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Exploring Some Cultural Patterns in Saudi Female Drama: A Study of the Literary Implications in The Pianist (2012) and Oh My Mirror (2016)

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Abstract:

This article examines the implicit cultural patterns in Saudi women's drama, focusing on how these narratives reflect the evolving societal roles and representations of women in literature. Through a detailed analysis of the monodramas of Milha Abdullah and Khamisah Alfarhan, respectively, The Pianist and Oh, My Mirror, the study explores the contrast between generational values and the changing dynamics within Saudi society. Abdullah's work delves into the cultural values and norms shaping women's experiences, highlighting the shift in Saudi female playwrights' approach to dramatizing women's roles. Meanwhile, Alfarhan's play offers a poignant feminist discourse within the confined symbolic space of a room, representing the limited societal spheres allocated to women. It encapsulates the essence of feminist discourse, contrasting traditional societal norms with the perspectives of the fiery younger generation. This article integrates quotations and dramatic elements to elucidate the emotional toll of family relationships and the broader societal struggles women face, thereby uncovering the thematic depth and emotional landscapes portrayed in these dramatic works.

Keywords: Implicit cultural pattern, Women's drama, Women's voices, Saudi female playwrights, Milha Abdulla

استكشاف بعض الأنماط الثقافية في الدراما النسائية السعودية: دراسة الآثار الأدبية في "العازفة " (٢٠١٦)، و "يا مرآتي" (٢٠١٦) د. عهود بنت صالح العقيل

قسم: اللغة الانجليزية –كلية: الآداب جامعة الجوف

ملخص الدراسة:

تتناول هذه المقالة الأنماط الثقافية الضمنية في دراما النساء السعوديات، مع التركيز على كيفية انعكاس هذه السرديات على الأدوار الاجتماعية المتطورة وتصوير المرأة في الأدب، من خلال تحليل دقيق للمونودراما لكلٍ من ملحة عبد الله وخامسة آل فرحان على التوالي؛ "عازفة البيانو" و"يا مرآتي". تستكشف الدراسة التباين بين القيم الجيلية والديناميات المتغيرة داخل المجتمع السعودي. يتعمق عمل عبد الله في القيم الثقافية والمعايير التي تشكل تجارب النساء، مسلطًا الضوء على التحول في نهج الكاتبات المسرحيات السعوديات في تجسيد أدوار النساء. وفي الوقت نفسه، يقدم مسرح آل فرحان خطابًا نسويًا مؤثرًا داخل مساحة رمزية محصورة في غرفة، تمثل المجالات الاجتماعية المحدودة المخصصة للنساء. يجسد هذا العمل جوهر الخطاب النسوي، مناقضًا المعايير الاجتماعية التقليدية من منظور الجيل الشاب المشتعل. تدمج هذه المقالة الاقتباسات والعناصر الدرامية لتوضيح التأثير العاطفي للعلاقات الأسرية والصراعات الاجتماعية الأوسع التي تواجهها النساء، مما يكشف العمق الموضوعي والمناظر العاطفية التي تصورها هذه الأعمال الدرامية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: النمط الثقافي الضمني، دراما النساء، أصوات النساء، كاتبات مسرحيات سعوديات، ملحة عبد الله.

Introduction:

The theatre has historically served as a medium for exploring societal complexities, challenging norms, and giving voice to the marginalised. In Saudi Arabia, female playwrights have harnessed this medium to articulate the intricate cultural and social dynamics shaping women's experiences. The provided excerpt captures the tensions of oppression, inner conflict, and the relentless pursuit of self-identity that characterise the lives of Saudi women navigating a rapidly evolving society.

Saudi Arabia, with its rich cultural heritage and deeply entrenched traditions, has often been associated with strict interpretations of women's roles and rights. However, as societal paradigms shift and generational divides emerge, these narratives are being redefined. Saudi female playwrights offer a compelling lens to observe the interplay between past and present, reflecting generational tensions, evolving beliefs, and the reconciliation of traditional and modern ideas and values.

The feminist theatrical discourse emerging in Saudi Arabia challenges cultural patterns that confine women to

childbearing and familial preservation roles. Feminist playwrights critically expose the systems of power that dominance and reinforce perpetuate male gender hierarchies. Influenced by postmodern theatrical traditions, these writers reimagine the female body as a sensory and cultural symbol, challenging patriarchal discourses. Despite the growing presence of female voices in Saudi theatre, the shadow of male dominance persists in its narrative frameworks. This implicit tension seeks to dismantle patriarchal authority while affirming women's autonomy, including the freedom to define their identities and selfexpression relationships.

The article explores various forms of oppression and violence against women, including physical, economic, and social aspects. It rejects male superiority and the expectation of women's obedience. By highlighting societal constraints supporting male dominance, it advocates for gender equality and celebrates women's bodies as tools for challenging patriarchal norms. The texts under discussion examine the evolving nature of masculinity and femininity, emphasising

the need to recognise women's individuality and perspectives on autonomy.

Monologues for Liberation: Women's Voices Rise:

Monodrama is a form of storytelling that originated in ancient Greece. It is exemplified by Thespis, who performed solo and focused solely on narration, often accompanied by a chorus. Similarly, Arab storytelling traditions transitioned from oral forms to stage performances, introducing innovative artistic

techniques that expanded monodrama's possibilities.

In the Arab theatrical tradition, monodrama evolved to portray diverse characters through dialogue with audiences or imagined entities within the protagonist's mind. Playwrights employed visual, auditory, and kinetic elements, using creativity to reinterpret memory and navigate complex narratives. Integrating modern technology further enhanced monodrama, dramatizing introspection and enriching its dramatic structure.

Both playwrights intentionally chose monodrama to comment on situations that impact women's lives and struggles. This decision was not arbitrary; instead, it was deliberate and thoughtful. Saudi female playwrights possibly used monologues as a means of liberation, allowing women's voices to be heard and amplified. The spotlight shines on a single figure, their voice weaving a tapestry of experience. This is the power of monodrama, a theatrical form in which one actor embodies a character's inner monologue. Women facing societal expectations and familial pressures have found this format a potent tool for expressing their identity and agency struggles.

The two central figures in the play are the passionate young Hasnaa and the seasoned Pianist, whose contrasting experiences shape the narrative. Hasnaa monodrama pulsates with raw frustration. Confined by her family's traditional expectations, she yearns for a life beyond the boundaries set for her. Through her monologue, the audience experiences her simmering anger and the weight of societal norms pushing down on her dreams. The Pianist, on the other hand, brings a quieter strength to the stage. Her monodrama, a poignant reflection on a life lived, delves into the sacrifices she made for family and societal acceptance. Yet, there's a simmering defiance in her voice, a testament

to the battles fought and the spirit never entirely subdued. By its very nature, monodrama grants women a platform to speak their truths unfiltered. It becomes a safe space for raw emotions and unyielding perspectives to be laid bare. Through these powerful monologues, the audience witnesses the multifaceted struggle of women against societal and familial constraints, sparking empathy and challenging the status quo.

Methodology:

This study uses textual analysis, feminist theatrical discourse, and cultural contexts to understand the cultural patterns in the works of female Saudi playwrights. It examines the historical backdrop of the plays, allowing for a close reading that reveals thematic elements and narrative structures. Textual Analysis is the primary method for exploring texts, emphasizing explicit content and linguistic subtleties. The goal is to illuminate the cultural patterns within these works and enhance appreciation of Saudi Arabia's cultural identity and heritage.

Additionally, the Feminist Theatrical Discourse is employed as a critical lens through which the power dynamics and

gender relations within these texts are interrogated. This approach allows for a focused critique of how the plays engage with and support feminist issues, particularly within Saudi society's conservative context. Moreover, implicit cultural patterns are explored to understand how the playwrights' works reflect and navigate Saudi Arabia's cultural ethos and societal norms. This method uncovers the less overt but equally influential cultural codes that shape the narratives and characters' actions.

The combination of these methodologies is driven by the complex nature of the research questions, which seek to understand the content of the plays and their cultural and feminist significance. This integrated approach enables a holistic analysis, where textual details are read through a feminist perspective, and cultural underpinnings are examined to reveal more profound insights into the play's implicit messaging.

According to Jason A. Smith, Textual Analysis is a research method scholars use to study messages communicated through various mediums. The data used for textual analysis can be obtained from different sources, including documents, films, newspapers, paintings, web pages, etc. These data sources are called "texts" and are analysed to determine the meanings, values, and messages conveyed through them (Smith, 2017, p. 2).

Moreover, "Textual analysis as a research method involves a close encounter with the work itself, an examination of the details without bringing to them more presuppositions than we can help", explains Belsey (2017,p.160). Implicit beliefs are robust, underlying assumptions that shape our behaviors and responses in social contexts. They include perceptions of stimuli and assumptions about causality. Chao et al. (2017) noted, "Implicit culture beliefs refer to people's assumption about the malleability of cultural attributes, such as value endorsement and personality traits." These beliefs act as filters for interpreting intercultural encounters and influence responses (Heider, 1958, p.259). Additionally, they encompass assumptions about cause and effect (Detert & Edmondson, 2011). Ultimately, these beliefs significantly impact social interactions (Dweck, 2000, p. 394-415).

The Discourse of Women in The Saudi Theatrical Text:

In the context of Saudi feminist theatrical discourse, the implicit pattern seeks to undermine male domination by dismantling cultural, philosophical, and political narratives that perpetuate gender inequalities. By resisting patriarchal discourses, Saudi feminist theatre affirms its unique identity and strives for equality.

Initially, it is essential to explore the distinctive features of feminist theatre and its origins as a means of resistance and self-expression in response to the marginalisation of experiences women's in traditional narratives. Chronologically, in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, feminism emerged in European theatre as women started challenging the traditional gender roles and societal expectations imposed on them for centuries. This shift was reflected in the arts, including theatre, where playwrights like Henrik Ibsen and George Bernard Shaw began creating female characters who defied these conventions. Ibsen's famous play, A Doll's House, portrayed a woman's struggle for independence, sparking meaningful conversations about

women's rights and autonomy. This was just the beginning of feminist theatre movements in Europe, as women began to break free from the confines of conventional roles both on and off the stage. Through their works, they advocated for gender equality and explored feminist themes, paving the way for future generations of female artists to do the same.

Feminist theatre has made its mark on the Arab world, though its unique cultural and historical context must be considered. In the 20th century, female playwrights and performers in Arab countries began tackling gender inequality, patriarchy, and women's rights through their work, bringing about a significant shift from traditional theatrical portrayals of women. Works like "Wedding Night" by Alfred Farag of Egypt and "The Absurdity of the Situation" by Lebanese writer and director Lina Abyad shed light on the struggles Arab women face, contributing to an expanding feminist discourse. Arab feminist theatre continues to evolve and flourish, providing a platform for women's voices and perspectives in a region with complex and multifaceted gender dynamics.

Rida Hussain believes that feminist theatre provides a platform for women to share their stories, challenge societal norms, promote equality, and break stereotypes while showcasing a strong focus on the female perspective. He argues that feminist theatre seeks to revolutionise the content and structure of traditional theatre to reflect women's narratives and experiences better. He suggests that feminist theatre is concerned with the content of the stories and the way they are presented, advocating for new and more inclusive forms and techniques that better represent women's voices and experiences. This leads researchers to question the implicit patterns represented in feminist theatre discourse (2022,p.346).

Like the world's feminist theatre, the Saudi feminist theatrical discourse disrupts existing power structures. It asserts the presence and identity of women in a society deeply rooted in patriarchal traditions. In feminist theatre, monodrama is a unique way to delve into female identity and challenge patriarchal norms. By focusing on a single character and their inner thoughts, monodrama allows for self-reflection and expression. This format offers an intimate

look at female experiences and can be a powerful tool to challenge patriarchal beliefs and showcase the complexity of women's personalities.

In brief, feminist theatrical discourse continuously evolves, challenging prevailing norms and power structures. It reveals the impact of cultural, social, and political systems on women's lives and seeks to empower them by dismantling patriarchal narratives. By incorporating postmodern elements and utilising monodrama, feminist theatre offers a platform for women's voices to be heard and their identities to be affirmed.

Since the revival of American feminism in the 1960s, feminist theatre practitioners and scholars have sought to highlight the gender-specific aspects of theatrical representation and fundamentally alter its dynamics. By questioning the conventional role of the ideal spectator as a symbol of the prevailing culture, feminist critics reveal that every element of theatrical production—ranging from the kinds of plays and performances staged to the texts eventually deemed canonical—serves to mirror and uphold the ideology of the ideal spectator (Dolan, 1998, p. 288)

Feminist Theatrical Discourse as An Analytical Tool:

Feminist theatrical discourse represents a crucial and intricate facet of theatre and performance studies. It encompasses various theoretical frameworks, practices, and critical perspectives that analyse and question traditional gender norms, power structures, and the depiction of women in theatre. Emerging in the late 20th century alongside the broader feminist movement, this discourse addresses the underrepresentation of women, both on stage and behind the scenes, while critiquing the portrayal of women in conventional theatre. A central focus of feminist theatrical discourse is analysing gender representation and performance in theatrical works. Scholars and practitioners within this field have examined how theatre may reinforce subvert stereotypes, gender roles, and societal expectations. Feminist theatre has championed the contributions of women playwrights, directors, and actors, creating opportunities for women's narratives perspectives to be articulated. This has led to plays and performances illuminating women's experiences and aspirations.

Feminist theatrical discourse is constantly changing and moving forward. It questions cultural, social, and political systems that have historically put women in predefined societal roles. It shows how power affects the relationship between men and women and how women are oppressed while men have privileges. Feminist theatrical discourses have helped to highlight how power systems reinforce gender inequalities.

Feminist theatre often portrays strong female characters, but male dominance can still exist within the discourse. The power structures in theatrical discourse operate on a deeper level, influencing character actions and motivations. Even in feminist theatre, the discourse remains embedded in the structural forces perpetuating male dominance, calling for a critical examination of implicit biases in these narratives.

The feminist theatrical discourse seeks to incite rebellion against existing reality and reject patriarchal systems that define gender relations. By challenging the tools of domination and oppression imposed by the patriarchal system, the feminist theatre aims to bring about social change and achieve gender equality. The implicit systems

within feminist theatrical discourse catalyse transforming society by challenging patriarchal norms and empowering women to assert their freedom and choices.

It is essential to understand the different political types of feminism and clearly express one's preference before beginning critical work. Creating too many categories may be dangerous, as it may lead to pressure to take sides, resulting in losing something. Gayle Austin has discussed the various political divisions of feminism in theatre. Sue–Ellen Case and Jill Dolan have made significant contributions to this discussion. Dolan has identified three main divisions: liberal, cultural, and materialist.

Despite the difficulties, studying plays has advantages for the feminist critical project. Plays allow the reader and audience to visualise and fill in blanks and gaps. They provide the frameworks for productions that can highlight many of the issues feminism finds pressing. Plays combine verbal and nonverbal elements simultaneously so that questions of language and visual representation can be addressed through the medium of an actual body. They contribute a unique

field of examples of women's representation (Austin, 1990, p. 137).

So, Feminist theatre makers and critics have aimed to expose the gender-specific nature of theatrical representation and modify its terms. They denaturalise the position of the ideal spectator as a representative of the dominant culture. By doing so, feminist critics can point out that every aspect of theatrical production, from the types of plays and performances produced to the canonised texts, reflects and perpetuates the ideal spectator's ideology. Despite its difficulties, studying plays has advantages for the feminist critical project. Plays allow the audience to visualise and fill in gaps, providing a framework for productions that address pressing issues in feminism.

Essentially, one of the most fundamental aspects of working with feminist theory is defining the different political types of feminism and clearly expressing one's preference at the beginning of critical work. Thankfully, several formulations of political feminism are now available (Austin, 1990, p. 136). Plays combine verbal and non-verbal elements, allowing questions of language and visual representation to be

addressed simultaneously through the medium of an actual body. They also provide a unique field of examples of women's representation. Feminist theatre makers and critics have worked to expose the gender-specific nature of theatrical representation and radically modify its terms.

Gayle Austin has discussed the various political divisions of feminism in theatre in her groundbreaking books. In particular, Sue-Ellen Case and Jill Dolan have significantly contributed to this discussion. Dolan has identified three main divisions: liberal, cultural, and materialist. Liberal feminism has developed from liberal humanism and stresses women's parity with men based on 'universal' values. On the other hand, cultural feminists stress that women are both different from and superior to men and often advocate expressing this fact through female forms of culture (Austin,1990,p.137).

Studying plays enables feminist theatre makers and critics to address key issues and enhance women's representation. It is essential to define the various types of political feminism before engaging in critical work, as excessive categorisation can be counterproductive. The feminist theatrical discourse method provides a framework for examining a play's narrative and dialogue, illuminating power dynamics and gender roles, particularly in conservative societies. Saudi Arabian female playwrights are celebrated for their capacity to create female characters with diverse personalities and intricate interactions. Their dramatic works frequently seek to explore complex themes.

In practice, the study will unfold through a series of analytical phases, beginning with a detailed Textual Analysis, then a critical application of Feminist Theatrical Discourse, and culminating in an examination of Implicit Cultural Patterns. This multi-layered approach ensures a comprehensive exploration of the texts, offering a nuanced understanding of the intersection between literature, feminism, and culture.

The *Pianist* (2012);

In *The Pianist*, the protagonist's recurring fear of opening the piano is central to the dramatic tension, symbolising her hidden secrets and unresolved conflicts. This hesitation reflects her inner turmoil and deep-seated confusion, which symbolise her struggle with decision-making and the weight of her emotional history. The dramatic events in her life profoundly influence her, mainly as she reflects on her enduring love and longing for her absent husband. These reflections reveal the layers of vulnerability and strength that define her character, making her journey both profoundly personal and universally resonant:

[Settings]

A room with modern white furniture, sofas in place, carpets on the floor, and artistic paintings on the walls, indicating a refined taste.

The windows are closed and covered with transparency.

White curtains in the shape of a horseshoe.

In the middle of the place is a piano played by

a female musician in her thirties wearing a Transparent white dress.

(Abdullah, 2012, p. 2).

In *The Pianist* (2012), Milha Abdullah portrays a woman trapped in a world that stifles her freedom and subjects her to emotional and financial hardships. Despite her husband's physical absence, his pervasive influence continues to dominate every aspect of her life, leaving her isolated and depleted of personal and economic resources. This allencompassing oppression serves as a poignant critique of the societal norms that tether women to their roles, even in the absence of their partners.

The play's opening moment is emblematic of its thematic depth. As the protagonist begins to play the piano, the initial notes scatter in dissonance, reflecting the fragmented rhythm of her life. This dissonance, gradually replaced by moments of consistency, mirrors her internal conflict and the tension between order and chaos in her emotional landscape. As she continues to play, the protagonist transitions into a narrative mode, using the piano to display her memories. This storytelling becomes a cathartic exercise, allowing her to confront the suppressed emotions and unspoken truths that define her existence.

Closed windows and modern furniture characterise the room where the narrative unfolds, with the dominant white hue contributing to its refined aesthetic appeal. At the centre of this space, the Pianist—a woman in her thirties wearing a transparent white gown—plays the piano. This visual composition encapsulates the Pianist's world: a meticulously exudes elegance arranged space that vet communication, symbolizing her isolation. The closed windows and translucent white curtains signify a paradox of confinement, purity and restriction, and reinforcing the themes of alienation and introspection central to the play.

The piano carries profound symbolic weight as the focal point within the room. It is not merely an instrument but also the Pianist's sole companion, functioning as an extension of her identity and a medium for self-expression. The piano becomes a complex symbol, embodying the dichotomies of her existence—instability versus restlessness, conformity versus rebellion, and isolation versus liberation. Through this symbolic lens, the piano reflects the Pianist's aristocratic upbringing and her emotional and existential

alienation struggle. It bridges her confined physical reality and the expansive emotional world she navigates internally, allowing the audience to anticipate her transformative journey within this restrained yet evocative space.

As the Pianist begins to play, the scattered, dissonant notes serve as a metaphor for the complexity of life itself—a juxtaposition of harmony and discord. This auditory dissonance reflects the fractured rhythm of her existence, where moments of coherence are interspersed with chaos and uncertainty. Playing becomes a cathartic process, enabling her to explore and express her innermost experiences and emotions. Through this interplay of sound and memory, the piano transforms into a narrative device, guiding the audience through the contradictions, joys, and sorrows that shape her story.

The Pianist's recollection of memories, triggered by the dissonant music, illuminates the nuanced layers of her identity. Each note carries fragments of her past—moments of happiness, loss, rebellion, and acquiescence—creating a rich tapestry of lived experiences. This act of remembering is not simply retrospective but also transformative, as the

Pianist uses the piano to confront her emotions and reframe her understanding of herself and her world. The tension between her aristocratic background and her present isolation becomes a key element of the narrative, underscoring the psychological and societal pressures that define her journey.

In *The Pianist*, the room's design and the piano's symbolic resonance converge to create a powerful commentary on confinement and self-expression. The juxtaposition of the room's refined elegance with its isolating elements mirrors the protagonist's internal conflict—a struggle to reconcile her yearning for liberation with the constraints imposed by her circumstances. The play invites the audience to reflect on the broader implications of this struggle, challenging societal norms that stifle individuality and emphasising the transformative potential of art and introspection.

At a pivotal moment in *The Pianist*, the protagonist shatters the mirror, and her fragmented image reflects onto the curtains. This act signifies the rupture she experiences—a visceral representation of the internal and external conflicts rooted in her childhood. The fragmentation of her

reflection reflects the fractured identity imposed upon her by a patriarchal system that prioritised her male sibling's needs over her own. The preferential treatment of her brother, exemplified by the family giving him chocolate but not her, highlights the inherited bias favouring male children in her society. This symbolic and deeply emotional moment underscores the protagonist's long-standing feelings of deprivation and alienation.

The protagonist articulates the scene in vivid detail, as though it were an aesthetically charged dream. This dream bridges the character's internal emotional landscape and the performance's external dramatic framework. Even as the dream grows darker and more foreboding, the shattered mirror beneath her feet becomes a metaphor for her fragmented sense of self. Each fragment reflects a distorted version of her identity, emphasising her internal struggle. As she picks up a shard of the mirror, it cuts her hand, and the blood flows onto the curtains. This physical act of injury mirrors her psychological wounds as she begins a ritual of self-flagellation using the distorted, fragmented images

projected onto the curtains. Her monologue during this scene is haunting:

"Here you are with a thousand eyes, a thousand noses; here are your pupils torn. And you have hundreds of teeth like sharks, vast and endless nostrils, and a mouth.

Like the mouth of a ghoul.

This is your actual image that satisfies everyone" (Abdullah, 2012, p. 8).

This chilling description of her fragmented image symbolises the internalized societal judgment and self-perception she endures. The grotesque imagery—eyes, noses, teeth, and a monstrous mouth—reflects the way she perceives herself through the lens of societal expectations, a distorted and dehumanised image shaped by external criticism and neglect. Her "actual image," as she calls it, is not a true reflection but a projection of the judgment and oppression imposed upon her.

Stained with blood and carrying the weight of her fragmented identity, the protagonist wanders through her house. Her attention halts on the sofa—a piece of furniture she cherishes for its sentimental value. It is the only item she treasures, as it carries the scent of her father, connecting her to memories of a time when her identity was less fractured. The sofa, purchased with her meagre share of her father's inheritance, symbolises her resilience and attempts to reclaim fragments of her identity in a world that continually undermines her.

Her reflection on her inheritance highlights the systemic inequality embedded in the fabric of her society. Islamic inheritance laws, which allocate women a smaller portion of assets than their male counterparts, are framed within the play as another layer of subjugation. This legal and cultural norm compounds her burdens, symbolising the masculine systems that consistently render women inferior. The scent of the sofa becomes a poignant reminder of the complexities of her relationship with her father and her society, encapsulating both the tenderness of familial connections and the harsh realities of gendered oppression.

This scene's vivid imagery and symbolic acts encapsulate the protagonist's emotional and psychological struggles. The

shattered mirror and the flowing blood serve as metaphors for her fractured identity and unhealed wounds. At the same time, her self-flagellation and grotesque descriptions reveal the depth of her internalised oppression. At the same time, the sofa stands as a quiet symbol of resilience and agency—a small but meaningful attempt to reclaim her place in a world that denies her equality. This moment, rich in symbolism and emotional weight, reinforces the play's broader critique of patriarchal systems and their pervasive impact on women's identities:

"A woman in our society does not take what belongs to her from her father's money. Otherwise, she will be cursed, society will boycott her, and she will be rejected as a prostitute or a foundling. Ah, I feel hungry despite the great inheritance left by my father, but my brothers' claws are over it. How can a strange man put his foot in my father's inheritance? This is how they announce to passers-by about a woman of ill repute

who took her inheritance from her brothers" (Abdullah, 2012, p. 8).

The strategies of the implicit pattern in the feminist theatrical discourse in the female Saudi playwright's work focus on the following: Revealing various forms of oppression, subjugation, and persecution that some women in specific societal contexts may experience. The play of violence—whether patterns critiques physical, economic, or social—perpetrated by masculinity against women in such settings. However, it is essential to note that these dynamics are not universal but may occur in specific groups or contexts within society. The play rejects the notion that males are inherently superior, females are inherently inferior, and that a man's authority must always be represented in leadership. At the same time, it challenges the expectation that a woman's primary role is to display obedience. Through these critiques, the playwright exposes the social constraints that characterise some manifestations of the masculine system of domination while also revealing the unspoken implications of male dominance within these contexts.

The play emphasises how specific societal frameworks dictate roles for women and men, shaping gender identities and reinforcing these dynamics through implicit social functions. It interrogates the patriarchal desire to codify femininity in ways that conflict with feminist ideals. By asserting her identity, the protagonist advocates for gender equality and affirms her difference as a source of strength, challenging the restrictive norms imposed by patriarchal structures. The play underscores that the concepts of masculinity and femininity are not static; they evolve based on laws, social and political systems, and prevailing customs, varying significantly across different groups and contexts. In her memories, the protagonist envisions her mother on her wedding day, adorned with a white shawl, surrounded by the joyous chants and rhythmic beats of drums. This the weight of generational encapsulates moment expectations. She symbolically removes the shawl and assumes her mother's role, seeking wisdom on marital traditions passed down through generations. The advice emphasises a wife's role as a caretaker and pacifier,

responsible for managing her husband's temper, fulfilling his needs, and maintaining an ideal of quiet decorum:

He is your fate; he is your road to heaven or hell; listen to his words when he speaks; if his fire is lit, extinguish your fire.

Please do not respond to his anger angrily; instead, take care of his food. The way to a man's heart is through his stomach, so let him speak.

Many words are spoken, but you say little, for a loquacious woman is a nuisance. He should not hear unpleasant words from you and only perceive delightful scent aromas.

Walk gently, dress tastefully, move tenderly,

also, speak quietly" (Abdullah, 2012, p. 2).

These words reduce the woman to a figure of obedience and self-sacrifice, revealing societal norms that prioritise the man's needs over the woman's identity. The protagonist's

doubts deepen as her husband returns home each day drunk, praising the beauty of other women while completely ignoring her. His behaviour amplifies her feelings of invisibility and humiliation, leaving her with frustration and self-doubt. Each time she approaches the piano, the music becomes discordant, reflecting her emotional turmoil and fractured state of mind. Once a beloved instrument of harmony and self-expression, the piano transforms into a symbol of tension and unease, mirroring her strained relationship with her husband and her diminishing sense of self.

In a moment of transformation, the piano evolves into a desk piled high with books and papers, bringing her back to a critical memory from her past. This desk symbolises her intellectual pursuits and her struggle for self-realisation. The scene recalls her efforts to complete her master's thesis amidst her husband's hostility. His destructive behaviour, such as tearing apart her work, highlights his resentment toward her ambitions and his perception that her success challenges his pride and authority. This act reflects a broader resistance to women's personal and intellectual growth,

framing her education as a threat to the traditional power dynamics within their relationship.

The memory underscores the systemic obstacles women face in their pursuit of independence and self-expression within patriarchal systems. The protagonist's struggle to reconcile societal expectations with her aspirations illustrates a broader critique of the rigid roles assigned to women. Her memories of the piano, her thesis, and her husband's oppressive behaviour portray her resistance to these constraints. Through these moments, the play critiques deeply ingrained constructs that prioritise male dominance and demand women's submission. By revisiting her past and confronting these challenges, the protagonist begins to reclaim her narrative and assert her identity against the societal structures that seek to confine her.

At this moment, the protagonist assumes the persona of her domineering husband, mimicking his tone and words as she internalises his arrogance and oppressive behaviour. This act highlights the intensification of her internal conflict as her ambitions clash with external societal pressures. His words echo with disdain:

"Didn't I tell you to stop this nonsense every day at this desk, forgetting that you are a woman? Or do you dream of assuming the ministry chair? Here are your diplomas lying on the kitchen walls. There is no place for you but Him, do you understand?" (p. 3).

These harsh words encapsulate his efforts to belittle her intellect and aspirations, framing her pursuit of education as futile and incompatible with her prescribed role as a woman. His dismissal of her achievements reduces them to mere adornments, relegated to the kitchen walls—a space traditionally associated with domesticity and subservience. The scene escalates as the husband rips her books and papers apart, discarding them on the ground in an act of destruction that symbolises his rejection of her intellectual pursuits. He asserts his dominance by opening the window to hurl her work outside, only to shut it again, metaphorically reinforcing the barriers to her freedom and self–expression. This act is a visceral representation of the patriarchal system's oppression of women's right to education, a fundamental

human right enshrined in humanitarian charters. His actions starkly contrast these ideals, highlighting the systemic forces denying women equal opportunities for growth and self-determination.

She attempts to play the piano amid her deteriorating emotional struggle, grappling with her husband's absence and presence. His overpowering influence lingers despite his physical absence, creating a tension that heightens her anxiety. This emotional turmoil manifests through her conflicting feelings of repulsion and longing. Occasionally, she produces jarring notes or pauses in frustration, reflecting her internal discord. In this moment, when she tries to open the piano, it resists her efforts, as though echoing her psychological barriers. After several futile attempts, even resorting to using a hammer, her mind spirals into emotional pain and hallucinations. These hallucinations, born from her repulsion toward her husband's unacceptable behaviour, are juxtaposed with the love she still harbours for his strength and vitality—a love that once provided her a sense of safety. In her anguished state, she voices her thoughts, exposing the depth of her emotional conflict:

"Go away, do not come near me; you carry in the folds of your clothes the perfume of another woman; here are the locks of her hair on your shoulders; I wish you washed the palms of your hands from the remnants of her sweat, From the prints of her lips on your shirt, [continuing in panic] Leave me alone, You will not touch my body, for my body is pure, do not contaminate it with the cells of whores scattered all over your body" (Abdullah, 2012, p. 5).

Her words express disgust and panic, highlighting her emotional torment. Her accusations symbolize her struggle for autonomy over her compromised identity due to his infidelities. This reaction reveals her yearning for purity and the sanctity of their marriage, which is seen as desecrated by his behaviour. The contrast of love and revulsion, purity and defilement, reflects the complexities of gender roles and power dynamics in marriage.

This emotional and temporal shift reaches a critical moment when the piano transforms into a bed within the narrative, a symbolic space of vulnerability and reflection. This transformation underscores the duality of intimacy and alienation that defines her relationship. As she lies there, her thoughts unravel in a torrent of anguish and suspicion:

"I feel the breath of a spotted viper hissing, almost stinging my flaming cheeks. Is it for this devastated state that he was lying motionless beside me? Perhaps he spent the night with a prostitute, or perhaps he imagines another, so he misses my presence while I am lying next to him, or perhaps he is impotent sexually and is unable to do anything of that desired virility" (Abdullah, 2012, p. 6).

Her words reveal her inner turmoil and disconnection, confronting suspicions of infidelity, emotional detachment, and inadequacy. These thoughts indicate a decline in trust and intimacy in their marriage. The piano symbolizes her voice and creativity, while the bed represents vulnerability and disconnection from her husband. Together, these elements explore the complex interplay between power and desire, critiquing the constraints of implicit cultural patterns on women in traditional marriage roles.

"Or maybe he is a fool who cannot do anything of that desired virility?" (Abdullah, 2012, p. 6) This statement highlights "the other" in the protagonist's marriage, represented by her impotent husband—his impotence conflicts with his oppressive virility. The protagonist's ridicule of her husband's inadequacy reflects her resentment towards their power dynamics. However, she remembers her mother's words about ensuring a husband's satisfaction within the home, irrespective of traditional gender roles:

"It does not harm you in anything, my daughter. The important thing is that you have a husband who fills the corners of the house for you.

Coming and leaving opens your door to enter and exit in front of the public, while

those other things are only a matter of formality" (Abdullah, 2012, p. 6).

The protagonist's mother's words encapsulate the systemic legacy that shapes spousal relationships in certain Arab societies, particularly in Saudi culture, as seen in this play. The narrative also sheds light on the influence of external familial and social authorities, reinforcing these dynamics and perpetuating men's dominance in marital relationships. This paradox prompts us to consider her acceptance of the situation. Is it a resigned acquiescence to a legacy that supports male privilege and infidelity or an unacknowledged submission to societal norms that require women to endure without protest? However, the narrative shifts as the protagonist anticipates her child. As she wipes her hand across her stomach, the fetus symbolizes continuity and change.

This represents a transformation in her understanding of identity and legacy and offers hope for redefining her role dynamic:

"You're so daring when you're running wild. I told you to calm down.

A moment

I'll sing you a song that puts you to sleep.

It seems that you are protesting against your father's actions. Ahh, what a violent kick it is. Ahhh, you see, perhaps.

A girl, as a female, only issues these violent kicks, so they are nothing but a protest of your father's actions. I told you to calm down; I will sing you a song to put you to sleep" (Abdullah, 2012, p. 7).

After this, she lies back and removes a mirror from her bag, which becomes pivotal, confronting her reflection. In this moment, she speaks to herself, engaging in a dialogue that includes other women's struggles. Through the mirror, she sees her image alongside the echoes of many who have faced similar battles. This dramatic use of the mirror allows the protagonist to embody multiple perspectives, merging her character into a chorus of shared voices:

"You are the one who makes me sleepy.

Please calm down and remember you are

a " woman?" In our society, they

marginalize your boundaries.

They give you labels that I need help understanding.

To place you in a lower rank" (Abdullah, 2012, p. 7).

This excerpt highlights the clash between fading traditional values and globalisation's pressures. This conflict creates discord in the protagonist's narrative, showing her struggle to adapt to changing societal norms that reshape her identity. This leads the Pianist to remember a painful moment of oppression and loss: a time of severe hunger when she was isolated and pregnant. Driven by necessity, she worked—a choice her husband reluctantly supported. Despite his approval, she faced harsh conditions, reflecting systemic inequalities faced by women in certain social classes:

"Oh, my love... If you want to work outside the home, you have to give me your full salary in return for allowing you to leave and for your work outside my emirate. My mother, your mother, my grandmother, and your grandmother only left the house, only to the grave?" (Abdullah, 2012, p. 9).

This dialogue underscores the deeply entrenched patriarchal legacy that confines women within restrictive societal norms. Despite this, the Pianist agrees to leave, yearning to step outside and experience the sunlight—a poignant symbol of freedom after a lifetime of confinement. This act is more than physical; it represents her rebellion against the gilded cage in which she resides, challenging the expectations placed upon her.

As the narrative unfolds, she ritualistically opens the piano, her "favourite game," inhaling its scent that connects her to the past. At this moment, the Pianist confronts her inner turmoil, recalling her wedding night in a white dress, symbolizing purity and longing. In a dramatic twist, she

removes her bridal veil and approaches the piano with renewed resolve. Overcoming her fear, she opens it, revealing her husband's embalmed body, showing she is the one who confined him within the instrument's strings. The piano transforms into a bed for their final confrontation, where she lies beside him, blurring love, death, and resistance. This scene symbolizes the dismantling of the patriarchal legacy that affects both society and women's lives, echoing critiques like Nietzsche's *Death of God* author."

The Pianist critiques women's oppression, highlighting their marginalization in public life and limited roles in reproduction and employment. The husband's death symbolizes the dismantling of inherited masculinity. Character dialogue exposes cultural contradictions and a system that supports male dominance. The text encourages questioning patriarchal norms, prompting reflection on power structures shaping gender realities and the potential for change. As a cultural marker, it employs an implied format to reveal societal influences rather than stating them outright. By addressing the nuances of male-dominated

systems, the playwright exposes the tyranny in explicit and implicit perceptions of masculinity.

Oh, My Mirror (2016):

Khamisah Alfarhan's play, Oh My Mirror, explores cultural patterns through Hasnaa, a young woman trapped by family and societal norms. Her story reveals struggles with gender roles, family dynamics, and authority as she seeks selfidentity. Confined to her home, she faces limitations on her freedom, is denied social engagement, and her career pursuits. The play critiques gender-based restrictions and traditional expectations enforced, especially by her mother, who believes women should be confined domestically. Themes of entrapment, rebellion, and resilience reflect a broader critique of patriarchal control, similar to The Pianist (2012). Both plays challenge traditional gender perceptions, urging a deeper interrogation of social and cultural legacies of inequality. Together, they show resistance empowerment in Saudi Arabian theatre, providing a nuanced view of changing gender and identity paradigms. The interactions between Hasnaa and her family reveal tension and oppressive dynamics. The mother's harsh

reprimands and brothers' dismissive attitudes symbolise patriarchal privilege, contrasting with Hasnaa's quiet resistance. Her quest for permission to leave the house reflects rebellion and highlights her physical and metaphorical confinement. Her frustration over limited job prospects and autonomy emphasizes women's confinement and lack of agency in their lives. This interplay between societal and familial expectations is further amplified through the dialogue:

[A female voice from outside the room]
Shut up, impolite daughter.

God help me because I did not bring you up nicely.

Do not raise your voice. What have you done more of? You fool. Oh, disobedient. (Alfarhan, 2016, p. 13).

The opening lines, delivered by an offstage female voice, presumably Hasnaa's mother, poignantly reflect the internalisation and perpetuation of societal expectations among women. Statements like, "Shut up, impolite daughter," and "Do not raise your voice. Isn't what you've

done enough? You fool. Oh, disobedient," reveal a hierarchical dynamic rooted in obedience and control. This authoritarian tone reinforces the weight of societal norms that demand politeness, submission, and compliance from women, framing femininity as quietness and passivity. These sharp reprimands serve as an audible manifestation of the societal pressures imposed on Hasnaa, reflecting the pervasive expectation that women conform to rigid, prescribed roles. (Alfarhan, 2016, p.13).

In response, Hasnaa emerges as the embodiment of resistance. Her retort, "You are the one who forced me to do so," becomes a bold declaration of defiance. This statement is not merely an expression of frustration but a profound articulation of her resistance to the lack of autonomy she faces. The tension intensifies when the mother dismissively responds, "To hell with you," further highlighting the generational and ideological clash between Hasnaa's aspirations for independence and her family's insistence on conformity. (Alfarhan, 2016, p.14).

Hasnaa, who dares to challenge these structures, offering a potent reminder of the strength required to carve out space for individuality and freedom in the face of deeply ingrained expectations:

Hasnaa: I felt suffocated. I was tired of sitting at home within four walls. Since completing my studies, I have been waiting for Godot. I have no job, outings, return, or marriage. My family is surprised that I am not glued to my mobile phone. What am I to do? They say the work is never finished. Quite the opposite. It is also ending and becoming routine (Alfarhan, 2016, p.16).

Hasnaa's repeated expressions of wanting to "live" and "feel" reveal a profound yearning for change and self-determination. Her feelings of loneliness and desperation stem not only from her inability to fulfil her aspirations but also from her failure to communicate her frustrations with her family. Her monologue, "I am tired... I want to live... I want to feel," resonates as a poignant cry for autonomy and existence beyond the circumscribed identity assigned to her by societal norms (Alfarhan, 2016, p.14). The suppression of

Hasnaa's voice is portrayed as not only stifling but also profoundly damaging, amplifying her feelings of alienation and helplessness.

However, the description of the bedroom, adorned with feminine elements such as a teddy bear and a pink quilt, symbolises the societal expectations placed upon Hasnaa, highlighting her expected innocence and the constraints of her role. Through this setting, the play critiques how physical spaces and objects confine women within the boundaries of socially constructed gender emphasising the broader cultural expectations that dictate their behaviour and identity. The mirror in her room signifies her inadequacies, allowing the audience to perceive the restrictive norms that enforce her conformity. Hasnaa's gestures and dialogue in her rebellion amplify the critique of traditional roles, transforming her struggle commentary on resisting societal constraints while seeking to define her identity:

The Mirror: I am you, and you are me. I reflect your image, and you're talking to yourself. I am like an echo,

The reflection of your truth and reality.

Hasnaa: I don't understand.

The Mirror: I am your reflection in the mirror. (Alfarhan, 2016, p. 14).

The play uses the mirror as a symbolic object and an integral narrative device that bridges Hasnaa's inner world with the outer forces shaping her life. It reflects her psychological battles while simultaneously serving as a tool for resistance. From a literary perspective, the mirror is a powerful dramatic device that encapsulates Hasnaa's internal struggle. When Hasnaa questions the authenticity of her reflection, she is, in essence, interrogating whether her true self is represented in the mirror or whether it merely reflects the version of herself that society expects her to be. Her plea to her reflection—"Have I lost myself?"—is a poignant cry that resonates with the experiences of countless women forced to conform to restrictive societal roles. This duality—between her intrinsic identity and the imposed societal

image—symbolises the fracture between the personal and the social.

According to feminist scholar Gayle Austin, Nelly Furman emphasises that "for the feminist scholar, the importance of textual criticism resides in the implications of the switch to the power of the reader... the reader is not a passive consumer, but an active producer of a new text" (Creating a Feminist, 1990, p.52). This feminist approach calls for making women's narratives as visible and audible as men's, placing women's stories and objects at the centre of literary and theatrical discourse. In mixed emotions, Hasnaa's presence at the centre of the room underscores her internal turmoil. It symbolises her search for a voice and identity amidst the shadows of societal oppression. Her standing position visually and thematically dismantles the "seamless realism" often associated with traditional narratives, instead calling attention to her confinement and resistance mechanisms.

This monologue bears the emotional and psychological toll of societal expectations that confine women to the domestic sphere. Hasnaa's aspirations for employment and independence transcend material needs, representing her desire for self-expression and personal agency. This dialogue critiques the entrenched cultural belief that a woman's place is solely within the home. It highlights the resistance or dismissal faced by women like Hasnaa who challenge this traditional narrative. Hasnaa's narrative journey, marked by her proficiency in household tasks such as cooking, cleaning, and mastering beauty and makeup techniques, underscores the deeply ingrained role expectations imposed on women:

I've started enjoying housework, learned to cook, and discovered cleaning products and beauty tips. But what of it? I crave freedom to leave the house when I feel overwhelmed. I'm human, like my younger brothers, who go out for official and unofficial outings while I'm stuck at home. When I share that I feel trapped, they ask, "Do you have a TV or a mobile phone?" When I suggest joining them, they say, "This is a lads' night out." And if

I want to go to the market to wear my abaya, they respond, "What do you need from the market? We'll buy everything for you." I'm exhausted; I leave home once every five months. Even job applications are online now (Alfarhan, 2016, p. 16).

This monologue starkly juxtaposes Hasnaa's limited freedom with the unchecked liberties of her brothers, highlighting the gender-based inequities that pervade her life. While her brothers can freely attend parties, travel, and engage in social activities, Hasnaa's world is confined to the domestic sphere. Their dismissive responses to her desire to leave the house—such as "What more do you want?"—reflect a normalised cultural mindset that disregards her emotional and psychological needs for independence and space for self-discovery. These interactions starkly illustrate the disparity in societal expectations between genders, where men are afforded freedom while women are expected to remain confined and invisible.

From a critical perspective, Hasnaa's dialogue critiques implicit cultural patterns prioritising male independence while relegating women to restrictive roles. Her longing to go to the market is a metaphor for her desire to break free from the physical and psychological confines imposed by these cultural norms. This yearning transcends mere physical mobility; it symbolizes a more profound need for self-expression and the recognition of her humanity. The repetition of phrases such as "I want to breathe" and "I am tired" highlights her burdens, emphasizing how her exhaustion is both a personal struggle and a reflection of the acceptance of cultural limitations placed on women.

Through Hasnaa's experiences, *Oh, My Mirror* exposes the broader societal structures perpetuating gender inequalities. By juxtaposing her dreams with the dismissive attitudes of those around her, the play invites the audience to reflect on the limitations imposed on women and the resilience required to challenge these norms, where even small acts of autonomy, such as leaving the house or taking a taxi, become acts of defiance. This tension is captured poignantly in the dialogue between Hasnaa and her reflection:

Hasnaa: I left the house, took a taxi, and went.

The Mirror: Why did you do that?

Hasnaa: Don't you feel what I feel?

Hasnaa: Would you like to go for a

walk with me?

The Mirror: No. My family would scold me (Alfarhan, 2016, p. 17).

The exchange between Hasnaa and the mirror highlights the disconnect between women's internal aspirations and their external pressures. The mirror's question, "Why did you do that?" reflects the societal gaze that constantly scrutinises and polices women's behaviour. Hasnaa's plea—"Don't you feel what I feel?"—is an emotional outcry for empathy and understanding, emphasising her isolation and frustration. This self-imposed restraint is not merely a personal choice but a learned response to societal and familial structures prioritising conformity over individuality. Hasnaa's longing for even the simplest freedoms is met with resistance, reflecting the broader cultural pressures that limit women's autonomy and personal rights growth.

The main character's monologues, interwoven with feminist discourse and rich symbolism, shed light on the complex experiences of women constrained by societal expectations. This internal conflict is further illuminated in the dialogue between Hasnaa and her mother:

Mother: Who are you talking to?

Hasnaa: No one. I'm talking to

myself.

Mother: Are you crazy?

Hasnaa: About to become one

(Alfarhan, 2016, p. 18).

The mother's exclamation, "Are you crazy?" and Hasnaa's retort, "About to become one" (Alfarhan, 2016, p.16), symbolise society's tendency to pathologize women's dissatisfaction and desire for freedom. Rather than acknowledging the legitimacy of women's grievances, societal norms often dismiss their struggles as irrational or symptomatic of madness. This dismissal, akin to gaslighting, serves as a mechanism to maintain the status quo by delegitimising women's emotions and reinforcing existing power structures.

Hasnaa's response encapsulates her defiance against this invalidation, asserting her awareness of the emotional toll such dismissal takes on her psyche:

[Hasnaa laughs loudly, and a male voice appears behind the door].

Hasnaa: Are you crazy? Why are you laughing alone? Open the door,

Hasnaa: I will not open. I want to stay with myself for a little while. Do I have the right to talk to myself?

The Male Voice: Then stay locked up.

Ultimately, the voices of the mother and male characters symbolise the societal mechanisms that seek to silence and control women's expressions. At the same time, Hasnaa's responses reveal the strength required to challenge these structures. By portraying Hasnaa's defiance within this oppressive auditory and social environment, *Oh, My Mirror* critiques the cultural norms that pathologize women's independence and reaffirms the importance of reclaiming agency in the face of systemic oppression.

The authoritative voices of the mother and the male character symbolise societal judgment, control, and the pervasive structures that confine women to predefined roles. These voices dismiss Hasnaa's individuality, reducing her identity to societal expectations of compliance and silence. Through this portrayal, the playwright critiques the cultural norms in some families that suppress women's voices, physically and emotionally confining them.

The ongoing verbal abuse that Hasnaa faces during this incident becomes the breaking point of her internal conflict. Desperate for validation and connection, she turns to her reflection in the mirror in a final attempt to express herself:

Where did you go, oh me? [She goes to the mirror and calls it]

Come and lock me up or take me with you.

This is even me... my reflection... my image... my girl who healed me and disappeared as she appeared. Does this mean that I lost myself ??????? (Alfarhan, 2016, p. 23).

The mirror becomes a profound symbol of Hasnaa's fractured identity in this climactic moment. Her reflection, once a source of solace and connection, now mirrors her sense of loss and alienation. Hasnaa's final question, "Does this mean that I lost myself?" encapsulates the play's central theme: the existential crisis women face navigating their identities within a patriarchal framework. The ambiguity of this ending, with Hasnaa questioning her sanity—"Have I gone crazy, or am I looking for myself in the mirror?" (Alfarhan, 2016, p.16)—forces the audience to grapple with the unresolved inquiry into women's autonomy and selfhood.

By remaining open-ended, the playwright urges the audience to reflect on the psychological impact of these constraints and confront a society that restricts women's self-definition. Hasnaa's struggle symbolizes a universal quest for liberation and challenges the audience to assess their role in gendered oppression. Key themes include the pursuit of self-identity, the clash of personal desires with societal expectations, and the loss of hiding one's true self. The concluding question encourages engagement with feminist

discourse, inspiring empathy for women seeking to express their true selves in oppressive contexts and calls for introspection and societal change.

Conclusion:

Plays like *The Pianist* and *Oh My Mirror* are compelling explorations of the tension between inherited customs and the yearning for individuality. Employing feminist theatrical discourse, these works delve into the heart of societal expectations, revealing the emotional, psychological, and social burdens imposed on women by these timeworn practices.

Upon analysing these two works, a compelling rationale emerges for addressing them together within this study. Beyond their shared classification as monodramas written by Saudi women, the thematic parallels between them are striking. Both plays delve intensely into the struggles of women grappling with societal traditions and familial pressures, shedding light on the generational conflicts that shape their realities. These conflicts, rooted in traditional expectations, reveal the pervasive tensions between upholding cultural norms and seeking personal freedom.

In both plays, the central female characters endure familial resistance that either denies them their rights or attempts to dissuade them from pursuing their aspirations—an embodiment of the older generation's adherence to traditional values. The tension between these generational perspectives fuels the narratives and highlights the broader societal structures that confine women within prescribed roles. These constraints become central to the characters' struggles, revealing the emotional toll of living within environments that resist change.

The playwrights skilfully use symbolic furniture to convey the protagonists' emotional and psychological struggles. Whether through sound, imagery, or physical presence, these objects become the sole companions of the women within their confined physical and emotional spaces. In these plays, objects like the mirror, piano, and pink quilt their functional roles transcend symbolise to psychological and spatial confinement experienced by the protagonists. These symbols vividly represent the plight of women subdued by societal expectations, encapsulating their loneliness, powerlessness, and yearning for agency.

However, this symbolic reliance on furniture extends beyond mere representation; it serves as a commentary on the multifaceted constraints placed upon women by societal norms. The shared symbolism in both plays strengthens the connection between the works, providing a unified lens through which to explore their thematic depth. The furniture underscores the physical limitations imposed on women and amplifies the psychological barriers that hinder self-expression and independence. This convergence of themes and symbols enriches the analysis, offering a profound critique of the patriarchal systems perpetuating these constraints.

The study examines the protagonists' shared struggles in these two monodramas to highlight the broader implications of societal norms for women's lives and identities. Through their powerful symbolism and evocative narratives, these works challenge the audience to reflect on the systems that sustain gender inequality and reconsider how societal traditions continue to shape and constrain women's roles. Ultimately, these works are more than theatrical expressions; they are a rallying cry for progress and

equity. They encourage us to question the relevance of traditions that no longer serve the needs of modern individuals, particularly women. By doing so, they remind us of the transformative power of art to critique the past, reimagine the present, and inspire a more inclusive and equitable future.

This article underscores the significance of examining implicit cultural patterns in literature and their broader for understanding social implications and cultural transformations. The works of Saudi female playwrights provide invaluable insights into these dynamics, presenting narratives that challenge traditional norms and highlight women's evolving roles within society. Their contributions to the literary canon enrich the field of dramatic arts and serve as essential tools for critiquing and reimagining cultural and societal structures. As such, these works warrant thorough analysis and thoughtful engagement to fully appreciate their impact and relevance.

Nevertheless, in recent years, Saudi Arabia has undergone significant changes in its social and cultural discussions, reflecting shifts in societal values and structures. These

changes have been spurred by national reforms such as those outlined in Vision 2030, which focus on promoting gender equality, empowering women, and diversifying cultural narratives. Consequently, once rigid norms and traditions evolve, they increase the representation of women's voices and experiences in public and artistic spaces.

In this context, the rise of Saudi female playwrights is particularly noteworthy. Their creations resonate within a society that is becoming more willing to reassess traditional gender roles and challenge patriarchal norms. These developments create a rich environment for examining underlying cultural patterns in literature, highlighting the dynamic relationship between historical continuity and Saudi society's emerging modern identity.

This study acknowledges several limitations that offer further exploration opportunities. Firstly, textual analysis is interpretative, meaning subjectivity may influence it. Complementary methods, like interviews with playwrights or audience members, could provide valuable insights. Secondly, while the feminist framework offers critical insights into the plays' gendered dynamics, it may not fully

account for other cultural, political, or socio-economic factors. Intersectional elements such as class and religion require more investigation for a holistic view. Lastly, the evolving Saudi discourse and significant recent changes in women's roles necessitate deeper exploration. Future research should examine how these shifts reshape cultural patterns and representations of women in Saudi theatre. Addressing these limitations will enhance the understanding of gender and societal transformation complexities in the region.

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