MAGIC REALISM IN GAMAL ELGEZEERY'S *NISF MAJHUL* (AN UNKNOWN HALF)

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Abstract

This paper, entitled "Magic Realism in Gamal Elgezeery's *Nisf Majhul*, (An Unknown Half)" delves into the intricacies of magic realism within the novel, elucidating how it adeptly incorporates the essential elements of this literary genre. The study is organized into two sections: the first expounds the theoretical foundations of magic realism, while the second focuses on the novel under scrutiny. The primary objectives include showcasing the integration of illogical events, the portrayal of a setting that intertwines reality and fiction, the deliberate disruption of grand narratives, summoning the dead, and a satirical exploration of pertinent social, political, and environmental issues. Elgezeery employs magic realism, also known as magical realism, in his novel for a multitude of compelling reasons. Through this literary style, he skillfully blurs the boundaries between the ordinary and the supernatural, utilizes symbolism and metaphor to address complex themes, explores cultural identity, challenges readers' perceptions of reality, conveys deep emotions and dreams, heightens the sense of wonder, offers a form of escapism and entertainment, creates unforgettable imagery, and ultimately reflects the rich complexity of the world. Magic realism serves as a versatile and imaginative storytelling tool, enabling Elgezeery to delve into a wide spectrum of themes and ideas while captivating readers with its distinctive fusion of the everyday and the extraordinary. The conclusive findings affirm that Elgezeery masterfully employs a postmodernist technique, magic realism, to unveil the hidden tapestry of everyday calamities, showcasing the author's skillful rendering of this literary genre. This study suggests exploring the following areas for prospective research: Intertextuality, Ecocriticism, Deconstruction, and Campus fiction.

Keywords: Gamal Elgezeery, Magic realism, *Nisf Majhul*, Postmodernism.

المستخلص

تتناول هذه الورقة البحثية، التي تحمل عنوان "الواقعية السحرية في رواية "نصف مجهول" للكاتب جمال الجزيري، تعقيدات الواقعية السحرية داخل الرواية، وتوضح كيف تدمج هذه الرواية ببراعة العناصر الأساسية لهذا النوع الأدبي. وتنقسم الدراسة إلى قسمين شاملين: يتناول الأول الأسس النظرية للواقعية السحرية، بينما يقدم الثاني تحليلا تطبيقيا يركز على الرواية قيد البحث. تشمل الأهداف الأساسية عرض الأحداث غير المنطقية، وتصوير بيئة تتشابك بين الواقع والخيال، والتفكيك المتعمد للسرديات الكبرى، واستدعاء الأموات، والنقد الساخر للقضايا الاجتماعية والسياسية والبيئية ذات الصلة. يستخدم الجزيري الواقعية السحرية في روايته لعدة أسباب مقنعة. من خلال هذا الأسلوب الأدبي،

يطمس بمهارة الحدود بين العادي والخوارق، ويستخدم الرمزية والاستعارة لمعالجة موضوعات معقدة، ويستكشف الهوية الثقافية، ويتحدى تصورات القراء للواقع، وينقل المشاعر والأحلام العميقة، ويزيد من الشعور بالدهشة، ويقدم شكلا من أشكال الهروب والترفيه، ويخلق صورًا لا تُنسى، ويعكس في النهاية التعقيد الغني للعالم. تعتبر الواقعية السحرية بمثابة أداة متعددة الاستخدامات وخيالية لسرد القصص، مما يمكّن الجزيري من التعمق في مجموعة واسعة من المواضيع والأفكار بينما يأسر القراء بدمجه المميز بين الحياة اليومية والاستثنائية. تؤكد النتائج النهائية أن الجزيري يستخدم ببراعة الواقعية السحرية بوصفها أسلوبا ما بعد حداثي لكشف النقاب عن النسيج الخفي للمصائب اليومية، وإظهار تقديم المؤلف الماهر لهذا النوع الأدبي. تقترح هذه الدراسة استكشاف الموضوعات التالية للبحث المستقبلي في هذه الرواية: التناص، النقد البيئي، التفكيكية، والرواية الأكاديمية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: جمال الجزيري، الواقعية السحرية، نصف مجهول، ما بعد الحداثة.

MAGIC REALISM IN GAMAL ELGEZEERY'S *NISF MAJHUL* (AN UNKNOWN HALF)

Introduction

Magic realism is a literary genre that has captivated readers and critics alike for its ability to seamlessly blend the ordinary with the extraordinary, the real with the surreal. In this study, the researcher embarks on a comprehensive exploration of the multifaceted world of magic realism, delving into its definition, its unique departure from the conventions of mainstream genres, and its transformative power to combine the realms of the real and the supernatural. At the heart of the investigation is *Nisf Majhul* (2020), a remarkable work penned in Arabic by Dr Gamal Elgezeery[i], which serves as an exemplary fusion of realist and supernatural elements. This research seeks to unravel the intricate tapestry of verbal effects that magic realism employs to weave its enchanting narratives, as well as to dissect how fragmented characters within this genre navigate a world both hostile and grotesque. Beyond the literary aesthetics, the study delves into the deeper layers of magic realism, exploring its function as a tool for dramatizing the ethical and representational complexities that envelop existence. It acknowledges that magic realism engages with significant events, yet maintains an ethical and experiential distance from reality, offering readers a unique lens through which to view the world. The initial section focuses on establishing an understanding of magic realism, tracing its origins and identifying its fundamental characteristics. Subsequently, it moves to the practical application of these insights by analyzing how *Nisf Majhul* can be interpreted from the perspective of magic realism. By embarking on this journey, the study aims to shed light on the captivating world of magic realism and its capacity to blur the lines between the ordinary and the extraordinary, the real and the supernatural, and the ethical and the surreal.

Magic Realism

Magic realism is a literary genre that blends elements of the fantastical and the ordinary, seamlessly intertwining the supernatural with everyday reality. According to William Spindler, magic realism can be defined as texts in which two divergent perspectives of the world (one being "rational" and the other "magical") are portrayed in a manner that suggests their

coexistence without contradiction (78). Tzvetan Todorov asserts that within our familiar world, there are some events that defy explanation within the confines of the established laws governing that very world (25). Magic realism is defined by Amaryll Chanady as primarily marked by the presence of two opposing yet independently consistent viewpoints. One viewpoint is rooted in an "enlightened" and rational understanding of reality, while the other embraces the supernatural as an integral component of everyday existence (21–22). It represents a seamless blending of the ordinary and the supernatural, as suggested by Ursula Kluwick (3). One of the primary characteristics of magic realist literature can be described as the existence of two contrasting ontological frameworks within a text. These frameworks differ in their approach to 'reality,' with one being mimetic and the other nonmimetic, as articulated by Jenni Adams (6). Alejo Carpentier aims to dissolve the division between the rational and the irrational, as emphasized by Kluwick (9); it predominantly emerges as an embodiment of unique non-Western perspectives (1). As proposed by Wendy B. Faris, the concept of magic realism serves to disrupt Western realism not as an external critique but rather from within the framework of Western literary traditions (1). In essence, it challenges the established norms and conventions of Western realism by introducing elements of the supernatural and the extraordinary in a way that appears natural and integral to the narrative.

Unlike western critiques that question realism from an outside perspective, magic realism operates within the western realist tradition itself, subtly subverting and expanding the boundaries of what is considered probable and acceptable in storytelling. This internal disruption prompts readers and scholars to reevaluate their understanding of reality, pushing the boundaries of what literature can convey. Todorov identifies the fantastic as marked by the introduction of elements that do not align with the fundamental realist framework of the text. These unsettling events lead readers to question the suitability of realist interpretations, as noted by Kluwick (14). As Chanady contends, because the magic realist narrator does not portray the supernatural as a source of difficulty, readers do not find irrational events disconcerting. Instead, they embrace the simultaneous presence of contradictory codes without raising doubts about their compatibility or lack thereof (Kluwick 16). Nikolai Gogol's short story "The Nose" (1836), for instance, portrays a protagonist who loses his nose, "his nose had gone!" (46), which then transforms into a man wandering the streets of St. Petersburg without causing shock or requiring explanation, as if such events were entirely normal: "And it was abundantly clear that the nose was going to visit someone. It looked right, then left, shouted to the coachman 'Let's go!, climbed in and drove off" (48).

The term "magic realism" was first coined in 1925 by the German art critic Franz Roh. Initially, it was used to describe a movement in post-Expressionist painting often referred to as 'New Objectivity.' This artistic movement had a central focus on defamiliarizing objects and images. In essence, it aimed to make the familiar appear strange and captivating by presenting it in unconventional ways, often through unusual perspectives and unexpected juxtapositions. To illustrate this concept further, Irene Guenther's description is quite illuminating. She explains that within the context of New Objectivity, ordinary objects and scenes were depicted in a manner that made them seem extraordinary. This was achieved by portraying them as if they were "over-exposed," emphasizing certain details, or isolating them from their typical surroundings. Moreover, these objects were often rendered from unusual angles, providing viewers with fresh and unexpected viewpoints. In this artistic movement, the familiar was transformed into something unusual and uncanny. The uncanniness of these depictions evoked both fear and wonder in the audience. By presenting the everyday world in this way, New Objectivity

challenged viewers to reconsider their preconceptions about the ordinary and to see it in a new and thought-provoking light. This artistic approach can be seen as a precursor to the literary genre of magical realism, where a similar blending of the ordinary and the extraordinary occurs. In both cases, the aim is to disrupt conventional perceptions, encouraging audiences to question the boundaries between reality and fantasy and to appreciate the magic that can be found in the world around us.

Magic realism originated in Latin American literature, particularly with the works of Gabriel García Márquez and Jorge Luis Borges, but has since gained popularity worldwide. The key pioneers of magic realism include Márquez, who is often considered the father of the genre, as well as other notable authors such as Jorge Luis Borges, Isabel Allende, Alejo Carpentier, and Julio Cortázar. These writers introduced the concept of magic realism by infusing their narratives with enchanting and imaginative elements while grounding them in the familiar.

The general features of magic realism include the coexistence of the magical and the mundane, the blurring of boundaries between reality and fantasy, the incorporation of myths and folklore, the use of vivid and evocative imagery, and the exploration of complex social and political issues within a magical framework. This genre often challenges conventional narrative structures and invites readers to question their perceptions of reality. While each magic realist novel possesses unique characteristics, they share certain commonalities (MasterClass *Par 8*). Magic realist novels are rooted in a sense of place, typically set in familiar locations for the readers. This distinction sets them apart from fantasy novels like *Harry Potter*. In magic realism, fantastical elements coexist with the real world, ranging from objects or deceased figures to telepathy and mystical occurrences. These elements are presented naturally within the narrative, where the conceivable and unimaginable happen simultaneously. Authors of magic realism often provide limited and incomplete explanations for the symbols and enigmas present in their stories. The magic, mystery, and paradoxical elements remain unexplained, integrated seamlessly into everyday life. This narrative approach resembles the dreamlike quality of dreams, where events occur without logical or rational explanation, yet we accept them without question. This sets magic realism apart from fantasy novels as well. Magic realism is frequently employed as a means of implicitly critiquing serious issues such as fascism, racism, colonialism, American imperialism, the logic of the community, as well as personal and academic problems. Authors use this genre to question political systems, elites, and the deteriorating conditions experienced by countries in the fourth world. The unconventional nature of magic realism disrupts traditional narrative patterns, often deviating from a linear structure that has a clear beginning, middle, and end. This unpredictability intensifies the reading experience, as the plot progresses without a predetermined rhythm or precise moments of conflict. Lastly, magical realism invites interpretation and embraces multiple meanings. The genre allows for diverse understandings and perspectives, encouraging readers to delve into the symbolic layers and complexities of the narrative.

Surrealism and magic realism both incorporate a blend of realism and fantastic elements in their artistic expressions, but they differ in terms of their content and goals. While both aim to create a fusion of reality and the extraordinary, their approaches and effects set them apart. Magic realism seeks to offer a fresh perspective on the familiar world we inhabit. Artists working within this genre may employ unconventional viewpoints and ambiguous juxtapositions, or portray common objects in extraordinary and wondrous ways. However, all that is depicted in magic realism remains within the realm of possibility, albeit occasionally stretching the boundaries of probability. The emphasis lies in presenting the extraordinary within

the ordinary, challenging people's perceptions and inviting them to reconsider the familiar from a renewed perspective. In contrast, surrealism transports people into an entirely different realm, one that exists only in the realm of imagination and the subconscious (dreams). It ventures into the realm of the impossible, using a combination of conventional and experimental artistic techniques to create jarring and shocking effects. Surrealist works often defy logic and rationality, presenting dreamlike or absurd scenarios that provoke strong emotional and intellectual responses: "In magic realism there is always a tense connection between the real and the fantastic: the impossible event is a kind of metaphor for the extreme paradoxes of modern history. In surrealism, metaphors become the real, effacing the world of reason and common sense" (David Lodge 175). The goal is to challenge traditional notions of reality and engage the viewer's imagination in unexpected and unconventional ways. Thus, while both surrealism and magic realism incorporate elements of reality and the fantastic, the distinction lies in the nature of their content. Magic realism emphasizes the extraordinary within the ordinary, whereas surrealism ventures into an unreal world existing solely in the realm of the mind, often employing shock and subversion to challenge our perceptions of reality:

> Unlike superrealism, magical realism does not use dream motifs; neither does it distort reality or create imagined worlds, as writers of fantastic literature or science fiction do; nor does it emphasize psychological analysis of characters, since it doesn't try to find reasons for their actions or their inability to express themselves. Magical realism is not an aesthetic movement either, as was modernism, which was interested in creating works dominated by a refined style; neither is it interested in the creation of complex structures per se. (Luis Leal 121)

In brief, magic realism distinguishes itself by its ability to make the extraordinary seem ordinary, allowing readers to accept and engage with fantastical elements as an integral part of the narrative world. It operates within the realm of the familiar while inviting readers to reconsider their perceptions of reality and the boundaries of what is possible in storytelling.

In *Nisf Majhul*, Elgezeery employs the postmodernist technique of magic realism in order to create a captivating narrative by weaving together elements of the magical and the ordinary, presenting a world where fantastical occurrences seamlessly blend with everyday life. Readers are presented with a complex web of characters and events in the novel that go beyond the confines of reality. The novelist uses descriptive language and vivid descriptions to captivate readers with his writing, which becomes a conduit for the extraordinary and mysterious. By employing magic realism, he is able to explore the depths of human experience, presenting both the beauty and the challenges of life in a unique and enchanting manner. Through the lens of magic realism, Elgezeery not only tells a compelling story but also invites readers to contemplate deeper truths and reflect on the intricate connections between the seen and the unseen, the known and the mysterious. This innovative approach adds layers of depth and meaning to *Nisf Majhul*, making it a truly remarkable work that showcases Elgezeery's mastery of the genre and his ability to transport readers to a world where reality and magic coexist.

Analysis

Numerous writers of magic realism have experienced significant societal, political, or cultural disruptions, as well as intense personal challenges and transformations (Lodge 114). These historical convulsions could include wars, revolutions, dictatorships, colonization, or significant societal shifts. Elgezeery uses the genre of magic realism to represent the multifaceted and often surreal nature of these historical experiences. By incorporating magical elements into *Nisf Majhul*, he can capture the chaos, confusion, and surrealism of these tumultuous periods.

Beyond external historical events, Elgezeery often has experienced significant personal upheavals, trauma, or transformation. These could range from personal losses, intense emotional experiences, or periods of great change and self-discovery. Magic realism allows him to convey the emotional depth and complexity of these personal experiences in a way that traditional realism may not. *Nisf Majhul* is a captivating fusion of reality and fantasy, where the demarcations between time and space become hazy, giving rise to a narrative that disrupts traditional storytelling conventions. In *Nisf Majhul*, Elgezeery masterfully employs all the hallmark elements of magic realism, displaying a remarkable level of skill, intricate craftsmanship, and a distinctive style, such as: illogical and incoherent events, realistic setting, inadequate and restricted information, summoning the dead and telepathy, violating the grand narrative, and socio-political criticism.

Illogical and Incoherent Events

The novel under study appears to be a fascinating exploration of the interplay between logical and illogical elements within its narrative, encompassing various aspects such as time, geography, history, and language. This fusion of elements serves to challenge and engage the reader's intellect and imagination while also conveying deeper thematic messages and emotional resonance. By embracing both the rational and the irrational, the novel invites readers to search for the blurred boundaries between reality and imagination, logic and chaos, and history and fantasy.

The novel employs non-linear storytelling or temporal distortions that challenge conventional chronological sequences. It utilizes flashbacks, flash-forwards, or even alternate timelines to create a sense of disorientation and unpredictability. This manipulation of time contributes to the novel's illogical aspect while also serving a logical purpose in enhancing the narrative's complexity and thematic depth. In *Nisf Majhul*, the author blurs the line between reality and fantasy:

> While I stroll, I discern an indistinct language, one that doesn't seem composed of human letters but rather appears to be the dialect of fruits, representing all the trees' bounties. . . . The lemon fruits undergo a transformation into human forms, and the narrator endeavors to bestow kisses upon them. . . . The esteemed doctor [lecturer] parked his car beside our trees and began refueling it with the fruit's gasoline, all without seeking permission or compensating for the fuel." (*Nisf Majhul* 13, 20, 45)

These extracts vividly illustrate the strangeness and absurdity of life through various magical and unconventional scenarios. The first passage introduces an unusual experience where the narrator hears an "indistinct language" that does not conform to human communication. This intriguing phenomenon of fruits seemingly possessing a language challenges the readers' understanding of the natural world. It symbolizes the idea that life often presents people with mysteries and unexplainable occurrences that defy conventional logic. The second extract takes the absurdity further by describing lemon fruits transforming into human forms. This magical transformation blurs the boundaries between the animate and inanimate, highlighting the unpredictability and inexplicability of existence. The narrator's attempt to kiss these fruit-turned-humans underscores the absurdity of his actions in the face of such a bizarre situation. The third one portrays a respected lecturer behaving strangely by refueling his car with the "gasoline" from trees. This act challenges the understanding of reality and the conventional use of resources. The lecturer's complete disregard for permission or payment amplifies the sense of absurdity, as it defies societal norms and expectations. In these extracts, life is portrayed as a series of inexplicable,

absurd, and magical events that challenge people's understanding of the world. They serve as a reminder that life is often filled with the unexpected and the bizarre, and that attempting to find meaning or logic in every situation can be a fruitless endeavor. These scenarios emphasize the need to embrace the strangeness of life and acknowledge that it does not always conform to everyday's expectations or understanding. This means that the novel under study contains elements of magic realism, where fantastical elements are seamlessly integrated into the everyday world. This fusion allows the author to explore complex themes and emotions in a unique and imaginative way. This suggests that *Nisf Majhul* does not adhere to a traditional linear plot structure or logical sequence of events. Instead, it is characterized by dream-like or surreal moments, where the boundaries of what is possible are stretched or even broken:

> We are but transient wanderers, Umm Hassan, seeking nourishment [food] for our journey. Spontaneously, she utters, 'May all sustenance be a sacrifice for you. May all sustenance be a sacrifice for you. Retreat a while.' Her fingers curl around the guava clutched in her hand, and with an abrupt motion, she propels it toward the open doorway, launching it skyward. In a magical twist of fate, the guava finds its mark in mid-air, striking a turkey in its flight, and in a bewildering spectacle, she subdues the airborne creature. As for how the turkey had taken flight or whence it had appeared, the enigma lingers, shrouded in the veils of the unknown. (*Nisf Majhul* 75)

This quotation indeed exemplifies the writer's skillful blend of reality and fiction within the narrative. The initial statement, "We are but transient wanderers, Umm Hassan, seeking nourishment for our journey," introduces a sense of reality. It speaks to the universal human experience of seeking sustenance, both literally and metaphorically, as people navigate their way through life. Umm Hassan's spontaneous utterance, "May all sustenance be a sacrifice for you. May all sustenance be a sacrifice for you. Retreat a while" takes a more abstract and almost spiritual turn. It introduces a layer of mysticism and metaphysical reflection, suggesting a connection between sustenance and a higher power. This is where fiction begins to intertwine with reality, as it delves into deeper, less tangible aspects of existence. The turning point of the passage occurs when Umm Hassan hurls the guava toward the open doorway, and it miraculously strikes a turkey in mid-flight. This event is a fantastical element that defies the laws of nature and reality. The collision between the guava and the airborne turkey introduces a magical twist to the narrative. The turkey's sudden appearance and its ability to take flight add an element of mystery and magic to the story, pushing it further into the realm of the supernatural, the magical, and the fantastical. The passage concludes with an acknowledgment of the enigma surrounding the turkey's flight and appearance. By leaving this aspect shrouded in the "veils of the unknown," the narrator deliberately maintains a sense of ambiguity and wonder, emphasizing the coexistence of the real and the imaginary within the narrative. In this quotation, the writer smoothly weaves together the ordinary and the extraordinary, the tangible and the ethereal, creating a narrative that invites readers to explore the boundaries between reality and fiction. The passage encourages readers to contemplate the mystical and inexplicable aspects of life while grounding the novel in relatable human experiences. It is through this blending of elements that the writer creates a narrative that resonates with both the everyday and the fantastical, making for a captivating and thought-provoking literary experience**.**

Elgezeery's novel incorporates a diverse range of settings, both real and fantastical, that are interconnected in unusual or illogical ways. Some of these settings may not adhere to real-world geographical constraints, blurring the line between the plausible and the fantastical. This approach creates a dreamlike atmosphere that heightens the sense of the illogical within the story

while also serving to symbolize or mirror the characters' emotional or psychological states. Geographical boundaries as well as the constraints of time also dissolve within the realm of this magical realist novel. The narrator perceives all locations as extensions of a singular extended place, or rather space, where their appearances vary, yet their fundamental essence remains identical—a space where individuals sit in a state of bewildered non-comprehension, much like the present moment:

Praise Allah that in your plight, you grapple with a missing link and that it is only one link. I, oftentimes, find myself ensnared by an intricate web of countless missing links within my own cognitive labyrinth. I can no longer make sense of anything, as though some enigmatic codes have been surreptitiously excised from the very fabric of my DNA, leaving me in a state of profound bewilderment, desperately yearning to reconstruct my DNA so that I may find the missing links among all the events unfolding around me and understand my situation and condition. I initially thought that going out into the desert would provide me with a warrior's temporary repose where I could clear my mind. But I have discovered that every place in this part of the world is an extension of the same place. Although the apparent aspects of every place may be different, its essence is the same, making you sit, as we do now, without understanding anything. (*Nisf Majhul* 100)

This passage delves deep into the human condition, portraying the universality of the struggle to understand life's complexities and the shared sense of confusion that binds people together. It emphasizes that beneath the surface of the diversity of cultures and landscapes, there exists a common thread of existential uncertainty and a shared quest for meaning. Ultimately, it suggests that humanity is connected by its pursuit of answers to the enigmatic aspects of existence, transcending borders and boundaries. This transformation is achieved through the metaphorical use of a magical tool, reminiscent of Riyad Al-Ghazlani's ability to traverse vast distances, moving seamlessly from Giza to Juhayna in Sohag Governorate with a simple incantation: "Tra-ra-ra. Here is your house and your mother's house" (*Nisf Majhul* 62). These narrative leaps, while bewildering, serve to confound the mind, giving rise to a sense of the unknown lurking within every aspect of existence, rendering clarity elusive without it. In an alternative fashion, the novel's progression transitions from realistic settings to fictional ones, creating a temporal disjunction: "More than thirty years have passed, and here I see my grandfather in front of me, as if I saw him yesterday" (*Nisf Majhul* 127). These artistic choices serve multiple purposes. They deconstruct the traditional narrative structure, infusing the narrative with excitement and disorientation due to the rapid movement of events, their migration across countries and places, and the distortion of time. Simultaneously, they underscore the absence of absolute truths, challenging the notion of complete certainty as the title of the novel also stresses, "Half Unknown."

The concept of nostalgia for the past strongly pervades *Nisf Majhul*. Elgezeery, instead of outright rejecting the past, engages with it in a manner that may appear distorted to some. This approach serves as an affirmation of the democratic spirit in which he handles heritage. Simultaneously, he as well as postmodernists seeks to dismantle the mystique/aura surrounding renowned classical works (heritage), often resorting to playful mockery, as exemplified by Marcel Duchamp's addition of a mustache to Da Vinci's *Mona Lisa*. However, this return to the past can also stem from contemporary artists' perceived creative limitations, an assessment that does not apply universally. It leads to a revisiting, repurposing, and production of the past. Art has reached a point where it no longer follows a linear historical trajectory of innovation and advancement. Instead, it regresses or spirals within its own history, recycling and reusing

existing forms and ideas. This cycle of repetition and reuse leads to a sense of futility, as the pursuit of novelty and originality in art becomes elusive or meaningless in a hyperreal world where copies and simulations dominate. This perspective aligns with the rise of the "heritage industry" in the West since the early 1970s, a term scrutinized by scholars like Douglas Crimp and Andreas Huyssens. It characterizes history as a vast archive that can be readily retrieved and consumed repeatedly:

> The young man came to the realization that each bucket of water he poured into alzir [a water pitcher] to fill it was a missing link, a missing link in an extensive chain lacking documentation. Pardon me, grandfather, for I may need to complement your narrative and its missing links with details I create. Utterances and speech should have meaning, and I cannot remain bewildered, lost, confused, disoriented, and out of joint like this. (*Nisf Majhul* 139)

According to Huyssens, postmodernism and the heritage industry are closely related, forming a veneer of separation between the present world and the past. History, in this context, becomes more of a contemporary construct than a critical discourse. He concludes that readers are increasingly compelled to seek history through the popular images at their disposal, even if they present distorted or false representations (43, 165). Rather than presenting history with entirely new perspectives or "points of view," *Nisf Majhul* tends to incorporate elements from heritage or the past to underscore the concept of "juxtaposition." This juxtaposition often carries a sense of humor and appears comical. To sum up, *Nisf Majhul* could feature alternate histories or historical events reimagined in illogical or fantastical ways. This alteration of historical events serves as a commentary on the consequences of different choices or the malleability of history. The blending of logical and illogical historical elements invites readers to contemplate the impact of seemingly irrational actions on the course of history.

Life can be perceived as an assemblage of dreams, underscoring the intricate nature of existence and the human struggle to adapt and find harmony within it. Individuals often seek refuge in their imagination, fantasies, and dreams, yearning for solace, serenity, and delight. These reveries offer a respite, a means to navigate the complexities of reality, and an avenue for comprehending aspects of existence that elude them in the waking world:

> In another dream, after the dream of the garden, I saw myself standing before a threshold, door, waiting for my entry . . . The gatekeeper opens the door for me. An image from another dream that I also saw at night passes my mind. It is an image of a fig tree and an olive tree, with a lemon tree inbetween. Therefore, I say to the gatekeeper, "Thanks for the fig, lemon, and olive. I dreamt of them, and I can now smell their approaching smell." (*Nisf Majhul* 9)

Here, dreams seem to be an element that may create some logic out of the chaotic life that is full of missing links that challenge human comprehension and sense-making. The fabric of the different dreams has something in common and gives life coherence and meaningfulness. In contrast with the different places discussed earlier which are mere replicas of a single place that opposes the process of making sense on the part of the narrator, the dreams of this narrator in this extract are continuous and complete one another, shed light on one another, and create a signifying, coherent, and meaningfully fulfilling space that can counter the engulfing and links-devouring real or realist world.

In a parallel vein, Guy Debord's seminal work, *The Society of the Spectacle*, sheds light on the drawbacks of a world where media appears to have infiltrated every facet of society (2). Debord's contention is that people inhabit a realm where reality has been supplanted by a constant performance. In this contemporary epoch, there exists a predilection for simulacra over the genuine, the portrayal over the actual, and the facade over the essence. This trend not only

propels the rise of illusion but also imbues it with a quasi-sacred status, rendering life, though seemingly authentic, as a manifestation of hyper-reality rather than unadulterated truth:

> I recline beneath the fig tree, uncertain of the duration, whether for an hour or more, or perhaps less, as if I do not know what the duration of an hour is. Lying on my back, I gaze at the fig trees above and around me. Some fig fruits wink at me; some dangle within the reach of my hands; some drip their "milk" on my forehead; some stretch their hands and pat on my shoulder. I feel that the fig tree has a bosom, and this bosom has a shade or extent. Its bosom hugs me, and its shade extends to cover me in full, inducing me to have a nap. (*Nisf Majhul* 12)

This passage reflects elements of magic realism through its blending of the ordinary and the fantastical in a seamless and matter-of-fact manner. It begins with the narrator reclining beneath a fig tree, a very ordinary everyday activity. However, it quickly takes a fantastical turn as the narrator describes the uncertainty of time, suggesting a suspension of the usual rules of reality. This blurring of the line between reality (the act of reclining) and fantasy (the timeless moment) is a characteristic of magic realism. The description of the luscious fig fruits tempting the narrator and their nectar gently caressing the forehead adds a magical quality to the scene. This sensory experience goes beyond the ordinary and is presented as a natural part of the environment, even though it has a dreamlike and surreal quality. The passage personifies the fig trees and their fruits by suggesting that they reach out and offer a friendly pat on the narrator's shoulder, creating a sense of life and consciousness within the natural world. This anthropomorphism is presented as a normal aspect of the narrative, blurring the boundary between the animate and inanimate. The mention of the hug of the fig tree adds an emotional and psychological dimension to the scene. It suggests a deep connection between the narrator and the natural world, transcending the usual boundaries of human experience. This quotation, in brief, captures the essence of magic realism by coherently interweaving magical or fantastical elements into an otherwise ordinary and realistic setting. The narrative treats these elements as a natural part of the world, creating a sense of wonder and enchantment within the everyday, which is a hallmark of the magical realism genre.

        Reality, in its essence, harbors a profound enigma, with dreams serving as a canvas upon which readers endeavor to decipher its mysteries. This underscores the inherent absurdity, the disarray, and the distortion of conventional values that permeate everyday life. Oscar Wilde, in his astute proclamation, posits that nature emulates the artistry of human creation. The following passage, indeed, challenges the traditional notion that art simply imitates nature by presenting a more complex and dynamic relationship between art and the natural world. The passage personifies the painting, describing it as "standing boastfully amidst nature." This portrayal suggests that the artwork is not a passive imitation but a living presence within the natural world. This challenges the conventional idea that art is a mere reflection of nature; instead, it positions art as an integral part of the environment. The passage has the painting proclaim its presence to those who contemplate it. By doing so, it suggests that art has a voice and a role to play in the grand symphony of creation. It is not just a static representation but an active participant in the dialogue of existence. The passage introduces ambiguity regarding the painting's origin and significance. It states that discerning souls are left in quandary, unable to determine whether the painting is the progenitor (the originator) or a mere echo (a reflection) in the symphony of creation. This ambiguity challenges the idea that art simply mimics nature; it proposes that art can have its own unique identity and impact on the world. The passage employs the metaphor of a "grand symphony of creation" to emphasize the interconnectedness of art and nature. Instead of

a one-way imitation, it suggests that art and nature coexist and interact, each contributing to the overall harmony of existence: "As though this splendid painting, standing boastfully amidst nature, proclaims to the one who stands before it or in its presence, "Here I am! You cannot know whether I am the origin or the image" (*Nisf Majhul* 10).

The narrator affirms that within this artistic masterpiece, no gaps or omissions exist; it encapsulates every intricacy, offering a plethora of clues and symbols that guide one toward comprehending the intricate interplay among its elements, thereby forging a harmonious whole. In this context, readers perceive reality not as the genesis of dreams and art but as a reflection thereof. Dreams and art, conversely, emerge as bastions of stability, order, and linearity, untouched by the capricious whims of the human mind. This, in turn, underscores the deconstruction of grand theories, the ascendancy of dreams, the prevalence of ambiguity, contradiction, and fragmentation, and the fusion of temporal and spatial dimensions facilitated by modern technology and advanced techniques. In brief, this extract deconstructs the fixed rule that art imitates nature by presenting art as a dynamic and integral part of the natural world. It challenges the notion that art is a passive reflection and instead suggests that art can have its own agency, voice, and impact on the world. It invites contemplation on the complex relationship between art and nature, blurring the lines between the two and celebrating their interplay in the grand tapestry of creation

Elgezeery stands apart from post-modernist writers due to his unwavering commitment to preserving linguistic purity. He employs colloquial language sparingly, valuing instead the elegance of poetic expression and simplicity. His relentless quest for fresh, vivid imagery and metaphors, rooted in his background as a prolific writer with numerous published collections, sets him apart. Furthermore, he takes great care to craft and elucidate words, ensuring that his message resonates clearly with readers of all backgrounds, abilities, and cultural contexts. However, he aligns with postmodernist thinkers in acknowledging the limitations of language. He, too, recognizes that in the face of the intricacies of contemporary life and humanity's struggle to adapt and harmonize, language often falls short in its capacity to interpret, decode, and convey these complexities:

> Perhaps I cannot convey what I want to express well. The predicament with language is that no matter how eloquent or linguistically adept you may be, no matter how you are able to invent new words, you feel that you cannot convey this flux of meanings, this whole presence that overwhelms you, as you feel that it is above your abilities and powers of endurance, expression, explanation, and interpretation. As a result, you yield yourself to it to enjoy it per se, without bothering yourself with your failure to express it, your failure to find the words and expressions that can convey it fully. (*Nisf Majhul* 16)

Elgezeery further emphasizes that when language reaches its limits in conveying thoughts and emotions, individuals may resort to alternative means, such as visual artistry, "Instead of committing words to paper, he dedicates himself to sketching every person encountered throughout the day, from the moment he awakens until the time he goes to bed, a ritual repeated day after day" (*Nisf Majhul* 17). The novelist subscribes to the notion that words often fall short in encapsulating the depth of perception or emotion. It is as if meaning itself looms colossal, while words appear as diminutive dwarves, feeble in their attempts to capture the meaning. This underscores the inherent challenge of communication, as the narrator endeavors to imprint the countenances of familiar faces onto the canvas of reality, nostalgia, the past, memories, or even the future, all the while striving to evade the stinging thorns of the lemon tree, a symbol resonating with the multifaceted nature of human beings (*Nisf Majhul* 20).

Inadequate and Restricted Information

Postmodernist thinkers like Frederic Jameson, Julia Kristeva, Michel Foucault, Jacques Derrida, and others assert the nonexistence of absolute truths or even the absence of concrete facts. According to Jean-Francois Lyotard, for instance, painting a comprehensive picture is a challenging task, inevitably requiring some degree of speculation within the description (*Postmodern Condition* 3). He argues that life comprises a series of events open to numerous interpretations and explanations. This viewpoint is underscored by the novel's title, "Half Unknown," which symbolizes the incompleteness of ignorance/truth, the existence of numerous gaps, as well as enigmas and riddles. Elgezeery says,

> Creating an authentic and complete impression of anyone seems implausible, for each of us exists not in a static condition but rather in a perpetual flux of interactions. The capacity to forecast the consequences of this ceaseless interaction remains elusive. A person's essence, one's true identity, resembles a perpetual stream, a continuous fluidity, an ever-shifting flux from one state to another. You cannot deal with anyone, based on the image that you pictured for them a year ago, for instance, as this year represents the interval or darkness between one scene and the next in the grand theater of his or her life. In that interval, developments and transformations you have not witnessed and know nothing about have unfolded in their life and personalities. I once perceived Riyad as somewhat shallow and trivial person, confined to the realm of jokes, Al-Qalash[1], and jests, incapable of being deep about anything. However, I now see him in a different light. (*Nisf Majhul* 121)

This passage reflects a deep and contemplative perspective on the complexity of human nature and the limitations of forming lasting impressions of others. It highlights the following key points. The narrator recognizes that people are not static beings but are constantly evolving and changing due to their interactions and experiences. This understanding acknowledges the multifaceted nature of individuals. It also emphasizes the difficulty in accurately predicting how people will behave or evolve over time. It suggests that trying to forecast the consequences of these interactions is a challenging endeavor. The concept of a person's essence resembling a "perpetual stream" that is in an "ever-shifting flux" reinforces the idea that human identity is not fixed but constantly in flux. This fluidity adds complexity to understanding individuals. The narrator cautions against relying on past impressions and perceptions to judge someone's current state. He highlights the "interval or darkness" that a year represents, suggesting that unseen developments and transformations can occur during that time. The speaker's own experience with Riyad illustrates personal growth and a shift in perspective. He has moved from perceiving him as shallow to discovering a previously unseen depth to his character, suggesting that people can surprise us with hidden facets of themselves. In brief, this extract reflects a thoughtful and introspective perspective on human nature. It emphasizes the need for humility and an open mind when trying to understand others, as well as the recognition that our perceptions can change over time as we gain new insights and experiences.

The novel commences by posing inquiries but refrains from furnishing solutions, mirroring the surreal nature of existence and the disruption of its equilibrium and norms. It begins with questions such as:

> Where have I come from in my car? I know this sidewalk and these walls well. I appear as if I'm traversing my usual path from my flat to my work at this university. Unbelievable! Where

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[1] Al-Qalash represents a form of wit and humor with the aim of jesting and eliciting laughter from individuals.

is the university? Is it a garden that lies there within these enclosing walls?" . . . Have I returned to an old time, or has that old time come here to the present moment?" (*Nisf Majhul* 5, 23).

The quotation portrays a sense of disorientation and introspection in the narrator's thought process. Here, he begins by questioning his current location and the familiarity of his surroundings. He expresses uncertainty about the exact location of the university and even ponders the existence of a hidden garden. This reflects a moment of spatial disorientation, where the known and the unknown blur together, leading to a sense of intrigue and curiosity. He also contemplates the possibility of being in a different time, questioning whether he has somehow crossed into a past era. This notion adds a layer of temporal disorientation, where the boundaries of past and present seem to blend, creating a sense of mystery and intrigue. The passage suggests that the narrator is engaged in deep contemplation and introspection that are not just focused on the physical surroundings but are also pondering abstract concepts like time and reality. This introspective journey indicates a thoughtful and philosophical mindset. The narrator's musings convey a sense of wonder and curiosity about the world around him. He is open to the idea that there might be hidden aspects or dimensions to his familiar environment, which adds an element of fascination to his contemplation. In other words, this extract captures a moment of profound introspection where the narrator's perception of space and time becomes fluid and malleable. It reflects the human capacity for curiosity and the willingness to explore the boundaries of what is known and unknown, both in the physical and abstract realms.

This is also where modernism and postmodernism diverge. Modernism approaches reality in a pragmatic and optimistic manner, seeking solutions to the predicaments afflicting contemporary individuals who grapple with absurdity, disorder, disorientation, and fragmentation. It elevates an individual's worth, establishes their identity, and measures the capacity of their mind to govern and comprehend. In contrast, postmodernism, Lyotard confirms, raises these very predicaments not as challenges to be overcome but as subjects for examination. It celebrates the erosion of traditional values, the upheaval of norms and standards, the absence or partiality of absolute truths, and the distortion and discord within reality (*Understanding Postmodernism* 13). This shift in perspective, particularly in the aftermath of the harrowing events of World War II, marked by over 60 million casualties and widespread global devastation, as well as subsequent conflicts like the bombings of Iraq and the destruction of Syria and Libya, underpins the essence of postmodernist thought.

Setting

Nisf Majhul incorporates a diverse range of settings, both real and fantastical, that are interconnected in unusual or illogical ways. These settings may not adhere to real-world geographical constraints, blurring the line between the plausible and the fantastical. This approach can create a dreamlike atmosphere that heightens the sense of the illogical within the story while also serving to symbolize or mirror the characters' emotional or psychological states. The story seems to take place in two distinct settings: the Republic of Sharqatoun and Egypt, with a specific focus on Juhayna (the narrator's birthplace) and Giza (where the narrator has lived since 1995). These settings serve as symbolic spaces that represent different aspects of the narrator's identity or experiences. The narrative swiftly transitions from Sharqtoun to Faisal Street in Giza, an Egyptian city where the narrator has previously resided before moving to work in Sharqatoun. Abruptly, the novel transports us to Juhayna, at Sohag Governorate, Upper Egypt, where an unexpected encounter with the narrator's mother unfolds. In a poignant twist, the

narrator's mother denies recognition, mistaking her son for a departed soul, uttering, "Even in the shroud of death, you still have a sense of humor, 'Since the day my beloved traveled' [an allusion to the classical Egyptian female singer Umm Kulthum's song 'El-Awwela fil-gharaam' ['the first thing in love'], a song on farewell and a departing love]]" (*Nisf Majhul* 70). Desperate to understand the magical shift in reality, the narrator reaches out to his companion, Riyad Al-Ghazlani or Hassan Al-Aali, pondering whether they have slipped into Egypt or are still ensnared within the enigmatic realm of Sharqatoun. This bewildering experience prompts a cascade of questions: "How have we, in but the span of a fleeting moment, journeyed from Giza to Juhayna in Sohag, as such" (*Nisf Majhul* 62). His companion, however, advises him to respect this moment, and indeed, it appears that time has been quite elusive on this journey. It has been over 24 hours since they embarked on this road trip. Additionally, the drivers have exhibited an unusual level of impatience and greediness. It has been quite an eventful journey. Later, his companion also offers a lot of questions:

> Fears will remain the same. I cannot have a decisive opinion and tell you which of whose dream of us we are in. What I remember is that you invited me to visit your people in Juhayna. I also recall that your mother called me her son when she saw me and that she denied you. Although I tried to portray myself before you as the serious man regarding places earlier, I do not know how I have come from Sharqatoun to Giza then to Juhayna. Here, I find myself wondering how Juhayna has given up its way of knowing the truth and let us stuck in a whirlpool of bewilderment, ignorance and missing links in such a way! (*Nisf Majhul* 91)

Subsequently, the mother discloses the rationale behind her rejection:

> I'm not blaming myself, my son. Pardon me, Hassan, for I intentionally called you my son because I was concerned about my son Shereef. It's complicated, and I don't know how to explain what I was thinking. I thought of the possibility that all that was happening in my own dream, and therefore, I denied Shereef. If it was me who recalled him in my dream, this would be a bad omen: he has not been relieved of the pains of his expatriation yet, although the people of Sharqatoun and those of Egypt are kith and kin; how could I then bear his coming directly from his expatriation to this very place?! (*Nisf Majhul* 94)

Summoning the Dead and Telepathy

Summoning the dead allows for a rich exploration of the past and present, and it serves as a means to reflect on the troubles and challenges individuals and societies face as they grapple with the passage of time, changing circumstances, and the erosion of cherished memories and traditions. It invites readers to contemplate the complexities of human existence and the enduring power of memory and nostalgia. In magic realism, the dead are summoned in a metaphorical sense. Rather than literal resurrection, deceased characters or memories of them are brought to life through the vividness of storytelling. Their presence is felt through the memories, dreams, or supernatural encounters of the living characters. This blurs the line between life and death, making it feel as though the dead are still a part of the living world. Elgezeery, in a transcendent moment, beckons forth the spirits of the departed—his mother, father, and grandfather. In this spectral communion,

> In general, one likes re-stepping on the paths that he stepped on in the past, likes the foods that he ate in the past. It is not a pure nostalgia. He does so in order to feel some sort of harmony, some sort of continuity, some sort of communication, in his life. he wants to feel that he is still on track, that he is still living, that he is still enriching himself, that he has a

memory, that he has nostalgia which can be satiated at any moment, that no obstacles block the road of his nostalgia, and so on. (*Nisf Majhul* 14)

Here, there exists no obstruction, no barricade that can thwart the pursuit of this innermost desire. The summoning of the departed is not an invocation of the deceased in the traditional sense, but a communion with the echoes of life that resonate through the corridors of memory. It is an affirmation that the past lives within, an inseparable part of the journey, and that one's path is eternally enriched by the presence of those who came before. However, regrettably, none of these aspirations materialize, as bewilderment, disarray, anguish, uncertainty, and obscurity continue to intensify. The narrator's mother disavows him with the words: "Your mother?!! Who is your mother, oh, impolite and impure?!! We have lived until we now see that people falsify motherhood!! Am I your mother? Watch your tongue. Walk away, Mr. John Doe, otherwise you will see what won't please you!!" (*Nisf Majhul* 69).

In the postmodernist novel, the concept of telepathy holds significant prominence. Within a philosophical framework that lacks a central viewpoint and does not perceive humans as singular and indivisible entities, coupled with the presence of shifting facts and the absence of absolute truth, the existence of the immaterial human essence becomes a matter of question. Jean Baudrillard argues that in a world dominated by reproduction and media explosion, absolute truth has ceased to exist; instead, everything has transformed into simulated images. He explains that the distinction between the signifier (the symbol or representation) and the signified (the meaning it conveys) has recently collapsed, rendering signs as mere "floating signifiers" (18). Telepathy in this context serves as a link between the spiritual transcendence of Sufism and the collective mythical subconscious shared among individuals. Some individuals believe that death is not the end but rather a transition to another form of existence. According to this belief, the soul departs from its human host upon death and temporarily resides in the bodies of animals and birds, spanning the realms of land, sea, and air, before eventually returning to inhabit a human body once again.

Within the postmodernist novel, there are sections of prose that seem entirely rooted in reality, mirroring aspects of the author's life. However, they become deceptive when the narrator aims to transition from reality to fiction, leading the reader astray. Elgezeery's novel reflects a sense of disillusionment and despair experienced by the narrator, who has spent a significant amount of time abroad: "Have the 13 years of being deceased made you, Hassan, forget simple things like the location of the tap? What about what is said about the dead that they remember everything about the world? Why do you make me question my own memory? Here I am; I can recall everything vividly, and the tap is there" (*Nisf Majhul* 72). Here, the narrator perceives his life abroad as a form of death, despite having earned a substantial amount of money. This notion suggests that even though he may have achieved financial success, he feels disconnected from his true self, homeland, and roots. It implies a sense of spiritual or emotional emptiness despite material wealth. His mother's question also symbolizes the sense of alienation and estrangement the narrator feels from his familial and cultural origins. The "location of the tap" represents a place of comfort, nostalgia, or familiarity that he has seemingly forgotten. The narrator also encounters his deceased grandfather, father, and big brother. This supernatural encounter with family members who have long passed away adds an element of magic realism to the narrative. It represents a longing for connection with his heritage or an exploration of his own mortality. It paints a bleak picture of life in Upper Egypt. The once vibrant and lively environment has undergone a dramatic transformation for the worse. Nature has lost its vitality, familial relations have been deteriorated, and the political landscape has shifted negatively:

I feel downhearted when I see plants on the sides of the road, as though I am seeing them for the first time. There are no open or unfolded leaves; all plants' leaves are shrunk and folded upon themselves, as if they were clinically dead. Moreover, their stems do not stand upright, as if they felt humiliation, shame, oppression, or even deprivation. Pale greenness is everywhere, suggesting dejection, misery, and gloom. I feel that all my history is dying before my own eyes. These plants were not mere plants; they were an identity, roots, extension, spaciousness, and communication, even if they are not the same plants that I used to experience in old times, like the water of the river that does not remain the same, as other waters replace it, but the river remains the same river which engulfs all the water that runs through it. The same can be said about the land which provides all the plants that grow on it with a bed, soil, and a bosom. What has happened? Is this also a missing link? Am I a missing link myself? (*Nisf Majhul* 65)

This passage appears to be a reflection on the narrator's sense of disconnection and disillusionment with life abroad, contrasted with his memories and perceptions of his homeland. It touches on themes of alienation, mortality, and the decline of familiar landscapes and social structures.

The use of legends and metaphors adds depth to Elgezeery's narrative, inviting readers to contemplate the deeper meanings behind the narrator's experiences and observations. The novel makes allusions to legends like Uncle Bishara and the myth of Sisyphus. These references can be used metaphorically to symbolize the narrator's perspective on the futility of life or the repetitive and seemingly purposeless nature of existence. Furthermore, when the narrative mentions the rise of the sons of Al-Masaleeb (morally, socially, ethically, and spiritually dispossessed/ deprived) and the Ruwaibidah (foolish/stupid) to power, alongside the disappointment of the January Revolution, it suggests a broader socio-political context, as is discussed in the subsequent section. This implies a sense of disillusionment with the state of affairs in the narrator's homeland, where the hope for change ultimately results in disappointment. Postmodernists contend that no text exists as a completely original entity because any text represents a dynamic interaction among various texts. These texts are either cited, referenced, or invoked by the author, leading to outcomes like the negation of some texts, their combination, or displacement, "The poet John Donne once wrote that "no man is an island," and for postmodernists, no text is an island. Postmodernism is all about the connections between texts, including the various ways in which one text references another (or many others). There are all kinds of techniques that authors can use to highlight these links, including pastiche, parody, quotes, and direct references, as well as subtle nods to other material. What these techniques have in common is that they're examples of intertextuality" (Shmoop Editorial Team *Par* 1). This intricate phenomenon is referred to as "intertextuality." Authors in this movement employ intertextual references, drawing from a wide array of sources such as Qur'anic verses, passages from the Bible and the Torah, ancient hymns, Sufi chants, and songs. Consequently, the traditional boundaries between fiction and non-fiction blur, and the distinctions between poetry and prose dissolve. As a result, readers are treated to a significant intellectual feast and a rich literary drapery that celebrates diversity and plurality.

Socio-political Criticism

The narrative structure of *Nisf Majhul* provides an avenue for exploring themes concerning identity, memory, the malleability of time, and the very essence of reality. It also invites readers to question the reliability of their own perceptions and the boundaries of human

understanding. In other words, the novel is a work of experimental fiction that challenges conventional storytelling techniques. It invites readers to embrace a world where reality and fantasy coexist, where time and space are intertwined, and where the narrator's unreliability adds layers of complexity to the narrative. This type of storytelling is both intellectually stimulating and emotionally engaging, encouraging readers to explore the boundaries of their own imagination and understanding. *Nisf Majhul* offers a critique of various educational, societal, political, and environmental concerns, encompassing themes such as the validity of knowledge in the postmodernist era, the emergence of the Masaleeb and Ruwaibidah offspring, the vanishing of the upper echelons of society, and ultimately, the disappointment stemming from the Arab Spring revolutions and the subsequent regression into more unfavorable circumstances.

The opening of the novel prominently illustrates the state of knowledge during the postmodernist era and the way students perceive science, education, and teachers. Here, knowledge has relinquished its practical and transactional significance, transforming into a mere commodity driven by consumerism. According to Lyotard, knowledge has transitioned into a commodity that is susceptible to the influence of market dynamics. In other words, knowledge is not a means to an end; instead, it is an end in itself, generated primarily for the purpose of commercial exchange (*Postmodern Condition* 5). In the postmodernist era, students no longer regard education and knowledge as inherent values but primarily as credentials for securing employment and marriage. This shift has become particularly pronounced with the broadening of access to education, notably through the "Education Laws" amendment of 1968, which enable individuals from all socioeconomic backgrounds to attend university and even become educators, marking a departure from the aristocratic classes' traditional, more holistic perception of education. Elgezeery's novel sheds light on this current state of students in the Arab world and their perspective on knowledge in the following dialogue:

"Welcome, Lecturer," they said at the same time.
"You are welcome. How are you?"
"Lecturer, we haven't attended the poetry class for weeks."
"Do you have an excuse so that I can write off your absence?"
"What excuse, Lecturer? It is you who haven't given the lecture for weeks."
"Yes!! Any lecture? I give all my lectures regularly."
"you are you disoriented, Lecturer? Lecture at 7:30 in Building 34."
"Oh... what's your name?"
"My name? My name? We are sorry, Lecturer, we meant Dr Abu Ziad."
"And what's my name?"
"We thought you were Abu Ziad, "because he has a car exactly like yours."
"I ask you: What is my name?"
"That's enough Lecturer. As you say in Egypt, "Nothing bad happened."
"Good is in Salama, Lecturer, as you say in Egypt as well.
"But Salama is not fine." (*Nisf Majhul* 5-6).

Contemporary students stand in stark contrast to their predecessors, a transformation that the researcher attributes primarily to the prevailing administrative system and the state's overarching priorities. In days of old, teachers and students could be likened to knights on a quest, ardently pursuing facts and knowledge in their myriad forms, driven not merely by the ambition of attaining degrees or securing employment. In those times, the pursuit of knowledge was a noble and intrinsic goal, transcending the utilitarian aspects of education. The focus was

on the essence of truth and the multifaceted facets of reality. Students and educators alike were infatuated by the profound mysteries of the world, driven by an innate curiosity to understand and uncover the intricacies of life, society, and the universe. However, the contemporary landscape paints a different picture. Today's students seem more preoccupied with what revolves around truth and reality rather than the essence of truth and reality themselves. The distinction lies in their orientation towards superficiality; they engage with the discussions, debates, and narratives surrounding truth and reality but often lack the depth of engagement and curiosity that characterized their predecessors. A disheartening observation is that a significant portion of today's students appear indifferent to knowledge and intellectual pursuits altogether. Their educational journey is often reduced to a means to an end, driven primarily by the pursuit of degrees and the pragmatic goal of securing employment. The profound love for knowledge for its own sake, which once motivated scholars and learners, has dwindled in significance. This transformation underscores the profound impact of societal and administrative shifts on the motivations and aspirations of students. While the quest for truth and knowledge remains an essential pursuit, it now exists in a context where the broader educational landscape has evolved, and the intrinsic value of learning sometimes takes a backseat to more immediate and pragmatic concerns:

> At the same time, I feel that the walls that surround the garden are the walls of Cairo University, and that I am on the verge of entering it in order to reap some of the fruits of knowledge it offers. Many years have passed since I last set foot on its grounds, since that professor scornfully waved me away. That professor then dismissed me although I had an appointment to submit my doctoral plan to him, although I had been waiting in front of his office for hours, and although he saw me waiting while he was sitting with an undergraduate female student for hours… Who art thou, thou apostate, that thy lungs rumble at us? With our own orbs, we witnessed thy steadfast vigil ere the lady's sanctum, akin to a faithful hound, without budging or feeling shame. (*Nisf Majhul* 23-25)

In this scene, there is a convergence of times and places, merging the present and the past, Asia and Africa, into an indivisible space-time continuum. It demands an intense focus from the reader as it skillfully interweaves realistic and imaginative scenes. The narrator shares various details about himself and highlights some forgotten events, following a specific sequence: his role as a PhD student, a genuine passion for acting, a desire to leave his university job, residing in Giza Square, a life no longer connected to Faisal Street after the January 25, 2011 demonstrations. Within this context, the narrative unveils the trial of a student who insults his don, replacing the proper title of "professor" with "lady" (*Nisf Majhul* 27, 38). The narrator's intent becomes apparent as he endeavors to expose certain corrupt and harassing scholars. He attacks them all, referring to them as "His Excellency the Doctor" in unison, a metaphor for all academics with moral failings (*Nisf Majhul* 160).

The novel portrays the narrator's and his companion's bewilderment, highlighting the sheer absurdity of life, especially within academic circles. This absurdity extends beyond local and regional boundaries to a global scale, where education and knowledge have been commodified by market forces. Students no longer engage with professors, attending lectures, cultural seminars, or philosophical debates out of a genuine thirst for knowledge; instead, the primary aim of education has shifted towards obtaining a certificate for marriage or job prospects, rendering education devoid of its essence. This decline is also attributed to the lack of commitment among few academics who view their roles merely as temporary employment or a means to secure a salary, often as a means to cope with life's pressures and vices, rather than as a

service to the cause of science and knowledge. This becomes evident in the narrator's interactions with a senior professor at an Egyptian University, who is perceived as responsible for corrupting the university system in Egypt. He bestows advanced degrees and even professorships on individuals who do not meet the necessary qualifications, while suppressing distinguished scholars and relegating them to lower academic ranks. The irony and absurdity lie in the university's support of this professor, rather than holding him accountable and making an example of him. Instead, the university initiates a trial against the narrator, charging him with a dozen allegations, including:

> The first charge: The accused published, in Ukraine, a paper on censorship. The second charge: He committed the grave sin of slighting the court's prestige, for he remained seated when the court's light did shine. The third charge: He affronted Egyptian women by addressing a virtuous and honorable man with "my lady." The fourth charge: He understood questions literally and gave direct answers that did not the theatrical spirit into consideration, as you witnessed when he replied to the investigator's first question. The fifth charge: He is dogmatic, obstinate and unresponsive to the investigator when the latter asked him to change his name. The sixth charge: He regards his name as exalted and untouchable, thus impersonating authorities that are not his. The seventh charge: He has two names, as he says that his name is Raed [pioneer/ leader] whereas his mother calls him Shereef [noble], thus violating the rules of scientific research, as there is no scientific evidence for any strong relationship between leadership and nobility. The eighth charge: He is arrogant and dogmatic and violates the rules of scientific research, attributes which do not qualify him to become a pursuer of truth in his study for the doctorate. The ninth charge: He undermines the prestige of the court and that of university professors. (*Nisf Majhul* 34-35)

This encapsulates the essence of the novel, where the academic world mirrors the broader absurdities of life, where knowledge is devalued, and corruption prevails unchecked.

The novel delves into the impact of capitalism and consumerism on human behavior, relationships, and values. It portrays a world where the pursuit of wealth has overshadowed other aspects of life, leading to a society where greed becomes a driving force, often at the expense of moral values and genuine human connection. This exploration serves as a powerful commentary on the challenges and consequences of living in a hyper-capitalistic world:

> At a distance, I see a light. I'll walk to it, although I enjoy this feeling of loneliness, solitude, or emptiness. Is it a feeling of emptiness or of this city being mine?
> An inner voice says to me:
> - Go to that light; you may find a person who, like you, has found himself in this familiar city and enjoys loneliness or solitude, like you.
> … I find myself hung on a massacre. May I say that I am hung on a butcher's… (*Nisf Majhul* 152, 154)

Though the narrator relishes his solitude and isolation, he chooses to embark on this journey towards the distant light. Perhaps, in this pursuit, he seeks a companion who shares his yearning for connection, a means to mend the fragments of his existence, or an elucidation for the mysterious transformation of the waters into a foreboding shade of red, which heralds the onset of myriad afflictions upon the world. However, contrary to expectations, the narrator finds himself not guided but rather besieged by mounting uncertainties, heightened alienation, a labyrinth of perplexities, a somber outlook, and a growing cynicism. The once-inviting light now morphs into a snare, ensnaring and confounding him further: "It appears that they remember the

location of my body well and do not need to see me in order to assail me with their blades" (*Nisf Majhul* 155).

In the novel, the reference to the myth of Orpheus serves to underscore the idea that sacrificing for others often leads to ingratitude, rejection, and the severing of family bonds, ultimately rendering such sacrifices futile. Additionally, the novel draws upon the legend of Uncle Bishara within its narrative to enhance the storytelling and provide evidence that attempting to achieve a certain goal can also be a fruitless endeavor: "Why does not this zir [water tank] become full? For months now, I've carried water in the waterskin from my land to pour it in this zir, but it has not retained a single drop of water." (*Nisf Majhul* 147). This passage appears to explore the protagonist's conflicting emotions: the allure of solitude and isolation, the desire for change or connection symbolized by the distant light, and a sense of entrapment or vulnerability. It paints a vivid picture of inner turmoil and the complexity of human emotions and desires.

The postmodernist movement challenges the notion of a text being solely the creation of an author with exclusive rights to originality or absolute truth. This approach diminishes the authority of the author and highlights the text's autonomy once it detaches itself from its creator:

> The concept of endings originated with Hegel and was reiterated by some of his followers. Erich Weil once remarked, "Hegel marked the beginning of the ending for philosophy." Spengler, in a more explicit manner, proclaimed the decline and demise of the West. Nietzsche contributed to this idea by declaring the death of God. This theme gained significant prominence in Western philosophical discussions during the latter half of the 20th century. Benjamin discussed the ending of art in the age of automated production, Heidegger built his philosophical endeavor on the notion of undermining metaphysics, Barth proclaimed "the death of the author, Fukuyama wrote about the end of history, Foucault declared the death of man, and Rorty explored the ending of philosophy. In a similar vein, Vattimo attempted to encapsulate the phenomenon of postmodernism at an intellectual level through five key principles: the end and decline of art, the death of humanism, nihilism, the conclusion of history, and the transcendence of metaphysics. (Badr El-Din Mustafa 30)

The narrator's father highlights the disaster of pollution by drawing a metaphorical comparison between the current situation and the pristine state of the Red Sea, known for its clear water and vibrant coral reefs. In doing so, his father is urging his children to be cautious about neglecting nature's beauty, even when they are in the midst of their own village or surroundings:

> I approach the stream and reach for one of the clay pots that seem to have been washed by their female owner who left them beside the stream to dry. The water's surface is covered with dry, yellow and red tree leaves, giving the impression that the water of the once-flowing stream has now become scarce and aged. The water lacks the strength to sweep away all the yellow and red leaves that fill it with rot and redness. As I fill the clay pot with water, numerous leaves find their way into it. I pour the water back into the stream and clear the leaves from where it fill the pot, but some stubborn leaves still linger. My father says with effort:
>
> - This is the Red Sea, my son. May God's curse fall upon fanjariat albuqq [those who are big mouths, speaking a lot with giving a real help], taqqi alhanak [those who are talkative and nonsensical] and the powerless, all at once. Give me the pot"

… Even the artesian water comes out of the depth of the ground is red! Can you imagine something redder than that? . . . You believe that wheat not having spikes is a logical phenomenon! (*Nisf Majhul* 132, 134, 177)

This extract contains a vivid and poetic description of a polluted stream, highlighting the degradation of the natural environment. It serves as a critique of pollution and its effects on the once-pristine stream. The description of the stream covered in dry, yellow and red leaves creates an image of the stream's former beauty and vitality. The leaves' accumulation and reddish hue signify a loss of this natural beauty due to pollution. The image of the stream as scarce and aged suggests that pollution has disrupted the natural flow of water. It is a common consequence of pollution as contaminants can reduce water flow and harm aquatic ecosystems. Pouring polluted water back into the stream is symbolic of the cyclic nature of pollution and its impact on the environment. It demonstrates how pollution persists and even worsens over time if not properly addressed. The comparison to the Red Sea and artesian water with a reddish tint underscores the severity of pollution. It implies that the pollution in the stream is so pronounced that it rivals iconic examples of red-colored bodies of water. The reference to "wheat not having spikes" can be interpreted as a metaphor for the absurdity and senselessness of pollution. It is a statement on how pollution disrupts the natural order and harmony of the environment. In essence, this extract serves as a powerful critique of pollution and its detrimental impact on the environment, human health, and the overall sense of natural beauty. It underscores the importance of addressing pollution and preserving the natural world for future generations.

Furthermore, the speaker implies that if the government were genuinely interested in making positive changes, they could do so. However, it seems that the government may prefer to keep the population focused on their daily struggles, such as making a living, dealing with health issues, and managing personal problems. This, in turn, may be a deliberate strategy to discourage people from questioning authority or raising their voices in protest:

 "Consider the Red Sea," says my father who sits next to me. I understand his words as an invitation for us to draw a comparison between the current state and the pristine condition of the Red Sea which is known for its clear waters and coral reefs. It's as if my father is urging us to consider the outcome of moving away from nature, even though we are now in the heart of our village. I say:

- If the government truly desired change, they would make it happen. However, they want us to be totally occupied with our livelihoods, health issues, and our challenges so that we cannot be free to raise our heads and think of what they have done. (*Nisf Majhul* 129)

In brief, the words convey a call not to appreciate and preserve the beauty of nature even in familiar surroundings. They also express a sense of skepticism towards the government's intentions, suggesting that they may prioritize maintaining the status quo over genuine transformation, utilizing distractions to deter deeper reflection or criticism.

The novel also criticizes a lot of hypocritical artists. For example, an actor who plays a character who strongly supports social change may be put in a position where he is required to maintain the status quo:

Acting is a beautiful thing. It makes you live the lives of dozens of other people, feel them and appreciate their situations. It makes you feel fullness, diversity and luxury of having options. And let alone the actors who do not benefit anything from the roles and situations that they personify in their films, plays and TV series: when reality requires them to take a position similar to what they were personifying, they turn against themselves and the land itself; you find that the positions they take are in fact completely at odds with what they were

advocating and against the change they were seeking to achieve through their artistic works. (*Nisf Majhul* 122)

The narrator also reminisces about George Orwell's *Animal Farm*, using it to underscore the uncertain future, the disappointments of the Arab revolutions, the resurgence of an even more formidable form of fascism, the erosion of media integrity, and the inherent absurdity of existence. The narrator recounts, "He interjects, adopting a George Orwellesque tone from *Animal Farm*: 'But some ducks are more equal than others' (*Nisf Majhul* 123).

Violating the Grand Narratives for the Sake of Mini-Narratives

Lyotard posits that the fragmentation of grand narratives is attributed to the disintegration of the social bond, leading to the dispersion of social collectives into a multitude of individual entities adrift in the bewildering chaos reminiscent of Brownian motion (*Postmodern Condition* 15). To elaborate, the fragmentation of grand narratives results in the breakdown of the social fabric and the disintegration of social groups into a chaotic collection of isolated individuals who appear to move randomly, akin to the phenomenon of Brownian motion. In essence, the concept of "grand narratives" refers to overarching, all-encompassing narratives or belief systems that provide a sense of meaning, purpose, and order to society. Examples of such narratives include religious, political, or philosophical ideologies. When these grand narratives lose their influence or are deconstructed, as some authors argue, it can have profound effects on society. The dissolution of the social bond implies that the connections and shared values that once held communities together are weakened or severed. People find themselves disconnected from the traditional sources of meaning and identity that these grand narratives used to provide. This leads to a sense of disorientation and disintegration within social groups. The reference to "Brownian motion" draws an analogy from physics, where Brownian motion describes the seemingly random movement of particles suspended in a fluid due to the constant and unpredictable impacts of surrounding molecules. Similarly, in the context of the dissolution of grand narratives, individuals feel adrift and without a clear direction, as their beliefs and values are no longer anchored by a dominant narrative. They experience a sense of absurdity and aimlessness in their lives, much like particles in Brownian motion appear to move aimlessly. In brief, the breakdown of grand narratives result in the weakening of social bonds and the fragmentation of social groups, leaving individuals feeling disconnected and adrift in a world where the guiding narratives that once provided structure and meaning have eroded.

Nisf Majhul challenges traditional notions of language, truth, authority, narrative structure, and identity. It often employs innovative techniques to disrupt established norms, fostering a sense of ambiguity and multiple interpretations. These themes and techniques collectively contribute to the novel's exploration of the complex and uncertain nature of contemporary existence. It questions the traditional belief that language can accurately represent reality. It refrains from offering definitive explanations or interpretations of the complex themes it presents. Instead, it deliberately leaves readers in a state of uncertainty, inviting them to grapple with doubts, ambiguities, and the task of filling in the narrative gaps. This narrative approach recognizes the transformed role of today's readers who actively engage in shaping the text's meaning, rather than being passive recipients. In other words, readers are consistently encouraged to apply their previously acquired knowledge and experiences to novel circumstances. In brief, Elgezeery's novel epitomizes the essence of postmodernism, and its distinctive feature is the deliberate use of open-ended conclusions and deconstructing established narrative rules.

Nisf Majhul also highlights the limitations of language in capturing the full complexity of human experience. It often plays with language, engage in wordplay, and employ techniques like metafiction to draw attention to the constructed nature of narratives. It also rejects the idea of a single, absolute truth. Instead, it suggests that truth is subjective and contingent upon individual perspectives. It, furthermore, often presents multiple viewpoints, unreliable narrators, and contradictory narratives to emphasize the absence of a universally accepted truth. It challenges traditional forms of authority and hierarchical structures. It questions established power dynamics, including patriarchal systems, and often subverts them. Elgezeery's characters resist authority or deconstruct hierarchical norms, leading to narratives that defy traditional expectations. They frequently disrupt traditional narrative structures that are non-linear or fragmented, or lack a clear plot. The concept of displacement is central to this novel, as it involves dismantling conventional storytelling techniques and experimenting with the overlap of time and space. This creates a sense of disorientation and challenges the reader's expectations. It also explores the fluid and fragmented nature of human identity where the characters have multiple identities, or their identities are in a state of constant flux. The blurring of boundaries between self and other is a common theme, and it often reflects the uncertainty and complexity of contemporary identity. It encourages multiple interpretations, so it often employs ambiguity, irony, and paradox to invite readers to engage with the text actively. This multiplicity of perspectives reinforces the idea that meaning is not fixed but varies depending on one's viewpoint: "There is no more hope for meaning. And without a doubt this is a good thing: meaning is mortal. Appearances, they, are immortal, invulnerable to the nihilism. This is where seduction begins" (Baudrillard 157).

The narrator of *Nisf Majhul* is notably unreliable, grappling with uncertainty regarding the nature of his experiences—whether they are real or mere dreams. Additionally, his identity remains enigmatic; he is referred to as Raed, Shereef by his mother, and Hassan by his travel companion during his journey to Egypt and Upper Egypt. His confusion extends to his geographical location, as he questions whether he is in Egypt or Sharqatoun. One striking instance of his bewilderment is when authorities ask for his residency card within his own country, leading him to ponder the absurdity of being held accountable for residing within his homeland (*Nisf Majhul* 33-34). This prompts the narrator to question his own sanity, expressing doubt about his mental state (*Nisf Majhul* 167). In contrast to modernists who often lament the fragmentation of reality and seek to establish order through art as a source of meaning in a seemingly chaotic world, postmodernism takes a different approach. It embraces fragmentation as a fundamental aspect of existence and employs it to create humor-infused narratives that reflect and explore the disorder inherent in the world. There is no pursuit of overarching or "grand narratives" in postmodernism. Instead, individuals question the core of their identities and beliefs, subverting the notion of linear human development, which is evident in the novel.

Riyad Al-Ghazlani holds a significant position within the novel, serving as a constant companion to the narrator from the very outset of the story and remaining a witness to the narrator's unreliable narration. He highlights the absence of concrete facts, the proliferation of narrative gaps, and provides an opportunity for readers to draw comparisons between the Egyptians and the inhabitants of Sharqatoun. At times, Al-Ghazlani even assumes the role of the narrator, symbolizing the disappearance of the omniscient narrator who possesses all-encompassing knowledge:

I do not know how to describe my situation, Umm Shereef, although I do not usually forget. I was in Sharqatoun. A person, who had an old hostility with me, was trying to make me do

what might enable him to betray me at my superiors at work up to the One with the Supreme Position. Also, a person who stole Shereef's car tried to trump up murder charges against me because I helped Shereef get his car back, although that person was wanted in a terrorist case. When I informed my directly superior person at work, he advised me to be away for some time because partisanships are sometimes more powerful than the law, and because those who do not believe in the notion of homeland and citizenship master the art of acting. Therefore, I applied for a job leave and came to Egypt. By chance, I encountered Dr. Shereef at a café in Giza. However, I don't know how I came to Egypt. I also don't know why I asked Shereef to come together here to have lunch, although we could huve lunch together in Giza. But I feel that there is a missing link in my memory. I confess that most of my talk with you before was an attempt on my part to compensate this missing link. That is, most of my talk did not emanate from me within or represent what I would say if I found that missed link. Therefore, I cannot decide for sure whether I was in Sharqatoun or in Giza before coming here. (*Nisf Majhul* 97- 98)

The passage reveals the narrator's profoundly disoriented or indecisive state of mind as he comes to grips with a complex web of events and experiences. Several elements contribute to this sense of turmoil and disorientation. The narrator's indecisive state is practically a result of external threats, the complexity of the events he is embroiled in, and the inner turmoil caused by memory gaps and a fractured sense of identity. This turmoil creates a narrative atmosphere steeped in uncertainty, disorientation, and psychological distress, which adds depth to the overall tone and themes of the narrative.

The essence of the novel centers on fragmentation, disintegration, and the shattering of conventional narrative structures. The protagonist and his companion embark on a journey through time, a narrative technique that not only permits manipulation of temporal and spatial elements but also mirrors the profound sense of psychological division experienced by the narrator or narrators. Importantly, the author refrains from furnishing readers with the customary details concerning the personalities and defining characteristics of the characters, in stark contrast to traditional storytelling. This lack of character elaboration contributes to the narrative's disjointed nature. The events of the novel lack the traditional coherence typically associated with plot development, affirming the absence of a concrete identity, a proliferation of missing narrative links, and the inadequacy of reason and science in providing explanations and interpretations for the unfolding events, "Is this another missing link? Am I, myself, a missing link?" (*Nisf Majhul* 66). This underscores the prevailing ambiguity in contemporary life, where many occurrences transpire devoid of explanations or justifications, and the narrator refrains from offering interpretations or explanations:

Now, we are three. Every night, I hear the sound of three shots of gunfire coming from those trees, over there, beyond the field. I cannot now find a connection between our number and the three shots, although I cannot figure out how the short will hit me while I am beyond the range of shorts. However, we could not have a decisive opinion of whom among us the dream belongs to. Until we can decide, I see that the three shots are assigned to us, and that we cannot all die a single death like that… Tell me, Shereef, where had you been before you saw me? (*Nisf Majhul* 96-97)

In his quest for evidence shedding light on the fate of the inhabitants of the mysterious house, his inquiries only yield more questions, enigmas, and frustrating gaps in understanding. Within this narrative, history metamorphoses into a realm of futility, resembling a spectral dwelling or a desolate ruin. The narrator finds himself utterly estranged from the transformative processes that

have led him to this perplexing juncture. Consequently, he resolves to sever his ties with the past, disavowing history, objective facts, and the very notion of reality. His faith in memory and historical texts is eroded, leading him to question the essence of his relationships:

> What am I to do with the father? What am I to do with the son? What am I to do with the mother? When I cannot have a sure view of my present, what happens before my own eyes, how can you ask me to trust the memory of someone, of anyone? (*Nisf Majhul* 139)

As articulated at the outset of this part, contemporary society places little faith in the absolute truth but rather revolves around the orbit of subjective perspectives and deep-seated emotional inclinations. Personal opinions hold sway, influencing and shaping societal attitudes more profoundly than ever before.

Elgezeery exhibits a penchant for narrative structures and influences that intentionally disrupt the conventional linear flow. This is achieved through abrupt, swift transitions, and sudden bursts of illumination. Consequently, the experience of time takes on a volatile and unpredictable quality. Such an approach has, at times, posed challenges for individuals accustomed to perceiving time solely as a straight, unbroken line. For them, any deviation from linearity tends to be interpreted as cyclical or fixed in place. Time within Elgezeery's novel is a fractured and intricately woven entity, eluding the narrator's grasp. There is a moment when he examines his nails, noting their current shortness, only to find his chin's stubble has grown since he last shaved it, which was just yesterday. Puzzled by this temporal disarray, he turns to Riyad and inquires:

> I gaze at Riyad and inquire, "Could you determine since when we have been here?"
> He asks me, "What prompts you to ask such a question?" I explain, "Everything around us suggests that we have been here for months or years although we do not have manifestations of the impact of that long period."
> He says, "Don't worry. I can determine the time well. This rising sun tells that we at least spent the night and part of the day yesterday in this cursed house. I'm sorry, for I cannot find a better description to describe this house." (*Nisf Majhul* 172)

In the midst of his conversation with Officer Hassan, the confines of geography vanish, and the narrative abruptly transitions from the backdrop of Sharqatoun to a bustling café in the Faisal neighborhood of Giza, Egypt. This sudden shift leaves the narrator utterly astounded. After all, mere moments ago, they were firmly rooted in the world of Sharqatoun. Yet, Officer Hassan clarifies that this peculiar occurrence took place during the previous Ramadan as they savored the curious fruits of gasoline, basking in the broad daylight:

> Doctor, your very look at this very moment terrifies me. Were it not for the deep affection I hold for you, I might have trumped up a charge against you, a charge punishable by both a term in prison and a fine, and I know well that you don't have even fifty Sharqatoun pounds and cannot repays your debts in Egypt. Do you see how I am frank with you, how I use the phrase "trumped up a charge against you" to you so frankly?
> I say to him teasingly, "It is called "in public," not "to you"".
> He says to me blamingly and teasingly at the same time, "Where is your intellect, doctor? Is there anyone other than you and me on this local café? Egyptian films have made me love Egypt and Egyptian cafes. Sip your coffee and smoke your hookah, doctor. Sip. Smoke. None will take anything from this world with them when they leave it. Where are the café customers?" (*Nisf Majhul* 58).

Elgezeery's perspective on fragmentation serves as a poignant indicator of contemporary predicaments: a world marked by the forces of globalization and mass communication. In this

landscape, the traditional notion of a clear and stable "center" has eroded, and the mapping of space has become increasingly elusive. This phenomenon is not surprising, given the prevalence of globalization, which dissolves traditional spatial boundaries and creates a sense of disorientation. Furthermore, Elgezeery's novel contends that this postmodern world, characterized by a pervasive presence of technology and the ascendance of media, is fertile ground for the emergence of paranoia. The omnipresence of technology and the dominion of media in society contribute to a sense of surveillance, control, and a blurring of the boundaries between the public and private spheres. This, in turn, fosters a heightened state of anxiety and suspicion, commonly associated with paranoia. He represents a world that has lost its connection with history, replacing it with a ceaseless flow of images. In this "hollow" world, the past is supplanted by a relentless stream of visual representations and simulations. The depth and historical consciousness that characterized modernism give way to a flattened, image-driven culture.

Conclusion

This exploration into the captivating realm of magic realism has unveiled a literary genre that defies conventional boundaries and enchants both readers and critics alike. Through the seamless integration of the ordinary and the extraordinary, the real and the surreal, magic realism presents a transformative power that challenges the norms of mainstream genres. Elgezeery's *Nisf Majhul* stands as a testament to the genre's potential to blend realist and supernatural elements, illustrating the beauty of this fusion through its intricate narrative tapestry. Elgezeery employs magic realism in his novel for a multitude of compelling reasons. Through this literary style, he skillfully blurs the boundaries between the ordinary and the supernatural, utilizes symbolism and metaphor to address complex themes, explores cultural identity, challenges readers' perceptions of reality, conveys deep emotions and dreams, heightens the sense of wonder, offers a form of escapism and entertainment, creates unforgettable imagery, subverts genre expectations, and ultimately reflects the rich complexity of the world. Magic realism serves as a versatile and imaginative storytelling tool, enabling Elgezeery to explore a wide spectrum of themes and ideas while captivating readers with his novel's distinctive fusion of the everyday and the extraordinary.

Nisf Majhul is a captivating journey that delves into the intricate interplay between logical and illogical elements within its narrative tapestry. It consistently weaves together various dimensions, including time, geography, history, and language, inviting readers to traverse a realm that challenges their intellect and imagination. This fusion of elements not only engages the reader but also conveys profound thematic messages and emotional resonance. By embracing both the rational and the irrational, the novel encourages readers to venture into a world where boundaries between reality and imagination blur. It prompts readers to explore the delicate balance between logic and chaos, inviting contemplation on how history and fantasy intertwine and shape the perceptions of the world. In this intricate dance of elements, *Nisf Majhul* becomes more than a literary work; it transforms into a mirror reflecting the complexities of the readers' own understanding and interpretation of the world. Through its narrative, readers are beckoned to embrace the enigmatic beauty of life's inexplicable moments and the vastness of human experience that extends beyond the confines of logic and reason. Ultimately, the novel serves as an invitation to ponder the mysteries that lie at the heart of existence, leaving an indelible mark on the curious and open-hearted reader.

Nisf Majhul ingeniously weaves a diverse tapestry of settings, blending the real and the fantastical in unconventional and interconnected ways. These settings, which defy conventional geographical constraints, create a dreamlike atmosphere that amplifies the sense of illogicality within the narrative. Moreover, they symbolize and mirror the emotional and psychological states of the characters, inviting readers to traverse a landscape where the plausible melds seamlessly with the fantastical. The story unfolds in two distinct but interwoven settings: the Republic of Sharqatoun and Egypt, with a sharp focus on Juhayna, the narrator's birthplace, and Giza, where the narrator has resided since 1995. These locales act as symbolic spaces, representing different facets of the narrator's identity and lived experiences. The narrative swiftly transitions from the evocative landscapes of Sharqatoun to the bustling streets of Faisal in Giza, reflecting the narrator's journey and evolution. In an abrupt yet poignant shift, the novel transports us to Juhayna in Sohag Governorate, Upper Egypt, where an unexpected encounter with the narrator's mother unfolds. This shift not only adds depth to the narrative but also emphasizes the interplay of memories, emotions, and the fluidity of time within the context of the story. Through this masterful crafting of settings and transitions, *Nisf Majhul* invites readers to venture beyond the ordinary, into a world where the boundaries of reality are blurred, and symbolic landscapes become the canvas upon which the narrative unfolds. It is a literary journey that challenges our perceptions, allowing us to explore the complex intricacies of the human psyche and the multilayered dimensions of our existence.

The act of summoning the dead, whether metaphorically or literally, within the realm of *Nisf Majhul*, provides a profound platform for exploring the intricate tapestry of the past and present. It beckons readers to a contemplative space, inviting them to reflect on the challenges and triumphs faced by individuals and societies as they grapple with the passage of time, evolving circumstances, and the fading of treasured memories and traditions. In addition, *Nisf Majhul* offers a unique lens through which the departed are summoned, not in a literal resurrection, but through the power of storytelling. Deceased characters and the memories associated with them are vividly brought to life, their presence becoming palpable through the recollections, dreams, or supernatural encounters of the living characters. This masterful blending of reality and the supernatural blurs the demarcation between life and death, allowing the departed to retain a poignant presence within the living world. In the compelling narrative of *Nisf Majhul*, Elgezeery orchestrates a transcendent moment where the spirits of the departed— the author's mother, father, and grandfather—are beckoned forth. This powerful invocation encapsulates the essence of magic realism, coherently fusing the past and present, evoking nostalgia, and underscoring the enduring power of memory. Through this exploration, readers are reminded that within the folds of magic realism, storytelling serves as a bridge between worlds—between the corporeal and the ethereal, the known and the mysterious. It is an invitation to embrace the eternal interplay between memory and reality, leaving an indelible mark on the heart and mind of the reader, a reminder that the departed, in their own way, remain an integral part of the intricate fabric of our lives.

Elgezeery's novel stands out for its deliberate ambiguity surrounding the characters, leaving them shrouded in mystery. It embraces the absence of complete narratives, leaving gaps in their present, past, and future. The title of the novel inherently represents an enigmatic or undiscovered portion, symbolizing both the thematic and technical aspects of the fictional universe. At the level of both themes and techniques or content and form, there is always something missing or mysterious that characterizes the fictional universe and highlights the narrator's dilemma and experience in this fictional universe, which is a fractured mirror of the

contemporary world. Furthermore, the narrative structure is intentionally fragmented and inconsistent, with a penchant for open-ended conclusions. In contrast to the values of order, rationality, science, reason, and unity that postmodernism often challenges, Elgezeery's work celebrates uncertainty, alienation, fragmentation, and disintegration. It leans into a style that parallels magic realism, which rejects the confines of realism, tradition, and the ordinary. Instead, it rediscovers the world with a sense of purity, spontaneity, virginity, and instinct, reviving things in their original freshness and vitality.

Nisf Majhul stands as an exemplary work of experimental fiction that challenges conventional storytelling techniques, inviting readers to traverse a narrative landscape where reality converges with fantasy, and time intertwines with space. This intricate tapestry of storytelling serves as a conduit to explore profound themes concerning identity, memory, the malleability of time, and the very nature of reality itself. The novel prompts readers to question the reliability of their own perceptions and confront the boundaries of human understanding. Through the narrator's unreliability, it adds layers of complexity to the narrative, fostering intellectual stimulation and emotional engagement. Readers are encouraged to embrace a world where reality and fantasy coexist harmoniously, urging them to embark on a journey of exploration within the realms of their imagination. Beyond its experimental narrative structure, *Nisf Majhul* transcends the boundaries of fiction to critique significant educational, societal, political, and environmental concerns. It delves into themes such as the validity of knowledge in the postmodernist era, the emergence of the Masaleeb and Ruwaibidah offspring, the fading of the middle class, and ultimately, the disillusionment stemming from the Arab Spring revolutions and the subsequent regression into more challenging circumstances. In essence, *Nisf Majhul* beckons readers to grapple with the complexities of their world, encouraging critical reflection on pressing issues while captivating their hearts and minds through a narrative that defies traditional norms. It is a literary venture that beckons us to not only reevaluate the boundaries of storytelling but also the very fabric of our reality.

In brief, Elgezeery possesses a unique blend of personal sensitivity, artistic prowess, and a penchant for innovative experimentation, setting him apart as a distinguished writer.

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[i] **Endnotes:**

Gamal Muhammad Abdel-Raouf Elgezeery (1973-) is known for his seminal and diverse work and writings as an Egyptian novelist, critic, poet, short story writer, and translator. He tirelessly exposes the vices of humanity while never forgetting to capture the beauty that exists within these oppressed lives. The researcher commenced the exploration of Elgezeery's writings in the late 1990s, encountering a level of complexity in the author's style that posed a considerable challenge to comprehension. Elgezeery firmly believed that the power of language, the brilliance of words, intense emotions, and a dogmatic style were fundamental elements of creativity. However, his writing style has evolved into more demotic, democratic, and accessible forms. His style and structures have become simpler, easier to respond to, and well-crafted, while simultaneously retaining profound artistic and creative visions. His style has transformed into a captivating, smooth concept that fascinates readers and stirs their imagination and interpretive powers. Perhaps Elgezeery's experience in the teaching profession, at universities such as Suez University in Egypt and Taibah University in Madinah, KSA, since 1999, has influenced this evolution. Elgezeery has also excelled in writing short stories, flash fiction, microflash fiction, and haiku poetry. In addition, he has written many studies, academic and otherwise, in both English and Arabic, covering topics such as narration, feminism, identity, alienation, contemporary and recently emerging literary genres and styles, cultural studies, ecocriticism, the roles of literature in society, the coping mechanisms of literature in face of the challenges of contemporary life, etc.

Elgezeery has undertaken multiple translations from English, showcasing his versatility and wide-ranging interests. He has an impressive body of work, having translated around twenty books from English to Arabic. Many of these translations have been published by the Egyptian National Center for Translation. Additionally, Elgezeery has edited three translated books published by the National Center for Translation: *Hotel Insomnia* (translated by Ahmed Shafei, 2004), *The Black Face of America: The Beautiful Face of America* (translated by Ahmed Shafei, 2005), and *The Lord* by Soraya Antonius (translated by Elgezeery and Mahmoud Hasab Al-Nabi, 2006). These accomplishments reflect the breadth of Elgezeery's expertise in translation and his dedication to promoting literary works across languages.

Elgezeery has received numerous literary prizes and awards, including the first-place prize in the short story category from South Valley University in 1995, the Naji Noman Literary Award in 2009, and the Abdel Ghaffar Makkawi Short Story Award in 2010 for his collection "Closing the Crossings." Furthermore, he was honored with the First Class Medal of Excellence in Short Story Writing in the Arab World for the year 2010 by the World Press Council, particularly for his story titled "The New President".

Professor Bahaa El-Din Muhammad Mazeed has authored five studies analyzing the works of Elgezeery. These studies include "Narrative Orbits in 'The Blazing of Green Questions'" (2011), "Footnotes on 'The Travels of the Lady of the River'" (2011), "A Word and an Eye's Look: A Comment on Wamda by Gamal Elgezeery" (2014), and "Names... Names... Names: Commentary on Wamda (Fortress of Knowledge) by Gamal Elgezeery" (2014). Additionally, there is "From a micro-flash fiction to a meta-flash fiction" (2015), rounding out the body of Mazeed's scholarly work on Elgezeery's literary contributions. Many studies have been also written about some of his oeuvre such as: *Time and Aspect in Gamal Elgezeery's Awlaad Alharam [Illegal Children]: A Semantic Analysis of the Present Tense* (2020) by Saadia Musa Omar and Amal Abdul Aziz Ghazi, *Employing Heritage in the Narratives of Dr Gamal Elgezeezy: 'And the Eyes of the Crow Shed Tears,' 'Illegal Children,' and 'How Beautiful is This Resurrection* (2020) by Naglaa Ahmed Hassan, *Authorship Attribution Revisited: The Problem of Flash Fiction A morphological-based Linguistic Stylometry Approach* (2019) by Abdulfattah Omar, Basheer Ibrahim Elghayesh and Mohamed Ali Mohamed Kassem, and *Employing Cinematic Techniques in the very Short Story Collection: Fatafit Al-Sawra* [Fragments of the Image] *by Gamal Elgezeery" as an example* (2017) by Iman Maliki.

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