



Narrating Iraq In Fragments: Trauma, Exile, And Cultural Loss In The Works Of Sinan Antoon

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Abstract

The paper examines the fractured narrative and thematic handling of trauma, exile, and cultural disintegration in the literature of Sinan Antoon, giving particular attention to *The Corpse Washer* and *Ijam: An Iraqi Rhapsody*. The analysis of the ruptured Iraqi identity described by Antoon is based on the framework of trauma theory and postcolonial criticism, and war literature, as the analysis will show. His characters caught between existence and purpose are the psychological leftovers of the generational trauma, cultural grief, and the ever-present need to express themselves and have control over their lives. By means of a close reading and critical approach to the literature, the present paper argues that the narrative strategies employed by Antoon can be seen as both a manner of resistance and an affirmation of human strength in the face of systematic dehumanization. His works provide a scribe of misery as well as a literary reappropriation of Iraqi voice, memory, and identity against fragmentation.

Keywords: Sinan Antoon, Iraqi Literature, Trauma, Exile, Cultural Loss, Resistance, Identity, Post-2003 Iraq

Introduction

The 2003 invasion of Iraq by the U.S. was a turning point in the history of the country and opened a loss of cascading sociopolitical and cultural imbalances, which remain the defining factor in the country and its national psyche. The precedence of this intervention was the Iran-Iraq War, the Gulf War, and years of authoritarian rule that established the climate of constant instability, violence, and loss. To numerous Iraqis, all these multiple traumas shattered their security, identity, and belonging. In the backdrop of such an existential crisis, Iraqi literature has emerged as an important medium of communicating the communal and personal pain caused by war. Literature, which used to be the mirror of society, has become the shelter of memory and struggle. The post-2003 Iraq cultural trauma has to be reckoned with in the field of literature, as scholars like Al-Khafaji (2018) and Salih (2019) claim, to document and deal with the colossal losses that Iraqis suffered.

Sinan Antoon is one of the new literary voices who have faced this legacy with sensitive and textured pictures of the aftermath of war. Being born in Baghdad but exiled, Antoon can simultaneously assume the role of an insider and an outsider, writing with both insight and retrospectiveness. His novels, *The Corpse Washer* and *Ijaam: An Iraqi Rhapsody*, are not merely a narration of what violence and displacement mean; they also provide a comprehensive account of lives being shredded by the trauma, dreams lost, and severed continuity of culture (Mahmoud, 2016; Mhoodar, 2021). With the help of his characters, Antoon shows the psychic trauma and social breakdown that is the reality of post-invasion Iraq. His literary world is full of the dead, the displaced, and the broken, a country caught between yesterday and today, life and death, survival and destruction. Specifically, the work of Antoon is characterized by the narrative format and the intensity of the themes. His narratives are disarranged in time, out of order, and unorganized thoughts- just as traumatic events themselves are. This fragmentation of narrative shows not only the inner conflict of the characters but also the fragmentation of the Iraqi society in general (Alkyam, 2018; Jaber, 2019). The fiction of Antoon is thus confrontational, confronting the reader with memory and identity as fragmented entities that require reconstruction. This discourse of storytelling simulates the manner in which war and exile disrupt time and distort the ability to construct a meaningful past or a coherent future.

This paper uses the trauma theory to put in context the psychological and emotional aspects of the aftermath of war in the fiction of Antoon. The trauma theory, especially as theorized by authors like Caruth and LaCapra, highlights the inability of traumatic experiences to be narrated linearly and instead they come out through repetition, silence and fragmentation. These aspects are reflected in the main characters of Antoon, who have a post-traumatic state of alienation, desensitization, and haunted identity (Aziz, 2022; Al-Janabi, 2021). *The Corpse Washer* follows Jawad, the main character, who lives in a world of unstoppable death and tries to take back control and significance in the chaos. The paper takes a postcolonial perspective as well to look at the critique of imperial violence and occupation, and cultural erasure by Antoon. His stories oppose the prevailing discourses on geopolitics that have tended to keep Iraq in a state of battlefield or a failed state. Rather, Antoon restores Iraq to literary presence, providing it with a counter-narrative that focuses on human misery, endurance, and struggle to attain dignity. In this way, he criticizes the epistemic violence of war, the disappearance of the Iraqi subjectivity and voice in international narratives of war (Naimou, 2008; Elimelekh, 2017). His writings turn into a decolonization device, claiming the right of the Iraqis to tell their own stories and to restore their broken identities.

This paper argues that the literary corpus of Antoon is a form of resistance as well as elegy. It grieves over what it has lost: lives, culture, traditions, and at the same time, battles to forget. His fiction makes the narrative a survival and cultural memory. By means of textual analysis and the involvement of the corresponding scholarly literature, this paper has managed to place Antoon not just as a traumatic chronicler but rather as a visionary who, in spite of the despair, still manages to find words of continuity, resilience, and hope. His Iraq is fragmented, but the human spirit is not ready to be forgotten completely.

Trauma and the Shattered Self in *The Corpse Washer*

In *The Corpse Washer*, Sinan Antoon introduces the emotionally wrenching experience of young sculptor Jawad Kazim, who was on the verge of leading a life devoted to artistic creation when the country of Iraq was engulfed in a state of continuous war. The novel describes the process of how Jawad turns into a depressed man who is in love with his art, yet tries in every possible way to be a good student of his father, his job, which is to wash corpses, a ritual that is deeply rooted in the Islamic tradition, but which is also drained by the mass violence. The transformation of his person into a sculptor into a corpse washer is not merely a change in occupations, but it symbolically denotes the fall of identity to the pressures of trauma, loss, and historical legacy (Mahmoud, 2016). The aesthetic aspirations that used to provide Jawad with a sense of life lose their relevance in a world where beauty and stability are continually destroyed by bombs and sorrow. His vision of life is taken over by the ritual of death, and every corpse he washes is another reminder of how war is erasing any meaning in life. The effect of this endless contact with death is reflected in the slow numbing of emotions and the emotional disassociation of Jawad, which can be associated with the theory of trauma as a condition of post-traumatic stress. Recurrent experiences with corpses, most of them young victims or even people Jawad knows, make him more and more unable to mourn in the classical sense. His sorrow does not come out in forms of emotional releases but in

desensitization, which is a practice known as a psychological adaptation and a survival tool in war-ravaged locations (Aziz, 2022). The broken narrative pattern of the novel, dreams, and reflections that are interlaced, reflect the confused psychological situation of Jawad. He loses the ability to sustain intimate relationships or even describe his suffering with the complete vocabulary, as the emotional continuity, so prolifically imposed by trauma, breaks down (Mankhi, 2020). Jawad is not the only one with personal trauma, and the trauma is closely interwoven with a bigger historical and cultural legacy of violence. Due to the history of Iraq consisting of war after war, dictatorship, and foreign oppression, the entire basket of grief, fear, and disillusionment has been engraved in the fabric of the society. Other researchers, including Al-Khafaji (2018) and Al-Janabi (2021), have stressed that the issue of systematic oppression has contributed to the entrenchment of trauma in the national consciousness of Iraq. In *The Corpse Washer*, this embeddedness is expressed by the inter-generational transfer of duty, despair, and resignation. Jawad does not receive his role by choice, but by default, he falls into the role that was fated to him by family and country. This unwilling inheritance is a metaphor of the circularity of trauma in Iraq, whereby the unsolved grief is passed and internalized by generations of children, leading to a generational emotional chain of suffering and silence.

To add to this, individual and generational trauma is the loss of cultural identity, which accompanies the violence. The divine ritual of corpse washing, a traditional, respectful religious and communal maintenance, turns into a mechanical and heartless process in the presence of constant deaths. Jawad is torn between this duty and his personal struggle, and this relationship shows that what used to have spiritual significance is now a matter of burden, which distances him not only from his values and beliefs but also from himself. His father treats the work with stoic respect, whereas Jawad considers it dehumanizing, a forced act of being part of a ritual that lost its soul due to the magnitude of the loss (Yaqoob, 2019). This clash of cultures increases Jawad's alienation and makes him a victim of trauma, but at the same time a victim of cultural disintegration. He is caught in the conflict of filial and personal desire as a representative of a generation that has difficulty finding a sense of identity in the midst of a collapsing society.

The desire to be a sculptor that Jawad has is not just a boyish dream, but the urge to declare life and stability against the instability of war. His art is visualized as a balance against the disorder of his surroundings- an attempt to impose beauty out of hopelessness. But with the violence spilling over and death surrounding him at all times, Jawad is unable to exercise his creative juices anymore, and everything is reduced to the monotonous routine of cleaning up the dead bodies, preparing them to be buried. This aesthetic opposition, sculpture versus corpse washing, Antoon employs as a literary metaphor to the existential struggle of living in a society that is on the borderline between life and death (Mahmoud, 2016; Kadhim, 2020). The hands that should have been used in creating art, now wash the dead. This turning around describes the atrocity of war not only in its conquering of flesh, but in its disfigurement of human desires and the silent ambitions that comprise character.

Psychological decline of Jawad is not only a sign of personal suffering, but the microcosmos of a national tragedy. His failure to bond with other people, his failure to mourn, or his failure to see joy in creation is a reflection of the inability of society to grieve, to rebuild, and to dream of the future. Such fragmentation of emotions, which is deeply rooted in the story of Antoon, is what the trauma theorists refer to as a failure of both temporal and relational coherence. This is the case as Iraq, just like Jawad, lives in a state of liminality: it is haunted, broken, and unsure about the future (Al-Janabi, 2021; Jaber, 2019). By the disintegration of Jawad, Antoon is criticizing not only the violence that kills, but also the violence that kills more subtly by killing culture and identity, and by killing the human ability to feel. By doing so, *The Corpse Washer* also turns into a personal tragedy and a national allegory, a chilling reminder that nothing will be able to escape the touch of war.

Cultural Disintegration and the Loss of Ritual Meaning

In *The Corpse Washer*, Sinan Antoon depicts in great detail the process at work as rituals once based in a spiritual reverence become empty, mechanised procedures due to the sheer volume of mass death. The main procedure of corpse washing, which is normally endowed with a religious symbolism in Islamic burial services, is performed severally by Jawad and not in solemn spirituality, but in a mechanical coldness. Ghusl al-mayyit, this ritual, is a strong literary metaphor in the story by Antoon. It points to the breakdown of cultural sacredness because the rate of death surpasses the capacity of the community to grieve in a thoughtful and ceremonially clean way (Mahmoud, 2016). The washhouse or mghaysil, which was originally a holy passage between life and death, is changed in the novel into a joyless, routine-based place where death is not remembered but is processed. The holy turns into the mundane, which shows a society desensitized by the trauma it experiences. As the novel unfolds, Antoon only enhances this feeling of loss by demonstrating how the normalization of death not only invades the state-performed rituals but also the state of mind of individuals. Even the process of washing the corpse becomes a normal activity, such that it no longer has a heavy emotional impact. Social reaction to death, which used to include collective grief and religious practice, has turned cold and routine (Salam, 2020). The result of this normalization is a sort of cultural amnesia, with the repetition of funerary rituals no longer being able to tie the living with the dead in an effective manner. Rather, it creates an emptiness of feeling, a ritualized emptiness. The way Jawad grows more and more indifferent to the act also represents the deeper emotional vacuum seizing the Iraqi society, where death is not a sacred passage but a mere statistic (Jaber, 2019). His mental desensitization finds its reflection in the national loss of respect for the sacred traditions, which results in the cultural dislocation of great magnitude.

This cultural displacement is also highlighted by the tension and the symbolic relationship between Jawad and his father. The older generation, in the form of the father, believes that washing of corpses is a religious duty, a form of humility, service, and spiritual reward. In comparison, Jawad, who has been brought up in the modern war and generational disappointment, views it as a heavy burden, a cultural obligation that oppresses his personal self and artistic selves (Kadhim, 2020). This strained relationship is the best example of an intergenerational breach, in which sacred tradition is used as a means of suffocation instead of comfort. The refusal of his inherited role by Jawad is both a rebellious act of a man and a literary allusion to the overall theme of the young generation of Iraqis who seek independence in a world full of obligation to the trauma and legacy passed to them.

This clash of different generations is not a stand-alone quality that is presented by Antoon, but is rather connected to a bigger story of national alienation. The frequent wars and the collapse of societies have broken the intergenerational relations that pass on cultural values and collective meaning, as Al-Janabi (2021) affirms. The alienation of Jawad is therefore representative of a whole generation that is culturally adrift and dislocated, whereby they are not alienated by choice but by the existential and emotional misalignment brought about by war. In Jawad's internal struggle, with the sculpture as a life-asserting act, and corpse washing as a death-bound ritual, we have the emblematic killing of continuity itself. This separation not only disrupts family customs but also the national identity itself, leaving a cultural vacuum where the next generations are not able to find themselves.

The desensitization to death and ritual in *The Corpse Washer* is also an indicator of the specific type of cultural grief, the long-lasting and unrecognized mourning that expresses itself through the inability to feel and to heal in the society. In the post-2003 reality of Iraq, the traditional practices, instead of being a healing site, are reminded of the powerlessness and the breakdown of the institutions (Mhoodar, 2021). Rituals such as corpse washing only add to the futility, and instead of offering catharsis, rituals tie the living to the suffering loops. Jawad does not feel any relief in these rituals, but it increases his inner desolation, proving a paradox of the meaningless rituals carried out. Antoon is a genius at transforming this empty repetition into a narrative judgment of cultural stagnancy, where the loss of the emotional implication of actions means the loss of the attachment of people to history, to community, or to self.

Finally, the loss of ritual and intergenerational bonding results in an even greater paradox: the failure of the cultural transmission. Having no true connections with tradition and deprived of the symbolic meaning of rituals, the younger generation is left without anything to inherit except despair (Salih, 2019). This

fragmentation is not a symbolic one only; it has a material consequence in the future of Iraq, especially in its chances to come out of decades of war and reconstruct a coherent social fabric. To some extent, Antoon portrays the mghaysil as a way of criticizing the destruction of cultural practices but also a way of questioning what type of legacy is being transmitted. When rituals that were supposed to commemorate the dead and the healing of the living result in numbing and isolation, then the chances of reaching national healing are greatly jeopardized. Antoon is telling a story, therefore, not only as a lamentation, but as a warning as well that unless there are efforts to restore both emotional and spiritual value to cultural activities, Iraq will lose its history, as well as its future.

Exile, Fragmented Identity, and the Search for Home

Exile in the literary world of Sinan Antoon is not a simple change of territory, but rather a disjunction that tears people away from their origin, language, and cultural identity. Antoon introduces exile as a multidimensional phenomenon that not only affects the body but also the soul in *Ijam: An Iraqi Rhapsody*. Such characters as Nameer, an Iraqi intellectual in exile, reflect the liminality and alienation of those who are in between the country they had to escape and the country they are currently living in. The protagonist feels the conflict in his identity of the past and the present, nostalgia towards Iraq, and the estrangement of the host country (Elimelekh, 2017). Exile turns into the place where every individual is free and captive at once, an illusion that drives the characters in Antoon forward in their struggle to find a balance between living and remembering. This duality highlights the exile as a dominant form of Iraqi identity since the post-war period and constant displacement.

To the exilic characters, especially Nameer, in Antoon, identity is fragmented, not unified: torn up by the loss of homeland and the never-ceasing burden of memory. This division is expressed in various forms: divided loyalties, survivor's guilt, and failure to establish stable relationships. Alkriti and Janoory (2019) believe that the contradiction between internal cultural memory and the external reality adds to the double consciousness of the characters. They are left in the limbo between languages, customs, and worlds of views with no possibility to go back to their past and no chance to become a full member of their present. To Antoon, the exiled person is always in the middle of a balancing act, bearing the burden of a bloody past and trying to define a new identity in unfamiliar territories. This identity crisis lies not as an episodic theme but as a constant mood profile, formed under the influence of displacement and desire to belong.

The approach to memory by Antoon is central in the interpretation of psychological burden in exile. Memory in *Ij aam* is as much a source of extreme agony as it is a means of anchorage of identity. Memories of the characters are involuntary, fragmented, and intrusive, which provides the lack of ability to forget the traumatic past (Elimelekh, 2017). In the case of Nameer, memory serves a dual purpose; on the one hand, it helps him to maintain a sense of his Iraqi identity, but on the other, it also keeps him trapped in the loops of loss, remorse, and inability to do anything about it. These memories are not linear, and as such, they tend to emerge in fragmented and repetitive ways. According to Alkyam (2018), the trauma of archive in the work of Antoon is presented in the broken narrative forms that resemble the psychological fragmentation of the displaced. Such a stylistic decision brings to the fore the idea of the difficulty of creating coherent narratives during exile, which resonates with the broken minds of people who have been uprooted from their cultural and linguistic environment.

The structural format of the novels of Antoon resembles the disturbed lives of his exilic characters. The nonlinearity of chronology, his internal monologues, and sudden changes in the voice of narration are the literary devices used by him to describe the confusion of exile. Such formal approaches not only indicate the trauma theory's focus on fragmented narration but also establish ground with postcolonial literature that does not approve of the Eurocentric narrative integrity (Naimou, 2008). The interrupted story in *Ijjaam* cannot be easily concluded, and the same is true of the experience of exile. Such characters as Nameer are trapped in a continuous process of becoming, with their doubts about origin and destination. Their identities are revealed in pieces, one half in remembrance, the other half in re-creation, which highlights the thought that exile not only disturbs physical presence, but temporal and narrative continuity as well.

It has long been stressed by postcolonial theorists that exile disorients the very narratives by means of which people make sense of who they are. Both Farhat (2016) and Naimou (2008) argue that displacement does not equate to relocation in space, but a reorganization of identity due to the pressure. Such restructuring is discernible in the characters of Antoon, whose lives are characterized by the lack rather than the presence. The self is transformed into an object that needs to be negotiated all the time in a strange environment- you have to translate yourself into new cultural languages and, at the same time, silently grieve what you have left behind. In case of Nameer and other characters, exile means a loss of certainty. They are no longer in a stable cultural matrix, and, rather, they are in an abyss where language, community, and belongingness need to be re-created. This is the state of not being at home, anywhere, and it comes to be the main theme in the narration of Antoon.

By portraying exile in such a subtle way, Antoon makes his contribution to the discussion of the Iraqi diaspora and a post-war identity. His characters are not just people on the run, but they are a symbol of a whole nation that experienced the trauma and survived. Antoon places these individual trips in the larger geopolitical scene, demonstrating how the intervention in the West, dictatorial brutality, and sectarian segregation have made exile a legacy of generations (Alhudhairi, 2021). The main strength of his work is that it does not romanticize the idea of exile as a way to enlightenment or liberation. Rather, Antoon shows its disintegrative, isolating qualities, as well as the tiny gestures of survival, of writing, of remembering, of mourning that enable fragmented identities to survive. Through this, his stories represent not only a mourning of the loss, but also a form of subdued protest over the obliteration of the Iraqi voice in the history of the world.

Resistance, Resilience, and the Act of Narration

Despite the prevalence of war and trauma in Sinan Antoon's narratives, his fiction does not end up giving up to despair. Rather, it brings out the latent modes of resistance that live on in the human spirit. The sporadic but fervent interest of Jawad with sculpture in *The Corpse Washer* is one of the most vivid examples of this opposition. Being short and in some cases even in the shadow of his work in the mghaysil, these instances are a notice of the strong urge to recapture life and meaning through the artistic performance. To Jawad, sculpting is not only a form of beauty but also a form of sanity, the way to prove that man still exists in a world that has been dominated by death (Salam, 2020). Creative production appears as a revolt against the war machine, producing a narrative of resistance to violence that demands beauty, durability, and identity. It is in such momentary moments of creation that Antoon engages in encoding a deep denial of the will of violence to dictate the entirety of living.

This resistance is also in the role of Antoon himself as a writer. By locating himself as a wounded storyteller, as Habeeb (2015) refers to him, he uses individual and collective trauma to tell what has been made unspeakable or unseen. His literature is not mere documentation of events, but is rather a labor of memory and criticism, taking the voice of the repressed narratives of the people devastated by war in Iraq. This process of narration, in turn, acts as a political and cultural opposition. Antoon makes his tale insist on the dignity and humanity of the suffering people, and in this process, the tale is opposed to narratives of dehumanization perpetuated by war and war-like discourse of authoritarianism. His fiction works in the history of resistance literature, a world tradition of writing that testifies, refuses to be forgotten, and practices cultural survival against destruction (Alhudhairi, 2021). Here, literature is both an anti-erasure weapon and a remedy to psychic injuries.

In addition to personal measures of artistic opposition, *The Corpse Washer* also depicts the strength of Jawad in terms of his long-standing connections, especially with his mother. The bonds create a strand of emotional connection in the midst of the war. Although the wider social fabric is in pieces, the family and community give small glimpses of togetherness that define identity and community. Mankhi (2020) argues that Jawad maintains a psychological anchor through his relational resilience that keeps him emotionally tied to the people he loves despite his tendency to get completely dissociated. These relations are not ideal; they are painful, incomprehensible, and silent. But they survive, and there is in their survival a silent declaration of life and caring about each other. Such moments, as brought out by Antoon, remind us that human survival is not only biological but emotional, relational, as well as cultural.

Cultural traditions, even in their fragmented forms, become very important identity indicators and points of resistance. Despite all the distortions in the rituals like corpse washing, the fact that they are still performed shows that people have a desire to seek continuity and meaning. As Al-Saadi (2023) observes, cultural practices, despite being deprived of their initial meaning, provide a framework, with the help of which people can defend themselves and find some dignity despite the complete breakdown. Such rituals are not idealized in the work of Antoon, but are analyzed as contested landscapes, which are places where trauma and tradition exist simultaneously. The ambivalence of Jawad regarding his inherited role can be seen as a part of an overall conflict between generations, but his persistence in the performance of the rituals also points to a complicated kind of cultural persistence. The washing of the dead, in its painfulness and depersonalization, nevertheless keeps Jawad in touch with his roots, his religion, and his broken but still alive community.

The protest itself has taken the form of the literary techniques of Antoon. His irony, fragmentation, and polyvocality challenge the power of the mainstream discourse and reveal the irrationality of authoritarian power relations. Subversive jail scribbles in *Ijaam* as an example have a dual purpose of satire and survival as the protagonist mocks the stupidity of state monitoring and totalitarian propaganda (Shamkhy & Janoory, 2019). Such narrative techniques are antilinear and anticlastic, signifying the chaos of those who experience exile, imprisonment, and shattering of the mind. According to Truslow (2019), the fiction by Antoon undermines sectarian metanarratives coerced in and after the U.S. occupation of Iraq. His works challenge Western imperialism and local despotism, where the voices of Iraqis are in the very center of their narratives. By so doing, the stories that Antoon tells make room to think critically, empathetically, and in an agency. Finally, the work by Antoon confirms that to narrate is to endure, and to endure means to resist. His fiction shows no redemption or resolution, but it still makes the ethical demand of remembering and representing. Antoon does this by giving shape to the lives of people who are caught between life and death, exile and home, words and silence, and by so doing shows the power of literature to restore the humanity of the dehumanized. Even in the broken nature of his characters, there is a grain of agency, an urge to tell, to create, to love, and to survive. This was a human spirit, which endures through destruction and is the strength that Antoon thinks is necessary to mend and to come to terms with history. Antoon uses art, memory, and testimony to turn the narration action into a moral act, against forgetting, against silence, and against the destruction of dignity before violence.

Conclusion

The collection of Sinan Antoon can be viewed as a haunting but strong literary monument to the shattered realities of post-war Iraq. In the densely layered stories, psychologically rich characters, Antoon traces the scars left behind by violence, despotism, exile, and the destruction of culture. That world of his fiction, especially in *The Corpse Washer* and *Ijaam*, is one of fluctuation between remembrance and bereavement, struggle and acquiescence. Instead of providing clean lines and neat endings, Antoon throws the reader into the state of emotional turmoil that was experienced by his characters in real life. It is not just a stylistic choice to tell these fragmented stories, as this is the only way such lives that are torn apart by war, exile, and inherited trauma can be shown. The main characters of the novel by Antoon Jawad and Nameer are representatives of a psychologically and culturally fragmented modern Iraqi experience. Both men are caught in between places, life and death, home and exile, obligation and lust. The breakdown of a generational transmission and the depreciation of cultural practices, which used to form the foundation of Iraqi identity, further alienates them. But in this dissolution, Antoon finds some points of small resistance: in art, in memory, in affection. Such gestures, although minor, are reminders that the identity is not simply lost, but it is re-created and re-negotiated under the pressure of the historical forces. The constant conflict between hopelessness and the desire to live turns out to be the distinct feature of the narrative voice of Antoon.

Moreover, the works by Antoon serve as personal reflections or national allegories as well as political interventions. He disputes the authority of the prevailing narratives that represent Iraq as a warzone or a failed state, and rather presents a humanistic approach in which he confirms the dignity, agency, and complexity of people in Iraq. By making trauma, exile, and cultural erosion the focus, he urges people across the world to consider the long-term effects of war not only in terms of numbers, but in the broken psychology, displaced families, and cultural heritage loss. In his literature, he reveals the moral failure of perceiving conflict as a self-contained instance instead of understanding it as an intergenerational scar, the effects of which still persist in defining identity and memory decades after the violence has ceased. Finally, the stories of Antoon show that even in the context of overall loss, the very practice of storytelling entails resistance and survival. The act of writing is the act of memory; the act of memory is the act of resistance. His fiction celebrates the sorrow and strength of a nation that survived inexplicable atrocities and still refuses to shut up. Antoon is reclaiming the voices of Iraqis from the periphery of the world conversation as well as judging the power of narrative to maintain the past, define the self, and envisage the future, however tenuous, beyond ruin through the plight of his characters. By telling the story of Iraq in pieces, Antoon does not merely describe a shattered country, but he puts together, bit by bit, the chance of its emotional and cultural reconstruction.

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