

# Repressed Desires and Trauma in Al-Humaidan's and Al-Hamad's Novels: A Psychoanalytic Reading of Inner Conflict and Repression

Mustafa A. Thabet

Faculty of Language Studies, Arab Open University, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia

Khaled Abkar Alkodimi

Department of English Language and Literature, College of Languages and Translation, Imam Mohammad Ibn Saud Islamic University (IMSIU), Riyadh 13317, Saudi Arabia

**Abstract**—This essay draws on Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytic perspective, among others, to explore Ibrahim al-Nasser al-Humaidan's *Ghuyum al-Kharif* (1988) and Turki al-Hamad's *Juruh al-Thakirah* (2002). The basic argument is that the psychological turmoil of the characters, Muhaisin and Latifah, in particular, stems from a dual impulse: a desire to adopt Western norms and a simultaneous fear of cultural dislocation. The study shows that these works ostensibly depict the psychological impact and consequences of social transformation in Saudi Arabia, illustrating how rapid shifts in cultural, political, and gender norms infiltrate individual consciousness and collective identity, resulting in psychological tension, inner conflict, and evolving understandings of how individuals perceive their own identity. It further shows that both texts emphasize that the psychological conflict depicted in both texts seems to arise from a strong attachment to cultural traditions, which are deeply internalized and come into conflict with changing social realities.

**Index Terms**—*Ghuyum al-Kharif*, *Juruh al-Thakirah*, psychoanalysis, repression, trauma

## I. INTRODUCTION

Saudi Arabia has undergone profound social and cultural changes over the past several decades, particularly following the discovery of oil. These rapid changes shifted the Saudi landscape from traditional rural life to a modern, urban society (Alkodimi & Thabet, 2026, p. 1). However, this caused significant psychological effects on many Saudi citizens, who found themselves torn between embracing modernization and maintaining traditional values (Alshammari, 2017; Alwuraafi, 2021). Literature, as a reflection of society, often serves as a space where these transformations are examined, debated, and internalized. Many prominent Saudi novelists have chosen to explore the psychological effects of the swift social and economic changes in the post-oil-discovery era—among them, al-Humaidan and al-Hamad stand out as notable examples. As Al Farhan and Al Raddadi (2023) point out, “the rise of the novel in this context depicts the impact of the rapid modernization of these societies and how it produces a sense of fragmentation of the self and society” (pp. 1–2).

Ibrahim al-Nasser al-Humaidan's *Ghuyum al-Kharif*, translated as [Autumn Clouds], and Turki al-Hamad's *Juruh al-Thakirah*, translated as [Wounds of Memory], powerfully depict the psychological impact of those social changes upon individuals and society at large. Through striking imagery and character development, these works of literature powerfully illustrate the profound impact of those shifting social dynamics on personal identity and collective consciousness. Al-Humaidan, in *Ghuyum al-Kharif* (1988), for instance, seems to hint very early at this social problem when Muhaisin, the narrator protagonist, raises a serious question: “Is money a cause of disorder and distraction?” (p. 46). Such a question implicitly reflects his mental/psychological agony. Perhaps this is why he seeks to see a psychiatrist (p. 46). Muhaisin believes that the oil flow marked the advent of a new turning point in the history and life of the Saudi people (p. 49). He thinks that it caused “a great civilizational leap that he never dreamed of living” (p. 25). Indeed, he thinks it is a “crazy leap” (p. 101). This leads him to contemplate whether an ethical crisis will appear due to this economic boom (p. 89). Muhaisin concludes that “the magic of money overshadowed all values” (p. 137).

Similarly, Latifah's early comments in *Juruh al-Thakirah* by al-Hamad (2002), on the new life and its economic and social changes, clearly imply that the main concern of the novel is the psyche of its characters. “It is not what is happening around us that matters, but what is happening within us,” Latifah said (p. 19). Like Muhaisin, in *Ghuyum al-Kharif*, Latifa, the protagonist in *Juruh al-Thakirah*, undergoes a long psychological therapy in Riyadh, California, and Beirut (pp. 145, 168, 183). Indeed, the opening of al-Hamad's *Juruh al-Thakirah* reflects the novel's engagement with the psyche of its characters. It opens with a quotation from the Belgian psychotherapist Pierre Daco's famous book *Les Prodigieuses Victoires de la Psychologie Moderne* (*The Amazing Victories of Modern Psychology*), translated into Arabic by Wagih Asaad in 1988:

Life passes, and its development continues slowly ... A balanced man should let an unfavorable circumstance slip away smoothly. As for a favorable circumstance, he is required to utilize it ... Those who are incapable of

utilizing an adequate circumstance are prisoners of mental paralysis, who are afflicted with internal distortions. (Al-Hamad, 2002, p. 9)

Hence, these opening lines de facto foreshadow the content of the text that strikingly provides vivid depictions of the psychological conditions that many citizens have experienced due to the economic boom that the kingdom passed through in the post-oil era, the 1950s, and beyond.

Yet, the psychological dimension becomes more pronounced when Dr. Ayman, another character, articulates the adverse effects of the new lifestyle on mental well-being to the protagonist while providing her medical treatment, stating that “the psychological illnesses are a result of the new era we are living in,” to which she wholly agrees (p. 76). Furthermore, Saleh, Latifa’s husband’s powerful comment almost sums up the whole idea when he explains the case his wife is undergoing to his friend, Sulieman, the latter laughs and says that “maybe a day will come and the whole country will become a sanitarium or a mental hospital” (p. 117). Sulieman adds that Saleh is the fifth person among people whom he knows who has a similar issue at their homes. Hence, these comments and views by these different characters clearly show that the major theme of these two significant novels is the representation of the psychological impact of the economic boom on Saudi society during the second half of the twentieth century.

Arguably, *Ghuyum al-Kharif* and *Juruh al-Thakirah* do not simply reflect external societal changes; rather, they delve into the interior lives of individuals navigating these shifting paradigms. This essay contends that both texts ostensibly depict the psychological consequences of Saudi Arabia’s evolving social fabric, offering nuanced portrayals of anxiety, alienation, internalized conflict, trauma, and resilience as individuals confront the dissonance between tradition and modernity.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Several studies have been conducted on the Saudi novels that reflect the psychological impact of the economic boom on individuals and society. One of the earliest studies that applied the psychological approach to Saudi fiction is Sami Juraidi’s *Al-riwaya al-nisa’iya al-Sa’udiyya: Khatib al-mara’a wa-tashkil al-Sard*, 2008 [The Saudi Women’s Novel: Female Discourse and Narrative Formation]. He employs the stream of consciousness technique to examine the narrative formation of Saudi female fictional discourse from 1958 to 2008. In ‘*The City and Social Transformations in Arabic Literature: The Saudi Novel as Case Study* (1980-2011),’ Alfauzan (2013) explored several aspects in Saudi fiction, among them is the psychological impact of social changes in modern Saudi Arabia. He states that one of the prominent characteristics of Saudi fiction during the concerned period is its capability to discern the social transformations “not only from the historical and political perspectives, but also from within the fabric of civil society and in terms of the psychological effects” (p. 97). This view is shared by Al-Abdullah (2013), who states in his book *Tajaliyat Al-Hadathah fi Al-Riwayah Al-Saudiyyah Al-Mo’asirah* [Manifestations of Modernity in Contemporary Saudi Novel] that “in the modern Saudi novel one can find different colors inspired by serial, existential and psycho-analytical imagination” (p. 13), quoting some prominent modern experimental Saudi novelists like Turki Al-Hamad, Abdo Khal, Ghazi Al-Qosaibi, among others.

Alshammari (2017), however, conducted a comparison between Saudi and American postmodern novels, and subsidiarily attempted a psychological analysis of some Saudi novels, among them *The Dove’s Necklace* (2010) by Raja’a Alem, *Throwing Sparks* (2009) by Abdo Khal, *Girls of Riyadh* (2007) by Rajaa Alsanea, and *Life on Hold* (2004) by Fahd al-Atiq. He illustrates how “Americanization and cultural globalization” shaped Saudi personality to the extent of making a character “a schizophrenic person” (p. 115), as reflected in the first novel. More importantly, his study highlights that “psychological problems cannot be isolated from the influence of wealth and power” (p. 21). Moreover, in the third novel, he endeavored “to illustrate how Saudi Arabia’s participation in the global economic system produces the instability of personality” (p. 34). Finally, in the last novel, he explores the psychological trauma in “the life of a Saudi man who encountered the economic and social development in the 1970s and the 1980s” (p. 119).

Recently, Alwuraafi (2021) published a research paper entitled ‘Modernity and Alienation in Fahd Al-Atiq’s *Life on Hold*’, in which he examines the “negative psychological impacts such as alienation and estrangement on Saudis who, unexpectedly, found themselves in an entirely new world” due to the sudden metamorphosis after the “extraordinary economic boom that resulted from the oil production” (p. 1). Indeed, this major concern of the Saudi novel seems to be the main focus of Mohammed Albalawi’s study, who, however, appears to emphasize this major shift in the Saudi novel. In his article, ‘*The Hidden Treasure: (Re)branding Saudi Fiction*’, he reassures the readers that the Saudi novelists, particularly the young authors, “added a psychological and philosophical depth to the paradigm of Saudi fiction” (Albalawi, 2022, p. 4). He quotes Abdo Khal’s novel *Throwing Sparks* (2010) as an example of Saudi fiction that “can be analyzed psychologically through its topics of narcissism, personality disorder, revenge, torture, and more” (p. 7).

However, even though several studies have been conducted on a few Saudi novels from a psychological perspective, little attention is paid to the specific texts selected for this study. The literature review, in other words, shows that, to date, no psychoanalytical study has been conducted on these texts. This study focuses on two prominent Saudi novelists, al-Humaidan and al-Hamdan. While al-Humaidan’s text was published in 1998, Alhamad’s novel was published in 2002, a relatively recent work, by the time that the social changes had already reached their peak. This enables researchers to provide an in-depth analysis that reflects not only the psychological impact of those changes on society and individuals, but also their effects across generations.

### III. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Literature has been studied from a psychological perspective for decades. According to Kurzweil and Phillips (1983), “the coupling of literature and psychoanalysis goes back to Freud” (p. 1). Sigmund Freud, who was an Austrian doctor, founded psychoanalysis at the end of the nineteenth century as a kind of medical treatment for neurotic personality (Holland, 1990, p. 5). Later, he and other theorists of psychology, such as Alfred Adler, Carl Jung, Jacques Lacan, Erich Fromm, Wilhelm Reich, and Melanie Klein, widened the scope of psychoanalysis to include the study of literature, culture, myth, and civilization. The field of literary psychoanalysis was subsequently enriched by literary critics and theorists, including Norman Holland, Lev Tolstoy, Fyodor Dostoevsky, and Virginia Woolf. For Barker (2001), literary psychoanalysis considers the text as “a source of information about the unconscious mind of the speaker” (p. 98). It helps literary critics to explore thematic issues and intended messages by lending itself as a valuable tool that can be used to carry out a systematic analysis of characters’ unconscious thoughts, repressed desires, underlying motives, and inner conflicts.

The primary concern of this study is the psychological turmoil experienced by the characters in al-Humaidan’s *Ghuyum al-Kharif* (1988) and al-Hamad’s *Juruh al-Thakirah* (2002) as a result of socio-economic development. It argues that Muhaisin and Latifah’s psychological condition, in particular, stems from a dual impulse: a desire to adopt Western norms and a simultaneous fear of cultural dislocation. The study employs a psychoanalytic lens to examine the two novels. Drawing primarily on Sigmund Freud’s theories, the analysis focuses on uncovering the unconscious desires, repressed emotions, and internal conflicts of key characters, as well as the symbolic structures within the texts. The study also considers the psychological dimensions of identity, memory, trauma, and cultural perspective, exploring how these elements reflect broader socio-cultural tensions between tradition and modernity. By applying psychoanalytic concepts such as the ‘ego’, the ‘superego’, the uncanny, repression, and others, the paper aims to reveal deeper layers of meaning and the psychological undercurrents that shape both character development and narrative structure.

### IV. THE ECONOMIC BOOM: A TURNING POINT LEADING TO A NEW LIFESTYLE

Before we delve into the psychoanalysis of the two novels, it is essential to briefly highlight how these two texts, though written in different times (1988 and 2002), have provided a panoramic view of the rapid social and economic transformations in mid-twentieth-century Saudi society. Al-Humaidan’s *Ghuyum al-Kharif*, for example, depicts these changes, taking Riyadh city as a microcosm for all Saudi cities and societies. In a detailed account of the changing landscape of Riyadh, the narrator protagonist states:

Riyadh, the city, is gradually discarding its past walls, gates, narrow alleys, and ancient mud houses, expanding in all directions with urbanization, factories, universities, and agricultural projects. This leap creates a flourishing economic boost. Prosperity prevails after poverty and destitution ... And now that affluence has spread its wings, let us reflect on the elders’ saying: ‘Oh God, protect us from the evils of this boon’ ... (Al-Humaidan, 1988, pp. 100–101)

This detailed description continues, depicting the rapid and deep social changes. It portrays a society transformed by rapid urbanization, materialism, and the relentless pursuit of success. Luxury and wealth have become dominant values, symbolized by the fixation on the figure of one million, which had then become a common figure. However, as people chase opportunities in the city, personal relationships have weakened, friends drift apart, and even the elderly abandon their rural homes to follow their children into urban life. The countryside lies deserted, echoing with signs of abandonment, while the city is a hub of constant construction and business. Individuals are overwhelmed, time-starved, and so engrossed in commercial ambition that many forget the importance of family and human connection. The overall tone conveys a sense of disorientation and loss amid unchecked progress (Al-Humaidan, 1988, pp. 100–101).

Hence, Al-Humaidan’s (1988) *Ghuyum al-Kharif* reveals a rich tapestry of denotations. First, urbanization is taking place rapidly, bringing about significant changes in the Saudi lifestyle. The Saudi government is carrying out mega-developmental projects. The lower- and middle-class people are rushing towards business; the closed conservative society is turning into capitalism. Social and familial bonds are affected negatively. Everyone is busy building wealth and improving their social status. Second, globalization has a remarkable impact on Saudi society and individuals. The shedding of the walls of the past symbolizes the openness of Saudi society that for centuries remained closed, “fearing the destructive new or the poisoned dazzle” (p. 64). Open-door economic policy resulted in Saudi individuals traveling around the world and discovering new cultures, and people from several Asian and African countries flooding the kingdom as laborers, bringing with them their own cultures. In other words, the kingdom has become a cultural melting pot, leading Saudis to embrace new cultural views and practices like socialism and liberalism, particularly those who belong to the young generation who studied in America and European countries. Apparently, Sulaiman’s character can be an embodiment of such influence in *Ghuyum al-Kharif*, embracing the philosophical views of Western thinkers such as Descartes, Spinoza, and Schopenhauer and writers like Tolstoy, Gorky, and Gogol (p. 48), and considering Muhaisin as a capitalist (p. 52). Sulaiman’s view is further confirmed through Khaled, another character who enthusiastically talks about the need to change the Eastern economic views, social traditions and values, and political systems to catch up with the modern civilized Western countries (pp. 106–111). In short, Al-Humaidan’s *Ghuyum al-Kharif* clearly illustrates to what extent the discovery of oil has changed the fate of the kingdom and its people. Rapid urbanization and pervasive

globalization have led to tremendous social, economic, and intellectual transformations. As Alharthi (2015) believes, oil discovery and globalization are two factors that have accelerated these transformations, which have had a perennial impact on the Saudi personality (p. 14).

Similarly, Al-Hamad's *Juruh al-Thakirah* offers a description of modern Riyadh that closely mirrors the one found in Al-Humaidan's *Ghuyum al-Kharif*. Latifah, the female protagonist, openly points out that Riyadh has changed in a few years to the extent that it has become Riyadhs and that she cannot recognize where Riyadh is in today's Riyadh as it is changing a thousand times a day (p. 25). Urbanization entailed modernization, which is realized in adopting the Western lifestyle. The manifestations of the new lifestyle are evident in various practices that have become emblematic of the boom's newly affluent class: excessive travelling abroad and engagement in medical tourism (p. 22); the acquisition and use of multiple branded cars (p. 26), residence in villas located in well-developed districts within the Kingdom and overseas (p. 28); the ownership of pets such as Persian cats, European dogs, and goldfish (p. 32); the decoration of villas with marble statues and expensive world-famous portraits to signify social prestige (p. 98); the employment of foreign drivers and housemaids to oversee domestic affairs (p. 141); and finally, the consumption of American films, European music, and literary works by Western authors and novelists. In this sense, the new lifestyle appears to be completely different from the old traditional one. There is a huge gap between the old society and the new one. When Latifah compares her life to her sister's, who remained in their village, she finds that "the huge gap between her and her sister makes her feel that they belong to two different eras and two unrelated lives" (p. 275). Thus, both texts are deeply engaged with the dynamics of social transformation and its ensuing consequences. However, the issue at stake is the psychological impact of those social changes on the lives of individuals, which will be discussed in the following sections.

#### V. THE BOOM GENERATION AND THE COMPLEX OF THE PAST

To begin with, Al-Humaidan's novel deliberately juxtaposes two contrasting portraits of Saudi society, before and after the emergence of the boom generation. That is to say, the boom generation lived in two eras. This generation underwent a profound transformation, transitioning from an era defined by unpaved streets and the absence of basic infrastructure, such as clean water and electricity, to a period of rapid modernization and material prosperity, characterized by modern villas, formal education, hospitals, and widespread access to essential services (p. 25). Muhaisin, the narrator protagonist, for example, is introduced as a miserable villager who moved to Riyadh city and became a government employee, and later an entrepreneur. He traveled to London, Paris, Rome, and Madrid, and "tasted the strange flavor of life" (p. 26). Yet, he is reminded of belonging to a "miserable generation" (p. 34) and of being a "worthless villager" by his friend, Suliaman, who belongs to the next generation (p. 35).

This traumatic state continues to disturb Muhaisin, who is haunted by weird fantasies, feeling that he lives in a dichotomy. He is caught up between the pull of modernity and the traditional lifestyle of the past. He lives a luxurious life; nevertheless, "that does not make him feel true happiness or lush serenity; rather, he feels torn" (p. 45). He used to sleep peacefully when he was at his wretched worst. That is why he asks, "[i]s money the cause of his disorder and distraction" (p. 46). He soon discovers that his psychological suffering is that he is still the 'old peasant', and that his "barren, bleak, past years that he spent in poverty and desolation, sharing his home and food with snakes, still spread their terror around him and absorb ephemeral delight from him" (p. 57). Hence, it is the complex of the past that haunts him and prevents him from enjoying the new era.

From a psychoanalytic perspective, Muhaisin appears to fall under the influence of the 'superego' that acts like a "regulating agent". Based on the Freudian theory, "the superego imposes a set of moral imperatives on the ego to ensure that the ego's actions align with the ethical and societal values" (Zuhair, 2025, p. 4). In other words, the superego is the "moral censoring agency". It is, as Freud says and as discussed by Guerin et al. (1999), the "representative of all moral restrictions" (p. 130). Guerin et al. further state that "Freud de facto attributes the development of the superego to the parental influence that manifests itself in terms of punishment for what society considers to be bad behavior ..." (p. 131). In this sense, we would argue that Muhaisin's "overactive superego creates an unconscious sense of guilt," using Guerin et al.'s expression (p. 131), due to his emersion in the western lifestyle in response to the demands of his id. According to Freud's view, whereas the id is dominated by the pleasure principle and the ego by the reality principle, the superego is dominated by the morality principle. In this sense, al-Humaidan's character seems to embody the psychoanalytic view where Muhaisin's internal conflict between modernism and tradition appears to be the result of a struggle between the id (instinctual impulses) and the superego (internalized societal norms), with modernism representing the id's desire for freedom and tradition embodying the superego's demands for conformity and guilt.

Muhaisin's psychological state is further illustrated through the theme of alienation, another psychological dimension explored in *Ghuyum al-Kharif*. Upon returning from America, Muhaisin experiences a profound sense of estrangement within his native environment. He finds himself disconnected from the familiar, yearning for the vitality and dynamic atmosphere he once encountered abroad, thus embodying the psychological dislocation experienced by individuals caught between contrasting cultural spheres. Indeed, Muhaisin's situation appears to echo that of Subhyyah in *San'a'ā'ī* [My Sana'a] by Nadia al-Kowkabani. Upon returning from Cairo, Subhyyah finds herself utterly alienated from both the people and the city that she once viewed with deep nostalgia. "Ironically, Subhyyah ends up searching for Cairo" as "she "finds Sana'a incomparable to Cairo" (Alkodimi, 2021, p. 13). Like Subhyyah, whose return from Cairo to Sana'a evokes a deep sense of displacement, Muhaisin's sense of alienation similarly underscores the psychological distance that he feels in his

own environment upon returning. Muhaisin's psychological state is revealed through self-interrogation as he raises serious questions. "Why did they push us to the West until we fell in love with it? Isn't it our right to imitate it since it has unleashed this burning sense of awakening life and freedom? We tasted privation ... Now the other side of life smiled and clapped for us, calling us to pursue our pleasure" (p. 76). The very mention of 'pleasure' clearly illustrates Muhaisin's psychological conflict.

From a psychoanalytic perspective, conflict between the superego and the id, or the ego, can lead to "neurosis", a psychological distress, anxiety, or inner turmoil (Ryan, 1999, p. 36). This inner turmoil can be interpreted in Freud's (1915) conception as "the return of the repressed" (p. 154). Muhaisin appears to suffer from some repressed desires or aspects of his personality that were fulfilled in the Western lifestyle, which led to feelings of nostalgia and an inner conflict. That is to say, the character's experience of alienation could stem from the conflict between his Saudi cultural identity and the Western values he has internalized. Hence, Muhaisin's experience of alienation in his own culture could be seen as an uncanny feeling, where the familiar becomes strange and uncomfortable.

Muhaisin's emotional instability reaches its peak when he regretfully admits that by staying abroad, he is running away from his conservative society to the world of perversity (p. 82). He enjoys worldly pleasures in the West that he cannot find at home. He wonders whether an ethical crisis will come up as a consequence of this modern Western capitalist lifestyle. He realizes that there is a huge gap and a deep chasm caused by hidden transformations. Consequently, he resolves to reclaim his youth, to return to the foundational layers of his past, and to extract from them that which he seeks (p. 99). Perhaps, this is why his friend Sulaiman rightly accuses him of suffering from schizophrenia and that he has come to Europe with the complexes of Eastern society (p. 103). Sulaiman's assertions seem substantiated, given that Muhaisin experiences a state of mental fragmentation, entangled in a psychological conflict. To put it differently, Muhaisin's inner trauma is a consequence of an inner conflict between what Horney (1950) calls the "real self" (i.e., the person's true personality) and the "ideal self" (the societally expected personality a person strives to maintain), stressing that a normal psychological state of mind can be achieved by balancing real and ideal selves (p. 176), which Muhaisin fails to achieve.

Like Muhaisin, Latifah in *Juruh al-Thakirah* by Turki al-Hamad, has a severely psychologically disturbing issue as she suffers from Nostophobia and Chronophobia. The specters of the past, as evoked by the novel's title, function as a metaphor for the protagonist's enduring psychological trauma. She was born in the last year of World War II and is now over fifty years old (p. 18). Chronologically, this description spans the period of the 1990s, following the Gulf War and the liberation of Kuwait (p. 22). During the boom years, her family had risen from poverty and become one of the richest families in Riyadh. However, "a feeling of fear from the future creeps into her heart; she is worried about the return of poverty days, though everything tells that those days had gone forever for their accounts in the European and American banks are enough to secure their welfare for an infinite time" (p. 23). As Horney (1939), in her book *New Ways in Psychoanalysis*, states, human beings are not only controlled "by the pleasure principle alone but by two guiding principles: safety and satisfaction" (p. 73). This might explain Latifah's neurotic fear of losing wealth and social status.

From a Freudian psychoanalytic point of view, the character's fear of a seemingly impossible return to poverty, despite objective financial security, reveals the persistence of unconscious anxiety rooted in earlier traumatic deprivation. This anxiety, manifesting as an irrational fear of the future, exemplifies Freud's notion of the "return of the repressed," whereby unresolved past experiences resurface in disguised or displaced forms. Her emotional response illustrates not a rational appraisal of circumstances, but rather a symptom of internal psychic conflict: the ego, unable to fully repress the trauma of past poverty, allows it to re-emerge as anticipatory fear. Hence, Latifa's deep fear of returning to a life of poverty, after having lived through the comfort and possibilities of the modern era, can be understood as a psychological struggle rooted in repressed memories and anxieties. Although she may not fully acknowledge these fears on a conscious level, they continue to influence her behavior and thinking. According to Freud (1915), past experiences, even when suppressed, remain stored in the unconscious and tend to resurface over time (p. 154). In Latifa's case, the trauma of her earlier life does not vanish but instead reemerges in subtle, distorted forms, through anxiety, resistance to change, or symbolic behavior. This aligns with Freud's (1915) notion that symptoms and inner conflicts are not caused directly by repression, but rather represent the return of what has been repressed (p. 154). In this sense, Latifa's case exemplifies the Freudian concept of the 'return of the repressed'. This psychological trauma has been clearly articulated through her psychiatrist, Dr. Saleem, who explains to her:

I noticed that you maniacally fear the future and you have a fear of the past as well ... you fear the past and its poverty and destitution. You do not believe that you live in a wealth and social status that you never dreamed of; therefore, you feel anxious. The whole education that you got in your young age concentrated on Obliteration being the rule, so never trust days ... You try to suppress this thought, which as a result transforms into a complex that is the cause of your turmoil. (Al-Hamad, 2002, pp. 236–237)

Thus, from a psychoanalytic perspective, Saleem's comments clearly illustrate the inner conflict between Latifa's unconscious fears and her conscious reality. The speaker identifies a dual fear: of both the past (poverty, insecurity) and the future (the loss of newly gained wealth and status). This emotional turmoil reflects further what Freud describes as the 'return of the repressed', a psychological process where repressed thoughts or emotions, especially those rooted in trauma or fear, reemerge in disguised or symptomatic forms. The text also subtly refers to the impact of childhood experiences, a central tenet of psychoanalysis. The line 'the whole education that you got in your young age concentrated on Obliteration being the rule, so never trust days' suggests that Latifa internalized instability and impermanence early

on. These deeply embedded beliefs formed a kind of psychic blueprint, instilling in her a chronic sense of mistrust and vulnerability that continues to shape her adult psyche. Latifah's attempts to suppress these fears, of losing everything, of being returned to a destitute state, are not successful. Instead, the repression leads to the formation of a psychological complex, which manifests as anxiety and inner conflict. In this case, the complex born from repressed trauma becomes the source of her turmoil. Hence, Latifa's psychological distress is not just about her current life situation, but about the unresolved, unconscious fears rooted in past deprivation, which continue to haunt her despite her material success. Her inability to fully accept her present comforts speaks to a deeper, internalized belief that security is an illusion, a belief shaped by early experiences and reinforced by repression. This chronophobia, which is usually associated with people undergoing major life changes, leads her to an abyss of madness. Additionally, her thinking is occupied by nostophobia, the fear of her personal history or origins.

Arguably, Latifa's psychological conflict stems from a dual impulse: a desire to adopt Western norms and a simultaneous fear of cultural dislocation. Like Muhaisin, Latifah's 'superego' seems to act "like an internal censor, causing [her] to make moral judgments in light of social pressures," according to Freudian theory. As Alhusami (2021) puts it, Saudi women are tormented by "an inner conflict between openness to Western culture and conformity to cultural heritage" (p. 1). Bressler rightly observes that the superego, de facto, operates according to morality principles and acts as a guard to protect society and us from the id. It serves as a "filtering gent, suppressing the desires and instincts forbidden by society, thrusting them back into the unconscious" (p. 123). Overall, according to psychoanalysis, the superego "manifests itself through punishment" by creating an "unconscious sense of guilt and fear" (Bressler, 2003, p. 123). This perhaps explains the many conflicting thoughts swirling through Latifa's mind (Al-Hamad, 2002, p. 14).

Indeed, the very mention of the names of psychologists Freud, Jung, Adler, Watson, Pavlov, and Skinner by Latifah can be a significant reference to her psychological dilemma (pp. 93–94). Unluckily, many views of such writers contradict her religious and cultural beliefs. However, despite her immersion in the Western lifestyle, she believes that "the West's laws, problems, and diseases do not apply to us, the Arabs, as we have our own specificities that cannot go with others' generalizations" (p. 101). She emphatically states: "I am the daughter of a decent family; I am Arab; I am Muslim; and I am Eastern" (p. 107). Unfortunately, such cultural conflict causes her psychological conditions to deteriorate. While discussing her mental illness, her son Khalid accuses his father of being the cause of her suffering. He addresses his father: "My mother is a pious woman and your lifestyle ... hurts every certainty she holds ... She does not want to inflame you as she is a good wife, and that reflected upon her in the form of physical and psychological illness" (pp. 123–125). Hence, her son's comments appear to encapsulate not only Latifah's condition but also the central theme of the text, namely, the entanglement between modernity and tradition.

## VI. PLACE CAPTIVITY AND TIME IMPRISONMENT

Arguably, the psychological turmoil of both protagonists in *Ghuyum al-Kharif* and *Juruh al-Thakirah* stems not merely from external circumstances but from a deep-seated psychological inertia, a resistance to internal transformation that persists despite changes in their material and social environments. That is to say, the protagonists' adoption of modern lifestyles fails to liberate them from the grip of their past. Drawing on Freud's concept of 'repetition compulsion', their psychological inertia reflects a deeper inability to break free from earlier emotional structures. In this sense, they continue to relive the past, not just in memory, but also through unconscious repetition, despite material and social development (Freud, 1920). Their transition from mud houses to palaces failed to transform their inner nature. Despite adopting a modern lifestyle, they remain psychologically anchored in the past. Muhaisin, for instance, explicitly acknowledges this fact in a heated discussion on family ties in the East and the West with his young friend Khalid when he confirms, "never forget that deep down inside me lies the old peasant" (Al-Humaidan, 1988, p. 131).

By the same token, Latifah, in *Juruh al-Thakirah* by Al-Hamad, seems to experience the same psychological condition. "Outwardly, she had turned into something resembling an Italian countess or a lady born into an English aristocratic family and educated in the finest institutes of Paris, but inwardly she remained full of everything instinctive and simple" (p. 67). In other words, the old Latifah still inhibits the modern Latifah. The discrepancy between the outward and the inward of the protagonists' personas is due to being ensnared by place and imprisoned by time. This is exactly what Latifah felt during a serious discussion with her Lebanese nurse, Haifa, about the relationship between men and women. "Latifah seemed disturbed by this discussion, as it was shaking the convictions she had lived with throughout her life, and issues that were unthinkable, or even permissible to approach" (p. 227). Haifa's comments pulled Latifah back to the captivity of place and the prison of time, when she concluded that "we are captives of habit and tradition" (p. 228). Hence, like Muhaisin, Latifah appears to pass through the same experience as she clearly admits: "Yes, we no longer live in the village, and even the whole village no longer exists, but it does not want to leave us. The worst of the village still inhabits our depths and controls our behaviors despite everything that has changed and is changing" (p. 82). Consequently, one can conclude that the oil boom generation's psychological suffering was because of their split souls that experienced schizophrenia caused by the old firm village beliefs and the modern lifestyle they practiced. They remained chained by space and confined by time. According to Al Farhan and Al Raddadi (2023), the "desire for modernization and progress has not drastically changed the cultural structure or locale per se; rather, it has reshaped the society's relationship to its heritage and environment" (p. 2).

Indeed, the twentieth century is distinguished as an era of cultural communication and economic exchange, an unprecedented moment in history. This is a fact that is recognized by the characters of *Ghuyum al-Kharif*, who belong to both the boom's generation and the next generation (Al-Humaidan, 1988, p. 106). The question, thus, becomes, could the second generation escape the psychological dilemma the first generation experienced? The new generation, de facto, was familiar with the modern kingdom and did not have to contend with the dichotomy between old and new lifestyles. Nevertheless, it seems that mentality has remained unchanged, as believed by many characters in both novels. In an argument between the two young characters, Salman and Khalid, in *Ghuyum al-Kharif* about the impact of the twentieth century on the world in general and Saudi Arabia in particular, the latter surprisingly admits that, regardless of the twentieth century's positive features mentioned above, the socio-economic view will remain different and unchanged. Unlike his friend, who thinks that holding fast to traditional views will decline with time, Khalid believes that change might take tens of years (pp. 106–107). Khalid himself is a clear illustration of the case in point. When he declares that he is travelling to see his sick father, his American friend tells him that it is enough to call him, to which he replies: "It is not enough, dear. Our Eastern characteristics are different ... We cannot and do not want to change our social bonds. You need a long time to study our characteristics" (pp. 129-30). Thus, Khalid's comments clearly illustrate the deep attachment of Saudi individuals to their culture and traditions, a bond that underlies their psychological struggle, as they find themselves unable to fully embrace a newly adopted Western lifestyle.

This attitude has been further confirmed by Tariq, Latifah's son in *Juruh al-Thakirah*, who reminds his mother of his father's mentality when he reacted violently to the idea of her living in Beirut alone. Latifah comments on this incident and says that "generations change and the conditions as well, but minds do not want to change" (Al-Hamad, 2002, p. 278). She goes on, telling us that Tariq is a university graduate who is supposed to be among the intellectual elite, and a businessman who is assumed to be one of the new bourgeoisie; nevertheless, he is a replica of his father, whom the village haunted wherever he was. Hence, she seems to sum up the condition of all when she concludes that "the village seems to have disappeared from space and time, only to settle permanently in minds" (p. 279). The spatial complex appears to exhibit a remarkable persistence. While the outward appearance of the place and its people has changed, inwardly they have remained unchanged through generations. The lifestyle is modern, but the social traditional views and practices have remained firmly rooted. The psychological dilemma is thus transgenerational and might continue for a few decades.

## VII. CONCLUSION

This paper used a psychoanalytical approach to explore al-Humaidan's *Ghuyum al-Kharif* (1988) and Turki al-Hamad's *Juruh al-Thakirah* (2002), focusing on the psychological experiences of the characters as they navigate the tension between inherited traditions and the emerging values and liberties. By focusing on the psychological dimensions of social change, this study offers insight into the lived experience of change, its ambiguities, contradictions, and emotional entanglements. Through Muhaisin, Latifah, and other characters, both al-Humaidan and al-Hamad tried to depict how the boom generation internalizes, negotiates, and sometimes resists the rapidly evolving societal norms around them. The study reveals that these texts are deeply engaged in the psychological conflict of the characters in the novel as a consequence of the rapid social transformation. In this sense, they serve as vital interlocutors in the broader discourse on modernity and mental life in the contemporary Arab world.

Both al-Humaidan and al-Hamad appear to emphasize that Saudi men and women are deeply attached to their culture and traditions, an attachment so deeply rooted that it shapes their identities and internal landscapes. This cultural embeddedness gives rise to a psychological conflict, particularly when individuals are confronted with competing modern values and/or external influences. In other words, the works of both authors suggest that the psychological trauma experienced by Saudi men and women stems from a deeply ingrained attachment to cultural and traditional norms.

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**Mustafa A. Thabet** was born in Hodeidah, Yemen, on 12 May 1977. He obtained his BA in English from Hodeidah University, Yemen (2000). He received his MA in English (2003) and Postgraduate Diploma in the Teaching of English (PGDTE, 2005) from the Central Institute of English and Foreign Languages (CIEFL, now English and Foreign Languages University), Lucknow Campus, India. He was awarded his PhD in English (Literature) from the University of Lucknow, India, in 2008.

He has extensive academic experience in teaching English language and literature, and has served in several universities in Yemen and Saudi Arabia. He has held various academic and administrative roles, including Head of the English Department at Amran University (Yemen). He has taught a wide range of literature, linguistics, and translation courses. He authored and co-authored several research articles. His current research interests include comparative literature, social and political fiction, postcolonial literature, and world literature.

Dr. Thabet is currently an Assistant Professor of English Literature at the Faculty of Language Studies, Arab Open University, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. He is a member of the FLS Research Committee and has participated in several workshops, conferences, and training programs. Email: [m.thabet@arabou.edu.sa](mailto:m.thabet@arabou.edu.sa); ORCID iD: <https://orcid.org/0009-0003-1038-1564>



**Khaled A. Alkodimi** is currently an associate professor of English Language & Literature at the College of Languages and Translation, Imam Mohammad Ibn Saud Islamic University. He attended several international conferences and conducted numerous workshops and seminars. He obtained his Ph.D. from University Putra Malaysia (UPM), Malaysia, and has already published a number of books and articles in various internationally recognized scientific journals on a wide range of topics. He has been an editorial member and a reviewer for many international journals since 2012.

Dr. Alkodimi's research areas of interest include Comparative Literature, Postcolonial Literature, Ecocriticism, Posthumanism, Feminist Studies and English Language Teaching. His recently published papers include Posthumanism, Artificial Intelligence and Ishiguro's *Klara & the Sun*: Can Humanoid Machines Attain Consciousness? The subaltern, the superior race and the artificial friends: Ishiguro's postcolonial perspective in *Klara and the Sun*, Allegorical depictions of the spiritual life of man in *Robinson Crusoe* (1719): An Islamic perspective, Islamophobia, Othering and the Sense of Loss: Leila Aboulela's *The Kindness of Enemies*, the Concept of nation in al-Muqri's Novels, Identity and Patriarchy: Nadia al-Kowkabani's *My Sana'a* and Al-Muqri's Anti-Religious Stance: A Call for Moderate Islamic Discourse. Email: [kaq2002@yahoo.com](mailto:kaq2002@yahoo.com); ORCID iD: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4894-8223>