



Chapter 7

ORIENTALISM AND WORLD LITERATURE: A RE-READING OF COSMOPOLITANISM IN ṬĀHĀ ḤUSAYN'S LITERARY WORLD¹

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The view that the Muslim world was completely at a standstill until the forces of the West collided with it at the end of the eighteenth century is no longer tenable. The stirrings of Wahnābism in Arabia, and somewhat later, of the Sanūsiyyah in North Africa are signs of vitality. . . . The fact is, however, that such indigenous movements did not become powerful or extensive enough to direct the political and cultural history of the Near East. Particularly is this true of the one country that concerns us here, Egypt. . . . A convenient starting point for a history of the Egyptian Renaissance is the landing of Napoleon's forces in 1798. It was not merely a military expedition: with it came some distinguished French scientists and orientalists, and they brought to Egypt its first printing press. . . . In fact, the most significant feature of the literary picture of the period was the appearance of literary translations. These soon became so popular that, unless specially commissioned to translate a scientific book, translators devoted their entire attention to fiction, so that apart from the influence they have had on style in general, translations are responsible for the appearance in Arabic literature of two genres: novels and plays.

Pierre Cachia, *Ṭāhā Ḥusayn*²

IN HIS MASTERFUL 1956 literary biography of Ṭāhā Ḥusayn (1889–1973), Pierre Cachia, typical of Orientalist scholarship at the time, situates the education and development of this famed 'Dean of Arabic Letters' (*'amīd al-adab al-'arabī*) as a public intellectual and reformer of Egyptian culture and literature in the context of the nineteenth-century Egyptian *Nahda*, the beginning of which, as Cachia posits, like all historians of Arab modernity, is traceable to Napoleon's Egyptian campaign (1798–1801). This particular encounter between the French and the Egyptians, all at once violent, shocking and fascinating, precipitated the series of events, measures, reforms and transformations in Egypt as well as the Arab world. This is how the story of the *Nahda* has been told in cultural and literary histories of the Arab world until very recently. The military might of the French dazzled those in power. The knowledge exchange between French scientists and Orientalists and local scholars incited thirst for new knowledge among the Egyptians. The delegation of students sent to receive education and training in France brought home ideas and plans for modernising all aspects of Egyptian life, from government bureaucracy to the military, city planning,



education, the status of women, dress, language and literature. And the introduction of the Būlāq printing press in 1820 gave birth to what Benedict Anderson would call ‘print capitalism’³ in modern Arabic, particularly journalism, and generated newspapers and journals in which the issues of the day were proposed and debated. This gave rise to a lively and dynamic print culture that served as one of the arenas of what Jürgen Habermas would call the ‘public sphere’⁴ in which ideas, concepts, bodies of knowledge and world views circulated into and out of Egyptian culture and literature along multiple trajectories.

Ḥusayn’s Legacy in the Egyptian *Nadha*

Ḥusayn, who was embroiled in one controversy after another during his lifetime, is now an iconic figure in the story of the *Nadha*.⁵ His impact on modernising Egyptian education,⁶ culture and literature,⁷ albeit controversial in certain quarters,⁸ is undeniable. His standing as one of the most important architects of modern Egyptian culture is acknowledged in the stupendous efforts made to preserve his words and deeds in writing.⁹ Pieces culled from newspapers¹⁰ as well as his private papers and letters to other Egyptian luminaries¹¹ are published in collected volumes. His contribution to and influence on Egyptians are subject to continuous assessment.¹² Generations of admirers and detractors have been responding to him, praising or taking to task the views he expressed (even those embedded in his studies of classical Arabic poetry and prose, in his reviews of the works of his contemporaries, and in his translations and summations of French poetry, novels and plays), the proposals he made for cultural rejuvenation that were published in print or broadcast on radio, and the programmes he suggested for the reform of Egyptian school and university curricula.¹³

Ḥusayn is what Michel Foucault would call an ‘author function’¹⁴ and Roland Barthes a ‘myth’¹⁵ in that he has come to embody the ethos of the century-long enlightenment (*tanwīr*) which began with Rifā‘a Rāfi‘ al-Ṭaḥṭāwī (1801–73) and ended with him. Considered the last of the generation of the Egyptian Renaissance, his death marked the formal end of what Albert Hourani calls ‘the liberal age’ of ‘Arabic thought’.¹⁶ He is most interesting as a site of the confluence of all the competing, overlapping, contradictory, dialectical and differing positions held and perspectives taken by public intellectuals with regards to democracy, freedom of speech, secularity,¹⁷ Islamic reform, the separation between critical thinking and faith,¹⁸ the role of literature in public life, and literary innovations and fashions.¹⁹ This ‘towering figure of Arabic letters’ is ‘a mirror of his times’, as Gaber Asfour (Jābir ‘Uṣfūr) puts it in his masterful study of Ḥusayn’s literary criticism, *al-Marāyā al-mutajāwira: dirāsa fī naqd Ṭāhā Ḥusayn (Adjacent Mirrors: A Study in the Criticism of Ṭāhā Ḥusayn, 1983)*.²⁰ Through his works it is possible to reconstruct the Egyptian-French intercultural context of the development of Arabic culture, literature, literary criticism and even Egyptian society²¹ in the first half of the twentieth century. His autobiographical works, *al-Ayyām* (1929) and *Adīb* (1935), are unsurprisingly the loci of inquiries into his life, his time and even his blindness²² in the stupendous body of research on the political, cultural and literary issues heatedly debated across the pages of the Egyptian print culture and the sound waves of radio broadcasts at the time. His writings and transcribed broadcasts are invaluable precisely because they are saturated with the material conditions of his life. He continues to speak to us of his time and

place, quite often repackaged in utopian idealisations, a nostalgic remembrance of an age of enlightenment, *tanwīr*, and of the impact of the *Nadha* on contemporary Egypt in reassessments of its achievements, missed opportunities and failures.²³

His bearing on Egyptian modernisation is, however, simultaneously enduring and evanescent – he is everywhere but nowhere in particular. He is indispensable in any consideration of the legacy of the Egyptian and Arab Renaissance. At the same time, he seems either ahead of his time or out of sync with his contemporaries, for very few of his ideas gained during his lifetime the kind of critical currency associated with, for example, Jamāl al-Dīn al-Afghānī (1838–97), Muḥammad ‘Abduh (1849–1905), Rifā‘a Rāfi‘ al-Taḥṭawī (1801–73), Rashīd Riḍā (1865–1935) and Sayyid Quṭb (1906–66) in debating Islamic reform and modernisation, or Aḥmad Fāris al-Shidyāq (1805–87), Muḥammad al-Muwayliḥī (1868–1930), Tawfīq al-Ḥakīm (1898–1987) and Najīb Maḥfūz (1911–2006) in setting new literary trends. His simplified but elegant language of expression was universally admired,²⁴ but his experiments with the novel were far from pioneering. His translations of Greek plays were well received but of unknown impact to date. And his practical criticism, of classical or modern Arabic literature,²⁵ was often referenced but rarely taken further as the kernel of a serious critical method, perhaps because the diverse and divergent sources of his critical thought manifested themselves in his proclamations on classical and modern Arabic and European literary works rather disparately and without much theoretical coherence or even intellectual discipline.

If in hindsight Ḥusayn’s thoughts on culture and literature proved too soft for new generations of theoretically more robust cultural critics and literary theorists, the main areas of his interest – literary criticism, creative writing and translation – continue to throw up ideas and issues of immediate relevance to our pursuits and practices today. Subsequent to Cachia’s biography and Hamdi Sakkout’s magisterial bio-bibliography in 6,342 pages (1975),²⁶ and in the years since his death, Ḥusayn has been subject to numerous revisionist considerations which take stock of the ways in which his discourses were enmeshed in the fabric of the Egyptian *Nadha* and which reassess not only our understanding of what was at stake but also the continued relevance of the unresolved issues of his time. His secularism and Orientalism,²⁷ usually entwined with Islamist assessments of his dismissal of pre-Islamic poetry and the Quran as reliable sources for the history of Islam, for example, remain contentious.²⁸ But these are not the only issues that can have an afterlife in our current reassessment of the cultural and identity politics of the *Nadha* period. The cosmopolitanism inherent to his discourses on literature and culture, even as it is underpinned by Orientalism, I will argue, suggests ideas and trajectories by which world literature may be differently theorised. More importantly, it suggests alternatives to nationalism as an imagining of community articulated around the conceptual category of ‘nation state’ that will have an impact on how Arab identity politics will be understood differently and modern Arabic literature read.

Cultural Encounters and Literary Worlds

In the past decade or so, since the ascendance of ‘world literature’ as an idea for inclusion of literary works from around the world in an ‘international canon’ and as a method of literary study, always informed by translation, scholars of Arabic literature

have taken advantage of the concepts and methods proposed or assumed in ‘world literature’ to rethink Arabic literary studies and at the same time to respond to its problematic theoretical underpinnings. Translation, as a means of cultural encounter, or the ‘translation zone’ as Emily Apter calls it,²⁹ has been most productive for Arabic studies. Apter’s notion of ‘untranslatability’ has informed many revisionist studies of the *Nadha*, moving literary and cultural histories from equating Arab modernisation with Westernisation, and from the postcolonial master-slave dialectic in Arab responses to the West.³⁰ Similarly, Pascale Casanova’s idea of ‘world republic of letters’ has sparked a new way of envisioning the medieval Islamic world of letters.³¹ However, translation, as both a mechanism of cultural encounter and an itinerary of world literature, problematically straddles the two poles of ‘nation’ and ‘world’, with ‘nation’ serving as ‘local’ and the ‘world’ ‘global’, the latter more often than not being located in the ‘West’. More importantly, ‘nation’, as sovereign territory, has come to underpin our understanding of language. Language, just like nation, is territorially sovereign. Any text constructed in a language is by extension, ‘nation’-like, territorially sovereign. World literature, which requires translation for its circulation, inevitably comes to be defined by the movement of ‘national’ canons, via translation, from ‘local’ to ‘global’. Conversely, ‘nation’, as defined by the language of its national canon, is necessarily monolingual.

In a post-national move to pry open the sovereignty of ‘nation’ and ‘language’, I want to make a concerted effort to rethink the monolingualism of the ‘nation’, or the ‘local’, as Francesca Orsini does in her article ‘The Multilingual Local in World Literature’ (2015),³² and its cosmopolitanism – understood here simply as a vision of humanity as one community based on a shared morality – that is more akin to ‘worldliness’ of a text or to the idea that a text, as theorised by Edward Said, always inheres in the world and is never self-sufficient,³³ and less to Michael Allan’s sense of Ḥusayn’s ‘provincial cosmopolitanism’.³⁴ In Ḥusayn’s works this cosmopolitanism entails a vision of humanity that extends beyond the ‘national’ to encompass all Egyptian, European and Mediterranean³⁵ civilisational values. My purpose is three-fold: to move away from the linear itinerary of world literature, from ‘national’ and ‘global’ where global is always located in Europe and North America, by pluralising the temporal and spatial configurations of world literature as well as diversifying its sites around the world; to rescue narratives of the *Nadha* from mere postcolonial identity politics; and to read modern Arabic literature as more than a set of allegories of ‘nation’.

One way of doing this is to shift focus to the ‘literary world’, and more particularly, to its cosmopolitanism and the ways in which this cosmopolitanism takes shape in cultural encounters and their attendant – even if only enacted in the fabric of one language – multilingualism. World literature itself need not travel, but it can demand the circulation of ideas and people across multiple literary worlds, not necessarily through translation but rather through the multilingualism of the world or those who inhabit it. More important, the ‘world’ of world literature can be located anywhere in the world, in the past or present. Now seen as multilingual and cosmopolitan, this literary world can guide us to alternatives to ‘national’ history of both the Arab world and Arabic literature. As we will see in Ḥusayn’s works, nationalism need not contradict cosmopolitanism. What impact will this have on the stories of the *Nadha* we will tell in the future? If we look for different imaginings of community, will we

also uncover alternative narratives of the *Nadha* that will free us from the binaries of 'nation' and 'world', and more importantly, in the context of the postcolonial Arab world, of 'colony' and 'empire'? Can we move beyond reading Arabic literature as postcolonial identity politics?

I take Orientalism and the way it underpins cosmopolitanism as a test case for my inquiries. Orientalism here means the body of knowledge about the 'Orient' and the disciplines in which this knowledge is produced in Europe, as well as the discourses on the Orient as the other in academia, popular culture and political institutions.³⁶ Diverging from Said, however, I do not consider Orientalism as necessarily informed by the will to power or domination, as driven by the impulse to demonise or reduce to stereotypes (see pp. 4–9), or as, in Said's words, 'a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient' (p. 3). Moving away from studies that consider it on its own as an element of the 'Oriental' discourse of modernity,³⁷ I overlap this body of knowledge about the Orient produced in and circulated from Europe, with an interrogation how Europe defined its modernity in relation to its *internal* others, or to its past medievalism, and in line with its perceived 'Golden Age' located in classical antiquity (as John M. Ganim argues in *Medievalism and Orientalism: Three Essays on Literature, Architecture and Cultural Identity*).³⁸ This complex Orientalism, comprising a combination of knowledge about *both* the Orient and European modernity, one which was underpinned by a profound ambivalence towards the relations between the two, I will show, serves as the foundation of Ḥusayn's formulation of an at once authentic and cosmopolitan Egyptian identity, which is at once national and international.

Tāha Ḥusayn and the Itineraries of World Literature

I see three overlapping areas of Ḥusayn's legacy that can serve as loci for a productive interrogation of theories of world literature, imaginings of Egyptian nation and narratives of the Egyptian *Nadha* and modernity: the centrality of the exuberant print culture of the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth century in fostering innovations informed by encounters in cultural practices, language developments, and literary sensibilities and trends; the role of the Greek cultural heritage, or European classicism, in the cultural politics of the Egyptian *Nadha*; and the impact of European Orientalism on the identity politics of a specific educated class represented by someone like Ḥusayn. By mining these areas, which have been overlooked by Cachia and other Ḥusayn scholars, and by reading Ḥusayn against world literature, I seek to complicate and nuance our theories of world literature as well as our understanding of the *Nadha* and modern Arabic literature.

In the following reading of Ḥusayn, I pursue two lines of inquiry. First, I reconsider the itinerary of a world literature normally understood as structured by the linear movement of a literary work from the 'national' to the 'international' (West), located in Paris, London and New York, as mediated by translation of an entire literary work, particularly the novel,³⁹ as well as the privilege accorded to what Eric Hayot calls the 'literary world'⁴⁰ in thinking about world literature. As I do so, I interrogate the sovereignty not only of the 'nation' conceptualised in 'world literature' but also of its assumed monolingualism, and argue that 'nation', even when seen as the 'local site' of the circulation of literary works, can be multilingual, multicultural, cosmopolitan and worldly, and that the 'literary world' that inheres to this 'nation' is, like the 'nation',

necessarily created in the circulation of ideas, concepts and bodies of knowledge across linguistic boundaries and national borders, and, more importantly, in the multilingualism of the local and its intrinsic cosmopolitanism. Second, I look at the kind of 'nationalism' Ḥusayn proposes and ponder its implications for our understanding of the *Nadha* and reading of modern Arabic literary works.

Given the size of both the Arabic print culture and the published material by and on Ḥusayn, it would be impossible to be exhaustive in coverage or thorough in analysis. It is perhaps more judicious, then, to focus on a couple of texts that would allow me to bring together the disparate strands of thought from both Arabic print culture and Ḥusayn's legacy in a way that is productive for how we think about world literature. I will move away from literary works typically used to theorise world literature, and look at his 1938 manifesto on the future of education, and therefore culture, in Egypt, *Mustaqbal al-thaqāfa fī Miṣr* (*The Future of Culture in Egypt*),⁴¹ in tandem with his essays on culture and literature, particularly those collected in *Min ḥadīth al-shi'r wa-al-nathr* (1936) and *Alwān* (1958). These may not be works of literature, but their discourses on the role of multilingualism in the development of a worldly national literature that frames, informs and expresses a cosmopolitanism specific to Ḥusayn's time and place, is in harmony with the contemporary modernist Arabic literature – poetry, fiction and drama – that Ḥusayn himself encouraged and promoted as a critic, and, on occasion, aspired to write. That he chose to announce his vision for Egyptian culture in the print culture, particularly in the case of *Mustaqbal al-thaqāfa*, rather than in the form of a report to be submitted to the government as he initially intended, points to the significance of print culture,⁴² an important arena of the public sphere in the 'liberal age', not only in shaping Egyptian national community and its attendant cultural identity but also in giving substance to the cosmopolitan literary worlds created in Arabic writings.

The Imagined Egyptian Nation in *Mustaqbal al-thaqāfa fī Miṣr*

This manifesto epitomises Ḥusayn's vision of an Egyptian identity harvested from his experience as both student and educator, his knowledge of French and of traditional and reformed Egyptian curricula,⁴³ his commitment to and understanding of literature, and his conviction in a form of cosmopolitanism that is informed by his belief in the unity of the Mediterranean and the world. This vision took shape in his encounter with modern European civilisation, as seen through the prism of French and, more particularly, of Orientalism and the discourses on the Orient intrinsic to the agenda and scope of Orientalist scholarship as well as its adjacent discourses on European modernity. It is equally inspired by an Egyptocentric nationalism that aspires to be simultaneously 'authentic', or firmly rooted in the local, and 'at home in the world' (a concept I borrow from Timothy Brennan to denote the kind of place Ḥusayn envisions for Egypt, on a par with Europe in the global and ahead of other 'Oriental' nations, as well as his critical self-indulgence).⁴⁴

If we wish to be on equal footing with the European nations, in particular, with their military might, so as to be able to defend ourselves against any invasion, and to be able to say to our English friends in a few years: get lost with thanks, for we are now able to defend the [Suez] Canal. Whoever seeks the end must have the

means, whoever pursues power ought to possess the means to power, and whoever wishes for an army of European might should desire an European education so as to prepare the youth to form a powerful army. (p. 40)

Full independence is the future of the Egyptian nation and it begins with economic independence from Europe.

We are in need of economic independence without a doubt, and no one would dispute this. In fact, I call for it and insist upon it. . . . We do not want it in order to enjoy looking at it. We want it for the protection of our wealth and livelihood as we similarly want an army to protect the lands of our nation. This economic independence must be of the European kind, for we do not want to be independent economically in relation to Hejaz, Yemen, Syria and Iraq, but in relation to Europe and America.

This is to be followed by independence of other kinds, which will eventually lead to both national and individual freedom.

We wish for scientific, artistic and literary independence. This independence will enable us to shape a young generation capable of defending our nation, its lands and wealth, and of letting the European know that we are like them and equal to them. This will allow us to speak to the Europeans in such a way as to make them understand us, and to hear the Europeans and understand them. This will let the Europeans know that we see things as they do, assess things as they do, evaluate things as they do, seek from things what they do, and reject things as they do. We want to be their partners and allies in life, not their servants or means to life.

If we desire this intellectual and emotional independence, which may only be achieved through scientific, artistic and literary independence, then we must desire the means to it. We must then learn as a European would, feel as a European, make judgements as a European, work as a European, and live as a European.

For in the end what we desire is to be free in our homelands, free in relation to foreigners so that they cannot treat us unjustly or oppress us, and also free in relation to ourselves so that we cannot treat each other unjustly, or oppress each other.

We want an internal freedom the foundation of which is a democratic system. We also want an external freedom the foundation of which is proper, full independence, and the ability to protect this independence. (p. 41)

For such an Egyptian nation to emerge and take her place in the world, Husayn suggests, each and every Egyptian citizen, regardless of her religious belief and class (he makes no mention of ethnicity or gender), must be educated into a cultured 'citizen of the world'. The reforms and robust new curricula in multilingualism and what we today call 'the humanities' he forwards for the education of postcolonial Egyptian nationals. First aired in the print culture, these proposals were informed by the ideas of civilisation and the various types of knowledge about the world circulating around the Mediterranean, as well as the world, through and beyond the machinery of empire, in language, literature and culture, which in turn gave form and substance to the 'worlds' inhabiting his literary and cultural texts.

Education and Nation-building

Written between 1937 and 1938 and published in 1938, *Mustaqbal al-thaqāfa fī Miṣr* celebrates Egypt's nascent independence in the wake of the 1936 Anglo-Egyptian Treaty, by which Britain ended its military occupation and control of Egypt, and the 1937 Montreux Convention, by which the Capitulations in Egypt were abolished (see p. 11). The future of the Kingdom of Egypt looked, in the early moments of post-independence euphoria, rosy and full of possibilities. The modernisation project driven by a desire for technological advancement begun by Muḥammad 'Alī Pasha (who reigned as Ottoman Viceroy from 1805 to 1848) and continued through the rule of Farouk I (who reigned as King from 1936 to 1952), when Ḥusayn was writing, could now twin itself with the project of nation-building and forge ahead at full speed. The project of 'imagining political community', which started as early as al-Ṭaḥṭāwī,⁴⁵ looked certain to take the form of a nation state, now that Egypt – even if along the way it was mapped by European powers – had gained its territorial sovereignty and financial independence. It was time to look ahead and plan for a future that all Egyptians could subscribe to, invest in, participate in building, and finally enjoy the fruit of their labour, living fully and happily as 'authentic' Egyptians in a democratic nation state that guaranteed individual freedom, particularly of faith and speech, and social equality. This idea is repeatedly stated, explained and related to education throughout the book (see pp. 65–9, 144–8).

'Primary education is the fundamental pillar of democracy', Ḥusayn declares in a chapter on the relationship between education and democracy (p. 65). 'A democratic system must guarantee all members of the nation life, freedom and peace' (p. 65), and as such it must guarantee a 'livelihood' to its people, which can only be achieved through education (*ta'lim*)' (p. 66). For education will guarantee the 'nation' its survival (p. 66) and individuals their freedom and peace, for freedom cannot be founded on ignorance (p. 67). Education 'allows an individual to know himself, his natural surroundings and his patriotism, and to harmonize his needs with these' (p. 67). Egyptians live in a country (on earth), '*al-arḍ*', which is their refuge, and among a community, '*umma*', in which a language is used. They must learn this language in order to achieve a simple goal: as speaking social animals ('*ḥayawān ijtīmā'ī nāṭiq*'), education will enable individuals to take responsibility for themselves, removing any sense of superiority among those in charge that does not 'agree with democracy, equality and freedom' (p. 145). This sense of superiority must be replaced by 'belief in equality and justice' and 'faith in the people', which are 'fundamental to national belonging' (*juz' muqawwim li-shu'ūrīnā al-qawmī*) (p. 146).

As he asserts in a chapter on '*al-qawmiyya al-islāmiyya, al-qawmiyya al-waṭaniyya*' (see pp. 54–64), for Ḥusayn the responsibility for nation-building must be shared by the state and its apparatus, the government and the nation, or all Egyptian nationals, regardless of their faith and social background. While the state provides funding for education, from the four years of primary school through the five years of secondary to the four years of university, and plays a leading role in curriculum design and reform, production of textbooks, teacher training, inspection of schools and supervision of delivery, all nationals partake in education so as to fashion themselves into 'citizens of the world' able to interact fully and on an equal footing with Europeans, and thus re-join the most advanced civilisations in the world. 'The purpose of general education (*ta'lim 'āmm*) is not only to provide an individual with what he needs in order to live

in an advanced society, but also to go beyond to something loftier; to reach the highest ranks of knowledge' (p. 87), so that the 'sons of our nation' can be on a par with the 'foreigners' (p. 96). It would be best for Egyptian schools, private or public, religious or secular, to follow a unified general education, from which not even a single Egyptian would be excluded regardless of social or religious background (see pp. 70–98). The foundation of education, a general education that would serve as a basis for more skilled specialisations, ought to be a fully developed curriculum in languages and the humanities, through which mastery of multiple languages may be cultivated, and in-depth knowledge of each branch of the humanities attained.

The ideal Egyptian national would be multilingual and versed in history, geography, philosophy, literature and the culture of the Mediterranean, the cradle of civilisation, as well as of the world, from ancient times to the present, so as to take up his or her true place in the world. Arabic and Islam, the national language and religion, are to be compulsory for all Egyptian nationals regardless of their religious background, for Islam, along with Pharaonic, Greek, Roman, Ottoman and colonial histories, is perhaps the most important part of Egyptian history and culture, and must be taught to Egyptians with increasing depth from primary through to secondary school. Greek and Latin understandably became essential language requirements, and there would also be room for Coptic, especially among the Coptic population, who too are entitled to their own religious education (see pp. 266–8). In addition, pupils must learn European languages so as to be able to access European civilisation, and their choice must not be limited to English and French, the languages of Egypt's former colonisers, but rather include, for example, German, Italian and Spanish. The ascendant European civilisation is not confined to the achievements of the English and French, Ḥusayn argues, but encompasses contributions made by other Europeans. There are also the languages of the fellow members of the Muslim community, particularly Persian and Turkish, however ambivalent Ḥusayn might have felt towards the Ottomans, whom he blamed for the recent backwardness of the Muslims (see p. 35), for the Iranians and Turks are similarly architects, engineers and builders of Muslim civilisation.

In a chapter on 'what ought to be taught in general schools' (*mādhā yu'allam fī al-madāris al-āmma*), Ḥusayn asserts that languages afford their speakers, or those fluent in them, access to the cultural heritage of humanity at large. This world cultural heritage is the ultimate objective of multilingualism. A truly cultured Egyptian would be schooled in their own cultural heritage as well as the culture of humanity at large. A general curriculum for Egyptians must include 'geography of the homeland', which 'links the past of their homeland to the past of humanity, and their mutual influence', as well as arithmetics and foreign languages. And foreign languages will allow 'the school pupil to transcend his homeland culturally to reach other homelands' (p. 152). The educational workers employed by the state, school teachers and inspectors, must take up their responsibility once funding, curriculum reform and design, and the structure within which a multilingual and cultural educational programme may be delivered have been put in place. Schoolteachers must serve as role models for their students and embody the kind of multilingualism and multiculturalism Ḥusayn hopes to see shape Egyptian national subjects. Otherwise, how can they be effective as teachers and convincing, to their students and to the nation, of the curriculum they are to deliver? School inspectors must similarly personify the 'citizen of the world' and at the same time take up the additional task of ensuring the delivery of the desired curriculum to the full (see pp. 149–89).

This prescription for the school inspector and teacher is preceded by a lengthy critique of the educational policies and practices followed in Egypt at the time. The disparate curricula pursued by colonial, missionary, religious and ‘modern’ (those established by Muḥammad ‘Alī) schools, which fulfilled the divergent agendas of their founders but no longer suited the purposes of nationalisation, particularly of the Egyptian subject, must necessarily be reformed. At the heart of reform, in addition to curricular unification and redesign, is pedagogy. Teachers and inspectors, while called upon to perform their role seriously and responsibly, are to be trained in critical thought as well. Teachers are expected to impart critical skills to their pupils, and inspectors to ensure their delivery in full (see pp. 198–231). The new Egyptian nationals are to be, like Ḥusayn himself, worldly and autonomous thinking subjects (see pp. 269–83).

Ḥusayn’s adoption of Cartesian scepticism is well known. It is often attributed to the French influence and assessed in terms of its impact on the study of pre-Islamic poetry and the Quran in relation to the history of Islam. However, seen in the light of *Mustaqbal al-thaqāfa fī Miṣr*, it is also relevant to his imagining of the Egyptian nation. If the multilingual and multicultural Egyptian nation he imagines is to be founded on the principles of democracy, equality and individual freedom (modelled on the slogans of the 1789–99 French Revolution – liberty, equality, fraternity), it must also foster solidarity among all Egyptian nationals. He therefore proposes the separation of religion from state, and faith from thought (though he allows for religious knowledge to be taught and transmitted in the religious community and even within the system of public education) as a strategy for building an all-inclusive, multi-faith national community with a distinct Egyptian identity (see pp. 253–68).

Multilingualism and Mediterranean Cosmopolitanism in the Egyptian Nation

Ḥusayn’s ambitious multilingual programme for Egyptian nationals is his recipe for Egyptian identity. The nature of life in Egypt dictates, for example, that the Faculty of Arts (Kulliyat al-Ādāb) teach Semitic languages, including Arabic and Eastern languages (see p. 257), Islamic studies, including Islamic philosophy, Islamic history, modelled on what is being taught in Europe (see p. 257), and foreign languages (see p. 258). To be a true Egyptian is to be rooted in Egyptian culture, which is by definition multicultural, whether one looks at it historically or geographically. Egypt, the cradle of Pharaonic civilisation, one of the most ancient civilisations in human history, has been the site of intercultural confluence since time immemorial, starting with the Pharaonic, which spread outward to the eastern Mediterranean and Europe, followed by successive waves of Greek, Roman, Islamic, and finally modern European ‘colonisation’, which brought to Egypt their respective cultures, making Egypt multicultural for thousands of years. Egypt’s location along the southern shores of the Mediterranean has made it part of the same cultural sphere to which modern Europeans, similarly heirs to Pharaonic, Greek, Roman and Islamic civilisations, belong (see pp. 18–48). ‘The future of culture in Egypt is tied to its distant past’, Ḥusayn announces in the title of chapter two (p. 18), by which he means its Pharaonic history. He then goes on to link ‘the Egyptian mind and the Greek mind’ and explain their mutual influence (see pp. 21–4), as well as ‘Islam

and Christianity', which 'have in common their heritage in philosophy' (see pp. 26–8) in that the 'Islamic mind is like the European mind' (see pp. 29–30) and that both learned from other civilisations and must continue to do so (pp. 39–50). Being in close contact with Europe does not present any danger to 'our personality' (p. 49), for an authentic Egyptian identity, in Ḥusayn's estimate, is by definition multilingual and multicultural. A multilingual and multicultural national education for Egyptians is arguably their right by birth and a timely reminder of who they are and what their rightful place in the world is.

The world Ḥusayn sees is the Mediterranean. He sees the Mediterranean as one cultural block whose different parts have centuries of history as well as some core cultural values in common. He resorts to a pre-modern term, '*bahr al-rūm*', literally the Roman or Byzantine sea, to designate a region delineated by its Mediterranean reach rather than by its location in the African continent, and in so doing reminds his readers of Egypt's Greek and Roman past, a subject he taught at the Egyptian University (*al-Jāmi'a al-Miṣriyya*) between 1919 and 1925, upon his return from France.⁴⁶ He also borrows the European division and categorisation of the rest of the world, such as 'Near East' and 'Far East', to articulate his Eurocentric global vision for Egypt. Egypt may be a part of the Near East, '*al-sharq al-qarīb*', not of the entire East, '*al-sharq*', as Tawfiq al-Ḥakīm would see in '*Uṣfūr min al-sharq*' (1938), and as such it has little to do with the Far East, '*al-sharq al-ba'īd*', Ḥusayn asserts, notwithstanding his admiration for Japan's achievements in modernisation (see pp. 22, 36). Egypt has far more in common with Europe, both being parts of the same Mediterranean world. There is no escape from the European influence historically or geographically, even at the level of religion, and for that matter, no point in denying the pervasiveness of Europe in Egyptian life past and present. On the contrary, it is desirable to be a part of the same world as Europe, now that European culture, the most advanced civilisation in the modern age, has indeed become an integral part of Egyptian culture (see pp. 49–50).

This apparent Eurocentrism and Orientalism of Ḥusayn's cosmopolitanism is, however, tempered by his critical position towards both the achievements of the Far East, evidenced by his admiration for Japan, and his discomfort with the darker side of Europe, seen in its violent imperialism and self-serving imperial policies. Egyptians should not blindly imitate the English or French, therefore; they should engage with them critically in such a way that would lead to their own transformation into global citizens (see pp. 39–50). Ḥusayn's cosmopolitanism entails locating Egypt in the global not only in the sense of being 'at home in the world', as Timothy Brennan says, but also in that of engaging actively and critically with cultural others in such a way that leads to the transformation of the self. If anything, Ḥusayn's manifesto on the future of Egyptian education and culture is about a transformation of the self, of Egyptians and of their place in the world, one that is premised on embracing Europe as well as what it says about Egypt. Orientalism informs and underpins Ḥusayn's cosmopolitanism.

Orientalism and Egyptian National Identity

Ḥusayn's interpretation of pre-Islamic poetry and classical Arabic literature, as he clearly lays out in his introduction to *Fī al-adab al-jāhili* (*On Pre-Islamic Literature*, 1927), the heavily revised second edition of *Fī al-shi'r al-jāhili* (*On Pre-Islamic Poetry*,

1926) for which he was tried,⁴⁷ owes a great debt to European Orientalists, chief among them Carlo Alfonso Nallino (1872–1938), who taught Ḥusayn during his tenure as professor in Cairo, and David Samuel Margoliouth (1858–1940), whose views he often borrowed and repackaged for his Arabic reading audience (though not always without contention).⁴⁸ What he says about *adab*, for example, is a paraphrase of Nallino's views.⁴⁹ His controversial discussion of the unreliability of pre-Islamic poetry and, in fact, the Quran as historical sources for the reconstruction of the rise of Islam in the 'authentic' historical context (an issue that would become known as the question of the authenticity of pre-Islam poetry) echoed Margoliouth and what the European Orientalists were debating at the time.⁵⁰ Even his commentary on contemporary Arabic literature was considerably coloured by contemporary French criticism (Paul Valéry (1871–1944) was his favourite poet and critic, and the most influential source for his critical views). Ḥusayn's self-Orientalising impulse is not necessarily only deconstructive of Egypt's relationship with its past; rather, it is part of a broader agenda of reconstruction that is in turn informed by European Orientalism and its attendant discourses of European classicism and medievalism.

The scope of European Orientalism goes beyond the discourses of Arabic pre-Islamic poetry and classical literature, and encompasses those of the ancient civilisations of the Near East as triggered by the decipherment among European Orientalists of the hieroglyphic writing of Pharaonic Egypt and the cuneiform scripts of Sumerian, Akkadian and Babylonian in the nineteenth century. The Rosetta Stone, the key to Jean-François Champollion's (1790–1832) successful decoding of the Pharaonic hieroglyphs in 1820, contains a text written in three languages – Hieroglyphic, Coptic and Greek, and as such it certainly inspired Ḥusayn to link Egypt's history and culture to those of Europe, and to unproblematically incorporate the Copts into the Egyptian nation.⁵¹ He was not the first or alone in reconstructing Egypt's history by drawing a much longer temporal line beginning with the Pharaonic and stretching through the Greek, Roman, Umayyad, Abbasid, Mamluk and Ottoman civilisations, all the way to Muḥammad 'Alī: *Al-Ṭaḥṭāwī* had already done so before him in *Anwār tafwīq al-jalīl fi akhbār Miṣr wa-tawthīq banī Ismā'īl* (1868).⁵²

Such a reconstruction of Egyptian history in a linear progressive fashion from time immemorial to the present corresponds to another process of reassessment of the past, one that echoes the ways in which modern Europe redefined its past as well as its relationship to its various parts. In the process, it reaffirmed its Greek heritage, or classicism/Hellenism, as the foundation of its 'Golden Age', and distanced itself from the medievalism that (with its Orientalism) Ganim has shown to comprise the other face of European modernity. As he argues, 'the idea of the Middle Ages as it developed from its earliest formulations in the historical self-consciousness of Western Europe is part of what we used to call an identity crisis', 'a site of contest over the idea of the West', where an ambivalence about its Oriental contaminations, even origins, as well as about the Orient, would by the nineteenth-century become connected with Orientalism as well as Romanticism. European modernity would in the end locate its roots in classicism.⁵³ Modernist Egyptian intellectuals performed a similar procedure by which they identified the 'Abbasid era as the 'Golden Age' of Arabic-Islamic civilisation, one in which Greek learning was a key constituent, and demonised the Ottoman rule of what would become known as 'the Arab world'. Medievalism and Orientalism in European modernity would collapse into Ottomanism in late Egyptian

Nadha discourses of modernity – an issue which has yet to be explored fully⁵⁴ – and European Orientalism would become a key ingredient in Egyptian imaginings of national identity. More significantly, Orientalism and Hellenism in European modernity would become twin(n)ed in Ḥusayn's cosmopolitanism. He now located the 'Golden Age' of Arabic-Islamic civilisation in the 'Abbasid era, as his predecessors and contemporaries did and his successors continue to do even today, as well as in the Hellenism of this very 'Abbasid 'Golden Age'.

In a variety of lectures he gave on the Arabic prose and poetry of the ninth and tenth centuries in Egypt and abroad, possibly between 1930 and 1933, which were later collected and published under the title of *Min ḥadīth al-shi'r wa-al-nathr* (*Essays on Poetry and Prose*, 1936), Ḥusayn identifies three cultural sources underpinning classical Arabic literature, as evidenced by that of the 'Abbasid 'Golden Age': the Arabic language as shaped by the Quran; Greek philosophy and science; and Persian material culture and art.⁵⁵ However, he privileges the Greek sources over the Persian. Persian culture and art, limited to a few works and ideas (see p. 31), did not have as profound an impact on knowledge and thought, as did Greek philosophy and science. More importantly, the Persians in fact lived and operated under the influence of the Greeks – even Ibn al-Muqaffa' could not escape their influence, and he purportedly went as far as translating Greek works as well (see p. 31). Ḥusayn's examples all go to show the Greek underpinnings of classical Arabic thought and aesthetics. All under the influence of the Greek cultural heritage the Arabs translated, preserved, embodied and transmitted were, from among the prose masters, Ibn al-Muqaffa' (AD 724–50), 'Abd al-Ḥamīd al-Kātib (d. AD 749/50), al-Jāhiz (AD 776–868), Qudāma b. Ja'far (c. 873–932/948 AD) and Abū Ḥayyān al-Tawḥīdī (AD 932–1023), and, from among the major poets, Abū Tammām (AD 788–845), al-Buḥturī (AD 820–97), Ibn al-Rūmī (AD 836–96) and Ibn al-Mu'tazz (AD 861–908). Hellenism was at the heart of the 'Golden Age' of classical Arabic civilisation. Its return to Europe gave rise to the European Renaissance and even to modern Europe itself (see p. 21).

Ḥusayn's translations of dramatic⁵⁶ and philosophical⁵⁷ Greek works, albeit more often than not indirectly from French, and his dissemination of Greek traditions⁵⁸ bespeak his faith in Hellenism and in its further role as a catalyst for a second coming of the Arab 'Golden Age', a time when the Egyptian nation would stand shoulder to shoulder with those of Europe. Interestingly, however, Hellenism serves another set of purposes for Ḥusayn. In a lecture he delivered on '*Al-adab al-'arabī wa-makānatuh bayn al-ādāb al-kubrā al-'ālamīyya*' ('The place of Arabic literature among the major world literatures') (see pp. 11–22) at the American University in Cairo in November 1932, he deploys the Hellenism inherent to classical Arabic literature to refute the Orientalist claim that pre-modern Arabic literature is as naive as that of black Africans that was allegedly made by Carl Brockelmann (1868–1956) in the (first edition of) his *Encyclopaedia of Islam* (see p. 13),⁵⁹ and at the same time to situate it in a rather sizable world in which multiple languages are used and various cultures – particularly Arabic, Greek, Latin and Persian – overlap and are all unified in and by the Arabic language (see p. 15). Classical Arabic literature, even if it is second (only) to Greek literature, is necessarily cosmopolitan, as evidenced by its inherent multilingualism (Arabic, Greek and Persian, to say the least) and explicit multiculturalism (Greek, Persian and Arabic-Islamic, to name but a few), as we have already seen in his assertion of the multilingual and multicultural sources of classical Arabic prose and poetry.

Arabic Print Culture and World Literature

Orientalism, simultaneously expressive of its attendant classical Greek and modern European traditions, understandably becomes an integral part of the texture of Arabic writing, just as does the experience of living in intimate proximity with the European world. The travel of European life, culture and literature into Arabic writing takes place on divergent trajectories and follows diverse itineraries, not necessarily those of translation alone. This is not to undermine the role of translation in mutually enriching as well as transforming cultural encounters; rather, it is to point to other avenues which, if fully explored, could open up current theories of world literature to new possibilities. Looking at Orientalism as a body of European knowledge that inhabits the textual worlds of Arabic writing, it is possible to begin to see how the circulation of ideas, even world views, outside the 'translation zone' occurs through quotation, paraphrasing, summation, allusion and even critique in print culture, in newspapers, magazines and 'trade' or 'popular' books intended for, let us say, a 'general audience', or the public. Ḥusayn's *Mustaqbal al-thaqāfa fī Miṣr* is a good example.

Arabic print culture in the nineteenth century and early twentieth century served as an important arena for the formulation, debate and reformulation of issues relevant to modernisation in the 'public sphere'. Ḥusayn, with whom this role of Arabic print culture allegedly ended, took full advantage of the relative freedom of the press at the time and, like his predecessors and contemporaries, put forward his ideas and those of others to have them tested, debated, and revised, as was the case with his *Fī al-shi'r al-jāhili*. Arabic print culture is where knowledge from various sources was gathered and then spread. This knowledge, like that of Orientalism, became part of the fabric of Arabic writing at the time, and was by definition and necessity grounded in the kind of multilingualism and multiculturalism that Ḥusayn sought in his utopian vision of a cosmopolitan Egyptian nation.⁶⁰

Alwān (1958), another collection of Ḥusayn's essays originally published in newspapers and journals, though from a later period, brings together yet again major and minor cultural and literary figures, their major works and influential ideas or practices, from classical Greek and Latin, classical and modern Arabic, modern and contemporary European and French, and contemporary American in a comparative fashion. Cicero (106–43 BC), Yazīd b. Mufarrigh (a minor poet Ḥusayn picked out from *Kitāb al-Aghānī* for a discussion of the ways in which poets in the early Umayyad period were embroiled in politics), Voltaire (1694–1778), Diderot (1713–84), August Comte (1798–1857), Paul Valéry (1871–1945), Jean-Paul Sartre (1905–80), Franz Kafka (1883–1924) and Richard Wright (1908–60), even the two famous Parisian salon hostesses, Jeanne Julie Éléonore de Lespinasse (1732–72) and Marie Anne de Vichy-Champrond, known as Madame du Deffand (1697–1780), appear in parallel individual studies. Aristotle (384–322 BC), Aristophanes (c. 446–386 BC), Sophocles (c. 497/6–406/5 BC), Euripides (c. 480–406 BC), Pindar (c. 522–443 BC), Ibn Ḥazm (994–1064) and Stendhal (1783–1842) are on the other hand seamlessly alluded to in the fabric of the text. Always paraphrasing and summarising but never quoting directly or translating, Ḥusayn populates the world of *Alwān* with characters from different historical eras and cultural spheres, who are now all engaged in dialogues through the prism of his impeccable Arabic prose, so as to shed light on issues of immediate relevance to humanity at all times, such as the universal topics of war, love, freedom and justice.

In a contemplation of artistry in literary works in *‘Fī al-ḥubb’* (‘On Love’),⁶¹ Ḥusayn juxtaposes Ibn Ḥazm to Stendhal and ponders the ways in which love as explored and theorised in their works (which Ḥusayn does not name) goes beyond cultural, emotional, political and psychological preoccupations, and explains the nature of art itself. Similarly, in an inquiry into individual freedom and just rule in *‘Thawratān’* (‘Two Revolutions’), the slave rebellion against the Roman Republic most famously linked to Spartacus (c. 111–71 BC), known as the Third Servile War (73–71 BC), is compared with the Zanj Rebellion led by a certain ‘Abdallāh b. Muḥammad (AD 869–83) during the ‘Abbasid rule (see pp. 13–153). In order to adjudicate in favour of ‘political engagement’ against ‘art for art’s sake’, practices in Greek, Arabic and French literary fields in the past and present are brought to bear on a discussion of literature and politics in *‘Al-Adab bayn al-ittiṣāl wa-al-infiṣāl’* (‘Literature between Isolation and Engagement’; see pp. 155–70). Panoramic surveys of world literature in *‘Al-Adab al-muḥlim’* (‘Oppressive Literature’; see pp. 172–92) and *‘Bayn al-‘adl wa-al-ḥurriyya’* (‘Between Justice and Freedom’; see pp. 193–207) respectively provide a general sense of how humanity has always responded to injustice, and of the perpetual tension between freedom and justice.

The text of *Alwān* is worldly, as are the in-built texts, or chapters, that make up the collection. It will be worthwhile to unpack the ways in which Ḥusayn’s impeccable Arabic is infused by the French language, or, put differently, how the French language transformed his Arabic. The task will not be easy, but will not be impossible either. Perhaps it suffices for now to see that the intellectual and, let us say, cultural and literary ingredients of his texts, even as they are now given a different shape and texture in the Arabic language, come from multiple extra-Arabic sources. These sources, melded into each other, give his texts a worldliness that corresponds to his Mediterranean cosmopolitanism. This inherent cosmopolitanism places Ḥusayn’s writing in the world and this worldliness gives texture to his writing. Ḥusayn’s writing, whether in *Mustaqbal al-thaqāfa fī Miṣr* or elsewhere, gives us two ideas about theories of world literature: that the worldliness of literary works, what Eric Hayot calls ‘literary worlds’, ought to be an important area of inquiry; and that the circulation of ideas, concepts, bodies of knowledge and world views outside the machinery of translation (and this machinery is yet to be adequately and carefully theorised) is equally significant in giving shape to worldly literary works.

Orientalism, Hellenism and Egyptian Cosmopolitanism

In *Forget English! Orientalisms and World Literatures* (2016),⁶² Aamir Mufti points out that world literature as conceived by Goethe in the late nineteenth century and revived today has a complicated history in Orientalism. Orientalism’s relationship with world literature is not too different from that which it has with European modernity. Equally, it has a complex relationship with the Egyptian *Nadha* and its discourses of modernity. It is a site of competing discourses and often overlaps with Hellenism. Ḥusayn was not the first to advocate for a multilingual curriculum in schools or for the teaching of Greek and Latin literature and history. In al-Ṭaḥṭawī’s schools, Arabic, English, French, Italian and Turkish were taught, as was a book by ‘Abdallāh Ḥusayn al-Miṣrī called *Tārīkh al-falsafa al-Yūnāniyya*.⁶³ However, the Greek and Latin heritage, or Hellenism,

would in Ḥusayn's hands become one of the many sides of his definition of Egyptian modernity and 'national' identity, and not simply a part of medieval Islam. There, it is overlapped with Orientalism as well as with Egypt's Pharaonic and Islamic roots. As juxtaposed to Ottomanism, these elements would become the foundation for his vision for a Mediterranean Egyptian identity. This Egyptian identity is comprised precisely of its 'authentic' multilingualism and multiculturalism, and more importantly, its refusal to be boxed into one language, religion or culture. What other stories of the *Nadha* can we tell by focalising our examination of the nineteenth century through Ḥusayn's insistence on Egypt's multilingual and multicultural heritage?

It has been sixty years since the publication of Cachia's literary biography of Ḥusayn. Literary studies within area studies, comparative literature and world literature, having acquired novel priorities and developed new theories and methodologies, have significantly transformed Orientalism. However, the cultural encounter that Cachia, in his writings on Ḥusayn, identified between Egypt and Europe in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries remains a site of contemplation and debate on issues relevant to Egyptian cultural and literary modernity and national identity. Even Ḥusayn, as one embodiment among many of this cultural encounter, can still provide us with the critical ammunition not only to theorise world literature differently but also Egyptian modernity and identity. The story of Orientalism, Hellenism and Ottomanism in Egyptian discourses on modernity and identity has yet to be told.

Notes

1. This chapter was originally published in the *Journal of Arabic Literature*, 49 (2018), pp. 1–30. Minor edits have been applied here.
2. Pierre Cachia, *Ṭāhā Ḥusayn: His Place in the Egyptian Literary Renaissance* (London: Luzac, 1956), pp. 3–18.
3. See Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1991).
4. See Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*, trans. Thomas Burger and Frederick Lawrence (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1989).
5. Tributes to his contributions have regularly been made even while he was alive. For examples of personal tributes, see Muḥammad al-Sayyid al-Dusūqī, *Ayyām ma'a Ṭāhā Ḥusayn* (Beirut: al-Mu'assasa al-'Arabiyya li-al-Dirāsāt wa-al-Nashr, 1978) and Nizār Qabbānī, *Tarṣī' bi-al-dhabab 'alā sayf Dimashqī* (Beirut: Manshūrāt Nizār Qabbānī, n.d.). Also, poems and letters addressed to him by, for example, 'Allāl Fāsī, may be found in 'Abd al-Ḥamīd Ibrāhīm (ed.), *Rasā'il wa-qaṣā'id lam tunshar ilā Ṭāhā Ḥusayn* (Cairo: Dār al-Shurūq, 2006). For collective tributes, see *Ilā Ṭāhā Ḥusayn fī 'id milādīhi al-sab'in. Dirāsāt muḥdāh min aṣdiqā'ih wa-talāmīdhbih* (Cairo: Dār al-Ma'ārif, 1962); *Dhikrā Ṭāhā Ḥusayn: al-kalimāt wa-al-qaṣā'id wa-al-dirāsāt allatī ulqiyat fī-al-ihtifāl bi-dhikr al-duktūr Ṭāhā Ḥusayn, 26–28 fabrāyir 1975* (Cairo: al-Hay'a al-Miṣriyya al-'Āmma li-al-Kitāb, 1977); *Mi'awiyyat Ṭāhā Ḥusayn: waqā'i' nadwat Bayt al-Ḥikma bi-Qartāj, 27, 28 jānfiya 1990* (Qartāj: Dār al-Ḥikma, 1993); *Nahr al-'amīd al-fayyāḍ* (Cairo: Maḥṭaf Ṭāhā Ḥusayn, 1996); Maḥmūd Fahmī Ḥijāzī (ed.), *Ihtifāl Kulliyyat al-Ādāb bi-dhikr Ṭāhā Ḥusayn bi-munāsabat murūr 25 'āman 'alā raḥīlih, 27–29 Uktūbar 1998: dirāsa wa-mukhtārāt wa-wathā'iq* (Cairo: Kulliyyat al-Ādāb, Jāmi'at al-Qāhira, 1998); Maḥmūd Fahmī Ḥijāzī and 'Abdallāh al-Taṭāwī (eds), *al-Kitāb al-tidhkārī fī dhikr murūr khamsa wa-'ishrīn 'āman 'alā raḥīl Ṭāhā Ḥusayn* (Cairo: Kulliyyat al-Ādāb, Jāmi'at al-Qāhira, 1998); and

- Muḥammad Nawwār (ed.), *Ṭāhā Ḥusayn min jadīd: ārā' nukhbā min kibār al-muthaqqafīn* (Cairo: al-Hay'a al-Miṣriyya al-Āmma li-al-Kitāb, 2006).
6. See also Muṣṭafā Rajab, *Fikr Ṭāhā Ḥusayn al-tarbawī bayn al-naẓariyya wa-al-taṭbīq* (Cairo: al-Hay'a al-Miṣriyya al-Āmma li-al-Kitāb, 1995).
 7. See, for example, Muḥammad Khalafallāh Aḥmad, *Ma'ālim 'alā tariq al-kilāsiyya al-'arabiyya al-ḥadītha: Ṭāhā Ḥusayn wa-Maḥmūd Taymūr* (Cairo: Ma'had al-Buḥūth al-'Arabiyya, 1977); Rashīda Mahrān, *Ṭāhā Ḥusayn bayna al-sīra wa-al-tarjama al-dhātīyya* (Alexandria: al-Hay'a al-Miṣriyya al-Āmma li-al-Kitāb, 1979); and Khālīd Karakī, *Ṭāhā Ḥusayn riwā'iyyan* (Amman: Maktabat al-Rā'id al-'Ilmiyya, 1992).
 8. On the iconoclastic dimensions of Ḥusayn, see Jamāl al-Dīn Ālūsī, *Ṭāhā Ḥusayn bayna anṣarīh wa-kbuṣūmih* (Baghdad, 1973); Sāmīh Kurayyim, *Ma'ārik Ṭāhā Ḥusayn al-adabiyya wa-al-fikriyya* (Beirut: Dār al-Qalam, 1977); 'Alī Shalash, *Ṭāhā Ḥusayn maṭlūb ḥayyan aw mayyitan* (Cairo: al-Dār al-'Arabiyya, 1993); Kāmil Muḥammad 'Uwayḍa (ed.), *Ṭāhā Ḥusayn bayn al-shakk wa-al-i'tiqād* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya, 1994); Muṣṭafā 'Abd al-Ghanī, *al-Mufakkir wa-al-amīr Ṭāhā Ḥusayn wa-al-sulṭa fī Miṣr* (Cairo: al-Hay'a al-Miṣriyya al-Āmma li-al-Kitāb, 1997); and Aḥmad Zakariyyā al-Shalq, *Ṭāhā Ḥusayn: Jadal al-fikr wa-al-siyāsa* (Cairo: al-Majlis al-A'lā li-al-Thaqāfa, 2008).
 9. The majority of his works may be found in *al-Majmū'a al-kāmila li-mu'allafāt al-Duktūr Ṭāhā Ḥusayn* (Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-Lubnānī, 1973). In addition, his French writings are collected and translated into Arabic in 'Abd al-Rashīd al-Ṣādiq Maḥmūdī, *Min al-shāṭi' al-ākbar: kitābāt Ṭāhā Ḥusayn al-faransiyya* (Cairo: Dār al-Hilāl, 1997).
 10. See *Turāth Ṭāhā Ḥusayn: al-maqālāt al-ṣuḥufiyya min 1908 ilā 1967* (Cairo: Maṭba'at Dār al-Kutub wa-al-Wathā'iq al-Qawmiyya, 2002–3). On his contribution to journalism, see 'Abd al-'Azīz Sharaf, *Fann al-maqāl al-ṣuḥufi fī adab Ṭāhā Ḥusayn* (Cairo: GEBO, 1986).
 11. See Ibrāhīm 'Abd al-'Azīz (ed.), *Ayyām al-'umr: rasā'il khāṣṣa bayna Ṭāhā Ḥusayn wa-Tawfiq al-Ḥakīm* (Cairo: al-Hay'a al-Miṣriyya al-Āmma li-al-Kitāb, 1998); *Rasā'il Ṭāhā Ḥusayn* (Cairo: Dār Mīrīt, 2000); and *Awrāq Ṭāhā Ḥusayn wa-murāsālātuh* (Cairo: Maṭba'at Dār al-Kutub wa-al-Wathā'iq al-Qawmiyya, 2005–7).
 12. See, for example, Sāmī al-Kayyālī, *Ma'a Ṭāhā Ḥusayn* (Cairo: Dār al-Ma'ārif, 1952); Anwar al-Jundī, *Ṭāhā Ḥusayn: ḥayātuh wa-fikruh fī daw' al-islām* (Cairo: Dār al-i'tisām, 1976); Sāmīh Kurayyim, *Mādhā yabqā min Ṭāhā Ḥusayn* (Beirut: Dār al-Qalam, 1977); Ḥusayn Naṣṣār, *Dirāsāt ḥawla Ṭāhā Ḥusayn* (Beirut: Dār Iqra', 1981); Aḥmad 'Ulabī, *Ṭāhā Ḥusayn: rajul wa-fikr wa-'aṣr* (Beirut: Dār al-Ādāb, 1985); Ḥusayn Yūsuf Bakkār, *Awrāq naqdiyya jadīda 'an Ṭāhā Ḥusayn* (Beirut: Dār al-Manāhil, 1991); and Mujāhid 'Abd al-Mun'im Mujāhid, *Rihla fī fikr Ṭāhā Ḥusayn* (Cairo: Dār al-Thaqāfa li-al-Nashr wa-al-Tawzī', 2001).
 13. The critical responses to Ḥusayn are conveniently collected in Maḥmūd Maḥdī al-Istānbūlī (ed.), *Ṭāhā Ḥusayn fī mīzān al-'ulamā' wa-al-udabā'* (Beirut: al-Maktab al-Islāmī, 1983).
 14. See Michel Foucault, 'What is an Author?', in Josué H. Harari (ed.), *Textual Strategies: Perspectives in Post-Structuralist Criticism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1979), pp. 141–60.
 15. See Roland Barthes, *Mythologies*, trans. Anette Lavers (New York: Hill and Wang, 1987), pp. 109–58.
 16. See Albert Hourani, *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age, 1798–1939* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1962).
 17. See, for example, *Ṭāhā Ḥusayn: al-'aqlāniyya, al-dīmuqrāṭiyya, al-ḥadātha* (Damascus: Mu'assasat 'Ībāl, n.d.) and Kamāl Ḥāmid Muḥīth and Sa'īd Ismā'il 'Alī, *Ṭāhā Ḥusayn: maṣādiruh al-fikriyya, al-'adāla al-ijtimā'iyya, al-dīmuqrāṭiyya, al-ḥurriyya al-akādīmiyya, al-fikr al-tarbawī, al-huwāyya al-thaqāfiyya* (Cairo: Markaz al-Dirāsāt wa-al-Ma'lūmāt al-Qānūniyya li-Ḥuqūq al-Insān, 1997).
 18. See Anwar al-Jundī, *Ṭāhā Ḥusayn: ḥayātuh wa-fikruh fī daw' al-islām* (Cairo: Dār al-i'tisām, 1976); Sāmīh Kurayyim, *Islāmiyyāt: Ṭāhā Ḥusayn, al-'Aqqād, Ḥusayn Haykal,*

- Aḥmad Amīn, Tawfīq al-Ḥakīm* (Beirut: Dār al-Qalam, 1977); Ramaḍān Muḥammad Ramaḍān Jāriya, *al-Ittijāh al-islāmī fī adab Ṭāhā Ḥusayn* (Cairo: 1996); and Ilhām Shāhīn, *al-‘Ilmāniyya fī Miṣr wa-ashbar ma‘ārikibā* (Egypt: Dār Ḥārmūnī li-al-Ṭibā‘a, 2001).
19. For the role of his autobiographies, *al-Ayyām* and *Adīb*, in shaping the modern Arabic novel, see ‘Abd al-Muḥsin Ṭāhā Badr, *Ṭaṭawwur al-riwāya al-‘arabiyya al-ḥadīthda* (Cairo: Dār al-Ma‘ārif, 1963), pp. 302–21.
 20. See Jābir ‘Uṣfūr, *al-Marāyā al-mutajāwira: dirāsa fī naqd Ṭāhā Ḥusayn* (Cairo: 1983).
 21. See ‘Abd al-‘Azīz Sharaf, *Ṭāhā Ḥusayn wa-zawāl al-mujtama‘ al-taqīdī* (Cairo: al-Hay‘a al-Miṣriyya al-‘Āmma li-al-Kitāb, 1977).
 22. See, for example, Fedwa Malti-Douglas, *Blindness and Autobiography: Al-Ayyām of Ṭāhā Ḥusayn* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988).
 23. See ‘Abd al-Majīd Muhtasib, *Ṭāhā Ḥusayn mufakkiran?* (Amman: Makbat al-Nahḍa al-Islāmiyya, 1980); ‘Umar Miqdād Jimnī, *Ṭāhā Ḥusayn mu‘arrikhān* (Qartāj: Bayt al-Ḥikma, 1993); Lūsī Ya‘qūb, *al-Aṣāla wa-al-mu‘āshara fī fikr Ṭāhā Ḥusayn* (Cairo: Maktabat al-Maḥabba, 1989); and *Ṭāhā Ḥusayn wa-ta‘ṣīl al-thaqāfa al-‘arabiyya* (Cairo: al-Majlis al-A‘lā li-al-Thaqāfa, 2002).
 24. For a linguistic analysis of his style, see al-Badrāwī Zahrān, *Uslūb Ṭāhā Ḥusayn fī daw‘ al-dars al-lughawī al-ḥadīth* (Cairo: Dār al-Ma‘ārif, n.d.).
 25. For a summation of his literary criticism, see David Semah, *Four Egyptian Literary Critics* (Leiden: Brill, 1974).
 26. See Hamdi Sakkout (and Marsden Jones), *Ṭāhā Ḥusayn* (Cairo: American University in Cairo, 1975). There is in addition: Sa‘d Muḥammad al-Hajrasī, *Ṭāhā Ḥusayn..! Fī al-qarn al-‘ishrīn. ‘Aṭa‘āt usrat Ṭāhā Ḥusayn al-bibliyūghrafīyya aw Ṭāhā Ḥusayn fī al-Khālīdīn* (Cairo: Dār al-Thaqāfa al-‘Ilmiyya, 2000).
 27. On his Orientalism, see ‘Abd al-Rashīd al-Ṣādiq Maḥmūdī, *Ṭāhā Ḥusayn: bayn al-siyāḥ wa-al-marāyā* (al-Haram: ‘Ayn li-al-Dirāsāt wa-al-Buḥūth al-Insāniyya wa-al-Ijtimā‘iyya, 2005). See also Mohamed Al-Nowaihi, ‘Towards the Reappraisal of Classical Arabic Literature and History: Some Aspects of Taha Husayn’s Use of Modern Western Criteria’, *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 11:2 (1980), pp. 189–207.
 28. For a most recent discussion of this, see al-Tihāmī al-Hānī, *Ṭāhā Ḥusayn wa-al-shi‘r al-jāhili: bayna nafaḥāt al-mustashriqīn wa-ḡilāl al-‘arab* (Tunis: al-Dār al-Tūnisiyya li-al-Kitāb, 2015). For earlier discussions, see Ṣāliḥ Jawdat (ed.), *Ṭāhā Ḥusayn wa-qaḍiyyat al-shi‘r* (Cairo: al-Hay‘a al-Miṣriyya al-‘Āmma li-al-Kitāb, 1975) and Muḥammad al-Khiḍr Ḥusayn, *Naqd kitāb Fī al-shi‘r al-jāhili* (Beirut: al-Maktaba al-‘Ilmiyya, n.d.).
 29. See Emily Apter, *The Translation Zone: A New Comparative Literature* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006).
 30. See Kamran Rastegar, *Literary Modernity between the Middle East and Europe: Textual Transactions in Nineteenth-Century Arabic, English, and Persian Literatures* (London: Routledge, 2007); Shaden Tageldin, *Disarming Words: Empire and the Seductions of Translation* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011); and Michael Allan, *In the Shadow of World Literature: Sites of Reading in Colonial Egypt* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016). These studies of the *Nahḍa* take place side by side with studies that expand the arena historically and geographically to cover the Eastern Mediterranean in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. See, for example, Stephen Sheehi, *Foundations of Modern Arab Identity* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 2004); Tarek El-Ariss, *Trials of Arab Modernity: Literary Affects and the New Political* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2013); Khaled El-Rouayheb, *Islamic Intellectual History in the Seventeenth Century: Scholarly Currents in the Ottoman Empire and the Maghreb* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015); and Abdulrazzak Patel, *The Arab Nahḍah: The Making of the Intellectual and Humanist Movement* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2013). See also Kamran Rastegar (ed.), ‘Authoring the Nahḍa: Writing the Arabic 19th Century’, *Middle Eastern Literatures*, 16:3 (2013), pp. 227–350.

31. See Muhsin al-Musawi, *The Medieval Islamic Republic of Letters: Arabic Knowledge Construction* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2015). For most responses to 'world literature' from Middle Eastern perspectives, see Paulo Horta (ed.), 'World Literature', *Middle Eastern Literatures*, 20:1 (2017), pp. 1–124.
32. See Francesca Orsini, 'The Multilingual Local in World Literature', *Comparative Literature*, 67:4 (2015), pp. 345–74.
33. See Edward Said, *The World, The Text, and the Critic* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1983), pp. 31–53.
34. Allan, *In the Shadow of World Literature*, p. 129.
35. 'The Mediterranean' has been used as a foil to the division of the area into North Africa, the Near East, East Europe and West Europe, or nation states, in cultural, historical and literary studies since the 1990s. For the most recent responses from Mediterranean studies to 'world literature', see Suzanne Conklin Akbari, 'Modeling Medieval World Literature', *Middle Eastern Literatures*, 20:1 (2017), pp. 1–16 and Karla Mallette, 'Translation in the Pre-Modern World', *Middle Eastern Literatures*, 20:1 (2017), pp. 17–29.
36. See Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978), pp. 2–3. Page references for citations from this text will henceforth be provided in the main text.
37. See, for example, Joseph H. Escovitz, 'Orientalists and Orientalism in the Writings of Muhammad Kurd Ali', *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 15:1 (1983), pp. 95–109; Usama Makdisi, 'Ottoman Orientalism', *American Historical Review*, 107:3 (2002), pp. 768–96; Derek Hopwood, 'Albert Hourani: Islam, Christianity and Orientalism', *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, 30:2 (2003), pp. 127–36; Lisa Lau, 'Re-Orientalism: The Preparation and Development of Orientalism by Orientals', *Modern Asian Studies*, 43:2 (2009), pp. 571–90; and Fruma Zachs, "'Under Eastern Eyes": East on West in the Arabic Press of the Nahḍa Period', *Studia Islamica*, 106:1 (2011), pp. 124–43.
38. See John M. Ganim, *Medievalism and Orientalism: Three Essays on Literature, Architecture and Cultural Identity* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), pp. 3–6.
39. I refer to Pascale Casanova, *The World Republic of Letters*, trans. M. B. DeBevoise (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004); David Damrosch, *What is World Literature?* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003); David Damrosch, *How to Read World Literature* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009); Franco Moretti, 'Conjectures on World Literature', *New Left Review*, 1 (2000), pp. 54–68; Franco Moretti, 'More Conjectures', *New Left Review*, 20 (2003), pp. 73–81; and Franco Moretti (ed.), *The Novel* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006).
40. See Eric Hayot, *On Literary Worlds* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).
41. References are made to the second edition: see Ṭāhā Ḥusayn, *Mustaqbal al-thaqāfa fī Miṣr* (Cairo: Dār al-Ma'ārif, 1973). For a partial translation of this text into English, see Sidney Glazer, *The Future of Culture in Egypt* (Washington, DC: American Council for the Learned Societies, 1954).
42. See Ḥusayn, *Mustaqbal al-thaqāfa*, pp. 12–13. Page references for citations from this text will henceforth be provided in the main text.
43. A survey of his experience as a student and educator is found in Muṣṭafā Rajab, *Fikr Ṭāhā Ḥusayn al-tarbawī bayn al-naẓariyya wa-al-taḥbīq* (Cairo: al-Hay'a al-Miṣriyya al-'Āmma li-al-Kitāb, 1995).
44. See Timothy Brennan, *At Home in the World: Cosmopolitanism Now* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997).
45. See Benjamin Geer, 'The Priesthood of Nationalism in Egypt', PhD Thesis, School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, 2011.
46. See Rajab, *Fikr Ṭāhā Ḥusayn*, p. 17.
47. For the relevant court documents, see Khayrī Shalabī (ed.), *Muḥākamat Ṭāhā Ḥusayn: naṣṣ qarār al-ittihām ḍidda Ṭāhā Ḥusayn sanat 1927 ḥawla kitābibi 'Fī al-shi'r al-jāhili* (Beirut: al-Mu'assasa al-'Arabiyya li-al-Dirāsāt wa-al-Naṣh, 1972).

48. See Maḥmūdī, *Tāhā Ḥusayn*.
49. See Tāhā Ḥusayn, *Fī al-adab al-jāhili* (Cairo: Mu'assasat Hindāwī li l-Ta'lim waa-l-Thaqāfa, 2012), pp. 21–9.
50. See, for example, Meftah Tahar, *Tāhā Ḥusayn: sa critique littéraire et ses sources françaises* (Tunis: Maison Arabe de Livre, 1976); Muḥammad al-Khiḍr Ḥusayn, *Naqd kitāb 'Fī al-shi'r al-jāhili* (Beirut: al-Maktaba al-'Ilmiyya, n.d.); and al-Tihāmī al-Hānī, *Tāhā Ḥusayn wa-al-shi'r al-jāhili: bayna nafahāt al-mustashriqīn wa-zilāl al-'arab* (Tunis: al-Dār al-Tūnisiyya li-al-Kitāb, 2015).
51. For the problematic role of Pharaonic civilisation and antiquities in the construction of postcolonial Egyptian national identity, see Donald Malcolm Reid, *Whose Pharaohs?: Archaeology, Museums, and Egyptian National Identity from Napoleon to World War II* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002) and Elliott Colla, *Conflicted Antiquities: Egyptology, Egyptomania, Egyptian Modernity* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007). For its role in shaping Egyptian nationalist discourse in fiction, see Samah Selim, 'The New Pharaonism: Nationalist Thought and the Egyptian Village Novel, 1967–1977', *The Arab Studies Journal*, 8/9:2/1 (2000–1), pp. 10–24.
52. See Wen-Chin Ouyang, 'Return or Departure?: Homecoming in al-Ṭaḥṭāwī's Travelogue', in Frédéric Bauden (ed.), *Tropics of Travel: 4. Homes, Proceedings of the International Conference Organized at the University of Liège, 13–15 January 2011* (Louvain: Peeters Publishers, 2015), pp. 89–108.
53. See Ganim, *Medievalism and Orientalism*, pp. 3–6.
54. There is little on this aspect of *Nadha* discourses to the best of my knowledge. For an example, see Rifaat Ali Abou-el-Haj, 'The Social Uses of the Past: Recent Arab Historiography of Ottoman Rule', *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 14:2 (1982), pp. 185–201.
55. See Tāhā Ḥusayn, *Min ḥadīth al-shi'r wa-al-nathr* (Cairo: Mu'assasat Hindāwī li-al-Ta'lim wa-al-Thaqāfa, 2012), p. 77. Page references for citations from this text will henceforth be provided in the main text.
56. His translations of Sophocles' *Electra*, *Antigone*, *Ajax*, and *Oedipus the King*, possibly in 1939, are found in *Min al-adab al-tamthīlī al-yūnānī: Sūfūklīs*. He also translated André Gide's *Oedipus* (1931) and *Theseus* (1946) in *Ūdīb Thīsiyūs* (1946).
57. Ḥusayn translated Aristotle's *Constitution of the Athenians* in 1921, as *Nizām al-ātīmīyyīn*.
58. For his introductions to Homer, Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, Alexander the Great and Julius Caesar, see Tāhā Ḥusayn, *Qādat al-fikr* (Cairo: al-Hilāl, 1925) (Tāhā Ḥusayn, *Leaders of Thought*, trans. Hasan Lutfi (Beyrouth: Khalifé, 1932)). An anthology of selected texts from Greek drama, *Ṣuḥuf mukhtāra min al-shi'r al-tamthīlī 'ind al-yūnān* (1920) is available in a Hindawi digital edition.
59. I have found an echo of what Ḥusayn alleges in the first chapter of Carl Brockelmann's *History of Arabic Literature* on the Arabic language, which I accessed in Arabic, *Tārīkh al-adab al-'arabī*, translated into Arabic by 'Abd al-Ḥalīm al-Najjār (Cairo: Dār al-Ma'ārif, 4th edn, n.d.). The comparison reads as follows: 'And this is how the Bedouins describe their camels, as the Bantu Africans (*zunūj* 'Bantu') describe their cows. For this reason, Arabic is not capable of inventing words that describe general and abstract concepts (*lam taqwa al-'arabiyya 'alā ikhtirā' alfāz tu'abbir 'an al-ma'nawiyyāt al-'amma wa-al-madārik al-kullīyya*); rather, it sufficed with describing and identifying specific features (*al-ṣifāt wa-al-khaṣā'is*). This is the best feature of the poetry of ancient Arabs. It does not point to an expansive awareness; on the contrary, it indicates a narrow, limited consciousness not yet capable of abstraction (*tajrīd al-ma'ānī al-kullīyya wa-istikhlāṣihā*): Carl Brockelmann, *Tārīkh al-adab al-'arabī*, trans. 'Abd al-Ḥalīm al-Najjār (Cairo: Dār al-Ma'ārif, n.d.), p. 43; translation from Arabic mine.
60. I go against the grain of Allan's reading of the exchange between Ḥusayn and Gide that took place in person but more particularly on the site of *Adīb* as 'the limits of literary experience'

and the 'provincialism of the literary world', even as he acknowledges something akin to 'provincial cosmopolitanism', and argue for the cosmopolitanism of Ḥusayn's texts, more particularly, his critical texts. For his reading, see Allan, *In the Shadow of World Literature*, pp. 115–30.

61. See Ṭāhā Ḥusayn, *Alwān* (Cairo: Mu'assasat Hindāwī li-l-Ta'lim wa-l-Thaqāfa, 2012), pp. 83–97. Page references for citations from this text will henceforth be provided in the main text.
62. See Aamir Mufti, *Forget English: Orientalisms and World Literature* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2016), pp. 56–98, 99–145.
63. See Daniel L. Newman, *An Imam in Paris: Account of a Stay in France by an Egyptian Cleric (1826–1831)* (London: Saqi, 2004), pp. 17–97.