



The Representation of Egyptian History in Maher Batuti's Novel *Al Futuuhat Al Barisiyyah*: A New Historicism Study

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ABSTRACT

A novel is not merely a work of fiction, it can also serve as an archive of history, both in documenting global events and recording personal responses to occurrences that are rarely preserved in official records. This study departs from a series of excerpts from Maher Batuti's *Al Futuuhat Al Barisiyyah* which portrays Egyptian history after 1952, including humanitarian tragedies, political conflicts, and social dynamics in the Middle East. Several key issues highlighted in the novel include civilian massacres caused by Israeli air raids, Egypt's defeat in the Six-Day War or the Naksa of 1967, the dilemmas of the Egyptian diaspora in France, as well as Gamal Abdel Nasser's political repression against the leftists and the Muslim Brotherhood. The objectives of this study are to reveal how fiction can function as an alternative historical archive, to analyze the representation of Egyptian political history within a literary text, and to uncover the causes and impacts of Egypt's political decline as depicted in the novel. This research employs a qualitative descriptive method through literary text analysis combined with historical inquiry. Data were collected through intensive reading of the novel, examination of historical articles, and archival studies. The findings indicate that the novel presents Egyptian history from a more humanistic perspective, capturing experiences of diaspora, political wounds, and the transition of leadership from Nasser to Sadat. Egypt, once depicted as a tolerant and beautiful nation, is shown to have hardened under Nasser's policies, culminating in the Naksa tragedy and conflicts with the Muslim Brotherhood. Thus the novel constructs an alternative history that not only addresses political events but also records marginal voices often overlooked and omitted in official historiography.

Keywords: representatiton, Egyptian History, Al Futuuhat Al Barisiyyah, new historican study

Representasi Sejarah Mesir dalam Novel *Al Futuuhat Al Barisiyyah* Karya Maher Batuti: Kajian New Historicism

ABSTRAK

Novel bukan hanya karya fiksi biasa, tapi dapat difungsikan untuk menyimpan arsip sejarah, baik secara global maupun merekam respons secara personal terhadap peristiwa yang jarang tercatat resmi. Penelitian ini berangkat dari serangkaian kutipan novel *Al Futuuhat Al Barisiyyah* yang merekam sejarah Mesir pasca-1952, tragedi kemanusiaan, konflik politik, dan dinamika sosial di Timur Tengah. Beberapa isu utama yang diangkat antara lain: pembantaian sipil oleh serangan udara Israel, kekalahan Mesir dalam perang enam hari atau Naksa 1967, dilematis diaspora Mesir di Prancis, serta represi politik Gamal Abdul Nasser terhadap kaum kiri dan Ikhwanul Muslimin. Tujuan penelitian ini adalah: (1) mengungkapkan bagaimana karya fiksi dapat difungsikan sebagai alternatif untuk arsip sejarah (2) menganalisis representasi sejarah politik Mesir dalam teks sastra (3) mengungkap dampak dan penyebab kemerosotan Pemerintahan Mesir yang digambarkan dalam novel. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode kualitatif deskriptif dengan pendekatan analisis teks sastra yang dipadukan dengan kajian historis. Data dikumpulkan melalui pembacaan intensif novel, telaah artikel sejarah, serta studi arsip. Hasil penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa novel menghadirkan sejarah Mesir dari sisi yang lebih manusiawi, pengalaman diaspora, luka politik, hingga pergantian kepemimpinan dari Nasser ke Sadat. Mesir digambarkan dulu sebagai negeri indah dan toleran, namun berubah keras di bawah kebijakan Nasser. Hingga tragedi Naksa dan konflik dengan Ikhwanul Muslimin. Dengan begitu, novel ini menyusun sejarah alternatif yang tidak hanya soal politik, tetapi juga merekam suara-suara kecil yang sering terabaikan dan tidak tercatat dalam sejarah resmi.

Kata kunci: represenntasi, sejarah Mesir, Al Futuuhat Al Barisiyyah, Mesir, New Historicism, Mesir.

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INTRODUCTION

Egypt is one of the Middle Eastern and North African countries with a highly complex political trajectory. In 1798, Egypt was trapped in a dire situation due to ineffective governmental policies in the social, cultural, and educational sectors. This condition made Egypt an easy target for the French expedition during its territorial and commercial rivalry with Britain. (Shidiqiyah, 2022). After approximately three years of occupation and control over Egypt, France was eventually forced to surrender to Britain in 1801. France and Britain then concluded an agreement known as the Alexandria Treaty, which stipulated that the French forces in Egypt had to return to France, and Egypt was restored to the rule of the Ottoman Empire (Peters, 2009). This initial contact with the European world marked the starting point of Arab awareness regarding external powers and their accompanying ideological influences. At that time, Egypt was politically and economically subordinated to Britain. The reality of colonial domination became increasingly evident with the outbreak of the First World War (Milner, 1907). This situation gave rise to new political consciousness among the people. The Egyptian Revolution began when Egyptian communist activists realized that the country had to be liberated from British domination, which culminated in the years 1949–1951. In 1952, Egypt officially gained its independence from Britain. However, part of the British forces, under royal command, continued to occupy Egypt and remained involved in state affairs. This condition paved the way for Gamal Abdel Nasser to assume leadership of Egypt in 1952. Nasser's path to the presidency began when King Farouk abdicated, creating a governmental vacuum. This situation pushed Gamal Abdel Nasser

toward the presidency and eventually transformed Egypt into a republic (Nurudin, 2015) in (Ali, 2022).

The development of democratization in Egypt during Nasser's leadership often gave rise to policy conflicts. Nasser restricted the advancement of the fundamental components of democracy. His administration adopted a socialist political system that leaned toward leftist ideology and abolished political pluralism, which had previously flourished during the monarchical era (Maulana et al., 2025). In 1970, leadership was transferred to Anwar Sadat. During his administration, Sadat shifted Egypt's political orientation from the Socialist bloc toward the West. This policy was implemented in order to stabilize the economy after the Nasser era, during which 40 percent of Egypt's national budget had been allocated to cover war expenses (Surya, 2022). Sadat introduced a series of adjustments. Through Law No. 43 of 1974, Egypt launched the "Infitah" or open-door policy, which gradually shifted the economy from a socialist system toward a capitalist framework (Aulas, 1982).

The next era, under Hosni Mubarak (1981– 2011), extended the pattern of authoritarian rule. Egypt was politically stable, yet this stability was sustained through repression, corruption, and restrictions on civil liberties. Eventually, on January 25, 2011, the Egyptian people began to stage protests, an action inspired by the Tunisian uprising (Ahmad, 2020) in (Jalal, 2024). A mass demonstration was scheduled for Friday, January 28, 2011. The objective of this action was to test the authority and power of the government. The authorities instructed individuals to barricade downtown areas, squares, bridges, and other gathering places. They also cut off access to the internet, social media platforms, and mobile



phone services. Many of these governmental efforts were unsuccessful. Large crowds broke through the restrictions in Cairo and gathered in Tahrir Square, located in front of the Presidential Palace and the state television headquarters.

This political trajectory later became a source of inspiration for many Arab writers of the time, giving rise to modern Arabic literary works, one of which is Maher al-Batuti's novel *Al-Futuhat al-Barisiyyah*. The novel portrays the lives of Egyptian students in Paris after the revolution, during a period when Egypt was marked by political tension. The story begins with a young Egyptian named Muhib, a history graduate from Cairo University who continued his doctoral studies in Islamic history in Paris in 1969. In Paris, Muhib was not only occupied with academic pursuits, but also became entangled with an illness referred to as *Baharan*, in which he lived across two temporal dimensions: the modern Paris he experienced in daily life and the Paris of the past that emerged through fragments of history. Among these experiences, Muhib seemingly witnessed firsthand the execution of the French king by guillotine in 1793 at Concorde Square. In this way, Muhib appeared to traverse historical spaces directly.

Through its characters, the novel also illustrates the tension between Egyptian traditions and European modernity. Muhib's life in Paris opened a new space of encounter with the Western world, ranging from academic life and student interactions to his romantic relationship with a French woman named Chantal. Beyond presenting European history, the novel also reflects the socio-political realities of Egypt after its defeat in the June 1967 War, which continued to haunt the younger generation. The lives of Egyptian

students in Paris are depicted as filled with disillusionment. The repressive political situation in their homeland stood in stark contrast to the freer atmosphere of Europe, leading the characters to continually compare, question, and even doubt the direction of Egypt's future.

Through this novel, the author seeks to reinterpret the political conditions of Egypt during the presidency of Gamal Abdel Nasser and the transition to Anwar Sadat by employing the perspective of New Historicism. New Historicism refers to the renewed interest that emerged in the 1980s among a number of North American critics in examining the historical and social contexts of literary works. This approach carries a political dimension while simultaneously highlighting the close interrelation between literature, culture, and history (Wolfreys, 2002) in (Li & Lewis, 2021) with the awareness that the study conducted is not entirely objective, since our interest in the past is shaped by our involvement in the situations of the present (Li & Lewis, 2021). Artika explains that New Historicism aims to understand intellectual history through literature and to understand literature through its cultural context. In her research, Artika agrees with Teeuw's view that the boundary between fiction and fact is becoming increasingly blurred, thus she emphasizes the importance of applying New Historicism theory in the teaching of literature (Sentana et al., 2023). Stephen Greenblatt introduced this approach in 1982 to provide a new perspective in the study of the Renaissance. Greenblatt juxtaposed literary texts with non-literary texts in order to generate new understandings without making absolute claims about history (Maza, 2004). New Historicism tends to view literary texts not as autonomous objects but as material products that emerge from specific

social, cultural, and political contexts (Er, 2005). In the view of New Historicism, evaluating a literary work is not sufficient by reading the text alone. What is most important is to consider the historical background in which the work emerged. From this perspective, it becomes possible to see how the social, political, and cultural conditions of the time influenced the content of the work, while at the same time how the work itself contributed to shaping the way humans understand their own identity (Dale, 2021). According to (Greenblatt, 2000), New Historicism is an approach to examining past events by positioning both historical and non-historical documents, including literary works, as sources of equal importance, whether written or non-written (Alkhaerat et al., 2024).

New Historicism is chosen as the analytical framework for the novel *Al-Futuhat al-Barisiyyah*, since it is a paradigm capable of uncovering the close interconnection between literature, history, and culture as integral parts of socio-political processes. The novel contains a number of events that illustrate Egypt's political dynamics during the presidency of Gamal Abdel Nasser and the transition to Anwar Sadat. This makes New Historicism highly relevant to the study. As (Brannigan, 1999) states, New Historicism is an approach that connects a text with its context within the broader scope of politics, as well as its relation to literary interpretation. Therefore, there are clear indications of a strong link between the text in *Al-Futuhat al-Barisiyyah* and politics (Muttaqin, 2021) In this study, the theory of New Historicism is appropriately applied.

In the course of the research, the researcher identified several relevant studies. First, the study by (Adhitya et al., 2021) entitled *The Representation of History and the Impact of World War II in Fumiyo Kouno's*

Comic Kono Sekai no Katasumi ni, employed Stephen Greenblatt's New Historicism theory to examine the comic by Fumiyo Kouno. The study aimed to understand the representation of World War II and its impact on Japanese society, particularly in Kure, through historical facts as well as the shift in public mindset from a spirit of war to a preference for peace. Second, the study by (Sentana et al., 2023) entitled *The Image of Java and Its People in Emilie's Eyes Under the Perspective of New Historicism*, employed the theory of New Historicism with the novel *Emilie Java 1904* by Catherine Van Moppes as its object of analysis. This study aimed to uncover the historiography of Java in 1904 during the Dutch colonial period through the perspective of a French character, highlighting the depiction of Javanese society, socio-cultural conditions, and the practices of colonialism portrayed in the novel. Third, the study by (Nurhasanah et al., 2021) entitled *Independence in Ahmad Syauqi's Poetry "Ya Ayyuha As-Sail Ma Al-Huriyyah"*, applied the theory of New Historicism to examine Ahmad Syauqi's poetry. Its aim was to reveal the concept of independence during Egypt's colonial period, which was understood as something sacred, a source of national strength, and a form of sacrifice. From the three studies mentioned above, the researcher identified both similarities and differences with the present study. The similarities lie in the application of Stephen Greenblatt's New Historicism theory, the use of a qualitative descriptive approach, and the novel in the first study. The differences, however, are found in the objects and areas of focus. The first study examined the comic *Kono Sekai no Katasumi ni* by Fumiyo Kouno, the second explored the novel *Emilie Java 1904* by Catherine Van Moppes, and the third analyzed the poem *Ya Ayyuha As-Sail Ma*



Al-Huriyyah by Ahmad Syauqi.

Based on these similarities and differences, the position of this study is to represent Egyptian history in the novel *Al-Futuhat al-Barisiyyah* by Maher Batuti using the New Historicism approach to reveal the causes and consequences of the decline of the Egyptian government as depicted in the novel, as well as to compare officially recorded historical texts with historical narratives preserved in literary works. The focus of this research lies on the representations of Egyptian history in the novel *Al-Futuhat al-Barisiyyah*.

METHOD

This research employs a descriptive qualitative approach using the library research method. The object of the study is the novel *Al-Futuhat Al-Barisiyyah* by Maher Batuti, which was first published in 2017, later revised in 2024, and issued by Hindawi Book. The research data consist of excerpts from the novel that document the history of Egypt in the post-1952 period.

The research process was carried out through several main stages:

- 1) Repeated reading of the text to understand its content, structure, and historical representations presented in the novel.
- 2) Classification of excerpts relevant to the themes of social, political, and cultural history.
- 3) Comparison with non-literary sources, such as historical articles, history books, archives, and news reports, to examine the relevance between the novel's narrative and official historical records.
- 4) Analysis from the perspective of New Historicism, aimed at interpreting the relationship between the literary

text and the historical discourse and ideology of its time.

- 5) Drawing conclusions by reviewing the findings, followed by discussions with peers and experts (lecturers) to validate the data.

This study is non-experimental in nature, with an emphasis on gaining an in-depth understanding of literary phenomena through written sources. Data collection was conducted through national libraries, digital repositories, and academic journals relevant to modern Egyptian history. The primary source of this research is the novel *Al-Futuhat Al-Barisiyyah* by Maher Batuti, supported by secondary data in the form of historical articles, history books, archives, and news reports related to post-1952 Revolution events.

The study does not employ tests or questionnaires, but rather relies on documentation techniques and systematic recording of literary texts and historical sources. To facilitate reference retrieval and organization, document processing software and reference management applications such as Zotero/Mendeley were used.

The data were analyzed using three main techniques:

- 1) Structural analysis, which examined the plot, characters, language style, and historical narrative within the novel.
- 2) Thematic analysis, aimed at exploring the political, social, and cultural values embedded in the text.
- 3) Contextual analysis, which situated the novel within the socio-political framework of modern Egypt, particularly the period after 1952 up to the power transition from Nasser to Sadat.

Since this research is qualitative in nature,

neither descriptive nor inferential statistical analysis was applied. Interpretation was carried out narratively, drawing upon literary theory, aesthetic approaches, and cultural contextual references.

RESULT

1. Fiction Can Function as an Alternative Historical Archive

Data 1: *Al-Futuhah al-Barisiyyah*, p 79

فقام محب وأدار مفتاح التلفزيون وجلس إلى جوار شانتال وتناول زجاجة من البيرة وشرب منها على الطريقة المصرية، مع بعض الجبن وحببات الزيتون. وحمل التلفزيون أخبار مذبحه جديدة في بلدة مصرية قامت بها الطائرات الإسرائيلية مما أدى إلى مصرع أطفال ومدنيين أبرياء تابعت شانتال الأخبار على غير عاداتها، ثم التفتت إلى محب مستطلعة. هؤلاء القتلة متى سيكفون عن هذه المجازر؟ أرجو ألا يؤثر ذلك فيك يا محب. كيف لا يؤثر في؟ أعرف ذلك، ولكنها الحرب بكل ما فيها من خسة.

إني لم أكن أهتم بالسياسة، مركزا كل شيء في دراساتي وفني. ولكن هذه الأحداث تحفر في نفسي آثارًا عميقة من الأسى والحزن والغضب. أنا أيضًا أحاول الابتعاد عن السياسة قدر الإمكان. ولكن ما يحدث الآن مأساة أخلاقية لا يمكن السكوت عليها انظر، يقولون إن العرب سيقومون بمظاهرة سلمية ضد هذا العدوان. أتريد أن تشترك فيها؟ كلا، هذا لا يفيد شيئًا. لقد شعبنا شجبا وإدانة وهتافات. معك حق عليكم أن تفعلوا شيئًا بدلا من هذا الضعف العجيب. كيف وصل الحال بالعرب إلى هذا القدر؟ لقد قصصت على موضوع مخطوطك، وإني لأعجب لماذا لا يظهر بينهم صلاح الدين جديد.

كنا نعتقد هذا في القائد الحالي حتى انهار ذلك الحلم في أيام معدودات. ولكني كنت أعرف أشياء رهيبه في تلك السنوات الماضية، مما كان العارفون بالأمور يتناقلونه همسا. وهذا ما أدى إلى ما حدث من هزيمة وتفكك.

إني أذكر أيام حرب يونيو هنا، وكيف كان فرنسيو الجزائر شامتين في العرب ويهتفون هتافات مناصرة لإسرائيل على وزن هتاف الجزائر فرنسية». بالطبع، فقد كانت مصر أقوى مناصر للجزائريين في حرب استقلالهم.

حسنا، سوف نرى ما نقول إليه الأمور لا بد أن تحدث نهضة بعد تلك الكارثة. ولكن... فلنحاول أن ننسى هذه الفظائع قل لي كيف تسير دراستك للمخطوط؟ صمت محب قليلا ثم

استجمع تفكيره ثانية.

The news on television told of a new massacre in a small Egyptian town, Israeli planes had struck civilian areas and killed children and innocent people, Shantal who rarely paid much attention to the news listened carefully this time then turned to Mohib

"When will these killers ever stop"

"I hope this does not weigh too heavily on you Mohib"

"How could it not" Mohib replied, "this is war and all its lies and treachery"

"I have never been someone who cares much about politics, my life has always been about study and art, but things like this cut into my soul leaving grief and anger"

"I try to stay away from politics too, but what is happening now is a moral tragedy, you cannot just turn away from it, look there is talk of a peaceful demonstration by Arabs as protest, will you join"

"No, it is useless, we have shouted and condemned enough"

"You are right, but you should do more than just speak, how could the Arabs become this weak, I even told my father about the manuscript you are studying, strange is it not that no figure like Salahuddin has risen again"

"We once thought such a figure had come, until that hope collapsed in a matter of days, I knew even then there were terrible things whispered among those who understood, all of that led to the defeat and the ruin"

"I still remember during the June War when I was here, the French of Algerian descent cheered and mocked the Arabs, they even shouted support for Israel just like before when they cried Algeria belongs to France"

"That is because Egypt was then the fiercest supporter of Algeria's independence"

"Yes, we will see what comes after this,

*there should be a rising after such a disaster,
but let us forget for a moment all this horror”*

Data 2: *Al-Futuhat al-Barisiyyah*, p 36

فمنذ دراستي الثانوية، وقعت على كتب الاشتراكية والشيوعية، وانضمت إلى حزب منها سرا منذ أيام الملكية، وطوردت مع أصدقائي في الحزب. وعند قيام ثورة ١٩٥٢م، استبشرنا خيرا بحرية الاعتقاد السياسي، وتزامن ذلك مع تخرجي من الجامعة بامتياز، فعينت معيدا وظلت أحضر لقاءات ومحاضرات الحزب. غير أن انقلاب مارس ٥٤ - وهو الانقلاب ضد الديمقراطية. جلب علينا المطاردة والنقمة ففصلت من عملي، ودفقت مرارة المعتقلات وبقيت عاطلا طريدا، وأقمت أودي بالدروس الخصوصية وأعمال الترجمة. وظننت أن تاريخي الأكاديمي قد انتهى.

Since high school, I had been drawn to books on socialism and communism. In secret, I joined one of those parties, back in the days of the monarchy. I was hunted down along with my fellow party members. When the Revolution of 1952 erupted, we allowed ourselves to hope that true political freedom would finally arrive. By chance, I had just graduated with honors and been appointed as a teaching assistant. I kept attending party meetings and discussions. Yet the March 1954 coup a coup against democracy itself brought disaster upon us. I was dismissed from my job, tasted the bitterness of prison cells, and was cast out onto the streets without an income. I survived by giving private lessons and translating documents. At that time, I thought my academic career had come to an end.

Data 3: *Al-Futuhat al-Barisiyyah*, p 48

الحقيقة إن الموضوع ده هو اللي كنت عاوز أناقشك فيه الدول دي، ومنها فرنسا نهبت بلادنا وخبراتها وأثارها، ومع ذلك تمنعنا من البقاء هنا وتحرم علينا الشغل اللي احنا في أشد الحاجة له. وعشان كده، أنا مسيطرة على فكرة إن احنا ناخذ حقنا بإيدينا. كيف، لا أفهم. مثلا، الآثار دي، ليه ما ترجعشي بلدنا؟

أنا أعلم أن هناك مفاوضات عديدة مع كل الدول في هذا الشأن، كما أن هناك مشاريع اتفاقيات توضع الآن في الأمم المتحدة وفي اليونسكو لإعادة الآثار المسروقة إلى بلادها الأصلية.

Rustom nodded quickly, growing more excited That's exactly what I wanted to say brother Countries like France have plundered our land taken our wealth our artifacts and now they drive us away forbid us to work when we desperately need to live That's why I feel we must we must start reclaiming our rights.

Adel raised his eyebrows. What do you mean?.

For example those artifacts Why not return them to our country Aren't they rightfully ours.

Yes I know There are many negotiations between Egypt and other countries Even now UNESCO and the UN are drafting an international agreement to return stolen artifacts to their countries of.

Data 4: *Al-Futuhat al-Barisiyyah*, p 99-100

ودخل ساعي المكتب الثقافي الذي كان يخدم الحفل إلى الصالون ليخبر رامي أن السفارة تطلبه على التليفون فتوجه رامي إلى الداخل ليتلقى المكالمة ثم عاد بعد قليل مكفهر الوجه بأدي الاضطراب. وتطلع إليه جميع الموجودين وهو يعلن بصوت متحشرج البقية في حياتكم. أعلمتني السفارة أن الزعيم جمال عبد الناصر قد توفي.

وانتقل الكثيرون ممن تواجدوا في حفل رامي إلى مقر السفارة المصرية لتقديم العزاء والتعبير عن الحزن لفقدان الزعيم، وبقي رامي في البهو بوصفه عضوا من أعضاء السفارة. لم يكن سامح من ضمن الحاضرين، ولا المصريون الملتحون. وقد سمع محب أحدهما يقول للآخر ببهجة مكتومة إنهما سيذهبان مع جماعتهم للاحتفال بهذا الحدث العظيم. ولم يكن محب يحب ذلك فلموت حرمة مهما كانت الظروف، ولكنه يعلم كم نكل عبد الناصر بالإخوان وبالإسلاميين منذ عام ١٩٥٤م. ولكن لا تجوز الشماتة في حالة الموت أبدا.

“Inna lillahi wa inna ilayhi raji’un... just now the embassy announced that President Gamal Abdel Nasser has passed away.”

Many guests immediately headed to

the Egyptian embassy to offer condolences and deep sympathy. Rami stayed in the lobby, carrying out his duties as embassy staff. Sameh did not join them, nor did the bearded students. Mohib overheard one of them whispering to a friend with hidden joy that they would celebrate this great event with their group. Mohib disliked that attitude; death still deserved respect, no matter the circumstances. Although he understood how Nasser had oppressed the Ikhwan and Islamist groups since 1954, he remained convinced it was improper to cheer at someone's death.

data 5: *Al-Futuḥat al-Barisiyyah*, p 107

لماذا لم تصبح مصر بلدي كمثل فرنسا، وقد كانا متشابهين في العشرينيات والثلاثينيات؟ إنني أشعر بالسعادة لأنني عاصرت الأربعينيات والخمسينيات حين كانت مصر ما تزال جميلة ونظيفة والناس طيبة ومتسامحة أه يا سامحها قد تغير النظام ولا ندري هل سيسير السادات في طريق ناصر أم سينتهج سياسة أخرى تضمن بعض الديمقراطية والأمان الداخلي لشعب على الأقل، أرجو أن يكون في زوال حكم عبد الناصر ومجموعته التي أطلقوا عليها مراكز هناك تقريراً يتم إعداده بشأن بعض الدارسين غير المنتمين للنظام تمهيداً لإلغاء ابتعاثهم، لا ندري من أعدده، وإن كنت أعلم أنه لم يكن للمستشار الثقافي ولا لرامي دخل في ذلك الموضوع.

Why can't my Egypt be like France, when once, in the 1920s and 1930s, they had seemed so alike? I am grateful to have lived through the beauty of the 1940s and 1950s, when Egypt was still graceful, clean, and its people full of kindness and tolerance. Ah, but alas... everything has changed now. The new system drifts without clear direction; whether Sadat will follow in Nasser's footsteps or carve another path that grants a glimpse of democracy and security for his people, no one can say. My hope is that the collapse of Nasser's rule and the narrow circle once called the center of power will bring a breath of fresh air. Yet the rumors that spread only breed unease: a report is being drafted about several students accused of straying from the

regime. They say such a report could be used to revoke their scholarships. Who its author might be, no one knows. But I am certain it is not the cultural adviser, nor could it ever be Rami who would involve himself in such a matter.

1. The Political History of Egypt in the Novel

The following excerpts highlight how the novel *Al-Futuḥat al-Barisiyyah* represents Egypt's political history through the experiences of its characters abroad. Major events such as the Naksa of 1967 and the Bahr al-Baqar school massacre are not merely presented as factual records but also as emotional experiences lived by Egyptian students and diplomats in France. In this way, the novel revives historical memory while also underscoring the complexity of Egyptian politics amid the global dynamics of that period.

Data 6: *Al-Futuḥat al-Barisiyyah*, p 99-100

أهلا رامي بك. الحمد لله، وكيف حالكم والسفارة؟
عندنا الأمور سيئة؛ فالناس هنا شامتون فينا بعد
النكسة، ويرون فيها انتقاماً لهم
من مصر لمساعدتها الجزائريين في حربهم
للاستقلال عن فرنسا.....
ونحن أيضاً نعاني من هذا الموقف الفرنسي من
زملاتنا وحتى بعض الأساتذة.
نحن هنا في فرنسا في موقف لا تحسد عليه، والسبب
هذا التهور الذي دفع بنا إلى
تلك الهزيمة الماحقة.
مهلاً أستاذ سامح، تقصد النكسة.
أي نكسة؟ أنتم طبعاً مع الموقف الرسمي وتتبعون ما
يبتكره الصحفي الأوحى من تعابير.
وما تقول أنت يا أستاذ محب؟
هي مأساة بكل المعايير وقلبي مع سكان مدن القتال
الذين تركوا مدنهم وأصبحوا لاجئين في وطنهم. طبعاً هذا نتيجة
العدوان الإسرائيلي الذي لا يفرق بين المدنيين والعسكريين.
هذا هو الكلام.
أي كلام يا رامي بك؟ ولماذا لوحنا بالحرب ما دمنا
غير مستعدين لها؟ ولماذا لم
يستمع القائد لرأي رئيس وزرائه؟

عن إذنكما سأذهب لتحية الإخوة الآخرين
“Welcome, Rami I’m doing fine How about you at the embassy”

“Things are bad,” sighed Rami “People here even cheered when we lost after Naksa They see it as revenge for Egypt’s support to Algeria during the war of independence against France”

“We feel the same,” replied Sameh “Even among fellow students and some professors”

“Yes,” continued Rami “Here in France we are in an unenviable position... all because of the recklessness that led us to that crushing defeat”

“Wait a moment Mr Sameh you mean Naksa”

“Naksa what You probably just follow the official line using the term coined by some lone journalist”

“What do you think, Mohib”

“It’s a tragedy in every sense My heart is with the people in the Suez Canal cities forced to leave their homes and become refugees in their own land And of course it’s the result of Israel’s aggression that made no distinction between civilians and military”

“Now that’s talking”

“Talking what Rami Bey If we weren’t ready for war why provoke with weapons And why wouldn’t the leaders listen to the prime minister’s advice”

Data 7: *Al-Futuḥat al-Barisiyyah*, p 28

وبعد عدد من الأنباء الفرنسية المحلية، أبرز التليفزيون ردود الفعل الغاضبة تجاه الغارة الإسرائيلية على مدرسة بحر البقر في مصر التي أسفرت عن مقتل عدد كبير من الأطفال الأبرياء. كان هذا الحادث العدواني البشع لا يزال يسيطر على المصريين في غربتهم، وقد أعدوا تظاهرة احتجاج سلمية في ميدان لا ريبيليك حيث لم تسمح لهم شرطة باريس بإقامتها في جانب من جوانب الشانزليزيه كان موقف فرنسا عموماً متعاطفاً مع مصر، ولكنها كانت محكومة أيضاً إلى حد ما بوجود عدد ضخم من الصهاينة الذين يتحكمون في كثير من المجالات الحيوية كالاقتصاد والوسائط الإعلامية والفنية. وكانت كميلاً تنوي الاشتراك في تلك التظاهرة في الغد.

After several local reports, French television turned its gaze toward the public outcry over Israel’s assault on the Bahr al-Baqar School in Egypt, which claimed the lives of countless innocent children. The brutal strike left a deep scar upon the hearts of Egyptians in exile. They had already prepared a peaceful demonstration at the Place de la République, though the Paris police refused to grant them space along one side of the Champs-Élysées. Public sentiment in France leaned largely toward sympathy for Egypt, yet the nation itself remained constrained by the heavy hand of Zionist influence, which held sway over vital spheres such as the economy, the press, and the arts. Camille, for her part, intended to join the demonstration the following day.

2. The Causes and Consequences of the Decline of the Egyptian Government as Depicted in the Novel

The excerpts in the following data illustrate how the novel *Al-Futuḥat al-Barisiyyah* reveals both the causes and consequences of the decline of the Egyptian government, particularly after its defeat in the 1967 War (Naksa). Through the dialogues of its characters, the novel conveys criticism of political and military decisions deemed reckless, as well as the failure of leaders to heed advice. This defeat not only affected the military and political spheres but also triggered a large wave of Egyptian emigration to Western countries, especially the United States, in search of better opportunities for life and education. In this way, the novel documents how the failure of the state directly shaped the trajectory of its people’s lives, both within the country and across the diaspora.

Data 8: *Al-Futuḥat al-Barisiyyah*, p 100

أي كلام يا رامي بك؟ ولماذا لوحننا بالحرب ما دما

غير مستعدين لها؟ ولماذا لم يستمع القائد لرأي رئيس وزرائه؟

“Talking what Rami Bey If we weren’t ready for war why provoke with weapons And why wouldn’t the leaders listen to the prime minister’s advice”

Data 9: *Al-Futuhat al-Barisiyyah*, p 22

وكانت أعداد المصريين في فرنسا وفي الدول الغربية الأخرى قد زادت بعد هزيمة ١٩٦٧م، حين عمل الكثيرون على الهجرة إلى الأصقاع الأجنبية - وخاصة إلى أمريكا - طلبا لحياة أفضل وعلم أعمق، وتحقيقا للأمال لم يستطيعوا تحقيقها في ظل ما يحدث في بلادهم.

The number of Egyptians in France and other Western countries grew after the defeat of 1967, when many sought refuge in foreign lands, especially America, in pursuit of a better life, deeper knowledge, and the dreams that had slipped beyond their grasp in their own homeland.

After presenting the research findings according to the objectives of the study, the researcher will also provide a discussion of the data based on these objectives in order to facilitate readability, and of course discuss the data within the framework of New Historicism as proposed by Stephen Greenblatt, namely how readers view each text as an alternative historical narrative (Li & Lewis, 2021). Greenblatt argues that literary texts cannot be understood apart from the social, political, and cultural contexts in which they emerge, and at the same time, literary texts also influence and shape those contexts. Thus, New Historicism seeks to explore the reciprocal relationship between text and context. Therefore, the researcher presents the discussion through the lens of New Historicism.

DISCUSSION

1. Fiction Can Function as an Alternative Historical Archive

The excerpt from the novel on page 79 illustrates how foreign television covered the

tragedy of the Bahr al-Baqar School massacre in 1970; it also touches upon the bitter experience of the diaspora witnessing French-Algerian communities cheering in support of Israel during the Six-Day War of 1967; this occurred despite Egypt having been the foremost defender of Algerian independence.

If we examine the period of the Algerian Revolution that arose against French colonialism, which began on 1 November 1954; it becomes evident that this revolution emerged from extremely difficult conditions; at that time Algeria was engulfed in major events caused by French colonization; France exerted great efforts to erase all identities that characterized this Arab land; they sought to suppress every scholarly movement or thought that opposed their authority and the oppression they imposed upon the powerless Algerian people (جودي & عبدالنور, 2017). It can be said that Egypt rendered great services to the Algerian people, as acknowledged by Algerian leaders themselves; such contributions were evident in various fields, whether political, military, or cultural; this was reflected in the substantial aid Egypt provided from the very beginning of the independence revolution; while other Arab countries also offered support in varying degrees, Egypt occupied the foremost position as the nation that aided the Algerian Revolution during its most difficult times (بن جودي & عبدالنور, 2017). Then in 1955, at the Asian-African Conference in Bandung, Indonesia, Egypt played a leading role in the conference, specifically supporting the struggle for Algerian independence (Schmidt, 2013).

This excerpt touches upon the peaceful demonstrations by Arabs in protest against Israel’s actions; the author of *Al-Futuhat al-Barisiyyah* portrays the emotional wound of



the character Muhib, who initially cared little for politics but ultimately could not escape the grief and anger left by the event; even Shantal, as a French citizen, considers the tragedy not merely a political issue but a moral matter, a question of humanity that cannot be ignored; the Bahr Al-Baqar School massacre was not only a humanitarian tragedy but also a symbol of systemic injustice and the international community's passive response to war crimes; this attack occurred at the height of the Friction War, when Egypt sought to reclaim the Sinai Peninsula, and was intended by Israel as a harsh message to Egypt; however, the attack instead sparked stronger national solidarity with the Egyptian army; *Al-Futuāt al-Barisiyyah* shows how this tragedy shaped political perceptions abroad, especially in Paris, where sympathy for Egypt was overshadowed by the influence of Zionist groups in the economy, media, and arts; moreover, the dialogue between the two characters unveils criticism toward the weakness of the Arab world, seen as only able to condemn without real action, thus raising the question of why no figure like Salahuddin has emerged again.

In the excerpt from *Al-Futuāt al-Barisiyyah* on page 36, the main character Muhib is portrayed as experiencing a mixture of deep disappointment and sorrow; since high school, he had been drawn to the ideas of socialism and communism, even secretly joining a party he believed in, so that when the Revolution of 1952 broke out, he nurtured great hopes for the arrival of political freedom; however, the coup of March 1954 shattered those hopes; losing his position as a teaching assistant, enduring the bitterness of prison life, and being cast onto the streets without income plunged him into period of intense pressure and uncertainty; nonetheless, he struggled to survive by giving private

lessons and translating documents, demonstrating strong resolve even as his brilliant academic career seemed to vanish.

In July 1952, a coup was carried out by the Free Officers. This coup successfully ended the monarchy in Egypt and replaced it with a military- led republic under a presidential system. At that time, the communist movement was still fragmented and striving to strengthen its ideology and organization. In addition to larger groups, there were also smaller factions and individuals operating independently underground. Initially, the Free Officers gained support from various political organizations, including HADITU and the Muslim Brotherhood. However, beginning in 1954, the new regime under Gamal Abdel Nasser severed ties with all existing political forces, dissolved the parties, and subsequently established its own organization, the Liberation Rally (1953–1957) (Abdel-Malek, 1967).

On January 18, 1953, the Revolutionary Command Council (RCC) dissolved all political parties except the Muslim Brotherhood, this move had been preceded by a law on December 9, 1952 that revoked the right to strike, the policy came after a major strike in Kafr al-Dawwar in August 1952 which was violently suppressed by the Free Officers, by suppressing independent political elements especially communist organizers in the trade unions, the new government sought to ease economic and political relations with the United States, all party assets including offices and printing presses were then confiscated (al-Dīn, 1995) and the leaders of the political parties were arrested and placed under house arrest while awaiting trial (Abdel-Malek & Markmann, 1968). In 1953, the military established a provisional revolutionary court to prosecute political dissidents. On January 18 alone, security

forces arrested 101 political leaders, including 48 communists, most of whom were members of the *Democratic Movement for National Liberation* (DMNL), also known as *al-Haraka al-Dimuqratiyya lil-Tahrir al-Watani* (HADITU) (Beinin, 1990).

From this excerpt, we can observe another dimension of history presented by the author of *Al-Futūāt al-Bārīsiyyah*. In Egypt's official historiography, the 1952 Revolution is glorified as the nation's awakening. However, the novel offers a different perspective namely, that of the leftist groups who regarded the revolution as a betrayal of democracy. The author of *Al-Futūāt al-Bārīsiyyah* foregrounds the personal experiences of the main character, thereby rendering the text not merely as fiction but as a form of cultural archive that documents how Egyptian society experienced the repressive nature of the regime.

The excerpt from page 36 of the novel, portrays the character Rustom venting his anger over the perception that Western countries, particularly France, have long plundered Egypt's wealth and cultural artifacts. Furthermore, these countries restricted the livelihood opportunities of Egyptian immigrants who sought to survive there. Over the course of several decades, beginning in the nineteenth century, numerous elements of Egypt's cultural heritage were transported abroad. These objects largely became masterpieces in the collections of European museums (Susantio, 2010). The author of *Al-Futūāt al-Bārīsiyyah* also presents two contrasting responses among the characters regarding this issue. Rustom tends to react emotionally, insisting on the need for justice, whereas Adel adopts a more rational stance, reminding that the restitution of the looted artifacts was already being discussed in official forums such as UNESCO and the United

Nations.

In fact, a considerable number of Egyptian artifacts were looted by France. The following record illustrates some of the artifacts that were successfully repatriated from France to Egypt. In July 2014, France located and returned a decorated sarcophagus lid that had previously been stolen from the Saqqara Museum in 2011. A few months later, in November 2014, the French government handed over 239 artifacts from the ancient Egyptian, Roman, Byzantine, and Islamic periods, including Ushabti funerary figurines. This cooperation continued in 2016, when 44 additional artifacts were repatriated, among them a plaque depicting the goddess Sekhmet from Saqqara. Most recently, in 2017, Egypt received another 45 ancient artifacts from France, consisting of a plaque portraying Sekhmet, estimated to be around 2,400 years old, along with 44 items from the Coptic era that had been seized earlier at Charles de Gaulle Airport (Conor, 2017).

The excerpts from pages 99, 100, and 107 depict the events surrounding the death of Gamal Abdul Nasser and the transition of power to Anwar Sadat as president; on September 29, 1970. President Gamal Abdel Nasser was reported to have passed away on September 29, 1970, at the age of 52 due to a heart attack. Radio Cairo announced in a broadcast that he had experienced the first symptoms upon returning from a ceremony marking the conclusion of the Arab Summit talks. He died three hours later (Staff, 2014). ice President Anwar Sadat delivered a speech to the nation announcing Nasser's death. Following the announcement, Egyptian television and radio began broadcasting recitations of verses from the Qur'an (Scott, 2020). However, amid the grief, the news was received as a moment of joy by the Muslim Brotherhood.

The relationship between the Muslim Brotherhood and Gamal Abdel Nasser can be



described as deeply antagonistic. It all began when the Brotherhood's founder, Sheikh Hassan al-Banna, along with his ideological ally Sayyid Qutb, were executed by agents of the ruling regime. From that point onward, tensions between the Muslim Brotherhood and Nasser escalated sharply. In January 1954, at precisely a quarter to one in the morning, the Revolutionary Command Council decisively issued a formal decree ordering the immediate dissolution of the Muslim Brotherhood (Lestari et al., 2025). In 1956, Mahmoud Abdel Latif, a member of the Muslim Brotherhood, was reported to have attempted to assassinate Nasser two years earlier while he was delivering a speech in Alexandria to celebrate the withdrawal of British troops. Upon returning to Cairo, Nasser responded harshly by ordering the arrest of thousands of people, most of them from the Muslim Brotherhood, and by dismissing dozens of officers loyal to Naguib (Kandil, 2018). Until Nasser's death, there was no freedom for the Muslim Brotherhood, so it is not surprising that at the time of his passing, the Muslim Brotherhood instead celebrated it. After Nasser's death, leadership shifted to his deputy, Anwar Sadat (Beatti, 2000). The excerpts on pages 99, 100, and 107 are particularly compelling when viewed through the lens of New Historicism, as they open the possibility of seeing history from perspectives often neglected in official records; the news of President Gamal Abdul Nasser's death provoked not only sorrow but a spectrum of emotional and political responses among the Egyptian diaspora; some felt a profound sense of loss, while others, such as certain members of the Muslim Brotherhood, greeted it with quiet joy, recalling the long history of conflict with Nasser's regime; moreover, the dialogue excerpts contain personal reflections linking Egypt's political changes to comparisons with past

politics; critiques of Nasser's policies and hopes for Anwar Sadat's leadership reveal doubt and debate over the nation's political direction; from the New Historicism standpoint, these excerpts function as a counter-narrative, offering readers a space to question the official historical narrative and affirming that collective memory is shaped not only by formal facts but also by stories, experiences, and interpretations that frequently escape the pages of conventional history.

2. The Political History of Egypt in the Novel

The novel excerpt on pages 99–100 reveals the impact of Egypt's defeat in the Six-Day War (Naksa 1967) among the Egyptian diaspora, particularly in France; several key points emerge from this passage; first, the emotional response of the French public to the Naksa, with some expressing satisfaction at Egypt's loss because Egypt had previously been a major supporter of the Algerian revolution; thus, Egypt's defeat was perceived as political karma; at the war's outset, French media largely sided with Israel, portraying its army as victorious over Arab attacks; this shifted public opinion in favour of Israel, evident in large demonstrations, pro-Israel concerts, and petitions signed by prominent politicians and artists; even Sartre and Beauvoir mobilized support, while the Communist Party was cornered for holding positions contrary to the majority public view; conversely, President Charles de Gaulle refused to support Israel and warned that Israel's occupation would only produce oppression; this stance was surprising given France's earlier close alliance with Israel; criticism soon arose, with some accusing de Gaulle of ignoring France's guilt over Vichy's involvement in the Holocaust, while others, especially those

nostalgic for colonial Algeria, felt deprived of the chance to exact revenge on the Arab nations (Vidal, 2007). Secondly, there was a conflict within the Egyptian diaspora; some followed the official discourse, while others, more critical, considered the Naksa a result of the government's recklessness at the time. Thirdly, the character Muhib chose to sympathize with the suffering of civilians in the Suez Canal, who became refugees in their own country as a result of the Israeli attacks.

Then, the excerpt on page 28 illustrates Egypt's condition after its defeat in the Six-Day War (1967); Egypt did not surrender easily, and one year later President Gamal Abdul Nasser launched a counterattack against Israel (Nurudin, 2015). On March 8, 1969, President Gamal Abdul Nasser officially proclaimed the War of Attrition, marked by large-scale shelling along the Suez Canal, massive air battles, and commando raids; hostilities continued until August 1970 and ended with a ceasefire ("War of Attrition," 2025). However, on Wednesday, April 8, 1970, at precisely 09:20, before the ceasefire took effect, a humanitarian atrocity of historical significance occurred; on that day, in a simple school consisting of only two classrooms in the village of Al-Salhiya, Sharqia Province, Egyptian children began their day with lessons; without warning, that calm was shattered when Israeli Phantom fighter jets appeared in the sky, dropping five bombs and firing two missiles at Bahr Al-Baqar School, leveling the building within minutes (Egypt, 2025). Of the 130 students at the school, 46 were killed and more than 50 others wounded; in addition, 11 school staff were also injured in that tragic incident; mothers of the students ran in grief searching for their children.

This massacre occurred at the height of the War of Attrition, when Egypt sought to reclaim the Sinai Peninsula after the 1967

defeat; Israel's intention, it seemed, was to deliver a brutal message to Egypt: retreat, or face further suffering; yet the attack became a boomerang; instead of submission, it provoked waves of public anger and forged a national unity behind the Egyptian army in its struggle to restore dignity; however, despite international condemnation from many nations, Israel was never held accountable for the Bahr Al- Baqar massacre; no independent investigation was conducted by any international body; the world's silence became a stark reminder of global passivity and the impunity that often shrouds crimes committed under occupation (Barakat, 2022). One example, as depicted by the author of *Al-Futūhāt al-Barisiyyah* in his novel, is *كان موقف فرنسا عموماً متعاطفاً مع مصر، ولكنها كانت محكومة أيضاً إلى حد ما بوجود عدد ضخم من الصهاينة الذين يتحكمون في كثير من المجالات الحيوية كالاقتصاد والوسائل الإعلامية والفنية* the general stance of Paris was sympathetic toward Egypt, yet it could only remain silent in witnessing that tragic event, due to the strong influence of Zionist groups controlling many vital sectors such as the economy, media, and the arts.

3. The Causes and Consequences of the Decline of the Egyptian Government as Depicted in the Novel

In 1967 Egypt, Syria, and Jordan suffered a crushing defeat at the hands of Israel; this loss was a deep humiliation for the Arab armies facing the Israeli forces that had been established for less than twenty years in the land of Palestine; some fifteenthousand Arab soldiers were killed and more than five thousand reported missing, while the Sinai Peninsula and the Golan Heights fell into Israeli hands (Zakariah, 2007) in (Isa et al., 2020). This defeat was certainly a heavy blow to the Egyptian government, triggering a



political and social crisis and eroding public trust in the authorities; the narrative of Arab glory collapsed instantly; at the same time, Egypt faced a serious economic crisis due to the enormous military expenditures (Sholahudin & Maksum, 2024).

This had a profound impact on Egyptian society, as depicted in the novel. After the defeat of 1967 many people moved abroad, particularly to the United States. Data reported by (“Egyptian Americans,” 2025) (Camings, 1977) show that about fourteen thousand seven hundred Egyptians and three hundred Lebanese migrated to Canada between 1960 and 1971, and more than seven thousand former Egyptians and three thousand former Lebanese obtained Canadian citizenship during the same period. In Britain the number of registered foreigners grew by almost forty seven percent between 1961 and 1973 to a total of nearly one hundred eighty four thousand. By 1973 the number of Egyptians had risen to more than three thousand five hundred, an increase of over one hundred fifty three percent. Meanwhile the Iraqi population in Britain grew more slowly, about twenty eight percent, reaching around three thousand two hundred.

The reasons for the large number of Egyptians leaving their country were related to economics and education. However many also migrated because of concerns about political developments in Egypt after the 1952 Revolution. Thousands of Egyptians, particularly Copts, left Egypt in 1967 after its defeat in the Six Day War. From 1967 to 1977 more than fifteen thousand Egyptians immigrated to the United States (“Egyptian Americans,” 2025).

Therefore, based on the results of data analysis, the researcher finds that in the novel *Al-Futuhat al-Bārīsiyyah* the author directly portrays the impact of the defeat in the Six Day

War of 1967. The narrative illustrates how many Egyptians migrated in search of a better life, reflecting the failure of the state to fulfill the expectations of its people. In the excerpt presented in Data 1, the author not only provides historical facts but also revives the psychological condition of society after the defeat of 1967, including the loss of hope, dissatisfaction with the government, and the reliance on foreign lands rather than one’s own homeland.

Let us consider some of the mistakes made by the Arab governments in the Six Day War of 1967 as noted by (Laurens, 2007). First, Nasser and other Arab leaders underestimated the military capability of Israel. They assumed that Israel would not be able to fight on multiple fronts simultaneously and wrongly believed that the West, whether the United States or Britain, would not allow Israel to attack. In fact, Israel had already prepared a well structured plan for military expansion and required only political support from the West, not military aid. Second, Arab radio and media, particularly the Voice of the Arabs, exaggerated their calls for the destruction of Israel. This situation shifted international public opinion in favor of Israel and further worsened the Arab diplomatic position. Third, Nasser’s reckless actions, including the withdrawal of UN forces from Sinai, the closure of the Straits of Tiran, and the mobilization of troops without proper preparation, provided Israel with a legitimate pretext to launch an attack. Fourth, the division within the Arab world between the progressive camp, represented by Egypt and Syria, and the conservative camp, represented by Saudi Arabia and Jordan, weakened coordination. Jordan was compelled to join the war due to political pressure despite its lack of military readiness. Fifth, Arab leaders felt secure in the support

of the Soviet Union, but this was a grave miscalculation since the Soviet Union actually urged Egypt not to engage in direct warfare.

CONCLUSION

The history presented by Maher Batuti in his work reveals aspects rarely highlighted in official narratives. Batuti portrays another side of modern Egyptian history by emphasizing its social, political, and psychological impacts. First, the Six-Day War defeat in 1967 triggered a wave of migration to the West, symbolizing the state's failure to meet its people's expectations. Second, the 1970 Bahr al-Baqar massacre is shown not merely as a military event but as a lasting human tragedy that fueled anger, criticism of Arab weakness, and the contrasting neutrality of foreign powers under political pressure. Third, the novel depicts political repression after the 1952 Revolution, especially against leftist groups, exposing that the revolution did not bring full freedom but introduced new forms of oppression. Fourth, it addresses cultural colonialism through the looting of Egyptian artifacts by Western nations. Lastly, it captures society's anxiety during the leadership transition from Nasser to Sadat.

Thus, the novel functions not only as historical narration but also as a counter-history, recording not just major events like wars or leadership shifts but also the emotional, moral, and personal dimensions of Egyptians and their diaspora. It complements official history with overlooked voices of loss, betrayal, critique, and longing for justice.

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