



RESEARCH PAPER

Jokha Alharthi's *Bitter Orange Tree*: A Literary Document of Cultural Transformation In Oman

Dr. Abdul Ghaffar

Associate Professor of English, Division of Arts & Social Sciences, University of Education, Lahore Multan Campus, Punjab, Pakistan

***Corresponding Author:** abdul.ghafar@ue.edu.pk

ABSTRACT

This study investigates cultural shift and transformation in Omani culture in Jokha Alharthi's novel *Bitter Orange Tree* (2022). It traces how the discovery of oil and subsequent modernization changed the social fiber of Omani culture and how these socio-political and historical conditions played a crucial role in shaping the character's identities. While applying Homi K Bhabha's concepts of hybridity and identity, the researcher analyzes how the characters' identities, especially the main character Zuhour's identity is a construct of her contact with different cultures. Therefore, it's naive to consider these characters having single and pure identities. Rather, being diasporic characters, they have complex and multiple identities that reflect and characters' exposure with other cultures and the shaping of their identities. Since *Bitter Orange Tree* mirrors the changes that took place in the social and cultural domains of Oman, it may be considered a literary document of the period.

KEYWORDS Cultural Shift, Modernization, Hybridity, Identity, Diasporic Characters

Introduction

The title of the novel *Bitter Orange Tree* (2022), a tree of citrus family, is a very powerful cultural symbol since it is native and natural to Omani culture. Al Dawoodi (2024) comments that the author has aligned the title with its societal context, events, and characters in the novel. It dominates the novel from the beginning to the end and all events revolve round it. It's inseparable from the character of Zuhour's grandmother, Bint Aamir who is eighty years old and represents traditional agrarian Omani culture. It grows and flourishes along with Bint Aamir and starts withering and dies along with her due to the onslaught of modern, consumer Omani culture. So, its death becomes indicative of the decline and death of traditional Omani culture. It also becomes prominent in the way the novel registers the shift of gender roles to modernity that seems to challenge and question the traditional gender roles. Alharthi has beautifully analyzed these traditional gender roles by choosing her young characters from two different ethnic communities of Oman and Pakistan. Zuhour, Sumayya and their brother from Omani community whereas Zuhour's friend Suroor, her sister Kuhal and Kuhal's lover-cum-husband, Imran serve parallel studies who stand contrast to the traditional, patriarchal family backdrop in both Oman and Pakistan. From this perspective, the whole novel presents the saga of an Omani family and reflects the shift from traditional Omani cultural values to the modern ones.

Literature Review

Researchers and scholars have investigated the cultural transformation and shift in literary works from different angles. There are only a few researchers who have examined cultural transformation and cultural shift in Arab English literature in general

and Omani English literature in particular. For an instance, the researchers have examined the themes such as the role of professional storytelling (Al-Yahyai et al, 2023) and the role of English language on Omani education and culture (Al-Issa, 2005). There are limited studies that deal with Omani English literature with reference to cultural transformation and shift in Omani society. After surveying Arab English literature, Mohja Kahf (2014) notices that there are three stereotype images of the Arab women prevalent in Arab English literature. These three images relate to women as an escapee of their repressive culture, as a pawn of Arab male power and as a victim of gender oppression (pp. 148-172). Alharthi's female characters seem empowered in the sense that they don't fall under any one of these three categories of stereotypical images of the Arab women. They are not an escapee of their repressive culture, not a pawn of Arab male power and not a victim of gender oppression. If they are caught up in any of these three situations, they challenge and question these types and show their strength and resilience. Bint Aamir from old generation and Zuhour from new generation are the good examples that defy the three stereotypes about Arab women. Hence, Alharthi may be considered among one of those Arab writers who have given vent to the Arab Women's emotions and experiences through her work in the context of rapidly changing cultural values. Therefore, her work can be granted special status in Arab English literature because it not only captures the social transformation of a specific period but also records the women liberation and autonomy in Oman that ensue owing to that cultural change. Like her *Celestial Bodies* (2019), Alharthi's *Bitter orange Tree* (2022) also reflects the beauty, richness and transitional phase of the Omani culture. Ekhtyari et al (2025) have analyzed *Bitter orange Tree* in terms of contrast and conflict between tradition and modernity in their research work. The researcher believes that the interest and beauty of the novel lies not in the cultural conflict, but in the way, it mirrors the shift of the Omani culture and how this shift affects and shapes characters' identities. It would be pertinent to mention that the representation of the cultural dynamic shift is also a prominent theme in her other novels such as *Dreams* and *Celestial Bodies* (Manshi & Mishra, 2020). In *Celestial Bodies*, "the mothers functioned as witnesses to the profound changes in Omani society, creating intra-gender generational conflicts" (Yusoff & Raihanah, 2022, p. 209). Similarly, like her other novels, Alharthi has used non-linear, cinematographic technique to represent the dynamicity of Omani culture through chunks and pieces of memories gathered and narrated through the character of Zuhour. Since, no existing study is available that focuses on the cultural transformation and shift in Alharthi's *The Bitter Orange Tree*, the current study fills that gap by examining the issue.

Material and Methods

The research is qualitative in nature. The researcher has drawn on close reading and textual analysis of Jokha Alharthi's *Bitter Orange Tree*. While employing Homi K Bhabha's concepts of identity and other related notions like hybridity, third space and unhomly, the research attempts to explore how the characters in the novel reflect the cultural shift of Oman that has been prominently represented in the novel and have complex and hybrid identities because of their interaction across the culture. Homi K. Bhabha's concept of hybridity has gained popularity and significance in the field of postcolonial and diasporic studies. Originally, the term came from the discipline of biology where it is used to talk about hybrid species. It is equally valid and useful in the areas of cultural studies and linguistics where the terms like cultural hybridity, linguistics hybridity and ethnic hybridity are frequently employed to explore the effects of hybridity. Robert Young (2016), a literary theorist, states that "Hybridity, described as a blend of diverse elements, is inherently a concept of mixed origin" (p. 21). It refers to the fusion and blending of cultural values, traditions and customs that influence

characters and finally contribute in shaping their identities. This creates “new transcultural forms” (Ashcroft et al, 2003, p.118) that are varied and rich. Related to Bhabha’s concept of hybridity and identity, the concept of the third space is also crucial to understand the construction of characters’ identities. The characters’ interaction across cultures provides them a liminal zone, a third space where identities are negotiated and produced. Thus, the cultural symbols and meanings are also not fixed, but, may be reread and reinterpreted due to the change of conditions and circumstances. As Bhabha (2012) argues that “It is that third space, however unrepresentable in itself, that offers the discursive conditions of enunciation, ensuring that the meanings and symbols of culture have no primordial unity or fixity, that even the same signals can be appropriated, translated, historicized and read again” (p.37).

Results and Discussion

The novel was basically published in Arabic with the title *Narinjah* in 2016 and Marilyn Booth translated it in 2022. Despite the English version, the novel records frequent Arabic words, references and Arabic folk tales that betoken the richness of native Omani culture. It evinces the Omani female writers’ dream and desire to have access to the international readership and get more popularity by transcending the boundaries of national and regional Arab speaking community. This act also simultaneously shows the transformation of Arabic cultural roots and heritage in a rapidly changing cultural and global scenario and writers’ attempts for autonomy and agency that is characteristic of the modern Omani culture. The characters, being bilingual and multilingual, also allude to the fact that modern identities are blend and hybrid that defy pure, monolithic Omani identities. The phenomenon of cultural shift plays important role in the construction of characters’ identities. The way the characters accept and adopt modern cultural values in terms of their communication, education, dress and food habits reinforces the idea that characters’ identities are complex, multifaceted and fluid. Alharthi stresses that socio-historical and political context fashion the characters’ identities.

To comprehend how *The Bitter Orange* mirrors the cultural transformation of the Omani society, there is need to look back on the socio-political and historical changes that paved the way for cultural transformation and modernization of the Omani society. Though Sultan Said bin Taimur ruled Oman for a span of forty years yet majority of the Omani people had no access to education and better medical facilities. It was mainly agricultural and traditional with little urban facilities. Blankinship (2021) mentions “By 1970, it had only six miles of paved roads, no newspapers or radios, and an average life expectancy of 47” (p.10). Then, a couple of social and political factors in 1970s prompted a shift in Oman from traditional agrarian state to a modern state. Firstly, Sultan Qaboos bin Said Al Said (1970-2020), Sultan Taimur’s son, ousted his father and became the ruler of Oman with a different mindset. He left a great impact on modern Omani culture. The people of Oman called him a beloved modernizer with an iron fist. Secondly, the discovery of gas and oil reserves accelerated Oman’s way to modernity and consumer culture. Alharthi herself alludes to this fact in an interview with Talei and Blankinship (2021) “Then suddenly, with the discovery of oil, a new chapter of Oman’s history was launched. Omanis found themselves, in a very brief span of time, forced to brave tremendous changes that took other nations centuries to assimilate”. Oman experienced a considerable change. There was initiation of many mega projects, educational opportunities within country and abroad and increase in economic activities that modernized and liberalized the Omani culture. Women education contributed a lot in the process of modernization of Omani culture. It empowered women to choose and

decide for themselves keeping their wishes and dreams in their minds. It was during this period “National GDP grew from \$256 million to \$80 billion and life expectancy improved from 50 to 77 years. Slavery, once a cornerstone of the economy, was outlawed in 1970, and in 2002 voting rights were granted to all citizens over age 21” (Blankinship, 2021, p.11). Alharthi as a writer seems deeply interested in capturing these changes in her novels since it gives her an opportunity to map the generational differences and generational struggle evident in the Omani culture. As she (2021) insists in her interview “The values that I lived by when I was a student are different from the ones she now follows. It is these changes, and the way people are adapting to them, that fascinate me and compel me to write”. From this perspective, the novel transcends the simple story of generational differences and changes. It navigates the cultural transformation and change that the Omani people were experiencing at that time.

The role of Zuhour, the protagonist, becomes significant since it's through her character, Alharthi has attempted to explore the cultural flux in Omani culture. Zuhour emigrates from Oman to England to complete her medical education. Though she is modern and transformed yet she longs for lost old cultural values and gets nostalgic. She is unable to situate herself in England and feels home in London. Zuhour's isolation and alienation in UK stems from Appadurai's (1996) concept of deterritorialization, and Aihwa Ong's notion of globalization (1999). To Appadurai, deterritorialization due to distance and detachment from the native land causes isolation. Whereas, Ong argues that globalization commodifies the cultural identities and develops a sense of alienation. Zuhour's feels haunted by her grandmother's memories throughout the novel. Both Bint Aamir and Zuhour experience the feelings of unhomly due to different reasons. Bint Aamir's feeling of unhomly results from her victimization at the hands of oppressive patriarchal system whereas Zuhour's feeling of unhomly stem from her displacement and deterritorialization.

Zuhour's memory of her grandmother represents Bint Aamir as a fat, old woman of “ancient soil” (Alharthi, 2022, p.12) scented with “civet musk, precious aloes wood oil” and her fleshy, wrinkled, fingers with the rough nails. This evokes the aura of a woman who represents her traditional or premodern Omani culture that stands contrast to the aura of Zuhour's smart physique and her nails “painted bright red” (p. 12) as a modern Omani lady. This becomes prominent in case of their education and contact with the external world. Bint Aamir has little education and she leaves her home just two to three times unwillingly or due to some urgency. It's also evident in case of Zuhour's mother, Athurayyaa, who got only basic education from a local mosque school. Whereas Zuhour goes to England to get her medical education. Alharthi has superbly captured this rapidly changing perspective of Omani culture through the three generations of her characters like Bint Aamir, Athurayyaa and Zuhour. Bint Aamir represents the traditional culture, while Athurayyaa exhibits the middle transitional phase and Zuhour shows the modern face of Omani culture that empowered the Omani women and, subsequently, they got opportunities of contact and exposure with other cultures. Since Bint Aamir and Athurayyaa have little exposure with the external world, their identities are not as complex as it can be noticed in Zuhour's case. Zuhour, being a diasporic character, does not possess a pure, monolithic Omani identity. Her identity is characterized by what Bhabha (2012) refers as hybridity. According to Bhabha, identity does not remain fixed and categorical whenever there is a contact of cultures. It is neither original nor authentic. Rather, it is fluid and in flux. So, when we look at Zuhour's character, we see that she experiences and exposes herself to Omani, English and Pakistani culture. This interaction and exposure shape her into a multiple identity that defies the simple notions of identity. Similarly, Bhabha's concept of third space is equally

useful and valid in case of Zuhour. Third space is an imaginary space where two cultures converge. Zuhour's stay in UK being a liminal zone helps Alharthi investigate the cultural richness and variety of the English culture that plays a pivotal role in shaping Zuhour's multiple identity.

Alharthi has also navigated the cultural shift in case of Zuhour's Pakistani fiends Suroor and Kuhl, the two Pakistani sisters. They belong to Pakistani elite class and getting education in London. Kuhl secretly marries her Pakistani class fellow, Imran who belongs to a poor peasant family and is studying in London on a scholarship. Suroor informs Zuhour "Just imagine, Zuhour, imagine! My sister ... my very own sister, marrying that peasant!" (p. 12). Again, Suroor tells about Imran "He's a peasant. His mom and dad are illiterate" (p.13). Suroor can't imagine Imran's "rough peasant hand – on her sister's soft, smooth throat; his coarse lips on her pampered body" (pp. 16-17). Suroor's words reflect the traditional feudal mindset whereas Kuhl's decision to marry her poor class fellow shows how traditional class barriers even in Pakistani culture were on the verge of collapse due to education and exposure with the other culture.

The Second World War along with drought and famine changed the structure of Omani Culture from a traditional agrarian culture to modern consumer culture. It caused inflation and gave rise to consumerism. The oil-drilling rights were given to a British company. The Omani people in large numbers moved to the east coast of Africa or "the parts where life was affordable" (p. 14). Motherless Bint Aamir and her brother left their father's home due to humiliation at the hands of their father. Later on, Bint Aamir not only loses her brother due to his miserable death but also her father owing to his father's insulting behavior with his children. The traditional culture was tied to the land and people were contented with what they had. Bint Aamir's wish for a patch of land where she can grow different vegetables and fruit plants and "rest in their shade" (p.15) represents the simplicity, contentment and beauty of that culture. It was a culture where people had sparse medical facilities and treated themselves with herbal medicines.

The cultural shift is visible in case of Zuhour's dress. She wore traditional dress and wrapped herself in pinafore dress and shawl as long as she was in her native village, but it was replaced with skirt and blouse when she moved to Muscat and finally with a jacket and trousers when she came to London. But Bint Aamir, being representative of traditional Omani culture, "never shed the clothes that were native to" (p. 19) her village. It was "bright-colored cotton tarha and the black tunic that fell below her knees", a "long and loose" (p.19) dress with "head-shawl masarr" (p. 19) that stands in contrast to Zuhour's modern dress. The cultural shift is also noticeable in the way Zuhour's father, Salman leaves Oman, goes to Zanzibar to settle over there for trade. He becomes a prosperous merchant. It's under the influence of modernity that the Omani youth and Arab people felt dissatisfied with the available opportunities and went abroad for education and felt no hesitation to "apply themselves energetically to the whiskey bottles that these young men had brought with them" (p. 34).

Omani culture becomes vivid in the readers' eyes through the writer's references to Omani cultural values, their food habits, their superstitions, their cloths and so on. For an instance, the emir, Mu'tamid bin Abbad, decorates the floor of his palace with "perfume, saffron, musk, and camphor" (p. 27) for the strolling of his wife and her retinue. But, such references also reveal the class difference of Omani society when the writer mentions that musk and camphor were the words for her grandmother and other charcoal making friends. Bint Aamir enjoys coffee and dates along with her friend Shaykha. Alharthi even does not spare the taboos of Omani culture with reference to the

character of Athurayyaa, Zuhour's mother, who "had gotten a reputation for being ill-omened" (p.31). Athurayyaa has to wear white mourning dress, confine herself for four months and ten days after her first husband's death. The cultural shift is also observable in the sense that new generation due to exposure and interaction with the foreign people forgets its roots and identity. This is what happens in the case of Shakyha's son who never comes back to his country and his mother since his affair with a lady from foreign land. His mother believes her son to be an angel who was "kidnapped by a sly wicked jinni woman so she could take him into exile" (p.49). Through such examples, Alharthi argues that despite the fact Omani culture is old, traditional Arab culture, it also embodies richness of folklores, anecdotes, sayings and proverbs. These folklores or tales reflect wisdom and prudence of Omani people. For instance, the tale that Bint Aamir's story of the wood gatherer reveals the contentment, religious attachment and beliefs.

Bint Aamir's death causes a great psychological and spiritual loss for Zuhour and the way it's linked with withering and loss of Narinjah, the bitter orange tree shows that the elders and old people have great respect and honor in the Omani family system. As long as Bint Aamir was living in Zuhour's house, there were blessings and she was like the cool shade that protects you against the heat of the summer. Her death means loss of all those cherished and sweet things that were associated with Bint Aamir, grandmother, Maah. As Zuhour recalls "The losses piled up, and there was nothing there to compensate for them. No compensation, Grandmother. Maah" (p. 58). The characters' passion for singing and dancing also reflects the impact of modernity on Omani cultural values that were expanding and encompassing new things which were not once its part. The modernity changed the shape of Omani culture. School going children read English books, learnt singing and dancing because of their exposure to the characters from English classics.

The Second World War further played a pivotal role in changing the cultural outlook of Oman. Salman lost his property. He kept eatables under lock and key so that not even a single food particle may go waste. Instead of toilet, there is a little mud-brick shelter. As it has already been mentioned that the thing that changed the future of Omani culture was the Omani oil industry. It caused a noticeable shift in cultural norms and values along with the changing times. The old and traditional Omani culture was simple, rural, and beautiful due to its agrarian values as compared to modern Omani culture that is mainly based on the trade economy. In the old Omani culture, farming was the main source of one's bread and butter and the number of the date palm trees helped assess the riches of a family whereas the modernity introduced schools, hospitals and internet facilities that changed the shape of Omani culture forever.

The novel evinces how Omani culture, prominently being Islamic culture, reflects change and serious issues due to modernity in Oman like other parts of the Arab countries. It can be noticed how do some of the characters experience a clash between old and modern interpretations of Islam? This change and conflict in Islamic outlook came in the wake of the cultural shift that affected the Omani culture and made people skeptic and liberal. This thing along with other changes in the Omani culture shows that though the Omani culture was rapidly changing due to modernization yet it retained some of the aspects and values of the traditional agrarian culture (Rasaf, & Basid, 2024, p.583). This indicates the growth, dynamicity and progressive aspect of any culture. Alharthi's use of *The Bitter Orange Tree* as a title of the novels also alludes to the fact that past and present, old memories and new thoughts can never come to terms with each other. The bitterness of the past keeps on haunting Zuhour's mind despite her distance and detachment from the past. It's an act of acceptance and continuity that lend

dynamicity to any culture. By juxtaposing the character of Bint Aamir with the character of Zuhour, Alharthi explores the transformation of rapid changes that affected the Omani culture and played a crucial role in constructing their identities.

This cultural shift becomes prominent in the case of female characters of the novel. Education brought a great change in the Omani social fiber and women started feeling empowered, enlightened and liberated. The Omani women felt and experienced things on their own. They realized that they are no more goods and chattels rather living entities capable of thinking and taking their own decisions. It's in this context the Arab women writers like Alharthi situated their works and became the spokesperson of women's new found freedom and identity. JT Zeidan (1995) aptly observes that the Arab women writers' "Key themes were individualism, the drive to assert a personal and distinctly female identity, and demands for the social, sexual and political rights of women" (p.6). Bint Aamir, Athurayyaa, and Sumayya are weak, non-eloquent and compromising since they lack education. Subsequently, they do not seem as strong as Zuhour is. Education transforms Zuhour's personality and makes her confident, expressive and strong. The setting of the novel England and the way Zuhour tells the story of her stay over there, her exposure to global culture that is totally different from Omani culture, and her desire for Kuhul's husband, Imran reflect that she steps beyond her Omani cultural limits under the influence of her contact and her experiences of the global culture while living in England. The writer expresses Zuhour's desire for Imran through her utterance: "He was very, very charming" and "captivating" (p.70-71). The use of *was* indicates remoteness, inaccessibility, unfulfilled desire and *very* shows the intensity of that desire. The minute observations like Imran's slim and long fingers, the way she feels the closeness of Imran's hair to her fingers and the way she visualizes "the essence of first and elemental desire for union" (p. 78) between Kuhul and Imran further betray Zuhour's desire for Imran. This play of the desires become more noticeable when Zuhour and Kuhul go to inquire after Imran in his flat. Zuhour says "Drops of sweat ran down his neck. My hands ached to reach out and wipe away the dampness, but Kuhl's fingers were already there" (p. 103). Since Zuhour can't fit in the triangle, she feels contented with the wonders of her imagination: "I was happy enough living with imagination" (p. 129). The modernization of Omani culture transforms her into an empowered and emancipated figure who defines herself, imagines the new wonders of her brave world, experiences a new reality, asserts her identity and boldly expresses it despite the trap of language.

The colonial influence is explicitly visible in case of Bint Aamir's visit to the al-Rahma hospital in Muscat. Her interaction with the famous Dr. Wells Thomas and his wife bespeaks how the colonized/eastern people consider the western people as superior, magical and creature from another planet. Bint Aamir looks at Beth Thomas' smiling face and thinks that the miracle is near and her sight will be cured. She receives the Bible from her and later on she keeps it as a treasured gift and memento. Similarly, she meets Dr. Thomas as if she were "a lowly mortal meeting a saint or a holy man or a revered miracle worker who had turned people's dreams into reality" (p.82).

Alharthi has introduced the character of Sumayya, Zuhour's sister as an example of traditional, macho-conservative and rigid Omani culture. She marries a man who inflicts torture on his wife and bullies her without having the qualms of the conscience. It is his sudden accidental death that provides Sumayya an exit and escape and after her husband's death she looks like a picture on the wall "eternally hung suspended in time" (p. 97). The other character who reflects the rigidity of traditional, patriarchal Omani culture is Bint Aamir who cannot marry due to her father's stubborn and wilful nature.

Her father's egoistical nature does not let him marry his daughter due to the fact that he does not want to be abused as a father of one blind eyed daughter. It's her suffering and loss that make her experience a feeling of what Bhabha calls unhomeliness. She is unmarried woman with children who are not her own children. She yearns to have a plot, a patch of land where she can grow vegetables and fruits but she does not own land. Despite the oppressive patriarchal constraints, Bint Aamir's character reveals agency and resilience through her boundless love for children, her knowledge of herbs and folklores, her sympathy and empathy and above all, her suffering, endurance and resignation. However, the modernization of Omani culture owing to the oil discovery brought a considerable change in the low position of women and social fiber. As B. V. Saraswathy (2020) notes that "In Arab culture, women had a low status for centuries. Economic development and state expansion are two major sources of social change in the Gulf countries since World War II and has effected a change in the social stratification and concomitantly the position of women in the new modernized society" (p. 2). Contrary to her, Zuhour is foil to her sister, Sumayya, due to her education that transforms her into an enlightened character. She goes abroad for medical education, experiences and enjoys the openness and colors of a modern and liberal culture. The novelist further highlights the rigidity and victimization of female characters living in Omani culture through the character of Kaaffa, Mansour's beloved-cum-wife. The same victimization can also be observed in Alharthi's *Celestial Bodies* (2019). In *The Bitter Orange Tree* (2022), Kaaffa is Mansour's passion, desire and love but this love is stifling. Mansour adores her, admires her, and worships her so much that she feels imprisoned: "The price of deification was being paid by her body and her spirit, both held lifeless in these walls" (p. 116). It's not only her husband's love that is claustrophobic, Kaaffa's father love for her daughter is equally ruinous and dangerous. If her husband's love stifles her, her father's love spoils and destroys her marital life. The men of the community know only two things: to suppress the women or to treat them as an object of desire. So, their relationship lacks harmony, understanding and equality that may sustain a relationship for a long time. These female characters help Alharthi represent and investigate the patriarchal constraints on one hand and women's liberty in the old and conservative Omani culture. In this way, the novelist has evinced how the characters are culturally rooted and how Omani culture has finally shaped the identity of the characters. Alharthi portrays the narrow limits and myopic vision of the old Omani generation through the story of Bint Aamir's friend, Shaykha and her son who emigrated to the west and never returned to his country. Shaykha innocently believes that her son is possessed "by the jinni women of the West" (p.126) and hence unable to come to his native land and his mother.

Conclusion

This study examines cultural transformation and cultural shift in the Omani culture in Jokha Alharthi's *The Bitter Orange Tree* (2022). It traces how varied socio-historical and political conditions contributed to the changes that prompted shift from traditional agrarian culture to modern consumer culture. Cultures are not fixed and static. Rather, continuous changes in the social-historical and political domains affect the shape and form of a culture. It is an unending process that causes change and lends beauty to a culture. In the words of Raymond Williams (1983), culture is a lived and dynamic process. It is this progressive and dynamic aspect of Omani culture that Alharthi has superbly represented in her novel. Furthermore, Bhabha's notions of hybridity and identity reveal that characters' identities in the novel are complex that challenge the simple notions of identity. Like culture, characters' identities are also porous and amorphous due to the absorption of the constant changes that result from

interaction and contact with the foreign culture. Finally, the analysis reveals that the novel in itself becomes a site of Homi K Bhabha's third space where premodern and modern Omani culture, past and present, young and old generation, Omani and British culture, and, English and Arabic language converge to create what Chantal Zabus (2007) calls as palimpsest. The future scholars and researchers can investigate Alharthi's other novels in terms of cultural shift in Oman and even other Arab countries.

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