

Mahfouz's Akhenaten, Dweller in Truth

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Mahfouz's Akhenaten, Dweller in Truth

In the history of literature, perhaps the most explored genre is the historical novel. From the Epic of Gilgamesh to the present day, authors have taken historical facts and interpreted them novelistically. When no facts are available, the author may extrapolate missing parts of the story from two sources -- either through the interpretation of the existing scholarly data or through the author's imagination. These two approaches to 'filling in the [gaps](#)' of a historical novel can either appease the [historian](#) and displease the literary critic or please the literary critic and upset the historian. Very few novelists can produce a historically accurate novel that is also pleasing to a literary critic; to do so would be very difficult because the novelistic plot structure hardly ever follows the structure of truthful historic events. A novelistic writing about a battle in World War Two would be bound to either an accurate portrayal of the events around the main character or a convincing depiction of the people involved. If the author chose to write about turrets, casualty statistics, and troop movements, he would surely sacrifice much of the artistic content of the novel. If the author chose to focus on character and plot, then the writer couldn't portray the event with the specificity it requires. However, the exception to these guidelines appears when a novelist chooses to write a historical novel about a time or a person when

large portions of the historical picture is still either unknown or up for scholarly debate. This condition [presents](#) itself infrequently to the historical novelist, in circumstances where few people witnessed or spoke about the event, or through an event so ancient tha...

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... with a few authorly embellishments. Despite his lack of glaring inaccuracies, the author does not seem to capture the anthropological, sociological, and political climate of the Amarna period. Having examined Mahfouz's portrayal of the pre-Amarna and Amarna periods, in the context of popular belief and scholarly interpretation, the novel appears as an interesting yet general view of Akhenaten and his times. Despite his writing geared towards a general audience, Mahfouz does not take advantage of his audience by engaging in heresy and confabulation. The novel appears to be thought out on the basis of scholarship, both Egyptian and otherwise, giving the reader a surface glance of the complications of the Amarna period.

Works Cited:

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