FEVERISH SOULS: ARCHIVES, IDENTITY, AND TRAUMA IN *FIHRIS*¹ AND *ḤIṢN AL-TURĀB*

Mahmoud Abdelhamid M. A. Khalifa

Abstract: The archive is used both literally and metaphorically as a manifestation of the ubiquity of power and the authority invested in material archives. To work from the margin and in secrecy is a trait of the subaltern quest of both Wadood the bookseller and Dr Nameer, as well as the different characters of the De Molina family. The official history written by the powers that be marginalizes the other. However, the digging of the archives by the subaltern raises the hope of an alternative history that saves the traces of the subaltern. The archive includes physical archives, manuscripts, artefacts, stamps, cassettes, and photos, as amply shown in *Fihris*. In *Ḥiṣn al-turāb*, the archive has more of a metaphoric than literal meaning: it is the spectral *topos* of suppressed desire and recovered memory. The archive enables the subaltern to speak by digging up and even making up archives. Both quests are feverish and reflect the trauma that motivates digging up the past as recovered memory and the desire to keep traces of the past as tokens of a marginalized identity seeking redress. Archives are tokens of the past that threaten the integrity of the history written by the powerful: the hunter. The victims question that history and create nuisance that offers hope of a more just history that includes the marginalized subalterns.

Keywords: trauma archives, collateral damage, *Ḥiṣn al-turāb*, identity, subaltern, power

Civil wars and foreign invasions across the Arab and Islamic world brought destruction to museums, libraries, and books. Irreplaceable manuscripts and artifacts were consumed by fire or bombed into oblivion. Libraries were sacked and museums left to be emptied of their precious contents following the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq. This was not the first time in the history of Arabs and Muslims. In 1258, Baghdad fell to the Mongols who destroyed its libraries. The Inquisition in early modern Spain collected tens of thousands of Arabic books and burnt them publicly. In her book, *The Map of Knowledge*, Moller (2019) explains the enormity of the loss:

Mahmoud Abdelhamid M. A. Khalifa is Assistant Professor of Literary Criticism and Cultural Studies, Taibah University, Medina, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

The culmination came in 1499, when the fanatical cleric Cardinal Ximénez de Cisneros arrived in Granada intent on converting the population and removing any vestiges of Islamic culture. He took the contents of the city's libraries and built an enormous bonfire in the main square of the city, burning somewhere in the region of two million books . . . Proclamations followed which banned writing in Arabic and prohibited the ownership of Arabic books. Ximénez de Cisneros was so successful that, by 1609, only a tiny number of Arabic manuscripts existed in Spain. (118)

One reason why the powers that be are so focused on the destruction of the archives of defeated nations is that

Archives have always been about power, whether it is the power of the state, the church, the corporation, the family, the public, or the individual. Archives have the power to privilege and to marginalize . . . They are the basis for and validation of the stories we tell ourselves, the story-telling narratives that give cohesion and meaning to individuals, groups, and societies. (Schwartz and Cook, 2002: 13)

This makes the loss even more damaging and tragic to the marginalized and defeated. The loss of books, manuscripts, and architectural buildings threatens group identity and its continuity in space and time.

The archive is one way of preserving identity as well as marking loss, as Voss and Werner (1999: i) point out, "An account of the archive cannot fail to acknowledge the paradoxical logic by which it runs. The archive preserves and reserves, protects and patrols, regulates and represses." The archive is an effective tool to present questions of identity and trauma because it contains the competing discourses of the powerful and the marginalized. They exclude the subaltern other from memory and leave her/him out of the archive. The subaltern is twice treated as an absence or as a collateral damage. The archives are a battle ground then for those who want to mark identity and challenge marginality and those who want to exterminate others.

Reclaiming the Subaltern

This drama of archival violence is represented in *Fihris* (2016) published in English translation as *The Book of Collateral Damage* (2019) and *Hişn al-turāb* (2018). Both novels examine colonial and imperial destruction of the subaltern's story. They create archives and discover others to rescue the voice of the subaltern. The question is of the Spivakian type: "can the subaltern speak?" Archives can be an answer to that question. They cannot speak directly to power but can

archive as a response. The colonizer's attack is involved in the "asymmetrical obliteration of the trace of that Other in its precarious Subject-ivity" (Spivak, 1988: 281). Archives are approximations of the past, imagined to validate the loss of archives that were destroyed by the powers that be, such as the Americans in 2003 in Baghdad as fictionalized in *Fihris* by Fihris (2015) and the inquisition that destroyed Arabic manuscripts in early modern times as fictionalized in *Ḥiṣn al-turāb* (2018) by Ahmad 'Abd al-Laṭīf. An archive can be a place of recovered memory and a chance to weep over the *atlal* of destroyed cities, very much in the tradition of Arabic elegiac poetry. In Arabic poetry after the fall of Baghdad at the hands of the Mongols in 1258, Annmarie Schimmel (2000: 12) argues that what Arab poets find in the "*atlal* is no longer the beautiful beloved but rather it is past glory, the past beauty of these places." However, the novel increasingly outflanks poetry as an expression of memory and the *atlal* now are not of the beloved but of cities and consequently places of trauma narrativized in lengthy prose, not in poetic couplets.

The very title of the English translation of Sinan Antoon's novel, *Fihris*, indicates that this novel is going to provide an inventory of loss that came as a result of the U.S. invasion of Iraq. Wadood, the mysterious Iraqi bookseller on Al-Mutanabi street, who epitomizes the quest for the archive that comes after the American invasion of Iraq in 2003, is a reflection and a desire to write oneself into the surrounding events and to have an impact. Archives become ego documents that write the individual pain of characters into the general archives of society. Characters in both novels come out of trauma with the "burden of the archive" that is the strong desire to preserve, protect, and interpret the archive with all its inclusions. Although we are promised an archive by Wadood that includes a history of everything, none is provided as such but in the intervals that separate narrative episodes of the main narrative, a different narrative is provided. In those intervals, objects, places, and streets speak, which is a clue to the inventory of everything that Wadood wanted.

Fictionalized archives attempt at retrieving a past that is traumatic and stand as testimonial to a traumatic past or even as an attempt to document a not long past trauma, as in the case of the American invasion of Iraq. The project by the Iraqi bookseller aims at documenting everything. For the invaders, all the precious archives destroyed by the invasion are considered collateral damage, a euphemism that exonerates the perpetrators. For Wadood, the Iraqi bookseller, his list of damaged things is an attempt at salvaging the history and civilization of his home country. Dr Nameer, who runs into him accidentally while browsing books in al-Mutanabi Street, is intrigued by him and follows him in search of a rarer book to his storeroom. Dr Nameer is particularly attracted to a specific set of files and on inquiring about their contents, Wadood, the bookseller answers:

He pulled out one of the files and started leafing through the contents: notes in his own handwriting on small pieces and slips of paper. Cuttings from newspapers.

"This is the project of a lifetime, an archive of the losses from war and destruction. But not soldiers or equipment. The losses that are never mentioned or seen. Not just people. Animals and plants and inanimate things and anything that can be destroyed. Minute by minute. This is the file for the first minute."

"You mean this last war?"

"Exactly."

"And what are the sources you rely on?"

I noticed a sparkle in his eyes as he spoke about his project.

"Everything. News. Oral history. Personal observation. Imagination."

"But that's a massive project that calls for a whole institution."

"Oh man, you think we still have institutions here? I can do it myself."

"And what's the title?" *"Fihris."*

(Antoon, 2019: 23)

Reclaiming the voices of the subaltern according to Wadood requires not only facts but imagination. For

The contested realm in which we operate is one where certain stories are privileged and others marginalised by the decisions we take to keep, describe or open our collections. In seeking to be just, archivists must recognise that archives 'are witnesses not to unadorned truth but to invented contrivance. (Brown, 2013: 86)

The imagination of the traumatized subaltern need not be an exercise in writing history but in challenging the story of the powerful, of inventing the archive, itself. Here, Wadood's ambition and audacious attempt to write a history or archive everything that was lost after the U.S.-led invasion may be an impractical venture, but it is one that gave him hope for some time, a hope of course that is destroyed when he dies in a car bomb attack. The tragic end of Wadood is a statement of the hopelessness that marks the narrative from the beginning. In *The Book of Collateral Damage*, Wadood who is a marginal and subaltern bookseller, realizes the fact that operating outside institutional power disadvantages the voice of the subaltern:

By the time someone who wants to revise, question, or change it comes along, it's already too late. But what about the history of the victim? Or the victim's victim? That's what I am concerned with. The first time I read that proverb I empathized with the lion, of course. But then I thought hard about the matter and reconsidered, to discover, or rather remember, that I should be in solidarity with the lion's victim. I imagined, even felt, that I was inhabiting the gazelle (or any other prey) in this equation because it represents me, and I represent it. (Antoon, 2019: 20)

Wadood's realization that victims and subalterns are left out of the archives of the powerful motivates him to write his own *Fihris* or archive that attempts at retrieving past moments when the history of the subaltern Iraqis was written by the invading armies.

Ḥiṣn al-turāb, long listed for Arab Booker prize (2018), fictionalizes the depredations of Muslim minorities under Christian rule in Spain in early modern times. It follows the tribulations of the family of Mohamed De Molina. It is made up of several episodes in the form of diaries by the three generations of De Molina. The novel witnesses very little action but explores what characters feel and argue about events they witnessed or were told about. It gives a voice to the subaltern through fictionalizing the archives that challenge the inquisition's voice that silenced the Moriscos. It is a world of archive that reveals the struggle of a disappearing community that was criminalized and alterized because of its Muslim and Christian identities, which were never accepted as authentic. The novel is shot through with an intimidating fear of the archive, which is so paramount as it stands as a perilous liability in the face of extreme social and literary limitations placed on it by the inquisition. The characters stand in an ambiguous relationship to the archives left out by previous generations and secretly entrusted to their care. It is all that is left of their cultural and religious identity, so they stand in fear and awe of the archive.

The archives are polyphonic and reflect the differing perspectives of the line of the family of De Molina over two centuries. They relate the generational responsibility of taking care of identity through the constant act of copying and archiving manuscripts and translating them. Subsequent events ended in the final expulsion edict by Felipe II in 1609 and the diaspora that moved to several North African cities. The novel is made of sections with each introduced by a title declaring that what comes after is taken "from the papers of so and so," mentioning the name of one of the de Molina family, date, and location. There is a perplexing multiplicity where the line of the plot moves between "papers" or diaries that reflect on the dilemma of Morisco communities that lived the nightmare of a divided self.

Moriscos, or at least some of them, had two identities: a Muslim identity where Islam was observed at home in total secrecy and an outward public identity where Christianity was followed and church attended. Moriscos had to watch in pain as their books, language, and identity were destroyed. This violence forced the family De Molina, the protagonist of *Ḥiṣn al-turāb*, to develop a secret underground identity and an archive that was handed down secretly from father to son. Arabic manuscripts that escaped the Inquisition's burning were kept. The manuscripts were sources of history: the history of the subaltern subject in all its fragility and precariousness.

The task was to keep archives alive and to fight against oblivion and forgetfulness. The frame narrator, Ibrahim De Molina, and last in line of the De Molina family sets the pace of the novel so all the documentary papers and diaries of the De Molina family follow one by one, with each narrating a specific period from a specific place. Traumatic and painful memories dominate as the various members of the De Molina family feverishly archive their stories and pass them on the way genes are passed on from father to son:

My father said "All these manuscripts are yours; take care of them and add to them. Make new copies of them before they dissolve and disappear and bequeath them to your son after you." My father then fell silent and when I asked him to clarify, he added, "In a far city- which you will know in time, the time which neared; you must find other papers, the ones that I failed to find." ('Abd al-Laṭīf, 2018: 17)

Collecting the archives becomes a quest that keeps the tradition alive. The archives become a romantic pursuit of the past; an activity that seems Quixotic, at times, given the fact that the last in line of the De Molina was living in exile away from his father's hometown of Cuenca. However, it was a fulfillment of a duty and a promise that the son must do for the father; the wish of a dying man and perhaps a dying tradition.

Far from being a linear narrative, the archive is polyphonic and cyclical. It structures the two novels and forms their thematic as well as their poetics of space that are entangled with issues of power, identity, and trauma. Polyphony is used to highlight the cacophony of voices that undermine the master voice of the Inquisition and the U.S.-led invasion. Polyphony is a concept introduced by Bakhtin and Booth (1984) in a study of Dostoevsky:

A plurality of independent and unmerged voices and consciousnesses, a genuine polyphony of fully valid voices is in fact the chief characteristic of Dostoevsky's novels. What unfolds in his works is not a multitude of characters and fates in

a single objective world, illuminated by a single authorial consciousness; rather a plurality of consciousnesses, with equal rights and each with its own world, combine but are not merged in the unity of the event. (6, emphasis in the original)

In *Hiṣn al-turāb*, polyphony is used strategically to alternate between the voices of the powerful and the oppressed. The discourse of the powerful is represented as an attempt to rationalize the treatment of Moriscos as second-class citizens and a justification of their final expulsion. The novelist alternates between archives of the Inquisition that have one voice that wants to eradicate Muslim presence and Moriscos, who are hybrid and polyphonic. The narrative voice of the hidden unofficial archives portrays Moriscos as loyal Spaniards who happen to stick to their Muslim identity. Those were Spaniards expelling Spaniards. Andalusian identity was hybrid. Moriscos wrote *Aljamiado* and this is strong proof of hybridity. The archives left include writings by Johan whose son Miguel sees as proof of an Andalusian identity that transcended the borders of language, religion, and ethnicity. It was an inclusive identity.² These characters archive unofficially in hidden libraries handed down by the previous generations:

My mother's will, apparently, is to demolish the house. But the house in my thinking may be a life. Demolishing the house may be a symbol of destroying memory. Demolishing the house may mean removing the trace of my grandfather. It may mean removing the trace of my father. It may mean removing my trace. The first floor which was my grandfather's is still locked. It still contains secret documents. Documents or manuscripts that narrate an unknown history. My grandfather as well as my maternal uncles Muhammad and Asem and my brother Marwan write diaries. And I follow in their footsteps: I write my diaries. My mother is against all of us: she hates writing things down. She believes that documenting the past is dangerous. (124)

The written archives that register memory are bedeviled by doubts. And as one critic argues "Archive addresses the inadequacy of memory. Memory's fundamental errancy. If there is a future to be had, it is one replete with fractures, forgetting and lacunae" (Baker Jr, 2016: 1). The marginalized and suppressed voice of the Andalusian/Morisco is retrieved through the archives. It aims at reshaping the past by recalling memories stored in archives and questioning them through the fictionalized voices of the victims. The victims' voices were constrained by the legally required questions that framed the answers and thus the emerging voice was constrained. The silencing that archives imposed is reversed through the narrative technique that creates parallel archives that question and shape the past. This is an impossibility that is made possible through the archives.

Through the polyphony of voices of the family of De Molina, history and memory and trauma are written down for the benefit of generations to come. The archives are future oriented. “The archive,” argues Steedman (2002: 7) “is a record of the past, at the same time as it points to the future. The grammatical tense of the archive is thus the future perfect, ‘when it will have been.’” The characters take issue with the designations of Morisco and Mudejar, designations given to them by the powers of the inquisition and the state which foreignizes and Others them. They are Andalusian, a polyglot identity that disregards language and religion. This is made clear:

I write these papers acting on my father’s will. A will that will be inherited by my sons. I write as they have written and as they will write because memory is a vestige and writing is a reconstruction. I am neither a historian nor one of those who the almighty blessed with the ability to narrate and analyze events. Even though I am not a man of outstanding merit to interest people to read what I write, I believe—God be my witness—that annals are a substitute to speech. And we the natives of Cuenca know what is happening now and what is going to happen in the future because days are repetitions of days and events are a mere repetition of events and nobody is allowed to contradict the king. (‘Abd al-Laṭīf, 2018: 56)

Although the fictional narrator here demurs from identifying himself as a historian, his work is more or less that of a historian who besides consulting the archives, exercises his judgment and in the case of a disappearing community, espouses the mission of saving the past from disappearing as well. Even though the current moment may not serve him well, his future-oriented attempt is based on the hope that his writing will matter one day. The will of the father in *Ḥiṣn al-turāb* is to keep the records and manuscripts secret for fear of the Inquisition, however, the vision of the mother was to release them because they no longer pose a threat after the expulsion. The time has come for the archive to move from secrecy to public in order to become public memory. There is a tension between the literal and metaphorical. How should the son act? Follow the letter of the will of his father or his mother’s advice to release the archives? According to Jonathan Boulter (2011: 9):

subjectivity without any subject (*subjectivité sans sujet*), is particularly useful for thinking about the subject as he begins to negotiate a relationship to his memory, his history; specifically, as the subject negotiates a relationship to a disastrous history, to a past marked by loss and trauma, the subject becomes more than merely an individual reflecting on a particular kind of economy of tragic loss.

Addressing his son, the father continues:

“All these manuscripts are yours; take care of them and add to them. Make new copies of them before they dissolve and disappear and bequeath them to your son after you.” My father then fell silent and added what I asked him to clarify: “In a far-away city—which you will know in time, as the time has neared, you must find other papers, the ones that I failed to find.” (‘Abd al-Laṭīf, 2018: 17)

This patrilineal secretive handing down of tradition aims at hanging on to the hope that the future holds redress in some form. Tradition is a tool through which identity is preserved. The archive is a means to an end. If destruction of the archive is the strategy of the powerful, protecting it is the strategy of the marginalized and subaltern.

Memory and Trauma

In *Ḥiṣn al-turāb*, Ibrahim De Molina, one of the last generations of the family De Molina, is intimidated by the archive. The past itself can carry with it a hidden trauma and opening it may open a Pandora’s box. The advice of the father to his son carries the message of maintaining the voice of the marginalized, not the elite. The official histories leave out the subaltern voice; the attempt here is to capture the voices of the forefathers who were left out of the official record. Ibrahim De Molina, the frame narrator of *Ḥiṣn al-turāb*, registers his father’s deathbed instructions:

My father said “organise the papers after copying them. Date the dated papers when copying. Avoid using the Hijri calendar and use the Gregorian calendar instead. Notice that the language of our Mudéjar and Morisco forefathers is different from the language of Arabic heritage as it does differ from the language of our Andalucian forefathers. *Give each one of our forefathers his own voice as much as you can and leave out the names of rulers if you want as much as the rulers left out our names in their histories.*” Then my father repeated, “copying must be in Arabic.” (33, emphasis mine)

Memory and trauma relate to the archive in the abovementioned novels. Both writers evoke the archive in the form of a topography of loss, which is a continuation of a long tradition in Arabic where cities are at the center of cultural and historical memory. There is a conflict in both novels between archives of the powerful that erase the memory and practices of the colonized and Others them and archives of the powerless that aim at decolonizing the archives. This venture becomes an act of survival where characters create a counter archive inscribing a

counter discourse. In *Fihris*, the act of archiving the U.S.-led war against Iraq is meant to reserve the memory of pain and loss of Iraqis as well as the archives of identity. The original Arabic title of Sinan Antoon's novel is *Fihris*, which refers directly to the act of archiving. Its catchier translation into *Collateral Damage* is meant to sarcastically challenge the destruction of Iraqi souls and archives. Memory plays an instrumental role in the novel. It is the mental archive that requires deep search: Walter Benjamin is quoted in *Fihris*:

He who seeks to approach his own buried past must conduct himself like a man digging . . . Above all, he must not be afraid to return again and again to the same matter, to scatter it as one scatters earth, to turn it over and over as one turns over soil. (Antoon, 2019: 134).

The relevance of the quote is clarified when Dr Nameer reaches back to his childhood to relate the story of his first year as a pupil:

I don't remember a time when I didn't write. Ever since I learned to write letters and words I've been writing incessantly. Even before that I often used to scribble. All children scribble, but my grandmother, who died before I was eight, used to say she had never seen a child who scribbled as much as I did. She even called me Scribblekins. (134)

The acts of writing and digging the past are correlated. Writing the past and keeping its record is the subaltern's way of fighting death and forgetfulness. As an adult, Dr Nameer adds to this the obsessive habit of archiving newspaper articles about the war in Iraq. This too was meant to keep record of the dead against forgetfulness. Iraqis are not collateral damage.

Fever of the Archive

Moreover Dr Nameer's tireless attempt to archive newspapers as well as buy artifacts stolen from Iraq from online sites represents the protagonist's feverish search for the archive. Dr Nameer's feverish attempts are geared towards keeping the archives and challenging loss. His archiving is an obsessive attempt to counter the archives of the invasion. Foreign archives edited the war period in a way that suppresses the voices of the traumatized victims:

Is this incessant desire to archive everything a sickness? Can it spread by contagion, or just by reading? For years I've been clipping pictures and news stories out of the newspapers and keeping them, albeit not methodically.

The pace at which I archived material picked up when I came back from Baghdad after meeting Wadood and finding out about his project, and after the level of violence and destruction in Iraq increased. But I had never been interested in collecting stamps, documents, or postcards, and it had never occurred to me that I would have this obsession. (277)

An American media team enlists the translation services of Dr Nameer, who was still then a PhD student, to accompany them as a translator in Baghdad. Their film documents the aftermath of the 2003 U.S.-led invasion of Iraq, yet it ends up editing out more than it included. Dr Nameer narrates his disappointment at the American imperial archive:

In the nights after I watched the documentary, my head became a screen, with a collage of scenes that Roy hadn't chosen and others that had retained their place in the final version. The tanks crouched on the pavement in Abu Nuwas Street. The American soldier who came up to us when he saw us filming the statue of Abu Nuwas and asked us who he was. The woman in her fifties who wept and said, "I'll forgive the Americans for bombing us but I'll never forgive them for the embargo years." The former prisoner we met in al-Andalus Square who, smoking with trembling fingers, told us about the torture he had endured. Then he asked us to stop filming and said, "I can't go on." The librarian at the Faculty of Arts at Baghdad University, walking between the burned books. (69)

The archives, it turns out, cannot be preserved except by the victims themselves. Dr Nameer preserves his own archives of Iraq under a file he named "Collateral Damage," which in a way reflects the *fihris* of Wadood. One critic argues, "From the beginning, Antoon constructs an unusual set of parallelisms or dualities shared equally by Namir and Wadood; these are echoed throughout the book right up to its double ending. They are almost like twins who were separated at birth" (Elimelekh, 2019: 2). However, the similarities and differences are not free floating and coincidental; they are definitely constrained by power. Although both are subalterns, they occupy different gradations of the subaltern. Dr Nameer is literate in the discourse of power and resides at the center. He is a professor and has the privilege of plotting a publishable novel whose inspiration is Wadood's *fihris*. Both develop an interdependence. Wadood pins hope on Dr Nameer's ability to break through the discourse of power and occupy some liminality that enables him to represent what Wadood's peripheral *fihris* could not. However, Dr Nameer depends on Wadood for the vocabulary of the deep trauma experience of occupation. Dr Nameer as an academic is secluded and protected from the nuances of the occupation and its collateral damage, while Wadood is its very collateral

damage. However, regardless of the context of the lives of both characters, they are unified by a single vision of being subalterns. The desire to archive brings them together in one unity. This unity is not physical, of course, but one in which the one echoes the other. Their words are meant to conjure up the same dead souls of Iraqis, who are viewed by the powers that be as collateral damage. Both campaign for the same purpose. Both reflect Antoon's strategy of not letting go of the memory of Iraqis destroyed by the invasion.

Wadood's effort is motivated by hope. Wadood includes all possible kinds of subaltern: a race horse that was sold off to pull a cart after it lost races because of a kick that wounded it; a tree that was uprooted from its native place; and a manuscript that was eaten away by fire. The ambitious project by Wadood documents the collateral damage of the U.S. invasion of Iraq. This includes not only humans, but also cultural centers, historic sites, libraries, schools and universities, and nature. All these are given a voice. The novel is structured around the life of Dr Nameer and *fihris* or catalogue of Wadood. They intersect in a fictional intertext where the voices of Dr Nameer, Wadood, and all subalterns merge in one mass of a cacophony of voices and a polyphony where no single voice predominates. Dr Nameer is aware of that influence:

I look through the notebook and discover that my words have come to resemble Wadood's words in many places. Did that happen because I copied out his colloquies and letters by hand because I was worried they might get lost or be torn up? Because I had read what he had written dozens of times? Was that a pretext for assimilating his style and inhabiting his persona? I'm not sure. No, I didn't write this part. He was the one who wrote it. These are not my words. They are his words. My words are the ones that sneaked into his eternal minute and his catalog to escape through the black hole. Or to hide inside it. I can no longer tell the difference. (Antoon, 2019: 283)

Dr Nameer becomes aware of how the catalogue of Wadood started to invade his vocabulary and ideas. It is a kind of archival intertextuality that sometimes blurs the lines between Wadood and Dr Nameer. The archive itself becomes an intertext that unifies the cacophony of voices. All their traumas are intertextual and vary only in tone and emphasis. While the novel offers a polyphonic world where many voices are heard, intertextuality creates a centrality to that voice. Wadood, Dr Nameer, and all the animate and inanimate things that Wadood included share a subaltern status and a feverish concern with memory and trauma. All the stories retain the intertextual concern with writing the past and its depredations. The whole novel alternates passages from the catalogue by Wadood and the

daily life of Dr Nameer. Ultimately both share the same trauma that makes both depressed, with the exception that Wadood, who falls victim to his depression, is more subaltern than the privileged Dr Nameer, whose place in Western academia provides him with a speaking space that is not guaranteed to Wadood. Wadood writes and never publishes anything. Dr Nameer, however, was able to secure a job through his translations of Abu Nawas. Dr Nameer is a mirror figure who reflects Wadood—the real sufferer and cataloguer of the subaltern.

The voices of the subaltern carry a strong message of trauma through the episodic narrative that alternates with the life of Dr Nameer. There is a passion to archive and be part of the past as an antidote against forgetfulness. Wadood, who we come to know was tortured in prison and shows signs of trauma after his release, has the ambition of archiving all the trauma that came after the invasion of Iraq. He starts to hear voices. Inanimate and animate things start to talk to him. His diseased mind bears witness to the subaltern: through crossing the lines of reason, he is able to step into the raw and prelinguistic, which he includes in his catalogue. His psychological trauma is productive.

The trauma of the invasion of Iraq is highlighted in Dr Nameer's university, where students called for anti-war gatherings. Only a few gathered and the student who organized the event asked Dr Nameer to participate. When he asked the student about the number of roses placed at the elm tree commemorating war casualties, she answered:

"They represent the number of American soldiers killed in Iraq so far: three hundred and seventy, one rose for every ten." Before I could ask her about the Iraqis, she added spontaneously, "Unfortunately, we don't know exactly how many Iraqis have died. And in the group we decided it would be better politically to focus first on our own troop casualties and bring up civilians later." (96)

Archives then are tools that reflect the powers that be. They only keep record of what is "important" and ignore that which is Other and unimportant.

Death of the Author and Birth of the Archive

Manuscripts and other archiveable materials are likened to a human being. As Wadood argues in his letter to Dr Nameer:

We are manuscripts and rough drafts of books. But in order to be completed and to be read, we have to die. Only then will we become known. Because things become known through being complete. It's the same with people. You can only do a full autopsy on a body after death. (101)

Collateral Damage ends with the desire of Wadood, the author of the catalogue or archive, to destroy the catalogue where he wanted to inventory the losses incurred by the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq:

My birthday is a month away and I will celebrate it in an unusual way. I'm going to throw all my files into a barrel and watch them turn into ashes. Yes, I am going to burn the catalog. And since it is an important project and a unique text, it would be unbecoming for it to march to its demise alone. What am I after the catalog? Why should I even exist and for whom? The ideal ending would be for me to burn too. The ecstasy of utter annihilation, leaving this form of existence and going to absolute nothingness. (291)

The archive of the subaltern suffers from one important weakness: it is not attached to power. Working from the periphery is its strongest and weakest point at the same time. That is why it always dresses itself up in trauma and loss. It seeks redemption in the past and looks for similar moments of loss. Attached to that letter of Wadood is a letter by Tawhidi, a tenth-century copyist and writer; one of his estranged friends and patrons in which he explains at length the reasons that made him destroy his writings. The narration highlights similarities between the two in order to create a continuity between an Iraqi writer in the tenth century and the imaginary character of Wadood. Both decide to destroy the archives as an act of utter negation of the self. Their tortured souls could not bear being slighted by their times. Therefore, not all destruction of the archive is inflicted by an invading power; sometimes it is self-inflicted. Wadood admits his own marginality. His is a job of a subaltern trying to write the story of the subaltern. He would, though, accomplish his own death.

It is only through a privileged center that the hero of the archive is able to speak. Wadood, the author of the all-inclusive *fihris* or catalogue, can only wish to publish his work in translation through Dr Nameer, the U.S. professor who undertakes to help him and even get him a scholarship to complete his work. Self-destructive instincts creep in and he, like the tenth-century copyist and intellectual, thinks of burning his *fihris*:

Is it reasonable to worry about the fate of what I write before my pen even begins to bleed ink onto paper? There's a wonderful African proverb in Chinua Achebe's novel *Things Fall Apart* that goes "Until lions have their own historians, the history of the hunt will always glorify the hunter." The idea isn't new, of course, but the metaphor is a gem. The victors are always the ones who write history. (20)

In his article on the tradition of book burning by authors, Wadād al-Qāḍī (2004) ruminates on the reasons of Tawhidi's decision to destroy his books:

Tawhidi mentions the degeneration of contemporary society twice, but it is noticeable that he does not say anything about what exactly makes that society degenerate. What he suggests, however, is that the values upheld by this society do not include in any way the appreciation, let alone the rewarding, of artistic talent and scholarly accomplishment: such matters are totally alien to that society. This disenfranchises scholars and litterateurs, pushes their patience to the utmost limit, makes them "strangers" in their own lands, and eventually leads them to abominable, lamentable behavior, like burning. (632–633)

Wadood reaches back a millennium to an Abbasid copyist and bibliophile, who burned his books, to find a justification for burning his catalogue or *fihris*. Tawhidi serves as an inspiration to Wadood. This desire for destruction because one was ignored and mistreated recalls Freudian desire to self-destroy—the Thanatos.

This concern with the archive as destructible and unviable and biased is at the core of Antoon's attempt to recover the past as well as heritage that were destroyed by the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq in 2003. Trauma is a defining feature of the archive. The archive is broadly defined as including almost everything that is written from the margin and that looks at the past. That definition is given to us by the bookseller of Baghdad. It is a history of everything that was lost and kept and an attempt to come to terms with the war's "collateral damage."

This death wish of the author of the archive opens the way for interpretation and ambiguity, which find a similar connection with the characters of *Ḥiṣn al-turāb*. Archives are all that are left of their authors. Therefore, archives here are incarnations of the dead. For archives themselves in the form of manuscripts or letters do not offer themselves readily for interpretation. They are difficult to decipher. In both novels, characters and manuscripts are inseparable. In *Ḥiṣn al-turāb*, the lineage of the past is mediated through manuscripts that make access to the past a matter of *Ijtihad*. Glifford Geertz's (1973) description of the difficulty of studying cultures is apt:

Doing ethnography is like trying to read (in the sense of "construct a reading of") a manuscript—foreign, faded, full of ellipses, incoherencies, suspicious emendations, and tendentious commentaries, but written not in conventionalized graphs of sound but in transient examples of shaped behavior. (10)

The generation of Moriscos in different locations over centuries retains a feverish interest in protecting the archive, as one father entrusts the manuscripts

and their preservation and translation and even interpretation to his son and the whole quest runs in the family. On their deathbeds, fathers place a quest upon the shoulders of their confused sons, who try hard to interpret the looks on their fathers' faces before death. Ibrahim De Molina, the main narrator, wonders about the meaning of his father's look which "carried signs that I did not completely process until now. All his statements were guiding; nevertheless, they were like Sufi statements: ambiguous and hard to interpret" ('Abd al-Laṭīf 2018: 161). The past is another country that needs to be brought to life by means of undertaking an anthropology of the dead. Translation broadly defined complicates an already arduous task. Talal Asad (2018), a distinguished anthropologist, argues that:

translation is never a direct move from discourse A to discourse B because it always involves an interpreting (mediating) sign X. That chain I see as the core of tradition, the move from one generation to another through translation, and through disputes over what is essential to the tradition, differences that must therefore be reflected in the translation. (4–5)

The context of interpreting the past is constrained by the mundane needs of the time. The past is archived and preserved as a means of social coherence that comes under attack through the constant supervision of the Inquisition and the facts of living under constant surveillance. The archive is used as a means of shoring up a common heritage and becomes a final refuge and only certainty in the face of uncertain times. In her much-celebrated book, *The Allure of the Archive*, French historian Arlette Farge (2013), looking at the archives of the Bastille, argues that:

Police records of Paris in the eighteenth century are relevant to a community being supervised and hunted down: Discord and confrontation lie at the heart of police records. Why not make use of this fact, and create out of rupture and disquiet a grammar with which to read the ways existences were time and again made and unmade? It is not easy to separate the history of men and women from that of social relations and antagonisms. Indeed, certain social groups only came into being through the experience of struggle. (44)

Such was the identity of Moriscos as they appear throughout *Ḥiṣn al-turāb*—a community that is brought into existence out of an elongated period of constant strife to remain loyal to their culture and religion. That identity is earned rather than conferred as the characters must work hard translating and copying and hiding manuscripts and making sure that the manuscripts are handed down their line for yet more translation and interpretation as times change. The many generations of *Ḥiṣn al-turāb* do not look back to the past bequeathed upon them in the archives with

dogmatic certainty but with a constant feeling of its contingency. This is structurally achieved using a cacophony of voices in the novel. The archives are the complex documents written in several languages that responded to the needs and constraints of the times. All that can be produced are only editions and versions of the past through the exercise of human agency and intellect. Steedman (2002) explains that:

In the project of finding an identity through the processes of historical identification, the past is searched for something (someone, some group, some series of events) that confirms the searcher in his sense of self, confirms them as they want to be, and feel in some measure that they already are. The search is for all the ideas, and times, and images that will give us, right now solidity and meaning in time. (77)

In both novels, the search is always for the subaltern and the voiceless.

The messianic hope that the day will come when the manuscripts would be of value never materialized. The powerful have sealed the fate of Moriscos forever. The papers of Abdallah De Molina ominously declare:

From now on, your brothers in Granada, Cordova, Seville, Cadiz, Jaén, and Malaga will see the bitterness of defeat: They will be banned from naming their children the names they like, eat what they like, sing their songs, fast in Ramadan. The inquisition will be established for them as it was for us. They will be hanged if they do not eat pork. They will fast and pray in secret. O my children! Their destiny will be similar to the destiny of Cuenca: Pray to Jesus in public and follow Muhammad in secret. ('Abd al-Laṭīf, 2018: 76)

Antoon's main character, Dr Nameer, uses the archive as a structuring trope that is utilized to shape the past, not the future. His alter ego is the Baghdad bookseller, Wadood, for whom

the universe is just fragmenting and debris, and here we are, living the consequences and effects of it. I'm going to pluck this minute out of the black hole. But why? There are people who write in order to change the present or the future, whereas I dream of *changing the past*. This is my rationale and the rationale of my catalog. (Antoon, 2019: 23, emphasis mine)

Thus, the writing of the story of the victim and the subaltern is the main concern. Wadood/Dr Namir and Ibrahim De Molina examine the past and the archive of the past and its potential, which is salvaging the voice of the subaltern in all its nuisance and complexity.

Asked about his birth certificate as a required document for issuing a driving license, Dr Nameer makes clear that he does not have it as it is left behind in Baghdad. The clerk inquires as to why he cannot get his birth certificate from Baghdad and he answers, “There are manuscripts hundreds of years old that have been burned and lost as well as antiquities and archives. Who is going to look for my birth certificate after all that?” (92). Dr Nameer was obsessed with archiving:

I was always saving newspapers or magazine clippings, folding them up or putting them in books associated with them. I once tried to pull them all together and sort them into a folder when I was trying to organize my papers and my life, as would happen once every year or two. But I never finished the task because I realized I was using these side projects as an excuse to procrastinate and avoid working on my dissertation. When I came back from Baghdad after meeting Wadood, saving clippings became a daily ritual. I seemed to have contracted by contagion his obsession with the archives. (83, emphasis mine)

Dr Nameer’s brief visit to Baghdad and cursory meeting with Wadood trigger a meeting with the old self or in Bachelard’s terms “sites of our intimate lives” (2014: 8). The novel alternates between “quotations” from the archive of Wadood and the life of Dr Nameer. There is an element of metafiction in *Fihris* where Dr Nameer, a fictional character, thinks of writing a novel:

I thought of writing about Wadood and his project. It could be intertextual with his catalog, including excerpts from it. Why not? But I had to find out more about his background and his life. I scolded myself for getting carried away with an idea that was wonderful but totally impractical. (Are wonderful things ever practical?) I had to finish my doctoral dissertation to secure my job, and I had to turn it into an academic work, and after that I might be free for novels. That would be logical, but it’s not my logic. (Antoon, 2019: 23)

Both Dr Nameer and the various characters of three generations in *Ḥiṣn al-turāb* undergo some form of exile. Exile is a definitive characteristic that they try to survive by creating archives of the past and the present. The archive has a therapeutic effect as it points towards the future and the deferred dream of completeness. In *Ḥiṣn al-turāb*, a generation lives in Tetuan, Morocco and traces their origins to Cuenca in Spain. Miguel and father were ordered to leave but the Christian wife and daughter were ordered to remain. The father who converted to Christianity in his hometown in Spain died as an exile and his son who remained a Muslim takes him back to be buried in Spain, according to his will.

The archive becomes even more important when it relates to exile. An exile shows attachment and concern for his home country. Dr Nameer, an Iraqi professor who lives in exile, archives news about Iraq so that he can write a novel later, which is a form of metanarrative. *Collateral Damage* is self-conscious about its topic of trauma, cultural memory, and the archive.

The Archive as a House of Memory

Edward Said (1997) succinctly summarizes Foucault's use of the library and archive:

the "library" and the "archive" in Foucault's project serve a particularly humanizing purpose. Certainly a library is manmade, even if as a collection of discrete entities it cannot be contained in anyone man's mind or experience. Still, the library's use for a finite purpose can be subordinated to a human motive—just as an act of speech is humanly motivated. (333)

In *Hişn al-turāb*, the library is a place of memory where manuscripts inherited through generations change hands and are stored in rooms in houses. They are kept and copied to counter forgetfulness and loss of identity. The archives cement an identity threatened with extinction because of the Inquisition and expulsion. The house provides a structure of feeling as well as a lacuna better understood in spatial terms:

For these are the houses in which we are going to recapture the intimacy of the past in our daydreams. We shall have to apply ourselves increasingly to studying how, by means of the house, the warm substance of intimacy resumes its form, the same form that it had when it enclosed original warmth. (Bachelard, 2014: 84)

Generally, places in both novels provide a sense of lingering intimacy and obstinacy that stand as a marker of the past and a willingness to mourn the traumatic events that transformed space. In *Hişn al-turāb*, physical space is the place where identity is stored in the form of manuscripts and documents that are inherited generation after generation. The father chooses his son to carry their identity but all in secrecy. In *Poetics of Space*, Bachelard (2014: 81) argues that: "These complex pieces that a craftsman creates are very evident witnesses of the need for secrecy, of an intuitive sense of hiding places. It is not merely a matter of keeping a possession well guarded." In *Hişn al-turāb*, tradition, history, and identity are handed down secretly. The need for secrecy is paramount for a

Muslim community that was being hunted down. Closets and chests are symbiotic with tradition:

The rooftop room had a huge wooden chest a mat and an iron bed. It was an open door to history. A history about which I knew nothing: the past that I had to live in. The outwardly poor room was inwardly rich. My father let me in because I am his first born. Because I am his first born and only son, he bequeathed to me our history. The history of our family . . . My father allowed me to enter me and left me there in the secret chamber. He left me in the past and inside I came to know my forefathers. ('Abd al-Laṭīf, 2018: 16)

The archival quality of space as a repository of a past pointing towards the future is prominent in shaping identity and marking loss. This is especially emphasized in the case of *Fihris*, where the Iraqi bookseller ambitiously aims at inventorying all physical and non-physical spaces that shape the past.

Finally, the archive is used both literally and metaphorically as a Foucauldian manifestation of the ubiquity of power and the authority invested in material archives. To work from the margin and in secrecy is a trait of the subaltern quest of both Wadood the bookseller and Dr Nameer, as well as the different characters of the De Molina family. The official history written by the powers that be marginalizes the Other. However, the digging of the archives by the subaltern raises the hope of an alternative history that saves the traces of the subaltern. The archive includes physical archives, manuscripts, artefacts, stamps, cassettes, and photos, as amply shown in *Fihris*. In *Ḥiṣn al-turāb*, the archive has more of a metaphoric than literal meaning: it is the spectral *topos* of suppressed desire and recovered memory. The archive enables the subaltern to speak by digging up and even making up archives. Both quests are feverish and reflect the trauma that motivates digging up the past as recovered memory and the desire to keep traces of the past as tokens of a marginalized identity seeking redress.

Notes

1. The Arabic original *Fihris* (2016) was consulted, however, all quotations in this article are taken from the 2019 translation, *The Book of Collateral Damage*.
2. All translations from *Ḥiṣn al-turāb* are mine.

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