Unreality, Reality, and Themes in Kezilahabi's *Rosa Mistika* and Mahfouz's Midaq *Alley*.

Dr. Sukari B. Saloné
South Carolina State University, Orangeburg, South Carolina, USA
ssalone@scsu.edu

This work provides a close linguistic and thematic analysis of the dialogues in the two novels *Midaq Alley* by N. Mahfouz and *Rosa Mistika* by E. Kezilahabi, as they reflect fundamental assumptions about **gender**, **tradition,** and **modernity.** Certain complex clauses that have been traditionally recognized in Logic and Philosophy to be used in argument play a key role in expressing the conflicts that are central to the themes in both works. The data for this analysis come from dialogues and conversations found in the English translation of *Midaq Alley* and the Swahili of *Rosa Mistika*, specifically, **simple conditionals**, **contrary-to-facts**, and **hypotheticals**. The merger of Philosophy, Discourse Linguistics and Literature permits a close analysis of literature for cultural and thematic **c**ontent. The pragmatic information imparted by these structures, such as speaker presuppositions, entailment, perceptions about possible fulfillment add much to the revealing of the themes that are central to the two novels: the urgent need for both societies to confront the roles of women in African societies, the tendency to favor modernity over tradition, and the implications of socio-economic inequality.

This paper focuses on pragmatics in language, literature, culture and gender.

           Key Words: unreality, language, culture**,** gender, thematic analysis, discourse analysis

1. Introduction and thesis

Language, culture and gender are the focus of this discourse linguistic-thematic analysis of Rosa *Mistika* by E. Kezilahabi (1988) and *Midaq Alley* by N. Mahfouz (1992). The discourse data provide a pathway for a comparative study of the dialogues within the two novels. The female protagonists are Rosa in *Rosa Mistika* and Hamida in *Midaq Alley*. East African and Egyptian traditional cultures are challenged when two young women leave their traditional domiciles for cities and cultures unknown, both rejecting the limits of their traditional surroundings and values in favor of new urban lifestyles. They both fall victim to elements of urban societies which impact them in life-changing ways.

The thematic conclusions drawn here for both novels suggest the rejection of traditional roles for women. Yet, the novels differ in the degree of cultural alienation exhibited, as well as the degree of attachment to money and material goods. There are several theoretical conclusions drawn about the usefulness of a linguistic analysis of dialogues and thoughts as an analytical approach to understanding literary themes. The pragmatic (related to the real world and situational context) information imparted by these structures, such as speaker presuppositions, entailment, perceptions about possible fulfillment of the action, and perceptions about reality/unreality add much to the revealing of the themes. Much is contained in these linguistic structures to reveal and highlight the overall themes that are central to the two novels: the need for both societies to confront gender, the conflict between tradition and modernity, and the effects of socio-economic inequality. The many linguistic examples given here provide the subjective viewpoints of the characters toward these theme ideas.

1.1 Methodology and data

The data for this analysis consist of dialogues within the two novels which feature If-then conditions, hypotheticals, contrary-to-fact structures, and subjunctives. The data taken from *Midaq Alley* is an English translation and the data from *Rosa Mistika* is in the Swahili language. This research provides a close linguistic analysis of the dialogues as they reflect fundamental assumptions about gender, tradition and modernity, and the effects of economic instability. The working hypothesis suggested that certain complex clauses that have been traditionally recognized in Logic and Philosophy to be used in argument also play a key role in expressing the conflicts that are central to the themes in literature. Contrary-to-facts, hypotheticals, and subjunctives are analyzed in Saloné (1983a, 1983b) with reference to the interactions between syntax, semantics, and pragmatics in language. So, there is a precedent for connecting the grammatical structure in language with argument and logical thought. These structures are found to reflect many of the arguments of the characters, either in direct confrontations with each other, or in internal conflicts as they reason out their situations within themselves (as in thoughts and dreams). The merger of Philosophy, Discourse Linguistics and Literature makes an intriguing way of closely analyzing literature for cultural and thematic content.

1.2. Theoretical Connection between Linguistics and Literature.

T M. Fludernik provides support for the merger of linguistic and literary research by emphasizing the specific ways that discourse analysis can add to the interpretation of literary

writing.   She discusses how "…. the shift towards a pragmatic model of language use …has made it possible to bridge the divide between the literary and the linguistic approaches to language" (1996, p. 585). De Beaugrande's arguments for "closing the gap" between discourse analysis and literary theory also give this type of research incentive.   By his assessment, the ideal speaker-hearer is on a par with the text producer and text receiver (1993, p. 16).

In this paper, a linguistic analysis is applied to certain syntactic structures which express subjective judgments: subjunctives, conditionals, hypotheticals and contrary-to-facts. These syntactic markers are used during moments of tension within the stories or during moments of rationalization or justification.   These arguments in the dialogues or thoughts mirror the central conflicts in the novels and seem to play a central role as indicators of themes in the stories. Hence these syntactic markers are frequently to be found in places in the novels where the themes are highlighted.

2. A brief summary and introduction of the protagonists

2.1 Rosa *Mistika*.

Rosa Mistika is written as a didactic tale about the perils of guarding teens, particularly girls, too closely and not allowing them to have any degree of freedom. There is an inherent irony in that the word "rose" in Rosa's name is contradicted throughout much of the novel when she is unable to bloom due to the denial of freedom.   Rosa is a perfect example of a good-girl-turned-wild as a result of strict parenting. Rosa leaves her village to acquire an education, which is expected to lead to social and economic advancement for herself and her family. Unfortunately, about mid-way through the novel, she turns totally toward promiscuity; but, by the end of the novel, she has found resolution in compromise. Unlike Hamida in *Midaq Alley*, who seems unalterably alienated from her traditions, culture and religion, Rosa's fortunes change toward the end of the novel when she reunites with the young physician who loves her, as well as with the culture into which she was born.

2.2 Midaq Alley.

Midaq Alley paints a vivid picture of life in World War II Egyptian cities, while providing a plethora of images of the values and cultures of the alley's residents. It follows the day-to-day lives of several residents as they attempt to negotiate both the harsh economic times of World War II and their personal lives. One such resident is Hamida, the story's protagonist, who like others, gives the readers a glimpse into the lives of the humble residents of the Alley as they try to make their lives more prosperous. As does Rosa in *Rosa Mistika*, Hamida, leaves the alley to find a better life.   "As Hamida turns into Titi (prostitute), she knows that she had made her choice with all her strength and it was the one she really wanted (p. 773)."   Almost the opposite of Kezilahabi, Mahfouz leaves the eventual outcome of Hamida entirely up to the imagination of the reader, but what is clear is that she does not return to the alley, nor to the culture that it represents.

Both novels:

Rosa and Hamida leave their villages and towns to live in larger cities, gaining exposure to non-traditional influences.   Their confrontations with the outside world create conflicts between the old and the new and the rural and the urban. They both reject the traditional gender roles assigned by their societies and religions; and in so doing, they place themselves totally outside the ethos of their traditional societies. Both Hamida and Rosa challenge the roles to which their societies have relegated them.

3. Reality and Unreality in *Rosa Mistika*

The terms Reality and Unreality distinguish the broad semantic content of simple indicative tenses (present, past, future) which indicate that the speaker or writer believes that the proposition is available for fulfillment versus counterfactual and hypothetical sentences which indicate perceived improbability or impossibility of fulfillment (Saloné , 1983b).

Reality and possibility. The data in this section support one of the themes of Kezilahabi that cautions against over-protectiveness of girls by their parents. These examples are found in the midst of the conflicts between Rosa and her father, who is trying to forbid her the freedom of young adult exploration.

The syntactic marking of Reality requires the following modal markers in Kiswahili: *ki* (as an infix on the verb) and *kama   –ki-*. Typical sentences using *ki* or *kama ..ki* may be translated into English as "if" or "when." For example, when Rosa is considering seriously going out with boys, she questions:

> (1) Kama ni-<u>ki</u>-fanya urafiki na wavulana,   baba   yangu a-ta-fahamu?
>   If   I-if-make   friends with boys   father my   pro-fut-understand
>   'If I make friends with boys, will my father know/understand (p. 32)?'

At this point in the novel, she wants to break away from her father's excessive control. Using the –ki- conditional marker allows her to ponder an event that she very much wants to occur. She has full intention to see boys; therefore, the *reality* of the proposition exists. The meaning of this sentence might also be translated '…when I make friends with boys.' This proposition exhibits the melancholia of Rosa over the denial by her father of chances to experience the complexities of life.   She thinks to herself as a part of the conversation, "With all this guarding, is he (referring to her father) going to marry me?" She is being quite facetious.   There is another section of the novel in which Rosa's father is being overly protective.   By this time in the tale, she had lived on her own for a time at school, having returned for a short time.   Yet, her father's behavior towards her does not reflect her age nor her maturity. She is pushing the button, for sure, as she is picked up by a well-known, older man of the city, and the father reproaches her severely. After that, her father ran off to console himself with alcohol and a friend, as his comments present a very interesting simile for what he and his elderly friends are doing in the midst of all the changes and new ideas of the younger generation. According to him, "….the two of them were like two blind men leading each other down the road (author translation) (p. 59)." The generational and cultural conflict is clear at this point.

The next example is not so much to reflect one of the themes of the story, as to show how the –ki- reality conditional marker often expresses something that usually happens; this reinforces the analysis of it as a "reality" conditional marker.   This extended example shows the realities of life on the farm.

(2)　　U-**ki-**mw-uliza mtu wa shamba habari kuhusu maisha yake a-ta-kw-ambia
　　　　you-if-PRON- ask   a farmer   about   life   his   he FUT –you-tell
　　　　maisha ya shamba ndugu yangu, ni mazuri. **Kama** mvua i-**ki-**kosekana
　　　　life on the farm   brother my   is good   If   rain PRO-if- fails
　　　　muda mrefu u-ta-wa-sikia   watu wa-ki-lia   Mwaka huu kuna njaa
　　　　for a long time you-FUT-PRO-hear people PRON-PROG cry year this there is
　　　　hunger
　　　　(p. 70)
'**If** you ask a person on the farm about his life he will tell you that life is good. …..**If** the rain fails to come for a long time you will hear the people crying. This year there is famine. '

The last example in the Reality area is an extended simile, which is a commonly used strategy in the writing of Kezilahabi. Later, we will return to similar examples from Mahfouz. The simile compares the life of a human to a tree, expressed almost as a general truism—and as such it is very much considered in the realm of reality or likelihood of occurrence.   And crucially, this simile goes a long way in expressing Kezilahabi's attitude toward excessive protectiveness in parenting teens.

(3)　　Maisha ya binadamu ni kama mti. Mti u-na-hitaji maji, hewa
　　　　The life of a human is like a tree. A tree PRON-PRES- need water, air

　　　　Na mwanga. **Kam**a mti u-**ki-**nyimwa   mwanga wa kutosha na
　　　　And light.   If a tree   PRON-IF-is denied   enough light

　　　　Na miti mingine, u-ta-refuka. U-**ta-**jaribu   kupita miti yote ili upate
　　　　by other trees,   it- FUT- grow. PRON-FUT-try to surpass all the trees

　　　　Ili   upate Mwanga.   Zakaria a-li-wa-nyima   binti zake
　　　　In order PRON-get light   PRON-PST-PRON-deny   daughters his

　　　　mwanga wakati ule   wa-li-kuwa wa-ki-u-hitaji sana.   a-li-wa-piga;
　　　　light   time that   they-PST-be PRON-if-it-need a lot he-PST-them-beat

　　　　 a-li-wa-kataza   kuzungumza   na mvulana. Nao kama mti
　　　　 he-PST-them-refuse   to speak   with a boy   and they like a tree

　　　　wa-li-jaribu ku-ji-refusha   ili   wa-pate   mwanga,
　　　　they-PST-try to-REFLEX- elongate   in order they-may get light

.　　　　wa-li-refuka kweli;   kiasi cha   kutoweza kuonywa na mtu yeyote.

they-PST- elongated themselves so much INF-not able to-be warned by

mtu yeyote (p. 47)
anyone

'The life of a human is like a tree. A tree needs water, air and light. **If** it is denied light by other trees, it will grow tall. It will try to surpass all the trees in order to get the light. Zakaria denied his daughters light when they needed it. He beat them; he refused to allow them to speak with boys. And they, like a tree trying to grow in order to get light, extended themselves surpassing cultural and societal boundaries of morality. They exceeded the boundaries so much so that they were not able to be warned by anyone (They would not listen to anyone.).'

This extended example presents one of the themes of *Rosa Mistika* very clearly. Young people, like trees, need certain key ingredients for their development: freedom and the opportunity to explore and to learn from life. If these opportunities are withheld, they may descend into cultural isolation and immorality. Rosa is a young, maturing girl who needs to be able to experience the world just a bit before being immersed fully into it.   She needs to have a bit of freedom and then to be able to gradually learn a sense of responsibility. She gets neither from her father and her home environment. She is the stifled tree. She eventually goes way beyond the boundaries of tradition for women; she goes much too far in her zeal to learn about the life that she is denied knowledge of as she is growing into a young lady. This extended simile and the previous examples support two of the themes of the novel: overprotection of children and cultural conflict.

The moralistic and homiletic nature of the first theme idea comes out of a literary tradition of Realism in the early stages of the Swahili novel, expressed by Khamis: "Compared to Swahili poetry, whose inception goes back to perhaps the seventeenth century, the Swahili novel is a comparatively recent form in Swahili literature. It began (both in Kenya and Tanzania) in a realist trend, though not without a moralistic tinge as evidenced by *Mbotela's Uhuru wa Watumwa* (The Freeing of Slaves, 1934), (2005: p. 93)." Khamis further asserts, "The earliest Swahili novel in Kenya deals with three major themes: slavery, struggle for national liberation, and religious morality (2005: p. 93)." *Rosa Mistika* may be viewed within the perspective of "religious morality."

In the foregoing examples, the conditional markers *ki* and *kama* express "if-conditions" that are perceived by the characters to be likely events. These events are believed to be able to or likely to occur, or in some instances, they are general truisms.   All of the preceding examples show the "if-conditions" used in a realm of perceived possibility or Reality; and they relate to Kezilahabi's themes pertaining to the parenting of young girls and cultural conflict. The themes suggested by these examples relate to overly strict governance over girls, as well as the conflict between the traditional society and values and the modern ideas that are often imported. These examples will be contrasted below to the "if-conditions" that are used in the realm of perceived impossibility or Unreality.

Unreality and impossibility markers are found in places in the novel where the speakers have doubt about the event or knowledge that the event cannot occur or is most probably not to

occur (Saloné , 1983b). The normal structures used to show unreality are the variants, *–ngali-* , *--ngeli-*, or *–nge-*, all of which are infixes used on the complex verb structure, which translated means "would or would have."   The *–ngali/ngeli-* variant is normally used for the counterfactual; and the *–nge-* is normally used for the hypothetical; although there may be some overlap in that *nge* may be used for both.

      The connection between language and thematic interpretation is particularly compelling in these examples, which tend to focus on the controversies and differences of opinion among the characters in the stories. It is in some of the most heated moments when many of the stories' themes are being confronted and these structures are used. These unreality markers are the structures frequently found as speakers try to justify their positions to others or as they reason in their own minds. They are used during central conflicts, as were the reality structures in the preceding section.   In the following example, the unreal *–ngali-* is used to express the perceived impossibility of occurrence of the proposition. This statement is found in the scene where Rosa appears in a compromising position with one of her teachers in his own home, which scene in many ways represents the nadir of Rosa's journey away from her cultural and ethical values and mores.

      (4). Hata kama mtu   a-ngali-tembea   juu ya paa
        even if   a person PRON-UNREAL-walked   on   roof

       Thomas a-si-nge-sikia
          PRON-NEG-would-hear

      ' Even if someone had been walking on the roof, Thomas would not have heard (p. 54).'

The first clause reflects the incredulity of this proposition; and it firmly indicates that it *had not happened and was not likely to happen.* This is a comical part of the novel (and in some ways tragic) where Rosa is in the bedroom of the school master, whose wife is supposedly away for the weekend. The assertion suggests that the schoolmaster was in such an ecstasy, that, 'even if a person had been walking on the roof, he (the schoolmaster) would not have heard him or her.' The utter ridiculousness of this idea was allowed by the use of *–ngali-*, but it might as well have been a premonition because ironically, within a short time, the wife actually showed up and witnessed the horrible scene of adultery and infidelity. But, she wis not, of course, on the roof. This is one of the more poignant scenes which highlights how far Rosa had "drifted" from her rural upbringing, traditional family and societal values.

      The example below is shouted by the protagonist to her father out of frustration finally as she realizes that the status quo remains at her home, regardless that she has been away to school, having lived on her own and returned. Her statement very much mirrors both themes of conflict between the traditional and the modern worlds, as well as the perils of strict parenting.

      (5).   Ni-si-nge-zaliwa   hapa   labda   ni-nge-kuwa mtu mwingine.
            I -NEG-would-be born here   perhaps   I-would-be   person another

       ' If I had not been born here perhaps I would be someone else (p. 57).'

Clearly she blames her parents, particularly her father, for forcing her to become the promiscuous girl that she has become. She realizes that the traditional morality will continue to be imposed by her parents. Rosa's statement of lament was preceded by: "Only God understands who is lacking what she needs (obviously referring to herself)." In this example, the *nge* marker indicates an event that is contrary to the facts. Finally, the theme comes from Rosa's mouth in her expression of regret that she was even born into the society, as she suggests that she would have been a different (better) person had she been born in some other society.

Another example of the usage of the Unreality markers is uttered by Rosa's father after she has left the house on a date with a married town official. The enraged father goes off to drink with his friend and expresses his feelings in a contrary-to-fact as he expresses his dissatisfaction with the education of his children, since that education often indirectly leads the children down the wrong path—away from tradition and morality.

>   (5).   Labda   i-nge-faa   Kama tu-si-ngali-wa-peleka
> .   perhaps it-would-be better   If   we-had not-pron-sent
>   watoto   wetu shule-ni
>   children our   school-to

'Perhaps it would have been better had we not sent our children to school (p. 59).'

3.1. Section Conclusion and Thematic Content (*Rosa Mistika*)

To summarize, the themes that are exposed while looking at Unreality and Reality conditionals support those found by other researchers, including the warning against denial of liberties to young girls, conflict between the traditional and the modern world, and the need for parents to allow their children to take on responsibility and freedom gradually. Diegner (2002) includes the "criticism of society" as one of the thematic complexes that he assigns to *Rosa Mistika*; and within that complex, he includes criticism of the "role of women" and "the family." Both of these thematic ideas are supported by the preceding data and analysis. Another thematic area that Diegner concludes is that of "cultural alienation," which is also supported by the analysis here as Rosa becomes more and more alienated from her community and her upbringing. The following quote shows Diegner's corroboration with the themes discussed here:

> If we consider the whole context of the novel, this story about the failed
> emancipation of a young woman in the Tanzania of the 1960s can be read
> as an allegory of the fatal effects of authoritarian education and
> restrictive norms in society. On a more personal level, *Rosa Mistika* would
> be an allegory about how the opportunity of a human being to find its
> place in life is destroyed by social constraints and strokes of fate (2002, p. 62).

3.1.1 General Section Conclusion.

In the previous section, syntactic and semantic structures of reality and unreality are frequently used to convey speaker attitudes towards the events in the story. The story-line and

themes are visible through the dialogues and dreams of the characters; and through the same, the hopes, regrets and doubts of the characters are expressed.   The hypotheticals typically express **the hopes and wishes of the speakers;** and, the counterfactuals typically **express regret about what might have happened.**

3.1.2   Reality and Unreality in *Midaq Alley*

Midaq Alley follows a myriad of alley residents: Zaita the cripple-maker, who maims or pretends to maim people so they can legitimately earn money as beggars; Kirsha, the café owner who likes young boys and drugs; Abbas the barber; and of course, the protagonist, Hamida.   Many of the alley's residents are trying to deal with the harsh economic realities of post World War II Cairo. The primary focus here is on Hamida who abandons her morality to escape the alley. Like Rosa, Hamida strays from the boundaries of her society, culture and religion. The language of Reality and Unreality particularly reveal major points of tension in the novel.

Several themes are prevalent: conflict between the old world and the new, conflict between traditional values and those of the modern world, gender inequality, and economic instability. There is an ever-present attempt to escape the grim world of the Cairene alley, with all that it represents of tradition, struggle and squalor. This attempt to gain freedom from the old ways eventually leads to the downfall of the protagonist, Hamida.   Another theme found is the preoccupation with power and riches which drives several of the characters away from the alley and some to their own destruction. Takieddine-Amyuni states: "The girl is totally self-engrossed and dominated by one passion, her lust for power and riches. Indeed, in the squalid world of the alley, money is a central preoccupation (1985: p. 25)."
In the data from this novel, "reality" is indicated by the "simple conditional" and the "hypothetical" constructions in the English translations; and "unreality" is indicated by the contrary-to-fact constructions.

3.1.3 Reality
As was the case in *Rosa Mistika*, reality expressions in *Midaq Alley* are being used during heated arguments between the characters; and hence, they frequently contain elements of tension, disagreement and conflict.   In the examples from Midaq Alley, the simple conditional is used as well as the hypothetical to express propositions **that are hoped for or that are within reach.**
In the first example of reality, the subjects of homosexuality and pedophilia are broached, where a wife is forced to live with this harsh reality due to the relatively weak position of women in the society. "Married to the café-owner who is a hashish addict and a homosexual, she is sexually frustrated and full of hatred for her husband in particular and for humanity at large. Yet, 'she was really proud of him [her husband], of his masculinity, of his position in the Alley and of the influence he had over his associates' (p.65).' (Takieddine-Amyuni, 1985, p. 29)."   Mrs. Kirsha knows very well that her husband has been behaving outside of the morality of the society; and she is ready to confront him over his fantasy for boys and hashish. The third-person narrator commenting on this family uses a hypothetical *if-* conditional to indicate that things could be quite different if Mr. Kirsha would change his habits.

(6).   "If it were not for this abominable shortcoming of his, she would not have a

single complaint against him (p. 65)."

   The speaker in example (6) suggests that Mrs. Kirsha's only problem with her husband is this particular habit.   This example highlights one of the gender-related themes of Midaq Alley that relates to the difficulties for women in the society and the compromises that they often make in order to survive financially. Mrs. Kirsha compromises her religious and moral principles because she has no other means of sustenance and Mr. Kirsha is the sole provider for the family. As often occurs in traditional African and Arab societies, the women have less education than and no economic independence from the men in their lives. The hypothetical expression adds emphasis and highlights the controversy (the homosexual relationships of Mrs. Kirsha's husband). The hypothetical also permits a reading that allows for hope on the part of Mrs. Kirsha that her husband may be able to change his behavior.   And her husband asserts his own "wishful thinking" in the next example.

   (7).   "Deep inside he wished his wife were just "sensible" and would leave him to his
             own affairs."

Again, the narrator speaks hypothetically of Mr. Kirscha to express his wish that she will just leave him alone.   Again, the underlying message is that she can only resist up to a point. She must be "sensible." Where can she go? Can she sustain herself in this society? She must accept her place in the alley and be grateful that she has a home, fine things, and the basic necessities of life. The female in this scene is dependent on her husband; and this is a refrain that repeats throughout the story.

   Another example follows in which a hypothetical structure expresses a hoped for outcome and highlights a common dilemma for women in the society.   The matchmaker tries to convince a wealthy, older female client of her desirability and need for marriage:

   (8).   "And many women of sixty could still be happy if only God were kind enough to
             keep them from illness (p. 107)."

This section also highlights the dependence of women on men in this society. Mrs. Afify is a woman of 60 who is in good health and quite well-to-do, as she is, in fact, the landlady of the matchmaker.   Yet and in spite of her wealth, she is considered quite vulnerable in this society due to her unmarried status. This explains her dealings with the matchmaker, who is trying to convince her of her marriageable attributes and to gain her as a client. The examples in this section all represent propositions that are considered to be a possibility, hence are within the realm of reality.

   A final example in this section involves Abbas speaking when Hamida tries to goad him into doing harm to Faraj, her pimp. Poor Abbas would do anything to get Hamida back, to return things to the way they were before he left the alley for military duties.

   (9). "And you, Hamida, what if I get this gangster out of your life (p. 267)?"

Here, the simple conditional is used because Abbas has great hope that this will happen and that Hamida will return to him. Abbas' future hopes rest on extricating Hamida from the pimp and his unacceptable lifestyle; and his intent to do just that is indeed a certainty and a reality, at least in his mind. He does eventually make an attempt to get rid of the pimp, which costs him his life.

Some of the thematic ideas that permeate this section are: female vulnerability and dependence on men in the society, male indifference to the emotional needs of their wives, the catastrophic result of the denial of opportunities for women, and the negative consequences of escape from the alley and what it represents.

3.1.4 Unreality

As occurs with the reality conditional examples, the unreality examples often justify or persuade a given position. Structurally, the unreality examples here have been rendered into English translation as either hypothetical or contrary-to-fact structures, which express the **perceived impossibility** or **near impossibility** of the proposition. The contrary-to-fact form in example 10 expresses the perception of the speaker that the proposition cannot possibly be true.

(10). "Why, **if** he **were** as good as you think he is, God **wouldn't** have taken all his sons (p. 146)."

Hamida challenges the community's assessment of Mr. Hussein as a respectable and upstanding community member, along with all the praises that are heaped upon him. Hamida would like to contradict this opinion using her interpretation of her religion as her warrant. Hamida's religious assumption is that bad things only happen to bad people. Since Mr. Hussein had such poor luck of losing all his sons, then probably he is not a good person. Hamida is using this argument to discredit Mr. Hussein; and in so doing she would deny the validity of his advice about her selection of another husband (other than poor Abbas).

Another unreality example is found when a friend is trying to give Abbas advice by sharing what he himself would have done in the same situation, as he reflects on the fact that Abbas' fiancée, Hamida, became a prostitute:

(11). "If I were in your position, I wouldn't have hesitated a minute. I'd have throttled her on the spot and then butchered her lover and disappeared. That's what you should have done, you fool! (p. 279)."

The vivid description and the contrary-to--fact highlight the egregiousness of the actions of Hamida and her lover/pimp, giving more force to his statement. Of course, Hamida's actions to leave the alley represent a turning away from Abbas; but more importantly, they represent a turning away from the traditions of the alley and the society. Finally, the last unreality example is found in a major turning point in the story, where Hamida first meets Faraj. She does not know that he is a pimp and "owner" of women. Here Faraj assumes the posture of a suitor, and his deceptive language of persuasion is filled with hypothetical and subjunctive expressions. The strong contrary-to-fact assertion being made is that she is so beautiful that this would always be her fate-- to be pursued by men; and if not, the world must be topsy-turvy.

(12).   "Didn't you know that men follow beautiful women wherever they are? This is a basic principle of life. **If** a girl like you **were** not followed, then there's something wrong in the world; it **would** mean that the day of resurrection **were** indeed near (p. 167)."

 This new "suitor" has lavish words and makes Hamida feel absolutely wonderful.   Notice the logic of his argument. The contrary-to-fact construction suggests a person of some degree of logical and oratorical ability; and these syntactic structures are again being found in contexts of argumentation and persuasion. This suitor is quite articulate, and the language of his seduction is in a very formal and educated style, which makes the reader shocked when the fact of his occupation is later revealed. Eventually, Hamida is persuaded to leave Midaq Alley and to wear beautiful clothes, learn the exotic dances, and live a life of luxury as compared to the life she would have lived in Midaq Alley as a wife with children, living in near poverty.

Several themes that are brought out in the Unreality section include: the desperate and tragic situation that occurs when a young girl leaves hearth and home, turning away from the traditional values of her society (Hamida) and the alienation from tradition caused by leaving home (Hamida and Abbas). Of course, these are not the only characters who experience alienation from tradition. Others, such as Mr. Kirscha, become alienated from their cultural and religious traditions while remaining in the alley. The complex and dependent relationships for women in this culture and the negative outcomes that often result are also highlighted.

3.1.5 Section Conclusion and Thematic Content

The common themes that are discernible in *Midaq Alley* are alienation from cultural and religious traditions, the need for opportunity and equality for women, and the problems that result from the juxtaposition of poverty and wealth.   Takieddine-Amyuni captures some of the themes in her statement: "*Midaq* presents in a nutshell a disintegrating system within which age-old institutions are falling apart and human relationships are all distorted. Lying at the core of this vision are images of women dominated by greed, lust, gossip, and envy (1985, p. 25)." As already expressed above, conflict with tradition and compromise for material gain are at the heart of the themes in *Midaq Alley*. And, Elshall captures a certain reality about the complexity of religion in *Midaq Alley: "*Instead of a singular monolithic depiction of Islam and the Muslim, we are introduced to the inconsistencies of Islamic doctrine, the frailties of the Muslim and the complicated history and psychology behind both through the Abd al-Jawads. In this way, Islam is demystified and the Muslim is humanized (p. 86)."   And Oerson supports the themes found here about the relative absence of opportunities for women: "She cannot co-exist with the people of *Midaq Alley*, who appear to be in a perpetual state of torpor. I would suggest that Mahfouz transformed her into a sex worker to demonstrate the tragedy of having no options available, firstly as a woman and secondly as a member of the Egyptian proletariat class (2005, p. 63)."

3.1.6. Thematic Content of Both Novels

In both novels, the reality and unreality expressions are frequently used during times when the speaker needs his or her argument to be understood or when there is a need to be extremely persuasive. The hypothetical and counterfactual expressions give force to the speaker's arguments within the text, whether characters are grappling with each other or with a decision in their own minds.   In all cases, the reality and unreality verb forms that are used help to enrich the literature by allowing the readers into the minds of the characters. We not only know what events are occurring, but the speakers' feelings about the events. The readers come to learn their hopes and aspirations for the future, what they perceive to be extremely important, and what they perceive as real or unreal. The readers can feel their passions, as they argue their positions. The analysis of these subjective expressions allows a deeper level of enjoyment and understanding of the themes.

Which themes become apparent using this technique of close reading? The examples given above can be grouped into content areas. One of the most primary thematic content areas is that represented by **cultural alienation**, represented by Hamida's rejection of her traditional role in the alley, as well as by her choice to leave the alley and all that it represents behind. Rosa also becomes alienated from her culture and values when she is away at school, where she begins to reject the values of her traditional society.   The decision to leave turns out quite negatively for Hamida, as she has been taken in by a pimp or panderer who uses her body and her dancing for his own financial gain. The alienation takes Rosa to a very dark place as well when she violates many cultural norms and is ignominiously tossed out of school.   Both novels seem to conclude that adherence to ones culture and traditions is best. Rosa Mistika ends with a compromise and a favorable outcome; while Midaq Alley presents a negative outcome for the protagonist, her turn toward prostitution.

Conflicts with **the traditional role of women** can be seen in both characters, as negative consequences result when they veer from these roles.   Hamida rejects what the alley has to offer--marriage and family-- and becomes a prostitute.   When Rosa steps outside of the traditional role of women to go to school and tries to get to know boys at the school, she is quickly labeled "loose." Both Hamida and Rosa experience strong judgments on their behavior by their respective societies. One eventually returns to the tradition, but with a new focus on education for women; and the other completely leaves the alley and her old life. The chart below summarizes the thematic comparison of the two novels.

Thematic Content	Rosa Mistika	Midaq Alley
I. Gender 1 a. Traditional roles of women 1 b. Non-traditional roles for women	1 b	1 b
II. Tradition 2 a. Favors Ancient Traditions 2 b. Favors adapting to modern ways	2 b	2 b
III. Culture 3 a. Return to traditional culture, with modification. 3 b. Ends in cultural alienation	3a	3b
IV. Materialism 4 a. Rejection 4 b. Favors 4c. No commitment	4c	4b

Table 1 THEMATIC COMPARISON OF THE TWO NOVELS.

The chart reflects several common threads in both novels: A move away from traditional gender roles for women and traditional culture, an adoption of modern and foreign customs. The issue of Materialism is a factor in Egyptian society; but it is not a factor in Tanzanian society.

4. **Theoretical Conclusions**

In both works, the themes are revealed through the thoughts, expressions and dialogues of characters in various dimensions of reality and unreality. The focus on tense and aspect in narrative is present in this study, but within a very restricted and subjective area—reality/unreality. Discourse linguistics refers to these contrasts as pragmatic to indicate that they depend on the character's knowledge, understanding, or perceptions of the real world. The data include the beliefs, assumptions, and hypotheses of the characters which are visible during times of heightened tension in the novels, thereby providing linguistic evidence for the literary themes.

Saloné (1983a) and (1983b) show the importance of these pragmatic contrasts in natural language data, with reference to the fact that encoding of real world subjectivity is sometimes needed by grammars; and here we focus on aspects of literary meaning that are revealed when dialogues in unreality and reality are analyzed. These pragmatic and semantic contrasts encode specific points of theme, and it happens that they are also present during argumentation. In an interesting way, this work follows the suggestion of Fludernik in "……..liberating literary studies from the fetters of their self-imposed exile from ordinary language (1996, p. 607)."

4.1 General Conclusions

In both literary works considered here, the content expressed using traditional logical structures facilitates understanding some of the major conflicts in the novels. And thus, the reader is able to understand the beliefs and assumptions of the characters, which quite often reflect the novels' themes.   The themes suggest a need for increased expression and opportunity for women, a lessening of the strictures of traditional societies, and an openness to cultural exchange and modernity.

The linguistic structures that indicate reality and unreality in language add force to the arguments of the characters and add very subjective and sometimes introspective information for the reader.   Using his or her own innate understanding of the reality/unreality contrast in natural language, the reader is able to focus on the subjective perceptions of the characters, their viewpoints on reality or non-reality, and their viewpoints on the events, as expressed in their use of language.   With these structures, the reader has access to the logic of the speakers, to their wishes and desires, to their regrets and doubts, and indeed to how they view reality or non-reality. Knowing what the speakers presuppose, what their statements entail and what they assume to be true or not true is vital to understanding the stories themselves and the meaning that is being conveyed by them. This paper is one small way that a linguistic investigation sheds light on the meaning and themes of literary works.

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