

How *Zaynab* Became the First Arabic Novel

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Abstract

This paper is part of a *History Compass* conference cluster tracing the formation of national culture in Egypt. Guest edited by Walter Armbrust, this cluster of articles was originally part of a conference in Oxford on January 12–13, 2007, organized by Walter Armbrust, Ronald Nettle, and Lucie Ryzova, and funded by the Middle East Centre (St. Antony's), The Faculty of Oriental Studies, The Khalid bin 'Abdullah Al-Sa'ud Professorship (Professor Clive Holes), and The Centre for Political Ideologies.

The cluster is made up of the following articles:

Guest Editor: Walter Armbrust

'The Formation of National Culture in Egypt in the Interwar Period: Cultural Trajectories', Walter Armbrust, *History Compass* 6 (2008), 10.1111/j.1478-0542.2008.00571.x

'Repackaging the Egyptian Monarchy: Faruq in the Public Spotlight, 1936–1939', Matthew Ellis, *History Compass* 6 (2008), 10.1111/j.1478-0542.2008.00572.x

'How *Zaynab* Became the First Arabic Novel', Elliott Colla, *History Compass* 6 (2008), 10.1111/j.1478-0542.2008.00573.x

'Women in the Singing Business, Women in Songs', Frédéric Lagrange, *History Compass* 6 (2008), 10.1111/j.1478-0542.2008.00574.x

'Long Live Patriarchy: Love in the Time of 'Abd al-Wahhab', Walter Armbrust, *History Compass* 6 (2008), 10.1111/j.1478-0542.2008.00575.x

'Football as National Allegory: *Al-Ahram* and the Olympics in 1920s Egypt', Shaun Lopez, *History Compass* 6 (2008), 10.1111/j.1478-0542.2008.00576.x

'The Professional Worldview of the *Effendi* Historian', Yoav Di-Capua, *History Compass* 6 (2008), 10.1111/j.1478-0542.2008.00577.x

Despite a long-standing critical consensus that Muhammad Husayn Haykal's 1914 novel *Zaynab* was the first 'mature' Arabic novel, there is much evidence to the contrary. First, in terms of genre, *Zaynab* was not the first book calling itself by the term that later critics would call 'novel'; second, in terms of the bibliographic record, it was not a unique book on the cultural market in 1914; third, in terms of literary style, it was not at the time a particularly unique formal or thematic experiment in prose fiction; and finally, in terms of reception, it was not recognized as significant even by the small market segment and cultural field in which it initially appeared. This article revisits this critical debate and suggests that the canonization of *Zaynab* as the first Arabic novel cannot be explained by the work itself, but rather by subsequent developments – most especially, in the film adaptations of the novel and in the nationalization of university curricula during the Nasserist period.

In literary criticism of Egypt, there is a fairly regular story told about the origins of the Egyptian novel. Or, as Pierre Cacchia once commented, there is a futile game that 'is played among historians of modern Arabic literature, which . . . consists of searching the highways and byways of Arabic writing for the less-than-obvious forerunners of such genres as the short story and the novel'.¹ In this story, we have often been told that out of a slew of derivative, inconclusive and immature attempts at writing prose fiction came the first serious, mature work to rightly earn the title of novel, Muhammad Husayn Haykal's *Zaynab*, published in 1914.² According to the dominant history of the novel in Egypt, *Zaynab* marks a break with the literature that had come before, or in the unqualified words of Mustafa Badawi: '[*Zaynab*] is the first fully fledged novel of literary merit in Arabic'.³ In this critical tradition, what is most stressed is that Haykal's novel was 'authentically Egyptian' in character and that it was not derivative of European themes. It thus argues for cultural purity even while admitting that Haykal wrote *Zaynab* while he was studying law in Europe, and that the lush 'Egyptian' landscapes described in the novel owe much to the Swiss scenery that surrounded Haykal while writing.⁴ According to this story, *Zaynab* is the unequivocal point of origin for the canon of authentic Egyptian novels. Despite patent problems, this story continues to dominate the way the early history of the Egyptian novel is read by critics.⁵

This literary critical narrative was consolidated during the 1960s, a point I will return to, and its cornerstone is the claim that *Zaynab* was the first authentic novel written in Arabic by an Egyptian. The reason I highlight this is because it is a claim widely accepted but sadly mistaken. But the point here is not to show the error of the claim and by extension the overly simplistic narrative about the development of the novel which rests upon it. Instead it is to suggest that while these claims about *Zaynab* may indeed be mistakes, they were not oversights, but rather the product of a process that was deliberate in nature. To get at this process, two issues must be fleshed out: first, why *Zaynab* was not the first Egyptian novel when it was first produced; and second, how it later came to be thought of, through a series of reproductions, as the first novel.

The first problem with the claim about *Zaynab* is of a philological kind. Over the years, many critics have implied that *Zaynab* was the first 'novel' to appear in Arabic. According to the record of early print culture in Egypt however, this is simply not the case. From the nineteenth century, experiments in narrative fiction had been appearing in Egyptian and Lebanese publications.⁶ Aside from the didactic novels of the new elite print cultures, there were also the so-called entertainments – sentimental works, melodramas, historical romances, and political satires. Some were printed in colloquial Arabic, most in some reformed version of fusha, some were addressed to the established aristocracy, some to the emergent effendi class, some even to literate elements of the urban working class.⁷

These works appeared in bound books – printed in hundreds, perhaps a few thousand copies; some appeared first in serialized form in the new journals and newspapers of the 1890s. By 1914, the year of *Zaynab*'s first publication, many dozens of such works of prose fiction had already appeared in print.⁸

It is clear from the extant record of this print culture that sharp distinctions were not part of the novel's discourse. If anything, there was a recognition of its heterogeneity – that any form of long prose narrative could be called by any number of names and still be recognizable. Indeed, within the context of the Egyptian print markets of the early twentieth century, there was no agreed-upon term to describe this new genre of print narrative. The word '*al-riwaya*' which is used today as the proper term for the novel did not come into standard use until the 1950s. However, for the period stretching from the 1870s until the 1940s, the word '*al-riwaya*' referred not only to works that later critics would insist were novels, but would also with equal frequency and ease, refer to other works, such as short stories, plays, and screenplays. Likewise, other terms such as '*qissa*', '*uqsusa*', and '*haduta*' were used to describe specific works which later critics of the Nasserist period insisted were part of the canon of the '*riwaya*'.⁹ Indeed, Haykal, in his introduction to the second edition of *Zaynab*, refers to the work in print as '*qissa*' – while he calls the screen adaptation a '*riwaya*'.¹⁰ Thus, when attempting now to read the works in their earliest editions, one must be struck by their considerable discursive fluidity. Not only was there wide variation of terms used to refer to works that later were renamed as '*riwayat*', but the term '*riwaya*' referred more often than not to other kinds of texts, texts which then later were reclassified as non-novels.¹¹ However, what appears as a confusion of terms to us was probably not an issue of confusion at the time. Whereas critical discourse of the first half of the century was not concerned with creating rigid differentiations between literary genres, during the Nasserist period, the codification of sharp generic distinctions became arguably the highest purpose to which nationalist criticism could aspire.

Zaynab thus appeared among and after dozens of similar narratives had been regularly appearing since the late nineteenth century. These earlier texts – often reprinted in numerous editions – had come to constitute a readership that was familiar with and desirous of reading such long works of prose fiction. The philological record thus raises some important points. First, as a kind of book appearing on the Egyptian print market, *Zaynab* did not come out of a void. Second, as a book on the fiction market, *Zaynab* was by no means unique; it was produced, advertised, and distributed much in the way other recent works of prose fiction were. Third, whether it was a proper novel was not initially an express concern for its author and audiences.

The more persistent argument about *Zaynab* has proved to be a formal one. This is the claim that, judged on purely aesthetic terms, *Zaynab*

marks a radical break in the form and thematic content of Arabic prose fiction. The problem with this assertion is that *Zaynab* was not recognized as particularly unique in either form or theme at the moment of its first publication. That was a distinction insisted upon by critics only later. The argument about the text's originality was first launched in 1929, when Haykal and his supporters argued that the novel was the first to treat the everyday life of the peasantry and the virtue of Egyptian women. For this distinction to hold, Haykal had to ignore the many prose fictions about peasants and peasant women that had already appeared in the Egyptian print market by 1914. Novels like *al-Fatat al-rifiyya* which was published by the best-selling author Mahmud Khayrat in 1905, or his earlier novel *al-Fata al-rifi* serialized in *Musamirat al-Sha'b* in the late 1890s. Novels like the 1905 work *Fatat Misr* by another best-selling author Ya'qub Sarruf, or his 1908 novel *Fatat al-Fayum*. We could also mention Mahmud Tahir Haqqi's 1906 work '*Adhra*' *Dinshaway*, or 'Abd al-Halim Dular's novel, *Dinshaway*, also from the same year. As these titles suggest, peasants and peasant women had been on the minds of Egyptian fiction writers for some time before *Zaynab* appeared.¹²

Zaynab was not the first text to take up an interest in women and peasant romance, nor did it mark a significant departure in terms of sentimental plot, the description of the Egyptian countryside, the development of character, or the use of colloquial dialogue.¹³ Moreover, it is not the case that Haykal's text was the first to develop romance to suit the needs of nationalist discourse. Many of these other fictions had already posed a 'national romance' between a central feminine character of unimpeachable virginity and honor – the focus of libidinal competition between masculine characters of different social classes who vie for her heart, who vie for the heart of Egypt.

It is important to underscore that the formalist argument about the uniqueness of *Zaynab* was one that did not appear in 1914. It is an argument which has become stronger with time, that is, as its initial moment of publication has receded further and further from cultural memory. This issue raises the last way in which critics might try to conceive of *Zaynab's* place in literary histories, the question of reception and audience consensus – whether or not *Zaynab's* first audiences thought that they were encountering something uniquely 'novel'. Here we have to admit that it is difficult, if not impossible, to speak of any consensus about *Zaynab's* significance, even within the relatively confined market of prose narrative at the moment of its publication. It is safe to say that *Zaynab's* initial appearance on the literary scene was an inglorious one: Haykal's journal, *al-Siyasa al-Ushbu'iyya*, admitted that *Zaynab's* publication in 1914 meant that it would first be forgotten by Egyptian readers distracted by WWI and then forgotten again by Egyptians militating for national independence in the wake of that war.¹⁴ Not unlike other prose works of the period, *Zaynab* arrived and disappeared with little publicity.

It garnered scarce reviews in the contemporary press and fell out of print for 15 years.¹⁵

To recapitulate: *Zaynab* was not the first book calling itself by the term that later critics would call 'novel'; in terms of the bibliographic record, it was not a unique book on the cultural market in 1914; in terms of literary quality, it was not at the time a particularly unique formal or thematic experiment in prose fiction; finally, in terms of reception, it was not recognized as significant even by the small market segment and cultural field in which it initially appeared.

Some questions follow. If *Zaynab* was not the first novel in 1914, how then did it subsequently become known as the first novel? Put differently, when did it become known as the work of origin, a singular starting point for an emerging novelistic canon in Egypt? Why was it so important that there be a defined origin, a first, for the history of the novel? And finally, whose interests were served by the writing of this literary history about first novels?

A response to these questions relies on a distinction between primary and secondary moments of literary production,¹⁶ between the production of literature and the reproduction of literature through new media, such as the cinema, through secondary discourse – such as literary criticism – and, of course, through the republication of the print text in new editions. In order to understand the rise of *Zaynab's* stature, in other words, one must consider the interaction between the production of the Egyptian novel and its many reproductions – in various institutions at various historical junctures. Thus we might posit a brief timeline sketching out the founding moments in the long process that created the illusion that *Zaynab* is the first novel despite all the evidence to the contrary.

The first moment of this process comes in 1929 when, after being out of print since 1914, Muhammad Husayn Haykal republished the novel, this time in his name, amidst a protracted parliamentary struggle and amidst a dramatic reorientation within his own party away from Pharaonist symbolism and towards icons of the peasantry.¹⁷ Importantly, this is also moment in which the novel was adapted into one of the first Egyptian films made with local Egyptian capital.¹⁸ The pages of Haykal's weekly were soon filled with articles about the film, turning *al-Siyasa al-Ushbu'iyya* into a virtual advertisement that extended for months.¹⁹ During this time, with the republication of the novel and the release of the film in 1930, the pages of Haykal's weekly, *al-Siyasa al-Ushbu'iyya*, were filled with articles about the novel and its author – and it is only here, 15 years after initial publication, that *Zaynab* was first hailed as a unique breakthrough in Arabic literature.²⁰ Interestingly, in the pages of Haykal's political enemies, most notably in the influential Wafd publication *al-Balagh al-Ushbu'i*, there was more or less a resounding silence on the subject of *Zaynab's* second edition. On the subject of the film adaptation, however, there was a consensus among the various cultural and film journals: Muhammad

Karim's 1929 film version of *Zaynab* was boring, pretentious and had more to do with European fantasy than with the actual life of the peasants it claimed to represent so realistically.²¹ Nonetheless, this flurry of writing was significant. Never before had so much space been given in the press to discussions of the merits of long works of Egyptian prose fiction.

A second moment in this process comes during the 1930s when Haykal's English colleague, the Orientalist Hamilton Gibb, published an article on the Arabic novel echoing arguments proclaimed in Haykal's journal in 1929 and 1930. Gibb was perhaps the first to make the claim that *Zaynab* was the first 'authentic' Egyptian novel.²² Not surprisingly, Gibb's articles were quickly translated and published by Haykal, who was happy to have received such confirmation.²³ But throughout the 1930s and 40s, it would be difficult to say that there was much of a consensus among Egyptian intellectuals about *Zaynab*. For most critics, the genre of novel was not elevated enough to qualify as literature (*adab*). Indeed, within Egyptian university publications of this time, the only novels subject to scholarly criticism were, not surprisingly, foreign works.²⁴ Within criticism of the elite press, there was growing discussion of the body of novelistic literature, though this received only a fraction of the interest that was regularly directed toward poetry.²⁵ In the few critical works dedicated to the history of the novel, there was perhaps a recognition that Haykal's novel was of significance, but critics of this period were not interested in positing a single origin. For them, *Zaynab* was still merely one novel among many.²⁶

The third moment in the process of producing *Zaynab* as 'the first novel' was perhaps the most important, since it popularized Haykal's text in a new way. In 1952, the film director Muhammad Karim, whose first adaptation of *Zaynab* had been so widely panned, decided to remake the film he had made 20 years before. The original film now sadly does not exist. In the remake Karim drew upon proven film stars – Raqia Ibrahim and Farid Shawqi among others – who transformed the brooding silent film into a melodrama complete with musical numbers. Critics of the 1930 film complained that the high cost of making the film had made cinema tickets prohibitively expensive in comparison to the Hollywood films with which it competed. Indeed, the 1930 film version seems to have been pulled from the theaters quite quickly. The 1952 remake was significantly more popular. Arguably, it is this film adaptation which gave the novel – which for 40 years had perhaps not been read by more than a few hundred of the intellectual elite – wide recognition. This is the film version that continues to show regularly on Egyptian television, and it is arguably this version that most Egyptians refer to when they think of *Zaynab* the novel.

In academic circles the most important moment of reproduction is tied to the work of the Egyptian critic 'Abd al-Muhsin Taha Badr whose monumental work on the Egyptian novel, *Tatawwur al-riwaya al-'arabiyya al-haditha fi-Misr*, was published in 1963.²⁷ Drawing upon the work of Ian

Watt on the English novel, Badr's argument was important in that it helped to break down resistance to discourse on the novel that had previously existed within the Arabic departments of the Egyptian academy. One cannot help but marvel at the way Badr's study attempted to lay down the groundwork for the critical acceptance of a national canon of novels. As such, we should see it as part of the wider process by which Egyptian universities were being remade in the image of Nasser. Badr's study is remarkably wide in scope, and he attempted to organize the long history of print fiction into neat categories. It was he who first clearly and systematically laid out the formalist claim about *Zaynab*. For Badr, *Zaynab* was not the first work to call itself a novel, but it was the first serious work worthy of the title 'aesthetic' or 'artistic' novel. Badr's history of the novel is based upon an essential categorical division between aesthetically minded novels – of which *Zaynab* is considered the first – and the entertainment and didactic novels which preceded and followed it. While the beginning of Badr's history does discuss these other experiments in novelistic production, the effect of his argument is to separate *Zaynab* from the wider context of popular print culture in which it first appeared. Arguably, it has been this distinction that has structured much of the subsequent criticism, albeit with an important difference: while it was important for Badr to acknowledge the rich variety of popular texts which existed before and alongside *Zaynab*, most subsequent critics have paid far less attention to those novels which Badr designated as mere 'entertainment'. Badr's argument has since been largely echoed by scholars working in his wake – and it has, at times, been accepted by critics working in a wide range of ideological and methodologies. In fact, there is a remarkable consensus on the subject between nationalist critics and western Orientalists, a consensus where one might otherwise expect more difference of opinion.²⁸

To conclude, each of these instances of reproduction marks a moment of crisis and constitution in Egyptian political and cultural history. The 1929 reproduction of *Zaynab* in print and in cinema needs to be understood in light of the 1919 Revolution and the subsequent shift from popular, direct politics to the representational, party politics of the Egyptian Parliament. This was a shift in which the struggles between the British, the King, the dominant Wafd party and the smaller opposition parties necessitated rapid shifts in representational strategies. It partly explains why, after letting his novel lie dormant for so long, Haykal would resurrect it so quickly to remake the Pharaonic face of his Liberal Constitutionalist party into that of a Muslim peasant.

Similarly, the 1952 film version – instantly celebrated by the Free Officers – also nicely reflects a turn away from the image of the urban elite toward a more populist image of lively peasants. Likewise, the subsequent repackaging of *Zaynab* in the academy helped to sacralize a canon of national literature of supposedly high literary value.

The question of value suggests perhaps the most important significance of *Zaynab* in this process of canon formation. The 1960s reproduction of *Zaynab* took place within a literary market in which imported foreign works competed with local cultural commodities. Indeed, it was at roughly the same moment that *Zaynab* came back into print that translations of foreign novels began to taper off considerably. Perhaps we need to read the history of *Zaynab* as an instantiation of the import substitution policies of the 1960s.

All of this is to say that the formation of the Egyptian canon, of which *Zaynab* is the cornerstone, has more to do with the needs of national institutions such as the cinema, the Parliament, or Cairo University, at moments of formation or reformation than it does with the texts themselves, or more precisely, than with the texts themselves at the moment of their initial appearance within the literary field. Simply put, *Zaynab* became recognized as part of the national literary tradition not at the moment of its initial production but repeatedly, in subsequent circumstances of reception and reproduction, each of which was tied to other non-literary significances.

Short Biography

Elliott Colla is author of *Conflicted Antiquities: Egyptology, Egyptomania, Egyptian Modernity* (Duke University Press, 2007), and translator of works of Arabic literature, including Ibrahim Al-Koni's *Gold Dust* (Arabia Books, 2008). He teaches comparative literature at Brown University.

Notes

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¹ Pierre Cacchia, *An Overview of Modern Arabic Literature* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1990), 104.

² See for example: 'Abd al-Musin Taha Badr, *Tatawwur al-riwaya al-'arabiyya fi-Misr* (Cairo: Dar al-Ma'araf, 1977 [1963]); Roger Allen, *The Arabic Novel: An Historical and Critical Introduction* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1982); John Haywood, *Modern Arabic Literature 1800–1970* (London: Lund Humphries, 1971).

³ M. M. Badawi, *A Short History of Modern Arabic Literature* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), 97.

⁴ As noted in *Anthologie de la littérature arabe contemporaine*, ed. Raoul Makarius (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1964): 'Pendant ce séjour, [Haykal] écrit un livre qui devait faire date, apparaissant comme le premier roman moderne en Arabe: Zeinab' (1:97). See also Yahya Haqqi's comments in: *Fajr al-qissa al-Misriyya* (Cairo: al-Hay'a al-Misriyya al-'amma li-l-Kitab, 1987 [1960]), 44.

⁵ See for example: Sayyid al-Bahravi, *Muhtawa al-shakl fi-l-riwaya al-'arabiyya : al-nusus al-misriyya al-ula* (Cairo: al-Hay'a al-Misriyya al-'amma li-l-Kitab, 1996); or the bulk of the papers published from the symposium on Haykal sponsored by the Supreme Council for Culture, *Nadwat Muhammad Husayn Haykal wa-juhud al-astinara al-Misriyya*, al-Majlis al-A'la li-l-thaqafa, Cairo, December 14–17, 1996.

⁶ See, for example, Pierre Cacchia, *Overview of Modern Arabic Literature*; Shmuel Moreh, *Studies in Modern Arabic Prose and Poetry* (Leiden: EJ Brill, 1988); Clément Huart, *A History of Arabic*

Literature (London: William Heinemann, 1903); Matti Moosa, *The Origins of Modern Arabic Fiction* (Washington, DC: Three Continents Press, 1983).

⁷ See Marilyn Booth, *May Her Likes Be Multiplied: Biography and Gender Politics in Egypt* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2001); Booth, *Bayram al-Tunsi's Egypt: Social Criticism and Narrative Strategies* (Reading: Ithaca Press, 1990); Hamdi al-Sakkut, *al-Riwaya al-'arabiyya al-haditha: bibliughraphiyya wa-madkhal naqdi (1865–1995)* (Cairo: Matba'at Dar al-Kutub al-Misriyya bi-l-Qahira, 1998); *Fihris al-kutub al-'arabiyya al-maujudat bi-dar al-kutub, adab al-lughat al-'arabiyya, Vol. 4, al-riwaya* (Cairo: Dar al-Kutub al-Misriyya, n.d.); 'Le roman, le conte, et la nouvelle dans la littérature arabe moderne', *Annales de l'Institut d'Études Orientales de la Faculté des lettres d'Alger* III (1937).

⁸ Indeed, the first review of the book, referring to it as 'riwaya', attempts to describe it as a useful, realistic novel. See: *al-Bayyan*, 2/8–9 (1913): 571–2.

⁹ For a fascinating survey of the use of literary terms (such as qissa, sira, hikaya, samar, khurafa, ustura, riwaya, nadira, khabar, mathal, hadduta, and maqama) in nineteenth-century Egyptian print culture, see: Abdel-Aziz Abdel-Meguid, *The Modern Arabic Short Story: Its Emergence, Development and Form* (Cairo: al-Ma'aref Press, n.d. [1970]).

¹⁰ See *Zaynab* (Cairo: Matba'at al-Jadid, 1929).

¹¹ For instance, the magazine *al-Jinan* used the term 'riwaya' to refer to an original or translated short story or novel during the 1870s, while the journal *al-Hilal*, from 1892, used 'riwaya' for novel, and 'qissa' for story. However, writing in 1925, Mahmud Taymur insisted that the term 'qissa' refer to the novel, and 'aqsusat' refer to short story. In 1948, he would revise this terminology, arguing that 'aqsusat' refer to short story, 'qissa' for novella, 'hikaya' for oral tale, and 'riwaya' for novel. See Mahmud Taymur, *Fann al-qisas* (Cairo: Dar al-Hilal, 1948), 40–1.

¹² This point is made succinctly by 'Abdallah Ibrahim in his paper, 'Bahth fi-ma'ayir ithbat al-riwaya wa-naqdiha', in *Nadwat Muhammad Husayn Haykal wa-juhud al-astinara al-Misriyya* (Cairo: al-Majlis al-'Ala li-l-Thaqafa, n.d.), 99–101.

¹³ By 1914, the novels of Ya'qub Sarruf, Niqula Haddad, Mahmud Khayrat, and Girgy Zaydan had already introduced sentimental themes to Egyptian reading publics. The 'peasant' fictions of the early 1900s had already explored the rural landscape according to pastoral themes. The colloquial prose fictions of Ya'qub Sanu' and 'Abdallah al-Nadim, published in their journals (*Abu a-Nazzara al-Zarqa* and *al-Tankit wa-l-tabkit* and *al-Ustadh*, respectively) had already showed to possibilities of colloquial narratives. See Semah Selim's seminal work on the subject, *The Novel and the Rural Imaginary in Egypt, 1880–1985* (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2004).

¹⁴ See Ibrahim 'Abd al-Qadir al-Mazini, 'Zaynab: al-sira' bayn al-wajib wa-l-'atifa', *al-Siyasa al-Ushbu'iyya*, April 27, 1929, pp. 5, 24; 'Abd al-Qadir al-Mazini, 'Zaynab: fann al-riwaya, taswir al-rif, al-hiwar wa-l-lahjat al-'ammiyya', *al-Siyasa al-Ushbu'iyya*, May 4, 1929, p. 5.

¹⁵ A selective review of period literary and cultural reviews affiliated with Haykal and which serialized and/or discussed Egyptian novels – *al-Jarida*, *Mara'at al-adab*, *Fir'awn*, *Ra'amsis*, *Ruz al-Yusuf* – turns up no mention of *Zaynab*. The journal *al-Bayyan*, in which Haykal occasionally published, glowingly reviewed Haykal's text before publication in 1913 but did not explicitly refer to the novel again.

¹⁶ See Pierre Macherey, *A Theory of Literary Production*, trans. Geoffrey Wall (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1986).

¹⁷ During this period, the masthead of Haykal's weekly was radically changed: the staid image of Horus was replaced by poignant and often satirical political cartoons. On Haykal's shift from Pharosism to Islamist populism in parliamentary politics, see Charles Smith, *Islam and the Search for Social Order in Modern Egypt: A Biography of Muhammad Husayn Haykal* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1983); Israel Gershoni, 'Imagining and Reimagining the Past: The Use of History by Egyptian Nationalist Writers, 1919–1952', *History & Memory*, 4/2 (1992): 5–37; Gershoni and James P. Jankowski, *Egypt, Islam and the Arabs: The Search for Egyptian Nationhood: 1900–1930* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986); Gershoni and Jankowski, *Redefining the Egyptian Nation, 1930–1945* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

¹⁸ Writers in Haykal's journal referred to the film adaptation as the first Egyptian film. See Muhammad Khalid, 'al-Fann al-Misri: riwayat Zaynab 'ala al-lawha al-faddiyya', *al-Siyasa al-Ushbu'iyya*, April 5, 1930, pp. 11–24. In this piece, Khalid expressed his hope that movie audiences would not now ignore the literary text upon which the film was based.

¹⁹ See 'Riwayat Zaynab 'ala al-shasha al-bayda: hadith ma' al-Ustadh Muhammad Karim mukhrij al-riwaya', *al-Siyasa al-Usubu'iyya*, June 15, 1929, p. 12; Muhammad Karim, 'Fi-intizar zuhur film *Zaynab*', *al-Siyasa al-Usubu'iyya*, September 14, 1929, p. 8; 'Qabil zuhur *Zaynab*', *al-Siyasa al-Usubu'iyya*, December 7, 1929, p. 7; 'al-Ustadh Muhammad Karim: Mukhrij riwayat *Zaynab* fi-l-sinima', *al-Siyasa al-Usubu'iyya*, April 5, 1930, p. 15; 'Zaynab 'ala sitar sinima al-Metropol', *al-Siyasa al-Usubu'iyya*, April 19, 1930, p. 21; Zakariyya 'Abduh, 'Film *Zaynab* wa-l-aqlam al-latamri allati suni'at fi-Misr', *al-Siyasa al-Usubu'iyya*, April 26, 1930, p. 9; Zakariyya 'Abduh, 'Ba'd Zaynab: hal 'indana ruwayat muhtarima li-l-sinima?', *al-Siyasa al-Usubu'iyya*, May 3, 1930, p. 18. Finally, there are the only known stills remaining from the film: 'Suwwar min film *Zaynab* al-sinima'i', *al-Siyasa al-Usubu'iyya*, February 8, 1930, p. 2; 'Suwwar min film *Zaynab* al-sinima'i', *al-Siyasa al-Usubu'iyya*, March 1, 1930, p. 2.

²⁰ Not one to shy away from publicity, Haykal led this drive to rewrite the history of the Egyptian novel, installing *Zaynab* at its origin while publically taking credit for its authorship 15 years after its publication. See: 'al-Duktur Haykal Bey: mu'allif riwayat *Zaynab*', *al-Siyasa al-Usubu'iyya*, April 5, 1930, p. 15. And also: Anonymous, 'al-Nahda: al-fann al-qissasi li-l-munasibat zuhur riwayat *Zaynab* li-l-Duktur Haykal Bey', *al-Siyasa al-Usubu'iyya*, June 8, 1929, p. 6. See also: Mahmud 'Azzat Musa, 'Zaynab: Ma'asat Misriyya Khalida', *al-Siyasa al-Usubu'iyya*, September 13, 1930, p. 8. Also appearing was a panegyric poem to the novel: 'Abd al-Latif al-Nashshar, 'Zaynab', *al-Siyasa al-Usubu'iyya*, May 24, 1930, p. 21.

²¹ See the period articles reprinted in '*Zaynab*' *'ala al-shasha al-Misriyya*, eds Madkur Thabit and Anisa Abu al-Nasr (Cairo: al-Majlis al-A'la li-l-Thaqafa, 1996). On the reception of Karim's first version of *Zaynab*, see Ahmad al-Hadari, *Tarikh al-sinima fi-Misr: al-juz' al-awal min bidayat 1896 ila akhir 1930* (Cairo: Matbu'at Nadi al-Sinima bi-l-Qahira, 1989).

²² H. A. R. Gibb, 'The Egyptian Novel', *The Bulletin of the School of Oriental Studies*, 8/1 (1933): 1–22. Reprinted in *Studies on the Civilization of Islam* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1962).

²³ H. A. R. Gibb, 'al-Adab al-'arabi fi-l-'asr al-hadir', *al-Siyasa al-Usubu'iyya* 204, February 1, 1930, p. 3, cont. *al-Siyasa al-Usubu'iyya* 205, February 9, 1930, p. 14.

²⁴ Based on a review of the *Bulletin of the Faculty of Arts*, University of Egypt (later Fu'ad I University, later Cairo University), 2/26 (December 1934–December 1969) and *Bulletin of the Faculty of Arts*, Farouk I (later Alexandria University), 1–17 (May 1943–1963).

²⁵ In some prominent literary-cultural journals of the 1930s and 40s – al-Risala (beg. 1933), al-Riwaya (beg. 1937) and al-Katib al-Misri (beg. 1945) – prose fiction, and especially fiction translated from European languages, figured importantly. The vast bulk of the critical discussion of literature centered on poetic forms. The not-insignificant number of articles devoted to novelistic writing would suggest an increasing interest in the genre. However, these articles tended to discuss the genre as a European, rather than Egyptian, form. In these journals, no mention is made of *Zaynab* as the first authentic Egyptian novel.

²⁶ Importantly, Mahmud Taymur, writing in 1948, began to describe the Egyptian novel in terms of historical development. According to Taymur's argument, Muhammad al-Muwaylili's serialized fiction *Fatra min zaman* (1898–1900), which was subsequently published as *Hadith 'Isa ibn Hisham*, is one origin (*matla'*), Haykal's *Zaynab* is another. See Taymur, *Fann al-Qisas*, 37–8.

²⁷ Yahya Haqqi's description of *Zaynab* does not place it as the singular origin of the Egyptian novel, but he does acknowledge it as a beginning point for new novelistic production. Haqqi's essays, collected as *Fajr al-qissa al-Misriyya*, were first published in 1960, i.e., while Haqqi's career was closest to the Nasserist state.

²⁸ It is critical to note that in recent years, some critics who had earlier promoted the 'Zaynab as first novel' thesis have radically reconsidered the proposition, and have begun to see the novel form's roots in earlier, post-classical narrative genres. See *The Cambridge History of Arabic Literature, Vol. 6, Arabic Literature in the Post-Classical Period*, eds Roger Allen and D. S. Richards (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

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