Jurjī Zaydān and the creation of Arab identity: Arabism and the early Egyptian novel: how the Christian Lebanese Jurjī Zaydān influenced the construction of Arab identity in Egypt

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"Without school or book, the making of a nation is in modern times inconceivable."

George Antonius, 1946

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Introduction

The Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region is often referred to as the Arab world by Western journalists and politicians[1]. This characterization propagates the monolithic worldview that all MENA inhabitants share some sort of identity, namely an Arab one. Western popular culture, such as the series Homeland, has brought forth a certain 'standard' image of the Arab. For example, the Arab is usually a bearded man or a veiled women, indicating that the Arab is (visibly) Muslim. Specifying the country of origin seems unnecessary for the story, as the Arab seems to be the same sort of person in every part of the MENA region. Type-casting and misrepresentation of basic facts remain an issue. For example, representation of Christian Arabs are largely neglected (ThoughtCo, 2019; BBC, 2019). By overlooking the internal differences regarding Arab identity, one fails to appreciate the diverse and plural nature and features of the region. This thesis contributes to the broad debate on the characteristics of Arabism by going back to a critical time in the debate on what it means to be an Arab (the second half of the 19th century) by using sources from a self-proclaimed Arab, Jurjī Zaydān.

In contrast to public opinion, the academic world is aware of the problematic portrayal of Arab homogeneity. Scholars that write about the MENA region are stressing the need to stay away from the idea that the inhabitants of this region are a homogenous group of people; they emphasize the different histories of different groups, examine geographical locations and societal domains separately and include modern theoretical frameworks centered, for example, around queer and feminist studies. By doing so, they do not exclude any ethnicities, religions and experiences of people that do not belong to, or do not identify themselves as being part of, the dominant identities in a region that is predominantly Arab and Muslim[2].

[1] See for example the New York Times (2020ab) (https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2016/08/11/magazine/isis-middle-east-arab-spring-fractured-lands.html; https://www.nytimes.com/2018/10/22/opinion/khashoggi-mbs-arab-democracy.html), CNN (2020) (https://edition.cnn.com/2019/12/30/middleeast/middle-east-decade-in-review-intl/index.html) and the Financial Times (2020) (https://www.ft.com/content/13f690dd-ce12-4c20-a158-630911befb53).

[2] For an overview of the shifts in anthropological studies on Arab majority societies see Deeb, L. & Winegar, J. (2012).

As a student of the construction of Arab identit it is important to be aware of one's own position in the world. Hence, in order to understand the issue fully, it matters to look at how Arab people(s) describe and regard themselves and their own history. To understand current modes of self-understanding, an analysis of previous narratives on the same subject are helpful, because narratives often 'survive' timeframes and are not bounded to one specific place (Sarbin, 1997, p. 68). Several sources can be used to perform this analysis; literary works, like novels and poems of all genres, allow us to explore the topic of identity and language well. To explain this, I cite the critically acclaimed scholar of literature, C. S. Lewis. In his book *An Experiment in Criticism* (1961), he states the importance of (reading) literary works. Although Lewis rejects the claim that literary works tell the reader definitive truths about life or culture (pp. 63-67), he acknowledges the importance reading:

> ***"It is not question of knowing (in that sense) at all. It is connaître not savoir; it is erleben; we become these other selves. Not only nor chiefly in order to see what they are like but in order to see what they see, to occupy, for a while, their seat in the great theatre, to use their spectacles and be made free of whatever insights, joys, terrors, wonders or merriment those spectacles reveal. Hence it is irrelevant whether the mood expressed in a poem was truly and historically the poet's own or none that he also had imagined. What matters is his power to make us live it." (p. 139)***
>
> ***"Literary experience heals the wound, without undermining the privilege, of individuality. There are mass emotions which heal the wound; but they destroy the privilege. In them our separate selves are pooled and we sink back into sub-individuality. But in reading great literature I become a thousand men and yet remain myself." (pp. 140-141)***

Lewis emphasizes that literature plays a huge role in the construction of one's identity, by showing certain imaginations that give insight to other or expand existing realities by shaping and molding multidimensional stories. Literary works can expand humanity and make the reader see or feel issues in a broader way, as an alternate reality, than on just the individual level, although without becoming a different person altogether. Subsequently, these stories can influence the actual behaviour of people in the 'real' world (Sarbin, 1997, pp. 70-72).

One of the writers that understood this was Jurjī Zaydān (1861-1914), a Christian Lebanese writer, entrepreneur and autodidact. His work had a paradigmatic influence in the construction of Arab identity. He is credited for this as well as his role as historian. Choueiri (2003, p. 55, p.68, p. 203) portrays him as a typical 19th century progressive, inspired by Western theories on history and nationalism and credits him for updating published texts in light of newly emerged information. Nonetheless, Choueiri (2000, p. 70) does not pay much attention to Zaydān in his book about Arab nationalism. Masters (2013, p. 204) mentions Zaydān as one of the main drivers of a movement in Cairo that sought to write down their Arab ancestors' history. In Khalidi's book on Arab nationalism (1991), Zaydān is omitted as a great contributor to the construction of Arab identity and nationalism. Meanwhile Hourani (1983, p. 246, p. 277) expands on Zaydān's prominent place in the construction of what is now called Arabism and Arab nationalism. He describes how Zaydān set himself apart from other Christian writers, who were apprehensive about a coherent Arab nation because they were afraid that it would turn ino a mere new way of Islamic self-assertion. Hourani emphasizes that Zaydān chose to incorporate both the Islamic and the Christian aspects of the Arab history in his novels.

These authors have neglected to mention how exactly Zaydān constructed Arab identity in and through his work and whether his method(s) were different from others. There are, however, a couple of scholars that have written about this extensively. In his 1979 book *Gurgi Zaidan; His life and Thought*, Philipp provides a compilation of Zaydān's translated writing, including his unfinished autobiography and letters to his son, which are useful for understanding Zaydān's life, thought

process and opinions. In 2014, he compiled Zaydān's essays (translated by Starkey and Kilpatrick) in *Jurjī Zaydān & the Foundations of Arab Nationalism*. These essays cover a variety of topics, from history to language and from religion to ethnicity. Moreover, Ware (1974) has written a dissertation focused on Zaydān's role as a popular historian and mentioned his novels as inspiring texts for a possible construction of an Arab world view. This thesis builds on these works.

Zaydān's main vehicle for constructing Arab identity was writing. Although his novels contain fictional stories, they are based on historical events. He sought to popularize those through the medium of fiction, and place them in the context of the overarching story of the history of the Arabs (Bahkou, 2015, p. 70), thereby creating a sense of national Arab consciousness among his readers. However, there have been no studies conducted about the way he did so per novel. By answering question like 'how does Zaydān describe religion(s)?' and 'what are his thoughts on Arabs and people of other ethnicities?' it becomes clear how the construction of the Arab identity takes place.

The main research question of this thesis will thus be: how has Jurjī Zaydān constructed a collective national Arab identity through his novels? These sub-questions form the basis for the four chapters: (1) How did Egyptian nationalism and Arabism develop during the 19th century and how did they fit in the time frame?; (2) Who was Jurjī Zaydān and what position did he take during the *nahḍa* regarding the use of language?; (3) What role does the (Arab) novel play in distributing nationalist ideas and ideals?; (4) How are Arabism and Arab collective identity constructed in the works of Jurjī Zaydān?

Arabism, nationalism and collective identity are the just three of the main key concepts for this thesis and they are elaborated on in the first chapter from a political-historical perspective. The academic debate on these concepts is broad and contains many branches: some of them look specifically at the role of religion, some of them have a strong geographical focus, while others use a psychological approach. Each of these branches are relevant and together they form an extensive body of academic literature. For the purpose of this thesis, I start with a description of (collective) identity and nations and then discuss 19th century Arabism. The second chapter introduces Jurjī

Zaydān. The chapter starts with a short biography of Zaydān and then continues to focus on the *nahḍa*, the Arab renaissance that occurred at the end of the 19th century, and the role of language during that period.

The third chapter shows how the concepts of Othering and chronotope (as introduced by Bakhtin) are helpful to further understand how (Arab) nationalism develops and is 'sold' to members of the community (the nation). By ways of Othering, one's own identity is established and reinforced. By looking at chronotopes for Arab nationalism in the 19th century, the inclusivity and exclusivity of certain groups is exposed. This chapter then explains what role (Arab) novels play in the construction of collective identity and the promotion and marketing of it.

The fourth chapter consists of three short case studies. I use the theoretical framework of the first three chapters to analyze how Arab identity is constructed in three novels. They are discussed in chronological order of publication, starting with *The Conquest of Andalusia* (1903), following by *The Caliph's Sister – Harun al Rashid and the Fall of the Persians* (1906) and *Saladin and the Assassins* (1913). In the final chapter my findings are concluded and discussed.

Methodology

Chapters 1-3 consist of literature reviews based on peer reviewed articles and provide the conceptual and political-historical framework for the 4th chapter, in which the framework is applied to Zaydān's novels. As mentioned above, questions around the construction of (collective) identity are broad and thus they can and should be answered in multidisciplinary ways, including an array of social sciences and humanities. This thesis contains such study into the creation of Arabs as an ethnic group (ethnogenesis) with a coherent identity through texts (Zaydān's novels). Overall, my research followed a constructivist and transactionist approach regarding nationalism and collective identity.

Constructivism finds that the way a nation (a collective identity) can be formed, for example through invented traditions, which are often used to cement group cohesion. Seeking to "inculcate certain values and norms of behaviour by repetition, … they normally attempt to establish continuity

with a suitable historic past" (Hobsbawm & Ranger, 1983, p. 1-13). Bakhtin's chronotope and Othering provided an additional theoretical focus, both are elaborated on further in chapter 3. The constructivist lens showed that the idea of a coherent collective Arab identity could be made out of stories and beliefs about past behaviour (through language) which could be used to inspire and prompt people to act accordingly: Zaydān did this by writing historical novels.

Hobsbawm (2012, p. 102) applied constructivism on nationalism. He describes how nationalism changed during 1870-1918 (roughly Zaydān's lifetime); (1) the threshold to be able to participate in nationalism disappeared, i.e. the popular masses got a voice, (2) language became the most decisive criteria for potential nationhood, and (3) the political focus shifted to 'nation and flag'. These changes were elaborated on in this thesis. They were used to show how Zaydān could transcend religious boundaries and the traditional class system and tried to mold all Arabs into one cohesive nation.

The transactionist culture approach by Barth adds a behavioural aspect. I followed Barth's recommendations for researchers, namely to look at transactions that produced shared meaning and to show how cultures (shared norms and values) come to be and how they change (Patel & Rayner, 2012, p. 124). In other words, I followed a line of thinking wherein identity and nations are not static, but evolve over time and are made in reaction to time.

The qualitative method allowed me to find out how Zaydān portrays and communicates cultural values and conventions, while connecting these in a social-political and historical context. From Zaydān's novels, I discerned and categorized patterns of Arab identity and compared them to descriptive patterns of non-Arabs. Subsequently, these findings were placed in the broader debate on Arabism and the Arab collective identity at the time of writing, thereby connecting my findings with the literature review.

Data

Because I do not read Arabic, my data (the novels) were limited to the availability of novels translated into English. Given the limited space of this thesis, I decided to select three novels. Six novels are available in English[3], of which five commissioned by the Zaydān Foundation. I chose to eliminate *Tree of Pearls, Queen of Egypt*, as it is not a translation authorized by the Zaydān Foundation. I selected *The Conquest of Andalusia* (1903), *The Caliph's Sister – Harun al Rashid and the Fall of the Persians* (1906) and *Saladin and the Assassins* (1913) for my case studies. These cover several time periods and were written in different years. Furthermore, they depict various regions and feature characters from several ethnic groups. Thus, by choosing these novels it was possible to see whether or not Zaydān changed his views on Arabness per time period and ethnic group. Zaydān published the first of this series novels in in 1891 and his last in 1914. However, from the first decade of his publications, no novels are translated.

[3] More have been translated, but those have not been published.

Chapter 1 Arab nationalism during the 19th century

The history of the Arab world and nation as portrayed in the novels by Jurjī Zaydān did not emerge out of a vacuum. Zaydān wrote his novels in a time of critical developments in political thinking. For readers to understand his work and reasoning, it is important to first have an understanding of the political-historical setting of his lifetime. During the 19th century, several European powers, most importantly the British Empire, took political, military and financial power over Egypt. The other major foreign presence was the Ottoman Empire. Therefore, the Egyptian was not in control of his own country. Tensions and popular uprisings added to the academic and intellectual debate on nationalism and collective identity. This chapter intends to answer the first sub-question of this thesis: How did Egyptian nationalism and Arabism develop during the 19th century and how did they fit in the time frame? The chapter provides a short historical overview of 19th century Egypt, and explains the development of (Egyptian) nationalism and Arabism during this time, thereby providing the background setting for Zaydān's life and work.

1.1 19th century and early 20th century: reforms, debts, Colonel 'Urabī and foreign powers

The 19th century in Egypt began with the expansionist vision of Muhammad Ali (see figure 1). He started a period of reforms in which the educational system became the key instrument for influencing the minds and ideas of the Egyptian people; Ali found it very important to enlighten his people with Western ideas instead of the traditional Ottoman curriculum. He also wanted textbooks to be in Arabic and not Turkish. He was set on state building, including sustaining commercial and

Figure 1 Historical map of Egypt 1804-1914

diplomatic relations with other (Western) countries (Cleveland & Bunton, 2013, pp. 60-65)[4].

Near the end of the 19th century, the British Empire started to establish and consolidate dominance over Egypt. It was able to do so because Ali's successors did not have the leadership abilities that were required to continue Ali's success[5]. Two European powers, the French and the British, gave out huge loans during the 1860s and 1870s for investments in infrastructure and construction, while the Egyptian government was unable to make debt repayments. This failure led to the disposal of Khedive Ismail by the Ottoman sultan at the behest of the foreign powers (Gifford, 2020, p. 7) [6].

Figure 2 Colonel Ahmed ʿUrabī

Meanwhile, both the general public and government officials pushed back on the reality that Egypt found itself increasingly under foreign control. A national revolution broke out in 1881, led by Colonel Ahmed ʿUrabī (figure 2), after a dispute over unpaid salaries and unfair promotions in the army. The revolt became known as the ʿUrabī revolt[7]. This protest movement grew into a national call for the removal of foreign interference in domestic policy-making (Gifford, 2020, p. 9; Cleveland & Burton, 2013, pp. 92-93). ʿUrabī's ability to gain a following under several segments of society ensured a broad base for his cause, which was 'Egypt for the Egyptians'[8].

The revolt provided a perfect opportunity for Britain to invade Egypt with military force (Gifford, 2020, pp. 9-10)[9]. The invasion was initially supported by Egyptian political leaders and the

[4] For more information about Ali's reign, see Daly, 1998, chapter 6.
[5] For example, they hired Europeans instead of Egyptians for government positions, even though at that time a newly educated class had emerged. For more information about this period, see Daly, 1998, chapter 7.
[6] By 1874, Egyptian debt had risen to almost £20.000.000 and an additional £6.000.000 in debt interests, reaching a state of insolvency that led to direct interference from foreign power in Egyptian domestic affairs. By the time of the 1890s, the financial situation had stabilized and economic prosperity followed. For more information about the financial control of the British and the French, see Gifford, 2020, pp. 8-9; Cleveland & Bunton, 2013, pp. 87-93.
[7] For more information about the revolt, see Daly, 1998, chapter 9.
[8] The next section of this chapter shows how this Egyptian nationalist sentiment relates to broader Arab nationalism.

Ottoman Empire (under pressure from the British)[10]. Finally, the Egyptian army was dismantled by the Khedive and the British Empire consolidated its occupation and was now in control of Egypt militarily, politically and economically. It was the start of a veiled protectorate (Gifford, 2020, p. 9)[11]. ʿUrabī had wanted to shift power from a political ruling class controlled by foreigners to the Egyptian people, instead his country became completely controlled by foreigners. He did, however, give an important push to the debate on nationalism.

One of the most notable events that occurred in the veiled protectorate was the Dinshaway incident[12]. The incident raised tensions between the British and the Egyptians and resulted in the further growth of nationalist sentiment. The ʿUrabī revolt and the Dinshaway incident illustrate how singular events helped shape ideas around nationalism.

1.2 19th century Egyptian nationalism and Arabism

Concepts

It has been notoriously difficult to come up with definitive theories, analysis or even standard definitions of nationalism, nationality and nation. What is clear, is that these concepts come into being within a historical context (Anderson, 2016, pp. 3-4). The biology-based primordial view that people are born with set identities has failed to convince scientists (Greenfeld & Eastwood, 2007, p. 262). Hence, it is has become somewhat of a truism that identities are social constructs, i.e. they are made and shaped by people (Kiely, Bechhofer, Stewart & McCrone, 2001, p. 33). As Jenkins (1994, p.

[9] The British claim of total anarchy and loss of control by ʿUrabī was never documented or proven. After ʿUrabī's defeat, he was exiled after the British failed to convict him to death because of a lack of condemning evidence. The reason for the British invasion could also have been financial interests, or an attempt of Prime Minister Gladstone to improve his domestic popularity. For more information, see Hopkins, 1986.

[10] On 13 June, it was agreed that no European power was allowed to take unilateral action in Egypt and that no power was to seek any profit to come out of this unstable situation that another power could not also equally obtain. Regardless of this agreement, Britain bombed Alexandria just 16 days after and landed troops on Egypt's shores. For more information see Gifford, 2020, p. 9.

[11] Infrastructure investments were huge. In contrast, the public education system was notoriously ignored and neglected and actual political reforms remained mainly institutional: a new quasi-colonial regime was established. For more information, see Booth & Gorman, 2014, pp. 1-30.

[12] For more information about the Dinshaway incident, see Tignor, 1963, pp. 152-153; Fahmy, 2007, pp. 177-178 and Khalidi, 1991, p. 245, pp. 274-275.

209) states: “identity is produced and reproduced in the course of social interaction.” Whenever a certain number of people share an identity, it becomes a collective identity. The group of people with the same shared identity becomes a community, meaning they adopt shared characteristics and norms and values. The basis for the community may vary (Carens, 2000, pp. 167-169).

Heuristically speaking, identities can be subdivided. National identity is just one of someone’s identities. One that is formed by culture and one’s conscious experience (or, lived identity), social space, changes in modes of production, etc. (Kashan, 2000, p. 18). Even though national identity has been marked as the objective need for homogeneity, because of the evolving world images and lived experiences, identity is never static and never averse to self-transformation. So, national identity differs from per imagined community and per time period (Greenfeld & Eastwood, 2007, pp. 257-258; Gellner, 1983, p. 46; Hobsbawm, 2012, pp. 9-10). The function of national identities is to create hierarchies, by shaping the organizational structure of societies (Kiely et al., 2001, p. 34; Anderson, 2016, p. 7).

The collective nation is an imagined political community. It is political because the community seeks self-governance, which is a necessary criterion to be categorized as a political community (Carens, 2000, pp. 167-169). The community is imagined because most members will never meet, hear from and know all of their fellow community members. Yet, they ‘know’ each other and form a communion (Anderson, 2016, pp. 5-6).

Egyptian nationalism

The main goal of Egyptian nationalism in the 19th century was self-determination, i.e. the removal of the British Empire and the Ottoman Empire. But what constitutes the (national) identity of an Egyptian? The Egyptian national identity is divided into several components, among others Islamicism, Arabism and a specific Egyptian nationalism. The first two link Egyptian nationals to the broader Islamic community and the Arab nation (imagined community), the latter is a way of expressing the conviction that Egypt is a separate, sovereign entity with members with a shared

identity and that it could and should perform a leading role in the region, based on its ancient history and geographical location (Gifford, 2020, pp. 17-18; Suleiman, 2008, p. 39; Janikowski, 1991, p. 244).

Following this line of thinking, it is fair to say that nationalism in Egypt is also based on these components; from a religious nationalist perspective, the nation's goals are pursued through religious groups and the people in power can use religious beliefs and affiliations, while from a political perspective there is the aim to establish an independent strong government, which could advance the interests of the imagined community, i.e. the nation. Through literature, journalism, theater etc., national consciousness was fueled and spread among all social-economic classes, but the educated class took charge (Gifford, 2020, pp. 18-19; Ahmed, 1960, p. 15, p. 58; Grendzier, 1961, pp. 20-24).

19th century Arab nationalism

More and more nations within the Ottoman Empire started taking a critical look at their own position vis-à-vis foreign powers (Masters, 2013, p. 193; Ahmed, 1960, p. 28). However, there was no pre-existing sense of 'Arabness' or Arabism that could be built on[13]. As is the case for most –isms, Arabism (or, Arab nationalism) is a contested term. Although there is a certain degree of sympathy and understanding among nations in the Arab world, it has been impossible to identify a definitive framework of practical common interest to pursue conscientiously (Kashan, 2000, p. *ix*) [14]. Hence, Arabism is more of an umbrella term that harbors components that are not mutually exclusive, but that relate to and reinforce each other, like ethnicity, religious affiliation, identity, and territory. These concepts combined lead to different definitions of Arabism, based on the emphasis and significance each component is given.

[13] The slogan Egypt for the Egyptian illustrate this as it clearly refer to the Egyptian nation (Masters, 2013, p. 205).

[14] It can be argued that the fact that there is no coherent definition of Arabism causes a crisis in terms of identity, and that it caused rivalries between Arab states. Subsequently, Western powers have been able to misuse that situation to infringe on regional resources and lands to enhance their own position (Kashan, 2000, p. 1, p. 15).

The term Arab is used to distinguish an ethnic group. But ethnicity is more of an overarching super category[15]. Furthermore, tribal identities remain more important than ethnicity (Tibi, 1996, pp. 176-179). In addition, the idea that all nations in the Arab world share the same ethnical background is outdated (Webb, 2016, p. 2). So, while there might be (but not always is) a shared ethnicity among Arab tribes, it is apparent that this does not mean there is a shared common interest.

Some 19th century intellectuals thought that the Arab nations' goals could only be achieved through Islamic belief systems[16]. They were heavily influenced by Western education and borrowing from Western notions (Barakat, 1993, p. 239; Kashan, 2000, p. 34). Yet, for some the hold of religion was not self-evident and they sought secularism and alternative political authorities. Political nationalism took over their dominant discourse, without a place for religion in it. Some Christians and Jews supported Arab secular nationalism because they regarded it less of a threat than a purely Islamic rule (Kashan, 2000, p. 2, p. 26, pp. 31-32, p. 34).

During the Tanzimat, the Ottomans sought to (re-)strengthen power and presence in its Arab-speaking lands and win over the elites (clergy as well as prominent families, the *aʿyan*). The Arab elites collaborated with Ottoman rule and performed administrative duties (Masters, 2013, p. 15, p. 158, pp. 225-226). Overall, the ruling class contained relatively few Arabs and the Ottomans were not deeply concerned with their Arab subjects, who they thought of as inferior (Makdisi, 2002; Deringil, 2003; Hanioğlu, 1991, pp. 31-32, p. 43). However, contemporary records show that Arabs generally did not feel occupied and major uprisings were rare (Dawn, 1991, p. 19)[17]. The administrative appointees were considered oppressive and corrupt, and in the early 19th century they did not have the resources to actually rule (Masters, 2013, p. 158, p. 146). This left a void that was filled with

[15] For example, not all Arabs were Bedouin and not all people living on the Arabian peninsula were (and are) identifiable as Arabs (Gifford, 2020, p. 19; Webb, 2016, pp. 1-2).

[16] This does not mean that someone who was not a Muslim could not be an Arab. It means that non-Muslims were part of an Islamic system of politics and living, i.e. the Islamic structure was dominant for all.

[17] Arab Muslims recognized the Ottoman ruler as official guardian of the faith, while Arab Christians had a more ambivalent attitude towards the Ottomans, but their status was protected and they were able to perform their own rituals (Masters, 2013, p. 6, pp. 227-228). The rarity of uprisings can be explained by the fact that they simply were not in the Arabs' interests (Masters, 2013, p. 8).

(local) Arab nationalism, like that of Ali in Egypt, as the benefits of being ruled by the Ottomans diminished (Choueiri, 2000, pp. 43-45).

When the Ottoman Empire could not maintain its status as major powerholder and foreign powers like the British and the French became dominant, Arabism became politically salient (Daly, 1998, p. 218), as it was now used to gain political independence. Inspiration and pride regarding Arabness was found in the long Arab traditions of poetry and rich historical conquest (Choueiri, 2000, pp. 64-70). It is important to note here, though, that this does not mean that Arabism united all Arab lands. Local nationalism remained at play (Muslih, 1991). Furthermore, Arab nationalist sentiment was mostly absent with the *aʿyan*, who profited from Ottoman rule (Yenen, 2020, p. 7; Khalidi, 1991, p. 52). It was the new educated middle class that wanted to take matters into their own hands (Masters, 2013, p. 231, pp. 203-204).

Still, there was no Arab majority that wanted to completely overthrow the Ottomans, as people were afraid control would simply shift to other foreign hands (Dawn, 1991, p. 16; Haddad, 1991). Some Arab nationalists preferred a federalist solution, with an Arab state within the Empire (Yenen, 2020, p. 23). The final straw for the Ottoman Empire, simultaneously the best case for Arabism, became the ethnical Turkish nationalism the Ottomans adopted as official policy. In addition, the centralizing tendencies towards Istanbul made Arab Muslims feel like they were no longer a partner in an Islamic union. Arab Jews and Christians also started to feel alienated (Khalidi, 1991, p. 63; Masters, 2013, p. 19, p. 193). A significant step was taken when Muslims as well as non-Muslims started to call themselves Arab and feel a collective (secular) sense of Arabness (Dawn, 1991, p. 7; Masters, 2013, p. 206).

So, Arab nationalism did not just emerge at once. Caliphs sought to bring together Arab tribes, as far as one can speak of such a thing as a pre-Islamic Arab[18]. Arabism only became politically salient during the 19th century in reaction to the crumbling Ottoman Empire and the increasing

[18] The pre-existing and ongoing diversity is important to keep in mind, as the term Arab seemingly suggests unity (Webb, 2016, pp. 2-4).It would be a mistake to claim tribes already identified themselves as Arabs en masse before the Islamic conquests (Webb, 2016, p. 5, p. 353).

dominance of foreign powers. Even then, internal disagreements did not make Arab nationalism the inevitable victor (Yenen, 2020, p. 39)[19]. This means that one should be careful when reading about Arab nationalism when it refers to times before the 19th century[20].

The academic debate on concepts like nationalism and Arabism is still very influenced by Western notions, scholars and Western-style education systems. They have led to projecting a narrative of Arabism that complies with existing (modern) ideas (Webb, 2016, p. 3). Therefore, it is and remains important to look at contemporary sources and see those define what it means to be an Arab and what Arabism means.

[19] For a critique of the often used teleological lens concerning this topic, see Yenen, 2020.
[20] There has been a tendency among (Arab) scholars to apply 20th century notions of Arabism onto 19th century Arabs. Among others, Webb (2016), Masters (2013) and Khalidi (1991) caution against this.

Chapter 2 Writing the nation: Jurjī Zaydān and the *nahḍa*

Chapter 1 has provided the context of the historical and political period in which Jurjī Zaydān lived and worked. This chapter answers the second sub-question of this thesis: Who was Jurjī Zaydān and what position did he take during the *nahḍa* regarding the use of language? First, this chapter gives a short biography of Jurjī Zaydān. The second part of this chapter discusses the role language, literature and novels play in the construction of Arab identity and the spread of an Arab consciousness.

2.1 Jurjī Zaydān

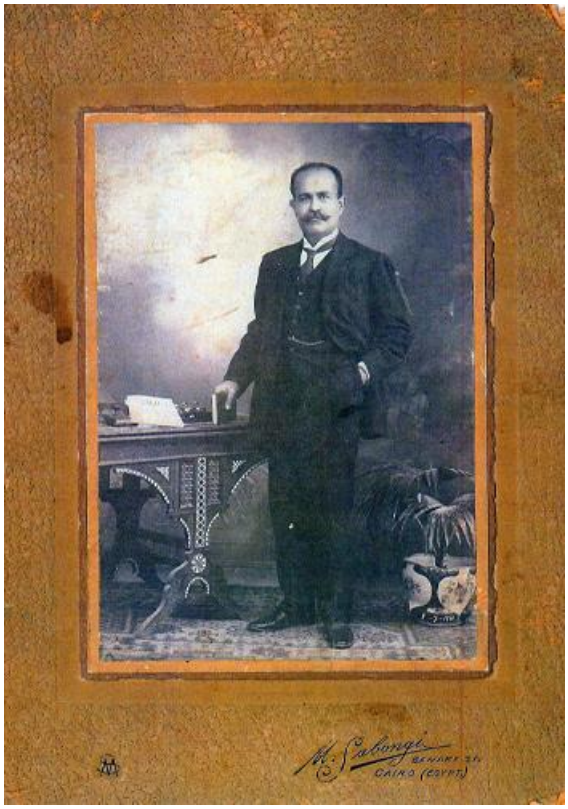

Figure 3 Jurjī Zaydān in his fourties

Jurjī Zaydān was born on 14 December 1861 in Beirut into an at least nominally Greek Orthodox family. His illiterate father was a baker and later owned a small restaurant in Beirut. The Zaydān family lived in humble, modest circumstances. In his memoirs, Zaydān paints the picture of a family that spent all its time working (Ware, 1974, p. 9) Jurjī went to a traditional school where his teacher soon said he had finished his education because he was at a level where he could spell words. Even so, his father transferred Jurjī to a *madrasa*, and later the Greek Orthodox school *al-Aqmar al-Thalātha* where he learned to read, write and memorize psalms (Starkey, 2014a, pp. 343-344). Because Jurjī was literate, he was tasked from an early age to help his father with the accounts. The time he spent in his father's restaurant turned out to be character shaping. It could be suggested that the strong personal moral responsibility Zaydān felt was rooted

there, where he would witness drinking bouts and obscene speech. Yet he also saw great storytelling and other aspects of contemporary popular culture (Starkey, 2014a, p. 345).

He became interested in classical Arabic poetry and eagerly read scientific articles and essays. His reading scope expanded when he taught himself basic English (Starkey, 2014a, p. 345). The most important book he got his hands on was *Self Help*, by Samuel Smile. The book about men and women of the working class "who got to the top through their own efforts and struggle and reliance upon themselves alone" affected him profoundly. It gave him some sort of inferiority complex and he later described how he could never finish the book. The philosophy that one could make it on its own by identifying and exploiting individual talent and willpower would stay with him his whole life (Bahkou, 2015, p. 67; Starkey, 2014a, p. 346; Philipp, 1979, p. 164).

Zaydān passed the entrance exams for medical school at the Syrian Protestant College (Bahkou, 2015, p. 68). There had been previous controversies at the College, for example over whether Arab or English should be the language of instruction, but in 1882 divisions arose over Darwin's evolution theory. Zaydān actively took part in discussions in support of the professor who had been fired after giving the initial lecture on Darwin's theory. He ended up leaving the College and going to Cairo to complete his medical studies (Starkey, 2014a, pp. 346-347; Philipp, 1979, pp. 179-204). At that time (October 1883) Egypt was adjusting to life under British domination.

In 1891, he married his wife, fellow Beiruti Maryam Matar. They had four children. Even though his family life connected him to Lebanon, his professional and intellectual life took off in Cairo (Starkey, 2014a, p. 348). Shortly after his arrival, Zaydān had quit his studies in medicine. Because his autobiography ends abruptly after his move to Cairo it is impossible to know exactly why. Philipp (1979, p.24) suggests a lack of interest in medicine combined with a lack of financial resources.

In 1884, Zaydān's writing career started. First as a journalist. He visited Sudan as a war correspondent on a British expedition, and because of these kind of experiences, where he would witness the making of history, a broader interest in history was fueled. This led to his determination to popularize the long history of the Arab world. He traveled to London to research materials in the

library of the British Museum, which led to the publication of his first books *Tāʾrīkh al-tamaddun al-Islāmī* (History of Islamic Civilization). Furthermore, while still publishing his own work on linguistics and history, he also became an editor and administrative assistant at a magazine (Bahkou, 2015, p. 68).

In 1892 he founded the periodical *al-Hilāl*, which would become one of the most important periodicals in the Arab world. At this time, Zaydān became a real *adīb*, an educated men of the pen who contributes (in Arabic) to debates on social issues (Dupont, 2010, p. 174). The accompanying publishing house, *Dar al-Hilāl*, became a prominent place of intellectual debate and an inspiration for other historians and writers of all sorts of backgrounds. During his editorship, the historical perspective of the collective for articles was preferred over direct comment on political issues and individual struggles. *Al-Hilāl* served another purpose too: it was the vehicle for the publication of Zaydān's novels (Starkey, 2014a, p. 349).

Zaydān did not originally plan out to write a series of novels on Islamic history, but after the success of his first one, *al- Mamlūk al-Sariid* (The Fleeing Mamluk (1891)), he was convinced by his friends to continue writing such novels. He set the goal not to write a complete definitive Islamic history, but rather to popularize this history through fiction and "to arouse the desire for the public to read their history" (Bahkou, 2015, p. 69; Starkey, 2014a, p. 352, pp. 357-358).

2.2 The *nahḍa* and Zaydān's use of Arabic

Some scholars have suggested that Napoleon's invasion of Egypt in 1798 was the starting point for the development of modern Arab literature and a focus on Arab language (Hopkins, 1986, p. 376; Suleiman, 2008, pp. 30-31). For Egypt, the invasion certainly marked an important step for cultural encounters with Western European (political and cultural) sentiments (Sheehi, 2004, p. 163). The newly educated class started to discuss the role of Arabs in the world and they became interested in their own history (Starkey, 2014a, p. 350). Consequently, the Arab language was also a topic of

discussion. Hence, the second half of the 19th century, an Arab cultural and literary renaissance, the *nahḍa*, took place.

This renaissance can be connected to the broader movement of ideas on Arabness, as discussed in the chapter 1. The British did not invest in education for Egyptians, but that did not stop the already educated class the developing desire to read. The (commercial) success of Zaydān's historical novels shows this desire beyond doubt. They might have even filled an educational gap as they struck a balance between fictional narratives and topics relevant to the construction of an Arab identity at the time of British occupation (Starkey, 2014a, pp. 356-357).

The Arab language was not uniform throughout the Arab world, as there were many dialects. A debate arose on what kind of Arabic should be used for writings. Zaydān placed himself in the camp that promoted classical Arabic, although a certain degree of revision and reform was desired. This stance is rooted in the fact that Zaydān had only attended primary schools and became an autodidact until his enrollment at the Syrian Protestant College. His evolutionist world view (which led him to side with the professor that lectured about Darwin's theory) made him regard language as a living body that evolved and transformed during history. He saw no valid reason for that to stop in the late 19th century (Dupont, 2010, p. 172).

The transformation of the (written) Arab language and the debate on how to do it was part of the *nahḍa*. Writers had to please the elite as well as the increasingly literate common people. The former considered fictional narratives inferior to Arab poetry (Shalan, 2002, p. 217). The latter used an Egyptian dialect and had only learned the basics of classical Arabic in school. One school of thought sought to use dialects for educational purposes, claiming dialects could be of great use in increasing literacy. Zaydān did not support this stance and belonged to the other school, claiming that writers should address common people through their work, but should not use the common language (Dupont, 2010, p. 176). Zaydān had several reasons to hold this view.

The first was political. Whereas Arabic increasingly replaced Turkish as the language of the administration in Egypt, the Turkish, French and English language had become the main languages of instruction in educational settings. The first reason for this was the perceived weakness of Arabic's scientific terminology and the lack of Arabic textbooks. The second reason was that education in Arabic was usually done at conservative schools in accordance with a pedagogy focused on memorization instead of writing of essays on social issues (Jeha, 2004, pp. 147-165; Dupont, 2010, p. 173). For Zaydān and his fellow pro-Arabic intellectuals, the condemnation of Arabic would have been a constant reminder of British neo-colonialism.

The second reason was financial. Zaydān, an immigrant, was much better off when the Arabic language was unified for all people (readers) throughout the Arab world. That way, he could expend his publishing market and make a larger profit. There is a reciprocal relationship between the Arabic language and the Arab world: a unified Arabic language would itself reinforce the idea of the Arab world, making it an even stronger market for his literary publications. Furthermore, even though Zaydān was not a Muslim, he was well aware that his readership primarily consisted of Muslims and that Arabic was the language of the Quran. He therefore wanted the language to stay alive. A third reason was that Zaydān considered dialects to be weak and inapt of expressing complex scientific and social-political issues (Dupont, 2010, p. 176). Essentially, this was how the British looked at the Arabic language.

Zaydān opted for a language transformation without too much rupture. He wanted a revival of the spirit of the classical language. This did not mean that he did not use any common language, he just tried to place certain common idiom in classical structures. In accordance with his evolutionist world view, he added new words transliterated and derived from foreign languages. It secularized the language, as the main lexicon was expanded beyond religious sources and words like socialism and communism became part of it. About this a new split emerged, and now Zaydān, who considered himself a language purist, was criticized by others who did not support the use of

common and foreign idiom (Dupont, 2010, pp. 177-178; Shalan, 2002, p. 218). It turned out Zaydān was a bit more of a modernist than it seemed at first glance.

Because of the print press Arab texts were democratized as more and more people had access to them and could read them because of an increase in literacy, while foreign languages were challenging the Arab language as vehicle for modern (scientific) ideas. Zaydān wanted to preserve and modernize the Arab language. His writing style supported his other goal, namely to make as many people as possible aware of their shared history.

Zaydān had evolved from being an *adīb*, to being a *kātib ʿāmm*, i.e. a writer for the general public. A *kātib* is a professional *adīb*, i.e. he makes his living by writing. His type of *kātib* was *ʿāmm* : he did not specialize in one subject like religious scholars, but was a generalist, writing on cultural matters rather than scientific ones, much like an *adīb*. *ʿĀmm* also relates to the readership: Zaydān wanted to reach *al-ʿāmma* (the general public), which he later refined to *al-umma* (the community) (Dupont, 2010, p. 174). The shift is considerable, because it shows his growing sense of purpose. The *ʿāmma* had to be turned in an *umma* by his work. The community of people had to be formed, molded and educated through reading in a shared language about a shared history. In addition, his works taught readers the right way of social conduct and skills (Sheehi, 1999, p. 91; Dupont, 2010, p. 174-175).

For centuries, a host of terms like *ghawghāʾ* (vile), *awbāsh* (riff-raff), *sifla* (lowly) and *aghtām* (barbarians), had been used to indicate the negative connotations educated people had with the general public (Masters, 2013, p. 9). In other words, there was a clear line between the educated people and the *ʿāmma.* The negative view of the *ʿāmma* was not limited to their personality traits. They were also deemed less worthy because of their bad personal hygiene and ignorance, which stemmed from being uneducated (Antoon, 2006, pp. 238-240). The fact that Zaydān wanted to educate this class shows how he did not turn his head away from their struggles. Instead, he attempted to lift their spirits about their Arab identity and improve their living condition. The use of a

form of Arabic that uneducated people were able to understand certainly aided him in achieving his goals.

Zaydān was creating a shared identity and heritage among the community, i.e. he was 'writing' a nation. He did this trough his books on history and language, his periodical *al-Hilāl* but most importantly through his novels. Novels have long been analyzed by academics as results of nationalism. Instead, they are important sources of nation-building instruments (Shalan, 2002, p. 214). The term for Arab prose and plays, regardless their length, is *riwāya*. An adjective could be added to indicate what kind of *riwāya*, for example historical (*tarīkhiyya*) or romantic (*gharāmiyya*). The published works are called *riwāyāt*, an etymon that has a primary meaning of 'to convey water.' This word alone already indicates the power of literary works to convey certain images and knowledge and thus the creation of nations (Holt, 2013, pp. 232-234; Shalan, 2002, pp. 212-214).

The reach of periodicals went far beyond the local context. In fact, periodicals like *al-Hilāl* were spread widely throughout the Arab world and eventually beyond to places like London and Paris. Hence, the audience was diverse and included not just literate people, as stories were often read aloud in households and among friends (Holt, 2013, p. 233; Sheehi, 2004, p. 158).

Publishers were well aware of their power and felt the responsibility to spread knowledge and information about (international) politics, but also to place their outlets in a broader Arab tradition of anthologies. The print outlets included pages for prose and poetry organized according to the popular topics and the current social context (Holt, 2013, p. 235). To be clear, Arab print outlets were not immune to capitalist incentives. Even though there might be an honestly felt responsibility, periodicals also gained huge numbers of subscribers when they started to publish novels; the owners depended on the suspension of 'what was to come next.' Zaydān described his surprise of this in *al-Hilāl* (Holt, 2013, p. 244).

The first novels in Arabic were translations of foreign works mainly from France. This process was accelerated with the founding of the School of Languages in 1835 and the Translation Bureau in 1841 in Egypt. Increasingly, Arab writers started to work on their own material. Al-Bustānī's

periodical *al-Jinān* started publishing the first novels and writers were inspired by each other. That way, Arabic prose started to form itself, influenced by a classical poetic style of Arabic (Shalan, 2002, p. 217; Starkey, 2014a, pp. 350-351). Zaydān's attempt at *riwāyāt tarīkhiyya* was nearly unprecedented. Only al-Bustānī had written novels that could be said to lay the foundations for a tradition of Arab historical novels (Starkey, 2014a, p. 351). Zaydān's novels were written with a specific audience in mind, namely Arabs. By wanting to educate and create the Arab people and nation, it was important for Zaydān to distinguish that group from others. The next chapter shows how that can be done through literature.

Chapter 3 Chronotope and Othering

The previous chapter discussed the transformative character of Arabic. This chapter shows the power of language and literature in general. The third sub-question (What role does the (Arab) novel play in distributing nationalist ideas and ideals?) is answered in this chapter. By using Bakhtin's concept of chronotope and insights on Othering as an x-ray that can be laid over literary works, (Arab) novels show that they are prime bottom-up vehicles for the construction of identity and thereby national communities (and thus nations).

3.1 Chronotope: the Self and the Other in time and space

Bakhtin was one of the first scholars to introduce chronotope as a dialogical analysis. Older, more traditional ways of looking at discourses (discourse analysis and its correlatives) do not include the broader context of the subject matter. Bakhtin developed an approach that includes social-historical context as an essential and integral part of a story. The other element of his dialogical approach is looking at 'the Self.'

Bakhtin never gave a definition of the term chronotope (literally time-space). What is clear is that he considered it to be a 'form-shaping ideology'. This means that chronotope helps understanding the nature of experiences (actions or events). By using chronotopes as analytical tool, spaces can be studied not only based on visible characterizations, but also through narratives of human experiences (Folch-Serra, 1990, p. 258). However, chronotopes will differ in explanations (Bakhtin, 1982, pp. 84-85), i.e. there is not one universal chronotope for one action or event, for example the spread of Arab nationalism. The differences depend on the context of time and space, which Bakhtin describes as having different qualities: one set of activities and its representation presumes a different kind of time and space than another set. The chronotope is determined by the time shaping of narratives and representation, which changes per (literary) genre. Moreover, time (the socio-historical context) and space (the geographical position, conversations, people, and the description

of the Self in relation those) are not limited to just mathematically abstractions, but can be considered in broader terms (Morson & Emerson, 1990, p. 367, p. 370)[21]. So, when discussing the spread of Arab nationalism, an author can place certain events (like a battle) in a certain time period (like the 8th century) and shape the chronotope in a way that fits certain belief systems about Arabness (like the belief that Arabs are a united people). Another author (or even the same one) might write about the same time-space but shape it differently, for instance including other descriptions of the events and times, and the chronotope has changed. The chronotope within Zaydān's novels remains the same, as we will see in chapter 4.

Descriptions of time and space are inevitably coming from a writer's sense of Self (whether he knows it or not) (Morson & Emerson, 1990, pp. 176-179). Even though the Self is central to the chronotope, Bakhtin emphasized that in order to find one's true Self (or, true identity), it is essential to have someone else around, the Other, to differentiate oneself from because self-consciousness is determined by a relationship with another consciousness (Folch-Serra, 1990, pp. 265-268; Morson & Emerson, 1990, p. 191). The practice of differentiating is also called Othering. It does not make the Self obsolete. In a way, Othering can be considered a way of analyzing the Self (by differentiating the Self from the Other). Both the identity of the Self and of the Other can thus be constructed. The recognition of differences between the Self and the Other happens only when an interaction occurs that crosses boundaries of the Self and the Other (Webb, 2016, p. 11; Morson & Emerson, 1990, p. 55). In the end, this gives us three categories of Self-formation: the performative 'I-for-Others', the reverse 'Other-for-me' and the personal conscious 'I-for-myself' (Morson & Emerson, 1990, p. 180).

For Bakhtin, merely describing the Self by using the Other was not enough. According to Bakhtin, descriptions do not matter if not communicated to the world, i.e. "*to be means to communicate*." When this correspondence stops, the Self and the Other cease to exist. Furthermore,

[21] Scientifically, this is not possible (it goes against Einstein's relativity theory). Bakhtin offered several responses to this, mainly arguing that he was using the time-space dimension as metaphor (but not entirely) for literary criticism. See, Morson & Emerson, 1990, pp. 367-369.

just as the Self needs the Other to complete the description of the Self, communication also needs at least two partakers (Holloway & Kneale, 2000, pp. 75-76; Steinby, 2013, p. 107). In other words, there needs to be dialogue within the chronotope. Dialogue is a form of interaction that does not just mean verbal interaction, it can also be interaction of meanings (Morson & Emerson, 1990, p. 49). As soon as a dialogue starts, the speakers take a certain position. The place a speaker puts himself in when describing the Self and the Other is called positionality. A positionality deploys a world-view, social interest and/or ideology. When dialogue between the Self and the Other is absent, we speak of a monologue[22]. Still, a monologue can provide a sense of Self and Other, as the latter is described in more characterological traits. Then, the Other is portrayed as representative for a whole group (Morson & Emerson, 1990, p. 238).

In essence, Bahktin's concept is a very individualistic tool; time and space are two organizational concepts that are unique to every single person. Multiple people cannot ever have the exact same interpretation of the two although they do occupy the same place simultaneously. This difference in simultaneity was phrased by Bakhtin as: "the unique and unified event of being" (cited in Holloway & Kneale, 2000, p. 74). Still, novelistic discourse has the potential to transfer ideas about societies from author to reader. There are several ways in which dialogue can be had, but for this thesis Bakhtin's term novelness is most appropriate. With this term Bakhtin focusses on the possibility of having dialogues about Self-consciousness in art, most prominently novels (Steinby, 2013, p. 105). According to Bakhtin, novels do his concept the greatest justice, as those offer the most complex sense of language and thus provide the richest and most profound sense of the world (Bakhtin, 1982, pp. 41-51).

In historical novels, a certain world vision is allowed to be portrayed in the form of concrete examples of experiences, as opposed to just theoretical ones (Morson & Emerson, 1990, pp. 282-284). Novelistic images (geographical places, conversations, events etc.) that are in dialogue with each other are assumed by social beliefs and norms, and fused with discourse and language, i.e. they

[22] For Bakhtin, monologue did not always mean non-dialogue. Throughout his work, he ascribed at least three meanings to dialogue. For more information, see Morson & Emerson, chapter1 and 4.

are tools for understanding and transferring ideas about societies (Bakhtin, 1982, p. 357). The chronotope determines the parameters of the narrative. Readers recognize that certain actions or events would be highly implausible when they are placed in the wrong representation of time or space. This recognition of the story in in terms of time and space can add to understanding relationships of characters (of the story and the reader) (Morson & Emerson, 1990, p. 371).

The textualization, communication and discussion of Self-Other relations need to be, and almost always are, constantly evolving (Folch-Serra, 1990, p. 259). This means that, as described in the first chapter, identities and chronotopes are not intrinsically static (Steinby, 2013, p. 110). To apply the chronotope in novels means that it becomes a way of understanding narratives in a multidimensional way: the chronotope is used to understand and to represent temporal-spatial relationships and narratives (Steinby, 2013, p. 107).

3.2 Bottom-up marketing: the role of novels in the construction of (Arab) identity

Zaydān wanted to educate an Arab readership about the Arab identity. This national identity was created in his novels. For chronotopes and novelness to reach and influence a readership, the works of art need to reach far beyond the writer. There are several ways to 'market' national identity to the members of the community, i.e. how the idea of the national community and its corresponding ideal identity is spread to the members.

The first approach to this is a top-down one. This approach is usually a state-sponsored way; governmental institutions and power are used to reach people. When there is no state, leadership of a national community takes over that role. The goal is not for the leaders of a nation to gain knowledge about its members, as the leadership is the starting point and main actor. The community is supposed to focus on their rights and obligations towards the nation(-state) (De Hart, 2005, p. 34). The members of the nation are made aware of those, for example, through civic education, in which an 'official' version of history is taught. Another top-down marketing tool is taking control over folklore traditions and rituals and symbols (Coakley, 2004, p. 539). The top-down approach leaves

some space for community members to partake in a dialogue about identity, but this is preferably done so by signing up for public office or by participating in by leadership organized debates about local community issues. Doing so might even be regarded patriotic (Renshon, 2004, pp. 118-120). It can be argued that countries where foreign nations are in power, like Egypt during the 19th century, have been neglected in terms of this approach.

The second way nationalism can be spread is bottom-up. This is a non-state-sponsored approach. The idea behind the bottom-up approach is that non-state actors take the initiative without interference by state or national leadership. It is up to the community to create its own culture and identity (Van Gunsteren, 2009, p. 43). Bottom-up initiatives usually connect the private dimension of community members to the public dimension of the nation at large. Individual (lived) experiences matter and are often the starting point for dialogue. Bakhtin's novelness fits better with this approach than the top-down approach, as writers, like Zaydān, try to influence the nation through their own work without being directed top-down. The absence of top-down directions also mean that there is more space for discussion and diversity, as multiple voices are regarded equally important (Van Gunsteren, 2009, p. 45). In addition to Bakhtin, Anderson (2016) has also described how writing is a good vehicle to perform Othering and good means through which a non-state actor can spread their version and ideas on identity issues.[23]

Historically, books have been distributed on a relative large scale from the moment mechanical reproduction became widespread. The initial market for books was Europe, but by the time the Arab novel came into existence, the market had grown significantly to almost all inhabited regions of the world, due to a combination of capitalism, improvements of production capacity and religious reform movements that needed their views to be spread to potential new members (Anderson, 2016, pp.

[23] In this marketing scenario, bottom-up solely refers to the fact that it is not state-sponsored. So, even though bottom-up actors could be members of the educated elite or other high level members of society who might have benefited at some point of state-sponsored institutions, they can still be regarded as bottom-up actors simply because their actions are not state-sponsored.

37-46). In essence, these three components already show the ascribed power to texts and their importance in spreading ideas.

The previous chapter already briefly touched upon the beginnings of the Arab novel and Zaydān's work. As said, Zaydān saw Arab people as his main audience. Therefore, his novels needed to strike a chord with them[24]. Novels that do not fulfill that aim and that do not resonate, are not capable of transferring any norm and/or value and are thus worthless in terms of nation-building (Suleiman, 2006a, p. 2). Suleiman (2006b, p. 208) has gone so far as to state that any account of Arab nationalism is not complete when the role of literature is disregarded.

Suleiman (2006a) describes how the social-historical context and a cultural-cum-political process explains much of what writers are aiming for in their work, a thought in line with Bakhtin. Applied to the early Arab novel this makes sense: the early Arab novels were written in a time when foreign powers were omnipresent in Arab lands. This social-historical context caused many (scholarly) elite Arabs (like Zaydān) to feel a common connection with each other throughout the region. Hence, Arab novels were meant to enhance those feelings of connectivity, simply because that was what the historical context made them contemplate about. This way of thinking is corroborated with other examples of nations that are struggling with outside powers while trying to create and empower their own sense of identity (Coakley, 2004, p. 537). However, national identities are not just shaped unidirectional through bottom-up writings. There is an inevitable reciprocity to be found in the process, as leadership of a nation cannot be completely separated from the historical context the writers find themselves in (Suleiman, 2006a, pp. 2-3).

Even though early Arab writers like Zaydān have all been influenced by earlier Arab thinkers and their social-historical surroundings, this does not mean that their novels are merely reflections of the existing ideas on nationalism. Although this 'reflection theory' is popular among modern day scholars, it diminishes the role the early Arab writers had in the construction of identity and nationalism, and does not make it clear enough that there is no such thing as a completely thought

[24] In Bakhtin's terms: the chronotope needs to be productive rather than to exist stubbornly.

out pre-existing idea of nationality. It is also quick to assume that the national community predates the political community (Suleiman, 2006a, pp. 3-4).

One way in which novels contribute to the creation of (Arab) identity is to use popular myths about the members of a nation, i.e. the in-group. Anyone who does not belong to the nation, automatically belongs to the out-group[25]. The main myth about nations is that they are ideologically coherent, sovereign and want or have a clearly defined territory over which they want to rule or are ruling according to clear behavioural norms and values (Benhabib, 2004, pp. 74-75). The idiom in novels that is used to sell that myth in a way that all Arab people recognize they are members of the same community functions as vehicle through which a shared sentiment, consciousness, culture and destiny is created, enhanced and distributed (Suleiman, 2006b, p. 209; Suleiman, 2006b, pp. 228). So, by describing idealistic behaviour (for example how strong, good behaved and smart the characters of the in-group are) in a novel, the out-group is immediately diminished to be regarded as inferior or even as a group to be pitied. To be fair, by making nation-building literature available to other nations, empathy can also be created to one another (Suleiman, 2006a, p. 9). The stories that are told in novels that explicitly contribute to nation-building (myth-making), are not just chosen randomly. They have to be suitable to be molded into stories that can show the in-group as opposed to the out-group. This so-called 'packaging of history' is used in top-down as well as bottom-up approaches (Suleiman, 2006b, p. 211).

The novel as marketing tool for nationalism has several main functions: first of all the stories *define* conceptual boundaries about norms and values, then they plant and *reinforce* those in the minds of the readers. Subsequently, novels *legitimize* ideas and *inspire* people. Other functions flowing from those main four are *coordinating* an initially heterogeneous group behind a (new) common identity and *mobilizing* those people to act accordingly and spread the word further (Coakley, 2004, p. 541).

[25] Following Bakhtin's chronotope, the in-group resembles the Self and the out-group resembles the Other. Any transaction of recognition between them creates dialogues.

As described in the first chapter, people can have multiple common identities based on several characteristics. For the national identity to take precedence over the other as the main organizational identity, the importance of the other identities need to be diminished. Zaydān was definitely one of the non-state actors that saw the this as a positive and did not regard the diminishing of other identities as an erasure of their presence, as he tried to incorporate them in the Arab identity.

Chapter 4 Zaydān and the construction of Arab identity

Given the limited space of this thesis I will not go into the historical accuracy of the three novels, nor will I explain each of the main and side plots. These overviews and summaries have already been drawn up by some scholars, among others Bahkou (2015). What has not been done by the academic community is to study the way Arab identity has been constructed in each individual novel. This chapter will do that for three of the six novels that have been translated into English, commissioned by the Zaydān Foundation, namely *The Conquest of Andalusia* (1903), *The Caliph's Sister* (1906) and *Saladin and the Assassins* (1913). The analysis builds on Bakhtin's chronotope and Othering, as described in the previous chapter.

4.1 Zaydān's style and chronotope

Zaydān wrote his novels during summers, when *al-Hilāl* did not appear, after which they were serialized in the periodical during the remainder of the year. First, he set out to identify a certain historical period or event as the main topic. He would conduct as much research as possible to make sure the historical accuracy remained sound throughout the novel, although he did not shy away from some deviances when these suited his stories better.

The historical outline serves as the skeleton for the fictional story, which entails a romance usually troubled by conflicting loyalties (Bahkou, 2015, p. 70). The novels are around 42.000 words and are divided into some 50 plus short chapters, which are named either after the place where the action takes place, or give a short description of the action. The first chapter always gives an explanation of the historical setting of the story. His style is sometimes described as monotonous, wooden and pedestrian in the past tense ('this happened, and then that happened') (Starkey, 2014a, pp. 352-354). Thought his writing style was criticized, it hardly changed between 1891 and 1914. However, the at times questionable literary quality of novels does not mean that his work should be excluded from the canon of nationalist literature (Suleiman, 2006b, pp. 211-212).

Zaydān's novels reflect a lot of his personal opinions, mostly on the superiority of the Arab race and the exquisite behaviour of Arab people as opposed to the Others. Zaydān's perception of the Arab identity, however influenced by other prominent historians and thinkers, is inherently personal and related to his own lived experiences up to the time of writing the novels. However, of course this does not mean that his views cannot influence his readership and create a common identity. This has been put as the "resulting paradox that we all share uniqueness" (Bakhtin cited in Holquist, 1985, p. 227).[26]

When looking at the list of novels (see Appendix) it is clear that Zaydān covered a wide range of time periods and regions. I made the following distinctions based on short summaries by Ware (1974, pp. 219-221, pp. 259-263) and Bahkou (2015).

Time

One of his books (*Egyptian Armansura*) covers a story set in the time before the Islam gained dominance in the Arab world, the *jahiliyya*. He has covered this period more extensively in some of his other non-fictional writings. It is important to note that he includes this timeframe, as it shows that Zaydān did not believe Arab history started with the emergence of Islam.

The first main timeframe Zaydān focuses on is the glorious and successful spread of the Arab and Islamic empires. *Girl of Ghassan* (early 7th century) and *Egyptian Armansura* (which takes place around 640) focus on the rise of Arab dominance and the decline of the Greek-Persian power. *Virgin of Quraish, 17 Ramadan, Battle of Karbala, al-Hajjāj ibn Yūsuf* and *Abū Muslim al-Khurāsānī* tell the story of the clash between the Umayyad dynasty and the rising (Persian) Shia's and cover the 7th and the early 8th century. *Conquest of Andalusia, Charles Martel and Abd al-Rahman* and *ʿAbd al-Raḥman*

[26] Bakhtin cautions against fruitless debates about objectivity and a misunderstanding on the reader's part of the author's intention. Yet, it is possible to construct an image of an author based on the social-historical context and space that person worked in. Novels can thus be analyzed with that chronotope in mind. However, it is important to remember that any analysis is always just that, i.e. the reader will be able to construct 'the-Other-for-me' but never the 'I-for-myself' that is the author(-as-creator) himself (Morson & Emerson, 1990, pp. 429-432).

al-Nāṣir also take place around the early 8th century, while they focus on the clash between Arabs and Europeans.

Then, the focus shifts to his second timeframe, the threats to Islamic empires from without and within. *The Caliph's Sister, al-Amin and al-Maʾmun* and *Bride of Farghana* show how the ʿAbbasid dynasty and empire succumbs to outside pressures. Those novels takes place during the early 9th century. *Aḥmad Ibn Ṭūlūn* (beginning of 10th century) and *Girl of Qairawan* (end of 10th century) depict a similar trope, namely the demise and weakening of an empire, in this case the Tulunids and the Fatamids.

The third timeframe shows Egypt's return to orthodox Sunni Islam and the crusades (*Saladin and the Assassins* and *Tree of Pearls*), taking place in the 12th and 13th century. There is a significant gap in time until the last centuries are reached. This signals that Zaydān thought that those centuries were not essential for his goal of popularizing and educating Arab history. The final timeframe consists of stories about tensions between Arabs and the foreign powers (the Ottomans and Europeans) during the 18th and 19th century (the first four novels and *The Ottoman Revolution*).

Space

- Egypt, 8 novels: *The Fleeing Mamluk*, *The Captive of the Mahdi Pretender*, *Despotism of the Mamluks*, *Egyptian Armansura*, *Aḥmad Ibn Ṭūlūn*, *Girl of Qairawan*, *Saladin and the Assassins*, and *Tree of Pearls*. Within Egypt the most prominent places are Cairo and Fustat.
- Syria, 3 novels: *Saladin and the* Assassins, *Egyptian Armansura* and *Virgin of Quraish*. Within Syria the most important place is Damascus, the other one is Misyaf.
- The Levant region: *Girl of Ghassan*
- Holy places Medina (*Virgin of Quraish*) and Mecca (*Girl of Ghassan, al-Hajjāj ibn Yūsuf*)
- Prominent Ottoman cities Constantinople and Thessalonica: *The Ottoman Revolution*
- Europe, 3 novels: *The Conquest of Andalusia* and *ʿAbd al-Raḥman al-Nāṣir* (Andalusia), and *Charles Martel and Abd al-Rahman* (Tours). In one novel, *The Captive of*

the Mahdi Pretender, the main protagonist visits Europe to complete his education upon returning to Egypt.

- Iraq, 5 novels: *Virgin of Quraish, 17 RamadanI, Battle of KarbalaI, The Caliph's Sister*, *al-Amin and al-Maʾmun*. The most important places are Siffrin, Karbala and Baghdad.
- Far East cities Merv (*Abū Muslim al-Khurāsānī*) and Fergana (*Bride of Farghana*).
- North Africa region, 3 novels: *Girl of Qairawan*, *The Conquest of Andalusia* and *ʿAbd al-Raḥman al-Nāṣir*.

The geographical locations (spaces) of his books are the traditional centers of power and (intellectual) glory of several Islamic caliphates and a couple of famous battlegrounds. In most novels, several of those in different regions are featured, i.e. the main characters travel a lot[27]. This is one way in which Zaydān sought to show that the Arab history takes place all over Arab lands and the Far East, emphasizing the unity of history for all Arabs and the far reach of it.

Given the limited space of this thesis, it is impossible to give a complete overview of all characters, but they can be divided into groups. They are heroes (usually of an elite class but not always), villains, royalty and their servants. The everyday life of the Arab mass is never described. Still, the characters are written in ways such that readers can identify with them. Likewise, the impeccable behaviour of the heroes feels like a realistic aim for the reader. This sets these novels apart from the epic genre (Bakhtin, 1982, pp. 14-15; Morson & Emerson, 1990, pp. 420-421).

Some categories of people are most prominent and often returning: Persians, prominent ruling dynasties like the Mamluks, Ommayads, Fatamids, ʿAbbasids, Hashemites, and religious groups like Christians (several branches including Arian and Coptic), Jews, Berbers. All of them are ascribed distinct and static features. It is not the case that a category is always the enemy. For example, the Christians and Persians are sometimes the enemy, while sometimes loyal servants.

[27] Following Bakhtin's categorization of novels, Zaydān's novels are Novels without Emergence A.3-6, see Morson & Emerson, 1990, p. 412.

The characters in the novels are usually one-dimensional, i.e. there is no 'becoming'[28]; they are either 'good' or 'bad' and there is no place for character development. The story is therefore driven by coincidences, explanatory dialogues and fate against a historical backdrop (although the mathematical time period does not determine the plot necessarily). This differentiates the novels from the tendencies Bakhtin noticed in 19th century novels. Zaydān's chronotope looks more like the classic Greek romances (Bakhtin, 1982, p. 60, p. 91, p. 105, p. 392; Morson & Emerson, 1990, pp. 381-383). For Zaydān this did not matter: his main priority was educating the readers about Arab and Islamic history (Philipp, 1979, pp. 235-236).

Zaydān provides an abundance of geographical and historical descriptions (sometimes even quoted verbatim from other historians and writers like Jamāl al-Dīn al-Afghānī) without those being essential to the fictional plot (Starkey, 2014a, pp. 354-356). In terms of chronotope this is actually very telling, because in this concept time and space are interdependent. All the elaborate descriptions create a chronotopic 'aura', which means that the actual space represents more than just the (physical) presence of it (Morson & Emerson, 1990, pp. 374-375). For example, the lavish courts in Baghdad and Cairo represent the intellectual and material wealth of the all Arab people all the time. This chronotopic motif is enhanced by the similar use of language in all novels.

This is Zaydān's way of telling the reader that Arabness is a static and fixed idea over time and space. Thus, the combination of familiar language, familiar settings, a familiar plot, the offering of the same opinions and the promotion of the same norms and values, show the same chronotope throughout his work, i.e. even though the physical spaces and mathematic times are different in each novel, they are the same chronotope. And given that his targeted audience is Arab people, he tells them that they are part of the same chronotope.

Ware (1974) and Philipp (2014) have composed an extensive overview of Zaydān's thought on political and historical matters based on all of Zaydān's publications and translations. Their work,

[28] Following Bakhtin's categorization of novels, Zaydān's novels are Novels without Emergence B. 1&4, see Morson & Emerson, 1990, p. 412.

thus indirectly Zaydān's own thoughts, serve as guidance to notice Zaydān's own influence in the stories. One general aspect becomes clear very soon when reading a Zaydān novel: even though Zaydān was a religious man, he was a modernist and did not believe history was made just by God. His novels set out to show how other causes related to governing administrations, social structures, the economy and even natural laws determined the arch of history (Ware, 1974, pp. 162-163).

4.2 The Conquest of Andalusia (Fatḥ al-Andalus)

Time and space

Figure 4 Tariq ibn Ziyad

The Conquest of Andalusia covers the region of Andalusia, Spain right before the Arab invasion (portrayed as liberation) and the invasion itself (710-711CE). A successful invasion would mean a permanent presence of Arabs as governing officials and military leaders. With that, the Islamic religion and trade with the Arab world and Arab merchants would most certainly grow in Andalusia. The story is set in a time when Islam is not yet widely present in Andalusia.

The period before the emergence of Islam is called *jahiliyya*. According to many Islamic scholars, this period contained chaos and widespread injustice which was brought to an end by Islamic Arab conquer. According to Zaydān, the time of *jahiliyya*, was a time of preparation for their future leading role (Ware, 1974). In a way, then, it can be expected that Andalusia 710CE would find itself in such position, hence the portrayal of the invasion as liberation. The chronotope links the invasion of a foreign heathen region to those of other conquests of the Arabs throughout history, both before and after the 8th century. Being conquered by the Arabs becomes an almost inevitable event, which proves and leads to the further superiority of Arabness. In times of oppression this is a comforting thought, which can also inspire Arabs to unite against the oppressor(s).

The geographic location is described extensively throughout the whole book. The picture that Zaydān paints is one of an Andalusian court with beautiful gardens filled with flowers and picturesque creeks, and stately towers. Outside the city walls, the countryside provides fertile land for farmers, where peasants and slaves live and work for their feudal lords under harsh circumstances (Zaydān & Allen, 2011, pp. 211-212, p. 295). The landscape as described becomes the text, the setting, for the story to follow. None of the main characters are Arab. Instead, they are Christians, Jews and Visigoths. The main Muslim character (most closely connected to Arabs), is commander Tariq ibn Ziyad[29], who comes from a Berber tribe (Zaydān & Allen, 2011, p. 197).

Race and gender

The situation of Andalusia was indeed not as Zaydān ought it to be; unjust treatment of peasants and a general loss of identity are mentioned as the two main reasons for the need for change. In the novel, the cause for Arab rule, which would mean a more just society, is made not by Arab characters, but by Visigoths themselves (the Others), because the actions of the tyrannical government are "a loss for both the country and its people" (Zaydān & Allen, 2011, p. 195, p. 162). By doing so, Zaydān shows how Arabs are admired by other communities and in need of Arab rule, legitimizing the expansion of Arab conquest and expansion.

This novel gives the Others a voice and an opportunity to provide meaning to the Arab conquest they are about to witness. Based on Zaydān's essays, it is not surprising that he gave space for non-Muslim voices to express their positive views of Arabs and Islamic rule: Zaydān saw Christians, including himself, as crucial part of Arab history and later also Islamic history. The fact that non-Muslims, like the Ghassanids and in this novel the Visigoths, fought for the Islamic cause outside the Arabian peninsula proved that point to him. He believed himself and his fellow non-Muslims were part of a shared Arab nation. As that nation became predominantly Islamic, he saw taking up

[29] In all three case studies, the names are written as in the English the translation.

the Islamic cause not as a religious project, but as a national one (Ware, 1974, p. 178). Therefore, Arab history became intertwined with Islamic history.

In Andalusia, the Visigoth kingdom is under a constant threat of dismantlement because of internal conflict: one faction wants to remain faithful to the Arian identity and one faction wants to continue with the adoption of the Roman Catholic religion. A unified kingdom is thus out of the question. Zaydān narrates how the Visigoths lost their identity when they traded their own Arian religion and language for Roman Catholicism and Spanish (Zaydān & Allen, 2011, p. 24, pp. 61-64). While there was a conversation between the Visigoth Self and the Spanish Other, the difference between the Self and the Other started to fade, therefore the Visigoth identity started to disappear as well. Arab rule could 'heal' the internal divisions and relieve the Visigoths of their governing duty and live peacefully under Arab rule, giving them the opportunity to renew their Christian lifestyle without any diversions. Zaydān portrays the arrival of the Arabs as possible solution, because he sees the Arab as dominant race (Zaydān & Allen, 2011, p. 23), as they had been able "to mold the various peoples with whom they came into contact into a single community that spoke the same language," something the Visigoths notably failed to do. Notice the importance of language Zaydān states here. Furthermore, the Arabs are also the race that is the bravest, as they are about to conquer a region even though they are outnumbered. Their fortitude, courage and endurance made up for the difference in numbers (Zaydān & Allen, 2011, p. 297, p. 334).

The arrival of Arab rule would not be beneficial to just the several Christian sects, the Jewish community realized it early on, as described in the book through the actions and scheming of Yaʿqub and Sulayman (for instance Zaydān & Allen, 2011, p. 181). Yaʿqub narrates how the Visigoths gave the Jews a choice: either convert to Christianity, be exiled, or be killed (Zaydān & Allen, 2011, p. 159). Zaydān sees Jewish people as an honorable race. According to him, they were rooted in the Arabian peninsula and at a certain point they breached out, while Arabs stayed. His approval of Jews might come from the fact that he believed that they stemmed from the same Semitic genealogy as Arabs,

as laid out in the Torah (Starkey, 2014b, pp. 271-272). In the novel, Muslims are referred to as sons of Ismaʿil and cousins by Sulayman (Zaydān & Allen, 2011, pp. 187-188).

Another race that was positively approached by Zaydān were the Berbers. They are described as courageous, excellent horseman and devout to their own language and practices (just like the Arabs). Initially, they were idol-worshippers with shamans that used to lay down the law for tribes (Zaydān & Allen, 2011, pp. 199-201). The reason for the positive approach can be found in the period of *jahiliyya*. The way of Arab living then resembles a lot of the Berber traditions (Starkey, 2014d). Therefore, they were similar to the Arabs, especially when large parts of the Berber population converted to Islam or Christianity.

One last aspect related to race is the emphasis Zaydān places on skin color. It is mentioned that "the general belief was that courage went with brown skin color, while light-skinned people were puny and cowardly" (Zaydān & Allen, 2011, p. 203).

Figure 5 Depiction of the Visigoth army (white complexion) and the Arab army under command of Tariq ibn Ziyad (brown complexion) at the decisive Battle of Guadalete

Another important aspect of Zaydān's study of what constitutes Arab identity is his study of women's roles and in this case the period of *jahiliyya* also plays a significant role. He considered women in that time culture-bearers, poets, political actors and even soldiers (Ware, 1974, p. 173). I think Zaydān's high regard for women as independent thinkers and actors is further demonstrated in his novels. Florinda, a Roman Catholic woman and one of the main female characters in *The Conquest of Andalusia*, shows us that Zaydān ascribed importance to their presence in history. In no way is she

just a passive girl[30]. To the contrary, she is well-read and understands the political situation and her position in it. On multiple occasions she speaks up against injustice, mainly when her chastity is in danger: "All I possess is this one jewel. Do you propose to take it away from me? Do you presume that, simply by wanting it, you can have it?" (Zaydān & Allen, 2011, p. 42), chastity "is the most valuable thing I possess in this life; in fact, it's even more valuable than my own life" (Zaydān & Allen, 2011, p. 94). Bakhtin deals with the 'Idea of Testing' specifically. He recognizes the testing of a characters' integrity as trope (or, organizing idea) in the Greek romances. We will see this trope in the other books as well. Usually it relates to someone's chastity, but it can relate to a broader pattern of behaviour too (Bakhtin, 1982, p. 107, p. 391; Morson & Emerson, 1990, pp. 380-382).

Furthermore, gender roles are ascribed according to traditional views of expression of emotions. Zaydān positions his opinion on this matter in a commentary way, writing: "tears also can remove feelings of stress, […] crying will often alleviate those feelings. Such emotions are encountered more often in women than men" (Zaydān & Allen, 2011, p. 47), thereby constructing clear gender roles for men and women. He also literally states that women are weaker than men (Zaydān & Allen, 2011, p. 289). He does not let men of the hook completely, as he acknowledges that they also are prone to "animal instincts" and "desires of the flesh", like King Roderic who tries on multiple occasions 'to have' Florinda. Zaydān comments how "those who are the closest to a life of virtue are those with the strongest wills" (Zaydān & Allen, 2011, p. 95).

Norms and values

Zaydān's attempt to educate the reader through his own position on subject matters is not subtle. His opinions usually discuss the goodness or badness of a character's personality. When Zaydān gives his opinion he usually resorts to write a paragraph filled with commentary, but at times they come to the surface in dialogue as well. Even though there are hardly any Arab voices heard in this novel, this does not mean Zaydān has not showed us what kind of personality he would like an Arab to have.

[30] Her character is not passive in the sense that she has some agency. However, there is no growth in character and her prime action is 'to endure' (Bakhtin, 1982, p. 95).

The personality traits Zaydān promotes are to be aimed for by everyone, but they are often already ascribed to Arabs as if part of their nature (a clear sign of the superiority of Arabness).

One important personality trait that Zaydān promotes is loyalty. Not just person to person loyalty, but also loyalty to one's own nation. This is most prominently described in the case of Oppas, a Visigoth elder who converted to Catholicism but who supported king Witizia's attempt to return to the old identity. When it seems like this is going to happen (with the help of the Arabs), he remains loyal to the current king because he rather wants a Visigoth king with the 'wrong' ideas than Arab rule and no Visigoth king at all (Zaydān & Allen, 2011, p. 283). When the Arabs eventually conquer the territory, Oppas is respected for his ideals and not punished for his initial resistance to the invasion, showing the importance and goodness of loyalty (Zaydān & Allen, 2011, p. 336). It also shows that the Arabs keep their promise of letting people maintain their own identity after being conquered, i.e. not forcing anyone to convert to Islam and giving protection to everyone (although a tax had to be paid in order to live freely) (Zaydān & Allen, 2011, pp. 187-190, p. 305).

Through the character of Oppas, Zaydān also depicts the struggles of being a good statesman, commenting on how most leaders truly want to bring change, but are not able to do so in existing social and governing structures because they adapt themselves as to fit in and let themselves be swayed into corruption of the mind and soul (Zaydān & Allen, 2011, p. 122, p. 208). This has to do with the admiration and respect people tend to have for people who possess more wealth and/or power. However, true reformers do not betray themselves and also do not let other people change them by pondering and scheming. They also are better off having few demands and a clear conscience, so that they can live without spite, greed, hatred et cetera (Zaydān & Allen, 2011, p. 135, p. 214, p. 276). By showing good behavioural patterns in non-Arab characters, Zaydān is still able to reinforce ideas on personality and inspire good behaviour for the Arab nation.

4.3 The Caliph's Sister: Harun al Rashid and the Fall of the Persians (al-ʿAbāssa Ukht al-Rashīd)

Time and space

The time period of this book is what Zaydān considers the Golden Age of Arab and Islamic dominance. This chronotope gives the Arab reader cause for a celebration of Arabness. The story is set around the year 803CE, which means caliph Harun al-Rashid is in power. He resides in Baghdad, the capital of the ʿAbbasid Empire. During this era a huge leap in cultural and scientific development was made. Many artists, poets, merchants and scholars flocked to the capital in hope of further glory and development. Among them were people of all sorts of religions, sects and nationalities, including Persians, Turks, Armenians, Indians etc. Furthermore, Muslims, Jews and Christians all lived under the protection of the ʿAbbasid dynasty. The rest of society was divided into freeman, freed slaves (clients), bondsman and slaves (Zaydān & Bouletta, 2012, pp. 1-3). By being a patron of all these artists and scientists, including religious scholars, the ʿAbbasid caliphs enhanced the wealth and fortune of their empire, but also gained something in return: respect and adherence. In the case of religion, it also gave them a certain stamp of approval, which could be used for good or bad (Starkey, 2014d, pp. 174-177).

In this book the time and spaces flow into each other seamlessly. The main characters almost never leave the setting of the royal court, consisting of several palaces along the banks of the river Tigris. Over and over again the vast wealth of the palaces is described, and no detail is too small for Zaydān to leave out. Each time a person enters a room, an extensive description is given, from the ceilings to the doorknobs to the carpets. The same counts for clothing: veils and robes are often embroidered with Quran verses in gold (for example, Zaydān & Bouletta, 2012, p. 111). From the descriptions it becomes clear that the ʿAbbasid dynasty is rich, but also that it centers their Islamic values as source of their power. The mentioned origin of used materials are a sign of just how vast the empire was and how much global trade occurred during the 8th and 9th century. For example, trees for in the gardens came from Khurasan and Turkestan, artists and gardening experts came from

India and Byzantine, while headband were of a typical ʿAbbasid style (Zaydān & Bouletta, 2012, pp. 70-71).

Race and gender

(Pre-)existing understandings about race are crucial to the development of the novel. The conflict between two Arab brothers, one supported and surrounded by Arabs and one educated and surrounded by Persian influences, are symbolic for the broader political power struggles that plagued the stability and continuity of the ʿAbbasid Empire.

Figure 6 Calpih Harun al-Rashid with wife Zubayda being entertained by a poet. In the background a black slave cools them while a black cup-bearer is ready to serve the royals their drinks.

Of all three analyzed novels, this one gives us the most Arab characters. It also shows us a good inside into how Zaydān thought of the Other, non-Arabs. This starts with his theory on the early start of life: he was convinced a child would inherit more of their character from the mother than the father (Starkey, 2014b, p. 354). Hence, when the ʿAbbasids started to lift restrictions on interracial marriages between Arab men and non-Arab women, decline in culture and political strength and stability automatically followed (Ware, 1974, p. 191). This is one of the reasons why the caliph forbade al-ʿAbbasa, sister of the caliph, to consummate her marriage to Jaʿfar al-Barmaki, the vizier who is of Persian heritage. Her maid, ʾUtba does not even understand why her mistress would even want to marry someone like Jaʿfar, while she could also marry a Hashemite (Zaydān & Bouletta, 2012, p. 19). This kind of racism is not just adhered to by the Arabs, it is internalized by some Persians as well, like Jaʿfar, who could hardly get over the fact that his love's lineage was so much more honorable than his (Zaydān & Bouletta, 2012, p. 54, p. 61).

In the early stages of the novel, Zubayda (the caliph's cousin and favorite wife) is heard describing how she looks down on al-Maʾmun, half-brother of her son al-Amin, simply because his mother was a Persian slave girl, even though he was more refined culturally and intellectually than her own son. In fact, she hates Persians in general (Zaydān & Bouletta, 2012, pp. 6-7). This sentiment dominates most Arab characters in the novel. The only character that does not judge the Other, the Persian, on his descent is the wise man Ismaʿil ibn Yahya (a revered Hashemite himself) (Zaydān & Bouletta, 2012, p. 90, p. 97).

The novel does not just deal with race relations regarding the Arab and Persians. It expands to all named races, of which there are many. Clear is that Arab identity is inherently connected to being part of a certain lineage. By naming all other races of people as distinct features, he rejects the idea that a non-Arab can become a true Arab. In other essays, Zaydān explicitly states his views of other races than the Arabs and Jews (and later Christians) who share a genealogy, calling "peoples of India, Australia, America and African negroes" barbaric. Meanwhile superior Arabness is displayed by saying Arabs were "one of the most advanced peoples intellectually and psychologically" (Starkey, 2014b, p. 272), a view in stark contrast with how the British and Ottomans saw Arab people. So, Zaydān is not only Othering within his stories, but also in his own life, i.e. what we see here is the presence of 'I-for-myself' and 'Other-for-me'.

Claiming that the Arab identity is based on lineage, the Other is automatically judged on the basis of race. For example, the cruel and heartless executioner Masrur is said to be cruel simply because he comes from Fergana (Zaydān & Bouletta, 2012, p. 191), while the Barmakid family is used as example for all Persians (Zaydān & Bouletta, 2012, p. 98). As previously mentioned in the discussion on race for the previous novel, skin color takes up a lot of space when race is discussed. For example, black slave girls from Sudan are destined to serve not just their (royal) masters, but also white slave girls, and the white complexion of al-Amin is deemed handsome (Zaydān & Bouletta,

2012, p. 33, p. 71). Furthermore, often when a new character is introduced, the skin color is mentioned.

As stated previously, Zaydān chooses to position himself in the story by clear commentary sections on the goodness or badness of personality traits and situations. As Zaydān considers the scenario's in this book part of the Golden Age of Arabness, and the chronotope suggests that identities are fixed, it can be argued that this book lays the groundwork for the continuation of Arab dominance. While discussing race in this novel, Zaydān refrains from giving his typical commentary. Apparently, he sees his race-thinking as self-evident. When comparing this book with *The Conquest of Andalusia*, it is striking how little dialogue is granted to Others. However, the dialogue in the other book was not between Arab characters and Others. This book gave Zaydān that option, but he consciously chose not to; the only contact the Self and the Other have is in form of a command from the Arab to the Other. This shows that Zaydān chose the monologue as form that best suited his goal.

As was the case in *The Conquest of Andalusia*, *The Caliph's Sister* shows a strong women as central to the plot, albeit a little more in the background. This time, the woman is of the Hashemite clan, which means she is held in high regard, because that is the clan related to the prophet Muhammad. Zubayda continues the role of women as political counselor that Zaydān had seen in women during the pre-Islamic period. This Arab women is consulted by her husband regarding matters of state and personal relationships. She is also one of the main drivers of court politics (Zaydān & Bouletta, 2012, p. 6). The other main female character, al-ʿAbbasa is less lucky. She has some autonomy, and she is aware of court politics, but she is in no state to take fate into her own hands like Zubayda can. She is, however, very pious. At one point she even dares to challenge her brother's religious power as Commander of the Faithful, as see believes god's laws are still more powerful and important than her brother's (Zaydān & Bouletta, 2012, pp. 187-188). Power dynamics within the court, it seems, is the main determent of how 'free' a woman is.

Norms and values

Zaydān describes that while it was indeed a Hashemite Arab caliph that was the patron of all the cultural splendor and riches during the Golden Age years of the ʿAbbasid Caliphate, it was not the Muslim-Arabs, but the Christian minority and the migrant communities, including Indian and Persian cohorts, that were responsible for the enormous amount of translations of classical works and artistry (Zaydān & Bouletta, 2012, pp. 97-98). By doing so, Zaydān once again shows the importance of non-Muslim and non-Arab people to the grandeur of Arab greatness. The fact that Zaydān mentions non-Muslim Arabs as an existing group of people in itself shows that he did not think Arab identity was based on being part of the dominant Islamic religion. In fact, Zaydān believed that Islam stemmed from a long pre-Islamic Arab culture (Ware, 1974, p. 169). In other words, the Islam had to conform with Arab identity instead of being the prime shaper of that identity.

A minor but not unimportant storyline is the struggle between Sunni ʿAbbasid caliphs and the constant looming threat of the large Shia minority (Zaydān & Bouletta, 2012, p. 58). Zaydān never implicates that one form of Islam is better than the other. It may very well be that this struggle is not central to his story because he believed that religion should not be the main driver of politics anyways, with the exception of the first four Rightly Guided Caliphs who he believed to have made decisions on the basis on what was best for the community rather than Islam (Ware, 1974, pp. 186-188). This secular look on the Arab nation also gave him the possibility to include many non-Muslim and non-Arab voices in his novels.

Just as in his other novels, Zaydān shows how he would like an Arab to behave. For example, in this novel it becomes clear that Arabs should always be hospitable, even when the true reason for a guest's appearance cannot be mentioned (Zaydān & Bouletta, 2012, pp. 14-15). Furthermore, he praises the ability not to suppress emotions and feelings, for a person is most happy when he is his true self and his natural instincts are transparent (Zaydān & Bouletta, 2012, p. 23). Not to say that emotions should just be expressed without first giving them any thought. People that do not rationalize and order their thought first "do not do well in politics or at embarking on difficult

projects that require effort, control of feelings, long waiting periods, and delays" (Zaydān & Bouletta, 2012, p. 65). From this it is easily deducted that he does not approve of all the court intrigue and scheming, as is done by so many of the characters in his novels. By showing these kinds of situations, Zaydān manages to construct identity through narrative.

4.4 Saladin and the Assassins (Salāḥ al-Dīn al-Ayyūbī)

Time and space

This novel takes place during the last year of the Fatamid Empire (1171CE). The story begins shortly before the last Fatamid caliph, al-ʿAdid, dies. After his death, several candidates are battling for the throne, based on claims of leadership and lineage. There are two main locations that form the background for this novel. The first is the court in Cairo, Egypt. Cairo became the capital of the Fatamid Empire and was more beautiful and cultured than Fustat, and filled with antiquities (Zaydān & Starkey, 2012, p. 207). The capital was in constant competition with Baghdad, capital of the ʿAbbasid Empire. The Cairo court contained some secret tunnels to connect the female spaces to the male spaces, making the separateness of spaces not absolute. This novel attempts to center Egypt as the best place to host the throne of caliphs, which is in line with Zaydān's thoughts on the centrality of Egypt for Arab and Islamic history. The reference to antiquities too shows Zaydān's tendency towards Egyptian nationalism. Meanwhile, the descriptions of both capitals also shows that wherever Arabs are in power, wealth is present. Again, the chronotope shows this wealth throughout the Arab world and time.

The second space in which most of the second half of the novel takes place is the citadel and fortress on the mountain Misyaf. The mountain was home to the Assassin sect, led by Rashidin. The fortress itself was historically known to be impregnable, partly because the mountain was surrounded by vast swamps on the East and the West (Zaydān & Starkey, 2012, p. 239). By giving the description in this manner, Zaydān makes the reader aware of the invincibility of the Assassins without even going into their deeds.

Race and gender

The emphasis on race in this novel is comparable to the Arabs versus Persians trope in *The Caliph's Sister*, as Zaydān again tries to communicate the importance of (Arab) lineage. This starts with the fact that the vizier of the ailing caliph al-ʿAdid, Saladin, is not an Arab but a Kurd. As the health of the Arab caliph is of such matter that he is not able to rule, the Kurd and his family and loyal emirs are the most powerful men of the caliphate, leading them to think the time is ripe for a non-Arab caliph (Zaydān & Starkey, 2012, p. 95). A large Arab segment of officials does not agree, claiming that the nationality of the caliph should always be Arab, as the Quran is also Arab (Zaydān & Starkey, 2012, p. 213). As described above, Zaydān did not oppose this statement, as he considered Islam was rooted in Arabness. Furthermore, Zaydān argued that the Arab nation existed long before Islam, based on shared kinship, geographical location and language (Ware, 1974, p. 170).

When the caliph dies without having designated an adult ruler, discussion arises on the matter of succession. Hasan, claiming heritage to the Fatamid dynasty, tries to scheme himself to the throne, for instance through a proposal to the caliph's sister Sittalmulk and by plain lying (Zaydān & Starkey, 2012, p. 41, p. 68). When a princess of Fatamid descent would end up marrying a non-Arab, it would be regarded a true scandal (Zaydān & Starkey, 2012, pp. 150-151). Hasan, however, is obstructed by the vizier Saladin. Throughout the novel, Zaydān depicts Saladin as power hungry, but just, as his claim on the throne is based on his previous actions, namely his aid to the keep the Fatamids in power. Hasan, on the other hand, is depicted as a nasty conspirator against the Fatamid dynasty. The only other time a judgement is made on the Other, apart from the Kurds, is when a Turk man is seen acting based on animal instinct (Zaydān & Starkey, 2012, p. 255).

Apart from being in love with another man, the main reason princess Sittalmuk does not want to marry Hasan, is that she sees through his lying and does not believe he is a pure Arab, or at least that he is not descended from the prophet Muhammad, and therefore automatically also not related to the Fatimid clan, as they claimed a direct lineage from the prophet's daughter Fatima (Zaydān & Starkey, 2012, p. 2). Later, Hasan admits to this, saying that descent from an honorable,

most importantly Qurayshi, lineage can easily be manipulated. This is corroborated by two of his eunuch servants (Zaydān & Starkey, 2012, p. 232, p. 294). To be fair, some people in the camp of Saladin plan to do the same thing by making Saladin (even) more suitable for the role of caliph, as they told him: "[…] we could devise some noble connection with them" as many descendants of the prophet "were dispersed as a result of the conquests, and some of them settled in Kurdish territory. So it may be that your grandfather could be descended from one of them" (Zaydān & Starkey, 2012, p. 95).

The few main women characters in this book, princess Sittalmulk and her maid Yaquta, follow the same patterns of gender conforming behaviour that Zaydān has set out in the previous novels: they are pious, aware of the political intrigues of the court, possess a certain level of autonomy and drive others to actions, but they are never independent from the approval of the men, who always remain senior to them. They do, however, question their ration from time to time, for example when the princess asks her brother why the Kurd Saladin is seen as a threat based on his nationality while other ministers have often been Kurds, Armenians or Turks. Historically speaking, (other) important Fatamid caliphs have also made (religious) policy based on advice from Persian viziers (Zaydān & Starkey, 2012, p. 44, p. 103).

Norms and values

Compared to the clear presence of Zaydān's thoughts in the previous two discussed novels, this novel gives us significantly less straight lessons on morality. The story focusses more on the fictional narrative, especially when the Assassins are discussed. Yet, some lessons about Arab identity can still be learned. As said in the discussion of *The Caliph's Sister*, Zaydān mentions the Islamic sects to which groups adhere to, either the Sunni or Shia sect. In this novel, the Kurds represent the Sunni sect (and they are therefore assumed to be loyal to the Sunni ʿAbbasids), while the Fatamid Empire is Shia. Again, Zaydān does not lean to one or the other. This means that while Islam had become

deeply entangled with the Arab identity, the division within the Islam did not divide the Arab nature of the religion or question the Arab identity of the Sunni and Shia. To the contrary, Saladin believes that the Muslims should never let their own divisions divide the Arab world into two. A firm front against the Others must maintain, in this case against the Franks (Zaydān & Starkey, 2012 , p. 193). In addition, like in the other novels, religion is not one of the main drivers of the story, those are human tendencies like loyalty, love and a hunger for power. Just as Zaydān did in other novels, non-Arabs are given a major role in the construction of Arab history. He repeatedly shows admiration for non-Arabs, in this case a Kurd, that perform Arab-like behaviour (like being loyal). It shows how there is a place for non-Arabs in the Arab world. The fact that a Kurd would gain power over Arabs just emphasizes the importance of norms and values over adherence to a certain religion even more.

For someone to be a good person, more important than whatever religious sect someone belongs to, one needs to show an undying loyalty to that sect. For example, Nuradin, commander and governor of Syria, remains loyal to the son (Saladin) of his fellow Seljuk commander Najmudin when he rejects Hasan's plea to invade Egypt and deliver the throne to him, even though he had previously been a supporter of the Fatamid dynasty and tried to prevent Saladin from accumulating too much power, for he feared Saladin would invade Syria as soon as he felt his army was strong enough (Zaydān & Starkey, 2012, pp. 229-232).

Next to loyalty, a good person also exhibits respect for hierarchy. Saladin is by far the most powerful man in this novel. Still, he listens to his father and respects and accepts the his judgement and advise (Zaydān & Starkey, 2012, p. 27, pp. 160-161). Furthermore, Zaydān shows how good leaders are not preoccupied with decadence and opportunism. Leaders, not the least caliphs, should never lose sight of the needs of their nation. This novel shows how the Fatamids had not been able to do so and that, as princess Sittalmuk puts it, the Fatamid's downfall was no surprise and the assumption of power by Saladin "had been a natural and inevitable consequence of the lack of resolve, corrupt ideas, and trivial disputes that afflicted her brother's reign during the final period of the Fatamid dynasty" (Zaydān & Starkey, 2012, pp. 57-58, p. 200). These words resemble Zaydān's

own opinions. He thought the Fatamids had failed to adhere to the ideals of Arabism (for example social equality). According to Zaydān, this was a shame, as he thought the Fatimid Empire was actually one of the few caliphates that was able to inspire a return to a true virtuous Arab state. In his eyes, Ali was a successor to the Fatamids, which again shows his Egyptian nationalism (Ware, 1974, pp. 192-193, chapter 1.2).

As was the case in the previous novels, emotional wellbeing is promoted by Zaydān, although emotions are not meant to be expressed without thinking of their consequences. When other (rationalized) actions can be undertaken to turn a bad situation into a good one, those should be preferred. For example, "there is no harm in crying […] but it is useless. Patience and wisdom are more useful […]" (Zaydān & Starkey, 2012, p. 72). Hence, the act of staying with the Assassins just based on "sensual pleasures and physical enjoyment" should also be denounced (Zaydān & Starkey, 2012, p. 305).

Apart from being able to rationalize, other virtues are also promoted. Zaydān has made clear by now that a Kurd or a Persian could never become an Arab, because Arabness is tied to lineage. However, noble behaviour can make someone worthy of marrying an Arab women, as is the case with ʿImadin. By displaying chivalry, "lofty principles, generosity, and chivalry" he has proven to be worthy of being a king or emir, because Zaydān deems these character traits as good (Zaydān & Starkey, 2012, pp. 125-127). He even goes so far as to quote the saying that "there is no fault that generosity cannot up" (Zaydān & Starkey, 2012, p. 235).

Conclusion and discussion

This thesis has shown how Jurjī Zaydān constructed a collective national Arab identity through his novels, following a constructivist approach. This question could not be answered without going into the historical setting of Egypt, his country of residence, during the 19th century. Chapter 1.1 described Ali's attempt of nation-building and reform of education (in the Arab language and according to Western ideals), the mere nullification of those efforts by his successors and the subsequent takeover of power by the British Empire as a result of the major debts Egypt found itself in. The ʿUrabī revolt caused an even greater dominance of the British, while it also gave a huge push to the debate on Egyptian and Arab national identity.

Chapter 1.2 elaborated on key terms. When a group shares the same identity, it becomes a collective identity and the group becomes a community. A nation is a political imagined community: even though most members will never meet each other, they share an identity and a will for self-governance. National identity is not static, it changes over time and per nation. In 19th century Egypt, nationalism consisted of a focus on Islam, the Arab world and Egypt's leading place in that Arab world. Zaydān wanted to contribute to this nationalism by focusing on the second component, Arabism, which serves as umbrella term for several components like ethnicity, religion and secularism. Arabism became politically salient during the 19th century in reaction to the demise of the Ottoman Empire and the increasing European control of Arab lands. It remains important to stress that Arabism does not necessarily indicate a (pre-)existing sense of community. The centralizing tendencies in combination with an ethnical Turkish nationalistic policy gave way for Arab nationalism to grow, first and foremost under the educated middle class.

Chapter 2 gave a short biography of the main actor of this thesis, Jurjī Zaydān. Born in modest circumstances in Lebanon, he grew up to be an influential thinker and made a name for himself once he started writing in Egypt, at that time fully under British control. Zaydān started the periodical *al-Hilāl* during the time of the veiled protectorate. He went from being an *adīb*, to being a *kātib ʿāmm*, teaching his Arab readers the right way of social conduct and skills, in addition to

educating them about their own history through *riwāyāt tarīkhiyya*, an important source for nation-building. The second chapter also shows how media became the tool in educating the masses about history and informing them about the state of politics, especially since the educational system did not perform that task anymore. The *nahḍa* gave Zaydān the opportunity to promote his ideas on language. He wanted to modernize and secularize the language, without losing the sense of the classical Arabic. The educated class debated on the correct ways if and how this should be done.

The power of novels as medium for the construction of collective identity is described in Chapter 3. Novels are a bottom-up marketing tool for the promotion of ideas and ideals. For them to be successful vehicles for marketing, they need to strike a chord with the readers. Zaydān's novels certainly did: they were a huge commercial success. His novels did not just reflect existing ideas of Arab nationalism, they actively shaped those by choosing the right stories, i.e. stories that could be molded into tropes about the in-group versus the out-group (the Self and the Other(s)). As the fourth chapter has shown, empathy with as well as the inferiority of the out-group was created in the novels.

The third chapter also gave the final tools for analyzing Zaydān's *The Conquest of Andalusia* (1903), *The Caliph's Sister* (1906) and *Saladin and the Assassins* (1913). Bakhtin's chronotope and Othering became the x-ray that could be laid over each story. The chronotope is a form-shaping ideology which combines time and space and helps to understand the nature of experiences (actions or events). Time and space are interdependent and together they form a chronotope. Chronotopes differ per representation of time and space (thus they are not static) and can be in dialogue with each other. Within the chronotope, a dialogue is to be had between the Self and the Other. By describing the Self and the Other, identity is constructed. Ideally, both are in dialogue. This dialogue can occur through conversation, but also by an exchange of meanings. These meanings can be ascribed identity of Others and by designate Others as representatives of a whole group, like Zaydān has done. This is form of dialogue is called a monologue.

Bakhtin considered historical novels to be the best vehicles for the chronotope. Zaydān's *riwāyāt tarīkhiyya* shows the power of conveying images and knowledge. Notably is that Zaydān's positionality is really clear, and is therefore a big part of the chronotope.

Time and space

From analyzing the chronotopes in three novels, it has become clear that Zaydān provided one similar chronotope for each novel. The descriptions of surroundings and environments are not at all necessary to understand meaning of the story and they are sought out to show Arabness in all its glory. Furthermore, all novels provide a similar plot, promote the same kind of norms and values through the same positionality of Zaydān, who also uses the same style throughout the novels. The chronotope shows that the Arab identity is static and fixed. Even though the physical spaces and mathematic times are different in each novel, they are the same chronotope, which tells his target audience, Arabs, that they too are part of the chronotope and thus Arab superiority.

Chapter 4.1 gives an overview of the timeframes and spaces Zaydān uses. They focus on the glory, richness, intellectual and hard power of the Arabs, while giving considerable space to non-Arabs. In the these three novels there are not many changes of location outside of the several palaces, the only exceptions being the departure from the city to the battlefield in *The Conquest of Andalusia* and the journey ʿImadin makes from Cairo to the Assasins in Misyaf. The main locations show the richness (intellectually and materially) of the Arabs, but the true source of power is their Arabness itself.

The main characters are extraordinary people but they are described in ways that allows the reader to identify with them. This sets these novels apart from the epic genre. Zaydān's novels show a lot of similarities with Greek romances: the characters lack any kind of character development and are one-dimensional, i.e. there is no becoming. For Zaydān this did not matter: his main priority was educating the readers about Arab and Islamic history. Another similarity is the so-called testing trope, which mostly used in relation to chastity, but Zaydān also uses it to show how characters'

loyalty is tested. The three novels provided a lot of non-Arab and non-Muslim characters (Others). They were used to differentiate the Self from, though they were not always portrayed negatively.

Race and gender

This might be the most important category in terms of constructing an Arab identity, as this is the section where most of the Self-Other comparisons take place. Zaydān showed himself to be a race-thinker. According to him, lineage and not religion was the main determent factor on whether someone could call himself an Arab. He was also of the opinion that Arabism preceded Islam, and that the Islam was rooted in Arabness. As Zaydān set out to portray Arab history, he never diminished the role that non-Arabs played in achieving the greatness and the demise of dynasties and empires. He also never failed to point out the foreign influences on the Arab way of living. This complies with the constructivist view of identity, which entails that identities are not static and are subject to change, at times influenced by other identities. The Others were rarely given a voice that was in dialogue with the Arab Self. Whenever they had a voice, for instance the Visigoths and Saladin, it was always to provide meaning to the Arab narrative of superiority.

Zaydān also sets out a very traditional pattern in terms of gender roles for men and women. Women are the weaker of the two, but he does not depict them as passive actors. The most important thing for women is to be pious and to remain loyal to family. In his novels, the women are smart and at times cunning. Furthermore, they have their own autonomous thoughts, but they have no decisive power or full authority (apart from one's own body at times).

Norms and values

Zaydān is not subtle in showing his own positionality in his novels. His commentary shows a strong opinion on good and bad personality traits and behaviour. Zaydān shows that it is possible to live in a prosperous Arab society even when the caliph or people in power are autocratic. The only way this is

possible, though, is when all members of the community, the nation itself, behave properly according to the behavioural pattern that Zaydān has constructed in his novels. Two main traits are discussed. The first is the importance of undivided loyalty to one's own creed. The second one is to exercise control over emotions and to prefer rationalizing and reasoning. In addition, he describes how hospitality and respect for hierarchal structures are virtuous.

In terms of leadership, Zaydān shows that good leaders do not let themselves be swayed into unjust actions, i.e. actions that do not serve the greater purpose of the national community (the Arabs). The Kurd Saladin and the Berber Tariq ibn Ziyad could even become heroes of Arabism, while other non-Arab characters like Florinda are also portrayed in a positive light. This is related to their impeccable Arab-like behaviour, which Zaydān preferred over an Arab like Hasan, whose behaviour was unworthy of being a true Arab. So, although Zaydān placed a lot of emphasis on lineage, other factors too are important for Arabness.

Discussion

As Zaydān wrote these novels in Egypt while it was under British control, one could read into his novels a veiled criticism of the presence of the foreign power in an Arab land, as Arabs should be able to rule themselves perfectly fine without outside influences. His historical stories show that the Arabs have always been able to do so, not the least because the Arab creed is dominant in all aspects of life. So, these stories could inspire the reader to behave accordingly and resist the imperialism of both the British and the Ottomans. Hence, although Zaydān never actively coordinated and mobilized people, inspired readers could certainly do so.

This thesis contributes to the broader academic discussion on Arabism. Further studies could be conducted by analyzing the construction of Arabism in each separate Jurjī Zaydān novel. In order make this type of research more accessible, it would be beneficial if the data, translated novels into English, would expand significantly. Further research could then compare the findings to research about contemporary novels that were written after the British political and military presence in

Egypt, and analyze whether the outlook on Arabism is different and whether that has anything to do with the changes in social-historical contexts.

Zaydān himself is a constructivist *pur sang*. He has provided his definition of a good Arab and Arabness. The result came in the form of a fixed and static identity, which in turn goes against the main constructivist theory. Overall, in terms of the functions of novels as nation-building tools, Zaydān has certainly met some of those. By relaying the 'correct' norms and values, he has defined behavioural patterns for Arabs. He has reinforced the idea that the Arab race is dominant and has legitimized Arab conquests and expansion by showing the need of the Other for just Arab rule.

Regardless of Zaydān's extensive effort and contributions to the debate on Arabism, it remains practically and theoretically impossible to come up with a definitive definition of Arab collective identity: the Arab identity is fluid and it consists of many building blocks (other identities). But the importance of his works should not be underestimated. When a group or writer that places more significance on one identity (for instance lineage) pulls Arabness to one way, it is inevitable that another group (for example a group that identifies Arabness more with religion) pulls another way. Add to this the never ending struggle between nation-states (based on a placed significance on soil and territory), it seems impossible to reach an answer to the question what Arabism exactly is.

In any case, no matter what direction the debate will go in, it remains extremely important to include Arab voices like Zaydān's and other contemporary voices in the debate. Western people tend to apply Western concepts to non-Western actors without thinking about it twice. This way, pre-existing ideas and imaginations as described in the introduction will continue to be enforced. Combining several approaches, like the political scientists' one and the linguistics' one, could deepen the understanding of Arabism.

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Figure 3. Retrieved from: http://zaidanfoundation.org/ZF_Website_Photos_JZandFamily02.html
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Figure 5. Retrieved from: https://thedetailedhistory.com/the-battle-of-guadalete-19-july-711/
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Appendix

- 1891: *al-Mamlūk al-Sariid* (The Fleeing Mamluk)
- 1892: *Asīr al-Mutamahdī* (The Captive of the Mahdi Pretender)
- 1893: *Istibdād al-Mamālīk* (Despotism of the Mamluks)
- 1893: *Jihād al-Muḥabbīn* (the only non-historical novel Zaydān wrote)
- 1896: *Armānūsā al-Miṣriyyah* (Egyptian Armansura)
- 1897/98: *Fatāt Ghassān* (Girls of Ghassan)
- 1899: *ʿAdhrāʾ Quraysh* (Virgin of Quraish)
- 1900: *17 Ramadan*
- 1901: *Ghadat Karbalāʾ* (Battle of Karbala)
- 1902: *al-Hajjāj ibn Yūsuf*
- 1903: *Fatḥ al-Andalus* (Conquest of Andalusia)
- 1904: *Shārl wa ʿAbd al-Raḥman* (Charles Martel and Abd al-Rahman)
- 1905: *Abū Muslim al-Khurāsānī*
- 1906: *al-ʿAbāssa Ukht al-Rashīd* (The Caliph's Sister)
- 1907: *al-Amīn wa al-Maʾmūn* (al-Amin and al-Maʾmun)
- 1908: *ʿArūs Farghānah* (Bride of Farghana)
- 1909: *Aḥmad Ibn Ṭūlūn*
- 1910: *ʿAbd al-Raḥman al-Nāṣir*
- 1911: *al-Inqilāb al-ʿUthmānī* (The Ottoman Revolution)
- 1912: *Fatāt al-Qayrawān* (Girl of Qairawan)
- 1913: *Salāḥ al-Dīn al-Ayyūbī* (Saladin and the Assassins)
- 1914: *Shajarat al-Durr* (Tree of Pearls, Queen of Egypt)