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Intertextuality in Gamal Elgezeery's Novel *Nisf Majhul* (*An Unknown Half*)

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Abstract

This paper examines intertextuality in Gamal Elgezeery's postmodern novel *Nisf Majhul* (An Unknown Half) (2020), which intricately merges times, events, and characters while incorporating diverse cultural references. Using a descriptive and analytical approach, the study explores intertextuality within the novel across multiple dimensions, including religion, literature, mythology, folklore, proverbs, media, and historical events such as the Arab Spring. Elgezeery skillfully integrates intertextual elements to enrich the narrative, engaging readers through allusions to literary works like *A Doll's House*, *Animal Farm*, and *The Open Door*, as well as myths such as Sisyphus and Oedipus. By referencing the Qur'an, classical and contemporary poetry, popular songs, and Egyptian proverbs, he enhances cultural resonance while embedding deeper philosophical and political critiques. His intertextual strategies create dialogues between texts, inviting critical reflection on themes of authority, identity, freedom, and societal norms. The novel's engagement with historical and contemporary references, such as the Egyptian January 25 Revolution and modern media content, further connects past and present, broadening the interpretive scope. Through satire, rephrased proverbs, and strategic distortions of familiar narratives, Elgezeery challenges traditional interpretations, adding humor and depth to his work. Ultimately, intertextuality in *Nisf Majhul* serves as a dynamic literary tool, fostering a multilayered reading experience that bridges historical, cultural, and philosophical discourse.

Keywords: Gamal Elgezeery, intertextuality, Nisf Majhul.

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مستخلص الدراسة

تتناول هذه الدراسة التناص في رواية "نصف مجهول" (2020) للكاتب جمال الجزيري، وهي رواية ما بعد حداثية تمتزج فيها الأزمنة والأحداث والشخصيات ضمن نسيج سردي معقد يستوعب مراجع ثقافية متنوعة. من خلال نهج وصفي وتحليلي، تستكشف الدراسة أشكال التناص في الرواية عبر محاور متعددة، تشمل الدين، الأدب، الأساطير، الفولكلور، الأمثال، وسائل الإعلام، والأحداث التاريخية مثل الربيع العربي. يوظف الجزيري التناص بمهارة لإثراء السرد، حيث يستحضر أعمالًا أدبية مثل "بيت الدمية" و"مزرعة الحيوانات" و"الباب المفتوح"، إضافةً إلى أساطير مثل سيزيف وأوديب. كما يعزز البعد الثقافي في روايته بالإحالة إلى القرآن، والشعر الكلاسيكي والمعاصر، والأغاني الشعبية، والأمثال المصرية، مما يمنح النص أبعادًا فلسفية وسياسية أعمق. وتعمل استراتيجياته التناصية على خلق حوارات بين النصوص، تحفز القارئ على التأمل النقدي في قضايا السلطة، الهوية، الحرية، والمعايير المجتمعية. علاوة على ذلك، يعزز التفاعل مع المرجعيات التاريخية والمعاصرة، مثل ثورة ٢٥ يناير والمحتوى الإعلامي الحديث، الارتباط بين الماضي والحاضر، ويوسع آفاق التأويل. ومن خلال إعادة صياغة الأمثال، وتوظيف السخرية، وتحريف السرديات المألوفة، يتحدى الجزيري القراءات التقليدية، مضيفًا طبقات من الفكاهة والعمق إلى نصه. وبهذا، يصبح التناص في رواية الدراسة أداة أدبية ديناميكية تتيح تجربة قراءة متعددة المستويات، تربط بين الخطاب التاريخي والثقافي والفلسفي.

الكلمات الرئيسة: جمال الجزيري، التناص، نصف مجهول.

Intertextuality in Gamal Elgezeery's Novel *Nisf Majhul* (*An Unknown Half*)

Introduction

Gamal Elgezeery's *Nisf Majhul* (*An Unknown Half*) (2020) is a postmodernist novel that merges times, events, and characters in a logical narrative texture. It assimilates many cultural references and allusions, whether these relate to Arabic or non-Arabic culture. This paper examines intertextuality in Elgezeery's novel. It adopts the descriptive and analytical method. It begins with a brief review of the concept of intertextuality in terms of its concept, history, and implications. As the paper's focus is the applied part, this theoretical section will be as brief as possible. After this theoretical review, the researchers focus on intertextuality with religion, literature, mythology, lyrics, proverbs, media, and Arab Spring.

Gamal Muhammad Abdel-Raouf Elgezeery (b. 1973) is an Egyptian novelist, poet, critic, short story writer, and translator. He has contributed to various recently evolving literary forms, including flash fiction, microflash fiction (wamdha qassaseyya), and haiku poetry. His literary achievements have earned him several awards, including the South Valley University Short Story Prize (1995), the Naji Noman Literary Award (2009), and the Abdel Ghaffar Makkawi Short Story Award (2010). He received the First Class Medal of Excellence in Short Story Writing from the World Press Council in 2010. Professor Bahaa El-Din Muhammad Mazeed has written five studies analyzing Elgezeery's oeuvre, while other scholars have explored themes such as time, heritage, authorship attribution, and cinematic techniques in his narratives (Ashraf Zidan 28).

The novel *Nisf Majhul* by Elgezeery was written in the period from October 12, 2017 to December 29, 2018, and was published in 2020. The types of intertextuality in the novel appear in several forms, including intertextuality with the Holy Qur'an, literary texts, whether external (*A Doll's House*, *The Open Door*, *Animal Farm*, and the poet Nassar Abdullah) or internal (*Mountain of Light*, an unfinished novel). It also appears in intertextuality with myths

(Sisyphus, Uncle Bishara, Oedipus the King, and Orpheus), popular proverbs, folklore, and songs, in addition to intertextuality with the article "Don't Be Despair" (2003), the Arab Spring revolutions (the Egyptian January 25 Revolution), and a *YouTube* program (Fahd Al-Rajhi).

Review of the Concept of Intertextuality

As its name shows, intertextuality signifies a relationship created by an author between a present text and other texts. This relationship is not necessarily a linear one because it may range from direct citation to partial or complete appropriation. In classical literary criticism, whether in Arabic or Western cultures, it was known as plagiarism, literary theft, allusion, parody, pastiche, etc. In all cases, there are interconnections between texts created by an author making references, whether explicit or implicit, to other texts. These references require knowledge on the part of the reader of the texts that are referred to.

Although intertextuality in practice goes back in history to the earliest forms of oral literature, the actual term was coined by Julia Kristeva (1980). Kristeva (1986) argues that every text is built in the form of a mosaic of quotations. It absorbs and transforms other texts (37). She introduced the concept of intertextual space, where texts are understood through the network of relationships between them. She focuses on poetry as her field of study, especially after the separations between different literary genres have disappeared. Her philosophy is based on the demolition and construction between texts, and she presents three forms of intertextuality: total negation (completely rewriting the text), parallel negation (balanced intertextuality), and partial negation (incorporating specific parts of other texts) (Miloud Laqah 102).

Although Kristeva was the coiner of the term intertextuality, the concept itself was already in practice in western modern literary criticism. For example, T. S. Eliot’s concepts of "impersonal poetry," "objective association," and "mythical method" are closely related to intertextuality, as they are in line with his view of tradition as essential elements in the creation

of poetry. In his essay "Tradition and the Individual Talent" (1920), Eliot stresses the importance of the writer having a historical sense that is temporal and flexible. He asserts that tradition shapes the modern artist, while new artworks offer innovative interpretations of the old because of the emergence of new techniques, doctrines, or documents. The concept of "mythical method" is introduced by Eliot in his essay "Ulysses, Order, and Myth" (1923), which deals with James Joyce's Ulysses. He explains that Joyce drew on myth from the past not as an imitator but as a creator who employed it in a new way. He compares this approach to the scientist who uses Einstein's discoveries to enhance his scientific achievements. The mythological method, according to Eliot, is not merely a retelling of myth, but a structural technique that provides order and unity to a literary work. Instead of isolated individual symbols, this method presents a coherent network of symbols, which reduces the need to interpret each symbol separately and allows comparison between old and new work. Many critics point out that Eliot's mythological method falls within the concept of intertextuality. They also compare Bakhtin's linguistic and dialogical contrast to Eliot's concept of tradition, which is the starting point for Julia Kristeva's idea of intertextuality. These critics see intertextuality as an evolution of traditional concepts such as literary allusions and influences and consider it broader in scope than Eliot's mythological method (Shannan Dijlah Kattan 11-13).

Roland Barthes sees literature as one huge text, and the text as a fabric of quotations and references. He raises the concept of the death of the author, asserting that the text depends on different readings and not on the intentions of the writer. He believes that the text is based on quotations and references from other texts (1970, 19).

Barthes describes the text as a "multidimensional space" where diverse writings merge, none of which is entirely original, making the text a conflicting mixture of different voices. There has been a long debate about the role of the author and the reader in shaping the text:

does the author have complete control over the text, or does the reader play an active role in understanding it? On the one hand, the author weaves a complex web of signs and references, but the reader contributes to the process of understanding by linking texts to his memory bank. Intertextuality is thus inevitable, as readers' understanding of texts and their responses to them depend on their interaction with other texts they have experienced (1986, 85).

Many critics and theorists who came after Kristeva have elaborated and ramified the concept of intertextuality. For example, Michel Riffaterre argues that intertextuality relates to the act of reading as well as that of writing. For him, the literary phenomenon comprises the text, the reader, and the reader's all possible responses to the text (1983, 3). He describes reading itself as intertextual: "Intertextual reading … is the perception of similar comparabilities from text to text; or it is the assumption that such comparing must be done even if there is no intertext at hand wherein to find comparabilities" (1980, 626)

Having a linguistic and structuralist background, Jonathan Culler relates intertextuality to the linguistic concept of presupposition:

> The first is to look at the specific presuppositions of a given text, the way in which it produces a pre-text, an intertextual space whose occupants may or may not correspond to other actual texts ... The second enterprise, the study of rhetorical or pragmatic presupposition, leads to a poetics which is less interested in the occupants of that intertextual space which makes a work intelligible than in the conventions which underlie that discursive activity or space (1976, 1395).

Having briefly reviewed the concept of intertextuality and its ramifications, the researchers will now move to identify and examine intertextuality and its manifestations and implications in *Nisf Majhul*. Each type of the most prominent types of intertextuality in the novel is dealt with separately under its own heading.

Quranic intertextuality

Quranic intertextuality is evident in this narrative passage: "And the faces inside, layers upon layers, or branches upon branches, so I try to extend my finger to greet them, if I can do so without being wounded by the thorns, or I extend my finger from afar towards them as if I am greeting them, and I find them also extending their little fingers as if they are greeting me from far away, greeting me through eyelashes" (*Nisf Majhul* 20). It stresses the depth of the confusion and psychological alienation that the narrator experiences, as he dives into his existential questions and his position between homeland and exile, reality and dreams. The intertextuality with the verse from Surat Al Imran (3:97) "Pilgrimage to the House is a duty that mankind owes to God, those who can afford the expenses" reveals the novelist's religious background and the extent to which he is influenced by the Holy Quran as a central text that shapes his awareness and perceptions. In addition, the intertextuality with the concept of ability in the verse refers to the effort and suffering required to achieve the desired goal, whether this goal is the pilgrimage in the Quranic verse, or the narrator's attempt to understand the world around him and interact with the strange faces he sees in the trees. The thorns that the narrator faces also express the difficulties and obstacles that stand in his way, just as the pilgrim faces challenges while performing the Hajj rituals. The narrator's quest intersects with the experience of Hajj in that they both carry spiritual dimensions, as the pilgrim seeks to purify himself from past sins and draw closer to Allah, while the narrator seems to seek to understand himself and overcome the feeling of alienation that exhausts him. The difference, however, lies in the desired outcomes; while the pilgrim may emerge with inner purity and a sense of comfort and contentment, the narrator seems to remain stuck in his sense of alienation and inability to find clear solutions that become clear later.

The depiction of trees as containing human beings extending their fingers "in greeting through eyelashes" reflects a state of ambiguity and confusion. Here, human interaction turns

into a surreal experience in which feelings of loneliness and the desire to communicate mix, but this communication remains limited and incomplete, perhaps because of the thorns that wound, or because of the psychological distance that separates the narrator from the world around him. The text reflects a dual state of alienation; spatial alienation manifested in the narrator's questioning of whether he is in his homeland or not, and psychological alienation represented by his inability to fully integrate with the surrounding environment, whether it is people or even nature, and this creates a constant feeling of alienation and uncertainty.

The narrator's attempt to "surrender" to the tree-shaped faces is symbolic of the search for a relationship or shared understanding with the other (nature or people), but it is a relationship fraught with danger. The thorns here are not just a physical obstacle but embody the fears and pain of trying to overcome the barrier of isolation. The "peace of the eyelashes" also indicates a symbolic level of communication, where peace is distant and intangible, adding to the narrator's sense of inability to reach the desired goal.

The narrator differs from the pilgrim in that the latter has a specific destination (the Sacred House of Allah) and a clear goal (getting closer to Him and getting rid of sins), while the narrator seems lost without a clear destination, suffering from existential questions for which he cannot find answers. The pilgrim, despite his hardship, has certainty and faith that his effort will be crowned with forgiveness, while the narrator remains stuck in a cycle of confusion and alienation, which deepens his psychological suffering.

This text represents a rich model of literary and philosophical analysis, in which reality and symbol, religion and human experience intertwine to create a complex picture of existential confusion and self-discovery. The intertextuality with the Qur'anic verse adds a religious and spiritual dimension that deepens our understanding of the narrator's predicament and makes us in turn question the limits of communication between man and himself, and between man and the world around him.

In the second intertextual scene: "We have nothing to do with your mother's names now, Raed. No, no, the name Raed does not suit this position. I will choose a name for you that suits the chair. What do you think of the name Kars, so that it will be a name that suits it? ... These are names that you and your fathers have named them" (*Nisf Majhul* 29-30), the narrator places his readers in a sarcastic and tragic confrontation with a symbolic scene that reflects issues of oppression, injustice, and alienation of identity. The narrative conveys a profound critique of the social and institutional structure that suppresses the individual and strips him of his humanity, while it evokes the Qur'anic verse from Surat An-Najm: "They are only names that you and your fathers have named, for which Allah has sent down no authority" (23) to highlight the depth of intellectual and behavioral deviation in dealing with concepts and values.

The judge's choice of the name "Kars" instead of the narrator's real name "Raed" reflects a deliberate attempt to rob him of his identity and dignity. The new name, which means "stool," is not just a random designation, but carries a profound meaning that symbolizes the deprivation of power, support, and independence. This name expresses a state of brokenness and surrender that is imposed on a person, highlighting the modern slavery that denies individuals their true humanity.

The invocation of the verse "They are only names which you and your fathers have named…" adds a profound critical dimension to the text. The verse speaks of names and concepts that humans have invented without any legal or objective basis, and which they have adopted as a means of control and injustice. This intertextuality reveals that the judge and the entire institution represent a model of distorting values and facts, where authority is deified and transformed into a tool of oppression, while justice and humanity are denied. The invocation of the verse shows how this human authority deifies itself and imposes its stereotype on others, just as the polytheists in the pre-Islamic era named and worshipped their gods based on conjecture and personal whims. The narrator here indicates that the judge and the institution

follow whims and conjectures instead of truth and guidance, reflecting a deviation from divine and human values.

In the third intertextual scene, the narrator arrives at his home in the city of Juhayna in Upper Egypt, but his mother denies him and does not recognize him, instead considering his friend Riyad her son. When they ask for food, the mother takes a bag of guava, rolls it up into a ball, and throws it into the air, where it collides with a flying turkey and pins it down. The narrator wonders in astonishment how the turkey flies and where it came from. At this moment, he remembers "the four birds who come running towards our master Abraham" (*Nisf Majhul* 76), in reference to the Qur'anic story in which Abraham expresses his wonder and confusion about how the dead are revived. The intertextuality here with the holy verse: "And when Abraham said, 'My Lord, show me how You give life to the dead.' He said, 'Do you not believe?' He said, 'Yes, but [it is] to reassure my heart.' He said, 'Then take four birds and bring them close to you, then place a portion of them on every mountain, then call them, they will come to you running. And know that God is Exalted in Might and Wise" (*Al-Baqarah* 260), reflects the narrator's feeling of confusion and questioning, evoking the spiritual and contemplative dimension in understanding the world around him. This narrative scene shows a symbolic dimension rich in existential confusion and deep questions about life, death, and rebirth, by evoking an absurd scene that combines the real and the imaginary. The narrator's intertextuality with the story of the father of the prophets adds a philosophical and spiritual dimension that reflects man's struggle with the concept of faith, the search for truth, and the desire for reassurance.

The narrator's vision of a turkey flying represents a moment of strangeness and astonishment, as he wonders how something that seems to contradict logic and reality could possibly happen. The turkey, known for its weight and inability to actually fly, is transformed into a flying creature in this scene, evoking a sense of contradiction and confusion. The

narrator's question about how a turkey flies reflects his deeper confusion about the laws of nature and miracles, which is linked to the story of Abraham, who wondered how the dead are resurrected. The invocation of the story of Abraham highlights a parallel between the narrator's confusion about the strange events he sees and Abraham's confusion about how Allah resurrects the dead. In the story of Abraham, the prophet asks to see how the dead are resurrected to reassure his heart, despite his absolute faith in Him, and this reflects the human dimension of seeking reassurance through sensory knowledge. In the narrative scene, the narrator contemplates the strangeness of what is happening before him, as if he is trying to understand the miracles and search for answers to his existential questions, despite them seeming illogical or imaginary.

The four birds that Abraham was ordered to make into pieces on the mountains, then he called them and Allah revived them and made them come to him running, are symbolic of the absolute divine power that exceeds the limits of human comprehension. In contrast, the flying turkey is used as a symbol in the narrative text of something unfamiliar and unexpected, reflecting the narrator's psychological and intellectual turmoil and his attempt to understand the world around him.

The entire scene shows a contradiction between absurdity and the search for meaning. The actions of the mother and the flying turkey reflect the absurdity of the reality in which the narrator lives, while the evocation of the story of the four birds highlights the spiritual and faith-based aspect in trying to understand this absurdity. The narrator, like Abraham, lives in a state of tension between faith and questioning. The latter seeks reassurance of his faith by seeing a divine miracle, while the former finds himself surrounded by strange events that force him to continue to be perplexed and ambiguous.

The fourth intertextuality compares the literary text quoted from *Nisf Majhul*: "There is a light there in the distance, I will walk towards it, although I enjoy this feeling of loneliness

or isolation or emptiness... Is it a feeling of emptiness or a feeling that this city is mine? And my soul says to me: Go to that light; perhaps you will find someone like you who has found himself in this familiar city and enjoys solitude or isolation like you" (152-3), and the Qur'anic verse from Surat *Taha*: "And has there come to you the story of Moses, when he saw a fire and said to his family: 'Stay here; indeed, I have seen a fire; "Perhaps I may bring you a torch from it, or find guidance at the fire" (10), between two different existential states but linked by themes such as guidance, isolation, adventure, and alienation.

In the Quranic verse, prophet Moses walked towards the fire in response to a physical and existential need. He was searching for a material light that would illuminate the path for his family and perhaps find guidance or someone to guide him. However, this light, which he thought was material, turned into a major turning point in his life, as he found spiritual guidance and divine revelation that would change the destiny of humanity.

In the literary text, the narrator is not driven by his need for light as much as he is driven by his curiosity or desire to escape from the feeling of isolation and emptiness, or perhaps a search for a deeper meaning to life. However, this pursuit of light does not lead him to guidance or solutions, but rather to more confusion and pessimism. Here, light becomes a metaphor for a trap or a snare that deepens his alienation, as if it reflected the condition of contemporary man who finds nothing in his continuous attempts to search for meaning but disappointment.

The case of Moses represents a material alienation resulting from his escape from Midian, but an alienation that carries with it hope and faith that Allah will guide him to the right path. His alienation reflects a kind of psychological and spiritual maturity, as it is linked to his quest to protect his family and fulfill his responsibilities. In the end, this quest is rewarded by obtaining prophecy and revelation. The alienation of the narrator in the novel is more complex and existential; he feels disconnected from the material world around him, and lives in an internal struggle with reality controlled by capitalism and greed. This isolation is not a

conscious choice as much as it is the product of a society characterized by excessive materialism and consumerism. Even the light he seeks becomes a symbol of disappointment, showing that his attempts to search for familiarity or meaning end in more doubt and loss.

Moses' journey towards the fire leads to a positive transformation in his life. He is transformed from a person seeking physical light to a prophet receiving the light of revelation. This transformation reflects man's relationship with Allah and the integration of material and spiritual needs. In contrast, the narrator's journey towards the light ends in the exact opposite. Instead of finding meaning or companionship, he discovers the harshness of social reality, where materialistic and opportunistic relationships prevail. The light becomes a symbol of the deception of life, as he finds himself "suspended in a slaughterhouse," reflecting the loss of hope for any guidance or salvation in this world.

The novel offers a scathing critique of capitalist society that weakens human bonds and replaces them with purely material values. The characters in the novel, including the narrator, appear to have abandoned morality and human values in pursuit of money. In this context, the light sought by the narrator becomes a symbol of the deception of capitalism, which sells illusion and destroys hope.

Moses' alienation is temporary, and its purpose is clear: he returns to Egypt by divine command to fulfill his mission. His alienation remains part of his journey towards fulfilling his destiny. As for the narrator, his alienation is twofold, geographical and internal. His return to Egypt after a long absence (13 years) does not bring with it any good news, but rather deepens his feeling of loss and meaninglessness. His alienation intersects with Moses's in that they both go through transitional stages, but the ending is completely different: Moses finds divine guidance, while the narrator finds traps and disappointment.

The final intertextuality with the Holy Qur'an: "Now I understand the significance of Allah teaching Adam the names at the beginning of the preparation for life on earth" (*Nisf*

Majhul 176) reflects a deep contemplation of the significance of the story of Adam's creation and his teaching of the names in the Holy Qur'an, as stated in the Almighty's saying: "And He taught Adam the names—all of them" (*Al-Baqarah* 31).

In the Qur'anic context, teaching Adam the names highlights the status of man and his role in creation. This teaching is not merely a matter of acquiring knowledge, but rather a symbol of the ability to perceive, think, and name, which are essential characteristics that distinguish man from other creatures. The names here represent knowledge, language, and science, which are the tools that qualify man to populate the earth and achieve succession.

This intertextuality reflects the narrator's late awareness of the significance of this divine teaching. This realization indicates a deep understanding of the place and role of man in life, and expresses a moment of awareness of man's ability to face the challenges of existence. Teaching names can be considered the first step in enabling man to interact with his surrounding environment, and giving him the means to understand and organize the world and populate the earth. It indicates that this education was an essential step in preparing Adam and his descendants for their role on earth. Knowing names gives man the ability to control, understand, and develop the environment. This education can be considered a compass that guides man on his complex journey in life. The narrator's expression of his late awareness of the significance of this education reflects a common human experience. Humans often realize the value of the blessings and knowledge that Allah has bestowed upon them after going through life's experiences and struggles, making this moment a turning point in the narrator's understanding of the nature of existence.

In short, the intertextuality with the Holy Qur'an shows the writer's skill in combining absurd and spiritual elements, realism and symbolism, to present a profound vision that reflects human confusion and the constant search for meaning in a world that sometimes lacks logic. This intertextuality enhances the sense of the narrator's inner conflict, highlighting his

confusion and psychological alienation, and reflects issues of oppression, injustice, alienation of identity, the dominance of stereotypes, and the pessimistic vision that reflects the crisis of contemporary man who is dominated by materialism and consumerism, and finally the possibility of man fulfilling his role and responsibility towards society. In the end, the text invites readers to contemplate the nature of faith and human questions, as the narrative skillfully combines Kafkaesque absurdity with Qur'anic spirituality, producing a literary work rich in symbolism and philosophical connotations.

Literary intertextuality

The novel intertextualizes with the French campaign and its occupation of Egypt (1798-1801) and with the poem by the Iraqi poet Ahmed Matar, "Where is my friend Hassan?": "What brought the French campaign to the twenty-first century? Do you insist on driving me crazy?" The trusted minister was right. ... She stands welcoming me and says, as if she is impersonating Hassan's mother, in a hypothetical continuation of the poem "My friend Hassan" by the poet Ahmed Matar: Finally, you have returned, Hassan. The question "Where is my friend Hassan?" has been ringing and resonating in my ears for thirteen years, and here you have come. Come to the embrace of your land, Hassan (*Nisf Majhul* 73-74). This scene highlights confusion, bewilderment, oppression, persecution, alienation, and the fluidity of social relations. This intertextuality between the mention of the French campaign in the twenty-first century and Matar is rich and deep, as it points to a group of symbolic meanings and connotations that reflect the social, political, and cultural reality.

The intertextuality between the two texts reveals a shared oppression between times, whether in the colonial invasion (the French campaign) or in the reality of social and political oppression that Matar describes, as this connection indicates the continuation of the state of alienation and injustice experienced by individuals, reflecting the circular nature of history:

The trusted president visited some of the country's states/And when he visited our neighborhood, he told us to bring our complaints honestly in public/And do not fear anyone, for that time has passed/So my friend Hassan said, "Sir, where is the loaf of bread and milk? Where is the housing provision? Where is the provision of jobs? Where is the one who provides medicine to the poor without a price?"/Sir, we have never seen anything of that." The president said sadly, "May God burn my body. Is this all happening in my country?"/Thank you for your honesty in warning us, my son, you will see good things tomorrow./A year later, he visited us and a second time told us to bring our complaints honestly in public and do not fear anyone, for that time has passed/People did not complain, so I stood up and announced: "Where is the loaf of bread and milk?" Where is the housing insurance? Where is the provision of jobs? Where is the one who provides medicine to the poor without charge? / Excuse me, sir, and where is my friend Hassan?

In both texts, there is a spotlight on the crises of society, such as poverty and the absence of social justice, whether in the context of colonialism or in the context of local political systems. The use of the poem here shows oppression as a continuous phenomenon across time and reflects the state of disappointment felt by individuals as a result of unfulfilled promises. The character of "Hassan" in the poem reflects alienation from the homeland and the lack of a sense of belonging in the shadow of social injustice. In the novel, this alienation is embodied in the mother's relationship with her son Hassan's return from abroad, as his mother denies him, highlighting the rupture in social relations and the erosion of human ties: "Did you tell the truth, Hassan? You are a stranger to me, and salam is broken by the eyelashes" (*Nisf Majhul* 74). His mother denies him out of fear for him from his apparent and hidden enemies.

The intertextuality between the arrival of the French campaign to the twenty-first century and the idea of dialogue with the character "Hassan" carries a symbolic dimension that

indicates the overlap of times, as if history is repeating itself in a different way but with the same tragedies. This comparison reflects an absurd and sarcastic view of reality. The character "Hassan" who asks for basic rights such as a loaf of bread, milk and shelter refers to the permanent human suffering that is repeated across generations. The French campaign, as a symbol of invasion and exploitation, becomes a mirror of the economic and social oppression that individuals suffer in the present. The intertextuality with the poem and its placement in the context of the French campaign highlights the writer's ability to reinterpret texts and invoke poetic and cultural memory to create a new symbolism that expresses the present. This intertextuality enriches the literary work and makes it more relevant to reality. Thus, the intertextuality here is not merely a summoning of previous texts, but rather a re-employment of them to raise present issues, reflecting the depth of the ongoing human and social crisis across time.

The intertextuality that emerges in the following excerpt with Henrik Ibsen's *A Doll's House* (1879), Latifa Al-Zayyat's *The Open Door* (1960), and *madrasat almushaghibin* [School of Troublemakers] (1971) forms a rich network of symbols that reflect the theme of rebellion against societal restrictions and cultural heritage. The intertextuality here is not limited to a symbolic invocation of literary and theatrical texts, but rather shows how rebellion against cultural and social restrictions and traditions is a recurring theme across time. The writer employs these texts to re-raise questions about freedom, identity, and the role of women in shaping a better future. The intertextuality enriches the text with multiple levels of symbolism and interpretation, making it more profound and exciting:

> The door of the house is open, which means they are inside. She laughs a pure laugh as she lightly taps me on the shoulder and says: Did immigration and death make you forget the origins of the house in which you were raised, my boy? ... I do not sense any logic except the logic of the actor Saeed Saleh in *School of Troublemakers*. ... I feel as

> if a curtain is drawn over the scene, as if we were at the end of a chapter in a play, especially Henrik Ibsen's *A Doll's House*, which ends with an open door through which the heroine emerges after she revolts and rebels against her restrictions. Perhaps the open door calls for that, as it is an invitation to exit, and perhaps it calls for entry or entices the one standing in front of it or passing by to enter, as in that door that caught my eye in another novel, as I remember the book "The Open Door", and I do not remember whether it was an autobiography by Latifa Al-Zayyat or another writer. And I find myself standing in front of another door, urging the priestess to rebel against the door being closed in the face of the common people who do not have the precious offerings that they can give to the priests in Abydos, so I smile in a situation that does not call for a smile on its surface, and I ask: "Is my mother a woman?" There has been no woman since this strange dream or this even stranger novel began, as if the woman is now withdrawing from the scene because she knows that she is the one who must start life anew after all that men have done to the earth. (*Nisf Majhul* 85-87)

In Ibsen's play, the open door represents the heroine Nora's rebellion against the restrictions and outdated values of a male society. When she leaves the house, this moment becomes an icon of liberation and self-discovery. The writer invokes the symbolism of the open door as an invitation to break free from restrictions, whether by entering or leaving. This scene raises philosophical questions about the possibility of taking a bold step towards liberation or submitting to the current reality. The novel makes readers wonder about the dimensions of personal freedom and the role of women in starting life anew.

Al-Zayyat's novel represents a turning point in Arab feminist literature, as the author explores women's struggle with the constraints of tradition and the aspiration towards social and intellectual liberation. The reference to the "open door" evokes the symbolism of liberation not only at the individual level, but at the level of society. Elgezeery employs this symbolism

to link the idea of openness or exit with rebellion against a calcified reality, and a call for social change.

School of Troublemakers represents a satirical youth rebellion against the traditional educational system and a society governed by the authority of parents and teachers. The writer's invocation of the character of Saleh and his absurd logic indicates a comical deconstruction of the seriousness of cultural and social legacies. Here, intertextuality shows how satire can be a means of rebellion and a form of rejection of societal traditions.

In the novel, there is a clear isolation of women from the scene, as if distancing themselves from the destructive conflicts led by men. The writer hints at the idea that women are capable of restoring life to the land after its destruction. This perception reflects a call to think about the role of women as creators of life, and is a continuation of the rebellion that appeared in previous texts, but here it takes on a deep symbolic dimension linked to fertility and renewal.

These texts refer to a rebellion against everything traditional or inherited, whether social, cultural, or political. The author combines levels of rebellion to create a dialogue between the texts and contemporary life. In the novel, the door becomes an open metaphor: an invitation to enter a new experience, or to escape the constraints of the past, or even as a tool to attract ideas and change. It appears that rebellion is not just a single moment, but an ongoing process that reflects human confusion and the search for the self in the face of constraints. The intertextuality with *School of Troublemakers* adds a comic dimension to a conflict that appears serious on the surface, adding a layer of depth to the analysis of reality.

The following quote shows an internal and external intertextuality, aiming to express rebellion, specifically rebellion against traditional artistic methods of writing. In this context, it is based on the concept of alienation introduced by Bertolt Brecht, which conflicts with the concept of Catharsis/purification:

> I do not know if I am an actor in this play or if I am merely a spectator, even if I am a spectator in one of Bertolt Brecht's plays, and I have the right to intervene in its events and interact with them. I also remember someone talking to me in a previous dream or a previous novel [the author's novel *Mountain of Light*], someone who tells me about the darkness or the interval between the scenes or chapters of the play, and says that this interval is a moment of formation, shaping and transformation, and that the consciousness of the characters ferments in this interval such that they move to a new stage of their lives after the interval, so I am optimistic and feel that I will move to the stage of logic and understandable events immediately after that. (*Nisf Majhul* 87)

Brecht uses the concept of alienation (Verfremdungseffekt) to break the theatrical illusion, and distance the viewer from full emotional integration with the characters, with the aim of pushing him to think critically about the events shown. In the previous quote, this idea is shown through the interpenetration of the actor and the viewer, as the narrator indicates that he can be both at once, which removes the traditional barrier between fantasy and reality, and invites the reader to critically engage with the text. This intertextuality reflects a rebellion against traditional artistic methods that focus on catharsis in Aristotle's *Poetics*, as the writer here seeks to bring about an intellectual transformation in the reader rather than a purely emotional impact. It is an invitation to rethink the structure and role of the text (Selden et al 89).

The reference to *Mountain of Light* shows a continuity in the presentation of ideas across the writer's own works, and emphasizes the idea that texts are not isolated, but are linked to each other within a comprehensive intellectual project. The talk also of "the break between the scenes of the play" as a state of "formation, shaping, and transformation" reflects an internal transformation of the characters and perhaps of the reader himself. Darkness here does not only represent a temporary pause, but highlights a moment of contemplation and reconstruction.

The writer mixes the roles of narrator, viewer, and actor, which breaks traditional narrative traditions and places the reader in a position of constant questioning about his role in the text. This artistic displacement reflects a rebellion against familiar narrative methods, and redefines the relationship between text and readers. The narrator announces his expectation of moving to "the stage of logic and understandable events," referring to the rejection of the traditional chaos of experimental texts that neglect context or plot. Here, it appears that the writer wants to find a balance between experimentation and logic. The break between scenes in the play is used as a metaphor for personal and collective transformation. The author uses this break as a space for reflection, where "the characters' consciousness ferments" to show that growth or change occurs in the spaces between, not just in the clear events. The author suggests that the ambiguous or incomprehensible moments (the darkness or the break) are not an end, but the beginning of a deeper transformation. This perception encourages the reader to accept chaos as part of formation and maturation. Drawing on Brecht's style, the author invites the reader to interact with the text in a way that goes beyond passive reading. The reader becomes a partner in the events, creating a dynamic reading experience. The reference to "a new stage after the break" shows a rejection of the idea of definitive endings, and reinforces the idea that texts and events are in a constant state of development. This passage represents a rebellion against traditional artistic legacies, whether in theater or literature, and highlights the author's vision that challenges the usual narrative and expressive molds.

Intertextuality with Brecht and the author's texts reinforces the idea that the text is a space for intellectual interaction and debate, not merely for emotional or aesthetic consumption. Darkness and interstices become symbols of transformation and growth, inviting the reader to reflect on his or her role and the texts he or she consumes as part of a broader contemplative experience.

Finally, the following quote is intertextual with two literary texts; the first by Ibsen entitled *The Wild Duck* (1844), and the second by George Orwell *Animal Farm* (1945):

> Here you are talking about levels, why did you get angry with me before when I suggested that we move to the next level? Am I the son of the wild duck? ... The age of slavery is over, my friend. Today there is no difference between a white duck and a black duck. All ducks are the same, all ducks are equal... He interrupts me and says in the manner of George Orwell in *Animal Farm*: But some ducks are more equal than others. (*Nisf Majhul* 123)

In Egyptian popular culture, “son of the black/wild duck” is used to refer to outcasts or different people who are discriminated against. The intertextuality with texts by Ibsen and Orwell creates a semantic depth that shows the conflict between ideals and reality, and between the individual and society. Using the symbolism of “the black duck” and “false equality,” Elgezeery criticizes discrimination and social hypocrisy, while reinforcing the message of rebellion against injustice and the demand for true equality. The combination of world literature and Egyptian popular culture enriches the text, making it more relatable to a diverse audience and reinforcing the power of the universal humanitarian message.

In *The Wild Duck*, the duck is used as a symbol of individuals who are different or outcasts, who live in isolation from society due to tradition or past mistakes. Ibsen highlights the complexity of human nature and the need to come to terms with oneself rather than striving for harsh ideals. Orwell's novel also highlights the corruption of power and the manipulation of notions of equality, as one of the pigs says: "All animals are equal, but some animals are more equal than others" (*Animal Farm* 67). This quote reveals the contradiction between slogans of equality and the reality of class differences and tyranny.

Intertextuality with Myth

After the narrator meets his mother and Zaher, he feels that things have gone more beyond his understanding and control, and that his attempts to comprehend or contain the situation may become futile. It seems that his continued pursuit of his mother's and the child's voices may push him back to the starting point, where he faces the risk of falling into a vicious circle. At this moment, the narrator recalls the myth of Oedipus, referring to the fear of painful discoveries that may change his view of himself and reality:

> I do not know why I fear a discovery like Oedipus's, and perhaps I will find myself the criminal culprit responsible for all this confusion, and perhaps I will find that I have committed a heinous crime against logic, and I must then accept the logic of discovery and search for the truth. (*Nisf Majhul* 110)

In this passage, the narrator expresses a state of inner tension and profound confusion, as he finds himself confronted with the majhul/unknown that threatens to make him lose complete control over and understanding of the events. The narrator seems to feel that following the voices of his mother and child leads him down a path filled with mystery, which exposes him to the possibility of returning to the starting point or "ground zero," where his attempts make no tangible progress. At this point, the narrator invokes the myth of Oedipus, reflecting a sense of dread at discovering painful truths that may put him in confrontation with himself.

The reference to "Oedipus's discovery" is not random; it reflects a deep anxiety that the narrator himself may be responsible for the chaos and confusion surrounding him, similar to Oedipus, who later discovers that he is the perpetrator of his own life's tragedy: killing his father and marrying his mother. The narrator here appears to be caught between his fears and his courage, as he fears that he has committed a crime against logic or truth, but at the same time feels the need to confront this painful discovery. The invocation of "the logic of discovery

and the search for truth" reflects his awareness that escaping the truth is not an option, and that facing it, no matter how painful, is the only way to achieve understanding and reconciliation with oneself.

The passage carries deep philosophical and psychological dimensions; it expresses an internal conflict between the desire to uncover the truth and the fear of taking responsibility for it. It also reflects the existential dimension of confronting oneself and admitting sins or mistakes as a step towards progress and liberation.

In the following quote, a multidimensional intertextuality emerges by combining the evocation of characters, myths, and different literary works, for enriching the meaning and adding depth to the narrative experience:

> If I were in a myth, I would think of myself as the great poet and the nightingale of Dokki and the underworld Orpheus Effendi Sultan, son of the wretched word, and I now looked at the attic as the stairs to ascend from the underworld, and when I looked back, my beloved had disappeared, and the door had disappeared. If I had continued my mockery, I would have seen my door thanking God for having escaped the absurdity of my poems, as in a poem by the poet Carol Ann Duffy, even if his escape was his return to the underworld with its hell and ghosts. (*Nisf Majhul* 118)

The author evokes the figure of Orpheus from Greek mythology, who was a great poet and musician and whose magical voice convinced the gods to allow him to bring back his beloved from the underworld. However, looking back, which was forbidden to the narrator, led to her being lost forever. Here, the narrator reflects on his own experience by likening himself to Orpheus, introducing an element of irony that expresses his awareness of the futility or fragility of his attempts.

The text refers to a poem by the British poet Carol Ann Duffy, where the "door" is shown as a symbolic character that rebels against the poet and refuses to exist within the context

of his poems. This intertextuality adds an ironic dimension, as the door identifies with the narrator's experience and expresses a desire to escape the absurdity of his creativity, which enhances the feeling of alienation between the poet and his artistic production. The text overlaps with the idea of the underworld as a place of hell and ghosts, which links the narrator's personal experience with the world of mythology. However, it adds an ironic dimension by imagining the door "thanking Allah" for escaping from his poems, as if hell is less severe than facing its absurdity. This diverse intertextuality between myth, modern literature, and self-irony creates a rich artistic mix, as texts and experiences intersect to create a new meaning that reflects the narrator's contradictions and his struggle with himself and his creativity.

The legend of "I leaned on the mountain" here becomes an effective critical tool that exposes the falsehood of claims in the absence of real work. It is a reminder of the importance of facing the facts and admitting shortcomings instead of hiding behind flimsy excuses, which makes it a stinging social and intellectual critique that makes the reader think about his role within the larger system:

> Why is it now linked to the story of "Khaiba" that my grandfather also used to tell? That man whose name is Khaiba and for whom his wife prepares loaves or flatbreads every morning, so that he can eat well and be fit to work in the field and mostly harvest the wheat crop. He eats until he is full, then ties a rope around his waist as if to express his determination and resolve, holds the sickle in his hand and heads to the field. When his wife goes to him with lunch at noon, she finds him sleeping under a tree and has not harvested anything. Did he also say to his wife when she expressed her surprise: I am leaning my back on the palm tree? (*Nisf Majhul* 138)

In this passage, the narrator uses the story of “Khaiba/ Disappointment” as a satirical example to criticize lazy and negligent characters, especially those who claim to play an important role while in fact doing nothing. The story highlights a stark contrast between words and actions,

making it an effective tool for satirizing negative behaviors that hinder progress and productivity.

"Khaiba" is a symbolic figure representing failure and indifference. The quote shows how his day starts off perfectly, with his wife preparing him for work by providing him with the food he needs to fuel him. Here, a form of societal complicity with the unproductive person is evident, as the wife provides care without questioning or real expectation of performance. He ties a rope around his waist, appearing to be ready to work hard. However, this readiness is only apparent; he grabs a sickle and heads to the field, but ends up sleeping under a tree without harvesting anything. This paradox reflects the gap between outward appearance and actual reality.

The sarcastic phrase: "I support the palm tree with my back" highlights the mentality of justification and evasion of responsibility. Instead of admitting his shortcomings or laziness, Khaiba invents a fictional excuse in which he claims that he is playing an invisible but necessary role. This phrase reflects a scathing criticism of anyone who claims the importance of his role without providing any tangible results. By invoking this myth, the narrator criticizes the social phenomenon of inaction and negligence under the guise of excuses, and sheds light on human models that waste resources and efforts, and obstruct progress in the name of playing imaginary or ineffective roles.

The following passage is full of philosophical reflections and existential questions that intertwine with the narrative to form a state of deep research into the relationship between the past and the present, between the stories that were passed down to us in people's childhood and their impact on their identities and current thoughts:

> Why do I now find a connection between many of my grandfather's stories? Was he intentionally telling us stories that I now see as directed at adults? Or are the stories for adults and children, such as the collection "Poems for Adults and Children" or "For

> Children and Adults" written by the poet Nassar Abdullah? Was my grandfather intentionally telling us these stories in particular in our childhood so that they would stick in our imagination, thoughts, memories and aspirations and we would recall them again when we needed them or they needed us? Why are they fully embodied now when I returned to this place and began searching? Why did I return to this place at this particular time? And how did I return? Raed himself said that he did not know how he came here? And so he does not know how he and I came here, for he asserts that we were together at Giza before we suddenly appeared here. (*Nisf Majhul* 145-6)

The narrator reflects on the tales told by his grandfather, wondering if they are intended for both adults and children. Here, the narrator realizes that tales are not just passing stories told for entertainment, but rather a means of transmitting values and ideas across generations. They are like a "collective memory" planted in the consciousness of children to bear fruit later when they face life's challenges. The reference to Nassar Abdullah's collection *Poems for Adults and Children* reinforces this dual dimension, where simplicity merges with depth (political satire), guidance with frankness of interpretation: "You are the one who called defeat defeat,/ And turned around to say shame is shame!" Ayyad Shukri (1991) states that this collection of poems expresses truths that adults ignore, and children may not misunderstand. If there is a hidden meaning behind this game, it is that the path of poetry, which tells the truth, is no longer the path of poets these days (17).

The narrator indicates that the stories returned to his consciousness "when he returned to this place," highlighting the role of place as a vessel for memory. Places carry within them deeply rooted events and feelings, as if they revive stories that have remained dormant in the depths of the soul, becoming a bridge between the past and the present. The narrator raises existential questions about the timing of his return to this place, as if time has special dictates that force a person to confront his past at the right time. The question "Why now?" reflects a

feeling that there is something inevitable, as if events are pre-written and rearrange themselves in mysterious ways. The phrase "He doesn't know how he got here?" places the text in an existential framework, as the narrator faces a state of uncertainty and confusion. This ambiguity highlights the feeling of detachment from the usual logic of events, as if the characters are moving in hidden worlds that can only be perceived through contemplation and questioning. The use of repeated questions ("Why?" and "How?") lends a meditative rhythm to the text, reflecting the narrator's immersion in a journey of searching for answers. This narrative style resembles a stream of consciousness, where thoughts flow naturally and non-linearly, deepening the reader's sense of confusion and mystery. Riadh as a character, and his inability to explain how he came to be in the place, reinforces the sense of collective confusion that is not limited to the narrator alone. This ambiguity creates a state of entanglement between the characters, the place and the time, as if everyone is stuck in a common destiny beyond their comprehension.

Finally, the story of Uncle Bishara intersects with the myth of Sisyphus, as he asks his daughter's fiancé to fill the jug under the tree to the right of the palace with water, with the only source of water being the well on his land: "The young man looked back at his land, and could not see it, but he imagined his bride coming from there, so he smiled and said to the man: 'No problem, Uncle Bishara, no problem. If a person does not work hard in his youth, he does not deserve to have a prosperous future" (*Nisf Majhul* 142). He spends years without the jug being filled, and it can no longer bear it, and he eventually discovers that the bottom of the jug is open and the water is sinking to an unknown place.

The story of Uncle Bishara is similar to the myth of Sisyphus in many ways, as both works revolve around futile human effort that leads to no results. In the myth of Sisyphus, Sisyphus is punished by pushing a rock to the top of a mountain, only to have it fall back down each time, so he repeatedly tries to do this in vain. Similarly, Uncle Bishara asks his daughter's

fiancé to fill the jug, but the jug has an open bottom, rendering his constant efforts fruitless, just like Sisyphus. Both characters are stuck in a vicious cycle of endless and fruitless work. This absurd repetition raises questions about the value of human effort and the meaning of life, both in the story of Uncle Bishara and in the myth. The difference between the two stories is that Uncle Bishara's fiancé realizes the futility of what he is doing, which prompts him to try to cut down the tree and break the jug, considering the tree and its owner cursed.

Intertextuality with Lyrics

The novel intertwines with many Egyptian lyrics, which reflect feelings of confusion, disintegration, and loss of identity, in addition to the prevalence of witchcraft in its various forms, especially in Upper Egypt and rural areas. It also highlights the idea of alienation, which is depicted as a form of death, as some people sometimes resort to severing ties with their families to avoid the evil eye and envy. In the end, this intertextuality seems to serve the development of the plot in an intentional way, while leaving a glimmer of hope that is intertextual with the article "Don't be desperate."

The novel is intertextual with the poem "The Ruins" by Ibrahim Nagi: "It seems that I am in the opposite direction to the direction in which I was driving my car. But where is the car? I remember that I had a car, and that was about a few minutes ago, and I was walking with confident steps, walking on the edge of the vision" (*Nisf Majhul* 6). The intertextuality between the novel and the poem is evident through the evocation of feelings and themes that reflect confusion, loss, and loss of direction, whether on a sensory or psychological level. In the novel, the narrator seems to have lost his compass, not only in his physical direction, as he does not know where the car he was driving moments ago is, but also in his vision of the events and things around him, as he walks as if he is part of a vague and incomplete vision.

This intertextuality expresses feelings of loss, nostalgia, and the search for meaning amidst the wreckage. In the poem, the poet uses the symbolism of ruins to signify the past that

has passed and its profound impact on the present, a feeling that resonates in the novel through the narrator's depiction of a state of uncertainty, as if time has been divided between what it was moments ago and what it is now. In "The Ruins", the poem highlights human suffering with confusion and dispersion between what was and what is now. In the novel, the narrator appears in a similar situation, wondering about the car he lost and the direction he is going in, reflecting a feeling of spatial and temporal loss. The lost car in the novel may symbolize a means of controlling destiny or moving from one stage to another, but it suddenly disappears, deepening the sense of helplessness. In "The Ruins," the ruins themselves symbolize the past with all its memories and brokenness. The phrase "I walk on the edge of the vision" in the novel refers to a confused and incomplete perception of events, similar to what the hero of the poem "The Ruins" experiences, who suffers from an overlap between the past and the present, between dream and reality.

In brief, both texts invite readers to deep self-reflection, as each expresses an internal struggle with time, place, and existence. This intertextuality serves the plot of the novel by introducing the reader to a psychological state similar to that presented by "The Ruins," where feelings of confusion, alienation, and loss of contact with reality intertwine. This evocation also adds poetic depth to the novel, making it benefit from the aesthetics of the poetic text in depicting the inner feelings of its characters.

The invocation of the song "Salamatha Umm Hassan"—lyrics by Hassan Abu Etman, music by Farouk Salama, and sung by Ahmed Adawiya—highlights the suffering of humans due to magic, sorcery, envy, and the evil eye. In another way, this intertextuality enriches the novel by creating a resonance between the song and the text, making it a tool for explaining the characters' feelings and suffering with the forces of envy and magic. It also highlights how folk songs are used as a means of documenting the human experience and shedding light on

profound social and cultural issues: “I am sorry, Umm Hassan, Salamatha Umm Hassan” (*Nisf Majhul* 70). The lyrics of the song say,

> May Umm Hassan be safe from the evil eye and envy,
>
> May you, Hassan, be safe from the envying glance.
>
> She has caught the prevalent fit,
>
> This fit prevented her from sleeping.
>
> The evil eye doesn’t leave her alone.
>
> Umm Hassan is afflicted by the evil eye.

The novel invokes this song to highlight the suffering caused by magic and sorcery, a theme that recurs in the lyrics of the song, as Umm Hassan suffers from the evil eye and envy, which makes her surrounded by practices such as zar and incense in an attempt to break this curse. In the novel, this intertextuality enhances the state of confusion and disintegration experienced by the characters due to popular beliefs and the influence of magic. The lyrics of the song reflect the state of Umm Hassan, who seems to be a victim of a group of forces beyond her control, such as envy and magic, which makes her trapped in a state of pain and weakness—the author may suffer from the same thing. This feeling is paralleled by what the novel reflects of the characters’ suffering in the face of mysterious and unknown forces, whether social, psychological, or even metaphysical. Intertextuality highlights how popular beliefs and superstitions merge with people’s daily lives, turning them into means of trying to understand and explain suffering. This overlap is repeated in the novel, as magic appears as one of the elements that controls the fate of the characters, making them prisoners of forces that seem greater than their ability to control. The song is written in Egyptian colloquial language, in a style that blends sarcasm and seriousness, making it express the popular conscience in an honest way. The novel’s invocation of this text gives it a popular character that deepens its

connection to the Egyptian cultural context, and gives the reader a sense of intimacy and closeness to the characters' environment. The song's lyrics do not stop at describing suffering, but rather carry an implicit criticism of traditional practices such as "zar" and "incense," which are used as symbolic solutions to treat problems of a psychological or social nature. The phrase "Be smart and rational" comes as a call to abandon these beliefs and break out of the circle of delusion. The novel, in turn, may invoke the song to direct a similar criticism, or perhaps to clarify the conflict between rationality and superstition in the lives of its characters.

The incorporation of the song into the novel is not just a passing invocation, but a dramatic element that reinforces the themes of the novel. The phrase "May Umm Hassan be safe" in the text reflects a sense of regret and apology, as if the characters are acknowledging their inability to change reality or save "Umm Hassan" (the symbol of the victim) from her ordeal. This apology carries within it an awareness of the futility of attempts to confront the mysterious forces that control their lives.

Accordingly, the narrator's mother advises him not to disclose the family relationship between them, and asks him to greet her only with his eyelashes, fearing for her son who has been exposed to witchcraft that has turned his life into hell for decades: "Did you tell the truth, Hassan? You are a stranger to me, and greet them only with your eyelashes. And when I want to speak, she puts her hand over my mouth and says to me: The rules are the rules, Hassan, and the rules say: 'Say hello, don't talk, greet them only with your eyelashes.' Here I am shaking my eyelashes, so shake your eyelashes only, and then we will act (*Nisf Majhul* 75).

Here the novel intersects with "Salam", a lyric by Ahmed Sheta, composed by Salah El-Sharnoubi, and sung by Ehab Tawfik:

> Without words is better, silence is more beautiful, peace, peace, peace… peace, don't talk, let the peace be in the eyelashes, the language of the eyes, I don't know how it gets across? The rope of love is connected, and your eyes say a lot no matter how you hide

> them, between the eyelashes are secrets, my weak heart gets confused the first time I see them… peace, peace, peace, aah peace, don't talk, let the peace be in the eyelashes, the language of the eyes, I don't know how it gets across? Love with looks is like a sea of languages that you and I have lived, we tell many stories with looks and gestures and our eyes understand them, peace, peace, peace.

The novel's invocation of the phrase "Khalli al-Salam bil-Ramsh" highlights a deep overlap between the novel and the song, creating a rich intertextuality in expressing feelings and ideas related to fear, hesitation, and the desire for hidden communication without direct disclosure. The intertextuality here enhances the feeling of tension and fear experienced by the characters in the novel. The use of the language of the eyes as a tool for communication in both the novel and the song links familial caution (in the novel) and emotional romance (in the song), enriching the text with multiple layers. The song gives "al-Salam bil-Ramsh" a poetic aesthetic dimension, while the novel highlights the other side of the idea, which is the fear of direct communication, as the eyelash turns from an expression of love into a means of staying safe in a world full of threats. The novel's text invokes vocabulary from Egyptian popular culture such as "al-Usool" and "Khalli al-Salam bil-Ramsh," linking it to the world of popular songs that rely on colloquial language and reflect the conscience of society. This intertextuality shows how the popular expression of love or caution intersects with the events of the novel.

The invocation of the song "Salam" in the novel adds depth and beauty to the text, as intertextuality is employed to express the psychological and social tensions experienced by the characters. The song, with its symbolism in the language of eyes and silence, harmonizes with the novel to create a multidimensional space of emotions, combining caution, sadness, and the desire for safe communication.

Finally, the novel's invocation of Mohamed Abdel Wahab's last song adds an additional layer of depth and contemplation to the text, as the lyrics of the song become a lens through

which the reader sees the absurdity of life and the ambiguity of the characters' fates. This song carries within it a philosophical and human dimension that intersects with the themes of the novel, making intertextuality an effective artistic tool for enriching the text and highlighting its existential dimensions: "Can you explain to me why the singer Mohamed Abdel Wahab sang about such a situation in his last song before his death?!" (*Nisf Majhul* 121). The lyrics of the song say,

> We came to this world without knowing why, where we are going, or what we want
>
> Paths drawn for our steps that we walk in the exile of our nights
>
> One day it makes us happy and one day it hurts us, and we do not know why
>
> And just as we came, we came, and it was not in our hands.

The novel's invocation of Abdel Wahab's song enhances the philosophical nature of the text, intersecting with major questions about meaning and existence. This intertextuality makes the reader think about life in a deeper way, wondering about the role of fate, choice, and chance in shaping people's paths. The song, with its vague meanings, fits in with the state of ambiguity that dominates the novel. The characters do not fully understand what is happening to them, just as the song expresses a person's lack of understanding of the reasons that led him to enter life and live it in its details. Intertextuality with a song with a strong sentiment like Abdel Wahab's creates an emotional and intellectual bridge between the different artistic texts, and unifies the experiences of the novel's characters with the general human experience. The song becomes a reflection of the thoughts and feelings that the characters experience, which enriches the text and deepens its impact. Through this intertextuality, the novel presents absurdity not only as an external subject, but as an integral part of the nature of human life, where man finds himself stuck in a cycle that he cannot break or explain.

Intertextuality "Do not be desperate...the Future belongs to God's Religion and Honor belongs to His Saints"

The Islamic nation gets sick but never dies and weakens but never extinguishes. When the Tatars invaded the lands of the Muslims, they destroyed cities, overthrew the Caliphate, and decimated Islamic civilization, to the point that some people thought the banner of Islam had been lowered forever. Ibn al-Athir described the event as a great tragedy, to the point that he wished to die before witnessing it. However, a few years later, the miracle of Islam was achieved, as these invaders embraced the religion of the vanquished, in an exceptional phenomenon that contradicts the well-known historical rule that the vanquished imitates the victor. This transformation highlights that victory and honor are in the hands of Allah, and that the Islamic nation can rise after a setback, no matter how great the ordeal, as the poet said: “Do not despair of regaining your honor, for there may be a vanquished who fell and then ascended/And endure every great difficulty for the sake of honor, for I have seen that honor is difficult to climb”: “The city does not die. It may get sick, yes, but it does not die” (*Nisf Majhul* 25).

Both the article and the novel deal with the idea of steadfastness and survival despite illness or hardship. In both texts, there is a belief that setback is not the end, but rather a new beginning for revival. In the article, the Islamic nation symbolizes the spiritual and civilizational entity that does not perish, and in the novel, the city symbolizes societies that live and renew. Both texts carry an optimistic message that major crises may be the beginning of a new era of strength and pride. Both reinforce hope in the ability of civilizations or societies to overcome hardships and return stronger than before, emphasizing the idea that defeat is only a temporary phase, and that determination and belief in revival are the keys to survival and renewal.

Intertextuality with Proverbs

The use of proverbs in the novel plays a pivotal role in reinforcing its message and conveying its ideas deeply and clearly. Proverbs are not just passing expressions or sayings, but rather the essence of wisdom accumulated across generations, expressing societal values, customs and experiences. Through this employment, proverbs become an effective tool for opening new doors to understanding literary texts and linking them to social and cultural reality.

The novel highlights how proverbs can be used to justify domination and control, as this wisdom is sometimes exploited as a means of justifying authoritarian and oppressive actions. For example, when the court is portrayed as an all-knowing authority, the proverb is used to present a false image of justice. These proverbs highlight how language can be used to serve injustice, reflecting the novel's ability to expose the contradictions of societies: "The court knows the case better, and there is no one more just than it to read out the list of charges" (*Nisf Majhul* 32).

Proverbs also reflect a rush to judgment without analysis or listening, highlighting the weakness of critical thinking and the adherence to stereotypes. This use reveals the contradiction of societies that blindly rely on popular wisdom without realizing its relevance to real life: "You came to rob us, Doctor. I tell them excitedly: This is Cairo University, and it opens its doors to students from everywhere, and I will not say that you came to rob the university. They say: The sword has preceded the unarmed. We will call the police" (*Nisf Majhul* 42-43).

The novel also points to the lack of planning in many situations through the use of proverbs that express the gap between individual ambition and social constraints. This conflict is clearly shown through proverbs that reflect the frustration resulting from not linking dreams to real effort: "Don't concentrate, Doctor, where it settles, fix it" (*Nisf Majhul* 50). It also stresses "Adaptation to circumstances" (Ibrahim Sha'lan 332).

Oppression and injustice in the novel are clearly shown through the use of proverbs that convey the daily suffering of people in some Arab countries: "How can you live for thirteen years in Sharqton and not know that titles here are given with great severity and hardship? Titles are reserved, as you say in Egypt, but they are reserved in the literal sense of the word. You cannot address someone by the title of another authority, or else you will go after the sun, as you say in Egypt" (*Nisf Majhul* 52).

Proverbs here are not just a descriptive device, but a tool that makes the reader feel these experiences as if they were part of his life: "Don't you say in Egypt that the hungry man dreams of a loaf of bread?" (*Nisf Majhul* 54).

The novel also uses proverbs to ridicule those who claim to possess knowledge and science, indicating that true power lies in wisdom and balance, not in dominance or threat: "In front of you?!! Here are the waters and here is the diver, and I am with you to the door, and the waters belie the diver" (*Nisf Majhul* 61).

Proverbs are also used to highlight the idea that one reaps what one sows, reflecting traditional moral values and highlighting the relationship between action and consequence in the popular imagination: "The cook of blessings must be blessed. Peace be upon you, food for a believing people, peace be upon you, food for a hungry people, peace be upon you, food for a returning people. Come, my honored guests, come" (*Nisf Majhul* 80).

In brief, proverbs add vitality to the text thanks to their fluency and ease of use, making the dialogue more relatable to the reader. This flexibility contributes to making the novel a mirror of daily life, as the language reflects people's reality and lived experiences. Ultimately, the writer uses proverbs to enrich the novel with multiple cultural and social aspects, deepening its impact and creating a strong bridge between the text and the reader.

Intertextuality with the Egyptian January 25 Revolution

The novel deals with the January 25 Revolution and how influential people exploited it to achieve their personal interests, which led to the loss of the principles that the revolution called for, as the professor embodies the image of the climbers who use the revolution as a mere means to reach power and personal gain: "Will we sit on the void, young people? You are the hope and the roses that have blossomed in the gardens of this university" (*Nisf Majhul* 32).

This intertextuality refers to one of the most important transformations witnessed by the January 25 Revolution and is also intertextual with the poem by the Egyptian poet Ahmed Fouad Negm, "Good morning to the roses that bloomed in the gardens of Egypt." Here, Elgezeery addresses the deep criticism of exploiting the noble revolutionary principles to achieve personal interests or narrow goals, far from the aspirations of the people for whom the revolution was launched. In this context, the writer uses the character of "the professor" as a symbol of the hypocritical and double-edged discourse that promotes the youth as "hope" and "roses" in public, while in reality he sees them as mere tools that can be used to achieve the interests of the adults. The use of chairs here is a symbol of influence and power, as if these "adults" are looking to expand their social and political positions at the expense of the principles of the revolution. The phrase "Will we sit on the void, young people?" carries an exploitative tone that plays with the feelings of the youth and their enthusiasm for the revolution, as if the writer is pointing out how revolutionary slogans are transformed into hollow words used to convince the youth to continue making sacrifices without achieving real change. Through this symbolism, the writer reflects the disappointment that followed the revolution, as the noble principles it called for turned into slogans used in official speeches, while reality remains controlled by the elites who manage affairs only for their own benefit.

Finally, Intertextuality with Fahd Al Rajhi's Program

The following narrative scene is intertextual with Fahd Al Rajhi's program: "I was watching Fahd Al Rajhi's program on YouTube. ... Don't take it personally, Pasha, it seems that your house is a haunted house, and Fahd Al Rajhi has a program on YouTube in which he goes to an abandoned place in every episode..." (*Nisf Majhul* 114-5).

The narrative employs the character of Al Rajhi as a symbol of the adventurer who searches for mystery and faces the unknown in deserted places. The scene begins with the narrator's remark about watching the program, in which he explores deserted and mysterious places in each episode. This reference goes beyond being a mere description of the narrator's condition, but rather becomes a narrative tool that conjures up a world of horror and mystery and connects it to his personal reality. When the narrator enters the room in his house in Upper Egypt, the room in his imagination turns into something resembling a "ghost house," reflecting the program's influence on his perceptions. The summoning of the character of Al Rajhi here is not random, but rather represents the desire to understand the unknown and delve into the unknown, which intersects with the psychological atmosphere the narrator is experiencing at that moment.

This intertextuality adds multiple dimensions to the scene: First, it enhances the reader's sense of tension and dread by linking the fictional reality to the reality of well-known investigative programs, making the story closer to the reader's imagination. Secondly, this intertextuality reflects the narrator's inner tension, who lives in a state of anxiety and alienation in his own home. Thirdly, it points to the contradiction between the familiar daily reality (the YouTube program) and the troubled psychological reality that makes his home a strange and frightening place. In this way, intertextuality with the program becomes an artistic means that enhances the narrative atmosphere and sheds light on the state of mystery and psychological

turmoil experienced by the narrator, which enriches the text and gives it an additional symbolic and semantic dimension.

Conclusion

Intertextuality is a rich literary technique used to connect texts with other ideas or cultural references, enriching the literary work and giving it additional layers of meaning and interpretation. When talking about Elgezeery's use of intertextuality, we can notice how he skillfully integrates different texts and ideas within his works, enhancing readers' engagement with the texts and creating a dynamic, multi-dimensional reading experience.

When Elgezeery recalls other texts or references, he opens up the possibility for readers to interpret his novel in light of those texts. For example, intertextuality with Ibsen's *Wild Duck* and *A Doll's House* highlights an exploration of societal and personal issues, such as issues of freedom and individual choices, which deepen readers' understanding of human conflicts. In Orwell's *Animal Farm*, intertextuality works to critique totalitarian regimes through subtle symbolic metaphors. Al-Zayyat's *The Open Door* highlights issues of women's liberation and society in the context of a period of historical and political transformation in Egypt. When a writer incorporates such texts into his work, he adds a cultural or philosophical context that can open up new avenues of meaning.

Intertextuality creates a dialogue between different texts, inviting readers to explore the similarities and differences between the ideas presented. For example, intertextuality with Albert Camus's *The Myth of Sisyphus* highlights the philosophy of absurdity and the meaning of life in the face of continuous effort with no apparent benefit. The evocation of the poet Nassar Abdullah's collection of poems and Ahmed Fouad Negm's poem reflect multiple aspects such as liberation from oppression, leadership, or individual defiance against authority. Through these techniques, Elgezeery pushes his readers to think critically and connect the

themes presented in the literary texts to broader frameworks that include history, religion, and philosophy.

Elgezeery often draws on familiar references from folklore, such as proverbs or songs, to enrich the cultural context. For example, a reference to the song *Salamatha Umm Hassan*, which is considered a symbol of folklore, can evoke a sense of nostalgia and shared cultural identity, or it can be used to explore contemporary social issues in an indirect way. Proverbs carry within them the wisdom and traditions of a community, and their invocation in texts gives the work a local and global character at the same time.

Elgezeery employs intertextuality to challenge authority or to open up discussion about traditional social values. He may refer to well-known texts or symbols, but strategically paraphrase or distort them to offer an alternative view. This approach can reveal inconsistencies or biases in traditional interpretations of the original texts. For example, a reference to a historical or religious figure may be used not only for veneration, but also for criticism or analysis, as in the story of the eminent professor at Cairo University.

When Elgezeery invokes universally known stories or texts such as Greek mythology or religious texts, he strengthens the connection between the reader and the text. These strategies allow the audience to feel that the issues raised in the texts are not confined to a particular time or place, but extend to universal human experiences. Classic texts, such as the Qur'an or *Oedipus the Rex*, imbue the work with deep historical and spiritual resonance, giving the reader a sense of cultural continuity.

Rephrasing well-known texts or proverbs can be an effective way to add humor or satire. For example, Elgezeery changes an Egyptian proverb and repurposes it in a contemporary way to provide a clever and entertaining critique of reality: "Don't concentrate, doctor, when it settles, fix it." Distortion here is a way to raise questions about societal norms or prevailing concepts.

Finally, intertextuality is a powerful tool in Elgezeery's hands to enrich his texts and give them depth and flexibility. By calling upon other texts, whether religious, historical, popular, or classical, it opens the way for readers to explore multiple layers of meaning. It serves as a bridge between past and present, between different cultures, and between the author and his audience, creating a literary experience rich in dialogue and reflection.

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