

E. S. Forster (Baton Rouge 2005), 49). She was later accused of encouraging Süleyman in the execution of Mustafa in 960/1553, allegedly plotting to secure the succession for one of her sons (Mustafa's rivals rumoured in turn that he plotted to overthrow his father). Whatever the truth in this affair, Hürrem's actions should be evaluated in the context of the royal mother's mandate to protect and advance her son's career.

Hürrem played a greater political role than any concubine before or after her (her successors enjoyed political prominence only as dowager queens). As the sultan's trusted eyes and ears, she provided Süleyman with news and intelligence during his frequent military absences from the capital (several of her letters to him survive). Hürrem's diplomatic engagements included gifts to and correspondence with the Polish king and the sister of the Iranian shah. Among her many pious bequests were the Istanbul mosque and hospital complex known as Haseki (*khāseki*, "the favourite"), a large public service complex in Jerusalem, and hospices for pilgrims to Mecca and Medina. Hürrem schooled her only daughter, Mihrimah (Mihrumāh), to emulate such diplomatic and philanthropic efforts. Upon her death, Hürrem was buried on the grounds of Süleyman's great mosque in a mausoleum next to which the sultan was buried eight years later.

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Husayn, Tāhā

Tāhā Ḥusayn (1889–1973) was a leading figure in the Nahḍa, the Egyptian and Arabic literary revival. He wrote critical and political essays, was a historian, polemicist, translator, and newspaper editor, and served as minister of education in the last Wafdist government (1950–2). His vast, diverse, and sometimes controversial intellectual production earned him the unofficial title of "Dean of Arabic Letters." His writings generally express a progressive conception of history and a pedagogical view of literature.

1. EDUCATION

Tāhā Ḥusayn belonged to a generation of Egyptian intellectuals who benefited from both a traditional and a European education; his life story constitutes a paradigmatic example of the political, social, and cultural changes that took place in Egypt and more widely in the Arab world from the years immediately before the First World War to the period after the Second World War.

Ḥusayn was born in 'Izbat al-Kilū, a village in Minya Governorate, the seventh of thirteen children in a lower-class family. He became blind at the age of three, due to a neglected and then poorly treated eye infection, as he recalls bitterly in the first volume of his autobiography *al-Ayyām* ("The days"). He attended the local *kuttāb*, a school following a traditional curriculum focused on memorising the Qur'ān. In 1902, at the age of thirteen, Ḥusayn joined his brother at the al-Azhar Islamic mosque-university in Cairo. When his brother left al-Azhar to attend law school, the family hired a personal assistant for Tāhā and funded the remainder of his education at al-Azhar. Ḥusayn soon began to show open opposition to the

university's teaching methods and the outdated content of many of the traditional curricula. His dissenting position did not go unnoticed at al-Azhar, and in 1912 he was denied a degree. It was, nevertheless, in this dogmatic, change-resistant environment that the young Ḥusayn met scholars to whom he would later express gratitude, such as the *shaykh* Sayyid al-Marṣāfi (d. 1931), who taught him Arabic literature, and the reformer Muḥammad 'Abduh (d. 1905), whose lessons Ḥusayn managed to attend only once or twice: both instructors followed less strict, more analytical teaching methods than their Azharī colleagues.

Driven by his growing dissatisfaction, in 1908 Ṭāhā began to attend classes at the newly established King Fu'ād (later Cairo) University, where he attended lectures by orientalist such as Enno Littmann (d. 1958), David Santillana (d. 1931), and Carlo Alfonso Nallino (d. 1938). Ḥusayn was the first graduate of the university to earn a doctorate, with his dissertation on the blind 'Abbāsīd poet and philosopher, Abū l-'Alā' al-Ma'arrī (d. 449/1058), a figure with whom he felt a profound empathy. When he first attended the university, Ḥusayn joined the circle led by Aḥmad Luṭfī al-Sayyid (d. 1963), one of the most influential Egyptian intellectuals in the establishment of the nationalist movement and founder of the magazine *al-Jarīda*, where Ṭāhā debuted as an author in 1908. Scholars have emphasised that attendance in the circles of these academics and Westernised, liberal Egyptian nationalists may have led the young Ṭāhā to investigate the philosophy of European intellectuals such as Hippolyte Taine (d. 1893) well before his own move to France. Nevertheless, his early exposure to Western ideas did not prevent the young *shaykh* from voicing, in a series of

articles written in 1911, his very traditional position on mixed marriages.

In 1915, after a year's delay due to the outbreak of the First World War, Ḥusayn moved to France with a scholarship to the Sorbonne, where he studied with Gustave Lanson (d. 1934) and Émile Durkheim (d. 1917) and where he earned his degree in history in 1917 and his second doctorate in 1919, with a dissertation entitled *Étude analytique et critique de la philosophie sociale d'Ibn-Khaldoun*. While in France, Ḥusayn married Suzanne Bresseau, a young French woman he had previously hired as a reader; as his wife and the mother of his children, she assisted him in his intellectual activities by writing under his dictation.

2. EARLY ACADEMIC CAREER AND THE POLEMICS AROUND *FIL-SHI'R AL-JĀHILĪ*

In 1919, after his return to Egypt, Ḥusayn joined the faculty of King Fu'ād University as a professor of ancient history. He then became professor of Arabic literature in 1925 and, in 1929, was the first Egyptian citizen to be appointed dean of the Faculty of Arts. Ḥusayn's academic career in the 1920s and 1930s was profoundly affected by the controversy stirred by his soon-to-be banned book, *Fī l-shi'r al-jāhili* ("On pre-Islamic poetry," 1926), for which the journal *al-Manār* and the al-Azhar *shaykhs* accused him of apostasy, reiterating those same allegations several years after the book's publication. Following such accusations, Ṭāhā Ḥusayn tried, in 1930, to resign his position at the university, but Aḥmad Luṭfī al-Sayyid, then chancellor of the university, rejected his resignation, appealing to the Egyptian government and parliament for the independence of the university, which had, in the meantime, made an issue of

the accusations. Soon after the apostasy scandal emerged, Ḥusayn published a slightly revised version of his controversial *Fī l-shiʿr al-jāhili*, titled *Fī l-adab al-jāhili* (“On pre-Islamic literature,” 1927); scholars have since shown that the fundamentals of the original version remained almost unchanged in the revised edition.

Fī l-shiʿr al-jāhili is an openly polemical essay in which the author adopts an approach based on Cartesian rationalism, something he defines as the “method of doubt.” Challenging the high prestige long held by the Arabic poetic corpus of the *jāhiliyya* period in the Arab-Islamic world, Ḥusayn bravely maintained that most of the texts referred to as “pre-Islamic poetry,” excepting a few authentic excerpts, were actually composed after the advent of Islam.

Both orientalist and Arabic scholars participated in the debate provoked by the book, often highlighting the methodological and interpretative issues that make *Fī l-shiʿr al-jāhili* easily disputable from a scientific standpoint—not least regarding issues raised subsequently by studies devoted to the oral nature of the tradition. The book is, nonetheless, still widely printed and read, specifically for the enormous impact it had on the Egyptian intellectual environment of the time.

3. POLITICAL CAREER AND ACHIEVEMENTS

In the 1930s Ṭāhā Ḥusayn joined the Wafd Party, which opposed the regime of Premier Ismāʿīl Ṣidqī (d. 1950), but, in 1932, some of his political writings reignited the controversy aroused by his volume on pre-Islamic poetry, and he was forced to resign from his government positions.

He later held various positions in education, until, in 1950–2, he reached the climax of his political career with his appointment as minister of education for the last Wafdist government before the revolution of 1952. While in office, Ḥusayn tried to implement at least part of the agenda he had previously expressed in his writings, eliminating the costs of public education, promoting the establishment of institutions of higher education, and institutionalising the representation of Egyptian culture outside Egypt.

In the late 1940s Ḥusayn was active in the management of the newspaper *al-Kātib al-Miṣrī* (“The Egyptian writer”) and its related publishing house. He continued his work as a journalist until the mid-1960s, along with his duties as president of the Academy of the Arabic Language. In 1963 he was awarded the State Prize for Literature. He died at home, on Pyramids Road, on 28 October 1973.

4. AUTOBIOGRAPHY AND NOVELS

In 1929 Ḥusayn published the first volume of his autobiography *al-Ayyām* (“The days”), a work infused with extraordinary lyricism, which was to become one of the most famous Arabic-language books of all times. The first two volumes (“An Egyptian childhood,” trans. Evelyn Henry Paxton, 1932, and “The stream of days,” trans. Hilary Wayment, 1943) first appeared as supplements to the newspaper *al-Hilāl* in 1926 and 1927 and became instant classics that were reprinted dozens of times. The third volume, *Mudhakkirāt* (“Memoirs”; trans. Kenneth Cragg, “A passage to France,” Leiden 1976), did not achieve the emotional intensity and artistic value of the previous two volumes and was the last book published by Ḥusayn (Beirut 1967).

The well known opening sentences of the first volume stand out for the wistful longing emanating from the author's earliest recollections and for the soft strokes with which the author portrays the rural setting that serves as a background for the protagonist's childhood: in spite of its autobiographical structure, *al-Ayyām* features a third-person narrator, an unusual choice that adds to the creation of a dimension of suspended memory. The lyrical resonance of Ḥusayn's language and his elegant style based on classical rhetoric and prose contributed to the canonisation of the book, which many contemporary writers considered a model. Sayyid Qutb (d. 1966), writer, educator, and leader of the Muslim Brotherhood, for example, dedicated his own autobiography *Tiḡl min al-qarya* ("A child from the village," 1946) to the author of *al-Ayyām*. Ḥusayn's masterpiece has been widely recognised as a pivotal text for the growing interest in the novel as a genre in the 1930s.

Ḥusayn also wrote the following novels: *Du'ā' al-karawān* ("The call of the curlew," 1934), which begins with an honour killing and ends as a romance; the critically acclaimed *Shajarat al-bu's* ("The tree of misery," 1944), a family story set in a rural village; *Adīb* ("A man of letters," 1933), the story of a man who moves to France to complete his studies but succumbs to delirium; and *al-Qasr al-maṣhūr* ("The magic palace," 1936), co-written with another prominent figure of modern Egyptian literature, the writer and playwright Tawfīq al-Ḥakīm (d. 1987), a sort of parody of the latter's play *Shahrazād* (1934).

5. NON-FICTION AND TRANSLATIONS

Ḥusayn also wrote numerous volumes of textual criticism, including *Alā*

hāmish al-sūra ("On the margins of the [Prophetic] biography," 1933, with additional volumes in 1937 and 1938), *Ma'ā l-Mutanabbī* ("With al-Mutanabbī," 1936–1937), which illustrates the various phases of al-Mutanabbī's production, focusing on the period in which the poet resided at the court of the Ḥamdānid ruler Sayf al-Dawla (r. 333–56/944–67), and *Ma'ā Abī l-'Alā' fī sijnihi* ("With Abū l-'Alā' in his prison," 1935). According to several scholars the 1930s saw the collapse of Ḥusayn's positivism and the rise of a subjectivist turn in his criticism. In 1938 Ḥusayn published *Mustaqbal al-thaqāfa fī Miṣr* ("The future of culture in Egypt"), a manifesto of what he identified as the crucial guidelines for the educational and intellectual development of the country, in which he addressed such issues as foreign-language teaching in Egypt and the training of language instructors; higher education and the critical role of Egyptian institutions such as Dār al-'Ulūm (an institution of higher learning founded in Cairo in 1872 by 'Alī Mubārak in order to initiate Azharī scholars into the modern disciplines); the need for a linguistic reconstruction of "the entire reading and writing system"; and the lack of free, modern thought in al-Azhar and the consequent need to limit the university's primacy in teaching practices, at least those involving the Arabic language and traditional disciplines such as the study of grammar and rhetoric.

In *Mustaqbal al-thaqāfa fī Miṣr*, Ḥusayn distances himself from the adherents of Easternism—an ideology popular in Egypt in the 1930s, which postulated a connection between the cultural and spiritual roots of Egypt and those of a wider, super-national East, including the Far East—by supporting the idea of a Mediterranean Egypt as inheritor of a Graeco-Aegean

culture. Husayn's thesis was founded on the conviction that Egypt was, culturally speaking, a part of the West and not of the East as conceived by the supporters of Easternism. Husayn goes so far as to advocate the teaching of Greek and Latin in Egyptian schools in order to maintain the long-standing links to such cultural roots through instructional curricula. *Mustaqbal al-thaqāfa fī Miṣr* has been criticised by many Arab and Egyptian intellectuals for being excessively Westernised in its approach, something that is clearly demonstrated by the author's attempt to assimilate Egyptian civilisation to an older heritage shared with Western cultures and highly valued by Western scholars. In this book-length manifesto, however, Ḥusayn also defends Arabic and its literature, strongly supporting the idea of a modernity built on the renovation of a broadly conceived cultural heritage rather than on its rejection. For this inclusive view of culture, for its modernism, and for its unequivocal support of free public education, the book has earned a belated recognition among Arab critics and academics.

Ḥusayn was also active as a translator: in 1921 he published a critical translation of *Psychologie de l'éducation* by Gustave Le Bon (d. 1931), in 1935 he translated Racine's *Andromaque*, and in 1946 he published his translation of *Oedipe* and *Thésée* by his friend André Gide (d. 1951), whom he admired and who strongly supported Ḥusayn's nomination for the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1949.

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Ḥusayn Vā'iz Kāshifī

Ḥusayn Vā'iz Kāshifī (Mawlānā Kamāl al-Dīn Ḥusayn b. 'Alī, with the sobriquet Vā'iz, Ar. *wā'iz* “preacher,” and the pen name Kāshifī, “the unveiler,” c. 830–910/1426–1504–5), was a prolific and influential Tīmūrid-era (771–913/1370–1507) Persian author and poet, religious scholar, preacher, Ṣūfī, and occultist. He was born in about 830/1426 (Herrmann, 90) in Sabzavār, in the province of Bayhaq, hence his name is often followed by the gentilics Bayhaqī or Sabzavārī. He lived for almost forty years in Herat, where he was associated with the Tīmūrid