Motherhood and Memory in Najwa Bin Shatwan's *The Slave Yards*

Mona Almaeen
https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9408-4169
Jouf University
m.almoeen@ju.edu.sa

Abstract

This article argues that female slaves' experiences of motherhood are negatively impacted by the control exerted by social and discursive patriarchy. Focusing on the mother–daughter relationship as a vessel of memory transmission, this article addresses how this control complicates maternal memory narration. Using a contextual approach, this study investigates the influence of patriarchal social and discursive manipulation on the system of *umm al-walad* or the "mother of the children" in Najwa Bin Shatwan's novel *The Slave Yards* (2020). Bin Shatwan's portrayal of the deficiency of the system of *umm al-walad* in potentially safeguarding a mothering space for female slaves highlights the manner in which the mother–daughter dyad bears the brunt of both the slave owners' and legal figures' control. This investigation reveals that this deficiency results in complicating maternal memory narration. Owing to the fact that the author is a historian who has lamented the historical marginalisation of the slave community in nineteenth-century Libya, the mother's story is tackled in this article as emblematic of a whole community. In short, the loss of the history of the enslaved community is deeply related to complications of the maternal transmission of memories.

Keywords: motherhood; Najwa Bin Shatwan; slavery; *umm al-walad*; *zarayeb*

UNISA LASA
Journal of Literary Studies
Volume 40 | 2024 | #17667 | 19 pages

https://doi.org/10.25159/1753-5387/17667
ISSN 1753-5387 (Online)

Introduction

Najwa Bin Shatwan is a Libyan novelist and historian who was recognised by the Beirut39 project as one of the 39 most prominent Arab novelists under the age of 40 in 2009–2010 (Latifi 2020, 121). She was also a winner of the John Fante award in 2023 (International Prize for Arabic Fiction, n.d.). Bin Shatwan has published five novels: *The Horses' Hair* (*Waber Al Ahssina*, 2007), *Orange Content* (*Madmun Burtoqali*, 2008), *The Slave Yards* (*Zarayeb Al-Abeed*, 2016, translated into English in 2020 by Nancy Roberts[1]), *Roma Termini* (2021), and *Concerto Qurina Eduardo* (2022) (International Prize for Arabic Fiction, n.d.). In addition, she has written several short story collections, the most notable of which are *An Ongoing Coincidence* (*Soudfa Jariaa*, 2019), *A Catalogue of a Private Life* (*Cataloj Hayah Khassah*, 2018), *The Queen* (*Al Malikah*, 2009), *and The Child of Waw* (*Tifl Al waw*, 2006) (International Prize for Arabic Fiction, n.d.). Her burgeoning popularity among Arab readers culminated in the shortlisting of *The Slave Yards* for the International Prize for Arabic Fiction in 2017 (Latifi 2020, 121).

The Slave Yards focuses on the *zarayeb* enslavement system. Described in the novel as oppressive encampments, the *zarayeb* (sing. *zariba*) were built in Benghazi and other cities during the Ottoman reign in Libya, originally to keep cattle, then to house sub-Saharan slaves (Bin Shatwan 2020, 14). The word *zariba* literally means "corral" and denotes a pen commonly used for keeping domestic livestock (Viene 2017, 1). Continuing to use the term despite the change in the place's function is derogatory. Undermining the humanity of slaves by holding them in such pens contributed to the perception that they were "human refuse" or disposable labour (Bin Shatwan 2020, 239).

The novel has gained little critical attention among Anglophone scholars. Studies of it that are available for reference were conducted by Arab speakers prior to the publication of the novel's English translation. In her insightful review, Afifa Latifi (2020) discussed various unsettling aspects of the novel, paying much attention to the insufficient historical contextualisation provided by the author. Samaher Aldhamen's PhD dissertation, titled "Representations of Domestic Workers in Modern Arabic Fiction," grapples with the racial discourse of domestic labour, focusing on the novel's representation of blackness as associated with slavery (Aldhamen 2019, 101). Both studies comment on the novel's frequent and offhand use of racist terms. They are designated by Latifi (2020, 124) as an "undeniable flaw that the novelist ought to have

1 Roberts's translation of the plural "*al-abeed*" into the singular noun "slave" rather than the plural possessive modifier slaves' may prompt questioning. In the combination "the slave yards," the word "slave" modifies the noun "yards" to represent the specific type of "yards" being referred to. This is why the translation of "*zarayeb*" into "yards" is, as the article argues, problematic. It avoids the troubling reality that these pens are used to detain humans. Therefore, while Roberts's decision to use a smooth translation of the title, via the use of the singular noun, is warranted, the translation of the term "*zarayeb*" into "yards" is not.

rectified," whereas Aldhamen (2019, 124) attributes the use of these references to the epistemological context of the narrator. Bin Shatwan's attempt to document socio-historical elements of slavery in Libya led her to use words that specifically described persons in terms of race, such as *shushana*, meaning a female slave who was born to slave parents, as well as to provide footnotes that explained these terms (Aldhamen 2019, 38). Such terms were not meant to be disparaging; rather, they clarified traditional terminology used as references to certain groups of people. This is not to say that Bin Shatwan did not use derogatory words excessively elsewhere in her novel. She did so particularly in the first chapter, which takes place following abolition, in passages where Atiga endearingly addresses her husband as "you Negro that I loved" and "the old Negro is my friend and my sweetheart." These usages are not justifiable (Bin Shatwan 2020, 7).

Arabophone studies of the novel include "Social and Cultural Issues in *The Slave Yards*" (Younis and Amin 2021). This study discusses the social and cultural manifestations of women's subordination in Bin Shatwan's narrative. In doing so, the authors neglect to refer to slavery as a factor that substantially affected such subordination, and thereby they inadvertently equate the struggles experienced by free Libyan women with those of enslaved sub-Saharan women. Nonetheless, this study offers a valuable investigation of various local misogynistic traditions and their contributions to the suffering of women, both free and enslaved (2021, 809). Ahmad Dhuhaya's "Novels of Enslavement: Historical Imagination and Narrative, Bin Shatwan's *The Slave Yards* as an Example" (Dhuhaya 2020, 12) explores Bin Shatwan's use of fiction to rewrite the lost history of slaves in North Africa. While Dhuhaya's study offers a brief historical survey of slavery fiction, it does not delve into an examination of the history of the *zarayeb*.

Although these studies touch on historical and feminist issues, they do not explore Bin Shatwan's depiction of the socially and legally problematic situation of *umm al-walad*, or the concubine who bears her master's children (Ali 2006, 46). In addition, these studies do not examine the influence of slavery on the mother–daughter dyad as a nucleus of memory narration. To address this research gap, the present study embarks on a dual investigation, firstly of the oppression that female slaves suffer owing to the masters' patriarchal practices and secondly of the discursive marginalisation of female slaves, particularly *umm al-walad*, and the impact of their voicelessness on jurisprudential legislation regarding their maternal rights as well as their representation in historical accounts. As the article indicates, the history of *umm al-walad* has received very little attention, with the exception of a few politically significant figures who were owned by caliphs and gave birth to their offspring. That is, female slaves' double marginalisation is caused by both their gender and their slavery. Some scholars view this historical marginalisation as mirroring women's marginalisation from cultural institutions in mediaeval and nineteenth-century Middle East and North Africa (Gordon 2017, 3; Tucker 1983, 323). Furthermore, slavery and concubinage exacerbate this marginalisation because contemporary scholars have refrained from unearthing a thorny

topic as well as society's and ex-slaves' descendants' denial of the past (El Hamal 2014, 4). Studies have shown that these factors played a role in erasing the history of the *zariba* system. The contextual approach locates the novel within its historical background, thus permitting a reading of the novel as a testimony by the narrator, Atiga, to the struggles endured by Tawida, her mother, who represents the author's case of *umm al-walad*. The individual and collective histories are tied to one another and the loss of the individual stories, as this reading will reveal, causes the erasure of the history of the whole community.

Bin Shatwan has said that the novel was inspired by a photograph she happened to see showing two women and two children, a boy and a child who could have been either a boy or a girl, who were living in the *zarayeb* (Viene 2017, 1). Reflecting on the image, the author stated, "I imagined [the second child] was a girl, and I couldn't stop thinking about her: Ultimately she would become the narrating voice of *The Slave Pens*—Atiga Bin Shatwan" (3). The novel provides a context for this photograph, implying that it was taken by a Sicilian orientalist named Francesco who toured the *zarayeb* (Bin Shatwan 2020, 100). The photograph inspired the author to write about Atiga and her mother Tawida. The novel's story of motherhood, enslavement, and abjection reveals much about the lives of slave women living in nineteenth-century Libya, detailing their daily struggles as well as their major existential dilemmas. To provide a comprehensive reading of the novel, an investigation of the *zariba* system and the problematic name used for it must be explored first.

The *Zariba* System

The *zariba* system against which Bin Shatwan sets the narrative consisted of temporary shelters that housed slaves who were transported in caravans from Chad and Nigeria by way of the desert to Benghazi (Saleh and Wahby 2022, 60). The historian Martin A. Klein traces the *zariba* system to nineteenth-century Sudan (Klein 2014, 390). The initiation of the system is attributed by Lawrence Mire to the establishment of Deim Zubeir, a nineteenth-century *zariba* founded by the denounced "slaver and Sultan" Al-Zubayr Pasha Rahma Mansur (1830–1913) (Mire 2005, 100). It was established originally as a means of defence against local tribes which attacked and stole goods from ivory traders travelling from Khartoum to Bahr al-Ghazal (Mire 2005, 107). These traders later began raiding surrounding villages to steal cattle, which they kept in the fortified enclosures; hence the term *zarayeb* (ibid.). As the dwindling ivory trade was replaced by the slave trade, the slaves were also held in these camps, though the name *zarayeb* persisted (ibid.). This led to an increase in the number of *zarayeb* in Sudan to 80 within 10 years (Mire 2005, 105). The pens were established and maintained by slave traffickers, agents, and slave soldiers, the troops who assisted in managing the military and agricultural affairs in a *zariba* (Mire 2005, 106).

Therefore, the term *zariba*, which was initially the term for an annexed animal pen, comes to represent a historically specific dynamic. Both Klein (2014) and Mire (2005)

referred to this system using the original Arabic term *zariba* without attempting to present an English equivalent. Bin Shatwan confirms that her usage of the Arabic term is intended to reveal the etymology of the term and its suggestion that the enslaved inhabitants are like livestock: "*Zariba* (pl. *zarayeb*) means corral, a place where you keep animals" (Viene 2017, 1). She states that they were "actual pens, incompatible for human beings" (Abdulrazak 2017, n.p.). Dhuhaya explains that, although in Arabic the term *zarayeb* does not require a clarifying addition, because it implies that these pens are intended for animals, the title of the novel has the intention of revealing the shocking reality that these *zarayeb* are not for animals but for enslaved humans (Dhuhaya 2020, 17).

The loose translation of the title into English prompts questioning because of its superficial association with the historical facts. According to Adam Benkato (@ibn_kato, "just received a copy of the English translation of Najwa bin Shatwan's novel زرايب العبيد." 16 June 2020, 8:06 p.m.) the word *yards* in the translated title is misleadingly neutral and is not an accurate translation of the word *zarayeb*. The Arabic word for yards, *saah´at* (pl.), does not have the same negative meaning as the word *zarayeb*. Muḥammad ibn Mukarram Ibn Manẓūr (1232–1311), the author of *Lisān al-Àrab* (1956, 447), explains that a *zariba* is a separate place designated for animals, whereas *saahah* (sing.) is a common area located at the centre of a house. Zarayeb al-Sabiri are annexed to the city of Benghazi in the same way that a *zariba* for animals is annexed to a house or a farm. This article uses the terms *zariba* and pen synonymously in both their singular and plural forms, whereas the word yard is avoided for the above reasons.

Although the *zariba* system in Sudan attracted historical attention, the same system lacked documentation in neighbouring Libya. Bin Shatwan mentioned that her search for information about the history of this quarter, and particularly her attempts to interview descendants of the *zarayeb*'s inhabitants, was not fruitful (Viene 2017, 1). This compelled her to base her novel solely on oral tales and folklore (Abdulrazak 2017). She attributed the lack of interest on the part of descendants to their desire to detach themselves from a painful past (Viene 2017, 1). Some scholars have given additional reasons for the dearth of formal written accounts, which are elucidated further on in this article. Thus, she criticised the collective memory of Arabs as being "obliterative" or deliberately amnesic regarding dire episodes in Arabic history (Viene 2017, 1). Such circumstances made it challenging for the author to produce a precise historical context for the *zarayeb*, prompting criticism from scholars such as Latifi (2020). Bin Shatwan provides a historical timeline for the story by stating that her protagonist, Tawida, moved to the *zarayeb* in 1882, The Year of Flour, so named for aid that was shipped by the Ottoman Empire to Libya to relieve famine at the time (Bin Shatwan 2020, 255). This historical reference suggests that Tawida's story takes place around the same time that the historically registered encampments of Sudan were built. This suggests that Tawida's story epitomises that of the *zarayeb*. In effect, the stories that have been denied in historical scholarship are now featured in her fiction.

Gender, Slavery, and Memory

Enslaved women are subject to layers of gendered and racial discrimination which amplifies their susceptibility to dispossession. Judith Butler discusses the manner in which this intersectionality associates women's lives with dispossession. In *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence*, Butler enquires, "Who counts as human? Whose lives count as lives?" (Butler 2004, 20). Slavery is a result of what she and Athena Athanasiou label the "abjecting" and "disowning" by sociopolitical systems that prey on those who are assigned to the periphery of the contextual interests of these systems, depriving them of their own lands, communities, and even bodies through enslavement (Butler and Athanasiou 2013, 2). Butler and Athanasiou argue that the colonised are separated from one another and manipulated by a process the authors call the "distribution of vulnerability" (ibid.). Women and individuals who belong to minority groups are categorised as vulnerable and subjected to violence (Butler 2004, 20). Motherhood, while widely problematised in feminist discourse both as rooting the feminine body in the immanent and therefore confirming the platonic duality of superior male transcendence versus inferior female immanence (Stevens 2015, 93) and as afflicting womanhood with weakness in gender-power struggles (Bagchi 2017, xxi), further exacerbates enslaved women's vulnerability. This is evident in the system of *umm al-walad* which, despite being considered an empowering one for female slaves especially in the cases of the mothers of Abbasid and Ottoman caliphs (Gordon 2017, 4), remains a system of oppression owing to legal complications regarding *umm al-walad*s' maternal rights. The slavery of the *umm al-walad* often outweigh their position as mothers.

The situation of female slaves in the nineteenth-century trans-Saharan slavery system differed significantly from that of slaves in the Atlantic one. As Kecia Ali elucidates, owners of female slaves were allowed to have sexual relations with them after ensuring their consent (Ali 2006, 45). Yet as Gordon (2017, 4) asserts, the issue of consent is problematic given the power dynamic of this union. Once a slave gave birth to her master's child, she was granted the superior status of *umm al-walad*, literally "mother of the children." Besides giving her financial advantages, this designation indicated that children of an *umm al-walad* are born free, she was not to be sold, and she would be freed upon the death of her master (Gordon 2017, 40, 46). However, these privileges were not guaranteed. Younus Y. Mirza (2017, 13–15) elucidates that the legitimacy of selling an *umm al-walad* was a subject of scholarly debate throughout the ages, particularly since reselling an *umm al-walad* deprived her of her maternal experience as well as the opportunity of emancipation. Even if granted, as Lovejoy argues, emancipation did not completely alter the situation of the *umm al-walad*, as she would continue to occupy an "intermediate position between slave and free" (Lovejoy 2000, 32). The problematic socio-legal position of an *umm al-walad* which manifested in her susceptibility for sale, displacement, and use as an investment and labour force evokes Ranjana Khanna's (2009) concept of disposability. Khanna elucidates how slave women were made disposable, explaining that they were defined by their bodies as

"throwaways" and objects of "libidinal excess"; they were available and, thus, "discardable" objects (Khanna 2009, 186). The sexual exploitation of the *umm al-walad* by their masters and the ultimate control their masters had over their lives associated them with disposability. Aspects of the availability and temporary usability are central to the insignificance of disposable lives within the cultural and historical narratives.

Since the system of *umm al-walad* necessitated that the slave be freed upon her master's death, which made the duration of her slavery uncertain, she would have to continue to be available to her master during this period and bear him numerous free children while she remained a slave. The system of *umm al-walad* complicated the mother–children relationship, making it susceptible to an unnatural form of hierarchy. The biological bond between them could be outweighed by the socio-legal one of slavery. This system not only kept the *umm al-walad* in a subsidiary position to the father of her children, but it could, by extension, place her in a similar hierarchical position with her own children. The complicated mothering situation of *umm al-walad* compels a look at the *Partus sequitur ventrem* doctrine used in Atlantic slavery. As Morgan (2018, 1) underscored, this doctrine designates the children of a slave mother as slaves. Because of the use of their reproduction abilities, racialised slavery was a form of violence practiced, particularly against women (Morgan 2018, 2). She emphasised that hereditary slavery alienated women from the bond and experience of motherhood, as it "wrenched parenting out of the realm of the domestic and into the marketplace" (Morgan 2018, 12). This doctrine violates African women's bodies, as it threatens to usurp the very personal and intimate experiences of pregnancy and motherhood (Morgan 2018, 13). As Toni Morrison elucidates, "The assumption is … that slave women are not mothers; they are 'natally dead' with no obligations to their offspring or their own parents" (Morrison 1992, 21). Morrison contests the normative images in American literary depictions that represent enslaved women as being complacent about prioritising the well-being of their enslavers over that of their own children. Therefore, the enslaved woman's womb, as the discussion of *The Slave Yards* will reveal, is a potential tool of subjugation, or "a territory of utility and abjection," to use Del Priore's description (1993, 313). Morgan explicated that in the case of Atlantic slavery, a Western patriarchal narrative that typically assumes control over women's wombs is racialised (Morgan 2018, 12). White patriarchal intervention in the mothering experience emphasised gender as an extra dimension of oppression.

Similarly, *umm al-walad*'s motherhood is undermined by the patriarchal legal narrative, which constantly attempts to restrict their mothering space according to their socio-legal situation. The absence of alternative voices from the marginalised female slaves hinders a feminist exploration of their gendered struggles. Matthew S. Gordon asserts that, in the trans-Saharan slavery system, female slaves were secluded, and their lives were completely privatised (Gordon 2017, 3). However, the legal system continued to produce exorbitant numbers of theoretical discussions of issues related to concubinage sometimes by jurists who were, simultaneously, slave owners (Gordon 2017, 4). Judith E. Tucker, in her examination of the historical marginalisation of nineteenth-century

Egyptian women, argues that this marginalisation was caused by the fact that the only dominant voice of that period was male (Tucker 1983, 323). She explains that, in the Middle East and North Africa, most historians, jurisprudents, and poets were male, and studies based on oral, anecdotal, and anthropological surveys reflect the patriarchal viewpoints of their male narrators (ibid.). Consequently, Tucker says, "women, regardless of class, are largely ignored in studies of social history" (Tucker 1983, 322). Female slaves' marginalisation in historical accounts was amplified not only by their gender but by their slavery, leading to a double marginalisation. As Tucker elucidates, Middle Eastern and North African history is "permeated" by orientalist texts and historiographical methodology (ibid.). Such an entanglement is especially evident in the case of concubinage, for which there are an abundance of gendered narratives fed by orientalist images of the harem. This rendered Muslim scholarship, especially those addressing a Western audience, replete with apologetic explanations for slavery (El Hamal 2014, 7). These narratives, as El Hamal explains, neglect the lived reality and agentic actions of the enslaved (ibid.). Historical writing about slavery is critiqued by Saidiya Hartman (2008, 2–4), who elucidates that existing narratives of slavery are "quantified" ones that focus on stories of committed aggressions and slave markets rather than on the slaves themselves. Hartman laments the loss of individual slave stories, confirming that there is not a single full autobiographical account of a female slave's journey across the Atlantic (Hartman 2008, 3). This historical amnesia of female slaves' suffering causes anxiety, and Hartman reiterates that even the minimal accounts found in the archive are prone to loss: "They will expire or elude our grasp" (Hartman 2008, 6). Although susceptible to romanticising the suffering of the enslaved, Hartman asserts that fiction is capable of bridging such a gap.

Paying specific attention to the patriarchal social and discursive control and the absence of *umm al-walad*'s voice from historical accounts, the following examination of *The Slave Yards* explores the influence of slavery on motherhood and maternal memory. As this examination will reveal, Bin Shatwan depicted the historical marginalisation of *umm al-walad* through her characterisation of Tawida and the community of the Zarayeb al-Sabiri.

The Predicament of Motherhood and Memory Narration

The Slave Yards tells the story of young Atiga and her mother, Tawida. Atiga is the mixed-race daughter of Tawida and her Libyan master, Muhmmed Bin Shatwan. Despite her paternal lineage, which makes her indisputably a free person, Atiga is presumed to be a slave by the *zarayeb*'s inhabitants because of her skin colour. When the story opens, Atiga is a grown woman living with her husband and children. When a cousin, Ali Bin Shatwan, visits her, Atiga's story is prompted to unfold through a series of flashbacks that capture her and her mother's arduous lives in the *zarayeb*.

Tawida is a despondent slave who is tortured by her masters, the Bin Shatwans, who resent the affection shown to her by their son Muhammed. It soon becomes apparent

that the genuineness of Muhammed's affection is unclear; it is based on his racism, as well as his profoundly sexist attitude triggered by Tawida's vulnerability, or, to use his own words, "how degraded and humiliated she felt" upon meeting him (Bin Shatwan 2020, 149). When Muhammad is away on his prolonged business trips, Tawida remains unprotected from his family's wrath. They force her to have abortions, cause her to suffer a miscarriage, marry her to a closeted gay slave named Salem, punish her by starving her baby boy to death, and ultimately attempt to sell her in a slave auction (190).

After being rescued by Ali, Muhammed's nephew, the family succeeds in selling Tawida to Al-Figgi, a hypocritical religious figure who keeps her in a brothel and frequently assaults her (Bin Shatwan 2020, 193, 233). Tawida escapes and starts her life anew in the *zarayeb*, posing as Atiga's aunt, Sabriya. Tawida takes the name Sabriya, derived from the word *ṣabr* (endurance); she anoints herself as one who has endured a great deal (258), thus identifying herself with the titular Zarayeb al-Sabiri. Tawida's true identity as Atiga's mother is revealed only posthumously, after her tragic death in a fire set by the colonial military, supposedly to curb the plague (133). Yousef Giuseppe, Atiga's well-educated childhood sweetheart, arranges for her to move to the Josephite Mission, where she is educated in Italian and trained as a nurse (15). The story closes with the two being married and having two children named after Atiga's parents, Muhammed and Tawida (13). The narrative consists of fragmented and overlapping sections that lack temporal consistency. This disrupted temporal order is accompanied by spatial alienation as indicated by the titles of the chapters, such as "A Piece of You Is Outside of You," "Standing on the Outside, Kneeling on the Inside," and "Take Refuge in the Distance." Such temporal and spatial in-betweenness is seen when ex-slaves' descendants offer their disjointed recollections of the atrocities practiced against their ancestors. In this case, such a fragmented and nonlinear style exemplifies how the absence of the matrilinear transmission of memory impacts the narrative.

The author's decision to grant her own surname to the slave owners in the novel, and, therefore, the young protagonist, who is their descendant, was profoundly significant for her ability to write about a controversial topic that might get the attention of locally powerful people. In an interview with Valentina Viene, Bin Shatwan explains that she did this to avoid enraging socially powerful people (Viene 2017, 17). She made this decision after being reported to the authorities by a member of the Libyan cultural community who felt that themes in her writing were inappropriate (Bin Shatwan and Herr 2020, 86). In a short story entitled "The Fish Market" (Bin Shatwan and Herr 2020, 90), Bin Shatwan describes Libyan artists' fears of triggering social anger. In this story, the protagonist, referred to only as "the author," is compelled by her angry neighbours to make frequent and extensive revisions to a novel she is writing. Each neighbour reads the text to search for portrayals of characters that might be based on them and demand that changes be made in these characters that will fit their own self-image (Bin Shatwan and Herr 2020, 88). In a paradoxical twist, the author in the story remains nameless, indicating that allowing herself to be a mere pawn has eliminated her true self. In *The Slave Yards*, Bin Shatwan attempts to avoid narcissistic social manipulation by others

by giving her fictional family her own surname. She hopes this act of extending the responsibility for past injustices to herself and admitting her own culpability for them will appease the socially powerful people in Libya. This permits her to voice her opinions on the cruelty of the practice without being attacked by local people or labelled as a betrayer of the nation. For her, the historical implications of slavery must be acknowledged prior to any serious critical engagement in a discussion of them.

Bin Shatwan depicts the manner in which slavery renders a woman an item of property to be used in whatever manner the owner wishes with no restrictions. The narrative highlights frequent occasions on which Tawida is objectified. For instance, she is paraded at an auction wearing little clothing, so that her body is commodified and marketed in the public eye (Bin Shatwan 2020, 189). Her concubinage causes her, a marginalised house slave, to become a convenient source of pleasure and self-assertion for men. Despite the sympathetic treatment of Muhammed by the narrator, who depicts him as a passionate lover at times and as a victim of the multilayered patriarchal system at other times, it is evident to the reader that Muhammed exploits Tawida to satisfy his psychological and sexual needs. As Butler and Athanasiou elucidate, the inability of the dispossessed to formulate healthy bonds renders their selfhood manipulated by the power to which they are attached and that seek to "regulate [their] intersubjectivity" (Butler and Athanasiou 2013, 93). The constant violence Tawida is subjected to renders her dispossessed and deprived of her independent "I." Her lack of a sense of self causes her sense of humility. This humility is depicted by Bin Shatwan as a major reason that Muhammed uses her as a tool to fulfil his constantly challenged masculine image (Bin Shatwan 2020, 149). Bin Shatwan shows that Muhammed's first approach to Tawida is prompted by a "dare" issued by his cousin Saddiq, who expresses his inclination for black women (Bin Shatwan 2020, 149), saying that he is going to "try her out" before Muhammed does (ibid.). Demonstrating how he preys on her dispossession to secure his masculine prestige, this conversation illustrates that a slave woman was not only perceived and treated as an object of enjoyment but also of self-assurance. The narrative confirms that Muhammed's view of Tawida never altered, even during the period of her sham marriage to Salem, as he continued to have an intimate relationship with her (Bin Shatwan 2020, 180). She gives birth to a boy who she declares to be Salem's, and the family's patriarch Master Imuhammad starves the boy to death as a punishment for Tawida's failing to preserve a banquet meat (Bin Shatwan 2020, 210).

After learning that she has been captured and assaulted by Al-Figgi, Muhammed expresses no remorse for Tawida's pain and suffering. This is despite the fact that Al-Figgi's action is motivated by revenge against Muhammed, who previously witnessed Al-Figgi's son Hussein in an intimate relationship with the Bin Shatwans' slave Salem and used the knowledge to coerce Al-Figgi to forgive the large amount of money the family owed him (Bin Shatwan 2020, 177, 184). In fact, Muhammed's views of Tawida's situation are shockingly prejudiced and unsympathetic:

> She was, after all, a slave woman. And a slave woman's body doesn't rise up in protest. Rather, it's been conditioned to accept its lot. This is the mentality of submission on which concubinage is based, and it has molded slave women's temperaments down the centuries. When the body recognizes itself as enslaved, it doesn't resist the way a free person's body would. (Bin Shatwan 2020, 265)

Muhammed's reasoning confirms that his relationship with Tawida never extended beyond the master–slave duality. For him, Tawida's inability to resist Al-Figgi's assault stems from her hereditary inclination to submit; this is a profoundly racist viewpoint that, apparently, reveals the language of pro-slavery groups of the time and place of the *zarayeb*. He blames Tawida for becoming accustomed to the concubinage to which he introduced her. Having objectified her, Muhammed's only regret about Tawida is that he has to "share" her with Al-Figgi: "Why couldn't he find a single thing on earth that he didn't have to share with others?" (Bin Shatwan 2020, 265). Muhammed's masculinity is constantly undermined by other competing patriarchs. For him, Tawida's concubinage is an attempt to achieve a sense of certitude regarding his masculinity, and her assault is no more to him than an affront to his own independence and dignity.

Muhammed's exploitation forces Tawida into a tangled web of power struggles offering her no protection. In her captivity, Tawida silently calls to Muhammed, saying, "I flee to you, knowing I won't survive wherever you aren't" (Bin Shatwan 2020, 240). This romanticised appeal arises from her pre-existing sense of worthlessness, on the one hand, and her naïve expectations for the relationship, on the other. Bin Shatwan depicts Tawida's emotional turmoil as she finds out about the sale: "She wept the way slaves always weep when they learn they're to be sold. … Despite their nameless existence, they still fear the unknown—the nameless future" (Bin Shatwan 2020, 189). The author feels compelled to explain how the rootless life of slave women caused them to weep. The daily adversities they had to contend with and their anxieties about the future made their lives bleak and the perpetuation of their suffering likely. The travesty of her suffering is further highlighted when the money Al-Figgi pays for Tawida is used by Muhammed's mother, Lalla Uwayshina, to buy a set of earrings (Bin Shatwan 2020, 288). In this scene, Bin Shatwan suggests that the slave owners view Tawida as being no more valuable than a small adornment on her mistress's ear. The scene is an echo of Khanna's assertion that the disposable slave is merely a subsidiary or an "excess life" (Khanna 2009, 192). That is, the temporality of usability, as Khanna explains, adds a capitalistic connotation to the concept of disposability by making the slave a "standing reserve," or object for investment, that can be traded at any time (Khanna 2009, 192–194). The small amount for which Tawida is sold only aggravates her misery.

Tawida's suffering highlights the gap between social practices and legal legislations regarding *umm al-walad*. Although the *umm al-walad* system provided female slaves with social and legal advantages and forbade their sale, Tawida does not enjoy this privilege and is sold to Al-Figgi, who represents the religious authority in Benghazi (Bin Shatwan 2020, 215). Al-Figgi's unchecked power is evident in the way he speaks to Muhammed's father: "Sell [Tawida] to me. I'll relieve both you and your son of her in

a single stroke. Then I'll deduct her price from the debt you owe me" (ibid.). In attributing the transgression of the *umm al-walad* system to Al-Figgi, the author critiques the selective application of religious legislation by religious and social bodies. Not only does Al-Figgi accept the injustices of slavery, but he also uses the practice to his own benefit. Whereas the imam is presented as selfish and hypocritical, the general public of the female slaves' owners are depicted as being unwilling to abide by this legislation. As discussed earlier, there were conflicting jurisprudential views regarding the sale of *umm al-walad*; however, her freedom after the death of her master was unanimously agreed upon. Bin Shatwan depicts the situation in nineteenth-century Libya and how the application of these rules was left to the slave owners. This clarifies how the *umm al-walad* system was not always accepted socially owing to the status it provided for female slaves. When warning Tawida to be wary of believing that her concubinage would alter her social status, the brothel owner tells Tawida that trading caravans continue to flood the Libyan market with female slaves, each of whom could become *umm al-walad* but will never be subsequently liberated (Bin Shatwan 2020, 235). The author underscores that the dehumanising practices Tawida endured are non-Islamic and that their motivations were social rather than religious. These motivations included Muhammed's wife's jealousy, his mother's greed, and Al-Figgi's grudge. This reflects how Tawida was targeted both within the domestic feminine space and the public patriarchal space.

Not only does the position of *umm al-walad* fail to liberate Tawida and end her suffering, but it also provides no protection for her children. As depicted by the author, Tawida's children inherit her complexion and are assumed to be slaves in a society that adopts racialised slavery (Bin Shatwan 2020, 43). This is why the Bin Shatwans refuse to have mixed-race descendants. She is coerced into an abortion by drinking a herbal potion prepared by Lalla Uwayshina and suffers through one more miscarriage owing to the torturous nature of the housework (Bin Shatwan 2020, 192). Motherhood, in this sense, emphasises the abjection of the slave woman's body.

The melancholy of child loss is articulated in the slaves' folklore songs. For instance, Atiga's friend Durma sings:

> Oh you who've patiently endured as I have,
> You've endured forever and a day.
> You've borne up beyond the limits of the bearable. (Bin Shatwan 2020, 111)

Chanting this song, Durma attempts to console the elderly woman Bouga, who had lost her young son in the desert during their journey of enslavement many years earlier. The song is part of the inherited folklore the slaves recited to record their suffering. The novel elucidates how the traditional art of *Marskawi*, named after its place of origin, the Libyan city of Murzuk, flourished as slave folk art (Bin Shatwan 2020, 80–81). Normally, such folklore is chanted at weddings by a black woman called *Zimzama* (90). Bin Shatwan depicts how such folklore is ritualistically celebrated in the pens at the end

of each excruciating day as a "healing balm" (80). The song makes it clear how the mother's suffering permeates traditional folklore and becomes part of the collective heritage of slavery. Preserved in poetic words, pain remains fresh as it is conveyed from one generation to the next.

Bin Shatwan portrays how Tawida's denial of the children's lineage, exemplified by her hiding of Atiga's birth certificate, is perceived by her as a safer option (134). Furthermore, after moving to the *zarayeb*, Tawida abandons her identity and assumes the identity of Aunt Sabriya in order to distance her motherhood from the master–slave duality tying her with Atiga's father. In a sense, hiding the certificate represents what Rebecca Stone calls "issues of ownership and mastery, of possession and possessiveness, [which] are always present as anxieties in the early mothering relationship" (Stone 2015, 303). This concealment has serious repercussions for her relationship with Atiga, who goes through childhood as an orphan, deprived of a maternal connection and being subject to complications as she attempts to form a sense of identity. In a sense, while begins as a necessary precaution, this intended distancing of the daughter reveals Tawida's inability to navigate her motherhood while a slave.

The complications of the mother–daughter relationship in slavery are epitomised in Morrison's masterpiece *Beloved* (2019). In this novel, Sethe's escape from slavery with her four children seemingly fails when the slave owner discovers them. Sethe is left with one option that will ensure that her children will never endure the suffering she has experienced—murder. She only succeeds in ending the life of her youngest baby girl, who comes to be known as Beloved (Morrison 2019, 193). The daughter's ghost haunts Sethe, forcing her to remember her slavehood in Sweet Home. The story is based on a true one, in which Margaret Garner was forced to kill her baby daughter. The mother's act of infanticide is consistently read by critics as a mother's sacrifice of a piece of her own self to ensure her daughter's permanent liberation (Rué 2013, 6). Morrison elucidates how Sethe's sacrifice leads her to own her daughter: "You are my daughter, you are my face; you are me … you are mine" (Morrison 2019, 212). By emphasising her ownership of Beloved, Sethe articulates her relief at having finally become capable of forming a mothering bond: "Look like I loved em [*sic*] more after I got here. Or maybe I couldn't love em [*sic*] proper in Kentucky because they wasn't [*sic*] mine to love" (Morrison 2019, 158). Slavery deprives Sethe of motherhood, because as Gabriella Greco (2016) explains, among enslaved mothers, the master–slave duality affected the mother–daughter dyad, permitting only one expression of motherhood—ownership (Greco 2016, 10). Sethe's endeavour to permanently own her daughter, in light of the danger of slavery, could only be achieved if she returned her child to her pre-natal stage, when she was essentially part of her. Therefore, infanticide was the mother's attempt to "devour them back into the security of womb/tomb death" (Demetrakopoulos 1992, 53). Describing infanticide as "devour[ing]" suggests that when the mother murders the daughter, the latter slips into an alternative evasive form of existence that is no longer controlled by the mother.

Unlike Sethe's act, Tawida's effort to protect her daughter from slavery causes her own death: Tawida sacrifices her life to salvage Atiga's birth certificate from the burning huts (Bin Shatwan 2020, 134). Tawida's only way to experience her motherhood is through concealment, and only upon her death is her maternal relationship to Atiga revealed: "Cry for the woman who'll never come back. Cry for your mother!" screams her friend Aida (135). The maternal bond is concealed by Tawida and only dramatically revealed upon her death in an inside-out process that equates her death with giving birth. On the other hand, Sethe's act of infanticide, or the "devour[ing]" of her daughter, is an outside-in act of mothering her daughter that solicits an alternative experience of the maternal bond. Morrison and Bin Shatwan, despite their varying literary techniques, both viewed death as a liberation of the mother–daughter dyad from the chains of slavery. In addition, both authors depicted death as a factor that prompts the unfolding of the maternal memory. Sethe's ending of the matrilineal transmission forces her to relive the memory of her slavehood, which, as Greco explains, deprives Sethe of the judicious navigation of her traumatic past (Greco 2016, 1).

Adversely, Atiga's endeavour to retrieve Tawida's memory is hindered both by the latter's concealment under a pseudo-identity and the state of perpetual voicelessness (Bin Shatwan 2020, 44). This becomes apparent in the way Atiga frequently refers to her mother as "Aunt Sabriya" even as she narrates the story as an adult. The assumed identity creates a barrier separating Atiga from her mother's memory. The only way for Atiga to find a connection to Tawida is through the restoration of her lost memories.

The concurrence of the mother's death with the daughter's discovery of the maternal bond recalls the opening of Kincaid's outstanding novel *The Autobiography of My Mother* (1996, 3) "My mother died at the moment I was born." The daughter's birth coinciding with the mother's death means the daughter will have difficulties mourning her mother, since the mother–daughter relationship can never be a real experience but only one based on imagination. As Shu-li Chang (2004, 114) argues, this challenge confirms that the past is not concluded. The daughter's attempt to mourn requires what Chang describes as "traumatic haunting" or frequent visits to the past to reclaim and narrate it. Chang states that Kincaid's depiction of the interruption that befalls the mother–daughter relationship as a result of slavery represents the collective suffering of the Dominican people (Chang 2004, 119).

The loss of the mother–daughter relationship, a relationship that is ordinarily saturated with individual and cultural history, is deployed by Kincaid to represent the interruption of the national history caused by slavery (Chang 2004, 119). Xuela, the daughter and narrator of *The Autobiography*, tells readers how her grandmother, shortly after giving birth, left her newborn daughter (Xuela's mother) with French nuns, who raised her to be a "long-suffering, unquestioning, modest, wishing-to-die-soon person" (Kincaid 1996, 199). Xuela laments the loss of the maternal bond between her and her mother on the one hand and between her mother and grandmother on the other (ibid.). The loss of the mother, traditionally viewed as the storyteller and bearer of the ancestors' history,

leads to a permanent loss of the "chain of testimony," to use Sara R. Horowitz's phrase (2012, 217). The "chain," or continual transmitting of history across generations, protects the story from loss.

Atiga's narrative is an attempt to restore the lost memories of her mother. However, like Xuela, the absence of the mother's voice haunts the daughter's testimony. Tawida's dual identity causes a disparity between her and Atiga and challenges the latter's endeavour to retrieve her memory. This is why Atiga elucidates that she finds solace in "the memory of [her] mother's black body" (Bin Shatwan 2020, 283). Atiga attempts to compensate for the loss of spoken memory by reverting to physical memories, referring, at times, to her mother's "parched" hands, "trembling" lips, and "fleshy breast" and to biological processes in her and her mother's bodies, such as being hungry and sweating (Bin Shatwan 2020, 43, 46, 48, 55, 56). Such blunt and apparently emotionless descriptions convey the dire life the two led in the *zarayeb*, which reduced their images of their bodies to basic characteristics.

The lapses in Tawida's story are filled in by Aida, Tawida's slave companion, who has experienced the traumas of both the Bin Shatwans' house and the *zarayeb*. As the narrative suggests, Aida, the sole witness to the different traumatic situations experienced by Tawida, assists in delivering the story to Atiga. Contrastingly, Ali, although depicted by Bin Shatwan as having information that could restore memories of her descendants to Atiga, does not fill in such gaps. In response to Atiga's hesitation to talk to Ali, a reference to the fears of slaves' descendants about recalling their ancestors' stories, Atiga's husband insists that the reclamation of the past will provide her with "roots" and "origins" to pass on to her children (Bin Shatwan 2020, 8). Despite the fact that Atiga's goal is to learn about her matrilineal heritage, "my own story, the story that belongs to Atiga Bint Tawida," Ali focuses only on restoring her patrilineal lineage. For instance, Ali is determined to give Atiga her father's *jard*, a traditional garment worn by men, on which her name is embroidered next to her father's, but he fails to return to her the only item that could truly link Atiga to Tawida's past, the hoop earrings bought by Lalla Uwayshina when Tawida was sold to Al-Figgi (Bin Shatwan 2020, 281, 288). In contrast to Aida's accurate recollections, Ali's memories are biased. As Tucker confirms, patriarchal control of historical written accounts leads to the exclusion of women from these accounts: "the social history of the Middle East, at least in its early stages, is being written, on the whole, without [women]" (Tucker 1983, 322). Bin Shatwan depicts the manner in which the hooped earrings, a feminine item with critical importance to Atiga's maternal memory, become a source of confusion in Ali's recollections since Ali decides not to return them to Atiga: " … he couldn't return any part of her mother to her, not even the price that had been paid for her on the day she was sold" (Bin Shatwan 2020, 288). Ali's hesitation about returning the earrings shows how difficult it can be for those who held slaves to confront their heritage. Ali fails in the part he could have played in liberating Tawida's memory from the chains of slavery. This results in preventing Atiga from retrieving her mother's memories. Until the very

end of the novel, the retrieval remains deferred, as does the mother–daughter relationship.

Historical discrimination extends beyond the characterisation of Tawida and Atiga to the *zarayeb* and the city of Benghazi. The uprootedness caused by enslavement results in the loss of the collective memory of the community. Ali's hesitation to return the earrings represents the tormented Libyan consciousness and the resulting failure to make amends for past traumas.

Conclusion

This discussion reveals that slave women were peripheralised in historical documents of the time and in later written works that might have revealed their stories. The lack of consistency in the legal rights accorded them rendered them vulnerable to unjust social practices, and the patriarchal domination over legal and historical records only exacerbated this situation. Bin Shatwan depicts the threats faced by the protagonist of her novel as being consequences of such domination. Not only did the system of *umm al-walad* fail to protect her, but it amplified her suffering by making her children targets of the master's aggression.

Female slaves' stories are obliterated from the collective memory, and fiction may become the only medium in which these stories can be written. This study confirms the necessity of using a historical approach to read such fiction so that the cultural and socio-legal backgrounds of these stories can be presented and understood. Using this methodology facilitated the discovery of the web of factors that intersected in subjugating these women and the inefficiency of the legal regulations, such as the system of *umm al-walad*, to alleviate the state of disposition that befell them.

Bin Shatwan's attempt to revive the memory of enslaved women by centring the narrative around the mother–daughter relationship results in the identification of the mother's memory with that of the whole community. The failure to fully restore the memory of the mother represents the author's failure to find historical records of the Zarayeb al-Sabiri. The novel represents an invitation to readers to detach themselves from the inherited identification of selfhood. By doing so, readers can forge new bonds with the past and, like Bin Shatwan, extend their sense of responsibility to those whose stories of subjugation are lost forever.

References

Abdulrazak, Omar. 2017. "Books World: *The Slave Yards* and the Heritage of Slavery." Interview with Najwa Bin Shatwan. BBC Arabic. Accessed 12 January 2022. https://soundcloud.com/bbc-arabic/iqjnbzk8eip9

Aldhamen, Samaher. 2019. "Representations of Domestic Workers in Modern Arabic Fiction." PhD diss., University of Arkansas.

Ali, Kecia. 2006. *Sexual Ethics and Islam: Feminist Reflections on Qur'an, Hadith, and Jurisprudence*. Oneworld Publications.

Bagchi, Jasodhara. 2017. "Introduction." In *Interrogating Motherhood: Theorizing Feminism*, xxi–xxvii. Sage.

Bin Shatwan, Najwa. 2006. *Tifl Al waw* (*The Child of Waw*). Libyan General Cultural Council.

Bin Shatwan, Najwa. 2007. *Waber Al Ahssina* (*The Horses' Hair*). Centre for Arab Civilization in Cairo

Bin Shatwan, Najwa. 2008. *Madmun Burtoqali* (*Orange Content*). Dar Sharqiyyat.

Bin Shatwan, Najwa. 2009. *Al Malikah* (*The Queen*). Libyan General Cultural Council.

Bin Shatwan, Najwa. 2018. *Cataloj Hayah Khassah* (*A Catalogue of a Private Life*). Dar Athar.

Bin Shatwan, Najwa. 2019. *Soudfa Jariaa* (*An Ongoing Coincidence*). Riad El Rayyes.

Bin Shatwan, Najwa. 2020. *Zarayeb Al-Abeed* (*The Slave Yards*). Translated by Nancy Roberts. Syracuse University Press. https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctvz93842

Bin Shatwan, Najwa. 2021. *Roma Termini*. Kalimat Group.

Bin Shatwan, Najwa. 2022. *Concerto Qurina Eduardo*. Takween Publishing.

Bin Shatwan, Najwa, and Orna Herr. 2020. "Between the Gavel and the Anvil: A New Short Story About a Libyan Author Who Starts Changing Her Story to Please Neighbours." *Index on Censorship* 49 (1): 86–93. https://doi.org/10.1177/0306422020917091

Butler, Judith. 2004. *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence.* Verso.

Butler, Judith, and Athena Athanasiou. 2013. *Dispossession: The Performative in the Political*. Polity Press.

Chang, Shu-li. 2004. "Daughterly Haunting and Historical Traumas: Toni Morrison's *Beloved* and Jamaica Kincaid's *The Autobiography of My Mother*." *Concentric: Literary and Cultural Studies* 30 (2): 105–127. http://www.concentric-literature.url.tw/issues/The%20Comic/5.pdf

Del Priore, M. 1993. *Ao sul do corpo: Condição feminina, maternidades e mentalidades no Brasil Colônia* (*To the South of the Body: Feminine Conditions, Materialities and Mentalities in Colonial Brazil*). Quoted and Translated by Christina Stevens. José Olímpio Editora.

Demetrakopoulos, S. A. 1992. “Maternal Bonds as Devourer of Women’s Individuation in Toni Morrison’s *Beloved*.” *African American Review* 26 (1): 51–59. https://doi.org/10.2307/3042076

Dhuhaya, Ahmad. 2020. “Rwāīāt al-ʿbūdīa: at-tkhyil at-tārīkhī ū as-srd: nmādhj al’ khlfīt rwāīt Zarayeb Al-Abeed” (Novels of enslavement: historical imagination and narrative, Bin Shatwan’s *The Slave Yards* as an example). *Sudanile*, 20 December 2020. http://www.sudanile.com/132628

El Hamal, Chouki. 2014. *Black Morocco: A History of Slavery, Race and Islam*. Cambridge University Press.

Gordon, Matthew S. 2017. “Introduction.” In *Concubines and Courtesans: Women and Slavery in Islamic History*, edited by Matthew S. Gordon, and Kathryn A. Hain, 1–10. Oxford University Press. https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780190622183.001.0001

Greco, Gabriella. 2016. “Othering the Mother: Traumatic Effects of Motherhood on the Formation of Identity in Toni Morrison’s *Beloved*.” MA thesis, State University of New York at Stony Brook.

Hartman, Saidiya. 2008. “Venus in Two Acts.” *Small Axe* 26 (12):1–14. https://muse.jhu.edu/article/241115. https://doi.org/10.2979/SAX.2008.-.26.1

Horowitz, Sara R. 2012. *Voicing the Void: Muteness and Memory in Holocaust Fiction*. SUNY Press.

Ibn Manẓūr, Muḥammad ibn Mukarram. 1956. *Lisān al-Àrab* (*Arabs’ Tongue*). Vol. 1. Dār Ṣādir.

International Prize for Arabic Fiction. n.d. “Najwa Bin Shatwan.” https://www.arabicfiction.org/en/Najwa-Binshatwan

Khanna, Ranjana. 2009. “Disposability.” *differences* 20 (1): 181–198. https://doi.org/10.1215/10407391-2008-021

Kincaid, Jamica. 1996. *The Autobiography of My Mother*. Penguin Books. https://doi.org/10.2307/2935358

Klein, Martin A. 2014. *The Historical Dictionary of Slavery and Abolition*. Rowman and Littlefield.

Latifi, Afifa. 2020. “Review of *The Slave Pens* by Najwa Bin Shatwan.” *Lamma: A Journal of Libyan Studies* 1: 121–125. https://escholarship.org/uc/item/5nv1j9z0. https://doi.org/10.2307/jj.2353816.11

Lovejoy, Paul E. 2000. *Transformations in Slavery: A History of Slavery in Africa.* 2nd ed. Cambridge University Press.

Mire, Lawrence. 2005. “Al-Zubayr Pasha and the *Zariba*-Based Slave Trade in the Bahr al-Ghazal 1855–1879.” In *Slaves and Slavery in Africa: The Servile Estate*, vol. 2, edited by John Ralph Willis, 101–122. Routledge.

Mirza, Younus Y. 2017 “‘The Slave Girl Gives Birth to Her Master’: Female Slavery from the Mamlūk Era (1250–1517) to the Islamic State (2014–).” *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 85 (3): 557–599. https://doi.org/10.1093/jaarel/lfx001

Morgan, Jennifer L. 2018 “*Partus sequitur ventrem*: Law, Race, and Reproduction in Colonial Slavery.” *Small Axe* 22 (55): 1–17. https://doi.org/10.1215/07990537-4378888

Morrison, Toni. 1992. *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination.* Harvard University Press.

Morrison, Toni. 2019. *Beloved*. Penguin Random House.

Rué, E. D. 2013. “Herstory Unwritten: Trauma, Memory, Identity and History in Toni Morrison’s *Beloved*.” In *Trauma Narratives and Herstory*, edited by S. Andermahr and S. Pellicer-Ortín, 1–17. Palgrave Macmillan. https://doi.org/10.1057/9781137268358_10

Saleh, Mohammed, and Sarah Wahby. 2022. “Boom and Bust: The Trans-Saharan Slave Trade in the 19th Century.” In *Migration in Africa: Shifting Patterns of Mobility from the 19th to the 21st Century*, edited by Michiel de Haas and Ewout Frankema, 6–74. Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003225027-5

Stone, Rebecca. 2015. “Can the Breast Feed the Mother Too? Tracing Maternal Subjectivity in Toni Morrison’s *Beloved*.” *British Journal of Psychotherapy* 31 (3): 298–310. https://doi.org/10.1111/bjp.12162

Stevens, Christina M. T. 2015. “The Body of the Mother in Contemporary Black Women Narratives: (Re)writing Immanence Towards Transcendence.” *Ilha do Desterro* 68 (2): 93–110. https://doi.org/10.5007/2175-8026.2015v68n2p93

Tucker, Judith E. 1983. “Problems in the Historiography of Women in the Middle East: The Case of Nineteenth-Century Egypt.” *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 15 (3): 321–336. https://doi.org/10.1017/s0020743800050959

Viene, Valentina. 2017. “Libyan Author Najwa Binshatwan on *The Slave Pens*: Confronting a Dark Chapter.” *Qantara*, May 6, 2017. https://qantara.de/en/article/libyan-author-najwa-binshatwan-slave-pens-confronting-dark-chapter

Younis, Abdullah B., and Amir A. H. Amin. 2021. “Alishārāt l-ājtmāʿīt fī rwāīt Zarayeb Al-Abeed” (Social and cultural issues in *The Slave Yards*). *Twejer* 4 (1): 807–850. https://doi.org/10.31918/twejer.2141.18