

AMEEN A. RIHANI

MULTICULTURALISM & ARAB-AMERICAN LITERATURE

Platform International

AMEEN ALBERT RIHANI



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The works of Ameen Albert Rihani have been received with more than 203 book reviews, articles, and interviews in the published and broadcasted media.

The work regarding your book *Multiculturalism and Arab-American Literature* certainly appears timely, interesting and valuable.

Alan G. Thomas
University of Chicago, USA

You probe with great sensitivity what exactly the link could be intellectual, emotional, spiritual or a bit of each combined. You show with clarity how the disparities reflect the different characters, the one always straining toward a praxis and the other opting for a poetic, abstract effect... I like the characterization you make of Khalid "getting out of silence". You have sketched out the field and laid down some valuable points for further inquiry.

Geoffrey Nash
University of Sunderland, UK

I read this work with great pleasure. The only thing I can add is connected with endeavors of Russian Arabists and literary critics, beginning with Ignas Kratchkovsky and Anna Dolinina up to Vladimir Markov and myself...

Mikhail A. Rodionov
University of Saint Petersburg, Russia

WHY THIS BOOK?

Amidst the political conflict between the United States Administration and several Arab Governments, interpretations of the situation tend to refer it to historical cultural differences and clashes. The analytical observer might think that there has been no mutual intellectual understanding between the American and the Arab people in modern times.

This book highlights clear multicultural and multi-intellectual common concerns between Arab-American writers and colleagues from the Western World, particularly from the United States, on issues related to multiculturalism, transcendentalism, cross-cultural approaches to reconciliation, and futurism, as an attempt for bridging between East and West, and for catching a glimpse of the spirit of cultural tolerance and dialogue existing ever since the early twentieth century.



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 **Multiculturalism**
Arab-American Literature

Multiculturalism and Arab-American Literature

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Preface

Among the ethnic groups who emigrated to America, as of the second half of the nineteenth century, were people coming from the Middle East, particularly emigrants coming from Mount Lebanon. Few of these became writers in their mother tongue – Arabic. Their major writings were characterized by nostalgic sentiments expressed in prose and poetry and published among their own communities, specifically in New York and its surroundings.

Very few of these emigrants became writers in both languages, their mother tongue, Arabic, and the acquired language of the New World, English. During the first half of the twentieth century, this very small group of bilingual writers, not exceeding in number the fingers of one hand, were concerned, in their English writings with issues such as East and West, the Arabs and the Americans, dialogue of cultures, the future of mankind, materialism, spiritual values, and other multi-cultural concerns.

A smaller number, actually two or three, wrote and published regularly in English. They tried to express themselves in poetry, prose, fiction, essays, literary studies, art criticism and belles lettres. It is still debatable whether these writings are to be considered as part of English literature, or of Arabic literature written in English, or even as Arabic element in American literature. No matter what we may consider it to be, this kind of work is a clear Lebanese-Arab contribution to the American literary heritage of the twentieth century. It is the creative language where Arabic and English “can almost touch”, where

• *Preface*

East and West can almost sit down and listen to each other and enter into a sincere dialogue of mutual interest, reciprocal attention, and common human concerns.

The first chapter raises the issue of writing in English as a second language, particularly in the case of an emigrant writer who has chosen English, not only to master it, but also to make it his other mother tongue. It sounds contradictory to have “another” or a “second” mother tongue. However, it becomes understandable when the case is the outcome of a cultural and language migration whereby an emigrant decides to become a writer in the language of his new homeland. It even becomes clearer when this emigrant-writer decides to address an audience different from that of his old home country, an audience chosen, through the literary and artistic media, from his new intellectual circles. In this case, the Promised Land becomes the platform for migrating ideas and experiences, and the platform for intercultural understanding and concerns.

The second chapter deals with the core issue of multiculturalism . This aspect of literature is not limited to two opposite geographical poles like East and West or North and South. It is still a relevant issue within the West and the West or within the East and the East. This is to say that the cultural differences can be so minute and subtle that you can barely see them or feel them in the same country or people, or within two countries of the western world and civilization. The example discussed is that of Edith Wharton’s fiction and the comparison between European and American cultures, or the American and Middle Eastern cultures. The symbol of the Mountain, for example, would be a typical expression of the social, emotional, philosophic and artistic experiences in American literature as well as in other literatures and cultures at the turn of the twentieth century. On the other hand, Wharton exploited the contrasts between the respective social traditions of New York and Paris in her works of fiction. Arab-American literature attempted to show contrasts and similarities between East and West, particularly between Beirut and New York.

Another aspect of multiculturalism is the case of a Lebanese leading newspaper published in the Arabic language in New York at the dawn of the twentieth century: *Al-Hoda*. This particular newspaper played a social role that was directly concerned with the behavior and attitudes of the Lebanese emigrants to the New World. A call for the principles of justice and equality was a basic attempt for a social reform assumed by that newspaper within the Lebanese and Syrian emigrants community in New York and other parts of the United States of America at the time. Parallel to this particular role, as a result of the intellectual background of the owner and editor-in-chief of *Al-Hoda*, this newspaper attempted to raise the level of education among the new generation of Lebanese in New York. One concludes that this publication was not only a podium, but equally a social and cultural center, a leading motivator for development and prosperity among Lebanese Americans and eventually among Arab Americans at large.

The Western cultural experience of the founding father of the Arab-American literature, Ameen F. Rihani, was another typical example of a multicultural theme in the world literature of the twentieth century. Rihani made the acquaintance of the English and French poets and men of letters of the 18th and 19th centuries. He was inspired by the theory of evolution and its ethical and spiritual impact as expressed through the works of Herbert Spencer and Thomas Huxley. For some time he was deeply skeptic and agnostic until he became acquainted with the American Transcendentalist essays of Emerson and Thoreau. Another aspect of his cultural experience started to develop when two western writers introduced Rihani to the Arab civilization, Thomas Carlyle and Washington Irving. As a result, Rihani was the first Arab-American writer to write regularly both in Arabic, his mother tongue, and English, his “adopted” tongue. He was the first Arab-American writer to publish a collection of poetry and a novel in the English language. In these works he highlighted the personal experience of an Arab writer living in the US.

Bridging East and West is another multicultural theme discussed in this book through the English and Arabic works of Rihani. In spite of his criticism of East and West, Rihani believed that the West was the cradle of Science and Evolution and that the East was badly in need of what the former could offer. It was the voice of peace and of brotherhood among nations and cultures that was heard from a Lebanese-Arab-American who experienced both cultures, his own and that of the New World, the Middle Eastern and the American cultures. Whenever the author compares East and West, he aims at overcoming the barriers between cultures, civilizations and backgrounds on one hand, and at building bridges between nations and peoples of the modern world on the other hand. His ultimate objective is to secure prosperity for mankind. According to Rihani, the one who is expected to carry this message is the Superman who “from his transcendental height, shall ray forth the divine light [to] purify the spirit of Nations.” It is the “Universal Spirit” that the author is seeking, the one that emerges from the “Asiatic spirit of Poesy and Prophecy, and the European spirit of Art, and the American spirit of Invention.” It is the ideal of an international society, a “Great City” excelling through its healthy people rationally, morally and materially.

Transcendentalism was a main source of influence not only for the founding father of Arab-American literature, but also for two other major figures of this movement, namely Gibran and Naimy. A dissertation on the subject builds an interesting comparison between the biographies of K. Gibran and Walt Whitman. It also discusses pantheism and reincarnation in Naimy’s works, which might have a bearing on the American-Transcendental movement and its influence on the two emigrant authors. The attempt to highlight some common denominators and similar characteristics might shed a light on this relationship without meaning necessarily that these are signs of influence. The researcher may find interesting similarities when comparing literary texts from the authors of the American movement with

those of the emigrant movement up till the third decade of the twentieth century.

The prophet-hood characteristic of Arab-American literature started with Rihani's *Book of Khalid*. Khalid speaks with a tone borrowed from the Messiah and from prophets of the Old Testament. That particular tone conveys the teachings of the East in the language of the West. A comparison with Gibran's *Prophet* shows that these two major books of Arab-American literature have similar universal concerns. Among these concerns are suffering, friendship, the soul, truth, knowledge, freedom, democracy, falsehood, solitude, work, and love. But, the comparison between these two works highlights three major differences: self-identity, national identity and sense of humor. These three differences are clearly dealt with in *The Book of Khalid* and not revealed in *The Prophet*. However both prophets addressed themselves to the City of their vision, New York in the first case, and Orphalese in the second case. Both prophets are the product of the emigration experience and the multicultural theme of world literature.

Finally, if multicultural literature is a call for the dialogue of nations, peoples and civilizations, writers who followed that path were more concerned with the human being than with the political and social environments that might, or might not, serve humanity best. Two writers, from East and West, from different cultural background, came across a common ideal of internationalism. Both writers, Rihani and H.G. Wells, discussed those political and social concerns that would give rise to an understanding spirit among nations. Both of them contributed, at different levels, to the cause of a just and human globalism.

These are the basic themes of a literature enriched with its Eastern background and American experience at the early twentieth century. It is a living image of a world literature trying to build bridges among peoples and nations. Discussing the details of such themes is a major purpose of this book.

A.A.R.

CHAPTER I

Motives and Early Outcomes of Writing in English

The Case of the Founding Father of Arab-American Literature

Introduction

In the course of studying a model of a literary and intellectual Lebanese-American author during the first four decades of the twentieth century, it seems inevitable to examine his motives behind writing in English. For, it is common knowledge that, in general, the Western culture of the Lebanese is a French one, especially in Christian circles. It is also known that the main interests of emigrants are of commercial, social, and cultural natures. By cultural interests, I mean what falls within the framework of education, journalism, and the literary works that might ensue from them. Most of these cultural activities were in Arabic, a few of them in French, Latin, or Italian.

But we stand here in front of a different archetype that clashes with the cultural norm among emigrants, even among those who chose the United States of America as their new homeland. For those who chose to venture into the media and literary fields in the USA, they achieved their goals by either establishing an Arabic newspaper or launching an authorship in Arabic, be it poetry, prose, essays or any other literary genre. So, what drove them to break away from the bandwagon, to surpass the norm and to think seriously of writing in English?

This first chapter attempts to answer this question. It discusses the motives behind writing in English and their early results. This study will deal with four of these motives: the social motive or emigration, the cultural motive or achievement, the intellectual motive or dialogue with the West, and the human motive or the departure from the regional Arabic circle to the international English circle.

Considering the early results of writing in English, we shall elaborate on the Western reverberations of Rihani's English publications. In particular, on how they coincided with the intellectual and human motives that drove him to focus on publishing in the language of Uncle Sam, subsequently leaving a substantial total of twenty-nine volumes in English, most of which were published in the United States of America.

The Social Motive

The emigration of the Lebanese people during the last quarter of the 19th century formed a link in a chain that is as old as history and is part of its social, political, and cultural lifestyle. The rate of this emigration increased or decreased with the increase or decrease of the weight of the factors affecting it. We are going to shed light on the major factors of the 8th and 9th decades, starting, more precisely, from the year 1873 – three years before the birth of Ameen – when Fares Rihani, Ameen's father, along with his uncle Ameen Hashem, established a silk factory in Freike.

In the year that Fares Rihani built the silk factory in Freike, Rustum Pasha¹ acceded to the post of *Mutassarif* and the Lebanese Treasury was falling under a deficit burden; and when the Sublime Porte (*Al-Bab Al-'Ali*) was unable to cover this deficit,² the *mutassarif* cut in half the employees' salaries. These measures led to a spread of bribery among the state's administration. This corruption was aggravated during Wassa Pasha's rule,³ which "was distinguished by a mass emigration of Lebanese citizens overseas..."(Hitti, 1959: 542, 577)

Besides this dark and bleak picture of the state's condition and of the local political authority during that time, the situation was growing starker due to increasing oppression and restriction of liberties, especially in the districts (*caza*) of the *mutassarrifiya*. Freike is, for instance, located in the central part of *Al-Matn Al-Shamali*, a region that was known as *Al Qate'* and was ruled by a local *qa'imaqam* who represented the central authority.

This is yet another picture of the dire political situation during the 1880's and 1890's, which, almost directly, bore upon the daily life of the citizens, especially the merchants, like Fares Rihani, who had commercial relations with individuals inside and outside the *mutassarrifiya*, the Ottoman *wilayas* (governorates), and Beirut in particular.

In the face of this "political corrosion... that submerged Lebanon and this region of the world in a climate of ignorance, stagnation, submission, and hibernation", (Harfouch, I, 1974:13) many Lebanese relinquished their attachment to the land, and in the absence of a decent livelihood they went searching for another country where they could replace land for dignity and the servitude of belonging for a feeling of liberty.

If we want to search for political grounds to explain why America was chosen as a haven for emigrants, at least a great mass of them, we can note the following:

For the Lebanese, Europe was the symbol of the West sympathizing with the Ottoman Empire; and despite its advocacy of political freedom, it took into consideration, officially at least, the Ottoman interests. This drove many Lebanese to emigrate to another destination.

As for Australia, in addition to being part of the Commonwealth – the orbit of British politics and interests vis-à-vis the Ottoman Empire – its geographical distance did not make it a popular choice for emigration. It was even said that some emigrants

arrived in Australia by mistake thinking that they had been heading for New York. (Hitti: 578)

America remained the only haven. However, which of the two Americas would Fares Rihani choose? Alternatively, why did he choose North America? Was there a political motive behind this decision in addition to the obvious economic one? Providing answers to such questions is a challenge. In any case, it did not occur to Fares Rihani at that time that his choice benefited his son Ameen directly and on many levels, as will be detailed later on.

Despite the changes that occurred in Lebanese agriculture and commerce during the 19th century, the Lebanese economy remained in its primitive state and within limited peripheries. This was caused by a lack of stable markets, the absence of support from the authorities, and the dependence of crop maintenance and marketing on personal initiative. Agriculture and industry were not among the economic and commercial businesses that yielded a stable and considerable income, for they were subject to the political, security, and social conditions in the country, which in turn knew no stability that might favor the desired economy.

In the midst of this complicated situation, the cultivation of silk worms on the coast and the western peaks of Lebanon witnessed a relative prosperity that led to the spread of silk factories and the employment of hundreds of male and female workers. “Silk was produced locally in large quantities and was also consumed locally. Its surplus was exported to other countries; especially France” (Al-Bitar, I, n.d.: 125). This local industry kept on thriving and “knew no basic deterioration until World War I. Even then, it did not disappear completely and many Lebanese kept on making their living from the production of silk.” (Hitti, 1959: 573)

Despite its relativity, we conclude from the above that the silk trade was successful and prosperous during the last quarter of the

19th century. So, what drove Fares Rihani and his family to emigrate? Did his factory suffer a setback in production after it was “at its peak thriving with a full hundred male and female workers, who reeled golden threads from cocoons bathing in basins of hot water” (Rihani, *The Heart of Lebanon*, 1980: 391). Alternatively, did the trade market decline and recede after “the caravans of mules loaded with cocoons paced their way to the factory from anywhere and everywhere only to leave to Beirut again every week carrying bundles of silk to be shipped to the city of Lyon in France?” Or perhaps the net sales income became so paltry that the industry no longer formed an abundant source of income when “the agent of the factory owners in Beirut used to send the returns from silk in sackcloth bags filled with Ottoman *Majidi’s* and carried by mules on their way to Freike”. (*The Heart of Lebanon*, 1980: 391)

What happened to that factory during the 1880’s? Rather, what are the inherent economic reasons behind the decision of its owner to emigrate? It is worthwhile noticing here that the Japanese silk products started invading the Eastern shores of the Mediterranean as of the last two decades of the nineteenth century. This had a tremendous effect on the silk industry in Mount Lebanon. The economic and political deterioration at home led factory owners, like Fares Rihani, to consider better conditions of life in other parts of the world. Thus, the decision to emigrate had inspired new motives of commercial ambition and of a state of well-being that was only partially and relatively fulfilled in the homeland, but was not enough to quench the thirst of its owner and to meet his high expectations; hence, the dream emerged of wealth and power and along with it emigration.

It should be noted that Rihani’s fiery and rebellious temper when he was in his early 20’s drove him to argue a lot with his friends, teachers and acquaintances. In addition, even though he had no idea of the meaning of the political and economic motives of emigration at that time, for him emigration took the form of a window through which he looked onto another environment.

This was an exit to help him escape the hassles of the small and narrow environment where he grew up (*The Heart of Lebanon*, 1980: 391), an environment he was ready to exchange for another fresh and new one.

The Cultural Motive: Education

There are two main reasons that New York was a center of attraction for those emigrating to the United States in the last quarter of the 19th century. First, it provided the harbor that welcomed the newcomers from every clime to the new land where all emigrants had to pass through Ellis Island; and it was the city that rejected and accepted at will while the immigrants revolved endlessly in its giant industrial and commercial wheel. Second, the city embraced different varieties of people from different backgrounds, classes, and inclinations. Each emigrant had a chance to live or die, or to rise or fall in New York.

New York was a cosmopolitan city that enclosed different ethnic or racial groups from the Chinese in China Town to the Italians in Little Italy, Lebanese in Brooklyn, white Americans in Greenwich Village, and African Americans in Harlem. Moreover, it was exactly this human kaleidoscope that facilitated the process of absorption in the new social crucible. Accordingly, Manhattan was the window through which one can look onto the infrastructure of the modern society and the international climates of the giant city.

Consequently, the emigration of Rihani from Freike to New York was an emigration of mind, spirit, emotion, and body. It was liberation from a reclusive rural Eastern environment falling under the burden of customs and traditions and an immersion in a Western urban environment opened to the world and advancing with its science, machines, and institutions towards the future.

Early on, Rihani realized the importance of the new language of communication in his life. It was the language of dealing between the different ethnic groups emigrating to America and was the language of dealing with the Americans and the different aspects of their civilized progress. Indeed, if emigration was the first turnabout in the life of Ameen and his thoughts, transformation from the commercial interests, which his father willed for him,⁴ to cultural and educational interests, formed the second turnabout in his life. Khalid considered pursuing in America something more intellectual than working as a door-to-door salesperson of crosses and shoulder badges; especially in America where the alphabet was being broadcast freely over the radio. Hence, he made up his mind to set out on a mission of self-education. However, this self-education did not yield to his mother tongue but rather it surrendered to the English language that rebelled against all forms of captivity and that exuded life on all of its levels, despite all of its contradictions and disparities. Both languages fought in the spirit of Rihani, his heart encouraged Arabic while his mind encouraged English; the former carried his roots while the latter carried his hopes and future. The conflict went on to echo in his tongue and his pen. Rihani had once made a witty comparison between both languages through his protagonist Khalid, “verbs are more essential than nouns and adjectives. A noun can be represented pictorially; but how, pictorially, can you represent a noun in motion... The richest language, therefore, is not the one that can boast of a thousand names for the lion or two thousand for the camel, but the one whose verbs have a complete and perfect gamut of moods and tenses.” (*The Book of Khalid*, 1911: I, 53). Despite this linguistic comparison, subject to debate on the level of the Arabic language with respect to determining hyperboles and structural compositions that reflect the time of action, Rihani adopted it as an argument and a justification for preferring English over Arabic - during the time of Khalid at least - then for using them in parallel cultural comparison in the course of his literary life. The comparison between two languages is not the subject of our

study. Also, his preference for English during a period of time is not of our concern. What concerns us is the way in which Ameen escaped this linguistic conflict by deciding to acquire knowledge of English leading up to his writing in this language. This was the third turnabout in the life of Ameen, and it was the most prominent one, through which he paved an extraordinary way for himself and for other Lebanese authors in the first quarter of the twentieth century.

If we review the reading done by Rihani during his first and second emigration to the United States between 1888 and 1898 and between 1899 and 1904, the period of his long return to Lebanon, we shall be able to classify the contents of those English readings into the different lores of humanities, from philosophy to religion to literature, politics and history.

Philosophically: he acquainted himself with the following intellectual trends: agnosticism with H. Fawcett, J.T. Fields and R.G. Ingersoll, modern Darwinism with Thomas H. Huxley, and his ethical and spiritual flavor to the theory of evolution. He also read works by L. Buchner and J.G. Fichte, *Materialist Philosophy* and *Foundations of the Science of Knowledge*.

Religiously: his first readings were directed towards the characteristics common between the religious beliefs of Milner, the theosophy of Ingersoll, *The History of Christianity* by Gibbon, *The Meditations* by Pascal, and *Study on Islam and the Arab Prophet* by Higgens, in addition to the *Old* and the *New Testaments* and the *Koran*.

Politically: he read the *Conditions of the Rise and Fall of Nations* by Fulney, the *Social Contract* by Rousseau, the *Principles of Socialism* by Henry George, and the development of its modern concepts by Benjamin Kidd, H. Lloyd and M. England.

Historically: he read *The Evolution of the European Civilization from the Fall of the Roman Empire up to the French Revolution* by

Gizo and the *History of the United States* by Anderson, in addition to various readings in the ancient history of the East with Greeks, Persians and Babylonians. He also delved into the history of the French Revolution through books by Carlyle and Burke.

In literature: he moved toward the romantic novel by reading works such as Carlyle's *Sartor Resartus* (The Tailor Retailored) and his long story *The Diamond Necklace* and *Les Misérables* by Hugo. He also developed a taste for English poetry by reading the works of Shakespeare, Byron and Pope, and post-modern poetry with Walt Whitman and Thoreau, and the art of the essay with Emerson and Bacon.

Having had such intense exposure to such English works as these naturally developed within Rihani a yearning for writing and publishing in this language. In this sense, he was the first Lebanese emigrant to shift from commerce to literature, and the first Arab writer to write in English and in most of the contemporary literary forms known to this language.

The Intellectual Motive: Dialogue with the West

Language is the mirror of civilization and its royal garment. Every language has its own logic due to an *ipso facto* result of certain given features of the social, scientific, economic, and literary life of a people or a group of peoples with common or similar lifestyles.

Entering into a new society does not necessarily mean becoming an integral part of it. Many are the racial and ethnic groups that emigrate from one country to another and remain isolated and reclusive without interacting or communicating with their new environment; and what applies to groups also applies to individuals whose emigration varies between the geographical and physical admission into their new society and the mental and spiritual accession.

Lebanese are known for their high adaptability and their capacity to associate with the new societies they emigrate into. However, Rihani took the extreme path in this direction, which left him in a state of exhaustion by the end of his trip to Freike. For he did not merely associate with the lifestyle to satisfy a given economic or social need, rather he pushed it further to the extent of intellectual affiliation to its logical, linguistic and literary implications.

Rihani was not satisfied with entering America (the West) from the port of New York, so he wanted to enter it through the harbor of the English language. For geographical borders limit the first entrance, while the second delves into the cultural core that leads to a membership in the new society. Ameen did not use the language only to manage his work and relations with the people, but he used it to establish an intellectual bridge through which he could move from addressing his old decrepit society to addressing a new, younger society that would become his own. Here we should contemplate the conflict that germinated inside the man. No matter how much he wanted to shed his old skin, he feared for it and refused to break free from it. And, as much as he was determined to master English grammar, structure and vocabulary, and to acquaint himself with its contemporary literature, he realized the necessity of not forfeiting his Arab roots but rather of working diligently on mastering it, with the objective of writing and publishing in his mother tongue. From here it was unavoidable for him to master both languages, the language of Eastern heritage and the language of contemporary choice, the language of identity and belonging, and the language of perspective and embracement. This choice takes the form of two basic dimensions in Ameen's personality.

First, as a writer, he chose a new audience for himself beside his old one. Each of the two audiences has its concerns, issues and dilemmas; and each of them has its features and characteristics. On the one hand, the social structure of his first audience is distinguished by a simplicity confined between custom and

tradition. On the other hand, the social structure of his second audience is distinguished by a complex constitution not conforming to all traditions or inherited thinking. Hence, he always weighed the easiness of addressing his former audience with the difficulty in addressing the latter one.

Second, as a thinker, he realized the significance of choosing the hard path of establishing a dialogue with the West. It is the Oriental pen that utters the language and logic of the West, but it is this same pen that conveys the concerns, feelings, and heritage of the East to the West.

The prevalent trait in Rihani's English works is the Arab touch, reflected in context and style. This trait became one of Rihani's targets in the framework of his English writings. He wanted to establish a dialogue with the West in order to convey to it the hidden part of this Eastern *terra firma*, starting from its heritage down to its social and political problems. He wanted to address the West through an interaction with Western literature but with a contemporary Oriental voice and a distinguished Lebanese and Arab breath. As a result, he wrote, out of twenty-nine volumes in English, sixteen books on genuine Eastern, even Arabic, subjects, seven books on Western concerns, and six books on subjects common between the East and the West.

From his early writing stages he realized that "the language of Shakespeare has preceded that of Abu-l-Ala' Al-Ma'arri in my tongue and my pen – and I almost even said my heart – so I fell into the trap of writing there before I did so right here in my homeland."⁵

That is why he realized in his early writing stages his aim of addressing the West even though he did not write about this aim until the end of his writing endeavors:

among the wondrous things that occurred to me in my intellectual transcendence and my patriotic evolution – since I had to be an American heart and soul, pulp and

crest, one hundred percent as they say – was that I woke up one night at the break of dawn imagining myself bigger than America!⁶ (Rihani, *The Far Morocco*, 1975:8)

Why bigger than America? Why this conceit? Is it the ego of genius that drove its owner to such hyperboles? Rihani answered such questions by mocking himself and criticizing the arrogance and ignorance of Americans by saying half-jokingly and half-seriously:

I am the only Lebanese Arab thinker – by God! – between one hundred and twenty million non-thinkers mixed turbidly together and all boasting of their Americanism... not caring for anyone in the world but themselves. But, rather to them the world is America and everything other than America is peanuts! This tendency that branded the Romans, in ancient times, and which eventually led to their fall, generated in me, the Lebanese, the Arab, the lone thinker, some compassion towards the people cramped in the jungles of cities, between mountains of skyscrapers and of ignorance. And, this compassion begot a duty for saving those humans from that ignorance. How not to do so when I realized that they ignore all that I know and I do not ignore what they know, despite its scarcity! (Rihani, *The Far Morocco*, 1975:8).

Is the purpose behind this arrogant obstinacy and that snobbish harsh criticism inherent? Did Rihani intend the reflection of obstinacy for the purpose of arrogance, and harsh criticism for the purpose of slander and defamation? Needless to say, that his purpose transcends these explanations in the quest for a higher and deeper purpose, to which he always yearned for from his English pen and his orientation towards establishing a dialogue with the West represented here by the United States:

But, I, the Lebanese-Arab, want to convey to the American nation a modest amount of knowledge that hurts neither its pride nor its affluence. I want to teach it

the priorities of knowledge in my nation – a nation I belonged and still belong to, today, tomorrow and always – the Arab nation. (*The Far Morocco*, 1975:8).

However, Rihani admits the difficulty of this mission that he took upon himself and compares it to the act of fighting windmills. But, he does not retreat and continues saying:

And I ponder upon myself to find that I am restoring the quixotic spirit – pardon me *señor* Cervantes – to its Arab origin, even if it was westernized in language. I found myself sharpening my pen and tongue in English, writing articles and books in English, and standing on the rostrums of American associations and universities, in English, to make the New World, the Romans of our times, understand that this world is made up of more than just Americans and America, and that they will definitely perish if they persist in their ignorance or their use of force... (*The Far Morocco*, 1975:8-9)

We notice, here, that the method of Rihani in addressing the West was not confined to the publication of works, rather it combined different forms of “address”, such as the publication of English articles and poems in the American and British press, lectures in political, literary and academic forums in the United States, Britain and Canada, as well as hundreds of letters addressed to men of thought, politics, literature and art in different European and American countries.

The Human Motive: the Departure from the Regional Circle to the International Horizons

Rihani faced many obstacles in his move from the local Lebanese and regional Arab platform to the international English American one. This arduous trip that he chose for himself transformed itself into a long arduous struggle, especially with the American press, before he made his way through them to the American publishing houses.

On May 24, 1901, Rihani wrote from New York to his friend Issa El Khoury saying:

It's been four years and I am still carrying the torch of hope *vis-à-vis* the editors of English newspapers. I send my great letters to them and they return them with letters of apology. I even won several times but I am still susceptible to their grenades of contempt and their guns of neglect and their prominence. (*Letters of Ameen Rihani*, 1991:34)

But Rihani's bitter experience in this field taught him, after an accumulation of disappointments, to have recourse to agencies in the hope of accomplishing through them what he was unable to accomplish on his own. Here he is recounting to his friend the second chapter of his long struggle with the American press:

I recently wrote four articles and sent them to a special agency that helps famous writers like me to publish their articles and I still don't know what the outcome will be. The American editor does not accept all and every article because if he does he has to pay for them, otherwise our articles will not be repudiated every time, so be strong and don't lose your determination.⁷ (*Letters*, 1991:34).

This struggle went on for years until Rihani became acquainted with American literary circles and severed through them his relation with a group of newspapers, and began to write prolifically in English. This point we can ascertain from a letter he wrote to his friend Jamil Maalouf on May 15, 1905:

My Arabic writings are scarce these days, and I am mostly writing English poetry. And, soon, my poetical *diwan*⁸ will be published and you will be receiving a copy. Furthermore, I might write to my friend Monahan, the owner of the *Psychological Magazine* – I wrote to you about him earlier – where my article was featured...I sent

him on that day an article on famous American authors, especially those who write stories and novels with a strange sharp taste. (*Letters*, 1991: 59).

We understand from the above that Rihani had witnessed a race between the Arabic and the English language for his pen. Sometimes the former prevailed only for the latter to triumph again. We also understand that Ameen began publishing his poetry and prose in American newspapers and magazines with ease; and some of his work dealt with specific areas of American literature and its sharp critical style as he himself points out.

The association of Rihani with a number of American literary associations and firms contributed largely to removing the obstacles standing in front of the publication of his works in English and the wheels of such institutions were set in motion in a semi-spontaneous or natural way. When Ameen wanted to get into acting, he joined, as is known, the Henry Jewet Theatrical Group but he only stayed with them for a few months. But, later this beginning helped him to join The National Art Theatre Society. Perhaps, this step facilitated his accession to other literary associations in the United States, such as the Poetry Society of America, the Pleiades Club and the Authors Club. His association with these societies allowed his English poems and articles to be published in different literary and artistic journals. Among the most famous journals and magazines were *Atlantic Monthly*, *Phoenix*, *Poet Lore*, *Forum*, *Saturday Review*, *Bookman*, *International Studio*, and *Print Connoisseur*.⁹ Moreover, his circle of friends of American authors, poets, and painters expanded to include people such as Edwin Markham, Richard Le Gallienne, Frank Sanborn, Troy Kinney, Will Simons, George Sterling, Helen Peal, William Oberhardt, and S. J. Wolf.¹⁰

In return, we notice that nine publishing houses succeeded in publishing Rihani's English works and distributing them. One of them was an unknown printing press by the name of Gorham, where he printed his first collection of poetry maybe out of his

own pocket.¹¹ Others are of limited renown such as Stratford, James T. White, or known in American circles such as Doubleday, Dodd Mead, Page, or others of high reputation in the United States, Canada, and Britain such as Houghton Mifflin, Macmillan, Constable, and Oxford University Press.

With this abundant supply of contacts branching throughout the American literary, artistic, and media circles, Rihani was ready to experience America and the West in such a way as to promote his English publications and his principle of addressing the Western reader. It remains for us to discuss to what extent Ameen lived with the problems springing out of the new American society that became, more or less, his home.

Rihani began his experiences in the city of New York chaotically, as far as can be from any planning and pre-arrangements, in such a way as these experiences came sporadically, striking the prosaic and the essential faces of the American life. His literary experience in New York made him realize, at an early stage, that if he wants to make an intellectual difference then his poetry should be characterized with “Oriental mysticism and phantasm in Occidental free verse” as he wrote to his friend Florence Brooks, the American poet in 1905 (The unpublished *English Letters of Ameen Rihani*, Rihani Museum Archives, Freike, Lebanon, and the Library of Congress). In comparison, his political experience was a clear cut American democratic commitment since 1900:

I am a Democrat, not because W.J. Bryan is at the head of the Democratic Ticket, but because I strongly believe in the Democratic principles expounded in that immortal declaration of Independence, and preached by some of the world's greatest and profoundest philosophers. (The unpublished *English Letters*).

Khalid wandered freely in that great ‘cosmopolis’, the city of New York. He came out of his suffocating cellar and barged into the exciting and dynamic currents of the city life. However, before doing so, he rid himself from all the burdens of the door-to-door

sale, which until then, was his only source of livelihood. (*The Book of Khalid*, 1911: I, 8-9, 90-91).

From the above paragraph, it appears that the aim of Khalid – or Ameen – at that time was the first to cut loose from the world of business, then to work on barging into “the exciting and dynamic currents” of the New York-American-Western life. Those currents, as evident in *The Book of Khalid* and *Ar-Rihaniyat*, were hit by the storms of religious climates from atheism to Sufism, philosophical climates from personal and mass evolution to the “great city”, political climates from secular nationalism to international socialism, social climates from reform to revolution, and literary climates from restoration in language and Arabic literary arts to Oriental distinction in contemporary English literature.

It was among those intellectual positions that Rihani lived along with the problems of the West through the harsh personal experiences he underwent. For example, these were embodied in “the problem of earning his living honorably in the great city” or the issue of breaking loose from the fake American democracy or his expulsion “at the door of the temple of atheism.” (*Khalid*, 1911: II, 99-114, 117-124)

Those harsh personal experiences prepared Rihani to understand better the nature of the Western problems especially on the socio-economic and cultural-literary levels so as not to become impressed with the sparkle and dazzle of the West, but rather to look at it critically as one of the sons of the West. This was reflected in some of his critical writings both in English and in Arabic that dealt with social and political criticism of American life, and that dealt with literary and artistic criticism of Western works.¹²

The echo that resounded from these writings, especially in American circles, formed an incentive in the Rihani’s spirit to continue on the same path he had chosen for himself – writing in

English – for three reasons: to transfer aspects of the Eastern-Arab heritage to English literature, to express critically the harsh personal experience of his stay in the West and of its problems, and to transfer aspects of the contemporary Arab sociopolitical life to the Westerners. This leads us to the final section of this chapter.

Conclusion: Early Outcomes of Writing in English

Going through the reviews that appeared in the American press on the Rihani's English writings would reveal three points of interest: Rihani's mastery of English, the Eastern element that tinged his literature, and the critical one that might not have received the wished-for acceptance.

Ameen wanted his first book in English to act as a bridge between the old Arabic heritage, the modern English literature, and the contemporary American cultural circles. Consequently, *The Quatrains of Abu'l-Ala'* were published in an English vestment that aroused the interest of the American press¹³. This fascination might have been because the American literary and cultural circles discovered in Rihani a Levantine immigrant who used the literary and poetical language of Uncle Sam in writing and publishing. They also discovered in him: "the young (Syrian) poet who after failing in commerce and acting became an English teacher in his country and an English author in America." (*The Republican*, October 23, 1903)

Some saw otherwise; they saw in his *Quatrains* an equivalent of "Fitzgerald's English translation of Omar Al-Khayyam that converges with the original piece in the transparency of its poetical thoughts." (*The Star*, October 14, 1903) Others later considered that his sarcastic prose carried within its folds a satire that is on "par with the satire of Mark Twain." (*The Evening Sun*, August 13, 1921)

But, the publication of *The Book of Khalid* casts light on another element in the English literature of Rihani, the exchange of the cultural criteria in the process of appraisal where the West is measured by an Eastern migrant criteria and the East is measured according to Western based criteria. The Eastern element in the English writings of Ameen is not confined anymore to the tackling of Oriental issues, but rather dealt with the rational critical view emerging from the East. Therefore, “the West never saw itself before in the shining mirror of such a mind.” (*The Bookman*, January, 1911)

This might be rather exaggerated, but it points clearly to the harsh criticism of the West represented by the United States in *The Book of Khalid* on the social, intellectual, and political levels. This confrontation between Khalid and the Westerners did not stop the latter from noticing the unique quality of the English writings of an Arab author: Rihani discovered a literary genre “where the East and the West can almost touch despite the linguistic differences between Arabic and English ...” (*The Nation*, March 21, 1912)

This intellectual and artistic trend in the English literature of Rihani remained the most prominent in the two phases and even the third phase of his emigration, be it in his poetry or his prose. The American reader’s view of Rihani’s English works in the early 1900’s did not differ from their views of these works in the first two decades of this century. “For the Eastern flames that kindle in the poetry of Rihani give him a unique character.” (*The Sun*, February 19, 1921)

However, the sufism of Ameen generated a debate among the American public. At times it was accepted because “Ameen’s sufist poetry is a mixture of naturalness and oddness...he imprints the colors of the Arab World and its palettes into English literature” (*The Evening Transcript*, March 19, 1921). At other times, this same public excused this sufism, because Ameen was “the sufist who talks to us with the logic of one of the sons of

Connecticut (Americans) themselves...” (*The Evening Sun*, August 13, 1921).

This is the Oriental spirit melting into the body and mind of the West. Here the Arabic author unsheathes his pen and delves into the heart of America and the Americans where he is accepted once and rejected several times; where he is supported at times and opposed at others and where he is always a generator of debate.

Some of his poetry, prose, and particularly his essays had the dimension of his philosophical novel. In *The Path of Vision (Jadat Al-Rou'ya)*, the American reader witnessed how Rihani intertwines between the philosophy of the East and his feelings, on one hand, and those that contradicted them through their Western designs, on the other hand. (*The Evening Sun*, August 13, 1921).

Even though the West understood what Rihani intended to convey through his English writings, this does not mean that it took for granted Ameen's critical view of America and of Western society; also it does not mean that it assimilated easily the Eastern element that emerges *en relief* in his English pen. The interest of the American press in the writings of Rihani did not prevent it from “disagreeing” (*The Montreal Herald*, April 23, 1921) with him on his views in *The Path of Vision*, which was defined as a series of “philosophical articles that place the East and the West face to face, but from an Eastern point of view.” (*The Montreal Herald*, April 23, 1921)

These models provide an insight into the nature of the reaction that Rihani experienced as a result of the publication of some of his English writings in the United States. Those reactions with their positive and negative aspects were enough to form a new incentive for Rihani, one that drove him to keep on writing in the English language as one of the sons of that language. The goals he has set for himself, and that can be summed up with the

attempt of human conjunction between the East and the West, are receiving a wide interest in American circles in particular and Western circles in general, even if the forms and levels of this interest vary. These goals were not but a vibrant paradigm of multiculturalism at the early days of the twentieth century.

From here stems our understanding of Rihani's significant production of English works. From 1903 until 1940, the flow of his English works, together with Gibran's, constituted the literary and intellectual body of the early Arab-American literature. At the time it was the rich register of the American experience of Lebanese emigrants coming West, rather than just a nostalgic record of these emigrants leaving the East.

Endnotes

- 1 Born in Italy. He was ambassador of his country in Saint Petersburg and candidate to the office of the London Embassy. He acceded to the post of *mutassarif* between 1873 and 1883. He was the third *mutassarif*.
- 2 Estimated at twenty five thousand gold Ottoman liras.
- 3 He was accused of bribery. He acceded to the post of *mutassarif* between 1883 and 1892. He was the fourth *mutassarif*.
- 4 For more information on the city of New York since the beginning of the century, read: Burgess, Anthony, (1978) *New York, The Great Cities*. Amsterdam: Time-Life Books, pp. 33-60. For further readings on New York City, see: Albin, Robert G, (1939) *The Rise of New York Port 1815-1860*; Kouwenhoven, J. A., (1953) *Columbia Historical Portrait of New York*; Ellis, E. R., (1966) *The Epic of New York City*; Charyn, Jerome, (1987) *Metropolis: New York as Myth, Marketplace, and Magical Land*.
- 5 Among the sources that indicate that Rihani is the "Father of emigration literature" or that he was the first Arab author to write and publish in English in American publishing houses: Khafaja, Dr. Mohammed Abdel Minhim (1980) *Story of Emigration Literature*. Beirut: Dar Al-Kitab Al-Loubnani (Lebanese Book) Publishers, 3rd ed., p. 25.
Saidah, Georges, (1956) *Our Literature and Our Authors in the American Adopted Lands*. Cairo: Arab League Publications, pp. 22, 40. Bushrui, Dr. Suheil, and Munro, Dr. John, (1970) *Introduction to A Chant of Mystics and Other Poems*. Beirut: The Rihani Printing and Publishing House, p. 24.
- 6 Out of twenty-one English manuscripts he left behind, three manuscripts revolve around genuine Arab issues, two around common issues between the East and the West, and the rest around Eastern rather genuine Arab issues. Out

of twelve English books he published, six revolve around genuine Arab issues, and six around common issues between the East and the West.

- 7 Thirteen of his English manuscripts were collections of articles published in newspapers and magazines, given as lectures, or written as letters and the rest only partially saw the light. Two manuscripts were translated into Arabic and were published: *The Lily of El-Ghore (Zanbakat-ul-Ghawr)*, Jahan (*Kharij-ul-Hareem*).
- 8 As mentioned in the 1st edition. The word 'diwan' in Arabic means a collection of poetry.
- 9 Copies of these magazines are found in the Ameen Rihani Museum Archives, Freike, Lebanon.
- 10 Correspondence with American friends is found in the unpublished English letters of Ameen Rihani and the unpublished English letters to Rihani in the Rihani Museum Archives, Freike, Lebanon.
- 11 His first poetical compendium entitled *Myrtle and Myrrh*, 1905, Gorham Press, Boston.
- 12 Read Excerpts from *Ar-Rihaniyat*, English translation edited with an introduction by Naji B. Oueijan. Beirut: Notre Dame University Press, 1998. Two articles are directly related, namely: From Brooklyn Bridge, and Over New York's Roofs. Also read *Critiques in Art* with an Introduction by Kenneth J. Mortimer. Washington D.C.: Platform International, 2000.
- 13 Statistics indicate that this English book of Rihani was discussed by the American Press covering 142 newspapers, and magazines.

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CHAPTER II

A Literature with Multicultural Concerns

Introduction

While reading the analytical study¹ of Mrs. Nahida Saad,² I was wondering, first, why this very specific subject was chosen. At the beginning, it was difficult for me to guess. Eventually the answer to this question became part of understanding the spirit of this scholarly work. The study of the narrative technique of Edith Wharton, an American writer of the late 19th and early 20th centuries,³ is practically an evaluation of her particular ability to attend to her subject matter and to shape her experience as a writer and a person.

While going into the details of this study, I found several parallels between the techniques, choice of subject matter and personal experiences of Edith Wharton and those of Arab Americans writing at approximately the same time and place. A typical example would be the use of the symbol of the Mountain (Saad, 2000, p. 234) with all its social, geographic, spiritual, emotional, rational, philosophical and artistic meanings whether in American literature or in other literatures at the turn of the century.⁴

Another example would be the treatment of the clash of cultures. Wharton exploited the contrasts between the respective societies of America and Europe (pp. 44, 82...), more particularly those of New York and Paris. Arab-American literature⁵ showed the

contrasts and similarities between East and West, the Arab World and America, more particularly between Beirut, or Lebanon, and New York. One might say that this correlation never occurred to the mind of the researcher while writing her study. Nevertheless, this explanation of the choice of subject gave me, as a reader, a wider scope of understanding and evaluating this critical analysis.

Furthermore, the multicultural evaluation of the subject and the study itself created a common denominator for both Wharton the writer as the subject, and the researcher, Mrs. Nahida Saad, as the critic/object. The former tried to bring New York to Paris in terms of the social and human value system. The latter attempted to reevaluate this value system through techniques analyzed from a third perspective. This perspective embraces the two great cities but has its roots in a different one, a city, or culture that can understand both and so is able to analyze and criticize the human characteristics and relationships of both. It needs a multicultural background to be able to discuss a literature of multicultural concerns.

Comparative Approach

This is where the study of comparative literature appears. The different definitions of the term brought by Mrs. Saad do not all apply to this study. Never mind the oral literature and the migration of folk themes. What we are concerned with, here, is the “relationship between two or more literatures” (p. 6). If style is the “vehicle of thought in its fullest scope” (p. 7), as Wellek and Warren put it, then different styles, or different literatures, may be the vehicles of similar thoughts; or similar styles may be the vehicles of different thoughts. It is the purpose of comparative literature to build those kinds of relationships specifically between literatures of different cultural backgrounds,⁶ or between characters of different personalities and/or different cultures, social classes, geographical areas, genders and so on.

At this point Edith Wharton becomes very relevant as a subject for multicultural literature as well as for comparative literature. Mrs. Saad dealt with the subject from another comparative approach, namely that of comparative criticism. From the very beginning, the dissertation took a stand, which I can accept if the author can defend it. Mrs. Saad considered that most of the critics of Wharton's fiction either focused on women characters or ended up with a "flat, brief or insubstantial criticism of her style" (p. 12). However, she mentions elsewhere that "modern criticism has read Wharton in the light of gender, class, literary production and psychoanalytic analysis" (p. 9). The researcher did not attempt to clarify what seems to be contradictory in these two statements. Discussing gender in a certain literature does not mean necessarily focusing on women in that literature unless proven otherwise. Similarly, a literary or psychoanalytical analysis is hardly expected to be flat and insubstantial unless proven otherwise. In both cases, the researcher did not attempt to prove her counterargument, and undefended arguments tend to weaken any dissertation.

Influences

Nevertheless this dissertation tried to study what has been relatively neglected in Wharton's works, namely Wharton's techniques based on contextual analysis with a concentration on particular identified factors. These include the point of view, the setting, the style, the interior monologue, and the flashback. Before starting with its supposed counterarguments, the dissertation carefully outlined the major influences of Henry James, Paul Bourget, Goethe, Saint-Beuve, and Arnold on Wharton's literature. This part of the study is very significant as a comparative implementation in studying two authors and the substantial and artistic influence of one of them on the other.

In comparing between James and Wharton, the author of the dissertation highlighted the harmony of thought between the two writers. In doing so, Saad has sorted out some basic principles

from Wharton's book *The Writing of Fiction*, compared them with James's ideas and concepts, and supported them with quotations from Wharton's critics before starting the contextual analysis of the works of both authors of fiction. Although she compares in detail the similarities and differences between Wharton and James, she largely neglects any comparison between Wharton and Paul Bourget, and between Wharton and Goethe and Saint-Beuve. This kind of comparison is very significant for an American writer interested in European culture and literature. It would have complemented the objectives of this study.

Multicultural Observations

In many sections or chapters of the study Saad shows the gaps or failures of the critics to present a "comprehensive examination" of a certain technique, and then attempts to analyze the particular technical affinity with other writers such as Henry James, Christopher Newman, Isabel Archer and others. (pp. 52-53, 57-58, 63) This methodology is appropriate for the researcher because it clarifies the development of each idea from the negative evaluation to the positive one, or *vice versa*. This same methodology might not be the best for the reader because it dissects the different sections of the study rather than building it up to a growing and comprehensive analytical unit. The bilingual background of Saad is a major explanation of the kind of multicultural observations she inserts in her dissertation. In *The Age of Innocence*, for example, she encounters the state of knowledge in the "Europeanized American" as she uses the term. (p. 44). In other works of Wharton the dissertation observes the "conflict between foreign and American manners" followed by a remarkable comment to the effect that "as Wharton's set of values were European, she hardly found it impossible to conceive of an American culture which would not obliterate its ideals..." (p. 82) She even digs down into the multicultural issue in analyzing Wharton's characters. In comparing Ellen and May, for example, Saad argues "against Ellen's morals and manners are May's social

codes of behavior as a representation of the New World Culture.” The researcher explains her point of view by commenting, “unlike the Europeanized Ellen, May is ignorant of the more refined customs of the aristocratic European culture.” (p. 91) Multicultural observations such as these put the discussion in context and broaden the scope of analysis in the dissertation.

In building up a counterargument, Saad seems to be too brief an observer. She quotes Fryer, for example, on Wharton’s belief in harmony and proportion in human relationships to end up by commenting that these principles “seemed to be violated” and the “disorder in spatial arrangements reflects chaotic human relationships.” (p. 123) It is not clear in the argument presented by the researcher how the harmony and the proportion were violated or how the disorder in spatial arrangements took place.

In discussing the techniques of the author’s works of fiction, the dissertation tries to follow a systematic methodology in each chapter. This could be summarized in four steps:

1. A historical development of the analyzed specific technique.
2. Wharton’s point of view on that particular technique.
3. Wharton as explained and interpreted by other writers or scholars.
4. Work discussions through comparative texts and characters as the basis for analysis.

If we read horizontally across the chapters, we notice that each chapter introduces itself very clearly and very systematically from the very beginning. Each chapter reviews first a series of definitions on the particular theme discussed, and then observes the different criticisms on Wharton’s works before evaluating these works and comparing literary sections or features or characters or plots or set-ups. This clear and systematic structure of each chapter makes it easier for the reader to draw a line of thought that facilitates understanding the discussions of the dissertation. This confirms that the dissertation is built on solid

grounds and its comparative analysis is supported with clear evidence from either the text itself or the specific characters of the work of fiction.

Conclusion

However, it is necessary to conclude with the following observations:

1. Granted that some techniques, such as the flashback and interior monologue, provided the proper medium for the elaboration of feelings and critical thinking, how can the researcher generalize and conclude that “No other method could have better helped the character in her internal trip... and no other technique could have brought about such intensity of feeling(s) and depth of understanding”? (p. 259). Such a conclusion is usually the result of studying in depth other methods and other techniques, which was not the case in this particular example.
2. Other generalizations came in the conclusion specially when the researcher considered that “techniques such as titles, themes, beginnings, endings, dialogues, settings, characters, style...are always revealing to the totality of the human experience.” Is this not true of any similar literary technique? Is it not the objective of any literary technique to “reveal the human experience”?
3. The conclusion related to the flashback and the interior monologue and their roles in “supplying the character with insight ...and endowing the work with psychological and humanitarian dimensions”, although very significant, however is not very specific to that particular author because it could also be true of other authors as well whenever they use the same technique.
4. The dissertation emphasizes the originality of Wharton’s technique. (pp. 289-291, 296) However, does the study show this originality? Does it manage to develop this critical observation? Does it show the originality of Wharton’s “vision

of reality” and her artistic approach? This significant study showed the artistic criteria of Wharton’s techniques but not the original characteristic of this art and this vision. In different parts of her dissertation, Mrs. Saad emphasizes the influence of other writers on Wharton’s techniques, as mentioned earlier. If this is true, how can a certain literary characteristic be original and, at the same time, relying on another writer’s conception of that particular characteristic?

5. One last observation related to language: creative or analytical writing in a second language needs a certain level of linguistic command. Scholars tend to interpret this command as purely technical, while others highlight the artistic aspect of such a skill. In both cases, we tend to neglect the spirit of each language, which leads us, consciously or unconsciously, to what we call the logic of each language. The French saying “*chaque langue pour un homme*” tries to put particular emphasis on the spirit and the logic of each language under command. This is the challenge of multicultural literature⁷ and consequently of bilingual literature. It is applicable to American authors writing on European culture and to Arab-American authors writing, in English, on East and West or to European authors writing, in French, on different human concerns. It is also applicable to inter-European literary influence and to a similar American-European influence. This dissertation is significant in accepting this kind of a challenge by choosing the topic and by dealing with it in the proper spirit and logic of the second language and the second culture.

Finally, this serious study of a sample of literature dealing with multicultural concerns, supported with the comparative analysis of the different artistic techniques, deserves, in spite of some of our concluding observations, the necessary recognition. It carries an analytical flow, a depth of discussion, a clear theme, and a well-structured methodology necessary for a solid Ph.D. study in literature and multiculturalism.

Endnotes

- 1 This is a Ph.D. dissertation presented at, and approved by, the Department of English, Faculty of Letters I, Lebanese University, Beirut, June, 2000.
- 2 Mrs. N. Saad is a lecturer in Modern English Literature at the Lebanese University, Beirut.
- 3 Wharton, Edith (1826-1937), is known for her stories and novels about upper-class society. She was educated at home in New York and, later, in Europe. After 1907, she lived in France. Her major literary model was Henry James. The success of her novel *The House of Mirth* (1905) established her as a leading writer. She wrote also poetry and books of travel. In her novels, *Hudson River Bracketed* (1929) and *The Gods Arrive* (1932), she compares the cultures of Europe and the United States of America.
- 4 An interesting comparison would be with Kahlil Gibran's *Thoughts and Meditations* (1961) London: Heinemann, pp. 86, 92-96; and Ameen Rihani's *Hymns of the Valleys* (2002) New Jersey: Gorgias Press, pp. 24-26, 30-32, 75-77.
- 5 This term is given to the literature written by Lebanese and other Arab emigrants to the United States as of the early days of the twentieth century and later.
- 6 Refer to Rihani's *The Path of Vision* (1970 edition) Beirut: The Rihani House, pp. 81-85, 93-101, 120-125.
- 7 Literature of different cultural backgrounds is not limited to issues related strictly to East and West, or to different religions, languages, and peoples. This difference may be studied also between peoples of a similar culture and, sometimes, of the same language, like the social comparison between the Americans and the British, or between the Mexicans and the Spanish, or between the Lebanese and the Egyptians.

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CHAPTER III

Al-Hoda's Multidimensional Role

Introduction

Towards the end of the nineteenth century, when most Lebanese and Middle Eastern immigrants in the United States had had little or no schooling, a man came to America who, by exception, had a university degree. He was the son of a priest and a student of *Al-Hikmah*, a well-known Maronite high school in Beirut, and a graduate of Saint Joseph's University,¹ a prestigious Catholic institution of higher education in Lebanon and the Middle East. This was Naoum Mokarzel's background when he arrived to New York in 1888.

It is significant that Mr. Mokarzel was a teacher. He first taught Arabic language and literature at the Jesuit High School in Cairo,² then established his own elementary school in his hometown, Freike, in Lebanon, and finally when he came to New York taught French at the Jesuit High School there.³ Starting from his early days after graduation, Naoum, the teacher, had a dominating character teaching with conviction, zest, and commitment. He believed in his career as a teacher to the extent that languages were not to be used anymore as only the subject of his teaching, but also as the tools to teach his beliefs and convictions about life. With Naoum Mokarzel teaching did not stop in the schoolrooms of Lebanon, Egypt, and New York, it was continuously extended to his colleagues, to his staff at the *Al-Hoda* newspaper, and especially was carried on to his readers.

Naoum realized that learning is a necessary process for every successful teacher. *Al-A'sr* newspaper was his first elementary school of journalism. It did not take him long to decide that a more professional newspaper should start under his supervision as the owner and the chief editor; consequently, *Al-Hoda* was born in Philadelphia on February 22, 1898. The move to New York, four years later, was the decision of a vigorous and convinced teacher, a teacher who sought a larger platform, a wider audience, and definitely a longer and stronger reach to all Lebanese immigrants in New York, and eventually all across the United States of America. What previously had seemed an impossible dream started to be realized and became a reality.

The second newspaper after *Kawkab America*⁴ or America's Planet, *Al-Hoda* managed to become the first newspaper in terms of its wide circulation and its clear interest in the reader.⁵ Viscount Philippe De Tarrazzi describes *Al-Hoda* as the first daily newspaper in the New World that survived all difficulties and persisted to carry on its message (The Lebanese Book... 1914: 408). As a result, *Al-Hoda* played a significant role among the Lebanese and Syrian communities in the United States during the first half of the twentieth century. This role could be described as multidimensional due to its different aspects, which are mainly social, cultural, and political. These three aspects of *Al-Hoda's* role are directly related to the person who was behind that role, the founder of *Al-Hoda*, the promoter, the leader, and the teacher of the ideas and principles that the newspaper carried to the Lebanese and Syrian communities in the United States a hundred years ago.

Naoum Mokarzel carried a message. The newspaper was his tool or his vehicle by which he could reach his readers and provide them with his points of view. The message of Naoum Mokarzel may be summarized in two ideas: 1. Be yourselves, and 2. Be successful. I will come back to these two ideas later. For now, it is important to know that this message was perennially strong and clear, so people could not help but take sides on determining what

self-identity is and what the meaning of success is. People actually took sides by either supporting Naoum's message or by working against it. What should be realized here is the fact that it is not easy to play such a role or carry on such a mission without having a solid intellectual background reinforced by strong beliefs along with a clear sense of commitment.

This chapter discusses four basic points that help in understanding the owner and promoter of *Al-Hoda* as well as the newspaper itself, highlighting the personality of Naoum Mokarzel along with the newspaper's intellectual background. It examines the social, cultural, and political roles played vigorously by this newspaper and by its director/leader, specifically in the first three decades of the twentieth century.

Background

As a teacher, Naoum experienced direct contact with students in three different environments. First, in Egypt where the national government was struggling against the French and British colonial powers and where the mass media at the time were enjoying a relatively acceptable level of freedom, enough to express Egyptian national ambitions. Second, in Lebanon where the people were suffering from all kinds of Ottoman oppression and where freedom was an unreachable, impossible dream with little or no hope for the political and social situation. Third, in the United States where the image was reversed. He realized shortly after his move to New York that his new American experience was the straight and true one, discovering gradually that where he came from had a distorted image contrary to any acceptable situation of simple human rights. At that point, the teacher in Naoum Mokarzel woke up, but he soon became aware that a school with four walls has its limits. An outdoor school was necessary to reach every house, every reader, and every Lebanese immigrant in Philadelphia, in New York and eventually in all the United States of America. This is what inspired the birth of *Al-Hoda*.

Another motive behind the launching of the pioneering newspaper was to teach the immigrant community less to inform than to confront, less to communicate than to debate, and less to express than to impress. Naoum Mokarzel's discourse focused on the identification of his alien audience struggling for a full awareness of a clear self-identity. *Al-Hoda*, therefore, was not simply a tool of information nor was it a vehicle for current news; it was rather a message and enlightenment. The holder of this message came from an intellectual background recognizing the importance of languages, literature, and politics in the people's history and development. The *Abu-Houl* newspaper in Sao Paulo wrote about Naoum Mokarzel, on December 1, 1913: "He is a master of Arabic writing, unique among the Lebanese people, a man who knows how to create something out of nothing and who transforms weakness into strength. He is eloquent, logical and has a strong personality. He is known among the immigrants as the Lebanese Tiger." (De Tarrazi: 408). How could this strong, eloquent teacher and leader convey his message better than by starting a newspaper with a clear objective in his mind and, eventually, in the mind of his readers? His education was a tool in his hands, and his vision was another tool. Familiarity with the French Revolution as well as with the Ottoman oppression made the man aware of the values of freedom and democracy that he experienced in the United States of America.

Al-Hoda developed to be the platform of Lebanese writers, some of whom later on became international literary figures. Eventually it became a mirror, an echo, and a flag. It became the mirror of its owner reflecting his cultural, intellectual, and political interests and the mirror of its community reflecting its thirst for the kind of news, articles and activities that enriched its mental, emotional and ethnic horizons. It grew into the sounding board for its owner's vision and spirit, with his objective of supporting and promoting the social and national needs of his compatriots in the New World. As a result, Naoum Mokarzel became the example of a fighting leader for a noble national

cause, and *Al-Hoda*, in turn, became the symbol and the banner of debate, struggle, leadership, and continuous striving to achieve the difficult dream of an independent, democratic Lebanon.

The three roles played by this pioneering newspaper were clearly expressed in the kind of literature and material it regularly published. When one of the chronological orders of the roles played by this leading Arabic-American newspaper in the States was reversed, it becomes evident that one of the earliest contributions of *Al-Hoda* was of social concern. A typical example was the concern for the relationship between employers and employees.

An Early Socio-Economic Role

In an article entitled “Slow Suicide,” published in 1903, a detailed description of the ambitious, hardworking Lebanese immigrant introduces the issue by noticing that this immigrant

keeps struggling with determination, patience, hard labor, and a progressive spirit. He faces difficulties with a heart as strong as the rocks of Lebanon. He increasingly seeks profit and looks for a higher interest. However, he has been fair and equitable. (*Al-Hoda*, 3, 1, 1903: 1).

It is as if Mr. Mokarzel was describing himself in this paragraph. He reaches the point and determines the problem by saying:

The Lebanese strives for the best and exhausts himself but has no mercy upon himself and upon others... Some of us do not give the employees in their shops and firms any consideration. Some people treat them like machines, and they fall short of reaching themselves and reaching the employees. They weaken the productive power of their working staff. As a result, the level of production decreases, the employee loses interest and energy. (3, 1, 1903: 1).

Mr. Mokarzel, after giving an accurate, detailed description of the hard-working Lebanese immigrant, determines clearly and specifically the problem of the negative relationships between the business people among the Lebanese immigrants and their staff. A positive picture is followed by a negative one until a solution is proposed. He continues by saying: "We should like to have labor laws that harmonize the relationship between the employers and the employees." He then emphasizes his objectivity by saying: "We do not intend to praise labor nor to encourage laziness. We do not want to support the master over the worker." Finally, a practical solution is suggested: "We only seek to put a limit to oppression through mutual understanding. We hope that a dialogue between the two sides starts soon. We are ready to help. Be fair and do not commit a slow suicide."

This clear social commitment shows the close relationship between *Al-Hoda* and its community. The economic and social problems were not only a part of the daily news but mainly a subject to be dealt with, defined, treated, and discussed, to end up with a proposed solution to the problem examined. *Al-Hoda* was always ready to lend a helping hand to its community members. The owner of *Al-Hoda* was always on the go to assist, advise, guide, support, and, lead the immigrants to a better understanding as well as a higher level of social and economic development. This is how a strong and intellectual personality tries to use journalism as a means for worthy objectives, the kind of objectives that show concern and commitment to the people and their needs and in this case specifically to the Lebanese immigrants and to their behavior and attitudes in the New World. To call for the basic principles of justice and equality was common for that time. The uncommon approach to such principles was the idea of building a link between the concepts of equity and uniformity, on one hand, and improving productivity on the other hand. This is a clear attempt at social reform based on economic and human development as assumed by *Al-Hoda* in

its early stages and strived for by the owner of *Al-Hoda* ever since it was established.

A Cultural Awareness Role

At the same time, another concern was shown in the issues of *Al-Hoda*. The intellectual concern clarified and determined the cultural role of this major Arabic-American newspaper. The support of literary and artistic activities was paralleled with highlighting the necessary skills required for these educational undertakings. In an article entitled “Saladin and the Young Men’s Association” in 1903, special attention was given to the skills needed for the performing arts. The article opens the discussion by saying:

The men of letters who master the rhetorical and acting skills cannot develop these skills without continuous training and study. The reader knows that the subject of the play is a noble one and so are the objectives of the [Young Men’s] Association. The activities of the Association will be as noble if they prove to be successful. (*Al-Hoda*, 22, 1, 1903: 1).

In order to highlight the significance and importance of mastering specific artistic skills, the author points out one common basic characteristic of the play that they produced and the Association, this was also their noble objective. Both the play and the Association had, according to the author, the most glorious, honorable, and virtuous moral values. Both were striving for the dignified, impressive, and magnificent goals in life and in art. This is a clear example of the cultural role played by *Al-Hoda* at the time.

The author pushes his idea further by confirming that he will be “so pleased to know that this [article] will encourage the actors to work hard and do their best in order to have an excellent performance.” (22, 1, 1903: 1). At this point he reinforces the intellectual and artistic contribution of the Association and,

eventually, of the newspaper within the immigrants community in the early years of the twentieth century. He continues saying:

I'll be so delighted to witness the significant role of this Association in developing the acting skills by introducing new methods that we don't know in this field. For if we do not succeed in this play, many newspapers will criticize the association and blame *Al-Hoda* as a member in this association.

It is noticeable that the chain of responsibility moves from the Association to the newspaper to the owner and vice versa. This shows that Mr. Mokarzel's dynamism could not but find for itself three factors of active implementation: an organization through which a leadership role was played mainly at the intellectual and social levels, a mass media tool by which a public platform was firmly established, and the strong personality and character of the person himself that was behind this hard endeavor.

The leadership qualities were clearly manifested in the way Mr. Mokarzel compared the Lebanese community in New York and the Lebanese community in Brazil, which ended up by asking his people for a certain level of quality and quantity, qualifications and contributions. At the end of his article, he says:

Our brothers in Brazil are not more educated than we are, and they are not greater in number than ourselves. Nobody outside New York wishes us other than success. So I ask you to give priority for qualifications and not for personal preference. Give your time and money, accept the advice given to you and I'm sure you will make it.

This kind of intellectual and social leadership prepared Mr. Mokarzel to go further and assume a political role and leadership within his immigrant community.

The Vigorous Political Role

The Lebanon League of Progress was established in 1911. Mr. Mokarzel was elected as the first President of the League on

August 21 of that year,⁶ and *Al-Hoda* became the voice of this political organization in New York. The Constitution of the Lebanon League of Progress determines the objectives of the League in Article One as “to protect the interests of Mount Lebanon and maintain its privileges and ask to build a harbor for it, and develop its construction plan.”⁷ On August 24, 1911, an article, published in *Al-Hoda*, explains the political role of this new movement. It says: “The Lebanon League of Progress works as a council, with no preferences except for achievements, and no choices except for social service and no recognition except for continuous cultural effort.” (p. 4). While the declared objectives in the constitution were national and political, it is obvious that the choices of the Lebanon League of Progress were mainly social and cultural. However, the political concerns were dominating, and the actions of the League were planned accordingly. In that same article we read: “The Lebanese people have the full right to manage their own business and the Lebanese descendants have the full right to support them in attaining this objective.” The notion of the people’s right is justified and supported in the article by a statement that could be considered as one of the basic political beliefs of the League. It says: “Lebanon is the home for people seeking freedom and the fortress for those running away from oppression.” At the time, Lebanon was still under the rule of the Ottoman Empire. While addressing himself directly to his Lebanese community in the United States and Lebanon, the author was preparing himself for a further and effective step in serving his country. One week following that article, the League protested against calling up Lebanese citizens to join the Ottoman army. The protesters requested the “Executive Council of Mount Lebanon” (*Majles Al-Idara*) to “take all necessary measures to protect the rights of Lebanon.”⁸ We notice a clear development in the political expressions between the League’s constitution and the first action taken by the League: *Mount Lebanon*, in the constitution, turned out to be *Lebanon*, in the protest, and *privileges*, in the constitution became *rights* in the protest. This quick development took place because of Naoum Mokarzel’s

personal role in clarifying the political goals and actions of the League.

Few years later Mr. Mokarzel was very direct and clear in defining the objectives and role of the Lebanon League of Progress. He writes in *Al-Hoda* that:

The League is a national, political and reformative association. It aims at defending the Lebanese cause, bringing back its original historic and geographic boundaries. It strives for providing Lebanon with a constitutional, independent government under the French mandate. It works hard for the political and social development of Lebanon and for its national solidarity.(18, 3, 1919: 8).

These principles and beliefs were translated into clear actions taken by the League and its president Mr. Mokarzel. The article continues by saying that:

The League has delegated its president to attend the Paris Conference of 1913 to express a strong opposition and resistance to the idea of incorporating Lebanon with other states in the region and to participate in the Ottoman House of Parliament.

One concludes from this statement that, early after World War I, the political commitment of Naoum Mokarzel was for the full sovereignty and independence of Lebanon. In order to express these political beliefs Mr. Mokarzel used two platforms, *Al-Hoda* itself and the Lebanon League of Progress.

We understand from the same article that the League had established women's chapters that proved to be very active at the social and cultural levels. Furthermore, we read in that article that the League had delegated its president [who was Mr. Mokarzel himself] to support these objectives at the Peace Conference [after W.W. I]. In an article dated March 17, 1919, these objectives were stated very clearly in three points:

- The independence of Lebanon.
- The supervision of France, the word used in Arabic for supervision being *musharafa*, which could mean administration, oversight, control, and French surveillance.
- The return of the historic boundaries to Lebanon (17, 3, 1919:1).

In April 23, 1919, Naoum Mokarzel met with Mr. George Pico, the French Commissioner to Lebanon and Syria, to express the wishes of the Lebanon League of Progress for an independent Lebanon. He also met several distinguished personalities during May, June, and July of 1919 in Paris to discuss the League's suggestions in support of the independence of Lebanon. Among these personalities were Marshal Ferdinand Foch and Mr. Raymond Poincaré, President of France.⁹

As an information agency and a mass media tool *Al-Hoda* continued to publish the political developments in Lebanon, especially during the year of independence, with all the details of the events of 1943. The purpose was to update the Lebanese Americans with the changes and events taking place in their land of origin. Examples of these up-dates are in a summary of an interview with Patriarch Antoun Arida to the *Herald Tribune* on November 17, 1943, the release of the Lebanese leaders on November 22, and the reestablishing of the Lebanese government on November 26 of the same year (*Al-Hoda*, 22, 11, 1943: 1). For most Lebanese Americans, during the first half of the twentieth century, *Al-Hoda* was their major political and cultural link with Lebanon as well as with the culture of the new world.

Conclusion

The political role played by Mr. Mokarzel was the logical result of his background, ambitions, and beliefs. On the personal and social level, he succeeded in becoming a devoted leader. On the political level, he was eager to see his country, Lebanon, growing and developing into a self-governing independent identity.

The kind of concerns brought up by this major newspaper among Lebanese and Syrian emigrants during the early twentieth century helped in clarifying some of the writing themes of the first Arab-American authors who wrote in English. It is notable to mention that these themes were of multicultural, human, social, and intellectual concerns, which equally meet the interest of the reader as an emigrant to the United States or as an American citizen.

At the first centennial of *Al-Hoda*, it is worthwhile recognizing the multidimensional role of the first Lebanese American daily newspaper in the New World, and among the Lebanese Diaspora. It presented itself, together with the *Syrian World*,¹⁰ as a dynamic media tool influential among the immigrants in order to contribute socially, culturally, and politically to multiculturalism as well as to the struggle of a small nation trying to find its place on this planet during the first half of the twentieth century.

Endnotes

- 1 *The History of Al-Hoda and the Lebanese Communities in America*, Al-Hoda Press, New York, N.Y., 1968, p. 6. I referred also to the personal notes of Boutros Al-Khoury Feghali, a manuscript written in 1973, pp. 3-4.
- 2 *The History of Al-Hoda...*, p. 6.
- 3 *The History of Al-Hoda...*, p. 6.
- 4 *Kawkab America* was published in New York, in 1892. The owner, Dr. Ibrahim Arbili, coordinated the editorial work with his brother Najib Arbili, the editor-in-chief of this first newspaper of Lebanese and Syrian immigrants to the United States of America.
- 5 Other newspapers published in Arabic, in New York, at the first quarter of the twentieth century were: *Al-Muhajer* (The Immigrant), *Mir'at-ul Gharb* (The Mirror of the West), and *As-Sa'eh* (The Traveler). The publications in English were: the *Lebanese American Journal*, and *The Syrian World*. It is worthwhile mentioning that the adjective "Syrian" was given, at the time, to immigrants coming from Lebanon, Syria, and Palestine.
- 6 *The Lebanese Book, 25th Anniversary of the Lebanon League of Progress*, Al-Hoda Press, New York, N.Y., 1936, p. 35.
- 7 *The Lebanese Book...*, p. 36.
- 8 *The Lebanese Book...*, pp.47-48.

- 9 *The History of Al-Hoda...*, pp. 40-43.
- 10 *The Syrian World* is a magazine, published in English, in New York, by Salloum Mokarzel, during the first half of the twentieth century. It published articles for Arab-Americans among whose authors were Rihani, Gibran, and others.

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▲ Newspapers and Magazines

- *The Herald Tribune*, New York, November 17, 1943.
- *Al-Hoda*, New York, January 3, 1903.
- -----, January 22, 1903.
- -----, August 24, 1911.
- -----, March 17, 1919.
- -----, March 18, 1919.
- -----, November 22, 1943.

CHAPTER IV

The Western Cultural Experience of The Founding Father

Introduction

This is the story of a young emigrant who had an experience different from most other Arab emigrants. He was the first among his fellow citizens to have a different objective for his emigration. His purpose was not to become a businessperson like most of the Lebanese-Syrian emigrants of the time. His purpose was to become a writer and to earn his living as a writer by publishing in both Arabic and English. Very early on, he became aware that the essence of his message was about breaking new ground.¹

As a pioneer, Ameen F. Rihani paved the way for other Lebanese and Arab writers to write and publish in their mother language, Arabic, and in their adopted language, English. Thus, Rihani created a new trend and became considered among scholars, writers and Middle East specialists as the founding father of what is known today as the Arab-American Literature and Thought of the twentieth century. This chapter consists of three parts dealing respectively with Rihani's Western cultural experience, the Prophet Khalid of America, and the significance of his English works today.

What is Western and what is Cultural about Rihani's Experience

A major element of Rihani's cultural experience came from his deep understanding of the West. During his course of study in New York, Rihani made the acquaintance of the English and French poets of the 18th and 19th centuries. However, he was particularly inspired by two major trends of thought. One was political, that of the French Revolution and its men of letters such as Rousseau, Voltaire and Hugo, and its British historians such as Thomas Carlyle and Edmond Burke. The other was philosophical, namely Darwin's theory of evolution and its ethical and spiritual impact as expressed through the works of Herbert Spencer and Thomas Huxley. This was amalgamated with Buchner's materialism, Kant's phenomenology and Hegel's dialectic theory.²

Serious questions were raised in consequence within Rihani's mind; questions related to political freedom, religious beliefs, conflicts of matter and spirit, reason and faith, dogmas and anti-dogmas. For some time he was deeply skeptic and widely agnostic until the time when American Transcendentalism appeared. Rihani's acquaintance with the free verse of Walt Whitman and the Transcendentalist essays of Emerson and Thoreau made him discover that part of himself that he was always looking for, the critical, dialectic, free, transcendental part. At the same time, Tolstoy and Kratchkovski inspired Rihani not only as Russian literature, but also as literature of freedom and equity.

Another aspect of his cultural experience came from his deep roots in the East. Two Western writers introduced Rihani to Arab civilization, as he mentions in the introduction to his famous Arabic book *Muluk ul-Arab* (1924: 8). Thomas Carlyle, the British philosopher, introduced Rihani to the Arab Prophet Mohammed through his book *Heroes and Hero Worship*, and Washington Irving, the American writer, introduced him to the achievements

of Arab engineering in Spain through his book *Al-Hambra*. At the age of twenty-two, Rihani spent one year teaching English back home in Lebanon at Qurnat Shehwan High School and learning Arabic in return. Thus he was introduced to the classical Arabic prose and poetry, mainly the *Saktul Zand* of Abu-Ala' Al-Ma'arri and the *Nahj-ul Balagha* of Imam Ali. In addition, he was introduced to Arab Islamic Sufism as reflected in the works of Ibn Arabi, Jalalud-dine Al-Roumi and Al-Hallaj. This acquaintance with the Arab pillars of wisdom, thought and literature led Rihani to discover the other side of himself, the one lost and found, the mystical side.

Upon returning to the United States, he found that New York was no longer the land of exile, nor the Promised Land; it had become the challenge. Here again, one could draw a major distinction between Rihani and other contemporary immigrants of Arab descent. The more Americanized he became, the more he was able to discover and accept the American Spirit and the American Dream, yet without ever surrendering to the American challenge. At this point, a new kind of amalgamation started deep in his character that shaped the "Philosopher of Freike." This character seeks the synthesis of a superman emerging from the contradictions of freedom and discipline, spirit and matter, fantasy and reality, faith and reason, fiction and science, and illusion and truth. It is easy to reject one and adopt the other. However, traveling from the Oriental to the Occidental mind made Rihani realize that all these opposite ends have to be reconciled to the one. Rihani also realized that reconciling opposite characteristics has to be cross-questioned and cross-bridged in order for us to reach the ultimate goal of creating the new man of our time. Rihani also realized that reconciling opposite characteristics within the superman is and should be parallel to the possibility of reconciling different cultures within a people and within a place that he calls "The Great City."

In summary, Rihani's cultural experience was the result of his clear-cut plan to grasp the French, British, American, and Russian literatures, and the German and British philosophies, together with Arab literature and thought.³ This experience was enriched by Rihani's involvement in American artistic and literary circles. He was an active member of several associations such as the National Art Theater Society, the Pleiades Club, the American Poets Association, the Authors' Club of New York, and others. He wrote in notable newspapers and magazines such as the *New York Times*, *The Nation*, *The Atlantic Monthly*, *The International Studio*, *The Print Connoisseur*, *Asia*, *Travel*, *Current History*, *Foreign Affairs* and many more. His books were also published through different American and British publishers, principally Dodd-Mead, Houghton Mifflin, Macmillan, James White, and others. He was the first Arab-American writer to write and publish in English and his writings created a literary trend among immigrants known later on as the "Immigration Literature" or *Al-Adab Al-Mahjari*.

What is Western about Rihani's experience may be summarized in two statements: 1. he lived in New York not only as an immigrant but also as a human being who had his own vital vision, desire, and emotions, and 2. he accepted New York as his second homeland, where he felt free to both criticize and to praise. What is cultural about Rihani's Western experience may be reduced to three phases or levels: 1. he became accepted in American literary circles, 2. he committed himself to the concerns of the American and European artists and theatrical groups, and 3. he welcomed the difficult challenge of getting his work accepted by major American journals, newspapers and publishing houses.

The Prophet Khalid of America

One of Rihani's major problems from the early days of his writing career was how to address himself to the Arab as well as to the American reader. His first book in English was a translation of

Abu Ala's poetry into classical verse. It was published in New York in 1903 under the title of *The Quatrains of Abul-Ala*. His objective was not only to introduce an example of his Arab heritage to the American public, but also to pay tribute to the poet-philosopher whom Rihani considered the unique voice of reason and freethinking in classical Arabic poetry. In his preface to *The Quatrains* Rihani describes Al-Ma'arri as "the Lucretius of Al-Islam, the Diogenes of Arabia and the Voltaire of the East..." (1903: vi), in an attempt to put the Arab poet in a Western context in order to put him within the reach of the American reader. At the end of this preface, Rihani pushes the resemblance further by making the following comparison:

Just as Voltaire, for instance, acquired most of his liberal and skeptical views from Hobbes, Locke and Bayle, so did Omar [Khayyam] acquire his from Abul-Ala. (*The Quatrains*, 1903: xix)

However, are liberal and skeptical views all that Rihani wants to talk about with the American people? What about his own experience as an immigrant coming from the East to live in the West? What about the Oriental stranger coming to the West with his peculiar heritage? In his first collection of English poetry, *Myrtle and Myrrh*,⁴ Rihani addresses the American reader with the following self-description:

The stranger at thy gate, hailing from the Orient, holds out to thee a gaunt and tattooed hand. This hand has often made mud-pies from earth that might have once mapped out the stars; or, in a drunken vision, heard the grumbings of a god and made of them a captivating creed: the brain of an ancient Assyrian astronomer; the spine of a Semitic sage; the cheeks of a Jezebel or a St. Takla; the heart of a slave that added beauty and horror to the chariot of a Babylonian king or a Roman conqueror: any or all of these might have besmeared this hand (*Myrtle and Myrrh*, 1905: 5).

This vivid, yet skeptic, description of the Eastern heritage puts the author in front of an historical mirror before addressing himself to the West. It makes him aware of himself and his own spiritual and rational values before becoming aware of the other values, and telling the other Native American why that “Oriental stranger” is coming to him and to his Western world:

He came from the Mountains of Lebanon, from under the shadow of the Acropolis of Baalbak, to learn from the Yankees the way to do things – the way to rise and flourish and expand; or, as they put it, the way to get there and be it... (*Myrtle and Myrrh*, 1905: 5).

Although it appears that the Eastern writer knew what he wanted, and what he expected from the West, and particularly from America, it seems that he was not fully ready, at that stage, to adapt to and grasp the cultural and literary complexities that he would face in trying to cope with the life and habits of the West:

The writer has found the strenuous life to be as depressing and dwarfing as prison life itself; and so he has fallen back to the habit of dreaming, and singing, and taking things easy, even in restless and dreamless America. This sounds paradoxical; it is like going from the country of Trust and Equality to establish a trolley-car system in the Lebanon... (*Myrtle and Myrrh*, 1905: 6).

However, what about the young man with his entire oriental heritage, who is ready to wear the high hat, talk like the Yankees, walk the avenues and streets of Manhattan, live its days and nights and know all its ins and outs? What about New York’s institutes, magazines, books, theaters, galleries, literary and political circles that he has to deal with? The answers to such questions are found in one of Rihani’s major works, *The Book of Khalid*, a philosophical novel describing the hero’s ambiguities, challenges and frustrations in New York, physically, mentally and emotionally. Here, Khalid had to face the complexities of the American system and live the contradictions of belief and

disbelief, spirit and matter, soul and body, faith and reason, illusion and science, democracy and oppression... Khalid ended up by deciding to go back to his homeland, preaching his vision as an advocate of the “Higher Superman,” who, unlike Nietzsche’s, emerged from the soul of the East and the mind of the West. Khalid became an advocate of the “New Empire” or the “Great City”⁵ which, unlike Plato’s *Republic* or Al-Farabi’s *Merciful City*, is headed not by the Philosopher or the Poet or the Wise Imam, but by what Rihani calls the “People’s Man” who directs the dances of the wolves and the sheep and leads them all together to live in peace and prosperity (*Nationalism*, 1987: 5-12). Khalid accepts the full responsibility for speaking on behalf of his people, his “New Empire,” his “Great City”:

Our country is just beginning to speak, and I am her chosen voice. I feel that if I do not respond, if I do not come to her, she will be dumb forever... (*The Book of Khalid*, 1911: 148).

His faith in his “Higher Superman” was equally strong:

In This New World, the Higher Superman shall rise... From his transcendental height, the Superman shall ray forth in every direction the divine light, which shall mellow and purify the spirit of Nations and strengthen and sweeten the spirit of men... (1911: 135).

After preaching his social and political ideals with earnest and prophetic tone in the cities of Lebanon, Syria, Palestine and Egypt, Khalid disappears in the desert, behind the pyramids, leaving his disciples to carry on the message in his name and to look forward for his return with the dawn of every morning and with the rainbow of every spring spectrum. *The Book of Khalid* was the first novel written in English by an Arab writer. The first edition, New York 1911, was followed by several editions and reprints and translated into Arabic, French and Russian. Selections of the book were also translated into more than twenty European and Asian languages.

Most of the leading American newspapers and magazines wrote or commented on *The Book of Khalid*, showing interest in the first Lebanese Arab contribution to American literature. *The Nation* reviewed the book saying,

If Ameen Rihani could get over being what Mr. Kipling... called a 'product,' he might easily come to have the position in English which he holds already in Arabic. He has a very pretty gift of language and he has discovered a literary genre where the East and the West, Arabic and English, can almost touch... There is much kinship too, between the Carlylean thunder and crack of words, and the Oriental loftiness of style gained by hunting in the dictionary... This is the book of confessions... crossed with Gil Blas and Walt Whitman and Rousseau – all having suffered an Oriental change... Autobiography is certainly here, but it is more apparent in the earlier and later pictures of peasant life in the Lebanon... He finds text enough for Carlylean meditations, sulphurous and kindly, biting and tender. And therein is largely the value of the book... The discerning will find here the revelation of the [author]... mixed with blood from Scandinavia, Central Asia, and Northern Africa, skeptical, philosophical, cynical and yet a dreamer." (*The Nation*, March 21, 1912).

While *The Nation* focused on the international characteristics of *The Book of Khalid*, the *Boston Herald* considered that with this book, "the Eastern element takes its place in the rich and inclusive body of English literature." (*Boston Herald*, November 6, 1911 and January 22, 1912) This was a major step forward towards literary multiculturalism or multicultural literature.

However the Western element in *The Book of Khalid*, or the influence of European and American writers, poets, and philosophers on "Khalidism," could be detected through a suggested comparative study between Rihani's philosophical novel and the works of other authors such as Carlyle, Emerson, Thoreau, Walt Whitman, Rousseau, Nietzsche, Socrates, Hegel,

Cervantes, Spencer, Montaigne, Pascal, Swinburne, Plato, Thomas Paine, and others. Khalid commented on, addressed himself to, or quoted these writers at least once and in several cases more than six times as part of his intellectual development and experience. In his book, Khalid attempts to apply the theory of evolution to the passage from romanticism to transcendentalism, from nationalism to internationalism and from pragmatism to the “mysticism of reality.” To sum up a series of “isms” in this major work, “Khalidism” might be the best label for Rihani’s achievement in launching Lebanese-American and Arab-American Literature during the first three decades of the twentieth century. Steven Blackburn considers that *The Book of Khalid* is a synthesis of ideas, which presents a personal and universal message (*Al-Arabiyyah Magazine*, Vol. 9, No. 1 & 2, 1976:19). Walter Dunnavent touches a significant aspect of Rihani’s Western cultural background when he discusses Transcendentalism and *The Book of Khalid*. He follows the concept of nature from the material to the spiritual and compares this concept as revealed in the works of Rihani, Emerson, and Thoreau (*Ameen Rihani in America*, 1991: 58-93).

Ten years later, the voice of Khalid⁶ Rihani goes one-step further from his highest form of freedom to discover the Sufi union of humankind and the universe as he expresses it in his *Chant of Mystics*

We are not of the East or the West
No boundaries exist in our breast
We are free. (1921: 84)

The Path of Vision received favorable criticism from American readers for being “Strongly tinged with Oriental moods and methods of thought, yet suggestive of the best minds... with our own Thoreau, Emerson and others of our gods in literature,” as the *Columbus Dispatch* puts it (May 1, 1921).

On the other hand, American writer and poet Edwin Markham explains the characteristics of Rihani's poetry, as revealed by *A Chant of Mystics*:

...so fragrant and melodious with the noble poems of Rihani's mind. Here are writing shadows and winding ways; here are deep canyons, musical with moving waters; here are mountain-tops lighted by the stars. I rejoice in the growing powers of Rihani's poetry. (Rihani Museum Archives)

The dream of Khalid in the "New Empire" was revived in Rihani's mind due to the way he was increasingly attracted to the Arabs and their political, social, and economic problems. His travels to Arabia started early in 1922, and a few years later a new phase of Rihani's writings started with an attempt to realize Khalid's old dream.

The objective emphasized in his trilogy on Arabia was to promote Western understanding of the Arab world, an understanding that would build strong bridges between East and West, positive international relations and common peace perceptions between the two Worlds. This objective was the theme of *Arabian Peak and Desert*, *Around the Coasts of Arabia*, and *Ibn Saud of Arabia; His People and His Land*. These three books were published between 1928 and 1931 in New York, London, Toronto, and Bombay. W.B. Seabrook wrote in the *New York Herald Tribune* about Rihani's trilogy, "The ... rich material, stirring accounts of caravan marches and great cities ... the description of flora and fauna, and of the topography will give it a permanent place on shelves beside Doughty, Burkhart and Burton." (May 6, 1928: 5)⁷

However if Orientalism, according to Edward Said, deals with the Orient "by making statements about it, authorizing views of it, describing it, teaching it, settling it, ruling over it" (1978: 3), if Western Orientalism is a "style for dominating, restructuring and having authority over the Orient" (1978: 3), then the Eastern

Orientalism, as a parallel term, and as represented by the works of Rihani on Arabia, is an alternative or a counter approach to the Orient, and particularly to the Arab World, by correcting, rectifying, verifying and comprehending it, and by indoctrinating it as a region equally rich with its cultural and spiritual background. Rihani's approach aims at developing, rebuilding and supporting the solidarity of Arabia and having the Orient exercising its authority on itself. Moreover, if according to Edward Said, "the cultural role played by the Orient in the West connects Orientalism with ideology, politics, and the logic of power... matters of relevance to the literary community" (1978: 24), then the literary role played by Ameen Rihani in the West connects the Orient to the ideology, politics and the logic of power for the benefit of the Western literary community.

At the same time, Rihani's role in the Arab oil issue is also due to his Western culture and experience. His main objective was to avoid dependence of any Arab economic resource on any Western power. This went parallel to his political commitment to freedom, democracy, and independence. He was successful in avoiding this kind of dangerous link. Along these lines Leonard Mosley, in his famous book *Power Play* says:

Ameen Rihani had come to the Arabian peninsula not to look for oil, but to see and explore the Middle East and to get to know more about the Arabs... Nevertheless, he did get mixed up with oil... But his fellow Americans should be grateful to him for his well-meaning intervention. Had it not been for [this] fact, today the richest oil fields in the world would be in the British rather than American hands... (1973: 51-52).

One would ask: What was exactly Rihani's intervention, and how would a Westerner conceive this particular role? Mosley answers this question by comparing the position of King Abdul Aziz with that of Rihani on the matter. He highlights the fact that:

So far as the Sultan [Ibn Saud] was concerned, it did not matter who got the concession... until Rihani appealed to his sense of pride by writing him a letter [to that effect]... Ameen Rihani's antipathy toward Sir Percy Cox [the British high commissioner in Baghdad] saved [the oil] for the Americans. (*Power Play*, 1973: 58-59).

This supposedly Western writer of Lebanese, Arab, Oriental origins, this Lebanese writer with newly acquired Western identity, was deeply involved in the artistic movement in the United States and Europe. In the aftermath of WWI, after meeting with Henri Matisse, Kees Van Dongen and Emile Bourdelle in Paris, Rihani published a series of art criticisms in specialized magazines in America such as *The International Studio* and the *Print Connoisseur*. According to Rihani's article entitled "Artists in Wartime," Matisse combines between Fauvism and Futurism (*International Studio*, July 1919), and Van Dongen interweaves between realism and idealism as much as he integrates between the Western mind and the Eastern spirit (*International Studio*, December 1918). He describes the sculptures of Emile Bourdelle as vital, solid, accurate, noble, clear and explicit, none of which has to do with the war or with any national movement (*International Studio*, July 1919). In his article "Prints of Modern Masters" (*International Studio*, October 1920). Rihani writes about Manet, Degas, Gauguin, Pissaro and Toulouse-Lautrec. He favors the last two, namely Pissarro for what he considers as an elegant and transparent sensitivity in his works, and Toulouse Lautrec for his sarcasm that Rihani explains as stimulating expected imagination. Rihani sat to American portraitists such as William Oberhardt, S.J. Woolf, Hellen Peale and G. Lucks. He wrote about them and saw clear thought and romanticism (*The Print Connoisseur*, June 1921) in one, strong art with explicit expressions and commitment to reality (*International Studio*, July 1921) in another, a mastery of techniques and a limited maturity (*The Print Connoisseur*, March 1922) in a third, some emotions and spirituality and much poetry, artistic structure,

simplicity and uniqueness (*International Studio*, August 1920) in the fourth.

Rihani writes about “Landscape in America” and discusses the characteristics of “The Hudson River School” with its national movement, and the “Barbizon School” with its tragic religious influences (*International Studio*, May & July 1920). Rihani in more than one article shows his fascination with the richness of nature in America and the influence of Walt Whitman on the role of landscaping in art as in poetry (*International Studio*, May, July & August 1920).

Significance Today of Rihani's Works as an Outcome of his Western Cultural Experience

A sharper image of the “Philosopher of Freike” cannot be drawn without depicting what is still significant of his thought and literature, at the beginning of the 21st century. Three virtues could be highlighted because of his Western culture and background, namely freedom, rationality, and unification. Two others might be detected from a broader origin related to humanity of both East and West, which are pacifism and universalism.

Perhaps the image of the free rational thinker is one of the most significant remaining profiles of Rihani. His freedom of thought is reflected in his works of literature, politics, arts, philosophy, and religious belief.⁸ In that sense, the author of *The Book of Khalid* becomes, according to scholars,⁹ a symbol of freethinking and free writing in the Arab World of the 20th century. This freedom is substantial because it is combined with rational analysis of social, cultural, and political situations. Issues of human development in the third world are addressed in Rihani's works to give a real living picture of the concerns of people in the developing countries, the types of concerns that are still valid today, almost a hundred years after the appearance of these writings.

Having free rational thought as a basis, Rihani is a man of unity. Philosophically he advocates the unity of the universe and the unity of religions. This is the result of his mystic transcendental trend of thought. Politically, he calls for the unity of the Arabs as a means for their social, cultural, and economic development. He also calls for the reunion of East and West as a necessary step for the emergence of the “Great City” or the “New Empire” or what is known today as the New World Order. Culturally, he advocates the fusion of literatures and he applies it in his own works, which are considered today the beginning of a new trend known as the Arab-American Literature. He calls for the fusion of literary heritage and literary creativity, authenticity and originality, classicism and modern style, national and international culture. To him, human achievement is more precious and significant than people’s contradictions; finding the similarities among nations and making the best out of their differences are among his major concerns.¹⁰ This is why his “Higher Superman” is not from the East nor from the West. He is from both, and more particularly from the wisdom of Asia, the art of Europe and the science of America, is this concept still significant today? Is it at the basis of the political, literary and philosophical thought of our age? Is it parallel to the ultimate spirit of human cooperation and progress at the dawn of the twenty first century? Steven Blackburn considers that the “dialectic as a pattern of thought,” and the “synthesis as a symbolical and structural product... stand witness to the genius of Ameen Rihani” (*Al-Arabiyyah Magazine*, 1976, No. 1 & 2: 19-25).

Along with promoting freedom, rationality, and unity, Rihani is a peacemaker. The peace of mind within himself that is based on his firm belief in human and literary causes explains his motto: “Say your word and go on.” With this motto he used to respond to severe criticism against him, leaving to others the task of debating issues raised by his writings. Peace among individuals is paralleled with peace among nations. Rihani rejects the idea of war whether between nations or between people of the same

nation. He firmly believes that problems of humanity should and could be solved in many different ways other than the declarations of war with their negative consequences. In that sense, Rihani is a promoter of international peace and understanding, a cause that is still a major objective of the “New World Order”, and multiculturalism.

Conclusion

Universalism could be made to stand out because of Rihani's parallel experience of the powerful West and the spiritual East. Stunned by the rational and pragmatic discipline of the West, the rich cultural heritage of the East started to wake up in the subconscious of a writer rediscovering the softness of the Orient through the hard and painful challenge of the solid material Occident. Rihani took both to the limit, lived the New York challenges to the ultimate, and then tried to absorb the illusions and dreams of Arabia. This is where universalism, as manifested in his ideal superman, came through, a universalism that tried, in vain, to build a vision for humankind and the human being of the future, of the 21st Century.

These five values, freedom, rationality, unification, pacifism, and universalism that Rihani's English and Arabic works keep suggesting indicate an act of transfusion in the history of modern Arab thought. It is a transfusion from local to human values, from national to international causes, from temporary to permanent issues, and from relative to absolute substances. It is Rihani's voice echoed, as Geoffrey P. Nash puts it,

by virtue of the bicultural perspective he had on both western and oriental culture. He speaks to our own era, the closing twentieth century, by his vision of an international order, secular, but nurturing the various spiritual traditions of the human race... (*Al-Abhath Journal*, AUB, 1994, Vol. XL11: 120).

This is the first chapter of a long story called the Lebanese-Arab contribution to the American literature and heritage. It started, more than a hundred years ago, taking its fundamental shape in literature and philosophy. It continues today with Lebanese-Americans and Arab-Americans who proved to be successful as scholars and professionals in the various fields of humanities, arts, and sciences. It will keep prospering today and tomorrow with every Lebanese-American success and every Arab-American achievement to continue this story of literature, culture, and thought with its noble and everlasting global, multicultural, themes and objectives.

Endnotes

1. A similar experience is that of Joseph Conrad, who adjusted to an entirely new language and a totally new social and cultural environment. The English language allowed him to share his own experiences with an entirely different world than the one he came from. To elaborate on this particular issue refer to his book *A Personal Record*.
2. For further details on the subject refer to: Rihani Ameen Albert, (1987) *The Philosopher of Freike, Author of The Great City*. Beirut: Al-Jeel Publishing House, pp. 13, 15, 16, 19, 24, 29-32, 72-75, 153, 173-175, 178, 180, 195, 206, 217, 235, 243, 283, 305, 328.
3. For a comprehensive study of Rihani's cultural experience, refer to: *The Philosopher of Freike*, Al-Jeel Publishing House, Beirut, 1987, pp. 9-147.
4. This was the first collection of poetry in English by an Arab writer. It was published in New York in 1905.
5. For a further study on the "Great City" and on the "People's Man," see *The Philosopher of Freike*, pp. 257-280. It is worth noticing that Rihani's "Great City" cannot be ruled except by the "People's Man" after meeting the proper political, social and cultural qualifications.
6. A bibliography on *The Book of Khalid* is published in the reference book *Where to Find Ameen Rihani*, by Albert Rihani, The Arab Institute for Research and Publishing, Beirut, 1979, pp. 77-82. It was translated into Arabic and French (1986) and Russian (1998). Excerpts from it were translated into German, Georgian, Spanish, Italian, and Chinese.
7. Refer also to the *New York Times*, May 13, 1928, May 26, 1928, and November 2, 1930.
8. To elaborate on this issue, refer to *The Philosopher of Freike*, pp. 29, 31, 66, 73, 130, 160, 164, 171, 175, 232, 233, 247, 250, 288, 344.

9. Suggested references:
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10. For further details on Ameen Rihani's transcendentalism refer to Walter Dunnavent, Ph.D. dissertation: *Ameen Rihani in America: Transcendentalism in an Arab-American Writer*, Indiana University, 1991, pp. 58-93.

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CHAPTER V

A Bridge Between East and West

Introduction

The political thought of Ameen Rihani is engaged in the comparison between Eastern and Western societies and political regimes in order to come out with a formula that paves the way for the ideal international society or for what he calls “The Great City.”

This trend led him first to criticize both cultures. The West, for him, seemed to be too business-minded, “too commercial, socially, civically, ethically and religiously” (Rihani, *Adab wa Fan*. 1957: 7). In spite of this criticism, Rihani believed that the West is the cradle of science and evolution, which the East badly needs. “From the land of the Scientists to the land of the Prophets, the stream of mind comes divinely for rebirth and reincarnation...”(*Ar-Rihaniyat*, 7th edition. 1968, Vol. 2: 31).

Rihani’s hero, Khalid, compares the two cultures and symbolizes the West with ambition, the East with satisfaction.¹ His heart is in one, his soul is in another, until his vision of the new world, the new great city, is clarified:

The Orient and Occident,” Khalid sings, “the male and female of the Spirit, the two great streams in which the body and soul of man are refreshed, invigorated, purified, of both I sing, in both I glory, to both I consecrate my life, for both I shall work and suffer and die. The most highly developed being is neither European nor Oriental; but

rather he who partakes of the finer qualities of both the European genius and the Asiatic prophet.

Give me, ye mighty nations of the West, the material comforts of life, and thou, my East, let me partake of thy spiritual heritage. Give me, America, thy land, and thou, too, Asia. Thou land of origination, where Light and Spirit first arose, disdain not the gifts which the nations of the West bring thee; and thou land of organization and power, where Science and Freedom reign supreme, disdain not the bounties of the sunrise. (*The Book of Khalid*, 6th edition. 2000: 245-246).

It is the voice of peace and brotherhood among nations, and cultures, that was heard in the early twentieth century from a Lebanese, Arab, Eastern thinker who experienced both his own culture of the old world and that of the new world, of America.

The “Universal Spirit”

Rihani speaks of a “Universal Spirit” that awakens East and West towards the development and unity of mankind:

I dream of the awakening of the East; of puissant Orient nations rising to glorify the Idea, to build temples to the Universal Spirit—to Art, and Love, and Truth, and Faith... (*The Book of Khalid*, 2000: 325-326).

This “Universal Spirit” that Rihani called for did not prevent him from criticizing the cultural ambiguities of the world.² His objective was to clarify and overcome these ambiguities in order to reach the “Universal Spirit” and secure peace among nations:

Curiosity with the Occidentals,” he says, “...is a commendable quality of the mind, it is welcomed as a bid for intellectual or even social intimacy... But with the Orientals, curiosity is decidedly bad manners. Accept the exterior and divine the interior, is generally the prevailing humor... The tendency in one case is to overtax the

imagination, in the other to overtax the mind. The Oriental, it might be said, grows by repression, the Occidental, by expression. But both methods, to be sure, do not exclude the possibility of a morbid growth. On the contrary, they stimulate it. (*The Path of Vision*, 2nd edition. 1970: 132).

Rihani seeks the development and progress of humanity through mutual understanding between East and West. For this purpose he pinpoints the positive aspects of both. In one of his English manuscripts under the title *Turkey and Islam in the War*, meaning World War I, he mentions that:

Europe is superior in science, but not in philosophy, in those branches of knowledge that require observation and thought, not in those that require imagination and intuitive power. She is superior in military art, but not in the business of fighting. She has better mechanics, tacticians, engineers, financiers, and thinkers. This is a fact, which the Oriental now realizes and to which he has surrendered. The surrender is improving him. On the other hand, the Oriental has a better understanding and appreciation of elemental things, is more genuinely pious in the face of great calamities, more sincere in his faith, more ingenious too in invention, more capable of abstract reasoning. And this is a fact, which the European is slowly realizing and to which he will ultimately surrender. The surrender will improve him also. (MS: 134)

In spite of the debatable and argumentative aspect of these ideas, seldom do we find an acute comparison between the modern and actual characteristics of a Westerner and an Easterner. This comparison is geared towards a specific positive objective: that is to destroy barriers between cultures, civilizations, social and historical backgrounds, on one hand, and to build strong bridges between nations and peoples of the modern world on the other hand. This trend of thought is clearly at the very base of a human

cause that is to secure peace and common prosperity of humanity.³

Another Superman

The one who is expected to carry this message is the superman who in Rihani's mind differs from that of Nietzsche. To the Lebanese philosopher, "Man is supreme only when he is the proper exponent of Nature, and Spirit and God: the three divine sources from which he issues, which he is sustained, and to which he must return." (*Khalid*, 2000: 242)

Later he adds a fourth source to his superman, Passion, with which he completes the panorama of human being, and his hero Khalid preaches it in the following manner:

God, Nature, Spirit, Passion—Passion, Spirit, Nature, God—in some such panorama would I paint the life of a highly developed being. Any of these elements lacking, and the life is wanting, defective, impure. (*Khalid*, 2000: 242)

Parallel to this interaction between the spiritual and the material sources of the superman, Rihani declares another kind of interaction that is between the national and the international sources of humanity. We leave Khalid again to expose his ideas along this matter:

From his transcendental height, the Superman shall ray forth in every direction the divine light which shall mellow and purify the spirit of Nations and strengthen and sweeten the spirit of men. In this New World, I tell you, he shall be born, but he shall not be an American in the Democratic sense. He shall be nor of the Old World nor of the New; he shall be, my Brothers, of both. In him shall be reincarnated the Asiatic spirit of origination, of Poesy and Prophecy, and the European spirit of Art, and the American spirit of Invention. (*Khalid*, 2000: 113)

The Eastern and the Western

In his search for reconciliation and peace between Eastern and Western, Rihani compares the rational work of both, pinpointing their characteristics. In his book *The Path of Vision*, he writes about “The Oriental Heritage” and he considers that

the Oriental mind cannot grasp the infinity of detail as well as the scope of scientific vision... Moreover, the psychology of the Orientals is essentially deductive. Which gives them, it is true, a certain sweep of vision, but deprives them of the faculty of coordination. They have yet to acquire the scientific habit of mind and to reconcile themselves to certain elemental truths about this planet, which have also a sociological and moral application...
(*The Path of Vision*, 1970: 116-117)

In spite of the scientific and social differences between East and West, Rihani still insists on the possibility of mutual understanding and cooperation for the sake of international progress and development.

Early in the 20th century he wrote that Europe comes first in science but not in philosophy, in those fields of knowledge that require observation and thought, and not in fields that require imagination and instinctive power... This is the reality that the Eastern realizes now and admits. It is this position that helps him accelerate his progress.⁴

On the other hand, the Eastern, according to the Lebanese philosopher, shows more understanding and appreciation for principles and more tolerance for the difficulties of life... It is the reality that the Western begins to realize and will soon admit. It is this position too, that helps him accelerate his progress.

Rihani explains that the revised spiritual experience of the West comes in a line parallel with the national experience of the East. The one is a transcendental act, the other is an act of freedom and self-identity. The one is moral, the other is political.

Talking about the reconciliation of East and West for the sake of human freedom and international peace, one would ask whether Rihani had in mind a certain idealism, a certain utopia in his political thought. The answer could be found in Rihani's writings on what he called "The Great City."

The Great City

To him, the "Great City" differs from other cities in the world in many political, social, and cultural aspects. The "Great City" is to excel, mainly in the following:

1. in its poets, scientists, artists and industrialists,
2. in its numerous healthy people,
3. in its combination between simplicity and beauty, mercy and justice, science and religion,
4. in its trend of having the individual a master, and the ruler a servant,
5. in its freedom of speech and work,
6. in its performance in research, fine arts and literature,
7. in the victory of truth in it,
8. in the victory of the spiritual and rational forces in it, over the material forces, and
9. in the transformation of the instruments of war in it into the instruments of agriculture and industry. (*Ar-Rihaniyat* I, 10th edition, 1987: 136-141)

If these points summarize what Rihani wrote in Arabic about his "Great City," we find Khalid addressing his twin "City" on similar grounds and parallel trends of thought. He says:

In thy public squares, Oh my City, I would raise monuments to Nature; in thy theatres to Poesy and Thought; in thy bazaars to Art; in thy homes to Health; in thy temples of worship, to universal Good-Will; in thy courts to Power and Mercy; in thy schools to Simplicity;

in thy hospitals to Faith; and in thy public halls to Freedom and Culture. And all these, without Light, Love, and Will, are but hollow affairs, high-sounding inanities... (*Khalid*, 2000: 248)

Khalid goes further in addressing his City with a prophetic transcendental language, and with a Biblical voice of the twentieth century. He goes on:

Light, Love, and Will—with corals and pearls from their seas would I crown thee, O my City. In these streams would I baptize thy children... The mind, and the heart, and the soul of man I would baptize in this mountain lake, this high Jordan of Truth, on the flourishing and odoriferous banks of Science and Religion, under the sacred *sidr* of Reason and Faith. (*Khalid*, 2000: 247)

The “Great City” is the social and political result of Rihani’s attempt to build a human and cultural bridge between East and West. To him, one of the foundation stones of this bridge is freedom, freedom in all its aspects and levels, freedom of speech, thought and work, freedom of the individual, the society, and the nations, which leads eventually to freedom for all nations and peoples of the world, for the sake of international human peace and brotherhood.

An Early Cultural Dialogue

Living in New York in the early decades of this century, more precisely on Washington Street, Lower Manhattan, Rihani was inspired by the Statue of Liberty in more than one aspect. A well-known Arabic writing of his is a speech addressing Liberty and its Statue.⁵ The following is a translated quotation:

When art thou turning your face towards the East, Oh Liberty? When art thou mixing your light with that of the full moon, so that it goes with it around the world, and it illuminates the darkness of every oppressed people? Would the future observe a Statue of Liberty next to the

Pyramids? Could we see a statue, similar to yours, on the Black Sea? Is it possible to have sisters of yours that are born in the Dardanelle Sea, in the Indian Ocean, and in the Chinese Gulf, Oh Liberty? When art thou going around the world with the full moon, so that you illuminate the darkness of slavery and oppression among peoples and nations of the world? (*Ar-Rihaniyat I*, 10th edition, 1987: 88)

It is clear that Rihani's East and West are different from those of Kipling. Even if they differ from each other, Rihani believes that they can still collaborate, coordinate, and start an endless rich dialogue. The author of *The Book of Khalid* and *The Path of Vision* visualizes this dialogue in a poem that he wrote in 1922, in both languages: English and Arabic. Listen how Rihani's East started this dialogue by introducing itself:

I am the East
I am the hunchback of the world;
I am the archer of the universe...
I laid the corner stone
Of man's first dream, first temple, first throne
And ever since I began to build and dream
For myself and for the gods that be,
I have been bowed down, and I have been free...
Indeed, my pockets and my hands are full...
For those who build and dream
For those who travel Far
For traveling minds, for traveling visions too,
And I am traveling still (MS, *Third Collection of Poetry*:
183 a-b)

After this self-esteeming introduction, Rihani's East shows its openness to humanity in different parts of the world. He continues saying:

The leader of my caravan
Is tethered to Canopus, and the last
I cannot see the last.

He may be at the gates of Liverpool,
Or trudging though the stench of Samarkand,
Or browsing in the valley of the Nile,
Or lagging on the White Way of New York. (MS: 183 a-b)

This international horizon of unity and peace makes it easier for the East to address the West in particular, seeking a better mutual understanding:

I am the East
A phantom, O my Brave Lad of the West,
In the material pageantry of Time.
But hear you not the phantom's voice!
A voice of strange discordances, indeed,
Which echoes in the temples of my many-headed Truth,
As well as in the universities of your own land; (MS:
183 d)

The principle of intersection of cultures and backgrounds, peoples and nations, languages and social structures, traditions and beliefs... this principle becomes the key point, and the peak of the East addressing the West:

I am a thousand colors melt and fuse
And luminate one through the other 'neath the brush of
Time...
In me a thousand voices speak:
They whisper, murmur, sob,
They kiss and cry,
They sing and chant and wail
They shout aloud in my own heart
A rhapsody, a psalmody of silence
A thousand gods... (MS: 183 g-i)

In his attempt to build a bridge from the East to the West, and from the West to the East, Rihani reached the paradox of characterizing each of the two sides of the world in certain characteristics and its contradictory ones. Each one of them is, to him, conservative and non-conservative, liberal and non-liberal,

materialistic and non-materialistic, spiritual and non-spiritual. Each one of them is, at the same time, colorful and colorless, thoughtful and thoughtless, meaningful and meaningless, depending on the ability of each one of the two to understand the other.

Whether this is true or not is an irrelative question. The reflective remark here would be that the author took the principle of relativity to make it easier to cross that bridge between the two sides of the world.

Conclusion

Are we crossing that bridge? The answer is also a relative one. The crossing could take place spiritually, culturally, economically, geographically, any one of them or all of them, at the same time or at different times.

The important step is to get into the practice of crossing the bridge; the bridge between two non-identical parts, two different souls, two different parties of peoples or nations, for the sake of international peace and unity.

Rihani, like Taghor, Emerson and other contemporary thinkers and men of letters from different parts of the world, called upon us during the early twentieth century to adopt this principle, having in mind similar human objectives.

We have noticed that Rihani's methodology in building this bridge and in crossing it personally can be determined through the following steps:

First: to experiment with the East and the West both socially and culturally.

Second: to compare both parts of the world materially and spiritually.

Third: to call upon the “Universal Spirit” to rise, and try to overcome cultural ambiguities.

Fourth: to envision the superman who can carry the message of the “Universal Spirit.” His superman is a highly developed international human being, a highly qualified exponent of matter, spirit, and reason.

Fifth: to call upon an ideal international society, a “Great City” that is to excel in its healthy people rationally, morally, and materially.

Sixth: to seek liberty all over the world, for individuals, peoples, and nations.

Seventh: to start a positive dialogue between East and West in order to implement the above-mentioned objectives.

This is an example of a Lebanese Arab author who, as I mentioned, emigrated to the United States more than one hundred years ago, and afterwards his country became that of the whole world, and his people became that of all humankind.

Endnotes

1. Universality is not limited to the comparison of East and West. Jorge Luis Borges, for example, achieved the universality of his theme in the particular reality of various cultures. He returned to the universal through the particular. His cultural details vary from Buenos Aires, to Ireland, to Persia, or Germany and from the Hispanics to the Jews, to the Europeans. It is the reflection of the different shapes of humankind around the universe.
2. The cultural ambiguities of the world, or the cultural differences, represent a major theme of Joseph Conrad's novels and short stories. Narratives are set in distant places around the world. They focus on the kind of interactions between human beings of different cultures, races and languages. Among these places are the Caribbean, Malaya, Congo and several spots in South America.
3. A typical example of an intellectual bridge builder between nations and cultures is Johann Wolfgang Von Goethe. His wide readings in Indian, Arabic, Chinese and Persian literatures made him write with the conviction that the highest creations of the human spirit stand behind the multiple appearances of

things. Goethe's poetry highlights the value of a poetic cultural dialogue while affirming the human and spiritual significance of the East and the West.

4. It is interesting to draw a similar concern expressed by Nikolai Vasilievich Gogol. To Gogol the Germans (representing the Europeans) "combine calculating logic with tight morals and a somewhat vulgar preoccupation with the petty side of life." For further comparisons, refer to Abla Amoia and Bettina L. Knapp, (2002) *Multicultural Writers from Antiquity to 1945*. Connecticut: Greenwood Press.
5. Perhaps this is the first attempt an Eastern writer addresses the Statue of Liberty. One explanation may be that he comes from a political background where the concept of government means the institution with the ultimate physical and moral power. Woodrow Wilson, when he was the Governor of New Jersey, wrote in 1912, that the history of liberty is a history of limitation of government power, not the increase of it. (Spinrad, L&T *Speaker's Lifetime Library*, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1997, p. 179).

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CHAPTER VI

Gibran, Naimy and Transcendentalism

Introduction

Discussing a school of thought and literature when one or more authors are concerned would immediately raise the question of the level of discussion involved. Does the subject require the study of the relationship between two authors, or the influence of one author on the other? Is the objective of such a study to trace similarities and/or differences, or is it to draw a framework of parallel thoughts and literary expressions as part of the requirements of any study in comparative literature? It is worthwhile to mention, at this point, that the two writers, namely Gibran and Naimy, were originally outsiders to the Transcendental school of thought and literature, and alien to this cultural environment, but were supposed to have been influenced by it later on.

Reviewing the major references on Gibran and Naimy, mainly the ones written in English, the reader concludes that very little has been written on the subject of their relationship with American Transcendentalism. Even when Jean Gibran, Hawi, Bushrui, and Waterfield¹ do mention Transcendentalism or any of its figures, they do so very briefly without any details or discussion. El-Hage, in his comparative study on Blake and Gibran,² includes some very significant remarks highlighting the relationship between Gibran and the Transcendental literature. This is where the significance and importance of this subject lies. The only full study that I know of is the dissertation on the subject written by

Dr. Sami A. Bekdash.³ I should highlight the fact that Dr. Bekdash was courageous enough to choose this relatively new subject and to devote a tremendous amount of time and effort to go through the necessary original research on this topic.

I have been led to consider that the subject does not seem to be entirely original, for a similar Ph.D. dissertation, in relation to another author, was written at the Department of Near Eastern Languages and Cultures at Indiana University in 1991 by Dr. Walter Edward Dunnavent III, entitled *Ameen Rihani in America: Transcendentalism in an Arab-American Writer*. Dr. Bekdash would appear to be unaware of the dissertation just mentioned, for not only does he not refer to it in his research, but also he does not seem to have taken advantage of the structure and work-plan of that research, as I shall remark further on.

One question calls for another at the very beginning: could any study on the American Transcendentalism disregard someone like Henry David Thoreau, or Ralph Waldo Emerson, or Walt Whitman as a pioneering and major Transcendentalist? Any founding figure of a movement should complement, and equal in significance, the other major figures of the movement. For example, disregarding Thoreau, in any research work on Transcendentalism can hardly be defended in the absence of an explanation or a justification of such a limitation of the choice to two figures out of the three major ones.

To what extent were Gibran and Naimy “influenced” by Transcendental thought, or to what degree could one trace some parallel ideas or literary expressions? In this chapter, I am not trying to write another study on the subject but rather to give my remarks on the interesting comparative study done by Dr. Bekdash.

Observations on this Topic

Unlike the comparative studies on Blake and Gibran, for instance, or Gibran and Nietzsche, or Gibran and Rihani, the research done on the relationship between these Lebanese-American authors and Transcendentalism is, so far, very limited. This is one explanation of the difficulty in the way of dealing with such a topic.

Another difficulty is the fact that just comparing texts, or thoughts, or literary expressions, might not always reveal evidence of “influence” rather than, signs of similarity or parallelism of ideas. That is why I suggest a study of a certain “relationship” rather than a study of a certain “influence.”

The issue that further complicates this topic and renders it rather difficult to deal with is the position taken by Naimy himself, who denies any Transcendentalist influence. No matter what his arguments are, and no matter whether he is right or wrong, this topic remains a major issue in shaping the foundations of Arab-American Literature. In spite of that, no comprehensive study has been made yet to answer the question of the relationship between American Transcendentalism and each of these three Lebanese American writers.

One suggested way of dealing with this topic is to analyze common areas of concern. For instance:

- The concept of nature and the differences in the personification and humanization of its faces and characteristics. To what extent did each of the Transcendentalist and the Arab-American writers look for a certain nature beyond nature?
- The “Over-Soul” versus the “Greater Self” or the “Universal Spirit” in the writings of each of the Transcendentalist and Arab-American writers.

- The mapping of the land of imagination as a power of Transcendentalist perception both in schools of thought and in literature.
- The “Path of Vision” from man to nature to God, where man is a “God in ruins,” and nature is a man rewinding, or the flow of seasons is a “truth repeating itself.” How are such ideas expressed in the writings of these authors?
- The humanization of science and spiritualization of matter was a concern common to the two movements.
- To learn from both schools of thought that the visible reveals the invisible.

Building an intellectual relationship between Gibran, Naimy and Transcendentalism cannot be comprehensive without making a comparative study between the following works: *Sand and Foam*, *Walden*, *The Garden of the Prophet*, *Leaves of Grass*, *Mirdad*, *Essays*, *The Earth Gods* and other similar literary and intellectual “Transcendentalist” works.

Remarks on the References

Sometimes the difficulty of finding proper references invites writers to go to secondary material on the subject. The introduction of Dr. Bekdash’s comparative study refers to an encyclopedia as one of the references. Personally, I do not favor citing encyclopedias as references, specifically for a Ph.D. dissertation, for the simple fact that an encyclopedia gives only basic knowledge and does not go further and deeper into analytical knowledge. An encyclopedia might be accepted as a source of reference for an article or term paper, but more sources that are original are expected for a Ph.D. dissertation.

References, ought to be first-hand sources. It goes against the spirit of research to accept and use second-hand sources as a point of reference. I am making this observation after noticing that the author accepted several times to use unacceptable secondhand sources. For example, he quotes Frederick Schlegel,

or Paul Valerie (p. 2), Charles Nodier (p. 5), Victor Hugo (p. 6), De La Mettrie (p. 11), or Boileau (p. 23) through Mohammed Ghoneimi Hilal or Yusuf Karam. The question is what if these quotations were inaccurate copies of the original text? What if these quotations were used in a different context than the original one used by the author of the quotation? If the author of the dissertation does not know the original language of the text, then he should refer to a professional full translation of that particular text and not to a secondhand quotation.

While commenting on references, we may note that the dissertation refers more than once to European authors, such as Bukhinski (pp. 8, 9) and Rene Wellek (pp. 41-46) through the Arabic translations of these works. This is acceptable only if there is not any translation of these works into a European language known by the researcher. Is it possible that Bukhinski and Wellek have not been translated into English or French? This observation becomes more serious when the researcher refers to a British or American author through an Arabic translation of his work.⁴ I do not see any justification for that language diversion or even language gap, especially when the dissertation discusses, in English, a western trend of thought and literature, and refers to British and American authors.

Historical Clarifications

If Transcendentalism is one of the outcomes of Romanticism, the reverse is not always true. Consequently, the study of a Transcendentalist influence, or thought, or literary style, does not necessarily require the need to go back to Romanticism. Also the discussion of American Romanticism does not require the analysis of European Classicism and European Romanticism. What do Classicism and Romanticism have to do with the influence of American Transcendentalists on Lebanese writers? The justification that relates one to the other, by considering that Transcendentalism emerged from Romanticism and this movement came as a reaction to Classicism, might lead us to the

consideration that classical literature is the result of the Roman and Greek culture and these were once dominating the world and so on. In this case, a clear diversion from the original subject takes place and the dissertation moves from an analytical study, on the influence of Transcendentalism on Gibran and Naimy, to a presentation of history on a totally different subject. The argument of interrelationship between subjects does not justify the historical approach that could easily divert the whole research from one subject to the other and from one level of analytical discussion to a different level of historical survey.

If it is true that Transcendentalism is related to Romanticism, it is equally true that Transcendentalism is related to other human cultural and religious sources such as Christianity, Muslim Sufism, Hinduism, Arab culture and other Eastern patterns of thought. The concept of nature and the relationship between man and nature is also well represented and taken care of in the Transcendentalist movement as revealed in the works of Thoreau, Emerson, and Whitman.

Terminology

The expression “renovation movement” does not seem to be very accurate as a term. Renovation means rebuilding, repairing or cleaning. I am not sure whether the author is after this meaning of the term. He most probably meant reform, which implies amendment or improvement by change of form or removal of faults or abuses. Reform indicates the act of change into an improved form or condition by enforcing or introducing a better method or course of action. This is why I suggest using the word reform instead of renovation.

The reader is faced with another confusion related to terminology. One title reads: “Movement of Transcendentalism to America, Pioneers and Basic Ideas,” and talks about “Movement of Romanticism to America, Pioneers and Cultural Sources.” It seems to me that the author of the dissertation easily allows

himself to replace one term with the other, Romanticism with Transcendentalism⁵ or *visa versa* any place in his research. Can we really do that? Aren't we suggesting, in such a case, that both are identical? In brief, the following observation becomes necessary: if Transcendentalism is, or could be, one aspect of Romanticism, Romanticism is not always, and cannot be constantly, a Transcendentalist movement. In this case, one term cannot replace the other. If it does so, as is the case here, then the dissertation falls into a serious confusion that defeats its purpose. Another mismatch between the two titles is the replacement of "cultural sources" with "basic ideas." Again does the author mean the first or the second? If he means that both are really the same thing, then we have a problem.

Structure

It is interesting to compare the structure of the dissertation on *The Influence of Transcendentalism on Gibran and Naimy* with a similar dissertation presented at Indiana University in 1991 by Walter Edward Dunnavent III entitled *Ameen Rihani in America: Transcendentalism in an Arab-American Writer*. In the latter, the reader can see no history material except for that concerning Rihani's life, which comes in 32 pages out of 230, in other words only 13.9% of the whole dissertation. The other three chapters and the conclusion are an analytical and comparative study of Rihani's English works in parallel to those of Emerson and Thoreau. The author does not attempt even to define Transcendentalism⁶ except through the works of the writers involved. The author could have included Whitman in his study, in order to compare his poetry with Rihani's Arabic free verse. A comparison between *Leaves of Grass* and *Hymns of the Valleys* could have been a pioneering work in comparative literature.

The dissertation dealing with the influence of the Transcendentalist movement on Gibran and Naimy dwells too much on the background of the different European literary schools, covering almost half of the study, before reaching the

basic subject and building a certain comparison between the American Transcendentalist movement and the two Lebanese American authors.

The Influence of American Literature

It is very significant and interesting to compare the biographies of Gibran and Walt Whitman as the author of the dissertation has done (pp. 131-137). I don't know of any other study on Gibran that attempts to build such a relevant and indicative comparison. However, a comparative biography does not necessarily lead to the assumption of the influence of one on the other. The invitation of the Poetry Society of America sent to Gibran to give a lecture on Whitman may not be the best proof of the impact of Whitman on Gibran, as the author of the dissertation would like to maintain. In fact, it is no proof at all unless it is supported by anything written by Gibran that reveals a clear influence. Yet, no such text is quoted in the dissertation.

Similarly, the discussion of pantheism and reincarnation in Naimy's thought (pp. 142-146) has a bearing on the subject of the research, but the dissertation does not establish the link between the two doctrines and the core issue, which is Transcendentalism and its influence on the two "Mahjar" authors.

Only as of Chapter 4 does the dissertation go directly to the point and discuss what the author calls the "signs of influence." Maybe he meant here the indications, the signals, the clues, or simply the proofs. The "first sign," he says, "of the influence of American Literature on Gibran and Naimy is the boldness in freely expressing their opinions and thoughts..." I am not sure to what extent boldness constitutes a proof of influence.⁷ Many Arab Renaissance writers were characterized by boldness without being influenced by American literature or by Transcendentalism. Are similar characteristics, in principle, a sign of *influence*, or a sign of *common denominators*?

Again, the fact that both Whitman and Gibran criticized the Church and the clergy does not establish proof of the former's influence or of his "tempting" or "encouraging" Gibran to take a similar step, as the dissertation expresses. The attempt of the author of the dissertation to quote Suheil Bushrui "in this respect" gives the impression that Bushrui supports this argument. In fact, Bushrui's quotation has nothing to do with Whitman. It only observes that Gibran's severe criticisms of the Church "have still not been entirely forgiven."

I should mention here that Dr. Bekdash has succeeded in making a very interesting study comparing the texts and ideas of Gibran and those of Walt Whitman. This study is, I believe, the first of its kind. It points out parallel lines of thought or parallel expressions, terms and language found in the writings of the two authors. Examples are the concepts of madness as a symbol of total nudity, of total detachment from all the evils of society (p. 157), of belief in a continuous life (pp. 158-160), of unity of existence or pantheism (pp. 161-163), and of life and death (pp. 164-166).

These significant comparisons sometimes lead the author of the dissertation to draw some conclusions that are not always logical and convincing. In comparing Whitman's and Gibran's concepts of God, the dissertation concludes that "Whitman's Ode is the source of Gibran's attitude to God." (p. 168) The reader would ask here how the researcher proves that a text of the American poet becomes the source of the "attitude" or belief or concept adopted by another author? His only argument is the similarity between the two texts (pp. 169-174). Not only are these similarities debatable; one would also question the logical link between similarities and influence. The dissertation does not even give us clear evidence about whether or not Gibran had read Whitman carefully, whether or not Gibran commented on Whitman, and whether or not Gibran wrote about Whitman. Just comparing similar ideas does not prove that one writer has been the "source" for the other or has influenced the other.

In Naimy's case, the researcher's argument becomes stronger and more convincing, in spite of Naimy's denial of any Transcendentalist influence. He is convincing when he shows how Naimy "takes" from Emerson and Whitman. In the beginning, I thought that the researcher used a strong word, "takes," but when one continues to read his findings, one discovers that this word might be a euphemism for copying. The examples, given in the dissertation, leave no doubt about this kind of "influence" (pp. 187-195):

Emerson: My own body must be ranked under this name
Nature.

Naimy: Our bodies are part of Nature.

Emerson: I don't see anything that makes me bow my
head to a man.

Naimy: Beware bowing your head to any man.

Whitman: What has become of ...men? They are alive.

Naimy: Dead men are still alive.

Whitman: Only themselves understand themselves and
the like of themselves.

Naimy: You make out of yourselves reformers of
yourselves.

Whitman: How perfect is the earth and the minutest thing
upon it. What is called good is perfect, and what is called
bad is just as perfect.

Naimy: The world, which is the outcome of the perfect
God is perfect, if you see it imperfect... it will be due to
lack in your knowledge and to weakness in your insight.

I think the author of the dissertation was successful in producing evidence to prove the clear influence of American Transcendentalism on Naimy in spite the fact that the latter denies this influence and even tries to deny that "any of the 'Pen Society' members were influenced by American Literature or American life", as Dr. Bekdash mentions (pp. 154, 174, 175).

Conclusion

Finally, the significance of this subject is due to four main reasons:

1. It deals with a new topic that is relatively original in the history of Lebanese-American literature and Arab-American literature.
2. It invites a comparative study that could focus on the family environment, the cultural background, and the literary texts, which give such a study the necessary solid tools of discussion and research.
3. It takes the initiative of discussing and evaluating the influence and the intellectual impact of American Transcendentalism, as represented by two of its major figures, on two other key figures of modern Arab literature.
4. It could be considered as one of the pioneering steps in reshaping and characterizing a part⁸ of the Lebanese version of Transcendentalism as one of the major trends in modern American literature and culture.

After all, this interesting subject, i.e. the relationship between American Transcendentalism and Arab American Literature deserves to be studied carefully and thoroughly. Each of the suggested areas of concern, under “observations on this topic,” deserves to be a subject for a new comprehensive study or dissertation.

Endnotes

1. Refer to: *Kahlil Gibran* by K.S. Hawi; *Kahlil Gibran* by J. Gibran and K. Gibran; *Kahlil Gibran Man and Poet* by S. B. Bushrui and Joe Jenkins; *Prophet* by Robin Waterfield.
2. El-Hage, George Nicolas, (2002) *William Blake and Kahlil Gibran, Poets of Prophetic Vision*. Beirut: Notre Dame University Press.
3. Bekdash, Sami A., (1998) *The Influence of Transcendentalism on Kahlil Gibran and Michael Naimy*. Beirut: The English Department, The Lebanese University.
4. A literary or analytical work cannot be considered as original if it refers to second-hand sources, or if it uses quotations from another study of the text.

Using a quotation from a different context risks the misinterpretation and misunderstanding of the same quotation taken from its original place as set in the original text.

5. It would have been much better for the author to discuss Transcendentalism as a term, as a school of thought and literature, rather than adopting the historical approach, which, in most cases, is more confusing.
6. The author should have gone through major contemporary studies on American Transcendentalism such as: *Transcendentalism as a Social Movement* by Anne Rose; *The Transcendentalist Minister* by William Hutchison; *Studies in New England Transcendentalism* by H. C. Goddard; and *Literary Transcendentalism* by Lawrence Buell.
7. Here again, the approach raises the question of clarifying terms used. Unless the author clarifies exactly what he means by the key terms that build his hypothesis, it becomes very difficult to construct a sound and solid relationship of meanings.
8. Other works of Arab-American Literature could be studied in relation with American Transcendentalism such as: *The Book of Khalid*, *The Path of Vision*, *A Chant of Mystics*, and *Hymns of the Valleys*.

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CHAPTER VII

The Book of Khalid and The Prophet

Introduction

In an attempt to describe the portrait of the Emigrant by Auerbach Levy, Rihani interprets the emigrant's expression, finding that it involves "a past rich with culture, tradition and persecution."¹ It is clear in this interpretation that the art critic sees himself in this portrait as if in a mirror. The contradictory legacy of rich culture and persecution is an experience that most emigrants understand and more so if they happen to be intellectuals. The outcome of such a difficult experience is revealed by Rihani in his *Critiques in Art* as an amalgamation of

light and flame extinguished by centuries of brooding silence. And out of this silence comes [the] Emigrant not as a red, but as a type that is intensely human, with possibilities untold of spiritual and intellectual development. (1999: 127)

Perhaps this outcome represents the thesis of *The Book of Khalid*, which could be simplified under two aspects:

1. getting out of the silence,² and
2. striving for human development.³

Khalid reveals the first aspect affirming:

For our country is just beginning to speak, and I am her chosen voice. I feel that if I do not respond, if I do not

come to her, she will be dumb forever. (*The Book of Khalid*, 1911: 128)

The second aspect is manifested in several chapters of the book. Actually it represents the spirit of Khalid specifically when he hears “The Voice of the Dawn, the dawn of a new life, of a better, purer, healthier, higher spiritual Kingdom.” (1911: 236) An ideal but problematic attitude captures the reader when Khalid declares: “I am a citizen of two worlds—a citizen of the Universe... I am equally devoted both to the material and the spiritual” (*Khalid*, 1911: 237; *The Path of Vision*, 1921: chapter 1, 3, 6 and 10).

The purpose of this chapter is not to discuss the thesis of *The Book of Khalid* nor to evaluate the book in terms of its philosophic and literary values, but rather to highlight the pioneering prophetic work of this book and to recognize this achievement as a founding step for another major prophetic work in Arab-American literature, namely Gibran’s *Prophet*.

The Pioneering Role

Mohammad Husain Haykal wrote *Zaynab*, another pioneering novel in Arabic, almost the same time as Rihani wrote *The Book of Khalid*, between 1907 and 1910. Yet *The Book of Khalid* was published two years before Haykal’s novel. One could conclude from these simple facts that if *Zaynab* is usually listed as the first novel in Arabic, then *The Book of Khalid* is, and should be, listed as the first published Arab novel in English. Geoffrey Nash compares the national and cultural aspect of the two works:

If *Zaynab* has its significance in the development of a national literature and a national longing for form, *The Book of Khalid* embraces the interface of America and the ethnic ghetto, and the confrontation of Middle Eastern traditionalism with a modernizing nationalist awakening... (*The Arab Writer in English*, 1998: 26)

Recent scholars of Arab-American literature once more reinforce the pioneering role of the author of *Khalid*. Robin Waterfield confirms that “Rihani was, in general, a pioneer in almost every field later explored by Gibran and his fellow Mahjar writers.” (*Prophet, The Life and Times of Kahlil Gibran*, 1998: 118-119) Scholars specialized specifically in Kahlil Gibran and well published in the United States or the United Kingdom also confirm the pioneering role of Khalid himself. According to Suheil Bushrui, *The Book of Khalid* is “possibly the most complete account in English of the modern liberated Arab.” (*Arab American Cultural Relations in the 20th Century*, 1990) While Nash elaborates on the other sense of the pioneering aspect, which is the concern of an Arab American author in his adopted new land, he sees that

none of the other Mahjar authors had as wide an interest in their adopted country as Ameen Rihani. Confident enough of his own biculturalism, he set out to make an inventory of the impact upon himself exploring the wider implications of being a pioneer Arab-American. (*The Arab Writer in English*, 1998: 27-28)

Khalid's Prophethood

We hear Khalid's voice speaking with a tone borrowed from the Messiah and the prophets of the Old Testament: “Light, Love, and Will – with corals and pearls from their seas would I crown thee, O my City. In these streams would I baptize thy children, O my City...” (*Khalid*, 1911: 247)

It is significant here to trace the prophetic symbols of Khalid based on his attitude and thought as described in his book. The reader notices that the image of the Prophet is vividly present in the mind of the author, who uses the term repeatedly in describing some of *The Book's* characters. One of them is Jerry, the owner of a bookshop who, in a chapter entitled “The Summer Afternoon of a Sham,” is sketched as someone who “resembles

the Prophet.” (*Khalid*, 1911: 58) The author elaborates in portraying the “prophetic solemnity of the face [of Jerry who] is as grim and sullen as the Prophet.” (*Khalid*, 1911: 59)

Another personality is the hermit. The author opens Chapter X of Book II entitled “The Vineyard in The Kaaba” by saying: “...even the hermits of the Lebanon mountains, like the prophets of America ... are subject to the laws of evolution.” (*Khalid*, 1911: 202) This law of evolution is applicable to Khalid himself even when he is referred to as the new Prophet, the new Muhdi (*Khalid*, 1911: 8) or as “Our Prophet” who “lived in a cave in the wilderness of New York for five years.” (*Khalid*, 1911: 8). Khalid speaks of himself as the “chosen voice” (*Khalid*, 1911: 128-29) of his country, and his disciple friend Shakib goes on about Khalid, confirming that “he speaks, too, of his nation, his people, awaking, lispig, beginning to speak, waiting for him, the chosen voice!” (*Khalid*, 1911: 129) This voice delivers sermons of a prophetic vision and spirit. In Book III, chapter II, entitled “The Voice of the Dawn,” Khalid is anxious to affirm his devotion to both the material and the spiritual kingdoms. He affirms: “when the two in me are opposed to each other, conflicting, inimical, obdurate, my attitude towards them is neither that of my friend the Hermit nor that of my European superman...” (*Khalid*, 1911: 237) Scholars interested in Arab-American literature consider that “America is Khalid’s ‘Spiritual Mother’, the place where he received his call to prophethood...” (*Nash, The Arab Writer in English*, 1998: 28) If the first part of this statement is debatable, the second part stands on more solid ground. Nash sees that Rihani “had invented a fictive messiah, and produced an appropriate prophetic discourse for him.” (*The Arab Writer*, 1998: 29) It is true that Khalid’s call for prophethood⁴ came from America but it is equally true that Khalid’s prophetic vision is inspired by the spiritual values of the East and drawn from the human, social, and political needs of the East.

The Relationship between Khalid and Gibran

The seven illustrations made by Gibran for *The Book of Khalid* confirm the original contact between the book and the artist. These illustrations included drawings covering the title of the work in Arabic, and one illustration at the beginning and one at the end of each of the three Books. It is significant how Gibran highlighted the prophetic aspect of Khalid in his artwork for *The Book*, especially in drawings including the smiling sphinx with wings, the person carrying the torch, and the human bodies following the leader. If these illustrations stress anything, they emphasize Gibran's understanding of Khalid's prophethood. Scholars have neglected the artistic link between Gibran and Khalid and have been more interested in the intellectual relationship between the two. The author of *The Arab Writer in English* compares Gibran's taste for the "oriental and the exotic," with that of Rihani, who, according to Nash, "had already exposed in his satirical depiction of the young prophet Khalid." (*The Arab Writer*, 1998: 36) He elaborates further with the following statement: "Gibran adopted for himself the prophetic role for the artist that Rihani had already toyed with in *The Book of Khalid...*" (*The Arab Writer*, 1998: 38). In other words, Gibran adopted for himself Khalid's role. To support this idea, Nash highlights the social and historical context of both works by confirming that

the material and cultural conditions which helped produce the text [of *The Prophet*], ...and the new social and economic possibilities opened by an age of rapid modernization ...are present and specifically foregrounded in *The Book of Khalid*. (*The Arab Writer*, 1998: 44)

Suheil Bushrui and Joe Jenkins highlighted the image of the wise man coming from the East and noted that "the idea of a sage dispensing wisdom among the people of a foreign land no doubt appealed to Gibran" (*Kahlil Gibran Man and Poet, A New*

Biography, 1998: 99) as revealed in *The Book of Khalid*. They support this observation by stating that Rihani's book

has foreshadowed Gibran's *The Prophet* in that it conveys the teaching of the East in the language of the West, and was written by an Arab who appreciated the best of both worlds. (*Kahlil Gibran Man and Poet*, 1998: 99)

In his attempt to trace the influences that shaped Gibran, Robin Waterfield states clearly that after Gibran's return to the USA, the one "who was to have the greatest influence on him, and engagement in his life, was Ameen Rihani... [whom] Gibran admired immensely, describing him as a great poet." (*Prophet, The Life and Time of Kahlil Gibran*, 1998: 118-19) Waterfield adds: "It is not going too far to say that for some time he [Gibran] aspired to follow in his [Rihani's] footsteps." (*Prophet*, 1998: 119) *Waterfield indicates in his notes that*

Rihani was a model for Gibran in two important ways: as a pioneer of protest and, with regard to *The Book of Khalid* in particular, in writing about Arab experiences in English, that is, for an international audience. (*Prophet, The Life and Time of Kahlil Gibran*, 1998: 313)

When it comes to Gibran's direct reaction to *The Book of Khalid* we find it in two letters, one to Mary Haskell on May 16, 1911 saying "Rihani is very happy - his book *Khalid* is accepted by first class publishers, and I am sure you will enjoy reading it when it comes out." (*Otto, The Love Letters of Kahlil Gibran and Mary Haskell*, 1970: 74) It was obvious that this successful step of writing and publishing in English was a role model that Gibran took from his close friend and gave it significant thought. The other indication of Gibran's reaction to *Khalid* came on Monday, June 12, 1912, in a letter to Rihani himself, saying: "I would have liked to kiss you farewell before your ship takes you towards that place where the sun rises... But above all... come back with

another *Khalid*.” (Bushrui, *Unpublished Gibran Letters, to Ameen Rihani*, 1972: 10) One could conclude from Gibran’s first reaction to *The Book of Khalid* that he realized the significance of writing and publishing in English for the western reader and eventually for an international audience. This positive reaction from Gibran was paralleled by a similar reaction from a western reader and friend; Charlotte Teller writes to Mary Haskell on December 13, 1911, saying: “Rihani’s *Book of Khalid* is directly and indirectly the cause of my wakefulness...” (Gibran, J. and K., *Kahlil Gibran His Life and World*, 1974: 228) Whether this “wakefulness” was intellectual, emotional, spiritual, or a bit of each combined, the indication of the vitality of Khalid is clear. Khalid’s ability to create a special, solid, and vivid relationship with his reader is unquestionable. The artistic and intellectual relationship between Gibran and Khalid, as an example, sets the proper background for a comparative study between *The Book of Khalid* and Gibran’s *Prophet*.

Khalid and The Prophet: Similar Universal Concerns

In spite of the fact that most scholars, in English and in Arabic, have mentioned a kind of relationship between the two apostles, Khalid and the Prophet, very few, not to say none of them, have drawn up a comparative study between the two major works of Arab American literature. It is significant, at this point, to trace a series of similarities and differences between these two monumental works written in the first quarter of the twentieth century. This is the purpose of this chapter.

The prophetic characteristic of the two heroes paves the way for both of them to discuss with their audience basic issues of a universal and substantial nature. Both Khalid and Al-Mustafa preached among the people of a new city, a city that could possibly make their dreams a reality. Both are ill-tempered and do not hesitate to burn books, pictures and other items on the fire to express their anger and dissatisfaction. While Khalid burns pamphlets and books (*Khalid*, 1911: 58, 61, 65, 74) as a sign of

refusing conventionalism, the Prophet talks about burning laws and pictures (Gibran, *The Prophet*, 1966: 37, 48) as an attempt to obtain liberation from traditions. Both bid farewell to their cities of prophecy-making, New York and Orphalese, going back to their homeland. (*Khalid*, 1911: 138, *The Prophet*, 1966: 3, 95) Both Khalid and Al-Mustafa had their disciples who were at the same time their interviewers and their best listeners and pupils. In this sense Al-Mitra played a similar role to that of Shakib. Both introduced and interrogated the prophet Khalid and the prophet Al-Mustapha.

What common issues did both prophets discussed? What were their common concerns? In reviewing both texts, I could point to several similar topics dealt with in both works. I have tried to cut down the list to eleven. These common topics are: suffering, friendship, soul, truth, knowledge, democracy, falsehood, solitude, work, love and the desert.⁵ In the flow of these topics, I took the first book as a guide.

For Khalid, suffering is the result of crucified hopes and dreams and one should be prepared for this kind of crucifixion: “If your hopes are not crucified,” he says, “you pass into the Paradise of your dreams. If they are crucified... the gates of the said Paradise will be shut against you.” (*Khalid*, 1911: 29) As a result, “when you dream you are in *Jannat*... you must be prepared to go through *Juhannam* the following day.” (*Khalid*, 1911: 31) This confrontation of dream and reality that ends up with suffering and pain is expressed in *The Prophet* when Al-Mustafa says: “Your pain is the breaking of the shell that encloses your understanding... Much of your pain is self-chosen. It is the bitter potion by which the physician within you heals your sick self.” (*The Prophet*, 1966: 52) Both recognize the role of unpleasant feelings in shaping man’s perceptions and insights.

Describing the friendship of Khalid and Shakib, the *Histoire Intime* highlights the ethical standards of this relationship. It says: “One would never permit himself an advantage which the

other could not enjoy, or a pleasure in which the other could not share.” (*Khalid*, 1911: 46) *The Prophet* sees in friendship a similar level of ethics where “all thoughts, all desires, all expectations are born and shared with joy that is unclaimed. And in the sweetness of friendship let there be laughter, and sharing of pleasures.” (*The Prophet*, 1966: 58) Comparing these two definitions of friendship, a short statement could link both very closely: friendship is the act of sharing with joy. A condition of “unexampled friendship” is a “complete oneness” as expressed in the chapter entitled “The Cellar of the Soul,” (*Khalid*, 1911: 46) while according to *Al-Mustapha* “your friend is your needs answered.” (*The Prophet*, 1966: 59) If friendship unites, as Khalid explains, each partner answers the needs of the other, as the Prophet expresses. It is obvious that one concept leads to the other. The first prophet’s perception helped shape the second prophet’s comprehension.

Both Khalid and the Prophet believe in the power of the soul. Khalid asserts, “The power of the soul is doubled by the object of its love, or by such labor of love as it undertakes.” (*Khalid*, 1911: 128) The Prophet highlights this labor of love, or act of love, that supports the power of the soul by drawing in words that specific power “for the soul walks upon all paths. The soul walks not upon a line, neither does it grow like a reed. The soul unfolds itself, like a lotus of countless petals.” (*The Prophet*, 1966: 55) In this belief both Khalid and *Al-Mustapha* attempt to discover each their own soul and shape their own foresight. While Khalid highlights the labor of love as the power of the soul, the Prophet observes that particular power as ever unfolding.

When it comes to truth, both prophets try to put this concept on the prism of reality where the variations and variables lead one to see the different sides of a truth. Khalid says: “Of a truth, many attractions and disattractions are here.” (*Khalid*, 1911: 52) Likewise the Prophet carries on, twelve years later, by saying: “Say not ‘I have found the truth’, but rather, ‘I have found a

truth’.” (*The Prophet*, 1966: 55) Both prophets, in spite of their eastern mystic background, attempt to unfold the reality of this concept to find out that there is a truth to every little aspect of life and that it is unreal to replace a certain truth by the ultimate universal one.

On the other hand, both prophets express their immediate need for knowledge. While Khalid “asks for a few of the fruits of knowledge” (*Khalid*, 1911: 51) the Prophet goes further in this image and sees that “your ears thirst for the sound of your heart’s knowledge.” (*The Prophet*, 1966: 54) Both prophets realize the significance and role of knowledge in their mission. Both of them seek the intellectual self support that enriches prophecy and highlights its efficiency and effect. In a more accurate comparison we notice that the first prophet “asks for ...” while he second prophet “thirsts for...” The first prophet looks for the “fruits of knowledge” while the second prophet looks for the “sound of your heart’s knowledge.” This could be one of the keys to understanding both prophets. The first looks concretely at knowledge as such, while the second looks at it symbolically. The first talks about the knowledge of the mind and the second talks about the knowledge of the heart. A rational, pragmatic and enlightened prophet have paved the way for an emotional, spiritual and foresighted prophet.

Both prophets meet in their perspective to democracy and freedom. Both highlight the moral values directly attached to these social and political concepts. Khalid tries to reverse the pattern and says: “Instead of canvassing and orating for Democracy’s illustrious Candidate and the Noble Cause... one ought to do a little canvassing for Honesty and Truth among Democracy’s leaders...” (*Khalid*, 1911: 106) Isn’t the Prophet, on the other hand, “canvassing” the moral values of freedom and democracy by asking: “how can a tyrant rule the free and the proud, but for a tyranny in their own freedom and a shame in their own pride?” (*The Prophet*, 1966: 48-9) Both prophets agree

that fear is against freedom and democracy. For Khalid, “we obey either from reverence and love, or from fear. We are either power-worshippers or cowards, but never, never traders.” (*Khalid*, 1911: 112) Al-Mustapha carries on with a similar idea of fear, suggesting, “if it is a fear you would dispel, the seat of that fear is in your heart and not in the hand of the feared.” (*The Prophet*, 1966: 49) If we want to describe freedom according to both prophets, then it is that fearless act characterized by ethics and moral values.

Both prophets were concerned about determining falsehood or good and evil as part of their focus on moral values. To Khalid “what is unlawful by virtue of the Divine Law the wealth of all the Trust-Kings of America cannot make lawful.” (*Khalid*, 1911: 170) This boldness is expressed in Al-Mustapha’s words: “you are good when you walk to your goal firmly and with bold steps.” (*The Prophet*, 1966: 65) Both prophets are seeking for the giant virtual self that could play the role model in facing difficulties. “In your longing for your giant self,” says Al-Mustapha, “lies your goodness; and that longing is in all of you.” (*The Prophet*, 1966: 66) Virtue to both prophets is the oil painting with which you draw your good self, and the path through which your vision is clarified and your goal is achieved.

Solitude is another common ground between Khalid and Al-Mustapha. “Disappointed, distraught, diseased... excommunicated, crossed in love, Khalid... suddenly disappears. But where he lays his staff, where he spends his months of solitude, neither Shakib nor our old friend the sandomancer can say.” (*Khalid*, 1911: 181) The second prophet, as a means to discover ourselves and meet our immediate needs, similarly describes this state of solitude: “Appease your hunger with our bread and quench your thirst with our wine. In the solitude of their souls they said these things. But were their solitude deeper they would have known... And I hunted only your larger selves that walk the sky.” (*The Prophet*, 1966: 90-1) It is quite striking

how both prophets draw a line from loneliness and isolation to the spacious sky. In his solitude Khalid sees the pine tent “too narrow at times for its crowded guests; but beneath the surface there is room for every root, and over it, the sky is broad enough for all.” (*Khalid*, 1911: 189) Later on, Al-Mustapha addresses his audience saying: “You have sung to me in my aloneness, and I of your longings have built a tower in the sky.” (*The Prophet*, 1966: 95) It is as if both prophets considered and experienced solitude and loneliness as the spiritual highway to the above where only the sky is the limit.

When it comes to work, both prophets designated for it a certain value system without which work becomes meaningless. It is honesty and perfection with Khalid, and an act of love with Al-Mustapha. The first prophet notices “what is the difference between the jewelry you passed off for gold and the arguments of the atheist-preacher? Are they not both instruments of deception, both designed to catch the dollar?” (*Khalid*, 1911:68) Khalid does not hesitate to give one answer to these questions: “Honesty should be the cardinal virtue of the soul.” (*Khalid*, 1911: 68) Al-Mustapha, for his part, looks at work from a similar perspective equally labeled under a parallel value system called the love of life. “In keeping yourself with labor”, he says, “you are in truth loving life... When you work with love you bind yourself to yourself, and to one another, and to God.” (*The Prophet*, 1966: 25-6) When labor is characterized with honesty and love then one might reach perfection “and so thoroughly the work is done.” (*Khalid*, 1911: 206) It is remarkable how both prophets once again use the same image, a temple this time, as a place of refuge while discussing their notion of work and labor. Khalid confirms that “everyone’s life at certain times... is either a Temple, a Hermitage, or a Vineyard; everyone... takes refuge either in God, or in Solitude, or in work. And of a truth, work is the balm of the sore mind of the world.” (*Khalid*, 1911: 209) While the first prophet considers work as an act of the mind, the second prophet looks at labor as an act of the soul, but again using the symbol of

the temple. To Al-Mustapha “Work is love made visible. And if you cannot work with love but only with distaste, it is better that you should leave your work and sit at the gate of the temple to take alms of those who work with joy.” (*The Prophet*, 1966: 28) Once again, when both prophets show their concern about the same universal issue, one deals with it pragmatically, the other theoretically.

One would ask, at this point, what is the meaning of love according to the two prophets? The first prophet experienced a difficult love story with all its ups and downs; the second prophet gave a special sermon on love and both prophets used this word frequently in their talks and narratives. Both recognize the difficulties that come together with this beautiful experience. According to Khalid,

To be truly, deeply, piously in love, one must need [to] hate himself! For would he be always inviting trouble... would he be always bucking against the dead wall of a Democracy or a Church, if he did not sincerely hate himself – if he were not religiously, fanatically in love – in love with Najma, if not with Truth? (*Khalid*, 1911:171)

In spite of the trouble that love may invite, the second prophet asks you to follow the path of love, even its hard path:

When love beckons to you, follow him, though his ways are hard and steep. And when his wings enfold you yield to him, though the sword hidden among his pinions may wound you... For even as love crowns you so shall he crucify you. (*The Prophet*, 1966: 11)

To use a common language for both prophets, love cannot be attained for both of them without fighting it. Both of them suggest the sweet-and-sour taste that comes with love.

Finally, it is quite interesting to find out that both prophets used the notion of the desert as a metaphor for an exhausted yet cheerful and courageous human being. “Now, in this austere

delicacy of the desert, where is all the softness of pure sand, Khalid is perfectly happy... Here are joys manifold for a weary and persecuted spirit.” (*Khalid*, 1911: 335) Al-Mustapha, later on, asks: “And what desert greater shall there be, than that which lies in the courage and the confidence, nay the charity, of receiving?” (*The Prophet*, 1966: 21) It is worthwhile mentioning here that, unlike Gibran, the desert in fact and fiction played, later on, a major role in Rihani’s literature.

Going through the experience of intellectual immigration and facing the challenge of creating a multicultural identity was, most probably, a good background for having and dealing with common universal concerns. However, if the first prophet delivered the sermon of the real identified superman and his great city, the second prophet conveyed the discourse of the ideal superhuman and his imaginative city. This observation would lead us to highlight some of the contrasts in the two works.

***Khalid* and *The Prophet*: Different Perspectives**

Perhaps the first comparison between Rihani and Gibran was the one made by a friend of both, Charlotte Teller. On December 13, 1911, Charlotte wrote to Mary Haskell saying:

To be quite frank Kahlil has never made me feel *Syria*, the book [of Khalid], does. And yet how much more I feel Rihani because of his stiletto-like satire and humor... Rihani’s personality has suddenly become large enough to conceal most of the rest of Existence. His pain, is powerful...” (Gibran, J. and K., *Gibran His Life and World*, 1974: 228)

This comparison highlights two major points in the author of *Khalid* where Charlotte Teller finds him differing from Gibran. These points are:

1. The self and national identity⁶ as revealed in *The Book of Khalid* were never brought to light by Gibran when addressing himself to the West.

2. The ironic and caricaturistic style expressed in *The Book of Khalid* was less felt in Gibran's diction and sentence structure.
3. Rihani's strong and impressive personality covers the "rest of existence," while Gibran's personality is rather delicate, clandestine, and self-concealed.

One might ask, if these statements were written in 1911, seven years before Gibran ever wrote and published in English and twelve years before he published *The Prophet*, with what was Miss Teller comparing *The Book of Khalid*? My guess is that she was comparing Rihani's work with Gibran's personality as she knew him during that period. Miss Teller was however a close friend to both writers.

To elaborate on the self-identity and the national concern we can easily refer to three main chapters in *The Book of Khalid*. These are chapters V, VI and VII of Book The Third discussing respectively Union and Progress, Revolutions Within and Without, and A Dream of Empire. Khalid's Union and Progress tour in Lebanon, Syria and Arabia "is bound to have more than a political significance... the days must soon unfold the ... ideas of Khalid." (*Khalid*, 1911: 286) These political concepts are not found in the discourses of Al-Mustapha. To Khalid "a political revolution must always be preceded by a spiritual one, that it might have some enduring effect." (*Khalid*, 1911: 290) The concept of revolution Al-Mustapha speaks nothing about, and his attitude towards revolution is far beyond the wise, calm, inspiring attitude of Al-Mustapha. When it comes to the dream of an Empire, Khalid's enthusiasm and clear vision are manifested in these words: "Out in those deserts is a race which is always young... With my words and your love and influence, with our powers united, we can build an Arab Empire..." (*Khalid*, 1911: 303) This kind of a dream is totally absent in Al-Mustapha's words and vision. The national identity that the first prophet carried was exchanged for a general human identity with the second prophet.

The sarcasm, wit, irony and sense of humor in *Khalid* that was often expressed in almost every chapter of the three books of the work is not found in the solemn, earnest, peaceful and straightforward sermons of Al-Mustapha. Khalid draws keen caricatures of people surrounding him like “second-hand Jerry,” or “Im-Hanna”, or “Father Farouche” (*Khalid*, 1911: 58-69, 72-5, 176-7) and others.

The reader can discover more differences than those that Miss Teller had pointed out in 1911. I will mention here two more before ending this paper. The suffering of Khalid is the real, continuous, deep, and human suffering that Al-Mustapha did not know. Khalid’s personality is dramatic, growing through the experience of emigration and always ready for intellectual, emotional, and spiritual confrontations, while Al-Mustapha’s personality is stagnant where the same features are alike whether at the beginning or at the end of his mission. Khalid went through pain and suffered in the “Via Dolorosa,” “The Howdaj of Falsehood,” “The Stoning and Flight” (*Khalid*, 1911: 25-33, 167-180, 325-332) as well as in other phases of his life. Al-Mustapha, in his one sermon on pain, says: “Much of your pain is self-chosen.” (*The Prophet*, 1966: 52) The reader can easily notice that Khalid’s suffering is not paralleled with Al-Mustapha’s pain that he talked about and never experienced. Al-Mustapha, on the other hand, discussed issues that were never part of Khalid’s concerns such as “Eating and Drinking,” “Houses,” and “Clothes.” (*The Prophet*, 1966: 23-4, 31-4, 35-6, 60-1)

Finally, the language of the first prophet carries two main characteristics that are not to be found in the language of the second prophet. Khalid’s English language, first of all, carries with it many expressions and words that are directly and purposely borrowed from the Arabic language, such as *Al-Fatihah*, *Allah*, *billah*, *Janat*, *Jouhanam*, *aymakanen-kan*, *ya Muhtaram*, *mojadderah*, *Im-Hanna*, *ya habibi*, *howdaj*, *kaimkams*, *masnad*, *medjidi*, *Kaaba*, *awafy*, *mafsudin*, *inkhitaf*,

*kulmakan, sidr, amirs, sheikhs, Tammuz, seraj, dastur, mutafarnejin, Barr'ush-Sham, jubbah, Al-Khatimah, and wassalamu aleik.*⁷ This made the spectrum of this prophet expand to the East and the West, where both “can almost touch” (*The Nation*, March 21, 1912) in the text itself and maybe for the first time in English literature. Also, Khalid’s English language is a sophisticated one, that was able to challenge the native speakers in order to reach them and create Khalid’s own audience with full confidence and credibility.

Conclusion

To conclude, one can find some justification for saying that the prophecy of Khalid paved the way for the prophecy of Al-Mustapha. Both had common universal concerns related to knowledge, truth, freedom, and love. Both addressed themselves to the City of their vision or imagination. Both prophets are the result of the emigration experience and the multicultural theme of world literature. Both brought prophecy from the East and addressed themselves to a Western and international audience. However, the first prophet expressed himself in a novel form in what is considered the first Arab-English novel of its kind, while the second prophet expressed himself in a series of sermons on different subjects.

The first prophet identified himself with rational, pragmatic, and universal, visionary philosophy, while the second prophet associated himself with mysticism, utopia, and worldwide human good. Both were seeking the bright future of their communities and of humanity at large.

While we are experiencing the early days of the 21st century we are, at the same time, looking forward to bringing together the disciples of both prophets and preaching to the nations of the this new century a rational idealism and a post-modern practical mysticism. The message is carried out only when striving for the new Superman and for the new Great City whether we call it New York, Orphalese, or Beirut.

Endnotes

1. Rihani wrote and published several articles related to critiques in American and European modern art. These were collected in book form and published under the title of *Critiques in Art* (1999) Beirut: Librairie du Liban Publisher.
2. This term may be understood at several levels: it could be a case study about an ethnic community dealing with a cultural challenge; or about a Midwestern U.S. community dealing with a censorship challenge; or even about a professional recognizing his/her professional responsibilities. It also may indicate the emerging themes in African-American societies, in Asian-American Churches, and/or in Arab-American concerns and literature. This term may also mean fighting for human rights, a concern that was always expressed in Rihani's writings as an American author of an Arab origin and background.
3. Social freedom, political equity, economic growth, and education were dear themes related to human development in the prose and poetry writings of most of the Lebanese and Syrian emigrant writers during the first half of the 20th century.
4. It is worthwhile noticing that Prophethood in the case of Khalid, or Khalidism, is not purely theological and not uniquely spiritual. It may be a melting pot for theology, philosophy, sociology and politics. Khalid's ambition to bridge East and West cannot be limited to spirituality alone, or solely to philosophy or politics. It has to take into consideration all these human aspects. This explains the real, tangible experiences of Khalid whether in Lebanon, or in the United States, or in Syria and Egypt.
5. These topics may be arranged according to substantial categories as follows: human values: suffering, friendship, falsehood and love; human behavior: solitude and work; philosophical concerns: knowledge and truth; spiritual capacity: the soul; political value: democracy; and the aspect of nature that embodies human values and behavior: the desert.
6. It is interesting to notice that self-identity and immigration are two interdisciplinary issues that are expressed in world literature. Examples: Indian diaspora and social impacts, Korean immigration and self-identity, national concerns among Polish immigrants to Canada, cultural characteristics and the Hispanic growing migration to the United States of America.
7. Rihani insists of introducing Arabic vocabulary into his English writings. This may be the linguistic side of his attempt to bridge East and West. For these examples refer to *The Book of Khalid*, pp. 16, 21, 24, 44, 45, 64, 75, 92, 121, 122, 133, 142, 151, 153, 155, 159, 160, 163, 167, 174, 175, 178, 179, 180, 181, 197, 202, 203, 204, 224, 247, 257, 261, 270, 283, 288, 291, 308, 334, 336, 341, 349.

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CHAPTER VIII

Cross-Cultural Approaches of Reconciliation

Ameen Rihani and H.G. Wells

Introduction

A significant aspect of Oriental literature is the consideration that it is not always a movement friendly to the East. Internationalism, or globalization in the modern term, seems to be, in a way, a new political diversion neglecting the proper value of smaller nations and ethnic groups around the world. As much as technology is trying, willingly or unwillingly, to combine efforts around the planet, politics is ending up, with or without planning, by dividing these efforts and trying to re-enforce economic power over poor and weak nations. In the middle of this conflict, started more than a century ago, as early as 1922, a voice from the East called, for an “Orientalism that is not anti-European,” an Orientalism “that is cradled, on the contrary, in European thought”, and [for] an “internationalism that is willing to concede temporarily to the nascent nationalism of the world, both extending, moreover, in a converging direction.” (Rihani, *The White Way and the Desert*, 2002 [posth.], Washington, D.C.: Platform International, p. 108)

In order to focus on the problem, Rihani took the issue as a case study to raise a very significant question that could be the key for the discussion. He asks: “How long will it remain, in the solution of our foreign problems, a question of East and West. When will it become, in other words, a question essentially of justice, if not

also of ethics?" (*The White Way and the Desert*, 2002: 108) It is obvious here that Rihani wanted to shift the issue of East and West, as a real example of internationalism, from the political level to the moral level, from a cause of ethnic interest to a cause of human values. In other words, a true reconciliation of East and West cannot be a political settlement; it must be an ethical rapprochement if it wants to be a true, solid, and long-living cordiality. In this sense a mutual intellectual understanding between two poles, a proper communication on the highway of knowledge, becomes absolutely necessary for any aspect of adjustment between two beliefs, two nations, two cultures related to different geographic and historic regions around the world. In this sense it becomes a matter of conduct and discipline for each to recognize the other¹ and to build a powerful bridge of understanding and love in order to reach the one on the other side and, sometimes, on the other far end.

Perspectives of Reconciliation

One of the historical interpretations of tolerance and reconciliation was directly related to religious and political liberties. The British Prime Minister William Ewart Gladstone spoke out in 1883 supporting freethinkers and confirming:

I am convinced that upon every religious, as well as every political, ground, the true and the wise course is not to deal out religious liberty by halves, by quarters, and by fractions but to deal it out entire, and to leave no distinction between man and man on the ground of religious differences from one end of the land to the other.
(William Safire, *Lend Me Your Ears*, 1992: 764)

To be tolerant, therefore, is to believe in religious and political liberty that allows no partition and no separation of the principle of liberty itself.² To be tolerant is, also, to practice no discrimination between individuals or groups of people based on their cultural differences. Discussing tolerance, therefore, is

discussing liberal-minded individuals and liberal-minded groups of people.

In an answer to Rihani's question, "If the liberal-minded Orient... looks toward Europe for help, what have you left to give it?", Wells replies: "The technical sciences." To this common answer, Wells adds a substantial significance by linking science with another dimension based on a fundamental human factor: freedom. He considers that national and social freedom depends on economic freedom, which can only be attained through the mastery of sciences. Rihani agrees with Wells on linking the political freedom with the economic and social ones. However, his Oriental heritage makes him aware of the lack of spiritual values in the Wells approach. "He saw no spirituality nor the need of it," Rihani comments. (*The White Way and the Desert* 2002: 108-109)

Perhaps it is interesting here to observe Wells' material and economic mutual understanding versus Rihani's moral and intellectual reconciliation. Both may be political but each one coming from a different perspective. This could be elaborated by taking the example of their two contradictory statement on poetry in the East: Wells remembers "something about the Orient suffering from too much poetry" (*The White Way and the Desert*, 2002: 109), and Rihani observes the "poetic and prophetic rhapsodies... and the spirituality of the Arabs [that] looms up in a crude splendor beside which refinement is but a thing of culture, a commonplace, indeed, of art." (Rihani, *The Lore of the Arabian Nights*, 2002 [posth.], Washington, D.C.: Platform International, p.22) It is clear how Wells' reconciliation is non-spiritual, contrary to Rihani, who, in spite of his materialist tendency and realistic approach, could not resist the influence of the spiritual Orient as part of his cultural and social heritage. However, if reconciliation is a political issue to Wells and an ethical issue to Rihani, to both it is a clear and basic human cause, a cause

characterized by accepting the different “forms”³ of the relative beliefs.

A Devilish Dialogue

Imaginary dialogues between two contradictory poles usually represent the relativity of truth, which leads to sarcasm and irony⁴ in our interpretation of the world. Both writers used a fascinating ironic plot and a similar form of expression: a dialogue between God and the Devil or Satan. To Rihani the dialogue, written by Wells, was a “brilliant performance. Mr. Wells has created a most interesting devil, a devil with a knowledge of evolution and a fine sense of humor.” (*The White Way and the Desert*, 2002: 109) In another paragraph Rihani describes the Wellsian Devil as an “honest” creature whose “genius has a scientific, modern twist.” (*The White Way*, 2002: 110) But one might ask, “What does the devil have to do with the idea of reconciliation?” Rihani considers that Wells’ devil stirs up things for God’s benefit. In other words, his role is to stimulate our interest in the other party, or to redirect the current in the direction of the other side. How is that done? Rihani has two key words in answer to that question, science and humor. In Wells’ contemporary novel *The Undying Fire* (1919), Satan says:

If it had not been for me [Man] would still be a needless gardener... Think of it... Perfect flowers! Perfect fruits! Never an autumn chill! Never a yellow leaf! How bored he would have been! How bored! Instead of which, did I not launch him on the most marvelous adventures? It was I that gave him history. (*The Undying Fire*: 7)

The reader can pinpoint the spirit of evolution in these words, the spirit of adventure, stimulation, and provocation as a process of history making. A similar spirit could be traced in Rihani’s Satan when he wrote in 1935 an essay in Arabic entitled “رسالة الشيطان” or Satan’s Role saying:

I have to complete the work of God by assisting Man in illuminating the pathway of continuous evolution and ongoing development. My duty is to warn Man, provoke him, excite him and seduce him... My duty is to stir up whatever is rigid and stiff in the spirit of the human being. (*Ar-Rihaniyat*, The Rihani Essays, 10th edition, 1987: 379-380)

Satan elaborates his role at the end of this essay by explaining:

If Man cannot please himself, then God and myself are unable to please him. We, three, are partners in the same work, we are the sacred three corner stones of life: God, Man and Satan... We will work together to renew the youth of the World and revive the hope in life. We will open the door for Man's new endeavor and reform. (*Ar-Rihaniyat*: 398, 401)

In a final comparison between the two Satans, of H. G. Wells and Ameen Rihani, it may be noticed that the first Satan came from the West wearing the two hats of science and humor as a means of reconciliation. Sixteen years later, the second Satan came from the East with a romantic sensation, a poetic flavor, a scientific and humorous touch, guiding us into an inquisitive journey to the world of curious spirits; a journey reminding us of Al-Ma'arri's *Letter of Repentance (Risalat ul Ghufuran)* رسالة الغفران that Rihani admired and inspired.⁵ Both Satans were far-sighted, using both eyes to see the other face of the coin, the other side of the mountain, as a better means for tolerance and reconciliation.

Criticism and Attraction

The two writers first met in Washington D.C., during the Conference for the Reduction of Armaments in 1921. From the very beginning, Rihani had to criticize H.G. Wells. Wells, according to Rihani, used to write his daily articles without coming to the State Department or the Navy Building for the news; he

accepted without a qualm of conscience the 'feature' piece of a New York newspaper. He also accepted the invitations of Washington society ladies, who, under different circumstances, might have... lifted to him... the lorgnette of curiosity and condescension. (*The White Way and the Desert*, 2002: 107)

In spite of this criticism Rihani confessed, at the same time, that he "was drawn to [Wells] by the fact that he voiced an ideal, a political and social ideal, which I was also voicing in another language and for a world different from his own." (*The White Way and the Desert*, 2002: 107) They were different in more than one way, at least three on the surface: Arabic and English, East and West, business background and teaching background. However, they had a few common concerns: both were, in their own way, advocates of evolution, socialism, internationalism, and futurism.

The evolutionary writer overcomes the traditional ethnic and political barriers; the socialist writer challenges the social and economic difficulties, the internationalist writer overlooks the national boundaries, and the futurist writer builds a bridge between today and tomorrow. This intellectual attitude becomes possible by recognizing the other person and clarifying with him a common vision leading to a real reconciliation with the day to come, with "A Fellow Correspondent"⁶ and with *The Shape of Things to Come*. With this approach, we understand Rihani's reconciliation of East and West and Wells' concept of a modern World State. Both principles are different versions of the same international tolerance and global understanding and cooperation for a common human cause. However, it is significant here to note that this intellectual attitude of both writers is more idealist than realistic, more visionary than real and more of a wishful thinking than a product of a factual and practical mind.⁷ But, after all, isn't this the role of any visionary leading writer and thinker?

Rihani in the Eyes of Wells

H. G. Wells mentions Rihani three times in his book *The Shape of Things to Come* (London, 1933). The first occasion is related to an imaginary international conference held in Basra in 1965, thirty-two years after the publication of Wells' book. The conference, according to this literary work, took place to discuss proposals for the "modern World-State". Wells describes it referring to Rihani and focusing on age, gender, and intellectual background. He says: "It was a young gathering; the average age estimated by Ameen Rihani is about thirty-three, and five or six women attended in the social and educational branches." (*The Shape of Things to Come*: 285)

The second set-up is very similar to the first one except for the age group of the new conference members who gathered in the same place after one decade. The author adds to his previous description the political affiliations of the people involved.

The average age, says Ameen Rihani, [according to Wells] was a full ten years higher. Young men were still coming into the Fellowship abundantly... older men had been radical and revolutionary leaders in the war period... Moreover, the great scheme of the Modern State had now lost something of its first compelling freshness. (*The Shape*: 313)

The third time Wells mentions Rihani is in a different and interesting context. This time Rihani is not only an observer or a descriptive reference but also a political analyst. Discussing political assassinations and executions at the dawn of the 21st century, Wells refers to Rihani who "estimates that more than seven percent of these were carried out upon anonymous, circumstantial, or otherwise unsatisfactory evidence. Most were practically sentenced by court martials." (*The Shape*...: 350) The following and last sentence of this paragraph is strongly and comprehensively critical to the extent that the reader can hardly tell whether it is meant to refer to Wells or to Rihani or to both. It

condemns that contemporary period of history by stating: “The millennium arrived in anything but millennial fashion.” (*The Shape...: 350*) This clear disappointment could be equally true for both writers.

It is significant that the theme of a modern World-State carries with it the seeds of tolerance and reconciliation. For in order to succeed, as Wells and Rihani advocate, any global movement has to recognize local cultures and ethnic differences. Grasping these differences is absolutely necessary if we are to strive for internationalism and globalization. Why the condemnation of the millennium by, supposedly, both of the two authors? Why this common point of view expounded by H. G. Wells, with the support of a thinker from the East in condemning our modern time? The answer perhaps is that the two thinkers overcame their different backgrounds of East and West at the political level, and called for a common human cause that requested a sincere attitude of tolerance and reconciliation. They were disappointed with growing movements of fanaticism and regional wars that were far from accepting the other person and the other point of view. Does this mean that they were defeated? If politically the answer is yes, philosophically it only carries the taste of Socrates’ defeat and the shadow of Jesus’ Crucifixion. Wells and Rihani had a common vision seeking the salvation of humanity. They both were disappointed with the lack of patience and the absence of harmonization among peoples and nations.

The Futurists

Another way of looking into the notion of reconciliation is through time and place, a kind of tool that could be a common concern to humanity. John Paul Lederach considers that reconciliation essentially “represents a place, the point of encounter where concerns about both the past and the future can meet... [It] suggests the acknowledging of the past and envisioning of the future... for re-framing of the present.” (*Sustainable Reconciliation in Divided Societies: 1977*)

It is noticed that both Rihani and Wells were futurist writers. Both considered that the future of humanity must be the center of gravity for our suggested solutions with which we challenge the present.

In *The Shape of Things to Come* Wells draws a visionary world of the future in three steps, first, when

traditions of nationality had to be cleared away for good, and racial prejudice replaced by racial understanding... Next a lingua-franca had to be made universal and one or other of the great literature-bearing languages rendered accessible to everyone... And thirdly, [the] issue had to be joined with the various quasi-universal religious and cultural systems... (*The Shape of Things to Come*: 385-386)

In shorter terms, Wells saw in the future a world uniting nations, languages, and religions in one Modern State.

Thirteen years earlier Rihani wrote an article, in 1920, imagining how the year 1950 was going to look. He saw

a peaceful revolution of the American and British workers, a movement that is going to face the governments of the two countries and call for a united peace where other workers from France, Germany, Russia, Austria and Italy can join. (*Ar-Rihaniyat*, The Rihani Essays: 264)

He saw a "United Nations," established that year, and "able to control all the military powers of its members." (*Ar-Rihaniyat*: 265) In an attempt to explain this imaginary move, Rihani clarifies and elaborates his understanding of the Labor Government:

It is the fourth link in the chain of human Governments. From a paternal government with its wise rulers, to an arbitrary government with its kings of absolute powers, to

a constitutional government with its rich aristocratic rulers, to a socialist government, the government of the laborers, and till tomorrow my friend, till tomorrow. (*Ar-Rihaniyat*: 265)

The difference between the two futurist writers is the fact that one calls for the unity of nations, in the case of Wells, and the other one calls for a United Nations, in the case of Rihani. The latter defends small nations⁸ in the face of great powers, as in the following plea:

Preach people the value of a small nation. For a nation may be small except in its justice, limited except in its goodness. It is an ethical nation with spiritual values where nothing prevails except what is right, and nothing proves superior than what is honest, fraternal, and peaceful. The rulers of a small nation are the princes of wisdom, philosophy and art... (*Ar-Rihaniyat*: 403)

If Wells' futurism is based on natural and social sciences, Rihani's futurism is founded on ethical and intellectual sciences. Both may be far-fetched, but both are seeking a real and sincere solution to our political unsound attitude all over the world. Both have seen, at an early stage, a possible coalition among the nations of the world for a better future for the human race.

Conclusion

This chapter has attempted to show that, although tolerance and reconciliation were common objectives for the two writers from the East and the West, each followed a different approach to solving the problem. They ended up with two opposite visions for the future of humanity. Wells anticipated a single modern government for the whole world, a government that carries with it a unity of nations, religions, and languages disregarding all kinds of cultural and ethnic diversities. This world government seeks a social and economic utopia with the 21st century that will help clarifying the significance of *The Shape of Things to Come*.

Rihani, on the other hand, placed his hope in the revival of small nations where different cultural backgrounds are enhanced and enriched. He believed that the best way for a tolerant and reconciling attitude was to allow the other person, or group of persons, to exercise their ultimate concepts of a social commitment that could be different from the ultimate concepts of other people. The keynote in Rihani's approach is ethics, not only in the sense of moral values but, equally important, in the sense of political values where the other idea, the other belief, should be accepted as a condition for implementing the principles of justice, freedom, "pacification, unification and equity."

What draws our attention, finally, is the fact that each admired the approach of the other. As a result, Rihani became one of the heroes of Wells' "ultimate revolution" called *The Shape of Things to Come*, and Wells became Rihani's intellectual "Fellow and Companion," a symbol of a daring futurist, equally daring as an Eastern writer challengingly coming West.

Endnotes

1. On February 9, 1900, Rihani addressed the Young Men's Maronite Association, in New York City, in his famous speech entitled "Religious Tolerance" or "At-Tasahul ud-Deeny" where he emphasized that the ultimate universal truth is the same in all the religions of the world. The full text was published originally in Arabic in his book *Ar-Rihaniyat* (The Rihani Essays), The Scientific Press, Beirut, 1910: Vol. 2, pp. 113-140. This address received several supporting or disagreeing reviews and comments published in the Arabic media in New York, Sao Paulo, Beirut, Cairo, and other cities.
2. The complete text of Gladstone's speech, on April 26, 1883, in front of the House of Commons, included references to classical and historical authorities defending religious toleration and civil liberty. He goes on by saying: "I say that, besides our duty to vindicate the principle of civil and religious liberty, which totally detaches religious controversy from the enjoyment of civil rights, it is most important that the House should consider the moral effect of this test." (*Lend Me Your Ears*: 766) Seventeen years later Rihani came from the East to write, in Arabic, and support similar principles.
3. Henry David Thoreau confirms, "I do not have any sympathy for the bigotry and ignorance that establishes arbitrary, partial and boyish distinctions between the beliefs of one person and another, or between the forms of these beliefs." (*The Journal*: 1837-1861, Denoël, Paris, 1986) Reference should be

made here to Rihani's book *The Path of Vision*, where Thoreau, Emerson, and Whitman are vividly present in several essays of the book.

4. According to Octavio Paz "as soon as we understand that we should not withhold the ultimate truth and that all truths, particularly the political ones, are relative, we are ready, then, for irony." (*A Planet and Four or Five Worlds*, French translation by Jean-Claude Masson, Gallimard, Folio Essays, Paris, 1985) It is worthwhile to note, in this regard, that Rihani's literature was characterized by humor, sarcasm and irony.
5. To elaborate on the intellectual relationship between Rihani and Ma'arry the reader may refer to Rihani's translations of Ma'arry's poetry into English verse: *The Quatrains of Abul-'Ala'*, Doubleday Page and Co., New York, 1903; and *The Luzumiyat of Abul-'Ala'*, James T. White and Co., New York, 1918. The two books received a large coverage from the American media at the time, and reprints have followed in New York and Beirut.
6. Rihani wrote another article on Wells, in Arabic, entitled "The Travel and Conference Companion". This article is published in Rihani's Arabic book *Wujouh Sharkiyah Wa Gharbiyah* (Eastern and Western Figures), Arabic Collection, The Arab Institute for Research and Publication, Beirut, 1986, Vol. 9, pp. 520-535. It is worthwhile to have a comparative study of the two similar articles, written in two languages, by the same author and on the same topic, namely H. G. Wells.
7. Discussing Woodrow Wilson's campaign for the United States to join the League of Nations, Henry Cabot Lodge addressed the U.S. Senate on August 12, 1919 saying: "We hear much of visions, and I trust we shall continue to have visions and dream dreams of a fairer future for the race. But... the mechanical appliances of the rhetorician designed to give a picture... of a future which no man can predict are as unreal and short-lived as the steam or canvas cloud..." (*Lend Me Your Ears: 274*) Lodge was trying to make a case against Wilson's postwar foreign policy.
8. To better understand Rihani's defense for small nations the reader may go back to Rihani's theory of the "Great City" as written in his book *Ar-Rihaniyat* or (The Rihani Essays), 10th edition, Vol. 1, pp. 136-141. For a study on the subject, refer to Ameen Albert Rihani, *The Philosopher of Freike, Author of the Great City*, Al-Jeel Publishing House, Beirut, 1987, pp. 257-300. This study deals with the productive society, human rights, democracy, secularism, and East/West understanding in Rihani's vision of the "Great City."

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Concluding Observations

It is not the purpose of these observations to summarize the outcome of each and every chapter published in this book. I would like rather to start with a basic comment that this work is intended to focus on areas of study less known or less dealt with, and yet it consists of a fundamental step for the subject of this book, namely Arab-American Literature.

The shift of the art of writing from one language to another, as discussed in chapter one, is a major and a significant move for a writer. It is the experience of two languages, meaning two logics of expression, two cultures, two ways of thinking, two value systems, and two analytical approaches. This requires from the writer a high level of intellectual tolerance and understanding. It also requires the ability of seeing with another eye, feeling with another sense, and comprehending the other point of view. The motives might be direct or indirect, individual or common; however, the outcome depends on a clear decision to master the new language and to have it as a platform to reach to the new audience. This cross-cultural step might be the way leading to multi-cultural literature like the Arab-American literature.

The purpose of studying the following two topics is to clarify the notion of multiculturalism in its two aspects: one, as manifested in a specific literary work dealing with minute cultural differences between America and Europe, in other words, within the West itself; the other as manifested in the Arabic press material in America dealing with major cultural differences between America and Lebanon, and eventually the Arab World,

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and with how to overcome these differences. The first example shows that the notion of multiculturalism is not limited to two opposite continents, or cultures, or backgrounds, but can also be true of similar and interactive traditions and ethnicities. This proves our first conclusion in this work, and that is that multiculturalism is a relative term, and relativity, here, is a key characteristic for understanding the term and analyzing its literary feature. The second example reveals the early concerns of an immigrant community, as expressed in its newspapers and in the mother tongue or language, before starting to deal with these concerns in the new adopted language of the host country. In that sense Arab-American Literature started in the newspapers that paved the way for writings on common concerns, eventually in both Arabic and English. These common concerns could be mapped within the social and intellectual links between the immigrants themselves, and conclusively between them and the native speakers of English.

One of the explanations of the limited interest in Arab-American literature among native speakers is the fact that this literature, at one point, raised the kind of issues that have no particular identity, as in the case of *The Prophet*, where it was not looked upon as Arab-American but rather as “spiritual” or “human”, which was in a way misleading. This literature raised also issues of East and West, cultural dialogue, self-identity in its original and new phases, as in the case of *The Book of Khalid* where it was not of an immediate interest at the time as it is today. In other words Arab-American literature faced some difficulties in order to find its platform and to reach a point where it was more and more recognized.

Studies on Arab-American Literature have not been systematic and comprehensive. Several gaps still need to be filled in for us to be able to answer basic questions related to the pioneers of this movement, including their trends of thought, their intellectual, social and political concerns, their vision related to international

issues such as human diversity, dialogue of cultures, human rights, global causes, bridging East and West, problems of adaptation, the significance of a melting pot, and contributions to human intellectual heritage and civilization. In order for us to go through with this major research project it is necessary to reach and collect all the related bibliography, personal papers, letters and correlated documents including published articles in American magazines and newspapers. Till now, after almost a century since the emergence of Arab-American Literature and in spite of the very good published studies on particular writers, this task taken as a whole and as a complete academic project has not yet been properly launched.

Comparative studies on the subject have been very limited although it is a rich area of assessment and re-evaluation. Basic questions are still unanswered along these lines. For example, what is the real relationship between Arab-American literature during the first third of the twentieth century and American Transcendentalism? What is the position of Arab-American writers on the basic American political values like freedom, democracy, and multiculturalism? How are we to categorize, if necessary, the English writings of Arab-American writers? Is it considered a part of English Literature, or a part of the twentieth century American Literature? Or is it still a newborn baby, who is now over one hundred years old, yet bears no identity?

The literary genres of this heritage have been diversified into a wide spectrum of forms of prose and poetry. The main question is still valid: to what extent do these forms relate to similar ones in American literature, Arabic literature and English literature? If we want to go further in comparative studies, then the question is raised about the different literary themes and styles in Arab-American literature based on the cultural and intellectual roots of the authors themselves and their backgrounds that could be related to other literatures such as the French, German and Russian literatures.

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On the social and political scene, another question is, even up to now, looking for an answer: how, and to what extent, were some of the Arab-American writers able to make a fusion or link between the sense of original nationalism and the sense of Americanism, and eventually to push this sense of belonging to its utmost international human cause and human progressive striving? In other words, how does Arab-American literature mingle the particular and the universal, the ethnic and the global, the national and the international? To what extent does the philosophic notion of the “Concrete Universal” fit and match the themes of Arab-American Literature?

One final observation: it is very significant to highlight the present outcome of Arab-American literature as it influences the young generation of writers of Arab origin in America, but it is equally important to link this literary product to its roots. It is necessary to sustain a trend of thought and a trend of literature that is characterized as Arab-American. In order to do this it becomes imperative to define the uniqueness and distinctiveness of this literature as an essential part of the American heritage. Again this requires a series of on-going research studies to analyze the roots, the effects, the concerns, and the themes of this migration literature with all its diversities and characteristics.

It is not the intention of this book to find the answers for the questions raised above, or for similar questions. It tries rather to raise such kinds of questions and to raise a parallel interest in this unique literature that represents a worthy intellectual and cultural contribution to the American heritage. It tries to call upon universities and research centers to build programs of study that should cover all the different aspects of this distinguished contribution. It is significant to mention, finally, that although we are proud of the Arab-American literature we have not succeeded yet in studying it and presenting it to the world as it surely deserves.

APPENDIX I

Early Arab-American Writers

(other than Rihani and Gibran)

Few famous names overshadowed other contributors in the early establishment of Arab-American Literature. The purpose of this Appendix is to introduce, briefly, the other less known figures of this movement without whom the characteristics and the preconditions of this literary and intellectual movement wouldn't have happened, or would have taken a different shape and direction:

Alkhazin, Dr. Salim: Graduated from Harvard as a dentist. Born in Lebanon and studied at the American University of Beirut. He practiced dentistry in Brooklyn, New York. He was a liberal contributor to Arabic and English Lebanese Newspapers in America. One of his literary achievements was a masterly translation of *Ivanhoe* into Arabic. He wrote poetry, essays and short stories in English, many of which are published in New York periodicals.

Catzeflis, William: A member of the New York Arabic literary Circle known as *Ar-Rabitah Al-Kalamiyah* (The Pen Bond). His occupation was in the mercantile line, and his devotion went to literary pursuits. He graduated from Saint Joseph University, the leading French institution of higher education in Lebanon and the Middle East. His contributions to Arabic newspapers in New York did not prevent him from having some original writings in English that were published in well known emigration journals.

Hitti, Dr. Philip: The foremost educator and historian of Arab-Americans. Professor Hitti taught History at Princeton University, Columbia University and the American University of Beirut. He is the author of *The Syrians in America*, *Lebanon in History*, *The Arabs in History*, *The Origins of the Druze People*, *An Arab-Syrian Gentleman and Warrior in the Period of the Crusades*, and other works. He was a member of the American Oriental Society and founder of the Syrian Educational Society of New York.

Katibah, Habib I.: A graduate of Harvard and well versed in Arabic Literature. He was a regular writer for the *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* and an occasional contributor to the *Detroit News*, the *Syrian World* and other Lebanese/Syrian newspapers and periodicals in the United States. Mr. Katibah was one of the early Arab-American writers concerned with issues of multiculturalism and ethnicity.

Mokarzel, Salloum A.: He published for a short period of time *The Mail of America*, an Arabic newspaper, in New York. He then launched the *Syrian World* in New York, a monthly English-language journal between 1926 and 1932. Through this publication he tried to build a link between the old country and the new homeland. He also attempted to bridge the gap between the first and second generations of immigrants and encourage them to write about their unique cultural and social experiences, as Arab-Americans, using his journal as their platform.

Naimy, Michael J.: Writer of prose and poetry in Arabic and English. A member of the New York Arabic literary Circle *Ar-Rabitah Al-Kalamiyah* (The Pen Bond). He was known as a literary critic, playwright, essayist, and short story writer. After graduating in law from Washington State University, he settled in New York City and worked as a journalist for Arabic-language publications in the United States. He contributed to the *Syrian World* and other English-language periodicals in America before

returning to Lebanon in his early forties. *Mirdad* is his well-known intellectual novel in English.

Rihbany, Rev. Abraham Mitri: Historian and spiritual intellectual. Emigrated to Boston where he became a Protestant Minister. Published several articles in English about Arab-American writers and about emigration concerns. Author of several works in English published in New York and London. Among his other books: *Distant Voyage*, *Seven Days With God*, *The Syrian Christ*, *Wise Men of Orient and Occident*.

APPENDIX II

Major Writers of the *Syrian World Journal*¹

New York, 1926-1932

The meaning of “major” writers, in this appendix, is the frequency of their writing and publishing in English and in a leading Lebanese-American Journal in the United States. However this appendix includes other relatively known writers with limited publications in English who were part of the pioneering move to establish a multicultural literature characterized with an Arab background and an American early experience. These names, together with Rihani and Gibran, represent the beginnings of Arab-American Literature.

Alkhazin, Dr. Salim: 32 poems, 1 short story, 1 anecdote, and 1 article.

Attiyeh, Sumayeh: 5 articles.

Catzeflis, William: 3 articles and 1 short story.

Gibran, G. Kahlil: 28 articles, 5 poems, and 13 Arabic texts translated into English by Andrew Ghareeb.

Hakim, Akel: 9 articles.

Hanna, Labeebe: 10 poems and 4 short stories.

Hitti, Philip K.: 20 articles.

Katibah, Habib I.: 22 articles.

1. Moses, John, E.P. Nassar, J. Rosenblatt (1994) *Annotated Index to the Syrian World, 1926-1932*. Saint Paul, Minnesota: University of Minnesota, Immigration History Research Center.

Katibah, Nejib A. Dr.: 10 articles, 8 poems and 3 short stories.

Knaysi, George: 5 articles.

Mansur, W. A., Rev.: 26 articles and 1 short story.

Mokarzel, Salloum A.: 48 articles.

Naimy, M. J.: 5 poems and 1 article.

Rihani, Ameen: 28 articles and 10 poems.

Rihbany, Abraham M., Rev.: 1 article.

Saloomey, Edna R.: 11 articles, 5 poems and 3 short stories.

Shatara, F. L., Dr.: 6 articles.

APPENDIX III

Major Subjects of *the Syrian World Journal*

The purpose of this appendix is to give an idea about the ongoing concerns of the early writers of Arab-American Literature as revealed in one of the leading media tools during the late twenties and early thirties of the twentieth century in the United States of America. The meaning of “major” subjects, in this appendix, is the frequency of issues published in English for an Arab-American milieu, or the directly relevant subjects that might be of a significant interest to Arab-Americans.

Agriculture in the Near East.

Aleppo, City of Abraham and Metropolis of Northern Syria.

American School in Damascus, The First.

American Poet to Live in Lebanon.

Americanism and Native Culture.

Americanism, What Is.

Antioch (The City of God).

Appeal of the East, The.

Arab Contributions to World Civilization.

Arab King in the Desert, Meeting an.

Arab King at Home, An.

Arab Literature and Philosophy.

Arab Wisdom.

Arabia and its Problems.

Arabia, The Old and the New.
Arabian Nights.
Arabic, From the.
Arabic As an Asset.
Arabic As an Issue, A Challenge to Syrian-American Youth.
Arabic Newspapers in America.
Arabic Teaching in America.
Arabic Words in the English Vocabulary.
Baalbek, City of the Sun-God.
Baghdad to Basrah, Down the Tigris from.
Bashir, The Sword of Emir.
Beirut, The Beauty of.
Bethlehem and Nazareth in History.
Beirut Museum, The.
British Policy in Palestine, Defining New.
Byblos, City of Adonis, and A Pilgrimage to.
Capital of the Umayyads, The.
Carnival in Lebanon, The.
Children of America.
Christmas in a Lebanon Village.
Cities of Syria, Famous.
Damascus.
Dante, The Arabic Sources of.
Druze Exhortations.
East and West.
Eastern Religions in the West.
Education in Syria, opportunities for.
Egypt.
Emigration, Benefits of Syrian.
Freedom.
Friendship.
Geology of Syria and Palestine.

Haroun Al-Rashid.
Hittites, The Rediscovery of an Ancient Empire.
Islam.
Jebel Druze.
Knowledge.
Lebanon.
Mandates in the Near East.
Maronites.
Near East.
Palestine.
Palmyra.
Phoenicians.
Proverbs.
Sayings.
Shahrazad, The Widowhood of.
Sufi Sayings.
Syria.
Uncle Sam and His Syrian Cousins.
Washington Street, The sage of.
Wisdom.
Young Americans of Syrian Origin.

APPENDIX IV

Selected Studies on Multicultural Literatures

(other than Arab-American)

A little research on multicultural concerns may come up with few observations that draw the framework of this area of knowledge. These remarks may, or may not, touch the whole truth and reality of the issue, but they definitely help clarifying the scope of though that could be involved. Among the sorted out observations:

1. Literature is a wide and deep scope where multicultural experiences could express themselves at the intellectual, human and artistic levels.
2. Sociology sciences, particularly minority issues, feminism and ethnicity concerns are another scope of multiculturalism.
3. Political sciences open the way to study and discuss biracial, bilingual, multicultural politics, and issues of pluralism and authenticity.

The following selected studies are just examples of the rich diversity of this wide and complicated subject:

- Amirthanayagam, Guy (2000) *The Marriage of Continents: Multiculturalism in Modern Literature*. Lanhan, MD: University Press of America.
- Bernheimer, Charles, ed. (1995) *Comparative Literature in the Age of Multiculturalism*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.

- Hampson, Robert (2000) *Cross-cultural Encounters in Joseph Conrad's Malay Fiction*. New York: Palgrave.
- Harnisch, Antje, Anne Marie Stokes and Friedemann Weidauer, eds & trs. (1998) *Fringe Voices: An Anthology of Minority Writing in the Federal Republic of Germany*. Oxford; New York: Berg Publishers.
- Hawley, John C., ed. (1996) *Cross-Addressing: Resistance Literature and Cultural Borders*. Albany: State University of New York Press.
- Lape, Noreen Groover (2000) *West of the Border: The Multicultural Literature of the Western American Frontiers*. Athens: Ohio University Press.
- Lee, A. Robert (2003) *Multicultural American Literature: Comparative Black, Native, Latino and Asian American Fiction*. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi.
- Leslie, Antonette (1998) *The Rhetoric of Diversity and the Traditions of American Literary Study: Critical Multiculturalism in English*. Westport, CT: Bergin and Garvey Publishers.
- Mauguère, Bénédicte, ed. (1998) *Cultural Identities in Canadian Literature*. New York: Peter Lang.
- McCormick Coger, Greta M. K., ed. (1996) *New Perspectives on Margaret Laurence: Poetic Narrative, Multiculturalism, and Feminism*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press.
- Moffitt, Dale, ed. (1999) *Between Two Silences: Talking with Peter Brook*. Dallas: Southern Methodist University Press.
- Mohanty, Satya P. (1997) *Literary Theory and the Claims of History: Postmodernism, Objectivity, Multicultural Politics*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
- O'Hearn, Claudine, C., ed. (1998) *Half and Half: Writers on Growing up Biracial and Bicultural*. New York: Pantheon Books.
- Randall, Don (2000) *Kipling's Imperial Boy: Adolescence and Cultural Hybridity*. New York: Palgrave.
- Sauerberg, Lars Ole (2001) *Intercultural Voices in Contemporary British Literature: the Implosion of Empire*. Houndmills; New York: Palgrave.
- Shiffman, Dan (2003) *Rooting Multiculturalism: The Work of Louis Adamic* [Slovenian-American]. Madison, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson

University Press; London; Cranbury, NJ: Associated University Presses.

- Simerling, Winfried and Katrin Schwenk, eds., (1996) *Cultural Difference and the Literary Text: Pluralism and the Limits of Authenticity in North American Literatures*. Iowa City: University of Iowa Press.
- Taguieff, Pierre-André, ed. (1996) *La République Menacée: Entretiens Avec Philippe Petit*. Paris: Editions Textuel.
- Ungar, Steven and Tom Conley, eds. (1996) *Identity Papers: Contested Nationhood in Twentieth-Century France*. Minneapolis: University of Minneapolis Press.
- Wylie, Hal and Bernth Lindfors (2000) *Multiculturalism and Hybridity in African Literatures*. Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press.
- Zatin, Phyllis (2000) *The Novels and Plays of Edwardo Manet: An Adventure in Multiculturalism*. University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press.

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- Al-Issa, Fadi Ahmad (2003) *Living on the Hyphen: The Literature of the Early Arab-Americans Between 1870-1940*. MA Thesis. Florida: The Florida State University, College of Arts and Sciences, Department of English.
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