

HISTORICAL ALLEGORIES IN NAGUIB MAHFOUZ'S CAIRO TRILOGY

Naguib Mahfouz'un Kahire Üçlemesi Adli Eserindeki Tarihsel Alegoriler

Özlem AYDIN*

Abstract

The purpose of this work is to analyze the "Cairo Trilogy" of a Nobel Prize winner for literature, the Egyptian writer Naguib Mahfouz with the method of new historicism. In "Cairo Trilogy", Mahfouz presents the striking events of late history of Egypt by weaving them with fiction. As history is one of the most useful sources of literature the dense relationship between history and literature is beyond argument. When viewed from this aspect, a new historicist approach to literature will provide a widened perspective to both literature and history by enabling different possibilities for crucial reading. It is expected that the new historicist analysis of "Cairo Trilogy" will enable a better insight into the literature and historical background of Egypt.

Key Words: *Naguib Mahfouz, Cairo Trilogy, History, Egypt, New Historicism*

Özet

Bu çalışmanın amacı Mısır'lı Nobel ödüllü yazar Naguib Mahfouz'un "Kahire Üçlemesi" adlı eserini yeni tarihselcilik metodunu kullanarak analiz etmektir. "Kahire Üçlemesi"nde Mahfouz, Mısır'ın yakın tarihindeki çarpıcı olayları kurgu ile harmanlayarak sunmuştur. Tarih, edebiyatın en faydalı kaynaklarından biri olduğundan, tarih ve edebiyat arasındaki sıkı ilişki tartışılmazdır. Bu açıdan bakıldığında, edebiyata yeni tarihselci bir yaklaşım çapraz okuma konusunda farklı imkanlar sunarak hem edebiyata hem tarihe daha geniş bir bakış açısı sağlayacaktır. "Kahire Üçlemesi"nin yeni tarihselci analizinin Mısır'ın edebiyatının ve tarihsel arkaplanının daha iyi kavranmasını sağlaması beklenmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: *Naguib Mahfouz, Kahire Üçlemesi, Tarih, Mısır, Yeni Tarihselcilik.*

* Phd Candidate, Comparative Literature Department, Fatih University. Researcher Assistant, Bingöl University, English Language and Literature Department. ozlemaydin@bingol.edu.tr

1.1 Introduction

Literature is one of the society's instruments of self-awareness—certainly not the only one, but nonetheless an essential instrument, because its origins are connected with the origins of various types of knowledge, various codes, various forms of critical thought.

—Italo Calvino, *The Use of Literature*

The fact that narratives provide us with a sophisticated standpoint to access into other times and cultures confirms that history and literature intertwine. It follows that one of the best ways to get information about historical background of a country is reading the belles-lettres of a country. Because what most writers do via their work is portraying the reality of the society in one way or another. As Ngugi wa Thiong'o argues in his *Globalectics*; "the novel, like the myth and the parable, gives a view of society from its contemplation of social life, reflecting it, mirror like, but also reflecting upon it simultaneously"¹. According to Ngugi, the novelistic is closer to the scientific outlook in method. Comparing the scientist and the novelist Ngugi comes to the point that:

"the scientist collects data in the lab or in the field. He observes it, tries out different combinations, and comes up with a theory. The scientist may begin with a hypothesis, but that hypothesis may be modified by the logic of the data at hand. Novelists draw from the data of life that they have noted with their senses of touch, sight, hearing, and smell. The novel mimics, contemplates, clarifies and unifies many elements of reality in terms of quality and quantity. It helps organize and make sense of the chaos of history, social experience, and personal inner lives."²

Considering Ngugi's views, it is obvious that examining a work regardless of its author and his social, cultural and historical background can't enable one to understand the work as a whole. Because if there is no knowledge about the author and the circumstances under which the work came into being, the evaluations on that work can't go beyond personal assumptions or structural inertness. Reading the text by regarding the status of the author and the historical, social, cultural circumstances may be evaluated according to Edward Said's definition of *affiliation* in his *The World, The Text and The Critic* as the following:

"... affiliation is what enables a text to maintain itself as a text, and

¹ Ngugi Wa Thiong'o, *Globalectics: Theory and The Politics of Knowing*, (Columbia University Press, New York, 2012.), 16

² Ngugi Wa Thiong'o, *Globalectics: Theory and The Politics of Knowing*, (Columbia University Press, New York, 2012.), 16-17.

this is covered by a range of circumstances: status of the author, historical moment, conditions of publication, diffusion and reception, values drawn upon, values and ideas assumed, a framework of consensually held tacit assumptions, presumed background, and so on and on. ...affiliation releases a text from its isolation and imposes upon the scholar or critic the presentational problem of historically recreating or reconstructing the possibilities from which the text arose.”³

Considering the views of Thiong’o on the roles of novelist and novel and that of Said on the close relationship between history and literature it will be proper to mention about new historicism which paves the way for the evaluation of the text within its historical and cultural context. “I began with the desire to speak with the dead”⁴ was the famous opening of *Shakespearean Negotiations* by Stephen Greenblatt, the first critic and scholar who developed the theory of *new historicism*. This sentence summarizes new historicism in some way because someone who believes in total reality of the history doesn’t need to examine it by desiring to hear the witness. Unlike traditional historicism that focuses on objectivity of history, new historicism deals with interpretability of history. As Lois Tyson proposes in *Critical Theory Today*: “...we don't have clear access to any but the most basic facts of history...our understanding of what such facts mean...is...strictly a matter of interpretation, not fact”⁵ Tyson also makes the distinction of traditional and new historicism by revealing the different approaches to history: “...questions asked by traditional historians and by new historicists are quite different...traditional historians ask, 'What happened?' and 'What does the event tell us about history?' In contrast, new historicists ask, 'How has the event been interpreted?' and 'What do the interpretations tell us about the interpreters?’”⁶. So, considering the principles of new historicism, it can be claimed that if history is not objective and depends on the interpretations of narrator and if considering the text regardless of its author and the social, historical and cultural environment in which the text existed can’t enable one to go beyond structural inertness, one of the best way of getting information about the culture and history of a society is literature. Evaluating both literature and history together Peter Barry simply defines new historicism as “a method based on the *parallel* reading of literary and non-literary texts, usually of the same historical period”. To Barry, new historicism “refuses (at least ostensibly) to 'privilege' the literary text: instead of a literary 'foreground' and a historical 'background' it envisages and practices a mode of

³Edward Said, *The World, The Text and The Critic*, (Vintage: London, 1991). 174-5

⁴Stephen Greenblatt, *Shakespearean Negotiations: The Circulation of Social Energy in Renaissance England*. (Berkeley and Los Angeles: The University of California Press, 1988), 1.

⁵Lois Tyson, *Critical Theory Today*. (U.S.A.: Garland Publishing, 1999), 279.

⁶Ibid., 278

study in which literary and non-literary texts are given equal weight and constantly inform or interrogate each other.”⁷ Barry comes to this conclusion from the definition of new historicism offered by the American critic Louis Montrose who suggests this 'equal weighting' defining new historicism “as a combined interest in 'the textuality of history, the historicity of texts'.”⁸ Azade Seyhan affirms the necessity of literature together with history as well in her *In Tales of Crossed Destinies: The Modern Turkish Novel*, and comes to the point that when history is unstable and provides the general information of times and events, it is literature that enables one to get more detailed knowledge:

Historical, political and sociological studies record the events and trends of the times, whereas literary texts remember what is often forgotten in the sweep of history. ... It is precisely because of the unstable and unpredictable nature of life and history that we drew on fiction to lend in retrospect sense, unity and dignity to fragmented lives and times. In a world where tides of globalization threaten the specificity of local cultures and ethnic and religious strife is an all too common occurrence, the question of identity writ large has acquired an unprecedented intensity. Literature, as an institution par excellence of memory and a universally employed mode of human expression, untiringly explores ways of articulating who we are and of understanding both the incommensurability and the interconnectedness of our histories.⁹

1.2. Historical Allegories in Naguib Mahfouz's *Cairo Trilogy*

We will try to analyze the history Egypt by a distinguished literary work: *Cairo Trilogy* by Naguib Mahfouz in the light of the information above. *Cairo Trilogy* enables Mahfouz to reveal the realities of Egypt from social, cultural and historical dimensions. During the time span depicted in the *Cairo Trilogy* (1917-1944) not only Egypt but also the world is in the process of convulsive change. In 19th century the influence of Europe culture was felt more profoundly under the rule of Muhammed Ali's grandson Ismail (1863-1879) who planned to turn Egypt into a country of Europe. By the way British indirect rule in Egypt lasted from 1882 to 1952 Egyptian Revolution. Regarding the 1798 French invasion with that of British it can be claimed that the colonial imprints were also of crucial importance for Egyptians in the process of modernization.

⁷ Peter Barry, *Beginning Theory: An Introduction to Literary and Cultural Theory*, (UK: Manchester University Press, 2002), 172.

⁸ Ibid., 172.

⁹ Azade Seyhan *Tales of Crossed Destinies: The Modern Turkish Novel*, (New York: M.L.A., 2008), 1, 2.

Born in such a period Mahfouz witnessed a period of rapid changes in Egypt throughout his life, such as Egyptian Revolution of 1919, the last days of British colonial rule and Ottoman influence, the nationalist struggle of Saad Zaghloul, the reigns of King Fuad and King Farouq, the military coup of 1952, the establishment of the republic, Gamal Abdel Nasser's takeover in 1954, the Suez Canal crisis, the rule of Anwar al-Sadat, the Camp David accords of 1978 and the brutal dictatorship of Hosni Mubarak and the rise of Islamic fundamentalism. As a citizen of such a country in which convulsive changes took place in his lifetime, Mahfouz found inspiration from the social and historical realities of Egypt. For instance the revolutions in 1919 were recreated not only in Mahfouz's *Cairo Trilogy* but also in his *Fountain and Tomb*, an autobiographical *Bildungsroman* in which Mahfouz remembers the 1919 revolutions at some considerable length. (Tales 12–16, 18–19 and 23 are entirely devoted to the revolution.) Mahfouz describes 1919 Revolution in detail from its eruption to the death of Sa'd Zaghloul in the tales *Fountain and Tomb* from the conscious of a child. Mahfouz himself was seven years old when the revolution erupted and 'You could say', he proclaims, 'that the one thing which most shook the security of my childhood was the 1919 revolution'¹⁰ and he explains the demonstrations as the following:

From a small room on the roof [of our house] I used to see the demonstrations of the 1919 revolution. I saw women take part in the demonstrations on donkey-drawn carts.... I often saw English soldiers firing at the demonstrators.... My mother used to pull me back from the window, but I wanted to see everything. ... You could say that the one thing which most shook the security of my childhood was the 1919 revolution.¹¹

It was the publication of Mahfouz's early three historical novels (*Mockery of the Fates*, *Rhadopis*, and *The Struggle of Thebes*) that provided him some fame but the real achievement and recognition in literary circles outside Egypt came by his realistic contemporary novel *Cairo Trilogy*. In studying the novel as a genre Mahfouz's style was "generations novel" which follows a single family over an extended period. Before writing his Trilogy as a genre of generations novel, Mahfouz carried out extensive researches. As Rasheed El Enany proposes, "it is depicted in Mahfouz's interviews that Taha Husayn's novel *Shajharat al-Bu's* (*Tree of Misery*, 1944) was instrumental in focusing his attention on writing a saga novel. It was after reading it, he tells us, that he went on to read more of the same, namely Galsworthy's *The Forsyte Saga*, Tolstoy's *War and Peace* and Thomas Mann's *Buddenbrooks* before he

¹⁰ Rasheed El-Enany. *Naguib Mahfouz: The Pursuit of Meaning*. (New York: Routledge Inc., 1993), p 52.

¹¹Ibid., p,3-4.

wrote his own Trilogy.”¹²

Cairo Trilogy is the story of three generations of a middle class Egyptian family that caught between the clash of tradition and modernity. Major social and political events from 1917 to 1944 are portrayed vividly through the context of the story of the family. Enany claims that “there is no other source, literary or otherwise, that records with such detail and liveliness the habits, sentiments and living environment of Cairene Egyptians at the beginning of the century. Without the novelist’s loving and observant eye much about that period that no longer exists would have gone unrecorded forever”.¹³

The daily life of Abd al-Jawwad family with all its rituals was described in the first forty-seven chapters of the first book of the *The Trilogy*, *Palace Walk*. Actually Abd al-Jawwad family represents the middle class of Egyptian society of the time. What alters the course from such a detailed description of the daily life of Abd al-Jawwad family to the basic historical realities of the time is the exile of Saad Zaghloul due to leading Egypt's nationalist Wafd Party to the Paris Peace Conference and demanding formally recognition of the independence and unity of Egypt and Sudan by the United Kingdom. (Egypt had been occupied in 1882 by the British, and was declared to be a protectorate at the outbreak of the First World War. Even though it had its own parliament and armed forces Egypt had been under British rule for the duration of the occupation.¹⁴) Right after this, the 1919 Egypt Revolution erupts and martial law is enforced.

Mahfouz prefers a critical date for the beginning of the story: 1917, when the most important case for the world is the First World War the result of which is of crucial importance for Egypt as it is for whole world. During the time mentioned, everybody was exhausted from the war which didn't last since 1914. World War I, which 100 years ago involved Europe, Africa and the Atlantic and Pacific worlds, may have brought unpredictable destruction to the world as a whole, but “for Egypt it was a bridge to a new way of life that was more Westernized and yet more nationalistic, less conservative and yet fearful of letting go of tradition, richer and yet more concerned about the country’s

¹² Ibid., p. 20.

¹³ Ibid., 73.

¹⁴ Here, it will be proper to define *indirect rule* the method British applied in its colonies. Indirect rule was the plan to use existing tribal structures and traditions as conduits for establishing rules and regulations while English officials worked behind the scenes and could exercise a veto power. In some cases the British designated a person to act as "chief" in settings where there was no clearly hierarchical structure in place.

<http://www.historians.org/teaching-and-learning/classroom-content/teaching-and-learning-in-the-digital-age/through-the-lens-of-history-biafra-nigeria-the-west-and-the-world/the-colonial-and-pre-colonial-eras-in-nigeria/englands-indirect-rule-in-its-african-colonies> accessed October, 2014

poor."¹⁵ When it is the case, it is inevitable for the family not to mention about the war and propose their hopes about the result of the war according to which the fate of Egypt will change:

Like his brother, he (Yasin) wished the Germans would win and consequently the Turks too. He wanted the caliphate claimed by the Ottoman sultans to regain its previous might and for Khedive Abbas II and Muhammad Farid to return to Egypt. ...Shaking his head, he observed, "Four years have passed and we keep saying this same thing. . . ."

... "Every war has an end. This war has got to end. I don't think the Germans will lose."

"This is what we pray to God will happen, but what will you say if we discover the Germans are just the way the English describe them?"

"The important thing is to rid ourselves of the nightmare of the English and for the caliphate to return to its previous grandeur. Then we will find the way prepared for us."

... "Why do you love the Germans when they're the ones who sent a zeppelin to drop bombs on us?"

Fahmy proceeded to affirm, as he always did, that the Germans had intended their bombs for the English, not the Egyptians. Then the conversation turned to zeppelin airships and what was reported of their huge size, speed, and danger...¹⁶

The comments on the result of the war and the hopes about the winner are a reflection of the thoughts of many Egyptian citizens of the time. Due to its strategic position, Egypt was the initial target of European countries which were in search of new colonies. After the French conquest of 1798-1801, Egypt became a British protectorate in 1882-1922. The first period of British rule (1882-1914) is often called the "veiled protectorate". During this time Egypt remained an autonomous province of the Ottoman, and the British occupation had no grounds. This course of events lasted until the Ottoman joined the First World War on the side of the Central Powers in November 1914 and Britain unilaterally declared a protectorate over Egypt.¹⁷ The conversation among Yasin, Fahmi and Khadija reveals some basic realities about Egypt and Egyptians. First of all the general consensus achieved is the dissatisfaction with

¹⁵ <http://weekly.ahram.org.eg/News/5188/31/Egypt-in-World-War-I.aspx> accessed October, 2014

¹⁶ Naguib Mahfouz, *Palace Walk (The Cairo Trilogy I)*. Trans. William Maynard Hutchins et al., (London: Black Swan, 1994), 56.

¹⁷ See, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_Egypt_under_the_British accessed October, 2014.

the British occupation and the desire of liberty. The second remarkable point is the support of the German which may be interpreted as both the wish of the returning of caliphate in the case that the Central Powers win (as Ottoman, one of the states of Central Powers, is the representative of caliphate at the time) and the common social knowledge which may find its best expression in the proverb of "my enemy's enemy is my friend".

The possibility of independence of Egypt from British protectorate grew stronger with the foundation of Wafd party by a group of politicians including Saad Zaghloul. In *A History of Egypt*, Afaf Lutfi As-Sayyid Marsot proposes that "the various declarations made by the Allies during the war aroused hopes that independence might be in the offing." To Marsot, the hopes peaked up "especially when President Wilson made public his Fourteen Self-determination became the keyword in everybody's mouth, and a group of politicians met to plan the future of Egypt as an imminently independent country, or at least one that would have a modicum of home-rule"¹⁸. It was that group of politicians who established Wafd and "in November 1918 met with Sir Reginald Wingate, the British High Commissioner, to request they be allowed to proceed to the Paris Peace Conference and present Egypt's case. During that meeting one of the delegates told Wingate they were asking for complete independence, which became their goal."¹⁹ The demand of independence from Britain is depicted ironically during a conversation in the family in *Palace Walk*:

Thus when Fahmy mentioned that Sa'd and his colleagues were asking permission to travel to London, she suddenly asked, "Where in God's world is this London?"

Kamal answered her immediately in the singsong voice pupils use to recite their lessons: "London is the capital of Great Britain. Paris is the capital of France. The Cape's capital is the Cape. . . ." Then he leaned over to whisper in her ear, "London is in the land of the English."

His mother was overcome by astonishment and asked Fahmy, "They're going to the land of the English to ask them to get out of Egypt? This is in very bad taste. How could you visit me in my house if you're wanting to throw me out of yours?"²⁰

The conversation above reveals the sad but true dimension of colonialism ironically. Amina's single world is her house, because she is not permitted to

¹⁸ Afaf Lutfi As-Sayyid Marsot, *A History of Egypt: From the Arab Conquest to Present*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 95,96.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 96.

²⁰ Naguib Mahfouz, *Palace Walk (The Cairo Trilogy I)*. Trans. William Maynard Hutchins et al., (London: Black Swan, 1994), 324.

go out of her house as depicted in *Palace Walk*: “a quarter of a century had passed while she was confined to this house, leaving it only on infrequent occasions to visit her mother.”²¹ Ostensibly an illiterate woman, she brilliantly and graciously defines the demand of independence of Egypt from Britain. Amina with her pure world has difficulty in understanding the reality of colonialism. If Egypt was their country, why did Sa’d and his friends demanded independence from Britain? Describing British protectorate of Egypt from Amina’s view, Mahfouz may intended to reveal the injustice of colonial system which can be realized even by the most illiterate individuals of society.

The British government in London refused the request of the Wafd which created a tension in the country, supported by the nationalists and the government of the day and the sultan. The reason of the nationalist agitation was the recognition of Egypt’s right to plead her case in Paris. As a result a former cabinet minister, Saad Zaghlul was chosen as the leader of the Wafd. Marsot proposes that “throughout 1919 Egypt was rife with agitation. Zaghlul was arrested and deported to Malta, which signalled an explosion of violence in all regions in support of the national leader.”²² These events were of crucial importance for Egyptians which found their reflections in every segment of society. In the eyes of Egyptians, Sa’d and his friends were regarded as heroes who braved to mention about independence of Egypt as the representatives of their society. So the news of their exile disappointed the society on a large scale. The scene of spreading the news of Sa’d and his friends’ exile was portrayed in depth in *Palace Walk*:

"Look at the street. Look at the people. After all this, who could say that the catastrophe hasn't taken place?" ... "They arrest the great pashas. . . What a terrifying event! What do you suppose they'll do with them?" "Only God knows. The country is stifling under the shadow of martial law." "Exile to Malta. None of them is left here with us. They've exiled Sa'd and his colleagues to the island of Malta."

They all exclaimed at the same time, "Exiled them!" The word "exile" stirred up sad old memories that had stayed with them since childhood concerning the revolutionary leader Urabi Pasha and what had happened to him. They could not help feeling anxious, wondering if the same fate lay in store for Sa'd Zaghlul and his colleagues. Would they really be exiled from their nation forever? Would these great hopes be nipped in the bud and die?

²¹ Naguib Mahfouz, *Palace Walk (The Cairo Trilogy I)*. Trans. William Maynard Hutchins et al., (London: Black Swan, 1994), 35.

²² Afaf Lutfi As-Sayyid Marsot, *A History of Egypt: From the Arab Conquest to Present*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 96.

"Will today's hopes be for naught like those of yesterday?" ... If Sa'd did not return, what would become of these vast hopes? From their new hope a profound and fervent life had sprung that was too overwhelming to abandon to despair. Yet they did not know how their souls could justify reviving it again. ... "He was a man unlike other men. He inspired our lives for a dazzling moment and vanished."²³

The exile of Sa'd Zaghlul and his friends dashed the society's hopes and the news brought to the mind the exile of Urabi Pasha who led Urabi Revolution against Khedive Tewfik Pasha and the influence of British and French over the country. The Urabi revolt had clarified strong nationalist sentiment among educated and well-to-do Egyptians whose slogan that galvanized their hopes for the future was "Egypt for the Egyptians."²⁴ Urabi Pasha's revolution was heavily suppressed and he was exiled to the British colony of Ceylon (now Sri Lanka).²⁵ The disappointment of Egyptians due to the exile of Sa'd Zaghlul and his friends turned into countrywide demonstrations in 1919. Contrary to the unease of a limited class of Egypt against the foreign policies in the past, this time the demonstrations were characterized by rank and file of the population including students, elite, civil servants, merchants, peasants, workers, and religious leaders. To Lisa Pollard, "the demonstrations of 1919 and 1920 appeared to unite disparate elements of the Egyptian population. Egyptians—rich and poor, Muslim and Christian, peasants, workers and landed elites, men and women—took to the streets, arm in arm, not only to make the quotidian tasks of governing Egypt impossible for the British but also to demonstrate that a new order of things—a new stage of existence—had come to pass."²⁶ Mahfouz explains the details of revolutions at large in *Trilogy* from the eyes of Amina's eldest son, Fahmi, who was an intelligent and idealistic law student:

When the struggle began, it found him ready. He threw himself into the midst of it. When and how had that happened? He was riding a streetcar to Giza on his way to the Law School when he found himself in a band of students who were waving their fists and protesting: "Sa'd, who expressed what was in our hearts, has been

²³ Naguib Mahfouz, *Palace Walk (The Cairo Trilogy I)*. Trans. William Maynard Hutchins et al., (London: Black Swan, 1994), 350-51.

²⁴ Robert L. Tignor, *Egypt: A Short History*, (Princeton&Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2010). 235.

²⁵ For detailed information about Urabi Revolution, see Juan Cole, *Colonialism and Revolution in the Middle East: Social and Cultural Origins of Egypt's Urabi Movement* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993).

²⁶ Lisa Pollard, *Nurturing the Nation: The Family Politics of Modernizing, Colonizing, and Liberating Egypt, 1805–1923*. (London: University of California Press, 2005), 166-67.

banished. If Sa'd does not return to continue his efforts, we should be sent into exile with him." ... Then Fahmy shouted along with all his comrades at the same time, "Independence!"... At that point one of them protested: "Our fathers have been imprisoned. We won't study law in a land where the law is trampled underfoot. ..." They went to Medicine and Commerce. As soon as they reached al-Sayyida Zaynab Square they merged with a mass demonstration of citizens. Shouts were raised for Egypt, independence, and Sa'd. With every step they took, they gained more enthusiasm, confidence, and faith, because of the impulsive participation and spontaneous response of their fellow citizens. They encountered people whose souls were primed, reeling with anger that found expression in their demonstration.²⁷

Over reading the observations and inner monologs of Fahmi some of which were depicted above it is almost impossible for someone to forbear himself/herself from sharing the same feelings of the Egyptians at the time. Mahfouz depicts the annals of Egypt step by step from the exile of Sa'd Zaghoul and friends to their release, from 1919 Egyptian Revolutions to British armed intervention, from the foundation of Waft to the independence of Egypt. Beginning in the middle of a world war, the novel terminates with the end of another. The historical allegories depicted above are a drop in the ocean which means that *Cairo Trilogy* is among the best sources to learn about historical background of Egypt within the context of narrative.

1.3. Conclusion

New historicism defined as a method based on the analogous reading of literary and non-literary texts, usually of the same historical period provides us with the opportunity of simultaneous evaluation of primary historical sources together with secondary sources, including observations of social phenomena in literature. Such a kind of intertextuality enables reevaluation of history from the standpoint of present. As a theory new historicism seems to bring together historians and literary critics under the same roof by denying both the insistence of new critics on the autarchy of literary text and that of traditional historians on the privilege of primary historical sources. All in all, keeping in mind Ngugi's, Said's and Seyhan's views about the strict relationship among the writer, history and literature it will be proper to propose that born in period of rapid changes which are milestone in Egyptians' life, Mahfouz sheds light to late history of Egypt via his *Cairo Trilogy*.

²⁷ Naguib Mahfouz, *Palace Walk (The Cairo Trilogy I)*. Trans. William Maynard Hutchins et al., (London: Black Swan, 1994), 357-58-59.

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