

**When Language Rewrites History: A Narrative Discourse
Analysis of Rory McCarthy's *Nobody Told Us We Are
Defeated: Stories from the New Iraq***

**Submitted by
Rehab Farouk Gad
Associate Professor of Linguistics
Mansoura University
Faculty of Arts
Department of English**

Abstract

When people communicate, they tend to tell stories, narrate events and place themselves in place and time. It is through narration that social identities are built (Forchtner 2021). Narrative Discourse Analysis has been implemented in critical discourse studies in 1960s. Main events which shape histories of countries and nations have tremendously occupied narrative texts. In 2003, with the USA announcing its invasion to Iraq, real life experiences have been narrated. The present study analyses one of the major novels written on the 2003 Iraq which is Rory McCarthy's (2006) *Nobody Told Us We Are Defeated: Stories from the New Iraq*. The analysis is carried out through the lens of Narrative Discourse Analysis following Labov and Waletzky (1967) and Johnstone (2001). The study addresses the following questions: (1) in what way have the events that the novelist witnessed acted as the stimulus of the selected narrative piece; (2) how does the language of the novel manage to portray the war on Iraq and the devastating life conditions of Iraqis; (3) what are the features of narrative discourse that the selected novel exhibits; (4) in what way does the narrative structure of stories told by a first-hand writer differ from that written by a novelist who did not witness the events. The study refers to McCarthy's narrative piece as *A Novel of Witness* that exhibits the functional narrative features which reflect the devastating conditions of a country in war. The novel is not orderly due to the gloomy context of narration. Two types of complication actions are identified here: Main Complicating Actions (MCAs) and Commentary Complicating Actions (CCAs). The study also suggests that McCarthy's text presents a type of narrative referred to as Descriptive Narrative Commentary (DNC).

Keywords: Commentary Complicating Actions (CCAs); Main Complicating Actions (MCAs); Narrative Discourse; Narrative Structure; Personal Experience Narratives; Witness novel

حين تعيد اللغة كتابة التاريخ: تحليل الخطاب الروائي لرواية لم يخبرنا أحد اننا هُزمتنا: حكايات

من العراق الجديدة لروري مكارثي

ملخص الدراسة

حين يتواصل الناس، يميلون لسرد الحكايات و الأحداث و وضع أنفسهم في الزمان و المكان ، فيعد السرد أحد أساليب بناء الهويات الاجتماعية (فورشنر ٢٠٢١)، و أدرج تحليل الخطاب الروائي تحت مظلة دراسات الخطاب النقدي في ستينات القرن الماضي، و احتلت الأحداث المصيرية في حياة الشعوب و الدول مساحة لا بأس بها في النصوص الروائية. ففي عام ٢٠٠٣، عندما أعلنت الولايات المتحدة الأمريكية غزوها لدولة العراق، سُردت العديد من القصص و التجارب الانسانية، و من هنا تهدف الدراسة الحالية الى تحليل احدي الروايات التي كُتبت عن الغزو الأمريكي للعراق عام ٢٠٠٣، و هي رواية لم يخبرنا أحد اننا هُزمتنا: حكايات من العراق الجديدة لروري مكارثي، و التي كتبها عام ٢٠٠٦. اتبعت هذه الدراسة منهج تحليل الخطاب الروائي حيث أختيرت مقتطفات من الرواية و حُللت في ضوء الإطار النظري الذي وضعه لايوف و والتزكي (١٩٦٧) و جونستون (٢٠٠١). تُجيب هذه الدراسة عن الأسئلة الآتية: (١) كيف شكلت الأحداث التي شهدها الكاتب حافظاً لهذا العمل الروائي؛ (٢) كيف جسدت لغة النص المختار الحرب على العراق و الأوضاع المأساوية التي عاشها العراقيون؛ (٣) ماهي السمات اللغوية للخطاب الروائي المتضمنة في النص المختار؛ (٤) كيف تختلف البنية الروائية للقصص التي شاهدها و سردها الكاتب عن تلك التي لم يشاهدها و كتبها فقط لتعكس آرائه عن الأحداث؟ تقترح الدراسة وصف رواية مكارثي على انها "رواية شاهد" و التي تحتوي بنيتها التحتية على السمات الوظيفية للسرد و التي بدورها جسدت الظروف المأساوية لبلد تحت وطأة الحرب، أما ظاهرياً لم تُروى الأحداث الواحدة عقب التالية بشكل متصاعد بسبب السياق الدموي و المروع للنص. و تصنف الدراسة الأحداث المتصاعدة إلى أحداث متصاعدة رئيسة و أحداث متصاعدة تعقيبيه. و تشير الدراسة إلى وجود نوع جديد من الوصف في رواية مكارثي و هو الوصف الروائي التعقيبي.

الكلمات المفتاحية:

أحداث متصاعدة تعقيبيه؛ أحداث متصاعدة رئيسة؛ الخطاب الروائي؛ بنية السرد؛ روايات التجارب الشخصية؛ رواية شاهد

**When Language Rewrites History: A Narrative Discourse
Analysis of Rory McCarthy's *Nobody Told Us We Are
Defeated: Stories from the New Iraq***

Submitted by
Rehab Farouk Gad
Associate Professor of Linguistics
Mansoura University
Faculty of Arts

1. Introduction

After the Iran- Iraq war, which lasted for almost eight years, Iraq's economy was drastically declined. Iraq invaded Kuwait as the latter produces excessive amounts of crude oil. The American army was brought in to support Kuwait and airstrikes, which aimed at destroying the military power of Iraq, were carried out with the approval of President Bush. These events triggered the American invasion of Iraq in 2003. According to the American President, the invasion was mainly to remove Iraq's mass destruction weapons, putting an end to Saddam Hussein's regime and setting the Iraqi people free. The 2003 Iraq war has received a considerable attention in all forms of mass media. The dramatic events have also occupied war literature and many stories and experiences have been narrated in first-hand war novels. The present study conducts a narrative discourse analysis of one of the major and most controversial novels which handles the 2003 Iraq war: Rory McCarthy's (2006) *Nobody Told Us We Are Defeated: Stories from the New Iraq*. McCarthy also writes on Islam and politics with special interest in political affairs following the Arab uprisings.

A common theme in war time is that one party is victimised by the other. In *Nobody Told Us We Are Defeated*, the novelist, being a news reporter, dealt with the Americans and Iraqis as victims of war. He also told the stories of suffering that were not appropriately presented to the world. He recounted his personal experiences of the events and depicted how Iraqi people were traumatized by American and British powers. At the surface, McCarthy's novel looks similar to Tawfiq al-Hakim's autobiographical novel *يوميات نائب في الأرياف* *Yawmyyat Naib Fil Aryaaf* (*Diary of a Country's Prosecutor*) that was first translated into French in 1939, then into English in 1947. In a sequence of episodes, al-Hakim, as a member of the judiciary system and a public prosecutor, described corruption, fraud, crime and suffering of Egyptian peasants that he witnessed. McCarthy was working as a foreign correspondent for the

Guardian and when he was covering the American invasion in 2003, he witnessed the Iraqi people living under occupation; so he portrayed the state of Iraq in anarchy, and Sunni revolutions and brutal dogmatic war. McCarthy's novel is divided into 19 chapters narrating different experiences he had witnessed in Iraq. An epilogue, two maps of Iraq and Baghdad, a chronology, a list of notes and bibliography are all included at the end of the novel. The way McCarthy has presented his book makes it difficult whether to refer to it as a novel, a documentary, a historical document or a self-written life experiences (i.e. an autobiography). As the present study conducts a narrative discourse analysis, McCarthy's text will be dealt with as a novel and its narrative structure is accordingly investigated.

Johnstone (2001, p. 636) defined a narrative discourse as the presentation and portrayal of events within a narrative piece. In a metaphorical sense, O'Neill (1996) describes narration as a form of game that occurs either in a serious context (e.g. biographies, police reports, newspaper reports on disasters, scholarly histories, etc.), or in a non-serious contexts, such as literary narratives which are merely written to entertain. At first glance, readers might regard McCarthy's text as a diary or a memoir rather than a formal narrative with a book-length autobiography. However, the present study categorises McCarthy's text as a narrative piece that exhibits all characteristics of narratives discussed in the literature. Though McCarthy's text is set in a serious context, it is a narrative that is never meant to entertain. The study also hypothesizes that war narratives are of two types: (1) non-personal experience narratives which present events and actions portrayed by the novelists as products of their own points of views and (2) personal experience narratives (a term coined by Labov and Waletzky 1967, and discussed by Johnstone 2001) where the authors are part of the actual events they witnessed, and portray characters they met and describe places they had been to.

1.1 Research questions

The present study focuses on finding out how the main elements and components of narration are established in the selected corpus. It seeks to describe the impact of the narrator's career on the structure of his narrative piece; accordingly, the following questions are addressed:

- (1) In what way have the events that the novelist witnessed acted as the stimulus of the selected narrative piece?
- (2) How does the language of the novel manage to portray the war on Iraq and the devastating life conditions of Iraqis?

(3) What are the features of narrative discourse that the selected novel exhibits?

(4) In what way does the narrative structure of stories told by a first-hand writer differ from that written by a novelist who did not witness the events?

It is hypothesized here that McCarthy has achieved effective communication through his narrative structure and writing behaviour. The effectiveness of the physical context of events in structuring McCarthy's text is also assumed and investigated.

2. Literature review

This section presents a two-part literature review. The first part reviews some previous research on the application of narrative discourse analysis to oral/written texts. The second part of this literature review sums up some views and comments on two novels written on the 2003 American invasion of Iraq.

2.1 Narrative discourse analyses of oral/written texts

(a) 2.1.1 Hodges (2011)

In his introduction to *The "war on terror" narrative: Discourse and intertextuality in the construction and contestation of sociopolitical reality*, Hodges (2011) wrote: 'For the victims of 9/11 and the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq: Peace and justice begin with understanding'. The war in Iraq is one of the themes that Bush wanted his people to know as 'war on terror'. The war is described as a product of Bush's administration which sold it, following the 9/11 attack, though most of the Americans rejected the war and saw it as an illegitimate invasion. Hodge's book focuses on describing the way language shapes socio-political realities. He proposed a dialogic/performance narrative analysis which highlighted the construction of knowledge and identity. In his 'war on terror' analysis, Hodges's data were composed of the speeches of President Bush and some discussions of students on 'war on terror'. Stressing the role of narrative in shaping public views, Hodges added that narrative in 'war on terror' has constructed socio-political reality that justified the war in Iraq (p. 64). Accordingly, most of the Americans accused Saddam Hussein of assisting the terrorists in 9/11 attacks. Narrative in 'war on terror' was a well-designed marketing plan addressing the Americans who held opposing views.

For Bucholtz and Hall (2004), cited in Hodges (2011, p. 65), there are some tactics (i.e. practices which show how individuals are not free to act in daily situations due to some restrictions) of *intersubjectivity* (i.e. how people negotiate and interact in order to form their own identities). One of these tactics is that of *adequation* which refers to people's attempt to

establish specially accepted sameness within a certain group. In time of war, the tactic of *adequation* is prevailing, so differences are ignored in favour of group unity. Members of the same group unite against their country's enemies, following a tactic of distinction that differentiates 'us' from 'them'. Accordingly, identity is a process that not only admits similarities that precede a certain context, but also invents these similarities and minimizes differences. So identities are socially achieved by interaction and formed by ideology (p. 65). In Hodges's *war on terror*, the connection between Saddam and Al Qaeda is created by Bush's administration. The USA invasion of Iraq is taken as a progression of the 9/11 attacks. In one of Bush's speeches, he described the war on Iraq as '*the battle of Iraq*' and his language was in a form of series of events (p, 69).

(b) 2.1.2 Alsaahafi (2019)

- (c) Alsaahafi (2019) conducted a narrative discourse analysis of the short story *The Tell-Tale Heart*, written by Poe. He adopted macro and microstructure analyses proposed by Stein (1982) and Halliday & Hasan (1976) respectively. The macro structure analysis focused on genre schemata whereas the microstructure analysis stressed the lexico-grammatical cohesion in Poe's short story. Alsaahafi's analysis was based on Stein's (1982) narrative structure which has the following constituents: setting, initiating events, response/reaction, attempt, consequences and reaction. These constituents are combined in a unified and coherent sequence of events which have successfully created horror and suspense. For the micro-structure analysis of Poe's short story, Alsaahafi investigated grammar and lexical cohesion and concluded that Poe has used grammatical and lexical devices that created a coherent text and successfully conveyed the intended meaning to the readers.

(d) 2.1.3 Forchtner (2021)

Forchtner wrote his (2021) article to introduce the volume *Narrative in Critical Discourse Studies*. He discussed the concept of narrative in this special issue and argued that narrative is everywhere. Human beings arrange events through narration; so, narrative has an epistemological dimension that shapes the social world. What happens everywhere is understood and inferred only through narration (p. 305). This volume, reviewed by Forchtner, clarifies the concept of narrative and stresses the need for a clear cut definition for that concept. As narrative is the

building block of critical discourse studies, Forchtner presented some contemporary definitions, examples are:

- a. Narratives shape the past by connecting different historical events (Heer & Wodak 2008, Rheindorf & Wodak 2017)
- b. Narratives shape parts of groups' identities (Gavriely-Nurr 2017)
- c. Narratives' role is mainly to infer meaning within discourse (Viehover 2001)

Some types of thematic analyses that form the context of narration are:

- a. Discourse of accountability
- b. Discourse historical arguments
- c. Mafia discourse
- d. Problem-cause-responsibility discourse

2.2 Literature on America/Iraq war novels

Due to the scarcity of literary and linguistic studies that researched McCarthy's (2006) *Nobody Told Us We Are Defeated: Stories from the New Iraq*, this part discusses two novels written on Iraq war in (2012) and (2013): Kevin Powers's *The Yellow Birds* and Sinan Antoon's *The Corpse Washer* respectively. In *The Yellow Birds*, both Americans and Iraqis are made victims; however, it is only the voice of Americans that is being heard and detailed. The title of *The Yellow Birds* comes from a merchant chant of the army which expresses violence. The novel depicted the lives of two soldiers who became indifferent to the violence and destruction surrounding them. Satrianwan and Rahayu (2020) analysed *The Yellow Birds* within the framework of Gerald C. Davison's theory of post-traumatic stress disorder development (PTSD). They argued that the main character, Bartle, experienced the death of his friend and when he went home to America, he experienced post-traumatic stress. Soldiers suffer from post-war traumas that lead to psychological disorders when they go home.

According to Alosman and Omar (2022), Kevin Powers did not portray Iraqi people in depth, though he was a machine gunner in the US Army in 2004. In *The Yellow Birds*, the main character, Bartle, witnessed all realities of war and he was alienated from his own culture. He realized that American soldiers were concerned with their own lives rather than war heroes. Bartle took war in Iraq as a political deception. Powers stressed the psychological agonies of American soldiers who are unaccountable for war. Mydin and Alosman (2022) analysed *The Yellow Birds* as a post heroic narrative that depicts the ugly face of war and questions the real meaning of heroism. The novel is considered a war narrative which stresses the concept of bravery, political deception and heroism. Soldiers' hope is to survive and go on killing and fighting. War

is described as a theatre where heroic performances are witnessed on stage.

The other novel which handled war on Iraq is Sinan Antoon's *The Corpse Washer*. The novelist here focused on the sufferings of Iraqis following the American occupation. Antoon, who is Iraqi-born, described the devastating impacts of war on Iraqi-people. Mahmoud (2016) called Antoon's *The Corpse Washer* a 'trauma novel'. The novel is a narrative of its characters' trauma which depicts personal/individual experiences. It is also depicting Iraq with a traumatised history. The novel reflects the emotional effects of war and the different incidents of violence and the shattered minds of the Iraqi people. The main character, *Jawad*, wanted to be a sculptor and this desire symbolized a deep wish to accept death and to recreate human bodies. Similarly, as suggested by Mahmoud (2016), Antoon's novel reflects his desire to recreate a piece of literature that immortalizes the devastating events. Al-Omar (2018) argued that Antoon's translation of his own work from Arabic into English is reflecting his own desire not to be separated from his characters and, at the same time, depict his people's cultural identities. Throughout his novel, Antoon has employed some culture-based items to introduce his culture to the readers. Examples of these items are: *sayyid* 'descendant of Imam', *ustadh* 'Mr' and *kleicha* 'Iraqi cookies'.

Mankhi, Mohammed and Hummadi (2020) described how Iraqis were traumatized by war and how their vision of life was completely distorted after the American colonisation. In *The Corpse Washer*, Antoon discussed issues such as oppression and discrimination. The trauma caused by war rendered all characters in the novel confused and shattered. Iraqi people experience both individual and group trauma on daily basis. Antoon was forced to leave America 25 years ago and he decided to bring the wounds and sufferings of Iraqis to the public. Mankhi et al. also argued that Antoon's novel is about trauma caused by death, rape and war that Iraqis experienced. The main character, *Jawad*, is fighting the idea of helping his father with dead bodies as he described this profession as a horrible experience. *Jawad*'s trauma is a result of accumulative devastating experiences that he had gone through. These experiences had negatively influenced *Jawad*'s personal relationships. Antoon's *The Corpse Washer* depicted loss of hope in coping with death, destruction and war.

(e) 2.3 McCarthy's *Nobody Told Us We Are Defeated: Stories from the New Iraq*

Due to the scarcity of literature on McCarthy's *Nobody Told Us We Are Defeated: Stories from the New Iraq*, the present study reviews two main articles on Iraq written by McCarthy in the *Guardian*, in (2003) and (2005) respectively, before he wrote his (2006) novel. In *Iraqi's hidden War* (available at <https://countercurrents.org/iraq-mccarthy131003.htm>), McCarthy was describing an actual scene where an Infantry Regiment was attacked at Balad, an Iraqi city in Saladin Governorate. McCarthy described how a soldier was seriously wounded and smoke spread over the Tigris River; still Iraqis were shooting. According to this article which McCarthy wrote in October, 13, 2003, 320 US troops were killed and thousands of soldiers were injured. In this article, McCarthy gave actual description of American attacks on Iraq, number of death toll, emergency rooms at Iraqi hospitals, Iraqi resistance fighters and American medical school students who gave back their time to the American army. McCarthy ended his report by describing how American doctors were forced to treat Iraqi prisoners who appeared on trolley next to dead American soldiers.

In 12, February 2005, two years after leaving the city of Baghdad, McCarthy wrote *Iraq Trapped in a Terrible Vice between Ruthless Insurgents and Unloved Occupiers* (available at <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2005/feb/12/iraq.rorymccarthy>). He gave an account of these two years and expressed his concerns and fears for the future of Iraq. McCarthy was describing the situation in Iraq, following the toppling of Saddam Hussein's statue in Baghdad. The American leaders had called upon some important figures at the city of Ur to form a new idealistic government for Iraq. The meetings had turned out to become invasion and occupation. McCarthy said that he worked as a reporter in Baghdad and he witnessed violence born out of resentment and brutality. He described this war as 'a burgeoning insurgency and it is crippling Iraq'. For McCarthy, what America and Britain had to do was to acknowledge the humiliation they brought to Iraq in two years. The promised liberation had turned Iraq into a melting pot of Islam radicalism. McCarthy concluded that Iraq has been caught between an undesirable occupation and a cruel revolution. What McCarthy had witnessed during these two years was accurately depicted and portrayed in his 2006 novel *Nobody Told Us We Are Defeated: Stories from the New Iraq*.

The following features are assumed to be common among the three novels: (1) Powers, Antoon and McCarthy had gone through traumatic

experiences in 2003 Iraq; (2) the three novels represent a narrative discourse on war that aims at identifying social realities and giving clear vision to people. However, it is only McCarthy's novel that was not researched or discussed in the literature. The study suggests that this scarcity is due to the structure of the novel as McCarthy wrote it in a form of 19 chapters, referred to here as narrative pieces, or experiences that he witnessed for himself in Iraq. The study also suggests that though the three novels discuss the American invasion of Iraq, for some political reasons, McCarthy's novel did not gain its due publicity as it denounces the way both the American and the British powers have distorted the history and lives of the Iraqi people. It is not surprising that, according to the goodreads.com, an American cataloguing website that keeps database of books, McCarthy's *Nobody Told Us We Are Defeated: Stories from the New Iraq* is available in only 6 editions and has received 21 ratings and 3 reviews; Powers's *The Yellow Bird* is available in 68 editions, has received 25098 ratings, and 3436 reviews; Antoon's *The Corpse Washer* is available in 23 editions and has received 6886 ratings and 1429 reviews.

3. Theoretical framework of narrative discourse analysis

The present study hypothesizes that McCarthy's *Nobody Told Us We Are Defeated: Stories from the New Iraq* is a personal experience narrative and a witness novel written by a witness narrator. The linguistic narrative structure of the text is examined in order to highlight the way aspects of psychology and social identity are reflected in the narrative piece. This section draws upon the theoretical framework adopted here which is that of Labov and Waletzky (1967), reprinted in (1997), and Johnstone (2001).

3.1 Labov & Waletzky (1967): definition and structure of narratives

In their *Narrative analysis: oral versions of personal experience*, Labov and Waletzky (1967) argued that the function of narratives is not restricted to recapping experiences in accordance with their temporal sequence. Since a narrative is mainly a product, the context of narrated events must include certain stimulus which drives the functions of that product. Accordingly, a narrative achieves both referential and evaluative functions (p. 13). Referential clauses inform the readers about events, characters, and settings of the story, whereas evaluative clauses reflect the novelist's points of views and trigger the readers to read the story. Labov and Waletzky (1976) selected 14 personal experience narrative pieces where people told their stories and narrated events they had actually experienced; they analysed oral narratives of real experiences and

preferred to examine the structure of clauses instead of dealing with semantic units. The clause was analysed as the smallest linguistic unit that identifies the functions of narratives where the sequence and order of clauses are related to the sequence and order of events understood from that narrative. Hence, the main focus of narrative analysis is to identify the relation between the order of clauses and events (p. 20). Only independent clauses can be arranged in a temporal sequence that matches events and situations. Subordinate clauses interrupt the narrative sequence without disturbing the meaning inferred from the narration (p. 11). The following basic frameworks of narratives are proposed by Labov and Waletzky (1967):

1. Temporal sequence (p. 20): past experiences are recapitulated through matching sequences of clauses to sequences of actual events.

2. Displacement sets (p. 22): clauses are tested for all possible ranges of displacement by investigating the semantic inference produced when clauses move to all potential positions in the sequence of events. To explain how the displacement sets work, Labov and Waletzky (1967) gave example of a sequence w, x, and y: w is the first clause, x is the second clause and y is the third clause. If the partial sequence is 0^w2 , it means that the displacement set (DS) is: $DS(w) = \{w, x, y\}$: the number 2 means that the clause 'w' is followed by two clauses (x and y). In 1^x0 , the clause x is not followed by any clauses (as illustrated by number zero) and x is preceded by one clause which is w, so the displacement set of x is: $DS(x) = \{w, x\}$. If the displacement set of narrative clauses is 0^c0 , it means that the clauses (represented by the letter c) are locked in a position in the narrative sequence and these clauses have strict order in the narrative. The displacement set of free clauses is symbolized as $x-1^c n-x$: the clause 'C' ranges freely within the narrative sequence, so clauses here are referred to as free clauses (p. 22). In the formula $x-1^c n-x$, x refers to any clause that may occur before c or after it; n refers to potential number of clauses in one narrative.

3. Coordinate clauses (p. 23): This type of clauses has a more complex relation to the narrative sequence. Coordinate clauses are of the type $0^c1 1^d0$, where c is the first clause and d is the second clause. The matrix sentence encompasses both c and d joined by a coordinating conjunction. Clauses c and d have the same displacement sets. Accordingly, if two clauses (t and u) are coordinated, the displacement set of each clause is: $DS(t) = \{t, u\}$ and $DS(u) = \{t, u\}$.

4. Restricted clauses (p. 23): This type of clauses does not range freely over the whole narrative. Restricted clauses have displacement sets that range from left to right zero. For example, restrictive clauses c and d are

represented as: 0^c1 1^d0 and they are not described as free or temporally ordered.

5. Temporal juncture (p. 25): In a narrative, when two clauses are ordered and cannot be interchanged without interrupting the temporal sequence of the main semantic interpretations, the clauses are said to be separated by temporal juncture and the displacement sets of these clauses do not encompass each other.

The following is a summary of Labov and Waletzky's (1967, p. 25) definition of a narrative clause:

- a. The basic unit of a narrative is the narrative clause
- b. The narrative clause is defined based on the temporal juncture and the displacement sets
- c. When the narrative clause is displaced through the temporal juncture, the temporal sequence of the basic semantic interpretation is changed.
- d. The displacement set of a narrative clause has to be unordered with respect to each other; this clause is either a restricted or a free clause.
- e. A sequence of clauses that has at least one temporal juncture is said to be a narrative. In the following sequence, the first clause *a* is preceded by zero clause and followed by two clauses (*b* and *c*). The second clause *b* does not precede the third clause *c* and the third clause *c* does not follow the second clause *b*. This is due to the use of '*so*', which is a temporal juncture between clauses (*b* and *c*). Hence, the sequence of clauses is said to form a narrative.

- (1) 0^a2 She called two new customers
- (2) 1^b0 Her colleagues did not like that
- (3) 0^c0 So she was fired

Narrative heads are defined as the heads of the coordinate clauses. Some narrative sequences are related when they share the same semantic interpretations with different surface structures (pp. 28-30). A narrative can be semantically interpreted depending on listing the events in the order they were narrated at. Some clauses (e.g. clause *a* and clause *b*) have the same interpretation of (clause *a* then clause *b*) or (clause *a* and clause *b*). A narrative, as defined earlier, must contain at least one temporal juncture. Labov and Waletzky (1967) also added that the relation between two narrative clauses which is said to be of high primacy is (*a*-then-*b*). The *a*-then-*b* is referred to as a primacy sequence, from which other equivalent narratives can be driven. So a primary sequence can be isolated or split in four main processes (p. 31):

1. Each narrative clause is assigned a displacement range
2. Each free clause is shifted to the beginning of the narrative sequence

3. Restricted clauses are shifted early in the narrative with no change in the temporal sequence of the basic semantic interpretation
4. Coordinate clauses are merged into single units

The functions of clauses in a narrative piece include: orientation, complication, evaluation, resolution and coda as follows:

1. Orientation: It is a structural feature where some narratives open with free clauses that orient readers to place, behavioural situation, time, and person. Almost all orientation sections do this orientation tasks and some narratives do not have orientation sections. When orientation sections are displaced within narratives, they carry evaluative, rather than referential functions. If the narrative carries out referential functions, temporal sequence has to be kept.

2. Complication: It refers to the main body of the narratives which contains a group of main events referred to as complicating actions or complications.

3. Evaluation: Narratives are not easy to understand if they lack any point and significance; hence, it is difficult for readers to differentiate between complicating actions and the results. With evaluation, the results of the narratives are complete. The main function of the evaluation sections is to draw a line between the complication sections and the results. Evaluation sections outline the structure of the narratives when they occur in different positions. The flow of the narrative from *a-then-b* is interrupted by evaluation sections. This leads to a transformed narrative with a complete structure. Labov and Waletzky (1967) defined evaluation sections as those representing the narrator's views and attitudes towards some units. In the evaluation sections, stressing some points can be achieved semantically (by direct statements or lexical intensifiers), formally (suspension of the actions either by coordinate clauses and restricted clauses or repetition) and culturally (either by symbolic actions or judgement of a person not present in the narratives). All these examples of evaluation sections present the narrator in a more favourable form than others involved in the narrative. Personal experience is a type of unevaluated narrative and it sometimes lacks a structural definition (p. 39).

4. Resolution: If the evaluation refers to the break between the complicating events and the resolving actions, the resolution sections are those parts that follow the evaluation (p.39). If the writer ends his narrative with the evaluation, then this narrative has the evaluation and the resolution as one part.

5. Coda: Some narratives have resolution sections as the last portion; however, a coda is an additional part that some narratives can end with. The coda returns the verbal perspective to the present time. Codas are not always identified by the traditional concluding statements. Codas can be represented by: (a) deixis that refers to the end of the narrative and make it a remote past incident, while staying at the present time. Obviate deictic elements (such as that, there, these) occur in the codas, whereas proximate elements (such as this, here, these) occur in the evaluation sections; (b) a coda can be an incident which refers to a character in the past, and explains the character's role at a certain moment in the past, though the narrative still mentions this character at the present moment and (c) an incident that refers to an effect on the narrator that is still felt at the present moment is also a coda (p.39).

In conclusion, Labov and Waletzky (1967) assumed that the principal structures of narratives originate in real texts of personal experiences rather than texts written by narrators of people's stories. The properties and functions of narratives can be related through close examination of techniques used by simple people narrating their own experiences, Based on Labov and Waletzky's argument, it is assumed that the elements of narrative in McCarthy's novel are isolated as he witnessed the actual events portrayed in his work *Nobody Told Us We Are Defeated: Stories from the New Iraq*. The novel is dealt with in this study as a narration of personal experience and is referred to as *A Witness Novel*.

3.2 Johnstone (2001): structuralist narratology

Though Johnstone (2001, p. 638) followed the narrative structure of Labov and Waletzky (1967), she added that narratives usually start with a part, referred to as an *abstract*, that summarises what the story is all about. Accordingly, the six constituents of narratives, arranged in order, are:

- (1) **abstract:** narratives open with a clause or group of clauses that recapitulate the events to come. In this part, the narrator attracts the readers' attention, announcing that there is an interesting story to come.
- (2) **orientation:** introduces temporal settings, physical settings, situations and people. It is written in past progressive tense and can be interjected at different points in the narratives, if not at the beginning.
- (3) **complicating actions:** narrative clauses that present sequence of actions that trigger the climax: maximum tension is a basic element.
- (4) **result/resolution:** tension is finally released announcing final actions.
- (5) **evaluation:** either occurs before the resolution or interjected at different points in the narrative. An evaluation section tells the readers

what is interesting about the story, why they should keep reading and why the author should keep writing.

(6) **coda**: announces that the story is over and has come to an end.

4. Data Collection and Methodology

Data analysed in this research are collected from McCarthy's *Nobody Told Us We Are Defeated: Stories from the New Iraq*. However, analysis of the narrative structure is restricted to narrative pieces no.1, and no.19 due to the space limitation and the fact that the 19 pieces represent similar devastating events, witnessed by the narrator, so it is expected that the same narrative structure is followed throughout the whole text. The first and the last pieces are assumed to represent the remaining 17 narrative pieces. The present study suggests that the structure of the novel is complicated. At the macro level, the novel comprises 19 chapters, referred to here as narrative pieces; they are actually 19 different stories and experiences McCarthy had gone through in Iraq, with different people, places, and times. However, the 19 stories share similar features such as destruction, death, agony, suffering, and conflict. At the micro level, each narrative piece has a temporal sequence and exhibits the narrative sections (i.e. abstract, orientation, complication, evaluation, resolution and coda) proposed by Labov and Waletzky (1967) and Johnstone (2001).

5. Data Analysis

The selected data are analysed within a *narrative discourse framework* to investigate a narrative of war and invasion. Analysis is carried out in two phases: first, a macro narrative discourse analysis of the two narrative pieces (appendices a & b) is carried out based on the function of the narrative sections; second, a micro narrative discourse analysis of only two paragraphs, one from narrative no.1 and the other from no.19, is presented in terms of the structures and types of clauses.

5.1 Macro level analysis of narratives no.1& no.19

(f) 5.1.1 Analysis of narrative no.1: "Out of the Graves "

The first observation about the structure of narrative no.1 is that it does not open with an abstract that summarises the events to come. Instead, the narrative opens with an orientation section that describes characters, physical settings and surroundings along the road from Baghdad to Southern Iraq. The first two paragraphs describe Qais, McCarthy's friend who accompanied him to a gravesite at the village of Mahawil where families gathered to collect the remains of their beloved ones executed in 1991. The past progressive tense is the main orientation tense used here:

- "Qais was sitting in the front seat....and talking again about fear..." (p. 3)
- "Qais was my guide....At night he would get drunk and then we argued..." (p.3)

Description of natural settings is interrupted by description of shocking images of destruction and death:

- ".....the path of the Euphrates into the clay-red farmland of Southern Iraq..." (p.3)
- ".....dozens of wrecked military vehicles....." (pp.3-4)
- ".....thick groves of date palms sheltered modest brick farmhouses....." (p.4)
- ".....wooden coffin strapped to the roof....." (p.4)

Following the orientation section, McCarthy introduced the *abstract* section that introduces the events to come:

- "It was a warm afternoon in May 2003 and we had left Baghdad to drive south...." (p.3)

Not until paragraph 6 had the readers come to know about McCarthy's mission at the village of Mahawil. The main *complicating* actions are narrated when McCarthy witnessed the arrival of bags filled with clothes and bones of Shia Muslims who were executed in 1991, following Shia's rebellion against Saddam. The narrative here starts with events that took place in May 2003, then the writer took his readers a month back (April 2003). Narration is interrupted by continuous reference to past events such as the 1991 Shia's *Intifada*. What is remarkable about the structure of narrative no.1 is that the *resolution/result* section, which gives what finally took place in narratives, is followed by the details or the *complicating* actions. Throughout the narrative, McCarthy gave more details and references to events that gave rise to the executions at the Mahawil camp. What is also remarkable here is the frequent reference to past events, specifically to what had finally happened, followed by narrations of complicating actions. Readers frequently encounter sudden time shift; for example, McCarthy has moved back from describing the grave site to reminding the readers of the 1990 Iraq-Kuwait war. Though Labov and Waletzky (1967) argued that temporal sequence has to be observed in personal experience narratives, this sequence is not strictly followed here as narration of McCarthy's experience at Mahawil city is interrupted by narration of non-personal experience of the Iraq-Kuwait war in 1990. Some paragraphs begin with phrases such as:

- "Thirteen years earlier" (p. 7)

- "This uprising began in Basra " (p. 7)
- "It had begun in March,..... " (p. 16)
- " One day in 1994..... " (p. 21)

As it has been referred to above (section 2.3.), main events of the narrative piece are classified into *abstract, orientation, complicating actions, resolutions, evaluation, and coda*. McCarthy's profession as a news reporter influenced the way he narrates events. For example, he frequently refers to background actions; details are always provided at the middle of the narration. A sudden shift in the time reference is always encountered in McCarthy's lengthy text. The study here categorises all background details and actions under the heading of *complicating actions* as they are introduced by the writer to account for the devastating stories he listed in the whole text. The extra details given by McCarthy in the middle of his narrative, which deviate from the main line of events, are referred to here as *Commentary Complicating Actions (CCAs)*. Accordingly, complicating actions are classified into *Main Complicating Actions (MCAs)* and *Commentary Complicating Actions (CCAs)*. Divisions of the selected narrative pieces are illustrated in Table 1 representing the narrative sequence map of narrative piece no.1.

Table 1. Narrative sequencing map of narrative piece no. 1(43 paragraphs)

First

Paragraphs Sequencing	Narrated Events	Narrative Functions
1, 2	Describing <i>Qais</i> who accompanied McCarthy to the grave site at Mahawil camp	Orientation (introduces a character)
3,4	Describing their journey to Southern Iraq	Orientation (introduces a physical setting)
5	Arriving at the gravesite	Orientation (introduces a physical setting)

Next

Paragraphs Sequencing	Narrated Events	Narrative Functions
6,7,8, 9, 10	What happened at the gravesite	Abstract (summarises a past/main event)
11	What happened 13 years earlier in 1990	Commentary Complicating Actions (CCA)
12	What happened before 1990	
13	McCarthy went to Afghanistan in 2001	
14	Saddam Hussein won the elections in 1994, 7 years before McCarthy went to Afghanistan	
15, 16	The difficulties McCarthy faced when he	

When Language Rewrites History: A Narrative Discourse Analysis of Rory McCarthy's Nobody Told Us We Are Defeated: Stories from the New Iraq

	first came to Iraq after the falling of Saddam's regime	
17,18,19	A Sunni American member of TV crew praying at Mahawil camp	Main Complicating Actions (MCA)
20,21,22,23, 24	How the conflict between Shia and Sunni Muslims started and the killing of Hussain	Commentary Complicating Actions (CCA)
25	Back to the gravesite	Main Complicating Actions (MCA)
26,27,28	Referring back to the reasons of the American invasion of Iraq	Commentary Complicating Actions (CCA)
29,30	McCarthy's views on the difficulties faced by the American Army in Iraq: Iraqi leadership and society are both guilty of crimes	Evaluation (introduces views to keep writers talk and readers listen)
31,32	McCarthy leaving the gravesite to Hilla to meet some of the 1991 execution survivors	Main Complicating Actions (MCA)
33,34,35,36, 37,38, 39, 40, 41	McCarthy listening to some stories told by those who survived after the 1991 uprising	

Last

Paragraphs Sequencing	Narrated Events	Narrative Functions
42, 43	The narrative ended with telling how one of the survivors escaped death at Mahawil camp	Coda

Based on the analysis of narrative no.1, the following observations are drawn:

- (1) The orientation section of narrative no. 1 runs from paragraph 1 to 5
- (2) Some narrative accounts of the past use epideictic rhetoric which combines language of praise and values. These accounts also recall the past for the sake of the present (Richardson 2018, p. 173). Past events such as the killing of Hussain and Shia-Sunni conflict were interjected at different points in the narrative discourse. It is plausible to suggest that narrative no.1 has more than one complication section of both MCAs and CCAs.
- (3) The more humiliating, devastating and harsh the events are, the more effective the narrative. Accordingly, it is noted that more spaces and details are given on serious events such as the surviving of execution at Mahawil camp, the conflict between Shia and Sunni, the gathering of people at the gravesite waiting to collect the dead bodies of their relatives.
- (4) Non-personal experience narratives are described, for example by Labov and Waletzky (1967), as vicarious/second hand and non-evaluated,

whereas personal experience narratives are evaluated (e.g. should have evaluation sections). According to Labov and Waletzky (1967, p. 34), narratives achieve a function of self-importance if it is designed to make the narrator appear favourable than others. Being a news reporter, McCarthy frequently interjects evaluation clauses at different points in the text. The study suggests the existence of stimulus in the political/physical context of the narrative that reflects the narrators' desires to be part of the events. Hence, evaluation sections were interjected at different points in the narrative discourse.

(5) It is noted that McCarthy usually makes a sudden shift from present to past events, then back again to the situation at hand. This practice is a type of intertextuality (a term used by Hodges (2011, p. 8) to refer to situations which involve encounters). Intertextual connections, as suggested by Hodges (ibid), involves both decontextualization (i.e. a discourse lifted from one setting to another setting) and recontextualization (i.e. a discourse moves from one context to another new context where it gets transferred in this new one). The narrator moved from Mahawil, a city in southern Iraq, to Hilla, a city in central Iraq (paragraphs 30 and 31), then back to Mahawil camp (paragraphs 42 and 43),

(6) As the events narrated here had already taken place before McCarthy reported them, it is expected that the narrative does not follow the usual order encountered in other narratives. This suggests that personal experience narratives, similar to McCarthy's text, though they share the same constituent parts proposed by Labov and Waletzky (1967) and Johnstone (2001), have a different surface structure.

(g) 5.1.2 Analysis of narrative no. 19: "An Election and a Funeral"

At the beginning of this narrative piece, McCarthy, in three *orientation* paragraphs, gave a detailed description of the serious events which preceded the 2005 elections. Two consecutive explosions were described in two paragraphs, followed by a third one that provided a vivid image of the destruction caused by the blast. As illustrated by the title of the narrative (*An election and a funeral*), McCarthy narrated his experience with two *complicating actions* which took place at an election and a funeral sites. When talking about the elections, readers no longer come across the language of terror and fear which McCarthy used to describe his reactions to the two explosions. From paragraph 4 to 9, the language of narration is similar, if not identical, to that of news reports. The study here suggests that paragraphs, written in formal and emotion-free/abstract language, carry out the narrative function of *abstract*, as they all lead to the main event to come, which is McCarthy's experience at the funeral.

Before telling his readers about what happened at the funeral, McCarthy commented on a main past event, in paragraph no. 10, which is the assassination of Mithal al-Alusi's two sons; McCarthy and his friend Qais appeared at the funeral site to express their condolences to Mithal.

A basic feature of personal experience narratives is description (both abstract and concrete). It is suggested that writers of first-hand experience narratives provide their descriptions at different points in their texts. Descriptive sections located at text initial positions carry the narrative function of *orientation* (as in paragraphs 1, 2 and 3). Descriptions interjected within a narrative piece are referred to in this study as *Descriptive Narrative Commentary (DNC)*: (as in paragraphs 8, 11 and 12).

Table 2. Narrative sequencing map of narrative piece no. 19 (17 paragraphs)

First

Paragraphs Sequencing	Narrated Events	Narrative Functions
1	The first explosion outside Al-Hamra Hotel in Bagdad two weeks before January 2005 elections	Orientation (introduces a serious situation at the beginning of the narrative piece)
2	The second explosion outside Al-Hamra Hotel in Bagdad, January 2005	Orientation (introduces a second serious situation at the beginning of the narrative piece)
3	Describing the destruction of shops and markets by the blast	Orientation (introduces the physical context)

Next

Paragraphs Sequencing	Narrated Events	Narrative Functions
4	The first day of the election	Abstract (summarises a past/main event)
5	People's views on the elections at a teashop	
6	Results of the elections	
7	McCarthy telling his readers about al-Barrak	
8	Description of al-Barrak's home	Descriptive Narrative Commentary (DNC)
9	Conversation between al-Barrak and his brother-in-law about the election and McCarthy packing his bags then off to a FUNERAL	Main Complicating Action (MCA): the two speakers hold conflicting views on the concept of democracy
10	Someone had tried to assassinate Mithal al-Alusi, but killed his two sons	Main Complicating Action (MCA)
11	Description of the funeral tent	Descriptive Narrative Commentary (DNC)
12	More descriptions of the funeral tent	Descriptive Narrative Commentary (DNC)
13	al-Alusi narrating how his two sons were killed	Main Complicating Action (MCA)

14,15	McCarthy comments on the assassination and links what happened to how he thinks Iraq can have a better future	Evaluation (introduces McCarthy's views on the only chance Iraq has for a decent future)
16	McCarthy, al-Alusi and a new comer discuss Iraq's need of a strong man	Main Complicating Action (MCA)

Last

Paragraphs Sequencing	Narrated Events	Narrative Functions
17	The narrative ended with McCarthy leaving the funeral site.	Coda

Based on the analysis of narrative no.19, the following observations are drawn:

(1) The narrative opens with more than one orientation section that narrates main events such as the two explosions outside al-Hamra Hotel. It is noted that there is no abstract as the narrative has more than one main event to come: (1) two explosions, (2) results of the elections and (3) the assassination of Mithal's two sons.

(2) There are more than one complication action of both Main Complicating Actions (MCAs) and Commentary Complicating Actions (CCAs).

(3) Similar to narrative no.1, intertextual connections, which involve decontextualization and recontextualization, characterise the narrative. With decontextualization, the discourse was lifted from one setting (i.e. al-Hamra Hotel where the two explosions were heard); with recontextualization, the discourse moved to the funeral tent. Encounters took place between McCarthy, Qais, Mital and a new comer when they all discussed their views on the future of Iraq and its need for a strong man.

(4) The narrative does not have a resolution section as it is not expected that all these conflicts and tragedies would have come to an end. A coda ends the narrative with McCarthy leaving the funeral site.

5.2 The structure of clauses in sample paragraphs from narratives 1 & 19
 In sections 5.1.1 and 5.1.2, the narrative functions of clauses in narratives no.1 and no.19 were analysed based on Labov and Waletzky (1967) and Johnstone (2001). In section 5.2.1, a paragraph from narrative no.1 is selected and clauses are analysed according to their displacement ranges and types of clauses (i.e. free, narrative, restricted and coordinate). In section 5.2.2, a paragraph from narrative no.19 is selected and clauses are analysed according to their *narrative functions* (i.e. abstract, orientation, resolution, evaluation, complicating actions and coda). This is to give a

comprehensive image of the narrative style/structure which characterises McCarthy's complicated text.

(h) 5.2.1 Sample paragraph from narrative no.1

It was a warm afternoon in May 2003 and we had left Baghdad to drive south. The road was narrow and choked at first and then gradually it broadened out, following the path of the Euphrates into the clay-red farmland of southern Iraq. To the side of the highway, just a few miles outside the capital, we passed a walled compound piled with dozens of wrecked military vehicles. Broken olive-painted armoured personnel carriers and upturned tanks lay side by side or on top of one another. Each still bore the white Arabic numerals that identified division and regiment. A month before, thousands of American soldiers had fought their way up this road, blasting through the Iraqi army emplacements in the push towards Baghdad. The remains of the routed army had already been swept up and tidied away. Later they would be stripped for scrap. (narrative no.1 , pp.3-4)

The above paragraph includes 11 clauses coded alphabetically from *a* to *k* as in the following table:

Table 3. Clause division and subscripts

Clause number	Clause annotation	The clause	Clause narrative function
1	A	It was a warm afternoon in May 2003	Orientation
2	B	and we had left Baghdad to drive south	Orientation
3	C	The road was narrow and choked at first	Complicating actions
4	D	and then gradually it broadened out, following the path of the Euphrates into the clay-red farmland of southern Iraq	
5	E	To the side of the highway, just a few miles outside the capital, we passed a walled compound piled with dozens of wrecked military vehicles	
6	F	Broken olive-painted armoured personnel carriers and upturned tanks lay side by side or on top of one another	
7	G	Each still bore the white Arabic numerals that identified division and regiment	
8	H	A month before, thousands of American soldiers had fought their way up this road, blasting through the Iraqi army	

		emplacements in the push towards Baghdad	
9	I	The remains of the routed army had already been swept up	Resolution
10	J	and tidied away	
11	K	Later they would be stripped or scrap	

This narrative paragraph begins with a free clause *a* that can move freely through the narrative sequence and has a displacement set which includes the entire narrative; its displacement set is $a-6 \text{ } ^c \text{ } 0-a$. This means that the free clause *a* is preceded by a zero clause at its right and is followed by 6 clauses: *b, c, d, e, f* and *g*. The *first narrative clause* which is locked in position and has a strict sequence is *b* "and we had left Baghdad to drive south" ; its displacement set is $DS(b)= \{b\}$ and it ranges over the five following clauses (*c, d, e, f* and *g*). The *second narrative clause* which is locked in position and has a strict sequence is *h* "A month before, thousands of American soldiers had fought their way up this road, blasting through the Iraqi army emplacements in the push towards Baghdad"; its displacement set is $DS(h)= \{h\}$ and it ranges over the three following clauses (*i, j* and *k*). Clause *e* is a *restricted clause* that is neither a free clause, nor a temporally ordered clause. It is locked in position after clause *d* and is followed by clauses *f* and *g*. Clauses *f* and *g* should retain their order as the quantifier "each" in clause *g* refers back to two noun phrases in clause *f*: "*broken olive-painted armoured personnel carriers*" and "*upturned tanks*".

(i) 5.2.2 Sample paragraph from narrative no.19

There is a certain, unspoken choreography to an Iraqi funeral that makes it both public and yet very personal. Qais and I walked in and saw dozens of other guests sitting down. If this had been an ordinary occasion, we should have shaken their hands. We did not. Instead we found our own seats, sat down and Qais raised his hands palm upwards and silently mouthed a prayer, the Fatiha, the opening verses of the Qur'an. He spoke a couple of sentences and then brushed his palms across his face and sat back in silence. We sat for about thirty minutes, talking quietly to each other. Occasionally another visitor would enter, sit and mouth the Fatiha and everyone would pause for a moment and then acknowledge them quietly. It was only men that came into the tent, most dressed in suits, a few in dishdashas. Women were directed inside the house where there was an area set aside for them. After a while Alusi came in. He was smoking

heavily and looked drawn and tired. The Qur'anic tape was still playing, low and rhythmic. (narrative no.19 , p.291)

The above paragraph includes 25 clauses coded alphabetically from *a* to *y* as in the following table:

Table 4. Clause division and subscripts

Clause number	Clause annotation	The clause	Clause narrative function
1	a	There is a certain, unspokenvery personal	abstract
2	b	Qais and I walked in	orientation
3	c	and saw dozens of other guests sitting down	
4	d	If this had been an ordinary..... their hands	evaluation
5	e	We did not	
6	F	Instead we found our own seats	Main Complicating Action (MCA)
7	G	sat down	
8	H	and Qais raised his hands palm upwards	Descriptive Narrative Commentary (DNC)
9	I	and silently....., the opening verses of the Qur'an	
10	J	He spoke a couple of sentences	
11	K	and then brushed his palms across his face	
12	L	and sat back in silence	Commentary Complicating Action (CCA)
13	M	We sat for about....., talking quietly to each other	
14	N	Occasionally another visitor would enter	Main Complicating Action (MCA)
15	O	Sit	Descriptive Narrative Commentary (DNC)
16	P	and mouth the Fatiha	
17	Q	and everyone would pause for a moment	
18	R	and then acknowledge them quietly	
19	S	It was only men that came into the..... dishdashas	Main Complicating Action (MCA)
20	T	Women were directed inside the house	
21	U	where there was an area set aside for them	
22	V	After a while Alusi came in	
23	W	He was smoking heavily	Descriptive Narrative Commentary (DNC)
24	X	and looked drawn and tired	
25	Y	The Qur'anic tape was still.....,and rhythmic	

The clauses in the paragraph carry out the following narrative functions: Clause a "There is a certain, unspoken choreography to an Iraqi funeral that makes it both public and yet very personal" is functioning as the abstract which is summarizing the events to come. The whole paragraph is a description of traditions performed in Iraqi funerals. Clauses b and c are two coordinate clauses that function as orientation clauses placed at the beginning of the narrative to introduce the characters (other guests sitting down) and the physical setting (Qais and I walked in). In clauses d and e, McCarthy records his observation that Iraqi people do not shake hands in some special occasions. So, the two clauses function as evaluation clauses. The main action is expressed by clauses f and g when Qais and McCarthy found seats and sat down. Similar to narrative no.1, clauses which introduce new action/event is referred to here as a main complicating action. Clause m "We sat for about thirty minutes, talking quietly to each other" is a commentary complicating action clause which is based on the main complicating action expressed by clauses f and g. Clauses h, i, j, k and l all describe what Qais had done after sitting down, so their function is that of Descriptive Narrative Commentary (DNC). Clause n introduces another main complicating action which is the arrival of another visitor. Clause n is followed by a description of what was usually done when receiving a new visitor at the funeral tent, so clauses o, p, q and r are also Descriptive Narrative Commentary clauses (DNCs). Two pieces of new information were given by clauses s, t and u and they are categorized as main complicating action clauses. Similarly, clause v introduces a new piece of information which is the arrival of al-Alusi, so it functions as a main complicating action clause; it is followed by a description of al-Alusi as well as the Qur'anic rhythm in clauses w, x and y which are all descriptive narrative commentary. In this paragraph, McCarthy follows the same narrative technique which is based on presenting his narration side by side with descriptions and references to past events. Events are not listed in a temporal sequence and sudden shift is observed at different points in the narrative; this justifies the complicated nature of McCarthy's narrative pieces.

6. Major research findings

McCarthy's *Nobody Told Us We Are Defeated: Stories from the New Iraq* looks like a reference book on war rather than a novel that amuses, instructs and provokes emotions. Moreover, McCarthy took his readers into actual settings (e.g. meetings, homes, mosques) and portrayed Iraqi men and women living in an endless conflict and chaos, without adding any artistic touch in order to maintain the authenticity of events and stress

the gloomy atmosphere. Based on the analysis of the selected corpus, the following research findings are listed:

(1) The language of this narrative piece has managed to humanise McCarthy's and Iraqis' experiences. However, the narrative units do not always match the temporal sequence of events. The narrated events were not generated by McCarthy since they had taken place before they were actually reported and written in a narrative form, so the study refers to the whole text as a Witness Novel.

(2) The study has also suggested that *Nobody Told Us We Are Defeated: Stories from the New Iraq* shares the same constituent parts of narrative structures which characterise literary novels, but it differs only at the surface level of presentation.

(3) The social context in which the events had taken place has also affected the structure of the selected narrative pieces. At the deep structure, the six constituents of narratives proposed by Labov and Waletzky (1967) and Johnstone (2001) are well embodied, similar to other narrated texts; however, at the surface structures, events are not presented in an orderly manner. This is justifiable if the psychology of the narrator who writes first-hand experiences in a bloody and devastating physical context is considered.

(4) The study has detected two main types of complicating actions: (1) Main Complicating Actions (MCAs) that are narrated in temporal sequence and (2) Commentary Complicating Actions (CCAs) which interrupt the narrative clauses to either add more information on existing situations or comment on previous ones.

(5) Descriptions interjected within narrative pieces are referred to in this study as Descriptive Narrative Commentary (DNC). The narrative pieces provided by McCarthy are assumed to be a narrative technique that recalls and summarizes personal experiences.

7. Conclusion

The body of data examined here is a sample of two selected narrative pieces from a novel written on America's invasion of Iraq which is McCarthy's (2006) *Nobody Told Us We Are Defeated: Stories from the New Iraq*. The study has proposed a functional analysis of McCarthy's text as an example of a personal experience narrative. The analysis was conducted within the framework of Labov and Waletzky (1967) and Johnstone (2001). Though other narrative clauses are normally arranged in accordance with the sequence of events, this harmony/tradition is not achieved in McCarthy's text; hence, the structure is said to be complicated and not orderly. The novel is still influencing due to the nature of events,

the way they are narrated and the way actual events were portrayed to the readers by a witness author. When people narrate favourable moments and special events, their psychological state is clearly felt by the readers. Accordingly, the devastating events and the miserable life conditions in Iraq have affected the way McCarthy has narrated the 19 stories, as his main focus was on what, rather than on how, he is narrating the shocking events. As an eye witness, McCarthy was not driven by the desire to recapitulate his past experiences as a news reporter in Iraq. He wanted to reintroduce to the world Iraq under the American invasion. Hence, the present study suggests that McCarthy's text is a witness novel of both a complicated and an influencing nature.

References

- Al-Omar, N. (2018). Cultural identity in Sinan Antoon's self-translated 'The Corpse Washer'. *International Journal of English Linguistics* 8(2), 215-221
- Alosman, M. and Omar, L. (2022). The making of war victims in Kevin Powers' *The Yellow Birds*. *GJAT*12(2). Available at https://www.researchgate.net/publication/367166394_The_Making_of_War_Victims_in_Kevin_Powers'_The_Yellow_Birds
- Alsahafi, M. (2020). A narrative discourse analysis of Poe's short story "The Tell-Tale Heart": Implications for language teaching. *English Language Teaching* 13(1). Available at <https://doi.org/10.5539/elt.v13n1p1>
- Antoon, S. (2013). *The corpse washer*. New Haven& London: Yale University Press
- Bamberg, M. (2005). Narrative discourse and identities. Available at: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/242397241_Narrative_Discourse_and_Identities
- Forchtner, B. (2021). Introducing 'Narrative in Critical Discourse Studies'. *Critical Discourse Studies* 18(3), 304-313. Available at <https://doi.org/10.1080/17405904.2020.1802765>
- Hodges, A. (2011). *The "war on terror" narrative: Discourse and intertextuality in the construction and contestation of sociopolitical reality*. Oxford: Oxford University Press
- Labov, W. and Waletzky, J. (1967). Narrative analysis: Oral versions of personal experience. In J. Helm (ed.), *Essays on the Verbal and Visual Arts*. (pp. 12-44). Seattle: University of Washington Press.
- Labov, W. and Waletzky, J. (1997). Narrative analysis: Oral versions of personal experience. *Journal of Narrative and Life History* 7(1), 3-38. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1075/jnlh.7.02nar>
- Levinsohn , S. (2005). Self-instruction materials on narrative discourse analysis. Available at: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/228684453_Self-instruction_materials_on_narrative_discourse_analysis
- Mahmoud, R. (2016). War and violence in Sinan Antoon's *The corpse washer*. *International Journal of Applied Linguistics and English Literature* 5(2), 49-55
- Mankhi, A.H, Mohammed, H.J. and Hummadi, I. R. (2020). Prolonged war in trauma in Sinan Antoon's 'The Corpse Washer'. *International Journal of Innovation, Creativity and Change* 12(5), 88-89
- McCarthy, R. (2003). *Iraqi's hidden War*. Available at <https://countercurrents.org/iraq-mccarthy131003.htm>

- (2005). *Iraq Trapped in a Terrible Vice between Ruthless Insurgents and Unloved Occupiers*. Available at <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2005/feb/12/iraq.rorymccarthy>
- (2006). *Nobody told us we are defeated: Stories from the new Iraq*. London: Chatto& Windus
- Mydin, R. and Alosman, M. (2022). Post-heroic portrayal of war in Kevin Powers' *The Yellow Birds*. *Jordan Journal of Modern Languages and Literatures* 14(1), 189-202
- O'Neill, P. (1996). *Functions of discourse: Reading narrative theory*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press
- Powers, K. (2012). *The yellow birds*. London: Little, Brown and Company
- Richardson, J. (2018). Sharing values to safeguard the future: British Holocaust Memorial Day commemoration as epideictic rhetoric. *Discourse & Communication* 12(2),171–191. Available at <https://doi.org/10.1177/1750481317745743>
- Satriawan, F. and ahayu, M. A Soldier's post-traumatic stress disorder in Kevin Power's *The Yellow Birds*. *Jurnal Pembelajaran Sastra* 2(1), 1-12
- Stein, N. (1982). The definition of a story. *Journal of Pragmatics* (6), 487-507. DOI: 10.1016/0378-2166(82)90022-4

Appendix a

Narrative piece no. 1|

Out of the Graves (pp. 3- 23)

Qais was sitting in the front seat of the car and talking again about fear. He believed there was a policeman who patrolled inside your mind, *scrutinising* every thought even before it was formed. The policeman in your head was bigger than the policeman on the street, he said. You knew not to let your mind think for itself. It was the secret cog in the machine of dictatorship. He said it wouldn't be easy to dislodge the police- man even now the regime had fallen.

Qais was my guide. He had a round face, a day's growth of beard and a pair of small, circular spectacles. It was impossible not to be charmed by him. In private he was a poet consumed by grand imagined romances. In public he had spent many years working at the front desk of the Ishtar Sheraton, a concrete-heavy but once luxurious riverside hotel in Baghdad. In the last years before the war he worked as a guide for state archaeological tours and he delighted in stories about the ancient lords of Mesopotamia, men like Hammurabi and Nebuchadnezzar. At night he would get drunk and then we argued.

It was a warm afternoon in May 2003 and we had left Baghdad to drive south. The road was narrow and choked at first and then gradually it broadened out, following the path of the Euphrates into the clay-red farmland of southern Iraq. To the side of the highway, just a few miles outside the capital, we passed a walled compound piled with dozens of wrecked military vehicles. Broken olive-painted *armoured* personnel carriers and upturned tanks lay side by side or on top of one another. Each still bore the white Arabic numerals that identified division and regiment. A month before, thousands of American soldiers had fought their way up this road, blasting through the Iraqi army emplacements in the push towards Baghdad. The remains of the routed army had already been swept up and tidied away. Later they would be stripped for scrap.

As the road widened, fields stretched out on either side. Small mud ridges divided the land and thick groves of date palms sheltered modest brick farmhouses. A queue of eucalyptus trees, the bark peeling off their trunks, stood along the verge. A car passed with a roughly hewn wooden coffin strapped to the roof. It was heading for burial in the cemetery of the Valley of Peace in Najaf, a holy city for the Shia Muslims who make up more than half Iraq's population. Our driver raised his hands from the wheel for a moment, turning his palms upwards in prayer as we overtook the convoy of mourners. After an hour or so the road passed at a distance the ruins of Babylon, the deathbed of Alexander the Great and perhaps the most glorious of the ancient cities to which Qais had led his tours. Now they were occupied by American troops and almost completely out of bounds.

At the village of Mahawi there was a narrow dirt trail on the left. There was no signpost but rutted tracks showed many cars had already passed this way so we followed and skirted round a barren hillock. Before us was a large expanse of mud, an abandoned field. Crowds of people were crouched down poring over the soil. A sour smell rose up. Dozens of broad, shallow craters had been carved out of the earth, and between them were narrow, connecting ridges that had been trodden down into walkways. To one side were rows of large, clear plastic bags. The bags were spaced neatly a few feet apart and each was filled with old clothes and beneath the clothes, human bones. Next to one bag was a broken pair of crutches. A prosthetic leg emerged from another. Some of the skulls still had rags tied around the eye-sockets, others were small enough to have belonged to children. A few of the bags contained identity cards with faded photographs. Scores of men and women were walking from one bag to the next looking at the identity cards and trying to recognise the pictures. If they couldn't find a picture there were other pieces of evidence to cling to: a shirt they recognised, a pair of shoes, a piece of jewellery maybe. In one case someone produced a crumpled cigarette packet and swore it had belonged to his missing relative. It was several minutes before I noticed here and there small tufts of what was unmistakably human hair protruding from the caked ground beneath me. I began to look out for them and to tiptoe carefully round them.

The first person I spoke to at the gravesite was a farmer. Today was his fourth day searching for the bodies of his three brothers. Like all the victims here, they were Shia Muslims taken away by Saddam's security forces and summarily executed in March 1991. The killings were the regime's response to the intifada, the brief moment in the wake of the first Gulf War when the Shia in the south and the Kurds in the north rose up in violent and chaotic rebellion against Saddam. The farmer was detached. I thought it was odd that he didn't cry. Instead his eyes stared straight ahead as if he didn't want to acknowledge the clamour around him. He had already found the remains of the youngest of his brothers: an identity card wrapped in a bundle of bones and rags, nothing more. Now he was looking for the remains of the elder two.

The second man I met was looking for his two cousins. One had been a soldier aged twenty-two when he went missing and the second was still at school and aged only seventeen. The man described how Republican Guardsmen, part of Saddam's loyal security elite and mostly Sunni Muslims from further north, came to his home and asked for food that March. He was afraid and stayed at the back of the house, but his two young cousins brought them out bread and dates. Then another Republican Guard officer joined them and said he needed two more prisoners to complete the quota that had been set for him and so the two young men were arrested. They never returned. A total of thirty-three people from this man's street alone were missing and thought to be in the grave.

By now the undertakers had arrived, offering wooden coffins priced at 15,000 dinars, around £7. The families knew in their hearts that the missing were dead, but few had held proper funerals or mourned for the customary forty days. They had had no bodies to bury. Now their grief had been released again by the fall of the regime. I walked over to the far side of the field where a crowd had gathered. Half a dozen men wearing orange kitchen gloves had hired a large, yellow mechanical digger and were tearing their way through the earth. I joined the

crowd that pushed forward greedily to watch. At first they removed layers of topsoil, then after half a metre or so came the bodies, many already crumbled, others sliced apart by the machine itself. I say bodies, but they were hardly that. They were bones, grey and stripped of flesh. 'Give us space to dig,' one of the men in gloves shouted at us. 'We have to find them'.

In their haste there was no forensic analysis and no summoning of specialists to seal off the site or record the evidence, even though it was by now obvious what lay before us. This one field near the village of Mahawil, sixty miles south of Baghdad, was by far the largest gravesite uncovered in Iraq and evidence of a startling crime. Later it was determined there were 3,000 bodies buried in the field.

On the side of the hillock, away from the crowd and surrounded by half a dozen heavily armed American troops, US Marine Lieutenant-General James Conway, commander of the 15th Marine Expeditionary Unit, was talking in English to a small group of Iraqis. He was tall and wore the distinct mottled camouflage uniform of the Marines and a small peaked cloth cap to keep the burning sun from his skin. 'Our feeling is that you would rather do this yourselves,' he told them. The proper thing is for these people to be able to bury their families. We have the evidence we need.' And then he walked away.

Thirteen years earlier, in August 1990, Saddam had sent his army to invade Kuwait. Iraq was reeling from the cost of an eight-year war with Iran and the Iraqi dictator coveted the rich Kuwaiti oilfields, a desire he disguised in ageing notions of pan-Arab unity. He seized the little emirate swiftly but it was a huge political miscalculation. Neighbouring governments saw it not as a triumph of pan-Arabism, but as a threat to their own security and stability. Within six months the United States brought together a broad coalition of nations, including many in the Arab world, to stand against Iraq and its ruling Ba'ath party. The US military then led a war against Saddam's ill-equipped, conscript army, killing thousands of Iraqi soldiers and sending the rest retreating home. On the last day in February 1991, Saddam ordered a general to go down to the Kuwaiti border to sign a ceasefire. The next day the Iraqi people began a rebellion. The intifada spread rapidly across the country. As soon as the extent of the revolt was clear US President George Bush senior encouraged all Iraqis to resist and to topple his enemy in Baghdad.' But this time there was to be no Western military assistance, even though American troops were still deployed deep into southern Iraq.

The uprising began in Basra, when a tank driver fired a shell straight through a vast portrait of Saddam. Crowds quickly poured onto the street in defiance of the regime. Three days later Kurds living in the north also began a revolt. Thousands of soldiers disillusioned by war and defeat deserted their regiments and joined the uprising. Within days the rebels controlled fourteen of Iraq's eighteen governorates and nearly every major city in the south and north, leaving Baghdad almost isolated. Many of Saddam's officials and military officers were killed in the rioting. Even without the help of the US, it was the biggest challenge his rule had ever faced. For a few days his regime seemed in grave danger. Then he dealt the rebels a swift and severe blow. The grave I saw was just one of many left from the crushing of the 1991 spring *intifada*.

When I first went to Iraq I was thirty-one. I had a degree in history and had been a journalist for nearly ten years, but I had no experience of the Middle East. I had been working for some time as a reporter with a French news agency in Hong Kong and Tokyo and in 1999 had been sent to Pakistan. Two weeks before I arrived in Islamabad, General Musharraf had taken power in a coup and pushed the country into the headlines, which, at least as far as I was concerned, was fortuitous. I quit my job and started to send stories to the Guardian. I wrote about the new military regime in Pakistan, human rights abuses, political corruption and Islamic militancy. I travelled in the Afghanistan of the Taliban and then returned after September 11 when their regime fell. I saw some fighting and took some risks but, still, I was only a freelancer on a modest retainer. Some days if my story didn't make the paper my translator earned more than me. I felt junior compared to some of the well-known reporters who flocked to Kabul with their bullet-proof jackets and testy egos and I certainly didn't consider myself a war correspondent. A year later I was still in Pakistan, but now on staff with the Guardian. They sent me to Iraq to cover the presidential referendum.

This was the first of two visits I would make to Baghdad before the American invasion. It proved easy to get a press ~~visa~~, which was a sure sign that something was being stage-managed. Seven years earlier, Saddam had won a 99.96 per cent Yes vote. Now officials hinted the result would be even better. We were packed into coaches and driven to Tikrit, Saddam's hometown, where we saw nobody on the streets or at the shops. The only crowd was at the one polling station we had been taken to see. ~~where~~ people ran up to the cameras and pricked their fingers so they could mark their Yes vote in blood. The next day the government said every eligible voter had cast a ballot for the president, describing the 100 per cent result as a 'quantum leap in democracy. It took much longer to get a visa for the second trip two months later. I went back to follow the UN inspectors as they drove around the country searching in vain for signs of a chemical, biological or nuclear-weapons programme. I followed them to several factories and warehouses which stored barrels of toxic-looking chemicals with names like Chemo-rat, though none proved to be anything more deadly than industrial pesticide.

It was a particularly difficult place to work. The regime controlled every aspect of life and dragged us journalists through its impossibly corrupt bureaucracy. As soon as I walked off the plane (every other step on the gangway was marked 'Down USA') I had to pay a bribe to avoid an impromptu AIDS test at the airport, where the doctors re-used a single steel needle. I had to have my satellite telephone sealed with tape at the airport, and another unofficial payment was demanded. I had to pay again when I had it formally unsealed at the Ministry of Information later that day. As a journalist I had to have an official Iraqi minder at my shoulder, ostensibly to translate and guide me through the country, but quite clearly also to report back on my activities and curb my inquisitiveness. I had only a little Arabic so I was more reliant than I wanted to be on my minder. One day I had heard a ~~rumour~~ of a demonstration outside the headquarters of the intelligence service and I asked to be taken there. My minder, a precious man who always clutched a large leather purse in his hand, spoke to the driver and we headed off. ~~Some time~~ later we arrived in the middle of a busy market. There was nothing in sight that looked remotely like an intelligence agency

headquarters. Perhaps you might like to buy a leather jacket?" he said. When I asked why we were there he said I was forbidden from visiting the intelligence building. On another day I was assigned a more junior and open-minded young bureaucrat. I asked if he could help me meet a political prisoner. A few days later he introduced me to a neighbour of his, a dentist, and we sat together on a sofa in the lobby of the Mansour Melja hotel. He had just been freed as part of a sweeping prison amnesty a few months before the war. I asked him to tell me about his arrest. He looked at me and began to tremble. They told us: "If you talk we will arrest you again and this time we will kill you," he said and he drew his finger slowly across his throat. I said I no longer needed to hear his story.

After the regime fell, the Guardian sent me back to Iraq, this time to live there as a correspondent. I flew to Amman and found a travel agent who arranged for me to take a \$500 taxi ride in a large, GMC four-wheel drive across twelve hours of desert and into Baghdad. I left at midnight and the next morning I checked into the Hamra Hotel near Baghdad University. The rooms were in two dun-coloured towers, separated by an open-air swimming pool. Nearly every window was marked with a large cross in long stretches of masking tape, a largely symbolic precaution against the American bombing raids. The beds were narrow and hard.

The grave at Mahawil was discovered a couple of weeks later, at a time when no one could say precisely what was happening, or what was about to. There were only a few certainties. First, there had been a tremendous wave of looting immediately after the fall of the regime, which had now largely subsided of its own accord. Second, Shia clerics and their armed followers were taking over large parts of eastern Baghdad. And third, the Americans were here but they didn't seem to have much idea what to do next.

The grave, of course, was an old certainty. Many people had been killed in the Saddam years. Now here were the bodies. It was easy enough to report on the horror of what I saw, the grief of the relatives and the anger of those who wanted the Americans to conduct a proper survey. But I also thought how transfixing I found the graveyard, how other-worldly the place was. As I sat in the car writing up my notes, the graves just a dozen yards away, the sun was setting over the fields in the distance. Many of the families and most of the other journalists had left and it was quiet. I had stopped registering the foul smell. The heat had been sapped out of the day and the sky glowed.

A few feet in front of me an American man, who I supposed was with a television crew, laid out a rug by the side of his car and began to pray. A couple of Iraqis chatting nearby stopped to watch and their eyes widened. By the way the American folded his hands across his stomach they saw at once he was a Sunni Muslim. They began to talk loudly and gesture at him as if he had offered them some terrible insult. I went over with Qais. The American continued to pray silently.

'Don't be angry with him,' I said.
'He's a Sunni,' one of the men said.
'He's a Muslim. Shouldn't you respect him for that?'
'But he's a Sunni. Why is he here?'

Originally the difference between the two schools of Islam was a straightforward if bitter historical dispute. When the Prophet Mohammad died, there was a disagreement about who should be recognised as his successor to lead the Muslim community. A meeting was held, which many attended, and it was decided that the role should pass to Abu Bakr, the Prophet's father-in-law, and so he became the first caliph. But another, smaller group complained about the decision and said the position should have gone to Ali, the Prophet's cousin and son-in-law. They were the Shi'at Ali, the partisans of Ali, or the Shia. The Sunni saw themselves as the orthodox, the Shia felt unfairly passed over.

After Abu Bakr there were two other leaders who ruled before Ali was finally made caliph. Then just five years after he was appointed, Ali was assassinated as he prayed at Kufa, a town in southern Iraq. After Ali's death his family lost the caliphate. His son Hassan thought about going off to battle the new caliph, Muawiyah, to retrieve the title for the Shia, but eventually decided to submit without a fight. Then Hassan's younger brother, Hussain, decided to pursue the family's claim to the caliphate. He was, after all, the Prophet's grandson. But Muawiyah refused to strike a deal and, before he died, appointed his son, Yazid, as heir. What had been a position appointed after consultation became an inheritance.

Most accepted Yazid, though the Shia did not. Hussain marched to reclaim the title. He had only a small group of loyal soldiers but nonetheless he set out from his home in Mecca heading for Kufa to begin the revolt. The Caliph Yazid in Damascus had heard rumours of his plan and sent down his troops to crush it. In 680, Hussain and his small force were surrounded at Kerbala, about forty miles from Kufa, and for several days they were besieged, their water supply cut off. Finally they were slaughtered in a desperate fight in the desert. Hussain, like many of his warriors, was beheaded. He was buried at Kerbala as the great martyr who died fighting injustice.

I have a poster that I bought once in a town near Kerbala, which depicts Hussain's death. It is a stylised picture, just like many I saw on the walls of Shia homes in Iraq. Hussain, wearing a golden helmet, lies dead in the arms of one of his fellow soldiers. His thick leather breastplate is pierced by three arrows and a single tear runs down his cheek. His white charger stands by him, its head raised high but with a tear also running down its cheek. Behind them the sky is a dark, blood red.

The Shia, in defiance of the Sunni caliphs, continued to recognise the imams who followed after Hussain. Across the Shia world, Hussain's death is re-enacted every year at the ceremony of Ashurah, where his martyrdom is felt as keenly as if he had died only yesterday. In Iraq, such was the potency of this ceremony as a symbol of the Shia faith and of resistance against tyranny that Saddam had it banned. Although the Shia are in the majority in Iraq, until the fall of Saddam they had never ruled their country and felt as unfairly excluded as their Imams Ali and Hussain. The seat of power in Baghdad, they said, was their rightful inheritance. The Mahawil grave, as they saw it, was another in a long line of betrayals, persecutions and martyrdoms.

It was true that when you stood in that field and peered into the hastily dug holes you saw an undeniable horror, something that was clearly a great crime. The problem with the grave only came when you were far away from it. Because, like dozens of similar sites across the country, it told different stories of Iraq, as many stories as you wanted to find.

For the advocates of the American invasion here was a justification: evidence of an extraordinary cruelty, an elimination of large numbers of an already persecuted population. It was forceful evidence of crimes against humanity and genocide. It was Saddam's regime at its most brutal and its most exposed, a 'wonderland of terror' as one Iraqi dissident in exile described his era.

Here too, though, was early evidence of America's failure to manage the peace. After other wars in other countries, in Bosnia and in Kosovo, graves like these had been sealed off. There, forensic scientists had carefully removed the remains, recorded the evidence and tried to identify the bodies before returning them to their families. Here the process of exhumation was chaotic and American generals stood by and watched. There is no forensic evidence collected from the Mahawil grave that would now stand up in court. If this had been a justification for war, why was there to be no accountability? What did the general mean when he said he had all the evidence he needed?

For the critics of Western foreign policy this was cruel evidence of how Washington and London had turned a blind eye in 1991 when it suited them. Thousands of Iraqi civilians were summarily executed over a period of several weeks even while Western troops were deployed nearby. When the revolt that an American president had encouraged was crushed and the protestors shot dead in mass graves, the governments of the West stood back and chose not to intervene. Although there was a near-nationwide uprising, they chose not to press onwards to Baghdad and topple Saddam. Under the terms of the ceasefire, they did not even stop the regime flying its military helicopters, which were to prove so vital a few weeks later when Saddam suppressed the intifada. They preferred a contained and sanctioned Saddam to no Saddam at all. He had a part to play in their foreign policy strategies and was still needed as a bulwark to the Shia theocracy next door, in Iran.

For the Ba'ath faithful, however, and there was no question that there were many still around in these early weeks, the graves showed a quite different Iraq: a nation that had been under threat from an anarchic rebellion. The rebels were law-breakers, they were killing government officials and attacking government property and it had needed an iron fist to subdue them. I later met many people who supported Saddam and insisted Iraq had needed its strong man.

So in the graves lay the victims of Saddam's dictatorship, evidence of his crimes against humanity, the true legacy of his rule. If at some distant point in the future there was ever to be a reckoning with the past, here was a starting point. But any reckoning would be fraught with difficulty. Saddam and most of the senior party figures were Sunnis, as were most of the powerful security forces. It was true that they had persecuted the Shia, but they had not done this alone. Among the Shia in the south there were powerful figures who were also loyal

Ba'athists. They had helped crush the uprising. They arrested or informed on their neighbours and in many cases at the time of this war they still lived near families of the missing. They were teachers, judges, policemen or local government administrators. Saddam had created an extraordinary state, something akin to Soviet Russia or Communist East Germany. It wasn't just a small leadership that was guilty of crimes. The guilt trickled down to the very bottom of society. What did it mean to bear guilt? It wasn't that everyone had murdered. It was that some had provided information, knowingly or unknowingly, that others had informed, others deceived, others made compromises. That was at the crux of Saddam's Iraq: he had tried to taint everyone with guilt. It was what had kept the regime going for so long, and it was what would make re-building the country so difficult.

A month later the story had moved on. Everyone in Baghdad was talking about what new government might emerge, or what the Americans were up to in the palace they had requisitioned in the centre of town. But I was still drawn back to the graves. I had heard rumours that there were men who had remarkably survived the killings and I wanted to hear their stories. I wanted to know exactly what had happened here twelve years before. This time the site at Mahawil was almost deserted. Most of the bodies had been removed and several that had not been identified had already been reburied in small mounds of earth. Tied to each grave was the clear plastic bag that still held scraps of clothes. A large trench had been dug around the site and a barbed-wire fence set up to protect it, though from what was unclear. The stench had faded.

We went to Hilla, a large town a few miles further on, and asked at the newly established human rights office. It was true, they said, there were one or two men who had escaped from the graves and who were still here. They directed us to a small computer shop a few streets away. There a man was sitting at a desk editing an amateur film he had shot about the discovery of the Mahawil site. He had a friend who had seen the killings. He told us to wait and we sat watching his documentary with its shaky close-ups of skulls and sobbing mothers. Half an hour later the filmmaker returned with his friend, a taxi driver named Ali Abid Hassan. Hassan was thirty-nine and agreed to tell his story. He took me back to Mahawil and led me to a spot near a canal a little way off from the main gravesite. This, he said, was where he had been taken and almost killed.

It had begun in March, some days after the 1991 uprising had taken hold. Small groups of armed rebels and much larger crowds of civilians had come onto the streets in several southern towns and attacked government buildings, particularly police stations and offices of the several security organisations. Prisons and interrogation centres had been opened and their inmates freed. Hassan, like most young men, was in the army, a sergeant, although he had not been sent to fight in Kuwait. His brother Haider had fought in the invasion and had walked all the way home through Basra and up to Hilla. Once the rebellion took hold they both deserted and went home. Though Hassan didn't say so, it seemed likely that they had both taken part in some of the rioting, which was largely unorganised and had no clear leadership. Hassan later spoke of how he had wanted 'revenge' against some of the most brutal of the military and security officials. But despite its initial strength, the uprising proved short-lived. Within days the Republican Guard, which had survived the Gulf War remarkably unscathed, began to re-

assert control. A volunteer force drawn from the Sunni tribes north and west of Baghdad that had played a key role in the Iranian war and in the invasion of Kuwait, the Guard was a force to be feared. As the crackdown began Hassan had already watched Guardsmen shoot down a woman in front of him at a checkpoint. She had walked through with her three sons and then returned to pick up a slipper one of her children had dropped. Inexplicably, one soldier pointed his rifle and shot her dead. These soldiers were the most ruthless force in the army, men 'chosen from those who had a heavy heart of hatred,' Hassan said. They were the most loyal to Saddam.

Four days after the woman was killed, Saddam's forces had virtually regained control of Hilla and Hassan decided to leave. He got in the car with Haider, who was then nineteen, and headed to the bridge that leads out of the city onto the road to Baghdad. At the bridge was a checkpoint manned by a group of men with guns, some soldiers, others wearing the olive-green safari suit of Ba'ath Party officials or dressed simply in dishdashas the long Arab robe. With no explanation, they ordered the pair out of the car and took them directly to the military base at Mahawil, one of the largest in the region. It had become a collection point for suspected rebels. There they were made to crouch on the floor surrounded by dozens of others until the early morning. There was no water, no food and occasionally a guard would walk past and beat them with a length of cable. Finally they were pushed into a large hall, crowded with what Hassan estimated were hundreds of other prisoners. He could see through a window into the courtyard where some of the prisoners were being brutally beaten. He saw one man he recognised, a man named Ibrahim. The guards took a bulldozer tyre and forced it over this man Ibrahim's head. He shouted and screamed and then they set fire to the tyre and Hassan watched as he burnt to death. He saw at least two others killed in the same way. For another day and an evening Hassan and the others were held at the camp. At midnight on the second day they were ordered outside

'We were all in the army then and they told us we were returning to our units. Soon we started to get a feeling of what would really happen,' he said.

Their hands were tied behind their backs and a strip of cloth was torn off each of their shirts for a blindfold. They were divided into three or four groups and forced into five or six waiting buses. Hassan was split up from his brother Haider and was not even sure if they were on the same bus. They drove for fifteen minutes and then he felt the bus leave the main road and take an unpaved track. It was the same dirt road I had taken. 'We all started to get the feeling we would be dead soon,' he said.

They were led off the buses and told to sit on the ground. Somehow in the confusion Hassan found his brother Haider again and they sat next to each other, waiting.

'I felt the hand of my own brother and I felt safe for a time. I thought maybe we wouldn't be killed,' he said. 'And then they started shooting us'.

The gunfire was just a few metres away from where the two brothers were sitting, blindfolded in the field. Men were being led from the crowd in small groups and made to stand next to trenches that had already been dug into the soil and then they were shot. But it quickly

became disorganised. Several of the men tried to run away so the guards began forcing prisoners into the trench while they were still alive. Then they were shot where they lay. A man in a mechanical digger threw mud on top of the dead, burying them in the soil. Hassan said he believed the driver was later killed as well.

Hassan was taken away from his brother and, with two other prisoners, he was led to a path by the side of a canal. This was where, twelve years later, I was now standing with Hassan, surrounded by tall, green reeds. We were alone and the hot sun enveloped us in its warmth. Along the pathway we began to find evidence of what happened that night: some vertebrae, a rib bone, one button and eleven long, creamy-brown teeth collected in a little line. It could have been a display in a museum.

I am looking now at a black and white photograph of Hassan taken on the day we stood by the canal. His hair is dark, short and thinning and he has a closely-trimmed beard in the Shia style. He wears a patterned short-sleeved shirt and cheap, dark trousers. Behind him are the reeds, bent under the weight of the wind, and, beyond them, farmland rises into the horizon. Hassan is holding his hands up to his face, palms closed together as if in prayer and I can see the dark rings under his eyes. He seems to be swallowing his own words, words he cannot bear to let out. But he looks composed, still in control. I know that a few minutes after the picture was taken we had to stop talking. He was sobbing into his hands.

Hassan and the two men with him were made to sit by the canal and the guard began to shoot. He felt the guard's hand on his shoulder. I could feel that he didn't want to kill me," he said. The guard fired his Kalashnikov and hit Hassan four times in his right leg. It shattered the bone and he fell forward into the trench, badly injured but alive. As far as he was concerned, an act of divine providence had spared him from death. Later he would say: 'I was saved by God for a reason I will never know.'

He lay in the trench and waited. 'I was feeling the pain and I just kept it inside. I didn't want them to hear me.' The other two men with him had been killed. A mechanical digger drove over and covered them in a layer of dirt, but Hassan could still breathe. The killings continued for several minutes, until the canal was filled with bodies. 'After half an hour I heard the sound of a prisoner crying from the pain. I said to him: "Don't make any sound. Stay calm." I thought we were the only two alive.'

The second man, he later learnt, was an Egyptian named Mohammad al-Arabi." They helped each other untie the cuffs binding their hands and then removed their blindfolds. With difficulty they climbed out of the trench and away into the darkness. For three days they walked through the fields until they found a farmer who took them in and dressed their wounds. Hassan sent a message to another of his brothers who collected him by car and drove him to the house of one of their relatives. The family treated his young and pulled out three bullets. They had no anaesthetic to give him so instead they pushed a pillow into his mouth and told him to bite on it. They couldn't reach the fourth bullet, which even now was still lodged in his upper thigh. His brother told him his name was on a wanted list as a deserter and a suspected rebel. But remarkably, instead of staying hidden, Hassan went back to his

military unit in the town of Amara, about an hour's drive away, and rejoined the ranks. He told his superiors that he had been shot by looters during the uprising. Some of his fellow soldiers had heard he was dead, others that he had fled to the refugee camps in Saudi Arabia where many other rebels had gone. It was an astonishing decision and even now it is difficult to grasp the enormity of the risk he was taking by giving himself up to the authorities who had tried so hard to kill him. Was he hoping to hide in the open? Did he think nobody would notice? Or that nobody would know what had happened?

Hassan judged the situation well, for these were chaotic times. On 5 April the regime made an announcement declaring the uprising over and later that month it issued the first of a series of amnesties. Those involved in the uprising, but not wanted for crimes of murder or rape, would be excused and allowed back to their jobs. There had been amnesties in previous years so they were not unknown, but they had often been used by the regime to round up suspected dissidents. Many times those trying to take advantage of the amnesty were simply arrested and taken away. Perhaps at this stage Saddam needed desperately to get the military back on its feet and under his control once more. Perhaps he could not afford to lose all the disillusioned and defeated young soldiers who had just deserted so spectacularly. For a second time Hassan survived. He was accepted back under the amnesty and was sent to the military hospital where his wounds were treated and three months later he was released from military service. He moved to Baghdad to live with his sister for several months. There he found work on a building site, helping, ironically, to reconstruct the headquarters of the Ba'ath Party, which had been badly damaged during the US and British bombing of the first Gulf War. Of course Hassan was anxious that he might be re-arrested, but no one in Baghdad knew his past, not even the friend who had found him the job. When the work at the party headquarters finished, he found another job buying and selling flour. He was earning a reasonable living.

One day in 1994, as he was at work in the wealthy Baghdad suburb of Mansour, four armed men from the National Security directorate approached him. 'Welcome, they said, and slapped handcuffs on his wrists and shoved him into the back of the car. They hit him three times on the back of his head with a pistol and sat him between two men on the back seat with his head between his legs. They drove him down to the National Security office in Hilla and put him in solitary confinement, occasionally bringing him out for interrogation.

'Where do you come from? Which party do you work for? What is your assignment?' they asked him, again and again. 'Which countries have you been to?' Hassan thought someone from his hometown had informed on him but not once did they ask about the graves. He was sure that the security officers didn't know the truth of his past.

However, the officers did ask if he had taken part in the intifada. Hassan remembered there had been an amnesty so he told them he had been involved: that he had fought, but not killed, a Ba'athist; that he had stolen from a supermarket; that he had helped loot the police headquarters. It was better to give them something, rather than nothing, he thought. Then they asked about the bullet scars on his leg. He told them he had been injured while fighting in the army. The questioning went on for eighteen days and then eventually he was released. From

that day on he went from one job to the next, working as a daily labourer. Several times in the next nine years he was followed, re-arrested, questioned and then released by security officials. He was never convicted of a crime. It was just to remind him how closely he was being watched, as if they were telling him they knew his story. After dark came the nightmares and he would imagine security officials at his door waiting to arrest him. 'Even in my dreams I saw them,' he said. 'Every single minute I felt they would take me away for execution. No one can imagine what it was like.' His brother Haider was executed that night in March 1991. The family never found the body.

Then came the fall of the regime. Not surprisingly, Hassan welcomed the invasion and the collapse of the rule of Saddam and the tyranny of his many security forces. But it unleashed an anger that had been brewing for twelve years. Hassan was a quiet man, not particularly well-built and he still carried terrible scars on his right leg and a bullet embedded deep in his flesh. He was now married and had two young daughters, Rania, who was two, and Miriam, who was just a year old. When he spoke of them his voice was so gentle and loving that it was hard to imagine him in a violent rage. However, a few days after the collapse of the regime, Hassan and a group of other young men in Hilla had cornered one of the Ba'ath Party officials who had played a part in the executions of 1991. His name was Hamza Abu Shawab and he had held the rank of Udy Firqah, or group member, one of the top four ranks in the party only given to those regarded as extremely loyal if not complicit themselves. He wore a big moustache, in the Ba'athist style, and, formerly a shopkeeper, he had grown conspicuously wealthy through his devotion to the party.

'We chased him and we caught him,' Hassan said. 'We were very angry. "What am I supposed to do with you after what you have done to us?" I said to him. He was sitting on the ground and crying and asking for forgiveness and mercy.'

Hassan recognised him as one of those who had placed the burning tyres around the three men at the Mahawil camp. For a moment they thought of doing the same to him, Hassan said. They would place a tyre round his body, set it alight and leave him to die. In the end they could not. We really were about to kill him but I stopped and I changed my mind. I looked at him and I felt pity. We just couldn't. We decided to let him go. The man got up, ran off and left the city never to return.

Appendix b

Narrative piece no. 19

An Election and a Funeral (pp. 285-293)

In the New Year, two weeks before the elections, I was sitting in my hotel room early in the morning when there was a powerful explosion outside. The blast was heavy and close enough to shake the windows. For a few seconds there was silence, and then the sound of gunfire from the policemen stationed just across the road. After a few minutes that stopped too and there was only the roar of a generator and the faint sound of sirens in the distance. The Iraqis living in the apartments opposite the hotel stood on their balconies and pointed towards a column of dark smoke rising into the sky a mile or two away. I thought how strange it was that, although my neighbours and I hardly ever spoke, we now exchanged familiar looks, all of us sharing the same apprehension and relief, breathing in the same distant smell of burning car tyres. A suicide car bomber had driven into the entrance to the main office of a Shia party, the Supreme Council of the Islamic Revolution in Iraq. Two guards had died. A few minutes later there was another, even deeper explosion somewhere else in the city, and more sirens and gunfire. Then two American observation helicopters, small glass globes powered by a frenetic, high-pitched buzzing, started circling in the sky just a mile or so away. It was still before 9 a.m. I looked out of the window and a man in the flats opposite stepped onto the balcony in his underwear. Oblivious of the gunfire and panic around him, he collected a pair of socks from the clothes rack where his laundry was drying and walked back inside.

The next morning just after 7 a.m. there was another explosion, this one so huge that I felt it deep in my chest before I heard it. I shot bolt upright in bed and got dressed quickly. It was the loudest, longest and closest blast I'd heard yet. This time the smell of burning tyres was thick in the air. My neighbours on their balconies were pointing to a spot very close to the hotel, their eyes wide. I waited for a few minutes and then, with a friend, started to walk slowly through to the other side of the hotel. There were broken windows everywhere, debris in the lobby and in the swimming pool. A suicide car bomb a hundred yards away had hit a tall, half-built tower block used as a base for Australian troops. Though the Australians were well protected and hadn't been hurt, two Iraqis had been killed and several others injured.

I went down into the street where the shops opposite the Australians building, including the Milky Way ice-cream parlour, had been torn through by the blast. An American Abrams tank sat blocking the road. It had 'Hell Yeah' printed on one side of the barrel and 'Heavens No' on the other. Two Apache helicopter gunships circled overhead as American soldiers inspected the wreckage. A crowd of Iraqis looked on, one man wearing a burgundy dressing gown and plastic slippers. It was the first time I'd been able to stand out in the street in the open for months. The next morning I woke again at 7 a.m. waiting for the sound of another explosion, but nothing came. I was so tired but I couldn't sleep.

The day of the first elections finally came, at the end of January 2005, and although there were mortars at dawn and bombings at some polling stations there was less violence than I

had expected. With all the roads closed and police everywhere, I was able to spend the day walking through the streets talking to ordinary people without feeling at risk. The district around the hotel was heavily Shia and so there were many people voting, and long queues at the polling stations. Children raced past on bicycles, their parents walked behind often smartly dressed and clutching their voting cards. Neighbours set up plastic chairs in the road, drinking sweet tea from thin glasses and showing off their inked index fingers, the indelible mark of the voter. Several of the parties had formed alliances among themselves, and put their candidates forward in a joint list of names. The Shia religious parties, including representatives from Moqtada al-Sadr's movement, had combined to form one list, supported by Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani, the leading Shia clerical authority. It was called the United Iraqi Alliance, or known by its number: list 169. There was great pressure on the Shia voters to support this list. As well as large cloth banners hanging outside the polling stations on the day, there were even exhortations from Sistani himself. On the walls near the polling station there was crude graffiti: 'Saddam is a dog and a disgrace,' read one. 'Saddam is a coward and a dishonour,' read another. In other parts of the city and in the Sunni towns like Falluja, of course, it was quite different. In those areas there were few voters and a lot of intimidation. The boycott was enforced.

I walked along Amar Bin Yasir Street, a main road that led on to our old house near the bank of the Tigris, and I sat on a white wooden bench at a teashop. There were perhaps half a dozen men sipping tea from glasses and flicking their prayer beads as they watched the voters walk past. There was a large clay water jug on the pavement near them and two American military Humvees blocking the street not far away. Most of these men had voted for the Shia alliance, although at least one admitted he had voted for the incumbent Prime Minister, Ayad Allawi. To a man they cursed Saddam and the Ba'athists and spoke proudly of the election.

"They said that anyone who goes to vote would get shot but just look at the streets, even women and children going to vote," said the first man, a former factory worker named Tariq. "Enough is enough. Now it is time for the Shia to rule this country. A police car drove quickly past us.

Even if we just have 40 per cent of a democracy this time, then next time it will be 80 per cent and it will get better and better," said his friend Abdul, a labourer and, like many, a deserter from Saddam's army. "The Americans did us a favour." "But we are against the occupation and the Americans should leave", Tariq said to him.

"But if the Americans didn't topple Saddam he would have ruled us for generation after generation," his friend replied. "They did us a favour, now they should make a timetable and then leave."

The Shia alliance, list 169, won that first election and it was one of their leaders, Ibrahim al-Jaafar, head of the Dawa party, who became Prime Minister.¹⁰ The Kurdish parties also did well and this was reflected in the appointment of Jalal Talabani, a Kurdish politician, to be President. Few from the Sunni community voted and so few of their leaders were elected. Hassani, however, did manage to win a seat and some weeks later was named Speaker of the

When Language Rewrites History: A Narrative Discourse Analysis of Rory McCarthy's Nobody Told Us We Are Defeated: Stories from the New Iraq

National Assembly, a position of much greater prestige than Industry Minister. Najwa al-Bayati, as expected, did not win her Communist Party seat. Ahmed al-Barrak, the human rights lawyer I had first met in Hilla shortly after the war, had also stood as a candidate but he had not won a seat either and he was disconsolate.

I saw Barrak again a week after the elections. The Governing Council on which he sat had been disbanded at the handover but, because his seat on the council had made him a high-security risk, he now lived in a well-protected compound of houses near the Green Zone. Barrak's house a comfortable two-storey building with new furniture and central air conditioning had once been the home of a member of Saddam's Presidency Council, a fact that rather embarrassed Barrak.

We met in the Convention Centre, a large building inside the Green Zone used by Iraqi politicians and the US military and administration. Barrak was angry about the Shia alliance, which he thought had unfairly monopolised the vote. At first he claimed that this was because it was too religious and was led by people, who wanted a theocratic government. But as we talked some more it became clear his objection had nothing to do with these criticisms. In fact he had been offered a place on the alliance's list. He had refused to take it because the position they offered him was only 190th on the list and he knew that there was slim chance that this would bring him a seat. There had followed a negotiation in which he was offered 157th, 120th and finally 96th position, but it still wasn't good enough for Barrak so he walked away. In the end he joined a much smaller party, the Movement for a Democratic Society, led by a couple of his colleagues from the former Governing Council. This time he was a big fish in their small pond and was given second place on their list. But the party was small, and had done little campaigning even in the south where they thought they could count on a good reserve of guaranteed votes. By the time it came to election day, the powerful Shia alliance had done so much campaigning, with posters and clerical endorsements, that the little parties struggled to stay afloat. Barrak's party didn't even win enough votes to qualify for one seat.

The low point came when Bassam, Barrak's brother-in-law who lived in Sweden, called him just after the elections to congratulate him. It was an awkward telephone conversation. 'Ahmed, congratulations for the big success,' Bassam had said. And after they talked for a few minutes: 'I voted for 169, you know',

'What? Why did you do that?' said Barrak. 'You know I wasn't on that list'.

'No, I knew you were on that other list. But I voted 169 because I follow Sistani, he is our leader, our authority, and I couldn't go against his decision.'

But, Bassam, you live in Sweden, you know full well what is going on. You know my thoughts, my education, you know that I have degrees in law and economics, you know I am qualified to represent you in parliament and still you voted for the 169 list'?

'Ahmed, it's a democracy'.

But democracy means you choose the right person to represent you in parliament. That is democracy.'

I was due to leave Iraq in two days. It was nearly two years since I arrived and by now I was worn-down and scared. I bought a plane ticket, packed my bags and went to a last funeral.

Someone had been trying to assassinate Mithal al-Alusi, the former De-Ba'athification chief, for months. He'd had mortars fired at his house and gunshots aimed at his car. Now there had been another shooting: gunmen had opened fire on his car just as it pulled up to his house one morning. Yet again, Alusi escaped unhurt. He'd been inside the house the time. But in the car were his two sons, Ayman and Jamal, who worked as his drivers and assistants. They had come that morning, like most other days, to pick him up and take him to the office of his new political party. When the gunmen opened fire on the car, the two boys hadn't stood a chance. They were both killed. Ayman was thirty and had a wife and three young children. Jamal was twenty-three. Today was the second day of mourning for them. A black banner on a street corner in Jamja, a mixed Shia and Sunni area, announced their funeral: "We are of God and to God we will return," it said.

A large grey and yellow tarpaulin tent had been set up on a patch of land opposite Alusi's house. Inside were two long rows of white plastic chairs and a table on which stood a tape recorder playing a reading from the Qur'an. It was early afternoon and there was still a dull winter chill in the air so heaters had been positioned down the length of the tent. There were brass trays laden with packets of cigarettes, several different varieties, each packet unwrapped, opened and laid out in a circle.

There is a certain, unspoken choreography to an Iraqi funeral that makes it both public and yet very personal. Qais and I walked in and saw dozens of other guests sitting down. If this had been an ordinary occasion, we should have shaken their hands. We did not. Instead we found our own seats, sat down and Qais raised his hands palm upwards and silently mouthed a prayer, the Fatiha, the opening verses of the Qur'an. He spoke a couple of sentences and then brushed his palms across his face and sat back in silence. We sat for about thirty minutes, talking quietly to each other. Occasionally another visitor would enter, sit and mouth the Fatiha and everyone would pause for a moment and then acknowledge them quietly. It was only men that came into the tent, most dressed in suits, a few in dishdashas. Women were directed inside the house where there was an area set aside for them. After a while Alusi came in. He was smoking heavily and looked drawn and tired. The Qur'anic tape was still playing, low and rhythmic.

Alusi came over and sat next to me. I said I was sorry that his sons had died. I said I hadn't known them, though perhaps I had met one briefly in his office a few months back. I asked what had happened. He described how he had heard gunfire in the drive. Fetching his Kalashnikov he had run into the streets. By then his two sons were dead and the gunmen had gone.

He seemed to have some information that suggested the attackers belonged to Ansar al-Sunna, one of the more extreme Sunni Islamic groups in the insurgency. He was sure they had been trying to assassinate him. 'It is another proof that the terrorists mean to kill every human being,' he said. It made him especially angry at those within the government who had

begun to argue that the only solution to Iraq's violence was to start negotiating with the rebels. The rebels were simply terrorists, he said. It was wrong to consider making deals with them, or to give them any sort of political credibility. As far as he was concerned they were killers and needed to be arrested and, at the very least, jailed.

I said I found this difficult to accept. Of course I hadn't suffered as he had, but still it seemed reasonable to me that the only chance of a decent future was to begin to talk to at least some of the rebels, if not the most extreme among them, then certainly those who claimed to fight a resistance in the name of Iraqi nationalism. Surely the one lesson of guerrilla wars the world over was that an iron-fisted military solution never worked. Only with a political dialogue could a path to peace be found. Alusi was not in the mood to accept this. I asked him what future he saw for Iraq.

'It is either terror or democracy, one of them has to win. The violence will continue like this unless we build quick alliances between Iraqi democrats and liberal people across the world to fight against terrorism.'

He hadn't managed to convince many that he was the right man to build these alliances. His party hadn't won a single seat in the elections a week or so before. In fact, they'd barely taken 4,000 votes across the entire country.

As we were speaking, an old man stopped forward in front of us. Alusi stood up to acknowledge him. The old man moved closer. 'You really are brave,' he said he shook Alusi's hand.

'You have proven you are a strong man and this is an honour for you as an Iraqi.' He placed his hand on Alusi's shoulder and then walked away.

Alusi sat down again. 'Everybody has to understand that making politics doesn't mean making a copy of Saddam's me. We don't need a strong man in Iraq. We need a system. y have to understand the difference. The liberation started on 9 April 2003 and it is not finished. We will need much more time.'

We talked some more and then I stood up to go, shaking his hand. I said the formal words of condolence that I had memorised before the funeral: 'Al-baqia fi hayatak' - 'May their lives come into yours.' And then I walked away into the cold spring afternoon.