

Glory, Disillusionment, and Exile: Re-evaluating War Ideals through Caruth's Framework

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Abstract

This paper intersects the changing ideals of war across time, from the glorifying martial valor of epic tradition to disillusionment of modern war and exile in post-colonial studies. Due to the fact that three authors —Homer, Auden and Darwish experienced trauma stemming from wars in different times, it connects them and shapes each writer's response. The study seeks to elucidate how the memory of violence reappears throughout literary traditions through the lens of Caruth's trauma theory, using her concepts of belatedness and recurrence of trauma. Applying qualitative methods, the research is grounded in textual interpretation, thematic analysis and intertextual comparison to highlight the functionality of trauma. The research ascertains a transformation in war ideals from 'glory' to 'disillusionment', and culminates in 'exile' by claiming that war literature is mostly about remembering, mourning and seeking meaning in human suffering rather than focused on battle only. It also extends trauma into the sphere of collective and post-colonial wounding. By examining Darwish's works alongside Homer's and Auden's, this paper unsettles the inherited Eurocentric limits of the discourse, thereby leaving scope for future discussions of war literature in different contexts.

Keywords: War, Trauma, Latency, Exile, Resistance

1. Introduction

War is a force that shapes human history, myths, identities, and human lives actively, sometimes like a phantom. From ancient times to the postmodern period, writers have attempted to capture the nature of war. In literature, war has a destructive attribute, but it also gives rise to the stories that survive: narratives of resistance, of life carried forward through suffering. In the ancient times, Homer celebrated the ideals of glory, honor and immortality through battle, creating a world where the achievement of *Kleos* was the highest goal of the human race. However, as history progressed along with technological advancement, the same ideals started to fade including changes in the moral dimension of warfare. The devastating war of modern age, portrayed in Auden's "The Shield of Achilles," transformed the notion of war from a glorious aspiration to a phenomenon of isolation, degradation of morality and disillusionment. Later, Darwish redefined war in post-colonial context, identifying war as a condition of geographical exile and existential otherness. This evolution of war ideals from pursuit of glory to the despair of alienation and the pain of forced exile, suggests the constant existence of trauma in human civilization. Therefore, war literature transmits cultural memory, shapes communal identity, and portrays the incomprehensible experience of violence besides keeping record of the battle.

This study elucidates the transition of the moral and psychological response to war and how literature reflects the change across time. The transformation of war ideals as both historical and existential phenomena can be traced by comparative reading of Homer, Auden and Darwish. While warriors seek immortality through heroic death in *The Iliad*, they are mechanized soldiers in Auden, representing a world stripped of meaning. On the contrary, Darwish's exiles struggle to preserve their identities in the face of erasure and dispossession. In spite of their cultural and historical differences, all three authors reveal the underlying truth of war trauma, echoing Cathy Caruth's (1996) definition of trauma as "an overwhelming experience of sudden or catastrophic events in which the response to the event occurs in the often delayed, uncontrolled repetitive appearance of hallucinations and other intrusive phenomena" (p. 11). Applying Caruth's theory to these texts demonstrates a comprehensive understanding of the functions of trauma as a perpetual concept in war literature, and connects ancient heroism, modern disillusionment and post-colonial exile. Therefore,

this study questions how the ideals of war consolidate the enduring shadow of trauma linking human suffering in redefining heroism, identity and survival.

The significance of this study lies in its attempt to imply that the ideals of war, as imagined across distant cultures and eras, may fruitfully be read within a single theoretical framework of Caruth's trauma theory. From Freud to onward, most of the greatest theorists have tended to root trauma in the individual psyche and within Euro-American history. By placing Darwish in dialogue with Homer and Auden, the paper challenges the easy provincialism of Western models, and posits that trauma is equally present in communal and colonial contexts. In a world still surrounded by conflict, cultural estrangement and exile, such a return to ancient, modern and postcolonial perspectives of war is not only an academic inquiry but also an ethical act of recollection. The novelty of the study lies in its attempt to contribute both to literary scholarship and to our understanding of memory, ethics, and the frailty of the human condition.

1.1. Research Objectives:

The research work aims —

- a. To examine the way in which Homer's *The Iliad*, beneath the seeming continuity of martial glory, exposes the ruptures where personal trauma unsettles heroic discourse.
- b. To interrogate how W. H. Auden's "The Shield of Achilles" subverts the inherited continuity of classical heroism, and reveals modern warfare as a scene of traumatic disillusionment.
- c. To discern how Mahmoud Darwish's *State of Siege* presents war not as a completed event, but as a continuing field of collective trauma, exile, and resistance.

2. Literature Review

War literature has long intrigued scholars not merely with chronicles of battle but with a dispersed field in which glory, loss, exile and fractured identity appear as monuments of valor give way to suffering, disillusionment,

and politics. In *The Iliad*, Homer portrays both the glory and futility of human struggle, showing Achilles as a tragic example of the harsh truth of mortality (Rinon, 2008). In the same heroic-cultural context, Homeric society's ideals of prioritizing marital aptitude and material honor often clash with communal goals. Extending this argument, Adkins (1982) emphasizes that Homer portrays war as both glorious and shattering, placing trauma within the quest for *Kleos* and honor. Achilles' relationship with Patroclus and his respect for Priam prove the power of *thymos* (spirited part of the human soul). Similarly, Smith (2016) argues that the epic therefore, highlights the traumatic costs of *Kleos* and honor, besides heroic pursuit of glory. Yet, rather than reading trauma only as destruction, *The Iliad* transforms trauma into the revelation of moral strength through the portrayal of heroes as more godlike than the gods, and more human than men as Schein (2018) states. However, Wachsmann (2020) reopens a debate regarding the trauma of dishonor as he interprets Achilles' anger as not only the outcome of his pride but also an unresolved psychic injury, which destabilizes his heroic identity. Likewise, Minchin (2006) reinforces this psychological reading while examining *The Iliad*. She observes that men can never forget their pain; they learn to live with it. By the act of vengeance, Achilles has tried to reduce his pain associated with his friend's death, but his action proves that killing Hector is not enough for him. The reason is that he is captured by trauma and memory. In a related sense, pains of physical injury (*odunai*) are not only signs of physical suffering but also metaphors for the both physical and emotional costs of war (Holmes, 2007). Shifting the focus from heroic suffering to vulnerable victims, Werner (2008) has highlighted the vulnerability of war victims, especially women and children in *The Iliad*. He argues that while the warriors are occupied in seeking *Kleos* and Honour, the powerless are paying the price by enduring enslavement and suffering. Similarly, from a gendered perspective, Shannon (2015) contends that female characters of the ancient writings serve as models for both "Primary" and "Secondary" traumas, and help connect the experience of modern women during wars. Modern women can trace their trauma and can speak publicly about this. The word "trauma," therefore, has evolved from "physical wound" to "psychic injury" and it mirrors the modern concept of PTSD.

While discoursing Auden's "The Shield of Achilles", Spears (1951) asserts that Auden does not see war as simply a historical battle but the perennial situation of insecurity and danger in human life. Based on his anti-war interpretation, Aslam (2016) denotes that Auden wrote this poem to critique unreasonable wars of modern time by drawing contrast with the wars of the classical age. In the same way, the contrast between Homer's shield of Achilles and Auden's shows how modern war loses its glorious past and faith in heroism (Grgić, 2020). Extending this argument, Al-Sady (2022) claims that "The Shield of Achilles" is an elegy, and it laments the death of heroism and expresses grief for the loss of a past ridden with glory. In the same critical direction, the futility of modern war has further been studied by Aurin (2024), where she argues Auden's use of dystopian images reflects the anxieties of his era: technological dehumanization, loss of morality and mechanized world contrast directly with the Homeric glorious past. Correspondingly, the shield forged by Hephaestus demonstrates human fragility instead of the glory of the war, observes Scully (2003). In his anti-war poem, Auden masterfully crafts Thetis as a humanized character who thinks for all mankind, contrasting with Homer's version of Thetis as an ordinary mother concerned only for her son, emphasizes Hosain (2013). However, in contrast to previous scholars, Byre (1992) offers a different perception. He reveals the juxtaposition of joyful and dreadful scenes the very truth of human existence in "The Shield of Achilles" highlighting the wrath of Achilles and war as an inseparable part of survival. Through the forging shield, Auden shows the duality of Homeric warfare where glory and trauma coexist within the vision of Achilles' destiny.

Sylvain (2009) demonstrates that Darwish's poetry gives voice to the human condition under occupation by transforming the experience of displacement into a universal call for freedom. Similarly, Ashiq et al. (2024) point out that through his poetry, Darwish not only reflects the trauma of the Palestinians but also sends messages to the world for justice, identity and human rights. Moving from the Palestinian condition to a wider exilic condition, Darwish's poetry transcends personal lamentation to a universal symbol of hope and resistance for exiled people along with Palestinians (Ahamed & Risana, 2024). Butler (2012) identifies the same universalizing direction, where Darwish's works provide the framework for the reimagination surpassing the territorial borders, revealing the struggle against

oppression is a must to ensure justice. Khan & Awan (2018) note that turning from universal justice to memory and national identity, Darwish's poetry is deeply rooted in the politics of memory where exile works as an open-wound, and poetry becomes a tool for preserving national identity. Along the same lines, exile and constant displacement lead the Palestinians to an identity crisis and a feeling of alienation, highlighting their quest for identity (Al-Swmaei, 2022). Singh (2023) reinforces this concern with lost identity and survival as there is a deep sense of lost identity and exile in Darwish's poetry, reflecting the resistance and determination to survive against domination. Correspondingly, focusing on the emotional dimension of this loss, Darwish's works emphasize the psychological and emotional trauma of exile where the people of Palestine are yearning for a lost motherland (Zafar et al., 2024). From a similar perspective, Darwish's poetry contains the theme of exile with a sense of alienation and a yearning to restore the past; consequently, it creates a gateway of freedom through perseverance and faith (Najami & Ajjawi, 2014). However, broadening the concept of exile beyond Palestine, according to Darwish, exile is a very broad concept and very relative and everyone carries an exile or otherness as it's not only physical but also psychological (Yeshurun, 2012). From a postcolonial perspective, produced through colonial and hegemonic narratives, Darwish portrays exile as not only geographical but also existential marginalization, claims Habib (2013). Darwish further shapes exile into an existential crisis, which is no longer a geographical matter and instead becomes a part of cosmic identity (Hamzah, 2016). Shifting from existential exile to resistance, Darwish's poetry turns into a metaphysical concept by showing resistance against the erasure and confinement, argues Nassar (2011). In contrast to Homeric heroism, in *State of Siege*, Behar (2011) asserts that Darwish emphasizes the fate of Ramallah is different from the fate of Homer's Greece as no epic will be written on Ramallah. Since war is no longer a matter of heroism to Darwish, he rejects Homeric echoes. His poetry is a means of resistance against resistance erasure, preserving the story of the defeated. While Auden refutes the idea of war as heroic, Darwish transforms its meaning further unraveling a constant state of displacement, exile and collective suffering.

The use of trauma theory presents the analysis of suffering not only with questions of memory, representation, and transmission, but with

theoretical problems concerning the forms through which pain becomes intelligible. Alexander et al. (2004) define cultural trauma as no immediate given, but as a socially constructed process by which collective suffering is narrated, represented, and remembered, and by which a group recognizes itself historically. LaCapra (1994), in another register, situates trauma between history, memory, and representation, distinguishing “acting out,” the compulsive return of the past, from “working through,” a critical labor of recognition; he also insists on its ethical, specific historical, and contextual delimitation.

Therefore, the literature review establishes the foundation but leaves a gap, as no single work has yet connected them together, thereby acknowledging the necessity of a comparative study.

3. Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative approach based on textual analysis and a comparative framework to bring Homer, Auden and Darwish into a deliberate and illuminating dialogue. These authors are brought together due to the fact that their works mark different historical thresholds in the discourse of war and trauma. *The Iliad*, “The Shield of Achilles” and *State of Siege* have been used as the primary sources for the study; while journal articles, web resources, books, interviews and other relevant sources have been used for this research. A qualitative lens allows the study to apprehend those nuances of emotion, memory, and moral tension of war that no empirical method could reach. Comparative textual analysis has been carried out through a close reading of thematic formations and traumatic experience, using Caruth’s notions of latency, repetition, and belatedness and grounded in textual evidence and relevant scholarship. Although trauma may be approached through a plurality of perspectives, delimitation must be made: this study takes Caruth’s framework as its principal analytical field. LaCapra’s ethical distinction between “acting out” and “working through,” and Alexander’s account of trauma as culturally constructed, are not set aside, but suspended as primary procedures. What is examined here is literary representation itself; Caruth’s belatedness, repetition, and witnessing therefore define the comparative analysis of *The Iliad*, “The Shield of Achilles” and *State of Siege*. Accordingly, the choice arises naturally from the subject itself which seeks to

follow the shifting ideals of war across contrasting historical and cultural horizons.

3.1. Theoretical Framework

Cathy Caruth's Trauma Theory, particularly implied in *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History*, provides the study's theoretical foundation. Her conception of trauma as delayed, recurrent, and resistant to articulation enables an exploration of what war narratives repeatedly imply yet seldom fully name. Caruth (1996) defines:

“Trauma describes an overwhelming experience of sudden or catastrophic events, in which the response to the event occurs in the often delayed, and uncontrolled repetitive occurrence of hallucinations and other intrusive phenomena (p. 11). The experience of trauma, the fact of latency, would thus seem to consist, not in the forgetting of a reality that can hence never be fully known, but in an inherent latency within the experience itself. The historical power of the trauma is not just that the experience is repeated after its forgetting, but that it is only in and through its inherent forgetting that it is first experienced at all (p. 17). In modern trauma theory as well, there is an emphatic tendency to focus on the destructive repetition of the trauma that governs a person's life. As modern neurobiologists point out, the repetition of the traumatic experience in the flashback can itself be retraumatizing; if not life-threatening, it is at least threatening to the chemical structure of the brain and can ultimately lead to deterioration” (p. 63).

Caruth's theory identifies that trauma is not isolated; it connects people through shared recognitions, pain and haunting memories. Through a comparative reading of Homer's *The Iliad*, Auden's “The Shield of Achilles” and Darwish's *State of Siege*, the study demonstrates how each text confronts and reinterprets the wound left by war. Guided by Caruth's trauma theory, it examines the movement from the Homeric celebration of martial glory to modern disillusionment and, subsequently, to the post-colonial experience of displacement revealing trauma as the force shaping these transitions.

4. Discussion:

4.1. Tragic Consciousness of Mortality and the Inception of Trauma in the Epic Tradition

In *The Iliad*, the idea of glory grips the reader's attention, while grief quietly follows in its wake. The poem can be studied as a long reflection on wounds of both the body and the heart. Both sides, including the Achaeans and the Trojans, endure the clutches of suffering. This echoes Caruth's view of trauma as "the story of a wound that cries out, that addresses us in the attempt to tell us of a reality or truth that is not otherwise available" (Caruth, 1996, p. 4).

As the poem begins, not with glory but with raging anger, its structure reveals this pattern. The very first word is *menis* or "Anger," and upon closer inspection, it appears as a persistent wound rather than a simple emotion on the surface. As Caruth writes:

"trauma is not locatable in the simple violent or original event in an individual's past, but rather in the way that its very unassimilated nature—the way it was precisely *not known* in the first in stance—returns to haunt the survivor later on." (Caruth, 1996, p. 4).

Achilles' rage against Agamemnon, his withdrawal from battle, and his grief after Patroclus's death are all reflections of the same wound. When Patroclus dies wearing Achilles' armor, Achilles becomes stricken with grief; consequently, he covers himself in dust, and he cries like an ordinary man, as if he has almost forgotten that he is a battle-hardened warrior. Homer is showing something crucial to his readers: no warrior is invincible on the inside. Achilles' suffering turns more intense than the war around him; in addition, his killing of Hector underscores this brokenness. He tells Hector,

"Hector, no doubt you imagined, as you stripped Patroclus...So now the dogs and birds of prey are going to mangle you foully...will give Patroclus full burial honours." (Homer, ca. 700 B.C.E./2003, Book 22, lines 331–337).

These words of hatred come from the wounded heart of Achilles, as his humanity is damaged by grief. Consequently, every act of revenge repeats the original pain: the death of Patroclus and even the death of his own sense of

self. As a result, the battlefield becomes a place haunted by memory as well as grief. In his farewell to Andromache, Hector tells his wife,

“But deep in my heart I know well the day is coming when sacred Ilium will be destroyed, together with the people of Priam and Priam himself of the good ash spear...when you are dragged off in tears by some bronze-armored Greek, your freedom gone.” (Homer, ca. 700 B.C.E./2003, Book 6, lines 448–456).

Trauma produces a condition which is positioned between the crises of death and life where the survivor is required to confront both the violence of traumatic event and the demand of survival after its occurrence. Instead of glorifying the war, Homer carefully reveals the trembling beneath the shimmer of armor. Under the thunder of battle lies the soft voice of pain, an unclaimed wound, a “crying voice” that speaks across centuries.

The meeting of Achilles and Priam feels like the moment when the glory of war suddenly becomes human again, and the great noise of battle turns quiet and somber. Priam kneels before Achilles and says,

“Achilles, respect the gods and have pity on me, remembering your own father. I am even more entitled to pity...I have raised to my lips the hands of the man who killed my sons.” (Homer, ca. 700 B.C.E./2003, Book 24, lines 504–508).

Surprisingly, these words sharply penetrate the minds of both men; they reciprocally communicate through “the voice of the wound”, a truth deeper than simple language. When Priam enters Achilles’ tent, something inside him begins to change, and the hands that had mutilated Hector now tremble under an unknown force. He now considers Priam not an enemy, but a father seeking his deceased son. Homer’s language becomes softer than an epic poem, and resembles a lament especially in this part of the poem. The two men weep together in pain and grief over the loss of their beloved ones, and their shared grief becomes something sacred and connects the enemies through a common purpose. The laments of Hecuba, Andromache, and Helen articulate what the male warriors suppress, and this is evident when Andromache foresees

Astyanax's death. Hence, *The Iliad* stands as an early chronicle of trauma, recording not only the clash of arms but the fractures of the human heart.

Achieving glory brings bright and vigorous honor, but the shadow of death also pursues it which empowers the poem with fatalistic gravity. Achilles, however, recognizes this truth more than anyone else. After choosing a short life with eternal glory over a long life without fame, everything Achilles touches is colored by death. This is evident when Patroclus is killed by Hector; Achilles' world finally cracks open marking the collapse of the dream of immortality. Achilles' savage treatment towards Hector's body is not triumphant, rather a desperate reappearance of his pain.

The tragic perception of mortality shapes not only *The Iliad* but the entire literary tradition after it. At the end of *The Iliad*, what matters to both sides is not the battle but the burial of honored warriors. In this regard, the Trojans celebrate the burial of their beloved warrior Hector with great honor. Although the Trojan War remains far from over, grief becomes the final word of the poem. Caruth (1996) calls this "listening to the voice and to the speech delivered by the other's wound is what takes place" (p. 8). Homer's final note suggests that Priam's sorrow becomes universal, connecting the sorrow of all humanity. *The Iliad* underscores a simple truth that glory and honor will pass, but suffering will inflict the minds of those who bear it. Moreover, every hero is someone mortal who is prone to bleeding, remembering, mourning.

4.2. Auden's Refutation of the Heroic Ideals and the Continuity of Trauma

In Auden's "The Shield of Achilles," the old dream of heroism begins to fall apart. The heroic world of *The Iliad* suddenly feels thin and seems like a distant memory. Thetis expects beauty in this brave new world: "marble well-governed cities," "athletes at their games, / Men and women in a dance" (Auden, 1955, p. 35). Instead, she finds a wasteland which is a barren and lifeless space marked by negation, the absence of life, starvation, and confusion where soldiers stand like machines devoid of morality. This is not the heroic world of *The Iliad*; rather it is an exhausted world shaped by the aftermath of countless wars. Accordingly, the war-ridden landscape becomes a site for the formation of modern trauma as it is a psychic rupture which is

caused by a sudden experience which is beyond immediate comprehension and returns belatedly through involuntary repetition, hallucination and intrusive images. The soldiers, therefore, move as if caught in this delay as they march “without expression,” listening to a “voice without a face.” These soldiers have no choice, no thoughts, and the one thing they do possess is repetition.

Auden shows us that the heroic ideal is no longer heroic; rather, it has metamorphosed into a ghost, a memory that returns in the wrong shape. Thetis witnesses this transformation and feels a disorienting terror within her, and this becomes her moment of recognition. Caruth (1996) writes that “this truth, in its delayed appearance and its belated address, cannot be linked only to what is known, but also to what remains unknown in our very actions and our language” (p. 4) and Auden’s poem empowers the marginalized with a voice of its own. The shield no longer glorifies the grandeur of the world; instead, it now reflects the grim realities of war.

In “The Shield of Achilles,” war becomes mechanical, in which the old heroes die and a new figure appears. The soldiers obey statistical command, not belief, as evident in these lines “Out of the air a voice without a face / Proved by statistics that some cause was just / In tones as dry and level as the place: / No one was cheered and nothing was discussed...” (Auden, 1955, p. 35). In Auden’s poem, the soldiers resemble hollowed-out puppets, while the crowds remain in stasis on a broader scale. Their hollowness prevents them from taking any meaningful action without questioning it themselves. Caruth (1996) calls this latency which emphasizes that trauma is not about forgetting a dreadful incident but about inherent incomprehensibility of the event. Therefore, Thetis becomes the only listener and witness while her horror constitutes an act of moral awakening. However, even her awakening occurs late in the poem. The poem suggests that the greatest wound lies in the age of machines is the loss of the human heart itself.

Auden shows a world where moral order has quietly collapsed. This is a brave new world where wars will continue, but meaning will not. The heroic codes of the ancient world cannot thrive in such emptiness. Caruth (1996) says, “the focus on the survival function of trauma as allowing one to get through an overwhelming experience by numbing oneself to it” (p. 131),

and this is evident in the world of the poem. People have become numb; they exist as crowds of spectators, striving to survive without understanding what they are surviving. The survivors in Auden's world live inside a strange silence. Traumatic experience itself produces awareness in the survivor, but it wavers between the reoccurrence of trauma and the psychological weight of dragging life afterwards. The people in the poem embody this burden; they are not evil; rather, they are simply hollow. They watch executions taking place as if they are watching sports. Their deadened silence is another kind of wound.

Therefore, the shield refuses to summon heroic memory; it exposes the ongoing, unstaunched wound of modernity. Auden's shield renounces beauty; it disclaims the old epic promise of harmony. Its surface becomes the site upon which violence reasserts itself, again and again, like a memory that resists absorption or repose. No longer does it reflect the glory of Achilles; rather, it mirrors the fractured consciousness of an age unable to interpret its own brutality. It is not a cherished token of heroic culture, but a somber admonition. It's a mirror in which modern humanity is forced to confront the unresolved wound that continues to shape it.

4.3. Exile as a State of Living Trauma and Reclaiming Existence in the Edge of Annihilation

In *State of Siege*, exile is not only about leaving home; rather, it becomes a wound that stays open. This represents a life that hangs between belonging and disappearing. This exile appears as an "unclaimed experience," a pain that keeps returning long after the first injury. Trauma itself is a haunting experience to the survivor, and it becomes part of their reality for the Palestinians. Loss repeats itself until it becomes the very structure of memory. Darwish turns the siege into a whole symbolic landscape which is quiet, aching and endless. He writes, "Here on a hill slope facing the sunset and the wide-gaping / gun barrel of time / near orchards of severed shadows / we do as prisoners and the unemployed do: / we nurse hope." (Darwish, 2002/2010, p. 3). Amid this turbulent confusion, hope manages to survive despite great adversity. It serves as both comfort and pain for those involved.

Exile, here, is a way of seeing the world through a wound. Unlike *The Iliad*, where exile comes and goes and heroism offers rest, Darwish presents it as a circle with no exit. Achilles gains closure through death and glory. However, Darwish's people do not gain closure at all, as is evident in these lines, "Under siege, / life is measured between the memory of its beginning / and the oblivion of its end..." (Darwish, 2002/2010, p. 9). Here, time is collapsing while the past and future fall apart. The psychic injury of trauma is different from a physical injury as it creates an imbalance in the survivor's mind regarding time, identity, and reality. In this state, individual identity fades away, and humanity is required to return to its primitive origin. To overcome this impasse, passive endurance alone will not be enough to confront the enemy; rather, they must be challenged through the older cultural memory of the pre-Islamic past. Therefore, the "I" dissolves into "we" in the poem, representing the trauma that is shared. Consequently, exile becomes a symbol of living trauma—and strangely, a form of survival.

In *State of Siege*, the weight of memories is heavy, yet they help people survive amid turbulent times. For the Palestinians, however, memory is not a private matter. For them, memories act as a shared archive of wounds. Darwish unifies memory and identity when remembrance becomes mourning and mourning becomes resistance. "In fullness as well as emptiness... Life wonders / how can we bring *life* to life here" (Darwish, 2002/2010, p. 11) – this is not an expression of sadness but represents an act of defiance. To remember the homeland is to refuse to accept disappearance. Caruth (1996) states that trauma as a form of wound addresses a reality or truth, and in Darwish's poem, memory itself cries as an attempt to reveal it. It becomes a testimony and a purpose not to fix the past but to keep it from dying. Occupation breaks not only places but also time. Darwish (2002/2010) expresses the identical collapse in his poem, "We have a little time for recreation... the camera will smile for people born / under the Zodiac *Sign of the Siege*." (p. 23). The present is bruised by the memory of the past. It is observed that memory preserves the hero's name and deeds in the Homeric world whereas it becomes obscure and doubtful in Auden's world. However, Darwish makes memory a battlefield—the only battlefield the oppressed can still hold.

In *State of Siege*, to speak is to resist; to remember is to survive. Under occupation, poetry becomes a weapon forged from breath and emotion. Caruth opens the debate that resistance is not glory rather it is the answer to trauma's confusion. People survive by turning their pain into lines of verse. Homer presents resistance through spear and shield in contrast to Darwish's representation through persistence. Achilles dies in the name of glory; Darwish's people, however, live in endurance. Resistance is not victory; it is simply the refusal to disappear. Whereas Auden describes a world where war kills the human spirit, Darwish portrays a world where the human spirit refuses to die. Survival becomes political, ethical, and almost sacred as Caruth (1996) emphasizes it as "the return of the repressed" (p. 13). For Darwish, this recurrence becomes necessary art, while *State of Siege* whispers one truth: life continues, even when it is wounded.

Darwish's poem acts as a witness to the wound of a whole nation. Through Caruth, poetry becomes repetition—the only way to speak what cannot be spoken directly. Darwish returns time and again to the same wound: a homeland lost, an identity erased, and a siege pressing on the throat. In desolation, poetry becomes a memory that resists dying, suggesting that traumatic survival signifies being trapped in a repetitive and compulsive cycle of relieving the violence instead of moving beyond it. History recurs, and accordingly, Darwish returns since forgetting would be the final defeat.

4.4. Cross-cultural Continuity of Trauma

Homer honors the warrior while Auden shows the modern world falling out of meaning and Darwish stands inside the wound and speaks for the many. Darwish's poetry creates a communal space for mourning, endurance, and prophecy. Language turns into a battlefield, where silence fights speech, and pain fights memory. However, the poem survives, and survival is the prophecy. It evolves into an archive and the future of the people remembering what is lost and imagining a return. Heroes change, nations fall, languages shift—but the wound remains in memory, and these works express the same cry which returns time and again, what Caruth (1996) terms as "the oscillation between a *crisis of death* and the correlative *crisis of life*... the story of the unbearable nature of its survival" (p. 7). This primordial cry is heard

from Achilles to the poet under siege; consequently, trauma becomes the thread tying human history together.

Homer, Auden and Darwish are poets divided by language, century, and continent, but they answer one another in the expression of trauma. Troy, Europe, and Palestine are three landscapes, but they bear one reverberating wound. War divides nations, but pain draws them into a severe fellowship. Achilles brooding in his tent, the blank-eyed soldiers of the twentieth century, and the exiled poet of our own troubled hours are all heirs to the same ancestral cry. War literature, therefore, transforms into a kind of dark archive where ancient bards, modern witnesses, and besieged voices stand together murmuring that history is a long chronicle of wounding and the unyielding will that outlasts it. Through Caruth's lens, these voices gather the scattered shards of human pain, turning trauma into testimony, and sorrow into a grave, durable strength.

5. Conclusion

From the battle of Troy to the modern wasteland and besieged streets of occupied Palestine, war has been carrying both splendor and sorrow within it. The study began with the simple truth that the human response to war is not triumph but trauma. Using Caruth's concept of "unclaimed experience," this research resolves how Homer, Auden, and Darwish gradually changed the meaning of war. From the pursuit of glory to disillusionment and then to exile, there runs a single thread — trauma, the "crying voice" that refuses to be quiet.

Homer's *The Iliad* becomes both the tale of heroism and the witness of shared suffering. This exposes the birth of trauma in epic tradition through the suffering of the greatest heroes. Auden's "The Shield of Achilles" retells the ancient myth in the light of the modern age, where the heroic dream collapses and trauma becomes a cultural condition — a wound of both the body and the mind. Then comes Darwish's *State of Siege*, where verses of ruins, silence, and resistance become evidence of Caruth's concept of "the latency of trauma," the delayed comprehension of traumatic experience. Darwish employs this delay as strength to preserve communal identity so that the memory can function as a shield to protect it.

Across the works of these three poets, trauma serves as a structure that shapes each writer's way of thinking through repetition, rupture, and silence. War literature, therefore, becomes an archive of human suffering, preserving the cruelest past to warn the future. The evolution of war ideals, from *Kleos* to disillusionment and exile, serves as evidence of literature's capacity to transform suffering into a meaningful song that reminds us of the enduring nature of trauma and its impact on the human heart. This study suggests a new kind of heroism: the courage to remember and to testify. Future research might expand this framework to non-Western and Indigenous traditions by exploring collective, gendered, and post-colonial perspectives on war trauma through the lens of Dominick LaCapra, Jeffrey C. Alexander or other trauma theorists. Trauma may take different shapes from different traditions, yet tells the same truth — the human spirit suffers, but it does not stop recurring the dark image.

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