

## Writing on history and framing the evolution of Jewish figures in Egyptian novels

*Ṣālat ʿUrfānillī* (“Orfanelli’s Hall”) by Ašraf al-ʿAšmāwī

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Since his debut in 2010, the Egyptian writer Ašraf al-ʿAšmāwī (b. 1966) has been distinguished by two features: setting novels in historical contexts and paying considerable attention to minorities and marginalised classes in Egyptian society. The focus of this article is on *Ṣālat ʿUrfānillī* (“Orfanelli’s Hall,” 2021), one of his most recent novels. In this novel, al-ʿAšmāwī addresses the presence and the life of the Jewish community in Egypt in the period between 1911 and 1972. The novelist highlights the historical issues of Jews, in parallel with the political and social changes in Egypt over several decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In addressing political and economic issues related to this period, he questions and subverts the official, exclusionary versions of history. Against this backdrop, *Ṣālat ʿUrfānillī* offers a case study with two aims: firstly, to discuss recourse to historical context and its connection with political and socio-cultural concerns and secondly, to point out the evolution of Jewish characters in post-2011 Egyptian narratives.

**Keywords:** Ašraf al-ʿAšmāwī; *Ṣālat ʿUrfānillī*; Historical setting; Jewish characters.

### 1. Introduction<sup>1</sup>

Ever since his first novel, Ašraf al-ʿAšmāwī’s writing has been characterised by two remarkable features. Firstly, his novels are often set in a historical context and, secondly, he deals significantly with minorities and marginalised classes in Egyptian society.

The focus of this article is on *Ṣālat ʿUrfānillī* (“Orfanelli’s Hall,” 2021), one of his most recent novels. There, al-ʿAšmāwī addresses the presence and the life of the Jewish community in Egypt before

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<sup>1</sup> This article draws on my previous study (Waly 2021) that introduces the Egyptian writer (b. 1966) Ašraf al-ʿAšmāwī’s literary works since his debut in 2010, and discusses his novel *Bayt al-Qibṭiyya* (“The House of the Copt Woman,” 2019) as a recent model of the Coptic theme in post-2011, exploring its new sensibility in dealing with this delicate issue, especially in Upper-Egypt. It also unearths the writer’s unrelenting commitment to social and political realities.

and after 1952, highlighting the historical issues of Jews, in parallel with the political and social changes in Egypt over four decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. Against this backdrop, *Ṣālat ʿUrfānillī* offers a case study with two aims. Firstly, to discuss recourse to historical context, its connection with political and socio-cultural concerns and the writer’s commitment to these issues. Secondly, to point out the evolution of Jewish characters in post-2011 Egyptian narratives, considering the constant increase of narrative works that have addressed the Jewish theme from 1980 onwards (cf. LeGassick 1989).

A glance at the literary production in Egypt following the 1979 treaty<sup>2</sup> bears out the observation of a gradual and constant rise in novels that address Egyptian Jews. This trend captured the attention of scholars such as LeGassick (1989) and Beinin (2016).

LeGassick (1989) explains that this trend was due to a new consciousness formed after the signing of the treaty, in a kind of political realism after years of rupture and enmity with the Jews. It could also have been due to new sense of confidence stemming from post-1973 military and diplomatic success and the return of Sinai, which led to a more sympathetic view of Jews.

Similarly, Beinin (2016) points out that the treaty sparked a surge of interest in the Egyptian Jewish community—in both Egyptian and Western public discourse—that continues today. The conditions of its past and present have been continuously examined, with a combination of empathic curiosity, hostile suspicion, scholarly inquiry and nostalgia.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, Beinin argues that literary works in the early 2000s that emphasise the positive contributions of Jews to modern Egypt could be a sort of implicit opposition to the political regime, expressed by a reevaluation of what was considered the relatively more democratic and cosmopolitan era of the monarchy, Beinin (2016: 87) writes:

In the 2000s, nostalgia for the era of the monarchy and positive memories of Egyptian Jews became a vehicle for indirect criticism of the Mubarak regime.

Adopting Beinin’s approach, which can legitimately be applied to the current era in Egypt, this article aims to discuss *Ṣālat ʿUrfānillī* as a recent iteration of positive representation of Jews in Egyptian

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<sup>2</sup> The peace treaty that Israel and Egypt signed in March 1979 closely reflected President Carter’s proposals at Camp David and formally ended the state of war that had existed between the two countries. Israel agreed to withdraw from Sinai, and Egypt promised to establish normal diplomatic relations between the two countries and to open the Suez Canal to Israeli ships (which until then had been banned from the waterway). These measures were duly carried out. However, rather than following Egypt’s lead, most Arab countries ostracised Egypt and expelled it from the Arab League.

<sup>3</sup> It is not only novels but there is a remarkable proliferation of production of history books, memoirs, film and soap-operas such as *Yahūd Miṣr Fī al-qarn al-ʿiṣrin* (Abū al-Ġār 2021) and *Muḍakkarrāt Yahudī Miṣri* (Arie 2023) and soap-operas such as *Ḥārat al-Yahūd* (2015).

narratives. In my analysis of the novel, I argue that al-'Ašmāwī, through his historical context, is able to write his own statement on social and political concerns vis-à-vis the authority system. Herein, the novel doesn't produce only a story, but it is interested with a purpose and is of political and ideological nature. In this sense, the idea of the literary work as strategic responses to particular situations surfaces (Burke 1941). Drawing on Brukeian's notions, Jameson(1981), in *the political unconscious*, advocates mode of interpretation in which, "in a double gesture, one rewrites the literary text in such a way as to reveal it as itself a rewriting of a prior historical or ideological subtext"(quoted in Eagleton 2012: 169).

In similar vein, Mehrez(1994: 9) explains the doubling of writer's role in Arabic region:

not only are writers involved in producing a story, but very frequently they are equally intent on providing the story behind that story: the historical, ideological, and political context in which such a story (and not another) was not just possible but necessary.

The article draws on the studies by Mehrez (1994) and Jacquemond (2008), who employ literary, history and sociology to investigate the dynamics, negotiations and constraints that shape the field of cultural production in Egypt. Mehrez, in her "Egyptian Writers Between History and Fiction" (1994), sheds light on the complementary relationship between history and narrative that can only enrich and deepen our understanding of a given culture or society. She argues that neither literature nor history make us relive an event; they can only show it through different kind of representations. Thus, by making different choices in modes of representation, history and literature can never be neutral: "each, in its own way, is bound to and by authority or legal subject [...] (according to Hegel, this authority or legal subject is the State;" Mehrez 1994: 5-6).

Similarly, Jacquemond (2008), theoretically grounded in the work of Pierre Bourdieu, provides a meticulous examination of the cultural field in Egypt. He highlights the relationship between the Egyptian state and intellectuals in the 20<sup>th</sup> century and the role of state repression and patronage in shaping claims to literary autonomy. In his "Conscience of the Nation" (2008), Jacquemond asserts that the legacy of *Nahḍa* project, which perceived the role intellectuals as that of "raising consciousness and educating people," is still dominated even in post-independence Egypt.

Therefore, Egyptian writers, in their symbolic role of "consciousness-raisers," employ literary writing as "an important channel for political and social criticism" (Jaquemond 2008: 36), when political activity is severely restricted.

Samia Mehrez and Richard Jacquemond both observe that different Egyptian writers have historically negotiated dual positions in the political and literary spheres, employing a double language

as both "organic intellectuals" and "autonomous artists." From this perspective, al-'Ašmāwī offers a clear example of this dual position he is a Judge and former state security prosecutor and, at the same time, a writer who reveals great sensitivity towards the political and social issues of his country.

The presence of Jews in Egyptian novels has received relatively a little attention. In discussing the evolution of the Jewish figure, I will take into account the studies carried out by Altoma (1978); Zeidan (1989); LeGassick (1989); Starr (2009); Boustani (2013); Beinini (2009, 2016); Youssef (2019).

For the sake of clarity, I have divided my study into three parts. The first part presents a brief overview on the Jewish figure in the Egyptian narrative; the second focuses on the plot of the novel and the writer's narrative strategies; the third contextualises the depicting of the Jewish character and shows how the novelist, through his historical context, presents a searing critique of military politics in ruling Egypt.

## 2. Jewish figures: a brief overview

Zeidan (1989) contends that the presence of Jewish characters, especially females, in early Arabic novels, rather, in the few years after Haykal's (1914) *Zaynab*, was for aesthetic reasons; that is, in order to build up stories with the involvement of the female character in public life that could not be possible due to the exclusion of Arab women. Therefore, a widely-employed method to overcome this obstacle was to deploy non-Muslim or non-Arab female characters, due to their relative freedom of movement and ability to interact with men. However, in this period, saturated with secularised national consciousness, we can find examples of realistic and spontaneous incorporation of Jewish figures in Egyptian novels, who are portrayed in the same way as Muslim and Christian characters. For instance, the characters of the Jewish doctor and the Jewish nurse in *Ibrāhīm al-Kātib* ("Ibrahim the Writer," 1931)<sup>4</sup> by Ibrāhīm al-Māzinī (1890-1949).

According to Joseph T. Zeidan (1989: 59), a study of Jewish figures in the Arabic novel cannot escape classification and periodization:

We cannot, I am afraid, in a study of this nature, escape the problem of classification and periodization in examining the image of the Jew in Arabic literature. We can discern two main images of Jews in the Arabic novel. One, a relatively short-lived one, was employed before the complete politicization of relations between Arabs and Jews. The second image evolves along the

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<sup>4</sup> Written in 1925-1926 and published in 1931, the novel presents the title character's romantic adventures with three different women. In a 1939 article addressed to al-Hakīm, the author admits that the novel contains pages from his life (cf. Mossa 1997: 328-332).

distinctive lines of politics. The second image experienced change following the phases of the Arab-Israeli conflict. However, one can distinguish three major periods of development: pre-1948, 1948-1967, and 1967-1973 (Zeidan 1989: 59).

Departing from Zeidan's thesis in tracing back the Jewish figure in Egyptian novels, it is not difficult to observe that prior to 1948, the presence of Jews was very sporadic and they were almost absent as main characters. For instance, Jewish characters were quasi-absents in the works of the Arabic Nobel laureate Naḡīb Maḥfūz. In his writing, the presence of Jews was very scarce, despite his growing up in the old *Ġamāliyya* neighbourhood of Cairo's historic Jewish quarter, *ḥārat al-Yahūd* ("the Jewish quarter").<sup>5</sup> In two novels published pre-1948, Maḥfūz portrays Jews with typical stereotypes and moral shortcomings: Jewish girls are seductresses and of dissolute mores in *Ḥān al-Ḥalīlī* ("Khan al-khalili," 1946), while in *Zuqāq al-Midaq* ("Midaq Alley," 1947), Jewish girls are the cause of Hamīda's envy when she sees them on her daily walks outside the Alley. In the same novel, we find 'Alwān's account of the cunning of the Jewish racketeer with whom he was engaged in black market activities. Similarly, the novel *Fī qāfilat al-zamān* ("In the Caravan of Time," 1947) by al-Saḥḥār unravels hostility and contempt for the Jewish figure, depicting Rāšīl (the Jewish dressmaker) as a wicked, manipulative person. Indeed, these malevolent stereotypes have become more widespread in Arabic literary works owing to the escalation of tensions in Palestine and the establishment of the Jewish State in 1947-1948. Consequently, the images of Jews became the reflection of the Arab-Israeli conflict. Perhaps, in this period, Iḥsān 'abd al-Qudūs was the only Egyptian writer who addressed Jewish themes without stereotypes, but with a tolerant vision that transcended the violent conflict. In more than one interview, he asserts in that his writing on Jews is a reflection of his childhood experiences with neighbours and friends. In his short story *Ba'īd 'an al-'Ārḍ* ("Far from Land," 1950)<sup>6</sup> he conveys a political message, exploring a Jewish woman's transformation from Zionism to the acceptance of intercultural and humanistic values. Jewish character as a second character has continued to appear in several works

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<sup>5</sup> When Maḥfūz was asked why he does not deal with the Arab-Israeli conflict in his novels, he replied that this issue can be dealt with either directly or indirectly and in order to talk about the conflict with Israel, one has to be personally involved. Thus, he left this issue to the Palestinian writers. He asserted: "Egypt was not occupied by Israel and we did not have the refugee problem, but our battle with Israel is a conflict of civilisations. Therefore, when I criticise Egyptian society and point out the negative sides, I deal with this indirectly" (translation from the Arabic by the author of this article). See in this respect al-Šāmī (1970).

<sup>6</sup> Set in 1948, the novel involves a shipboard romance between a young Egyptian journalist dedicated to the Palestinian cause and a Jewish-American girl. Both are traveling to the United States; they are in love, but their happy and intimate relationship collapses as soon as news arrives that war has broken out in Palestine. The work is an effective piece of controversy, points being made with clarity and precision within a convincing context (cfr. LeGassick 1989)

of ‘Abd al-Qudūs in the period 1948-1967. In the period from 1967-1973 there was almost absence of Jewish character in Egyptian narrative, although the war of 1967 was a turning point in the modern history of the Arab country.

A few months prior to peace treaty on 1979, ‘Abd al-Qudūs published *Lā tatrūkūnī hunā waḥdī* (“Don’t Let Me Alone”),<sup>7</sup> dealing with the life of a Jewish-Egyptian woman converted to Islam in order to continue her life in Egypt.

Furthermore, through a comprehensive reading of Egyptian novels addressing Jews, I argue that from 1980 onwards, the image of Jews in the Egyptian narrative could be, though non-exhaustively, classified into three categories. The first category presents an image perceived through the prism of the Arab-Israeli conflict, therefore mistrust towards the Jewish figure is present, as we can see in the behaviour of the narrator and his friends towards Jacques Hassoun in the novella *ḥalwat al- ḡalbān*<sup>8</sup> (“Khalwat al-Ghalban,” 2003) by Ibrāhīm ‘Aṣlān, and with the Jewish Julia in *Warda* by Ṣun‘ Allāh Ibrāhīm. Boustani (2013) observes that in these stories, the ambiguity of the borders between Jews and the State of Israel is at the origin of this mistrust. In the second category, Jews are portrayed as a part of the cosmopolitan Egyptian society of the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. An example is the character of Rāṣīl in Ibrāhīm ‘Abd al-Maḡīd’s *Tuyūr al-‘anbar* (“Ambergris Birds”). In these novels, Jewish and foreign characters are often used to represent the cosmopolitan cities of Cairo or Alexandria, and to show an expansive cultural vision. The third is an image perceived through human experience, portraying members of the Jewish minority and focusing on their feelings, anxiety and disappointments in works that foreground the Jewish community’s problems and provide an opportunity to address the reasons for loss and nostalgia. In these novels, Jewish characters are portrayed with humanity and empathy, such as Yusūf in ‘Aḥir Yahūd al-Iskandariyya (“The Last Jew in Alexandria,” 2005) by Futayḥa Mu‘tazz, Nādīah in *Sayyidat al Zamālik* (“Lady of Zamalek,” 2016) and ‘Urfānīllī, the father and son, in *Ṣālat ‘Urfānīllī* (“Orfanelli Hall”) by al-‘Aṣmāwī (2021).

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<sup>7</sup> The novel was published in 1979, the year of the signing of the famous peace agreement between Egypt and Israel. ‘Abd el-Quddūs pointed out that he had dealt with stories with Jewish characters before 1979, and explained that the publication of his novel at the same time as the Camp-David agreement was purely coincidental.

<sup>8</sup> The novella describes the encounter between the narrator and, with the famous Jewish psychologist of Egyptian origins, Jacques Hassoun (1936–99), during a reception given by the French Writers of Paris.

### 3. *Sālat ʿUrfānillī*: Spatio-temporal settings and synopsis

The novel revolves around ʿUrfānillī, a young Jewish Egyptian of Italian descent, and his childhood Egyptian friend Mansūr Turkī. Manṣūr, a wicked man endowed with strong character, is very good at manipulating people while ʿUrfānillī has a weak character. Manṣūr founded an auction house for antiques with ʿUrfānillī as a partner but soon took full control of the auction house. Manṣūr tried to use Layla, ʿUrfānillī’s wife to please King Farouk, who was a compulsive womanizer. Thus, Manṣūr sends the woman to the king with a box of jewels. While she is awaiting the King in his private apartments with the jewels box in her hands, all of a sudden, the Queen comes in, and accuses her of being a thief. When ʿUrfānillī becomes aware of what has happened, he suffers from a heart attack, later on, Layla dies under mysterious circumstances. Then ʿUrfānillī and Layla’s son, named after his father and his father's best friend, plots revenge on Manṣūr and finally kills him. Eventually, ʿUrfānillī initiates his legal battle against Manṣūr’s wife and son to reclaim the auction hall after Manṣūr's passing. In the time span of the novel’s events, which appear to take place approximately from the 1930s to the early 1970s, we find a portrayal of key moments in Egyptian history such as the fire of Cairo, the 1952 coup, the declaration of the Republic of Egypt and the 1967 defeat.

### 4. *Sālat ʿUrfānillī*: Narrative strategies

*Sālat ʿUrfānillī* is skilfully constructed as a three-part novel. Each part is related by one of the three main characters and ends with the death of its narrator. Therefore, the three voices share the narrative in a polyphonic text. The voice of ʿUrfānillī the father and Manṣūr have more or less equal weight, while more pages are dedicated to ʿUrfānillī’s son. The central, connecting character is that of Manṣūr Turkī, as each of the other two narrators recounts his own story with him. The three characters are presented to us in the first person; thus, we learn the story alongside the narrator as it unfolds, hearing the narrator’s thoughts and feelings and understanding experiences in the way the narrator himself experiences them. In Booth’s words, “as soon as we encounter an “I” we are conscious of an experiencing mind whose views of the experience will come between us and the event” (Booth 1982: 151). Moreover, one of the most interesting things about the first-person narrator is that the point of view is very subjective and opinionated in ways that may not reveal the whole truth or the “full story.” Thus, relating the events in the first person creates an uncertainty of the truth which re-enacts the Borgesian idea that reality and historical truth are unknowable.



Another narrative strategy is the presence of inner monologue in the characters’ narration. This allows the reader to partake deeply in the thoughts and feelings of the protagonists, offering a powerful mode of access to history and memory. In this case, the reader becomes an implicit witness to the protagonists’ accounts. For this purpose, al-‘Ašmāwī also uses dialogical narration; Maṣṣūr, at the opening of his account, addresses his dead friend and justifies his attitudes with him. In this way, in our opinion, the narrator involves readers as witnesses and transcends the boundaries between them and the narrator’s voice.

The novel is written in standard Arabic, enriched by several details; the writer provides the reader with many details about the secrets of antique dealers and auctions and how to distinguish an antique from a replica and how he can verify this by feeling the surface with his hands and sometimes with his tongue. The writer’s care in supplying exact detail encourages belief in the setting (cf. Gardner 1983).

Moreover, the narration of the second and third main characters is rich in emotional pressure. The writer aptly represents the ambivalent feelings between Maṣṣūr and Urfānillī junior and how it wavered between love, hatred and mistrust. These details that resemble lived experience are called *qualia*.<sup>9</sup> As explained by Herman, quoted in Vickroy (2014: 139): “when reproduced in narrative, these help readers envision a character’s experience, and by extension, his or her consciousness.”

Another writer’s strategy is intertextuality; during the narration, there is the momentary appearance by Zaynab al-Maḥlāwī, one of the main characters in his former novel *Sayyidat al-Zamālik* (“The Lady of Zamalek”):

وقع اختياري على المريضة بولا، زوجة المرحوم سولومون شيكوريل [...].، إلتقيت بزينا المحلاوي السيدة المصاحبة لها، اخبرتني في ضيق أن الزيارة ممنوعة، ثم أشارت إلى دفتر زيارات احضرته معها لتخفيف تكديس الزوار بالجناح... انتظرت لفترة حرصا على مصافحة السيدة زينا بحرارة لتتذكرني وقت اللزوم، لكنها مطت شفيتها وزامت كعادتها باشمئناط.<sup>10</sup> -

I chose the patient Paula, wife of the late Salomon Cicurel [...]. I met Zaynab al-Maḥlāwī, the lady who accompanied her. She told me with anguish that visits were forbidden, then pointed to a visitors' booklet she had brought with her to reduce the crowding of visitors in the ward [...]. I waited for a while, eager to shake Mrs Zainab’s hand warmly, so that she would remember me in case of need, but she tightened her lips and continued with dissatisfaction as usual (al-‘Ašmāwī 2021: 154).

<sup>9</sup> Term (singular *quale*) coined by philosophers of mind and used by narrative theorists focusing on consciousness. Philosopher Janet Levin describes *qualia* as “the qualitative, experiential, or felt properties of mental states” (Vickroy 2014: 139).

<sup>10</sup> All the translations of the Arabic quotations are by the author of this article.



By reintroducing the character of Zaynab al-Maḥlāwī, al-‘Ašmāwī triggers reader’s’ minds into scenes from the previous novel and prompts them to connect between the two novels. Consequently, al-‘Ašmāwī reveals that the wickedness of the characters in the previous novel has not been silenced, but has resurfaced in the lives and actions of the new protagonists.

### 5. Image of Jews in *Salāt ʿUrfānillī*:

The novel is inaugurated by the account of ʿUrfānillī Alvīzī, the first Jewish main character. From the very first sentences, he shows a fragile and insecure personality:

يرأودني شعور غريب بأنني مثل عربة يصعد إليها وينزل من يشاء، أريد شخصا واحد يبادلني الثقة التي أعطيتها للناس، شخصا يجلس إلى جوار ي حتى نهاية الرحلة، يمنحني الطمأنينة ولا يجعلني أخشى تركه لي وحدي

I have a strange feeling that I'm like a carriage going up and down whoever he wants, I want one person who exchanges the trust I give to people, someone who sits next to me until the end of the journey, gives me reassurance and doesn't make me afraid that he would leave me alone (al-‘Ašmāwī 2021: 5).

The American critic Stanley Fish (2011:99) calls the first sentences an “angle of lean,” as “they lean forward, inclining in the direction of the elaborations they anticipate.” In this case, the reader is more likely to predict ʿUrfānillī’s easily-manipulated character and his falling into his friend’s traps.

The portrayal of ʿUrfānillī breaks with the usual negative stereotypes of Jews. He is naive, unskilled and has a good sense of ethics, but he is completely subservient to his friend Maṣṣūr. Moreover, through his account of his family, he paints a picture of people with a strict moral code. His father, for example, refused out of pity to denounce a worker who stole from him.

The other main Jewish character is ʿUrfānillī-Maṣṣūr, the son of ʿUrfānillī, who bears the name of his father and his father's best friend, Maṣṣūr. ʿUrfānillī-Maṣṣūr is intelligent and his character is stronger than his father's. At the age of twelve, he begins to work in the auction hall to learn the secrets of the trade and shows great talent. For young ʿUrfānillī, Maṣṣūr represented an object of fascination and respect, until his uncle informed him of Maṣṣūr’s role in the destruction of his family. From that day on, the young man’s feelings turned to hatred and resentment.

The account of ʿUrfānillī's son is initially told through the eyes of a young boy who narrates the difficult situation of losing his parents. The use of this technique obviously increases the reader’s identification with the protagonist, as the reader is naturally drawn to feel more sympathy for the experiences of a young boy. This sympathy is fostered by the character’s detailed and lengthy account

using interior monologue. In other words, by showing most of the story through the eyes of ʿUrfānillī’s son, the author ensures that we are travelling *with* him rather than *against* him. In fact, the reader continues to sympathise with him, despite the fact that he has murdered Maṣṣūr.

ʿUrfānillī-Maṣṣūr is also portrayed as a political activist who joined the movement called *al-Ḥarakah al-Dīmuqrāṭiyyah li-l-Taḥrīr al-Waṭanī ḤADITŪ* (“Democratic Movement for National Liberation”)<sup>11</sup> and collaborates for a while with communists. This detail alludes to a historical fact: the participation of Jews in the revival and reformation of the Egyptian communist movement (Beinin 1998).

The novelist features him as nationalist in the sense conceptualised by Hans Kohn: “Nationalism is a state of mind, in which the supreme loyalty of the individual is felt to be due the nation-state. A deep attachment to one’s native soil, to local traditions and to established territorial authority” (1955: 9). A significant example of this supreme loyalty, can be found in his reaction to 1967 defeat. He felt a deep sadness and he sustained Nasser’s reinstatement, though the unfair sanctions taken by Nasser against the Jewish community in Egypt:

لا زعيم بلا أخطاء وعبد الناصر لم يكن نبيا، رغم هزيمتنا ورغم الحراسة المفروضة على الصالة، مازلت  
أحبه وأثق في نواياه... أريد بقاءه ليحكمنا، لا بديل له.

No leader is without faults and Nasser was not a prophet, in spite of our defeat and the confiscation of the hall, I still have love for him and trust in his intentions... I want him to stay, he is irreplaceable (al-ʿAšmāwī 2021: 342).

There are several Jewish characters in the novel. Two of them, in particular, deserve our attention, as do the female characters. The first is ʿUrfānillī-Maṣṣūr’s uncle, Yusūf Ḥuṣnī: an intellectual, an

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<sup>11</sup> In the late 1930s and early 1940s, the Egyptian-Jewish communist Henri Curiel (191-78) was active in several antifascist political formations. He founded the Egyptian Movement for National Liberation (HADETU – *al-Ḥaraka al-Dīmuqrāṭiyya li-l-Taḥrīr al-Waṭanī*) in 1943, which formed the core of what became Egypt’s most influential communist organization for most of the next 20 years. Another Francophone Jew, Hillel Schwartz, founded the *Iskra* (“Spark”) organisation, named after Lenin’s Bolshevik newspaper, in 1942. *Iskra* was the largest of the communist organizations in the mid-1940s, with a high proportion of middle and upper-class intellectuals, Jews, and other *mutamassirūn* among its members. Jewish students at elite French secondary schools recruited their Muslim and Coptic schoolmates into *Iskra* through a combination of political-intellectual and social activities that enabled young men and women to mix freely, openly defying prevailing social norms. Early in 1947, *Iskra* absorbed People’s Liberation (*Taḥrīr al-Shaʿb*), an organisation founded and led by Marcel Israel, a Jew of Italian citizenship. Then, in May, Curiel’s HADETU united with *Iskra* to form the Democratic Movement for National Liberation (Beinin 1998).

idealistic Marxist member of ḤADITŪ, whose commitment to the Egyptian nation is unquestioned (indeed, he was so fervently anti-Zionist that he killed the Jewish journalist Albert Mizrāḥi, for collaborating with Zionist groups). Yusūf, who committed suicide in prison, strongly influenced his nephew's nationalist consciousness and ideology.

The second is Hārūn, the old Jewish man who taught Maṣṣūr and ʿUrfānillī-Maṣṣūr the secrets of antiques. Maṣṣūr describes him as “the father and the compass that guides my life” (al-ʿAšmāwī 2021: 128). He is wise, mysterious, and has a strong impact on Maṣṣūr. In his portrayal of this character, the novelist seems to draw on the antique dealer in Balzac’s *The Magic Skin*.

The novel introduces us to a half-dozen female characters (three of them Jewish and three of them Muslim). On the one hand, ʿUrfānillī’s mother, wife, and Naḡāt, ʿUrfānillī’s son’s fiancée. On the other hand, Maṣṣūr’s mother, his wife and his second wife. ʿUrfānillī’s mother and his wife are both imbued with all the virtues of the idealised national woman. Both are kind, faithful and virtuous, in contrast with the wicked and dubious reputation of Maṣṣūr’s mother and the evil intentions of his two wives.

Immediately obvious is the strategic juxtaposition of the two virtuous Jewish women against Nagat, who is portrayed as a seductress and a malicious woman. With her father’s help, she managed to deceive and murder ʿUrfānillī-Maṣṣūr. This reminds the reader that the Jewish community, as any human community, can encompass good and bad elements.

Interestingly, Naḡāt’s father, Arqaš, is a Jew who changed his religion several times, converting from Judaism to Coptic Christianity to Islam. He is described as *lā malla lahu* (“without religion;” al-ʿAšmāwī 2021: 205).

Here the novelist suggests an implicit link between the ease with which one could switch between religions and a dubious morality. The few Jews with poor morals in the novel are precisely those who changed their religion or forged their identity with Muslim names in order to stay in Egypt.

The Egyptian identity of the Jewish characters is foregrounded in the novel. To this end, al-ʿAšmāwī paints a broader, more inclusive picture of Egyptian identity, asserting an authentic Egyptian identity for his Jewish characters even though they are of foreign origin, as we can see by Maṣṣūr’s statement to ʿUrfānillī’s son: *انتم مصريون ودي بلدكم زي ما دي بلدنا* (al-ʿAšmāwī 2021: 175): “you are Egyptians and this is your country, exactly as it is ours.” Therefore, ʿUrfānillī and his son are not *mutamaṣṣirūn* but fundamentally Egyptian, despite their hybridised Egyptian identity due to their Italian origins.

In addition, al-ʿAšmāwī points out throughout the novel that many Egyptian Jews were loyal citizens to their country. The novelist seems to draw the depiction of this devotion from Rousseau’s *Social Contract* (1762). He portrays pre-1952 Egyptian society as a true political society. It was based

solely on the virtue of its citizens and their fervent love of the fatherland. Perhaps a more striking expression of this devotion is the portrayal of Albert Mizrāḥi, a journalist who helped rich Jews smuggle money out of Egypt. But out of concern for the Egyptian economy, he refused to transfer Manṣūr's money abroad:

أنت موش يهودي والحكومة موش بتضايقتك، لو أنا ساعدت كل الناس في تهريب فلوسها، حتبقى مصر مديونة  
زي انجلترا، برضيك نعمل كده في البلد اللي عشنا فيها احلى ايامنا وأديتنا خيرها

You are not Jewish. The government does not bother you. Egypt would be in debt like England if I helped everyone smuggle their money. It would please you if we were to do this to the country in which we spent our best days and which has given us so much (al-'Ašmāwī 2021: 178).

It is noteworthy that, despite the emphasis on their Egyptian identity, both ʿUrfānīllī and his son are addressed in the novel as *ḥawāḡh* (‘foreigner’), a term of respect that is commonly used to address foreigners living in Egypt. All those working in the hall are forced, on Manṣūr's orders, to address them as *ḥawāḡh*, while Manṣūr is addressed using the Italian term “Maestro.” This ambivalence stems from Manṣūr's awareness of foreigners' high status in his country under colonisation. Therefore, by assimilating their patterns, he is enhancing his own status. For example, he replaces his *ṭarbūš* with a hat. This behavior seems to align with Bhabha’s ‘mimetic desire:’ “colonial mimicry is the desire for a reformed, recognizable Other, as ‘almost the same but not quite’” (Bhabha 1994: 122).

To sum up: al-'Ašmāwī reverses the usual discourse in Egyptian fiction, which sets the despicable behaviour of the Jewish character against the moral integrity of the Muslim character, by presenting a positive image of Jewish identity. The kindness and sense of morality of most Jewish characters contrasts with the opportunism and ruthlessness of the Muslim protagonists. The main Muslim character is drawn in such a way as to make the reader despise him and to sympathise with the other two Jewish main characters, especially ʿUrfānīllī, who seems to be the most vulnerable party in the relationship with Manṣūr. Moreover, the extremely positive depiction of the Jewish female characters seems to be an attempt on the writer’s part to create a counter-discourse that challenges the dominant idea of Jewish women in the Egyptian narrative.

## 6. Historical setting: Nostalgia and writing on history

The novel is filled with historical elements, with overt “realistic” references to events and characters. The writer deploys the real names of Italian and Greek auction house owners who resided in Egypt in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, such as George Levy and Castsaros, and real historical events as well. These

elements enable the novelist to construct the history that binds his narrative, in Jameson's words, "in order to act on the real, the text cannot simply allow reality to persevere in its being outside of itself, inertly, at a distance; it must draw the real into its own texture" Jameson (quoted in Eagleton 2012: 171).

Nevertheless, the novelist manipulates historical data; for instance, he alters the true history of Albert Mizrāḥi, a leading figure in Egyptian journalism, who owned and edited two newspapers and lived in Egypt until 1960.<sup>12</sup> In the novel he was killed by ʿUrfānillī Maṣṣūr's uncle for his collaboration with Zionists. Likewise, he draws the story of ʿUrfānillī's wife being arrested at the king's private flat from a real incident happened in 1945, albeit he changes its details.<sup>13</sup>

This technique seems to draw on the postmodern theory on historical accounts, where such sources are viewed under the lens of a sceptic, as explained by Linda Hutcheon in "A Poetics of Postmodernism: History, Theory, Fiction." Hutcheon argues that historical data, even intentionally false data, is often used to legitimise the work of fiction, but also to subvert the historical discourse. "Historiographic metafiction acknowledges the paradox of the reality of the past but its textualized accessibility to us today" (Hutcheon 2004: 114). With this twofold strategy, the writer, on the one hand, manages to emulate the spirit of Cairo secular society, to celebrate—and to some extent fictionalise—what has been called by Starr (2006) a 'lost Egyptian cosmopolitanism,' where there was a Muslim-Jewish-Christian conviviality without any religious-based distinctions. On the other hand, the author seizes the opportunity to rewrite a dominant historical record from his point of view.

In *Sālat ʿUrfānillī*, we can observe the author's intention to create a dialectical and ideological relationship between the text and the world it represents, each developing the other, and to fill the lacunae and silences of official history or, in Jacquemond's words, how he becomes the "underground historian" or "parallel sociologist" of his country (Jacquemond 2008: 90).

As I mentioned earlier, the novel maps out social, political and economic changes in Egypt in the period between the late 1930s and 1972. In particular, it focuses on the impact of these shifts on the lives of Jewish characters, on the aristocratic class and on Maṣṣūr, whose work and life are intertwined with them. Undoubtedly, one of these crucial events is the foundation of the State of Israel in 1948. Through the first main narrator, the novelist summarises the crisis of Jews in Egypt in that year,

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<sup>12</sup> For more on Mizrahi, see Beinin (1998).

<sup>13</sup> A true historical incident is the basis of the story of a real incident that took place in 1945, when Queen Farida found a woman named Layla Sherin in the king's flats and denounced her. It was later discovered that she had an assignation with the king. To avoid the scandal, she was diagnosed with mental illness and ended up in an asylum (Stadiem 1992). Cf. also <https://elbashayer.com/1713851/865512>

emphasizing the involvement of the Muslim Brotherhood<sup>14</sup> which, by the late 1930s, became antagonistic to the Jewish presence. In a few lines, ʿUrfānillī relates the tensions aroused by the Palestinian issue and the outbreak of anti-Jewish violence in Egypt before and during the first Arab–Israeli war of 1948:<sup>15</sup>

جاء اعلان دولة قيام اسرائيل منذ شهرين، ليجعلنا نعيش أجواء حرب مرة ثانية، جاليتنا كبيرة تقترب من مائة ألف يهودي تقريبا لكن لم يعد مرحبا بنا على أرض النيل مع أننا لانريد الهجرة إلى هناك ولم نفكر يوما في ترك مصر وساذج من يتصور فينا ذلك، لكن المصريين المسلمين البسطاء تغيروا معنا فجأة. نجح حسن البنا وجماعته في غسل عقولهم المتحضرة، ليس أمامي بعد مصر حامي إلا تسجيل ملكيتي بالصالة وبيعها ثم الهجرة من مصر، لكني ايضا لن أذهب إلى اسرائيل.

The declaration of the State of Israel came two months ago, making us live in a climate of war again. Our community is numerous, approaching a hundred thousand Jews, but we are no longer welcome on the land of the Nile, even though we do not want to immigrate there, and we have never thought of leaving Egypt, and Anyone who imagines such a thing is truly naive, yet the simple Muslim Egyptians have suddenly changed their attitude towards us. Ḥasan al-Bannā and his group managed to wash their civilised minds. After my father-in-law's death, I have no choice but to register my property, sell it, and then emigrate from Egypt. But I will not even go to Israel (al-'Ašmāwī 2021: 101).

Here, ʿUrfānillī’s words seem imbued with fear and despair. He, an Egyptian citizen, is forced to leave his homeland due to the sudden hostility and hatred of his Muslim brethren. He decides to leave Egypt, but he will never emigrate to Israel. In these lines, the novel re-humanises the Jews, rejecting the official rhetoric of them seen as a fifth column. Furthermore, it is quite significant that ʿUrfānillī died suddenly in 1948, as if his death represented the death of the peaceful coexistence of the Jewish community in Egypt.

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<sup>14</sup> The 1930s and 1940s have been interpreted as the period of radicalisation of the political and social arena, when Islamic radicalism and right wing-nationalism started to play a more evident role (Miccoli 2015).

<sup>15</sup> During the summer and fall of 1948, Jews and their property were attacked repeatedly. On June, 1948, a bomb exploded in the Karaite quarter of Cairo, killing 22 Jews and wounding 41. Several buildings were severely damaged. The Egyptian authorities unconvincingly blamed the explosion on fireworks stored in Jewish homes and antagonism between Karaite and Rabbanite Jews. *Al-Ahram* reported that the police and firemen reacted to the fire quickly and effectively. But Jewish witnesses on the scene testified that the response of the authorities was sluggish and negligent [...] The government did little to protect Egyptian Jews and their property from bombings and other attacks generally attributed to the Muslim Brothers during the summer of 1948. The regime was not necessarily ill-disposed towards the Jewish community, but it feared confronting the Muslim Brothers, who did not distinguish between Jews and Zionists. Vigorously defending the rights of the Jews of Egypt during a war against the Jews of Palestine would have been difficult for an unpopular regime to explain to the public. During 1949 and 1950, about 20,000 Jews left Egypt, 14,299 of whom settled in Israel; the others went to Europe, North America and South America (Beinin 1998: 36).

The other key event was the 1952 *coup d'état* by the Free Officers. This Movement did not initially have a significant impact on the legal status of foreign and minority residents of Egypt (cf. Beinin 1998). However, the emergent Movement does not pose a threat to Manṣūr at least at the beginning; his account of the declaration of the Republic in 1953 reveals contempt and scepticism. He compares the new Republic of Free Officers to a premature infant doomed to die:

اعلنوا مصر جمهورية بدلا من مملكة مثل جنين مبتسر محكوم عليه بالموت، مددت شفقتي ممتعضا، نحن فيما يبدو على موعد مع  
التعاسة، لكن لا أحد يوافقني على كلامي غير زبائني القديمة.

They proclaimed Egypt a republic instead of a kingdom like a premature fetus condemned to death. I stretched my lips unsatisfied. It seems we have an appointment with misery, but no one agrees with my words except my old clients (al-'Ašmāwī 2021: 201).

Here, the novel contends that the Free Officers were plunged into the task of governing without any experience or preparation<sup>16</sup>. Thus, their Republic was doomed to fail. With this instance, al-Ašmāwī is a remembrancer against the official dogma surrounding the Free Officers. He questions and subverts the representation of official historical records about the Free Officers<sup>17</sup> depicted by the state-media as virtuous elite individuals, with and their Movement called a 'blessed Movement' in Egyptian history textbooks. Moreover, it is worth noting that with the outbreak of the 2011 revolution, there was systematic propaganda aimed at mobilising popular sentiment in favour of the military and army allying with the people. This sentiment was resurrected later, after Mursī was overthrown, and in post-2013 Egypt there was a revival of the Nasserist cult.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>16</sup> For more information on the 1952 *coup d'état*, see Solari (1954) and Abdel-Malek (1968).

<sup>17</sup> The Free Officers was a group of generally junior officers who had been accepted by the Military Academy during the 1930s, after the annulment of certain restrictions on entry to army schools. Until then, the Academy had closed off the chance of a military career to all but well-known rich and landlord families; this created a professional rather than a military career institution. These junior officers were very pragmatic army officers, not intellectuals, who would understand discussions surrounding the need for new weaponry, the establishment of military alliances, and the so-called communist threat. The Free Officers were against corruption, which had so personalised King Faruq's administration and the feudalist-styled party structures characterized by the Wafd Party (Budak 2022: 58; see also Harris 1967).

<sup>18</sup> al-Sisi himself revived the Nasserist cult by participating in the 43<sup>rd</sup> memorial ceremony of Nasser's death. He also allowed the spreading of posters with his picture adjacent to the venerated president, invited Nasser's son and daughter to official ceremonies (such as the one held to commemorate the "October War"), and used Nasser's "magic words" in his speeches. When these phrases were pronounced by Sisi, Egyptians were able to see him as the successor to Nasser, the Egyptian leader who fought the Muslim Brotherhood domestically and led Egypt to the leadership of the Arab World and the non-aligned community. <https://jcpa.org/article/sisi-fever-will-general-next-president-egypt/>.



In his tracing of historical moments, al-‘Ašmāwī does not touch upon the 1956 Suez/Sinai War, which was a real turning point in the conditions of Egyptian Jewry, leading to the emigration of thousands of them. The novel briefly explores, however, the consequences of Nasser’s nationalist policies and hints at the historical fact that Jews became susceptible to blackmail after 1956 and the creation of the Jewish Division (National Committee for the Struggle against Zionism; cf. Laskier 1995), whereby it was enough to report suspicions against them in order to confiscate their money and expel them from Egypt, as Manṣūr did with his new partner. Elsewhere, Manṣūr speaks of the repression of the Muslim Brotherhood Movement, which can lead to the arrest of a person on the mere reporting of suspicion of belonging to the movement, in an implicit parallelism with the increasing abuse of State Security laws and the perpetual state of emergency of the current regime:

إذا اردت التتكيل بجارك، كل ما عليك أن تتقدم لأقرب مركز بوليس لتقول للضابط [...] : أنا شاكك أن جاري أخوان، اجتماعات قرب الفجر ومعاهم مصحف

If you want to take revenge on your neighbour, just go to the nearest police station and tell the officer [...]: 'I suspect that my neighbour is one of the brothers, he organises meetings at dawn and he carries a copy of the Koran with him (al-‘Ašmāwī 2021: 210).

A central concern of the novel is the inefficiency and corruption of the military regime, to which the narrative repeatedly returns. On many pages, the novelist reveals his contention about the corruption and malfunction of state administration under the military regime. This contention could be sustained by documents to which he has access in his quality of judge and former state security prosecutor.

As we find in Manṣūr's account about the jewellery and collectibles that disappeared from the royal palaces in Egypt, while the few remaining collectibles were sold at very low prices, when the Free Officers had decided to sell Farouk’s gargantuan collection of objects of art and personal possessions by public auction on 1954. The novel underscores that the committee formed by the Council of the Command of the Revolution had rather inefficient and non-expert members:

عرفت من الكردي ان في شهر فبراير القادم سيعقد أكبر مزاد بالشرق سيبيعون فيه مقتنيات فاروق المتبقية بالقصور، كتمت ضحكتي وملت على اذن زميلي صبحي جاد هامسا: هو لسه في حاجة من مقتنيات فاروق علشان يبيعوها؟ ده احنا لقينا القصور تقريبا فاضية، كأن أهلها عزلوا من زمان [...] بيتهيا لك الناس دي حتهرب كل حاجة برة مصر ويبيعوها بالافات وبكرة افكر.

I heard from Al-Kurdi that next February the biggest auction in the East would be held, at which Farouk's remaining palaces' belongings would be sold. I stifled laughter and leaned into the ear of my colleague Subhi Gad, whispering: Is there anything left to be sold of Farouk's collectibles? We found the buildings almost empty, as if their inhabitants had moved out long ago [...]. These people are preparing to smuggle everything out of Egypt in order to sell them and gain thousands of pounds, and tomorrow I will remind you of this (al-‘Ašmāwī 2021: 216).

In another passage, the writer gives us a vivid portrait of the political and moral corruption in post-1952 Egypt. He mentions a specific—and real—case in which the unparalleled and one-of-a-kind items from Farouk’s stamp collection were sold for a very low price:

لا أحد يصدق السعر المفتوح ولا قيمة الترسية في غالبية القطع، أنا شخصيا بعث أشياء مقلدة باضعاف القيمة التي تباع بها مقتنيات وفي نهاية لو تركوا لي الأمر برمته لأدخلت خزينة مصر عشرة ملايين جنيها ثمنا لنصف هذه المقتنيات...فاروق الأول ملك مصر اليوم، كانت مجموعة من طوابع الملك التي تمثل اربعين بالمائة من اصدارات البريد الملكية، قد بيعت بنحو ستة الاف جنيها ومن بينها عشرة طوابع قيمتها الحقيقية نصف مليون جنيه. اعتبر مندوب الرئاسة مبلغ الستة الاف مبلغا كبيرا

No one believes the opening price or the premium value for most of the pieces, I personally have sold counterfeit items worth many times that of the collectibles of Farouk I, King [...] If they had left the whole affair to me, the Egyptian treasury would have gained ten million pounds as the price for half of these collectibles. By the end of the day, a collection of the King's stamps [...] had been sold for around six thousand pounds, including ten stamps which have a value of half a million pounds. The president of the committee considered the six thousand a large sum (al-‘Ašmāwī 2021: 226).

An informed reader of current Egyptian affairs will find that this account on the past is intertwined with the present political reality in Egypt. In the terms employed by Fanon (1963: 220) “incessant interaction with the impending, the real and the past.’. If we consider that al-‘Ašmāwī finished the novel in December 2020, it is not be difficult to understand that the writer is alluding to a real political issue; a presidential decree issued on September 4, 2020, ordering the transfer of ownership of several state-owned real estate assets to The Sovereign Fund of Egypt (TSFE). Thus, Egyptian assets are exposed to the threat of sale through deals that had immunity (they could not be challenged before courts).<sup>19</sup> Here, al-‘Ašmāwī is warning readers of the recurring patterns of corruption or, in Mehrez’s words, “the preoccupation with the present brings about revisitations of the past” (Mehrez 1994: 14).

Significantly, the account of pre-1952 Egyptian society portrayed by the three main characters features the city of Cairo with its beautiful landscape, and harmonious heterologous society, as well as the corruption of the regime, in a nostalgic and ironic tone. This depiction coincides with the description of reflective nostalgia, studied by Svetlana Boym (2001) who defines it as nostalgia that “lingers on ruins, the patina of time and history, in the dreams of another place and another time.”

<sup>19</sup> See ‘How did al-Sisi legitimise selling state assets?’ at <https://egyptwatch.net/2020/09/09/how-did-al-sisi-legitimise-selling-state-assets/>

Boym explains that reflective nostalgia can be ironic and humorous: “It reveals that longing and critical thinking are not opposed to one another, just as affective memories do not absolve one from compassion, judgment, or critical reflection” (Boym 2001: 26).

Moreover, exploring nostalgia can and should open up a negotiation between the present and the past which, in Denis Walder’s words, leads “to a fuller understanding of the past and how it has shaped the present for good and bad” (Walder 2011: 9).

I argue that, by locating his stories in a historical setting and over a period of time, al-‘Ašmāwī is able to use temporal distance and the device of nostalgia to explore the political and social changes in Egypt over several decades and to investigate, question and subvert the official, exclusionary versions of history. As observed by Mehrez (1994: 61):

They participate in the production of an alternative discourse that confronts and dislocates the dominant discourse on history, thus forcing us as readers to reread, rethink, and reposition our ideas about our place and time—past, present and future.

## 7. Conclusions

*Sālat ‘Urfānillī* presents an interesting case study for more than one aspect. The most significant is the manipulation of historical material and events so as to criticise the political regime in Egypt, either during the Farouk era or after 1952. The novel conveys an in-depth understanding of the failure of the military regime and inscribes how the great aspirations of a revolution could degenerate into mediocre political machinery, opportunism and corruption as with the Movement of the Free Officers. al-‘Ašmāwī has reason to be preoccupied with alarming developments in politics and economy in the present; this is reflected in his writing, which seems to be an alternative socio-political action. In Jameson's words: “there is nothing that is not social and historical—indeed, that everything is “in the last analysis” political” (Jameson 1983: 5).

More importantly, given the novel's concern with shattering the stereotypical image of Jews created by the establishment of the Israeli state and the Arab-Israeli conflict, the Jewish narrators assume the responsibility of winning the reader's sympathy and presenting an image of ordinary Egyptian citizens who are loyal and devoted to their country

In al-‘Ašmāwī’s portrayal of Jews, it is safe to say that he seeks a counterforce to the parochial nationalism and pays homage to the Egyptian nationalists of the early years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, who insisted on the indivisibility of Egyptian nation as in the famous essay *al-Yawm wa al-Ġad* (“Today and Tomorrow;” 1928) by Salāma Mūsā, in which he asserts that religion is no longer the basis of the community, but a matter of individual ‘private faith’ (Suleiman 2003).

It is worth noting that it is his second attempt to address the life of Jews in Egypt and his courage in portraying Jewish characters as victims of political change in Egypt has been criticised by some Egyptian critics, such as Fateen Lotfy,<sup>20</sup> who views it as a sort of political statement that contradicts reality, especially in the current phase of the non-stop crisis in the Middle East.

Furthermore, in a holistic reading of al-'Ašmāwī's literary project, we find that it rarely raises issues related to the present, and his novels are predominantly set in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, in the era of Egyptian secular society that lives on through its constant dialogue with historical events to describe and dismantle the oppressive and disillusioned reality surrounding it. His writing reflects a general feeling of unrest and social injustice, and captures the spirit of disillusionment after the so-called Arab Spring in Egypt. This gives his works an ideological function, as in Terry Eagleton's words:

Literary works are not mysteriously inspired, or explicable simply in terms of their authors' psychology. They are forms of perception, particular ways of seeing the world; and as such they have a relation to that dominant way of seeing the world which is the 'social mentality' or ideology of that age (Eagleton 1976: 13).

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<sup>20</sup> <https://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContent/18/62/411058/Books/Reviews/Book-Review--Orfanellis-Hall-plays-in-dangerous-wa.aspx>

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