

Contemporary Iraqi Women's Fiction of War

Angham A. Abdullah

PhD

University of York

Women's Studies

June 2014

Abstract

In this thesis I examine selected works by contemporary Iraqi women novelists written during three periods of wars: the Iraq-Iran War (1980-1988), the First Gulf War (1990-1991) and the US-led invasion and occupation of Iraq in 2003.

I argue that the unceasing chain of wars portrayed in the open-ended narratives I analyze unsettles mainstream conceptions of women as victims at the home front and men as brave fighters at the battle front. Instead women are constructed as survivors, working to preserve the memory of Iraq and its history, gesturing towards a possible rebirth of Baghdad. The stories the writers provide entail a testimonial account where a record of historical happenings is presented to the reader in fictional form. My thesis has five chapters: an introduction, three analysis chapters and a conclusion. In each analysis chapter, I examine two narratives from each of the three war periods.

For this I draw on Caruth's, Freud's, Felman's and Laub's and LaCapra's trauma theories, on Ann Whitehead's ideas about the way trauma is narrated in fiction and on Ikram Maşmudi's treatment of the Derridean concept of the unexperienced experience of death.

My research constructs a link between the three stages of war in Iraq and addresses the ramifications of these periods for the work of Iraqi women writers. This research enables an understanding of the historical referentiality of fiction, of the way gender roles are challenged and war is construed and resisted from a female perspective.

Table of Contents

Abstract.....	ii
Table of Contents	iii
Acknowledgements	v
Author’s Declaration	vi
Chapter One: Introduction	1
1.1 Sourcing Texts	6
1.2 Previous Studies.....	10
1.3 What Distinguishes My Research	15
1.4 Trauma in Clinical and Psychiatric Literature	19
1.5 Trauma and Memory.....	25
1.6 History and Fiction	29
1.7 Arab Women’s Fiction of War.....	32
1.8 Iraqi Fiction of War.....	38
1.9 Fiction as Testimony	44
1.9 My Experience as a Witness to War	49
1.10 Thesis Structure	59
Chapter Two: The Disruption of Gender Relations in the Narratives of the 1980s ...	62
2.1 The Political Context	66
Ibtisam ‘Abdullah’s “The Other in the Mirror”	85
Irada al-Jabburi’s “Prisoners”	101
2.2 Conclusion	113
Chapter Three: The Paradox of Survival in the Narratives of the 1990s	118
3.1 The Political Context	122

Maysalun Hadi' s <i>The World Minus One</i>	146
3.2 Gendered Grief in the Text	147
3.3 Communal Involvement in the Paradox of Survival.....	159
3.4 The Mourning Rituals	162
3.5 The Colour Imagery	166
Hadiyya Husayn's <i>Beyond Love</i>	171
3.6 The Narrative Technique	173
3.7 Huda's and Nadiya's Stories of the Past.....	175
3.8 Huda's Account of the Present.....	183
3.9 The Shared Experience of Exile.....	186
3.10 Conclusion	190
 Chapter Four: A Death Deferred in the Narratives on the Occupation of 2003.....	197
4.1 The Political Context	198
Iqbal al-Qazwini's <i>Zubayda's Window</i>	215
4.2 War and Estrangement through the TV and the Balcony Window	217
4.3 Memory of a Painful Past.....	222
4.4 Narration in the Text	226
Lutfiyya al-Dulaymi's <i>Women of Saturn: Biography of a People and a City</i>	230
4.5 Hayat's Confrontation with Death	233
4.6 The Targeting of Manar and Huda.....	239
4.7 The Victimization of Men.....	250
4.8 Survival in Narration.....	252
4.9 Conclusion	263
 Chapter Five: Conclusion.....	269
 Bibliography	292

Acknowledgements

I would like to express my deepest gratitude to my supervisor Prof. Gabriele Griffin for her invaluable effort, her continued support and her guidance. I also wish to thank Dr. Ann Kaloski Naylor who supervised the initial stages of my work for her academic and emotional support. Thanks also go to Harriet Badger the CWS Administrator for always being there for us.

My research was made possible by the University of York's Scholarships for Overseas Students and by the University of York's Students' Hardship Fund. This research was also facilitated by the support of the University of Duhok/Kurdistan region which offered me a three-year study leave.

A number of people shared with me their intellectual wisdom and academic expertise. I owe deep appreciation to my friend and colleague Prof. Wafaa Abdulaali from the University of Mosul/Iraq who spared no time or effort in reading and commenting on my work and to Prof. Janet Atwill from the University of Tennessee for reading parts of my work and for believing in me.

I am indebted to Dr. Gharbi M. Mustafa, from the University of Duhok/Kurdistan, for providing me with essential sources and to Prof. Bushrah al-Bustani, from the University of Mosul/Iraq, for her support with the necessary contact details of some of the writers. I am also indebted to the generosity of the Iraqi women writers, whose texts I study, for sending me hard and soft copies of their texts. I am highly grateful to Prof. Najim A. Kadhim from the University of Baghdad for the books he sent me. I am also thankful to my dearest friend Shahanz Shoro who was there for me during the most difficult times.

On a more personal level, I continue to be eternally grateful to my daughters Reman, Afnan and Mays who have always been understanding and extremely patient with me. Their presence, and love made it possible for me to continue this research which I dedicate to them.

Author's Declaration

All work contained in this thesis is my own and has not been previously published. I presented a paper entitled “Iraqi Women Write War,” based on my work, at the ‘Communicating War in the Media and Arts’ conference, held in Liverpool on 28 January 2011. I presented a reading of Irada al-Jabburi’s “Prisoners” at the ‘Carnival of Feminist Cultural Activism’ by the Centre for Women’s Studies at the University of York on 3-5 March 2011. I participated with a paper based on chapters Two and Three entitled “ The Violence of War in Iraqi Women’s War Fiction” at ‘The Violence of War: Experiences and Images of Conflict’ conference held at the University College London on 19-20 June 2014.

Chapter One: Introduction

This thesis focuses on contemporary Iraqi women's war fiction. I investigate work by Iraqi women novelists written during three periods of war: the Iran-Iraq War (1980-1988) which is regarded as the 20th century's longest conventional war,¹ the First Gulf War (1990-1991)² and the subsequent 13-year sanctions on Iraq,³ and the US-led invasion and occupation of Iraq in 2003.⁴ These three wars brought about a series of human tragedies which traumatized those who survived the atrocities and became witnesses to the wars. For each period of war I decided to examine two texts which centre on that specific period in the lives of Iraqis. For the war of the 1980s, I will analyze Ibtisam 'Abdullah's story "al- Akhar fil Mira'a" (The Other

¹ The Iraq-Iran War is also known as the First Persian Gulf War (September 1980 to August 1988), an armed conflict between the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Republic of Iraq (Hardy, n.d).

² The Gulf War (2 August 1990 – 28 February 1991), code-named Operation Desert Storm (17 January 1991 – 28 February 1991), was a war waged by a UN-authorized coalition force from 34 nations led by the United States against Iraq in response to Iraq's invasion and annexation of Kuwait (BBC 2005).

³ The sanctions against Iraq were a near-total financial and trade embargo imposed by the United Nations Security Council on Iraq. They began 6 August 1990, four days after Iraq's invasion of Kuwait. The original stated purposes of the sanctions were to compel Iraq to withdraw from Kuwait, to pay reparations, and to disclose and eliminate any weapons of mass destruction (Global Policy Forum, n.d). However, the sanctions stayed largely in force until May 2003 (after Saddam Husayn was forced from power), and persisted in part, including reparations to Kuwait in which Baghdad pays 5% of revenues from its oil sales. In 2010, the UN Security Council voted to lift most international sanctions imposed on Iraq during the Saddam Husayn era (BBC 2010).

⁴ The 2003 invasion of Iraq lasted from 19 March 2003 to 1 May 2003 and signaled the start of the conflict that later came to be known as the Iraq War which was incited under a Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) pretext and dubbed Operation Iraqi Freedom by the United States. The invasion consisted of 21 days of major combat operations, in which a combined force of troops from the United States, the United Kingdom, Australia, and Poland, invaded Iraq and deposed the Ba'ath government of Saddam Husayn.

in the Mirror 1999)⁵ and Irada al-Jabburi's story "Asra" (Prisoners 2007).⁶ For the war of the 1990s and the subsequent sanctions I selected Maysalun Hadi's novel *al-'Alam Naqisan Wahid* (*The World Minus One* 1999) and Hadiyya Husayn's novel *Ma ba'd al-Hub* (*Beyond Love* 2003).⁷ Iqbal al-Qazwini's novel *Shubbak Zubayda* (*Zubayda's Window* 2008)⁸ and Lutfiyya al-Dulaymi's novel *Women of Saturn* were chosen to represent the US-led invasion and occupation of Iraq in 2003.

There are three reasons why I have chosen the six texts I focus on. First my concern was with texts critiquing war and dictatorship, so I made this my primary selection criterion. Second, as a Women's Studies scholar with a concern for women's experiences I based my selection on the fact that these texts address a range of traumatic experiences women go through in the context of war, sanctions, occupation and exile. However, I do not treat these narratives as homogeneous as each text deals with a different type of suffering. I am interested not just in how trauma is depicted in the narratives but in how testimony to trauma provides a historical register of an ongoing trauma of survival. Third, I base my selection of the majority of the texts I examine on my experience as a witness to war, sanctions

⁵ Ibtisam 'Abdullah's short story "al- Akhar fil Mira'a" ("The Other in the Mirror") is from her anthology *Bakhur* (*Incense* 1999).

⁶ "Asra" is published in the anthology *Juruh fi Shajar al- Nakhil: Qisas min Waqi' al-Iraq* (*Wounds in Palm Groves: Accounts from Iraq*). The anthology was published in Arabic through the International Red Cross Committee in Iraq in 2007.

⁷ Maysalun Hadi's *The World Minus One* is published in Arabic. The excerpts used in the analysis of the novella are translated by the author of this thesis. Hadiyya Husayn's *Beyond Love* was translated into English by Ikrām Maşmūdī in 2012.

⁸ *Zubayda's Window* was translated from Arabic into English by 'Azza al-Khuli and Amira Nowayra, with an afterward by Nadje al-'Ali (2008).

and occupation, which I will elaborate while discussing the conceptual framework of my thesis. My position as a witness enables me to explore the way in which the line between what is real/history and what is imagined/fiction is blurred in testimonial narratives. In this I focus on the role narration plays in articulating history. By registering the cruelties of the Iraqi Ba‘th party⁹ and of war, the narratives I analyze offer a record to future generations in which the writers voice their critique of Saddam Husayn’s government and of war.¹⁰ The women writers I focus on provide female civilian points of view which do not always treat of the battlefield but rather tackle the human suffering at the home front.

My thesis is divided into five chapters. The first chapter, the current introduction, is followed by three analysis chapters and a conclusion. I begin this introduction by discussing my choice of research topic in order to introduce briefly the context within which I read the novels which is to do with my position as a witness to war and with the scarcity of material. I then examine the difficulties I faced while looking for the primary and secondary sources necessary to conduct my research. I provide an overview of previous studies in the field of contemporary Iraqi women’s fiction of war and outline what distinguishes my argument from these previous studies and how I position my work within the field of Iraqi intellectual

⁹ Ba‘th (Renaissance) is the name of the ruling party in Iraq and Syria. The Iraqi Ba‘th party was founded in 1951 and had 500 members three years later. However, after the fall of Husayn’s regime the US plan was to dismantle the Ba‘th (Kafala 2003).

¹⁰ The symbols used for the transliteration of Arabic words in the thesis are those of the Library of Congress.

work. I then examine the conceptual framework underlying the analysis of the narratives. Finally, I discuss the structure of my thesis.

The idea of researching women's war fiction occurred to me in 2007 when I commenced my academic work at Duhok University/Kurdistan after a 15-year absence from Iraq. While I was teaching Ernest Hemingway's *A Farewell to Arms* in the first semester, as part of a course in Modern World Fiction, I realized that my students identified with some of the specific details about the role war plays in destroying people's hopes and separating lovers. The students identified with the heartbreaking scene of villagers having to migrate along with their stock and belongings, since they themselves had witnessed similar processes during the 1980s.

By August 1988 a broad attack on Kurdish insurgents and civilians took place as part of the infamous Anfal campaign that Saddam's regime initiated against the Kurds. At least 180,000 people lost their lives, with hundreds of others deported and resettled. Kurdish villages were made uninhabitable through the destruction of water supplies and the mining of fields (Stansfield 112-115). The manner in which my students responded to this narrative encouraged me to think of teaching an Iraqi text on war in the second semester.

I found that no Iraqi novel had been taught over the previous few years and that the students knew little about Iraqi writers. One of the main reasons behind not teaching an Iraqi text in English was the scarcity of texts translated into English. I searched online for these texts and found that there were several relevant works which had been translated and published outside Iraq. These included Haifa' Zangana's novel *Women on a Journey: Between Baghdad and London*, Betul Khedayri's novel *Absent* and her *A Sky So Close* as well as others which I found later.¹¹ When I read notes and some online excerpts from *Absent*, I related to the text and felt that the writer was speaking on my behalf and on behalf of thousands of Iraqis, a point that I will elaborate on in this chapter when I discuss my personal experience as a witness. It happened that one of my fourth-year students who was in Germany on a research scholarship was able to locate a copy of *Absent* and bring it to me during the summer vacation. I started teaching the novel in 2008.

My experience of teaching this text not only informed my research topic but also made me realize the necessity of teaching Iraqi texts in translation to the students in Kurdistan who could not read Arabic texts.¹² The time and the effort I spent

¹¹Zangana is an Iraqi exile writer and a frequent commentator for *The Guardian newspaper* in the UK. Zangana is a high-profile activist for international human rights. She has written editorial articles and letters on the sanctions against Iraq and the U.S. occupation of Iraq. Zangana's first book, *Through the Vast Halls of Memory*, is based on her experience of imprisonment and torture in Iraq. Khedayri's novel was originally published in Lebanon as *Kam Badat al- Sama' Qaribah* and translated into English by Muhayman Jamil. Khedayri's *Absent* was published in Arabic as *Ghayeb* in 2004 and translated into English by Muhayman Jamil.

¹² The number of Iraqi Kurds who speak Arabic fluently has declined significantly since the 1990s, even though Arabic is the second official language in Kurdistan and the primary language of Iraq.

searching for *Absent* made me aware of the difficulty of getting hold of Iraqi texts both in Arabic and in translation from inside Iraq. This fact, which I will discuss further in the next section, constituted a real obstacle for me while collecting sources to conduct my research.

1.1 Sourcing Texts

When I started to think about researching Iraqi women's fiction, I found myself searching for work written about the three war periods of the 1980s, 1990s and 2000s. Focusing on texts that opposed war and condemned the political system, particularly texts which treat the Iran-Iraq war of the 1980s, and trying to collect them from inside Iraq, constituted a real challenge. Commenting on the work of the 1980s, Iraqi poet Dunya Mikha'il states:

A huge amount of Iraqi war literature that was published inside Iraq, especially during the Iran-Iraq war, depicts the Iraqi soldier as a "superman." This doesn't mean that all of that literature was trash, but only few Iraqi writers presented the Iraqi soldier merely as a human being (qtd. in Mehta 85).¹³

Given the fact that the narratives of the 1980s were state-censored by the Iraqi

Ministry of Information and that literature and art were mobilized to serve as war

After the creation of the autonomous Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) in 1991, assertions of nationalism and feelings of animosity toward Saddam Husayn's oppressive regime led to disinterest and neglect toward learning Arabic among Kurds (Walker, n.p.).

¹³ Dunya Mikha'il was born in Baghdad in 1965, and now lives in the United States. She is the author of three collections of poetry in Arabic: *The Psalms of Absence* (1993), *Diary of a Wave Outside the Sea* (1995) and *Almost Music* (1997). In 2001, Mikha'il was awarded the UN Human Rights Award for Freedom of Writing. Her collection *The War Works Hard* (2006) won the PEN Translation Fund award in 2004 and was selected by the New York Public Library as one of the twenty-five first books of 2005.

propaganda, works published by the Ministry of Information centred on the themes of heroism, martyrdom and love stories between fighters and women at home.

Writers and artists who failed to glorify the war would be subjected to harsh punishment as I shall discuss further in chapter two of this thesis. Most texts about the period of the 1980s were written by/about male fighters glorifying the war and martyrs, and honoring the soldiers who sacrificed their lives for the sake of the mother/nation.

Since I was living in Duhok, which is a small city in Kurdistan, where Kurdish is the main language, I could not find many Arabic texts, nor could I visit libraries or book stores in other Iraqi cities for safety reasons. When I asked a friend who lived in Baghdad to locate some texts for me, he told me that the bookstores he visited assured him that such texts did not exist inside Iraq. Lack of documentation inside Iraq and the difficulty of categorizing which narrative belongs to a certain war period was one of my biggest obstacles while trying to find texts.

The book which I found most helpful in this regard was Shakir Mustafa's *Contemporary Iraqi Fiction: An Anthology* (2008). This text was not available in Iraq. It was brought to me by a colleague at the University of Duhok who was doing his PhD in Poland. The editor translated the anthology into English and provided an introduction to the volume. Composed of contemporary narratives by

sixteen Iraqi female and male writers, the anthology is divided thematically into six categories which indicate key concerns in the texts. The categories are: family (women, men and love); war and its aftermath; political oppression; childhood; interfaith relations and western perspectives.

The volume helped me to identify women's war texts, especially of the 1980s. I decided on Ibtisam 'Abdullah's story "The Other in the Mirror" as it portrays the anti-war stance that interested me in particular. When I started writing my research proposal I built on ideas I got from teaching *Absent*, my readings of the few online articles about certain war texts and my reading of Mustafa's anthology. When I came to the UK in 2009, I resumed my search for more texts on the 1980s. It took two years to find Irada al-Jabburi's story "Asra" (Prisoners).¹⁴ I also managed to contact an established Iraqi woman poet and academic in my home town of Mosul, Prof. Bushra al-Bustani, who provided me with the email addresses of many women writers.

This enabled me to conduct interviews with three of them. I had two interviews with Maysalun Hadi. The first interview was in September 2011 in Amman where I met her in person. The second one was by email two months later. I had two Skype interviews with Irada al-Jabburi who lives in Baghdad. The interesting thing about

¹⁴ Irada al-Jabburi's story is one of many stories written in the context of wars and sanctions which were not published in Iraq under the censorship of Saddam Husayn's regime. The excerpts used in the analysis of the story are translated by the author of this thesis.

these Skype interviews was that while conducting the first interview the electricity was cut on the writer's side which affected our connection and accordingly we had to resume the interview some time later.¹⁵ I also did an email interview with Hadiyya Husayn who lives in Canada.¹⁶ Ibtisam 'Abdullah did not reply to my interview request. Yet, she sent me copies of her work. The same situation applies to Lutfiyya al-Dulaymi who did not respond to my interview request, but sent me a copy of *Sayyidat Zuhul: Sirat Nas wa Madina* (*Women of Saturn: Biography of a People and a City*, 2010).

My interviews with these writers were of great importance to my research in that they provided me with information about ways to get hold of their texts and also about new texts they had written about the period of 2003. These interviews also told me about the restriction imposed on the writers due to censorship and the economic conditions of the wars, the sanctions and the occupation. I understood more about the way exile provided the writers with a certain freedom of expression and a better chance for publication. In other words, contact with the writers increased my knowledge about the conditions of writing in war and offered me an opportunity to select from a range of texts about the 1990s and 2003 which they either sent me or guided me to purchase. The difficulties I faced in gathering primary material extended to problems in finding secondary sources.

¹⁵ The first Skype interview was held on 8 Nov. 2011, and the second on 10 Nov. 2011.

¹⁶ My email interview was made on 17 Nov. 2011.

1.2 Previous Studies

As I discussed earlier, Shakir Mustafa's anthology helped me to locate one of my texts and it also provided some critical reading in the introduction. Apart from the few lines Mustafa has about 'Abdullah's "The Other in the Mirror," I found no further writing on this text elsewhere. As far as the other text, al-Jabburi's "Prisoners" was concerned, it has also not been paid any critical attention to date (2015).

There are three edited volumes in Arabic on the work of individual writers from the 1990s and 2003. These are Najim A. Kadhim's *Al-Farasha wal- 'Ankabut: Dirasat fi Adab Maysalun Hadi al-Qasasi wal- Riwa'i* (*The Butterfly and the Spider: Studies in Maysalun Hadi's Fiction*, 2006), Wijdan al-Sa'igh's *Shahrazad wa Ghiwayat al -Sard: Qera'at fi al- Qesa wa al- Riwaya al -Onthawiya* (*Shahrazad and the Temptation of Narration: Reading Feminist Stories and Novels*, 2008), an article in English entitled "Portraits of Iraqi Women: Between Testimony and Fiction" by Ikram Masmudi (2010) and Rifqat Dudin's edited collection *Hadiyya Husayn fi Khams Riwayat* (*Studies of Five Novels by Hadiyya Husayn* 2011).

In the introduction to her book al-Sa'igh briefly discusses selected excerpts from Lutfiyya al-Dulaymi's novel *Hadiqat Hayat* (*Hayat's Garden*, 2009), Hadiyya Husayn's *Ma Ba'ad al- Hub* (*Beyond Love*, 2003), Maysalun Hadi's novel *Nubua 't Fer'awn* (*Pharoah's Prophecy* 2011) and Betul Khedayri's *A Sky So Close* (2001).

The writer argues that Iraqi war narratives are mirrors which reflect the intensity of the destruction of Iraq (al-Sa'igh 13), similar to that of "Picasso's *Guernica* where the artist utters a cry against Fascists" (al-Sa'igh 21). Yet, I shall argue that they go beyond that picture of devastation.

In Najim A. Kadhim's edited volume, several chapters examine Maysalun Hadi's novel *The World Minus One* which treats the war period of the 1990s. They focus on the novel's depiction of the misery of bereft parents by war. In her article, al-Aa'raji, for example, points out that Hadi challenges the concept of the martyr in the text by referring to the corpse as "fatisa" (decayed corpse) (172). Yet, she does not explain what sort of challenge this position indicates. I shall address this in my own reading of the text. In the critical texts just cited there is specific emphasis on 'Ali's father's feelings of doubt and uncertainty and little emphasis on 'Ali's mother's struggle to survive the loss. I intend to redress this. In al-Sa'igh's brief study of an excerpt of Husayn's *Beyond Love* about the period of the 1990s and Dudin's comments on the same novel, the critics draw a picture of the central character as an Iraqi person who is victimized by political decisions, wars and exile

that have left her with a distorted memory of a succession of wars. In my analysis of Husay's same novel, I shall develop these ideas further.

Ikram Masmudi discusses four contemporary Iraqi women writers' narratives in the light of Jacques Derrida's theory of the unexperienced experience of death.¹⁷ In *In the Instant of My Death* (2000) Derrida explains the manner by which testifying to the encounter with death by a victim works. Derrida draws on a text by Maurice Blanchot which begins with a Nazi lieutenant who orders a young man/Blanchot, his aunt, mother, sister and sister-in-law from their Chateau in France and lines them up in front of a firing squad. In the distraction caused by the noise from a nearby battle, a Russian soldier tells Blanchot "to disappear" (5). After searching the Chateau and burning most of the surrounding farms, the Nazi lieutenant and his men leave.

The young man's experience of death as something "that had already arrived, had already been decided, decreed" (52), even though the execution does not actually take place, is the traumatic event that shapes Blanchot's text. In his analysis Derrida comments:

Death had already taken place [...] He had thus left the world, dying

¹⁷ In his analysis of Blanchot's "The Instant of My Death" (1994), Derrida alludes to the autobiographical origins of the text where the protagonist experiences his own death, which is surprisingly deferred. As such, the protagonist is left waiting. This enables him to testify to the experience of death.

before dying, not for another world [...] but for a here-below without world [...] from which he who is already dead returns, like a ghost, the moment gunfire suddenly explodes in the vicinity (70).

The young man is not killed by the soldiers, and thus the death does not actually occur. This does not change the fact that the young man has had an encounter with death. Since this has taken place, he is able to testify to it even though it turns out to be something that was, in fact, never realized i.e., an unexperienced experience of death.

Masmudi suggests that in *Beyond Love* Huda faces a kind of deferred death by fleeing from Iraq to the neighboring country, Jordan. I intend to explore Huda's experiences beyond the notion of a deferred death. I base my analysis of *Beyond Love* on LaCapra's theories of the fixation on memory and the role of the witness in defining the experiences of degradation and violence.

Zubayda's Window has had very little critical attention in Iraq or abroad. I found only two critical studies on *Zubayda's Window*: the first is Ikram Masmudi's, mentioned earlier, and the second is an afterword to the novel by Nadjie al-'Ali. In her article, Masmudi suggests that Zubayda's feeling of loneliness in Berlin is augmented by the anxiety and trauma she experiences watching the images of war on the television. "For Zubayda sitting on her couch watching this hyper-real war on her TV screen, it is an unexperienced experience of death, a war without a war, simulating death without real death for her" (66). I find Masmudi's argument very

poignant but want to distinguish my argument from that of Masmudi through my analysis of the ending of *Zubayda's Window*.

As to critical readings of al-Dulaymi's *Women of Saturn* written in the context of the occupation of 2003, many of the Arabic online articles I came across focus on the way the narrative portrays an image of the damage Iraq has witnessed throughout history. The critic 'Adnan H. Ahmad suggests that the text "mirrors the disasters Iraq experienced throughout history" (n.p.). 'Ali 'Ubayd contends that "in *Women of Saturn* war ends before peace begins" (n.p.). Qays Kadhim al-Janabi argues that *Women of Saturn* "aims at liberating the female body from oppression where writing becomes an act of resistance against all forms of subjugation" (n.p.). Shakib Kadhim, in turn, suggests that the novel is "a living registry of the continuing Iraqi grief" (n.p.). 'Ali al-Mas'ud argues that the novel "draws a picture of corruption that afflicts the people before the city. *Women of Saturn* is an image of a conflict between beauty and ugliness where a kind of hope in a better future is evident" (n.p.). These critics suggest that love works as a remedy to the ruin and that "everything has surrendered to chaos except love" ('Abbas n.p.). They maintain that the survival of Baghdad will take place by means of love.

I shall suggest that Hayat's position as a narrator is rather complex in that she does not only experience social injustice and violence but also becomes, according to

LaCapra, a secondary witness to the experiences of men and women who undergo atrocities. I draw on Derrida's theory of the deferred death to explain the confrontation with death that Hayat and the other women characters undergo. I also argue that love plays a dominant role in Baghdad's rebirth. However, what distinguishes my argument from the previous critics is that I focus on the way the structure of *Women of Saturn* reflects how love and beauty survive in the midst of damage.

1.3 What Distinguishes My Research

Through researching contemporary Iraqi women's fiction of war and introducing it to the western reader my work fills a significant gap in critical studies and scholarship in the field of modern Arabic literature. Contemporary Iraqi women's fiction of war is a neglected area of critical studies in Arabic literature in general and in Iraqi literature in particular. This study brings this fiction to the forefront as it is the first PhD thesis on selected Iraqi women's narratives of the three periods of war.

When I started my search, I was surprised by the lack of documentation of narratives written about these wars and in particular women's writings. Later, when I was able to locate some texts I confronted the difficulty of the scarcity of any critical reception of these works, especially the narratives of the 1980s. Hence,

mine is the first study in the English language that treats contemporary Iraqi women's fiction of war for the three periods in question.

What distinguishes my research from existing critical studies on Arab and Iraqi fiction is its focus on the notion of trauma and on how memory and identity function to shape and define the lives of surviving characters in these texts. I examine how those survivors undergo, in Lifton's words, a "paradox of survival" (xi) that transforms them into victims. I undertake close textual analyses of texts from a gendered, literary and psychoanalytical perspective, contributing to an understanding of the way trauma is narrated in particular contexts. For this I utilize the works of certain key psychoanalysts, philosophers and historians whose debates enable me to explore the texts in question within the framework of their theorizations.

However, throughout the course of my analysis I also develop some of the theories such as those of Brown (105) and Haaken (34) who argue that trauma can either be a sign of a new wound or a reopening of an old wound. In my analysis, I find that the survivors are constructed to suffer from both new and old wounds owing to the dominance of their traumatized memory. I challenge Laub's (69) and Herman's (183) assumptions that testifying to an empathetic listener can change the processing of traumatic memory. My analysis of the majority of the texts shows

that testifying to trauma does not help the traumatized overcome their trauma but rather, that these traumas are intensified and complicated in the process. I also challenge LaCapra's argument as to the possible healing of historical trauma (13). My analysis indicates that despite survivors' constant effort to deal with their traumas these traumas persist. These findings therefore form my conceptual contribution which is embodied in the way contemporary Iraqi women's fiction of war presents a narrative about a traumatic history of continuous conflicts which have impacted and continue to impact survivors whose traumas cannot be mended.

The other element that distinguishes my research is that it discusses some of the narratives written under the censorship of the Iraqi government during the 1980s and the 1990s. Interestingly while "The Other in the Mirror" published under censorship received very little critical attention, "Prisoners," published after the fall of the Iraqi regime, has received no critical attention to date, whereas *The World Minus One* which escaped censorship, has had some critical attention. In my analysis of these texts I examine how the texts express "the inexpressible" (256) in Roger Allen's words. In other words, I analyze how these narratives resist the idea of war by describing the human cost of war, particularly at the home front. In this, the narratives participate in subverting the Iraqi political propaganda of war of the period.

Living in 2015 away from political repression I have the freedom of reassessing Iraq's modern history not only through the medium of fiction but through my memory of the days of war. By examining the political context of the periods of war and by identifying the effect of this context on women's lives, as narrated in specific texts, my research yields a critique and an analysis of this history.

Exploring the history of war enables a reading and interpretation of these narratives which articulate the personal experiences of their writers. I discuss the works of Iraqi women writers who depicted experiences of war both from inside Iraq and from exile. The themes of war present in their novels reference events and facts that preserve history and memory.

What characterizes my research is its focus on the way contemporary Iraqi women writers of war represent the relation between fiction and history and become, in Antoon's words, the "custodians of history" (Interview with Sears, 2013). By bringing private experiences into the public domain these writers create a historical narrative of a shared experience of cruelty, distress and damage. Their work functions as a testimony to a history of destruction.

I now turn to the conceptual framework which informed my understanding of the notions of trauma, memory and testimony that I mobilize for my analyses. I divide this part into seven sections: the first examines the origins of the concept of trauma

in clinical and psychiatric literature. The second deals with the relation between trauma and memory. In the third section I explore the relation between history and fiction in a way that leads to examining selected Arab women's texts of war. Discussion of the previous section directs the fifth section in which I examine the state of Iraqi war fiction throughout the three periods of war. Section six examines the way fiction provides a testimony to war bringing questions to do with my experience as a witness which will be discussed in section seven.

1.4 Trauma in Clinical and Psychiatric Literature

Trauma refers to an injury to living tissue caused by an extrinsic agent (Merriam-Webster Dictionary 1233). In clinical and psychiatric literature, the term is conceived of as a wound to the mind and not the body (Caruth 3). Judith L. Herman argues that three forms of psychological trauma have surfaced into public consciousness over time. The first is hysteria, the supposedly archetypal psychological disorder of women.¹⁸ The second is shell shock or combat neurosis, associated first with World War I veterans and then in the US with war veterans

¹⁸ The idea of psychological trauma was researched in Paris in 1885, under the name of moral trauma by French neurologist Jean-Martin Charcot, a forefather of the study of hysteria. Among the many distinguished physicians who studied under Charcot were Pierre Janet, William James and Sigmund Freud (Hacking 19). The concept of hysteria has been the object of much feminist critique (Showalter 125). In studying hysteria in women in 1896 Freud concluded that "at the bottom of every case of hysteria there are one or more occurrences of premature sexual experience" (Herman 13). Freud's ideas prospered and thrived in an anti-feminist political climate. However, the growing feminist movement participated in subverting Freud's patriarchal values (Kristeva 21).

returning from the Vietnam War. The third and most recent trauma to come into public awareness concerns sexual and domestic violence (9).

In 1920, Freud diagnosed symptoms of traumatized shell-shocked soldiers after they returned from the war front during World War 1. His work forms the basis of trauma studies. The point of interest in Freud's findings for my research centres on the idea of the delayed effects of trauma on the survivors. In his description of those soldiers Freud states that "the impression they give is of being pursued by a malignant fate or possessed by some 'daemonic' power." (*Beyond the Pleasure Principle* XI, 292).¹⁹ In the years following the Vietnam War (1965-1973), the Veterans' Administration conducted comprehensive studies tracking the impact of wartime experiences on the lives of returning veterans. Herman argues that the "moral rightfulness of the antiwar movement and the national experience of defeat in a discredited war had made it possible to recognize psychological trauma as a lasting and inevitable legacy of war" (Herman 27). In 1980, the American Psychiatric Association (APA) officially acknowledged "Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder" (PTSD), with symptoms of what was called "shell-shock, combat stress,

¹⁹ In 1946, a year after World War II ended, two American psychiatrists J.W. Appel and G.W. Beebe, concluded that 200-240 days in combat would suffice to break even the strongest soldier: "There is no such thing as getting used to combat ... Each moment of combat imposes a strain so great that men will break down in direct relation to the intensity and duration of their exposure. Thus, psychiatric casualties are as inevitable as gunshot and shrapnel wounds in warfare" (1468-71).

delayed stress syndrome, and traumatic neurosis, and referred to responses to both human and natural catastrophes” (Caruth 3).²⁰

Later, other incidents such as those of rape, child abuse, and experiences such as divorce and the unexpected death of a loved one were described as linked to PTSD.²¹ However, despite its extensive use, symptoms defined by APA are not necessarily applicable across cultures. Friedman and Marsella for example found that the assumption about the universality of the cultural applicability of the disorder is inappropriate as individuals who have aversive reactions to trauma often display symptoms distinct from the western ones (11-32). Not only symptoms but also western treatments for PTSD are not appropriate for use in non-western settings. In these treatments psychologists tend to focus on similarities among responses to trauma treatment across cultures while ignoring cultural differences (Baldachin 4).

Summerfield elaborates on faulty assumptions about using western treatments in other cultures. The first faulty assumption is that large numbers of traumatized survivors of war need professional help and that the clinician is classed as the

²⁰ The APA’s diagnosis of PTSD is unsatisfactory because the diagnosis was confined to persons who had experienced an event that is “outside the range of human experience.” A feminist perspective that calls attention to the suffering of girls and women, to their hidden experiences of pain reminds us that traumatic events lie within the range of normal human experience (Brown 119-133).

²¹ The current diagnostic criteria for PTSD are unsatisfactory because it is difficult to distinguish between the PTSD symptom cluster and what might be considered a normal human response to massive trauma (Wilson et al, n.p.).

expert savior, while the survivor is relegated to the role of a passive victim in need of help (1450-1451). This assumption does not consider the role of societal and situational factors that shape outcomes. In many Arab countries the majority of people still believe that visiting a psychiatrist is a disgrace.²² In ‘Abdullah’s “The Other in the Mirror” the schizophrenic soldier admits the dramatic change in personality he undergoes. This is evident in the way he keeps gazing at the mirror and through his recurrent question to his wife “what has changed in me?” (186). However, the husband refuses his wife’s support and he even becomes aggressive and eventually injures her. As I will elaborate in chapter two, the husband projects his weakness on his wife, turning her into a victim.

In addition, the talk-therapy treatment where survivors are separated from their environment and placed in a clinical context may be harmful in societies where “the individual’s recovery is bound up with the recovery of the wider community” (Bracken et al 8). The assumption that victims do better if they “emotionally ventilate and work through their experiences” (Summerfield 1460-1462) does not take into account the fact that in many cultures, discussing intimate details with someone outside the family circle is unacceptable. In some Iraqi communities,

²² Rania ‘Ali, a sociologist from Jordan, contends that most people in the Arab world lack knowledge of mental illness. They think that disease is only “physical” and that anxiety, depression and other psychological symptoms are casual cases which will certainly fade away. Those who are aware of their urgent need to see a psychiatrist are mostly afraid of being labeled as mad or mentally disturbed. See al-Dustur 8 Dec. 2014.

victims of rape prefer to run away or to commit suicide than to disclose the incident, especially when they realize that they will be killed for disgracing the honor of their families. In al-Dulaymi's *Women of Saturn* Halah flees Iraq to a neighboring country for fear of her uncle's threat to kill her after being raped in Abu Ghraib's prison and Hayat's husband prefers to flee the place of his disgrace after being castrated.

Caruth suggests that trauma is understood as a reaction to an unexpected, violent event or events that are not fully assimilated as they occur, but return later in flashbacks, nightmares, and other repetitive forms (91). Such belatedness of symptoms which appeared earlier in Freud's diagnosis of the shell-shocked is based on his much-cited example of the railway accident (*Beyond the Pleasure Principle* 1920; *Moses and Monotheism* 1939). In describing the railway accident Freud states:

It may happen that someone gets away, apparently unharmed, from the spot where he has suffered a shocking accident, for instance a train collision. In the course of the following weeks, however, he develops a series of grave psychical and motor symptoms, which can be ascribed only to his shock or whatever else happened at the time of the accident. He has developed a "traumatic neurosis" (*Moses and Monotheism* 84).²³

²³ In modern times, the railway accident comes to stand for traumas brought about by modernity and its new technologies. The forces of civilization and industrialization complicated the lives of human beings and led to higher degrees of traumatic incidents (Marcus 187).

In Freud's example the person does not realize the connection between the accident and his subsequent condition or the symptoms of the "traumatic neurosis." These symptoms which take place at a later stage work as evidence that the recurring traces of the traumatic accident are important not only because they indicate what we know about traumatizing events, but also "because [they] tell of what it is, in traumatic events, that is not precisely grasped" (Caruth 6). Accordingly, the person becomes haunted by violent images that not only gain their significance when they are repeated, but they are also "incomprehensible" (Caruth 6). The point of interest in the belatedness of the effect of trauma for my research lies in its relation to survival. That is those who survive tragic events can be subject to traumatic symptoms. This means that trauma is not only a consequence of damage but simultaneously, basically a paradox of survival (Lifton xi).

This paradox occurs because the survivor goes through a state of "oscillation between a crisis of death and the correlative crisis of life: between the story of the unbearable nature of an event and the story of the unbearable nature of its survival" (Caruth 7). Harold Bloom thinks that survivors of traumatic events go through two traumatic stages: the tragic event itself and the "passing out" of this event in a way that transforms survival into a kind of continuing predicament that Bloom defines as a "crisis of survival" (14). However, in some of the narratives I examine women characters' crisis of survival turns into a likelihood of survival. This particularly

concerns the female characters in “The Other in the Mirror” and “Prisoners.” The male characters, in these texts, are the ones who mostly suffer from the crisis of survival. The “passing out” of the event occurs in Freud’s railway accident where the person gets away “apparently unharmed” and is not fully conscious of the tremendous effect of the collision until later. Accordingly, the survivor of the accident seems to pass through three stages: the event, its repression and its return.

1.5 Trauma and Memory

The repression and the return of the traumatic event is also related to the manner by which memories banished to the unconscious do not disappear and continue to exert a powerful influence on behavior. Defense mechanisms serve to keep painful or socially undesirable thoughts and memories out of the conscious mind (McLeod n.p.). McLeod suggests that there is a perpetual battle between the wish (repressed into the id) and the defense mechanisms. We use defense mechanisms to protect ourselves from feelings of anxiety or guilt which arise because we feel threatened or because “our id or superego becomes too demanding” (Freud 78). With the ego, our unconscious will use one or more of these mechanisms to protect us when we come up against a stressful situation in life. When Ego-defense mechanisms get out of proportion, neuroses develop, such as anxiety states, phobias, obsessions, or hysteria (McLeod n.p.). According to George Simon, “denial” is one of these

unconscious mechanisms of protection from deep emotional pain (n.p.). That is, denial involves blocking external events from awareness. If some situation is too much to handle, the person refuses to experience it. As I will explain in chapter two, al-Jabburi's "Prisoners" provides an example of the way the character survives her loss by means of denial.

The crisis of survival is thus embodied in the return of the event that takes the form of traumatic memory. Brown (105) and Haaken (34) argue that trauma can either be a sign of a new wound or a reopening of an old wound. This idea was referred to as a "wound to the soul" in Hacking's discussion of the development of the concept of trauma (4). However, in my analysis of *Beyond Love* characters endure new wounds and old wounds at the same time. Their experience of exile creates a new wound which they try to survive through memory. But the act of recalling the past reopens old wounds which do not close.

Trauma acquires this sense of wounding by being linked to memory in that the wound here has nothing to do with the body but rather with the soul and with memory. Mieke Bal argues that traumatic events in the past have a persistent presence in that these memories remain present for the subject (vii). This means that survivors face the danger of an "obsession with, or fixation on, memory" (LaCapra 12). LaCapra suggests that what is repressed in memory does not actually

disappear. Rather it returns in the form of hallucinations, flashbacks and dreams triggered by incidents that more or less indirectly recall the past (12). However, LaCapra argues that victims of historical trauma can “work through” their traumatic memories and eventually heal” (13). In my analysis of the narratives, I challenge LaCapra’s argument. In these narratives, the traumatic memories of the characters are not healed through writing them or working through them. On the contrary, revisiting these memories through writing makes them more vivid. Iraqi poet Dunya Mikha’il thinks that poetry is: “an X-ray. It helps you see the wound and understand it” (Interview with National Public Radio, 2013) but does not heal it. In these texts, memories are always there, and do not fade or change. In writing her prison memoirs Zangana describes the way writing these memories is like “opening the drawer of a desk in which something has been hidden [...] what the writer attempts to do is realize what the truth is and maintain this truth” (Interview with Grace 2006, n.p.).

I argue that though the characters in the narratives I examine endeavour to cope with their crisis of survival, this crisis involves a psychical wound that refuses to heal. These wounds take different forms: destruction of marital bonds, loss of a son, loss of a husband, deprivation, displacement, rape and death threats. To manage their wounds the characters resort to a variety of measures including denial, imagination, mourning, escape in exile, recollection and writing. In *Beyond*

Love, *Zubayda's Window* and in some parts of *Women of Saturn*, exile is offered as a means of survival. However, the exiled characters are portrayed as paying a very high price for such a survival.

To endure their sense of loneliness, alienation and uncertainty these characters tend to revisit sites of memory as a solution. In *Zubayda's Window* the central character, who lives alone in Berlin, is insomniac: "On such endless nights, memory delights in choosing persons who have been sleeping for long in its corners and amuses itself by removing the dust of time from them and putting them in front of Zubayda's eyes" (al-Qazwini 55). On the one hand memory does work as a temporary healing process when characters conjure up happy images of their past. On the other hand memory can be an antagonist. Huda in Husayn's *Beyond Love* is threatened by the power of memory which "digs deeply [...] and reshapes the past like an enemy laying an ambush" (Husayn 18). In these novels characters' memories encompass two periods of time: a time before the war to which they run and a time after the war which they fail to escape from. To better understand how the representation of memory in the narratives plays a crucial role in the relation between those narratives and history I will briefly discuss the latter.

1.6 History and Fiction

It has become evident that modern distinctions between the “real” and the “imaginary,” hence between the historical and the literary confuse the relationship between the two fields. The historian Paul Veyne argues that “In no instance is what is called an event by historians directly or completely captured. If anything it is always incomplete and laterally seized through documents or testimonies” (14). Veyne states that the reality the historian produces is a representation of an event. This suggests that both history and narrative attempt to construct reality by means of representation and that the historian is the one who “imposes a narrative order on the past and makes history” (Mink 24).

History relies upon a principle of “mimesis - literally imitation - to represent events or developments in the past” (Ricoeur 186). Ricoeur identifies three elements of mimesis which parallel the different stages required to understand any narrative. The first element is the interest in human actions. The second is the plot where an organization of events into a coherent story is implied. The last element is the way in which the world of the text is related to the reader’s world (188-189).

Ricoeur claims that historical events have become part of the narrative identity of people: “defining who we are implies telling our history” (191). He also suggests

that when events have such moral intensity that ordinary historical explanation is insufficient, history summons fiction. In other words, fictional narrative has greater capacity to represent the woes of humanity than history. Ricoeur refers to the Holocaust as an example: “there are perhaps crimes that must not be forgotten, victims whose suffering cries less for vengeance than for narration” (189-191).

So, while the past is a period of time during which “real” events took place, history is a constructed narrative representation of the past or about it. As such, the central organizing factor in the representation of the past is the historian “as the author who narrates the history” (Munslow 5). In writing a history of the past “we create a semiotic representation that encompasses reference to it, an explanation of it and a meaning for it” (Munslow 9). That is to say, the meaning of the past is created through narration which references what happened by means of comparison and verification.

Whether it is in “fictional” or “historical” literature, the notion of a story requires a structuring process that communicates meaning as well as order. In this context I argue that one of the functions of contemporary Iraqi women’s fiction of war is to generate a narrative about a specific history. “History” here necessarily includes a personal and a shared experience of violence, dehumanization, abjection and

invisibility. Particular issues, for example the loss of loved ones, the targeting of writers and exile serve as frames of reference for the treatment of the past.

In the texts I analyze the writers share a desire to understand the Iraqi history of war and to explain how this history has impacted and continues to impact on Iraqis. The writers I discuss bring private experience into the public sphere. They do this through an act of testimony which reshapes the history of the Iraqi wars into a survivor narrative. Iraqi-American poet and fiction writer Sinan Antoon indicates the role the historical novel currently plays in Iraq: “in cultures experiencing violent upheaval, the fiction writer becomes a custodian of histories” (Interview with Sears, 2013).²⁴

Novelists, like historians may also produce narratives of history, creating stories about the past. After 2003, Iraqi writers, as Antoon contends, enjoyed a relative freedom to narrate the history of the past thirty years. Antoon argues that despite the political unrest in Iraq there was an audience eager to read “the stories of generations [that] are missing” (Interview with Sears, 2013). Antoon suggests that in the Iraqi context novelists are obliged to represent a counter record and an alternative discourse about reality to the one produced by the authorities which attempted, for decades, to suppress its people. In other words, the writer’s task is to

²⁴ Sinan Antoon, poet, novelist, and translator, is an Iraqi exile who left his home country in 1991 shortly after the First Gulf War to live in the United States and complete a PhD in Arabic literature, which he now teaches at New York University (Farid n.p.).

create a narrative about history that destabilizes the representations of official history.

It is in this sense that contemporary Arab writers occupy the position of an “underground historian” (Steiner 32) due to the restrictions and the censorship they may confront or confronted in the political systems of their countries. Describing his position as a novelist the late Palestinian writer and critic Ghassan Kanafani argues: “My political position springs from my being a novelist [...] politics and the novel are an indivisible case [...] I became politically committed because I am a novelist, not the opposite” (qtd. in Harlow v). Kanafani came to occupy the position of the “underground historian” as a way of “documenting the existence and material conditions of Palestinian literature under Israeli occupation, in face of what [Kanafani] designates as a *cultural siege*” (Harlow 2-3). Such a position is also evident in women writers’ work.²⁵

1.7 Arab Women’s Fiction of War

Arab novels are heavily politicized as they originate from a volatile political region such that the political/historical novel becomes “a main attribute of the novel in the Arab world” (Selim 19). The political situation of the Middle East in recent history,

²⁵ From within a plethora of Arab women writers I shall give an overview of the works of two Palestinian and Lebanese writers, namely Liana Badr and Hanan al-Shaykh, as discussing more works is beyond the scope of this thesis. Apart from being established writers whose works have been translated into many languages, these writers write from different experiences of war and exile than the Iraqi women writers.

notably the Nakbah in 1948, paved the way for a change in women's writing from a concern with the personal to a preoccupation with the national. Roger Allen argues that the Arabic novel acquired a national identity as a reaction to colonialism and occupation by foreign countries (247). The post-1960s was a period marked by the rise of national liberation movements, the defeat of Arab nationalism, the fragmentation of Arab identity, and increasing hostility from the Israeli state (Kamrava 69).

Most women's liberation movements in the developing countries were closely connected to the rise of nationalism. In other words, "the struggle for women's rights became a main part of the general political struggle against both colonial and local forms of oppression" (Golley 36). As such, texts by Arab women are shaped by what Lebanese novelist Etel Adnan calls intersecting "circles of oppression" and "circles of repression" (104). Such texts become a site of representing possibilities of resistance to political and social forms of "oppression" and "repression." Arab women writers attempt "to situate gender issues within these historical moments of flux and change [...] and to redefine boundaries of identity and community" (Majaj et al. xix).

These writers address how issues of gender, religion, and ethnicity - within their societies - intersect with the patriarchal, colonialist, Zionist, and militarized

violence in these societies. While most Palestinian writers' texts are informed by the background of a continuous struggle against the Israeli occupation of their homeland, Lebanese authors write within a context of the Lebanese Civil War. The Palestinian exile writer Liana Badr²⁶ and the Lebanese novelist Hanan al-Shaykh²⁷ deal with the representation of the struggle of women against the overlapping forces of colonial legacies, patriarchy and militarized violence in their work. Each has a particular interpretation of the way national struggle works.

Badr's stories combine narratives based on historical facts, stories by Palestinian refugees in the camps and autobiography in their depiction of the collective experience of Palestinian diaspora. By placing women at the centre of her narratives, Badr "rewrites gendered metaphors of the nation, reconfiguring Palestinian nationalism as a transnational struggle based on human rights" (Majaj et al 139). Badr writes about "women and war, women and exile, and the plight of women facing not only the national enemy but a massed weight of inhuman traditions and a heritage of male oppression" (Buck 311). This is clearly evident in her novel *The Eye of the Mirror* (1991) which describes the siege of Tel al-Za'tar

²⁶ Liana Badr was born in Jerusalem and raised in Jericho until 1967 when she fled with her father to Jordan. Liana was an activist for over twenty years with the PLO. Badr spent several years working with women's organizations in the refugee camps in Beirut. Badr's works in English translation include two novels, *A Compass for the Sunflower* (1989) and *The Eye of the Mirror* (1994), a collection of three novellas and several collections of short stories available in Arabic.

²⁷ Hanan al-Shaykh is one of the leading contemporary women writers in the Arab world. Some of her novels have been translated into English, French, Dutch, German, Danish, Italian, Korean, Spanish and Polish. Al-Shaykh wrote her first novel *Intihar Rajul Mayyit* (*Suicide of a Dead Man* 1970) at the age of nineteen. Her other novels include *Faras al-Shaytan* (*Praying Mantis* 1975), *Misk al-Ghazal* (*Women of Sand and Myrrh* 1988), *Bareed Beirut* (*Beirut Blues* 1995) and a collection of short stories, *Wardat al-Sahraa* (*Desert Rose* 1982).

(The Hill of Thyme). The novel tells the story of 'Aisha (life) who is forced to deal with the domestic violence of her alcoholic father whose behavior is a reaction to his own personal and military defeat as a Palestinian male. 'Aisha who "is present on this earth, yet does not exist" (Badr 82) contemplates escaping her family's plan to arrange her marriage.

However, the war and the barricades restrain 'Aisha from taking action in a way that reveals how her options to be liberated as a woman are restricted by her oppression as a Palestinian (Saliba 157). Badr's attempt to address the violence of the patriarchal household is accompanied by a critique of women's involvement in the persistence of oppressive practices. The writer's portrayal of the way 'Aisha achieves a sense of self by joining the Palestinian resistance movement, is a sort of liberation that is achieved through national struggle. However, Badr also questions the sacrifices the fighters make "to professional duties at the expense of [their] humanity" (Badr 239). In Badr's narrative nationalism remains the source for Palestinian resistance and is closely related to the search for individual and collective humanity against political and social annihilation.

While Badr emphasizes the interrelation between gender and national struggle Hanan al-Shaykh's writing stresses some crucial aspects of sexuality as they relate to social and political problems and to war. In *Hikayat Zahra*, 1980 (*The Story of*

Zahra) al- Shaykh portrays how Zahra, a Southern Lebanese woman, who lives with her demanding father and selfish mother becomes restrained, intimidated and frightened. Zahra has a failed marriage to a man whom she does not love, and finds herself in a sexual relation with a sniper in the districts of Beirut. This scene is set side by side with depictions of war where acts of sniping, looting, drugs, abortion and killing are exercised freely. Hopelessness pervades the novel. Hopelessness is further stressed when Zahra's relationship with the sniper is terminated by an accidental pregnancy which leads the sniper to killing her. The novel ends with Zahra wondering why he killed her. "He kills me with the bullets that lay at his elbow as he made love to me" (al-Shaykh 247).

The significance of Zahra's sexual relationship with the sniper has been read in many ways. According to Cooke this relationship stems from Zahra's decision to "distract [the sniper] from his deadly job" (40). This suggests that sexuality intervenes in the national struggle, where Zahra's encounter with the sniper means distracting him from killing others. However, Zahra's words contradict Cooke's argument: "What was I here for? Before I came, he would have been picking out his victims' heads as targets, and after I left he would be doing the same [...] Could I say I had been able to save anyone even in those moments when we met and had intercourse?" (136). Zahra realizes that her frequent encounters with the sniper do not stop him from "picking out his victims' heads."

Evelyne Accad too suggests that “the only way to have any kind of control over the elements of death ravaging [Zahra’s] country is to become part of this violence through sexuality” (56). Accad argues that sleeping with the sniper, who is a symbol of violence, works as a kind of remedy by which Zahra can put up with the violence of war around her. In contrast, Valassopoulos argues that Zahra’s sexuality should not be interpreted in terms of its relation to a nationalistic agenda. Rather, the war allows Zahra to achieve a kind of “self- discovery” (65). That is the war offers Zahra an opportunity to know her body and experience its possibilities, something that was missing in her previous relations. Thinking about the war Zahra reflects: “The war, which makes one expects the worst any moment [...] has swept away the hollowness concealed by routines” (al-Shaykh 138). Zahra’s engagement in violence represents another form of “self-discovery.” Raised in an environment that intimidated her and forced her into a marriage which she disdained and which ultimately turns into a hollow relation Zahra finds, in the chaos of war, a space where she can express her resistance to “routines” and to social restraints even though this resistance ultimately involves her self-destruction.

Despite the several “circles of oppression” women inhabit in these texts I argue that, in their struggle to survive, these women also assert themselves, whether through national struggle as in Badr’s novel or by means of self-destruction as in al-Shaykh’s narrative. In these narratives Arab women writers attempt to re-

investigate forms of gender oppressions which exist and are familiar to women. In providing a critique of these, the writers participate in narrating a history of gender violence and of war where women's lives are transformed in spite of the risks involved in such a transformation.

In his study of the Arabic novel Allen underlines the importance of considering the "more variegated studies that examine particular genres and sub-genres, regions and their cultural particularities, and critical approaches" (250). Following Allen the Iraqi novel should be distinguished from the general notion of an Arabic novel, given the particularities of the Iraqi political situation.

1.8 Iraqi Fiction of War

Since its founding in 1921 the Iraqi nation-state has been afflicted by political instability and violence. Iraqis became familiar with bloodshed and cruelty under the monarchy 1939-1958, and also during the reign of 'Abdul Karim Qasim, 1958-1968. However, violence and human rights abuses reached their highest levels during the Ba'th regime under Saddam Husayn who held power from 1968-2003 (Davis 11). Davis argues that in an attempt to enhance its authority Saddam's regime politicized historical memory and engaged in a process of rewriting the history of Iraq during the 1970s and early 1980s. The rewriting of that history and the regime's efforts to link the Ba'th to ancient Mesopotamia stem from the

intention to abolish the legacy of colonial thinking from Iraqi history and national heritage (17-18).

In this environment writers' and artists' work was put under strict surveillance.

Any writing which did not conform to the Ba'ath master historical narrative was prohibited. Writers who fell short of obedience were penalized or, if compliant, rewarded depending on their attitude towards the state. For instance 'Abdul Sattar Nasir, an established Iraqi novelist, was subjected to a year of solitary confinement in 1975 for publishing a short story based on a parable which critiqued the absolute power adopted by Saddam Husayn (Mustafa xvi). Some writers used legendary parables of the past as a "methodology of resistance," thereby engaging in a "safe political discourse" (Davis 17). The use of parables enabled writers to escape persecution and convey a dissident message.

With the advent of the war with Iran, the so-called Saddam's Qadisiyyah, in the 1980s, the Ba'ath regime directed cultural production towards nurturing hatred for Iran and backing Saddam who made every effort to prepare the populace for an extended struggle with Iran ('Alaywi and al-Hadithi 193).²⁸ This effort, as I will discuss in detail in chapter two, was articulated in Saddam's speeches, his support

²⁸ To justify the war against "Persia," the war was officially named by the Iraqi government as "Saddam's Qadisiyyah" or the "Second Qadisiyyah." Qadisiyyah is the name of a battle which took place in the seventeenth century between Arab Muslims and the Sassanid Persians. In this battle the Arab Muslims achieved complete victory over the Persians (Lewental n.p.). That is, the specific naming of the war and stressing its significance characterized Saddam Husayn's strategy in handling this war (cooke 224).

for cultural activities and generous spending on the construction of monuments commemorating bravery, martyrdom and conquest.

Muhsin al-Musawi claims that the war with Iran “weighed heavily” on many Iraqi artists and intellectuals who found their country fighting a neighboring state with which they shared many common beliefs (52). Accordingly, writers who remained in Iraq were divided into three groups (Zangana n.p.). The first group supported the Ba‘th ideology out of fear of punishment. This group of writers is considered by the Iraqi expatriate critic Salam ‘Abud an outcome of the “culture of violence” in which “Iraqi artists had either to collaborate with the regime or go into physical or inner exile” (156). In 1983 some 26 war novels were published in response to the “Stories under Flames of Fire” literary competition organized by the Ministry of Culture and Information (Muhsin 15). The competition stipulated that writers should depict the Iraqi fighter as a hero who defies death and is ready to sacrifice himself for the sake of his country. However, some writers refused to “collaborate” (al-Khalil 117) with the regime and decided to express their resistance by resorting to camouflage. As I will elaborate in chapter two, camouflage enabled writers to employ a highly figurative language so that they could hide politically contentious subjects from the censor.

Reviewing Iraqi women's narratives of the 1980s, cooke argues that men are not the legendary fighters who daringly go to fight the "enemy" and women do not encourage their husbands and sons to seek "martyrdom" in death. Instead the women's texts represent soldiers suffering from physical and psychological wounds which are hard to heal, and women afflicted by loneliness (240-241). Contrary to the Ba'th effort to use women's bodies for the service of war, the women characters in these texts hate the idea of begetting a boy: "I'll kill myself if it is a boy" (Salman 8), and they dream of a quick end to this "vicious war" (qtd. in cooke 245). In my analysis of 'Abdullah's "The Other in the Mirror," a state-sponsored text I investigate how the writer disguises her text so that it reads like a patriotic story while containing a critique of the brutality of war and the extreme suffering of soldiers and their families.

The second group consists of writers who emigrated as a result of their opposition to the authoritarian rule and to war. Some of these dissident writers left the country to write in exile, whilst others went into "inner exile" and preferred to remain silent or write secretly. Many published their writings on the war of the 1980s after the fall of the regime to avoid the government's persecution. In these texts, the acclamatory and heroic discourses which celebrate war as a patriotic duty disappear completely and are replaced by a new address that condemns war and its benefactors (Ben Driss 168). Irada al-Jabburi's "Prisoners," which I analyze, is an

example of such texts which enjoyed some freedom of expression in criticizing the war with Iran as they were published after the fall of the regime.

During the second half of the 1990s and as a result of the long period of the sanctions following the First Gulf War the hold of the government loosened.

Despite corruption being rife, writers were bolder in portraying Iraqi life. Irada al-Jabburi suggests that “this situation offered more space and freedom of speech to writers who described it and were very bold in portraying the status quo in a way that brought about a type of writing called “kutub al-Hisar” (the sanctions’ books)” (Skype Interview with ‘Abdullah, 8 Nov. 2011). Lutfiyya al-Dulaymi describes this kind of writing as a “text of resistance” (Interview with Kurayshan, 2 Oct. 2000). Resistance in al-Dulaymi’s view carries a double meaning in that it is not only a manifestation of clinging to life against the death brought by the US - imposed embargo, but it is also a resistance to the Iraqi political system.

In spite of the fact that Iraqi women writers of war discuss social injustice against women in their texts, they do not consider social injustice the main reason behind women’s woes. In women’s war texts the political system is blamed for oppressing women and for using them to serve the war agenda. In *Beyond Love* Nadiya describes how her father preferred her twin brother and neglected her, a fact that

tormented her. Yet, it is the violence of the regime and of war which motivates her escape and eventually leads to her death in exile.

From 2003 which marks the rise of sectarian, extremist and ethnic violence women paid a high price to survive. In texts from this period social injustice is portrayed as an outcome of the general state of upheaval, with the US marines, militias and extremists targeting women. In *Women of Saturn* Manar manages to escape Iraq despite her family's support after being gang-raped by a couple of thieves. Like other women characters in the novel, Manar's decision to leave Iraq is due to her inability to endure being targeted. Halah escapes her relatives' attempt to kill her for dishonoring them after being raped in Abu Ghraib prison by the American soldiers. In Halah's words: "I won't commit suicide and I won't let my uncles slay me. Let them get back at the Americans and avenge my disgrace" (al- Dulaimy 190). Though al- Dulaimy criticizes the illogicality of the social tradition of honor killing where women undergo a double form of victimization, the writer presents an image of women's victimhood as above all due to the unruliness of war, occupation and the political system.

Mustafa suggests that Iraqi women writers "transcend the conventional calls for the liberation of women to make the case for their wider participation in shaping their societies" (Mustafa xviii). Iraqi women writers of war realize that women's

liberation is achieved through their determination to outlive the violence of war. By portraying the effect of this violence on Iraqi women's lives women writers become "custodians of history" who present a narrative of a history of dictatorship and of conflicts where women share experiences of loss, humiliation and brutality. Yet, these women make an effort to survive violence either through escaping, writing, evoking memories or through imagination. In other words, these women survive in order to testify to/narrate a history of an unceasing state of disarray.

1.9 Fiction as Testimony

In his *History in Transit* (2004) LaCapra argues that "the apparent reliving of the past, as a witness, means going back to an unbearable scene, being overwhelmed by emotion and for a time unable to speak" (131). What matters in the act of testimony is not the precision of the details of the recollected event but rather the ability to remember horrible scenes and to express the horror involved in these scenes. LaCapra distinguishes between two types of memory: primary and secondary memory. Primary memory is that of a person who has lived through events and remembers them.

This memory involves gaps, relating to forms of repression and disavowal on the part of the witness (20). The witness cannot get immediate access to experience as the act of reliving the memory of trauma resists integration into consciousness in

that “it is not addressed to anybody, the patient does not respond to anybody; it is a solitary activity” (van der Kolk and van der Hart 163). This solitary activity can nevertheless, be articulated by means of the testimony that requires a speaker and a listener:

[T]estimony has become a crucial mode of our relation to events of our times [...] to traumas of contemporary history [...] Testimony is [...] a discursive practice, as opposed to a pure theory. To testify – to vow to tell, to promise and produce one’s own speech as material evidence for truth – is to accomplish a speech act, rather than simply to formulate a statement (Felman and Laub 5).

This implies that a testimony to tragic happenings requires a speaker/narrator and a listener/reader who will stand as a witness to the survivor’s account. Laub gives an example of a woman survivor of the Holocaust who narrated her experience to interviewers from the Video Archive for Holocaust testimonies at Yale. The woman said: “we saw four chimneys going up in flames, exploding. The flames shot into the sky, people were running. It was unbelievable” (59).

Sometime later a group of historians, psychoanalysts and artists watched the videotaped testimony of the woman and considered her testimony inaccurate since the number of chimneys which was actually blown up was one instead of four. Laub rejects this reading and insists that “the woman was testifying not to the number of chimneys blown up, but to something else, more radical, more crucial: the reality of an unimaginable occurrence [...] The event itself was almost

inconceivable [...] She testified to the breakage of a framework. That was historical truth” (60).

Laub argues that what matters for psychoanalysts is the discovery of knowledge conveyed by patients who are not expected to tell exact factual details since they do not necessarily have possession of these details. In a way, “the ability to remember is also the ability to omit and confuse, or simply the ability to forget” (van der Kolk and van der Hart 168). Through talking and listening to his patient Laub came to understand her subjective truth as well as the historical dimension of the event (62). In other words, the historical referentiality of testimony involves both factual and affective aspects.

Dori Laub states that “testimonies are not monologues; they cannot take place in solitude. The witnesses are talking to somebody [...] they have been waiting for a long time” (70-71). Laub suggests that testimonies entail a listener whose task becomes more difficult when dealing with testimony to trauma, as trauma challenges representation in language. The listener’s role is not only to hear the language spoken by the traumatized but also the silences and the gaps that intervene in their language since, as Laub thinks, trauma returns as disconnected fragments in the memory of the survivors and the listener’s job is to allow these memory fragments to have an effect both on her and on the traumatized.

If a survivor is encouraged to narrate her experience and emotionally relive it in a safe context with an empathetic listener such as a therapist, this “can actually produce a change in the abnormal processing of the traumatic memory” (Herman 183). The listener helps the witness to give voice to the traumatic events and “narrate his or her story in order to escape merely repeating and reenacting the traumatizing experience or embracing [...] defeating silence” (Laub 69). This suggests the importance of sharing such experiences in social contexts “such as testifying and writing to empathetic witnesses” (Kirmayer 188-189). However, in “The Other in the Mirror,” *The World Minus One* and *Beyond Love* when traumatized characters testify to others their testimonies do not ease their grief. Instead, their traumas are intensified leaving them in a state of irresolution which deepens their “crisis of survival.”

In this sense, secondary memory comes as a result of critical work on primary memory by the person who witnessed the event or by an analyst, or a historian. The historian or analyst in LaCapra’s view becomes a secondary witness and must work out an acceptable subject position in dealing with the emptiness and the fragmentations of the testimony (11-14). Fiction enables a reconstruction of the historical truth and of the emotional dimension of this truth. In other words, fiction has the ability to portray certain kinds of truth including the non-factual, the affective, in a comprehensible way.

Munté argues that literary fiction involves aesthetic and ethical truth at the same time. Aesthetic because the author will “transcend his own experience to talk about the ineffable, and ethical because the author [...] establishes a testimonial pact and does justice to the collective memory of all those murdered” (12). In Munté’s view the act of narrating the unspeakable particularities of individual trauma involves a testimony that encompasses the memory of all those who are silenced by violence as is the case with the central character of al-Dulaimy’s *Women of Saturn*.

In the novel *Hayat* the central character and narrator, tells the story of Baghdad’s survival throughout history by using many stories. Some of these stories are found in her uncle’s papers, left in her basement, in which he chronicles stories about Baghdad’s survival. Other narratives include her story of survival and those of men who were killed, abducted, deformed and of women who were kidnapped, targeted, incarcerated and raped. “The women handed me scraps of paper with their stories which I added to my papers [...] I collected the fragments to reshape the ruined city and its people [...] to make a mosaic image that looks like us” (al-Dulaymi 13).

The act of “reshaping” the story of Baghdad is an act of fictional reconstruction of the historical truth found in all the stories which Hayat narrates. This “reshaping” also includes the emotional dimension of Hayat’s testimony to her “ineffable” story of survival. While creating a “mosaic that looks like us” out of the “scraps,” the documents and the emotions implied in her survival, Hayat is positioned as a

secondary witness who attempts to do “justice” to all the men and the women who were crushed by dictatorship and war. The testimonies provided by the text situate the reader/listener as a secondary witness to the traumas of the survivors/narrators. This also concerns my position as both a primary and secondary witness to the three periods of war, sanctions and occupation.

1.10 My Experience as a Witness to War

My memory of the war events is, in this situation, a kind of “text.” Although I cannot totally rely on my memory for the figures and the exact dates of events, my recollections do give me a specific “insider” perspective on the events. Karen Foss and Sonja Foss argue:

By personal experience, we mean the consciousness that emerges from personal participation in events. The data of personal experience in feminist scholarship usually assume the form of women’s personal narratives about the events of their lives, their feelings about these events and their interpretations of them (39).

I have turned to my experience and those of others and to the articulation of that experience in the narratives, in order to gain a deeper understanding of the way narration shapes our lives by connecting these lives to broader aspects of humanity. Morton suggests feminist research is conducted to improve women’s lives who start to encounter their own stories and to produce a “new speech that has never been spoken before” (205). Incorporating my experience in this research is not only

about evoking the past but it is the very act of re-forming that past through my reading and interpretation of the narratives. This helps me to discover the role which the reader plays in co-producing the narratives and the role narrative plays in articulating accounts of myself. As such, probing into memory becomes a means of experiencing the past which does not only shape the present but enables a better understanding of it.

Commenting on feminist positions in research Hartsock argues that “the power of feminist method grows out of the fact that it enables us to connect everyday life with the analysis of the social institutions that shape that life” (36). My initial interest in researching contemporary Iraqi women’s fiction of war grew out of my experience in teaching Betul Khedayri’s *Absent*; a text by an exile writer about the impact of the embargo of the 1990s on Iraqi civilians. This experience deepened my knowledge of the way my position as a primary witness of the first two wars and sanctions enabled an identification with the text I taught.

I was particularly fascinated by Khedayri’s biographical details when I found that she, like me, had witnessed the first two wars and had only managed to leave the country during the late 1990s. In the 1990s my students were only kids and they could not remember the hardships Iraqis went through during that period. Most of what they knew had been narrated to them by their parents and relatives. When I

asked them to describe their responses to the novel, some of them identified aspects of the text with what they actually experienced on a daily basis. It was the scene about the daily electricity cuts which affected students during the summer final exams:

The schoolchildren are preparing for their exams. Some of them will study on the rooftops tonight; others will settle down in the central median between the two lanes of traffic, making use of powerful streetlights. The boys dream of falafel sandwiches and a bottle of Pepsi. The girls dream of chocolate bars [...] (10).

My students also recognized the scene about the ration card system since they knew from relatives' narratives how it felt to queue in the summer heat, waiting your turn as in the following excerpt:

I walk out onto the balcony. I look down at the people below me. In the distance are queues of men and women, all carrying their ration cards, waiting for rice, sugar, and tea at the food distribution points. The intensity of the heat raises a grey mirage that trembles between us. They eventually appear to me as masses that gradually melt away in vertical shapes (10).

Some students were surprised by the lack of basic items such as pencils for writing during the period of the sanctions: "I find our circumstances ridiculous. The whole world tries to prevent us from acquiring pencils for our schoolchildren because they claim that they could be used to make weapons! I may soon have to sell the secret of my father's ink to the people of this country" (Khedayri 36).

I was amazed to hear some of the students say that before reading the narrative they were ignorant of many of the difficulties Iraqis underwent during the sanctions.

Describing the role of the witness to tragedies Paul Celan argues: “To bear witness is to speak for others and to others” (2). In this sense the witness/writer of *Absent* testifies to and speaks on behalf of the victims. The writer’s role here is not just to testify but to record events for the coming generation.

Sandra Harding suggests that “one distinctive feature of feminist research is that it generates its problematics from the perspective of women’s experiences. It also uses these experiences as a significant indicator of the reality against which hypotheses are tested” (7). I would say that the experiences of fear, uncertainty, loss, loneliness and alienation that I found in the narratives I analyse are very similar to the real experiences I had when I was in Iraq at the time of war and in exile during the US occupation.

In other words, the similarity of my experience to some of the events depicted in the texts acts for me as a guarantor of the veracity of what I found in those narratives. My position as a researcher situates me “not as invisible, anonymous voice of authority, but as a real, historical individual with concrete, specific desires and interests” (Harding 9). My recollections of war work as a personal testimony to a historical fact and locate me as a historian and in my thesis also as an “author

who narrates the history” (Munslow 5) of the communal tragedy of Iraqis. My recollections enable me to critique the social and political circumstances which shaped my life and the lives of others in a similar manner to the way these conditions affected the lives of the characters in the narratives I analyse.

Ricoeur argues that when ordinary historical explanation is unsatisfactory, history mobilizes fiction as narratives have greater capacity to represent human suffering than history (188-189). This explains how the world of the text becomes related to the world of the reader. When I first read Hadi’s *The World Minus One*, which represents the effect of the loss of the only son on the lives of his parents, the details in the novella evoked for me the loss of my cousin during the war with Iran. The story of my cousin’s loss, the way his parents reacted and the condolence ceremony in my uncle’s house in Baghdad were described to me by my parents. I identified with the text as it portrays the event of the loss my family also had experience of. ‘Ali’s father’s way of “contemplating his son’s picture on the wall” (39) while losing contact with his wife resembled my uncle’s way of staring at his dead son’s picture on the wall for hours. The representation of the ongoing agony of survival of the parents in *The World Minus One* is very similar to the slow death my relatives went through for years, leading eventually to their actual death. The portrayal of collective grief in the mourning rituals - where women in black pay their condolences to ‘Ali’s mother while simultaneously mourning their own losses

- creates a “group bond [in that] one does not have to be an essentialist to claim membership in a group that has a historical experience of victimization” (Byerman 28).

This suggests that personal pain can turn into communal pain when a group of victims/survivors share a history of suffering. Witnessing this shared grief enables me, in Hartman’s words, “to read the wound” (8) of these characters. Reading the wound engenders sympathy with the victims. It also places me as a helpless onlooker. Byerman suggests that when loss is associated with cruelty and pain, the survivor must relive not merely the suffering of a loved one but also her own helplessness in the face of it (29).

My helpless position as a witness to the calamities of the characters resembles the near-to-death feeling of Manar in *Women of Saturn* who, finding herself drenched in her blood after being raped and mistakenly shot in the arm, asks: “But what was death if it was not like this?”(173). This helplessness mainly stems from a feeling of guilt for staying alive when others are brutally killed. In other words, to witness is to remember the horror and to remember oneself as a fellow victim of an endless struggle.

The writer’s portrayal of the physical and psychological suffering of Manar, during her rape, the panic she undergoes while pretending to be dead along with her

extreme grief over losing her loved ones, brings to mind a series of similar experiences friends and acquaintances had during 2003 in Iraq. Most of these incidents were carried out by extremist groups, sectarian militias and unknown gangs which emerged after the US occupation. In a lawless situation dominated by fear and insecurity, Iraqi women became victims to patriarchal beliefs and to religious conservatism (al-‘Ali and Pratt 51-52).

The exiled character in al-Qazwini’s *Zubayda’s Window* experiences similar helpless feelings to the ones I experienced while watching the bombing of Iraq when I was in Jordan in 2003:

It seems to Zubayda that the whole world has gathered in Iraq, that nothing exists outside its borders. Pictures of death unroll on the TV screen as she watches, feeling confused about whether she should continue watching. She feels rather dizzy, her breathing becomes increasingly irregular (1-2).

Hearing the news about the bombing of my city Mosul cost me long nights of fear and angst. I could not help but identify with Zubayda while watching the flames of fire engulfing Baghdad from her TV. In the tram Zubayda “turns around to make sure that no one occupies the seats behind her [...] she knows she cannot scream. Lost in reverie, she sees only the heavy fire on all fronts of Iraq. Why did she leave her home in flames? Could she have helped put out the fires?” (26). Zubayda blames herself for being helpless/paralyzed while the country and its people are dying. I was also overcome by a sense of guilt for being far, safe and just watching.

Being physically absent from the scene of violence gave me a sense of estrangement. The paradox in my situation lies in the fact that my sense of guilt in not physically sharing all of the wars became a perpetual moral sharing of the suffering of my people.

In the novel Zubayda's trauma is exacerbated by the indifference she experiences from the people around her. While Zubayda feels suffocated from the images of Baghdad's bombing from her TV she has a conversation with her old German neighbor who is watering his potted flowers. While the man discusses war with Zubayda he suddenly changes the topic: "There's a bee that comes here every day and looks at this big vase. If it could find its friend [...] Life is sometimes bizarre. They're still bombing your city, aren't they? What a pity!" (6). Though people in Jordan, where I lived at the time, were sympathetic to the situation in Iraq I could not get rid of the feeling of alienation which arose when the war started. At times I was completely distanced when I thought that the war was "Iraqis' business" and that no one else cared as I did.

Although I was extremely worried about everyone back home and dreamt of a quick end to the reign of Saddam and to war, grief wrenched my heart at the sight of the Coalition tanks triumphantly roaming the streets of Baghdad after killing many Iraqis on their way. I was overwhelmed by a feeling of humiliation when a

US Marine wrapped the statue of Saddam with the American flag and I wished that the US Marine were an Iraqi soldier holding an Iraqi flag. Later on, I realized that many Iraqis shared this feeling as they realized that an occupier had replaced a dictator, opening the door for a wider circle of violence.

The ongoing presence of a far/absent country in the memory of Zubayda and the tormenting presence of the absent 'Ali in the memory of his parents put the characters into a state of endless victimization. This victimization also concerns Manar and the women characters in the other narratives I examine. Commenting on his experience of survival in the Auschwitz, Elie Wiesel argues:

The only role I sought was that of witness [...] having survived by chance, I was duty-bound to give meaning to my survival [...] If someone else could have written my stories, I would not have written them. I have written them in order to testify. And this is the origin of the loneliness that can be glimpsed in each of my sentences, in each of my silences (viii).²⁹

Wiesel's argument induces the question of the burden of the witness which is as particular as that of the testifier. This burden does not only imply a breaking down of the limits of the solitary position of the testifier but it involves a responsibility for bearing witness to trauma. Felman suggests that contemporary writing is testimonial since it has "a constant obligation to the woes of history" (115). In

²⁹ Wiesel's words appeared in his article "The Loneliness of God," published in *Dvar Hashavu'a*, Tel-Aviv, 1984. The article is translated from the Hebrew by Shoshana Felman.

other words, it is the responsibility of literature to narrate the history of a protracted conflict.

This idea is expressed by Antoon who watched the ruin of Iraq from his exile in the US. Antoon writes: “oftentimes I am speechless, like many of us are, but we are in the business of words so we have to somehow try and represent the effects of all of this on human beings” (Farid n.p.). Antoon suggests that writers are obliged to translate the horror of the war into tales. I argue that Iraqi women writers of war respond to that sense of responsibility of the artistic production of the historical context of war which they inhabit and in which they produce. The narratives of war these writers produce justify the urgency of the literary text in the writing and reading of a collective reality.

In this sense contemporary Iraqi women’s fiction of war becomes an informer that participates in creating a collective memory of Iraqi society and thus offers an alternative articulation of this society’s history. Dunya Mikha’il argues that “We resort to poetry as a possibility for survival. However, to say I survived is not so final as to say, for example, I’m alive. We wake up to find that the war survived with us” (Interview with National Public Radio, 2013).

Mikha’il suggests that she resorts to poetry to expose deep wounds and celebrate the spirit of survival. However, survival compels the poet to confront the surfacing

of repressed memories of war and to come to terms with these memories by means of verse which stands as “a possibility of survival.” By providing testimonies to survival the writers reconstruct the emotional wounds along with the woes of history so as to create a different narrative about that history. In so doing they struggle to disrupt certain versions of official history.

1.11 Thesis Structure

In the next chapters I analyze selected texts in the light of the concepts and theories examined here. Hacking’s concept of trauma as “a wound to the soul” (4) that turns survivors’ lives into a “crisis of survival” (Bloom 14) is pertinent to almost all the texts of war I analyze. However, this wound is treated differently in each text.

Chapter two focuses on texts written about the Iran-Iraq war of the 1980s: Ibtisam ‘Abdullah’s “The Other in the Mirror” and Irada al-Jabburi’s “Prisoners.” In ‘Abdullah’s “The Other in the Mirror” the crisis of survival is evident in the shell-shocked soldier whose “traumatic neurosis” (Freud 84) upsets his relation with his wife. In al-Jabburi’s “Prisoners” I examine the way denial as “defense mechanism against anxiety and guilt,” (McLeod 2008), transforms into a strategy of survival that gains meaning when survivors share their communal grief.

In chapter three, I examine two narratives which represent the period of the war of the 1990s and the subsequent embargo: Maysalun Hadi’s novella *The World Minus*

One, and Hadiyya Husayn's novel *Beyond Love*. I analyze the way obsession with memory (LaCapra 12) of tragic events complicates survivors' lives. In Hadi's *The World Minus One* I examine how the normal process of mourning (Freud 240) turns into a "complicated grief" (Kerr n.p.) for the father when governed by uncertainty and doubt. In Husayn's *Beyond Love* I examine how memories can be antagonistic to those who endeavor to escape them, as these memories do not heal and "remain present" for the characters (Bal vii), ruining their present and obscuring their future.

In chapter four I discuss two narratives written from exile on the 2003 occupation of Iraq: Iqbal al-Qazwini's *Zubayda's Window* and Lutfiyya al-Dulaymi's *Women of Saturn*. I analyze the manner by which the exiled characters become secondary witnesses (La Capra 11-14) and try to deal with the emptiness of testimony through narration. In *Zubayda's Window* I examine how the secondary witness's role positions the character as a passive onlooker (Byerman 29) by reliving her loneliness, the suffering of her loved ones back home and her helplessness. In these texts I also examine the way women face a deferred death (Derrida 30) which enables them to testify to the tragedy of the disarray.

In chapter five, the concluding chapter, I discuss my research findings to show the significance of my research and suggest further work on the subject of contemporary Iraqi women's war fiction.

Chapter Two: The Disruption of Gender Relations in the Narratives of the 1980s

Is it the lovers' fault that their dreams of joy beget a dried fruit? For war stops rain from crops, and prevents lovers' processions from having their full share of rapture (Mustafa 82).

In her story "Qublah Qabl al-Mawt" ("A Kiss Before Death" 2007) Asma' Mustafa describes how, during the post-occupation time (2004-2007), many wedding parties turned into funerals because of the lack of security. This is implicit in the notion that war "prevents" happiness, "stops" growth and aborts the dreams of lovers. Similarly, the dreams of the female and the male characters, in the stories I analyze in this chapter, are terminated by war. Here, I discuss how selected Iraqi women authors respond to the war of the 1980s. Given the fact that Ibtisam 'Abdullah's "The Other in the Mirror" was actually published in Iraq during the 1980s it was state-sponsored by the Ba'th regime. Overt resistance to war was not tolerated by the government of Saddam Husayn. Eric Davis argues that Iraqi intellectuals in the 1980s "subvert the state's goals by incorporating multiple levels of meanings into their texts" (11). To escape censorship, the writers sought to veil their anti-war attitudes so that their texts would pass the censor. This makes these texts particularly interesting. It is a practice similar, to some extent, to how Samizdat

writers produced work in the Soviet Union in the mid-1960s.³⁰ According to Cengage, Samizdat writing established itself as the mainstream of independent thought and opinion among Soviet writers, and Samizdat documents increased to thousands of texts by the mid-1970s. However, many Iraqi writers who opposed mainstream political opinion either left the country or resorted to silence. Writers who attempted to write a counter-literature “developed strategies of evasion and indirection [...] because they could not openly dissent” (al-Musawi 52). They were expected to celebrate the war in a culture that glorified the heroic deeds of male soldiers but some tended, as will be discussed in this chapter, towards uncovering the cruelty of war by means of the themes and literary techniques they employed.

‘Abdullah’s “The Other in the Mirror,” written and published in the 1980s, escaped the censorship of the Ba‘th regime, despite its implicit critique of the act of war. It tells the story of a war-stricken soldier who undergoes a traumatic change. Irada al-Jabburi’s “Prisoners” only appeared after the fall of the regime and thus enjoyed a certain freedom of expression in its explicit critique of war, questioning its validity through a focus on dealing with loss. The story centres on Rabab, a woman who struggles to survive the death of her husband, killed in war, by living in denial of his death. Trauma is depicted in both texts.

³⁰ Samizdat literature in the Soviet Union existed most actively during the years following the fall of Premier Khrushchev in the mid-1960s, and lasted until the fall of the Communist regime in the Soviet Union in the early 1990s. Proponents of the dominant regimes made consistent efforts to track and shut down producers of samizdat literature. See Watchel and Vinitsky 2009.

In "The Other in the Mirror" I analyze the trauma of the shell-shocked soldier/husband in relation to Caruth's definition of trauma as a reaction to an unexpected, violent event or events that are not fully assimilated as they occur, but return later in [...] other repetitive forms" (91). I also manipulate Freud's description of the manner by which the shell-shocked develops "traumatic neurosis" by displaying belated grave psychological symptoms "which can be ascribed only to his shock or whatever else happened at the time of the accident" (84). In my analysis of "Prisoners," I find Simon's argument about the way denial works as an unconscious mechanism of protection against deep emotional pain (n.p.) applies to the character of Rabab who refuses to accept the fact of her husband's loss as a means of surviving her emotional shock. Moreover, Bloom's argument about the way the survivor of tragic events pass through three stages: the event, its repression and its return, (14) is pertinent to the character of Rabab who passes through these stages while trying to cope with her loss. Bloom suggests that the traumatized go through a "crisis of survival" (14) where the "passing out" of the traumatic event constitutes a "continuing predicament." In other words, the traumatized pass out "apparently unharmed" (Freud 84). That is, they are physically intact but psychologically harmed. However, from my analysis I find that Bloom's and Freud's arguments apply to the character of the soldier but do not apply to the female characters, i.e. the soldier's wife and Rabab.

In this chapter I argue that although the central female characters are constructed as traumatized in consequence to what happens to their husbands, the war does not ultimately break them. The crisis of their survival turns into a possibility of survival. The isolation and despair they go through as a result of the physical/spiritual absence of their husbands strengthens their will to survive and their ability to play the role of supporter to others. This ability is embodied in the effort to find meaning in their existence amid the madness of war. I focus on the way a certain female empowerment is depicted in the context of war and on how the two texts stand as a critique of war by providing a different reading to the history of war.

Before I examine the texts in detail and analyze how they become resistance literature, I want to provide an overview of the political background to the Iran-Iraq war and discuss how the effects of war encouraged the government to constantly change its gendered discourse towards women. This is often the case in war as I will show, in a way that serves the exigencies of war and the needs of the government. I discuss the state sponsorship of cultural production and explore the impact censorship had on the writers of the 1980s and on their literary production. In support of my argument, I also draw on my memory of the period of the war 1980-1988 as I was living in Iraq at that time.

2.1 The Political Context

Iraq has a history of border disputes with Iran. One of the major reasons for these are the navigation rights of Shat al-‘Arab, a river channel formed by the confluence of the Tigris and Euphrates rivers and flowing southeast to the Persian Gulf. In 1975, Iraq and Iran signed the Algiers Treaty which marked a middle line along the Shat al-‘Arab as the border between the two countries. However, on 17 September 1980 Saddam Husayn announced the abrogation of the Algiers Treaty and Iraq claimed sovereignty over the whole of the Shat al-‘Arab. After a number of border clashes between the two countries Saddam sent Iraqi tanks across the borders into Iran on 22 September 1980. This was the beginning of an eight-year long war between Iraq and Iran known as the First Persian Gulf War.

However, regaining control over the Shat al-‘Arab was not the only cause for the Iraqi war with Iran. Husayn Sirriyyeh (1985) thinks that the reasons were more broadly connected to Iraq’s regional relations and domestic politics (483). While the downfall of the Shah of Iran was highly welcomed by the people of the region, who embraced the Iranian revolution in the early stages of its eruption, the regimes of the neighboring countries had concerns that the revolution might expand further. These concerns were reinforced by the instance of Khomeini, the leader of the Shi‘i

revolution, whose statements unveiled his intention to extend the scope of the revolution to include other Islamic countries, especially Iraq (‘Abdullah 185).

These were the main reasons behind Saddam’s decision to fight Iran. Yet, by the end of the war in August 1988, Iraq had neither gained full control over Shat al-‘Arab, nor succeeded in removing the Islamic regime in Iran from power.

In the Iraqi government’s attempt to undermine the legitimacy of Iran, this country was officially called Persia. However, “when Iraq sought to improve relations, it used the name Iran (for instance during the October 1973 war against Israel or on the eve of the Gulf War)” (Bengio 140). As part of the Iraqi government’s campaign to emphasize the negative influence which the Persians supposedly had on Arab and Islamic history, Saddam ordered that history books be rewritten to describe the Persians as enemies of the Arabs. Moreover, the regime tried to eradicate any Persian existence in Iraq: “in 1982 a law was passed offering financial rewards to men who divorced their Iranian wives” (‘Abdullah 189).

Hatred of the Persians was fueled publicly. In a speech in 1982, in which he warned against Iranian aggression, Saddam coined such terms as “yellow storm,” “yellow wind,” or “yellow wave” to describe the danger Iran constituted (Bengio 142). This campaign against anything of Persian origin was accompanied by the Iraqi media’s representation of Saddam Husayn as the great Arab leader and the heir of famous Muslim leaders known for their bravery. The Iraqi president was

portrayed as a latter-day “Arab Knight” (Faris al-‘Arab) who would defend the integrity of the Arab nation from its Persian foes (Davis 188).

Iraq was very often described as the “Guardian of the Eastern Gate” of the Arab homeland. The image of Iraq as the defender of the Arab nation was very important for two main reasons: the first is related to Saddam’s endeavour to rewrite the history of Iraq by linking it back to its tribal base symbolized by the Battle of Qadissiya (Davis 188). The second is to ensure financial back-up from other Arab countries, especially the Gulf countries that had fears of a possible Islamist Iranian expansion towards their countries (‘Abdul- Jabbar 98). This back-up was not only provided by Arab countries, but also by the United States which, nevertheless, changed its policy towards Iraq during the 1990s.

While trying to gain financial support from neighboring countries to foster the war, Saddam Husayn ordered that more men be drafted into the army and announced severe penalties for deserters. Large numbers of Iraqi men who were able to fight and who were not in formal education were recruited after compulsory military conscription was introduced. “Even the educated elite, who had hitherto been spared, began to be recruited to fight in what many people believed to be a senseless war” (al-‘Ali 150-151).

My family began to worry for my eldest brother who had to join the army two months after he got married. I still recall the horrible stories he brought back about people who lost their lives or were badly injured, and how no one dared to help them because of the heavy shelling. I cannot forget how much my brother hated to put on his military uniform whenever he had to prepare himself for another dangerous journey back to the war zone at the end of his short visits to us. Not only did my brother suffer but his wife also endured loneliness and worries at his absence. Her situation was similar to that of the female character in Ibtisam ‘Abdullah’s “The Other in the Mirror” who suffers while waiting for her husband’s return from the war zone: “We’ve been in love with each other, and the past two years of our married life have only intensified our initial passions [...] these little pleasures died out bit by bit after he was drafted” (185).

Besides worrying for the absent soldiers, Iraqis were very frightened while experiencing bombings and air-raids for the first time in their lives. Although the battles mainly took place in the eastern part of Iraq, Iranian air-raids constantly targeted the cities. In an interview al-‘Ali conducted with Layla G. who lived in Basra in the south of Iraq, the woman told her:

Because we were so close to the battlefields, we were bombed many times during that war. We had to rebuild our walls and the roof of our house three times [...] My father was too old [...] We had a really difficult time. I volunteered in a local hospital to help with the injured (152).

Basra, where Layla lived during the war, is Iraq's main southern port that was badly hit by Iranian air- attacks. Besides the loss of lives and the demolition of houses, women also worried for their male relatives at the battle front. Many women had to cope with life's responsibilities alone. Layla's elderly father was still able to provide a living for the family while she was able to volunteer in a hospital. In her novel *A Sky So Close* (2001), Khedayri describes how most men were drafted as a result of the long years of fight: "The war has been dragging its heavy feet from the day the first military communiqué was issued. The ages of those called up for military services have been extended to both younger boys and older men" (140).

As the war entered its fifth year and with the heavy loss of young fighters at the war front, young men of the ages of 18 and over, who were not in any formal education, were recruited. In an interview, a woman called Widad told al-'Ali that her husband lost his life when drafted into the "People's Army." She said: "he left in July and never came back. I could not even bury him as there was no body. First I hoped that he had become a prisoner of war in Iran, but after years of waiting I realized that he was gone" (150).

Widad's tragedy of losing her husband involving years of futile waiting resembles the narrative of Rabab in al-Jabburi's "Prisoners" who continues to hope that her

husband might return one day and that the burned corpse she received was not his:

“She was told that the corpse was charred and had no death tag attached [...] She tried hard to expel the image of a charred corpse which she could have easily recognized had she tried, but she didn’t” (63). In “Prisoners” Rabab’s neighbor loses her only son and “was wailing and moaning until she lost her eyesight and then died out of grief” (60). The mother’s story is similar to that of many other parents who died after their sons’ death. Bullets fired into the air during daytime normally meant the arrival of a “martyr’s” corpse at his family’s house.

The term “martyr” was officially used in Iraq to label any soldier killed in the war zone while fighting the Iranians.³¹ Saddam’s pronouncement that “Martyrs are the most generous” was found everywhere on street corners, on school walls, university gates, on the radio and on television as part of the regime’s promotion of the idea of a just war against a savage enemy. Hence, the term initially meant great privileges for the martyr’s family, a piece of land or a brand new car plus a medal that entitled the martyr’s brothers, sisters or children to some benefits. Moreover, during the first five years of the war, widows and children of martyrs were allocated monthly salaries. Yet, due to the long duration of the war and the resulting economic decline, these grants to the widows and children of martyrs shrank (Zangana 75).

³¹ Sons or brothers/sisters of martyrs were awarded bonus points in examinations taken in the final year at school on which admission to university depends.

To justify the fighting and the heavy casualties, a huge propaganda apparatus was created to cultivate the ideals of honor, glory and self-sacrifice (Bengio 153). I remember television interviews with martyrs' families that took several hours followed by national songs glorifying the warrior leader and applauding the deeds of the martyrs and fighters. Very often Saddam, accompanied by a group of high-ranking officials, appeared on television paying tribute to some military fighters who had achieved victories at the battle front, granting medals, expecting more sacrifices, and promising greater rewards. Commenting on the constructions of death that nations employ during war, Ashplant, Dawson and Roper (2000) argue:

The politics of war memory and commemoration always has to engage with mourning and with attempts to make good the psychological and physical damage of war [...] The commemorative rituals and patriotic rhetoric of the nation state are involved precisely in making particular meanings about death in war: the "noble sacrifice" of "dying for your country" (124).

In order to persuade its citizens to go to war, governments tend to elevate the cost of war to that of sacrifice by creating war images which serve that purpose. As the war in Iraq grew fiercer and more casualties were brought back home, the Iraqi regime put restrictions on mourning ceremonies because these would instigate social gatherings. The point was to hide the human cost of war from view. Only black placards were permitted outside houses for two weeks only with the name of the martyrs and the date of the death written on them (Whittleton, Muhsin and Hazelton 248).

In the First World War a column entitled “Smiling through Their Tears” appeared in a November 1914 issue of *The Family Journal* describing an ideal scenario of a family mourning their dead son: “they were very glad that they had given their best – yes the very blood of their hearts – for the cause of Right” (qtd. in Acton 22).

Tony Walter suggests that “emotions have to be suppressed if the war effort is to continue” (132). The silencing of grief is thus constructed as a national necessity in wartime. Yet, this practice in Iraq could not hide the growing number of black placards, along with women in black mourning dresses found everywhere in the country, denoting more war victims.

In this war Iraq suffered as many as 100,000 killed, with many more wounded (‘Abdullah 184; Hiro 213-215). Over 60,000 Iraqis remained prisoners of the Iranians (Tripp 239). In some cases “soldiers who were announced dead came back while families of the dead who were buried instead, oscillate between doubt and belief hoping their ‘lost’ ones might be found alive one day” (al-Aa‘raji 168). In other cases, families mistakenly received maimed corpses or body parts of other people and later discovered that the corpse did not belong to them.³²

The tremendous loss of men who went missing, were killed or imprisoned, was accompanied by a decline in the Iraqi economy. Throughout the war, Iranians succeeded in air-attacking Iraqi industrial and commercial installations located in

³² See International Committee of the Red Cross. n.d.

Basra in the south of Iraq. The air attacks at the Iraqi ports stopped Iraq from exporting its oil via the southern fields during the war. In addition, the damaged infrastructure had to be reconstructed at huge expense (Muhsin, Harding and Hazelton 230-31). This in turn weakened the Iraqi economy; in that by the end of the war its cost came to \$ 452.6 billion (Mofid 127-82). Tripp thinks that when Iraqi foreign currency reserves had been exhausted, Iraqi debts amounted to \$ 80 billion (239).

The decline in the economy resulted in higher levels of inflation which were reflected in the wages of the workers, mainly women, who became the sole breadwinners of their families. Moreover, the difficulties the government faced in paying foreign workers, Egyptians and Sudanese, imported to replace Iraqi men, prompted the regime to conscript women into the workforce and in particular into offices and factories (Farhani 12-13). The government's failure to provide foreign workers with hard currency stood behind its call to women to fill the gap in manpower in the labour force. The challenges which confronted Iraqi women at this stage were embodied in the new legislations by the government with regard to women's labour, or through amendments to existing laws, especially those concerning women's right to maternity leave (al-Jawaheri 21).³³ With the men at

³³ The law of civil service of 1975 was amended to encourage female workers (doctors, nurses and others) to work in military hospitals and grant them special allowances in addition to their salaries. All female graduates had to work for one year in hospitals and health centres before they could be

war, working women had to put up with bad working conditions: long working hours, huge cuts in their wages, as well as their domestic and childcare responsibilities, especially with the new restrictions with regard to maternity leave.

The government also deduced donations for the war from the salaries.

The regime began to pressurize women to donate their gold and jewelry which is very important to Iraqi women as a form of insurance. Like many other levies, these donations “were portrayed by the media in Iraq as gifts to Saddam from his loyal people” (Cobbett 135).³⁴ In other words, women were used to serve the interests of the Ba‘th ruling regime. This became obvious by the end of the war when the Iraqi government had to deal with hundreds of thousands of soldiers who were demobilized and returned home to no jobs. Stansfield suggests that “demobilization of the military threatened to create social instability which Saddam would find almost impossible to manage” (119). While women were filling in for the absent soldiers, the return of those soldiers constituted a challenge to Saddam’s government unless the women were removed from the workforce. Hence, the official reasoning for dismissing female labor took the form of a patriotic image highlighting women’s reproductive role as mothers for more children.

assigned to any other job in the state sector. See *The Iraqi Gazette* No. 3054 1985. In the same manner, the right to resign was restricted to those who had completed ten years, of service in the public sector. The decree obliged those wanting to resign to, refund to the state the cost of their education. See *The Iraqi Gazette*, No. 2939, 1983.

³⁴ To collect these donations, uniformed soldiers used to go from door to door bullying women to offer their gold in return for receipts which would facilitate the processing of other official documents.

By the end of 1986, the government launched a campaign to persuade women to produce more children for the “al-Qadisiyya Army.” On 4th of May, 1986 *al-Jumhuriyya (The Republic)* newspaper published a speech by Saddam Husayn addressed to the General Federation of Iraqi Women, GFIW, during one of his visits to them, where he said:

The revolution demands that every family should have at least five children. A family with less than four children is considered less loyal to the revolution and should be severely rebuked [...] Iraq’s geographical location requires a larger population capable of defending the country (Husayn n.p.).

In response to Saddam’s speech the GFIW along with the Ministry of Health set up a three-year plan to put Saddam’s words into effect and to raise women’s awareness of the pan-Arab importance of increasing reproduction. While visiting Baghdad in 1987, a journalist reported that “Baghdad is plastered with anti-contraception posters exhorting mothers to breed for their country” (Whittleton, Muhsin and Hazelton 248). In her novel *Women on a Journey between Baghdad and London* (2007), Zangana describes the way Saddam Husayn used to address Ba‘th women to increase the birth rate. In the novel, Majda, a former Ba‘th woman and wife of Sa‘id, the minister of information and culture, remembers meeting Saddam at an official party during the campaign to increase reproduction. At the party Saddam addressed the Ba‘th couple:

“Comrade Majda Comrade Sa‘id! We had learned that you don’t intend to add to our young people.” His shoulders shook with laughter: “Don’t you know that the revolution can’t continue without new recruits to its ranks?” “Hayakum Allah, may God grant you life!” he added, as he was about to leave. “We’re relying on you” (120).

This extract explains the pressure the regime put on Iraqi women and in particular the Ba‘th ones who were supposed to be an example for other women in the effort to increase the population. Khedayri refers to the fertility campaign in her *A Sky So Close* in which she describes how “Pharmacies have been banned from selling contraceptive pills in an effort to increase the population and replace the losses at the battlefields” (140). Contraceptives which were freely available before this campaign were now considered illegal, as was abortion. In line with the fertility campaign, long-term effect fertility injections were given to female students and staff in schools and universities. The pressure on women to increase the birth rate was pushed further by means of new laws which paved the way for women to quit their jobs and be fully dedicated to motherhood.

In 1987, the state allowed women to resign from their jobs with full retirement rights, exempting them from the former obligation of paying back their education costs (*The Iraqi Gazette* n.p.). In the same year, the state granted one year of paid maternity leave to females in the public sector – six months fully paid and six months half-salaried – as long as they were in service (*The Iraqi Gazette* n.p.). In addition, a monthly family allowance of ID 25 for three years was granted to male

officials whose wives delivered their fourth child (*The Iraqi Gazette* n.p.).

Encouraged by the paid maternity leave as well as the monthly allowance many women gave birth to four children or more. I remember how my eldest sister, a librarian during the 1980s, had to work long hours at the beginning of the war. Her salary did not cover the cost of transportation to and from the nursery where she left her two children. To ease my sister's burden, my mother used to help her with childcare whenever she could. When paid maternity leave was introduced in 1987, she had her third child followed by a fourth in 1988, making use of the financial incentives granted to her husband who was working as a bank official.

Commenting on the way gender differences are heightened in times of war, Cockburn suggests that the "Militarized gender regime often exaggerates gender differences and inequality, and dictates complementary worlds for men and women, prior, during and after wars. Men are frequently equated with the worlds of arms and glory, and women relegated to birthing and mourning" (15). During the early stages of the war women were challenged by playing double or triple roles as workers, mothers and wives of absent or missing soldiers. Yet, in the later stages of the war, women had to narrow their roles to that of child birth to suit the demands of the regime.

During World War I and World War II, the image of the woman who sacrifices by waiting and weeping was highly promoted as her emotions were set against the

men's sacrifice in combat. Moreover, the most dignified role for women during war was the nurse who would not only perform the roles of sister, mother, wife and sweetheart but also serve the country through her war work (Acton 24). According to Chomsky the rhetoric of sacrifice was "instrumental in manufacturing women's consent to the slaughter and mutilation of millions of men" (132) and this was also typical for women in the 1980s in Iraq. Throughout the war with Iran, the Iraqi regime used women to bolster the regime's war effort. While women's productive roles were stressed in the early stages of the war, the roles of men as fighters and defenders of the land were underscored. Rohde argues that:

The Ba'ath's gendered recruitment policies during the war and their gendered war propaganda can be expected to have reinforced images of male heroism and superiority, notions of gender difference, ideals of virility and practices of male bonding among the individuals affected by them and in Iraqi society in general (qtd. in al-'Ali 154).

In its effort to uplift the morale of the Iraqi soldiers, the Iraqi government, through its media, publicized the notion of the soldier as hero, and as protector of the land. The land was also portrayed as a woman whose honor was violated by the enemy, an idea that paved the way for the notion of the martyr. cooke argues that the Iraqi war against Iran made it possible for a whole new kind of war literature to develop (220-26). During the war, the Ba'ath party's well-known daily newspaper *al-Thawra* (*The Revolution*) published short stories, poems, open letters in which the main themes were heroism, martyrdom and love stories between fighters and

women at home. Many of those works contained eroticized allusions to a soldier's love to his homeland being equal to that of his beloved woman. In a way, the war was constructed as an act of love (Rohde 192). The same idea was depicted in famous paintings and sculpture by renowned Iraqi artists who accommodated themselves to the system and continued to produce war propaganda.³⁵ To further popularize war, poetry festivals sponsored by the Ministry of Culture were frequently held to celebrate the "victorious war."

In many cases, such festivals were attended by Saddam who used to offer generous awards to poets from Iraq and other Arab countries that paid lip service to the regime and its war against Iran. A writing competition called "Saddam's Qadisiyya" was organized in which "Saddam's Literature Award" was offered to the winning text (Muhsin 15). Usually, the transgression of state-defined discourse of war results in penalties for those who refuse to abide by the official line. These penalties, such as "ostracism of the guilty party, differ dramatically from the imprisonment, exile, or even execution" (Davis 6) awaiting those whose views challenge that of the state. The widespread use of torture and the arbitrary arrests of the opponents to the regime's ideology contributed in defining Iraq as a "republic

³⁵ Achim Rohde mentions three examples of monumental projects in Iraq during the Iraq-Iran war of the 1980s: the Unknown Soldier Monument (1982) by Khalid al-Rahal and the Martyr's Monument (The Split Dome, 1981-83). Following the end of the war, the monumental Victory Arch was erected in the centre of Baghdad. See Rohde 2010. Also see cooke 1996.

of fear” (Makiyya 2).³⁶ Examining some texts written with the aim of propagating the war effort, cooke states that the narratives “glorified men’s heroism, humanitarianism, and patriotism and women’s jingoism” (233). Male writers, exempted from military service, were taken to the battle front wearing military uniform to enable them to describe the war closely. This led to the production of about 452 war short stories written within the first two years of the war (cooke 234).

Despite the huge efforts by the regime to popularize the idea of a “just war,” many Iraqi intellectuals were reluctant to join in the war propaganda and could not stand living under a dictatorial system. They preferred to leave Iraq and to live and work in exile. In the course of the war, the majority of Iraqi women writers did not write about war in the manner propagated by the regime and thus received far less support from the state. Many left Iraq and were able to publish their work abroad. Dunya Mikha’il is one of those women. Commenting on the literature produced during the 1980s, she said:

Most Iraqi writers are males, many of whom had been in the battlefield. For them, it was a war with other men whom they had to kill or be killed by. As a woman, I could see the war in the streets, in the tears of mothers, in the eyes of birds frightened by bullets in the holes on the walls and on the helmets of those men returning from the battlefield (qtd. in Mehta 85).

³⁶ Eric Davis argues that Kanan Makiyya’s (Samir al-Khalil) characterization of Iraq as a “republic of fear” is limited to the coercion and liquidation of Ba’th opponents and the regime’s internal struggles and that it does not consider the complexity of the political discourse and its “hidden texts” (17).

Unlike some male writers who engaged with the act of the fighting in the battlefield, women writers depicted the effect of war on everyday civilian life and engaged with the human tragedy resulting from war. Makiyya accuses the whole generation of Iraqi writers during the 1980s of “[collaborating] with the Ba‘th regime... From within the world of fear, opportunism rules behavior... Yet everyone inside the country... denies responsibility for what they know has been going on” (117- 129). However, if some writers supported the Ba‘th’s notion of a “victorious war” out of fear, there was a group of writers who were reluctant to glorify war. In examining *At Dusk the Mermaid Returned* 1988, a state-sponsored collection of war narratives, cooke argues that not all men’s and women’s texts are “collaborations” in that a patriotic subject might imply an ironic message about the illogicality of war. Women’s texts, in that collection, reveal considerable courage (cooke 240-241). In their writing, these women attempt to express a critique of the war effort and narrate a counter history to that of the government.

Apart from Irada al-Jabburi’s “Prisoners,” which was written in the 1980s and published in 2007, Hadiyya Husayn’s novel *Bnt al-Khan (The Lodge’s Daughter)*³⁷ was also written during the 1980s and published in 2011. In the text, the central character and narrator Mahasin wonders:

³⁷ Khan in Iraqi dialect refers to a lodging house.

When will this war come to an end [...] This question becomes a joke [...] The world is busy, it cannot follow a war that lasts for years [...] Nobody, except ourselves – who are burnt with the fire of war – agrees to poison his life and worry about a desert-like country that buried its civilization, while its rulers preferred to put the cart in front of the horse. That is why the world calls our war “the forgotten war” (qtd. in Ben Driss 168).

Husayn’s use of “joke” to refer to her unanswerable question about the end of war indicates a kind of hopeless waiting for an unforeseeable end to the eight-year conflict. The writer’s description of the way Iraqis are “burnt” and how they have “agreed” to “poison” their lives by war echoes her indignation at the way Iraqis were silent in the face of their dictatorial government. In this excerpt, Husayn not only voices her critique of the people and the government of Iraq, but she also condemns the world’s inhumanity in ignoring this “forgotten war.”

Similar positions emerge in the work of writers who produced a kind of a counter-literature. Davis argues that some Iraqi intellectuals “subordinated their creative interests and sold their souls to the state” (226). But many others developed subtle forms of resistance that kept the spark of opposition alive until the fall of the regime (Scott 87). Despite being officially endorsed, the works of some female and male writers represented the meaninglessness of war and its unjustifiable deaths.

Such writers used what the Russian writer Loseff (1984) terms “Aesopian Language,” to escape censorship. Loseff suggests that the Aesopian writer alludes to information known to the reader by experience, rumour, or through foreign radio

broadcasts so as to create an interaction between author and reader, at the same time that it obscures “inadmissible content” from the censor (x). This suggests that while the Aesopian writer tries to veil certain details, s/he at the same time shares facts with the reader who already has some knowledge about the information alluded to in a way that helps spread the anti-war discourse among readers.

Loseff’s concept of the Aesopian writer explains the means by which many Iraqi authors produced counter-texts.

The Iraqi poet ‘Ali al-Fawaz argues that during the 1980s writers succeeded in inserting hidden meanings into their texts which censors were unable to identify.

After his seven-year experience as a soldier in the war with Iran, Fawaz published a collection of poems during Saddam Husayn’s reign on how wars affect man's body.

Although the subject was prohibited, because the authorities thought it would discourage people from fighting, the poet insisted on running the risk of writing about this, employing high symbolism to mislead the censors (Interview with Nasir, 16 April 2004).

Commenting on the literature produced by such writers as Fawaz, Firyal Ghazul uses the term “uncanny” to describe the way Iraqi writers used certain techniques to achieve “an aesthetic quest and a political camouflage” (5). In his introduction to Dunya Mikha’il’s collection of poems *The War Works Hard* (2006) the Iraqi critic

Sa'di Simawi argues that Mikha'il's collection *Diary of a Wave Outside the Sea* (1995), published in Baghdad, misled the Iraqi censors who were initially unable to detect its anti-war essence (vii). However, within a few months the Iraqi authorities began harassing Mikha'il who left Iraq for the United States.

Ibtisam 'Abdullah's "The Other in the Mirror," which I analyze below, was written in the 1980s and published in 1999 under Saddam Husayn's regime. The text stands as an example of this kind of writing that escaped censorship. As such, some officially endorsed texts by Iraqi women along with texts which were published after the regime's fall embody a resistance to the act of war and to the Ba'th ideology regarding women's status in war.

Ibtisam 'Abdullah's "The Other in the Mirror"

Though Ibtisam 'Abdullah was recognized in Iraq as a journalist and television figure, she is also "one of Iraq's most productive fiction writers. Between 1985 and 2001, she published four novels and one collection of short stories" (Mustafa 181). In 'Abdullah's work the focus is mostly on the intricate relation between feminist themes and the social and political issues in Iraq.³⁸ 'Abdullah's "The Other in the

³⁸ 'Abdullah was born in Kirkuk and has lived mostly in Baghdad. She has written for a number of newspapers and magazines and since 2001 has been editor in chief of Iraq's only publication

Mirror” is the story of a traumatized soldier whose participation in war changes his character and destroys his relation with his wife. The narrative is told by an extradiegetic narrator from a homodiegetic narrative position using the first person. Telling the story from the first person point of view enables the reader to have closer access to the mind of the central character/narrator.

From the very first lines of “The Other in the Mirror” the central female character reveals her thoughts and feelings of loneliness and boredom as her husband has gone to war. The first person point of view allows “The Other in the Mirror” to “mimic the effect of trauma” (Whitehead 86) on the character/narrator by using flashback without interrupting the course of the narrative which keeps shifting between the present moment where the central character describes the tediousness of her life after the war and the memory of her happy life with her husband prior to this war.

The story opens with a description of the effect of war on the female character. This is immediately fused with the past by a flashback in which the central character remembers two different past time periods: a happy past that started with her marriage two years before the war and a painful past after the war, which starts with “his sharper changes a few months later. He withdrew and almost seemed a

dedicated to world literature, the *Journal of Foreign Cultures*. ‘Abdullah’s works are: *Fajr Nahar Wahshi* (A Cruel Dawn 1985), *Mamar Ela al-Layl* (A Passage to Night 1988), *Matar Aswad Matar Ahmar* (Black Rain Red Rain 1994), *Bakur* (Incense 1998) and *Mesopotamia* (2001). See Mutafa 2008.

different person” (186) and continues to the end of the story. As such, the largest part of the narrative takes place in the past and is about the traumatic transformation of the soldier/husband. The relief the wife feels when she remembers how happy she was before the war is interrupted by her realization of her husband’s change of personality.

The absence of the husband transforms the wife’s life. The narrative opens with a point in the present where the wife describes her state:

I am alone, and it doesn’t look like that’s going to change anytime soon. I can put up with that. All I have learned these years is how to kill time with silence. It’s a profession I began to master after he went to war. Or after he was drafted. Anyway, loneliness soon followed. Mornings go on reasonably well, but evenings and nights are heavy. They wear down my shoulders and eyelids, and by night’s end dim lines spread across my face. My nose alone sticks out, presiding over a landscape of features vanquished by the barriers of mute darkness. Then I slowly fall into sleep. I lull myself with sighs of relief as I repeat for the hundredth time: “There goes another long day, and tomorrow might bring something else” (185).

The narrative opens in a pervasive atmosphere of dejection. The narrator’s description of her gloomy state, which is not going “to change anytime soon” not only indicates her desperation, but implicitly refers to the prolonged war with no end in sight. Moreover, the wife’s use of the word “drafted” also signifies a veiled condemnation of war where men are enrolled against their will. The central character’s reference to the manner by which she engages in killing time “with silence” intensifies the depressing routine she lives. The tediousness of the central

character's life is intensified by the notion of the silence engulfing the woman and eradicating her facial features. Yet, the kind of killing the woman is preoccupied with does not affect her character, nor does the "mute silence" affect her the way her husband's character is affected.

The metaphor of the "mute darkness" overwhelming her refers to the death-like state the female character experiences with the slow passage of the nightly hours.

The idea of the character's death in life is cemented by not naming her. This obliterates her specific individual identity. Not identifying the wife is also about not individualizing the story or making it unique to a particular woman but turning her potentially into a kind of everywoman.

However, the lonely woman comforts herself by declaring that she "can put up with that," highlighting her determination to live through this difficult situation.

Her will to outlive her "crisis of survival" (Bloom 14) contradicts Bloom's generalized assumption about trauma victims whose crisis of survival cannot be overcome. Despite the pain the woman undergoes at the slow pace of her lonely days, a faint hope reappears every now and then to rekindle a faith in a better future "that might bring something else." As such, the episode above is analogous to the structure of the story which, though governed by anguish, nevertheless bears signs of relief through the narrator's focus on her ways of coping with the situation.

To outlive her “crisis of survival” the female character achieves an imaginary reunion with her absent husband. In the text, the wife describes how she makes up her own ways of connecting with her absent husband: “I place his teacup on the small table in the kitchen and talk to him. Joke with him or reproach him. Sometimes I even create scenes and quarrel with him. His vacant seat always seemed filled with his presence” (185). The imaginary presence of the absent husband helps to fill the long days of waiting but does not bring him back. This image of the presence/absence of the husband/soldier foreshadows his state of change, which I will examine later, when the actual presence of the man turns out to be a kind of absence for his wife.

As the narrative progresses the writer shifts focus from describing the woman’s condition to describing the man’s “sharper changes” (186) during his leaves from the war front. Caruth describes trauma as a reaction to an unexpected, violent event or events that are not fully assimilated as they occur, but return later in [...] other repetitive forms” (91). The repetition of the word “change” throughout the narrative always occurs with reference to the husband’s traumatized state. Vickroy argues that repetition can be a sign that a character “is caught in stasis, not able to move on and resolve the initial trauma” (99-100) and this is the case with the husband here. The insistent progression of the husband’s state of change is strengthened by means of the “mirror” the husband keeps holding “to stare for long

frightened moments at his face” (186). The act of staring at the mirror recurs in the text to emphasize the physical and spiritual shift in the man/soldier:

He’d stand close to it or retreat, all the time staring at his eyes and his paling features. Sometimes he smiled, at others he looked distressed, but whenever he realized I was watching him, he left the mirror [...] One night he gazed at his face in the mirror, but after some scrutiny turned to me and surprised me with a question, “What has changed in me?” He repeated the question, “What has changed in me?” “What do you think?” “I don’t know. I don’t seem to know myself anymore. A strong feeling tells me I’ve changed. That much I’m sure of [...] I mean my face, my features. Don’t you see that?” [...] “I don’t know,” I said. “Perhaps some paleness in the face.” He [...] then whispered to himself, “ Yes, I ‘m sure I’ve changed. No, it’s not the paleness. What I mean is that I have a different face” (186).

The soldier’s helpless dependence on the mirror to search for clues about his “change” which he is unable to define becomes a source of anxiety and depression for him. A pale face is all that the husband sees in the mirror. This reflects the surface reality of his physical change. In a sense, the soldier is torn between the mirror’s objective presentation and his own subjective reality. Caruth argues that shell-shocked soldiers are usually haunted by violent images that not only gain their significance when they are repeated, but they are also “incomprehensible” (Caruth 6). The incomprehensibility of the soldier’s situation to himself is evinced in his repeated question “What has changed in me?” This references his uncertainty as to the nature of the change he has gone through. Yet, the husband’s insistence on understanding his change indicates his feeling that this change is not only about the “paleness” of his outer facial appearance, but is rather an inner “paleness.” In other

words, what he is undergoing is a “wound to soul” (Hacking 4) or a psychological change, implied in his last words to his wife insisting that he has “a different face.”

The way the husband repeats his question indicates his loss of confidence in the mirror and portrays the wife as a truer mirror who reproduces her husband’s change. In spite of the wife’s realization of her husband’s trauma she strives not to tell him the truth of how awful he appears physically and morally. Instead, the wife tries her best to reassure her husband and support him with words such as: “I’d still love you even if the change were for the worse. Do you hear me? I’d still love you. I don’t know if he really believed me, for he said nothing [...] He turned his back to me and left the house” (187). While the wife tries hard to divert her husband’s attention from the idea of change by showing love and care he becomes indifferent. This intensifies my earliest suggestion that the “crisis of survival” in this text is to do with the soldier/husband not with the wife. The husband’s indifference reflects the intensity of his divided self. The enigma lies in the fact that though he turns to his wife for assurance, the husband is unable to believe her words. Hence, the gap between them grows.

More than once in the text, the narrator describes her husband’s “spells of absent-mindedness” (186) which make him lose contact with her. “Whenever I tried to

break the shell of silence around him, he'd jump terrified, his face muscles would contract, and he'd look at me with scared suspicions" (186).

The symptoms the husband undergoes are those described by Freud as "traumatic neurosis" (292) which occur when shell-shocked soldiers returning from war behave as if "being possessed by some 'daemonic' power" (292). The alteration the husband experiences is described by Caruth as a struggle between "the unbearable nature of an event and the unbearable nature of its survival" (7). The husband's inability to comprehend the change he feels increases the periods of silence between him and his wife. The prevalence of silence is intensified in the minimal dialogue throughout the text. It becomes confined to the subject of change and later on to that of the situation at the warfront. At the same time, the long silences which recur throughout the text turn the husband's bodily presence into a state of spiritual absence. The wife then struggles on the one hand with putting up with her husband's physical absence by creating an imaginary presence of him, then finds herself in a position where she has to cope his spiritual absence when he is actually physically present.

LaCapra argues that when witnesses of horrible events relive the past, they will be overwhelmed with emotions and for a time unable to speak (131) The husband's silent condition is accentuated as his wife endeavours to "break the wall of silence"

(187) he has built around himself. To break that silence the wife tries to discuss war with her husband who: “At the beginning [...] used to avoid talking about war and ignored all [her] questions for months or gave only cryptic answers” (187).

Laub argues that in dealing with testimony the listener’s role is not only to hear the language spoken by the traumatized but also their silences and the gaps that intervene in their language (70-71) The husband’s reluctance to talk about the war for a long time worries his wife who, at a later stage, finds “that it was the war that he talked about when he talked at all” (187). This suggests that the soldier’s prolonged silence which torments his wife is finally broken by a shift to war talk:

He’d talk even without my prompting, with loving embraces, his head often on my breasts. Long talks about incoming fire and engulfing flames. Smoke, explosions, dead soldiers, POWs and the state of mental collapse that seized them in moments of weakness so devastating to both body and soul. I’d listen not daring to interrupt (187).

After long periods of silence the husband begins suddenly to describe the situation at the war front and its effect on the soldiers. LaCapra suggests that primary memory is of a person who has lived through events and remembers them (20) Here, the soldier is constructed as a primary witness to the horror of the warfront. The reference to the mental breakdown some soldiers experience “in moments of weakness” alludes to the husband’s own state of “mental collapse” that he is experiencing at home. Like the man in Freud’s example of the railway accident

where a person “gets away, apparently unharmed” (84) after facing a traumatic event, the soldier gets away from the war front unharmed physically but not mentally.

The husband/soldier describes other soldiers’ “weakness” that is “so devastating to both body and soul” but fails to realize that this description applies to him too. As she describes her husband’s breakdown the wife notices that his eyes “would squint sometimes, and their light would fade” (188). She later adds: “But they were also the eyes I loved so much, and they would sparkle again with dazzling radiance, like dashes of lightning emerging from dark clouds” (188). In spite of her unvoiced grief at her husband’s gradual deterioration the wife remains hopeful that a day will come when her husband returns to normal. The wife is determined to support her husband:

[...] when he was not himself [...] I became very much the wall he needed to lean against during those times of ebb and flow that left the psyche drained. The wall occasionally sagged and whined under his pressing pains, but didn’t buckle under them. If it did, that would have broken him into pieces (188).

The wife’s position as a source of encouragement and reassurance is summarized in the metaphor of the “wall” on which her husband depends. The reference to the wall which might “sag and whine” but does not “buckle” could be read by the censor as a symbol of Iraqi women’s continuous support for men/fighters who go to war for the sake of defending the woman/land and thus serve the war

propaganda. In other words, this excerpt might serve as an instance of Aesopian language where the writer communicates a message obscured from the censors. At different way of reading the reference to the “wall” indicates the way women overcome their “crisis of survival” and refute the propaganda about their weak position as inferior to men. The metaphor of the “wall” that stands firm in the face of difficulties signifies the woman’s perseverance and is in contrast to the weakness of the men/fighters. The soldier’s wife realizes that without her presence and love her husband will be “broken into pieces” as a result of his trauma.

That trauma is embodied in the way he feels when he is at the battle front which explains the difficulty of the physical “passing out” (Bloom 14) of war which alters the soldier into an “other” as an outcome of the continuing predicament (Bloom 14) he undergoes.

Felman and Laub argue that to testify is to accomplish a speech act between a speaker and a listener who acts as a witness to the survivor’s account (5). Here, the wife is constructed as a secondary witness to the husband’s testimony. He tells her that “I’m in better touch with myself over there” (188). The soldier feels that the war front where death, fear and loneliness surround him is “better” than the home which is supposed to be a source of warmth, safety and comfort. This is clear in his statement: “Over there I know who I am and what’s at stake, to kill or be killed.

But here all certainties disappear. Your quiet fills me with questions and draws me toward you and our home and the pleasures of the past. This scares me” (189).

What makes the there/war front a “better” place than the here/home for the husband, is that there he faces two options only: to defend himself and “kill” others or “to be killed.” However, these two options are also destructive since they entail the narrowing down of life into two distinct choices only. The war has become the all-consuming present for him. Once away from the battlefield, he does not know any longer what to do with himself as he feels he is an “other” personality. The love and the warmth of his wife “here” do not attract his attention anymore in that he refers to them as “pleasures of the past.” Once again, this scene might be read by the censor as a form of war propaganda where the man/soldier is portrayed as a daring fighter who prefers to be amid death rather than in a cozy home with his loving wife.

However, the husband’s expression that the “questions” roused by his wife scare him alludes to the burden these contradictory feelings exert on him as he expresses not unwavering commitment but feeling conflicted to the point of destruction, “Being divided like that frightens me, as if I’m literally being torn apart” (189).

Turning into a destructive entity is easier for him to bear. Yet, this frightful reality is tearing him apart. This implies a kind of condemnation of war. Being torn

between the “here” and the “there” suggests the soldier’s failure to deal with his crisis of change.

The husband’s failure to come to terms with his “continuing predicament” despite his wife’s support refutes Laub’s and Herman’s suggestion that when the traumatized testifies to an empathetic listener, this can actually produce a change in the abnormal processing of the traumatic memory” (183). The presence of the “empathetic” wife/listener does not actually change the state of her husband. The wife describes how her husband’s traumatized state is evident in his behaviour and in his face which looks “lifeless” (189). During his final visit he is silent almost all the time, “nailed to a chair [...] chain smoking and completely ignoring me and my anxiety” (189). Once again, the wife is depicted as patient and caring despite her “anxiety” at her husband’s strange attitude who keeps staring at his face in the mirror and whispering, “I’ve changed a lot” (189).

The last but one scene portrays the wife’s failure in trying to pull the mirror away from her husband who, in turn, tightens his grip on the mirror: “Are you crazy? It’s just a mirror,” I said. “No, it’s the truth” (190). The wife’s attempt to take the mirror denotes her rejection to the truth of his change. It is meant to shift his attention away from the change he is undergoing. As such, the mirror symbolizes the “truth” for both wife and husband. In the last paragraph the wife describes her

furious husband's reaction while still clinging onto the mirror: "His eyes widened and flashed. He raised his hand and threw the mirror at me. Its broken pieces flew all over the room. A long wound opened on my chest, and blood flowed between the two of us" (190).

The throwing of the mirror articulates the otherness in the husband who no longer knows any language other than that of violence. The physical wound he inflicts and the blood recall the image of the fighter and the enemy that he used earlier when he described his role in war as either "to kill or be killed." This act undermines the assumptions about a universal treatment of PTSD victims who can be treated by a professional expert playing the role of saviour, while the survivor is relegated to the role of passive victim in need of help (Summerfield 1450-1451).

The husband's attitude destabilizes the power relations between the victim and the saviour in the narrative. Though the husband/victim recognizes his "change," he refuses his wife's support and denies her the right to become the saviour. Instead, by hurting his wife/victim the husband turns into a perpetrator. The breaking of the mirror/truth symbolizes the destruction of both his physical and spiritual self. Replicating his behaviour from the war front, the only action he knows is how to attack.

The wife's blood signals the arrival of war in the home. She cannot hold his transformation at bay. However, while the physical "wound" of the woman is likely to heal, the spiritual "wound" to her husband seems to escalate. The war then succeeds in wounding the female character but fails to destroy her. The psychological injury of the husband is furthered in his description of how he "kills" time at the battlefield: "What scares me is the lull when we are in the trenches, the silent wait when we run out of words. The silence we sometimes try to kill with meaningless words" (189). The use of "we" in the lines denotes a shared feeling of fear out of the "silent wait" the soldiers experience in the trenches during the intervals between one air-raid and another.

The testimony the unnamed wife provides about her ways of coping with the absence/presence state of her husband, his traumatic transformation along with the stories he brings her from the war front is a narrative about a history of a communal trauma. This trauma not only involves the soldiers at the battle front but it implicates the wives who are doomed to endure a double burden at home.

LaCapra argues that the historian becomes a secondary witness and must work out an acceptable subject position in dealing with testimony (11-14) While listening to her husband's testimony the wife/historian witnesses the subjective dimension of her husband's trauma as well as the historical truth about war. The husband's initial inability to talk is due to the fact that the event itself "was almost inconceivable

[later he was able to testify] to the breakage of a framework. That was historical truth” (Laub 60). This explains the inherent relation between narration and history which in Ricoeur’s words is “mimesis-literally imitation-to represent events or developments” (186). The wife’s endeavor to listen to her husband’s “silences and gaps” and to encourage him to narrate is similar to Iraqi women’s writer’s attempt to represent a testimonial about the history of the eight-year-long war.

The author’s construction of the image of the “weakness” of the soldiers challenges the Iraqi government’s dominant discourse at that time about the legendary Iraqi male fighter who knows no fear and is ready to sacrifice himself. The wife’s position as a caring, loving and a patient listener “not daring to interrupt,” lest her husband returns to his earlier spells of silence, casts the wife on one level into a conventional feminine, supporting role. But it also highlights her strength in coping with his damage. Since the text was officially endorsed the presence of the censor did not stop the writer from describing the brutality of war and exposing the way gender hierarchies operate. While “The Other in the Mirror” presents a potentially more implicit critique of war, “Prisoners,” as will be discussed, deals more directly with the illegitimacy of war.

Irada al-Jabburi's "Prisoners"

Irada al-Jabburi was a journalist in the years 1988-1997 and then an academic at the University of Sana'a in Yemen and the University of Baghdad. What distinguishes al-Jabburi's work is "her fidelity to the theme of war" (Sarmak 3).

Pain is central in almost all of al-Jabburi's fiction in which war is depicted.³⁹

"Prisoners" to which I now turn, centres on a traumatized female character, Rabab, who survives the death of her husband killed in the war of the 1980s by fantasizing about the idea that he might be imprisoned rather than dead. The story is narrated by an extradiegetic narrator who uses a third-person hetero-diegetic voice. Wayne Booth argues that the most important privilege of omniscient narration is gaining an inside, but somewhat detached, view of the characters (164). This is true of Irada al-Jabburi's "Prisoners" where the text starts with an omniscient description of the "place," which I will expand on later, to where the passengers head and the sidewalk vendors find their way. This third-person narration then centres on Rabab's actions, her speech and her mental record of everything around her. In other words, by means of a "limited omniscience" (Booth 164) the extradiegetic

³⁹ Irada al-Jabburi wrote many anthologies of short stories about war: *Shajarat al-'Umniyat* (*The Tree of Wishes* 1990), *Ghubar al-Mudun* (*The Dust of the Cities* 1993), *'Itr al-Tuffah* (*The Fragrance of Apples* 1996), *Inanna Ibnat Babil* (*Inanna the Daughter of Babylon* 1996), *fil Ghaba* (*In the Forest* 1999), *'Ala Masafah Qariba* (*At an Odd Distance* 1999) and *Fuqdanat* (*Losses* 2004). See International Red Cross Publications 2007.

narrator describes the story from the perspective of a single character whose thoughts move in time and place in the course of the narrative.

Trauma is described as “a reaction to an unexpected violent event or events that are not fully assimilated as they occur but return later in flashbacks, nightmares and other repetitive forms” (Caruth 91). This description applies to Rabab who loses her husband in war and refuses to accept the loss. Brown (105) and Haaken (34) suggest that trauma can either be a “new wound” or can come as an outcome of a “reopening of an old wound.” In Rabab’s case her husband’s loss causes a “new wound” in her soul and memory. In order to outlast her wound Rabab struggles not to “reopen” it or, simply, to deny it.

Whitehead argues that narrating trauma requires the use of a form that imitates the most poignant features of trauma such as fragmentation, repetition and flashbacks (4). In “Prisoners” repetition of the words “key,” “prisoners” and “box” is employed to signify the central character’s inability to confront the reality of her husband’s death. Since the central character tries hard to deny her traumatic past, a large part of the narrative takes place in the present. As Rabab gets on the bus the reader is taken onto a journey where the passengers and their conversations are described. However, the flashback device is used in the last part of the narrative

when Rabab's memories and dreams are fused at the level of Rabab's consciousness.

The present action of the story takes place in two main settings: the bus station where Rabab waits for the bus that heads to an office located on the Iraqi-Iranian borders where information about prisoners of war is provided and names of soldiers who went missing or lost are announced. The other setting is on board of the bus known as the "prisoners' office bus." The text opens with the portrayal of a certain location which the narrator refers to as "the place":

Overnight, the grim concrete building coming out of a saline land has turned into a lively place. People gather, sellers find their way to the place and sidewalk vendors scatter around serving food, tea and fruits. Transportation lines from the centres of the cities take passengers from and to the place (al- Jabburi 55).

The concrete building is the prisoners' office. The juxtaposition of the bareness and the salinity of the "grim" building with that of life and movement is meant to emphasize the hopeful manner in which the place is populated from Rabab's perspective before embarking on her unplanned journey to it. The idea of the likelihood of life out of bareness/death resonates with the way Rabab blocks the fact of her husband's death from awareness (Simon n.p.). Rabab refuses to experience the feeling of loss and envisions a destiny of her husband in the same manner in which she visualizes the state of the place.

The dead place is turned “lively” when it becomes a place where prisoners of war are expected to be found. This picture is analogous to the way the word “prisoner” participates in bringing her dead husband to life which highlights Rabab’s effort to transform her “crisis of survival” (Bloom 14) into a chance of survival. However, when Rabab’s view changes by the end of the story, as I will discuss here, the lively atmosphere of the building also changes accordingly.

The narrator describes the way in which the word “prisoner,” which recurs in the bus station, becomes a “key” for those people who do not know how to reach the place:

For Rabab that word was a key for a box that she was unwilling to open for years. During the nights, when she was alone [...] she used to roam around the box with the key in her hands. Waiting for the chance or the courage to unlock it. The few times, in which she tried to open it, her hands used to withdraw [...] postponing her decision to other days or probably other nights [...] She was scared what she would do once the box uncovered what was inside (56).

The word “prisoner” stands for the “key” that helps Rabab survive her husband’s loss, symbolized by the “box.” When the body of her husband was brought to her in a “tightly pinned tomb” (56) Rabab did not try to open it and thought that “the body might not belong to her husband as mistakes do happen in war time and that since his leave is due the next day he couldn’t in any way come in a box” (56). The event of the death of Rabab’s husband is a “wound” to her soul (Hacking 4). Her decision not to open the tomb where her husband lies is an attempt not to reopen “a

wound” (Brown 105; Haaken 34) in her soul and in her life and an unconscious defense mechanism against the pain of discovering the fact of his death. However, denial in Rabab’s case is deliberately prolonged.

The imaginary destiny of a “prisoner” which Rabab creates stems from the fact that she is “scared” of confronting loss. The reference to “chance” and “courage” in the text suggests Rabab’s renouncement of her agency in relation to the act of unlocking the “box” in that she constructs the box rather than herself as being the one who uncovers. In other words, the illusory idea of the “prisoner” which she creates enables Rabab to keep her dead husband alive and helps her survive.

That Rabab manages to confront her dilemma by drawing on her imagination is embodied in her name which means a “white cloud.” The word Rabab also refers to a musical instrument that comprises of a box covered with a piece of leather and has one string and one key only. This explains the symbolism of the name in relation to the “key” and the “box.” The “key” that might help Rabab get rid of her illusions is exemplified in the prisoners’ bus. All that Rabab needs to do is to get on board one of these buses and go to the office where she might find evidence for what she imagines as her husband’s destiny. What in the end makes Rabab decide to take the bus is an old woman led by a nine-year old boy in ragged clothes. When the old woman asks Rabab about the right bus to the prisoners’ office:

Rabab realizes that it is too late to move back. She replies: "Follow me, I am going there." She said the words quickly [...] She walked wondering how did she utter those words: "I am going there," to find herself sitting next to the old woman and the child on a bus heading to the office of the Iran-Iraq war's prisoners in Autumn 1990 (57-58).

An unexpected meeting with a strange old woman prompts Rabab to take a quick decision that she has kept postponing for years. The words "I am going there," which she unconsciously utters, signify the manner by which Rabab's mind is engaged with the idea of "going there" which she could not put into action before. The old woman tells Rabab that she is going to look for her missing son. She adds that her grandson was not yet born when "they received an enveloped paper informing them of their missing son." (58)

In this situation Rabab becomes a secondary witness to the story of the old woman. Rabab also becomes a witness of several other stories of the passengers who are "mostly women and very old men" (58). These passengers, who, in Caruth's words, are "oscillating" between hope and despair, tell about "war returnees whose families thought had been killed when they had mistakenly received corpses [...] and children who didn't recognize their fathers except through pictures on the walls" (58). While witnessing these stories, Rabab is allowed to "read the wound" of the survivors (Hartman 8).

Reading the wound engenders sympathy with the victims. It also places Rabab as a helpless onlooker. Byerman suggests that when loss is linked with cruelty and pain,

the survivor must recreate not merely the suffering of a loved one but also her own helplessness in the face of it (29). The wound of the loss which Rabab strives to deny locates her as a helpless victim/survivor whose condition is no better than the masses in the bus. Yet, what brings Rabab together with the crowd is not only the agony of loss and bereavement but also this attachment to hope.

Each one of those passengers along with Rabab carries a hope of finding their loved ones. Each has a story of someone whom they hope to be a “prisoner” and not a dead body. Despite the faint glimmer of hope Rabab has she feels that she does not belong to the mass and “finds herself standing at a distance” (59) from them as her story supposedly does not fit in with this collective tragedy. What places Rabab in a different position from the group is that her husband cannot be a “prisoner” because he is dead and that she does not have to search for a clue/key to her husband’s destiny since she already has it. Rabab’s journey is thus meant to enable her to accept the reality of her husband’s death.

To dissociate herself from the group Rabab “closes her eyes to be with herself as she used to for years” (60). At this point, the narrative shifts into the past through a flashback when Rabab remembers a woman neighbor whose 19-year old son died in war. The mother “was wailing and moaning until she lost her eyesight and then died out of grief” (60). During those nights Rabab used to avoid her neighbor’s

wailings “by closing her eyes and pressing on her ears” (60). The latter reflects Rabab’s will to survive by “denial.” Earlier, Rabab realized that had she surrendered to pain and grief, her life would have been damaged in a similar manner to that of the neighbor who lost her eyesight and then “died out of grief.” To escape her neighbor’s moans and to face her fears during her lonely nights Rabab used to recite God’s names of “kindness, mercy [...] power and ability” (60). The narrator describes how, with the passage of time, these names enabled Rabab to get through her misery.⁴⁰ The majority of Muslims frames their traumatic experiences within their religious beliefs and, thus, understands their life experiences as meaningful. Baldachin argues that by understanding variations in trauma between cultures, psychologists concerned with the treatment of PTSD survivors can recognize the cultural influences on reactions to trauma and mechanisms for coping (8). While recitations help her deal with her situation at night, Rabab uses another coping mechanism during the day:

She avoids confronting herself by teaching her pupils language facts [...] In the meantime she listens to the tales they bring her about their families, the fathers who disappear in the war, the stories of the horror of death returnees bring back to their wives like birthday presents. The pupils tell her about the long gazes of their mothers at calendars and the red lines they drew under the expected arrival date of their absentees

⁴⁰ Islamic beliefs stipulate that each disease is sent down to this world with its cure. Quranic Ruqyah (an incantation or prayer for healing) provides Muslim believers the opportunity to treat all their ailments through the use of Allah’s words and Du‘aa’ (prayer) taught by prophet Mohammad in parallel with using medical treatments. See “Healing and Treatment from Quran and Hadith (Du‘aa’ and Quran verses for Ruqyah)” <<http://www.iqrasense.com/islam-and-science/healing-and-treatment-from-quran-and-hadith-dua-and-quran-verses-for-ruqyah.html>>.

and how these lines may extend into days and sometimes weeks leaving the mothers/wives restless (60).

Rabab's engagement with her teaching task during the day is an attempt to "avoid confronting" the fact of losing her husband. Her position as teacher enables Rabab to be a secondary witness to the tragedies of her pupils and their families. Over and over again, Rabab finds herself listening to stories of other women who wait hopelessly for their husbands. Once again Rabab is positioned in a different place from the pupils' "restless" mothers who are waiting for the arrival of the absent husbands. The memory of Rabab's pupils releases another memory of one of the pupils, Dijla (river Tigris), whom she supported. The name of the girl brings to Rabab's mind a series of other thoughts connected to Dijla, the river which Rabab calls "the silent river" (61). The silence of the river Tigris that moves forward despite the wars and miseries alludes to Rabab's self-possession and determination to survive the tragedy. The narrator tells us that time has granted Rabab "the river's tranquility," (61) in a way that enables her survival and also allows her to inspire others.

Dijla was traumatized by the loss of her brother who went missing in war. During his last leave Dijla's brother "had promised to take her to the funfair at 11:00 on his next leave [...] since then Dijla has been waiting for the 11 o'clock to come" (62).

To help Dijla overcome her anguish, Rabab suggests that she "records her thoughts, wishes and anxieties on a daily basis in a note book that she names 11:00

O'clock as Dijla needs to finish writing by 11:00 every day" (62). This allows Rabab to act as a therapist and a witness to Dijla's testimony.

Laub argues that the witness should help the victim to give voice to the traumatic event and "narrate her story in order to escape merely repeating and reenacting the traumatizing experience" (69). Despite her deep wound Rabab acts as an "empathetic witness" (Kirmayer 188) to Dijla's testimony hoping that narrating her story would "produce a change in the abnormal processing of the traumatic memory" (Herman 183). The story leaves open the likelihood of Dijla's recovery. In the text Rabab wonders "if Dijla, who is now a university student, is still waiting for 11 O'clock as she knew that Dijla has completed 33 notebooks so far" (62).

But, witnessing Dijla's personal agony authorizes Rabab to play the role of the fiction writer whose task involves reconstructing "aesthetic and ethical truth at the same time" (Munté 12). The aesthetic truth involves Rabab's effort to rise above her own "wound" to talk about the overwhelming experiences of other survivors. The ethical truth is implied in the way narrator forms a testimonial pact and does justice to the collective memory of the victims (Ibid). At this point in the story, Rabab's stream of thoughts and memories are interrupted by the old woman's questions about Rabab's marital status and whether she has any children:

These questions make her feel lonely. They remind her of her weakness and of her husband whom she doesn't like to believe that he was killed

in war. She was told that the corpse was charred and had no death tag attached. Yet, it definitely belongs to him, as his colleagues witnessed the burning of those who happened to be inside the targeted trench. She tried hard to expel the image of a charred corpse which she could have easily recognized had she tried, but she didn't (63-64).

According to LaCapra, what is repressed in memory does not actually disappear. It rather returns, triggered by incidents that more or less indirectly recall the past (12).

The old woman's curiosity, in this instance, fosters Rabab's memory of a child whom she could not have and places Rabab into a "weak" position where she has no choice but to admit to the reality of her husband's death.

The details of Rabab's husband's "charred corpse" which the narrator uncovers are accentuated by the reference to her husband's name Salam (peace) "who is absent in war or death and who is supposed to be forty" (64). The choice of the name Salam which means peace offers multiple readings. On the one hand, it highlights the absence of inner peace in Rabab's soul which she has lost with her husband's loss. The loss of spiritual peace has been referred to earlier in the narrator's description of the "restless" wives waiting for their absent husbands. The name also suggests Salam's peaceful condition in death which symbolizes the soul being "at peace," a euphemism for death. Finally, the death of Salam, or the death of peace, foreshadows the Iraqi realization that the peace which they deluded themselves into thinking would be achieved by the end of the war with Iran is lost and that other wars are waiting.

Rabab's thoughts about Salam are interrupted by the bus driver who announces their arrival at the "place." When Rabab examines the place from the window, she finds "a muddy field surrounding a concrete building that has lost its colours" (64). The place which Rabab imagined to be "lively" before the journey has turned lifeless. This reinforces my previous point about the correlation between "prisoners" and life. Once Rabab acknowledges the fact of her husband's death, the place becomes deadly. When Rabab sees the passengers, "mothers, wives, fathers and children," dashing towards the office window she decides to "return to her seat" (64). The text closes with Rabab's decision not to get off the bus. When the driver tells her that he is going back to Baghdad to bring another group Rabab asks the driver "to take her back with him" (65). Rabab's decision not to get off the bus and her choice of joining the driver back to Baghdad indicate her acceptance of her husband's death. In other words, the journey to the prisoners' office helps to free Rabab from the illusion of the "prisoner" to which she herself was a prisoner.

As a text published after the fall of the regime, "Prisoners" offers an overt critique of war through the treatment of the theme of loss and also by means of direct references to the pointlessness of war which Rabab makes throughout the text:

"Rabab cried bitterly while witnessing the tombs of soldiers after the war [...] She asked [...] hundreds of times: What will happen next? Do they come back? Why

did they go in the first place and for what?” (64). Such comments would not have been possible had the text been published in the censorship phase.

Though Rabab makes every effort to deny the fact of her husband’s loss for years, she cannot go along with her denial indefinitely as everything around her reminds her of loss. The stories of her pupils, of Dijla, of her woman neighbor, and of the women on board of the bus impel Rabab to merge in a shared experience of loss. By listening to the story of her husband’s loss from his colleagues who “witnessed the burning of those who happened to be inside the targeted trench,” (63-64) Rabab also becomes a witness to her personal pain. These narratives which are embedded within her own story situate Rabab as a secondary witness and a historian who is responsible for narrating a communal history of loss. Yet, Rabab, like the other women in the stories does not lose hope. These women are empowered by sharing their stories which speak to their determination to survive.

2.2 Conclusion

The Ba‘th regime politicized historical memory in the 1970s and early 1980s and engaged on the process of the rewriting of history on a scale never seen before in Iraq (Davis 3). In its effort to rewrite history Saddam’s government tried to “cultivate ideals of honor, glory and self-sacrifice” (Benigo 153) to embellish the ugly reality of war. This in turn created a discourse that promoted the view of the

male as champion at the battlefield and the female as the powerless at the home front. However, the eight-year-long war took part in troubling the mainstream gender hierarchy in the Iraqi society. In cooke's view "Once notions of militarism [...] are questioned, the stable gender relations so necessary to the peaceful waging of war are undermined [...] It is the war which threatens the very fabric of a society it had been fought to defend" (199). The great numbers of casualties, shell-shocked returnees and prisoners of war created a situation in which women had to bear a sole responsibility of keeping life going with the absence of men. This situation brought about "a whole new kind of literature" (cooke 220-226) which resists war despite censorship.

Commenting on the writing of the 1980s Mikha'il states that "only few Iraqi writers presented the Iraqi soldier as a human being" (qtd. in Mehta 85). The texts I analyzed address the human cost of war. These texts portray a world at war in which men are its immediate victims and are absent. When male characters are present, their presence is portrayed as a spiritual absence. The soldier in 'Abdullah's "The Other in the Mirror" survives war bodily. Yet, he is left with "grave psychological symptoms ascribed only to his shock or whatever else happened at the time" (Freud 84) of the battle. The soldier's physical survival bequeathed him a deep psychological wound which constitutes a "continuing predicament" (Ibid). In al-Jabburi's "Prisoners" men are absent. They are portrayed

as burned corpses, prisoners or soldiers who went missing. In other words, the image of the male superhero propagated by the Ba`th regime disappeared from the texts I examine to give way to ordinary human beings who experience fear, worries, death and imprisonment.

To present the war-related “trauma that is beyond language” (Gilmore 102) writers employ the techniques of repetition and flashbacks. In the texts of the 1980s flashbacks are used to describe the way women escape the difficult reality of the present by resurrecting a happy past. “The Other in the Mirror” and “Prisoners” represent the manner by which the long war has brought the dreams of the characters in the narratives to an end and wounded them. Despite the inherent differences in the characters’ wounds, they seem to share a joint grief caused by war. The soldier’s wife in ‘Abdullah’s text feels that the little pleasures of her life with her husband “died out bit by bit” (185) after war. In al-Jabburi’s text war has deprived Rabab “of a chance to get a baby,” (61) spoiled Dijla’s plan to go to the funfair with her brother and blinded Rabab’s neighbor who kept mourning her son until she dies of grief.

However, the war also empowered the women whose dreams were aborted. The texts I analyzed demonstrate women’s fight to survive psychological hardships. In the texts the female characters invent their methods of survival and transform their

“crisis” (Bloom 14) into a possibility of survival in which they become a source of inspiration and backing to other survivors. In “The Other in the Mirror,” the wife uses her imagination to cope with the physical absence of her husband. When her husband is present the unnamed wife copes with his mental absence by becoming the “wall” (188) on which he rests. In “Prisoners,” Rabab denies her husband’s death and keeps going in a similar manner as the “silent river” (al- Jabburi 61) that keeps moving uninterrupted by the constant wars on its banks. Despite their psychological wounds the women in the texts do not lose hope in searching and waiting for their loved ones. Every night they “lull [themselves] with sighs of relief as [they] repeat for the hundredth time: There goes another long day, and tomorrow might bring something else” (‘Abdullah 185).

These strong-willed women characters become witnesses to their experiences of trauma and loss and to the experiences of death, imprisonment, anxiety and long wait other survivors undergo. In describing these characters writers are aware that their task is “to speak for others and to others,” (Celan 7) as that “defining who we are implies telling our history” (Ricoeur 191). These writers feel that they bear the responsibility of testifying to a history of eight-year-long conflict that was rewritten in the form of a “just war” against a barbaric enemy. In their attempt to critique the patriotic image of war and to defy censorship, Iraqi women writers “show a considerable courage” (cooke 241). As such, these writers do not only undermine

Makiyya's generalized classification of writers as "collaborators" (117-129) during the 1980s, but also play the role of the "underground historian" (Steiner 32).

Witnessing wars enables these writers to rebuild the real historical occurrences through "mimesis" (Ricoeur 186). In narrating a different version of the history of war writers produce a picture of an "active non-violent struggle" (Accad 7) led by women against the inhumanity of war. This kind of peaceful struggle is also depicted in the narratives of the 1990s which I explore in my next chapter.

Chapter Three: The Paradox of Survival in the Narratives of the 1990s

This is all that remains: A handful of burnt papers, photos, here and there with rippled backs like maps. One of us died, another savours life in his place [...] eventually we forget how, in the short lull between two wars, we became so old (Mikha'il 18).

These lines from Dunya Mikha'il's poem "Between Two Wars" were written in the context of the First Gulf War in 1991. They raise the themes of memory and mourning that I discuss in this chapter. The poem opens with an allusion to burnt material where nothing "remains" but a "handful of burnt papers and photos" which is often the case when families receive burnt corpses. Survival is portrayed in an ironical manner in that the survivor/victim is described as "savouring life" in the victim's place. However, survivors' lives are not only consumed by mourning and remembering their loved ones, but also by the lonely passage of time "between two wars."

This chapter explores fiction written about the 1990s war and the embargo which followed. I undertake a close reading of two texts: Maysalun Hadi's novella *al-'Alam Naqisan Wahid* (*The World Minus One* 1999) and Hadiyya Husayn's novel

Ma ba'd al-Hub (*Beyond Love* 2003). These stories offer insights into the experiences of surviving war in terms of the representation of “ordinary” lives within the genre of war fiction, and to suggest how the wider experience of war is gendered. *The World Minus One* is about the loss of ‘Ali, the only son in a family who has probably been killed in an air crash while on military duty, and his parents’ struggle to survive that loss. ‘Ali’s father’s grief is fuelled by his inability to recognize whether the mutilated corpse he buried belongs to his son or to the co-pilot who went missing in the air-crash. The misery of ‘Ali’s parents and other characters in the narrative persists to make them victims of an endless pain of bereavement, uncertainty, hopeless waiting and grief.

Beyond Love tells the story of Huda, the main character, who works in a factory for men’s underwear. During the presidential elections Huda writes “No” instead of the required “Yes” on her ballot. Huda’s fear of punishment when a Ba‘th woman neighbor hints that those who said “No” are known and will be imprisoned, compels her to flee from Iraq to Jordan with a forged passport. She does so with the help of her lover who promises to join her after he finishes his military service. Meeting one of her best friends Nadiya, in Amman and losing her in a car accident, increases Huda’s suffering, especially after reading Nadiya’s memoirs. In these, the latter records a series of desperate memories about war and loss.

In this chapter I shall explore how these texts which are open-ended reflect the unresolvedness in the Iraqi experience of consecutive wars. Alan Friedman argues that “The design of life in that open form is presented as an endlessly expanding process, a design in which protagonists are forced by the organization of events to attempt to resolve experiences which cannot finally be resolved” (182). Friedman suggests that the open-ended text reflects the experience of life which is growing and “expanding” in a way that leaves the characters in a state of irresolution. Such irresolution marks the ending of *The World Minus One* and *Beyond Love*. Adams argues:

Work in open form [...] must stand at once closer to the reader and farther from its own actions or characters. Its proper effect always precludes simple identification between reader and character; an element of self-consciousness enters into the proper reaction to the work in open form (208).

Here, Adams suggests that open-ended texts generate a self-conscious response in the reader. For me as an Iraqi reader of *The World Minus One* and *Beyond Love*, the fictional experience reflects my experience of life amid war where an end of one war marks the beginning of series of related pains. The multiplicity of the wars has left Iraqis with a sense of their endlessness. The relief at the end of military operations at the battle front was always mediated by grief over those lost. The survivors are thus victimized by their survival and are destined to suffer for their loss. The absence of their loved ones opens up wounds that refuse to close.

In the texts I analyse here, characters fall victims to their wounded memories in a way that transforms their lives into an open-ended paradox of survival (Lifton xi).

In Hadi's *The World Minus One* the paradox of the trauma of survival takes the form of an open-ended sort of grief. In this novella I examine how mourning as a healthy and normal process for the recovery from the loss of a loved one (Freud 240) develops into a "complicated grief" (Kerr n.p.) for the father when governed by indecision and ambiguity. In Husayn's *Beyond Love* the paradox of survival is represented in the dominance of past memories which "remain present" for the characters (Bal vii) who endeavor to escape them. The pain women go through is not only about the loss they witness but also about the way they are treated by patriarchal society. The end of the First Gulf War and the embargo created a difficult situation for women whose role in life was relegated to that of producing children to serve the exigencies of war. *The World Minus One* and *Beyond Love* generates a critique of such patriarchal practices against women who are portrayed as capable of withstanding the hardships of survival. Before examining these texts in detail, I offer an overview of the political background to the First Gulf War and, in particular, the impact of the 13-year embargo on Iraqis' lives.

3.1 The Political Context

The embargo started on August 6, 1990, four days after Iraq's invasion of Kuwait.

It had a devastating impact on the economy, education, health and social relations between Iraqis, and especially on Iraqi women. In this section I explore the ramifications of the war and embargo on those Iraqi writers still living in Iraq. The agony Iraqis witnessed during the eight year-long war of the 1980s resulted in a series of miseries throughout the 1990s that created open-ended suffering. As a primary witness to the period of the 1990s I partly utilize my memories in discussing the historical background of the conflict.

In particular, I recall the overall atmosphere of fear, uncertainty and desperation I experienced and witnessed in that period. I can still remember the 2nd of August, 1990 when I woke up to the news of the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait. I could not believe the radio news at first and neither could my family. I rushed to the university as I was doing my MA and normally went to the university library every morning. The library staff was whispering in confusion. I watched them at a distance trying to guess what exactly they were discussing. I was completely devastated when one of my friends assured me that an invasion had taken place. I turned back home immediately, overcome by the images of war and death. I

thought of the Iraqi young men who were doomed to war and of my two brothers who were deemed old enough to fight. I prayed to God that this might end soon without casualties. Once again, Iraqi TV was given over to national songs and military marches. News and slogans promoted the fact that Kuwait historically belonged to Iraq.

On the 8th of August, Kuwait was annexed by Iraq as its nineteenth province (Tripp 252). Within days, the United States, along with the United Nations, demanded Iraq's immediate withdrawal from Kuwait and a six-week-long bombing campaign code-named Operation Desert Storm started just before midnight on the 16th January, 1991. For ordinary Iraqis, the violence of the Gulf War was felt and seen on a daily basis via air raids that destroyed the country's infrastructure. Though the US and its allies kept claiming that they were not targeting civilians but rather military installations we were all extremely frightened that missiles would hit us.

On the 13th February 1991 our fears came true when two of the so-called US "smart missiles" hit the al- 'Amiriyyah shelter in Baghdad. This made us realize that civilians' lives were in jeopardy and that we might be the next target. When I heard the tragedy described on the radio news, I became haunted by images of the children and women who were burned inside the shelter. With every siren alarm we rushed downstairs to an underground cellar built in my family house years before

the war started.⁴¹ The cellar that used to protect us turned into a fearful place in my mind as it reminded me of the shelter. Some people, who lived in a one-floor house or had no cellars, either moved to relatives' and friends' houses or used the shelters in their neighborhoods.

US aircraft alone dropped “88,000 tons of explosives on Iraq, the equivalent of nearly five Hiroshima nuclear blasts” (Schmitt 3). *The Washington Post* mentioned that 70% of the “smart” bombs missed their targets to fall on civilian buildings, mosques, churches, schools, or empty fields. The 30% that hit the targeted areas affected Iraq's infrastructure including roads, bridges, canals, electricity generators, sewage treatment networks and communication centres (Gellman 1). US and other UN members began deploying troops in Saudi Arabia and a coalition formed under UN authority. After a month of relentless bombings, the ground war started (‘Abdullah 195).

On the 23rd February, the Iraqi forces were cut off from their supply bases and headquarters by the intense air campaign which led thousands of Iraqi soldiers to simply give up rather than fight. In the meantime, the Allied air strikes and cruise missile attacks against military troops as well as civilians proved devastating.

⁴¹ My home city, Mosul, and a few other cities in Iraq, are famous for building underground cellars in most of the houses. In the past, these cellars were used to store wheat, flour and oil in the summer season because these cellars were normally cool. Later, they were used to sleep in during the summer, given the absence of electricity, as alternatives to air conditioning.

Estimates of civilian deaths ranged from 100,000 to 200,000 while estimates of Iraqi soldiers who were killed on the ground ranged from 25,000 to 30,000 ('Abdullah 19). In March 1991, following Iraq's defeat in the Gulf War, the Kurds of northern Iraq and the Arabs of the south rose up against the Ba'th regime. Saddam's marginalization of the Shi'is and the Kurds and his persistent suppression of their political movements had led to a state of resentment among them (Stansfield 131).

The Iraqi retreat from Kuwait made it possible for the Shi'i uprising (Intifada) in the south and the Kurdish rebellion to take place. For two weeks, the uprisings were phenomenally successful. Government administrations in the towns were overthrown and local army barracks were left in disarray. Yet, by the end of the month the rebellions had been crushed and the rebels scattered, fleeing across the nearest borders into Turkey or Iraq's southern marshes. Many of those who could not flee were killed in summary executions. Soon after, the UN imposed economic and trade sanctions on the Iraqi oil industry. However, the sanctions expanded to include almost all aspects of life. Air travel was banned, sea lanes were blocked, and no goods were allowed to be sent in or out of Iraq, including books, magazines and journals (Siegal n.p.).

The embargo imposed by the UN lasted for 13 years and had severe economic, social, educational and medical consequences affecting the Iraqi people.

Malnutrition due to food shortages resulted in the death of approximately half a million children (Stahl n.p.). In 1996, Secretary of State Madeline Albright was interviewed on US TV and asked what she thought about the fact that 500,000 Iraqi children had died as a result of the sanctions. Her cold response was stringent. She replied: "I think this is a very hard choice, but the price, we think the price is worth it" (Mahajan n.p.). Albright did not deny the toll of the sanctions. She rather admitted that the US government along with all the countries that voted for the imposition of the embargo on Iraq believed that the death of half a million children was "worth it."

By 1997, US leaders declared their determination to preserve the sanctions even if the UNSCOM declared that Iraq had no biological, chemical or nuclear weapon-making ability. The UN sanctions committee, based in New York, continued to deny Iraq a variety of goods, from technological equipment to the simplest tools such as pencils. In her diary, the Iraqi exiled writer Haifa' Zangana recalls:

On the 6th December, 1995 I sent a parcel to my nephews and nieces in Mosul/Iraq which included a pencil case, three erasers, three pencil sharpeners, six fountain pens, two highlight pens, two glue sticks and two pens. I wrote "Present to Children" on the parcel. The parcel was returned to me with a note "Due to the International Embargo on Iraq, we cannot send your parcel to this address." I was also directed to the British Office for Trade and Industry for more information (80).

One might wonder what threat pencils held, but clearly this was one embargo which was enforced. I remember my 10-year nephew telling me how his teacher got very angry when she found him over-sharpening a half-length pencil and how some of his classmates used to search the bin for left-over pencils and colours at the end of the school day. Not only were pencils rare, but also paper. Nuha al-Radi describes how university students managed this lack: “They write on the backs of receipts, pharmacy bills, and account books, anything that has a blank side to it” (78).

As might be imagined, the embargo led to a sharp rise in inflation. During the 1970s, the Iraqi dinar was one of the strongest currencies in the region with oil revenues and high levels of reserves from trade. The official exchange rate was \$1 to ID 0.3.11 (al-Jawaheri 6). By December 1995, the exchange value of the ID was \$1 to ID3, 000. The high inflation rate was directly reflected in the food prices, especially of basic foods such as flour, meat, eggs, sugar, tea and cooking oil. However, basic necessities could only be accessed through the government’s rations which were provided at a low price.⁴² Before the embargo, a typical family with many children would eat rice served with a thick vegetable and meat soup.

⁴² All additional foods beyond those rations such as meat, fruits and vegetables had to be purchased at market prices which were beyond the financial means of many families.

During the sanctions, it was very difficult to keep to this diet. Instead, grains and rice were served along with thin soup. However, poor families could not even find enough grains and had to depend on bread and thin onion soup. One of the most common diseases among children became malnutrition (Pellett 151-65).

The absence of men as the only breadwinners in poor families worsened the financial status of these families, especially when the family was run by a poorly educated woman, used to depending on her husband for her living. Accordingly, the absence of men and the sanctions created three types of classes among women: uneducated non-working women who belonged to a low-status family, educated working women who abandoned their poorly paid jobs, and highly educated women whose payment did not match their degrees.

Many women found themselves in a situation where they had to live with their parents or their in-laws in extended families (al-Jawaheri 119). In some cases, non-working women who pre-war would have received a state pension now had to find a job to provide a living for themselves, their children and their older in-laws or parents who were unable to work. The most commonly accepted professions for these women were house-cleaning, baking and sewing. Some jobs like retail selling were considered culturally unacceptable for women in some areas as they are thought to expose women to strangers. According to al-Jawaheri, except for a few

shops managed by old women who moved to the city from villages and from the suburbs of Baghdad, it would have been impossible for women to work in retail services (37).

This situation is tackled in Khedayri's *Absent*. In the novel a woman character, 'um Mazin practises soothsaying, coffee-cup reading and preparing love spells for other women as a way to survive the dire economic conditions. However, 'um Mazin's profession is not very commonly welcomed in Iraqi society and only found in certain rural areas. When one of her customers asks 'um Mazin how she became a fortune teller, she replies, "out of necessity" and adds that "in 1990 [...] we abandoned our shops [...] and were liable for substantial amounts in taxes that were imposed on everyone who'd traded with Kuwait. My partner fled [...] and I took this line of work" (88). The character of 'um Mazin represents an old woman who is originally from the suburbs of Baghdad. In Iraq it is normal for such women to work in shop keeping or a goods selling as it was also normal to find them practising such professions as palm reading, soothsaying and fortune telling.

While it was difficult for some women to work in shops for cultural reasons, prostitution was practised by a number of women who faced financial hardships. Nadjé al-'Ali thinks that prostitution was an unwelcome trend in a society which believes that the honor of the family is represented in the "woman's honor" (200).

According to al-‘Ali, the Iraqi government supported prostitution for some time since most clients were from the regime’s circle and war profiteers. In 1993, the government fought prostitution as part of the regime’s engagement in a national faith campaign. However, the government’s violent punishment of prostitutes forced many of them to practise their profession in Syria and Jordan in a way that led the Iraqi government to ban women under the age of forty-five from travelling out of the country except with a close male relative (mahram): a father, a brother, an uncle or a husband.⁴³

As to the educated women, before the sanctions they were mostly employed in the public sector, in schools, banks, hospitals and universities. The public sector had always been considered by the majority of Iraqis as the most respectable working environment. Moreover, this sector was highly preferred by Iraqis as it traditionally secured a pension. As a result of inflation, working women’s income in the public sector declined significantly, forcing a large number of them to quit their jobs as they were unable to afford the cost of transportation to their work-place.

⁴³ Saddam 's national faith campaign singled out prostitutes and included a public campaign to halt their activities. Appearing on Iraqi television, Saddam announced that these Iraqi women “were dishonoring their country.” Between 2000 and 2001, he unleashed the Fedayeen Saddam, a militia created by his son, ‘Uday, to send an unmistakable message to a beaten-down population. Women accused of prostitution were rounded up and publicly beheaded in Baghdad and in other cities. The executioners carried out their work with swords. The severed heads of the condemned women were left on the doorsteps of their homes.

The disparity between their skills and the payment they received also made some highly educated women leave their jobs. “Under sanctions, professional skills ceased to be an outcome-determining factor [...] almost all occupations [...] were likely to be low paid, regardless of the skills required” (al-Jawaheri 35). Low payment, lack of the necessary facilities such as transportation, nurseries and paid maternity leave were behind middle-class women’s high unemployment rate in the public sector. In her short story “The Nursery,” Ibtisam ‘Abdullah describes the efforts of a single mother who used to work as a primary- school teacher to provide food for her starving son out of a small amount of rice:

I pour the rice into a metal bowl and see the beaming smile on the boy’s face. He’s clapping his hands as he follows me, the dog after him. I put the bowl on a low table out there in the nursery. The two of them rush towards it, and the bowl tips over. In a split second rice is all over the place [...] Dust-covered rice on the ground, the boy’s pinched and pale features[...] The dog approaches the rice slowly [...] The boy shouts at it [...] The dog’s tongue is still picking up small lumps [...] he falls to the ground puts out his tongue, and starts licking the dust-covered rice (‘Abdullah 4-5).

Here, a mother sees her son reduced to an animal in his desire for some food. The story provides an account of the daily struggle of a woman whose husband leaves the country, looking for better working opportunities abroad. With the decline in the economic situation, the woman who works as a teacher realizes that her salary is not enough to provide a living for her and her son, so she decides to move to her father’s house where she is given a room at the rear and gets an extra job working

from home. Due to the difficult economic conditions, some middle-class women were forced to practice jobs which used to be done by women from other classes only, such as cleaning. Al-Jawaheri interviewed a middle-class woman, Nawal, aged 42 and a mother of five children whose husband received a monthly pension of ID 3000 equal to \$1.50 which was not enough to live on. Thus, she had to work as a cleaner:

We have sold everything that could be of value. We did not know what to do. The embargo was “evil.” It took everything from us. It has battered our lives mercilessly. Before, I would never have thought of cleaning other people’s houses in order to bring food to my family. Now, I have no alternative. I have even become used to enduring the humiliation and the constant pain that are always part of me. This situation has left no space for us to think (48).

But according to al-‘Ali, social attitudes toward women’s work changed in the 1990s in that “the ideal woman” became the housewife and mother who would stay at home and not mix with men in the workplace (189). This attitude in turn changed the way marriage was looked upon in that it became very common for Iraqi women to look for a wealthy man or a man who lived abroad (al-Jawaheri 107). It encouraged women to get married to men living or working outside of Iraq regardless of age and social status. This kind of marriage was looked at as the best solution to guard women against the unstable economic conditions.

In Lutfiyya al-Dulaymi’s novel *Hadiqat Hayat (Hayat’s Garden 2004)*, one of the female characters dreams of travelling abroad and although it is very difficult she

finds a way: “At last [...] at last I am travelling [...] I found a young man who intends to immigrate [...] We agreed on a temporary marriage contract in exchange of \$ 3000 by which I get my freedom” (al-Dulaymi 123). Such deals where a woman offered an amount of money to a man in return of a temporary marriage contract was not unusual. In some cases, however, the cancellation of the marriage contract may not take place causing further troubles for both parties.

The large numbers of educated people who left the country had a negative effect on the educational field. The level of education lowered as a result of the deteriorating economy. While some school teachers had to look for extra after-school jobs to increase their low incomes, others had to quit their low-paid teaching posts for more profitable employment. This led to a big shortage in teaching staff. University professors often worked as private tutors or did some other type of business. When I started working at the University as an assistant lecturer in 1993 the monthly salary I had was less than \$1 when the ID 3000 was equal to \$1. That payment was not sufficient to cover the least of my needs, but it was enough to free me from the desolation I experienced at home reading old issues of periodicals I had to borrow from the library, translating some old texts and helping my mother make bread.

Low payment drove some university professors to leave Iraq for Jordan, Yemen, and Libya and work in these countries. Some stayed in these countries temporarily

and then migrated to Europe, Canada and the States. Estimates suggest that 2000 professors, usually the most qualified, fled from Iraq's twenty major universities between 1995 and 2000 (Solomon n.p.). A previous exodus which started in the 1980s in the aftermath of the Iran-Iraq war prompted the Iraqi government to issue a travel ban to university professors, doctors, engineers and other skilled experts. Obtaining an exit visa, if at all, required overcoming bureaucratic hurdles as well as the payment of ID 400,000, a huge fortune which only a few rich Iraqis could afford at that time.

However, this ban did not prevent all academics from travelling as some merely changed their names or the title of their profession to businessmen or tradesmen, as these two professions were allowed to travel. This indicates a lax bureaucracy and forgery which were widespread during that period. Women degree holders, used the title of housewife which usually meant no profession instead of lecturer or professor as identification in their passports. I also changed the title of my profession from an assistant lecturer to a housewife in order to be able to accompany my husband who was studying abroad.

The travel ban worsened the situation for writers and researchers who were invited to attend conferences or were rewarded in other countries. The Iraqi poet Reem K. Kubba struggled to reach the Emirates in November 1999, where she was to be

awarded a prize for her poetry. The main problem was her exit visa, which could not be issued unless she found a male relative to accompany her on the journey. Eventually her elderly uncle agreed to join her, and even then the journey took thirty-two hours instead of the usual three, as there were no direct flights to the UAE (Kachachi 213).

The professors who had no choice but to stay in the country had to struggle with the lack of new teaching materials and the disengagement of students who were supporting their families rather than focusing on their studies. An Iraqi woman professor of philosophy at Baghdad University described the teaching conditions during the sanctions as follows:

There were no new books or journals available. Before the sanctions we would ask for books, and as long as they were not politically sensitive we would get them. But all of a sudden, we had to smuggle books and journals into the country. Salaries dropped [...] Many of our students had to work. Most of them were buying and selling things and they became part-time students. Students stopped coming from provinces as they used to [...] Some of my students used to faint or fall sick because they had not eaten all day (al-'Ali 195).

The scarcity of knowledge sources and teaching aids meant an increasing percentage of student drop outs from classes. Some students also had to study alternate years as their parents could not afford to pay for their studies. Some male students failed on purpose to delay being drafted into the army which was compulsory after graduation (al-Radi 78). Female students who failed were

vulnerable to pressure from their families to leave their education, not necessarily to work, but just to stay at home, as this would spare the family the costs of transportation, clothing and other needs. Besides, with the deterioration of security and the increase in the rates of rape and kidnapping of women, it became safer for women to remain at home. Lamya', a political science student at Baghdad University, told al-Jawaheri that:

To reach university I have to cross half of Baghdad City. Our effort, money and time are wasted nearly every day, because classes are often cancelled due to the absence of our teachers. Last year, we had to postpone one of our majors to a later semester because the teacher had left the university very suddenly. I had to hide this from my family because it might have encouraged my brother, who is opposed to my daily trips outside the home. He has threatened me several times to prevent me from going to the university (67).

In Lamya's case, the brother was the only breadwinner in the family and his opposition to his sister's daily trips to the university stemmed from his inability to cover the costs of her travel and education. Despite the deterioration that took place in the education system at all levels, the recognition of the importance of education remained. Most Iraqi women understood that education would save them from the seclusion they would face once they found themselves doing other than domestic tasks, with almost all means of communication with the outside world unavailable. I was able to continue my MA during the sanctions because I had some savings from my previous job which covered some of the costs. When I got my degree in

1992, I had to wait for one year to get a job at the university. That was the most depressing year in my life as it was very difficult to visit friends and relatives in remote areas of the city because of the high cost of transportation. Even when I wanted to watch TV as a distraction, I found it boring as there were only two TV channels, the propaganda state one and the youth channel that was run by Saddam's elder son 'Uday. Satellite dishes and mobile phones were banned.

In her novel *Absent* Khedayri describes the punishment of her neighbor when a satellite is discovered on his rooftop:

His father is in prison because his friend informed the authorities that he had a satellite dish hidden away on his rooftop. He installed it late at night, under cover of darkness, so that he could watch the news from around the world. They say that the informer was given a reward when the dish and its cables were confiscated (45).

The standard punishment for owning a satellite dish under Saddam was six-months' imprisonment, the confiscation of the equipment and a fine of 100 dollars. Those few people who managed to get a satellite smuggled through the northern areas of Iraq had to set it up at night and hide it in the day. The internet was also banned in Iraq during Saddam's regime except for some governmental offices where internet access was censored. Iraqis were detached from the outside world except for the news broadcast through radios and international calls. Letters from outside Iraq took a long time to reach the country because there were no direct air

flights to Iraq. In 1994 when I was in Yemen, it took my letters more than two months to reach my family back home.

The educated elite and writers underwent a sort of seclusion from new information when books and journals from outside the country were banned. According to Lutfiyya al-Dulaymi: “Writers used to copy a limited amount of these books using old copiers and low standard paper and circulate them among other writers in Baghdad and other cities of Iraq” (Interview with Kurayshan, 2 Oct. 2000). During these years, al-Mutanabi Street in the capital city of Baghdad, famous for selling all kinds of books, suffered from the absence of any new books which used to circulate in the years before the sanctions. Due to the dire economic conditions, Iraqis visited al-Mutanabi Street not to buy books but rather to sell their own, as a means of providing a living. In “Akhaḥ min al-Mala’ika” (“Lighter than Angels”), a short story written about this period, al-Dulaymi describes the central character’s urgent need to sell books and artwork to survive:

I opened my handbag and counted what remained of the money I got for selling history and philosophy books and from auctioning a painting by a dear painter, only to realize that for the history and philosophy and art I let go, I got a pair of poorly made leather shoes for two thousand dinars and a half kilo of coffee for three thousand dinars (3).

Irony is implied in the fact that valuable books of history and philosophy along with a piece of art work are disposed of and sold in exchange for “shoes” and

“coffee” which though very cheap in ordinary circumstances, yet here have become expensive due to the inflation brought about by the sanctions.

Books purchased in al-Mutanabi Street were constantly censored by Saddam Husayn’s security forces which used to observe the circulation of banned books about modern Iraqi history and diaries written by exiled writers and religious figures. However, such books, usually printed in Beirut, were smuggled into Iraq through Jordan, Syria and Turkey (Frisk n.p.). While diaries of exiled writers were severely censored, writings which praised the regime, the state and the leader were published and widely disseminated. On the 6th of November 1993 the Ministry of Culture and Media issued an announcement published in the newspaper *al-Thawra* (*The Revolution*), calling writers and poets to attend a meeting where they discussed the documentation of the history of war (Zangana n.p.).

The writings which were encouraged by the regime during this period honored the leader and described the embargo as the evil behind the misery of Iraqis. As in the 1980s, texts were supposed to glorify the sacrifices of the martyrs who paid with their lives. In an interview, Hadiyya Husayn talked about the situation around Saddam’s regime’s censorship:

Writing was a challenge on such conditions and also with the censorship of the government. Writers inside Iraq were gagged and had to use symbols and allusions to escape censorship. Whereas other writers had to keep their works to themselves and could not publish them.

Some writers made their own copies by means of ordinary copiers. The poet Salman Da‘ud printed many of his own writings and those of his friends from his own office using his own copier. As such, these works could hardly ever reach the Iraqi reader [...] My third anthology was sent to Sharjah in the UAE as part of the Arab Woman’s Literature Competition and it came first. When I travelled for the award in 1999 I did not return to Iraq because I was aspiring to resume my literary journey away from tyranny. Whatever was written by me after that period was about war and its aftermath (Email Interview with ‘Abdullah, 17 Nov. 2011).

Husayn did not only witness two wars, sanctions and the destruction of her country; she also suffered from the censorship of Saddam Husayn’s government. Husayn argues that the regime’s censorship could lead to a kind of self-censorship. This censorship could consume the writer and prevented her from writing freely. Once the writer was freed from such self-censorship, she could articulate her ideas more easily. “Creativity cannot thrive under fear, but rather in a wider space of freedom” (Interview with Qaww‘Ali, 2013). Husayn survived an assassination attempt at the hands of the regime while in Iraq (Email Interview with ‘Abdullah, 17 Nov. 2011). In 1999, Husayn left Iraq for Amman and stayed there for several years during which she applied for asylum in Canada where she now lives.

Husayn’s experience in exile is rich with literary production. She contends:

The years I have been spending in exile brought me closer to my country and made me see it clearly. It was just like standing at a distance to examine a painting carefully. Homesickness was not a real sickness to me but rather a feeling that I turned into tales of persons and events inscribed in my memory. Exile has offered me the freedom of speech. I write freely and I do not care about censorship or the policeman who used to scare me. I am not scared anymore. In my writing I try to unravel the atrocities of the regime and defend its victims (Email Interview with ‘Abdullah, 17 Nov. 2011).

Like many of the artists and writers who left the country, the experience of exile freed Husayn from the censorship of the Ba‘th regime. Place acquired multiple meanings in that “home, homeland, other land, host and donor countries were no longer spaces with fixed meanings. [But] spaces inherently movable and dynamic where women have the opportunity to reshape, revise and construct better places” (Rodriguez 20). Husayn turned the feeling of nostalgia in exile into a positive force in her writing about her country. In other words, exile inspired Husayn’s work.

However, the experience of exile proved to be an added difficulty for many Iraqi writers who left the country. Irada al-Jabburi says of her experience of exile:

Leaving Iraq was my biggest mistake. I travelled to Yemen during the sanctions for economic reasons. In 2000 I wrote my collection *Losses* in Yemen where I settled well and made friends. However, I felt that everything was in a state of postponement, dream, pain and joy. It never occurred to me that Yemen would be a substitute home. I was haunted by the image of Iraq and was thinking of it as a sick child that I had left. I did not have my own library or my own garden in Yemen. My experience there was rich with pain. I am like a thread out of a silk fabric which stays in the air and can neither fly away, nor get back to mingle with the fabric again [...] (Skype Interview with ‘Abdullah, 8 Nov. 2011).

Like many Iraqis who left Iraq to end their suffering, al-Jabburi realized that leaving Iraq had the opposite effect. Despite the fact that the writer was able to settle and publish her work in Yemen she could not endure her nostalgia for her home and chose to return to Iraq. In his *Reflections on Exile* Edward Sa‘id

describes exile as the “unhealable rift forced between a human being and a native place, between the self and its true home: its essential sadness can never be surmounted” (137). The sense of dislocation for Sa‘id is not just about a loss of home but about a psychological separation that is difficult to overcome. In the introduction to her novel *Women on a Journey: Between Baghdad and London* (2007) the Iraqi writer Zangana discusses the four women characters in her text who flee Iraq for political reasons to settle in London as “united by their fear of loneliness, despair, isolation, and lack of human contact. Most of the time they live in the past, unable to enjoy the present and not daring to think of the future” (xv). It is this nostalgic sense of a past free of war and destruction which unites most Iraqi immigrants who find themselves in a state of limbo where they feel neither able to integrate wholly into a new society nor return to their country.

The women writers who stayed in the country found it very difficult to write as they faced many daily struggles just to survive. In the absence of electricity and fuel necessary to operate bakeries all over Iraq, women were expected to do the job. I remember that while I was preparing my MA research, I learned to bake bread using traditional fire stoves. Despite it being a chore, it was interesting – and I was not alone in this reaction. One woman whom al-‘Ali interviewed states that before the sanctions her husband never did anything in the house but when he stopped working he started helping her to bake the family bread (199). In *Hayat’s*

Garden al-Dulaymi details the female character's hard work to make ends meet during the sanctions and in the absence of her husband:

Hayat finishes correcting the pupils' worksheets to spend two working hours at 'um Nur's sewing factory that produces infants' wear. Hayat has to make five collections each evening [...] At midnight, she prepares the dough for the next day's bread. She feels that bread making has become a way of telling the secret of life, of clinging to time (al-Dulaymi 43-44).

Despite the pleasure some women found in learning the act of baking, this act was an additional concern for the women writers. Irada al-Jabburi writes of the multiple tasks of women writers:

Writing in war time is the most difficult task of all. During the 1990s almost all Iraqi women were engaged in how to keep life going. Each one of us had to bake her family's bread, collect wood for baking and cooking from scratch and maintain her family's safety with the absence of men. These daily activities were time consuming and were devastating for the mind. How can writers think of writing under such conditions? In 1996, my salary was ID 3000 when the price of a dozen of eggs was equal to ID 3000. I had to use public transportation as it was cheaper and whenever I finished writing a part of my work I used to reward myself with a cup of coffee at one of the coffee shops (Skype Interview with 'Abdullah, 8 Nov. 2011).

Even when writers did produce work, in most cases they had to pay for the printing and rarely made enough money from selling their books to cover these costs. For example, Irada al-Jabburi's novel *The Fragrance of Apples* was written in 1993 and published in 1996 by the al-Wataniyyah Publishing House which printed 1000 copies only for the author who reports that she made little profit. The First Gulf War prevented the regime from maintaining the level of cultural production of the 1970s and the 1980s. By 1994, the number of issues published annually of all state-

sponsored publications and books had been reduced by between a half and two-thirds (al-Dabagh 31).

In an interview with Hadiyya Husayn about the difficulties she faced while publishing her work, she stated: “my second anthology had waited for four years at the Cultural Affairs Publishing House in Baghdad before it came to light” (Email Interview with ‘Abdullah, 17 Nov. 2011). Self-publishing was no better as it brought no profit to the writer. Commenting on this issue, al-Jabburi said: “In 1993 I printed 1500 copies of my own anthology *The Dust of the Cities* in which the money I paid exceeded the profit I gained” (Skype Interview with ‘Abdullah, 8 Nov. 2011).

Eric Davis argues that more than 315 publishing houses, printing presses and associated companies were closed as a result of the embargo (240). According to al-Dulaymi, the al-Wataniyah Publishing House in Baghdad was the only publisher in Iraq. It printed no more than 2000 copies of any book. Some Arab publishers such as the Jordanian Azmina House, Jordanian magazines, Jordanian daily newspapers and some publishers in Syria and Tunisia did publish Iraqi writers. Some like Azmina Publishing House sent free copies of books and journals to Iraqi writers. However, most Arab publishers could not publish Iraqi writings from

inside Iraq since they were not able to market these books inside Iraq due to the economic conditions (Interview with Kurayshan, 2 Oct. 2000).

These comments introduce an important concept: “the sanctions’ books.” Although the term itself was not much used, the expression indicates a particular form of texts which began to demonstrate feelings of resistance towards the atrocities of the wars and sanctions that many Iraqis were experiencing. Resistance towards war is manifested through the writers’ attempts to give precedence to human experiences over purely political concerns. According to al-Jabburi, “Maysalun Hadi’s *The World Minus One* and her novel *The Black Eyes*, Ibtisam ‘Abdullah’s *Black Rain*, *Red Rain* and al-Jabburi’s *The Fragrance of Apples* are typical of the sanctions writings which passed unnoticed by the censor” (Skype Interview with ‘Abdullah, 8 Nov. 2011). Besides writing about the traumas of the wars and the sanctions, these women writers were preoccupied with presenting the complexity of life for Iraqi women in a patriarchal society and also with suggesting possible ways for women to take on life on their own terms. This is evident in the key texts I discuss in this chapter.

Maysalun Hadi' s *The World Minus One*

Maysalun Hadi started writing in the 1970s when she was in her twenties. Hadi wrote about love and romance, as was common for many women writers at that time.⁴⁴ However, during the wars of the 1980s and the First Gulf War of the 1990s, Hadi's choice of theme, technique and style underwent significant changes (Kadhim 8).⁴⁵ Since 1985, most of Hadi's fiction has centred on the trials of ordinary Iraqis during the war and embargo. Sarmak argues that Hadi is one of a few Arab writers who has made great use of the wars to change their oeuvre in a way that has produced "a resistant, humanitarian and creative type of writing in the age of crisis" (13-14).

The novella is divided into fifteen short chapters mostly told by an omniscient narrator who describes the action and the characters. By means of this method of narration Hadi moves freely from one character's consciousness to the other to be able to simulate the gaps, sudden shifts of perception, and selective personal

⁴⁴ Maysalun Hadi was born in 1954 in Baghdad and has continued to live there. Besides being a fiction writer, a critic and a journalist, Hadi writes children's stories and science fiction stories.

⁴⁵ Hadi's published work in relation to war includes: *al- 'Oyun al-Sud* (*Black Eyes* 2002), *al-Hudd al-Barriyyah* (*The Land Borders* 2004), *Hulm Wardy Fatih allawn* (*A Light-Pink Dream* 2009), *Shay al-A'rus* (*The Bride's Tea* 2010), *Nubu'at Phera'wn* (*The Prophecy of Pharaoh* 2011) and *Hafid al-BBC* (*The BBC Grandson* 2011). She has also published short stories: "al-Shakhs al-Thalith" ("The Third Person" 1985), "al- Farasha" ("The Butterfly" 1986), "Ashya' lam Tahduth" ("Things Which Never Happened" 1992), "Rajul Khalf al-Bab" ("A Man Behind the Door" 1994), "La Tandhur lil Sa'a" ("Don't Look at the Watch" 1999) and "Romance" (2000).

records typical of traumatic narrative (Moran 5). The writer's depiction of the characters' consciousness leads her to minimize action and dialogue in the text. The action of the novella is mostly set in Baghdad where the parents of the "dead" 'Ali live. Significantly, we never know the names of 'Ali's parents, and so the son – possibly dead, possibly still alive – is the centre of the narrative and at some stages the main though "absent" character. In the following sections I discuss the way the open-end paradox of the trauma of survival (Lifton xi) is articulated in the text first; through 'Ali's parents' gendered reactions to their loss. The parent's different reactions bring out questions to do with the way ordinary mourning turns into a complicated grief and of how war obscures the boundaries between victims and survivors; second by means of the collective experience of loss exemplified in the absence/presence state of the victims, the mourning rituals performed by women and through the colour imagery which signifies the general tragedy.

3.2 Gendered Grief in the Text

When 'Ali's father goes to the scene of the accident "the villagers told him that they saw some men burying a dead pilot and capturing a wounded pilot" (13). Due to the damaged corpse, the father is unable to recognize his son's facial features: "the face was deformed but the body was familiar and looked like 'Ali's. However, ['Ali's] torn military trousers uncovered a blue pair of long pants marred with mud

[...] which made me wonder why 'Ali put on something that he had never used to before" (64). The only clue to 'Ali's identity is a military jacket. The jacket is accompanied by 'Ali's identity tag and a copy of the Qur'an found near the body where the crash took place. The father thinks that these clues are not enough evidence that the marred corpse is 'Ali's. Thus, witnessing the violent death of his son makes the event "inconceivable" (Laub 60) for the father who embarks on a journey of an inner struggle with doubts. Caruth suggests that trauma is understood as a reaction to an unexpected, violent event or events that are not fully assimilated as they occur, but return later in flashbacks, nightmares, and other repetitive forms (91). The trauma of 'Ali's parents is represented in the "unexpected and violent" death of their only son. This trauma has left a constant "wound to the souls" (Hacking 4) of the parents that cannot easily heal. Yet, 'Ali's mother tries hard to survive her wound by maintaining connection with 'Ali. Whereas 'Ali's father's trauma is exacerbated by his doubts which he prefers to keep to himself and not to share them with his wife.

According to Eric Santner, "the work of mourning is a process of elaborating and integrating the reality of loss or traumatic shock by remembering and repeating it in symbolically and dialogically mediated doses; it is a process of translating and figuring loss" (144). In the novella 'Ali's mother feels that she can resurrect 'Ali whenever she "remembers him" (34). She believes that his spirit "roams around the

house for forty days after his burial” (47). The mother’s act of burning candles and incense at sunset every day stems from her conviction that this could “enlighten and refresh his tomb” (47). For the mother, this memorialisation helps to intensify ‘Ali’s presence rather than his absence. The clearest expression of the way ‘Ali’s mother invokes her lost son is the scene where ‘Ali’s mother feeds ‘Ali’s cats. When the latter was alive, his mother did not like his act of allowing stray cats to enter her kitchen. After his death, she takes on feeding those cats. ‘Ali’s mother thinks that the daily meowing of the hungry cats and her feeding them the way ‘Ali used to are “living signs of ‘Ali’s existence” (33).

The mother’s struggle to connect with her son is an indication of the emptiness she faces in her world. But it also reflects her determination to overcome this emptiness. To do so, the mother keeps performing the same routines she used to have during ‘Ali’s life such as “calling ‘Ali at the top of her voice from under the staircase every morning” (34). ‘Azzawi thinks that memorialization is not only about escaping from a sorrowful present to a happy past, but also about the ability to survive a desperate future (212). As such, ‘Ali’s mother’s acts of keeping the ties with her son help her to move on in her grief.

However, the same acts serve to enlarge the gap between ‘Ali’s mother and her husband who is unable to come to terms with her incessant effort to invoke ‘Ali.

‘Ali’s father notices that their telephone rings every day at five and that the caller rings off once he or his wife answers. He soon recognizes from his wife that the caller is ‘Ali’s lover who has no idea of ‘Ali’s “death.” When ‘Ali’s father realizes that his wife enjoys this ringing, he becomes angry and tells her:

I can’t understand why you insist on making this five o’clock every day a time to torture us? And why are you torturing this unknown woman? Why don’t you just tell her the truth and finish it? The mother gets bewildered and finds no answer. She is aware that he won’t appreciate the anguish of the mother’s heart because he is a man, and that she wishes that this unidentified woman caller would keep ringing forever [...] She answers: No, I won’t tell her (35-36).

While the ringing of the phone annoys ‘Ali’s father who sees it as a kind of “torture,” this ringing becomes a source of delight for the bereaved mother who wishes that the woman “would keep ringing forever.” Indifferent to the agony of ‘Ali’s lover who rings in vain, ‘Ali’s mother feels that this ringing is another bridge between her and her lost son and that by keeping it going, she is bringing ‘Ali back to life for a few minutes every day.

The text suggests that the reason behind the husband’s inability to understand the feelings of his wife is that he is “a man” who is incapable of comprehending the “anguish” of the mother. The discrepancy between husband and wife is deepened as ‘Ali’s father feels that his wife’s struggle to resurrect ‘Ali is unjustified since he is not sure of the identity of the dead body and thus unable to admit to his son’s death. ‘Ali’s father thinks that the mourning rituals his wife practises such as

lighting candles and burning incense at sunset as well as visiting the cemetery before sunrise, are “women’s beliefs” (47). Even though the husband thinks that his wife’s customs will help her endure her anguish, he still considers them as unfounded actions. Every time ‘Ali’s father accompanies his wife to the cemetery, he silently asks, “who are we visiting [...] and why?” (49).

The repeated questions indicate the complexity of the husband’s “trauma that is not precisely grasped” (Caruth 6) by his wife as he does not express it. The loneliness ‘Ali’s father experiences is made clear in the repetition of “I” throughout the chapter which serves to exclude his wife from the whole tragic scene. He acts as if the loss of ‘Ali concerns him alone. Even when he decides to tell his wife about his misgivings as to the identity of the corpse and his decision to visit the family of the missing pilot, ‘Ali’s father “refuses to take her with him despite her pleadings and tears” (86). The novelist draws attention to the father’s determination to face his worries alone when he decides to tell his wife a lie after coming back from the pilot’s house with no clues as to his son’s destiny. He tells her that “the pilot is alive and that his family has received a letter from him” (88). After shedding some tears, ‘Ali’s mother’s tension seems to be eased in that she realizes that the corpse belongs to her son and that she must “yield to the judgment of fate” (88). However, the mother’s compliance with the “judgment of fate” is what makes her husband consider her a “stranger” (40) and blame her for her ability to deal with her grief.

While 'Ali's father contemplates his son's picture on the wall and meditates on his son's absence, "She yawned. Her yawning involves some carelessness and an ability to adapt and forget about all the catastrophes of life [...] Yawning at this moment raises his revulsion and makes him think of pushing her away from him immediately" (40-41). Once again, the novelist depicts 'Ali's father's unfair judgment of his wife. The wife's yawning seems like a sign of her indifference to death. However, the mother's yawning at this stage could be an expression of the pressure of anxiety she feels. Freud argues that the bereaved develop somatic symptoms of grief accompanied by fatigue which results from the energy they lose in their effort to detach from the image of the deceased (Hoeksema and Larson 12). 'Ali's mother's experience is not only due to the burden of her loss, but also to her efforts in the loneliness she faces by being excluded from her husband's world and her struggle with her loss. By refusing to let his wife into his world, and by regarding her as a "stranger" and later a "careless" person, the husband widens the gap between them. This kind of the unresolved disparity in the way the parents deal with their grief grows to a point where each inhabits a separate world.

The text sets up an ongoing struggle between mother and father. Their tragedy is not only about losing their only son under war conditions, but about the "passing out of the event in a way that transforms survival into a continuing predicament" (Bloom 14). 'Ali's parents' fervent efforts to survive separate them into two

distinct worlds. 'Ali's mother's world involves measures to create a sense of her son's presence. The wife's world makes her look "strange" to her husband who chooses to fight his misgivings alone instead. This explains how gendered reactions to loss muddle survivors' lives and open the door to a more confounded sort of grief that concerns the father who fails to find answers to his doubts.

Caruth argues that the paradox of survival stems from the survivor's state of "oscillation between a crisis of death and the correlative crisis of life" (7). The husband's failure to find an answer to his questions and his failure to take action such as to re-open the tomb to check the identity of the corpse indicate a certain spiritual failure that leads to his state of "oscillation." Elie Wiesel attributes "the origin of the loneliness that can be glimpsed in each of my sentences, in each of my silences," (viii) to the burden of the witness which is as unique as that of the testifier.

This is the case with the father who does not only witness the marred corpse but also blame himself for burying a wrong body. The wife notices her husband's "perplexed state where he enters into long bouts of stupor which separates him from others" (37). She often tries to distract him by raising irrelevant issues or "asking silly questions which he abruptly answers to get back to his stupor" (37). His stupors and his refusal to communicate with his wife make her wonder

“whether she can find enough reasons for his silence. Isn’t ‘Ali their son?’” (38)

‘Ali’s father’s numbness is in many ways an ordinary stage in the process of mourning (Axelrod n.p.). Freud describes this process as a healthy and normal process “of the brain-body” that is necessary for the recovery from the loss of a loved one (240). In *Coping with Loss* Hoeksema and Larson (1999) argue that the bereaved may retreat from others and be preoccupied with their loss “even when they try to engage in everyday living, they may have intrusive, painful thoughts about their loss” (6). However, what starts as a normal reaction towards the loss develops gradually into a complicated grief.

This feeling is intensified and made clear to the reader in chapter twelve of the narrative when a shift from the third to first-person narration occurs to give the impression that ‘Ali’s father is alone in his dilemma. In her *Trauma Fiction* (2004) Whitehead suggests that “the term *trauma fiction* represents a paradox [...] if trauma comprises an event which overwhelms the individual and resists language or representation, how can it be narrativised in fiction?” (3). The use of stream-of-consciousness techniques such as direct interior monologue, indirect interior monologue, omniscient description and soliloquy (Humphrey 23)⁴⁶ promotes non-linear narrative structures. In the text, the shift in the narrative voice enables access

⁴⁶ Humphrey suggests that stream-of-consciousness fiction differs from all other psychological fiction in that it involves those “levels that are more inchoate than rational verbalization – those levels on the margin of attention” (2-3).

to 'Ali's father's interior monologue, a stream of thought fluctuating between doubt and faith leaving the reader with a sense of irresolution. While remembering the mourning ceremony 'Ali's father thinks:

I was the only one thinking that all this will come to an end once those visitors go back home and that a miracle is likely to take place and correct the mistake. I was trying alone to trace the fragrance of someone who left. I had no intention of taking part in this chaos where the house is ready for a new day full of those strangers [...] A day without a morning, without a night, without 'Ali, with nothing (71).

The extract reveals the father's baffled emotions towards the burial of 'Ali which he considers a "mistake." His notion of the "miracle" that might take place and correct the "mistake" implies the hope that 'Ali might still be alive. This also explains why he considers the mourning customs in his house as "chaos" which he is unwilling to play a part in. Ruby suggests that "mourners are confounded by two very contradictory needs when someone dies: to keep the memory of the deceased alive, and, at the same time, accept the reality of death and loss" (197). Mourning rites are supposed to help the bereaved admit the absence of a loved one as well as keep their memory alive. In 'Ali's case, the father's trauma lies in his inability to believe the "unexpected" loss of his son and thus looks upon the mourning gathering as a meaningless process where his house is full of "strangers" and empty of "'Ali." Herbert argues that mourning and grief get complicated when the bereaved has difficulty imagining a future without the beloved in a way that leads

to a sense of lost identity and hopelessness (n.p.). What complicates the father's feelings is that he cannot forget the sight and the smell of his son's decomposed corpse.

In the novella, Hadi writes of death in war as a dehumanizing process which diminishes human beings and lowers them to the rank of dead animals. When 'Ali is killed and left unburied for days the condition of his decomposed corpse becomes similar to that of the carcass of a dead animal. The novelist addresses the violence of war by challenging the political propaganda that a soldier killed in war is to be called "martyr" (shahid).⁴⁷

A martyr in Islam is a true believer who sacrifices himself willingly in defence of his religion, country and the honor of his family. God supposedly honors martyrs and places them in higher ranks in paradise. They are buried wearing the same clothes they wore when they died. Due to their distinguished rank their bodies supposedly do not decay and good smells emanate from their corpses (al-Aa'raji 72). During the Iran-Iraq war of the 1980s and the Gulf war of the 1990s Saddam

⁴⁷ Shahid is the person who sees and witnesses, and he is therefore the witness, as if the martyr. The word shahid "is closely related in its development to the Greek *martyrios* in that it means both a witness and a martyr (i.e. a person who suffers or dies deliberately for the sake of affirming the truth of a belief system)." See D. Cook, n.d.

ordered that soldiers who were killed on duty were to be regarded as martyrs whose families were entitled to generous grants. Philip Dalton (1997) argues that “In order to mobilize a population, and for modern wars to be fought, images of warfare must conform to a number of criteria that transmute the essentially nightmarish qualities of the experience for the participants, into affirmations of socially positive values” (48). The Iraqi government’s endeavour to transform the ugly reality of death in war into an elevated state of martyrdom is reminiscent of a similar practice in the First World War where the dead soldier was associated with the sacrificed Christ. As such, death and mutilation take the form of duty and sacrifice in which not only the dead soldiers partake but also their families (Acton 3).

In the text, when ‘Ali’s father approaches “‘Ali’s” corpse to check, “the smell [...] sickens him” (17) and when the corpse is taken to Baghdad to be readied for the final burial someone says: “no shroud is required [...] the martyr is buried with his military uniform on” (20). At the same moment ‘Ali’s father feels that the corpse smells like “fatisa” (carcass of an animal), “left over by the side of the road for days” (21). The fact that the body is left for three weeks without proper burial evokes in the father the image of a dead animal left unattended. The juxtaposition of “the martyr” with the olfactory image of the disgusting “smell” and the deliberate use of the word “fatisa” throughout the text refutes the notion that death in war has sanctity and places the deceased in the position of a rotten animal

carcass for which a fast burial is the best remedy. It contradicts the Islamic story of what happens to the corpse of the martyr. Vera Brittain argues that the brutal reality of death in war destroys the Christ-like status of soldiers. When Brittain's beloved was killed in the war, his family received his kit which included his blood-stained uniform. Brittain writes: "Everything was damp and worn and simply caked with mud. All the sepulchres and catacombs of Rome could not make me realize mortality and decay and corruption as vividly as the smell of those clothes" (qtd. in Acton 29-30).

The concept of the "martyr" is further challenged by Hadi through the employment of the image of worms attacking the dead body. When 'Ali's father hears the news of his son's death three weeks after the plane's accident, he thinks that "three weeks are not enough time for the armies of worms to attack his son's body" (15). That thought references an "ordinary" death since the bodies of "martyrs" supposedly do not decay. The image of the worms keeps recurring in the father's mind whenever the idea of opening the tomb after burial occurs to him.

'Ali's father's paradox stems from "the intricacy of the recurring images" (Lifton xi) which haunt his mind and become almost "incomprehensible" (Caruth 6). He believes that once he attempts to open the tomb, he will face a body "wasted away by worms and humidity" (44). 'Ali's father realizes that it is nearly impossible to

try to re-check the identity of the corpse in the cemetery as it decomposes. This means that he will never be able to know if the body in the ground is his son, a fact that leaves open his traumatic paradox of survival. This “continuing predicament” (Bloom 14) is furthered with the continual presence of the absent ‘Ali in the mind of the father who, as the next section clarifies, realizes that he is not alone in his suffering.

3.3 Communal Involvement in the Paradox of Survival

In *The World Minus One*, the writer portrays the paradox of the absence of the dead victims which becomes a presence in the memory of their family and friends whereas the presence of the living survivors, which I discussed in the previous chapter, turns into a sort of absence. The grief of the present survivors unites them with the absent victims. As he battles with his fears, ‘Ali's father considers visiting the family of the missing pilot who was with his son and who survived the helicopter accident. When ‘Ali's father asks the pilot's family about their son's destiny, the pilot's father “sighed deeply and then replied: we have to wait and suppose that he is a prisoner as long as his corpse is not here” (74).

The “corpse” could be somewhere else, but as long as it is “not here” the pilot's family prefers to think that their son may be alive. This prompts ‘Ali's father to wonder:

Whether it means anything at all to know who of the two is in the tomb and who is in prison? He shouldn't care anymore since the one who is supposed to survive is absent and that his family has framed an imaginary destiny for him [...] Why should he start searching for clues when the two young men have been banished and lost in the abyss forever? (76).

Instead of reaching for “clues” that might ease his suspicions, ‘Ali's father realizes that the survivor’s parents’ condition is no better than his. The “living” pilot who is supposed to be present is actually absent as his family has not got his “corpse” while “‘Ali’s corpse” is present. However, the reception of the disfigured corpse does not put an end to the question of his absence. It rather complicates the matter and expands ‘Ali’s father’s worries. After his visit to the pilot’s family, ‘Ali’s father concludes that his search for signs of his son’s life has become meaningless since both ‘Ali and the pilot are actually “banished and lost in the abyss forever” (76). This presence/absence condition serves to unite the destinies of the two pilots, and it also aligns their surviving families as they experience the absence of their sons.

During his visit to the pilot’s family, ‘Ali’s father asks for a picture of the missing pilot. The moment he sees the pilot’s photo, he murmurs in a trembling voice:

“‘Ali?” [...] The woman in black, surprisingly, replies: “No, Mun ‘im” [...] ‘Ali’s father says: “He looks exactly like ‘Ali”. Wiping her tears away, the pilot’s mother replies: “All pilots look the same” [...] ‘Ali’s father asks her: “What is his year of birth?” She replies: “1965.” ‘Ali’s father mumbles: “The same rank, the same age and the same figure too!” (78-80).

The pilot's photo fosters 'Ali's father's anxieties. Not only are the features of the two men similar, but even the year of birth and the military rank. This resemblance connects the two young men's destinies such that they seem as one. The close likeness of the two pilots induces 'Ali's father to call out 'Ali's name while examining the pilot's photo. This further underpins the oneness of the two pilots' fates and opens up queries related to the significance of names in the text.

Throughout the narrative, 'Ali's name is almost the only name that the novelist uses. By means of the emphasis on 'Ali's name, his presence is felt everywhere in the text despite his physical absence. Hadi uses 'um 'Ali ('Ali's mother) and abu 'Ali ('Ali's father) to refer to 'Ali's parents who are otherwise not named. The name of the pilot "Mun'im" is only mentioned once in the above extract. His parents' names are also not mentioned; they are referred to as the pilot's father, the pilot's mother or the woman in black. Through their naming, the presence of the absent victims – 'Ali and Mun'im – is made more powerful than that of the survivors. 'Ali's father, 'Ali's mother, the pilot's father and the pilot's mother are all one in their endeavour to survive their calamity. They seem to exist only in relation- in relation to the dead.

The unidentified corpse becomes a source of agony and bewilderment to 'Ali's father. The pilot's father has received no corpse and thus assumes that his son is still

alive. While the black mourning gown 'Ali's mother puts on is a means to express her sorrow over her "dead" son, the pilot's mother's black dress is a symbol of grief over her absent son. Just as absence unites the fates of the two young men, the agony of the "continuing predicament of survival" (Bloom 14) homogenizes the two families whose anxieties remain undetermined indicating a wider collective tragedy. That collective tragedy is articulated through two measures which reinforce the unfinished ending of the text: first, through the mourning rites where all the female condolers are united; second, by means of black imagery: women dress in black, walls are covered with death black placards and the clouds bring black rain to conjure up sweeping misery.

3.4 The Mourning Rituals

The mourning customs begin when "'Ali's corpse" is brought to his parents' house. The novelist draws a picture of the way in which the neighborhood women show their sympathy towards the family of the deceased:

Rapidly, the house is crammed with them, the men and the women of the vicinity. One woman comes in with a torn dress, another with a frizzy-pulled hair and a third one with a mournful sound. All women cry with the names of their sons. All sons are martyrs. All are distant and will be present at this noisy, peaceful, scorching and crazy funeral wedding (18).⁴⁸

⁴⁸ In most cases women console each other by shouts, cries, recitation of lines of poetry which lament the dead person and describe the best qualities of the dead. This is mostly accompanied by breast-beating, clothes' tearing and hair-pulling to express their deep sorrow and distress.

The distress of ‘Ali’s family overwhelms the women of the neighborhood who express their sorrow with a traditional act of lament. The sight of the coffin propels the women into hysterical cries where each woman mentions the name of her son. The loss of ‘Ali becomes the women’s loss as they try to call back their own sons who are “martyrs,” “distant” or missing, and ‘Ali’s name mingles with all the other names. The novelist’s juxtaposition of the contrastive images of the “noisy” and the “peaceful” atmosphere with that of the “crazy funeral wedding” suggests that the solemnity of the death event is overcome by the crazy dances of women who produce sounds which reverberate to overwhelm everybody around as is the case with wedding parties.⁴⁹

The mourning gathering lasts for three days. Women and men, family and friends visit the family of the deceased to present their condolences. The women condolers “look similar to one another [...] in their groans, the memories they bring about the dead one [...] and the way they call ‘Ali’s mother’s tears down” (23). The black dress of women, the manner in which they sit and the way they recall the dead person happen every time these women visit a bereaved family for consolation.

⁴⁹ Describing the social etiquette of paying condolences in Iraq Betul Khedayri writes:
I will have to take my shoes off and leave them by the entrance, sit on the ground on mattresses with the other ladies, drink bitter coffee and listen to them recounting the deceased’s acts of goodness during their lifetime [...] If I am able to join in the collective crying, I have to show my sorrow by saying: “May God bless his or her soul” every time the moaning quiets down (n.p.). See Khedayri 2003.

While the women are engaged with their mourning, an old friend of 'Ali's mother arrives at the house to interrupt the women and perform a kind of hysterical dance which silences the entire group of women. When the friend's eyes meet 'Ali's mother's eyes, she utters "halhula" (trilling cry of joy or ululation).⁵⁰

The woman's trilling cry is followed by a lament which says: "The eyes of God guard my loved ones. They have dwelt in my soul since they went. Near or far, my heart is where they are" (28). Soon after, the friend's voice "quavers [...] her tears fall down as she continues her weeping which will go on forever." (28). The lament is loaded with contrasting images of loved ones who "left," "dwelt," "near" and "far." These images articulate the presence/absence condition of those who have passed away. The spiritual presence of the absent people is stronger than their physical absence as long as they stay in the "soul" and the "heart" of those who love them. The lines are not dedicated to 'Ali alone; they rather imply a universal grief over "loved ones."

The repetition of "they" signifies a general dilemma of a "group that has a historical experience of victimization" (Byerman 28). This universal distress is made clear through the image of the performance of 'Ali's mother's friend. The

⁵⁰ Women produce trilling cries upon hearing good news and at weddings as an expression of joy are called "halhula." During the Iraq-Iran war, halhula was common when a family received the corpse of a loved one. They did this because they believed that the dead soldier was a martyr whose soul would go to heaven, or they wanted to please the soul of the dead by turning the funeral into something similar to a wedding, especially when the dead man was unmarried.

woman's hysteric dance, the ululations, her lament and tears do not only attract 'Ali's mother's attention but that of the whole group of women who indulge in group weeping "stunned by her ethereal enchanting voice which touches their souls" (27). Neil Small thinks that the role of the mourners lies in encouraging the bereaved to express their sorrow, their anger and their weeping (155).

Besides helping 'Ali's mother to get rid of her sorrow, the women make use of 'Ali's funeral to grieve over their own bereavements that "will go on forever." Axelrod argues that the best thing the bereaved can do is to allow themselves to feel grief, as resisting it will only prolong the process of healing (n.p.). The collective crying of the women in the funeral and the neighborhood women shouting and dancing on the arrival of the dead body imply a group performance of lament. The same performance and the same lament recur in other houses leading more and more women to join in this universal mourning. A shared tragedy thus emerges afflicting the survivors who are doomed to bemoan their dead. The communal expression of grief by means of women's performances is a socially accepted coping method which challenges western assumptions with regard to the universality of PTSD treatment (Baldachin 4). In this context, western clinical therapies where individuals are encouraged to talk alone to a psychiatrist will not work since "the individual's recovery is bound up with the recovery of the wider community" (Bracken at al 8).

To console 'Ali's mother and to direct her attention towards other subjects, the women raise issues such as the "price rise, the scarcity of sugar and the tiring process of baking the family bread" (25). An old woman tells the story of her relative who delivered a dead baby "whose father was asked by the hospital to put it in his own house's fridge since the hospital's morgue is broken" (51). Another old woman "swears by God that it took her five hours to reach 'Ali's house on foot" (23) due to the scarcity of petrol. A group of women talk about the al-'Amiriyyah shelter's massacre and the "families" who got scorched inside it (47). These stories do not only divert 'Ali's mother's mind to others' distress, but also place the mother as a secondary witness to the distress of others and direct the reader's attention towards different forms of human ordeal that affect everyone.

3.5 The Colour Imagery

This collective tragedy is reinforced through the colour imagery. From the beginning of the narrative, the colour black dominates to convey a sense of gloominess. The text opens with a reference to a time of darkness, "It is around three in the morning" (5). At this time 'Ali's parents hear unusual knocking at their door. Later, they know that the knocker was the Kurd villager who came with the bad news of 'Ali's death. Due to the electricity shortage, the visitor cannot easily find his way inside 'Ali's house as "it is too dark" (7). The candle 'Ali's father uses

to help the villager find his way, fails to light the outside, for the garden is enveloped “with utter darkness [...] where intertwined black leaves are grouped alongside the garden’s back fence” (8). What looks like “black leaves” at the fence foreshadows the image of the black placards which cover the fences of the families of the deceased. Darkness is sensed and traced everywhere, inside and outside. It reaches the inner selves of the parents who are plagued by the misery that darkens their life. War has changed the meaning of things at dawn which supposedly signifies a new day and hope.

The darkness which characterized wartime is followed by a constant darkness which Iraqi experienced in the 1990s due to the destruction of the major power stations in the country. In her diary Nuha al- Radi writes: “I’ve forgotten what it feels like to switch a light on” (48). Wartime darkness is also tackled by the Lebanese writer Daisy al-Amir in her novel, *fi Dawwamat al-Hub wal-Karahiyya* (*In the Vortex of Love and Hate* 1979), on the Lebanese war:

Darkness had become the norm. Days were spent in gloomy anticipation of dimly lit nights. In this darkness, actual and anticipated, she longed for light more than for any other nourishment. Even death itself was preferable in the light than in the dark [...] Yet, if the light were to return, she mused ruefully, it would be then that the grenade would fall. The anxiety was not that the enemy might see, but that the fates could not resist the joke (qtd. in cooke 129).

In wartime, when darkness permeates, light turns into a sort of dream. The delight of having some daylight is always disturbed by the “gloomy anticipation” of a longer dark night that follows shortly. However, light in wartime has become a source of menace where targets are easily located by the enemy. The character in al-Amir’s text is torn between longing for the pleasure of light and a realization that the dullness of darkness is safer.

The imagery of darkness returns throughout *The World Minus One* to “mimic the effects of trauma, for it suggests the insistent return of the event” (Whitehead 86).

Darkness intensifies the after-effect of the trauma of loss for ‘Ali’s mother which is “incomprehensible” (Caruth 6). This is obvious in her interior monologue when the mourning funeral comes to an end. ‘Ali’s mother wonders: “Why did this happen to her? And why ‘Ali? Why did the black placard announcing ‘Ali’s death climb her fence like an ominous mat that she used to see over others’ houses and thought that it would not ascend her fence as it did to the others” (29). The black placard which is used to announce ‘Ali’s death becomes a source of torment for ‘Ali’s mother. The world of objects acquires agency which is set against people’s helplessness. The image of the death placards, which are man-made like war, contrasts with the natural imagery of the “black leaves [on] the garden’s back fence” discussed earlier. The man-made emblem along with the natural leaves

symbolize the pervasiveness of death. Moreover, the black at ground level is matched by blackness in the sky:

A layer of black smoke dominated Baghdad. Then, a giant black cloud overshadowed the ground that looked dark and dull. The colour, the taste and the smell of smoke are carried by the wind from every corner. When the forty-three bombing days ended, the sky poured a black rain which left black stains over the fences and the roofs of houses (59).

As a result of the explosions as well as the burning of the oil wells in the south of Iraq a black cloud results in “black rain” which stains the walls of the buildings.

“Black lines trickle down from top to bottom. The city is wearing a jailbird’s pajamas, like a scene in a Disney cartoon from the days of black-and-white television” (Khedayri 3). As such, “the black cloud” and the “black rain” which envelope Baghdad do not only symbolize the pollution that the war has brought, but also the latter’s all-encompassing nature.

The colour black which engulfed Baghdad, the walls of the buildings and the hearts of the inhabitants fills ‘Ali’s father’s heart, from the beginning of the story, with a feeling of dread. With the arrival of the villager in the dark dawn, ‘Ali’s father feels that dawn is “so mysterious and frightful” (11). ‘Ali’s father’s fears and worries continue throughout the narrative to indicate the endless state of grief. While contemplating the cemetery, in which his son is buried, ‘Ali’s father remembers:

When the war with Iran started, ‘Ali was only fourteen and no one would have ever thought that this boy would witness another war and be the first to be buried in the cemetery [...] After ten years, the cemetery has

become full of tombstones of young men as young as ‘Ali [...] queuing to find their places in this desolate wilderness (42).

Here, the personal loss of ‘Ali is aligned with the losses of all the “young men” buried in the cemetery. The cemetery that was empty ten years ago has been filled with the tombs of young men and will remain open for the coming lines of men who are waiting for their turn to be buried. The young men “queuing” for a place in the “wilderness,” ‘Ali’s father’s cautious decision to open the tomb to verify the body and the narrator’s comment that “The tomb is opened and will be widely opened in the father’s head forever” (90) make clear the impossibility of closure.

According to Brooks open closure “should neither complete the plot nor provide unraveling for the whole complication” (94) and this is the case here. ‘Ali’s mother’s efforts to connect with her son do not end and the women’s lament over their losses do not cease. ‘Ali’s father’s worries and wonderings that obsess him throughout the text do not settle at the end of the text. They rather grow larger and become more poignant as we reach the narrative’s finale. The state of unresolvedness which characterizes Maysalun Hadi’s *The World Minus One* is also found in Hadiyya Husayn’s *Beyond Love* which engages with how war shapes the survivors’ lives and destinies.

3.8 Hadiyya Husayn's *Beyond Love*

Husayn's *Beyond Love* addresses the experience of women leaving their country for a safe haven. The survivors of war and dictatorship are obliged to relive the experiences of horror and deprivation in an exilic space which, contrary to what they thought, neither provides healing for their wounds nor offers consolation. In an interview, Husayn said: "War was all that I saw when I was in Iraq. I knew no other language but that of guns and the black smoke of wars which I am still breathing. I cannot detach myself from war and I consider myself a war writer" (Email Interview with 'Abdullah, 17 Nov. 2011).⁵¹ Husayn left Iraq in 1999 and settled in Amman until she got asylum in Canada. About her experience in exile, the writer states:

I left Iraq in 1999 but I continue writing about the wars that ruined Iraq and deformed its beauty. In exile, I have become closer to my country because I enjoy a sense of freedom of expression. I wrote about the previous wars, dictatorship, the militarization of life, the men who disappear in the underground cells and the hidden crimes of the regime (Interview with Qaww'Ali, 2013).⁵²

⁵¹ Hadiyya Husayn was born into a poor family and lived in a destitute area in Baghdad which the writer considers as the birthplace of her writing. Due to the difficult economic situation of her family, Husayn could not continue her study at university. In 1973 she started working at Baghdad's Radio and continued for 17 years. Husayn also worked in the Iraqi Media. She started writing during the First Gulf War and published her first anthology in 1993.

⁵² Hadiyya Husayn has published several novels: *A'a tather Niyabatan A'nk* (I Apologize on Your Behalf 1993), *Qaba qawsein menni* (Just around the Corner 1998), *Bnt al- Khan* (The Neighborhood's Daughter 2001), *Wa telka qadheyatun okhra* (That's another Issue 2002), *Kul shay' a'la ma yuram* (Everything is Fine 2002), *fi al Tareeq elayhim* (On the Way to Them 2004), *Zujaj al- Waqt* (The Glass of Time 2006), *Shababeek: Qira'at fi al qessa wal -Riwaya* (Windows:

Exile offered Husayn the freedom of speech which was curtailed in Iraq during the rule of Saddam Husayn. The freedom she has in describing the atrocities of Saddam's government are traced in most of her war writings published outside of Iraq. This is the case with *Beyond Love* which was written in "Amman in the years 2001-2003" (Husayn 180). The novel bears some resemblance to the real life of the writer, especially the details about the assassination attempt which Husayn survived, her escape to Amman and her asylum in Canada.

The central character's name Huda is reminiscent of the writer's name, Nadiya's freedom in writing her memoir in exile resembles Hadiyyah's situation. However, *Beyond Love* cannot be reduced to a biographical fiction. I argue that this novel too traces the open-ended suffering of traumatized characters beyond the singularity of the individual within the framework of war in order to critique the tyranny of the Iraqi political regime and its war agendas. Leaving their country becomes the only means for these women to figure their agency and to defy the status quo. However, the haven to which they escape is not without cost.

In examining *Beyond Love* I focus on the way narration of traumatic personal experiences of violence helps unveiling a history of a nation in a continuous state

Readings in Fiction 2007), *Matar Allah* (*The Rain of God* 2008), *al -Bait al Maskoon* (*The Haunted House* 2008) and *Nisa' al- A'tabat* (*Women of the Thresholds* 2009).

of turmoil. Brown (105) and Haaken (34) argue that trauma can either be a sign of a new wound or a reopening of an old wound. In this text, I develop Brown's and Haaken's ideas. I explore how the experience of exile, does not only open a "new wound" but obscures the present and victimizes those survivors by means of the memory which "reopens old wounds" that they cannot escape. This situation puts them into unending "paradox of survival" (Lifton xi). To enable a discussion of these points, I examine how the narrative technique participates in bridging the gap between present and past and between the private and the public sorrows with the effect that "While war, as a historical event enters the realm of the personal, the personal is in its turn historicized" (Ben Driss 169).

3.6 The Narrative Technique

In her *Trauma Fiction* Whitehead suggests that fiction changed by its encounter with trauma. To represent trauma in their narratives, novelists tend to mimic its forms and symptoms (3). As defined by Caruth, trauma refers to a "belated" event that cannot be fully understood at the time of the occurrence as it is characterized by fragmentation, repetition and flashbacks (4). Imitating traumatic features requires a form that discards the conventional linear form of sequencing events by representing the influx of the past into the present (Whitehead 3). The influx of past into present and the continuous shift in place characterize *Beyond Love*. The

narrative moves between Amman as a site of displacement and Baghdad as a site of misery. Yet, the displaced immigrants long to go back to it. Huda's thoughts shift between these two locations while digging in her own memory. The narrative is divided into two time frames, the time of the tragedy from inside Iraq and that of exile outside it. The novel starts with Huda in Amman⁵³ and finishes with her, at the airport about to travel to the United States. Huda, the central character and narrator, narrates her story and those of others through daydreams, interior monologues, and letters.

The novel opens with "This is everything," (1) a phrase uttered by Huda while examining the few things Nadiya left after her death by a car accident in Amman. Among the objects Nadiya left is her "notebook of memories" which works as an embedded narrative with its stories that take the reader into a journey in time and place. As such, the notebook not only helps to bring Nadiya back to the narrative but it helps to present a chain of war stories within the framework of the main story and connects different times before and after the war to portray the unfinished paradox of survival. In the following sections I examine Huda's story of the past and Nadiya's memories in order to show how the two narratives mingle to reflect the endless sorrow of survivors. I also examine how the present reality of exile,

⁵³ During the First Gulf War and after it opened its doors to Iraqis, Amman was the only place which allowed Iraqis to enter its territories without the need for a visa.

described by Huda, becomes an extension of survivors' past trauma and signifies a shared experience of unresolvedness.

3.7 Huda's and Nadiya's Stories of the Past

Huda describes her meeting with Nadiya for the first time in Amman: "Our encounter in Amman was unexpected [...] It was as if each of us wanted to release a cry [...] We didn't know whether the source of our tears was the joy of the encounter or the sadness about what we had left behind" (Husayn 2-3). An unexpected meeting in exile becomes a source of "joy" for the exiled women who were separated by the widespread confusion in Iraq. But, the same meeting is also a source of "sadness" for Huda who finds out about Nadiya's traumatic losses. In their conversation before she dies, Nadiya tells Huda: "I have lost everything. They killed my brother, Nadir. My mother died of grief [...] two months after him. And the man I loved disappeared somewhere in this world" (15-16). Huda becomes a witness to Nadiya's testimony about the losses of her brother who was tortured to death in prison, her mother who died of grief and her lover who went missing after the Intifada. Caruth suggests that traumatic narratives imply a kind of double telling in that they are not only about the agonizing nature of the events but also about the agony of survival (7). Nadiya's life's crisis prompts her to escape. But Nadiya's successful escape to Amman does not enable her to escape the past.

Thinking of their mutual destinies, Huda takes the reader from Amman back to Iraq when she was working with Nadiya in al-Amal (hope) factory:

There was no hope in the Factory of Hope. Just a group of women looking for daily bread dipped in misery after the loss of opportunities, the lengthy siege, and the destruction of the country: pseudo women sitting behind deaf machines that devoured their lives and shrank their faces (6).

The word “hope” in the name of the factory is ironic since the condition of the women workers indicates a state of hopelessness. In these lines, the writer attributes the “misery” of women to the wars and sanctions which ruined the country and led to the loss of the men. With the absence of men, women have become the sole breadwinners for their families. Moreover, the absence of men reduces women’s chances of finding a husband and having a family which is referred to in the text by the “loss of opportunities.” Working in a factory for men’s underwear reinforces the absence of men in their lives. The desperation and the loneliness of the women in the factory, their boring daily routines transform their lives into a kind of void or death-in-life. The ghost-like condition of the women is reflected in their features and their faces which “shrank” with desolation. The lengthy time the women spend behind the noisy sewing machines turns them into machine-like human beings whose sorrows and cries are unheard by the “deaf” machines. The “deafness” of the machines could also refer to the war machinery

which continues in “devouring” people’s lives. The writer describes the women workers:

Some of them were illiterate – widows, divorcees, spinsters. Others were married in name only, preferring the protection of any man just so they weren’t considered divorced. Some were young girls whose dreams were bigger than their reality. The powerful, vicious Shafiqah supervised us, acting on behalf of a man who knew less about his factory than she did (6).

The women differ in terms of their social background, age and education. But they are united by an overarching sense of lost hope. The writer’s reference to the women “married in name only” demonstrates how social limitations act against the will of the women who, despite their suffering, prefer to be with a man they do not love than “considered divorced” which is regarded as a disgrace in certain Iraqi communities. The image of the vulnerable women is juxtaposed with that of the female manager, who acts on behalf of Mr. Fatih the owner of the factory and who is portrayed as “powerful.” The name Shafiqah which means a kind woman is also ironic as it conflicts with her “vicious” nature. From time to time, Shafiqah informs the workers that the boss will lay off some of them as a result of the economic recession. She frequently reminds them of Saddam Husayn’s sayings as to the value of time: “To lose a minute of work is to lose an opportunity for progress” (8). Huda finds the saying ironic since it is by “a president who was in fact the one who stole our lives and destroyed our hopes” (8). The way Shafiqah oppresses and intimidates the women workers inside this “humid room” (4) sets up the factory as

a microcosm of Iraq where people have lost all hope for a better future after being subjected to violence and tyranny at the hands of a dictatorial government. The notion of the factory as a miniature version of the political situation is depicted in the following episode:

Over time, we had become weaker parts of the machines. Sometimes we forced a laugh, but it vanished immediately, or we voiced our complaints but never received a response. The floating flannel particles clung to our clothes and our eyelashes, dulling the shine in our eyes. And whenever Shafiqah wanted to punish one of us, she would assign that woman to the storage room to find the damaged pieces and repair what could be repaired. The storage room was just seven by five feet, with no other opening than the door. The ventilation was very bad, the light scarce and the humidity suffocating. We used to call it the “prison cell” (12-13).

The notion of the women as “weaker parts of the machines” that can be replaced is reminiscent of the previous image of the women working behind “deaf” machines which do not respond to their feelings. These images articulate the way women were used to serve the purposes of the war economy by the government of Saddam Husayn during the embargo years. The detail of the “flannel particles” of “men’s underwear” that hung on the women’s “clothes and eyelashes” and “dull the shine” in their eyes suggests how women’s identities are obscured by men in a male-dominated society.

Despite the inhuman situation the women experience in their workplace, they persist and struggle to provide a living. Moreover, they prove more capable than

the men, as evident in Shafiqah being described as acting “on behalf of a man who knew less about his factory than she did” (6). She is constructed as a war profiteer:

Shafiqah, who had much experience in the market, never missed an opportunity to benefit from small pieces of fabric. She asks us to collect these pieces in bags after the selection process. Then she would sell them to the Dushma factories on her own initiative, not Mr. Fatih’s, because he never thought about taking such measures (13).

Shafiqah, commanding the women to collect “small pieces of fabric” to be sold to

Dushma factories (upholstery factories) for profit depicts a small-scale-version of

the way in which war-profiteers thrive. However, Shafiqah’s “initiative, not Mr.

Fatih’s” in collecting and selling the fabric’s leftovers constructs women as

entrepreneurial. This undermines the view of the government towards women’s

role which, was diminished in the 1990s, encouraging women to leave the

workforce in favour of the men returnees and to act as wives and mothers only.

While depicting the condition of women in the factory Huda shifts to read through

Nadiya’s diary which locates Huda as a witness to her friend’s wounded memory.

The diary begins with a day in 1963 when Nadiya’s mother was in labour while her

father was worried that the coming baby would be another dead girl added to the

first three who died at birth. Nadiya describes the way her father “waited tight-

lipped behind the door, his heart heavy with grief” (27) when the midwife hands

him a female baby. After a few minutes, the midwife hands the father Nadiya's twin brother:

He felt such strength that he almost fainted [...] he had thought that every female birth was equivalent to death. He was sure that if there had been a male baby among the four births, that son would have held on to life. But the days deceived my father, for he himself died a year after our birth. I survived, and a male in the family died (28).

Nadiya's father's reaction is common in some areas where a male baby is regarded as a source of honor and power and a female baby is a symbol of shame. Nadiya's life is shaped by bitterness from the very first day in her life due to the fact that she is marginalized as a female: "she already realized that from that moment on she was a surplus" (28). Her father's death leaves the family destitute. Yet, his death followed by her uncle's, who is killed during the Intifada of the 1990s, proves her father's misjudgement in that Nadiya, "the equivalent of death," (28) survives when the males die. Her twin brother Nadir also dies, unfairly imprisoned during the sanctions and brutally killed by the government for a failed attempt to set fire to the prison where he and many other men were detained during the Intifada. At the cemetery, Nadiya meditates:

Where are you father? [...] Nadir and I used to crawl together toward you to get close to your warm lap. You would take him into your arms and give him so many cuddles and kisses, but ignore my fingers playing with your toes. I didn't cry despite my disappointment. Perhaps I hid my tears for some other time [...] Here you sleep in this cemetery, and Nadir's grave is being dug next to yours (56-57).

In Hacking's definition of trauma a reference is made to trauma as a "wound to the soul" (4) which is hard to cure. This is the case with Nadiya. The years that have passed have not wiped away the image of Nadiya's father ignoring her while showering her brother with his love and care. The feeling of disappointment at her father's attitude is present in Nadiya's consciousness to indicate the prejudices that favour males on spurious grounds. Contrary to her father's assumption and the cultural supremacy of males, it is actually some women who survive.

LaCapra argues that "the apparent reliving of the past, as a witness, means going back to an unbearable scene, being overwhelmed by emotion and for a time unable to speak" (131). Witnessing social injustice and subsequent losses bears heavily on Nadiya who becomes "withdrawn" (4). During her first meeting with Huda at the factory: "She used to sit away from the others during the break [...] I also noticed her distraction when she spoke or was spoken to [...] as if she were sick [...] she seemed like an incomprehensible book [...] But this would last only a few seconds" (4). Nadiya's state of withdrawal and distraction is due to the "incomprehensibility" (Caruth 6) of her trauma which "is not addressed to anybody [as] it is a solitary activity" (van der Kolk and van der Hart 163) that takes place on the unconscious level due to the burden of her testimony.

Dori Laub argues that the listener to the testimony of the traumatized should not only hear the language spoken in the testimony but the silences and the gaps that intervene the language spoken, and should encourage the traumatized (70-71) because this therapeutic listening, as Herman suggests, “can actually produce a change in the abnormal processing of the traumatic memory” (183). In contrast to Laub’s and Herman’s views, I argue that testifying to the tragedies does not change Nadiya’s condition. Instead, her traumatic symptoms continue throughout the text and become more poignant. When, later, Huda asks her about the condition of her brother’s death Nadiya “was absorbed; thousands of sharp blades seemed to pierce her heart, and her eyes remained full of tears [...] A cloud passed over her eyes, and she looked absent-minded, as if her soul had been pulled out of her body. Then she seemed to wake up suddenly, as if from an oppressive nightmare” (18-19).

When the two friends meet in Amman, Nadiya tells Huda: “Do you know Huda, what hurts us [...] is not just exile, but our bleeding memory [which] digs deeply now and reshapes the past like an enemy laying an ambush” (18). LaCapra emphasizes how the original experience of pain is translated into emotional trauma through the role of memory (26) in that physical removal from the place of the continuing miseries does not equal the removal of memory which becomes the new “enemy.” It also signifies the way these characters become “obsessed with and fixated on their memories (LaCapra 12). Nadiya’s use of “us” and “our bleeding

memory” denotes a mutual feeling of helplessness in the face of the invasion of memory. It also indicates the way Nadiya’s traumatic past resembles Huda’s and how their present is made similar through their physical escape. As Huda is engaged with following Nadiya’s story of survival before leaving Iraq, she suddenly shifts to describe her own hazardous journey from Baghdad to Amman giving the reader an account of the present.

3.8 Huda’s Account of the Present

Escaping Iraq with a forged passport: “The checkpoints were endless: rapid questions and strange looks [...] cold [...] fear [...] heavy hours [...] until we reached Tribil, the last station [...] I was terrified, and my fear felt like sharp canine teeth” (35-36). Huda’s fear of being chased by the government is aggravated by her panic that her travel documents get suspected of being forged which, if discovered, would double her punishment. When the car finally reaches Amman, Huda describes herself: “I stretched to my full length and felt alive. Only a few hours earlier I’d been shrunken and scared [...] Getting out of the car was like a new birth, and I was taking my first steps”(37). Huda’s stretching and feeling “alive” produces an image of physical release. Edward Sa’id argues that “exile is strangely compelling to think about but terrible to experience. It is the unhealable rift forced between a human being and a native place, between the self and its true home”

(137). The physical release Huda experiences “like a new birth” lasts only for a short while and is soon interrupted by her feeling of loneliness mainly for the feeling of uprootedness she experiences away from her “true home.”

Huda finds herself living in a small room in a busy street in Amman. To reach her room, Huda “had to climb 120 steps,” (38) a process which intensifies her segregation. Huda’s loneliness is intensified by her failure to contact her grandmother and her fiancé who failed to join her. Huda describes her long days as follows:

My days moved like a tortoise with flabby legs. I spent that time doing nothing, either in my room or the refugees’ office or wandering around town, talking to myself [...] I was feeling burdened and confused [...] My head was stuffed with memories. Yusif’s face and my grandmother’s alternated in my head, consuming me. The alleys I had walked in Baghdad shone in my memory. I was drawn to the ebb and flow of the Tigris on whose banks I had been born [...] Then I would enter Imam Musa al-Kadhem’s shrine through the al-Murad Gate. Women would be buying a miracle product for their problems: a mixture made out of dried grapes, chickpeas, and sweet citrus. I would wander about with filling myself with good smells, passing my hands along the fence. Different coloured tissues and strings would be knotted around the window in the hope that the Imam would untie the knots and remove the sorrow (61).

The image of a “tortoise with flabby legs” describes the slow motion of Huda’s days. The only consolation for Huda has become remembrance. Remembering her loved ones and calling back pleasant memories from the past become her only consolation. Grace argues that the nature of memory is both fascinating and problematic, in particular the selectivity of memory (n.p.). This fusion between a

present state of alienation and a memory of a happy past intensifies the state of bewilderment in the exiled. The image of Huda's boredom while wandering through Amman is juxtaposed with two images of Huda walking in the alleys of Baghdad enjoying the sight of the river Tigris and the image of Huda entering the shrine. The ebb and flow of the Tigris "on whose banks" Huda was born resemble the perplexing emotions of Huda between her safety in Amman, her longing to be in her country and see her relatives, her loneliness, and her fear of the unknown in exile together with her uncertainty about her relation with Yusuf.

Though invoking pleasant memories works a relief, the same act becomes "problematic," in Grace's words, as it increases the feeling of nostalgia for that happy past. This also intensifies the idea of how exile constitutes a "new wound" and "reopens old wounds" which take the form of hallucinations, flashbacks and dreams triggered by incidents which more or less indirectly recall the past (LaCapra 12). Huda wishes that a miracle would take her to this shrine where she could knot one of those "coloured tissues and strings" which stand for her worries around the shrine's window so that the Imam "would untie the knots and remove the sorrow" which inhabits her.⁵⁴ Ironically, the Imam's ways proved to be ineffective in helping Huda to survive the "hell" (1) in Iraq. Similarly, exile which

⁵⁴ The shrine of Imam Musa al-Kadhem is located in al-Kadhemiyyah district in Baghdad. The shrine is well-known for its twin domes of glimmering gold. At this place Shiite Muslims seek healing, forgiveness and fulfilment of their wishes and needs.

Huda thought would work as a “miracle product,” has proved to be a “hell.” One might argue that Huda’s story of her suffering in exile and her lost love becomes Nadiya’s as both lose their lovers in war and end with an unfulfilled hope. Their story is mingled with the stories of other Iraqis who flee Iraq.

3.9 The Shared Experience of Exile

At the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in Amman

Huda meets Iraqi refugees whose stories replicate hers and Nadiya’s:

A few men leaned against the wall, and some women sat on large stones scattered randomly throughout the room. Others would walk in and out as though looking for something they had lost. There was only one story circulating among the people, though different details, the flight from hell and the lack of work opportunities in Amman. As soon as I sat next to someone, I would find myself listening to that person’s story, which which was my own (43).

Men and women are trapped in a prolonged wait at the gate of the asylum office.

Each one tells a story about surviving violence in Iraq and about facing financial

hardships in Amman and each is haunted by a feeling of uncertainty about their

unknown future. All are in a state of limbo where they can neither go back nor

move ahead. For Huda the different stories she hears are but one story which is her

own, a story that speaks about a journey from hell to hell. This creates a collective

dilemma shared by all the fugitives in Amman.

The collective dilemma is reinforced in the text when, walking down-town in Amman, Huda meets Mother Khadija, an old woman colleague from the factory. The woman is sitting on the sidewalk selling “loofahs, black bath stones, tweezers, needles and incense sticks [...] A faded cloak and intertwined wrinkles like an old tree-that was Mother Khadija” (143-44). When Huda asks what brought her to Amman, “With the corner of her cloak, she was wiping tears. What could I do? I found myself destitute after the fire at the Factory of Hope” (144). The burning of the factory which was the only source of livelihood for Mother Khadija left her “destitute.” This burning symbolizes the burning of hope for a better future which was already lost in the war. It also refers to the fire of “hell” in Iraq which provoked people to escape. The image of Mother Khadija sitting on “the sidewalks” in Amman with her “faded cloak” and selling scant merchandise is demeaning for this woman who belongs to a culture that would not normally tolerate such a situation for women. It references an earlier image of an old Iraqi woman Huda found on a sidewalk “arranging her merchandise on a black rug [...] All of a sudden, though, she shook herself gathered her goods, and disappeared up an alley, saying, ‘The police, the police.’ There was nothing left in her place except her shoes. She hadn’t had time to put them on”(129-130).

The tragedy of these old women is not that they are forced to sell their cheap commodities illegally, barely covering their daily needs and the manner the

Jordanian police sweeping them away, but it is the humiliation they have to go through at their age and their fear of dying alone away from their relatives and friends. When Huda visits Mother Khadija who is ill from sitting for long hours on the sidewalks in cold weather, she tells her: "The idea of dying here frightens me. What do you think should I die here? [...] I just want to reach Baghdad; then I don't care" (149). The old woman who escaped from poverty in Iraq realizes that the refuge she sought simply produces alienation and decides to return to the burning fire of Iraq.

The safe haven that the women characters were after ends in a fire which engulfs their hopes just as the fire that swallowed the Factory of Hope. Nadiya's death in Amman, Huda's loneliness and her desolate wait for the asylum decision, the financial hardships faced by the Iraqi fugitives and their prolonged wait at the gate of the refugees' office, the humiliation of the women sellers on sidewalks and Mother Khadija's fear of dying alone away from her country all indicate that flight imposes its own hardships, displacing individuals in every respect, not just geographically, but socially and economically

In describing Holocaust narratives, Langer suggests that: "In collapsing chronology and refusing the coherence of closure, survivors seek to reflect their own experience of rupture" (92). The intertwined nature of the agonies caused by war is

articulated through this kind of fragmented narrative. Continuous shifts in time and place and the resemblance in the destinies of the characters create a feeling of circularity and repetition in the narrative. This circularity “fosters a sense of openness and enigma, as when someone goes around in circles aimlessly, and always returns empty-handed” (Taha 9). This establishes an unbroken link between private memory and collective history and transforms the narrator into a historian “as the author who narrates the history” (Munslow 5).

When Nadiya writes her diary, she offers a narrative about a history of violence that engulfed her loved ones and troubled her soul. In other words, in writing about history Nadiya creates “a semiotic representation that encompasses reference to it, an explanation of it and a meaning for it” (Munslow 9). When Huda bequeathed her friend’s memoir, she becomes a witness to a personal history of loss which she identifies with. Narrating Nadiya’s story, her story and the stories of the refugees enable Huda to become a historian too. Despite the differences in these stories/histories all characters seem to share one story/history of a traumatic past that they wish to escape but fail.

However, these characters enjoy the sense of freedom that they were deprived of in Iraq. The freedom which induces Nadiya and Huda to tell their stories in exile after years of silence encourages the men and women, lining up at the gate of the

refugees' office in Amman, to exchange their stories without fear. It is the same freedom of speech which encourages the writer herself to write stories of the anguish caused by wars as "these stories are all that we have. We ought to repeat them again and again in order to bear witness to the age of butcheries" (Husayn 18).

3.10 Conclusion

In her short story "Ramad Nadi" (Wetted Ash) about the First Gulf War, Irada al-Jabburi writes: "I observed them taking off adhesive tapes from windows and doors, removing the dust and the fragments of glass. Who gathers the fragments inside us?" (3). After the First Gulf War, Iraqis began clearing out the broken pieces of their doors and windows. But they had no means of cleaning up the scars in their souls. This is underlined in the narratives of the 1990s.

The writings of the 1990s focus on the large-scale destruction the wars caused and portray the effects of the 13 years of sanctions on the lives of Iraqis. This work is described by the Iraqi writer Lutfiyya al-Dulaymi as a "text of resistance" (Interview with Kurayshan, 2 Oct. 2000) where an expression of clinging to life, against the death brought by the US-imposed embargo, is associated with a resistance to the Iraqi policy of waging war. Resistance in the texts I analyse is articulated against the way the political conflict is gendered to serve the machinery

of war which “devoured [women’s] lives and shrank their faces” (Husayn 6). In these texts, women are in constant struggle against loss, dictatorship, poverty, men’s dominance and the uncertainty and seclusion of their exiles.

The act of resistance is also embodied in the writer’s attempt to critique the policy of the Iraqi government in propagating war and the tyranny of the ruling regime.

The World Minus One destabilizes the notion of the “martyr” which was politically propagated by the Ba‘th regime to elevate the death of soldiers in war in its attempt to persuade Iraqis to participate in these wars. In Hadi’s text, the theme of death gains a complex meaning through showing human bodies as degraded to the level of animals since the human body becomes similar to a carcass in the awful smell it produces. The image of ‘Ali’s corpse as a carcass, which recurs in the text, undermines the ideal of the soldier/ martyr.

In *Beyond Love*, whose exiled writer enjoys the freedom of uncovering the brutality of the Ba‘th regime in punishing its opponents, the writer mocks the false democracy in the country. In the text, Huda describes the way elections work:

They made us crawl to the polls to write just one word, “Yes.” We were to write it in support of a president who had no rival [...] When I told him my idea, [my cousin] assured me that even if the entire people said “No,” the result would indisputably be “Yes.” Nevertheless, I was stubborn, and I wrote “No” (20).

The image of the people forced to write “Yes” for a “president who had no rival” and the forgone conclusion of the election outcome displays the dishonesty of these elections which are fabricated in favour of the president. Huda’s fear of a possible punishment after writing “No” and her escape are evidence of the fake democracy in which Iraqis are punished for expressing their views. But this escape signifies strength and determination.

In the narratives of the 1990s women are portrayed as powerful and determined to survive their wounds. In *The World Minus One*, the female character proves to be more able than her husband to put up with the loss of her son. ‘Ali’s mother’s means of creating contact with her dead son help to alleviate her suffering. The wound remains open for ‘Ali’s father whose mind is governed by fears and doubts. In *Beyond Love* Huda’s “stubborn” attitude towards electing Saddam Husayn, her decision to leave Iraq and her choice of applying for asylum are indications of a strong-minded character. Nadiya’s escape from the “tragedy that wears [her] like clothing” (18) and the writing of her memoirs are how she tries to make herself visible after years of social and political oppression. Other female characters in the text decide to flee the homeland. Their escape is a cry against the ruling regime which aborted their dreams and against the patriarchal culture which oppressed them. In exile, they confront a difficult reality which opens the door for a new suffering.

In these texts Iraqis are represented as sufferers of ceaseless pain in the “age of crisis” (Sarmak 13-14). Characters suffer for their loss which spoils their lives and turns survival into an “unbearable” (Caruth 7) experience. In *The World Minus One*, the only son is killed in war leaving the parents in a state of perpetual mourning. In *Beyond Love*, Huda and Nadiya lose their loved ones and their hope and escaped Iraq. The harrowing war conditions accompanied by the severity of the embargo produce what Stewart calls “post-traumatic narratives” (6). The word “post” refers to the delayed effect of trauma which appears in the form of nightmares at a later stage. In these war narratives the survivors are portrayed as traumatized by their own survival. When one dies the others “savour life in his place” (Mikha’il 18). Their traumas are represented in the form of a disturbed memory, day dreams, and nightmares. Despite the fact that “trauma challenges representation in language,” (Laub 70) writers in the texts I examined used certain narrative techniques to imitate the effects of trauma on the characters/witnesses.

In both texts, continual grief is addressed by means of a narrative of open closure, where the final statement neither answers the characters’ concerns, nor puts an end to the narrative, leaving the reader to consider a possible ending. *The World Minus One* ends at a moment of indecision: ‘Ali’s father’s grief gets “complicated” (Herbert n.p.) as he considers the possibility of opening his son’s tomb to find an answer to his uncertainties, but in the context of this bleak and indeterminate story

it also seems like an impossible action. Doubt and uncertainty seem to be the only truths, and they both haunt and structure the narrative. *Beyond Love* closes with Huda at the airport carrying her bag towards another exile: “The exile I had suffered would be a mere rehearsal for longer days that would begin tomorrow” (Husayn 167). Huda thus takes on the story Nadiya left behind, with questions about Huda’s destiny left open. The narrative closes with Huda reciting lines by an Iraqi poet who departed thirty years previously: “Oh, morning of Baghdad, farewell. I’m entering exile” (168).

In this unfulfilled closure the destinies of victims/survivors are united. On the one hand, many such as ‘Ali, have lost their lives in war. On the other hand, ‘Ali’s parents, as well as many other characters are all victims who have to pay a price for their survival. What unites these survivors is that they are tormented by their “paradox of survival” (Lifton xi). The absence/presence of their loved ones haunts them and spoils their lives. Describing Holocaust narratives, Primo Levi argues that “the scars of the outrage would remain within us forever, and in the memories of those who saw it and in the places where it occurred and the stories that we should tell of it” (177). Levi suggests that the wounds of traumatic events are very difficult to remedy. Yet, we “should tell” them.

In *Beyond Love* exile offers Nadiya the opportunity to testify to the events she witnessed about a country plagued by dictatorship and war. The memories of the tragedies in Nadiya's memoir neither fade nor change through the act testimony. Instead, they stay alive and help trigger a sequence of related stories in the memory of Huda who is placed as a secondary witness to this history. By unearthing the past stories in Nadiya's memoirs Huda not only revives the memories of the lost, but she locates the whole narrative within the bloody history of Iraq.

In a sense, Huda's position resonates with that of Hadiyya Husayn who fled dictatorship and wars. Husayn states: "War was all that I saw when I was in Iraq," (Email Interview with 'Abdullah, 17 Nov. 2011) and Nadiya's first-hand experience of loss reiterates Maysalun Hadi's description of her novella which is "based on a real story about one of my colleagues. Yet, its emotional side belongs to me as I have experienced the loss of my brother" (Interview with 'Abdullah, 5 Nov. 2011). These stories also concern us as "the world of the text is related to the reader's world" (Ricoeur 188-189). In these narratives writers narrate a history burdened with agony, marginalization, displacement and alienation as they realize that fictional narrative has a greater capacity to represent this history. By creating a "semiotic representation of history," (Munslow 5) these writers renovate the factual and the affective dimension of events and become historians who save the stories

of the victims/survivors from being lost. Their work provides a testimonial narrative of the stories of generations that “are missing” (Antoon 2013).

Chapter Four: A Death Deferred in the Narratives on the Occupation of 2003.

I see a horizon lit with blood,
and many a starless night.
A generation comes and goes,
and the fire keeps burning (qtd. in Mehta 79).⁵⁵

In these lines the Iraqi male poet al-Jawaheri, active in politics since the ascension of King Faysal to the throne in 1921, expresses cynicism at the instability that characterizes the history of the political situation in Iraq. The image of the “fire” that “keeps burning” in the last line symbolizes the poet’s vision of the continuity of Iraq’s violent history. The narratives I examine in this chapter articulate that continuity in Iraq in 2003, already poeticized by al-Jawaheri many years before. I examine Iqbal al-Qazwini’s *Shubak Zubayda: Riwayat al-Manfa al-Iraqi* (*Zubayda’s Window: A Novel of Iraqi Exile* 2008) and Lutfiyya al-Dulaymi’s *Sayyidat Zuhail: Sirat Nas wa Madina* (*Women of Saturn: Biography of a People and a City* 2010). Both texts have autobiographical origins in that both writers survived wars. In both texts, women who survive war go through what Derrida

⁵⁵ These lines are from the poem “al-Dam Yatakallam” (“Blood Speaks”) by the Iraqi poet Muhammad Mahdi al-Jawaheri born in Iraq in 1899. Known for his opposition to the Iraqi government of the 1960s and the subsequent Ba’th government, al-Jawaheri was exiled. He died in Syria in 1997.

terms “an unexperienced experience of death” (91).⁵⁶ In these texts, I explore the way women’s deferred death allows them to be secondary witnesses (LaCapra 11-14) to war and occupation so as to narrate history. In *Zubayda’s Window* narration does not provide a healing to the traumas of characters. This contradicts LaCapra’s suggestion that historical trauma can be healed (13). However, in *Women of Saturn* narration plays an essential role in suggesting a possible rebirth to Baghdad.

Before analyzing these texts in detail, I shall outline the political background to the US-led occupation of Iraq and the effect of this occupation on Iraq’s economy, education and health. I examine the impact of the occupation, along with the subsequent sectarian troubles, on Iraqis and especially on Iraqi women. I look at the way ethnic conflict involves Iraqi writers and how literary production is affected by all this.

4.1 The Political Context

During 2002 the US government made it clear that overthrowing Saddam Husayn was a key objective. It accused Iraq of using and developing weapons of mass destruction (WMD) – chemical, biological weapons and missiles of a certain range

⁵⁶ Blanchot’s narrative concerns a moment when a young man is brought before a firing squad during World War II and then suddenly finds himself released from his near death. Blanchot’s prose text along with Jacques Derrida’s 100- page lecture “Demeure” are published in Jacques Derrida’s *The Instant of My Death*, 3-11.

– and of having connections with terrorist organizations, especially al-Qaeda.⁵⁷ The supposed Iraqi possession of WMD constituted a violation of UN Security Council 1441 and forced disarmament was propagated as the necessary action.⁵⁸ At this time, a massive military build-up took place in Kuwait and in some of the Kurdish-controlled Iraqi areas in Kurdistan. By early March 2003 there were around 250,000 American and British soldiers in the Middle East (‘Abdullah 204). On 19 March 2003, President George W. Bush announced the beginning of Operation Iraqi Freedom, which aimed to free Iraq from Saddam Husayn and to extinguish Husayn’s ability to develop WMD and pose a threat to the world. The invasion of Iraq began on 20 March 2003. During the 21 days of combat operations, a combined force of troops from the United States, the United Kingdom, Australia and Poland – known as the Coalition forces – invaded Iraq. The military campaign commenced with heavy bombardment – named “Shock and Awe” by the US administration – against Baghdad where 600 cruise missiles were launched and 1500 missions flown, with 700 strike aircraft hitting 1000 targets (Murray and Scales 169). The Coalition forces fought against an Iraqi army that was “a shadow of what it had been in 1991” (Stansfield 159). The eight-year war of the 1980s with

⁵⁷ In 2004, the Central Intelligence Agency released a report saying that no weapons of mass destruction had been found in Iraq. See Borger 2004.

⁵⁸ See *Journal of Conflict and Security Law*, n.d.

Iran and the subsequent Gulf War of the 1990s contributed to exhausting Iraqi fighters and to weakening the strategies of defense for the Iraqi army in a way that enabled the Coalition forces to destroy Iraq's military formations within a very short time.

By 9 April Baghdad was under the control of the US military. A few hours after capturing Baghdad the statue of Saddam Husayn was brought down in Firdaws Square. The symbolic toppling of the statue marked the end of the reign of Saddam Husayn. In her *Baghdad Burning: A Girl Blog from Baghdad* (2005) Riverbend recounts April 9:

For me, April 9 was a blur of faces distorted with fear, horror, and tears. All over Baghdad you could hear shelling, explosions, clashes, fighter planes [...] Whether you loved Saddam or hated him, Baghdad tore you to pieces. Baghdad was burning. [It] was a day of harried neighbors banging on the doors, faces so contorted with anxiety they were almost without recognition. "Do we leave? Do we evacuate? They sound so close" (29).

Despite the fact that many Iraqis were extremely frightened and suspicious of the possible outcome of the occupation, they also hovered between hope and doubt not only about the outcome of the war but also about the US long-term objectives promoted as democracy, human rights, and freedom. In an interview al-'Ali conducted with Widad, an Iraqi woman in London, this woman said:

I am under no illusion that the Americans did this for us, for Iraqis. They want our oil and they want to control the region. I don't trust them. But at the time I felt we had no other choice. I reluctantly supported the war because I saw no way out of the horrible situation: people being caught

between Saddam and sanctions. This could not go on any more. No one wants to be occupied, but this is our chance. Things have been bad but now people have hope (217).

In spite of their realization that the Americans were after oil, many Iraqis were hopeful that their lives would become better after many years of wars and sanctions. My reaction to the invasion was slightly different, probably because I had been living away from my country since 1994. This enabled me to see the picture from a different perspective. With the disruption of telephone lines days before the invasion, television and the Jordanian newspapers were the best means of connection. The television was on almost all day and waiting for the news bulletin was my favoured task. I cannot forget the pain I felt while watching my country and people being shattered by heavy bombing and the relentless air raids. Hearing news about the bombing of my hometown Mosul would cost me long nights of fear and angst. I was extremely worried about everyone back home. The US-led invasion succeeded in putting an end to Saddam's regime, but at the same time it released a new period of desolation, violence, destitution and uncertainty for Iraqis. From the very first days following Saddam's removal, anarchy and disorder triumphed in the streets of many Iraqi cities especially Baghdad. Saddam's presidential palaces, ministries, hospitals, factories, homes, schools and shops were plundered. Many banks were also robbed by Iraqi armed groups. Worst of all was the burning of the National Library of Baghdad. Almost

nothing remains of the library's archive of thousands of manuscripts, books, and Iraqi newspapers (Burkemen 2003).

The act of burning the library was reminiscent of a similar act during the 13th century: "When the Mongols sacked Baghdad in 1258, it was said that the Tigris River ran red one day, black the other. The red came from the blood of nameless victims [...] The black came from the ink of countless books from libraries and universities" (Shadid 6). A strategy of destruction used centuries ago at the hands of an invader was repeated in 2003 at the hands of the victim.⁵⁹ Moreover, the damaging of our cultural heritage goes hand in hand with the act of killing in wartime. Neal Ascherson contends that deliberate cultural devastation of collective memory and collective physical annihilation may go together in that the first becomes an initial phase of the second (25).

The relatives and friends whom I met in Jordan in 2004 spoke about the sluggishness of the US troops in stopping the burning of the National Library and the looting of the Iraqi National Museum and described them as "spectators" and "onlookers" whose role was to encourage the theft. Fedwa, who was in charge of the museum, told al-'Ali:

⁵⁹ On April 8 2003 Iraqi troops took up positions in the museum grounds. There is some dispute as to the identity of these troops, whether they were irregular Fedayeen or regular Republican Guards. Iraqi forces in the vicinity of the museum soon became embroiled in heavy fighting with US troops, which lasted for two days. The US commander on the spot chose not to attack the museum directly because of the damage that would be caused, and pulled his troops back. Bogdanos believes the looting in this part of the museum was carried out by local people acting opportunistically. See Stanford Archaeology Centre Reports, n.d.

I saw it with my own eyes [...] By the time, I got there it was destroyed, bombed and the looting had started. After cleaning it, we locked it. A week later they had stolen the door [...] it had a huge map of Iraq with archaeological sites on it. I found it torn with a knife [...] It is a type of mafia, directed by vicious people [...] Tanks [watched] and protected the looters (224).

The reference to “they” and the “mafia” who stole and destroyed the museum suggests that Iraqi citizens themselves were behind the plundering. This destruction is part of a systematic plan that aims at wiping out memory, history and identity where “an enforced forgetting is the goal itself” (Bevan 8).⁶⁰ This idea is present in Dunya Mikha’il’s poem “Inanna” (2006) the Sumerian queen of heaven⁶¹ addresses the looters of the Museum: “I am Inanna. And this is my city [...] I see the antiquities scattered and broken in the museum. My necklaces are among them. I yell at you: Behave, you sons of the dead! Stop fighting over my clothes and gold! How you disturb my sleep and frighten a flock of kisses out of my nation!” (11-12).

The devastation of Iraq’s heritage was accompanied by a damaged infrastructure evident in the shortage of water, constant cuts of electricity, scarcity of gas, fuel supplies and food rations. The lack of these essentials, which were already

⁶⁰ The investigation determined that there had been not one but three thefts at the museum by three distinct groups: professionals who stole several dozen of the most prized treasures, random looters who stole more than 3,000 excavation-site pieces and insiders who stole almost 11,000 cylinder seals and pieces of jewelry. The investigation also determined that the international black market in Iraqi antiquities continues to flourish. See Bogdanos 2005.

⁶¹ Inanna (Sumerian)/Ishtar (Akkadian) is among the most vital idols and the most significant goddesses of sexual love. But she is equally prominent as the goddess of warfare. In her celestial aspect, Inanna/Ishtar is the planet Venus, the morning and the evening star. See Heffron 2013.

collapsing because of the wars and the sanctions, constituted an added burden on women who had to cope with them. When I returned to Iraq in 2007, I lived in Dohuk/Kurdistan which was relatively safer than other areas in Iraq. However, I always faced the lack of water which was intolerable, especially during the summer when the temperature would rise to above 48 degrees.

With three children, it was impossible to depend on stored water alone for carrying out domestic chores plus supplying the conventional air conditioners with the necessary water. We had to purchase water from a private supplier who used to provide impure water. Moreover, the frequent cuts in electricity during the day not only prevented us from having cold drinking water and sometimes spoiled refrigerated food, but it would also stop us from using the internet, watching TV and doing other things. When the electricity stopped at night, we were prevented from having an uninterrupted sleep in a way that affected our performance the following day.

Wars and occupation make women's lives more difficult. Ironically, "women's liberty" was one of the slogans propagated by US officials in their efforts to "spread the seeds of democracy" (See Sourcewatch.org. n.d.). In her article "Staying alive" Ahdaf Soueif describes the situation of some Iraqi women whom she met in Baghdad in 2003: "They are doing what they've always done: toughing it out,

spreading themselves thin, doing their work, making ends meet, trying to protect their children and support their men, turning to their sisters and mothers for solidarity and laughs” (qtd. in Golley 187). The wars of the 1980s and 1990s and the sanctions taught Iraqi women how to deal with tough times. However, after the fall of Saddam’s regime, the situation worsened for them. A report by the Human Rights Watch in 2003 stated that more than 400 women were kidnapped for ransom, for sexual abuse, or killed after being raped and sometimes sold by anonymous groups because of the security vacuum. Accordingly, many women/girls, mainly in Baghdad, stopped going to school and even to work because of fear and insecurity. In other words, women in 2003 “became prisoners in their own homes” (Zangana 13).

However, staying indoors also proved to be unsafe for women as American soldiers would break into houses at night, intimidating women and children while arresting military-aged men at random, beating and sometimes even killing them (al-Jawaheri 141). When I visited my family in Mosul in 2005 my eldest sister described to me the brutal manner in which a group of American soldiers, searching for “resistant gangs” in the neighborhood, broke into her house during one of their night raids, creating an atmosphere of fright and worry. The soldiers entered her bedroom and searched the drawers and the wardrobe where she had hidden her jewelry along with 500,000 Iraqi Dinars which were stolen by them.

She could not claim her valuables back, not only because she had no recourse to justice amidst the chaos, but also because she was worried that this act might prompt US soldiers to intimidate and arrest her young sons.

Stories of the confiscation of valuables during raids provoked people “to think up creative [ways] to hide the money and jewelry. Neighbors and relatives would trade tips on the best hiding places” (Riverbend 101). The rage these incidents generated among Iraqis was fostered by the news of the crimes of sexual abuse against Iraqis in Abu Ghraib’s prison. The number of Iraqi widowed women grew steadily from 2003. In a report published in 2006, the Ministry of Women’s Affairs stated that there were around 300,000 widows in Baghdad and about a million widows in the country as a whole (Zangana 120). Estimates of Iraqi civilians who were killed in bomb explosions, at the hands of criminal mafia groups and because of errors of shooting by American soldiers exceeded actual Iraqi military casualties. Women and children under 15 made up some 53 percent of deaths (See CNN 2004).

Unidentified male corpses from bombings and killings were frequently thrown on street pavements or into the river. Those who remained unidentified or unclaimed by relatives were sent for burial in mass graves in Najaf, Karbala and the outskirts of Baghdad (See Iraq Body Count Report 2007).

The sight of women looking for their missing loved ones in mass graves became familiar in Iraq. This was neither due to an improvement in security conditions nor to the “liberation” of women. Rather, it had to do with the deterioration of the security situation which made men the main targets at checkpoints and entry official locations where women were “either ignored or treated with the traditional deference or sympathy by the young thugs” (Zangana 50). In this manner, women were forced to take the risk of stepping out of homes to protect men and to carry out tasks that were traditionally linked to men such as burying the dead, queuing at the gates of prisons and visiting morgues to look for their missing relatives.

However, what aggravated the situation was that the process of searching for the remains, scattered in different tombs, might take the women several days and would sometimes end with failure. The tragedy of these women is portrayed in Dunya Mikha'il's poem “Bag of Bones”: “What good luck! She has found his bones. The skull is also in the bag [...] the full bag finally in her hand, unlike her disappointed neighbor who has not yet found her own” (3-4). Locating all the body parts renders some women ironically “luckier” than others who continue to search. In a sense, the tragedy of loss becomes more bearable once a proper burial, with the whole body buried, takes place.

The loss of men was not the only challenge that women faced in 2003. The religious and tribal groups that came to the fore “opened the gates to retribalize and

resubordinate women” (Efrati171). Throughout the period of occupation, different religious extremist groups became infamous, either in their resistance to the occupation, or in terrorizing the population by carrying out random acts of killing. In many instances, ethnic cleansing and revenge stood behind the rape and killing of women. Sectarian killings of men led to the displacement of families from their homes into refugee camps inside Iraq and increased the numbers of households headed by women only (al-Jawaheri 144). The religious groups put more pressure on women by imposing the hijab (head scarf). Women covered up for invisibility, security and protection as they were often “the targets of local patriarchal forces that locate women as the upholders of family honor,” (Grace 187) extremists and the US troops who used them to access male relatives. Even non-Muslim women were forced to put on a head scarf to avoid being threatened or killed (See IRIN news 2004). Female university students, professionals and women working for humanitarian agencies became targets for fundamentalists. Female students at the University of Basra stated that groups of men stopped uncovered women on their way to university and shouted at them. Incidents of women being killed on the streets grew and started to become extremely worrying (al-‘Ali 242). In 2004, my best friend, Dr. Iman ‘Abdul Mun‘im, who was head of the Translation Department at Mosul University, was assassinated while driving to work. Being uncovered was one of the reasons behind her killing.

I had used the headscarf since the 1990s, when I was living in Mosul, and I enjoyed a relative freedom as to the type of clothes I would wear. When I moved to live in the Kurdish city of Dohuk in 2007-2009, I continued covering my hair with no restrictions on the type of dress. But whenever I decided to visit my family in Mosul, I had to wear an 'abaya (a black cloak-like dress) as walking around in a colourful dress was highly restricted. My daughter who was 13 years old in 2009, and was uncovered, had to cover her hair and wear a long-sleeved top and a long skirt instead of jeans in Mosul to avoid being targeted by conservatives. Efrati suggests that as a result of the replacement of the Personal Status Law in Iraq with Shari'a law, that eliminated the law of equal rights between men and women, Iraqi women "found themselves running just to stay in place" (Efrati 595).

In an interview I did on 15 June 2013 with an Iraqi female professor who was on a research fellowship to the UK, she contended:

Travel to and from the university where I work takes me several hours because of barracks and security check points. Every morning and afternoon hundreds of cars queue at the gate to be checked for security precautions, especially after suicidal attacks took place on campus. When the date for local elections approaches, work is disrupted for fear of possible suicidal attacks and explosions. What has inflamed the situation are the death threats against academics whose students fail courses or against those who venture to express political views. It is a vulnerable environment for Iraqis in general (Interview with 'Abdullah, 15 June 2013).

Freedom of expression was also constrained during the rule of Saddam Husayn, but people used to avoid direct criticism of the president or the symbols of the Ba‘th regime to maintain their safety. With the emergence of the extremists, sectarian militias and opposition parties the situation became more complicated in that each of these groups had its own objectives and its own followers. Sa‘ad Jawad, a professor of political sciences at the University of Baghdad, states that: “just going to university meant taking my life into my hands [...] Corruption became rampant [in that] everything had to be done through parties or militias [...] I left Iraq in 2006 when I began to lose hope” (56-59). As a result of the escalating violence, the deterioration of the educational system and the living conditions many academics were pushed to leave Iraq. The exodus of academics was accompanied by the departure of a number of intellectuals and writers as they did not want to put up with the prevalent state of chaos. The Iraqi writer Lutfiyya al-Dulaymi describes her daily life in Baghdad before leaving the country:

[When electricity is cut] I light a candle and take the risk to go out to the garden to start the generator while shivering for fear of a thief or a killer lurking in the darkness among the trees. When the generator is on, it is almost 3:00 am and I can’t go back to sleep [...] I sit at my desk to rewrite some paragraphs from my novel, I write a few pages and get drowsy again. I sleep on the big sofa in my study after shoving it away from the window to escape any possible shootings in the near street (207-208).

The lack of essentials and general insecurity rendered living a kind of risk which affected the literary production of this writer. In an interview al-Dulaymi said: “They want my head, just because I am a writer” (Interview with Shamikh, 18 May 2008). Being editor-in-chief of a cultural magazine and head of a research centre for women’s freedom made her an easy target for the militias. Besides, al-Dulaymi was also targeted for uncovering her hair: “One morning I was interrupted by a bearded man who yelled at me raising his arm as if prepared to slap me in the face saying: Cover your hair, you shameless woman, or else, we would bury your shame in death” (al-Dulaymi 211-212). The difficult life conditions, insecurity, and death threats prompted al-Dulaymi to flee in 2007.

‘Aliya’ Talib is another established woman novelist who left for Egypt. In an interview Talib explained why she left:

I was displaced while still in my country [...] I have chosen to leave Iraq to be able to comprehend the bloody scene from afar and to distinguish the killer from the victim. This distance has enabled me to write about my country which would have been impossible hadn’t I escaped the incinerator [...] In an atmosphere of desperation and lawlessness intellectuals are debilitated and would be targeted once they venture an honest word (Interview with Kadhim, 31 Oct. 2007).

‘Aliya’ Talib suggests that the atmosphere of terror and bloodshed in Iraq “displaced” her. As with many intellectuals, Talib’s exile resulted from her inability to express herself freely. Talib’s employment of the word “incinerator” refers to Iraq as a burning furnace for intellectuals. The word “incinerator” also

gestures toward the death of more than 100 journalists. In addition, the word alludes to the targeting of writers who spoke out which became a common phenomenon in Iraq after 2003. As Zangana commented “Fear is our friend and our comrade, we grew up with it, it is closer to us than anything else. We have lived so long with fear, we cannot live without it” (9).

‘Uthman al-Mukhtar, a reporter for the *Washington Post*, describes how he kept editing a story he was writing on a car bomb attack against a checkpoint in Baghdad. In describing those behind the attack the reporter had to look for a phrasing that would ensure his safety. He first used the term “terrorists,” changed it to “armed militia” and finally decided to use “gunmen” to avoid becoming their next target. al-Mukhtar argues that the situation inside Iraq is tragic:

We don't know who is threatening our lives and the red line that we must not cross. In Iraq, all news and stories can be suspected and misinterpreted, and if a story appeals to one side it certainly alienates and antagonizes the other one. We live in a state of permanent confusion in which many truths were occluded because of threats against and assassination of journalists (Iyad al-Dulaymi 2011).

The reporter suggests that when confusion prevails writing can endanger the lives of writers. The challenge writers confront is not only the censorship that curtails freedom of expression but also maintaining their safety against violence. While Iraq's 2005 constitution preserves the freedom of the press and publication unless they violate public order or morality, in 2009 the Iraqi Ministry of Culture revived regulations banning the import of books which incite sectarian grudges. These

regulations provoked critics to accuse the ministry of bringing back Saddam-era censorship (al-Ansari 2009).

In order to alleviate the difficulties of publication and its dangers, many writers published their work outside of Iraq, in Jordan, Lebanon, Egypt and Europe.

However, al-Dulaymi states that some writers continued to write and publish from inside Iraq: “some writers who stay in Iraq use pseudonyms to publish their work on the internet which is the only way to pronounce their anti-attitudes about the status quo” (Interview with Shamikh, 18 May 2008). Bushrah al-Hilali argues: “Writing is not a means of attack against a person or a group [...] My words are meant to heal the wounds of my country. I find irony the best way to describe the transformations which turned our lives into a theatre of the absurd” (Interview with Kadhim, 4 April 2012). The use of irony may not only help writers to ridicule the illogicality of the political and religious situation but also enable them to survive the brutality of the situation around them by arousing laughter in the reader.

Maysalun Hadi argues: “My latest novel *The BBC Grandson* (2011) represents the bitter reality of Iraq through irony, which is a totally new experience for me. I believe that laughter is a powerful tool in lessening grudges and illnesses” (Interview with ‘Abdullah, 24 Sept 2011).

While irony and sarcasm allow some writers inside Iraq to obscure their critique of the state, many writers in exile address these issues directly. Walters states:

“displacement creates a distance that allows writers to encode critiques of their homelands, to construct new homelands and to envision new communities” (viii). The exilic spaces of Iraqis offer them a sense of freedom where they can depict the Iraqi turmoil away from threats and censorship. However, exile as Edward Sa‘id suggests is “terrible to experience [as] its essential sadness can never be surmounted” (137). The sadness inherent in the experience of exile lies in the conflict between the desire to escape one’s country and the desire to return to it. This is found in many narratives by Iraqi exiles who try to resolve this conflict by conjuring up memories of the past (Zangana xiv). Commenting on the new generation of Iraqi writers who emerged in exile in the 1980s, Zangana writes:

Writing in exile is characterized by the dominance of memory [...] as a vital tool, enabling him or her to recreate everything that happened in the past and preserve it intact. Memory may extend to the present and may overshadow the future. For some, memory becomes life itself. Other writers are happy to visit it, using it to reflect on their bitter experiences in Iraq (xiv).

While memory in *Zubayda’s Window* plays a vital role in helping the protagonist to come to terms with her exilic experience, it also becomes a source of agony. Memory locks Zubayda into a position where her relation is to the past which requires perpetual mourning. Commenting on the dominance of memory in exile Bauman writes: “Memory is a mixed blessing [...] Memory selects and interprets, and what is to be selected and how it needs to be interpreted is a moot matter and an object of continuous contention” (86). The problem of the selectivity of memory

faces almost all the exile writers who fail to escape a terrible past while at the same time trying to invoke pleasant memories to be able to survive. In the narratives I discuss in this chapter characters find solace in resurrecting a happy past while struggling with painful memories of a past that is a replica of an even more violent present. However, narration enables the writers to mourn the loss of Iraq, to expose and condemn war and to survive war and exile.

4.2 Iqbal al-Qazwini's *Zubayda's Window*

As an active member of the Iraqi Women's League, al-Qazwini was sent to East Berlin in 1978 to participate in the International Women's Conference as a representative of the Communist Party. When Saddam Husayn became President in 1979, al-Qazwini was unable to return to her homeland. She now lives in Berlin. *Zubayda's Window* echoes the life of the writer. Apart from being the first novel in English by an Iraqi to focus on 2003 invasion, what makes *Zubayda's Window* particularly interesting is the writer's attempt to portray a tormented woman who fled Iraq but still longs for her homeland.

The novel is structured around six chapters narrated from the point of view of an extradiegetic narrator, who uses the stream of consciousness technique to follow Zubayda's reflections. In this text, I examine how Zubayda goes through the "unexperienced experience of death" (Derrida 91) by being a secondary witness to

war. Not only war but alienation and memory become her enemies in exile.

Zubayda survives to testify to the history of violence by narration. I examine how narration does not help curing Zubayda's trauma which refutes LaCapra's

suggestion that traumatic memories can be cured by "working through" them (13).

The trauma of the central character is presented by means of daydreams, flashbacks and asides, frequently disrupted by the depiction of the live images of war on her television which push her back to face the reality of her loneliness and grief over her homeland.

TV images play a vital role in the narrative. The text is structured around the interplay between the audiovisual images of war, Zubayda's memory and her present reality in exile. Action takes place in Zubayda's room in Berlin. Readers are constantly taken to Baghdad through the TV and by means of Zubayda's memory and then back to Berlin through Zubayda's window overlooking the cold city. This interplay between visual imagery and memory of the past is always intersected by Zubayda's present seclusion where she negotiates the ugly reality of war that she watches on her television screen.

I divide this part into three main sections: In the first one I discuss the function of TV war imagery in bringing war to Zubayda's room where she confronts a deferred death. I also examine the role the balcony window plays in aggravating Zubayda's isolation from the outside world and her helpless position as a secondary witness to

war. In the second section, I discuss the way Zubayda's traumatized memory of Iraq complicates her situation in exile and helps her realize the reality of the present conflict which is an extension of a troubled past. In the third section, I discuss the importance of narration in preserving memory for Zubayda who thinks that the burning of Baghdad is a burning of her memory.

4.2 War and Estrangement through the TV and the Balcony Window

From her room on the eighth floor of a building in Berlin Zubayda watches war as it unfolds on her TV. Her condition as spectator to this destruction bears heavily on Zubayda. Byerman suggests that "when loss is associated with cruelty and pain, the survivor must relive not merely the suffering of a loved one but also her own helplessness in the face of it" (29). Yet, this "helplessness" transforms into actual involvement through her TV.

The TV screen which stands as a window to war in Iraq participates in bringing this war to Zubayda's flat. She watches Baghdad "burn before her eyes and almost disappear in the fire. She sees that place as a tongue of flame moving out of the screen and settling in the sitting room. The blazing fire unites with her blazing soul" (al-Qazwini 3). Here, technology does not act as a distancing device but instead bridges the gap between viewer and view. In his *The Illusion of the End*, Baudrillard argues that the intense pace of the circulation of information in the

mass media has shattered our experience of historical events (2). That is, with the live images of war it has become difficult to locate the event in time and space without its representation. In his *The Gulf War didn't Take Place* Baudrillard contends "we are no longer in a logic of the passage from virtual to actual but in a hyperrealist logic of the deterrence of the real by the virtual" (27). Namely, the programmed news has overtaken the actual in such a way that confuses the boundaries between simulation and reality. The audience of mass media does not experience the material event but only "the structural unreality of images" (Baudrillard 46-47) which leads to a different informational object from the real whose defining features are open to interpretation. However, these images affect Zubayda somatically.

The blurring of the geographical and the imaginary spaces in the narrative is emphasized when Zubayda watches Baghdad "burns before her eyes." Baghdad's burning becomes synchronous with her "blazing soul," indicating her identification with the blazing fire that engulfs Baghdad. The distance which separates Zubayda from her country, does not stop her from experiencing the burning of her country. Pictures of the dead affect her physically. Zubayda's sickness and her disturbed breathing point to the corporal damaging impact of the war on her. She identifies with the pictures of the devastation of her country to such an extent that she feels the smoke of the blasts reach her and fill her lungs.

Zubayda's collapse while trying to clear her "smoke-choked lungs" indicates how she goes through a bodily experience that one might interpret as an "unexperienced experience of death" (Derrida 91) or dying without undergoing actual death. This dying without actual death stands in contrast to her initial position as "helpless" bystander. It locates the central character as an actual participant in this war regardless of her actual physical distance. The audio-visual imagery fuels Zubayda's imagination:

[She] imagines that huge fighter planes are approaching from the distance and entering the satellite dish through its wires. Planes drift across the open door of the balcony into her apartment, and transform into small toys. Still the noise coming from the television grants them a destructive power. She watches people screaming, children escaping out of the three eyes of the satellite dish to float away skyward as in a dream. Some of them don't manage to fly. They fall down on the smooth shiny surface of the dish. After several desperate attempts, they plunge down the eighth floor [...] she moves closer to the balcony railings and looks down [...] she looks for the children whose bodies seem to her to have hit the pavement, drenched with spring rain (2).

Vividly, planes seem to manage to move through the wires of the satellite dish into Zubayda's flat. While Zubayda conjures up planes as "small toys," the uproar produced by the planes on her TV gives "them a destructive power." Zubayda's mind flits between her visual imaginations and the auditory forces of the TV that interrupt them. Put differently, the transmission of the war views on her TV transforms Zubayda's distant flat into a war zone site. The merging of the TV visions with the figures of children struggling to escape and then falling from her

balcony to “hit the pavement” is paradoxical. On the one hand, Zubayda’s effort to imagine the figures of the planes and the children is a conscious act of evocation which alters her into a partaker in this moving scene. On the other hand, her act of standing at the balcony to “look down” at the “bodies” of falling children which “hit the pavement” places Zubayda as a helpless onlooker which intensifies her feelings of guilt for watching her homeland falling to pieces.

The balcony where Zubayda experiences war becomes her window onto a world from which she feels estranged. Agitated by the sound of blasts from her TV, “her imagination shifts among the artillery fire, the noise of planes, and the prattling of a neighbor [...] all in a country where she feels alien” (6). While imagining the fearful planes on her balcony and listening to the noise of explosions on her TV screen, Zubayda meets her next-door neighbor, a fat old man “in a good mood” (5) watering the potted flowers along the adjacent balcony rail. When he sees her, he greets her and asks timidly:

“Excuse me! Haven’t you told me some time ago that you come from Iran?” “No, -sir. I’m from Iraq.” Apologetically, he says: “Yes, yes, from over there! Please forgive me, all the names of these countries of yours are similar! [...]” “European countries are suffocating with all these new comers [...] They arrive here and [...] rob shops and homes. As soon as a German forgets to lock up his bike, he watches it moving off, ridden by an immigrant coming from such countries” (6).

The neighbor’s inability to distinguish between Iran and Iraq and his dislike of immigrants whom he considers thieves, enlarges the distance between him and

Zubayda. Though Zubayda has been living in exile for thirty years she is yet still estranged “in a country where she feels alien. Still, she carries German identity papers and a passport and feels grateful for that bit of false security” (6). Being a German national is supposed to boost Zubayda’s sense of security, but her estrangement heightens her feeling of insecurity in a way that turns exile into an enemy. In the text Zubayda’s distancing is made clear by means of the minimal conversations she has with other characters. Even when she decides to go to a coffee shop Zubayda does not enjoy the scene “for what is the pleasure in sipping a cup of coffee alone?” (15).

Zubayda “imagines herself all alone in the world, all the creatures having deserted the earth for another universe and forgotten to take her along with them” (14).

Zubayda’s loneliness is not only due to her separation from the world outside her flat but also because of the fact that she lost two of her close Iraqi friends in Berlin. To overcome her loneliness, she drifts into invoking memories of her pleasant childhood which become a means of escaping the present “[that] drops drops off like a garment she removes from her body whenever she is besieged by the details of alienation. She seeks refuge in memory whenever she feels forlorn” (27). In the text, Zubayda’s good memories are mainly about her relation with her father who used to take her “on the double-decker red bus to the theatre [...] She felt secure and happy because her father was sitting beside her” (38).

The lack of certitude in Zubayda's present explains her longing for her father's company, which implies reassurance. "On clear days, Zubayda used to walk beside her father and sometimes run ahead when he took her to the factory where he worked" (41). The feeling of security and confidence soon fades with the images of war on her screen: "she sees that the planes bombing Baghdad are burning this beautiful day as well" (42). There is nothing but temporary respite from the images of war. While good memories are very rare, the memories of the painful past cover a larger section of the text in a similar manner to the Iraqi history of long periods of political turmoil in comparison to brief peaceful epochs.

4.3 Memory of a Painful Past

Zubayda's crisis of surviving her present situation is represented in the dominance of memories of traumatic past. According to McLeod "memories banished to the unconscious do not disappear and continue to exert a powerful influence on behavior" (n.p.). The overpowering emergence of memory explains the manner by which recollections of a past ridden with anguish work against Zubayda and further her trauma. The problematic nature of memory is to do with the "unreliability of memory" (Grace 191) which invades one's mind and exert a "persistent presence in that they remain present for the subject" (Bal vii).

“Zubayda does not know the exact moment when these memories begin to take the shape of some dramatic events on a stage performed before her eyes, disappearing, and then reappearing” (7). The recurrence of the memories is compared to a stage performance where actions come and go, and where Zubayda stands as audience.

The disappearance and reappearance of her memories indicate that what is repressed in memory does not disappear but returns. This suggests that Zubayda has no command over her memories and that she becomes a victim to the assault of memory which puts her into an “oscillation” (Caruth 17) between her present and her past.

LaCapra emphasizes how “the original experience is translated into emotional trauma through the role of memory” (194). The original experience here has to do with recollecting the bad old days of political unrest in Iraq which offers her a chance to comprehend the complexities of the present realities. Schwartz and Cook contend: “We construct our collective lives through remembrance, those lives obtain coherence, and meaning through the stories we remember and tell” (2).

Reliving the past of Iraq’s political life enables Zubayda to see the extension of the past in the present and to critique war and violence. In a flashback, Zubayda realizes that the war began years ago when King Faysal II was murdered. Her grandmother told her that when the King was shot, “the blood seeped slowly into his white flag” (33). Zubayda’s grandmother believed that the King’s curse would

lead to widespread ruin in Iraq. This memory triggers a series of memories about the massacres and coups which followed the King's death, leading to the wars of the 1980s and the 1990s and ending with the occupation. Thus, Zubayda's thoughts, wavering between present and past, extend the time frame of the narrative within the very limited space of Zubayda's living room.

While Zubayda reflects on the political history of Iraq, her mind snaps back to reality by means of the flashes of light on her TV screen. She watches the defeated Iraqi "young soldiers marching [...] Their military boots are tattered, and some of them are barefoot [...] crossing the whole country from north to south on foot [...] They ask the cameraman for some bread and water, and call out to cars to take them home" (112). The sight of the unshod desperate soldiers and the image of "the artillery fire blending with the black belt of burning oil encircling the besieged city with rivers of blackness" (3) releases memories about the Iran-Iraq war of the 1980s when Zubayda's brother was lost: "She imagines him thirsty and pleading with friends for a drop of water [...] hungry and dreaming of a crust of bread" (113). The image of Zubayda's thirsty brother in the 1980s and the thirsty soldiers in 2003 suggests that the present repeats the past. This reiteration prompts Zubayda to reconsider watching the news since the images are always the same. "The images of fires seem like replicas of earlier fires, all the tanks look the same and

spew the same fire, and the soldiers' green helmets and clothes are all exactly the same" (114).

For Zubayda this signals that the war of 2003 is but an extension of that of the 1980s and these two wars might result in more wars where: "The soldiers who die today are the same soldiers who died yesterday but are dying one more time. They die, then come back to life to die once again [...] Then the cycle begins again until the spark of life has completely disappeared" (11). For Zubayda, the cycle is a downward spiral, leading eventually to the extinction of all life.

The TV which brings war to the central character's room collaborates with memory in "reopening old wounds," (Brown 105 and Haaken 34) which are hard to cure and have become a "continuing predicament" (Bloom 14) to her. To escape the noise of war Zubayda mutes the TV and becomes "accustomed to watching the war without sound" (84). Still, the dead images transform into flashes of light in a similar manner to the flashes of memories which disappear and reappear in her mind. Zubayda "[opens] the closet of memory, [throws] away all that has clung to it, and [reaches into] its farthest corners to drag out the contents of a heavy box" (8). The "heavy box" that Zubayda strives to reach articulates the burden of memory that comprises photos of the dead and letters from friends and relatives in Iraq.

Frantz Fanon suggests that recollecting the past is far from a healing mechanism as memory is pain: “I look at the past as it approaches, falling on me, enfolding me, as though in layer upon layer of concrete. I look in silence [...] I want to scream. The scream becomes a whisper: memory, draw closer” (qtd. in Grace 193). Though memory is a heavy burden Zubayda finds refuge in resurrecting those whom she lost as re-experiencing the past becomes inescapable. By revisiting the “closet” of memories Zubayda maintains a kind of continuity with the past as each photo tells the story of a person or a family. Put simply, the box does not only stand for the history of Iraq but it works as a hiding place for Zubayda where she seeks shelter from her “crisis of survival” (Bloom 14).

4.4 Narration in the Text

Zubayda realizes that in order to keep the memories alive, she should write them down as “the ability to remember is also the ability to [...] forget” (van der Kolk and van der Hart 168). “Will Zubayda tell others the stories her grandmother had told her? Will the home land turn into nothing but memories?” (72). Zubayda’s role as a secondary witness (LaCapra 11-14) obliges her to preserve the memory of Baghdad. She feels responsible for narrating the stories of her grandmother about the history of Iraq along with the multiple stories of her soldier brother who went

missing and who she “wishes had been taken prisoner” (12) and the story of her “pilot lover lost in war” (64).

It is also Zubayda’s duty to reconstruct the several narratives of those men who could not survive their isolation in exile like her friend Tahseen who committed suicide in Berlin and whose “ashes placed in an urn [...] without a tombstone” (79). When Zubayda’s unnamed painter friend disappeared she realized that “his irrational sensibility must have led him to a destiny he had designated for himself in one of his paintings” (87). Zubayda’s subjective experience as a witness of all these stories is narrated to build a history of a collective trauma of war and exile. Thus, Zubayda’s deferred death diminishes her initial, “helpless” position by means of the testimony she decides to provide about a history that left a deep scar in her memory.

The scar in Zubayda’s memory is enlarged with the destruction of Baghdad which denotes the destruction of the material basis of her memories. With the fall of Baghdad Zubayda’s “hope fades away, energy dies, and the spirit feels weak and exhausted” (115). However, the fall of Baghdad does not stop Zubayda writing:

This becomes her daily routine until in the end she feels she is facing a flawed history [...] but she reaches no conclusion [...] As the rain falls heavily on the glass door of the balcony, she scatters her pages on the balcony floor, so that the rain may wash out their flaws, the anarchy and the remorse. As soon as she feels that she has wiped the past clean, she gathers the papers again and throws them into the dustbin (116).

The fall of Baghdad marks a stage of mental decline for Zubayda who thinks that the fate of Baghdad is the result of a “flawed history” and thus decides to clear the faults of history and start anew. The “flawed history” is represented in the text by the killing of King Faysal II and the royal family, the open executions of political figures, the government of Saddam Husayn and the subsequent wars and occupation. Zubayda has written her memories down “hoping that they might leap back into life once recorded on paper [...] hoping it brings her some relief. But it proves useless” (116). Zangana suggests that writing memories does not recuperate them as they remain fresh and painful (Interview with Grace 2006, n.p.). The impossibility of altering the flaws of history refutes LaCapra’s suggestion about a possible healing of historical trauma (13) as “the past is the present is the future” (Fanon 193). The act of placing the papers Zubayda has written in the rain and throwing them away later suggests the impossibility of revising history once it has taken place and that writing is like an X-ray which helps you see the wound and understand it but does not mend it (Mikha’il n.p.).

While amending history has proved to be impossible, Zubayda is still hopeful for a possible survival and a chance of rebirth. Hope is gestured towards in the last paragraph of the text:

Her heart beats become even more irregular. She feels alternately cold and hot [...] She calls the ambulance, gives them her address and hangs up [...]

The doorbell rings [...] She has neither the strength nor the desire to get up [...] She gets up, goes to the window, and opens it. She leaves it open to let In the air wet with rain, goes back to lie down. She dozes off and falls asleep (122).

Zubayda's irregular heartbeat during the bombing of Baghdad, becomes more acute at the fall of the city, a function of her visceral identification with Baghdad. Her inability to open the door to the ambulance men and her attempt to open the window instead "to let in the air," suggest a desire for a merger of some kind opposite to the earlier image of the window as a source of fear and alienation. The final indication that Zubayda "dozes off and falls asleep" but not that she dies means that Zubayda's death is textually deferred. Zubayda's confrontation with death without really dying leaves open the possibility of survival similar to the survival of Berlin. This image thus opens up new questions about a possible survival of Baghdad whose destiny is uncertain after its fall. The uncertainty which marks Baghdad's fate at the post-occupation stage is depicted in *Women of Saturn*.

4. 6 Lutfiyya al-Dulaymi's *Women of Saturn: Biography of a People and a City*

The three periods of the wars, sanctions, and occupation did not stop al-Dulaymi from working and writing.⁶² Living alone, after her two sons and daughter had left Iraq, was a challenge for al-Dulaymi during the post-occupation period: "I venture living amid the gardens of death which blossom with unidentified corpses and severed heads. It is a hazardous adventure for a writer who lives alone in the massacre" (al-Dulaymi 205). In 2005, the writer left Iraq after receiving death threats: "I am wanted because I run a centre for women's freedom and because I am a writer" (Interview with al-Dayf and Bakhat, 29 Oct 2011). However, leaving Iraq opened up a painful exilic space for al-Dulaymi who was denied a visa to some Arab countries and had to apply for asylum in France. Commenting on her experience in exile, al-Dulaymi states:

I have never felt at home in exile [...] At my age, here in Paris, I can't start from scratch. I am an established writer and I have built a good reputation in my country and in the Arab world too. I can't get along with a foreign

⁶² Lutfiyya al-Dulaimy was born in Diyala/Iraq in 1939. She worked as a teacher at the School of Music and Ballet in Baghdad. In the 1970s al-Dulaymi published around 15 books of fiction, five plays and three books of essays. Many of her novels and short stories have been translated into English, Polish, Spanish and German. The collection of stories '*Alam al-Nisa 'al-Wahidat* (*The World of Lonely Women* 1986) was translated into Chinese. al-Dulaymi was the founder of the Women's Cultural Forum in Baghdad in 1992. She has translated four books from English into Arabic. In 2003, al-Dulaymi established the Shaba'ad's Centre for the Studies of Women's Freedom in Baghdad and she was the editor-in-chief of *Halah*, a cultural magazine which ceased publication in 2006 because of al-Dulaymi's inability to return to Iraq.

culture and a third language. My second language is English and it is not easy for me to learn a third one. Besides, I feel displaced moving from one hotel to the other in an extremely expensive place like Paris. I can't accept being an "immigrant" in the West and I wish to end up in any Arab country that is close to Iraq (Interview with al- Dayf and Bakhat, 2011).

Torn between a home that she cannot return to and an exile she does not want, al-Dulaymi feels displaced. This feeling was intensified when al-Dulaymi was attacked by thieves who stole her laptop in Paris in 2006. Eventually, she managed to get permanent residence in Jordan where she lived at the time of the interview (Interview with Shamikh, 18 May 2008).

In *Women of Saturn* al-Dulaymi tells the story of Iraqi women who witnessed 2003 and its repercussions.⁶³ One of these women is Hayat al-Babili, the central female character and narrator. Hayat works at one of the journals in Baghdad. After losing all her loved ones to wars and violence, Hayat lives alone in her parents' house, which is known as "Bayt al-Babili" (al-Babili's House) with reference to the city of Babylon and the Babylonian empire 1900-539 BC. During periods of military conflict, Hayat leaves her room and descends to the house's underground cellar that acts as a shelter not only for Hayat but also for her women friends, Manar, Rawiya, Halah and the French journalist Prisca Bernard. They "nearly live with me in our house, the women's house" (42). Years before, this basement was a hiding place for Hayat's uncle Sheikh Qaydar who went missing while looking for his wife,

⁶³ The excerpts referred to in the analysis of the text are translated from the Arabic by the author of this thesis. One scene (The rape of Manar) was translated into English by John Peate. The translation was published in *BANIPAL: Magazine of Modern Arab Literature* (2013).

kidnapped in the aftermath of 2003. Qaydar's love for Baghdad urged him to "embark on a manuscript project in which he chronicles Baghdad's history during the 19th and the 20th centuries accompanied by his lute" (27). In the basement, Hayat finds papers by Sheikh Qaydar where he describes the decades of devastation Baghdad witnessed.

*Women of Saturn*⁶⁴ is divided into 35 sections with different titles, each of which presents a different story narrated by the first- person narrator/central character, Hayat. The stories move back and forth in time between past and present but are set in Baghdad. The narrative technique in this episodic text is similar to that of *A Thousand and One Nights* where several stories are incorporated within a framing narrative and one or more characters in the frame act as the narrators of the interpolated tales (Irwin 23). Irwin argues that every framing tale has an impact on the stories it encompasses, extending far beyond that of mere gathering and juxtaposition (23).

The stories of survival Hayat narrates in *Women of Saturn* symbolize the way Baghdad has survived the waves of destruction through time. By means of juxtaposition and parallelism, Hayat's story derives its meaning largely from its embedded narratives and does not stand independently of them.

⁶⁴ *Women of Saturn* was adapted into a cartoon film entitled "Babili's Home" in English, Spanish and Arabic by the al-Fanar Foundation for Arab Knowledge and the Campaign against the Occupation and for the Sovereignty of Iraq (CEOSI). The film shows western readers, what the lives of Iraqis were like after the US occupation in 2003. See The BrusselsTribunal.org., 2012.

The novel's title *Women of Saturn* indicates an emphasis on the stories of women.

In this section I focus on the way the state of anarchy in the “new Iraq” after 2003

has placed Hayat, the central character, as a primary witness (LaCapra 11-14) to

her confrontation with death. Hayat's “unexperienced experience of death”

(Derrida 91) also locates her as a secondary witness (LaCapra 11-14) to the stories

of others. This position allows her to narrate a history of a city and of people in a

way that does justice to the collective memory of Iraqis. I also examine the way the

structure of the novel relates to the interplay between past and present in the text

and how this structure is suggestive of Baghdad's rebirth.

4.5 Hayat's Confrontation with Death

Describing Baghdad, Hayat states: “Baghdad is eating its people up and my death

is a question of time. What is time? What is death? And what is Baghdad? A

ghoul? A massive pot? A giant black hole that would devour itself?” (al-Dulaymi

100). Despite the fact that Hayat finds refuge in her basement, she still “imagines

the murderers lurking beyond dawn [...] Evil strolls around to ridicule us, it

frequently masquerades to become a rocket, a bearded man, an explosive or a

betraying friend” (10-11). The idea of the “evil” that roams signifies the hardship

of survival in the middle of anarchy.

In the war years of the 1980s and the 1990s, most deaths took place at the warfront and sometimes at the home front as a result of an enemy air raid on some civilian targets. In 2003 and the years that followed, the possibilities of death increased through the US marines, militia groups, extremists, thieves and explosives. This suggests that Hayat is in confrontation with death in Baghdad. The image of Baghdad as a burning “pot” is referred to in ‘Aliya’ Talib’s description of Baghdad as an “incinerator” which she was forced to escape (Interview with Kadhim, 31 Oct. 2007). The rhetorical questions regarding “time” and “death” portray the uncertainty that overwhelms Iraqis as to their destinies. Living in a state of disarray and fear of the unknown that can “devour” one’s life at any minute is equal to a state of death. The vision of Baghdad as “a ghoul” symbolizes the killings and the lawlessness which triumphed during the post-occupation period and undermines the US government’s allegations about its endeavour to “spread the seeds of democracy in Iraq” (Sourcewatch.org. n.d.). The allusion to Baghdad as a “black hole” recurs in the writings of Hayat’s uncle where the destiny of Baghdad is suggested in a prophecy about the city, which seems to have fallen under the bad omen of Saturn.

Here, Saturn is defined as “a dark jinx male-planet that is cold and barren [...] Saturn’s misfortune lasts for 30 years followed by 30 more years of good fortune” (136). The association between Saturn’s qualities of misfortune, darkness, death

and sterility over “30 years” alludes to the succession of the wars of the 1980s, the 1990s and 2003. During the post-occupation period the conditions of women worsened: “women are pursued by the US marines, the armed men, the fundamentalists, the militias and the officials” (100). This explains the association, found in the title of the novel, between Saturn and women.

LaCapra suggests two types of memory: primary and secondary memory. Primary memory is of those who live through events and remember them. Secondary memory comes as a result of critical work on primary memory. LaCapra considers the historian or analyst a secondary witness who must work out an acceptable subject position in dealing with the emptiness and fragmentation of the testimony which can be presented through fiction (11-14). However, in *Women of Saturn* Hayat plays both roles. Her presence at a critical stage of Baghdad’s history compels her to confront deadly challenges where she becomes a primary witness to her own deferred death and to testify to similar experiences of death and loss as a secondary witness/historian by means of her narration.

Hayat’s position as a primary witness is explained in her line: “My loss is certain in Baghdad, anyway” (100). Hayat’s loss which she describes as “certain” has to do with the death threats she first receives, earlier in the text, from unknown groups for her work as a journalist. In the text, Hayat is targeted for the second time during

the burning of the neighborhood's library in which unidentified men pile up books in the front yard of the library by "throwing encyclopedias, dictionaries and books of history from the upper windows of the library, sprayed them with gasoline and sat fire. I dashed towards the fire shouting and screaming Why? Why? What you are committing is haram, haram (religiously forbidden)" (34). The act of burning books symbolizes the large-scale destruction of libraries and cultural symbols in Iraq immediately after the US military invasion to Iraq. The attack on the cultural resources that connect the Iraqi people to 7,000 years of history, "is part of the process of systematically destroying their national identity" (Martin n.p.).

The burning of the books echoes past acts of cultural annihilation conducted by the Mongols in Iraq, the Khmer Rouge in Cambodia, the Nazis and the Allied troops in Germany who used books as fuel for barbecues in World War II (Knuth 179).

Knuth suggests that the vandalizing of libraries is a kind of "libricide" committed by extremists on the grounds that books and libraries are sources of adversative principles which they despise (201). The novel thus becomes an act of historical preservation, documenting actual events in fictional form and hereby continuing their memories.

The picture of Hayat frantically running to save the looted library is the antithesis to the act of burning and plundering the library. Ironically, Hayat uses the word

“haram” to stop the looters who use the same word whenever they threaten women.

The looters’ inattention to Hayat’s cries reflects their double-standard in dealing with what is “haram.” Their criminal acts blur the lines between what is and is not haram. While they commit their crimes under the banner of “haram,” the plunderers do not consider the damaging of the library and the books as religiously prohibited deeds. Instead, they go even farther in attempting to kill Hayat:

I was shot before reaching the building, probably by one of those who started the fire or he might be a member of the same group which sent me a threatening letter [...] I infrequently regained my consciousness at the noise of the blasts and the bullets around. The pillagers were engaged in taking away computers, cabinets, office desks, heaters and air conditioners. They thought I was dead and, so did the bearded armed man who desired a corpse in the darkness under the charred mulberry trees [...] I was so weak and couldn’t scream when the necrophilic groped my body, lifted my bloody shirt up [...] when his fingers reached my blood-soaked jeans [...] I woke and yelled in madness. I scratched his face, pushed him back and grabbed his leg. He uttered a dreadful gasp and disappeared, I was unconscious afterwards (35).

Silencing Hayat is meant to prevent her from documenting the history of Baghdad and from testifying to its destruction. Her shooting constitutes an escalation from the threatening letter she previously received because of her work in journalism.

The image of the “bearded necrophilic” in his attempt to assault Hayat is ironical.

The beard suggests that this man is a religious figure who, the text implies, violates the religious law he is meant to uphold. This image is significant in its relation to the concept of “haram.” In religious terms, the acts of shooting, looting, and the burning of the library are “haram” and so is the “bearded” man’s assault. The text

thus offers a sustained critique of the death of moral and religious values articulated through the violations men engage in. This is also related to the description of Saturn as a “male planet” responsible for the calamities inflicted on women.

While she is unconscious, Hayat imagines hearing her dead parents and brothers: “they were yelling with intermingled shouts entreating me: Come on, Come on hurry up, and leave the land of madness. Stay and fight your death. Go away if you want to survive” (35).⁶⁵ The imaginary voices try to save Hayat by suggesting three ways of “survival.” One of the voices begs Hayat to leave “the land of madness” and to join the dead which suggests that when chaos rules death is the answer. This call is similar to the other call which asks Hayat to run away and leave the country. Of the three voices, Hayat – whose name means “life” in Arabic – responds to the second voice which urges her to resist her death and to continue living.

Hayat’s resistance symbolizes her “unexperienced experience of death,” portrayed by how she survives the shooting. When Hayat loses her consciousness after being shot, she is regarded as dead and is mistaken for a “corpse.” This puts her in a confrontation with death. The imaginary voice calling her to join the dead is an indication of her closeness to death. Yet Hayat does not die. Her will to live is evident in her fight with the necrophilic in spite of her physical weakness. In other

⁶⁵ People who come close to dying often say they had “an overwhelming feeling of peace and serenity [...] Many report meeting long-lost loved ones” (Stein 2013).

words, Hayat faces death but refuses to die. She survives in order to testify to the experiences of others. Hayat's physical "passing out" (Bloom 14) of the traumatic experience she underwent leaves a deep "wound to soul" (Hacking 4) that cannot easily heal. This wound is not only to do with her deferred death but it concerns her friends who are also targeted. Hayat's position as a primary witness to her own encounter with violence transforms into a secondary witness to Manar's and Halah's assaults.

4.6 The Targeting of Manar and Huda

The targeting of women in the text references the reality Iraqi women went through after 2003. Mark Lattimer argues that advances that took 50 years to establish collapsed. In much of the country, women could now only move around with a male escort. Rape was regularly committed by armed groups, including those linked to the government. Women were being murdered throughout Iraq in unprecedented numbers (n.p.). In *Women of Saturn* Manar is a doctor who survived an attack by sectarian militants in which she was raped, and her doctor mother and university teacher brother were murdered. Before the incident, Manar told Hayat about a threat she had received which described her as a "collaborator for working with international charities to distribute medicine to public hospitals" (168). Such

incidents mounted in Iraq in the years 2004-2008.⁶⁶ Despite the fact that Manar is carrying out a humanitarian mission in saving the lives of patients in hospitals which lack essential medical equipment, she is targeted. The chaotic state of affairs in the country which facilitates this is indicated by the very fact that innocents are taken as “collaborators” when the actual criminals are left untouched: “masked men pass quickly with their weapons, short dresses and curly beards, they shoot at the houses, at us, at the morning and exclude the US tank and US marines” (42). The writer depicts Manar’s stream of thought while describing the effects of the attack:

The heavy smell of manhood and the sound of gunfire woke Manar out of consciousness. A spiky smell was in the air and she had been dragged out of oblivion to discover that she was completely naked [...] The flow of blood between her thighs had taken all spirit from her and left her raving and sobbing [...] Was she dead? The pain, the convulsion in her stomach and the blood flow told her she was not. But what was death if it was not like this? Yes, she was dying and with no grave, butchered like all those whose bodies one came across on the pavements of Baghdad every night [...] Manar had seen them leave her to die in the room. She had pretended to be dead, holding her breath. She had resisted the pain of her wounds, though they were tearing her to pieces. The four of them had raped her in turn. A bullet had entered her arm and exited through the other side. The blood from both wounds was mingling [...] She resisted life and death at the same time. If they were to come back, they would surely finish her off (171-172).

Gross violation puts Manar in a state of a deferred death. Manar’s sobbing and moaning is not only due to the painful wounds of the assault but rather a poignant

⁶⁶ On 23 June 2004 Layla al-Sa’ad, the dean of the College of Law in Mosul University, was killed with her husband. On 27 Oct. 2006, armed men broke into Halima al-Jburi’s house, in the northern town Hawija, and assassinated her in the presence of her three children. Halima was leading the Human Rights Organization for Motherhood and Childhood in Iraq. See Zangana 2008.

feeling of humiliation and dishonor at the fact of losing her virginity. She compares her condition to that of a dead person despite the flow of blood and the pain that tell her otherwise. The image of Manar “dying with no grave” and “butchered” is compared to the image of “all those whose bodies one came across on the pavements of Baghdad every night” left without burial. That image had become very common in 2003.

By holding her breath, Manar struggles to resist life for fear that her assailants might kill her once they realize that she is not actually dead. At the same time she feels like death, bodily: “But what was death if it was not like this?” (173). Whilst actual death does not occur, and is thus unexperienced, Manar nevertheless confronts the possibility of death: “she was fading, her body was failing, she was dying” (173). The unexperienced experience of Manar’s death is evident in her near-to-death state which implies a wish to resist this death and to live. In this she shows resistance, as Hayat did to the attempt of rape while she was unconscious.

Manar’s situation is reminiscent of many cases of violated Iraqi women. Often they committed suicide after being raped in prisons, during Saddam’s era and in 2003, for fear of the subsequent honor killings. “Dishonoring women is therefore a powerful means of attacking social cohesion in order to secure political control.” (Omar 61). Rape was not only used to attack and humiliate the “enemy women,” but through them to attack their male protectors (al-‘Ali and Pratt 11).

In the text, when Manar regains her consciousness, she becomes able to listen to the conversation of the four killers before leaving the room: “Look, they’re all whores, these women who don’t wear the veil. They mix with men [...] We’ll get rid of all of them, these women doctors and women journalists, these atheist teachers. We’ll track them down wherever they go. This is our greater Jihad” (173). The notion of “jihad” (religious struggle) is used to justify all kinds of crimes committed against women.⁶⁷ Irony is implied in the way in which the men who have just committed rape and killing, refer to the female victims as “whores” who “mix with men.” It is the men who initiated the shameful acts they accuse the women of.

Robert J. Lifton argues that killing large numbers of people with a claim to virtue is “perverse” in that this killing becomes an attempt to affirm the life power of one’s own group by destroying, violating and murdering another (140). The perversion in the act of killing Manar’s family and in her assault lies in the way the assailants justify their criminal act on a moral basis. In his *Seductions of Crime* Katz talks about how even in individual violence “there is a moment of what you might call

⁶⁷ Political Islamists target universities in particular. A male university professor tells a story of a female student from Babylon University, Hilla, south of Baghdad:

She had never worn the scarf. Despite death threats to compel her to wear it, she refused and continued to attend university. She was raped and murdered. The professor has since told his daughter she must either wear a scarf or leave university. He doesn’t want her to wear the scarf nor does he want her to leave university, but he is terrified for her life (Abdela 2005).

moralism in carrying through the murder” (12). That is, the act of killing becomes a morally necessary act.

This assumption applies in the text when the assailants describe their deeds as part of the “greater jihad” against “atheists.” The great jihad in Islam is the effort of Muslim believers to be devoted to Allah and to follow the rules of the faith. To achieve this, they must go through an internal fight within themselves where they overcome all evils. Irony lies in the contradiction between the concept of “greater jihad” in which a true believer is supposed to fight vice and lust, and the crime of rape and murder the men commit in the name of jihad. Considering women academics as “atheists” because they are unveiled and because they “mix with men” is an ignorant accusation since atheists are those who deny the presence of God.

This becomes more evident in the conversation the assassins have in Manar’s back garden, which she overhears:

Safwan took the mother and shot her. The mother was pretty too. Was she really a doctor? Yeah, and the son was an unbeliever. He taught Darwin at university. A PhD in atheism! Darwin? What’s that? one of them asked. Some atheist who denied men are descended from Adam [...] Go in the kitchen and make us something. Don’t we have to break the fast when we hear the call to prayer? We have broken the fast with lust and blood. Who said that? We did a good thing. Killing atheists must be worth quite something in the next life. Is their food halal? Course its halal, they’re Muslim atheists, don’t make life difficult for us (174).

The reference to the killing of the “doctor” mother and the physicist son references the targeting of the intelligentsia in Iraq, which was very common in the post 2003 period.⁶⁸ To justify the act of killing Rafid, the assassins label him “unbeliever” and “atheist” because he teaches Darwin at University. Ironically, one of the killers has no idea what “Darwin” means. This alludes to the low educational status of the criminals who carry out random crimes based on misconceptions of religion. It becomes more poignant when it becomes clear that the crimes are committed in the holy month of Ramadan and the killers are “praying” and searching for food in the victims’ kitchen to break their “fast.”

The opportunistic abuse of basic Islamic principles such as fasting, which is not only about refraining from food and drink but is meant to cleanse the soul by freeing it from harmful impurities, is evident when the slaughterers discuss whether “lust and blood” have broken their fast. Irony arises when the men conclude that their deeds do not nullify their fast since they have killed “atheists,” a deed for which they will be “rewarded” on the Day of Judgment. However, when one of the men wonders whether they are allowed to eat atheists’ food, the others base their justification of this on the assumption that the food of “Muslim atheists” must be “halal.” This suggests that opportunism and convenience, rather than any principles, rule their actions.

⁶⁸ By the end of April 2006, 307 attacks on academics and doctors had been registered. “Those of the highest qualifications were the prime targets with 79% with doctorate or specialist medical qualification” (Jalili 2006).

Opportunism is implied in the killing of Manar and her family which occurs accidentally and not as part of a systematic plan against academics. This becomes evident from the assassins' uncertainty about Manar's mother's position: "Was she really a doctor?" It also becomes clear when Manar overhears a mobile phone conversation of one of the killers with his leader in which he says: "Like I told you, sir, the car broke down [...] what'd be the point of abducting them? No one would pay a ransom [...] We killed the three of them" (175). The plan of kidnapping Rafid for "ransom" was replaced by killing him and his family due to an unforeseen car breakdown which prevented the men from kidnapping Manar's brother. Moreover, the "ransom" which the gang had in mind if Rafid's kidnapping had been successful suggests that the targeting of Manar's family had more to do with the family's financial status than with their academic position.

Manar describes "the boyish voices" (174) of the killers and "the rage and vulgarity of their dialect [which is] a mixture of those of the rural midlands" (175). When she regains consciousness, Manar remembers how the four men "had smelt of stables and dust [...] holding Kalashnikovs and wearing baggy sirwal trousers [...] carrying the haul of jewelry, and cash in a green purse, in a plastic bag" (175). The different dialects of the four men, the way they smelt and the type of clothes they wore point to their lowly rural origins. The jewelry and cash they take from

Manar's house highlight the fact that they are effectively a group of thieves, after money.

On the one hand, after the fall of Saddam's regime, nearly half a million state employees (about 7 per cent of the labour force) were dismissed as a result of the dissolution of the Iraqi Army and de-Ba'athification (Foot et al. 55). On the other hand, retained workers received a six-fold increase in salary (Yusif 362). Yusif suggests that the dispersing of the army generated 400,000 young jobless males who were trained to use weapons. With few or no alternative job options, this situation was likely to drive those young men to theft, crime or to join private groups and armies (363). Kidnapping persons for ransom was very common during the years following the occupation of Baghdad.

In her diaries, Riverbend writes about her male cousin who was abducted and held for five days and then released for a ransom of \$ 15,000 in 2004. She describes how the family rushed to sell gold and collect money to pay the ransom. Riverbend states that her uncle excluded calling the police as – in some areas – these forces were working with the abductors for money (205). Riverbend's family was lucky to regain their relative; Manar's family is exterminated when the kidnapping plan fails. The deferred death and the rape put Manar in a similar place to that of Hayat and many other women who had similar experiences in Iraq.

In October the UN Assistance Mission in Iraq (Unami) expressed serious concern over the rising incidence of so-called honor crimes in Iraq, confirming that 255 women had been killed in just the first six months of 2007 (Lattimer n.p.). What privileges Manar is that the shame of her rape is not treated according to the traditional tribal system of “honor killing” – where many women are killed by their relatives – in that she belongs to an educated family whose members understand Manar as a victim. In the text Manar’s doctor sister “arranges an abortion to be conducted on Manar when symptoms of pregnancy appeared later” (178). Manar’s sister even arranges with her uncle to accompany them to Jordan “to apply for a visa to Europe” (179).

Unlike Manar’s relatives, Hala’s uncles decided to kill her for disgracing the family. Hala was an architect who was raped in Abu Ghraib prison by the Americans who accused her of hiding “insurgents” in her house. Commenting on the strategy of torture in Iraq, Zangana writes: “The war and occupation in 2003, apart from shattering Iraq as people and a country, has brought about many more imprisonments, many more deaths. Abu Ghraib is only one of many symbols” (5). In a diary she hands to Hayat, Hala writes: “I won’t commit suicide and I won’t let my uncles slay me. Let them get back at the Americans and avenge my disgrace” (190).

In March 2004 George Bush said that “the advance of freedom in the Middle East has given new rights and new hopes to women [...] the systematic use of rape by Saddam's former regime to dishonor families has ended” (Lattimer n.p.). This may have given some people the impression that the American and British invasion of Iraq had helped to improve the lives of its women. But this is far from the case. In order to escape her uncles’ punishment, Hala flees Iraq to Syria with her mother “with forged passports” (194). Hala’s flight to Syria with her mother and Manar’s escape to Amman with her sister open up a different phase of pain through their displacement. Applying for asylum in Europe at the refugees’ office in Amman Manar wonders: “Where shall we go if we are denied visa? Shall we stay here like vagabonds?” (164). The difficulty of exile for these women “is not that home and love of home are lost, but that loss is inherent in the very existence of both” (Sa’id 148). Away from a home that they cannot return to, the women are faced with uncertainties as to their fate.

In Amman, the women meet Rawiya who paid a man to marry her to get out of Iraq. Rawiya tells her friends: “I spend my money on an unemployed husband who extorts me” (165). In Syria, Hala and her mother pay a large sum of money to a trafficker who fails to send them to Greece. Depressingly Hala tells Hayat: “I can’t return to Iraq, I can’t stay here and I can’t leave anywhere else. I’ll commit suicide. My mother is dying here as she can’t take it anymore. What shall I do?” (195).

When Hala was released after being raped by the US forces in prison she said: “I won’t commit suicide” (190). Ironically, Hala’s escape to Syria has proved to have such an impact on her as to prompt her to consider suicide after all. Manar, Hala and Rawiya have fled the “burning pot” of Baghdad and they are “apparently unharmed” (Freud 84). However, their passing out turns to be a “continuing predicament” (Bloom 14) confronting the challenges of exile.

The stories of the abduction and rape of Hayat’s friends along with the failed attempt to rape her seem to be an extension of the story of Bahijah, Hayat’s mother who was a political activist during the 1960s. In a diary which Bahija hands to Hayat before her death, the mother relates her experience and those of other women in prison. Bahija was released with severe bodily injuries and three of her female companions were raped. Nahida, one of the women, “committed suicide in her prison cell [...] Sahira became a mistress to one of the prison officers and when Siham was released she fled to the mountains in the north” (70). By citing her mother’s diary Hayat becomes a witness of a witness to the violated lives of women. The experiences of the women to which Bahija bears witness recur in the stories of the women to which Hayat bears witness in 2003. This suggests a circularity of narrative where the stories of the past carry on and recur in the present.

4.7 The Victimization of Men

Hayat's role as a secondary witness is not confined to women survivors/victims.

Hayat becomes a witness to the loss and suffering of men too. During the Iran-Iraq war one of Hayat's brothers, Muhannad, was killed and the other one, Majid, was executed by the Ba'th's regime when he refused to join the military attack on Kuwait in the 1990s. These two deaths were followed by Hayat's father's death "out of grief" (8).

These losses were accompanied by the trauma of Hayat's husband Hazim, who was castrated in prison by Saddam's regime in the 1990s. Hazim was put in prison and was physically tortured with three of his colleagues for daring to express their ideas "about violations of human rights by Saddam's regime [...] Hazim wailed throughout the castration process and he attempted suicide afterwards but was saved by the prison's doctor" (91-92). While Hazim and his colleagues are trying to defend human rights they fall victim to their violation and his attempted suicide comes as a protest against his violation. The next day the doctor tells Hazim: "You are not free to choose your way of death. We are the ones who decide when and where you die" (92). Preventing Hazim from committing suicide explains the way the regime dehumanizes its opponents by prolonging their suffering. It also indicates the manner in which the regime controls people and their destiny so as to transform them into objects. Hazim's emasculation is not only a body wound but

also a wound in identity which alters his life into a “crisis of survival” (Caruth 17).

Hazim divorces Hayat and disappears because he does not want her to witness his unmanned state.

With the absence of men the neighborhood where Hayat lives is mockingly called

“the women’s neighborhood” by Hayat’s female friends “as nearly all men

disappeared leaving behind their shadows, some of their pictures and the smells

which die away in time” (48). There are only two men left: “Hisham who lives

with his elderly mother and who peeps at women, and Hamid; the dumb bird

breeder who guards the neighborhood’s houses and occasionally does some

services for women” (22). Hamid’s tongue was amputated by the previous regime

as a punishment for his allegedly anti-Ba’th attitude when he was working as a

teacher of English at a school for boys. Thus dumb, he loses his job and turns to

bird breeding.

Hamid writes to Hayat: “When my voice and soul were pulled out, the birds pushed

me back to life, living with birds is a kind of survival” (50). Hamid’s loss of his job

is followed by the loss of his beloved Rawiya who tells Hayat: “How can a woman

love a man with no tongue? I may marry him, anyway, if I don’t find a man” (50).

Rawiya prefers to marry a man who helps her to cross the borders to Jordan. Hamid

writes to Hayat before he disappears: “If Rawiya comes back [...] tell her that she

was my tongue and my dream in a city that slaughtered our dreams. I know she

abhorred living with a man without a tongue and that she wished I were different, but I loved her” (20). Hamid’s despair at the loss of his tongue and his job are amplified by the loss of his beloved. His decision to leave Baghdad stems from his inability to live in a place which has denied him his humanity. In describing Hamid’s calamity Hayat thinks that “executing the voice is more horrible than executing the body” (35).

Hamid’s story represents a symbolic form of castration. His disappearance parallels that of Hayat’s ex-husband, Hazim, who also disappeared after his castration. Bodily disfigurement and the silencing of men are forms of disgrace that signal their eradication and define their survival as a kind of “oscillation between a crisis of life and a crisis of death” (Caruth 17). Their disappearance which causes uncertainty as to their fate – did they kill themselves, did they move elsewhere, were they killed – lacks the certainty of death but to those left behind it represents a kind of death.

4.8 Survival in Narration

The stories of the women and the men which Hayat witnesses become part and parcel of a series of past narratives Hayat finds in the deserted cellar which she enters for protection. Hayat asks Hamid to give her a hand in cleaning it. To find their way through the darkness Hayat and Hamid light candles:

The candlelight drew flying insects on our faces [...] Hundreds of books and volumes wrapped with plastic see-through covers against dust and insects were placed on iron shelves [...] Termites and wood lice found their ways to the leg of one of the dumped chairs which fell to bits when we tried to move it producing a mildew smell which made us cough and sneeze [...] With the help of kerosene lamps we saw numerous old clocks and eccentric dusty mirrors on the walls. When we reactivated the clocks [...] cleaned the mirrors [they] reflected the lamp lights and our faces. The ticking and the ringing of the clocks were echoing in the basement (28-29).

The images of darkness, the insects and the moldy chairs suggest an old abandoned place that is like a tomb. Death is indicated in the dead clocks and the dusty mirrors. However, the books are in good condition not only because of the plastic covers but also because they are stored on “iron shelves” that cannot decay. These books stand for the history of Baghdad and the stories of people, which do not die. The revival of the clocks that start “ticking and ringing” and the cleaning of the mirrors which “reflected our faces” suggest rebirth. However, the rebirth of the old clocks is not possible without the batteries which Hayat finds in an old tool box full of “openers, torches, pills, phosphoric cubes for stoves and handmade muzzles we made ourselves when we expected a chemical war in 1991” (29). The batteries, stored in the cellar during the 1990s to help the besieged survive a possible chemical war, are used to energize the dead clocks in 2003.

This vision indicates the role narration plays in establishing connection between the past and the present situation: “I relate the stories to the walls, the clocks and the mirrors in the cellar and listen to the resonance of my sound which reverberates

like images in the mirrors at opposite sides” (19). The images which Hayat refers to are those of her dead parents and brothers whose reflections she sees in the mirrors. But the cellar is a world devoid of other people where only objects and the material fabric of her environment remain of those whose stories Hayat records: “they are all at the bottom of the mirror and so is Baghdad with its Abbasid features, minarets, palm trees and its rivers amid the fire” (29). Yet, memory is preserved through narration: “Someone says: Hayat is not scared. I know her. She will tell our stories to people, Hayat is our voice” (29). Hayat is given the responsibility of narrating the story of Baghdad and the stories of the dead by “someone” in the mirror. As such, Hayat’s plays a part as historian who “narrates history” (Munslow 5).

Hayat’s role as narrator of history is emphasized earlier in the text when Hamid writes her a letter in which he implores her to “rewrite [his] diaries and our stories” (20). When Hayat meets her female friends in Amman after they have fled Iraq, the women tell her: “It is you who should write what happened to us [...] and the story of Hamid, the bird breeder.” While collecting all the stories Hayat comments:

Stories were pouring like a tumultuous flood that I couldn’t manage to order. Do I need to bother about logic and order amid disorder? [...] When I met them at the refugees’ office in Amman, the women handed me scraps of paper with their stories which I added to my papers. In the infrequent quiet moments between a car explosion and a lurking death I collected the fragments to reshape the ruined city and its people [...] to make a mosaic image that looks like us (13).

The women's survival is suggested in their escape to Amman. By handing their "scraps of paper" to Hayat, the women authorize her to tell their stories of survival that she adds to her "papers." Here, the reference is not only to Hayat's story of survival, but also her uncle's historical records about Baghdad's survival. The reference to the disappearance of "time" and "logic" from these "disordered" scraps has to do with the manner by which trauma returns as disconnected fragments in the memory of the survivors who testify to the breakage of a framework. That is, historical truth (Laub 70).

In this case, the listener's job is to reconstruct these memory fragments. A fact that renders the representation of trauma a challenge (Laub 71). This means that the secondary witness must deal with the emptiness and the disintegration of the testimony which can be represented through fiction" (LaCapra 11-14). In dealing with the fragmentation of the testimony fiction writers have to impersonate the "gaps, sudden shifts of perspective" (Moran 5) and the silences that they encounter in witnessing. In assembling the patchy "scraps" about the present and the past Hayat participates in "reshaping" the historical truth of Baghdad. This history involves events about the killing of men, the rape of women and the burning of libraries at the hands of the Mongols in 1258 which resonate with similar ones in 2003 at the hands of the Americans.

The act of “reshaping” the stories “between a car explosion and a lurking death” alludes to the dangers implied in the act of narration in times of disarray. This danger highlights Hayat’s position as an “underground historian” (Steiner 32). In relating the multiple narratives of past and present torture Hayat presents a counter story to the dominant political discourse. Hayat’s narrative has become in al-Dulaymi’s words “a text of resistance” (Interview with Kurayshan, 2 Oct. 2000) to all forms of dehumanization as they were experienced under Saddam Husayn’s government and sustained by the US forces. Hayat narrates because she feels that there are crimes that must not be forgotten and there are “victims whose suffering cries less for vengeance than for narration” (Ricoeur 189-191). While narrating these crimes the writer forms a “mosaic image” of the ongoing destruction of Baghdad.

The act of forming a “mosaic image” by narration implies an aesthetic and ethical truth in Munté’s view. Aesthetic because the author will go beyond her own experience of trauma and talk about an indescribable experience of violence and ethical because the author will “establish a testimonial pact and does justice to the collective memory of all those murdered” (12). The testimony Hayat offers embodies the memory of the victims who were muzzled through a long history of bloodshed. The collectivity of the experience of victimhood in the novel is referred to in the following:

I am Hayat, and these are the papers I have been writing for years where I recorded our tales [...] All our names have been vanishing from my tales over the years [...] This ongoing fading of names and the interchanging of events appalled me [...] I need to work like a magician and to follow my instincts so as to disconnect events, times and stories in which destinies intermix (12-13).

The reference to “our tales” suggests the narration of a collectivity and possibly of a collective experience. The sense of collective experience is heightened by the notion of the “vanishing of names” and the recurrence of stories. When all that Hayat hears are voices of anonymous characters whose stories are similar, naming becomes meaningless. When Hayat records the stories, she finds the fading of these names “appalling.” What appalls Hayat is the degree of suffering these characters undergo in such a way that it obliterates their identities and disembodies them. In Zangana’s prison memoirs she writes: “I also wrote this book to [...] break the silence. Silence becomes your refuge from the shame and guilt you feel for being alive” (5). The disappearance of Hazim and Hamid after being physically deformed and the escape of Manar and Hala to Jordan after being raped along with similar incidents about men’s and women’s abduction which Hayat finds in her mother’s diaries locate these characters in the position of the anonymous voices of Hayat’s dead family members. Hayat’s task becomes that of breaking the silence engendered by the survivors who are, nevertheless, experiencing a living death. Hayat is also appalled by the extent to which the stories reverberate over time: “what happened to Hala in Abu Ghraib’s prison happened to me, what al- Qaeda

men did to Manar and her family was done to Rawiya [...] and what the jailors did to my mother in the 1960s was probably done to me in the 1990s” (13). This repetition suggests a communal tragedy that turns the tale of one person into others’ tales where the fate of one character is repeated in the fates of other characters/narrators. The repetition of past actions in the present extends the tragedy of what is told in time so that past and present become blurred.

Narrating the stories of the victims helps Hayat survive the daily massacres and the fear around her. In other words, Hayat’s death is deferred by means of the stories she reads and the tales she tells. Hayat’s statement: “Tales are found to ward off our fear” (19) is meant to emphasize the role of narration as a means of survival against violence. This role is also embodied in the tales of *A Thousand and One Nights* (1706). Many of the tales Shahrazad tells are termed “ransom tales” (Irwin 50) where the narrator tells a tale to save her life. In other words, Shahrazad “is put to death but kept alive” (Ghazoul 24) through the act of narration. Each night Shahrazad expects to die at the hands of the dictator king who used to kill a woman every night. Yet, Shahrazad’s death is deferred by the tales that enchant Shahrayar for a thousand and one nights. Thus, Shahrazad saves her life literally and the lives of her women folk metaphorically by means of her stories. Hayat and Shahrazad both face death. Yet both are empowered by the authority of narration. They

survive to testify to the atrocities of men and to the suffering of women. Their survival signifies hope for a better future.

The structure of the 35 stories in *Women of Saturn* provides fosters a hopeful tone that keeps rising and falling throughout the text. This hope is depicted in women's endeavour to survive the difficulties of war, the flowers which fight back against dust and fire and the love that struggles to resist distance and disaster. Love as a means of survival is evident in the last story in which the writer foresees a possible future for Hayat and for Baghdad. While looking at her uncle's writings Hayat remembers how "Baghdad survived two massive fires, a massacre, and a plague" (147). The massacre that Baghdad survived took place at the hands of Holaco who "concluded Baghdad's construction with a tower of skulls and Tamerlane who built a minaret out of peoples' heads" (147). Under the Mongol's reign in 1258 Baghdad underwent large-scale destruction, bringing about a deterioration which lasted for many years due to frequent plagues. The act of beheading women during Tamerlane's era anticipates a comparable deed carried out against Iraqi women accused of adultery in the 1990s. The same action was undertaken during the post-occupation stage at the hands of extremists: "four uncovered women were beheaded and left on the pavement" (98).

When Hayat remembers that Baghdad was able to survive and to regain some of its former distinction as a centre of Arabic culture, she becomes confident of a

survival that echoes the former rebirth of Baghdad. This is apparent in the way the women, who gather at Hayat's house for protection, celebrate survival:

Rawiya prepares tea in my kitchen. She polishes the thin crystal gilded-lined cups under the morning sun rejoicing survival. Our persistence and the death of others [...] We are overwhelmed with an awful selfish joy [...] Rawiya serves the cake her mother prepares for the Eid of Nowruz [...] An American armored vehicle passes across the road while we drink tea in the garden [...] Our fates are imperiled by probabilities while we hold on to life (38-39).

The peaceful intervals during war represent a rebirth for Hayat's female friends who go out of the basement into the garden to celebrate their survival. However, this temporary joy is disturbed by a sense of guilt for staying alive when other victims die. The image of a US tank crossing the nearby road during the women's celebration suggests the persistent threat to their lives. Yet, the menace does not stop the women from clinging to a life that is rendered bearable despite its difficulties. The women's aspiration for a possible recovery is symbolized in Hayat's occasional allusions to the flowers which retain their fragrance and colour despite the blood and the dust that cover them:

The fragrance of the rose and the Jasmine and the aroma of palm pollen fill the desolate gardens, the parks and the orchards in the outskirts of Baghdad [...] For some time, the scent disguises the reeking smell of the decomposed corpses thrown on the pavements. A little later, the sun exposes the reeking death [...] A shudder in a nest on the fig tree and the May sun, which melts the soft grass and stimulates the ground to produce a warm odor that makes me feel dizzy at the outburst of life in the middle of the peal of death (36).

In these olfactory images, the beauty of nature stands against the devastation of death. Though beauty cannot hide the ugliness of death for long, life goes on. The imbrication of life and death in this excerpt suggests that the long period of damage which Baghdad has witnessed may disfigure the face of life but cannot stop it.

This idea is marked in the scene of the burning of the library discussed earlier.

Looking at the ruins of the library after the act of burning, Hayat states:

Amid the heaps of ash, the burnt trees, the remainders of books [...] and the burnt encyclopedias a flock of sheep herds at the library's field. I hear the bleating of ewes and see their dung between the remnants of books. A shepherd trades with a lamb [...] He slays a sheep and hangs it on the Eucalyptus and sells the meat to women [...] Butchers' shops are closed and so are grocers [...] The women make their stew out of the lamb meat (35).

Two images of damage and life are juxtaposed in this scene. The ugliness of the scene is apparent in the way knowledge is eaten up by fire and animals, and in the manner the quiet and beautiful space of the library is filled with the noise and the manure of sheep. However, this chaotic situation offers possibilities of a life that continues out of the ruins.

The idea of survival is implied in the final story with the title "Okinawa's Flower."

Here Hayat dreams of a meeting with an old man from Okinawa who hands Hayat a flower and tells her: "I call it the flower of deliverance. You have to wait until wars die to plant it" (234). The idea of a possible survival through the prevalence of the ideals of beauty is used along with that of love as a savior. These two values

portray stand as an antithesis to destruction through al-Dulaymi's reference to the powerful love emotions between Hayat and Naji who lives in Nicosia. The possibility of Baghdad's recovery is represented in the name of Naji which means "survivor" in Arabic. Naji's love for Baghdad urges him to write a book about the city. "In his book Naji collects evidence of the secret behind Baghdad's rebirth through ancient times [...] kept in the hearts of lovers which were hard to reach by the occupiers and the murderers who were engaged in ruining Baghdad" (22-23). Naji is confident that the love which helped rebuild Baghdad throughout history is capable of saving it in the present. Baghdad's revival is also suggested in Naji's reassuring voice reaching Hayat from the distance at the opening of the novel. The presence of the man's voice and Hayat's reaction while hearing it blurs distinctions between the physical and the imaginary presence of Naji.

In her basement, shivering at the loud noise of the explosions outside, "His voice uplifts me out of the chasm of terror. I hear him saying: Calm down. All this will end and we'll outrun death together" (4). Despite the distance between Hayat and her lover, she conjures his spiritual presence which works as an antidote that drives evil away. This idea recurs in Hayat's description of Baghdad "whose name has become a mantra [which] drives death out" (19). It suggests that Hayat's love for Naji and her love for Baghdad are inseparable. This becomes evident in the last story. When Hayat finds her uncle, he asks her to leave Baghdad and to join him in

the mountains away from the disarray, leaving her to wonder: “Shall I write to Naji to join me in the mountains?” (236). This question opens up a series of questions as to whether Hayat will leave Baghdad or is she going to stay there and resume writing Baghdad “on [her] palm [...] as the city has turned into a tiny word and words don’t die” (19).

4.9 Conclusion

Zubayda’s Window and *Women of Saturn* originate from the traumatic memory of women to offer a testimonial narrative. The narratives give voice to the victims of war and dictatorship who were abducted, deformed, buried, and exiled. These testimonies are enabled by means of the central characters who are set up as secondary witnesses (LaCapra 11-14) to the loss of their brothers, friends, husbands and lovers and above all to the loss of a homeland.

In *Zubayda’s Window* the central character carries the burden of the traumatic memory of her country in exile. Partaking in war at a distance is intensified by means of the deferred death (Derrida 91) Zubayda experiences with the burning of her soul while watching the explosions in Baghdad. The burning of Zubayda’s soul inside her flat is juxtaposed with the outside coldness of Berlin where she experiences a slow death: “like the hands of a clock, she is caught in a circular trap, turning around and around without any hope of salvation” (al-Qazweni 14). With

the occupation of Baghdad Zubayda loses any hope of return “In the past, possibilities existed for her return [...] but all such possibilities now seem remote” (114).

Baghdad, which Zubayda hoped to return to, has become, after occupation, a “ghoul” (al-Dulaymi 100) in *Women of Saturn*. The text portrays women’s daily confrontation with death threats, fear and abduction in the post-occupation period. This reality places Hayat, the main character, as a primary witness to her unexperienced experience of death and rape, and as a secondary witness to the targeting and the loss of others. The basement where Hayat and her friends find shelter from violence becomes a place where Hayat revisits Baghdad’s past through the papers her uncle hid there.

Zubayda’s and Hayat’s endeavour to dig deeply into the memory of a bleeding past, by means of remembering or reading through past records, allows them to reopen “old wounds” (Brown 105 and Haacken 34) of traumatic occurrences in the history of Iraq. The succession of wounds constitutes a “continuous predicament” (Bloom 14) to Iraqis. This predicament is portrayed in the ages of political unrest which commenced with the Mongols and carried on through the dictatorship of Saddam Husayn, ending with the US invasion and the post-occupation stage of turmoil.

This turmoil is depicted in *Women of Saturn* through the burning of museums, libraries, the targeting of women and the random killings of intellectuals by the US soldiers, the unidentified militias and the extremist groups where a deliberate attempt to destroy Iraqi intellectual life takes place (Zangana 46).

By analyzing the traumatic experiences of women, the writers display the impact of war on civilian life and reveal “the other side of the invasion in a way that undermines the one-sided illiberality of the mainstream media and White House political speeches” (Mehta 81). Building on biographical experiences the writers record the stories of imprisonment, rape and abduction of Iraqis. Thus, producing a record “which is almost impossible to counter by the US occupation” (Zangana 143). In the text, Hamid describes the damage of Hayat’s house at the hands of a group of US marines and Iraqi forces who break into her house to look for weapons and armed men: “They damaged the doors with their rifles [...] Everything was destroyed; wardrobes, furniture and antiques [...] They stole some jewelry and money [...] To hell with this stuff” (22). The lines suggest an image of how US forces commit theft and terrify Iraqis whilst they look for “insurgents.”

In these narratives the world of the central characters is nearly empty of men. The men who were lost to violence live in the memory of the characters. In *Zubayda’s Window* Zubayda’s memory hovers between her soldier brother killed in the Iran-Iraq war and her pilot lover who went missing in the same war. In Berlin, Zubayda

laments the loss of her male friends who could not endure the hardships of exile.

The only man whom Zubayda happens to talk to is an indifferent neighbor who thinks that the explosions he hears from Zubayda's TV "are in Iran, and we can hear them here in Berlin" (al-Qazweni 6).

In *Women of Saturn* Hayat loses her brothers during the reign of Saddam, her father dies of grief, her husband divorces her and disappears after being emasculated and Hamid leaves Baghdad after losing his beloved. The only man who inhabits the women's neighborhood, where Hayat lives, is a voyeur who peeps at women. The women in the text face death, imprisonment and are raped. They leave Baghdad to Syria and Jordan where they face displacement and indecision wondering "What shall [we] do?" (al-Dulaymi 195).

Zubayda and Hayat outlive their near-to-death experiences of violence with traumatic legacies in their memories. Their wounds are those of all Iraqi women who find themselves fighting with "local and colonial forms of oppression" (Golley 133). Commenting on her work al-Qazweni contends: "In a way Zubayda's story is the story of my generation" (al-'Ali 135). The manner by which the personal experience is de-individualized also appears in al-Dulaymi's description of her work following 2003: "My lonely women characters leave my book to give condolences to deceased families. [The] young women characters stumble with death and explosives. Their eyes mirror the faces of the beloved who were engulfed

by absence” (205-206). The individual experiences of pain in the narratives represent the collectivity of the traumatic experiences. These writers embark on writing Baghdad which becomes a text that is constantly rewritten.

They write about the beautiful Baghdad of their childhood and the good old days of their parents’ past. They also write about the unrest which marks Iraq’s history.

Zubayda retells her grandmothers’ tales about the age of King Faysal II and the chaos that ensued after his assassination. She writes the stories of the dead “hoping that they might leap back into life once recorded on paper” (116). Hayat writes about the victims and the death in life which characterizes survivors’ living. The narratives emphasize that the historical memory of a homeland, beleaguered by wars and upheavals cannot be reconciled; an idea that is opposite to LaCapra’s view that the historical trauma of a nation can be reconciled (13). However, faith in a conceivable redemption is gestured at in the texts. Zubayda tells the story of the rise and fall of the Berlin wall and hopes that Baghdad will rise. Hayat describes the continual rise and fall of Baghdad throughout time and foresees a likely rebirth by love.

The movement between past and present in the texts creates a sense of circularity in the narratives where the present duplicates the past and gives an impression of a rewriting of a narrative on a history. Hayat asserts that “The country is overburdened with stories and we have to keep narrating them” (65) since narrating

these stories is a weapon against the annihilation of memory practiced in the post-occupation period in Iraq. In the texts, narration turns into “a constant obligation to the woes of history” (Felman 115). Narrating the collective experience of victims and of Baghdad as a wounded space is an attempt to recreate a collective memory of Iraqi society so as to do justice to both the living and the dead.

Chapter Five: Conclusion

From the ashes of tragedy an Iraq rises
guarded by millions of lovers,
an Iraq with liquid black eyes
whose lips are dates,
a river of ebony flows down the back
to the waist (qtd. in Mehta).⁶⁹

I have chosen these lines as they summarize some of my research findings. The Iraqi women's war texts of the three periods of wars I investigated document a long history of dictatorship, wars, sanctions and occupation referred to in the metaphor of "the ashes of tragedy." In these texts, the trauma of war is not specific to the men who fight at the war front, but is depicted in terms of the women at the home front. The women who survive wars in the texts I analyzed suffer in many different ways. They are widows of dead fighters, wives of traumatized soldiers, bereaved mothers, single women who lost their beloved in wars, exiled women watching the destruction of Iraq from exile and lonely women targeted by unknown militias. However, the tragedies of war do not shatter these women who "rise" and have as

⁶⁹ These lines are from the anthology *Standing on al Daghara Bridge* (2001) by Iraqi poet Ya'qub Jawad (1950-2002). The poet was a member of the Iraqi Writers and Publishers Association. He published two anthologies of poetry in which he expressed his deep love for his country. He also wrote many critical articles on poetry before his death in 2002.

the Iraq in the lines above “liquid black eyes.” The liquid here may signify both the tears of women and reference the beauty of their eyes.

In my study, I have examined how contemporary Iraqi women’s war fiction engages with the wars, sanctions and occupation. I show how that fiction defied the ideology of the ruling government of Saddam Husayn which propagated war during the 1980s and the 1990s and how through their fiction the women writers resist the violence which took place during and after the occupation of Iraq in 2003.

The challenges faced by the women writers under the censorship of Saddam Husayn’s government during the first two periods of the 1980s and the 1990s did not stop women writers from their peaceful struggle to undermine the very notion of war and to expose its human cost. Some of these writers left Iraq and wrote from their exile. Others, stayed in the country and went into, what Salam ‘Abud describes as, “inner exile,” (156) where they wrote silently and published their work after the fall of the regime. In 2003 writers confronted the complexities of the political atmosphere of the post-invasion period which pushed most of them out of Iraq.

Caiani and Cobham argue that physical exile does not stop Iraqi writers from setting their narratives entirely inside Iraq nor does inner exile inhibit those who remained in Iraq from imagining the hardships of exile (243). Whether from inside

or outside of their country, Iraqi women writers continue writing about the effect of war on civilian's life. They depict the way survivors who are mostly women are traumatized by war and hereby acknowledge the presence of war-related trauma. Therefore, a new literature emerged as an articulation of the ongoing conflict and its aftermath.

Herman argues that "trauma is an inevitable legacy of war" (Herman 27). In examining the narratives of the three periods of war and occupation, I found that despite the range of concerns each narrative addresses, they primarily deal with the trauma of their characters. The treatment of the human suffering of the survivors indicates that war victims involve both the dead and the living. Harold Bloom uses the term "crisis of survival" (14) to define the manner by which survivors turn into victims due to the "belatedness" (Freud 84 and Caruth 6) of the effect of trauma.

The crisis of survival begins when the traumatized outlast a physical danger and are "apparently unharmed," (Freud 84) but are psychologically affected. This effect is described as a "wound to soul" (Hacking 4) and a "wound to mind" (Caruth 3) which is not easily mended. The traumas of the characters in the texts take different forms: sorrow, guilt, uncertainties, fear, loneliness and a slow death. The common thread among the characters in the texts is the sense of the unendingness of their trauma which reflects the unfinished misery of the historical situation of Iraq.

Commenting on the Holocaust narratives of trauma, Caruth argues that there is no single approach to war trauma: “[we face] the difficulty of listening and responding to traumatic stories in a way that does not lose their impact, that does not reduce them into clichés or turn them all into versions of the same story” (vii). The focus on the trauma in the narratives I examined does not turn these narratives into “clichés” because each text portrays a unique “crisis of survival” and because this crisis varies in accordance with the exigencies of war throughout the three periods.

The texts which represent the eight-year war with Iran in the 1980s respond to the Iraqi government’s effort to draft young men to its “senseless war” (al-‘Ali 150-151). This effort was evident in the government’s publicity of the notion of the man as the glory maker, and of the woman as the offspring maker. Moreover, the Iraqi regime strived to hide the human cost of war by its fervent attempts to silence people’s grief (Walter 132). However, the narratives of this period told a different story. The soldier in Ibtisam ‘Abdullah’s story “The Other in the Mirror” was described as suffering from “traumatic neurosis” (Freud 292) and was unable to deal with his otherness. He and his colleagues were represented as “scared” (186) when they were in the trenches. The soldier/husband of Rabab in Irada al-Jabburi’s “Prisoners” was represented as “a charred corpse brought to her in a box covered with the Iraqi flag” (61).

On the other hand, the wife of the soldier in ‘Abdullah’s story was portrayed as patient, stable and loving “I’d still love you even if the change were for the worse” (187). She fights her husband’s physical absence with “imagination” (185) and confronts his psychological absence with empathy. In al-Jabburi’s story Rabab dealt with her “wound” by means of denial and played the role of an “empathetic listener” to the stories of other women (62). In other words, women are described as capable of getting by the “crisis of survival.”

The writers did not provide solutions to the traumas of the characters. “The Other in the Mirror” ends with the soldier’s otherness intensified by wounding his wife who becomes the enemy. By the end of “Prisoners” Rabab admits the loss of her husband but remains prisoner to grief. However, by empowering women characters and by portraying the human tragedy the texts troubled the Iraqi gendered policy against women and undermined the dominant discourse of war as glory.

The First Gulf War of the 1990s took place while Iraqis were grieving for their losses from the previous war with Iran. The damage the war of the 1980s brought was made even worse with the war of the 1990s and the embargo that followed.

This damage did not only involve the country’s infrastructure, economy, education and people’s lives but it was more about the feeling of despair at the continuity of

the conflict with no end in sight. This sense of hopelessness drove many Iraqis out of the country to fall victims to a different challenge in exile.

The ongoing circle of anguish survivors went through during this period is described by Lifton as a “paradox of survival” (xi). While experiencing this paradox survivors undergo a “continuing predicament” (Bloom 14) as they alternate between the “story of the unbearable nature of an event and the story of the unbearable nature of its survival” (Caruth 7). In Maysalun Hadi’s novella *The World Minus One* the loss of the only son signifies an unbearable burden on the parents who are engulfed into an open-ended form of mourning. On the one hand, mourning provides a sense of relief to the mother who believes that this is the only way which “can bring ‘Ali back” reducing her life into a perpetual attempt to resurrect the dead ‘Ali (16). On the other hand, mourning turns into a kind of “complicated grief” (Kerr n.p.) on the part of the father who is left in an unbroken circle of “oscillation” (Caruth 7) between belief and doubt that he might have “buried the wrong corpse” (20).

In Husayn’s *Beyond Love* the open-ended paradox of survival is embodied in the women character’s incessant struggle with a “hell” (1) of political oppression, social injustice, poverty and lost love. Ironically, the women survive the “hell” in their country to be caught into a new “hell” in exile. The new hardship is portrayed

in the way women are victimized by their dislocation, nostalgia and memory which “remain present” for the characters (Bal vii) who look at it as an “enemy laying an ambush” (Husayn 18).

Both texts leave the reader with a sense of irresolution. In *The World Minus One* ‘Ali’s father keeps questioning whether he should open his son’s tomb or not. In *Beyond Love* the central character is left overburdened with uncertainties as she enters into a new exile. The sense of non-closure found in the texts governed Iraqis by the end of the First Gulf War. When the military operations ended Iraqis were relieved but they soon realized that it was a temporary relief as more wounds were to come.

The feelings of vagueness and indecision which distinguished the age of the 1990s were amplified with the end of the reign of Saddam Husayn in 2003. The US-led invasion and occupation of Iraq let go to a new phase of violence, disarray and confusion. The lootings and the burning of libraries and museums were accompanied by a wave of sectarian cleansing which targeted men and women. Moreover, the large scale violence against women made them prisoners in their homes (Zangana 13). Ironically, the slogan of “women’s liberty” propagated by US officials gave way to the religious groups which resubordinated women

(Efrati171). This difficult situation led many Iraqis to leave Iraq. However, exile opened the door for more challenges.

These challenges are depicted in the narratives written during this period. Iqbal al-Qazwini's *Zubayda's Window* and Lutfiyya al-Dulaymi's *Women of Saturn* describe the manner in which the burning of Baghdad does not only engulf Iraqis inside the country during the occupation but it also encompasses the ones in exile. Watching the burning of Baghdad from her flat in Berlin Zubayda says: "It is happening here in my soul, too" (al-Qazwini 6). Zubayda's situation is worsened by means of her isolated state which is made worse by the command of a wounded memory which she cannot escape.

In both texts central characters survive a "deferred death" (Derrida 30) and are situated as primary witnesses to their stories of survival and as secondary witnesses (LaCapra 11-14) to the stories of others. Witnessing the ongoing calamities haunting their country induced the characters to try to understand the reality of the political situation in Iraq. The writers of the texts draw on the history of violence in Iraq and show how this violence extends to the present. While al-Qazwini draws an image of the blood shed that started with the fall of King Faysal II in 1958 and extends to 2003, al-Dulaymi goes even farther back in her portrayal of the Iraqi turmoil which began with the Siege of Baghdad by the Mongols in 1258 and has

recurred in the subsequent centuries. In other words, the texts about 2003 depict events as ramifications of previous ones, portraying women's trauma as an outcome of earlier series of crises Iraq has been going through.

In the texts survival offers the central characters the chance to narrate the stories they witness as "narration saves the stories" (al-Dulaymi 125). While narration rescues the stories from oblivion it does not remedy the defects in these stories/histories. This idea contrasts with LaCapra's (13) and Laub's (69) suggestions that historical trauma can be healed by sharing it through speaking and writing. In the texts narration does not provide a healing to the traumas of characters who find themselves narrating a "flawed history" (al-Qazwini 116). However, the flaws which ruined Iraq's past and present do not stop characters from dreaming of a rebirth. Zubayda's window is left open "to let in the air wet with rain [when] she dozes off and falls asleep" (122) and Hayat is left alone in Saturn/Baghdad dreaming of an imaginary reunion with her lover and of the Okinawa's flower of deliverance which she cannot plant "until wars die away" (234).

In the narratives I analyzed survivors/witnesses of traumatic happenings face the difficulty of testifying to the harrowing war events. Harold Bloom describes this testimony as an "impossible saying" (113). What render the articulation of the survivors' testimonies impossible are the gaps and the silences that intervene their

speech (Laub 70-71) as survivors are not in control of exact details in their memory. In their attempt to remember the witnesses tend to omit, confuse and to forget (van der Kolk and van der Hart 168). However, what matters in these “intersubjective” testimonies is not exact details but the “historical truth” (Laub 60) underlying these “impossible” accounts. When I was trying to remember the experiences of war I witnessed, many details escaped my mind. It was also very painful to recollect some of the more agonizing aspects, especially those related to losing loved ones.

Despite that the experience of trauma is beyond language “speech of all sorts spills out from the site of trauma” (Gilmore 102). Literature has proved to convey this impossibility by means of the techniques writers employ “to simulate [...] traumatic narrative” (Moran 5). The narratives I examined display a range of devices as flashbacks and repetition which enable the rendering of trauma (Whitehead 4). The main emphasis of the narratives of the first two wars of the 1980s and 1990s is on flashbacks where characters frequently revisit a memory of a better past to escape the reality of the present. However, in the narratives of 2003 the past is looked at differently in that it is no longer a refuge from the present since it represents the beginning of a continuous series of upheavals and unrest.

The historical referentiality in the narratives implies the personal experiences of the writers as war survivors and the experiences of other survivors whom the writers witnessed or learnt about. Regardless of the exact details of the traumatic experiences, the stories the writers provide entail a testimonial account where a record of historical happenings is presented to the reader/witness. The writers therefore have documented actual events in fictional form and hereby continued their memories.

In *The World, the Text and the Critic* (1991) Edward Sa'id suggests that: "Texts are worldly, to some degree they are events, and, even when they appear to deny it, are nevertheless a part of the social world, human life, and of course the historical moments in which they are located and interpreted" (35). Sa'id's words apply to the women writers' texts I examined. These texts impart female civilian points of view which do not always engage with battles but rather bring to light the human suffering at the home front.

Ricoeur argues that when events have such moral intensity that ordinary historical explanation is insufficient, history summons fiction (189-191). Literary fiction involves aesthetic and ethical truth at the same time. Aesthetic because the author will "transcend his own experience to talk about the ineffable, and ethical because the author [...] establishes a testimonial pact and does justice to the collective memory of all those murdered" (Munté 12). In representing the human suffering

Iraqi women novelists of war realize their moral responsibility as historians towards the victims/survivors. This also concerns my experience as a witness to real events. Incorporating my personal account of war and exile in my thesis places me as a historian responsible for narrating the communal disaster.

In her article “The Identity of Numbers” Irada al-Jabburi describes the manner by which the trauma of victims/survivors are reduced into figures in the news and that only through the medium of fiction these victims regain their dignity and humanity (250-255). Narrating the unspeakable particularities of individual trauma involves a testimony that encompasses the memory of all those who are silenced by violence.

These authors do not only write on behalf of Iraqi victims but also as part of the larger group where their private history becomes a collective memory.

The narratives I analyzed in this research represent a range of different forms of traumatic grief in which the personal wounds of the women writers merge with the wounds of Iraqi women and of the characters generating one story of loss. Baghdad is the centre of narration in this story whose action starts in the 1980s, rises in the 1990s and falls with the fall of Baghdad in 2003. Throughout, the reader is invited to visit not only Baghdad of the war periods but also Baghdad under the Mongols in 1258 and the following epochs with all the political and social vagaries that beset it.

In *Beyond Love* Baghdad in the 1990s is equated to a “hell” that engulfed the dreams of women. Once women characters are in exile Baghdad turns into a memory of a happy past which they constantly revisit in their dreams. In Zubayda’s *Window* the burning of Baghdad in 2003 signifies the “burning of [Zubayda’s] memory,” and the fall of Baghdad represents the fall of Zubayda’s dream of return.

In *Women of Saturn* Baghdad is portrayed as a ghoul and a burning pot that devours its people. The city is compared to Saturn, the harbinger of misfortune, darkness and death to women. Baghdad is not only a setting that the writers imitate but a text that is continuously reconstructed.

The act of reconstructing the personal narrative and the historical fact enables these writers to comment on the political and social system motivated by a desire to contest the dominant discourses. The writers of the 1980s and the 1990s have breached the barriers of censorship to rise above the fear of punishment (Grace 189). Their evaluation of the conflict places their work within the context of a critique of history that is the source of the conflict. Thus produces changes to the ways in which history is conceptualized and narrated.

“The Other in the Mirror,” which is state- sponsored shows that a writer could obliquely condemn war. ‘Abdullah’s treatment of the shell-shocked soldier’s psychological disturbance offers an opposite image of the soldier, as a hero, propagated by the Iraqi government in the 1980s. On the other hand, Irada al-

Jabburi's "Prisoners" expresses direct opposition to war by means of the character's questions about the validity of going to war.

In *The World Minus One* Maysalun Hadi destabilizes the concept of the "martyr" as a symbol of sacrifice and glory through the references to the soldiers' corpses as carcasses. Husayn's *Beyond Love* exposes the false democracy of the elections in the 1990s and describes the way the oppressive regime punishes its opponents.

In *Zubayda's Window* al-Qazwini ridicules the way Iraqi officials deal with the occupation and she uses the word "dictator" instead of Saddam Husayn throughout the novel. The writer also attributes the current instability of the political chaos to the previous regimes. The writer of *Women of Saturn* criticizes the way the Ba'th regime punished men and women dissidents and sees the prevailing social and political chaos as an extension of previous disarrays.

As such, the works are fraught with political implications, especially in regard to marginalized identities. In my analysis of the narratives about 2003, I did not expand on the writers' portrayal of the coexistence of the Iraqi minorities which is indicated in both *Zubayda's Window* and *Women of Saturn*. Yet, I found that the writers' focus on this issue in the narratives is very much needed in the current

situation while Iraq is experiencing rising sectarianism.⁷⁰ In *Zubayda's Window* a reference is made to a Jewish neighbor who entrusted her cupboard to Zubayda's grandmother when the Iraqi Jews were forced to emigrate. When her grandmother told her the story:

Zubayda never understood why she had refused to buy her Jewish neighbor's cupboard, or why it was kept here, if she hadn't bought it? When she asked, her grandmother always said: "It is not right to buy something from someone in need, someone whose soul is attached to a thing. This would be a sin." Her grandmother's solution had been to give the Jewish woman the money she needed, and to promise to keep the cupboard until she returned [...] (al- Qazwini 39).

This story along with another story about Zubayda attending the "marriage rituals of the Mandeans at the edge of the river with her father" (41) when she was a little girl, expand the reader's knowledge about the manner by which Iraqis were coping with their differences and supporting minorities in good and bad times. The grandmother's use of the word "sin" and the way promises are sincerely respected explains the profound implications of religious beliefs on neighborliness among people in a way that support friendly coexistence. In *Women of Saturn* al-Dulaymi makes references to intermarriages between different ethnic groups in the past and how this fact has become difficult in the 1990s and 2003. The writer refers to the Yazidi ethnic group⁷¹ in the symbol of the Yazidi religion, Melek Taus (the

⁷⁰ Despite confronting an invasion by British forces in 1914, Iraq did not experience the massive societal degradation then that began in the wake of the Iran-Iraq war, the 1991 Gulf War, the subsequent Intifada, and the ensuing sanctions regime. See. Khuri 2010.

⁷¹ The Yazidi are a Kurdish religious community who represent an ancient religion that is linked to Zoroastrianism and Sufism. They live primarily in the Nineveh Province of northern Iraq. The

Peacock Angel). In the text, she uses “the blue peacock” as a street name in the neighborhood after a blue peacock that lives in Hamid/the dumb bird breeder’s house. Hayat describes how:

One of the extremists shot the peacock that fell in a pond of blood [...] because Yazidi worship it [...] Hāmid sobbed while writing to me: “If this beauty is a devil, I will worship it [...] Are they killing beauty because of its virtue?” I answered: “Don’t cry. We are all this peacock and they have come to finish us” (al- Dulaymi 33).

Here, shooting the peacock which “fell in a pond of blood” yields a miniature image of the bloody situation of the sectarian violence that ensued during the post-invasion stage. The killing of the peacock draws a picture of the way certain militias spoilt the image of Islam that respects other religions and calls for mercy and compassion. The juxtaposition of the words “devil,” “virtue” and “beauty” indicates how these values have been affected by the deeds of these groups who think that their elimination of beauty/ the peacock is a “virtuous” act because they believe that the peacock stands for the “devil.” In addition, killing “beauty” denotes the targeting of women at the hands of sectarian groups from different backgrounds.

The uncertainty which marks the texts written in 2003 and its aftermath is experienced by the writers in the years that follow. Commenting on the difficulty

Yazidi believe that Melek Taus is a proud angel “who rebelled and was thrown into Hell by God. He stayed there 40,000 years, until his tears quenched the fires of the underworld. Now he is reconciled to God” (Thomas 2007).

of writing during the current situation, Maysalun Hadi who, during the writing of this research, has been living in Iraq maintains:

The censor inside us is highly cautious about a sectarian reading of our work. Can you imagine the time I spend before choosing the name of a character or a place in my texts for fear that such details may likely be misinterpreted by the reader? Generally, women are facing a real trial by extremists. Journalism is enjoying a freer atmosphere. Yet, printing is still restricted which induces many writers to publish their work in Arab publishing houses (al -Hilali 2012).

Given these restrictions Hadi thinks that black comedy is the best manner in which a writer can expose the viciousness of the present. In *Hafid al-BBC (The BBC Grandson* 2011) Hadi draws a comic female narrator who tells the story of the bloody history of Iraq, from the British occupation in 1921 to the US occupation in 2003 and the rise of the sectarian troubles. In the novel, Shahrazad/the grandmother is addicted to the BBC Arabic radio news because she thinks that this is the only news channel that tells the truth about the political situation in the Arab World:

At times, [Shahrazad] joined her son Shu'ait who used to listen to the Voice of the Arabs radio. He believed the radio announcer [...] who confirmed the downing of thirty, then forty and then seventy Israeli planes. In the meantime, the BBC was announcing the destruction of Egyptian planes on the runways by Israeli air forces. After a quarter-century the announcer [...] promised America's wreckage at the fences of Baghdad [...] Shahrazad was neither stricken by the Palestinian Nakba nor by the June Naksa nor by the um al-Ma'arik. She died of a heart attack a few months after um al- Hawasim while listening to the BBC news of the new government's intention to change the colours of the new Iraqi flag (230-231).

The narrator provides an ironic depiction of the way in which political propaganda in the Arab World, represented in the text as the Voice of the Arabs radio,

participates in stage-managing the reality of the political situation during the 1960s in which a setback could be represented as a victory. Conversely, the BBC announced the Arabs' defeat and conveyed the truth. Ironically, the same situation took place many decades later when the Arab announcer "promised" the damage of the US forces in 2003 while the Americans were occupying Baghdad. The lines also refer to the series of wars of defeat that Arabs, particularly Palestinians, and Iraqis went through. In the text, the word "nakba" (catastrophe) is used to refer to the Palestinian exodus that resulted in the Arab-Israeli war in 1948 and the founding of the state of Israel. The word "naksa" (setback) is the Arabic term for the defeat of the Arabs during the 1967 Six-Day War. Ironically, while "nakba" and "naksa" were understood to mean the displacement of a nation, "um al-Ma'arik" (mother of all battles), which means an unprecedented victory, was used by the Iraqi government during The Gulf War of 1991 to describe another war of defeat which took place after Iraq's occupation of Kuwait.

In 2003, another Iraqi defeat was named "um al-Hawasim" (mother of decisiveness) by the Iraqi government to propagate the supposed battle against the US forces (See al-Wasat News 2003). The word "hawasim" (decisiveness) is used sarcastically in the text. The irony lies in the fact that the "decisive" battle did not take place. Instead, the leaders disappeared, the land was occupied and the Iraqi flag which symbolizes authority is subject to debate about changing its colours. In

addition, the grandmother's death takes place while she is listening to the BBC news of another defeat that she cannot deny as it comes from a trustworthy channel.

While comedy and sarcasm allow some writers inside Iraq to voice their critique at the deterioration of the state, others tend towards a kind of writing that is enriched with symbols and ambiguous references. Thus, the situation of writing post 2003 is similar to the period of the censorship of the previous regime. As such, writers use ambiguous depictions in order to express their opposition to the state of instability around them. This is the case with Raghda al-Suhayl whose anthology of short stories *Baghdad Psycho* (2013) portrays the nightmare of wars and the illogicality of the ongoing turmoil. In her story "Ahthiya Mujanaha" ("Winged Shoes") the writer draws a picture of a messy world whose characters are mainly hens and cocks with an infrequent appearance from humans who are stricken by poverty, male domination and violence. The story opens with the narrator looking for her donkey and ends with her still looking for the donkey "amid the long queues of people in front of checkpoints which fill the roads of the crowded city of Baghdad" (82). When killing and bloodshed become the norm, human beings are viewed as monsters. This justifies the writer's choice of the donkey as the narrator's beloved.

In al-Suhayl's story the narrator who is a university lecturer, describes the way the students are seated in her classroom: "the cocks were seated on the right side while

the hens were on the left side. These creatures looked a bit weird. The cocks' feathers were plucked except a few ones that stood on the crests. The hens were without wings" (90). The image alludes to the dominance of the extremists who seem to have control over university classrooms where male students are separated from females and are not allowed to mix with them. The reference to the "few cocks' feathers" represents the condition of the males which is diminished not only by the ravages of wars but also as a result of the atmosphere of fear and insecurity overwhelming Iraqis. In spite of their weak position, the males retain some of these feathers which "stood on the crests." The complexities of the current situation in Iraq which create this mixture of anxiety and male superiority instigate the males to exhort their patriarchal authority over the females who are represented as hens "without wings."

In *Inanna's Eyes* (2012), an anthology of free verse poems, short stories and drama texts,⁷² sixteen contemporary Iraqi women writers break traditional structures and thus revolt against the social system which marginalizes them. The choice of the name of Inanna, the Sumerian goddess of war, love and power who conjoins feminine and masculine qualities, justifies the content of the book in which the writers use a highly figurative language rich with allusions and symbols (al-Khalil n.p.). The texts centre on the suffering of women as a result of wars, dictatorship,

⁷² The book was financed by the German Embassy in Baghdad and the Goethe Institute in Erbil. It was published by al-Mada Publishing House in Baghdad.

occupation and male domination.⁷³ In “Me and Shahrar,” Muna Sab‘a writes:

“This is how he wants me. Nice and loyal. Never to approach the outer door.

Unaware of what goes on outside. Taken by a dream” (23). In another text, Faliha

Hasan wonders “Why not write me? I had been imprisoned inside my head for

ages, thinking. Why not write me?” (34). Through these texts the women critique

men’s control and express their will to free themselves from such constraints. This

resistance is accompanied by a deep sorrow at the rising violence.⁷⁴ Addressing the

spirit of Atwar Bahjat, a female journalist who was assassinated in 2003, Rana J.

Yasin writes: “O’ Atwar. The only difference between the murdered and the

banished lies in the unheard throbbing of the pulse” (39). By lamenting the tragic

death of Atwar and comparing it to the experience of exile, the author, as other

authors discussed in this thesis do, reinforces the similarities of experience between

women.

At a critical stage in the history of Iraq, these books can play a significant role not

only in recording the cruelty of the present but also in documenting the effect of

this violence on women. Despite their realization that narration cannot mend

historical memory the writers discussed in this thesis, are driven by a feminist

impulse and a love to their nation to change the current situation. When I added my

⁷³ The texts I am referring to appear in al-Mada Supplements.com 2013.

⁷⁴ Human Rights groups have stated that domestic violence has increased since the fall of Saddam Husayn in 2003, leaving many women in danger and with no refuge to turn to. See Refugee Rights.org. 2012.

personal memories of war to the experiences of the women writers and the characters in this research I did not only intend to document the past but I also intended to refashion that past through my reading of the wounds and my interpretation of the narratives. Chamberlayne argues that “To understand oneself and others we need to understand our own histories and how we have come to what we are. We make our own history but not under conditions of our own choosing”

(7). The writers in the narratives I discussed revisited history in an attempt to understand the intricacies of the present in a way that would help them create a change.

However, in the current situation in Iraq such change cannot take place unless sectarian conflicts end. The end of chaos will mark the beginning of a struggle to reconstruct Iraq’s future in which writers can take part through reimagining the structure of society. This means that war writing by Iraqi women writers of the 1980s, 1990s and 2003 provides a bigger picture not only of how war was thought about, experienced and understood but also about the possibilities of a rebuilding. Their works are important as a testimony to the Iraqi political and social climate of the twenty-first century.

By researching contemporary Iraqi women’s fiction of war, I do not wish to say that preference should be given to these female writers over male authors. Nor do I wish to claim that civilians suffer more than soldiers in warfare. Through their

representation of the historical reality of the Iraqi experience of the trauma of war women novelists add an essential voice to the Iraqi contemporary narrative of war. The survival of the women in isolation from men and their perseverance has shown the feminist discourse of the texts.

My research is intended to argue for the necessity of including contemporary Iraqi women's fiction of war within the wider domain of war literature. Contemporary Iraqi women's fiction of war embodies women's artistic responses to that context and offers the testimonial accounts of history from the home front by women. It suggests that gender roles are challenged and resisted, and does so from a female perspective. This perspective requires much greater presence in public discourse.

Bibliography

al-Aa'raji, Nazeq. "Maysalun Hadi fi al-'*Alam Naqisan Wahid*: Qubur al-Harb al-Faghera Afwahaha." ["Maysalun Hadi in *The World Minus One*: The Tombs of War are Widely Open."] *al-Farasha wal- 'Ankabut: Dirasat fi Adab Maysalun Hadi al-Qasasi wal-Riwa'i* [*The Butterfly and the Spider: Studies in Maysalun Hadi 's Fiction*] Ed. Najm 'Abdullah Kādhim. Amman: Dār al-Shurūq, 1997. 168-172.

al-'Ali, Nadjé. "Reconstructing Gender: Iraqi Women Between Dictatorship, War, Sanctions and Occupation." *Third World Quarterly*. Vol. 26, No. 4-5 (2005): 739-58.

---. Afterward. *Zubayda's Window: A Novel of Iraqi Exile*. By Iqbal al-Qazwini. Trans. 'Azzah al-Khūlī and Amīrah Nuwayrah. New York: The Feminist Press at the City University of New York, 2006. 123-137.

---. *Iraqi Women: Untold Stories from 1948 to the Present*. London: Zed Books Ltd, 2007.

al-'Ali, Nadjé and Nicola Pratt, eds. *Women and War in the Middle East: Transnational Perspectives*. London: Zed Books, 2009.

al-'Ali, Nadjé and Deborah al-Najjar, eds. *We Are Iraqis: Aesthetics and Politics in a Time of War*. New York: Syracuse University Press, 2013.

al-'Ani, Shuja'. "al-Tarikh Min Mandhur al-Dahaya wal Muhammashin: Qira'a fi Riwayat Sayyidat Zuhā li Lutfiyya al-Dulaymi." ["History from the Perspective of the Victims and the Marginalized: A Reading of Lutfiyya al-Dulaymi's *Women of Saturn*."] *Iraqi Writers Union*, n.d.
At<<http://www.iraqiwritersunion.com/modules.php?name=News&file=article&sid=11533>>, accessed 11 Feb. 2013.

al-Ansari, Khalid. "Iraq Revives Rules Censoring Books." *Reuters*. 25 July 2009.
At<<http://www.reuters.com/article/2009/07/25/us-iraq-censorship-sb-idUSTRE56O1F720090725>>, accessed 11 June 2013.

al-'Azzawi, Nadiya Ghazi. "Hulm al-'Awda fi Qisas Maysalun Hadi" ["The Dream of Return in Maysalun Hadi's Stories."] *Al-Farasha wal- 'Ankabut: Dirasat fi Adab Maysalun Hadi al-Qasasi wal-Riwa'i* [*The Butterfly and the Spider: Studies in Maysalun Hadi 's Fiction*.] Ed. Najm 'Abdullah Kadhīm. Amman: Dar al Shuruq, 1997, 204-215.

‘Abbas, Lu’ay Hamza. “Sayyidat Zuhal: Hikayat al-Khawf wal Ishtiha” [“Women of Saturn: Tales of Fear and Desire.”] *Shehrayar*. 4 Dec. 2010. At <http://www.shehrayar.com/ar/node_2110/node_4179>, accessed 5 April 2014.

‘Abdullah, Ibtisam. “al-A’khar fil Mira” [“The Other in the Mirror.”] *Contemporary Iraqi Fiction: An Anthology*. Ed. and Trans. Shakir Mustafa. New York: Syracuse University Press, 2008, 185-190.

---. “al-Bustan.” Mustafa. 182-185.

‘Abd al-Jabbar, Faleh. “Why the Intifada Failed?” *Iraq Since the Gulf War: Prospects for Democracy*. Ed. Fran Hazelton. London: Zed Books, 1994, 97-114.

‘Abdullah, Thabit A.J. *A Short History of Iraq from 636 to the Present*. London: Pearson Education Limited, 2003.

Abdela, Lesley. “Iraq War on Women.” *Open Democracy*. 18 July 2005. At<http://www.opendemocracy.net/conflict-iraqconflict/women_2681.jsp>, accessed 2 April 2014.

Abdulmir, ‘Ali. “Intadhim fil Ba’th wa Khud Malan lil Zawaj.” [“Be a Ba’th and Get Some Cash for Marriage.”] *al-Hayat*. 19 June 2001. At <<http://www.Aliabdulameer.com/inp/view.asp?ID=330>>, accessed 2 Oct 2011.

‘Abud, Salam. *Thaqafat al-Unf fi al-Iraq [The Culture of Violence in Iraq]* Cologne: al-Kamil, 2002.

Accad, Evelyne. *Sexuality and War: Literary Masks of the Middle East*. New York: New York University Press, 1990.

Acton, Carol. *Grief in Wartime: Private Pain, Public Discourse*. Houndmills: Macmillan, 2007.

Adnan, Etel. *From A to Z*. California: Post-Apollo Press, 1982.

Ahmad Husayn, ‘Adnan. “Sayyidat Zuhal: Sirat Baghdad Min al-Ghazw al-Maghuli Ila Wusul al-Marinz” [“Women of Saturn: Baghdad’s Biography from the Mongol’s Invasion to the Arrival of Marines”] *al-Hewar*. 21 November 2010. At <<http://www.ahewar.org/debat/show.art.asp?aid=235809>>, accessed 12 April 2014.

Allen, Roger. *The Arabic Novel: An Historical and Critical Introduction*. Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press, 1995.

---. “Rewriting Literary History: The Case of the Arabic Novel.” *Journal of Arabic Literature* 2007, 38 (3), 247-260.

Amin, Samir. “The American Ideology.” *al-Ahram Weekly*. 15-21 May 2003. At <<http://weekly.ahram.org.eg/2003/638/focus.htm>>, accessed 20 Sept. 2013.

Amos, Deborah. "Dancing for Their Lives." *Foreign Policy*. 9 March 2010. At <http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2010/03/09/dancing_for_their_lives>, accessed 15 Feb. 2014.

Anonymous Professor. Face-to-face interview with Angham 'Abdullah. 15 June 2013.

Arnone, Antony, ed. *Iraq under Siege: The Deadly Impact of Sanctions and War*. London: Pluto Press, 2000.

Ascherson, Neal. "Cultural Destruction by War, and Its Impact on Group Identities." *Cultural Heritage in Post-War Recovery*. Ed. Nicholas Stanley-Price. Rome: Ugo Quintily S.P.A, 2007, 17-26.

Ashplant, T.G., Graham Dawson and Michael Roper. "The Politics of War Memory and Commemoration: Contexts, Structures and Dynamics." *The Politics of War Memory and Commemoration*. Eds. T.G. Ashplant, Graham Dawson and Michael Roper. London: Routledge, 2000, 121-135.

Badr, Liana. "Introduction to The Eye of the Mirror." *In the House of Silence*. Ed. Fadia Faqir. Trans. Samira Kavar, Reading: Garnet Publishing, 1998.

Bal, Mike. "Introduction." *Acts of Memory: Cultural Recall in the Present*. Ed. Crew and Spitzer Bal. 1999, USA: University Press of New England.

Baldachin, Jenna. "The Problematic Nature of Using Western Treatments for PTSD in Non-Western Settings and a Discussion of Culturally Sensitive Interventions" *Introduction to Cultural Psychology*. 2010, 2-15.

Baram, Amatzia. "From Militant Secularism to Islamism: The Iraqi Ba'ath Regime 1968-2003." *History and Public Programme*. Oct. 2011. At <<http://www.wilsoncenter.org/sites/default/files/From%20Militant%20Secularism%20to%20Islamism.pdf>>, accessed 20 Oct. 2011.

Baudrillard, Jean. *The Gulf War Did Not Take Place*. Trans. Paul Patton. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995.

---. *The illusion of the end*. Trans. Chris Turner. Cambridge: Polity P, 1994.
Bauman, Zygmunt. *Liquid Love: On the Frailty of Human Bonds*. Cambridge: Polity, 2003.

BBC. "Flashback: 1991 Gulf War." *BBC News*. 20 March 2003. At <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/2754103.stm>, accessed 11 May 2010.

---. "1990: Iraq Invades Kuwait." *On This Day*. 2 August 2005. At <http://news.bbc.co.uk/onthisday/hi/dates/stories/august/2/newsid_2526000/2526937.stm>, accessed 5 January 2014.

---. "Jihad." *Religion*. 3 August 2009. At <http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/islam/beliefs/jihad_1.shtml>, accessed 13 June 2014.

---. "UN Lifts Sanctions against Iraq." *News Middle East*. 15 December 2010. At <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-12004115>>, accessed 22 Dec. 2012.

Beausoleil, Beau and Dimah Shehabi, eds. *Al- Mutanabbi Street Starts Here: Poets and Writers Respond to the March 5, 2007 Bombing of Baghdad's Street of the Booksellers*. Michigan: PM Press, 2012.

Ben Driss, Hager. "Women Narrating the Gulf: A Gulf of Their Own." *Journal of Arabic Literature*, Vol. 36, No. 2, 2005: 152-171.

Bengio, Ofra. *Saddam's Words: Political Discourse in Iraq*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1998.

Bevan, Robert. *The Destruction of Memory: Architecture and Cultural Warfare*. London: Reaktion, 2005.

Bloom, Harold, ed. *Literature of the Holocaust*. Philadelphia: Chelsea House Publishers, 2004.

Bogdanos, Matthew. "The Casualties of War: The Truth about the Iraq Museum." *American Journal of Archaeology*. July 2005. At <<http://www.ajaonline.org/newsletter/110>>, accessed 15 August 2013.

Booth, Alison, ed. *Famous Last Words: Changes in Gender and Narrative Closure*. Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1993.

Booth, Wayne C. *The Rhetoric of Fiction*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1983.

Borger, Julian. "There Were no Weapons of Mass Destruction in Iraq." *The Guardian*. 7 Oct. 2004. At <<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2004/oct/07/usa.iraq1>>, accessed 12 January 2012.

Bracken, P. "Psychological Responses to War and Atrocities: The Limitations of Current Concepts." *Social Sciences and Medicine*. 1995, 40, 8.

Brown, Laura S. "Not outside the range: One feminist perspective on psychic trauma." *American Imago*, Vol 48 (1), 1991, 119-133.

Brittain, Vera. *On Becoming a Writer*. London: Hutchinson, 1947.

The Brussels Tribunal. "Babili's Home: Concept and Synopsis." *Campaign Against the Occupation and for the Sovereignty of Iraq*. 15 Dec. 2012. At <

http://www.brussellstribunal.org/article_view.asp?id=652#.Uf_GytIU8ml], accessed 1 August 2013.

Burkeman, Oliver. "Ancient Archive Lost in Baghdad Library Blaze." *The Guardian*. 15 April 2003.

At <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2003/apr/15/education.books>>, accessed 20 May 2012.

Butler, Judith. *The Psychic Life of Power: Theories in Subjection*. Stanford: University of California Press, 1997.

Caiani, Fabio, and Catherine Cobham, eds. *The Iraqi Novel: Key Writers, Key Texts*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2013.

Celan, Paul. *Poems*. Trans. Michael Hamburger. New York: Persea, 1980

Calm Clinic.com. "Yawning Caused by Anxiety," n.d. 2009.

At <<http://www.calmclinic.com/anxiety/signs/yawning>>, accessed 5 May 2011.

Caruth, Cathy, ed. *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995.

---. *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996.

Cengage, Gale. "Samizdat Literature." *E-notes*, n.d. 2004.

At<<http://www.enotes.com/samizdat-literature-essays/samizdat-literature>>, accessed 6 February 2012.

The Center for Media and Democracy. "Spreading the Seeds of Democracy," n.d.

At<http://www.spurcewatch.org/index.php?=&Spreading_the_seeds-od_democeacy>, accessed 13 January 2013.

Chamberlayne P, Bornat J, Wengraf T, editors. *The turn to biographical methods in social sciences*. London: Routledge, 2000, 7.

Chomsky, Noam. "The Manufacture of Consent." *The Chomsky Reader*. Ed. James Peck. New York: Pantheon Books, 1987, 121-136.

Christensen, Thomas. "Remembering al-Mutanabbi." *al- Mutanabbi Street Starts Here: Poets and Writers Respond to the March 5, 2007 Bombing of Baghdad's Street of the Booksellers*. Eds. Beau Beausoleil and Dimah Shehabi. Michigan: PM Press, 2012, 138-140.

CNN. "Study Puts Iraqi Toll *Saddam's Iraq: Revolution or Reaction?* at 100,000." *World News*. 29 October 2004. At

<<http://www.cnn.com/2004/WORLD/meast/10/29/iraq.deaths>>, accessed 22 March 2011.

Cobbett, Deborah. "Women in Iraq." Ed. Committee against Repression and for Democratic Rights in Iraq. London: Zed Books Ltd, 1986, 120-137.

Cockburn, Cynthia and Dubravka Zarkov, eds. *The Postwar Moment: Militarities, Masculinities and International Peacekeeping, Bosnia and the Netherlands*. London: Lawrence and Wishart, 2002.

Cook, David. "Martyrdom (Shahada)." *Oxford Bibliographies*, n.d.

At<<http://www.oxfordbibliographies.com/view/document/obo-9780195390155/obo-9780195390155-0124.xml>>, accessed 11 May 2014.

cooke, miriam and Angela Woollacott, eds. *Gendering War Talk*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1993.

cooke, miriam. "Baghdad Burning: Women Write War in Iraq." *World Literature Today*. Nov. 2007. At < http://cges.umn.edu/docs/cooke.Baghdad_Burning.pdf>, accessed 10 April 2014.

---. "Death and Desire in Iraqi War Literature." *Love and Sexuality in Modern Arabic Literature*. Eds. Roger Allen, Hilary Kilpatrick and Ed do Moor. London: Saqi Books, 1995, 184-199.

---. *Women and the War Story*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996.

Cooperative Research.org. "Iraq Under US Occupation," n.d.

At<http://www.cooperativeresearch.org/timeline.jsp?timeline=us_occupation_of_iraq_tmIn&us_occupation_of_iraq_tmIn_general_topics=us_occupation_of_iraq_tmIn_military_operations>, accessed 17 April 2012.

Dalton, Philip. "Prayers to Broken Stones." *The Unknown Country: Death in Australia, Britain and the USA*. Eds. Kathy Charmaz, Glennys Howarth and Allan Kelleher. Houndmills: Macmillan, 1997, 45-57.

Davis, Eric. *Memories of State: Politics, History and Collective Identity in Modern Iraq*. 2005, California: University of California Press.

Dejevsky, Mary. "US Committed to Hard Line Against Saddam 's Iraq." *The Independent*. 27 March 1997. At < <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/us-committed-to-hard-line-against-Saddam-s-iraq-1275262.html>>, accessed 13 May 2014.

Derrida, Jacques. *The Instant of My Death*. Trans. Elizabeth Rottenberg. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000.

Dillon, Conor. "Cultural Incineration: 80 Years Since Nazi Book Burnings." *History of the Second World War*. 16 May 2013. At <<http://www.dw.de/cultural-incineration-80-years-since-nazi-book-burnings/a-16798958>>, accessed 28 July 2013.

Dudin, Rifqat et al, eds. *Hadiyya Husayn fi Khams Riwayat [Studies of Five Novels by Hadiyya Husayn.]* Amman: Dar al-Faris Publishing House, 2011.

al-Dulaymi, Iyad "Iraqi Journalists Gripped by Fear." *Doha Centre for Media Freedom*. 27 Dec 2011. At <<http://www.dc4mf.org/en/content/iraqi-journalists-gripped-fear>>, accessed 17 January 2012.

al-Dulaymi, Lutfiyya. "Episode 28: Manar in Baghdad 2007." Trans. John Peate. *Banipal: Magazine of Modern Arab Literature*. 2003. At <<http://www.banipal.co.uk/selections/74/205/lutfiya-al-dulaimy/>>, accessed 13 Oct. 2012.

---. *Hadiqat Hayat [Hayat's Garden]* Baghdad: Dar al- Sho'un al- Thaqafiyya al-'Amma, 2004.

---. "Mehnat al-Baqa' fi Balad al-Dhilal." ["The Crisis of Staying in the Country of Shadows."] *Juruh fi Shajar al-Nakhil: Qesas min Waq'a al-Iraq [Wounds in Palm Groves: Accounts from Iraq]* Ed. International Committee of the Red Cros. Beirut: Riyadh al-Rayyes Books, 2007, 205-216.

---. "Akhaḥ min al-Mala'ika" ["Lighter than Angels."] Ed. and Trans. Shakir Mustafa. New York: Syracuse University Press, 2008, 39-43.

---. *Sayyidat Zuhā: Sirat Nas wa Madina [Women of Saturn: Biography of a People and a City]* Amman: Fadaa't Publishers, 2010.

---. Interview with Kurayshan, Mohammad. "Athar al- Hesar 'Ala al-Adab al-Iraqi." [The Effect of the Embargo on Iraqi Literature.] *al-Jazirah Net*. 2 October 2000. At <<http://aljazeera.net/programs/pages/2360c632-badd-4c71-a0be-01ee64607b31>>, accessed 10 Nov. 2012.

---. Interview with Wadi'a Samikh. "Hewar ma' a al-Katiba al-Iraqiyya Lutfiyya al-Dulaymi" [Discussion with Iraqi Writer Lutfiyya al-Dulaymi] *al- Hewar al-Mutamaddin*. 18 May 2008. At <<http://ahewar.org/debat/show.art.asp?aid=136793>>, accessed 5 August 2011.

---. Interview with Kamal al-Dayf and Islah Bakhat. "al-Katibah al-Iraqiyya Lutfiyya al-Dulaymi: Tajrubati fil Manfah Muri'aa" [The Iraqi Writer Lutfiyya al-Dulaymi: My Exilic Experience Is Horrible] *Swiss Info*. 29 Oct 2011. At <<http://www.swissinfo.ch/ara/index.html?cid=6592720>>, accessed 27 Feb 2012.

Efrati, Noga. "Productive or Reproductive? : The Roles of Iraqi Women During the Iran-Iraq War." *Middle East Studies*. Vol. 35, No. 2, 1999: 27-44.

---. "Negotiating Rights in Iraq: Women and the Personal Status Law." *Middle East Journal*. Vol. 95, No. 4, Summer 2005: 577- 595.

---. *Women in Iraq: Past Meets Present*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2012.

Eliot, Thomas D. "Identification in Bereavement." *The Midwest Sociologist*. Vol. 16. No. 2, Spring 1954: 7-11.

Ezzati, A. "The Concept of Martyrdom in Islam." *al-Serat*. Vol. 12, 1986. At <<http://www.AIslam.org/al-serat/concept-ezzati.html>>, accessed 26 April 2012.

Farhani, Nader. *The Impact of Oil Market Change on Employment in the Arabic Oil-Producing Countries*. Mexico: Arab Organization for Employment, 1986.

al-Fawaz, 'Ali. Interview with Cilina Nasir. "Iraqi Writers, Intellectuals Tell of Fear and Censorship Under Saddam." *The Daily Star*. 16 April 2004.

At<<http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Middle-East/Apr/16/Iraqi-writers-intellectuals-tell-of-fear-censorship-under-Saddam.ashx#axzz2SyvM9R7R>>, accessed 5 May 2013.

Felman, Shoshana and Dori Laub. *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis and History*. London: Routledge, 1990.

Foote, C., Block, W., Crane, K., et al. "Economic Policy and Prospects in Iraq." *Journal of Economic Perspectives*. Vol. 18, No. 3, 2004: 47-70.

Freud, Sigmund. *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*. Trans. C.J.M.Hubback. New York: Boni and Liveright Publishers, 1924.

---. *Moses and Monotheism: Three Essays*. Ed. and Trans. James Strachey. London: The Hogarth Press, 1947.

---. *The Interpretation of Dreams*. Trans. A. A. Brill. Ware: Wordsworth Editions Ltd., 1997.

Friedman, Alan Warren. *Forms of Modern British Fiction*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1975.

Friedman, M and Marsella, A. "Posttraumatic Stress Disorder: An Overview of the Concept." *Issues in Research, and Clinical Applications*. Washington: American Psychological Association, 1996, 11-32.

Fisk, Robert. "The Baghdad Street of Books Refuse to Die." *The Independent*. 14 April 2012. At <<http://www.independent.co.uk/voices/commentators/fisk/robert-fisk-the-baghdad-street-of-books-that-refuses-to-die-7643876.html>>, accessed 8 June 2012.

Gellman, Barton. "US Bombs Missed 70% of Time." *Washington Post*, A1, 16 March 1991: 21-25.

---. "Allied Air War Struck Broadly in Iraq." *Washington Post*, A1, 23 June 1991: 13-16.

Ghazul, Firyal J. *Nocturnal Poetics: The Arabian Nights in Comparative Context*. Cairo: The American University in Cairo Press, 1996.

---. "Postmarked Iraq." Rev. *Paroles d'Irakiennes: Le Drame Irakien Écrit Par des Femme*. By In'aam Kachachi. *al-Ahram Weekly*. Vol. 213, May 2003: 15-21. At <<http://weekly.ahram.org.eg/2003/638/bo2.htm>>, accessed 17 July 2011.

---. "Iraqi Short Fiction: The Unhomely at Home and Abroad." *Journal of Arabic Literature*. Vol. 35, 2004:1-24.

Gilmore, Leigh. "Autobiography's Wounds." *Just Advocacy? Women's Human Rights, Transnational Feminism, and the Politics of Representation*. Eds. Wendy Hesford and W.Kozol. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2005, 99-119.

---. *The Limits of Autobiography: Trauma and Testimony*. 2001, USA: Cornell University Press.

Global Policy Forum. "Sanctions Against Iraq," n.d. At <<http://www.globalpolicy.org/previous-issues-and-debate-on-iraq/sanctions-against-iraq.html>>, accessed 24 April 2014.

Golley, Nawar al-Hassan, ed. *Arab Women's Lives Retold: Exploring Identity Through Writing*. Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2007.

---. *Reading Arab Women's Autobiographies: Shahrazad Tells Her Story*. USA: University of Texas Press, 2003.

Grace, Daphne M. 2006. "Arab Women Write the Trauma of Imprisonment and Exile." *Arab Women's Lives Retold: Exploring Identity through Writing*. Ed. Nawar al-Hassan Golley. Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2007, 181-200.

Hadi, Maysalun. *al-'Alam Naqisan Wahid [The World Minus One]* Amman: Dar Osama, 1999.

---. *Hafid al-BBC [The BBC Grandson.]* Amman: Dar al-Faris lil Nashir wal Tawzi'a, 2011.

---. Email Interview with Angham 'Abdullah. 5 Nov. 2011.

---. Face-to-face interview with Angham 'Abdullah. 24 Sept. 2011.

Haaken, Janice. *Pillar of Salt: Gender, Memory and the Perils of Looking Back*. 1998, New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press.

---. "The Recovery of Memory, Fantasy, and Desire: Feminist Approaches to Sexual Abuse and Psychic Trauma." *Signs*. 1996, 21,4, 1069-94.

Hacking, Ian. *Rewriting the Soul: Multiple Personality and the Sciences of Memory*. 1995, Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Halliday, Denis. "Biographical Information for Denis Halliday." December 1988. At <<http://www.casi.org.uk/halliday/bio.html>>, accessed 9 January 2014.

Harding, Sandra, ed. *Feminism and Methodology: Social Science Issues*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987.

Hardy, Roger. "The Iran-Iraq War," *BBC News*, n.d.
At <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/middle_east/4260420.stm>, accessed 14 Sept. 2010.

Harlow, Barbara. *Resistance Literature*. New York: Methuen, 1987.

Hartman, Geoffrey H. "On Traumatic Knowledge and Literary Studies." *New Literary History*. Vol. 26, No. 3, 1995: 537-563.

Hartsock, Nancy. "Fundamental Feminism: Prospect and Perspective." *Building Feminist Theory*. Ed. Charlotte Bunch, 32-43. New York: Longman, 1981.
Harvey, A.D. *A Muse of Fire: Literature, Art and War*. London: The Hambledon Press, 1998.

Heffron, Yağmur. "Inanna/Ištar" ["goddess."] *Ancient Mesopotamian Gods and Goddesses*. 2013. At <<http://oracc.museum.upenn.edu/amgg/listofdeities/inanaitar/>>, accessed 7 March 2013.

Henry, Alison. "Domestic Violence on the Rise in Iraq." *Iraqi Refugee Assistance Project*. 12 February 2012. At <<http://refugeerights.org/domestic-violence-on-the-rise-in-iraq/>>, accessed 2 January 2014.

Herman, Judith Lewis. *Trauma and Recovery: The Aftermath of Violence from Domestic Abuse to Political Terror*. London: Pandora, 1994.

al-Hilli, 'Adnan. "Maysalun Hadi: Literature Is the Final Refuge For the National Identity." *Iraq Writers*. 14 Oct. 2012.
At <<http://www.iraqiwriters.com/inp/view.asp?ID=3227>>, accessed 10 Jan. 2014.

al-Hilali, Bushra. Interview with Jawad Kadhim. *Adab Fan*. 4 April 2012. At <<http://www.adabfan.com/interview/9363.html>>, accessed 10 May 2013.

Hiro, Dilip. *The Longest War: The Iran-Iraq Military Conflict*. London: Grafton, 1989.

The History Place.com. "The Burning of Books," n.d.
At <<http://www.historyplace.com/worldwar2/triumph/tr-bookburn.htm>>, accessed 17 June 2013.

Human Rights Watch 2003-2005. "Climate of Fear: Sexual Violence and Abduction of Women and Girls in Baghdad." 23 July 2003. At <<http://www.hrw.org>>, accessed 19 May 2010.

Humphrey, Robert. *Stream of Consciousness in the Modern Novel*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1962.

Husayn, Hadiyya. *Bnt al-Khan [The Lodge's Daughter.]* Amman: Dar al-Faris lil Nashir wal Tawzi'a, 2001.

---. *Ma ba'ad al-Hub [Beyond Love.]* Trans. Ikram Masmudi. New York: Syracuse University Press, 2012.

---. Email Interview with Angham Abdullah. 17 Nov. 2011.

---. Interview with Lenx Qawwali. "al-Ibda'a la Ya'aish Tahta Midhalat al-Khawf wa innama fi Fada' al-Hurriyyah al-Wasi'a." ["Creativity Needs a Free Space to Thrive in."] *Qantara*. 2013. At <<http://ar.qantara.de/content/hwr-m-lktb-lrqr-hdy-hsyn-lbd-l-yysh-tht-mzl-lkhwf-wnm-fy-fd-lhry-lws>>, accessed 13 Feb.2014.

Husayn, 'Akil and Colin Freeman. "Two Dead Soldiers, Eight More to Go, Vow Avengers of Iraqi Girl's Rape." *The Telegraph*. 7 January 2006. At <<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/main.jhtml?xml=/news/2006/07/09/wirq09.xml>>, accessed 1 May 2012.

Ibrahim, Salam. "Ma ba'd al-Hub: Riwayat Hadiyya Husayn." [*Beyond Love: A Novel by Hadiyya Husayn.*] *Hadiyya Husayn fi Khams Riwayat [Studies of Five Novels by Hadiyya Husayn.]* Eds. Rifqat Dudin et al. Amman: Dar al-Faris Publishing House, 2011.

International Committee of the Red Cross, ed. *Juruh fi Shajar al-Nakhil: Qesas min Waqe'a al-Iraq Iraq [Wounds in Palm Groves: Accounts from Iraq]* Beirut: Riyad al-Rayyes Books, 2007.

---. "Oshruna 'aman'ala intiha' al-Harb bayna Iran wal-Iraq wa 'Asharat al-A'laf min al-Muharibin la yazalun Majhuli al-Masir." ["Twenty Years since the End of the Iran-Iraq War and the Destiny of Tens of Thousands of Fighters is Still Unknown."] 16 Oct. 2008. At <<http://www.icrc.org/ara/resources/documents/misc/iran-iraq-missing-161008.htm>>, accessed 15 Jan. 2010.

Iraq Body Count Report. "Year Four: Simply the Worst." 18 March 2007. At <<http://www.iraqbodycount.org/analysis/numbers/year-four/>>, accessed 17 August 2012.

The Iraqi Gazette. No. 2939, 16 May 1983. At <<http://www.gjpi.org/wp-content/uploads/gazette-index-2009.htm>>, accessed 11 April 2014.

---. No. 3054, 15 June 1985. At <<http://www.gjpi.org/wp-content/uploads/gazette-index-2009.htm>>, accessed 21 April 2014.

IRIN News. "Iraq: Female harassment from religious conservatives." 14 April 2004. At <<http://www.irinnews.org/report/23680/iraq-female-harassment-from-religious-conservatives>>, accessed 15 June 2014.

Irwin, Robert. *The Arabian Nights*. London: Tauris Park Paperbacks, 2004.

Issawi Charles. *The Fertile Crescent 1800-1914: A Documentary Economic History*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1988.

al-Jabburi, Irada. "Asra" ["Prisoners"] *Juruh fi Shajar al-Nakhil: Qesas min Waqe'a al-Iraq Iraq* [Wounds in Palm Groves: Accounts from Iraq] Ed. International Committee of the Red Cross. Beirut: Riyad al-Rayyes Books, 2007, 55- 65.

---. "Identity of Numbers." *We Are Iraqis: Aesthetics and Politics in a Time of War*. Eds. Nadjé al-'Ali and Deborah al-Najjar. New York: Syracuse University Press, 2013, 250-255.

---. Skype Interview with Angham Abdullah. 8-10 Nov. 2011.
Jalili, Ism'ail. "Iraqi Academics and Doctors: Innocent Victims of a Wider Geopolitical Struggle." *Naba'*. 11 June 2006.

At<http://www.naba.org.uk/Content/articles/HR/IraqHRM/AID_60611.pdf>, accessed 7 April 2014.

al-Janabi, 'Isam. "Hurub Dakheliyah Wa Kharejiyah Afrazat Nisf Milliun Mafqud fi al-Iraq." ["Internal and External Conflicts Resulted in Half a Million Missing Persons in Iraq"] *al-Mukhtaṣar*. 6 Nov. 2011. At < <http://almokhtsar.com/node/21755>>, accessed 14 Oct.2012.

al-Janabi, Qays Kadhim. "Sayyidat Zuhā: Riwayat al-Rafd al-Niswi" ["Women of Saturn: A Novel of Female Rejection."] *al-Ittihad*, n.d.
At<[www. Al-ittihad.com/paper.php?name=News&file=article&sid=110306](http://www.al-ittihad.com/paper.php?name=News&file=article&sid=110306)>, accessed 16 March 2014.

Jawad, Sa'ad N. "The Assassination of Iraqi Academic Life: A Personal Testimony." *We Are Iraqis: Aesthetics and Politics In a Time of War*. Eds. Nadjé al-'Ali and Deborah al-Najjar. Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2013, 48-59.

al-Jawaheri, Yasmin. *Women in Iraq: The Gender Impact of International Sanctions*. London: I.B.Tauris & Co Ltd, 2008.

Journal of Conflict and Security Law, n.d. At < <http://jcsl.oxfordjournals.org/content/early/2009/11/23/jcsl.krp024.full>>, accessed 10 May 2014.

Kachachi, In'aam. *Paroles d'Irakiennes: Le drame irakien écrit par des femmes* [Iraqi Women Speak: Iraqi Drama in Women's Writing.] Paris: Le Serpent à Plumes, 2003.

Kafala, Tarik. "The Iraqi Ba'th Party." *BBC News*. 25 March, 2003. At <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/middle_east/2886733.stm>, accessed 25 February 2012.

Kadhim, Najim‘ Abd Allah, ed. *Al-Farasha wal- ‘Ankabut: Dirasat fi Adab Maysalun Hadi al-Qasasi wal- Riwa’i* [*The Butterfly and the Spider: Studies in Maysalun Hadi’s Fiction*] Amman: Dar al-Shuruq, 1997.

Kadhim, Shakib. “Riwayat Sayyidat Zuhal li Lutfiyya al-Dulaymi: Sard lil Waja‘ al-Iraqi al-Mustadim.” [“*Women of Saturn* by Lutfiyya al-Dulaymi: A Narrative of the Continuing Iraqi Grief.”] *al-Zaman*. 2 July 2013.
At <<http://www.azzaman.com/?p=38230>>, accessed 20 April 2014.

Kamrava, Mehran. *The Modern Middle East: A political history since the First World War*. California: California University Press, 2005.

Karen A. Foss and Sonja K. Foss. “Personal Experience as Evidence in Feminist Scholarship.” *Western Journal of Communication*. 1994, 58, 39-43.

Katz, Jack. *Seductions of Crime: Moral and Sensual Attractions in Doing Evil*. USA: BasicBooks, 1988.

Kermaire, Christine. “al- Mutanabbi Street Starts Here: A Literary Bridge to Baghdad.” *The Economist*. 28 Dec. 2012.
At<<http://www.economist.com/blogs/prospero/2012/12/al-mutanabbi-street-starts-here>>, accessed 20 June 2013.

al-Khalil, Samir. “Eyun Inanna wa Qudsiyyat Uruk.” [“Inanna’s Eyes and Uruk’s Sanctity.”] *al- Sabah*. 21 July 2013.
At < <http://www.alsabaah.iq/ArticleShow.aspx?ID=50477>, accessed 15 January 2014.

al-Khayyat, Sana’ . *Honor and Shame: Women in Modern Iraq*. London: Saqi Books, 1990.

Khedayri, Betul. *A Sky So Close [Kam Badat al-Sama’ Qariba]* Trans.Muhayman Jamil. New York: Pantheon Books, 2001.

---. “An Etiquette of Condolences.” *The Guardian*. 30 June 2003. At < <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2003/jun/30/iraq.comment> >, accessed 18 Feb. 2010.

---. *Absent. [Ghayeb]*.Trans. Muhayman Jamil. Cairo: American University Press, 2005.

Khuri, Dina R. “The Security State and the Practice and Rhetoric of Sectarianism in Iraq.” *International Journal of Contemporary Iraqi Studies*. Vol. 4, 2010: 325-338.

Knuth, Rebecca. *Burning Books and Leveling Libraries: Extremist Violence and Cultural Destruction*. Westport: Praeger Publishers, 2006.

Kristeva, Julia. *Black Sun: depression and melancholia*.Trans. Leon S. Roudiez. New York: Columbia University Press, 1989.

LaCapra, Dominick. *History and Memory after Auschwitz*. USA: Cornell University Press, 1998.

---. *Writing History, Writing Trauma*. USA: The Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 2001.

---. *History in transit: Experience, identity, critical theory*. 2004. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

Levi, Primo. *Survival in Auschwitz, and, the Reawakening: Two Memories*. New York: Summit Books, 1986.

Lewental, D. Gershon. "Qadisiyyah in Modern Middle Eastern Discourse." *D. Gershon Lewental Notes*. 21 Nov. 2005.
At < <http://dglnotes.com/notes/qadisiyyah.htm>>, accessed 10 Feb. 2014.

Library of Congress Country Study. "Iraq: Historical Setting: The Ottoman Period, 1534-1918." *Medieval History*, n.d.
At <<http://historymedren.about.com/library/text/bltxtiraq8.htm>>, accessed 22 Nov. 2013.

Lisa Majaj, Paula W. Sunderman, and Therese Saliba, eds. *Intersections: Gender, Nation, and Community in Arab Women's Novels*. Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2002.

Lifton, Robert Jay. *Death in Life: Survivors of Hiroshima*. 1991, Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press.

---. *The Broken Connection: On Death and the Continuity of Life*. 1979, New York: Basic Books.

Lobe, Jim. "Why Did the US Invade Iraq?" *Anti War*. 20 March 2008. At < <http://www.antiwar.com/lobe/?articleid=12552>>, accessed 19 August 2012.
Loseff, Lev. *On the Beneficence of Censorship: Aesopian Language in Modern Russian Literature*. München: Sagner, 1984.

al-Mada Supplements.com. "'Eyun Inanna: Nusus Min al-Adab al-Iraqi al-Mu'asir li Adiaat Iraqiyyat Mu'asirat.'" ["Inanna's Eyes: Texts from Contemporary Iraqi Literature of Contemporary Iraqi Female Writers."] 14 Dec. 2013. At < <http://almadasupplements.com/news.php?action=view&id=9218>>, accessed 25 April 2014.

Mahajan, Rahul. "We Think the Price is Worth It: Media Uncurious about Iraq Policy's Effects There or Here." *FAIR*. 5 Dec. 1996. At <<http://www.fair.org/index.php?page=1084>>, accessed 15 Dec. 2012.

Mahdi, Kamil. "The Iraq Sanctions Debate: Destruction of a People." *Middle East International*. 24 December 1999. At < <http://al-ghassani.net/popup-right/an-iraq/mahdi-article.html>>, accessed 6 March 2014.

Makiyya, K. *Cruelty and Silence: War, Tyranny, Uprising, and the Arab World*. New York: W. Norton, 1993.

---. *The Monument: Art and Vulgarly in Saddam Hussay's Iraq*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004.

Marcus, Laura. *Dreams of Modernity: psychoanalysis, literature, cinema*. New York : Cambridge University Press, 2014.

Mark, Josua J. "Babylon: Definition." *Ancient History Encyclopedia*. 28 April 2011. At <<http://www.ancient.eu.com/babylon/>>, accessed 10 May 2014.

Masmudi, Ikram. "Portraits of Iraqi Women: Between Testimony and Fiction." *International Journal of Contemporary Iraqi Studies*. Vol. 4, Numbers 1& 2, 2010: 59-77.

Masress.com. "53,000 Mafqud fi al-Harb al- Iraqiyya al-Iraniyya" ["53,000 Missing Soldiers in the Iraqi-Iranian War."] *Moheet* 11 December 2010. At <<http://www.masress.com/moheet/7518>>, accessed 12 May 2011.

al-Masud, 'Ali. "Riwayat Sayyidat Zuhail: Surah 'An Muwajahat al-Jamal M'aa al-Qibh." ["Women of Saturn: An Image of the Confrontation between Beauty and Ugliness."] *al-Hewar*. 2 Oct. 2013.
At < <http://www.ahewar.org/debat/show.art.asp?aid=380568>>, accessed 11 Feb. 2014.

Mehrez, Samia. *Egyptian Writers between History and Fiction: Essays on Naguib Mahfouz, Sonallah Ibrahim, and Gamal al-Ghitani*. Cairo: The American University in Cairo Press, 1994.

Mehta, Brinda J. "Writing against War and Occupation in Iraq: Gender, Social Critique and Creative Resistance in Dunya Mikha'il's *The War Works Hard*." *International Journal of Contemporary Iraqi Studies*. Vol. 4. Numbers 1& 2, 2010: 79-100.

Mikha'il, Dunya. *The War Works Hard*. Trans. Elizabeth Winslow. Manchester: Carcanet Press Ltd., 2006.

---. Interview with National Public Radio. "Revisiting Iraq Through The Eyes of An Exiled Poet." 21 March 2013.
At < <http://www.npr.org/2013/03/21/174773962/revisiting-iraq-through-the-eyes-of-an-exiled-poet>>, accessed 18 April 2014.

Mink, Louis. 1970. "History and fiction as modes of comprehension", *New Literary History*, 1, 514-58.

Mofid, Karman. *The Economic Consequences of the Gulf War*. London: Routledge, 1990.

Moran, Patricia. *Virginia Woolf, Jean Rhys and the Aesthetics of Trauma*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007.

Morton, N. *The Journey is home*. Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1985.

Munté, Rosa-Auria. "The Convergence of Historical Facts and Literary Fiction: Jorge Semprun's Autofiction on the Holocaust." *Forum: Qualitative Social Research*. 2011, 12, 3, 34-45.

Muhsin, Fatimah. "Cultural Totalitarianism." *Iraq Since the Gulf War: Prospects for Democracy*. Ed. Fran Hazelton. London: Zed Books, 1994. 11-25.

al-Mukhtasar.com. "Hurub Dakheliyya wa Kharejiyya Afrazat Nisf Milliun Mafqud fi al-Iraq." ["Internal and External Wars Led to Half a Million Missing Soldiers in Iraq."] 6 November 2011. At <<http://almokhtsar.com/node/21755>>, accessed 14 May 2013.

Muhsin, Jabir, George Hardin and Fran Hazelton. "Iraq in the Gulf War." *Saddam's Iraq: Revolution or Reaction?* Ed. Committee against Repression and for Democratic Rights in Iraq. London: Zed Books Ltd, 1986, 229-238.

Murray, Williamson and Robert Scales. *The Iraq War: A Military History*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003.

al-Musawi, Muhsin Jasim. "The Sociopolitical Context of the Iraqi Short Story: 1908-1968." *Statecraft in the Middle East: Oil, Historical Memory and Popular Culture*. Eds. Eric Davis and Nicolas Gavrielides. Miami, Florida: International University Press, 1991. 202-27.

---. *The Postcolonial Arabic Novel: Debating Ambivalence*. Leiden: Brill, 2003.

Mustafa, Asma' Muhammad. "Qublah Qabl al-Mawt." ["A Kiss Before Death."] *Juruh fi Shajar al-Nakhil: Qesas min Waq'a al-Iraq Iraq*. [Wounds in Palm Groves: Accounts from Iraq] Ed. International Red Cross Committee. Beirut: Riyadh al-Rayyes Books, 2007, 69-83.

Mustafa, Shakir, ed. And trans. *Contemporary Iraqi Fiction: An Anthology*. New York: Syracuse University Press, 2008.

---. "Iraqi Fiction Today." Introduction. *Contemporary Iraqi Fiction: An Anthology*. By Mustafa. New York: Syracuse University Press, 2008, xiii-xxii.

al-Nasiri, Musa. "A Man in Love with Knowledge." *al Mutanabbi Street Starts Here: Poets and Writers Respond to the March 5, 2007 Bombing of Baghdad's Street of the Booksellers*. Eds. Beau Beausoleil and Dīmāh Shehabi. Michigan: PM Press, 2012, 8-11.

Nolen-Hoeksema, Susan and Judith Larson. *Coping With Loss*. London: Erlbaum, 1999.

Omar, Suha. "Women: Honor, Shame and Dictatorship." *Iraq since the Gulf War: Prospects for Democracy*. Ed. Fran Hazelton. London: Zed Books, 1994, 67-77.

Patton, Paul. *The Gulf War Did Not Take Place*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995.

Pellett, Peter L. "Sanctions, Food, Nutrition, and Health in Iraq." *Iraq under Siege: The Deadly Impact of Sanctions and War*. Ed. Anthony Arnove. London: Pluto Press, 2000, 151-168.

Plath, Sylvia. *Collected Poems*. Ed. Ted Hughes. New York: Harper Perennial, 1981.

al-Qazwini, Iqbal. *Shubak Zubayda: Riwayat al-Manfa al-Iraqi [Zubayda's Window: A Novel of Iraqi Exile]* Trans. 'Azza al-Khuli and Amirah Nowayrah. New York: The Feminist Press at the City University, 2008.

al-Radi, Nuha. *Baghdad Diaries 1991-2002*. London: Saqi Books, 2003.

Raitt, Suzanne and Trudi Tate, eds. *Women's Fiction and the Great War*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997.

Reynolds, Lloyd G. *Economic Growth in the Third World 1950-1980*. London: Yale University Press, 1985.

Ricoeur, Paul. *Time and Narrative*. Vol III. Trans. K. Blamey and D. Pellauer. Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1988.

Riverbend. *Baghdad Burning: Girl Blog from Baghdad*. London: Marion Boyars Publishers, 2005.

Rodriguez, Maria Cristina. *What Women Lose: Exile and the Construction of Imaginary Homelands in Novels by Caribbean Women*. New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 2005.

Rohde, Achim. "Opportunities for Masculinity and Love: Cultural Production in Ba'th Iraq During the 1980s." *Islamic Masculinities*. Ed. Lahoucine Ouzgane. London: Zed Books, 2006, 184-201.

---. *State-Society Relations in Ba'th Iraq: Facing Dictatorship*. London: SOAS-Routledge Studies on the Middle East, 2010.

Roland Barthes. "Introduction to the Structural Analysis of Narratives." *Image, Music, Text*. Trans. Stephen Heath. London: Fontana Press, 1977, 79.

al-Sa'igh, Wijdan. *Shahrazad wa Ghiwayat al-Sard: Qera'at fi al-Qesa wa al-Riwaya al-Onthawiyah [Shahrazad and the Temptation of Narration: Reading Feminist Stories and Novels]* Algiers: Arab Scientific Publishers, 2008.

Sa'id, Edward W. *The World, The Text, And The Critic*. London: Vintage, 1991.

---. *Reflections on Exile and other Essays*. 2001, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.

Saliba, Therese. "On the Bodies of Third World Women: Cultural Impurity, Prostitution, and Other Nervous Conditions." *College Literature*. 1995, 22, 1:131-146.

Sallum, Sa'ad. *Minorities in Iraq: Memory, Identity and Challenges*. Baghdad: Masarat for Cultural and Media Development, 2013.

Santner, Eric. "History beyond the Pleasure Principle: Some Thoughts on the Representation of Trauma." *Probing the Limits of Representation: Nazism and the Final Solution*. Ed. Saul Friedlander. London: Harvard University Press, 1992, 143-154.

Sarmak, Husayn. *Maysalun Hadi Wa Adab 'Asr al-Mehna [Maysalun Hadi and the Literature of the Age of Crisis]*. Amman: Dar al-Shuruq, 2004.

---. "Irada al-Jabburi: fi Ghabat al-'Adhab al-Abadi." ["Irada al-Jabburi: In the Forest of Endless Torture."] *al-Mothaqqaf*. 10 Dec. 2010. At <http://www.almothaqqaf.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=41182:2010-12-10-01-46-33&catid=34:2009->, accessed 2 Feb. 2014.

Schmitt, Eric. "US Weigh the Value of Bombing to Coerce Iraq." *New York Times* 16 November 1997. At <<http://www.nytimes.com/1997/11/16/world/us-weighs-the-value-of-bombing-to-coerce-iraq.html>>, accessed 1 April 2014.

Schnell, Samantha. "Art Looted in Paris During World War II: A Family History." *Untapped Cities*. 4 February 2013. At <<http://untappedcities.com/2013/04/02/art-looted-in-paris-during-world-war-ii/>>, accessed 22 May 2013.

Schwartz, Joan M. and Terry Cook. *Archives, Records, and Power: The Making of Modern Memory*. Ottawa: Queens University Press, 2002.

Sears, Jennifer. "The Fiction Writer as a 'Custodian of History' and More from the Brooklyn Book Festival." *Arabic Literature in English Web*. 2013, n.p.

Selim, S. *The Novel and the Rural Imaginary in Egypt, 1880-1985*. New York: Routledge Curzon. 2004.

Shadid, Anthony. "The Bookseller's Story, Ending Much Too Soon." *al-Mutanabbi Street Starts Here: Poets and Writers Respond to the March 5, 2007 Bombing of Baghdad's Street of the Booksellers*. Eds. Beau Beausoleil and Dimah Shehabi. Michigan: PM Press, 2012, 3-7.

al-Sharni, Rashidah. "fi Riwayatiha *Ma ba'd al-Hub*: Hadiyya Husayn Taftah Nar al-Waja' al-Iraqi 'Ala al-Qaria'." ["In her *Beyond Love*: Hadiyya Husayn Opens Iraqi Wounds to the Reader."] Eds. Rifqat Dudin et al. Amman: Dar al-Faris Publishing House, 2011, 63-68.

Showalter, Elaine. *Hystories: Hysterical Epidemics and Modern Culture*. New York: Picador publishing house, 1979.

Siegal, Mark. "Sanctions against Iraq Amount to Genocide." *Cornell Chronicle*. 30 Sept. 1999.

At<http://www.news.cornell.edu/chronicle/99/9.30.99/Halliday_talk.html>, accessed 1 Dec. 2011.

Simawi, Sa'di. "Dunya Mikha'il: A Poetic Vision Out of the Iraqi Ashes." Introduction. *The War Works Hard*. By Dunya Mikha'il. Trans. Elizabeth Winslow. Manchester: Carcanet Press Limited, 2006, vii-xiii.

Simons, Geoff. *The Scourging of Iraq: Sanctions, Law and Natural Justice*. London: Macmillan Press Ltd, 1998.

Sirriyeh, Husayn. "Development of the Iraqi-Iranian Dispute, 1947-1975." *Journal of Contemporary History*. Vol. 20, No. 3, 1985: 483-92.

Solomon, Semere. "The Iraqi Educational System." *Review*. Baghdad: UNESCO. March, 1999: 5-8.

Soueif, Ahdaf. *Mezzaterra: Fragments from the Common Ground*. London: Bloomsbury, 2004.

Sourcewatch.org. "Spreading the Seeds of Democracy," n.d.

At<http://www.sourcewatch.org/index.php?=Spreading_the_seeds-of_democracy>, accessed 13 January 2013.

Spiller, Roger J. "Shell Shock." *American Heritage*. May/June 1999. At <[ing001.html](#)>, accessed 13 April, 2014.

Stahl, Leslie. "Punishing Saddam." *CBS 60 Minutes*. 12 May 1996.

At <<http://home.comcast.net/~dhamre/docAlb.htm>>, accessed 25 Feb. 2012.

Stanford Archaeology Center Reports. "2003 Looting of the Iraqi National Museum." *Cultural Heritage Resource*, n.d.

At<<http://www.stanford.edu/group/chr/drupal/ref/the-2003-looting-of-the-iraq-national-museum>>, accessed 12 August 2013.

Stansfield, Gareth. *IRAQ: People, History, Politics*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2007.

Stein, Rob "Brains of Dying Rats Yield Clues about Near-Death Experiences." *National Public Radio*. 12 August 2013.

At<<http://www.npr.org/blogs/health/2013/08/12/211324316/brains-of-dying-rats-yield-clues-about-near-death-experiences>>, accessed 8 April 2014.

Steiner, George. "The Writer as Remembrance: a Note on 'Poetics,' 9 in *Yearbook of Comparative Literature*, 1973, 22, 53.

Stewart, Victoria. *Women's Autobiography: War and Trauma*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003.

al-Suhayl, Raghad. *Sayko Baghdad [Baghdad's Psycho]* Cairo: Dar al-Adham Publishers, 2013.

Summerfield, D. "A critique of seven assumptions behind psychological trauma programmes in war-affected areas." *Social Sciences and Medicine*. 1999, 48, 1449-1462.

Taha, Ibrahim. "Openness and Closedness: Four Categories of Closurization in Modern Arabic Fiction." *Journal of Arabic and Islamic Studies* Vol. 2 1998/99:1-23.

Talib, 'Alya'. Interview with Jawad Kadhim. "I Chose Exile to Contemplate the Bloody Scene." *al-Hewar*. 31 Oct. 2007.
At< <http://www.ahewar.org/debat/show.art.asp?aid=113446>>, accessed 15 Feb 2010.

Thomas, Sean. "The Devil Worshippers of Iraq." *The Telegraph*. 19 August 2007.
At< <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/1560714/The-Devil-worshippers-of-Iraq.html>>, accessed 12 May 2014.

Tripp, Charles. *A History of Iraq*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007.

'Ubayd Hussayn, 'Ali. "Qiraa' fi Riwayat Lutfiyya al-Dulaymi al-Jadida *Sayyidat Zuhul*." ["A Reading of Lutfiyya al-Dulaymi New Novel *Women of Saturn*." *Iraqi Writers*. 8 May 2010.
At< <http://www.iraqiwriters.com/inp/view.asp?ID=2290>>, accessed 91 March 2014.

UN Office of the Iraq Program Oil for Food. "Iraqi Oil Sales Fund Humanitarian Action." 21 Nov. 2003. At < <http://www.un.org/Depts/oip/>>, accessed 30 Sept. 2012.

---. "UN Secretary-General Praises Work of the UN Office of Iraq Program." 22 Nov. 2003. At <<http://www.un.org/Depts/oip/>>, accessed 10 August 2011.

Valassopoulus, Anastasia. *Contemporary Arab Women Writers: Cultural Expression in Context*. Abingdon: Routledge, 2007.

Van Dyne, Susan. *Revising Life: Sylvia Plath's Ariel Poems*. London: The University of North Carolina Press, 1993.

Veyne, Paul. *Writing history: essays on epistemology*. Middletown, Conn: Wesleyan University Press, 1984.

Walker, Kira. "Knowledge of Arabic Fading Among Iraq's Autonomous Kurds." *Rudaw*. 22 Nov. 2013. At <<http://rudaw.net/english/kurdistan/221120131#sthash.33Ltxlcn.dpuf>>, accessed 19 Dec 2013.

Walter, Tony. *On Bereavement: The Culture of Grief*. Buckingham: Open University Press, 1999.

Walters, Wendy W. *At Home in Diaspora: Black International Writing*. Minneapolis: The University of Minnesota Press, 2005.

al-Waṣaṭ News.com. "Harb al-Hawasim." ["The War of Deciseveness."] 24 March 2003. At <<http://www.alwasatnews.com/199/news/read/200383/1.html>>, accessed 8 Feb. 2014.

Watchel, Andrew Baruch and Ilya Vinitsky. *Russian Literature*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2009.

Waxman, Zoë. *Writing the Holocaust: Identity, Testimony, Representation*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008.

White, Hayden "The Value of Narrativity in the Representation of Reality," *The Content of the Form*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987, 1.

---. *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1985.

Whitehead, Ann. *Trauma Fiction*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2004.

The White House. gov. "US Secretary of State Colin Powell the U.N. Security Council." 5 Feb. 2003. At <www.whitehouse.gov>, accessed 11 May 2012.

Whittleton, Celine, Muḥsin Jabir and Fran Hazelton. "Whither Iraq?" *Saddam 's Iraq: Revolution or Reaction?* Ed. Committee against Repression and for Democratic Rights in Iraq. London: Zed Books Ltd, 1986, 242-249.

Woolf, Virginia. *Mrs. Dalloway*. London: Penguin, 2000.

Yusif, Bassam. "The Political Economy of Sectarianism in Iraq." *International Journal of Contemporary Iraqi Studies*. Vol. 4, No. 3, 2010: 357-365.

Zangana, Haifa'. "I, Too, Was Tortured in Abu Ghraib." *The Guardian*. 11 May 2004. At <<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2004/may/11/iraq.usa>>, accessed 20 April 2014.

---. "Quiet, or I'll Call Democracy." *The Guardian*. 22 Dec. 2004. At <<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2004/dec/22/iraq.gender>>, accessed 23 April 2014.

- . *Women on a Journey: Between Baghdad and London*. Trans. Judy Cumberbatch. Texas: Center for Middle Eastern Studies, 2007.
- . Introduction. *Women on a Journey: Between Baghdad and London*. Haifa' Zangana. Trans. Judy Cumberbatch. Texas: Center for Middle Eastern Studies, 2007: ix-xvi.
- . *Madinat al-Aramil: al-Mara'a al-Iraqiyya fi Masirat al-Tahrir* [*City of Widows: An Iraqi Woman's Account of War and Resistance*.] Beirut: Markaz Dirāsāt al-Wahdah al-'Arabiyyah, 2008.
- . *Dreaming of Baghdad*. Trans. Zangana and Paul Hammond. New York: The Feminist Press at the City University of New York, 2009.
- . "Walling in Baghdad: The Impact on Baghdadi Women." *International Journal of Contemporary Iraqi Studies*. Vol. 4, No. 1 & 2, 2010: 41-58.
- . "Tawasul Am Infisal?" ["Attachment or Detachment?"] *al-Quds al-'Arabi*. n.d. At <<http://www.adnanalsayegh.com>>, accessed 12 January 2011.