



Echoes of War: Traumatic and Societal Impacts in Ahmed Ardalan's The Gardener of Baghdad

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أصداء الحرب: التأثيرات الاجتماعية والنفسية في رواية بستانى بغداد لأحمد أردلان
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Abstract

The Gardener of Baghdad 2015, by Ahmed Ardalan, provides an authentic portrayal of the atrocities of war and its enduring repercussions. Through the analysis of the novel, it becomes evident that the challenging events experienced by individuals serve as a reflection of their relationships, decisions, and actions. Moreover, these experiences impacted the whole social system, not only a few individuals. A critical examination and analysis of literary works reveal the impact of war-induced trauma on individuals, their identity formation, and the resulting interactions within society. Furthermore, the research emphasizes the enduring nature and consequences of conflict-induced violence. The primary objective of the research is to provide a comprehensive perspective and critical examination of how Ardalan portrayed the enduring consequences of war. The paper illuminates the degree to which individuals react to this phenomenon. This research paper, grounded in the trauma theoretical framework, illuminates the consequences of war experienced by both people and society at large. Applying the trauma theory of Cathy Caruth, the study demonstrates the psychological consequences of war, such as remorse, the need for redemption, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Not only does the research look into the psychological effects people face, it also looks into how social structures break down and become disorganized, leading to a change in culture and people having to move. This is a clear correlation between the traumas experienced by individuals and the collective well-being of society. The research has significantly contributed to sparking numerous debates on war, its casualties, and its long-lasting effects on people's lives, while also highlighting the profound shock that war inflicts on society and its devastating aftermath. **Keywords:** war, trauma, societal impact, the Gardener of Baghdad, Ahmed Ardalan

ملخص الدراسة

تسلط هذه الدراسة، التي تستند إلى الإطار النظري للصدمة، الضوء على عواقب الحرب التي يعيشها الناس، والمجتمع ككل. يكشف الفحص والتحليل الشامل للعمل الأدبي عن تأثير الصدمة الناجمة عن الحرب على الأفراد، وتشكيل هويتهم، والتفاعلات الناتجة داخل المجتمع. يقدم كلا العمل الأدبي "بستاني بغداد" لأحمد أردلان، تصويراً أصيلاً لفظائع الحرب وتداعياتها الدائمة. وبتطبيق نظرية الصدمة، توضح الدراسة العواقب النفسية للحرب، مثل الندم، والحاجة إلى الخلاص، واضطراب ما بعد الصدمة. ومن خلال تحليل الرواية، يتضح أن الأحداث الصعبة التي يعيشها الأفراد تشكل انعكاساً لعلاقاتهم، وقراراتهم وأفعالهم، فضلاً عن ذلك فقد أثرت هذه التجارب في النظام الاجتماعي بأكمله، وليس على بعض الأفراد فقط. فضلاً عن ذلك، لا تبحث الدراسة فقط في العواقب النفسية التي يعيشها الناس، بل تبحث أيضاً في انهيار وتفكك الهياكل الاجتماعية، مما أدى إلى التحول الثقافي، والهجرة القسرية للسكان. إن هذا يشكل ارتباطاً واضحاً بين الصدمات التي يتعرض لها الأفراد، والرفاهية الجماعية للمجتمع. فضلاً عن ذلك، تؤكد الدراسة الطبيعة الدائمة، والعواقب المترتبة على العنف الناجم عن الصراع. ويتمثل الهدف الأساسي من الدراسة في توفير منظور شامل، وتحليل نقدي لكيفية تصوير أردلان للعواقب الدائمة للحرب. فضلاً عن ذلك تسلط الدراسة الضوء على الدرجة التي يتفاعل بها الأفراد مع هذه الظاهرة. وقد ساهمت الدراسة بشكل كبير في إثارة العديد من المناقشات حول الحرب، وخسائرها، وآثارها الطويلة الأمد على حياة الناس، مع تسليط الضوء أيضاً على الصدمة العميقة التي تلحقها الحرب بالمجتمع وعواقبها المدمرة.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الحرب، الصدمة، التأثيرات الاجتماعية، بستاني بغداد، احمد اردلان

Introduction

Contemporary author Ahmed Ardalan is renowned for *The Gardener of Baghdad*. Owing to the precarious political, military, social, and economic conditions in his homeland, Ardalan decided to depart from Iraq. Ardalan's early years were spent in a multicultural milieu, and his global travels, along with his passion for understanding various cultures, significantly influenced his work. After an eleven-year absence, he returned to Baghdad in 2013 for a visit characterized by ambivalent feelings. Motivated by his recent visit to Iraq, he wrote the novel *The Gardener of Baghdad*. Ardalan explores identity, human experience, and culture in his innovative works. His writings amalgamate fiction with history and culture to provide a distinctive perspective on Iraqi society. *The Gardener of Baghdad* immerses readers in the essence of Baghdad, intertwining history, culture, and the resilient spirit of people. Ardalan skillfully constructs a multifaceted tapestry of people and emotions, prompting readers to examine love, loss, and hope within Iraq's tumultuous past and current circumstances. Ardalan's narrative transcends boundaries, illuminating the shared human experience while showcasing the beauty and resilience of one of the world's ancient towns. *The Gardener of Baghdad* offers a thorough social, historical, and political framework for readers and critics to analyze the text. This research examines the effects of war on individuals and society, highlighting the challenging psychological conditions and trauma experienced by individuals due to conflict. Through trauma theory and the work of different theorists, especially Cathy Caruth, the research shows how people deal with trauma and try to adapt to many political, economic, social, and racial problems. These challenges resulted in significant long-term outcomes for individuals, such as forced displacement, escape, regret, and efforts to compensate. The research seeks to illustrate the chaos generated by war during two significant periods in Baghdad's history, highlighting how Ahmed Ardalan depicted the trauma experienced by individuals because of war and its long-term effects on personality formation.

Literature Review

War and violence have long-term psychological effects, as shown by of Ahmed Ardalan's works. Instead, survivors may suffer severe emotional scarring as they revisit terrible events like explosions, alienation, torture, trauma, and unpleasant memories of previous experiences. Psychological diseases impose significant costs on both individuals and society. This research aims to explain how social trauma and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) manifest in Ahmed Ardalan's characters. This demonstrates how conflict damages people's thoughts for a long time and has devastating consequences for society and individuals. Cathy Caruth thinks that literature offers insight into traumatic events by instructing people to engage with narratives that can only be expressed indirectly and unexpectedly. Caruth's trauma theory is unconventional, lacking the characteristics of a widely recognized and universally accepted framework. It signifies a substantial advancement in trauma studies that contests and broadens conventional methodologies. Caruth's work has significantly shaped our understanding of trauma, especially within the realms of literature and cultural studies. Her work highlights the intrinsic incomprehensibility of trauma. She contends that trauma constitutes a crisis of meaning that arises when an individual encounters an overwhelming event that cannot be comprehensively understood or assimilated into their pre-existing cognitive and emotional structures. She introduced the concept of "delayed responses" to trauma. She asserts that traumatic events frequently lead to delayed responses, wherein individuals may not completely comprehend the experience at the moment it transpires. The effects of the trauma may manifest later, in unforeseen ways. The purpose of this research is not meant to show individual trauma but to show the social and historical traumas caused by war and violence, along with their terrible effects of death and displacement. Moreover, this exemplifies the literary ability to portray the reality of societies that have experienced psychological, political, and social traumas, as well as the ways in which these traumas impact and shape society. This facilitates the reconstruction of these cultures' memories and connects the past to the present by illustrating the transmission of trauma throughout generations and therefore forging new identities. The conflict is a significant catalyst for this new identity. Through his writings, Ahmad Ardalan shows how people have been hurt by historical and social trauma. He does this by connecting cultures with broken histories to modern realities shaped by conflict, all while trying to understand and deal with these traumas. Limited past research has examined certain themes in Ahmad Ardalan's novel, *The Gardener of Baghdad*. Scholars such as Ahmad and Shakir (2023), in their paper "Love and War in Ahmed Ardalan's the Gardener of Baghdad," argue that some people may survive in this harsh and devastating environment via love and compassion. In spite of political domination, their article argues that love can persist between individuals of diverse ethnicities and cultures. Qusay Hussein, in his 2024 paper "Unlocking the Symbolic Tapestry: Exploring Symbolism in Ahmed

Ardalan's the Gardener of Baghdad," focusses on the symbolic aspects of Ardalan's novel. Based on the semiotic theory, his paper argues that Ahmed Ardalan skillfully uses many symbols to explore the main themes of love, loss, and culture, creating a story that readers can relate to (Hussein, 2024). In his research paper, Challenging Dominant Discourses: Subaltern Voices and Resistance in Ahmed Ardalan's the Gardener of Baghdad and Elif Shafak's Honor, 2024, Hussein conducts a thorough analysis of the political and social marginalization, dependency, and exploitation faced by the primary characters. The author employs Spivak's concept of subalternity to illustrate the existence of dissenting voices that challenge dominant discourses and propose alternative ideas and methods for organizing relationships within those frameworks (Hussein, 2024). Limited prior research has examined Ahmad Ardalan's novel, The Gardener of Baghdad. Nonetheless, no prior research has examined the concept of trauma and the effects of conflict on people and society at large. The significance of this study is its capacity to elucidate Ahmad Ardalan's writings, especially regarding their depiction of Baghdad, a city imbued with a profound history of ongoing political, economic, and colonial strife. This study serves as an avenue for scholars and individuals seeking to delve into literary studies that encapsulate the civilizational, political, theological, and literary significance of this city in its entirety.

Theoretical Framework

The domain of trauma studies within literary criticism received considerable focus in 1996 with the release of Cathy Caruth's Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History and Kali Tal's Worlds of Hurt: Reading the Literatures of Trauma. A theoretical tendency was proposed by scholars such as Caruth who "pioneered a psychoanalytic post structural approach that suggests trauma is an unsolvable problem of the unconscious that illuminates the inherent contradictions of experience and language" (Azmi, 2018, p. 57). The term "trauma" originates from ancient Greek, meaning "wound." While the exact definition of contemporary trauma differs between contexts and disciplines, there is a widespread agreement that if trauma is really a wound, it represents a distinctly unique kind of wound. Moreover, as traumatic experiences often arise from social forces and within the social realm, trauma possesses an intrinsic political, historical, and ethical component. Trauma is defined as any emotional damage resulting in psychological harm or an occurrence that causes significant suffering. Trauma mostly manifests as psychological impacts rather than physical ones; its mental repercussions may be profoundly detrimental and may culminate in both mental and physical deterioration if not addressed. According to psychiatrist Sandra L. Bloom, "Psychic trauma occurs when a sudden unexpected overwhelming intense emotional blow or series of blows assaults the person from outside. Traumatic events are external, but they quickly become incorporated into the mind" (Bloom, p. 2) Trauma has undoubtedly been a component of human struggles throughout history. Nonetheless, the notion of trauma has been theorized in scientific disciplines such as Medicine and Psychology for centuries; however, it only recently garners recognition in literary studies through the contributions of esteemed scholars in comparative literature, including Cathy Caruth and Shoshana Felman, who have extensively explored this concept. As the globe transitions from one period to another, literature also changes, intricately intertwining the history and culture of a locale and its inhabitants. Trauma has been a pervasive theme throughout all literature. It emerges as the obscure aspect of all narratives that recount a history, memoir, and the agonies and sorrows of the author or individuals being portrayed: The trauma novel demonstrates how a traumatic event disrupts attachments between self and others by challenging fundamental assumptions about moral laws and social relationships that are themselves connected to specific environments. Novels represent this disruption between the self and others by carefully describing the place of trauma because the physical environment offers the opportunity to examine both the personal and cultural histories imbedded in landscapes that define the character's identity and the meaning of the traumatic experience. The primacy of place in the representations of trauma anchors the individual experience within a larger cultural context, and, in fact, organizes the memory and meaning of trauma. (Balaev, p. 1) The concept of trauma in literature is gradually receiving increased scholarly attention worldwide; numerous research papers, dissertations, and theses have been completed and are ongoing concerning trauma in literary studies. The very concept of trauma encompasses several interpretations, with numerous scholars offering their own definitions of the term. The study will examine a set of specific interpretations of the idea of trauma to enhance clarity. Sigmund Freud's idea of trauma is intricately associated with the interplay between conscious and unconscious processes. Freud asserts that traumatic memories are repressed from consciousness but remain alive and powerful. This repression is the body's way of trying to get rid of bad memories and traumatic events from the conscious mind. These experiences show up clearly and indirectly in dreams or other behavioral symptoms, "the essence of repression lies simply in turning something away, and keeping it at a distance, from the

conscious” (Freud, 1915, p. 147). Michel Foucault, a very significant scholar of the post-World War II period, argues that trauma arises from oppressive and unjust arrangements enforced by certain authorities, “where there is power, there is resistance” (1978, p. 93). The governing political and military structures in a region enforce their own authority and procedures that directly influence the identity and suffering of individuals. The aggression and control exerted by external forces inflict trauma on people. Judith Herman, an American psychiatrist, provides a distinctive concept and comprehension of trauma. She posits that trauma is mostly a result of the victim's vulnerability to the encountered trauma. Violence, warfare, and the adversities faced by a person create an environment of persistent problems, and overcoming these obstacles is a collective responsibility rather than only that of the individual: Psychological trauma is an affiliation of the powerless. At the moment of trauma, the victim is rendered helpless by overwhelming force. When the force is that of nature, we speak of disasters. When the force is that of other human beings, we speak of atrocities. Traumatic events overwhelm the ordinary systems of care that give people a sense of control, connection, and meaning. (Herman, 1992, p. 33) Cathy Caruth, a prominent scholar and professor of comparative literature and English, is regarded as a leading pioneer of trauma theory. She conceptualizes trauma through literature, positing that literary texts serve as vehicles for revealing the nature of trauma as experienced by its witnesses. She contends that literature allows us to see occurrences that cannot be definitively known and exposes us to sensations that may have otherwise remained unarticulated and unnoticed. Caruth compellingly demonstrates that although certain events may elude complete comprehension, they acquire significance in various ways through their expression and perception by others. In the introduction to *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*, Cathy Caruth gives a clear and consistent definition of trauma and a strong case for the conceptual problems that its effects cause. Caruth says that traumatic disorders, like post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), cannot be completely linked to or located within a single traumatic event. This means that trauma requires people to think that traumatic events are more than just events that happen in time. (Marder, 2006) Instead, they disrupt the individual's perception of time to whom they occur: The pathology cannot be defined either by the event itself—which may or may not be catastrophic, and may not traumatize everyone equally—nor can it be defined in terms of a distortion of the event, achieving its haunting power as a result of distorting personal significances attached to it. The pathology consists, rather, solely in the structure of experience or reception: the event is not assimilated or experienced fully at the time, but only belatedly, in its repeated possession of the one who experiences it. To be traumatized is precisely to be possessed by an image or event (Caruth, pp.4,5) Caruth in *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History*, utilizes literature and literary interpretative methods to deepen her investigation into the construction of traumatic occurrences and deferred experiences. She contends that literature allows us to witness events that are not fully comprehensible and connects us to experiences that may have otherwise gone unarticulated and unnoticed. Caruth compellingly demonstrates that “despite the fact that certain kinds of events cannot be fully known or understood, these events become meaningful in different ways by being told to others and heard by them” (Marder, p. 3). The research will primarily use Cathy Caruth's reading of trauma in Ahmed Ardalan's novel, *The Gardener of Baghdad* which posits that individuals cannot comprehend and process a traumatic incident simultaneously. Rather, they proceed belatedly and progressively. The paper will also reference the perspectives of other critics as needed.

Discussion

Ardalan's novel, *The Gardener of Baghdad*, illuminates a significant city over two distinct historical epochs marked by analogous occurrences, portraying Baghdad during severe political and military turmoil. It was under British military occupancy and control throughout the 1920s and subsequently under American military authority and involvement post-2003. Following World War I, British forces asserted their dominance over Iraq, leading to the formation of an Iraqi government characterized by a robust economic and political partnership with Britain. The discontent among numerous Iraqis catalyzed significant waves of protests, initially rooted in political grievances, which subsequently evolved into both scattered and organized military uprisings directed against the British and the Iraqi government of that era. The political conflict has significantly influenced the Iraqi populace, subjecting them to a myriad of social, economic, and psychological strains and challenges that have shaped the identity of the Iraqi individual, with lingering effects that persist to the present day. The American invasion of Iraq in 2003 represents a significant tragedy, with profound security, social, and political ramifications that continue to affect the internal dynamics of Iraq. The recent conflict has profoundly altered the psyche of the Iraqi individual and made him live in a vortex of anxiety, confusion, and fear. Ardalan's novel *The Gardener of Baghdad* highlights the challenging circumstances of these two historical epochs that

ensued following the military invasion of Iraq, first by British forces and subsequently by American forces after 2003. The narrative illustrates Baghdad enduring one of the most severe epochs in its historical timeline: Baghdad wasn't safe anymore; it hadn't been since day the regime had changed. Not a day went by without casualties anymore, and bombs, kidnappings, and shootings were rampant. It wasn't the Iraq Adnan used to live in, the place where people could at least feel safe living with their families. The worst part about it was that the bombings and continuous conflict seemed to be for no reason, and things were just getting worse. (Ardalan, 2014, p.6) At first look, Ardalan's novel, *The Gardener of Baghdad*, may seem to center on the romantic relationship between Ali and Mary; nonetheless, it fundamentally addresses the direct and devastating effects of war on the populace as a whole. Baghdad is a stunning ancient city that exudes love, vitality, and tranquility. Its bustling marketplaces, immaculate streets, and towering palm trees line the banks of the Tigris River. The city of Baghdad shines brightly as a center of learning, culture, love, music, and the arts in general. It is the perfect city in every respect; the mosques and other houses of worship are always bustling with people. It was quite the social scene. The city was bursting with cafés and restaurants, where elegantly dressed musicians, poets, journalists, and pedestrians gathered. Baghdad was Iraq's city that never slept. As late-night parties were wrapping up, some were preparing for their morning prayers in the hundreds or more beautiful mosques. The streets were never quiet. (Ardalan, 2014, p.12) However, because of the war, this vivid and lovely depiction of Baghdad has undergone a permanent transformation. The absence of security, persistent bombings, enforced curfews, and swift political developments have rendered people victims of this turmoil. Individuals' uncomplicated lifestyles have undergone a radical transformation. Baghdad has transformed from a tranquil city brimming with hope, affection, and tranquility to one plagued by horror, anxiety, and death overnight. The residents of Baghdad are contemplating escape and emigration, desiring to awaken each morning free from the sounds of explosives and the loss of life. Even houses of worship, once venues for communal faith and spirituality, today present a genuine danger to safety: The mosque was nearly empty, and only a dozen or so people were there to pray, most of them local elderly folks. Ever since the end of the war, people had avoided the Fajir prayer for security reasons, but those who'd suffered hard lives couldn't have cared less and insisted on following their religious customs in spite of all the turmoil and hardship. (p. 43) The story opens in the middle of a tense psychological and tragic scenario. Adnan, the library's owner, is blasted not far from the building. Encouraged by his wife, he decides to sell the library and move to another place in search of a better life for himself and his family. Despite his profound feelings for his library, he is forced to abandon it due to the conflict, bombings, and dreadful conditions in Baghdad after the American invasion of Iraq: Adnan's wife called again, understandably still worried about the bombing. She wanted to make sure everything was all right now, and before getting off the phone, she again urged him—as she'd done often in recent weeks—to consider leaving Iraq for good. (Ardalan, p. 3) One of the most severe repercussions of war is the phenomenon of forced migration. People are compelled to depart from the places of their birth or the places where they experience a connection and sense of self. Displacement has continued to captivate the attention of individuals and communities. It is a straightforward and unavoidable consequence of war. They need to search for a new place to attain tranquility and build a safe existence, liberated from anxiety, fear, and death, "he'd only wished for a nice, safe place where he and his family and their future generations could live, a place of peaceful harmony, better education, work opportunities, and free of wars" (p. 3). Cathy Caruth's theory of trauma, which says that a person cannot immediately understand the trauma he is experiencing because he has to focus on getting away from violence and war, fits perfectly with the idea of forced migration and displacement from one place to another and the psychological trauma it causes people. Later, there is conflict, which makes them feel traumatized, alone, lost, guilty, and like they missed what they left behind. Caruth elucidates that the "unrepresentability" of trauma is associated with migration, so many people who endure profound trauma lose the capacity to articulate their anguish and often recount the loss of cherished memories from their life. A similar phenomenon occurs when individuals recall the splendid history of Baghdad. This phenomenon indicates that individuals are digesting the trauma due to their inability to articulate or comprehend it: It was quite the social scene. The city was bursting with cafés and restaurants, where elegantly dressed musicians, poets, journalists, and pedestrians gathered. Baghdad was Iraq's city that never slept. As late-night parties were wrapping up, some were preparing for their morning prayers in the hundreds or more beautiful mosques. The streets were never quiet. (p. 12) War inflicts psychological ramifications on women, as they endure significant losses throughout the novel. Some women lose relatives, some lose their homes, and others lose their social status due to the war. This engenders a psychological wound and struggle for women, leading to a fractured identity,

melancholy, and fragmented memories. The shared traumas of women are prominently illustrated through Ali's mother, who lost her husband at the story's outset; Madam Laila, who mourns her son; Kaka Hawazin's wife, who also grieves a son; and Mary, the protagonist, who begins the story having lost her mother and concludes it bereaved of her husband, Ali. Similarly, Adnan's wife, the owner of the bookshop, persistently implores her husband to relocate swiftly in pursuit of a secure existence and an improved future. Caruth's analysis indicates that loss significantly impacts individuals, particularly women, who encounter unfamiliar realities. This experience leads to a disconnection from both society and their former identities, resulting in fragmentation. The ambiguity of the trauma prevents individuals from articulating their experiences, especially in the context of war and its direct consequences on women. Caruth's trauma theory, which extensively examines disrupted identity, is shown in the character of the novel's protagonist, Ali. The novel starts with Ali, a simple but aspiring gardener who relocates from a rural town to a more sophisticated and intellectual city. He grows in love with Mary, the daughter of the British commander. His misery was exacerbated by accusations of his involvement with a political group seeking to alter the regime and incite chaos against British authorities: Dr. Kamal and Ali! "Are you out here trying to change the future?" he boomed in a mocking, loud voice intended to humiliate us. "It will not happen in your lifetimes, gentlemen...and if I were you, I'd be careful what you say and to whom you say it. (p. 62) Ali could not remain in Baghdad any longer since it posed an immediate risk to his relationship with Mary. He endures significant hardship as he is compelled to escape with Mary and reside with her in the north at Kaka Hawazin's house. The swift transition from one place to another, jeopardizing Mary or endangering other people around him, significantly influenced the development of Ali's character. Mary's health deteriorated postpartum, and the thought of losing her compelled Ali to return to Baghdad. Notwithstanding everyone's attempts to dissuade Ali from accompanying Mary, he remains resolute in his decision to go with her. Upon his arrival in Baghdad, Ali is apprehended and incarcerated. Following the violent events and the uprising against British occupation in Iraq, a significant explosion occurred near the jail, resulting in Ali's amnesia. He is then adopted by a devastated family from Basra whose son perished in the jail blast. This illustrates Ali's character, fragmented by war and the traumas he endured, which influenced his identity transformation from a humble farmer in a secluded village to an aspiring gardener in Baghdad, ultimately culminating in his amnesia and total loss of identity. It was Abu Nasi's turn. His real name was unbeknownst to him, and his nickname, which meant "forgot," had been given to him by his friends in Basra, since he'd lost his memory as a result of an accident. He'd been told that he hit his head when he fell from a ladder, and since he had no recollection of his life before that day, his life started all over again. (p. 135) Memory is essential to Caruth's theory of trauma. Ali, the protagonist of the novel, aligns seamlessly with Caruth's theoretical framework. He could not fully understand the trauma as it transpired. His memory began to replay the events and, gradually, in fragmented pieces, adapted to the trauma. Ali's recollections of war, displacement, and loss manifest as fragmented pieces that progressively resurface in memory: Nasi's head began to spin, and he felt his heart pounding in his skull. He wanted to shout, but he couldn't, so he just held his head tighter and tighter and kept his eyes closed. Abu Nasi then saw another vision of his younger self, running through a crowded place, with his arm bleeding profusely. He was pushing people aside and running frantically, as if he was being chased. (p. 136) Thereafter, Ali starts having many visions, which are fragments of his memories that start to piece together his identity, which has been destroyed by the war and its psychological toll. By the novel's finale, Ali had come to terms with and accepted the trauma, returning to his original self. He tried to calm himself down and took a few short breaths. Slowly opening his eyes again, he saw the old woman several feet away. She looked at him as she turned around to make her way into the hotel, and he saw her green eyes clearly; in that moment, he knew he had seen her before. Another vision occurred to him, a picture of himself hugging a blonde lady with those same eyes and both of them crying as she handed him a pendant and said, "I love you, Ali." The name Ali kept on ringing in his head. (p. 136) The trauma of the war predominantly impacted all the characters. Political, social, and economic elements subsequently disseminate this influence across society in a comprehensive way. Psychology significantly influences the response to and manifestation of trauma in characters' behaviour and actions. Individuals first confront trauma and thereafter, as Caruth elucidates in her theory, assimilate and adjust to it. Ali, because of trauma, his identity compromised and shattered, navigated through fragmented memories, gradually reclaiming his memory, albeit belatedly.

Conclusion

Ahmed Ardalan's novel, *The Gardener of Baghdad*, provides a realistic portrayal of the effects of war on individuals and societies. Using Cathy Caruth's trauma theory, the research demonstrates the significant effects

of war on individuals' psychological and physical conditions, which encompass memory fragmentation, displacement, loss, and disorientation. The novel elucidates the catastrophic effects of war, highlighting the diverse ways in which its echoes impact the characters. The narrative illustrates the characters' capacity to preserve their humanity, navigate trauma after experiencing it, and coexist with it despite the significant challenges encountered by both individuals and society. The research examines two tumultuous epochs in Iraq's history: the British occupation during the 1940s and the American invasion in 2003. It illustrates the influence of these two wars on society and the consequent traumatic experiences that impacted people across several domains. The research illustrates that every conflict has enduring repercussions for society, which may not be readily understood by people initially. Over time, individuals learn to comprehend, manage, and coexist with trauma, as elucidated by Cathy Caruth in her theory. Ahmed Ardalan's novel serves as a valuable resource for scholars seeking to examine it through various contemporary literary theories that elucidate the complexities of an Eastern society characterised by unique customs and traditions, particularly in the historically and culturally rich context of Baghdad.

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