

Western-Made Source of Naguib Mahfouz's Pharaonic Novels by Mohamed Kamel Abdel-Daem

Abstract

This paper argues that the efforts and discoveries in Egyptology made by European archaeologists and historians are the main references that helped the modern Egyptian people and writers learn about the history of ancient Egypt. Naguib Mahfouz's three novels about ancient Egypt – written in the late 1930s when Egypt was under the British occupation and the Turkish rule – unconsciously conveyed postcolonial ideas to the colonized people, i.e, surrender to Fate (the colonizer's and dictator's reality) (*Khufu's Wisdom*), irrelevance of democratic rule, lack of centralized regime leads to conflict between two domineering authorities – religious and military (*Rhadopis of Nubia*), and political relief from contemporary oppression springing from nostalgic pride for forcing the invaders out (*Thebes at War*). The three novels foster enlightenment principles of Egyptian patriotism (rather than Middle-Ages Arab) nationalism, and this helped implement the European colonizer's strategy: '*diaírei kai basíleue*'.

Key words

ancient Egypt, enlightenment, dictator rule, colonialism, patriotism, individualism, Middle-Ages Arab nationalism.

Introduction

Egypt had been one of the places that witnessed the birth of human civilization. Pharaonic culture had come to existence thousands of years before, and lasted thousands of years longer than, Western civilization. But how did we know about, and how did the modern Egyptians learn about, the history of their ancient forefathers? The answer would certainly be: "from history sourcebooks"; and these books are mainly based on information in ancient parchments, as well as paintings on ancient Egyptian monuments. Another more significant question is: "Who interpreted such parchments and broke the code of the Pharaonic stone pictures?" Undeniably, the West informed the modern Egyptians of their ancient history, for European colonizers aimed at turning the Egyptian novelists' attention to a revival of antique intellectual and ideological norms put in a fresh framework (Israel2009: 15ff).

Naguib Mahfouz's pharaonic novels found great inspiration in the European and American publications on Egyptology. In fact, Western achievement in

archaeology, decipherment, and excavation, which began in the 17th and 18th centuries, was a byproduct of the Enlightenment interest in following scientific method. The late 17th-and 18th age of Enlightenment (or Reason) put greater value on intellect and individualism rather than traditional maxims (“Enlightenment”, Oxford Dictionaries, OUP). Promoting scientific thought, skepticism and intellectual interchange, Enlightenment aimed to rationalistically reform society, achieve knowledge breakthrough, and defy notions laid by tradition and faith (Kors, 2003). On this basis, Naguib Mahfouz’s novels about ancient Egypt best illustrate the Third-World “postcolonial intellectuals’ dependence on Western models” (Spivak 1988: 69-70); the attempts of spreading Enlightenment thought have made the Third World speak “through and by virtue of European imagination, which is depicted as victorious over [the East], that hostile ‘other’ world beyond the seas” (Said : 56). Yet, Mahfouz’s use of standard, somewhat poetic diction is the only mark of a surviving Middle-Ages Arab influence (Ragheb 1975:62).

The Greek and Roman historians – Herodotus, Strabo, Diodorus Siculus – first introduced Pharaonic Egypt to the West. Though Herodotus’ writings lack credibility, his tales about ancient Egyptian life are hardly doubted by some scholars (Mikalson 198-200). Many specialists admit the believability of Herodotus’ stories about ancient Egypt; “archaeology graphically confirms some of Herodotus’ observations” (Welsby 1996: 40). However, a number of historians do not credit Herodotus’s history about ancient Egypt (Martels 2013: 4-6; 13).

The 13th century witnessed the beginnings of the European research projects in Egyptology. That was approached by: Claude Sicard, Benoit de Maillet, Frederic Louis Norden and Richard Pococke. John Greaves, in the early 17th century, made a measurement of the pyramids, and an investigation of the broken obelisk in Rome. The founder of Egyptology, Athanasius Kircher was the first to study hieroglyphs and the Coptic language. In the late 18th century, Napoleon’s scholars published *The Description of Egypt*, in which they examined numerous sides of ancient Egypt, and that made many source materials on ancient Egypt available.

The ancient Egyptian writing alphabet, hieroglyphs, was first translated, and introduced to the modern world in 1822 by the French scholar Jean-Francois Champollion; he could decode the sound and pictorial signs on the Rosetta Stone. Champollion’s achievement really benefited from the earlier attempts of Johan David Akerbald, as well as Thomas Young, to investigate and interpret some of the text on the stone. In 1827 Champollion, accompanied by the Italian Egyptologist Ippolito Rosellini, went on a voyage on the Nile, studied, and published a book about, ancient Egyptian monuments (“Egyptology”. Saylor.org. retrieved 6 March 2012). Later on, during the 19th century, the German

archaeologist, Karl Richard Lepsius, made many excavations and investigated many ancient sites. Both William Matthew Flinders Petrie and Howard Carter were professional specialists in Egyptology. In 1882, Britain founded the British Egypt Exploration Fund, which depended on the scientific methods of Flinders Petrie; other Egyptologists published books on Pharaonic lexicon and history (“Where to Study Egyptology”. *Guardian’s Egypt*. Retrieved 13November2011). In the early 20th century, the American archaeologist, James Henry Breasted, made explorations in Egypt and Nubia, and founded the Oriental Institute that is devoted to Egyptology study. Numerous collections on pharaonic monuments and life appeared in the late 19th and early 20th century, and afterwards (Chaney 2006: 39-74). The discovery of the magnificent tomb of Tutankhamen in 1922, at the hands of the English archaeologist Howard Carter has made the West see Egypt anew, i.e, a country that deserves to be dependent from its Arab circle, and has its own identity.

Many Western artistic works were inspired by ancient Egyptian history and myth, to name a few: Jean Terrasson’s *Sethos*, Shakespeare’s *Anthony and Cleopatra*, Shelly’s *Ozymandias*, Verdi’s *Opera Aida*, Agatha Christie’s *Death on the Nile* (Benton 1999: 54). These have been a byproduct of enlightenment thought which gave birth to ‘debating societies’; these public institutions held controversial discussions about various topics: religion, politics, women’s rights and public role, liberality and courtship (Andrew1996:412-15). Such societies found in 17th-18th century English cafes places to exchange ideas among enlightenment scholars (Cowan2005:90-91). Mahfouz, interestingly, was a café-rooted writer (Sheppard, 1988).

Discussion

After the 1919 revolution, a number of Egyptian writers created historical novels about ancient Egypt in order to cope with the Western Enlightenment principles of liberalism and local patriotism (Abdulla 1971: 190). This illustrates the view that “Europe has the power to articulate the Orient and represents it as an ‘insinuating danger’” (Said 1979: 57). Naguib Mahfouz’s *Khufu’s Wisdom* was the first experiment in patriotic-oriented historical novel (Wadi 1972: 67). The Pharaonic trend in the Egyptian historical novel was encouraged, consciously or unconsciously, as a correlative to the Middle-Ages Arab historical novel inspired by the thoughts of Jamal ad-Din al-Afghani and his followers (Ragheb 1975:). Naguib Mahfouz’s translation of James Baikie’s *Ancient Egypt* into Arabic (1932), as well as his readings in Egyptology, archaeology and translations of Western novels about ancient history, has formed the main source of his tendency towards writing “patriotic literature” about pharaonic Egypt (Asfour,1999): thus, spreading Ancient-Egyptian-motivated patriotism

(Mousa1972:37). Mahfouz's three novels – *Khufu's Wisdom*, *Rhadopis of Nubia* and *Thebes at War* – all have realistically described the glorious life of the ancient Egyptians and linked it to the early 20th-century reality of Egypt under the British control and Ottoman guardianship. He was also influenced by Tawfiq Al-Hakim's novel, *The Return of the Spirit*, which represents the Pharaonic myth of Isis and Osiris, and by Adil Kamil's novel, *A King of Rays*, which is based on the life of Pharaoh Akhenaton. The source whereby Mahfouz took his inspiration has resulted in his excellent realism, thus:

His descriptions of the settings – from battlefield to the interior of a palace to a boat on the Nile – sound like he was right there making notes as the events took place. How else could he describe the way a chariot charge looks when 200 of them wheel to the attack? Or what is inside a holy temple, and what exact corner the God lives and how he is shrouded? I never sailed upon a boat up the Nile in 2000 B.C., but I now have a pretty good idea (Marcus 2007: 13).

Mahfouz has a great skill in making real portraits of battles, individual duels and conspiracy plans. This illustrates his view that liberation depends on the private capacities of man as a person, rather than as a member of a resistance group (El-Sheikh, 2013). In *Thebes at War*, for example, he tries to beautify the Hyksos campaign against Upper Egypt by giving a romantic description of their warship in its progress southward (*Thebes at War*: 7). This seemingly beautiful mask of ancient and modern colonization makes its awful face be attacked by individual persons or independent districts.

When Mahfouz started writing during the 1930s and 1940s, translated fiction was more popular than created fiction to many young writers: “When writers [of this] generation began to write, [they] were most indebted to translated novels rather than classical [Arabic] literature” (Kaixiong, 1996). From James Baikie, Mahfouz – by the guidance of a colonialist reality – has known about the alleged non-resistant nature of the Egyptians, thus:

They were nearly always fighting ... but in reality they were not a great soldier people, like their rivals ... we, who have had so much to do with their descendents, the modern Egyptians, and have fought both against them and with them, know that the 'Gippy' is not fond of soldiering in his heart. He makes a very good, patient, hardworking soldier when he has good officers ... he much prefers to live quietly in his own native village, and cultivate his own bit of ground. And his forefathers, in these long-past days, were very much of the same mind. Often, of course, they had to fight, when a Pharaoh ordered them out for a campaign in the Soudan or in Syria ... but ... they were glad to get back to their farm-work and their simple pleasures. They were a peaceful, kindly, pleasant race (Baikie1932: ch V).

In *Thebes at War*, for example, Ahmose tells the Hyksos king's daughter, Princess Amenredes, that he and the Egyptian warriors had suffered during the long wars against the bold, militant occupiers (*Thebes*: 258). Ahmose's patriotic

feeling becomes an alternative for his sacrificed love for the captivated Amenredes whom he returned to her father to save thirty thousand Egyptian war prisoners.

Likewise, in *Khufu's Wisdom*, Dedef's love for the Pharaoh's daughter, Princess Mere, helps the ordinary-originated leader to become a member in the royal house and, makes the hereditary regime survive. That Dedef was brought up in the senior priest's house asserts the ability of religious power in face of ruling central power (Wadi 1972:88). This authority lost its centrality in *Rhadopis* due to the growing power of the king's assistants and the priests as well as his being both 'a dictator and a lover' of the gay Rhadopis who has a 'taste for both politics and art' (*Rhadopis*: 8,10,36).

Depicting different phases of pharaonic history, the three novels best represent various socio-political aspects of 1930s and 1940s Egypt. Mahfouz has employed significant, heroic eras in ancient history to be settings for his books. This reflects his belief in the Western Enlightenment ideas, i.e., liberalism, reform and individualism (Asfour, 1999). Here follows two definitions of Enlightenment:

The most fundamental concepts of Enlightenment were faith in nature and belief in human progress ... the individual human being ... was designed to act rationally ... accordingly, both human righteousness and happiness required freedom from needless restraints, such as many of those imposed by the state or the church. The enlightenment's uncompromising hostility towards organized religion and established monarchy reflected a disdain for the past and an inclination to favor utopian reform ... society would become perfect if people were free to use their reason ("Enlightenment", History-World.org).

Irremediably Eurocentric, the ideas grouped under the rubric of Enlightenment are explicitly or implicitly bound up with imperialism. In its quest for the universal, enlightenment occludes cultural difference and refuses moral or social relativity ... [it] naturalizes a teleology in which all roads lead inexorably to an episteme associated with the West. Frozen in the dark backward and abysm of the 'primitive' or 'savage', non Western populations are stripped of the agency and historicity that underwrites civilized advancement. The doctrine of progress, in turn, legitimates imperial conquest under the guise of the civilizing mission, while the celebration of reason disqualifies other belief systems as irrational or superstitious. Enlightenment becomes alternately the engine of a relentlessly totalizing historical spirit and the ideological sugar coating designed to disguise the bitter nature of empire from both its victims and its perpetrators. Cast in these terms, any vestiges of 'the Enlightenment' that remain within a theory become a sign of insufficient liberation (Carey,2009).

Being affected by Sophocles' Oedipus, *Khufu's Wisdom* tells the story of an ancient king who tries to defeat destiny. Being told a prophecy, he strives to kill the newborn Dedef – along with many others – to prevent the boy from succeeding him on throne. The child escapes and innocent ones are killed instead. Then by the word of fate, Dedef is promoted higher and higher in the

Pharaoh's army, kills the betrayer crown prince, wins the king's trust, and eventually takes over after the king's death. Mahfouz has chosen the Arabic title “*Abath Al-aqdar*” which is literally translated as “*Futility of Defying Fate*”. The prophecy comes true and all the powerful Pharaoh's attempts to defeat fate turn out to be failure. Fate becomes reality and reality surrenders to fate; Mahfouz, indirectly and unintentionally, advises his contemporary Egyptians not to try to change the reality of occupation and dictatorship. Under the influence of the English (colonizer) Baikie, he tries to convey the idea of the futility of revolting against the Pharaoh dictator, thus:

Pharaoh, of course, is not his real name; it is not even his official title; it is just a word which is used to describe a person who is so great that people scarcely venture to call him by his proper name ... 'Pharaoh' ... really signifies 'Great House' ... people look upon him, and he looks upon himself, as something more than a man. There are many gods in Egypt; but the god whom the people know best, and to whom they pay the most reverence, is their King ... divine honours are paid, and sacrifices offered to him ... and ... [when he dies] hosts of priests are employed in his worship (Baikie1932: ch.IV).

The story is based on a myth written on an ancient parchment, known as “Westcar Papyrus”, kept in the Berlin Egyptology Museum. It dates back to the time of Khufu, one of the 4th dynasty kings, who belonged to the Old Kingdom, or the age of pyramid-builders. The Old Kingdom lasted from the 3rd to the 6th dynasty (2686 B.C.-2134 B.C.). It was the age when a big number of pyramids were erected as Pharaohs' graves. Meanwhile, a god-like pharaoh had a central authority, unlike the previous independent self-rule of ancient Egyptian states. Governors did their best to collect taxes. This image a heavenly-like dictator reminds us of the Enlightenment's effort to break through the “sacred circle”, i.e., the bond between the ruling inheritors, the religious leaders, and the sanctified scripts; it means that sovereigns have the divine right of kings to rule (Gay,1996). The construction of a pyramid was achieved by bringing to the site fluxes of farmers, rock sculptors, artists, mathematicians and priests from all over the country. The farmers worked while the Nile flooded their sown fields; they believed that the flood came according to the Pharaoh's order (Romer, 2012).

Rhadopis of Nubia is an allegorical tale that shows a weak, youthful, reckless Pharaoh who falls in love with the gay, Rhadopis. Even the courtiers left the administration of state's affairs for the infatuation with the charm of this flirty young lady. This tragic flaw, along with the king's and the powerful priest's competition over property and fortune, eventually leads to the destruction of the country. The Pharaoh stands for King Farouk I, Rhadopis for the corrupt life of the king and the aristocratic men, the priests for the religious Brotherhood that emerged in the early 1930s. The priests' (Brotherhood) involvement with civilian

matters has been considered a cause of economic-political weakening of the state (El-Bojy2009:231) Having embraced this, enlightened Mahfouz seeks for separating established faith from political sphere to occlude theological conflict (Grell2000: 1-68). In this novel also, Mahfouz prefers a powerful (dictator) rule to feeble (democratic) regime that allows corruption and division. He puts an end to the chaos caused by this frivolous reign through the murder of the king and his beloved; the king's tragic flaw – falling in love, rather than public rebellion, leads to this end.

The incidents of *Rhadopis* take place during the pharaonic Middle Kingdom which extends from the 11th dynasty to the 14th dynasty (2030 B.C. -1640 B.C). During this time, the country was divided between the Theban (upper Egypt) and the Heracleopolitan (lower Egypt) dynasties who were in continuous conflict. From the end of 6th to 10th dynasty, a number of districts, such as Nubia, gained independence due to the weakness of central command caused by the appointment of an uncaring 'vizier' as head of national civil administration, and by the rising power of territorial governors (Callender,2000). During the 6th dynasty (2345-2181 B.C), the power of the pharaohs gradually decreased leading to the increasing authority of district governors. These places gained independence from the royal family, forming local dynasties. These regional rulers had hereditary successors. During the extended reign of the pharaoh Pepi II (2278-2184 B.C), the country witnessed internal unrest that developed into civil wars after his death; his nominated inheritors might have created succession struggles. During the 22nd century B.C, there were very low Nile flood levels, so a severe drought, famine and strife blew the lands; that was the end of the Old Kingdom (Hassan, 2011).

Mahfouz took the story of *Rhadopis* from a myth told by Roger Lanslin Green, and hinted at by Herodotus, in which Rhadopis is a Greek maid sold to a Greek merchant who lives in Egypt. Then the Pharaoh takes her as wife when he finds her sandals thrown down by an eagle. Mahfouz makes the lady a Nubian, who attracts the king and his senior officer, Taho. When King Merenra determines to restore the land granted by his forefathers to the priests, the prime minister, Sofghutb, and the queen, Nitoqris, both advise the Pharaoh, to be wise and leave the lands to the religious men who feed the needy citizens from the harvest. Agreeing to Taho's opinion, the king with the help of the foreign Rhadopis gives orders to the army to force the priests and the people out of the lands, but the priests urge the oppressed people to revolt against the corrupt king and his assistants. The king is killed by an arrow thrown by one of the rebels, and Rhadopis commits suicide. Love spoils the lives of King Merenra, the senior guard Taho, and the suicide young artist Binamon. Ironically, the revolutionary

people call that Nitoqris should be the ruler of Egypt. This shows that Mahfouz prefers a monarch to a republic as a rule system of a people who has been oppressed and starved for long. He often endows ‘perfection qualities’ on monarchical families to prove the ideality of ancient Egyptian civilization (El-Bojy, 2009).

Rhadopis best exemplifies enlightenment revolutionary targets: “democracy; racial and sexual equality; individual liberty of lifestyle; full freedom of thought, expression, and the press; eradication of religious authority from the legislative process and education; and full separation of church and state” (Israel2009: vii-viii). British colonizers tempted 1930s and 1940s Egyptian writers towards conveying such ideas to be alternative for Middle-Ages Arab tradition, for the enlightened postcolonialists knew that until 1650s, Western civilization “ was based on a largely shared core of faith, tradition and authority” (Israel2001:3).

Dedef’s ascension illustrates the enlightenment’s upgrading of ordinary well-to-do individuals. Enlightenment helped create the bourgeois ‘public sphere’ by letting middle-class people share noblemen in many places. This was fostered by capitalist increasing urbanization, economic liberation, developed communication, availability of various commodity, and colonial openness to heterogeneous cultures (Outram 1995: 15-16). In *Rhadopis*, on the other hand, the lower –class men are just employed by noblemen to support one rival against the other. After the end of Merenra’s rule, the mob call for the continuity of monarchical regime by supporting the queen as an heir of the throne. This illustrates the fact that enlightenment thinkers degraded the ability of humble laymen to reform society; they put the concept of “public” versus “the people”, “opinion” versus “populace”, “the opinion of the men of letters” versus “the opinion of the multitude”, “truly enlightened public” versus “the blind and noisy multitude” (Chartier 1991:27). In *Khufu*, *Rhadopis* and *Thebes*, Mahfouz reduces the ability of humble men to force a change: in the former, circumstance controls the incidents; in the latter affection leads man to his destiny, while in the third book, the people are employed as aids to revenge (Ragheb1975:40).

Ancient history might have been reviewed by Mahfouz for, according to Bertrand Russell, “ the enlightenment was a phase in a progressive development, which began in antiquity, and that reason and challenges to the established order were constant ideals throughout that time” (Russell : 492-4). That the enlightened culture, politics and regimes made change in the West has been perceived by Mahfouz. He, consequently, tried to induce the enlightenment thought in the modern Egyptians by presenting accounts of model ancient powerful dictatorships. Enlightenment was first aided by the effort of mighty monarchical rulers – ‘enlightened despots’ who gave hand to the enlightenment philosophers

to form vigorous national states by designing laws and reform programs (Lee 1990: 258-66). This applies to Mahfouz's *Khufu*, *Ahmoose* and *Horemehb*, while in modern Egypt, the enlightened thought has been spread by "the Republic of Letters and the Masonic lodges" (Koselleck1988:62) – i.e. Mahfouz's circle and liberals encouraged by British-occupation-aided leaders. The former helped in emancipating people's minds, and the latter in freeing men from any ideological or traditional values.

Being disappointed by the 1919 public revolution, Mahfouz has deprived man from any ability to make a change of his rejected reality (Abdel-qader, 2013). In *Khufu's wisdom*, the tyrant king leads and directs his peoples' destinations, and gets them as slaves who build the king's eternal glory as well as his after life's palace, the pyramid. In *Rhadopis*, both the power of religion and the superstructure's inner frailties and the foreign pressures impose on the people a seemingly revolutionary change; the rule of Egypt remains in the court of late Merenra, and the religious domineering effect becomes stronger, and Taho, the police suppressor survives by putting the army in face of the priests and the public. The indiscreet behavior of Rhadopis and some other characters illustrates the enlightenment idea of " a liberal interpretation of law which leaves people free to do whatever the law does not explicitly forbid (Manent1995:20-38). This also applies to this *Thebes* ironic scene: when Ahmoose asks a burglar, 'Don't you fear the guards?', the man shows big panic as, ' robbery is allowed only for the rich and chiefs'. In *Thebes at War*, the writers highlights individualism as a motivator towards any change. The family of the late Sekninra, his successor Camus, and Ahmoose the crown prince are determined to take revenge on the Hyksos who forced them out of Egypt to Nubia. They try to engage the whole Egyptian people in their vengeance against the invaders.

The Hyksos invaded Egypt and brought with them Asian migrating settlers. That was during the reign of the 13th dynasty pharaoh, Sobekhotep IV, between the end of the Middle Kingdom and the start of the New. The Hyksos, who ruled till the 16th dynasty, overspread Egypt, and interior trouble and food shortage struck the people, so the 13th dynasty Egyptian governors of scattered areas could not prevent the tribal moving to Egypt. The Hyksos settled in, and controlled, the Delta and middle Egypt. Upper Egypt was under the control of Theban-based rulers who had commercial relations with, and paid high taxes to, the Hyksos(Booth2005:10). . Then the Theban ruling family declared their independence, and formed the 17th dynasty. They liberated the Egyptians, and drove the invaders back to Asia. The last two kings of this dynasty were Tao II and Kamose. Ahmoose I, the first 18th dynasty and New Kingdom pharaoh,

completed the liberation process and retained Egyptian control over formerly subjected regions of Nubia and Canaan (Girmal, 1988:194).

Thebes at War reports the story of Ahmose who could restore his position as king of Egypt, and then united the Egyptians to force the Hyksos invaders out of their land to Palestine. The ancient Egyptians' resistance against those colonizers is presented to deepen the modern Egyptians' local, border-limited patriotism, rather than any Arab-nationalistic notions. The enterprise of Camus and Ahmose depended mainly on the practical preparation of every governorate; their effort was "guided by rationality rather than by faith, superstition or revelation: a belief in the power of human reason to change society and liberate the individual from the restraints of custom or arbitrary authority; all backed up by a world view increasingly validated by science rather than by religion or tradition" (Outram 1995:3). The characters' behavior is often controlled by reason (*Thebes*: 239). Mahfouz himself admitted that he decided to write about the individually-led struggles against the Hyksos when he saw the King Seknenra's densely-stabbed mummy preserved in the Cairo Museum (Mousa1972:39).

Like Sir Walter Scott, Mahfouz set out to rewrite the ancient Egyptian history in the form of fiction works. He was able to finish three parts out of a forty-book historical project he had once sought to write about Pharaonic civilization. The idea then came to Mahfouz as a kind of following the Western pioneer of historical novel (Abdel-Basir, 2011). But soon he left the Pharaonic novel for the depiction of the more exciting reality of colonized Egyptian community.

The idea of national unity is not gratified in Mahfouz's pharaonic books. He would rather write about the dictator Cheops, about the conflicting poles in *Rhadopis*, about a Theban family's revenge, than to remind the reader of King Menes. According to the Greek historian, Manetho, around 3150 B.C. King Menes united the Two Lands, Upper and Lower Egypt. At the time of the pyramid-builders and afterwards, the Pharaohs were greatly extolled, while at Menes's time, 'mastaba' tombs were constructed for rulers and noblemen (Roebuck, 1966). Khufu (or Mhfouz) regrets this, and feels sad on watching the suffering people work to build his pyramid, a Menes-not-Khufu-deserved resplendence.

Mahfouz has also written a number of pharaonic short stories. In "King Userkaf's Forgiveness" (1938), an Odyssey-like king deserts his country for a long time to test the faithfulness of his family members and courtiers. On coming back, Userkaf receives the loyalty of nobody but his dog, Zay. But unlike, Odysseus, the pharaoh forgives all, but the queen commits suicide for fear of the king's revenge. "The Mummy Awakens" (1939), which is similar to Jane Loudon's *The Mummy* (1827) and H. Rider Haggard's "Smith and the Pharaohs" (1921), is based on the

mythic return of the dead General Horemheb (1328-1298 B.C) to become the last pharaoh in the 18th dynasty (Stock, 2002). “The Return of Sinuhe” (1941) is inspired by an incomplete hieroglyph narrative text interpreted by W.M. Flinders. Mahfouz tells how one of the army campaign leaders, Sinuhe, escapes to Syria after knowing about the death of the 12th dynasty king, Amenemhat; there he makes a fortune and eventually decides to go back to Egypt. “But the great difficulty in the account has been the sudden panic of Sanehat [Sinuhe] on hearing of the death of Amenehat ... it seems not unlikely that he was a son of Amenehat ... for his fear of his elder brother Usertesén, who might see him a rival, and try to slay him” (Flinders, 1985, Egyptian Tales, 1st series). Taw-ty in “A Voice from the Other World”(1945) resembles the character of Allamistakeo in Edgar Allan Poe’s “Some Words with a Mummy”. The character of Taw-ty is based on Pentaweret who might have carved the tale of Ramses II’s triumph over the Hittites at Kadesh in the Luxor Temple. In this story, Mahfouz describes in detail the mummification operation as explained in the 1940s. “Evil Adored” (1936) is also legendary. “Akhenaton: Dweller in Truth” (1985) is an allegory of political matters in the late 1970s and early 1980s, thus:

Mahfouz makes it clear that Akhenaton’s way is not the way ahead, however, and Horemheb is the real hero of the novel, the restorer of order from ... Akhenaton as Sadat, and Horemehb as Mubarak ... But Mahfouz also comments on the larger question of which parts of Egypt’s pharaonic heritage are worth retaining in a society which increasingly defines itself in terms of Islamic values (Montserrat,2000).

Mahfouz’s praise of anti-akhenaton’s multiple-attitude (multiple-deity) towards life, in almost all his pharaonic tales, goes in line with the new religious notion propagandized by postcolonial enlightenment philosophers, such as: pantheism, deism, atheism and skepticism; this let the human reason select its suitable moral (not religious demeanor) lifestyle in a God-made world, where the human mind is set free to question traditional creed (Wilson 2004:26, 148).

Conclusion

It was colonialism (or the French Revolution as an impellor to Napoleonic conquests) that might have “invented the Enlightenment by attempting to root its legitimacy and founding authors united ... by their preparation to rupture with the old world” (Chartier1991:5). On the other hand, Napoleonic wars are often considered to have witnessed the end of Enlightenment (Frost, 2008). Mahfouz’s pharaonic tales were an imitative correlative to Jurji Zaydan’s (as well as Es-Sahhar’s and Bakathir’s) narrative treatments of Middle-Ages Arab history (Badr 1978:153). Mahfouz saw that both A.C. Es-Sahhar and A.A. Bakathir were optimistic enough to write about the glorious Middle-Ages Arab civilization. On

the other hand, Mahfouz, A. Kamil and A. Zaki Makhoul have undergone a mental crisis caused by their cultural alienation from the Arab history (Dwarah 1965:32). Therefore, they resorted to the European writings which directed their attention towards ancient Egypt. 19th and early 20th century Colonialism in Egypt aimed to de-construct and re-form the established Middle-Ages Arab tradition by letting Enlightenment ideas penetrate into this body of inherited belief and custom, through the literary minds open to the West.

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