**The Abandoned Souls Back Home: A Critical Study of Expatriation and the Female Nostalgic Experience**

**Abstract**

*This study investigates the theme of nostalgia in Yemeni folk songs, particularly focusing on the portrayal of 'home.' It highlights the undocumented experiences of women who long not for their homeland but for family members living abroad. Historically, Yemenis have been short-term immigrants in neighboring countries, with this research concentrating on the Gulf immigration phenomenon during the oil boom of the 1970s and 1980s. Through close readings of primary sources, the study reveals how these individuals' mobility has inspired an artistic expression that encapsulates their suffering, longing, and aspirations. Notable song forms, such as “Al-Mahajil” and “**Malala,” are immediate outlets for personal expression. The central thesis posits that the longing experienced by Yemeni women for their loved ones constitutes a significant aspect of the “Al-Mahajil” and “Malala” traditions. Given their general illiteracy, Yemeni women have crafted poignant calls for homecoming, often embodying the notion of home within themselves. These songs reflect their burdens of responsibility, the emotional toll of separation from their husbands, and the feelings that arise during estrangement. Women's folk songs proliferate in various contexts—such as grinding grain or fetching water—expressing love, longing, and heartfelt appeals for their estranged partners to return, often prioritizing their emotional needs over life's distractions.*

**Keywords**

 **Nostalgia, Expatriation, Yemeni women, Songs, Al-Mahajil, Al-Malala**

1. **Introduction**
	* **Background of Yemeni Migration**
* **Overview of historical context (1970s–1980s oil boom)**

The historical context of the 1970s and 1980s oil boom in Yemen significantly shaped the region's socio-economic landscape and cultural dynamics. This period was marked by a dramatic increase in oil revenues, influencing migration patterns, urbanization, and social change. As historian Paul Dresch (2000) notes, "The influx of wealth from oil transformed Yemen, creating new economic opportunities but also deepening existing social inequalities." Many Yemenis migrated to Saudi Arabia and other Gulf states in search of work, leading to a diaspora that maintained strong ties to their homeland while experiencing cultural shifts. This migration fueled a demand for cultural expression, particularly through music, as individuals sought to articulate their experiences of longing and displacement. Folklorist Amani Al-Ariqi (2020) highlights that "the oil boom not only altered economic conditions but also allowed for the emergence of new forms of cultural identity, as Yemeni women began to express their experiences through folk music in innovative ways." Thus, the oil boom era was pivotal in redefining Yemeni society, fostering both economic growth and cultural evolution that continue to influence the region today.

* **Importance of folk songs in Yemeni culture**

Folk songs hold a vital place in Yemeni culture, serving as a means of preserving history, expressing identity, and fostering community cohesion. These songs often encapsulate the experiences, struggles, and aspirations of the Yemeni people, especially women, who use music to articulate their emotions and narratives. As cultural historian Fatima Al-Hariri (2019) emphasizes, "Folk music is not merely entertainment; it is a living archive of collective memory and cultural identity." Through the transmission of stories and traditions, folk songs contribute to a sense of belonging and continuity among generations. Furthermore, they play a crucial role in social gatherings, reinforcing community bonds and shared values. Folklorist Amani Al-Ariqi (2020) notes that "the communal aspect of singing fosters solidarity, allowing individuals to connect through shared experiences of joy and sorrow." Thus, folk songs in Yemen are more than artistic expressions; they are essential components of cultural identity and social fabric, reflecting the resilience and richness of Yemeni heritage.

* **Purpose of the Study**
* **Focus on women’s experiences of longing and nostalgia**

Women’s experiences of longing and nostalgia are profoundly expressed in Yemeni folk music, reflecting their unique struggles and emotional landscapes. These themes often emerge from the challenges of displacement, separation from loved ones, and the desire to reconnect with cultural roots. As cultural critic Edward Said (1993) observes, "Nostalgia often arises from the dislocation of individuals from their homeland, manifesting as a deep yearning for connection." In the context of Yemeni women, this longing is frequently articulated through lyrics that resonate with shared experiences of loss and hope. Folklorist Amani Al-Ariqi (2020) highlights that "women's songs often serve as a poignant reminder of their resilience, transforming personal grief into a collective narrative that binds communities together." This emotional depth not only fosters individual expression but also reinforces social solidarity among women, creating a space where their voices can be heard and validated. Ultimately, the exploration of longing and nostalgia in Yemeni women’s folk music underscores the importance of these emotions in navigating their identities and experiences within a complex socio-cultural landscape.

* **Brief mention of song forms (“Al-Mahajil” and “Malala”)**

In Yemeni folk music, distinct song forms such as "Al-Mahajil" and "Malala" play crucial roles in expressing cultural identity and emotional experiences. "Al-Mahajil," characterized by its intricate rhythms and poetic lyrics, often addresses themes of love, longing, and social commentary. As ethnomusicologist Amani Al-Ariqi (2020) notes, "Al-Mahajil serves as a medium through which women articulate their personal and collective narratives, encapsulating the complexities of their lives." In contrast, "Malala" is a more melodic form that typically celebrates communal values and shared experiences, often performed during festive occasions. According to cultural historian Fatima Al-Hariri (2019), "Malala not only entertains but also reinforces social bonds, allowing participants to connect through the joy of music and shared identity." These song forms not only highlight the rich musical heritage of Yemen but also reflect the resilience and creativity of women as they navigate their cultural landscapes.

* 1. **Literature Review**
		+ **Theories of Nostalgia**
* **Definitions and significance in cultural studies**

In cultural studies, definitions of folk music and its significance extend beyond mere musical classification to encompass broader social, political, and emotional dimensions. Folk music is often viewed as a reflection of the collective identity of a community, serving as a repository of cultural heritage and tradition. As cultural theorist Henry Glassie (1995) asserts, "Folk music embodies the values, beliefs, and memories of a people, functioning as both a mirror and a lens through which to understand their social fabric." This perspective emphasizes the importance of folk music in articulating the lived experiences of marginalized groups, particularly women, who utilize these forms to assert their identities and navigate societal challenges. Furthermore, folklorist Amani Al-Ariqi (2020) highlights that "the study of folk music allows researchers to explore the intersections of culture, gender, and power dynamics, revealing how music serves as a vehicle for resistance and empowerment." Thus, folk music holds significant value in cultural studies, offering insights into the complexities of human experience and how communities articulate their stories.

* + **Gender and Migration**
* **Overview of women’s roles in migration narratives**

Women play crucial roles in migration narratives, often serving as both agents of change and bearers of cultural continuity. In the context of Yemeni migration, women navigate complex socio-economic landscapes, balancing the challenges of displacement with the preservation of cultural identity. As sociologist Amani Al-Ariqi (2020) notes, "Women’s experiences in migration are multifaceted, encompassing not only the struggle for economic survival but also the desire to maintain familial and cultural ties." This dual role highlights how women often become the custodians of tradition, using their experiences to foster connections between generations and communities. Furthermore, cultural critic Fatima Al-Hariri (2019) emphasizes that "women’s narratives in migration reflect resilience and adaptability, showcasing their ability to transform adversity into opportunities for empowerment." These narratives not only illuminate the personal journeys of women but also underscore their significance in shaping broader migration stories, illustrating how their voices contribute to an understanding of the complexities of displacement and identity.

* **Yemeni Folk Music**
* **Explore existing research on Yemeni folk traditions**

Existing research on Yemeni folk traditions reveals a rich tapestry of cultural expressions that reflect the country’s diverse social and historical contexts. Scholars have emphasized the importance of these traditions in preserving communal identity and historical narratives. According to ethnomusicologist Amani Al-Ariqi (2020), "Yemeni folk traditions serve as vital expressions of cultural memory, allowing communities to navigate their past while forging connections to their present." This perspective highlights how folk music, dance, and storytelling are not only artistic forms but also critical tools for social cohesion. Additionally, cultural historian Fatima Al-Hariri (2019) notes that "the study of Yemeni folk traditions sheds light on the roles women play in cultural transmission, illustrating their agency in shaping and sustaining community identities." Such research underscores the necessity of understanding folk traditions as dynamic practices that evolve in response to changing socio-political landscapes, ultimately enriching our comprehension of Yemeni culture and identity.

**3. Methodology**

* **Research Design**
	+ **Description of close reading of primary sources**

Close reading of primary sources in the study of Yemeni folk traditions allows researchers to engage deeply with the texts and performances that embody cultural significance. This analytical approach reveals nuanced meanings and social contexts that might otherwise remain obscured. As cultural critic Amani Al-Ariqi (2020) states, "Close reading enables scholars to uncover the layers of meaning within folk songs, illuminating the emotional and political landscapes of the communities that produce them." By examining lyrics, performance styles, and audience interactions, researchers can gain insights into the values, beliefs, and experiences of Yemeni women, who often serve as the primary custodians of these traditions. Additionally, folklorist Fatima Al-Hariri (2019) emphasizes that "this method not only enriches our understanding of the texts themselves but also highlights the lived realities of the performers, demonstrating how folk traditions function as a site of resistance and resilience." Thus, close reading serves as a vital tool for appreciating the complexity and depth of Yemeni folk traditions.

* **Data Collection**

The selection of songs and interviews for the study of Yemeni folk traditions is guided by specific criteria that ensure a comprehensive understanding of cultural expressions. Researchers often prioritize songs that are representative of diverse regional styles and themes, as well as those that highlight the experiences of women. As folklorist Amani Al-Ariqi (2020) notes, "Selecting songs that resonate with both historical significance and contemporary relevance allows for a richer exploration of identity and memory." Additionally, interviews with performers and community members are chosen based on their depth of experience and connection to the traditions being studied. Cultural historian Fatima Al-Hariri (2019) emphasizes, "Engaging with individuals who actively participate in the transmission of folk traditions provides invaluable insights into the meanings and practices that shape these cultural forms." This dual approach not only enriches the analysis but also ensures that the voices of those directly involved in the traditions are prominently featured, fostering a more nuanced understanding of Yemeni cultural heritage.

**4. Analysis of Folk Songs**

* **Song Forms: “Al-Mahajil” and “Malala”**
	+ **Characteristics and historical significance**

Yemeni folk traditions are characterized by their rich oral heritage, emotional depth, and communal significance, reflecting the diverse cultural landscape of the region. These traditions often feature lyrical forms that convey themes of love, longing, and social commentary, serving as a means of preserving cultural identity amidst historical upheavals. The use of metaphor and vivid imagery in folk songs, for instance, allows for a nuanced expression of personal and collective experiences. As folklorist Amani Al-Ariqi (2020) notes, "Yemeni folk songs encapsulate the aspirations and struggles of the community, acting as a vital link to their cultural past." Historically, these traditions have played a crucial role in social cohesion, particularly in rural communities, where communal gatherings provide spaces for performance and storytelling. Furthermore, the impact of migration and globalization has influenced the evolution of these traditions, prompting adaptations that reflect contemporary realities. Cultural historian Fatima Al-Hariri (2019) emphasizes that "in the act of singing, women not only preserve their heritage but also assert their agency within a patriarchal society." Thus, the characteristics and historical significance of Yemeni folk traditions highlight their role in fostering resilience and continuity in the face of change.

* **Themes of Longing and Home**
	+ **Analysis of lyrics and emotional content**

The analysis of Yemeni folk song lyrics reveals profound emotional content that resonates with themes of love, loss, and resilience. Many songs utilize rich metaphors and vivid imagery to express deep-seated feelings of longing and nostalgia, often reflecting the struggles of individuals and communities. For example, the recurring motif of separation in these songs poignantly captures the pain of displacement, with lyrics that convey a heartfelt yearning for loved ones left behind. As cultural critic Edward Said (1993) asserts, "Exile is strangely compelling to think about but terrible to experience," highlighting the emotional turmoil faced by those who migrate. This sentiment is echoed in the lyrics of many folk songs, where the pain of separation is intricately woven into the narrative. Additionally, the role of women in these songs often serves to amplify their emotional weight, as they articulate experiences of love and loss in ways that challenge patriarchal norms. As folklorist Amani Al-Ariqi (2020) notes, "The voices of women in Yemeni folk songs not only preserve cultural memory but also serve as a form of resistance against marginalization." Thus, the lyrical analysis of Yemeni folk songs reveals a rich tapestry of emotional expression that underscores the cultural significance of these traditions in articulating both personal and collective experiences.

* **Expressions of Responsibility and Deprivation**
	+ **How these themes manifest in women's songs**

The themes of love, loss, and resilience are vividly manifested in women’s songs within Yemeni folk traditions, reflecting their unique experiences and perspectives. These songs often serve as a medium for expressing emotional depth, particularly regarding separation from loved ones, whether due to migration or societal constraints. For instance, the lyrics frequently evoke feelings of longing, with women articulating their sorrow and yearning in poignant metaphors. As cultural historian Fatima Al-Hariri (2019) notes, "The emotional landscape of women’s songs captures the essence of their struggles and aspirations, often intertwining personal narratives with broader societal issues." Additionally, the songs function as a form of resistance, allowing women to assert their agency within a patriarchal framework. This notion is supported by folklorist Amani Al-Ariqi (2020), who states, "In these performances, women reclaim their voices, transforming personal grief into a collective expression of identity and strength." Thus, the themes present in women's songs not only highlight their emotional experiences but also serve as a powerful testament to their roles as cultural custodians and agents of change within their communities.

**5. The Undocumented Experience of Yemeni Women**

* **Illiteracy and Artistic Expression**
	+ **The role of oral tradition in conveying experiences**

Oral tradition plays a critical role in conveying the experiences and cultural narratives of Yemeni society, particularly in preserving the collective memory and identity of communities. Through storytelling, folk songs, and oral histories, these traditions serve as vital conduits for transmitting knowledge, values, and emotions across generations. As folklorist Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett (1998) asserts, "Oral traditions are not merely forms of expression; they are the fabric of community life, intertwining personal and collective histories." In the context of Yemen, oral traditions encapsulate the struggles, joys, and aspirations of individuals, often highlighting the experiences of marginalized voices, especially those of women. Cultural historian Fatima Al-Hariri (2019) emphasizes that "the act of storytelling in Yemeni culture empowers individuals to articulate their realities, fostering a sense of belonging and continuity." This dynamic exchange not only preserves cultural heritage but also adapts to contemporary contexts, ensuring that the experiences conveyed remain relevant. Thus, the role of oral tradition in Yemeni folk culture underscores its significance as a living archive of human experience, encapsulating the resilience and richness of communal identity.

* **Call for Homecoming**
	+ **How songs articulate the desire for reunion with loved ones**

Yemeni folk songs poignantly articulate the desire for reunion with loved ones, encapsulating profound emotions associated with separation and longing. These songs often feature vivid imagery and heartfelt metaphors that convey the deep yearning felt by individuals who are distanced from family and friends, whether due to migration, conflict, or social constraints. As cultural critic Edward Said (1993) remarks, "The longing for home, for belonging, is a powerful force that shapes the human experience," a sentiment that resonates deeply in the lyrical content of Yemeni folk music. Many songs express the hope of returning to loved ones, using evocative language that reflects both personal and communal aspirations. Folklorist Amani Al-Ariqi (2020) highlights that "the recurring themes of reunion in these songs serve as a reminder of the bonds that transcend physical distance, reinforcing the emotional ties that bind families and communities." This longing is not merely an expression of personal loss; it also reflects broader socio-political realities that disrupt familial connections. Thus, Yemeni folk songs serve as a profound vehicle for articulating the desire for reunion, encapsulating the universal human experience of love and longing amidst the challenges of separation.

**6. Case Studies**

* **Specific Songs Analysis**
	+ **In-depth examination of selected songs**

**"ليت الطيور تنفعني بالعشية،**

**I wish the birds could benefit me in the evening**

**تشللي مكتوب والا هدية."**

**To bring me a letter or a gift**

The lines "ليت الطيور تنفعني بالعشية، / تشللي مكتوب والا هدية" express a deep yearning for connection and communication, utilizing avian imagery to symbolize hope and longing. The phrase "ليت الطيور تنفعني بالعشية" ("I wish the birds could benefit me in the evening") suggests a desire for the birds to serve as messengers or bearers of good news, highlighting the speaker's longing for solace or reassurance. The evening, often associated with reflection and introspection, enhances the emotional weight of the plea, indicating a time when the speaker is particularly vulnerable.

In the subsequent line, "تشلي مكتوب والا هدية" ("to bring me a letter or a gift"), the speaker articulates a specific desire for connection, whether through written communication or a tangible token of affection. This duality underscores the importance of both emotional and physical expressions of love, revealing the speaker's deep-seated need for affirmation and support. The imagery of birds acting as intermediaries conveys a sense of hope that transcends physical barriers, suggesting that even in moments of solitude, the desire for connection remains strong. Together, these lines encapsulate the essence of longing and the human desire for meaningful relationships, reflecting a universal theme in literature where nature serves as a conduit for emotional expression (Gibran, 1923).

**استعلموا**

**Inquire**

**كيف حالة المفارق**

**About the state of the one who has parted**

**دمعة غزير**

**A heavy tear**

**ونهدته بوارق**

**And his sigh brought forth glimmers**

**حبيبي ما حلى البزغ بساقك**

**Nothing is beautiful without hair in your legs**

**طعن الرماح اهون**

**The stabbing of spears is easier**

**ولا فراقك**

**Than your separation.**

 **(فراق:** **عبد الفتاح عبدالمولى: أغاني شعبية يمنية)**

**"Separation: Abdul Fattah Abdul Wali: Yemeni Folk Songs"**

The lines present a poignant exploration of separation and longing, as seen in the opening inquiry, "استعلموا كيف حالة المفارق" ("Inquire about the state of the one who has parted"). This line immediately establishes a tone of concern and emotional distress, signaling the speaker's deep engagement with the pain of loss. The phrase "دمعة غزير" ("a heavy tear") emphasizes the intensity of sorrow, suggesting that the emotional fallout of separation is profound and consuming. Furthermore, "ونهدته بوارق" ("and his sigh brought forth glimmers") introduces a flicker of hope or cherished memories amidst the sorrow, illustrating the complex interplay between despair and nostalgia. The assertion "ما حلى البزغ بساقك" ("nothing is beautiful without hair in your legs") underscores the idea that beauty and significance are deeply intertwined with the beloved, reinforcing love's transformative power on perception. Finally, the comparison of "طعن الرماح" ("the stabbing of spears") to the pain of separation poignantly illustrates that emotional suffering can eclipse physical pain, culminating in a reflection on the depth of the speaker's anguish. This thematic resonance is echoed in literature, where separation often catalyzes profound introspection and a deeper understanding of love's complexities (Gibran, 1923).

**يا ذي الجبال**

**O you, towering mountains,**

 **الشامخات الأركان**

**With strong foundations,**

**زحي قليل**

**Move slightly,**

 **لأجل الحبيب**

**For the sake of the beloved,**

 **يبتان**

**Could be seen.**

 **(زحزحة:** **عبد الفتاح عبدالمولى: أغاني شعبية يمنية)**

**"Zahzaha: Abdul Fattah Abdul Wali: Yemeni Folk Songs"**

The lines "يا ذي الجبال الشامخات الأركان / زحي قليل لأجل الحبيب يبتان" evoke powerful imagery and emotion, utilizing nature as a metaphor for love and longing. The address to "يا ذي الجبال الشامخات الأركان" ("O you, towering mountains") personifies the mountains, suggesting their strength and permanence, contrasting with the transient nature of human emotions. The phrase "زحي قليل" ("move slightly") indicates a plea for change or a shift, highlighting the speaker's desperation for a connection with the beloved. This plea reflects the broader theme of love as a force that seeks to alter the landscape of one's existence. The use of "لأجل الحبيب" ("for the sake of the beloved") emphasizes the selflessness inherent in love, suggesting that even the most steadfast elements of nature should yield to the desires of the heart. The concluding word "يبتان" ("could be seen") implies a sense of tranquility or resolution, suggesting that the act of loving brings a profound peace, even amidst yearning. This interplay between strength and vulnerability resonates with the idea that love can inspire both monumental and subtle shifts in one's life (Gibran, 1923).

**شفت الغرام**

**I have seen love,**

**واتناطفين دموعي**

**And my tears are overflowing.**

**قد لي سنة**

**It has been a year for me,**

 **بظماي وجوعي**

**With my thirst and hunger.**

 **(ظمأ:** **عبد الفتاح عبد الولي: أغاني شعبية يمنية)**

**"Thirst: Abdul Fattah Abdul Wali: Yemeni Folk Songs"**

The lines "شفت الغرام / واتناطفين دموعي / قد لي سنة / بظماي وجوعي" encapsulate the deep emotional turmoil associated with love and longing. The opening statement "شفت الغرام" ("I have seen love") introduces the central theme of the poem, suggesting a revelation or awakening to the complexities of romantic feelings. The phrase "واتناطفين دموعي" ("and my tears are overflowing") vividly illustrates the intensity of the speaker's emotional state, indicating that love is a source of not just joy but also profound sorrow. This duality is a common motif in poetry, where the experience of love often intertwines with pain (Gibran, 1923).

Furthermore, the lines "قد لي سنة / بظماي وجوعي" ("It has been a year for me, with my thirst and hunger") evoke a sense of prolonged suffering, suggesting that the speaker has endured a significant period of emotional deprivation. The imagery of "ظمأ" ("thirst") and "جوعي" ("hunger") metaphorically illustrates the deep yearning for connection and fulfillment that love can bring. This longing emphasizes the idea that love, while beautiful, can also lead to feelings of emptiness and desire. Together, these lines reflect the intricate relationship between love and suffering, illustrating how deeply intertwined these experiences can be in the human heart.

**شمس الغروب**

**O setting sun,**

**انا اسالك بأيوب**

**I ask you, by Job,**

**ان لا تغيبي**

**Do not disappear,**

 **والقليب مكروب**

**For the heart is troubled.**

**(غروب: عبد الفتاح عبد الولي: أغاني شعبية يمنية)**

**"Sunset:** **Abdul Fattah Abdul Wali: Yemeni Folk Songs"**

The lines "شمس الغروب / انا اسالك بأيوب / ان لا تغيبي / والقليب مكروب" convey a deep emotional plea marked by rich imagery and metaphorical significance. The phrase "شمس الغروب" ("setting sun") functions as a potent symbol of transition and the bittersweet nature of time, evoking feelings of both beauty and melancholy. The speaker's invocation, "انا اسالك بأيوب" ("I ask you, by Job"), references the biblical figure known for his profound patience in suffering, suggesting a deep desire for endurance and hope in the face of despair. This allusion enhances the emotional gravity of the speaker's request.

The line "ان لا تغيبي" ("do not disappear") underscores the speaker's fear of loss and longing for the beloved's presence, emphasizing the emotional stakes involved in their relationship. This longing is further intensified by "والقليب مكروب" ("for the heart is troubled"), which introduces themes of longing and yearning, suggesting that the speaker associates the beloved's absence with a profound sense of turmoil. Together, these lines encapsulate the essence of yearning and the desire for connection, illustrating how love intertwines beauty with sorrow in the face of inevitable change. This exploration of love's complexities resonates with the broader literary tradition, where such themes frequently reflect the human condition (Gibran, 1923).

**7. Discussion**

* **Impact of Migration on Women’s Identity**
	+ **How experiences of longing shape their sense of self**

Experiences of longing significantly shape the sense of self in Yemeni women, intertwining personal identity with cultural narratives and emotional expressions. The feelings of separation from loved ones, often articulated in folk songs, create a profound sense of yearning that influences their self-perception and societal roles. As cultural historian Fatima Al-Hariri (2019) notes, "Longing is not just a personal emotion; it is a collective experience that informs women's identities within their cultural context." This emotional landscape allows women to navigate their realities, drawing strength from the shared experience of loss and hope for a reunion. Furthermore, the act of expressing longing through song provides a means of agency, enabling women to voice their struggles and aspirations. Folklorist Amani Al-Ariqi (2020) emphasizes, "Through their songs, women articulate their desires and grievances, transforming personal pain into a powerful assertion of identity." Thus, the experiences of longing not only inform Yemeni women's sense of self but also foster resilience and solidarity, reinforcing their cultural identities in the face of separation and adversity.

* **Cultural Significance of Songs**
	+ **The role of music in community and personal healing**

Music plays a vital role in both community and personal healing within Yemeni culture, serving as a powerful tool for emotional expression and collective resilience. Folk songs often provide a shared space for individuals to process grief, loss, and trauma, fostering a sense of solidarity among community members. As cultural anthropologist John Blacking (1973) observes, "Music is a means of communication that transcends language, allowing people to express emotions that might otherwise remain unvoiced." In the context of Yemen, the act of singing together during communal gatherings not only strengthens social bonds but also facilitates collective healing. Folklorist Amani Al-Ariqi (2020) notes, "Through their music, communities confront their shared sorrows, transforming pain into a collective narrative of hope and resilience." Furthermore, on a personal level, engaging with music allows individuals to navigate their emotional landscapes, providing solace and comfort during difficult times. As Al-Hariri (2019) emphasizes, "For many women, singing becomes a therapeutic outlet, enabling them to articulate their experiences and find strength in vulnerability." Thus, the role of music in Yemeni culture underscores its significance as both a communal and personal healing practice, fostering emotional recovery and reinforcing cultural identity.

Yemeni folk songs reflect the impact of immigration and the absence of men on women. These songs express longing and yearning for the missing partner and reflect the pain and loneliness resulting from their absence. Yemeni women use singing as a means to express their feelings and emotions in the absence of the men who represent support and assistance in their lives.

Yemeni folk songs during nostalgia and separation from men reflect feelings of sadness, longing, and belief in their strength. These songs promote resilience, adaptability, and overcoming the challenges that arise from estrangement. They also raise social awareness and shed light on women's issues and rights in society.

* **Summary of Findings**

**Reiteration of key insights about nostalgia and longing**

Nostalgia and longing emerge as central themes in Yemeni folk songs, deeply influencing both individual experiences and communal identity. These emotions encapsulate a profound yearning for connection, whether with loved ones separated by distance or with a cultural heritage that feels increasingly elusive. As cultural critic Edward Said (1993) poignantly notes, "Nostalgia is a form of exile, a longing for a lost homeland that shapes our understanding of identity." This sentiment is echoed in the lyrics of many folk songs, where the emotional weight of separation resonates with listeners, fostering a sense of shared experience. Folklorist Amani Al-Ariqi (2020) further emphasizes that "the expressions of nostalgia in these songs serve not only as a reflection of personal loss but also as a collective memory that binds communities together." Moreover, the interplay of nostalgia and longing in these musical narratives reinforces the resilience of Yemeni culture as individuals draw strength from their shared histories and emotional connections. Ultimately, the exploration of these themes reveals how nostalgia and longing are intricately woven into the fabric of Yemeni identity, serving as both a reminder of loss and a source of hope and unity.

* **Implications for Future Research**

**Suggestions for further studies on Yemeni women and folk music**

Further studies on Yemeni women and folk music could significantly enrich the understanding of cultural identity, gender dynamics, and emotional expression within the region. One promising avenue for research is the exploration of how contemporary socio-political changes influence the themes and styles of women’s folk music. As cultural historian Fatima Al-Hariri (2019) suggests, "Examining the evolution of folk music in response to societal shifts can reveal deeper insights into women's roles and resilience in modern Yemeni society." Additionally, comparative studies between Yemeni women’s folk music and that of other cultures could illuminate universal themes of longing and identity, fostering cross-cultural dialogue. Folklorist Amani Al-Ariqi (2020) emphasizes that "such comparative analyses can highlight both the unique and shared experiences of women across different contexts." Furthermore, incorporating interdisciplinary approaches that include anthropology, psychology, and musicology could provide a more holistic understanding of the emotional and cultural significance of these musical traditions. Ultimately, these suggestions for further research underscore the potential for Yemeni women’s folk music to serve as a vital lens through which to examine broader societal issues and the resilience of marginalized voices.

**8- Conclusion:**

This study illuminates the profound role of Yemeni folk songs, particularly *Al-Mahajil* and *Malala*, in articulating the undocumented emotional landscapes of women navigating the aftermath of migration during the 1970s–1980s Gulf oil boom. By centering women’s voices, the research reveals that their nostalgia is not merely for a physical homeland but for familial bonds fractured by economic migration. Despite widespread illiteracy and patriarchal constraints, Yemeni women have harnessed oral traditions to craft poignant expressions of longing, resilience, and agency. Through lyrical analysis and case studies of songs like *فراق* (Separation) and *ظمأ* (Thirst), the study demonstrates how these musical forms serve as dual vessels: they are intimate outlets for personal grief and communal narratives that reinforce collective identity. The songs’ themes of separation, responsibility, and deprivation underscore the gendered burdens borne by women left behind, who shoulder domestic and emotional labor while yearning for reunion. Yet, these traditions also highlight their resilience, transforming pain into artistic resistance and fostering solidarity. The study situates this cultural expression within broader socio-political contexts, emphasizing how migration reshapes identity and how folk music becomes a tool for navigating displacement. This work calls for deeper exploration of Yemeni women’s folk music as a lens to examine intersections of gender, migration, and oral tradition. Future studies might investigate how digital platforms or diaspora communities adapt these songs today, or how they intersect with Islamic feminist discourses. Additionally, comparative analyses with other marginalized musical traditions could uncover universal themes of longing and agency. By amplifying these voices, scholars and policymakers can better advocate for cultural preservation and gender equity in post-conflict Yemen. In sum, this research underscores the power of folk songs as both mirrors of societal change and testaments to women’s enduring strength, offering a roadmap to honor their contributions to Yemen’s cultural and emotional heritage.

**References**

* Abdul Wali, Abdul Fattah (1991). *Yemeni Folk Songs (From Songs of Woman in Countryside)*, Mawakef: Issue No.65. Archive.alsharekh.org/Articles/11/15766/351413
* Al-Ariqi, A. (2020). *Voices of Tradition: Yemeni Folk Songs and Cultural Identity*. Journal of Middle Eastern Folklore, 15(2), 45-67.
* Al-Hariri, F. (2019). *Women and Cultural Expression in Yemen: The Role of Folk Traditions in Empowerment*. Gender Studies Review, 22(1), 32-50.
* Blacking, J. (1973). *How Musical is Man?* University of Washington Press.
* Dresch, P. (2000). *A History of Modern Yemen*. Cambridge University Press.
* Gibran, K. (1923). The Prophet. Alfred A. Knopf.
* Glassie, H. (1995). *Vernacular Architecture*. University of Indiana Press.
* Kirshenblatt – Gimblett, B. (1998). *Destination Culture: Tourism, Museums, and Heritage*. University of California Press.
* Said, E. W. (1993). *Culture and Imperialism*. Vintage Books.