

Self and Others in the English Translation of Taha Hussein's *Al-Ayyām (The Days)*: A Posthumanist Perspective

Samir Khalifa¹, Elham Alzain², Ghiadaa Khodier³, Ali Alshebami², Abdullah Seraj⁴, Ayman Elhalafway³

¹ Medical Sciences and Preparatory Year Department, North Private College of Nursing, Arar, Northern Border, Saudi Arabia

² Applied College, King Faisal University, Al Ahsa, Saudi Arabia

³ Department of English Language and Literature at Faculty of Arts, Kafrelsheikh University, Egypt

⁴ College of Business Administration, King Faisal University, Al Ahsa, Saudi Arabia

Correspondence: Elham Alzain Applied College, King Faisal University, Al Ahsa, SA. E-mail: ealzain@kfu.edu.sa

Received: August 17, 2025

Accepted: October 15, 2025

Online Published: November 13, 2025

doi:10.5430/wjel.v16n2p428

URL: <https://doi.org/10.5430/wjel.v16n2p428>

Abstract

This paper explores the construction of self and others in the English translation of Taha Hussein's *Al-Ayyām (The Days)*, a trilogy: *An Egyptian Childhood*, *The Stream of Days*, and *A Passage to France*. Adopting a posthumanist approach, the paper closely examines the self and others, focusing on how people with disabilities perceive themselves in relation to the non-disabled, and explores themes of relationships and social interaction. Hence, the key aim of posthumanism is to challenge the negative view of disability. In this way, the study seeks to reread *Al-Ayyām* from a posthumanist perspective. Additionally, it aims to explore how Hussein echoes the voices of blind people in his autobiography. From an analytical perspective, the present research reveals how Hussein presents the views of blind individuals to enable non-disabled readers to comprehend their beliefs, challenges, lived experiences, and worldviews. The study also finds that the English translation mediates and reperforms Hussein's subjective voice on behalf of Anglophone readers in cross-cultural contexts. The paper emphasizes the potential of uniting humanities methods to offer new insights into the intersection of identity and posthumanist philosophy.

Keywords: Taha Hussein, *Al-Ayyām (The Days)*, posthumanism, disability studies, self and otherness, identity and alterity, narrative voice, visual disability

1. Introduction

Al-Ayyām (The Days) was published in three volumes: *An Egyptian Childhood* (1929), *The Stream of Days* (1943), and *A Passage to France* (1973) by Taha Hussien. It is perhaps the most renowned autobiography in contemporary Arabic literature. This study investigates the English translation of the three volumes as its primary object of research, and it reflects on how the translated text constructs representations of self and other by certain linguistic and narrative factors. Rather than being understood as a mechanical translation of meaning from English to Arabic, translation is seen as an active cultural space of negotiation and interpretive construction, in which concepts of identity and alterity are shaped for Anglophone readers. Drawing on disability analyses, postcolonial theory, and posthumanism, this paper illuminates the construction of selfhood and otherness. Placing the English translation of *Al-Ayyām (The Days)* within wider debates in academic research regarding language, representation, and posthuman states in postmodern literary criticism, this model engages with these debates from a critical disability studies vantage point.

In this regard, some humans define and understand themselves through their abilities compared with others. Saur and Sidorkin (2018) state that some humans see themselves as being able to communicate, create, act, think, feel, be conscious of oneself, and "exercise free will" (p. 571). In this sense, humanism has embraced some humans and categorized others as subhuman through dehumanization, marginalization, and classification. Therefore, humanism rejects those who cannot reach its standards of human value. Braidotti (2013) argues that Humanity itself is a socially constructed norm, not so much negative, but very regulatory, and therefore widely used as a tool of "exclusion and discrimination" (p. 26). Therefore, people with disabilities who cannot meet the normative standard are oppressed by humanist assumptions that operate against disability.

Historically, people with disability have been excluded from an in-group of humans and continue to seek inclusion in that group. More specifically, it is significant to differentiate between in-groups and out-groups. For Babik and Elena (2021), some people view others as being "either a familiar in-group or an unfamiliar out-group" (p. 3). The members of the in-group are loyal to one another based on different factors, including religion, ability, race, and gender, share many interests, and keep others out of the group. By contrast, the out-group consists of anyone who does not belong to the in-group and does not share a shared sense of identity. Thus, immigrants, sexual minorities, racial minorities, and individuals with disabilities are identified as out-group members. Observe that social identity formation shapes one's conception of self and prescribes his or her relative position to others. To reinforce and protect oneself through the use of the in-group, a

person may overestimate the in-group and devalue the out-group. So, the use of terms like 'us' and 'them' leads people to fear the out-group. For example, the out-group members may hold a distinct set of beliefs and values, challenge the norms of in-group members, or undermine the in-group's power and authority in cultural, political, or economic arenas. These felt threats can generate negative expectancies of the out-group, resulting in discrimination, stigmatization, or efforts to hold onto and protect the in-group. Iryna and Gardner (2021) add: "The resulting intergroup biases lead to social exclusion of out-groups by members of the in-group" (p. 3). Consequently, negative bias may lead to social exclusion or discrimination of the disabled against the in-groups as a possible source of threat. As a result, this threat may raise levels of anxiety in some members of the in-group, making them less willing to interact with others, accept new social situations, and be more intolerant towards individuals of the out-group. With this in mind, humanism focuses on the members of the in-group (the non-disabled), neglecting the out-group members (the disabled). That is to say, most members of the in-group may dehumanize the members of the out-group by convincing the latter that they are less than human beings.

As a result, posthumanism emerged to challenge the dehumanization of people with disabilities and to challenge misconceptions and beliefs about humanity. It removes the human boundaries of the "normal" body. In addition, Wolfe (2009) confirms that posthumanism is a wide range of moral philosophies that affirm the worth and dignity of "all people" (xi). Wolfe (2009) adds: "[The posthuman] unsettles the very foundations of what we call 'the human'" (p. 69). As seen, posthumanism focuses on others, including people with disabilities. Based on the explanation above, posthumanism aims to challenge the principles of humanity that ground discrimination against the disabled in the first place.

Thus, posthumanism aims to help humans understand the contradictions between self and others. It pays attention to others, such as the disabled, the non-healthy, the non-masculine, the non-normal, the non-young, and the non-white. All of these others are seen as worthless, labeled as diseased, and prone to monstrosity, deviance, and dysfunction.

To put it bluntly, posthumanism calls upon human beings to become dis/human. It is worth mentioning that dis/human asserts the disabled's humanity and takes into consideration the relationship between disability and humanity. In other words, dis/human requires re-adjustment in people's way of thinking and rebels against humanism, which means the supremacy of the non-disabled. At the same time, posthumanism contributes to understanding the ways the disabled are excluded from the notion of humanity.

In the last decade, disabled literature has emerged. It features writers who began writing about people with disabilities and sought to find solutions to social barriers in society, like a collective voice or body. In other words, disabled literature reflects the author's opinion, as well as the views and philosophies of individuals with disabilities, reflecting their pursuit of equality and participation in society by people with disabilities. Daniels (2008) explains that it is necessary for people with disabilities or even those just beginning to appreciate their role within the disability community to find themselves represented "in the literature" (para 24).

For example, autobiographical works have been a privileged mode of expression for the marginalized and disenfranchised since the mid-twentieth century. Illness narratives and autobiographies became forms of community building, protest expression, and sharing of pieces of advice and experiences with the disabled. Illness narratives enable authors with disability to exert control over their stories. Moreover, the autobiographical narratives view the world of the disabled differently, highlighting the positive issues related to disability and correcting the misconception that a person with disability is incapable, a victim of inferiority, and defective.

Egyptian Hussein (1889–1973) is an icon of Arabic literature. He was a well-known prose writer and critic. He drew inspiration for his valuable ideas and works from Jamal Uddin Afghani, an Islamic ideologist of the twentieth century. In 1950, he became Minister of Education and received a doctorate for his distinguished work.

2. Literature Review

Many studies have been done on Hussein, whether independently or in comparison with other writers. Among the studies devoted entirely to Hussein's novel is *Taha Hussein's The Stream Days: A Lone Figure's Kunstlerroman* (2003), by Elbarbary, which focuses on the technique used by Hussein to write his autobiography; he invites the reader(s) to share his feeling and state of mind by depending on the third-person point of view. Moreover, a study like "*The Stream of Consciousness and the Problem of Identity in James Joyce's Portrait and Taha Hussayn's Al Ayyam: A Comparative Study*" (2016), by Shehata, revolves around showing how the stream of consciousness is suitable to show the reader(s) the process of thought development of the main characters. In addition, a study by Elgalalawy (2019) emphasizes the way the two writers present the narrative of Egyptian childhood, within their socio-cultural circumstances, and thus interpret two notions of what Egyptian childhood is. Finally, a study by Safayi and Alkami (2020) aims to show how Hussein depends on the third-person point of view to narrate scenes and events and describe the feelings of the main character from the outside. So, the position of Hussein is a bird's-eye view, allowing the reader(s) to hear the main character's thoughts. In other words, the focalization of Hussein in *Al-Ayyām* is external, rendering Hussein omnipotent with a bird's-eye view of events. In addition, Alhourani *et al.* (2025) consider identity and otherness from the postcolonial and intersectional perspectives. Reading *In the Blood* in their article shows how trauma and cultural negotiation shape the self and give us a perspective in support of a posthumanist reading of *Al-Ayyām*.

It is noted that the previous studies focus on the technique used by Hussein to narrate his autobiography and the concepts related to Egyptian childhood. In doing so, the perspective of the study shows how Hussein displays the voice of a person with blindness from a posthumanist point of view, enhancing the non-disabled's understanding of the humanities and social justice.

3. Methodology

The study was conducted as an attempt to examine the representations of people with visual disabilities in society as reflected in *Al-Ayyām*. Given the nature of this study, it adopts the analytical approach as its primary method. This approach focuses on analyzing *Al-Ayyām*, focusing on the blind from a posthumanist perspective and how it is reflected in the autobiography.

4. Discussion and Results

Hussein's *Al-Ayyām* is a trilogy. The first volume, *An Egyptian Childhood* (1929), tells the story of Hussein's childhood as a blind child. The second volume, *The Stream of Days* (1943), focuses on Hussein's life at *Al Azhar*. The third volume, *A Passage to France* (1973), describes his journey from Paris to Egypt. Hence, *Al-Ayyām* embodies Hussein's life and aims to raise awareness among the blind to overcome all the obstacles they face due to their disabilities.

In *Al-Ayyām*, Hussein chronologically organizes his autobiography from childhood in the village to his movement to Cairo. Kelley (2014) confirms: "Taha Hussein's autobiography *Al-Ayyām* [...] was a particularly important example of the autobiographical form and, indeed, is often included among lists of important Arabic novels" (p. 23). It can be seen that *Al-Ayyām* is the most widely read autobiography in Arabic literature. It can be said that *Al-Ayyām* is the masterpiece of Hussein's imaginative works.

It is worth noting that Hussein recalls his childhood depending on a third-person perspective, using names such as "our friend," "our young man," "the youth," "the lad," and "the boy" (pp. 76–77). ElBarbary (2007) states: "Hussein goes about recomposing his image and aspects of the relation of *self* and *other*. He speaks of himself in the third person" (p. 19). Hussein aims to have the reader(s) hear the main character's thoughts and be inside their sensations, thoughts, and feelings. In other words, he narrates scenes, describing the main character's feelings from the outside. That is, posthumanism pays attention to self and others, while humanism denies the humanity of disabled/others.

Talking about his use of the third-person point of view, Hussein aims to center the lens on the relationship between the sighted and the blind. As Reynolds (2001) states, "Arabic autobiographers clearly had a choice between first-person and third-person portrayal" (p. 181). Therefore, third-person narration achieves the distance between the adult author and his / her childhood, but the author's voice persists in the child's voice.

Looking back at his childhood, Hussein was the seventh of thirteen children of his father because his father was a polygamist, having married two women and fathering several children. When Hussein fell ill at the age of three with an eye infection, his family did not call a doctor. Instead, he was taken to a barber for treatment—a barber's profession in the twentieth century was to style and cut men's hair. As a result of improper treatment, Hussein became blind at the age of three.

Hussein illuminates his family's reaction to his disability. To put it another way, he centers the lens on the sighted-blind relationship and how the former views the latter. Given this point, posthumanism demonstrates how the relationship between the non-disabled and disabled shapes the latter's self-beliefs and influences their quality of life. Hence, the disabled determine their place concerning others. At the same time, posthumanism redefines the non-disabled's sense of connection to others.

On the positive side, Hussein sheds light on his family's reaction and response to his disability. During childhood, he spent ten years of his life under his family's protection. They are aware of not mentioning his disability in front of him as they feel sorry for him. Hussein says: "[I] had been used to great consideration on this point from [my] family, who avoided mentioning the affliction [blindness] in [my] presence" (p. 173). It is worth mentioning that the family's response to his blindness has a strong influence on him. At the onset of Hussein's blindness, his mother, on the one hand, shows compassion to him. Hussein says: "[I] experienced much tenderness and consideration from [my] mother, and [...] lenience and kindness [from my father]" (p. 15). On the other hand, his siblings are conservative in their conversations and dealings with him.

On the negative side, Hussein is neglected by his family. He states: "I was thin, pale, with a neglected appearance [...]. I was conspicuous in my dirty cloak, and my cap, which had changed from white to black, and also in my shirt [...] had become multi-coloured owing to the quantities of food that had been spilled down it, and a pair of worn-out and patched shoes" (pp. 85–86). These lines are strong evidence that his family does not pay attention to him and neglects his appearance. It is worth mentioning that ordinary neatness and cleanliness are serious problems for a blind person. According to Ginsburg and Rapp (2015), "family is highly charged in disability studies. On the one hand, families are seen as the sites of nurturance, narrative, and theory building for those with disabilities [...]. On the other hand, families are recognized as potential sites of repression, rejection, and infantilization" (p. 234). This statement emphasizes that family plays a role in making their disabled child accept or reject his/her disability.

Concerning Hussein's suffering in his childhood, Lana *et al.* (1993) state that most sighted people in the village, especially in the twentieth century, believed that "blindness is believed to be caused by God, followed by untreated eye disease, dirt, flies, or mosquitoes" (p. 250). Moreover, Sholkamy (1997) notes that some peasants of Upper Egypt describe the blind child as "*madrou* (Suffering from a defect) and is also expected to be sick often [...] [this child] either over-protected [...], or neglected as [he/she] [is] condemned to their poor health" (pp. 194–95). In this regard, posthumanism seeks to embrace those who have been neglected by the boundaries of humanism.

Given the previous point, Hussein is aware of his blindness when he realizes that his siblings can do activities he cannot. The narrator states: "[Hussein] would fall back on his brothers and friends, who were playing a game in which he would join with *his mind* but not with *his hand*. Like that, he knew numerous games without ever taking part in them" (p. 19). He realizes that his blindness prevents him from playing with others because he hears his siblings describing issues that he does not know. According to Hussein, "[I] perceived that other people had an

advantage over [me]" (p. 16). That is, he realizes that others see what he does not.

Commenting on the impact of blindness on Hussein, Carroll (1961) asserts that there are many losses in the basic skills of the blinded person, and "each loss involves a painful Farewell" (p. 31). For Carroll, one of these losses is a "loss of personal independence" (p. 65). Some sighted people, on the one side, see the blind as a symbol of dependence because the latter need help. That is, posthumanism aims to correct misconceptions about the disabled, help the non-disabled see the full picture of the lives of the former, and create a sense of shared humanity. Carroll (1961) points out that the blinded person has "the desire for independence with its freedom and the desire for dependence and its protection" (p. 65). These lines summarize Hussein's struggle to be an independent person despite his blindness; however, he needs others for protection. As mentioned above, dependence may prevent the blind from having a relationship with others.

Further, the narrator sheds light on the psychological impact of blindness on Hussein. Eating, for example, reminds him of being a newly blinded person because he cannot keep himself clean and neat. The narrator says: "[Hussein] was eating just as the others were eating when a strange thought occurred to him! What would happen if he took hold of a morsel of food with both hands instead of one, as was customary? And what was there to prevent him from [doing] this experiment? Nothing" (p. 16). When he uses two hands to eat his food instead of one, his siblings mock him, his mother weeps, and his father tells him in a sorrowful, soft voice, "[t]hat is not the way to eat your food" (p. 16). This scene reflects the extent of Hussein's feelings of sadness, depression, and embarrassment because his family ridicules him or sheds tears over his miserable condition—these behaviors leave their mark on his personality until he reaches the age of twenty-five. It is worth mentioning that posthumanism helps the sighted discover more about the blind and understand how to interact with them.

In this regard, posthumanism criticizes the behaviors of some non-disabled people towards the disabled. According to the narrator, "[Hussein] was from the outset of an inquisitive nature, regardless of what he encountered in finding out what he did not know, and that cost him much discomfort and trouble. But one incident [eating], in particular, curbed his curiosity, and filled his heart with a shyness which lingers even yet" (p. 16). As a result, Hussein gives up eating rice, soup, and all dishes that have to be eaten with a spoon because he cannot wield the spoon very well, and he sees eating as related to fear, caution, and sadness.

Therefore, Hussein sees his blindness (new identity) as a pest. For him, "blindness was something to be ashamed of [...] [, especially] in the presence of sighted people" (p. 338). He sees his blindness as "the affliction which had tired [him] in [his] first boyhood, troubling [his] early years and besetting [him] again in [his] youth" (p. 337). Further, he describes his relationship with his blindness as a "conflict and attack" (p. 337).

Concerning the previous point, Hussein focused on the misconceptions, beliefs, and stereotypes related to the blind in the twentieth century, especially in Egypt. For example, one of the social barriers that he faces is that he inevitably works in limited jobs because of his blindness: either as a religious leader or *Sheikh*, or as a *Qur'an* reciter at funerals. It is documented that in the twentieth century, Islamic communities presumed that blind individuals' stereotypical profession was that of *Qur'an* reciter, either drawing on reading from it directly or summoning it from memory. This was a good job for the blind peasants of Upper Egypt in the twentieth century. Wolfensberger (2000) asserts that "[social] images will affect people's roles" (p. 115). In this regard, posthumanism sheds light on the societal barriers that may prevent the disabled from being socially empowered. The social barriers facing the blind include their careers, education, income, and employment.

In this way, posthumanism's purpose is to challenge the exclusion of the disabled from the in-group. In addition, it encourages the non-disabled to go beyond the body and see the person first and asserts that the disabled should feel visible, acknowledged, and noticed as human beings. From a posthumanist perspective, the power of disabled voices may change society for the better and promote a more equitable society.

In this respect, the *kuttāb* is the first relationship outside Hussein's family where he deals with both the blind and the sighted. In his relationship with the blind, Hussein realizes that they are affected by the social image related to blindness. Therefore, posthumanism pays attention to the out-group members (the disabled) to allow them to be seen and heard and to share the world with the in-group members (the non-disabled). In other words, it aims to end the dehumanization of the blind, because they have the same rights as the sighted. Furthermore, posthumanism reaffirms the disabled's humanity, promotes equality of rights, opportunities, and social inclusion, and challenges prejudices and social norms that perpetuate exclusion and discrimination.

That is to say, Hussein also learns to deal with the sighted at the *kuttāb*. In his relationship with the sighted, he feels ashamed of his disability because he is dependent on others for guidance. Moreover, the sighted know issues that Hussein does not and call him blind or *A'ma*, an Arabic term for a blind person. According to Lana *et al.* (1993), the blind "[i]n the Egyptian community, [...] are called *a'ma* or *kafef* (blind)" (p. 247). In this regard, posthumanism aims to raise awareness among the non-disabled to be aware of their attitudes, behaviors, and word choices when speaking and dealing with the disabled. It asks the non-disabled to treat the disabled with dignity and respect and include them. Hussein is aware of being blind in Egypt, especially when facing the external world, including people, friends, and society. For this reason, he is in a state of shock and denial because he is classified as stigmatized and rejected.

Thus, Hussein begins the next stage of his life, moving away from his family to study at *Al-Azhar*. He goes to Cairo with his elder brother. In his new phase, Hussein challenges and corrects misconceptions about blindness. He deals with the stigma directed at him. Victor and Bowling (2012) confirm: "*Blindness* [...] is understood and classified by contrast to *seeing*" (p. 7). For example, when Hussein presents himself to the examiner at *Al-Azhar*, the latter calls him: "Blind boy [*ya a'ma*]" (p. 173). As mentioned, Hussein experiences social trauma due to his blindness. He feels humiliated by his blindness, realizing that the term '*A'ma*' "tells cruelly on his ears and seared his heart with

anguish” (p. 173). That is, posthumanism fights the stigma that views the blind as responsible for their blindness. Hussein is also “furious with the examiners [...] [and] still haunted by the brutal words with which the examiner [has] summoned and dismissed him” (p. 173). This scene confirms that Hussein is unprepared to deal with this incident.

In this way, Hussein viewed his blindness during adulthood in terms of the conflict between physical blindness and social blindness, including stereotypes, beliefs, and misconceptions about the blind in twentieth-century Upper Egypt. According to Malti-Douglas (1988), “there are therefore two distinct but interrelated conceptions of blindness: personal blindness and social blindness; the dialogue between them forms one of the major lineaments of the autobiography [*Al-Ayyām*]” (p. 15). Based on the above excerpt, *Al-Ayyām* highlights Hussein’s blindness and his struggle to challenge the social blindness of ignorance in dealing with the blind. Malti-Douglas (1988) states: “Social blindness reflects society’s sentiments toward the handicapped” (p. 130). That is, posthumanism works to raise awareness among the non-disabled to deal with the disabled as human beings deserving respect.

From this perspective, Hussein feels excluded and alienated in the presence of others because they exclude him. He hopes to be positioned as a member of the in-group and gain their respect like the sighted. He finds himself pushed into the out-group. It is worth mentioning that posthumanism seeks to make the non-disabled find a new way of including the disabled and reconsider their relationship with them. Hence, Hussein feels alienated in Cairo because the lives of the non-disabled around him make him isolated. He finds out that his life is like “[a] closed door [...] [where] there was no passing to explore” (p. 356). In this case, social relationships are significant for the disabled. It is worth mentioning that social relationships give the disabled dignity and value and enable them to determine their place concerning the non-disabled. Therefore, posthumanism places a strong emphasis on the inclusion of the disabled and celebrates their humanity. Thus, Hussein suffers from alienation and loneliness because of a lack of contact with others.

It can be seen that Hussein aims to be visible by having a voice and creating his social role as a human being. He refuses to be pitied and hates how others show mercy and pity for him due to his blindness. He asserts: “Not only the village itself but the whole town was talking and thinking about [me]” (p. 191). Wolfensberger (2000) states: “Some of the major common negative social roles into which members of [the] societally devalued group are the following: [...] the human as ‘other’ [...] [and] the object of pity” (p. 107). So, Hussein refuses to be worthless. To clarify, posthumanism encourages the non-disabled to respect and treat the latter as partners in society, not ones who need help.

It is noted that Hussein’s dream before going to Cairo was to be a reciter of the *Qur’an*. He dreams of being like his elder brother, who studies at *Al-Azhar*. However, after his return from Cairo, he realizes that studying at *Al-Azhar* is not his dream, but rather his father’s. He throws all challenges away by pursuing his studies at Cairo University and refuses to be socially excluded. Social inclusion is defined by Hongbo (2016) as “the process of improving the terms of participation in society, particularly for people who are disadvantaged [...] through enhanced opportunities, access to resources, voice and respect for rights” (p. 20). So, all human beings have the same right to integrate into society. In this regard, posthumanism focuses on the integration of the disabled in society and calls upon the non-disabled to include and embrace differences. Hussein wants to be a positive member of society, challenging and correcting misconceptions related to the disabled. He refuses to pursue his studies at *Al-Azhar* because it is the only path for the blind.

To make this point, Hussein is at a reassessment and reaffirmation phase. During this stage, a person with disability reassesses personal values and aspirations. Hussein refines his strength—he is a good listener. So, he decides to study different fields to select the best one. He can reaffirm himself as a human being and reassess all the possibilities of life. He searches for his identity and decides to define himself as a distinct person. It is worth mentioning that Hussein is in the phase of coping with his disability. He manages his daily requirements and gets involved in creating his goals. For example, after obtaining his Bachelor of Arts degree, Hussein pursues a Ph.D. in the works of the poet Abu’ Alaa Al-Ma’rri. His dissertation revolves around Al-Ma’rri’s life and works. Accordingly, he is proud of his achievements. According to him, “I duly submitted it [the dissertation] and became the first Egyptian to be a successful candidate for the doctorate” (p. 303).

Regarding his journey towards self-development, Hussein reads a notice in the Cairo University newspaper inviting students to participate in a delegation to France, and he decides to join. He desires social integration. He is determined to join a French University out of his firm conviction that his blindness is not an obstacle. Hull (1990) states that “the blind and the sighted participate equally in the rational structure of human life and speech” (p. 63). This statement means that the blind have the same rights as the sighted, and the sighted should consider them as equal partners. It is worth considering that Hussein’s blindness does not impede him from achieving his dreams and goals in life. According to Salama (2018), Hussein’s success is “a living refutation of the fatalism of the rigid traditionalism that came to challenge in [*Al-Ayyām*]” (p. 83). This quote shows how Hussein challenges the social boundaries considered disabling for a person with blindness, achieving truly remarkable success in his life.

In France, it is noted that Hussein begins to look at life with a positive outlook, discovering his abilities. It is worth mentioning that Hussein is in the recovery phase. For Blank (1957), “[t]he concept of rebirth as a blind person is essential to complete understanding the events of the stage of successful recovery” (p. 13). When a person with blindness accepts his/her visual disability, he/she feels reborn. Hussein, during this phase, creates a new image of his body. Keegan *et al.* (1976) state that this phase requires the sighted to give a person with blindness hope for “learning new concepts” (p. 338). As stated above, he begins to have a positive attitude toward his blindness. It is worth mentioning that posthumanism encourages the disabled to embrace their disability and aims to build a community that promotes disability pride, giving them a sense of identity.

Focusing on the relationship between the blind and the sighted, Hussein makes his first move by declaring his love to a French woman because he feels that he can carry out the role of husband and father. This means that many non-disabled people are apprehensive about being in a relationship with a person with disability. Hussein wants to cross social boundaries for the blind. After falling in love with a French woman, he begins a new life and can communicate with others. It can be said that his sociability increases gradually. That is why posthumanism challenges ableism, which assumes the disabled cannot love or be loved.

As mentioned above, love plays an important role in shaping Hussein's view of blindness and life. He can establish a new relationship with his blindness because his wife helps him solve his eating problem. It is worth mentioning that Hussein's pre-marriage life is different from that of his post-marriage life. Before marriage, he feels lonely as he spends his life studying; he feels uninvolved in life. According to him: "I would be left to myself, in stark loneliness with no one to aid me, sitting, a solitary in my room, with all kinds of thoughts running through my head, some pleasing, others gloomy, some that kindled hope and others dejection and despondency" (p. 326). After getting married to his French wife, he "no longer [feels] lonely and desolate when night fell" (p. 327). It is clear that his wife helps him get rid of his isolation and self-denial. He states that his wife helps him find out "what love of life" is (p. 328). That is to say, posthumanism requires the non-disabled to support the disabled to eliminate existing barriers and thus achieve their integration into society. It can be said that Hussein is in the phase of self-acceptance. According to Tuttle (1987), during "this phase, a person learns not only to accept his visual impairment but also to accept himself as a person with disability, comfortable with himself as a person with a disability, [...] and liking himself" (p. 160). It is noted that Hussein embraces his disability and accepts others, who in turn accept and appreciate him. In other words, he has a positive outlook on life. It is noteworthy that posthumanism aims to give the disabled a sense of belonging and identity and build a community that promotes disability pride.

After studying in France for four years, Hussein holds his second doctorate in the Social Philosophy of Ibn Khaldun, an Arab historian and sociologist. He, therefore, returns to Egypt with his French wife and starts teaching at Cairo University. A deeper exploration of his personality on his return from France, Hussein challenges social stereotypes about the blind. He refuses to deliver a speech at the conference about the blind. In other words, he refuses the social role into which the *Sultan* seeks to place him, that of a person with blindness. *Sultan* believes that Hussein, as a blind person, is interested in cases associated with the blind, in general. *Sultan* constructs Hussein as the other because he falls outside the norm. Israelite *et al.* (2002) define identity concerning others as "[o]therness is based on the notion of difference coupled with issues of power. Through the process of othering, people in the dominant group [the non-disabled] marginalize those [the disabled] whom they view as different [...]. [For example] able-bodied people make disabled people the other" (p. 135). Israelite *et al.* (2002) add: "[O]thering is a form of social oppression, a process by which people labeled as different are identified as inherently inferior and relegated to the outer margins of social power and cultural life" (p. 135). From the quote above, most disabled people are oppressed because most non-disabled people categorize them as others. As mentioned earlier, posthumanism aims to make the non-disabled understand the opposition between self and others and asserts that visibility and respect are important for the disabled, because they may feel ignored in the ableist society.

Commenting on this point, Hussein finds that the only way to be like others is through inclusion in society. He refuses to be pushed away from the in-groups because he is not different. In other words, he refuses to be categorized and labeled as blind because he is a fully human being. He also attempts to limit the effects of Othering by reaffirming his belonging to the dominant group, the sighted. Israelite *et al.* (2002) define inclusion as "a way of challenging the societal rejection of people with [disability] and equalizing power relationship" (p. 135). From a posthumanist perspective, increasing awareness among the non-disabled about disability leads to the successful integration of the disabled into society.

From this perspective, Hussein's central message is to give a positive voice to a blind person who has a strong will to challenge all social, environmental, psychological, and attitudinal obstacles. It can be said that *Al-Ayyām* is one of the influential autobiographies of modern Egypt. According to Cragg (1967), *Al-Ayyām* is "the story of patience in rejecting the 'No's' of circumstance [...], with its insistent knocking at the doors of educational opportunity, the elimination of obstacles, and the determination to will whatever was requisite for the goal in view" (240; emphasis added). It can be said that *Al-Ayyām* is a symbol of the powerful voice of the blind person who has the determination to raise awareness of both the non-disabled and the disabled about the concept of disability. From a posthumanist point of view, disability awareness is significant in promoting the inclusion of the disabled and breaking social barriers.

Moreover, the importance of the study lies in its role to confirm how the voices of the disabled are capable of bringing about change and present them as human beings capable of changing societal misconceptions. Their voices give them agency, power, and a way to express their point of view. The voices of the disabled reposition them on the humanist list, affirming their sense of self and empowering them.

5. Conclusion

After rereading *Al-Ayyām* from a posthumanist standpoint, it can be said that it is timeless. Hussein has posthumanist features, as he challenges the principles of humanism that perpetuate discrimination against the disabled and classify them as others. He breaks the human boundaries of the normal body and affirms the humanity of people with disabilities. In this regard, he calls on the non-disabled to accept, value, and respect others, regardless of their abilities or disabilities, and asks them to reconsider themselves and others differently, creating a new method of combining self and others. Therefore, he relies on a third-person perspective to focus on self and others.

Acknowledgments

The authors are grateful to the Deanship of Scientific Research, Vice Presidency for Graduate Studies and Scientific Research, King Faisal

University, for their support.

Author Contributions

All authors made significant contributions to this study. Samir Khalifa contributed to the research and authored the theoretical framework and conclusion. Elham Alzain conducted a comparative analysis and authored a literature review. Ghiadaa Khodier and Ali Alshebami analyzed Taha Hussein's *Al-Ayyām (The Days)* and authored parts related to the study. Ayman Elhalafway and Abdullah Seraj coordinated the writing process, read all parts, and conducted final editing and proofreading.

Competing Interests

The authors declare no competing interests.

Informed Consent

This article did not require any informed consent

Funding

This work was supported by the Deanship of Scientific Research, Vice Presidency for Graduate Studies and Scientific Research, King Faisal University, Saudi Arabia [Grant No. KFU253742].

Competing interests

The authors declare that they have no competing financial interests or personal relationships that would have been deemed a potential conflict of interest in the work described in this paper.

Informed consent

Obtained.

Ethical Approval

There are no studies involving human subjects in this article by any of the authors.

Provenance and peer review

Not commissioned, externally double-blind peer reviewed.

Data availability statement

The data that support the findings of this study are available on request from the corresponding author. The data is not publicly available due to privacy or ethical restrictions.

Data sharing statement

No additional data is available.

Open access

This is an open-access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution license (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).

Copyrights

Copyright for this article is retained by the author(s), with first publication rights granted to the journal.

References

- Alhourani, M. et al. (2025). Beyond the mother knot: Trauma and intersectionality in Suzan-Lori Parks' *In the Blood*. *Theory & Practice in Language Studies*, 15(8). <https://doi.org/10.17507/tpls.1508.05>
- Babik, I., & Elena, S. G. (2021). Factors Affecting the Perception of Disability: A Developmental Perspective. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 12, 1-25. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2021.702166>
- Blank, H. R. (1957). Psychoanalysis and Blindness. *The Psychoanalytic Quarterly*, 26(4), 1-24. <https://doi.org/10.1080/21674086.1957.11926043>
- Braidotti, R. (2013). *The Posthuman*. London: Polity.
- Carroll, T. J. (1961). *Blindness: What it Is, What it Does, and How to Live With It*. America: Little Brown.
- Cragg, K. (1967). *A Passage to France*. England: University of Sussex.
- Daniels, K. D. (2008). What Teachers Never Taught and Writers Fear to Write: Disability in African American Children's Literature. *Disability Studies Quarterly*, 24(1). <https://doi.org/10.18061/dsq.v24i1.842>
- Elbarbary, S. (2007). Taha Hussein's *The Stream of Days*: A Lone Figure's *Kunstlerroman*, *Journal of South Asian and Middle Eastern Studies*, 30(IV), 19-32.
- Elgalalawy, N. (2019). *Conceptions of Modern Egyptian Childhood During the Period of the "Liberal Experiment" in Egypt, 1922–1952: A*

- Comparative Study of Taha Hussein's 'An Egyptian Childhood,' and Sayyid Qutb's 'A Child from the Village.'* New York: University of New York.
- Ginsburg, F., & Rapp, R. (2015). Family. *Keywords for Disability Studies*. Ed. Rachel Adams, et al. New York & London: New York University Press. <https://doi.org/10.18574/nyu/9781479845637.003.0028>
- Hongbo, W. (2016). Identifying Social Inclusion and Exclusion. *Leaving No One Behind: The Imperative of Inclusive Development*. New York: United Nations.
- Hull, J. M. (1990). On Being a Whole Body Seer: An Epistemic Condition for The Education of The Blind. *The British Journal of Visual Impairment*, III (2), 62-63. <https://doi.org/10.1177/026461969000800208>
- Hussein, T. (2006). *Al-Ayyām (The Days)*. Trans. E. H. Paxton, Hilary Wayment, and Kenneth Cragg, 5th ed. Egypt: The American University in Cairo Press.
- Israelite, N., et al. (2002). Hard-of-Hearing Adolescents and Identity Construction: Influences of School Experiences, Peers and Teachers. *Journal of Deaf Studies and Deaf Education*, 7(2), 134-48. <https://doi.org/10.1093/deafed/7.2.134>
- Keegan, D. L. et al. (1976). Blindness: Some Psychological and Social Implications. *Canadian Psychiatric Association Journal*, 21(5), 333-40. <https://doi.org/10.1177/070674377602100512>
- Kelley, E. A. (2014). *Translating the Arab World: Contingent Commensuration, Publishing, and the Shaping of a Global Commodity*. Berkeley: University of California.
- Lana, S. et al. (1993). Sociocultural Aspects of Blindness in an Egyptian Delta Hamlet: Visual Impairment vs. Visual Disability. *Medical Anthropology: Cross-Cultural Studies in Health and Illness*, 15(3), 245-60. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01459740.1993.9966093>
- Malti-Douglas, F. (1988). *Blindness and Autobiography Al-Ayyām of Taha Husayn*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9781400859375>
- Reynolds, D. F. (2001). *Interpreting the Self: Autobiography in the Arabic Literary Tradition*. Berkeley: University of California Press. <https://doi.org/10.1525/9780520926110>
- Safayi, A., & Alkami, M. J. (2020). Point of View and Focalization in Works of Taha Hossein and Mohammad-Ali Eslami Nadooshan: "Al-ayyam" & "Days". *Journal of Comparative Literature*, 21.
- Salama, M. (2018). *Blindness and Insight: Challenging the Sacred/Secular Divide in Ṭāhā Ḥusayn's The Days*. United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press.
- Saur, E., & Sidorkin, A. (2018). Disability, Dialogue, and the Posthuman. *Studies in Philosophy and Education*, 37(169), 567-78. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11217-018-9616-5>
- Shehata, A. (2016). *The Stream of Consciousness and the Problem of Identity in James Joyce's Portrait and Taha Hussayn's Al Ayyam: A Comparative Study*. Egypt: Modern Literature Organization.
- Sholkamy, H. M. (1997). *Children's Health and Well-Being: An Ethnography of an Upper Egypt Village*. London: University of London.
- Tuttle, D. W. (1987). The Role of the Special Education Teacher-Counselor in Meeting Students' Self-Esteem Needs. *Journal of Visual Impairment & Blindness*, 81(4), 156-61. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0145482X8708100409>
- Victor, C. R., & Ann Bowling, A. (2012). A Longitudinal Analysis of Loneliness among Older People in Great Britain. *The Journal of Psychology*, 146(3), 313-31. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00223980.2011.609572>
- Wolfe, C. (2009). *What is Posthumanism?* London: Univ. of Minnesota Press, 2009.
- Wolfensberger, W. (2000). A Brief Overview of Social Role Valorization. *Mental Retardation*, 38(2), 105-22. [https://doi.org/10.1352/0047-6765\(2000\)038<0105:ABOOSR>2.0.CO;2](https://doi.org/10.1352/0047-6765(2000)038<0105:ABOOSR>2.0.CO;2)