CHAPTER-5

THEMES AND TECHNIQUES IN ‘MISR AL-QADIMA’ OF NAJIB MAHFOUZ

The Nobel Prize winner Egyptian author Najib Mahfouz started his career as a writer by exploring ancient Egyptian history. He did not do so to understand the contemporary scene, still less was it to criticise it in a covert fashion. His aim was to seek the identity of his own country in the space-time of his existence and the sphere of his Self. He also obviously sought for a reliable anchorage in the distant past during years of war, upheaval, and calamity. Being an Arabic author, he transcends the limits of Arabic and Moslem tradition, to which he belongs, tracing his heritage and seeking his identity as an Egyptian.

Najib Mahfouz has a deep interest in both literature and history. He strives to change literature by example and through his metaphorical treatment of topics related to literary theory. He also aims to change both the relation between literature and history and the perception of Arabic literature in general. His first published book was a translation of James Baikie's concise history of Ancient Egypt (‘Mısır al-Qadima’, 1932), published by the periodical Al-Majalah Al-Jadidah (The New Magazine).

In ‘Mısır al-Qadima’ (The Ancient Egypt), Najib Mahfouz provides a critical approach of Egyptian and Arab society from historical perspective. He also provides a critical analysis of Contemporary Arabic literature, both in terms of its appreciation by
native audiences and its interpretation by foreign ones. Specifically, he encourages the development of new fictional conventions and the use of multiple interpretive perspectives that are dependent neither on outmoded Arab conventions nor on dominant Western approaches. To demonstrate Najib Mahfouz’s combination of Arab and Western techniques and his message of change in both literary and non-literary contexts, I want to discuss in this chapter about the theme and the technique that used in his famous publication ‘Mīsīr al-Qadīma’ (The Ancient Egypt).

The main theme of the book ‘Mīsīr al-Qadīma’ (The Ancient Egypt) of Najib Mahfouz is to points out the history of ancient Egypt. Ancient Egypt distinguishes itself not only by reacting to circumstances, but also by contributing to a sense of crisis in the Arab world. It was produced the very historical categories and concepts, including those of rupture and discontinuity, which enable the critical understanding or interrogation of the contemporary; and by defining the historical conditions that allow the contemporary to take place or to make sense. On a meta-fictional level, it can be seen in the use of literary techniques that deviate from the Arabic tradition.

At the very beginning of ‘Mīsīr al-Qadīma’ (The Ancient Egypt), Najib Mahfouz has discussed about a land where a slave boy, Yusuf (Joseph), became the Viceroy and Musa (Moses), a Hebrew child became the Prince of Pharaoh’s household and a land of world famous pyramids. It is the land of great civilization Egypt. Here is a quotation to the readers:
If we were asked to name the most interesting country in the world, I suppose that most people would say Palestine—not because there is anything so very wonderful in the land itself, but because of all the great things that have happened there and above all because of its having been the home of our Lord. But after Palestine, I think that Egypt would come next. For one thing, it is linked very closely to Palestine by all those beautiful stories of the Old Testament, which tell us of Joseph, the slave-boy who became Viceroy of Egypt; of Moses, the Hebrew child who became a Prince of

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Pharaoh's household; and of the wonderful exodus of the Children of Israel. But besides that, it is a land which has a most strange and wonderful story of its own. No other country has so long a history of great Kings, and wise men, and brave soldiers; and in no other country can you see anything to compare with the great buildings, some of them most beautiful, all of them most wonderful, of which Egypt has so many.

We have some old and interesting buildings in this country, and people go far to see cathedrals and castles that are perhaps five or six hundred years old, or even more. Many people came to witness these from various places.

In Egypt, buildings of that age are looked upon as almost new, and nobody pays very much attention to them. For the great temples and tombs of Egypt were, many of them, hundreds of years old before the story of our Bible, properly speaking, begins.)

So, we may say that the book ‘Mṣr al-Qadima’ (The Old Egypt) is themed about the history of ancient Egypt.

The stories that pointed out by Najib Mahfouz provide a commentary on history and on the erroneous perceptions of Arabs by the West by the theme. On a meta-textual level, they subvert the official history by presenting history from a new perspective. Like most of Mahfouz’s novels, the stories in Ancient Egypt aim to portray Egyptian society and individuals and to understand the situation in present day Egypt in relation to its history.
After a deep study of the pages of ‘Mīṣr al-Qadīma’, we found the history of ancient Egypt as Najib Mahfouz themed this book on it. Ancient Egypt was an ancient civilization of North-eastern Africa, concentrated along the lower reaches of the Nile River in what is now the modern country of Egypt. It is one of six civilizations globally to arise independently. Egyptian civilization coalesced around 3150 B.C. with the political unification of Upper and Lower Egypt under the first pharaoh. The history of ancient Egypt occurred in a series of stable Kingdoms, separated by periods of relative instability known as Intermediate Periods: the Old Kingdom of the Early Bronze Age, the Middle Kingdom of the Middle Bronze Age and the New Kingdom of the Late Bronze Age. Egypt reached the pinnacle of its power during the New Kingdom, in the Ramesside period where it rivaled the Hittite Empire, Assyrian Empire and Mitanni Empire, after which it entered a period of slow decline. Egypt was invaded or conquered by a succession of foreign powers. In the aftermath of the death Alexander, the Great, one of his generals, Ptolemy Soter, established himself as the new ruler of Egypt. This Greek Ptolemaic Dynasty ruled Egypt until 30 B.C., when, under Cleopatra, it fell to the Roman Empire and became a Roman province.

The success of ancient Egyptian civilization came partly from its ability to adapt to the conditions of the Nile River valley. The predictable flooding and controlled irrigation of the fertile valley produced surplus crops, which supported a more dense population, and social development and culture. With resources to spare, the administration sponsored mineral exploitation of the valley and surrounding desert regions, the early development of an independent writing system, the organization of
collective construction and agricultural projects, trade with surrounding regions, and a military intended to defeat foreign enemies and assert Egyptian dominance. Motivating and organizing these activities was a bureaucracy of elite scribes, religious leaders, and administrators under the control of a pharaoh, who ensured the cooperation and unity of the Egyptian people in the context of an elaborate system of religious beliefs.

According to Najib Mahfouz, the Nile has been the lifeline of its region for much of human history. The fertile floodplain of the Nile gave humans the opportunity to develop a settled agricultural economy and a more sophisticated, centralized society that became a cornerstone in the history of human civilization. Nomadic modern human hunter-gatherers began living in the Nile valley through the end of the Middle Pleistocene some 120 thousand years ago. By the late Paleolithic period, the arid climate of Northern Africa became increasingly hot and dry, forcing the populations of the area to concentrate along the river region.

Thousands years back, a small tribes living in the Nile valley had developed into a series of cultures demonstrating firm control of agriculture and animal husbandry, and identifiable by their pottery and personal items, such as combs, bracelets, and beads. The largest of these early cultures in Upper Egypt was the Badari, which probably originated in the Western Desert; it was known for its high quality ceramics, stone tools, and its use of copper. Here, we may cite a quotation:

قال مورخ إغريقي قديم "مصر هبة النيل" وهذا صحيح. لقد رأينا كيف أن النيل كونه باختلافه طريقا بين الآثار، وبتكوينه الدنيا، وهو لم يخلقها فقط بل هو يحفظ لها حياة مستدامة. وقد كانت مصر، كما هي الآن، من
An old Greek historian once said, "Egypt is the gift of the Nile," and it is perfectly true. We have seen how the great river made the country to begin with, cutting out the narrow valley through the hills, and building up the flat plain of the Delta. But the Nile has not only made the country; it keeps it alive. You know that Egypt has always been one of the most fertile lands in the world. Almost anything will grow there, and it produces wonderful crops of corn and vegetables, and, nowadays, of cotton. It was the same in old days. When Rome was the capital of the world, she used to get most of the corn to feed her hungry thousands from Egypt by the famous Alexandrian

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cornships; and you remember how, in the Bible story, Joseph's brethren came down from Palestine because, though there was famine there, there was "corn in Egypt." And yet Egypt is a land where rain is almost unknown. Sometimes there will come a heavy thunder-shower; but for month after month, year in and year out, there may be no rain at all.

How can a rainless country grow anything? The secret is the Nile. Every year, when the rains fall in the great lake-basin of Central Africa, from which one branch of the great river comes, and on the Abyssinian hills, where the other branch rises, the Nile comes down in flood. All the lower lands are covered, and a fresh deposit of Nile mud is left upon them; and, though the river does not rise to the higher grounds, the water is led into big canals, and these, again, are divided up into little ones, till it circulates through the whole land, as the blood circulates through your arteries and veins. This keeps the land fertile, and makes up for the lack of rain.)

Moreover, Najib Mahfouz adds in praise of the river Nile:

ولا نهر النيل لكثافت مصر قطعة من الصحراء ليس فيها ما يميزها عن بقية أجزائها، وليس من شئ في حياة مصر بستر عن الانتهاء إلا تاريخها العظيم، ذلك التاريخ القديم الذي وسم القطر بسم سحر جعلها مصدر جاذبية لجميع الناس، وكذلك أثارها المجيدة، ولهذا لا توجد أمة غير مصر تشاهد فيها السكان الأصليين ومظاهر الخضارة القديمة كما كانت في بدة تاريخها.

(Apart from its wonderful river, the country itself has no very striking features. It is rather a monotonous land--a long ribbon of green running through a great waste of yellow desert and barren hills. But the great charm that draws people's minds to Egypt, and gives the old land a never-failing interest, is its great story of the past, and all the relics of that story which are still to be seen.)

Another important theme of the book ‘Mīsīr al-Qadīma’ (The Ancient Egypt) is arts of monuments and technology. Many achievements of the ancient Egyptians include the quarrying, surveying and construction techniques that supported the building of monumental pyramids, temples, and obelisks; a system of mathematics, a practical and effective system of medicine, irrigation systems and agricultural production techniques, Egyptian faience and glass technology, new forms of literature, and the earliest known peace treaty, made with Hittites. Egypt left a lasting legacy. Its art and architecture were widely copied, and its antiquities carried off to far corners of the world. Its monumental ruins have inspired the imaginations of travellers and writers for centuries. A new-found respect for antiquities and excavations in the early modern period by Europeans and Egyptians led to the scientific investigation of Egyptian civilization and a greater appreciation of its cultural legacy. So, Najib Mahfouz has kept his eyes on the Pyramids also. Major advances in architecture, art, and technology were made during the Old Kingdom, fuelled by the increased agricultural productivity and resulting population, made possible by a well-developed central administration. Some of ancient Egypt's crowning achievements, the Giza pyramids and Great Sphinx, were constructed during the Old Kingdom. Under the direction of the vizier, state officials
collected taxes, coordinated irrigation projects to improve crop yield, drafted peasants to work on construction projects, and established a justice system to maintain peace and order. As he says:

The arrival of the squadron at Thebes, which they must have reached by a canal connecting the Nile with the Red Sea, was made the occasion of a great holiday festival. Long lines of troops in gala attire came out to meet the brave explorers, and an escort of the royal fleet accompanied the exploring squadron up to the temple quay where the ships were to moor. Then the Thebans feasted their eyes on the wonderful treasures that had come from Punt, wondering at the natives, the incense, the ivory, and, above all, at a giraffe which had been brought home. How the poor creature was stowed away on the little Egyptian ship it is hard to see; but there he was, with his spots and his long neck,
the most wonderful creature that the good folks of Thebes had ever seen. The precious incense gum was stored in the temple, and the Queen herself gave a bushel measure, made of a mixture of gold and silver, to measure it out with. So the voyage of discovery had ended in a great success.)

In another statement Najib Mahfouz says:

(First of all, let me try to give you an idea of what an Egyptian temple must have been like in the days of its splendour. People come from all parts of the world to see even the ruins of these buildings, and they are altogether the most astonishing buildings in the world; but they are now only the skeletons of what the temples once were, and scarcely give you any more idea of their former glory and beauty than a human skeleton does of the beauty of a living man or woman. Suppose, then, that we are coming up to the gates of a great Egyptian temple in the days when it was still the house of a god who was worshipped by hundreds of thousands of people.)

In this context Najib Mahfouz adds:

(As we pass out of the narrow streets of the city to which the temple belongs, we find ourselves standing upon a broad paved way, which stretches before us for hundreds of yards. On either side, this way is bordered by a row of statues, and these statues are in the form of what we call sphinxes—that is to say, they have bodies shaped like crouching lions, and on the lion-body there is set the head of a different creature. Some of the sphinxes, like the Great Sphinx, have human heads; but those which border the temple avenues have oftener either ram or jackal heads.)

Najib Mahfouz also capitalizes his statement:
Not very far from Cairo, has the modern capital of Egypt, a line of strange, pointed buildings raised against the sky on the edge of the desert. These are the Pyramids, the tombs of the great Kings of Egypt in early days, and if we want to know what Egyptian builders could do 4,000 years before Christ, we must look at them. Take the largest of them, the Great Pyramid, called the Pyramid of Cheops. Cheops is really Khufu, the King who was so much put out by Dedi’s prophecy about Rud-didet’s three babies. No such building was ever reared either before or since. It stands, even now, 450 feet in height, and before the peak was destroyed, it was about 30 feet higher. Each of its four sides measures over 750 feet in length, and it covers more than twelve acres of ground, the size of a pretty large field. But you will get the best idea of how tremendous a building it is when I tell you that if you used it as a quarry, you could build a town, big enough to hold all the people of Aberdeen, out of the Great Pyramid; or if you broke up the stones of which it is built, and laid them in a line a foot broad and a foot deep, the line would reach a good deal more than halfway round the world at the Equator. You would have some trouble in breaking up the stones, however; for many of the great blocks weigh from 40 to 50 tons apiece, and they are so beautifully fitted to one another that you could not get the edge of a sheet of paper into the joints!

Another important theme of the book ‘Misr al-Qadima’ (The Ancient Egypt) of Najib Mahfouz is the importance of books and learning. The Egyptians were one of the earliest nations who patronized learning and reading books. So, they used to write books on various aspects of life. When most of the people of the world were not aware reading and writing but the Egyptian were the peoples who put down their thoughts in writing, or in other words, to make a book; and one of their old books, full of wise advice from a father to his son, is, perhaps, the oldest book in the world. Two words which we are constantly using might help to remind us of how much we owe to their cleverness. The one is "Bible," and the other is "paper." When we talk of the Bible, which just means "the Book," we are using one of the words which the Greeks used to describe the plant out of which the Egyptians made the material on which they wrote; and when we talk of paper, we are using another name, the commoner name, of the same plant. For the Egyptians were the first people to make paper, and they used it for many centuries before other people had learned how much handier it was than the other things which they used. As Najib Mahfouz highlights:

إذا انتهى المصري من صناعة ورقة فإنه لا يجمعه ملازم يغلبه كما تفعل الآن ولكنه يوصل الورق من الطرف الأعلى ثم يكتب في احتياج لورق صق ورقة بورقة وهكذا. ويلتف الجميع إن أراد أن يسير وكتبه في يده.
و عليه فلكتب كان لفة من الأوراق قد تبلغ أجسامه عدة أقدام طولا، وعندما في دار الآثار البريطاني كتاب مصري طوله سبع أطنان وثلاثون وخمس أقدام ونحن نعجب من الكيفية التي كانوا يجعلون بها أمثال هذا الكتاب، ولكن الأعراب من الكتاب نفسه وما يتضمنه من الكتابة التي تعد بحق أغبر الكتابات كلها وربما أغبلها أيضا، ونحن نسميه "الهيروغرافيا" ومعناها "النقي المقدس" وهي عبارة عن صور صغيرة. وكان المصريون في أول عهدهم بالكتابة يوزعون الكلمة التي يرغبون في التعبير عنها بصورة المعبر عنه، وبعد ممارسة ذلك الفن عهدوا تمكنوا من وضع
When the Egyptian had got his paper, he did not make it up into a volume with the sheets bound together at the back, as we do. He joined them end to end, adding on sheet after sheet as he wrote, and rolling up his book as he went along; so when the book was done it formed a big roll, sometimes many feet long. There is one great book in the British Museum which measures 135 feet in length. You would think it very strange and awkward to have to handle a book like that. But if the book seemed curious to you, the writing in it would seem still more curious; for the Egyptian writing was certainly the quaintest, and perhaps the prettiest, that has ever been known. It is called "hieroglyphic," which means "sacred carving," and it is nothing but little pictures from beginning to end. The Egyptians began by putting down a picture of the thing which was represented by the word they wanted to use, and, though by-and-by they formed a sort of alphabet to spell words with, and had, besides, signs that represented the different syllables of a word, still, these signs were all little pictures. For instance, one of their signs for a was the figure of an eagle; their sign for m was a lion, and for u a little chicken; so that when you look at an Egyptian book written in the hieroglyphic character, you see column after column of birds and beasts and creeping things, of men and women and boats, and all sorts of other things, marching across the page.)

Najib Mahfouz also adds this statement:

When the Egyptians wanted any of their writings to last for a very long time, they did not trust them to the frail papyrus rolls, but used another kind of book altogether. You have heard of "sermons in stones"? Well, a great many of the Egyptian books that tell us of the great deeds of the Pharaohs were written on stone, carved deep and clear in the hard granite of a great obelisk, or in the limestone of a temple wall. When one of the Kings came back from the wars, he generally published the account of his battles and victories by carving them on the walls of one of the great temples, or on a pillar set up in the court of a temple, and there they remain to this day for scholars to read.

In ‘Misr al-Qadima’ (The Ancient Egypt) the writer Najib Mahfouz has themed highly on the Egypt of Pharaoh. The Pharaoh was the absolute monarch of the country and at least in theory, wielded complete control of the land and its resources. The king was the supreme military commander and head of the government, who relied on a

bureaucracy of officials to manage his affairs. The temples formed the backbone of the economy. Not only were they houses of worship, but were also responsible for collecting and storing the nation's wealth in a system of granaries and treasuries administered by overseers, who redistributed grain and goods. As for example:

(For the King of Egypt is a very great man indeed; in fact, his 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. Ever since there have been Kings in the country, and that is a very long time now, the reigning monarch has been looked upon as a kind of god manifest in the flesh. He calls himself "Son of the Sun"; in the temples you will see pictures of his childhood, where great goddesses dandle the young god upon their

knees. Divine honours are paid, and sacrifices offered to him; and when he dies, and
goes to join his brother-gods in heaven, a great temple rises to his memory, and hosts of
priests are employed in his worship. There is just one distinction made between him
and the other gods. Amen at Thebes, Ptah at Memphis, and all the rest of the crowd of
divinities, are called "the great gods." Pharaoh takes a different title. He is called "The
Good God."}

In this connection Najib Mahfouz adds:

وفي الوقت الذي أتحدث عنه كان "الله الطبيب" رمسيس الثاني، ولا ريب أن هذا جزء صغير من اسمه
الكامل، لأنه مثل جميع التراثية له قائمة من الأسماء ضمًا صفحة. ولم تكن رعيته في طبيعة قد رأته من زمن طويل،
لأنه كان عاشيا في سوريا يحاول حل عدة مشكلات سياسية، فلم يرجع لمصر أهله في بناء عاصمة جديدة في
تشين أو "زون" كما يدعون اليهود، وهي واقعة بين الدلتا والحوار الشرقية وكان بين مصيب وقته فيها. وجميع
الذين شاهدوا العاصمة الجديدة يروون عليها أجملثناء ويضيفون بعضهم إشادة بديعة ورسهون في وصف معها
الجدد وتمثال فرعون المقام أمامه ارتفاعه تسعين قدماً، ولكن حتى في ذلك الوقت كانت طبيعة لا تزال مركز
حياة الشعب التجارية.121

At present "The Good God" is Ramses II. Of course, that is only one part of his
name; for, like all the other Pharaohs, he has a list of titles that would fill a page. His
subjects in Thebes have not seen very much of him for a long time, for there has been
so much to do away in Syria, that he has built another capital at Tanis, which the
Hebrew call Zoan, down between the Delta and the eastern frontier, and spends most of
his time there. People who have been down the river tell us great wonders about the

beauty of the new town, its great temple, and the huge statue of the King, 90 feet high, which stands before the temple gate. But Thebes is still the centre of the nation's life.)

Another notable theme of this book is Egyptian army that the great god or the good god keeps for his favour. Najib Mahfouz has talked prominently.

(The Egyptian army was not generally a very big one. It was nothing like the
great hosts that we hear of nowadays, or read of in some of the old histories. The armies
that the Pharaohs led into Syria were not often much bigger than what we should call an
army corps nowadays--probably about 20,000 men altogether, rarely more than 25,000.
But in that number you could find almost as many different sorts of men as in our own
Indian army. There would be first the native Egyptian spearmen and bowmen--the
spearmen with leather caps and quilted leather tunics, carrying a shield and spear, and
sometimes an axe, or a dagger, or short sword—the bowmen, more lightly equipped,
but probably more dangerous enemies, for the Egyptian archers were almost as famous
as the old English bowmen, and won many a battle for their King. Then came the
chariot brigade, also of native Egyptians, men probably of higher rank than the foot-
soldiers. The chariots were very light, and it must have been exceedingly difficult for
the bowman to balance himself in the narrow car, as it bumped and clattered over rough
ground. The two horses were gaily decorated, and often wore plumes on their heads.
The charioteer sometimes twisted the reins round his waist, and could take a hand in the
fighting if his companion was hard pressed, guiding his horses by swaying his body to
one side or the other.

Round the Pharaoh himself, as he stood in his beautiful chariot, marched the
royal bodyguard. It was made up of men whom the Egyptians called "Sherden"--
Sardinians, probably, who had come over the sea to serve for hire in the army of the
great King. They wore metal helmets, with a round ball on the top and horns at the
sides, carried round bossed shields, and were armed with great heavy swords of much
the same shape as those which the Norman knights used to carry. Behind the native
troops and the bodyguard marched the other mercenaries—regiments of black Sudanese,
with wild-beast skins thrown over their ebony shoulders; and light-coloured Libyans
from the West, each with a couple of feathers stuck in his leather skull-cap.)

Another notable theme of the book ‘Misr al-Qadima’ (The Ancient Egypt) of
Najib Mahfouz is the ancient Egyptian society and their thought of heaven. Egyptian
society was highly stratified, and social status was expressly displayed. Farmers made
up the bulk of the population, but agricultural produce was owned directly by the state,
temple, or noble family that owned the land. Farmers were also subject to a labour tax
and were required to work on irrigation or construction projects. Artists and craftsmen
were of higher status than farmers, but they were also under state control, working in
the shops attached to the temples and paid directly from the state treasury. Scribes and
officials formed the upper class in ancient Egypt, the so-called "white kilt class" in
reference to the bleached linen garments that served as a mark of their rank. The upper
class prominently displayed their social status in art and literature. Below the nobility
were the priests, physicians, and engineers with specialized training in their field.
Slavery was known in ancient Egypt, but the extent and prevalence of its practice are
unclear. Here is a quotation from the book “Misr al-Qadima” of Najib Mahfouz:

رتبثب الشمس في مهرها القيم وهو بيحب في سفينة خاصة وتحرسه عينان لا تغلَّن عنه أبدا وأما يدعو

لهذه الحريسة أن القمر يصعد كل شهر بعدد ندوم يظهر له في شكل خنزير، فبنى يبحر أئمتين يسير القمر
مطسطة بيطر ويمتدس إلى أن ينصف الشهر، وينبغي أن بلغ تمامه فيتم رحبتين من طبقته ويجزَّر بعده عن مكانه.
Behind the sun, and appearing after he had vanished, came the moon, sailing in its own bark. It was protected by two guardian eyes, which watched always over it and it needed the protection, for every month it was attacked by a great enemy in the form of a sow. For a fortnight the moon sailed on safely, and grew fuller and rounder; but at the middle of the month, just when it was full, the sow attacked it, tore it out of its place,

and flung it into the celestial river, where for another fortnight it was gradually extinguished, to be revived again at the beginning of the next month. That was the Egyptians' curious way of accounting for the waxing and waning of the moon and many of their other ideas were just as quaint as this.

I do not mean to say anything of what they believed about God, for they had so many gods, and believed such strange things about them, that it would only confuse you if I tried to make you understand it all. But the most important thing in all the Egyptian religion was the belief in heaven, and in the life which people lived there after their life on earth was ended. No other nation of these old times ever believed so firmly as did the Egyptians that men were immortal, and did not cease to be when they died, but only began a new life, which might be either happy or miserable, according to the way in which they had lived on earth. They had a lot of different beliefs about the life after death, some of them rather confusing and difficult to understand; but I shall tell you only the main things and the simplest things which they believed. They said, then, that very long ago, when the world was young, there was a great and good King called Osiris, who reigned over Egypt, and was very good to his subjects, teaching them all kinds of useful knowledge. But Osiris had a wicked brother named Set, who hated him, and was jealous of him. One day Set invited Osiris to a supper, at which he had gathered a number of his friends who were in the plot with him. When they were all feasting gaily, he produced a beautiful chest, and offered to give it to the man who fitted it. One after another they lay down in the chest, but it fitted none of them. Then at last Osiris lay down in it, and as soon as he was inside, his wicked brother and the other
plotters fastened the lid down upon him, and threw the chest into the Nile. It was carried away by the river, and at last was washed ashore, with the dead body of the good King still in it.)

In this regards the author adds:

... وكان لأوزوريب زوجة مخصصة هي إيزيز، خرجت عنه في كل مكان حتى عثرت على الصندوق وجلست بجانب تبكي زوجها المحبوب. ولكن فاجأها ست و خطف الجثة من بين يديها وقطعها أربا وثارها في الهواء، فزاد ذلك في حزن إيزيز، حتى هامت على وجهها تجمع ما تتأثر من لحم زوجها وتدفنه حيث تجد. وكان لإيزيس طفل يدعى هوروس، فما كبر وصار رجلا تباز مع ست وقنه انتقاما لوالده. هناك ادعت الأنيثة وتدبين لها من محاسبة الشقيقتين ما كان أوزوريب عليه من الحق والهدى وما كان أخوه عليه من العي والضلال ثم إنهما رفعوا أوزوريب إلى مصف الكنيسة وعينوه قاضيا بحاسب الناس بعد الموت. واستنتج المصريون من هذه القصة الاعتقاد بالحياة بعد الموت فقلوا إذا كان أوزوريب قد بُعد بعد الموت فإن الذين يعودونه يعثون كذلك ويعبشو معه. وتشابه هذه القصة ما ترويه الكتب المقدسة عن موت المسيح وبعثه حيا بعد ذلك.  

But Isis, wife of Osiris, sought for her husband everywhere, and at last she found the chest with his body. While she was weeping over it the wicked Set came upon her, tore his brother's body to pieces, and scattered the fragments far and wide; but the faithful Isis traced them all, and buried them wherever she found them. Now, Isis had a son named Horus, and when he grew to manhood he challenged Set, fought with him, and defeated him. Then the gods all assembled, and gave judgment that Osiris was in the right, and Set in the wrong. They raised Osiris up from the dead, made him a god, and appointed him to be judge of all men after death. And then, not all at once, but

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gradually, the Egyptians came to believe that because Osiris died, and rose again from the dead, and lived for ever after death, therefore all those men who believed in Osiris would live again after death, and dwell for ever with Osiris. You see that in some respects the story is strangely like that of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.)

Najib Mahfouz has left no stone unturned to point out history of ancient Egypt in each and every wink of eyes he even discussed on military department also. In real sense the ancient Egyptians were farmers, not fighters. They didn't see the need for an organized army. They were well protected by the natural boundaries of the desert that surrounded the empire. During the Old Kingdom, if the Pharaoh needed men to fight, he would call up the farmers to defend the country. They were responsible for defending Egypt against foreign invasion, and for maintaining Egypt's domination in the ancient Near East. The military protected mining expeditions to the Sinai during the Old Kingdom and fought civil wars during the First and Second Intermediate Periods. The military was responsible for maintaining fortifications along important trade routes, such as those found at the city of Buhen on the way to Nubia. Forts also were constructed to serve as military bases, such as the fortress at Sile, which was a base of operations for expeditions to the Levant. In the New Kingdom, a series of pharaohs used the standing Egyptian army to attack and conquer Kush and parts of the Levant.¹²⁵

Child education was one of the important themes of the book ‘Mīsīr al-Qadīma’ (The Ancient Egypt) of Najib Mahfouz. The ancient Egyptian children were given the

¹²⁵. For details please see ‘Mīsīr al-Qadīma’ of Najib Mahfouz
great privilege to learn while the other nations never think over it. A person usually stuck with the same career for the duration of his life, and most ancient Egyptians held labour-intensive jobs such as farming and building. The children in the house of life learned the sacred writing of ancient Egypt. They were taught hieratic, demotic and hieroglyphics. They were also taught mathematics. This literacy brought to them a host of wonderful choices that were off-limits to most. In this context Najib Mahfouz says:

(How did the boys and girls live in this quaint old land so many hundreds of years ago? How were they dressed, what sort of games did they play at, what sort of lessons did they learn, and what kind of school did they go to? If you could have lived in Egypt in those far-off days, you would have found many differences between your

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life of to-day and the life that the Egyptian children led; but you would also have found
that there were very many things much the same then as they are now. Boys and girls
were boys and girls three thousand years ago, just as they are now; and you would find
that they did very much the same things, and even played very much the same games as
you do to-day. When you read in your fairy-stories about a little boy or girl, you often
hear that they had fairy godmothers who came to their cradles, and gave them gifts, and
foretold what was going to happen to the little babies in after years. Well, when little
Tahuti or little Sen-senb was born in Thebes fifteen hundred years before Christ, there
were fairy godmothers too, who presided over the great event; and there were others
called the Hathors, who foretold all that was going to happen to the little boy or girl as
the years went on. The baby was kept a baby much longer in those days than our little
ones are kept. The happy mother nursed the little thing carefully for three years at all
events, carrying it about with her wherever she went, either on her shoulder, or astride
upon her hip.)

Further the author of ‘Mısır al-Qadima’ Najib Mahfouz points out:

وإذا مرضت الطفولة ودعت أمها طبيباً فإنه يصف لها من الأمراض ما يختلف عن أدوينتنا كلال اختلاف. فلم
ينكن الطبيب المصري يعرف الشيء الكثير عن الأمراض والأدوية وهو لجنه هذا كان يجري مريضه أشد ما
عرف الإنسان من جرعات الأدوية، ولا أظن أنك ترضي ببعض حيوان مصنوعة من عصير مياه أن المخزير ودماء
الصب، ولحما فصة، وكان الطبيب إذا فحص المريض كثيراً ما يقول "ليس هذا الطفل مريضاً إنما هو مسحور".
وأعلى ذلك كتب هذه "الوصفة" "علاج بقي من السحر". خذ خنفساً كبيرة، وقطع رأسها وجذبها، ثم اسمعوا في
زيت واتركها بعد ذلك، وأدف أخرجتها ورأسها والسحر للمسور. وأظن أن القليل يؤثر عليها السحر على
كل مثل هذه الوصقة، وفي أحيان أخرى يكتفي الطبيب بكتابة كلمات سحرية غامضة على ورق قد وبسطها
(If baby took ill, and the doctor was called in, the medicines that were given were not in the least like the sugar-coated pills and capsules that make medicine-taking easy nowadays. The Egyptian doctor did not know a very great deal about medicine and sickness, but he made up for his ignorance by the nastiness of the doses which he gave to his patients. I don't think you would like to take pills made up of the moisture scraped from pig's ears, lizard's blood, bad meat, and decaying fat, to say nothing of still nastier things. Often the doctor would look very grave, and say, "The child is not ill; he is bewitched"; and then he would sit down and write out a prescription something like this: "Remedy to drive away bewitchment. Take a great beetle; cut off his head and his wings, boil him, put him in oil, and lay him out. Then cook his head and his wings; put them in snake-fat, boil, and let the patient drink the mixture." I think you would almost rather take the risk of being bewitched than drink a dose like that! Sometimes the doctor gave no medicines at all, but wrote a few magic words on a scrap of old paper, and tied

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it round the part where the pain was. I daresay it did as much good as his pills. Very often the mother believed that it was not really sickness that was troubling her child, but that a ghost was coming and hurting him; so when his cries showed that the ghost was in the room, the mother would rise up, shaking all over, I daresay, and would repeat the verse that she had been taught would drive ghosts away:

"Comest thou to kiss this child? I suffer thee not to kiss him; Comest thou to quiet him? I suffer thee not to quiet him; Comest thou to harm him? I suffer thee not to harm him; Comest thou to take him away? I suffer thee not to take him away."

In another place Najib Mahfouz emphasized:
(For about four years this would go on, as long as Tahuti was what the Egyptians called "a wise little one." Then, when he was four years old, the time came when he had to become "a writer in the house of books," which is what the Egyptians called a school-boy; so little Tahuti set off for school, still wearing no more clothes than the thread tied round his waist, and with his black hair plaited up into a long thick lock, which hung down over his right ear. The first thing that he had to learn was how to read and write, and this was no easy task, for Egyptian writing, though it is very beautiful when well done, is rather difficult to master, all the more as there were two different styles which had to be learned if a boy was going to become a man of learning. I don't suppose that you think your old copy-books of much importance when you are done with them; but the curious thing is that among all the books that have come down to us from ancient Egypt, there are far more old copy-books than any others, and these books,

with the teachers' corrections written on the margins, and rough sketches scratched in here and there among the writing, have proved most valuable in telling us what the Egyptians learned, and what they liked to read; for a great deal of the writing consisted in the copying out of wise words of the men of former days, and sometimes of stories of old times. These old copy-books can speak to us in one way, but if they could speak in another, I daresay they would tell us of many weary hours in school, and of many floggings and tears; for the Egyptian school-master believed with all his heart in the cane, and used it with great vigour and as often as he could. Little Tahuti used to look forward to his daily flogging, much as he did to his lunch in the middle of the day, when his careful mother regularly brought him three rolls of bread and two jugs of beer. "A boy's ears," his master used to say, "are on his back, and he hears when he is beaten."

One of the former pupils at his school writing to his teacher, and recalling his school-days, says: "I was with thee since I was brought up as a child; thou didst beat my back, and thine instructions went into my ear." Sometimes the boys, if they were stubborn, got punishments even worse than the cane. Another boy, in a letter to his old master, says: "Thou hast made me buckle to since the time that I was one of thy pupils. I spent my time in the lock-up, and was sentenced to three months, and bound in the temple." I am afraid our school boys would think the old Egyptian teachers rather more severe than the masters with whom they have to do nowadays.

The Fairy Tales are also an important theme of the book ‘Mist al-Qadima’ (The Ancient Egypt) of Najib Mahfouz. Here he has stressed the nice stories of 'King
Khufu', the builder of the great Pyramids and the 'Zazamankh', the greatest magician of the ancient Egypt. About this theme Najib Mahfouz told:

في ذات يوم دعا الملك خوفو "وهو الذي يبني هرم الجيزة الأكبر" أولاده وعقلاء مساعدته ثم قال لهم "هل
فيم من يستطيع أن يروي لي قصة قراءة السحر؟". وهنا وقف الأمير بوفرا - ابن الملك - وقال "مولاي-
سأروي لكم قصة غريبة حدثت في عهد الملك سنيفو. أنبكم العظيم". فقد تضاقت الملك يوما وشعر بأشام والضجر
ولم يجد ما يفرح به عن نفسه الملك، وأخيرا قال له ضبطه "أحضروا إلى السحر "زازامانح" فإنا مال بين يديه قل
له الملك "أيها السحر زازامانح، لقد بختت في جميع قراءتي فلم أحد ما يذهب عنني المال". فقل السحر "الفضل يا
مولاي بالركن في القبر ووجه يسرينا في بحيرة القصر وم بباحت عشرين قناة نهجرك الماجديف، وركب
في القرب مجديف من الاليوس الموضع بالذهب والفضة، ولا بد أن تفرح عنا يا مولاي بالنور إلى طيور الماء
ووساطي البحيرة الجميلة والخشت الخضراء وتعيد نفثك سرورها".

وركب الجميع في السفينة الجميلة التي سارت بهم في بحيرة القصر، وكان على كل جانب من جانبي
السفينة نجلس تسمع القصص، أما الاثنين اللدانيان وكانا جمل القصص فقد جعلنا في مؤخر السفينة بجانب الدفة،
وأخذا ينشدان لنحا خاصا للتحديث، وابتدأ الأسر يعود السفر لما توالت القرب داخل البحيرة وكانت المجاديف
ترفع في الهواء وتعرق في الماء على نفخ القناتين المجادليين. ولكن حدث أن مجادف إحدى القناتين المجادليين
لمس خطأ رأس القنات الا ثانية فقط قبض في عيني صغير كان على رأسها، فأوقفت عن التحديث وعن الغناء وتوقفت
القينات الثاني في صفا كذلك، فسأل الملك: "ما السبب، لا توقفت عن العمل؟" فاجابت القنات "ذلك لأن ناجي الفيروزى سقط في
الماء". فقال الملك:

"استمري في الغناء وساعديك وأحجا غيره".

"أريد ناجي القديم ولا أرغب في امتلاك سواء".
One day, when King Khufu, the great King who built the biggest of the Pyramids, had nothing else to do, he called his sons and his wise men together, and said, "Is there anyone among you who can tell me the tales of the old magicians?" Then the King's son, Prince Baufra, stood up and said, "Your Majesty, I can tell you of a wonder that happened in the days of your father, King Seneferu. It fell on a day that the King grew weary of everything, and sought through his entire palace for something to please him, but found nothing. Then he said to his officers, 'Bring to me the magician Zazamankh.' And when the magician came, the King said to him, 'O Zazamankh, I have sought through my entire palace for some delight, and I have found none.' Then said Zazamankh, 'Let thy Majesty go in thy boat upon the lake of the palace, and let twenty beautiful girls be brought to row thee, and let their oars be of ebony, inlaid with gold and silver. And I myself will go with thee; and the sight of the water-birds, and the fair

shores, and the green grass will cheer thy heart.' So the King and the wizard went down to the lake, and the twenty maidens rowed them about in the King's pleasure-galley.

Nine rowed on this side, and nine on that, and the two fairest stood by the two rudders at the stern, and set the rowing song, each for her own side. And the King's heart grew glad and light, as the boat sped hither and thither, and the oars flashed in the sunshine to the song of the rowers. "But as the boat turned, the top of the steering-oar struck the hair of one of the maidens who steered, and knocked her coronet of turquoise into the water; and she stopped her song, and all the rowers on her side stopped rowing. Then his Majesty said, 'Why have you stopped rowing, little one?' And the maiden answered, 'It is because my jewel of turquoise has fallen into the water.' 'Row on,' said the King, 'and I will give you another.' But the girl answered, 'I want my own one back, as I had it before.' So King Seneferu called Zazamankh to come to him, and said, 'Now, Zazamankh, I have done as you advised, and my heart is light; but, behold, the coronet of this little one has fallen into the water, and she has stopped singing, and spoiled the rowing of her side; and she will not have a new jewel, but wants the old one back again.' "Then Zazamankh the wizard stood up in the King's boat, and spoke wonderful words. And, lo! the water of one half of the lake rose up, and heaped itself upon the top of the water of the other half, so that it was twice as deep as it was before. And the King's bark rode upon the top of the piled-up waters; but beyond it the bottom of the lake lay bare, with the shells and pebbles shining in the sunlight. And there, upon a broken shell, lay the little rower's coronet. Then Zazamankh leaped down and picked it up, and brought it to the King. And he spoke wonderful words again, and the water sank down, and
covered the whole bed of the lake, as it had done at first. So his Majesty spent a joyful day, and gave great rewards to the wizard Zazamankh.")

The narrative style is an important element in creation of Ancient Egypt. While he uses a variety of novelistic techniques associated with the Western literary tradition, he uses others that are associated with Arabic literature and Islam. In addition, he uses multiple narrative voices—a technique common to both Arabic and Western literature—to question and subvert the greater narrative process. Mahfouz achieves this by using various stories told by or about different characters—often in the form of different chapters. These multiple narratives create a polyphonic text in which they are able to expose their own authorial voices and function as alternative historians. By using characters immersed in an Arab community, he attempts to portray the historical, political, and ideological context in which these stories are possible and necessary.

After a deep study on the pages of ‘Mīṣr al-Qādīma’ of Najib Mahfouz I got these themes and techniques which I have stressed above all.

**Findings:**

The main findings of this chapter are as follows:

1. Necessity of the history in present day research scenario
2. Importance of the Pharaohnic Tales
3. Influence of ancient monuments in present day archaeology
4. Scientific discovery of the ancient Egypt
5. Ancient education system

6. Relation between history and literature etc.