

**THE RUSSIAN INFLUENCE ON THE LITERARY AND  
CRITICAL WRITINGS OF MIKHAIL NAIMY**

by

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SIGNED: Maria Lebedeva Swanson

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>Acknowledgements</b> .....	3
Abstract .....	9
<b>Preface</b> .....	11
<b>Introduction</b> .....	14
Problem Statement.....	30
Literature Review.....	36
Methodology and Thesis Structure.....	52
Significance.....	53
<b>Chapter One. <i>Naimy's Biography and His Relations with Russia</i></b> .....	55
Naimy's Early Years.....	55
Russian Teachers' College in Nazareth (RTCN).....	60
Poltava.....	65
Emigration to the United States.....	74
Participation in the First World War and Studies in France.....	84
Pen Association.....	84
Return to Lebanon.....	87
<b>Chapter Two. <i>The Arabic Renaissance (al-Nahdah) and Russian</i></b>	
<b><i>Context</i></b> .....	94
The Arabic Literature before <i>al-Nahdah</i> .....	95
<i>al-Nahdah</i> .....	95

The Radical Changes in Modern Arabic Literature During <i>al-Nahdah</i> Period.....	97
The Specifics of Modern Syro-Lebanese Literature.....	98
The Development of Literary Currents in Modern Arabic Literature.....	103
Russian Context.....	103
Russian Literature’s Specific Features.....	108
Naimy and Russian Literature.....	113
<b>Chapter Three. <i>The Influence of Russian Literary Critical Writing on Naimy</i></b> .....	116
The Development of Critical Realism in Russia.....	120
Naimy as a Founder of Modern Arabic Literary Criticism.....	122
The Influence of Russian Critical Writings on <i>The Sieve</i> .....	127
The New Literature and Its Role in Society.....	128
Historicism.....	138
Art for Art’s Sake.....	140
Form and Content.....	143
Critic’s Aim.....	145
Role of the Writer.....	147
Conclusion.....	149
<b>Chapter Four. <i>Tolstoī’s Anticlerical Writings’ Impact on Naimy’s World Vision</i></b> .....	150
Populism.....	168
The Official Church Dogmatism.....	171

<b>Chapter Five. <i>The Influence of Tolstoyan Social Criticism on Naimy</i></b> .....	195
Self-Perfection .....	202
Utopias, Patriotism and Pacifism.....	206
Moralities.....	212
Naimy’s Appreciation of Tolstoī.....	226
<b>Conclusion</b> .....	230
<b>Appendix</b> .....	241
<b>Works Cited</b> .....	258



## ABSTRACT

My dissertation examines the Russian influence on the critical writing, poetry, prose and philosophy of Mikhail Naimy (1889-1988), the world renowned figure in modern Arabic literature. Together with Jibran Khalil Jibran, Ameen al-Rihani, Iliya Abu Madi, Rachid Ayuub, and several other Arab-American men of letters he founded the Pen Association, a literary league in New York in 1920 that lifted Arabic literature from the quagmire of stagnation, imitation and old classicism. They also promoted the new generation of Arab writers and made it an active force in Arab nationalism.

Numerous researchers have studied the impact of British, American and French cultures and literatures on the Pen Association's creative writings. Meanwhile it was Russian literature that had the most important impact on Naimy, as well as on some other members of this literary association (though less). This influence has still only been studied superficially aside from some Soviet era analyses. My dissertation makes a much-needed contribution to this blank spot, since the Russian literary critic Vissarion Belinskiĭ (1811-1848) and the towering figure of Leo Tolstoĭ (1828-1910) contributed greatly to the foundation of the modern Arabic literature.

My dissertation traces Mikhail Naimy's Russian Orthodox heritage in Lebanon, his education in Poltava, Ukraine, and his readings of Belinskiĭ and Tolstoĭ to show how he incorporates critical social reform, anticlericalism and mysticism into his important Arabic language works. It also shows the influence of the Russian literary criticism on Naimy's critical articles.

My dissertation sheds light on global literary processes, as Naimy was able to synthesize Russian, European and American literary traditions into his native Arabic heritage. This

integration is an important part of the evolution of modern Arabic literature and an interesting phenomenon that emerged in the American melting pot of the early twentieth century.

My research has significant methodological value, as it will identify the typology and significance of cultural contacts, based on the example of influence mentioned above. It will also contribute to an important topic of the renewed interest in the academy – Russian influences and impacts in the Middle East and in Arabic culture and literature.

## PREFACE

The transliteration of Arabic in this work follows the format of the Library of Congress. All Arab words are italicized, except proper names.

1. The correct transliteration of Naimy's name is Mikhaī'l Nu'aymah (مikhail نعيمه in Arabic). It was decided to write it this way for this current dissertation, as the author himself spelled his name in English this way (NNI 68, ref.1). The same applies to Nādim Nu'aymah (نادم نعيمة in Arabic), Naimy's nephew and literary heritage keeper, who decided to use the same transliteration for his last name (NNI), so he is referred to in library catalogues and in the current dissertation as "Naimy, Nadeem N." At the same time, Mikhail Naimy's name in the Arabic references is transliterated according to Chicago style.
2. All translations into English, unless otherwise noted, are my own.
3. Citations follow the MLA parenthetical citation format, which references the author and page number(s), e.g. Hamburg (148), citations of several authors are separated by semicolons, e.g. (Munir 45; Nijland 56). If an edition has several volumes, the reference includes a volume number and a page number, e.g. Kirpichenko, Safronov (1: 6), meaning page six of volume one.
4. Long citations are indented as block quotations.
5. All works cited in the abbreviated form can be found in the following bibliography with references listed alphabetically as follows:

**Ab**= *Mikha'il Naimy. Ab'ad min mūskū wa wāshintūn [Far from Moscow and Washington]*

**Ghir** = *Mikha'il Naimy. al-Ghirbāl [The Sieve]*

**MNCW**= *Mikha'il Naimy. The collected works.* Beirut. 1979.

**Sab**= *Mikha'il Naimy. Sab'un: hikāyat 'umr* [Seventy: My Life's Story]

**NNI** = Naimy, Nadeem N. *Mikhail Naimy; an Introduction.* Beirut: American U of Beirut, 1967. Print. American University of Beirut. Publication of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences. Oriental Series 47.

**DAr** = Dolinina, Anna Arkad'evna. *Arabeski : [izbrannye nauchnye stat'i].* Sankt-Peterburg: Nestor-Istoriia, 2010. 290-296. Print.

**Och**= Dolinina, Anna Arkad'evna. *Ocherki istorii arabskoī literatury novogo vremeni. Egipet I Siria: (Publicistika 1870-1914).*

**DPos** = Dolinina, Anna Arkad'evna “*Posleslovie.*” *Moi semdesiat' let.* Moscow: Nauka, GRVL, 1980.222-236. Print.

**Vved** = Dolinina, Anna Arkad'evna. “*Vvedenie.*” *Arabskaia romanticheskaia proza XIX-XX vekov: Adib Ishak, Mustafa Kamil', Mustafa Al'-Manfaluti, Amin Ar-Rejhani, Dzhebran Halil' Dzhebran, Mikhail Nuaim, Mejj, Abu-l'-Kasim Ash-Shabbi : perevod s arabskogo.* Leningrad: Khudozhestvennaia literatura. Leningradskoe otdelenie, 1981. 5–22. Print.

**AP** = İmanquliyeva, Aida Näsir qızı. “*Assotsiatsiia pera*” *i Mikhail Nuaim.* Moscow: Nauka, 1975. Print.

**HRL** = Terras, Victor. *A History of Russian Literature.* New Haven : Yale University Press. 1991. Print.

**BRLC** = Terras, Victor. *Belinskij and Russian Literary Criticism: The Heritage of Organic*

*Aesthetics*. Madison, WI: U of Wisconsin P, 1974. Print.

**TRL** = Bell, Gregory. "Theosophy, Romanticism and Love in the Poetry of Mikhail Naimy."

Diss. U of Pennsylvania, 2001. Print.

**IIT** = Billington, James H. *Ikona i topor. Opyt tolkovaniia istorii ruskoī kul'tury*. Moscow:

Rudoimno, 2001. Print.

**IAA** = Billington, James H. *The Icon and the Axe: An Interpretive History of Russian Culture*.

New York: Vintage International, 1970. Print.

**MAL** = Badawī, Muḥammad Muṣṭafā. *Modern Arabic Literature*. Cambridge, UK; New York:

Cambridge U P, 1992. Print.

6. The numbers of parts of Naimy's trilogy *Sab'un* [*Seventy: My Life's Story*] are separated by a space. For example, (Sab 1 24) means page 24 of the first part of this trilogy.

## ***Introduction***

The prominent Lebanese writer Mikhail Naimy (1889-1988) is the one of the canonical writers and founders of modern Arabic literature. His unquestionable contribution to modern Arabic literature was in his substantial use and development of realism through his vast and diverse literary works, as well as his work in broadening its genres, and enriching its topics and the language. His *al-Ghirbāl* [*The Sieve*] (1923), a collection of critical essays was called by Roger Allen, Professor of Arabic and Comparative Literature at the University of Pennsylvania and one of the leading figures in Arabic studies, “the pioneering work of criticism published in the ‘20s” (225). Naimy not only criticized the current situation of Arabic literature, but also drew up specific solutions for transforming it into the one that would meet the needs of modern society.

Naimy together with several Arab men of letters made radical changes to Arabic literature. They converted its stagnant genres, topics and language into modern ones that met the needs of both society and readers in the twentieth century. It was possible to do by incorporating into it the best achievements of foreign literatures as well as following modern world literary currents and art directions.

The Scottish professor Hamilton Alexander Rosskeen Gibb, whose studies are concentrated on Middle Eastern history and culture, noted (4 28: 746) that “contemporary Arabic literature in the strict sense” came from two sources. They were the new generation of Egyptian men of letters who created their revolutionary works (al-‘Aqqād (1889-1964), Hāfiz Ibrāhim

(1871-1932), Ahmad Shawqī (1868-1932), among others) and the *al-Mahjarī*<sup>1</sup> modernists (Mikhail Naimy, Jibrān Khalīl Jibrān (1883-1931), Amīn al-Rīhānī (1874-1940), Īlīyā Abū Mādī (1889(90?)-1957), among others), who came together to form the Pen Association in the U.S.A.

In its brief outline of its literary program, the Pen Association specified its role, noting that it must bring “the new spirit [into the Arabic culture], which is aimed at stepping out from stagnation and traditionalism towards innovation...through literary works, as well as bringing freedom to the worldview of [men of letters]... This is today’s hope and tomorrow’s direction” (Hassan 86). Thus, it not only helped to further modern Arabic literature, but also influenced other literary schools and built an information conduit to facilitate the exchange of cultural, spiritual and moral values between Eastern and Western literatures.

The Pen Association’s representatives were living far from their Motherland and very often did not receive a traditional Arabic education. They were exposed to world literature while remaining in the Arabic diaspora. Furthermore, their literary works absorbed the Eastern and the Western literary traditions and enabled them to work out an inimitable style that played a significant role in the foundation of modern Lebanese literature.

The emergence of *al-Mahjarī* literature is similar to that of the non-Egyptian descendants<sup>2</sup> who made a major contribution to narrative discourse of Egypt in the early twentieth century. Professor Sabry Hafiz from the School of Oriental and African Studies at the University of

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<sup>1</sup> The literature created by the Levant Arab emigrants in North and South Americas during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

<sup>2</sup> Egyptian literature and journalism at the end of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were characterized by a high number of men of letters of Levantine descent, who were “as steeped in Egyptian literature as they... [were] in their own” (Meyer 258). We shall give more details about this phenomenon in Chapter Three.

London points out that it is ironic that the new Lebanese literature that served this country's national interests originated in the opposite part of the world in the U.S.A. The future Arab-American men of letters usually began their education in missionary schools in the Levant where they learned Arabic, thereby linking themselves to the Christian and Islamic religious traditions. They "thus liberated [themselves] from its traditional grip," old-fashioned canons and were able to express themselves much more freely (Hafiz 170, 171). Emigration to other countries, naturally, provoked their crisis of identity that was deepened by both their failure to blend into the culture of the host country and their failure to resist it. The former life realities of the Arab men of letters were perceived by them differently while in distant America. From another side, they tried not to lose their authentic self as a psychological defense against losing their sense of identity.

The Pen Association raised Arabic literature to a new level through its diversification of themes, genres and the new forms of artistic expression. These accomplishments were the result of its absorption of the achievements of world literature, and thus the regional literature expanded the horizons of Arabic literature onto the global stage.

But if the overwhelming majority of Naimy's peers from the Pen Association drew their inspiration from American and Western European sources, Naimy's case was different. His heightened role in the formation of modern Arabic literature consisted of his ability to perceive and transform Russian literary tendencies and organically synthesize them with his national artistic traditions. This happened because of his unusual biography that oriented him to Russian literature at the beginning of his writing career. It was a literature that appealed to him much more than did Western European, American or even his native literature, at least during the early



stages of his spiritual development. This interesting and unusual phenomenon can be explained by the fact that Naimy paid minimal attention to his native literature primarily because he was unfamiliar with it during this early period of his life. We can assume that neither in Biskintā's school<sup>3</sup>, nor at Jerusalem College where he studied did Naimy meet teachers who were able to spark his interest in his native literature. The passion for Arabic literature came to Naimy later.

Several reasons may account for Naimy's love for Russian literature and his preference for it over Western literature. First of all, he suffered tremendously over the eternal questions of good and evil, militant and aggressive clericalism, Orthodox religious theories, and social injustice. He was able to find answers in Russian literature to his questions and his philosophical reflections that absorbed him.

This was hardly surprising, as Russian literature has always been characterized by its focus on moral and ethical questions over form. This happened because of the strong influence of the Eastern Christianity that laid a basis of the artistic expression of Russian literature despite the well-developed Scythian art and rich Slavic mythology. That is why for many centuries Russian literature had a mostly religious and homiletic character, like the anonymous *Povest' o Frole Skobeeve* (*Tale about Frol Skobeev*).

Orthodox Christianity played an important role in spreading the Byzantine idea about the special mission of an Orthodox society into Russia (the word 'orthodox' in Greek means 'the correct faith') and it also formed an important part of building an ideology of young state of Russia. It was built on the Orthodox faith, that in its turn was secured by the prophets' doctrines. Such a

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<sup>3</sup> The name of Naimy's home village is spelled as Biskintā by the Lebanese postal system, though the inhabitants of this village pronounce it as "Baskintā" (Sab 1 44).

situation became especially critical when Khazaria, which was located in the Southern territories of Russia, adopted Judaism, and the Volga Bulgars converted to Islam (IIT 41).

The other foundational source of Russian literature was the Russian aristocracy of the eighteenth century (Lomonosov, Fonvizin, Derzhavin, Karamzin, among others). It was a time of struggle between different philosophical currents and foreign influences and a period when the ruling class was able to discuss its problems and ideas relatively freely without any consequences such as political and social upheavals. Numerous debates were carried out by the aristocrats who shunned having an official career and actively participated in these disputes. Such a situation promoted the development of a feeling of solidarity and spiritual commitment between educated Russians.

The Russian aristocracy founded a national culture and created a national poetry, ballet and architecture during this period. It worked out its own philosophy, which was concentrated on particular issues in history, culture and life itself.

As for American and European literature, its concern for esthetics and forms has always dominated over the ethical message of literature (Lukov, par. 2). That is why its tendencies to entertain could not find deep resonance in Naimy's soul in the way that Russian literature did. As Ivan Franko (1856-1916), the Ukrainian writer, wrote,

If we [merely] liked European literary works, which excited our esthetic taste and imagination, then Russian writing was torturing us, awakening our consciousness to what is human inside us, [and] awakening [our] love for the poor and aggrieved [people] (Lebedev, par. 9).

That is why Russian realism, and especially Russian critical realism, turned out to be not just the source of Naimy's inspiration, but formed the kernel of his world view. That perception

changed with the years, but the impact of Russian literature and culture remained one of the dominant components of Naimy's world outlook.

The second reason for Naimy's closeness to Russian literature and his special preference for it lay in his own biography. He was one of the first Arabic writers who applied the principles of Russian realism to his native literature not only because he was more familiar with the major works of Russian literature than with those from other literary traditions. At the age of 16, he arrived in Poltava (Ukraine) where he spent five long years during which he was shocked not only by the cultural differences, but by the dramatic Russian social upheavals, as his stay there in 1906-1911 took place during a period between two revolutions (of 1905 and 1917). Due to this situation many political, social and cultural issues penetrated his mind more deeply and helped him perceive Russian literature not from the vantage point of a curious onlooker or researcher, but as someone who was a part of the Russian society that was immersed in deep crisis. We shall provide more detail about this factor in the next chapter.

The third reason for Russian influence on Naimy during the earlier stages of his life was the favorable Russian cultural environment that he first encountered at the Russian school in his native village and in the Nazareth teacher's seminary. Both were founded by the Russian Imperial Orthodox Society, which followed the best pedagogical and ethical principles. Fifty years after graduating from school Naimy in his memoirs remembered many of his Russian teachers and mentors with deep respect and gratitude.

There was yet another reason for Naimy's love for Russia. His Poltavan period was considered by him to be the one of the happiest in his life, as it not only presented a contrast to his childhood in a traditional Lebanese village family, but was also radically different from his life in America

where he spent twenty years after living in Russia. With the exception of his participation in the Pen Association, he seemed never to be happy in the U.S.A., where he lived throughout the Great Depression. Naturally, he kept thinking back to Russia, where he had felt more comfort and happiness. Up until his last days he felt love and sympathy for the Russian people and gave much credit to what Soviet society achieved, as he had witnessed the common Russian people's sufferings in their pre-revolutionary country.

Naimy, both as a patriot and as representative of the Arab intelligentsia, did not limit himself to his admiration for Russian literature and his passion for it. Moreover, he was constantly comparing his native literature to that of Russia. At the end of the nineteenth century, Arabic literature bore mainly a journalistic character, touching upon socio-political topics. As for the imaginative literature of that time, it still followed the old Arabic traditions in both form and content. At the same time, the changes that had begun during the Arabic Renaissance were radically converting Arabic literature into a modern one. It already had a basis in realism, though realistic situations in its plots frequently blended with fantastic ones. As Dolinina stated in her *Ocherki istorii arabskoī literatury novogo vremeni. Egipet I Sīriia: Prosvetitel'skiī roman 1870-1914* and *Och*, its conventional characters gradually began to acquire characteristics of modern personalities). New genres, such as the realistic novel (*Zeinab* [*Zeinab*] (1913) by Muḥammad Ḥussein Haykal) and the satirical novel (*Ḥadīth Īsā ibn Hishām* [*Issa ben Hesham's Story*] (1907) by al-Muwailehī) appeared along with the changes in the traditional genres, such as plays where realism gradually started to prevail over Romantic and fairy tale plots (*Mā tarāhu al-ūūn* [*What the Eyes See*] (1917) by Muḥammed Teimur).

Naimy wanted to bring to his native literature the best achievements from other cultures that could induce radical and positive changes in Arabic literature. He made a unique attempt to solve several pressing problems in what he perceived as the stagnation of Arabic literature by applying the tenets of Russian critical realism<sup>1</sup>. His revolutionary critical works, which will be discussed in detail in Chapters Three-Five, were written under the influence of Russian writers who advocated for the special mission of writers and literary critics as enlighteners of their people. Thus, Naimy set new tasks and goals for modern Arabic literary critics, writers and poets.

In spite of his constant material needs abroad and his unhappiness with living in big overcrowded cities in the U.S.A., Naimy was very lucky: he found himself in the right places at the right time. His time in America was not only a period of radical changes and various mixtures of styles both in Russian and American literatures. It was also a formative period for him as a writer, who was, on the one hand painfully looking for new topics and forms for his native literature and, on the other living in other cultures and easily absorbing their literary tendencies. So, how did this process happen?

The theory of literary influence, which was developed by the American literary critic, Harold Bloom, in numerous works such as *The Anatomy of Influence*, suggests how Naimy developed. While studying British poetry, Bloom noticed that the process of its development consisted of constant borrowings and misreadings. New men of letters borrowed and imitated literary works that already existed, naturally focusing their attentions on masterpieces, as they wanted to become excellent writers and poets in their own right. At the same time, writers from the new generation wanted to move beyond imitation to develop their own writing pattern. This can only be attained, as Bloom claimed, by “misreading” their precursors' works.

In his other work, *Anxiety of Influence* (1997), Bloom developed the idea of the ambiguous relationship between the new generations of poets and the previous ones. Men of letters, according to him, produced their works based on the previous generation's writings, but very often they turned out to be weaker in comparison to their predecessors. New poets who wanted to leave their mark on poetry realized that it is almost impossible to compete with the previous generation of poets, as those of them who had put their firm footprint on the history of world poetry are distinguished by their genius. Their younger generation would be forced much more to emulate the earlier generation than to compete with it. It raised their sense of anxiety, as very few new poets ended up creating anything new and original.

If we apply Bloom's theory to Naimy's growth as a literary figure, we can see a very similar pattern. Naimy remained deeply influenced by his life in Ukraine. He noted in his Poltava diary that he wanted to copy Russians in everything, including their writing (Sab 1 175). During the next stage of his life, while living in the U.S., unlike his literary cohorts from the Pen Association, he retained strong ties with his distant motherland whose political, social and cultural realities were reflected especially in his early writings (Hafiz 171). The combined impact of these two important periods of his life is what made his writing so distinctive.

We also need to take into consideration the influence of Jibrān Khalīl Jibrān on Naimy. Jibrān, whom Naimy met in America, was an outstanding man of letters, philosopher, poet, artist, and a mystic. These two Lebanese men of letters founded and productively promoted the Pen Association's work for twenty years. It essentially ceased to exist after Jibrān's death in 1931 and Naimy's return to Lebanon from the U.S.A. in 1932 (Starkey 62). Jibrān was not only Naimy's colleague in the Pen Association, but also his mentor and a close friend:

...it was to Naimy that Jibrān confided his problems, secrets and anxieties, personal, and otherwise, seeking the wisdom of council and consolation that only Naimy could offer, it was with Naimy that Jibrān sought association with the influential... *Arrabitah*...a movement that revolutionized and gave impetus to the previously neglected and unrecognized Arabic contribution to world literature; it was to Naimy – almost exclusively – that Jibrān penned his countless letters and inquiries, opening his heart and his experiences to the last detail; it was for Naimy that Jibrān deliriously called on his death-bed, and it was Naimy who responded in breathless haste, comforting *The Prophet of Lebanon* until the end (Wolf XIII).

Naimy did not blindly copy Jibrān's works. However Naimy called Jibrān "the poet of the Night of Solitude, the poet of Loneliness and Melancholy, the poet of Longing and Spiritual Awakening, the poet of the Sea and the Tempest" (160, cited in Nijland 38), and his literary achievements and style did in fact tremendously influence Naimy. It was while under their influence that Naimy worked out his own writing style that combined romanticism, realism and certain other non-Arabic literary traditions and qualities, first and foremost Russian ones.

Jibrān was not only one of the founders of romanticism in modern Arabic literature, but he also laid the foundations of realism in it. Jibrān's heroes do not just want to ruin the odious world, which they survey from on high. They are able to take decisive steps to create a new one. This attitude was the first thing that attracted Naimy to Jibrān's books, and he wrote a number of critical papers devoted to it (Vved 19). Mustafa, Jibrān's prophet (in Arabic *Muṣṭafā* means 'the chosen') from *The Prophet* (1923), is not just some master who knows all the mysteries and calls on people to adopt a new life. After experiencing the people's revolt and abhorring the crowd and sorrowing for the poor, he finds a real solution to the suffering of his soul. It is love that enables him to understand loving hearts, and through this experience he becomes a part of a symbolic heart of life (Vved 16).

Jibrān's prophet undoubtedly inspired Naimy when creating Mirdad, a returning Messiah, who will be analyzed further in this dissertation. In all probability the extreme success of this book

made Naimy think of creating his own teacher for the people, who would reveal to them the truth about what is good and what is bad and teach them the proper lifestyle (Nijland 51)<sup>4</sup>.

Naimy's knowledge of Russian and later British literature enabled him to further develop realism in Arabic literature, whose foundation had already been laid by Jibrān among several other men of letters. Even Naimy's early stories were less sentimental and embellished, realistic, sane, and close-knit in comparison to what had been written before him. Moreover, he was one of the first Arab writers who was able to draw out the psychological development of his heroes (Nijland 12). Though sentimentality was still present in his stories, especially the earliest ones, it was milder than in Jibrān's works, such as in "*al-Ajniḥah al-mitakassirah*" [*The Broken Wings*] (1912) (Nijland 59). Even Naimy's early sentimental literary works do not carry Jibrān's hopeless despair. Naimy's play *al-Ābā' wa-al-banūn* [*Fathers and Sons*] (1917), deal with the same issues of an arranged marriage and family violence touched on in "*The Broken Wings*." But Naimy's literary approach differed from that of Jibrān's. The language of *Fathers and Sons* was not just much lighter and less bombastic than that in "*The Broken Wings*," its plot was not overloaded with additional unnecessary characters, and its ending was not absolutely unhappy and hopeless (Nijland 59).

Jibrān's social writings also had an important impact on Naimy. The freedom that all Arab emigrants enjoyed after leaving their Motherland enabled them to finally express their suppressed deep thoughts and feelings. Specifically, Jibrān, who remained under the influence of

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<sup>4</sup> Four million copies of *The Prophet* were sold between its first publication in 1917 and 1970, i.e. 7,000 copies a week (Jibrān, Haskell, Hilu 4).



the bad memories of his Lebanese childhood, sharply criticized the clergy<sup>5</sup>. Naimy, who also experienced a deep disappointment with the traditional church, certainly shared Jibrān's views. However, Naimy was additionally influenced by Tolstoī's criticism of official clerical institutions.

There are several more sources of Russian literary influence on Naimy in addition to Tolstoī and Belinskiī, to whom the current dissertation is devoted. As mentioned above, Naimy's early works were written in imitation of Russian poetry and prose. His earliest poem from those that survive to the present was even written in Russian. Unfortunately, all of his other poems, except for "Zamerzshaia reka" ["The Frozen River"]<sup>6</sup> (given in Appendix), were lost when he took

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<sup>5</sup> Jibrān's *'Arā'is al-murūj* ["*The Nymphs of the Valley*"] (1906), a collection of three allegories whose plots take place in Northern Lebanon, described issues related to love, nature, religious pursuits, predetermination of life events and reincarnation. It is distinguished by its anti-religious character.

Jibrān's "*al-'Arwāh al-mutamarridah*" ["*Spirits Rebellious*"] (1908), a collection of four narrative writings, which deal with women's hard life in traditional Syrian society, was sharply criticized by clergy for its ideas of women's liberation and negative portrayal of clergymen. Jibrān was even threatened with an excommunication from the church, and his book was censored by the Ottoman government (Saadi par. 26, 27).

<sup>6</sup> As for "The Frozen River", we think that it was an attempt by Naimy to imitate Ivan Nikitin's (1824-1861) poetry. Naimy loved his poems, remembered them even into his old age and enjoyed reciting them (Dolinina 236). Nikitin, following Ivan Kol'tsov (1809-1842), Ivan Surikov (1841-880) and other of his literary predecessors, crafted verses that were similar to Russian folk songs

If we compare Naimy's "The Frozen River" and Nikitin's poem "Rus'" ["Russia"] (see Appendix with my translation), for example, knowing that Naimy was fond of Nikitin, we notice that the young Lebanese seminarian followed the same rhyme scheme as Nikitin. All these signs are very common in folk songs. Naimy recognized that his poem's rhyme was different from the traditional Arabic one. He wrote in his diary: "My [poem] was [built on] the *kāmil*<sup>6</sup> meter and maintained a rhyme only for each couplet in the European style" (Sab 2 79-80, cited in Bell 2001 52).

them to America (TRL 74). We can only guess that Naimy's other poems, like "Pokhorony liubvi" ["Funerals of Love"] (Sab 1 185), are dedicated to the theme of love and disappointment that were popular with young people. "Funerals of Love" was written under the influence of early twentieth-century decadent poetry, particularly the Russian decadent poet, Semèn Nadson, whom Naimy highly admired at the time the poem was written.

Naimy's passion for Russian literature was also reflected in his choice of a new biographical genre. Naimy's Poltavan and early American diaries that later took the form of an autobiographic trilogy are reflective of Ivan Nikitin's *The Diary of a Seminarian* (1862) that Naimy read in Poltava (Sab 1 181). Here we would argue with Professor Nijland, who thinks that Naimy started writing his autobiography at time of the flowering of the so-called "*biographie romaniceé*" under the impact of works by André Maurois, Giles Lytton Strachey, Emil Ludwig and Stefan Zweig (Nijland 67). Naimy started his diary two decades earlier, in Poltava, when he remained under the strong influence of mostly Russian, rather than Western European literature.

When Naimy started his long and productive work in the Pen Association in New York, his writings underwent a radical shift. He began to blend Russian and European romanticism with realistic literary traditions, but his heroes were the Arabs living in the Arabic world or abroad. Naimy provided the description of their life's unique indigenous atmosphere there and their vision of the world that matched their social and cultural traditions.

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In that poem Naimy, who was feeling the tense prerevolutionary atmosphere in Russia, compared stagnant Russia to a frozen *Sula* river that would melt in the spring, making a direct reference to the coming revolution. [This metaphorical image of the ice break on a river as presaging the revolution was used as part of a montage in Pudovkin's 1926 film adaption of Gorki's *Mat* [*Mother*].

His early short stories “Sanatu-ha al-jadīadah” [“Her New Year”] (1914) that will be analyzed in detail in Chapter Four and “al-‘Āqir” [“A Barren Woman”] (1915) are devoted to the stagnant morality of Arabic villages and to the hard life of women. The plots of his *Muzakkirāt al-Arqash* [*Memoirs of al-Arqash*] (1949), “Sa‘ādat al-Bīk” [“His Excellency Bek”] (1919), *Sā‘at al-kūkū* [*Cuckoo’s Clock*] (1925) take place in an Arab community in the United States. Naimy’s characters from “al-Jūbīl al-māsiy” [“Diamond Jubilee”] (1958) live in an Arab city, and his heroes from “Dhanb al-himār” [“Donkey’s Tail”] (1956) and “Dajājat ‘umm ya‘aqūb” [“Umm Yaqub’s Hen”] (1958) live in an Arab village.

Hafiz (172) in his analyses of the genesis of Arabic narrative discourse points out that in Naimy’s early stories the evidence of Russian influence is obvious. It is manifested in their structure and choice of topic and character. The spiritual is given prominent place in everyday life and simple events. The unconscious as well as unimportant acts of normal people are seen as part of divine providence.

Another point of influence of Russian literature on the Lebanese writer is its felt presence in Naimy’s depiction of his characters’ inner psyche and its connection to the consequences of their deeds. He devotes the main part of his stories to a description of the inner conflict of his heroes, who are presented by him in Dostoevskian fashion where he feels sympathy towards his characters and tries to understand them and analyze their motivations and state of mind instead of prosecuting them (Hafiz 172).

Naimy’s innovations, which were made under the influence of Russian Literature, were also manifested in his attention to the moral and ideological content of his writings that will be explored in detail in the further chapters, as well as in how he balanced art and reality in his

works, in the new forms, genres and the style of his oeuvre in addition to the sufficient enrichment of the language of his literary products (Bilyk 28) that will be also discussed further in this work.

The other specific feature of Naimy's creative writings is the angle from which he saw the U.S. and the West on the whole. It was a mirror version of Western Orientalism and represented his subconscious attempt to preserve his native culture. Moreover, quite often his view is not only that of an Arab but of a Russian as well. The way he referred to himself as "Misha" (the Russian diminutive form of Mikhail) during his American period, or as "a Russian in America," can serve a confirmation of our hypothesis.

The term "orientalism" as used in recent critical theory was introduced by Edward Said, whose seminal works *Orientalism* (1979) and *Culture and Imperialism* (1993) develop Michel Foucault's idea concerning the relationship between knowledge and power. Said claims that the West made the East a special subject of its studies and in doing so created an image of the East that allowed Europe (and later the U.S.) to believe in their superiority over the Orient through their rationalism, flexibility and ability to adapt to change. This attitude allowed the West not only to subvert the East through modern technologies, but also forced it to submit by making it an object of its studies.

But Said's view was not academic theory. He considered his *Orientalism* to be "a pamphlet." It can be turned on its head and converted into "Occidentalism." Thus, those who turned out to be the object of Orientalist studies, can apply Occidentalism against their Western authors. Stephan Meyer, an American professor of Middle Eastern Studies and comparative literature, notes that

The Arabs' collective view of the Americans, who seem to accomplish things without exerting any visible effort, confers on the foreigners an aura of mystery similar to that which orientalism conferred on the Arab world. In this case, however, the contrast is between the Arab culture that does not wish to know the causes of everything, and the fetishistic "scientific" attitude of the Americans who constantly probe into every aspect of existence... (79)

Naimy's descriptions of the U.S. are a good demonstration of how Said's idea works in both directions. It converts the West into a kind of exotic other place as perceived by Easterners as well as an object of study. Orientalism becomes then not just the Western tool of predomination over the East. In works such as Naimy's, it is converted into a tool for philosophical dispute between the two opposite cultures over the terms of their power and equality. Naimy's Occidentalism is quite noticeable in his memoirs about his life in the U.S.A.:

[I felt New York through]...its giant buildings and hectic movement that were [like heavy] weights pressing on my chest... Hurly-burly, noise and overcrowding... Day and night... [The big crowd's]...movements are like those of insects<sup>7</sup> (Sab 2 290)...

That [American university] atmosphere of lightness, fun and cheerfulness, [students'] passion for baseball, football and other sport games, provokes nothing but silence in me (Sab 3 307)...

During [my long twenty years in the U.S.]... I knew all kinds of Americans...Overall, I found them more generous than miserly, more noble-minded than miscreant, more truthful than untruthful, more religious than atheistic, more disposed to good, than to bad... from the point of organizing their working life, they are superior to any people in the world... As for... [things that encourage them the most], they are their love for acquisition and joys,... [they dislike]...suffering.

... Americans...like the same food and drinks, and even [have the same emotional reactions, as well as the same]... judgments and traditions, but [it is not about] their clothes, living places and places of mass entertainment. I noticed that they are confident in their stereotypes, and even a small change in this [makes them uncomfortable]. They follow numerous religions, and each one... claims that it is the only one [that will lead] to Heaven's gate... Their praying led them to

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<sup>7</sup>We think that Naimy, while making such an interesting comparison, meant a huge and continuous stream of hurrying people, who turned into robots [but Naimy compares them to insects, not inorganic robots] that are only concerned with the correct performance of their work. From another side, it is the cruel conditions of nature that make them work hard to survive. They think only of this, not of saving their souls.

engrave “In God we trust” on their money ...I do not doubt that most Americans strongly believe that their affluence, strength and world leadership... are the result of their belief in God (Ab 222, 223).

### ***Problem Statement***

Naimy’s multifaceted creative writings, including poems, short stories, biography, autobiography, plays, novels and essays, aphorisms, travelogue, press interviews, and “a book of prayers” (Nijland 29), have been thoroughly studied. Many researchers devoted their works to his passionate literary criticism against the stagnation of Modern Arabic literature. His significant contribution to *al-Mahjarī* literature has also found its reflection in the numerous studies from the Arab world, the U.S., Western Europe, Russia and even Armenia.

It is true that foreign literatures and cultures had a tremendous impact on Mikhail Naimy and his peers from the Pen Association. But previous studies of Naimy have mostly focused on the influence of American and Western European writers. Meanwhile, the study of the Russian influence on Naimy’s long creative career has been neglected despite its decisive impact on his works.

In undertaking such a study, it is necessary to take into account Naimy’s sojourn in different countries at a time of radical changes in the world, his perfect knowledge of several languages that he was actively using for writing and reading literature in the original, and his hard but interesting and unusual job experiences that allowed him to meet different people from various social classes. All of these factors influenced his personality and impacted his literary works. They emerged as the result of the synthesis of different cultural traditions that enriched them by making them more complex and diverse. That is why it is important to deconstruct this

conglomerate of influences and to study each of them separately and in combination with each other.

This dissertation focuses on the influence of two prominent Russian men of letters, Vissarion Grigor'evich Belinskiĭ (1811-1848), who earned fame for his critical articles on Russian literature, and Lev Nikolaevich Tolstoĭ (1828-1910), a philosopher and author of numerous novels and stories.

Although Belinskii and Tolstoi are both notable nineteenth-century Russian writers and thinkers, they have very little in common except for their Russian origin. They led completely different lifestyles and came from different social backgrounds. Belinskiĭ was totally immersed in St. Petersburg's bohemian and theater life and at the same time could barely survive on very modest income that he earned from writing. He came from a naval doctor's family with no connection to the nobility.

As for Tolstoĭ, he generally stayed away from the bustle of big cities and the pressures of modern society. He settled on his estate at a relatively young age, and for most of his life he enjoyed fame, glory and a very decent income. He had inherited wealth and was a member of the landowning gentry. Tolstoĭ could trace his family's aristocratic lineage back to the thirteenth century.

These men of letters lived at different times: Belinskiĭ had already died when Tolstoĭ was still choosing a path to follow in his life and had not yet started writing. Their reputations as writers were won in completely different genres.

As opposed to Tolstoī, Belinskiī uses language that was extremely rich, complicated emotional and archaic. He remains under the influence of Russian romanticism and early realism and was an advocate of Russia's Westernization.

As for Tolstoī, his language is absolutely different: he follows the ideological movements that considered the Russian peasants' patriarchal lifestyle and philosophy to be the only right ones. That is why Tolstoī's style is characterized by extreme clarity that is derived from a mixture of Russian and Western literary and academic works, the language of Russian intelligentsia and common people's speech (Mal'kova, par. 2, 4, 6-11, 13). His so-called simple style is partly chosen to reflect the moral tenor of his works. He has a moral point to make, and he wants to be sure to make it.

It is quite interesting that Tolstoī has never been fond of Belinskiī. Moreover, he spoke very lowly of him. Iuriī Aīhenval'd brings up the following of Tolstoī's judgments of Belinskiī:

Which of Belinskiī's thoughts are you speaking about?... There were many times when I wanted to read him, [but] I always became bored, so I have still not finished [reading any work by him] (par. 17)...

Belinskiī is a chatterbox; all [of what he has written] is written so crudely. However, he also has good pieces, he is a smart guy ... But if Belinskiī and other Russian critics were translated into foreign languages, then foreigners would not read them, as [all of their writings] are so basic and boring (par. 18).

The last quotation brings us to the thought about that, probably, Tolstoī was not fond of, or did not understand Russian literary criticism on the whole. But this is the topic of an additional study that we are not going to pursue in the current paper.



When Naimy came to Russia, he might have met Belinskiĭ's very old disciples with whom this literary critic had been working at *Sovremennik*,<sup>8</sup> <sup>9</sup> or at least read their articles, though he did not mention these important facts in his diary.

The situation with Tolstoĭ was the opposite. Naimy came to Russia at a time when Tolstoĭ was still alive and already a cult personality. He was there when the entire country was proudly celebrating his 80<sup>th</sup> birthday and would be mourning his passing in two years.

What then made Naimy admire, become fascinated by and at times imitate both of these two men of letters, and why did both of them play key roles in his works?

There were several reasons for this. First and foremost were Naimy's multifaceted talents in many literary genres (poetry, short stories, novels, philosophical essays, notes and thoughts, and – for a short period of time – literary criticism). The Lebanese writer's literary experiments were not just the result of his constant search for new ways to express himself but reflected his growth as a person and the challenges that he had to confront during his long and unusual life. In addition to the special attention to Tolstoĭ as an important figure in Russian culture, Naimy was attracted to his writings, as he was able to find in them the very same transformations that took place within himself at a young age. Naimy started his career as a priest at a very young age, but, ironically, the years spent in the seminary transformed his deep religiosity into deep and bitter disappointment in official Orthodox establishments and prompted him to look for a replacement

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<sup>8</sup> An extremely popular St. Petersburg literary, social and political magazine that was edited in the middle of the nineteenth century.

<sup>9</sup> We doubt this, as Naimy remained in the Poltava area for his entire five-year stay in the Russian Empire.

for God.<sup>10</sup> Tolstoī experienced a similar transformation, but it occurred relatively late within his life.

Naimy’s attraction to both writers was also due to the fact that Belinskiī and Tolstoī responded to very specific nineteenth-century Russian issues (“the accursed questions”), such as the degree to which Russia should follow the West and the role of art as a tool for social change. In fact, Belinskiī’s central belief that literature must have a social purpose was largely shared by Tolstoī. In the second half of his career, the latter gave up writing long novels for a relatively limited, educated audience to focus on writing with a practical purpose for the dispossessed classes of Russian society. These later works included textbooks for his peasant school and moral parables. Belinskiī also thought that many traditional high art forms were worthless in terms of their social value. He stated, for example, that the only use for Russian icons is to cover pots. Naimy’s life in America sharpened one of the most distinct traits of his character: lack of any tolerance for social injustice and lies. He had seen them in his native Lebanon and in Russia. But living in America, which he did not seem to really like and where he did not have much luck either materially, or in obtaining a decent job, deepened all his previous sufferings.

Naimy’s life as an activist and a creator made him look for the solution to problems that tormented him. Since he was one of the few Arabs who had a chance to travel, study and live abroad, his world view was able to change rapidly with each passing year. Russia and America

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<sup>10</sup> Here we can make a parallel between Naimy and Dobroliubov and Chernyshevskiī, two radical critics who wrote for *Sovremennik* magazine in the 1860s after Belinskiī. They were sons of priests [*raznochintsy*] and had also attended seminary. However, their disillusionment with the church led them to assume positions further to the left.

were home to many kinds of literary and philosophical currents that could offer a solution to the painful topical issues that absorbed him.

At the same time, the apogee of Naimy's creative writing career happened during the period of his life in the U.S., when cultural life was extremely interesting between the 1910s' and the 1940s'. It was during this time when the mixture of different literary currents and philosophies that he found in the New World, and the Russian literary influence that still occupied an important place in his writings, took place.

Meanwhile, in America the Lebanese writer was successfully working in one of the best Arab literary associations. But he was too far from the Lebanon that was dear to his heart and, naturally, he was turning to his native literature and trying to find ways to improve it. We think that due to his time studying in a Russian Orthodox missionary school from an early age, Naimy became more patriotic. According to Hafiz, the Russian Empire was interested in cultivating such feelings within the Lebanese Orthodox community so that this religious minority could resist the aggressive Western influence over the declining Ottoman Empire (94). This was accomplished through the good will expressed towards the Russians<sup>11</sup>, the superior pedagogical principles, real enthusiasm shown by teachers, democratic rules of admission and educational programs in addition to good student living conditions, all of which will be described in the next chapter. These schools were thus extremely popular.

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<sup>11</sup> Naimy mentions in his diaries the following episode: when the Russian inspector and his translator visited the IOPRS School, where Naimy was studying at that time, one of the local cobblers left his store and ran out in order to see them. He stopped the inspector's horse and cried in delight: "*Int miscūb? Zītū!!!*" ("Are you from Russia? Long live!"). Then that local kissed their carriage stirrup and crossed it three times. The shoemaker remained in a pleasant stupor for a while, still unable to believe that he had seen people from "the great kingdom" (Sab 1 79).

In Naimy's eyes, Arabic literature was not comparable to Russian and American literature. Moreover, he was looking for ways to improve his native literature through the works of the best literary critics. The leading Russian literary critic was still Belinskiĭ.

The very observant Naimy certainly could not miss the fire in Belinskiĭ's writings and the numerous philosophical and social essays by Tolstoĭ (and their discussion in the press and among the people themselves) that touched upon problems that were pressing for Naimy.

The other factor that drew the Lebanese writer's attention to these two literary men was Naimy's nature, which was passionately searching for the truth and could not make compromises in his fight for progress and justice. In addition to this, Naimy admired the love and respect for the common people shared by both Naimy and Tolstoĭ.

We will discuss how Belinskiĭ and Tolstoĭ emerged in Russian literature and why they were important for Naimy, how they were reflected in Naimy's works and how they influenced the further development of Arabic literature through his writing.

The current thesis intends to fill a gap in the studies of the sources of influence and inspiration on Naimy and the Pen Association, and thus it will contribute to the study of the sources that nurtured modern Arabic literature's innovators and made Arabic literature a part of world literature.

### ***Literature Review***

In spite of the fact that we were able to find about 1,000 works that are wholly or partly dedicated to Naimy, and though practically all mention the Russian influence, none of them fully explore the following questions: How important was the Russian literary influence in light of

other factors? What specific Russian ideas, literary methods and genres impacted him? How were these influences reflected in his literary works?

We would like to pursue the literature review on the basis of the principle “from general to particular.”

Researchers in Arabic (Alwan, Ashtar, Dimashkiyah, Ibn Hasin and al-Tayyib, Fakhuri, Ghayth, Hamidi, Hammud, Hasan and al-Ghani, Jabr, Kāfūrī, Khūrī, Munir Sayyed, Sarrāj, Shayya) cover interesting and important topics, but even the most detailed works about Naimy provide little information for our dissertation topic. Practically all the researchers in Arabic provide a list of the Russian writers and poets that influenced the great Lebanese man of letters (generally taken from his diaries *Ab'ad min mūskū wā-wāshintūn* [*Far from Moscow and Washington*] (1957) (*Sab'un...Hikāyat 'umrī* [*Seventy: My Life's Story*] (1959-60)). Sometimes they add to this list several broad ideas taken from his memoirs about Tolstoī's philosophy, Belinskiī's critical works, Naimy's sympathy for the poor and downtrodden, his humanism, passion for freedom and love of Nature, among other themes.

Works about Naimy in English (Boullata, Bell, Chelala, Dabbagh, Fanous, Hine, N.Naimy, Nijland, Ramaḍān, Yuningish) are more informative compared to studies in Arabic. They are distinguished by a broader vision regarding the numerous aspects of his life. These scholars do not share a common position on Naimy, as their views vary from high appraisals (N.Naimy, Boullata, Bell, between others) to skepticism in terms of his innovations (Fanous). Most of these works cover specific topics, such as Naimy's humor, mysticism, theosophy, criticism and the development of the hero in Naimy's works. Though most of these studies contain very little information about the Russian influence on Naimy, we were able to use them

as a foundation for the arguments developed in this dissertation. In addition to it, we shall briefly analyze in the current chapter Hine's thesis devoted to Russian literature's influence on Naimy's writings.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, Russian scholars are responsible for the most detailed studies of the Russian impact on Naimy.

Naimy's writings were given primary attention in studies by Soviet critics of Syro-American writers (İmanquliyeva<sup>12</sup>) due to many reasons. It was not only his unusual biography, the time he spent in Poltava and the amount of attention that he devoted to Russia and Russians. He had a warm relationship with the Soviet Union, which he visited twice and where he even gave a talk on Soviet radio in 1956, where he glorified the achievements of the Soviet Union. But it was first and foremost the Russian influence on his works that contributed to the creation of modern Arabic literature. Naturally, it was Soviet scholars who were able to distinguish Russian tendencies in Naimy's works from the very early stages as they were much more familiar than foreign scholars with their native literature.<sup>13</sup>

The Russian scholar of Arabic language and literature Ignatiĭ Krachkovskiĭ was the first Arabic studies researcher to notice the talent of the then unknown Lebanese novice writer. He included the preface that M.Naimy wrote to his 1917 play Fathers and Sons in his anthology of new Arabic literature.

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<sup>12</sup> The correct transliteration of her last name is Imangulieva. But we spell it according to the transliteration given by the Library of Congress and the WorldCat library system.

<sup>13</sup> Although Soviet scholars were intent on finding Russian influences everywhere as part of the diluted version of Marxism that had infiltrated Soviet literature and criticism, Naimy's connection to Russian literature and culture was much more direct.

Three years later, Krachkovskii wrote a biography of M.Naimy and dedicated a whole chapter to him in his famous book *Nad arabskimi rukopisiami* [*On the Arabic Manuscripts*], in which he not only provided a brief analysis of Naimy's creative writing, but also an account of his personality and biographical details, including his life in Russia, the U.S. and Lebanon.

Krachkovskii was also the first researcher to note the Russian influence on Naimy in the early 1930s. He wrote about his first readings of Naimy: "...I could detect some echoes of Russian critical thought" (3: 323).

The Russian researcher highly praised Naimy's *The Sieve*, as the latter "was not afraid "to "sift through" [even] the most recognized of authorities" (Krachkovskii 1: 56) in modern Arabic literature, so the Russian scholar underscored again that Naimy "definitely felt the influence of Russian literature" (Krachkovskii 1: 57).

Professor Anna Dolinina from St. Petersburg State University, whose studies concentrate on Arabic literature, translated several of Mikhail Naimy's works into Russian, addressed the sources of literary influence on the Lebanese writer in her several books and articles, and considered him to be an important figure in the development of the modern Arabic literature. Dolinina claimed (Vved 19) that Naimy's first novels and his play Fathers and Sons were written "in the traditions of twentieth-century Russian critical realism" and that we can find the ideas of Belinskiĭ, the great Russian critic, in Naimy's assertions about the mission of modern literature, such as inspiring people and meeting their need for intimate inner reflection. Naimy, like Belinskiĭ, believed a true writer represented the fruit and aspirations of the nation.

In her afterward to the translation of Naimy's *Seventy: My Life's Story* into Russian, Dolinina stated that his memoirs were of great importance because they were not just chronicles

and recollections of the different events that took place in Naimy's life. They were "the path of the formation of an ordinary human and the biography of a human soul" (DPos 151). Meticulously she followed the main biographical milestones in Naimy's life along with "his literary experiments, doubts, flights, failures and his uncontrolled desire to write in spite of everything..." (DPos 158). Dolinina pointed out that by reading Russian classics, Naimy was able to learn about Russia's history and national spirit and to grow as a writer. It was during his stay in Ukraine when Naimy defined the purpose of his life "under the influence of Russian writers and poets" (DPos 157), that he wrote in his diary that his ideal was to honestly serve people with his pen. Dolinina touched on many aspects of Naimy's growth as a man of letters and a philosopher, the starting point of which, as she claimed, was Russia. Among Naimy's early publications were the articles where he expressed his concerns about the events of his beloved Lebanon. Dolinina pointed out that the young Naimy's social and political position was formed in light of the events taking place in pre-revolutionary Russia at the beginning of the twentieth century when he was living there. Dolinina also paid a lot of attention to Naimy's religious and spiritual quest under Tolstoī's influence, especially in her later works written after the fall of the Soviet Union. At this point, she had the freedom to write in a different vein than her processors.

In 1963 Dolinina wrote an article about Mikhail Naimy, where she made an interesting, in-depth comparison between his early play Fathers and Sons and the novel *Fathers and Sons* by the Russian novelist Ivan Turgenev<sup>14</sup>, though Dolinina asserted that Naimy did not blindly allude to the ideas and images of Turgenev's novel, but "obviously, he was inspired by them, wrote in light of them, rethought them...and even started a polemic discussion with some of them" (DAr 275).

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<sup>14</sup> Turgenev, Ivan Sergeevich (1818-1883) was also a translator, poet and playwright.



Professor Aida İmanquliyeva from Soviet Azerbaijan, the director of the Institute of Oriental Studies in Baku, dedicated a number of her works wholly or in part to Naimy. In her very detailed and solid work *Mikhail Naimy and the Pen Association*, she analyzed his writings and summed up the results of his productive work and his cooperation and personal relationship with members of the Pen Association. In her other landmark book *Coryphaeuses of the New Arabic Literature* İmanquliyeva collected a vast number of historical and cultural accounts of the activities of the Pen Association in the U.S. and touched on the question of the Russian, Western European and American influences on the members of this literary group that proved themselves as pioneers of the new Arabic literature. In this first fairly complete survey in Russian about the life and work of Jibrān, al-Rīhānī and Naimy, she devoted a special chapter to the Russian literary and critical influence on Naimy. İmanquliyeva's book was translated into English and was edited in 2009 under the title *Jibrān, Rihani & Naimy: East-West Interactions in Early Twentieth-Century Arab Literature*. Among the many issues raised in this thorough study is İmanquliyeva's analysis of the specifics of the Pen Association's contribution to the Arabic literature, which was in need of revitalization through adoption of Western literary forms. İmanquliyeva described in detail how al-Rīhānī and Jibrān incorporated European romanticism and American transcendentalism into their writings. She also wrote about the impact of Russian criticism and realism on Naimy, providing examples of Belinskiĭ's influence on Naimy as a critic and on his role in the development of the genre of drama in the new Arab literature under the impact of Turgenev's *Fathers and Sons*. İmanquliyeva also wrote about Tolstoĭ's influence on Naimy's anti-clerical position and his negative attitude towards private property and wealth. As for Anton Chekhov's impact on Naimy's literary writings, İmanquliyeva focused on how Naimy's reading of this writer improved his skills as a composer of short stories.

Though Imanquliyeva discussed the Russian influence on Naimy in her works, her research was superficial and had many unsystematic examples of particular points of influence. She also gave broad explanations and made vague conclusions. For example, while clarifying the reasons for why Naimy found Belinskiĭ, Tolstoĭ and Chekhov attractive, she wrote pages about their genius, importance and prominence for the whole world that did not give her readers a specific answer. The same can be said about the lack of description of specific techniques adopted by Naimy from the Russian classics, as Imanquliyeva limited herself to comparative examples of Naimy and Russian writers with little additional analysis. She did not develop any important thoughts about the premises and the consequences of the impact of the Russian literary process on Arabic literature. Instead, she spatially reasoned about the East and the West's historical, social and cultural relations and their spiritual values that frequently took readers away from the book's topic.

Professor Kh. Muminov undertook another fairly detailed study of Russian literary influence on Naimy. Unfortunately, we were not able to find the full name of this researcher from Soviet Central Asia and access the whole text of his dissertation. It concentrates on Russian critical realism's impact in Naimy's works. After the detailed and multifaceted study of the great Lebanese man of letters' critical articles and the biographical novel about Jibrān, as well as a lot of factual materials, Muminov uncovered broad scale of philosophical and literary influences on Naimy, starting from Christian religious thought and Belinskiĭ's literary criticism, up to Tolstoĭ's criticism of social issues.

Muminov undoubtedly made a valuable contribution to the topic covered in our thesis. His work, like Imanquliyeva's, contains many interesting thoughts, but they were also buried under thick layers of vague and sometimes unclear ideas about the relationships between the East

and the West instead of the academic application of literary theory that could clarify the premises and the consequences of Russian influence. This might be explained by the fact that Soviet studies at that time were forced to apply a very diluted form of Marxist critical theory that was pervasive in the U.S.S.R. In addition, scholars had very few opportunities to study any foreign sources or to establish academic contacts outside the Soviet Union.

Another Russian scholar of Naimy, Professor Irina Bilyk, who teaches Arabic literature at the Russian State Humanitarian University (RGGU) in Moscow, analyzed Naimy's creative methods in her dissertation and researched the influence of Russian culture on him. The topic of Naimy's literary analytical method that seemed to be simple was challenging when applied to Naimy's creative writing: he wrote his books for over 60 years, and lived in different parts of the world where he was naturally affected by various literary and philosophical currents. Bilyk's research obviously made a big contribution to the study of the creative heritage of the great Lebanese writer from the point of view of the detailed study of different prose genres and literary currents that he was following at different periods of time. She also provided good translations of Naimy's short stories and parts of his novels into Russian. Her work was criticized, however, by Imanquliyeva, who asserted that an artistic method was a coherent world vision and a system of principles of understanding life and embodiment of an artist's view through art, and not a conglomerate of all possible currencies and methods. If Bilyk understood the concept of what an artistic method was, this means that she conducted research based on the wrong principles, and the problem that she wanted to solve in her dissertation was not solved. In addition to this, it appears that she did not study all of Naimy's works written in the 1950-1960s, as we just find more references to them than actual details about them. Her study is thus incomplete.

All of the Russian works mentioned above were written during Soviet times, except for those by Bilyk, who is still an active scholar. The limited opportunities to obtain American, Western European and the Arabic sources about Naimy's life and works considerably limited the ability of Russian scholars to do research. The lack of access to much Western and American literary criticism, as well as the virtual absence of academic studies about the Arabic critical school did not allow Bilyk, İmanquliyeva, Dolinina and Muminov to develop their ideas fully. For example, Bilyk in her dissertation mentioned Nijland's study that she did not have access to despite the fact that it is still considered the most detailed one about Naimy's life and works. Moreover, even access by Russian scholars to Naimy's works was limited: İmanquliyeva was able to learn about Naimy's *Fī al-ghirbāl al-jadīd* [*In the New Sieve*] (1972) collection of articles only from a report presented at the conference devoted to Naimy's one hundredth birthday in 1987. She has never been able to read this original work.

While writing studies during Soviet times, scholars were forced to pay tribute to the existing regime. Hence the tenor of their research was directed primarily at serving socialist ideology. As an example, Muminov, who strictly based his work on Marxist theory, concluded that Naimy's views were limited, "as he, like Muhammed Teimūr and Ṭaḥa Husseyn, belonged to the liberal bourgeoisie social class and could not understand the objective laws governing the development of the society" (128). We think that such a limited judgment ruins our ideas about Russian influence. Naimy's compassion with the hard life of the common people, his philanthropy, and his sharp criticism of clericalism, wealth and private property were formed under the Russian influence. This impact together with the other ones turned him towards critical realism. Our explanation of Muminov's position is that he could only make use of limited sources due to the reasons mentioned above. He was also forced to include such ideas in his

study to support the Soviet aggressive social class distinctions that exalted the proletariat and peasants over the other social strata.

Of all the most detailed works about Mikhail Naimy, we should single out the analysis by Nādim Naimy, professor of Arabic literature at the American University in Beirut, Mikhail Naimy's nephew and the keeper of his literary heritage. Though this book was written in 1971, it still remains the most detailed study of Naimy's biography and one of the best studies of M.Naimy's literary heritage. N.Naimy's scrupulous study systematizes the vast legacy of the modern Lebanese and Arabic literary classic writer, and it attempts to systematically present the heterogeneous sources that informed the philosophical world of M.Naimy. N.Naimy compiled a long list of Russian, European and Arabic works that influenced his uncle.

He described the Russian influence on his famous uncle in his fundamental work, which includes a lot of useful information, even though it is listed more than it is analyzed. Specifically, N. Naimy, while speaking of the young Lebanese writer's sources of inspiration, mentioned the spiritual impact of Orthodox Christianity, especially the New Testament and the person of Christ. Another major source of influence on the great Lebanese writer, according to N.Naimy, was his familiarity with the literature of Russian romanticism and realism from his childhood that he read in the original and the cultural atmosphere in Russia that he experienced when he arrived there in 1906. N.Naimy emphasized in his book that Mikhail Naimy's critical realism was formed under the influence of the Russian critic Belinskiĭ (NNI 100, 111, 157), though he did not give the specific examples of such impact.

Another meticulous work about Naimy that we have used as a source was Professor Cornelius Nijland's thorough study of Mikhail Naimy, called by the author in the title of his

book “the promoter of the Arabic literary revival.” This study consisted of several chapters, each covering one distinct facet of the Lebanese man of letter’s multi-sided creative writings. This is a very rational approach to an analysis of the creative heritage of such a productive writer as Naimy, as it has always been challenging to researchers to adequately systematize 6,000 pages of Naimy’s miscellaneous works. As for the Russian influence on Naimy, Nijland primarily concentrated on the impact of Tolstoī’s ethical writings on the young seminarian, and on listing the many Russian authors whose works made an impression on Naimy. But Belinskiī, the outstanding Russian literary critic and the great source of influence on Mikhail Naimy, is not even mentioned in the entire book, though there is a special chapter in it devoted to Naimy’s fundamental critical works. This fact suggests the degree to which the Russian influence on Naimy has been understudied; Nijland, who undertook one of the most in-depth studies of Naimy’s literary work, did not recognize how deep and important Belinskiī’s influence was.

The third thorough study that served as a source in this dissertation for Naimy’s literary works and biography was one conducted by Hussein Dabbagh, a British scholar. Though his study mostly took details about Naimy’s Poltavan period from his diary, Dabbagh pointed out the extreme importance of the Russian influence on Naimy as both a writer and a critic. He wrote that years spent in the Ukrainian seminary led to the rapid growth of Naimy’s “intellectual independence,” and it was a place where his idea of being a Christian “took a new turn” (Dabbagh 11).

Dabbagh also paid special attention to Ukrainian social life as one more step in Naimy’s personal, spiritual and social growth, though all the information brought up by him was taken from Naimy’s memoirs, into which Dabbagh just inserted his comments and thoughts. The British scholar devoted a special place in his work to the details of Naimy’s life in Poltava,

which represented a radical change to his old-fashioned life in Lebanon. The young seminarian's experience with noisy and "shameless buffoonery" (Naimy 1 209), that he never liked, his affair with Varia, the married sister of his friend, his life in the seminary's dormitory where he witnesses all kinds of vices, in the end pushed him away from staying a member of the crowd and encouraged him to look inward to create a world of his own (Dabbagh 14). Dabbagh (13) thought that it was while he was in Ukraine that Naimy was able to both absorb Russian literature and start rethinking his own culture. Dabbagh also considered Naimy's deep spiritual crisis upon returning from Poltava to Biskintā in 1916 where he "found himself in a spiritual and intellectual vacuum" (19) to be the one of the decisive factors that allowed him to deepen his appreciation of Russian literature.

As mentioned above, English-language scholars have also touched upon such various topics as Naimy's philosophy (Hamidi, Shayya), mysticism and theosophy (Bell, Boullata, Malḥas, Yuningsih), humor (Chelala), the development of the literary hero (Ramadan), Naimy's critical thought (Fanous) and Russian literature in Naimy's works (Hine).

Mystical elements and the combination of the different religious conceptions in Naimy's literary works, their affinity with Islamic mysticism and European Theosophy have attracted the attention of Professor Gregory Bell from Princeton University, who studies Naimy's poetry in detail with an aim to analyzing the Lebanese man of letters' religious and spiritual development. Bell comes to the conclusion that Naimy's "experience in Russia was quite valuable" (TRL 26) in his spiritual searches. In Chapter Four of his study, Bell gives a good analysis of the development of romanticism's literary currents in the world, and, particularly, in Russia. The British scholar argued that Naimy was more impressed by Russian romanticism and Russian neo-romanticism (TRL 138-140) than his colleagues in the Pen Association who remained under

the influence of Western romanticism and some other Western literary currents that confirmed one of the main ideas of the current work.

Bell also claimed that Naimy first learned of theosophical ideas while in Russia, probably indirectly, before he met a Scottish member of the Theosophical Society in the U.S. So, Naimy's first encounters with theosophy were from Russian sources, like Tolstoy's literary works that we shall examine in detail in Chapter Two. He also became familiar with Madame Blavatski's writings while still in the Theological seminary at that time (TRL 97-102).

Bell thought that Naimy did not respond to theosophical ideas when he was still a young writer. His early poems were full of "social and political issues rather than the spiritual concerns that completely dominate his later works" (TRL 191).

Yeni Ratna Yuningsih from the Center of Islamic Studies in Montreal in her master's thesis also studied the mystical elements of Naimy's writing, but concentrated on their affinity with Islamic mysticism. She emphasized the oneness of being and the transmigration of the soul, considering this topic to be the most common in Naimy's mystical worldview compared even to his ideas about love and asceticism for which he is known (II). She claimed that his life in Russia had contributed considerably to his growth as a writer and a poet, as his shift to a new life style (visiting theaters, watching ballet, staying in heterosexual company) "shaped his literary art... and inspired him to write poetry, short stories and plays... [his] religious journey found its finishing touch [in Russia as well, as his life there made him reconsider] his religious model of thinking" (23).

Hadia Ramadan dedicated her Master's thesis at the American University in Cairo to the development of the hero in Naimy's novels. In order to do this, she picked three characters from



Naimy's novels (al-Arqash from *Memoires of al-Arqash* (1949), Mūsā al-'Askariy from *al-Yawm al-'akhīr* [*The Last Day*] (1963) and Sunbim from *Yā Ibn Ādam!* [*O, Son of Adam!*] (1969).

We would also like to mention Mohamed Fanous's doctoral thesis. The research of this scholar from St. Anthony College (Oxford) focuses on the Lebanese contribution to modern Arabic literary criticism. One of his chapters is devoted to Naimy and helped us understand his critics better. Fanous provided a brief and at the same time brilliant history of the heritage of Arabic literary criticism, which helped his readers see Naimy's place in his native critical tradition. He mentioned Belinskiĭ as Naimy's source of inspiration together with Arabic folk art traditions. As for Western literature, Fanous expressed his doubts about whether young Naimy was really as familiar with them as he claimed in some of his early works. But it was the Arabic literary criticism, according to Fanous, that had a much deeper impact on Naimy, much deeper than did the Western critical tradition whether he wanted to recognize this or not at the earlier stage of his life. That is why, according to Fanous, Naimy's works can be called "a repository where ideas of different Lebanese men of letters...are gathered and developed" (369) rather than "a pure firebrand from the West" (al-'Ashtar 81, cited in Fanous 363). At the end of his work Fanous concluded that "Most of ... [Naimy's] ideas, especially those published in his early years, are either confused or contradictory. In addition, the majority of his thoughts are not entirely unknown to the Arabic literary criticism of the time. In other words, Mīkha'īl Nu'aymah's output of literary criticism may fairly stand as a mirror that almost does nothing more than reflect works of other Lebanese writers in this field of literary activities" (363). Fanous (363) referred to Nijland (82-85), who also noted parallels between Naimy and Egyptians critics and philosophers such as al-'Aqqād and al-Manfalūḡī. But at the same time Nijland was not as negatively critical of Naimy as Fanous was. The Dutch scholar recognized that, though

“unsystematic, Nu’aymah’s views have probably exerted some influence on nascent Arab literary theory...[and] it was “probable that *al-Ghirbāl* was a signpost pointing to Western critical methods, of which Nu’aymah was one of the first to catch a glimpse” (Nijland 93).

The last work in the subgroup of writings in English about special topics related to the great Lebanese writer is Alyn Desmond Hine’s doctoral thesis at the University of London. This British researcher concentrates on allusions to Russian literature in Naimy’s works. Hine carries out this study using a very interesting lens: considering the fact that each of Naimy’s texts carries a complexity that extended far beyond a simple reading of Russian literature (6), he decides to make his work “a study of this complex pattern of creativity, rather than a comparative exercise or a study of a basic influence” (6). Hine’s research is based on an idea of a dialogue between the Russian and the Arab literary heritages. Hine, summing up the foreign influence on modern Arabic literature, comes to the conclusion that the number of works covering the topics of the American and the Western European influences on it are incomparably greater than the number of works devoted to Russian influences. Hine, when discussing Russian scholars, does not even mention one of the leading Russian researchers of Naimy’s literary heritage, Irina Bilyk, who is still teaching Arabic literature in Moscow and continues to publish about Mikhail Naimy. Hine also does not mention Muminov’s dissertation. These lacunae may be due to the fact that there is no information about these two scholars in English. But a scholar who focuses on Russian literature might be expected to know Russian, as very often just finding foreign language works in the library catalog or in a database and relying on foreign-language abstracts are not enough. Moreover, since Russian libraries are still not quite cooperative with the world library system, the search of Russian and especially Soviet sources requires additional efforts and skills, such as knowledge of the Russian language.

After bringing up a detailed history of the Arabic and Russian cultural relations that had been established around three hundred years ago, Hine concludes that this long and productive cooperation between the two cultures has undeservedly received too little attention. The British scholar made a successful contribution to filling this vacuum. He touches in his study on some points that are similar to the current work, such as the influence of Belinskiĭ's critical writings and the impact of Russian spiritual and religious thoughts on Naimy. Hine made many interesting and important conclusions and performed a deep philosophical and psychological analysis of Naimy's *Memoirs of al-Arqash* and Fèdor Dostoevskii's *Prestuplenie i nakazanie* [*Crime and Punishment*], and *Brat'ia Karamazovy* [*The Brothers Karamazov*], as well as some of Tolstoĭ's religious tracts. However, Hine's knowledge of Arabic literature would seem to be much deeper than his knowledge of Russian literature. This imbalance prevents him from performing a full-scale study. For example, Hine did not cover such important aspects as how Naimy's short story writing developed under Russian influence. Hine also does not even mention several core Russian works that have obviously impacted the plots, genres and thoughts of Naimy's works (such as Lev Tolstoĭ's *Kreitserova Sonata* [*The Kreutzer Sonata*] (1887-1889), or Ivan Nikitin's writing). Hine's inability to read Russian prevents him from reading the works about Naimy written by the Soviet scholars, such as Anna Dolinina, Aida Imanquliyeva and Irina Bilyk, with the exception of a couple of their works translated into English.

While mentioning the theoretical and sociohistorical sources used for this dissertation, we would like to start by discussing the works of Professor Sabry Hafiz. He notes that the translation movement in Egypt played a subsequent role in developing the genre of the short story as practiced by Egyptian authors. In particular, the share of translations of Russian short stories was quite high at first (i.e. in the 1920s-30s). Moreover, throughout the 1930s *al-Hilal'* and *al-*

*Majallah al-jadīdah*, most of the Egyptian magazines that published hundreds of foreign short stories in translation contained translations from Russian literature, a fact that suggests that Russian authors were extremely popular and were widely translated (59, 60). In spite of the difficulty of learning the Russian language as compared to English, French, or Spanish, the percentage of high quality translations of Russian literature was higher than that from the other European languages. Moreover, Russian literary works were extremely popular, to the degree that every collection of popular literary works had to include a Russian one in it, or even several ones (95).

The same situation took place in Syria and Lebanon. Russian sympathy with Arabic nationalist aspirations endeared these countries to each other, and promoted merging intellectual élite in the Arab world (94). Some graduates from Russian Orthodox schools did not limit themselves to translations and teaching, but also started to edit literary magazines, or actively participate in work on such editions. Khalīl Beydas (1875-1949), a graduate of the Russian Orthodox Seminary in Nazareth, Naimy's school teacher and a translator from Russian into Arabic, is an example of such an editor. His literary magazine was extremely popular in the Levant. There he published numerous translations of Russian literature and "participated in shaping a new Arabic literary sensibility" (95).

Hafiz stated that the popularity of Russian stories in Egypt in the 1940-1950s was replaced by an interest in stories from Europe and the U.S. But at that time Russian literature enjoyed unbelievable popularity in Syria. Souraya Boutros (cited in Meyer 99) notes the disproportional number of translations of works of Russian writers in Syria in 1950s that led to "the overwhelming prominence of realism" (Meyer 98).

### ***Methodology and Thesis Structure***

My research draws on a qualitative methodological approach. In Chapter One we will investigate Naimy's biography and the state of Arabic literature at the time he started writing. In the same chapter we will also briefly outline Russian literature of the Golden Age, which deeply impacted Naimy, as well as the situation in pre-revolutionary Russia that together with the Russian literature largely laid the foundation for Naimy's philosophical world view. Then, using both analytical and comparative approaches, we shall follow how specifically the several groups of Russian influences on Naimy (critical realism, Russian philosophical thoughts and the short story genre) were reflected in his writings. In order to do this, for each source of influence, we shall review the historical and socio-cultural framework that promoted its genesis and development in Russia. Then we shall distinguish from Naimy's writing everything what arose there as a result this specific Russian influence: literary currents, his thoughts, philosophical and critical positions, the structure of his short stories, plots, etc. We shall also conduct a close textual analysis of primary source materials. Finally, we shall indicate how the Russian influence on Naimy enriched the Arabic literature.

### ***Significance***

The significance of my research is in demonstrating the development of Arabic literature as part of the world literary process that followed two trajectories. The first one was from the particular to the general, when the small regional Arabic literatures united into one national Arabic literature. It became, in turn, a part of the global world literature.

The second direction in the process of the development of world literature was from a general phenomenon to a particular one, when international literary currents penetrated into national ones.

Many studies have been devoted to the influence of Western European and American literatures on Arabic literature, but the influence of Russian literature on it is still understudied. The Russian influence was the decisive one that formed the basis of the writings of the great Lebanese man of letters, especially at the early stages of his creative life. In my thesis I provide specific examples of currents, artistic devices and philosophical thoughts from Russian literature that impacted Naimy's creative writings and the influence of his works on the Arabic literature.

Finally, my thesis has significant methodological value in that it helps identify the typology of Russian cultural contacts on a writer whose creative work promoted the further development of Arabic literature.



## *Chapter One*

### *Naimy's Biography and His Relations with Russia*

This chapter gives a biographical sketch of the life of Mikhail Naimy from his early studies in the Russian Orthodox School and in Russian Teachers College (RTC) in Nazareth, that operated under the aegis of the Russian Orthodox Palestinian Society, and his move to the Theological Seminary in Poltava located in the territory of the modern Ukraine, in 1906. It also includes a brief presentation of his next life steps, such as his immigration to the USA (1912-1932), his service in the army in France during the First World War (1918), and his next life milestones after the return to Lebanon in 1932, where Naimy spent the rest of his long life.

#### Naimy's Early Years

The future writer was born in 1889 in an Orthodox Christian family in Biskintā, a village of then nearly 2,000 souls, located in Central Lebanon. Its inhabitants traditionally engaged in herding cattle and raising silkworm (NNI 70-71). When the enterprising population of Biskintā experienced stagnation in the silk manufacture industry, they gradually replaced it with growing fruits (Sab 1 45, 46). Farming in that barren area, where “there were more rocks than land” (Sab 1 20), required incredible labor, as it constantly demanded hoeing the soil, “fighting rocks, thorns and prickly bushes” (Sab 1 49). Naimy wrote in his diary that he never knew what brought his ancestors to this part of Lebanon (Sab 1 49). Probably, they came to escape the injustice of the local rulers or to flee dry lands (Sab 1 20). The population of the village was poor and had to look for a job in other places, joining the huge stream of Lebanese emigrants that was dramatically growing. Philip Khuri Hitti of Harvard University states that between 1900 and 1914 the 400,000 Lebanese, which was one quarter of the population, fled Lebanon to all parts of



the world. Most of them emigrated temporarily or permanently from their country, “where soil was less fertile than its women,” (206) to the Americas, looking for a better life. There were other reasons for emigration: lack of political and social freedoms in Lebanon that was under the yoke of the Ottoman Empire, harassment of religious minorities and constant religious clashes, encouragement of relatives who had settled there, or examples of more or less lucky neighbors or friends who returned from overseas. The Americas seemed to many despairing Lebanese to be “the land behind the horizon, where people take handfuls of soil, and it converts into gold” (Sab 1 18).

Naimy’s family was not an exception to those who tried their luck abroad. Yūsef, his father, left Biskintā for California in 1890 to spend a long six years abroad. He wanted to earn some money and return back to his lovely family in Lebanon (Sab 1 18). Naimy at that time was only ten months old. The future Lebanese writer stayed in his household with his mother, grandparents and the two older brothers. Life in America did not bring to Yūsef the expected stability and wealth. He had more sorrows there, like the death of his beloved sister, who lived with him, than joys.

Several years later, Naimy’s brothers followed their father’s way. They travelled to Walla Walla, a small town in Washington State, where both of them opened their businesses.

One of the earliest and deepest influences on Naimy was The Russian School which he attended (TRL24). He started his first classes in *al-madrasah al-khayrīyah al-urthūdhuksīyah* (the Orthodox Charitable School). Soon after this the Imperial Orthodox Palestine Society of Russia (IOPSR) founded its school in Biskintā as part of its missionary campaign in the Near East (Sab 1 76, 77).

The IOPRS could not rival the Jesuit order that opened St. Joseph University in Beirut, as well as the American University supervised by the Protestants there. That is why most of its schools were opened in the poorer areas in Syria, Lebanon and Palestine, where some of the population belonged to the Orthodox Christian church. The IOPRS main missionary aim was “to give at least primary education to every Orthodox Arab child” (Hopwood 141).

Russia sent its teachers to the Middle East and hired graduates from its local schools, financed all the necessary expenses related to its schools’ functioning, and developed its educational programs. The IOPRS further aim was to educate the local population and prepare young Arab men for work as teachers in IOPRS that was in constant need of teachers who would work in the Middle East (Iuzbashan par. 46-49; Lisovoī par. 29).

The IOPRS’ enlightened mission policy, on the whole, was successful (Daghir). This might be explained by their free tuition and provision of free supplies, as well as the quality, both in making educational programs and in selecting teachers (Daghir; Sab 1 176; Ab 63). The schools accepted all students despite their religious and other denomination (Sab 1 178). It is worth mentioning that the number of students in the Girls Seminary in Nazareth in three months grew from 27 at its opening in 1885 to 236 because of the mass movement of students from the Catholic and Protestant schools to the Russian one (Iuzbashan par. 47). In 1909 the total amount of the Russian educational establishments was 24 on the territory of Palestine, and 77 on the territory of Lebanon and Syria, with the total number of students at 1576 and 9974 respectively (Lisovoī, par. 32).

The influence of Russian culture left an indelible mark on the rest of the seminarian graduates’ lives. One more sufficient difference of the Russian schools was the prominent place given in its Arabic program to the Arabic language and Arabic literature. Geography, History

and the Natural Sciences were the next most important, and the basics of the Russian language were the third. Meanwhile the American and European missionary schools in Lebanon were promoting the programs of the European languages over the Arabic one (Iuzbashan par. 55; Sab 1 77).

Students who were studying in the OIPRS schools felt deep respect towards the distant *Mūscūbiyah* (Russia) and were proud of living “in the shade of a great power of Russia“ (Sab 1 78). Since his early years, Naimy, like many other people in his surroundings, started to gradually warm to Russia and Russians with their traditions and other things dear to them. For instance, while celebrating important Russian events at his school, such as the tsar’s birthday, he proudly and probably with some surprise, felt that he belonged to a hidden part of Russia. Over 50 years after graduation, Naimy, while comparing the solemn hymns sung at his school on the days of the national holidays of Russia and Turkey, pointed out “the taste and frankness” (Sab 1 181) of the ones devoted to the Russian Tsar Nicholas II, and to the “nonsense, exaggerations and lies” (Sab 1 179) of those devoted to Abdel Hamid, the Turkish Sultan. His and many others’ sympathy lay with Russia, and not with the Ottoman Turks, under whose yoke Lebanon stayed from several centuries.

Lebanese Christian students like Naimy did not attend one type of school sponsored by the Orthodox Church. The IOPRS educational establishments were divided into three categories:

- (1) Teachers’ boarding seminaries in Nazareth and Bet-Ja’al;
- (2) Elementary and secondary schools in big villages and small cities with instruction in the Russian language there;

(3) Provincial schools that “were no more than a small group of children gathered around a priest who, as he was himself uneducated, could provide little education” (Hopwood 139, 140).

But at the same time “the importance of these small, often poorly furnished schools was great. Pirogov’s and Ushinskiĭ’s<sup>15</sup> great covenants with their high ideals were applied... [to the Middle East] from Russia through teachers’ seminaries of the Palestinian Society. The pedagogical principles of the Russian schools in Palestine and in Syria were very superior to the richly equipped Western European and American missions” (Krachkovskiĭ 1: 55).

Some of the Russian teachers there were looking for adventures outside their country; others wanted to live in the Holy Land. The complicated and unusual living conditions, climate and food, together with the absence of the hygiene to which they are accustomed, made many Russian teachers return to their country. Life in the Middle East was different from what they had thought it would be. But it was also possible to meet at the IOPRS schools the Russian teachers that represented the new, democratically minded Russian intelligentsia. The Arab teachers in these *medreseh mūscūbiyah* (Russian School), as they were sometimes called by the local population (Krachkovskiĭ 1: 54), were also very different. Some of them did not have high proficiency in the Russian language, but others were surprisingly fluent in it without having visited Russia (Krachkovskiĭ 1: 55). During the two years of travelling to the Middle East (1907-1908), Krachkovskiĭ used to visit the teachers, who were working for the IOPRS. He noticed, that it was possible to see Turgenev’s and Chekhov’s volumes in every house, as well as Russian issues *Niva*<sup>2</sup> and *Znanie*<sup>3</sup>, and sometimes even such literature that was banned in pre-revolutionary Russia at that time (Krachkovskiĭ 1: 55).

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<sup>15</sup> Pirogov and Ushinskiĭ are the Russian pedagogues.

The IOPRS opened its school in Naimy's native village of Biskintā in 1899<sup>4</sup>. Its inhabitants made their generous donations for its construction – some people sent money, others contributed with their physical work (Sab 1 172). All the other expenses for school functions were covered by the IOPRS (Iuzbashan par. 52; Sab 1 172). Naimy was sent there by his family together with Dīb and Heykal, his older brothers (Krachkovskiī, 3: 225). The Russian school was the establishment where he learned for the first time in his life “what the particular system of education is” (NNI 8). And it is not surprising, as the IOPRS school programs were developed by the best Russian academics, such as N.A. Mednikov, A.A. Dmitrievskiī and I.Ju. Krachkovskiī<sup>5</sup> (Iuzbashan), M.O. Attaya and D.V. Semèonov<sup>6</sup> (Krylov, Sorokina).

The Biskinta school staff included five men and three women. The principal was a graduate of the RTC, who had studied there education, teaching and school administration. Naimy describes his impressions of the new school as if he had left hell and entered Paradise (Ab 199). The difference between this new school compared to the previous ones was tremendous, and not only in the big beautiful building which is still preserved in Biskintā. Though the IOPRS schools had to follow some Arabic education traditions, such as rote memorization (Iuzbashan), it did not use the traditional *falak*<sup>7</sup> school practice. This pleasantly surprised Naimy (Sab 1 55). The Arabic program in Biskintā was the one of the most important ones. It consisted of reading the 4-volumes illustrated Girgis Hammān textbook *The Reading Steps* with the selected classical and modern poetry and prose and a language part concentrating on grammar and syntax. Special care was also paid to Arithmetic. The IOPRS school program at Naimy's native village comprised even physical training lessons (Sab 1 77, 78).

Russian Teacher's College in Nazareth (RTCN)

In September 1902 Naimy, from among several of the best students, was selected by his school administration to continue his education at the RTC. This college was founded in 1898 (Ab 201). It was transformed from men's boarding school that had opened its doors to students in 1886. The training period at RTC was for 6 years, when Naimy was studying there. The last two years were devoted to studying pedagogy, the methodology of teaching and the practice of school teaching (Iuzbashan). During the first 20 years of its work, the RTCN accepted approximately 170 students. The IOPRS schools in the Middle East offered educational settings superior to the better equipped [and financed] American and European missions there (Krachkovskiĭ 1: 55), and the living conditions at IOPRS seminary were often better than at some students' homes.

The RTCN staff consisted of Arab and Russian teachers headed by Iskandar Jabrā'īl Kuzmā al-Dimashqīy, who had received his education in Russia. He was selected by the IOPRS for this position and was RTCN's permanent head for eighteen years from its founding until it was closed by the Turkish government at the beginning of the First World War in 1914, as were all Russian establishments in the territory of the Ottoman Empire. Kuzmā successfully combined his pedagogical talent with his abilities as an outstanding economic manager. He had an uneasy mission – to help his Arab and Russian colleagues, as well as the seminary students, to overcome the language and cultural barriers. Kuzmā was Naimy's teacher, whom he loved and admired (Sab 1 120-122).

Most of the RTCN graduates returned to their villages and towns in Palestine, Lebanon and Syria to continue their careers as teachers (Lisovoĭ). Some of them combined this job with jobs as local journalists. Summing up his impressions from meeting them during his trip to the Middle East in 1908-1910, Krachkovskiĭ (1: 55) writes:

I was particularly attracted by this environment of humble teachers. I foresaw the coming force in this real intelligentsia...that came from people and lived with people. The history of the Arab countries after the Second World War justified my thoughts...

The Russian Seminary graduated a number of gifted teachers, translators, writers and journalists, some of these people were the real “creators who had their say to the entire Arab world” (Krachkovskiī 1: 55). Among them were Nasīb ‘Arīḍah, a poet, writer, and journalist, and a publisher of *al-Funūn* literary journal (1913-1918), and ‘Abd al-mesīḥ Ḥaddād, a novelist, a founder of *al-Sā‘ih*, the emigrant arrived newspaper (1912-1957). Both of these editions were published in New York. Naimy met his two college mates in the U.S.A. several years later after their graduation. All three had emigrated there where they later collaborated in the Pen Association in New York.

Most of the IOPRS graduates forgot the Russian language very soon after finishing their classes, as their opportunities to use it were limited. But some of them tied their lives with Russia forever, among them Selīm Qub‘ayn, an editor of *al-Ihā‘* magazine in Cairo, and Halīl Beydās, whom we have already mentioned earlier. His *al-Nafa‘is al-‘aṣrīyah* magazines in Haifa and Jerusalem are also famous for their translations of Russian literature into Arabic. Mikhā’il Iskander, with whom Naimy studied in Russia, also became a Russian translator. Some of the RTCN graduates stayed in Russia forever, like Adīb Hāzin, a professor of Arabic at St. Petersburg University (Krachkovskiī 3: 226, 227; Hopwood 157).

Another example is Kul’thūm ‘Audeh-Fasil’eva<sup>16</sup>, who graduated from the girls’ seminary in Beit Ja‘al in 1908 and arrived in Russia in 1914. She planned to return to Palestine soon thereafter, but political and social developments in the world kept in Russia till the end of her long life. She was the one of the first Arab women of the early twentieth century to receive the

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<sup>16</sup> Referred in this work as Ode-Vasil’eva, according to the transliteration from Russian

academic rank of professor, and she did so through the Russian education system. Ode-Vasil'eva taught Arabic at the diplomatic academy in Moscow and the Institute of Oriental languages in St. Petersburg. She was the author of an Arabic textbook for Russian students, a translator of many Arabic literary works into Russian. Together with Krachkovskiĭ she was an editor of a collection of stories by Arabic authors in translation edited in Russia in 1928/29 (Iuzbashan).

Other Nazareth college graduates included Tawfiq Kezma, who continued his education in Kiev (Ukraine) and who is the author of a number of works about the Middle East and Arabic language manuals. Panteleymon Zhuze was sent to Kazan Theological Academy in Russia. Upon graduation, he wrote a Russian textbook for Arabs, compiled a Russian-Arabic dictionary, and translated Arabic literary monuments into Russian. A.Ph. Haschab pursued his education in the St. Petersburg Oriental Languages Department and gave lectures about the Arabic language (Iuzbashan).

Some of the IOPSR graduates, like Anṭun Ballān and Qoṣṭanṭī Kenāzi', laid the foundation of the translators' movement in the Arabic world at the end of the nineteenth-and beginning of the twentieth centuries. The radical changes that were taking place in the region, required a new literature, different from the traditional Arabic one. Many Russian authors, such as Pushkin, Gogol, Leskov, and more modern ones, like Lev Tolstoĭ, Alexei Tolstoĭ, Anton Chekhov, and Maksim Gorkiĭ, were translated for the first time by these scholars (Krachkovskiĭ 3: 254, 255).

Naimy's aim was to become a director of one of the Russian schools in six years (Ab 201), or a school teacher (Sab 1 159) and support his family in Biskinta. Naimy felt that he was highly honored and was happy upon hearing about his admission, as it was a dream that come true for him (Ab 201) although, as he later wrote in his essays, he did not have any inclination to become



either a priest or a teacher. Probably, he and his brothers were encouraged by their mother, who thought that it was necessary to read and to write in order to achieve any success in this life (Nijland 15). During all the years spent at the seminary he was one of the most diligent students, working hard in order to meet the RTCN standards and to justify his admission. In several years he thought more about his future and the prospect of ending up as school teachers, which at times, seemed less attractive to him than it had at first. While thinking of his two brothers who left Biskintā for the USA, as they were looking for decent employment and of what he could do for his family, he wrote in his dairy: “What can a school teacher do? He will stay a teacher until his body will be wrapped into sheets and he will be buried...” (Sab 1 159).

It was in Nazareth where Naimy read his first Russian books and where his knowledge of Russian language and literature soared, due to his “exceptional ability” (NNI 78), persistence, and interest in world culture. When he first entered the Russian class, with a Russian teacher who did not know Arabic, Naimy barely knew 100 Russian words. He started reading in Russian books that he had read before in Arabic, such as Jules Verne’s novels. By graduation, Naimy had already read some of Chekov’s and Tolstoī’s books, as well as *Crime and Punishment* by Dostoevskiī, though, as he wrote in his diaries, he did not understand half of what was written there (Sab 1 143, 144). Gradually he was also able to read Russian magazines (Ab 203).

Naimy studied Russian under Anṭun Ballān, an Arab from Homs, the talented educator and a translator of Russian literature mentioned earlier, who had studied in Russia himself. Naimy writes in his memoirs:

[Even] the small part of my reading in Russian that I understood...lit the flame of a passionate desire to deepen my knowledge of the Russian language and literature (Sab 1 144)... I felt like someone who is drilling a big well, but does not have all the necessary equipment. Thus, when the story came to its end, I felt something similar to anger at myself, as I did not understand it all

[as if I was not able] to see the bottom of the well. There was a language barrier between me and the well that I needed to overcome. Though my Russian reading left some bitterness in my heart because of my lack of language proficiency, my admiration of Russian literature kept growing. My grief about Arabic literature compared to the Russian [was also growing]. The shameful poverty of [the Arabic] literature has its roots in [our] lives. The litterateurs do not take the peel from the pith. [But] when I was really angry with our writers and poets, who were famous at that time, I also wished to be one of them... I wished I could write as these Russians write (Ab 203).

Even at these early stages of Naimy's life, it is possible to notice his tendency to solitude, spirituality, reflection, contemplation, natural curiosity (Sab 1 146, 147, 160), stamina and fortitude. Very soon these tendencies would become integral parts of his personality.

During the Nazareth period Naimy was very religious, and his early diaries are full of his thoughts about the life and the study of Christ (Sab 1 160, 161), who was "both a savior and a mystery" (NNI 80) for the young seminarian. Naimy attentively reads the Holy Bible in order to avoid its misinterpretation and visits the places related to Christ's life and deeds. Christ becomes Naimy's ideal, as through his ideas and deeds he wanted to purify himself and to grow as a person, to become strong, wise and powerful, and then come to this world with the similar message (NNI 80, 81).

At the same time, the young seminarian felt himself to be a creative person, and more and more he was realizing that he wanted to devote his life to creative writing.

## **Poltava**

During the first 20 years of its work, the IOPRS sent its best graduates to the Russian Empire's big cities such as Moscow, St. Petersburg, Kharkov, or Kiev, or to provincial towns, like Poltava, or Glukhov (Krachkovskii 3: 274) In 1906 Naimy was selected from several of the best students

to continue his studies in Russia. At the age of 16, he arrived at the Poltavan Theological Seminary (PTS) in Ukraine<sup>17</sup>, where he would spend five years establishing his world view.

PTS was the next step in his religious education. According to the seminary syllabus, students spent their first years there learning different secular and religious subjects, and then two more years focusing on church ceremonies and religious dogmas (Sab 1 173).

Naimy arrived in the distant, cold, and mysterious country of Russia at an interesting time. On one hand, the pre-revolutionary flames of strikes and agitation were burning, but on the other side, the early twentieth century was the blooming “Silver Age” in Russia, characterized by the nascence of a large number of literary currencies and new ideas as well as rejection of previous ideals, the proclamation of new aesthetics, and the emergence of a vast number of new poets and writers. Naimy not only gained knowledge of “the Golden Russian and Ukrainian Classics,” but made his first attempts to analyze their literary works in his diary, that he was writing in Russian since 1908. Gogol’s works helped him to “know better the Russian peasantry’s simplicity, its patience, kindness and love of its soil” (Ab 209).

The young seminarian argues with Leo Tolstoī in his journal about some of *Voina i mir* [*War and Peace*] conceptions, and at the same time he learns more and more about Russia and Russians. Fifty years later Naimy writes in his memoirs:

I have found out from Tolstoī’s books, how the Russians shed rivers of blood while defending their Motherland, and what hellish suffering wars brought [to them], I believed in the Russian people’s desire for peace (Ab 210).

Naimy does not only passionately read Dostoevskiī and Leskov novels among many others. He is fond of Russian poetry, especially Lermontov, about whom he says: “Only the Lord knows how many impressions on me this poet left” (Sab 1 183), as well as of Pushkin, Nikitin,

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<sup>17</sup> The Ukraine became the part of Russian Empire in 1654.

Nekrasov, Shevchenko, and is fond of the Nadson's decadent verses. At the same time, Naimy is interested in his contemporaries' works, such as those by Chekhov, Merezhkovskiĭ, Andreev, Tolstoĭ and Pisemskiĭ. Moreover, he was exposed to the ideas of the new generation of Russian writers, such as Gorkiĭ, Kotliarevskiĭ, and Zolotarev, who were taking their first literary steps in pre-revolutionary Russia (Sab 1 173-284; Ab 209-211). They were glorifying a new Lord, the common people (Sab 1 230), and trying "to bring to the surface 'the lower depths' of the society and consequently [pave] the way to the socialist revolution" (NNI 98). Naimy also reads the fundamental works of Kostomarov, the Russian historian. In addition to all of this various reading, the young seminarian seriously studies the critical writings of Belinskiĭ and Solov'ev that formed the base of his position as a literary critic (Sab 1 173-284).

Social life in Ukraine deeply impressed young Naimy as well. "The freedom of thought, heart and body blinded me, contrasted with the disgusting stringency in my country. I felt like someone who is trying to scoop up the sea by the handful, or... like a hungry man who comes across a basket of figs" (Sab 1 178).

Naimy tried passionately to follow the Russians in many things, and this distinguished his experience from that of his compatriots in the U.S. His delight with the Russian and Ukrainian culture he saw and desired to copy it in absolutely everything, except for wearing *portiaanki* [foot wraps] instead of socks, a ritual that he described with humor in his diary.

He was also eager to learn the beautiful side of this new culture, like dancing and playing the violin, in which he made some progress. Visiting the Poltavan Theater to see operas and ballets deeply impressed Naimy. He liked plays, as through acting serious social issues were raised. He wanted to sing Ukrainian songs, play the traditional musical instruments and declaim Russian and Ukrainian poetry even better than his friends there did (Sab 1 177-179).

Naimy was shocked when he realized in what solitude and loneliness he had lived in his homeland where he had no one to whom he could speak about world literature, painting, music, and acting (Sab 1 281). He notes in his journal:

I read the writer Andreevich's *An Attempt of Philosophy of Russian Literature*. I was unable to do anything except to compare our literature and Russian literature. O Lord, what a huge chasm separates us from the West! In what darkest darkness we live! How firm is the peel with which we have covered life, so that [it does not have] its kernel. How poor are you, my country that even world stars like Tolstoī have not yet burned through your nights' darkness (Sab 1 233).

Here we, certainly, need to take into consideration the fact that Naimy, who was so desperately writing about his native literature, just did not know it at that time. He does not mention any single Arabic literary work in his Poltavian diary and at the same time compares the Arabic literature in general to specific Russian authors. But these are different categories, and that is why they are incomparable.

Naimy seems to start appreciating his native literature much later. It happened not earlier, than during his American period, though Fanous (369) doubts about it.

Meanwhile a whole cohort of brilliant Arabic authors from Levant and Egypt that belonged to the new generation had created and was still creating their literary masterpieces by the time when Naimy was lamenting about its state. We shall focus on this time in the Arabic world's literary life in the first part of Chapter Two.

Not any source about Naimy that we have studied gives a clear reply to the question about why Naimy, who had a passion for literature in general, loved Arabic language and mastered his writings to a high degree even at the early age, was the one of the best students both at the high school and at RTC, was a real Arabic patriot, and expressed a deep and constant curiosity for the Arabic history and culture, was at the same time so much ignorant about his native literature.

Moreover, the educational program at schools founded by ROPS included the Arabic literature and language. This distinguished it from Jesuit and Protestant schools, where the main accent was paid to English and French languages and literatures, and Arabic language and literature were ignored (Iuzbashan). It gave Naimy a significant advantage. He does not seem to take it, neither he seems to follow the advice of Nasīb ‘Arīḍah, his colleague and county mate, to read more Arabic literature during his American period (Sab 2 312, 313). We shall return to this episode while speaking about Naimy’s first literary experiences in the U.S.A.

We also need to consider very young Naimy’s age. When he was grievously lamenting about the state of his native literature and mercilessly criticizing it, he was only between 16 and 18 years old, and in spite of his natural curiousness and observance, his judgments are, naturally, characterized by absence of compromises, lack of life experience and knowledge, and at times by infantilism and naiveness.

Naimy penetrated life in Russia to the degree that he wanted “to becoming one of Russia’s sons” (Sab 1 259), sharing the feelings of its people, who were angry over the idleness of the Russian aristocracy and the poverty and oppression of its toil-worn working class and peasantry. More and more the young seminarian felt the church’s complicity with the ruling class and how it used its authority to support the aristocracy so as not to lose its power (Ab 212, 213). Naimy’s rapid comprehension of Russian realities made him an active seminary striker in 1911, when the pre-revolutionary waves reached Poltava. During the seminary insurgence, Naimy was carried by his peers to a platform where he gave a fiery speech, finishing it with a rephrased quotation from the Holy Bible: “We ask for bread, and they give us a stone; we ask for a fish, and they give us a snake” (NNI 105), meaning by “they” the seminary administration. Naimy was expelled from the

Seminary by the Holy Synod, though later he received permission to pass the graduate exams, which he successfully did (Sab 1 255-257; NNI 105).

The social freedom in Ukraine had other aspects that Naimy disliked, such as various amusements, that involved the gathering together of both sexes, drinking alcohol, and parties that went on for the whole night. He wrote:

...Most of all I hate obscenity in all its forms. Each time when I hear an obscene word, I feel as if a needle is piercing my body.... I do not like people who draw away their eyes and ears from listening to the voice of life and seeing her real face inside themselves. And this is what they call “fun,” “joy” and “relaxation”... This is how they run away from their souls (Sab 1 209, 210).

It was mainly Naimy’s search for a moral ideal and the richness of his own inner world, as well as the borders he established for himself, with which he limited his world and gradually created one for himself that helped him to resist many temptations during his life in Ukraine (DPoS 225, 226).

Naimy perceived solitude and meditation as the only states wherein someone can hear his own soul, both its good and bad sides, and decide what direction he wants to take in this life. His inclination to loneliness, finally established in Russia, allowed him to create his own pure world, opposing it to the outside world that was full of dirt and disappointment. This tendency to solitude became Naimy’s main character trait and shaped his way of thinking as rebelled against several aspects of the outside world (Dabbagh 13-15) in Poltava.

In his memoirs, Naimy describes in detail life in the seminary as “the embodiment of all the existing vices” (Ab 215), such as lies, hypocrisy, theft, rumors and dissembling. At the same time, his religious world vision continued to change in Ukraine, bringing him to the sharpest crisis of his religious feelings and determining his life position. After a naïve boy’s belief that the Lord lives in the sky and will grant any wish (Sab 1 84, 91, 92), followed by the boundless and

unconditional faith that Naimy experienced later after reading the holy scriptures, in Poltava he arrived at a deep disenchantment with religion. The more he studied at the seminary, the less blind his faith became. He noticed at that time, “The blanket that the church tailored for my soul became tight... and is bursting at the seams. I do not have the energy to mend it” (Sab 1 277).

Influenced by Tolstoī’s and Rousseau’s ideas, among others, he began to deny the ritual side of religion. Naimy compared church services and prayers to a theater performance (Sab 1 187) and even began to skip attending some church services.

He painfully asked himself endless questions about the Bible and Christ’s doctrine that he could not answer, such as the origin of evil, and what happens after death. He wondered about redemption and deliverance, and why the Lord did not correct His mistake when He saw that this world was not perfect instead of declaring a plan for judgment after death. Though Naimy still defended Christ personality and His doctrine, he found many contradictions in The Scriptures, such as plunging people into eternal fire and at the same time calling for eternal forgiveness, or calling some people damned and also calling for blessing, not damning. Naimy thought that dividing people into sinners and saints, with eternal punishment for the first group does not agree with the Lord’s love of everybody and universal justice (Sab 1 272-281).

He was also outraged by the religious despotism of the Orthodox Church that allied itself with the ruling elite (Sab 1 257) and in the name of God crushed any liberal movement and silenced any voices that called for social justice (NNI 63).

Naimy’s thoughts not only about religion but also many other social and cultural phenomena, developed as his familiarity with Russian literature grew. In Poltava, Naimy completely gave himself to his long-standing passion for literature, finding in it an outlet from the uneasy realities of life. Several decades later he wrote in a letter to Krachkovskiī: "While at the seminary, I



quickly immersed myself in Russian literature...In front of me a truly new world was opening up, full of wonders. I read voraciously. There was hardly a Russian writer, poet or philosopher whom I did not read exhaustively” (qtd. in Krachkovskiĭ, 3: 225). As a result, Naimy’s eyes were constantly opened to new issues. The first thing that he came to understand was the sanctity of humanity. He felt a deep desire for perfect justice and freedom and was repulsed by the abominations of oppression and slavery (Sab 1 230, 234, 237). Naimy experienced a shock when he compared the Russian classics and modern writers to Arab literature. He wrote in his memoirs:

The poverty of our literature and the ineptness of its writers, who interest themselves only in the exterior phenomena of the human soul, became increasingly clear to me. Before that time I had envied some of our writers and poets and tried to imitate them (Sab 1 175).

It is not quite clear to us, what Arabic men of letters Naimy tried to copy, as he almost never brings up names. During his American period he brings up names without any analysis of author’s creative writings, that also leads us to serious doubts about how well he knew his native literature.

Our next question to which we were not able to find a reply, is if he first envied the Arab authors and tried to copy them, wasn’t his turn to the Russian literature and criticizing his native one the result of his infantile behavior at this still young age? Did he seriously check the recent Arabic writings before rejecting them?

We would like to express an idea about that we do not like what we do not know. Naimy did not refer to specific names and was criticizing his native literature without getting any theoretical base into it. Probably, these sources were not accessible to him in his poor village meanwhile life in Poltava turned him to the Western lifestyle and turned out giddy for the young

inexperienced seminarian from the small village? We also think that he did not meet a good teacher of Arabic literature, who could help him discover this subject.

But when Naimy came to Poltava, the situation radically changed. Living in a relatively big city of Poltava during the Silver age promoted his interest to the Russian and Ukrainian culture. He did not need to painfully look for good examples of their literature, as such names as Tolstoī, Dostoevskiī, Chekhov, Gor'kiī are world-known.

After a short time in Poltava, he decided to put his youthful daydream “to write like Russians” (Sab 1 175) into practice.

During that period Naimy wrote several poems in Russian. They were undoubtedly written under the influence of the Russian literature he loved and studied. The text of the most famous one survives today; it is called “The Frozen River” (1910). It is, as well as Naimy’s diary, an imitation of Ivan Nikitin’s (1823-1861) writings. Naimy remembered Nikitin’s poems into his old age and loved reciting them (DPos 236). Though the young seminarian writes in “The Frozen River” (1910) about the stagnant Russia comparing it to a frozen river, and makes a direct reference to the coming revolution, he then moves his thoughts to his Motherland. Naimy asks at the poem’s end “Oh, Lebanon, when will your spring come and your ice melts?” In 1917 Naimy translated it into the Arabic and published it in the New York magazine *al-Funūn*.

Naimy’s other poems, like “Love Funerals” (Sab 1 185), already mentioned above remain unpublished.

The young Naimy’s diary is, probably, his most important work of that period. Parts of it were published half a century later in the first part of his trilogy *Seventies....* Naimy’s journal is certainly interesting for its detailed description of his unusual life, but even more so because in it

he not only describes what happened to him, but critically analyzes his words and deeds and the world that surrounds him (DPos 222).

In April 1911, after almost nine years of absence, Naimy returns for a short time to his native Biskintā (NNI 105).

#### Emigration to the United States

Naimy had dramatically changed by the age of twenty-one, having become “a social rebel” (NNI 105, 106). He thought of going to France in order to study law to become an attorney for the poor, “humbled and humiliated” people. This new turn was the result of his different life experiences, his constant spiritual search, the influence of the world’s political and social developments, and the influence of Tolstoī, among other writers, as well as the Russian revolutionaries, such as Bakunin (NNI 107). By the time of graduation from the Poltavian seminary, he is thoroughly disappointed in the Arabic literature it and comes to admire instead Russian and Western literature.

Naimy’s sole crisis that had started in Russia brings him by the time of his graduation to the thought that the Church was so corrupt that it failed to defend people. The young Lebanese was asking himself why the Lord does not interfere in the world he created, as pains and injustice take place everywhere (Sab 1 224-226, 272-283). He thought that by defending poor people from the corrupt upper classes of society, he could bring some good into the world. Naimy asked the patriarch of the Greek Orthodox Church in Damascus to ask the French counsel there to help him get free education at the Sorbonne, and that request was successful (Sab 1 281, 282; NNI 107).

However, Naimy's plans unexpectedly changed. His brother Haykal came to Biskintā the same summer to visit his family and find a wife from among the village girls. He persuaded Naimy to come with him to the USA where he had already spent five years and opened a barber shop in Walla Walla, Washington. Naimy, who was still trying to decide between several careers, decided to go there and to enter the University of Washington. He writes in his memoirs, that what he was looking for in his life could not be purchased by dollars. On the contrary, dollars could be an obstacle in his search (Sab 1 275). Moreover, he never had a real predisposition to the law, though he began to realize this later. So the prospect of a new world where he could gain more experience, and be close to and receive some material support from his brothers (his other brother, Dīb, had a small furniture store in Walla Walla (Sab 2 292), as well as free or almost free university education played the decisive role in his decision to move to the U.S.A.

At the beginning of November, 1911 (Sab 1 275), Naimy arrived in Washington together with his brother Haykal' and his brother's bride. After several months of mostly private lessons he applied to the Seattle University (Washington), which accepted his Poltavian Seminary education and counted it toward his Bachelor of Arts, so he needed to study only three years more to obtain this degree. Moreover, the University gave him a chance to study law along with the arts program, and thus to simultaneously obtain two degrees, in Arts and in Law, in four years. In fall, 1912 Naimy started taking classes at the University of Washington (Sab 2 303, 304), from which he obtained a Bachelor's degree in arts and law in 1916 (Bilyk 5). Among the several classes that he took there were English literature and philosophy (Sab 2 304), and he found a real outlet in the first. These courses broadened Naimy's world perspective that had been

mostly based on Russian and Arabic literature. Some people whom he met in America also helped in the process of expanding Naimy's world view.

Nādim Naimy, made a long list of his famous uncle's reading in the U.S.A. He included in it the titles of M.Naimy's books from his library in Biskintā, where he lived after his return from the U.S.A. until his last days and added to it the books mentioned by M. Naimy in his private interviews. But even this research does not help "to estimate the scope of Naimy's reading of that period, whether in literature originally written in English or in translations into that language" (NNI 111).

In addition to the Russian literature that Naimy knew well, and to some ideas about the Arabic literature in the U.S.A. he immersed himself in the ocean of world writings, with works in English now taking the leading place. Naimy writes about this period, "I used to read books and use my pen as the biggest consolation. [Now] I turned to reading... the high English literature with the same greediness as I had turned to the Russian literature" (Sab 2 307).

From Lev Tolstoī he moved back to other spiritual thinkers, and saw how the creative works of Emerson and Thoreau, the American transcendentalists, laid the same idea of a corruption of an individual by a society and its institutions, that was later developed by the great Russian philosopher and writer. From Belinskiī, the Russian literary critic, he moved back to Matthew Arnold, Hazlitt, Shelley and Coleridge, Belinskiī's English counterparts. From Lermontov, one of the top Russian romantic poets, he switched to the British Romantics, like Keats, as well as Shelley and Coleridge poetry. Among British prose writers, he found the works of Hardy, Austen, Carlyle and Dickens as a replacement for Dostoevskiī, Gogol, Chekhov, and

he enthusiastically encountered Shakespeare, the genius of British literature, after his thoughtful reading of Pushkin, the genius of Russian literature.

Naimy also attentively studied the Eastern theosophies and read about Buddhism, Taoism and Hinduism, moving from them to Plato, St. Augustine, Savonarola, Spinoza, and to many other Western theosophists. He plunged into the mystical implications of the German Idealism of the 19 century, English Romantic Movement.

In the U.S.A. the young Lebanese slowly started reading his native Arabic literature, philosophical and religious works, such as al-Hallāj and Ibn ‘Arabi works (NNI 109, 111). He wrote about this period of his life: “The Arabic literature opened its door to me. I entered it with the longing and eagerness of an expatriate student who is returning back to his relatives and home” (Sab 2 307).

The more various sources he read, the more Naimy felt that he was in need of finding

a unifying principle, a pattern through which those varied but also homogenous spiritual teaching, Eastern and Western, could be woven into a uniform sequence, an integral system of thought, according to which all the first questions regarding man, God and the inverse are neatly and systematically answered (NNI 109).

Life in the New World did not bring to Naimy satisfaction, he was lonely there. The U.S.A., that seemed to Naimy to be a melting pot of all nations and races, that was united by “the sound of a dollar, whose face is not kind” (Sab 2 223), the Americans’ material preponderance over the spiritual essence, big city’s lifestyle where people’s life reminds a big anthill, university mates with their interests, like playing baseball and soccer, were very far from his nature (Sab 2 222, 223).

In 1914 Naimy, through his apartment mate, a Scottish guy, the University student, who was the member of the American Theosophical Society, starts his detailed Theosophy studies (Sab 2 326-330). Naimy's constant search for the world harmony brings him to this system of esoteric philosophy (Faivre 465, qtd. in TRL 80), that "denoted a form of gnosis which sought to reveal the hidden mysteries of God or the divine through the active use of both the human intellect and human intuition or inner enlighten"(TRL 80), that had plagued him for many years.

Theosophy is based on the most of spiritual world teachings that unites the Buddhism, Taoism, Hinduism and Christianity, with the Western Platonism (TRL 89-97) and with the old religions and mysteries of old Egypt and Mesopotamia. It also includes the modern ideas of the Eastern and the Western philosophers and writers, like Tolstoī, Gordiev, Emerson, Thoreau, Blake, Wordsworth (NNI 110) and Blavatsky's ideas (TRL 81-89), as well as unites them. Karma doctrine, the sole eternity, reincarnation, provided to Naimy "the main pattern on which all [his] philosophical thinking regarding every aspect of life was woven" (NNI 110).

Another turn in Naimy's life was his joining entering Freemasonry in 1916 that he became fond of after reading some of its literature, constantly looking for life harmony. But several months later he already left it, as its teachings were too dogmatic for Naimy and did not give answers to his numerous questions about the universe unity (Sab 2 341-346).

These two brief facts from his biography found their continuation in the presence of mystical and theosophical elements in his writings, that is still the one of the popular areas of researchers of his writings (Bell, Yuningsih, among others), but not the topic of the current work.

In Seattle Naimy was able to use his good knowledge of the Russian language that helped him to solve his financial situation. It was a typist job, two hours per day, in the Russian

consulate there. In addition to the regular salary, later Naimy got the three letters of recommendation to the Russian agencies in the U.S.A. It helped him to obtain a job after he moved from Seattle to New York, where he was working first for a short period of time as a typist at the Russian "Mercantile Marine" office, and later as a secretary of the Russian Inspector of the Bethlehem Steel company where the Russian company placed its important orders for military equipment. He was working there until all Russian offices were closed after the October Revolution in 1917 (Sab 2 349, 350), about which he was passionately catching the news from all the possible sources (Ab 226, 227). He accepted it enthusiastically,

fascinated by its amazing organization...The victory over the enemies of the revolution was not won by arms alone. There was a force that was far more powerful than the power of a sword and a rifle; it was the power of faith in the fairness and reasonableness of the objectives of the revolution. Its importance is great not only for Russia, but for the whole world. For the first time it destroyed the centuries-old injustice to those who work in the fields, factories and mines, and their voice with the demanding of the just share of their labor and human respect was heard around the whole world (Ab 231).

In addition to a lot of reading as an important part of his life in the U.S.A., Naimy continues writing, finding in it the great relief.

In the spring of his second year of the university (1913), his life was radically changed. He received a parcel with the first edition of *al-Funūn*. As it was mentioned above, this literary journal was published in Arabic in New York by Nasīb 'Arīḍah, Naimy's old friend from Nazareth College, and someone else unknown to Naimy (Sab 2 310). This parcel marked the beginning of Naimy's career as a literary critic and finally turned him towards making the writing his life mission.

Naimy was extremely excited after finding in *al-Funūn* many ideas that was thinking of all the time, but could not fully formulated them. He claims in his memoirs (Sab 2), that he pushed himself from his native literature, and that is why it was hard for him to accept radical changes



form and content. This is quite surprising, as he was not raised on the examples of the Arabic literature, but on the Russian ones. Moreover, in the U.S.A. he was actively learning the Western European and the American literatures.

The works published in *al-Funūn* together with the outstanding writings of the best representatives of the Arab Renaissance in Egypt, Tunisia and Levant, made the revolutionary attempts to bring up the old-fashioned Arabic literature, with its heavy rhythm, the artificial decorations and out-of-date topics, to the modern Western literature standards. *al-Funūn* published ‘Arīḍah’s poem “Amānī” [“My Hopes”] and “Alif” [Alif is the first Arabic alphabet letter]. Though these poems followed the traditional rhyme, their language was innovatory simple, and their plot was radically new. It was the depiction of the poet’s sole struggle with this world reality and his ideals. Between the other revolutionary publications were Jibrān’s “Oh, a Night” prose in poetry (Sab 2 311).

All of these writings were unprecedented phenomena in the history of the Arabic poetry and marked the first steps towards its radical changes. The cultural strata of the American life, into which the Arab Christian poets, who had emigrated there, emerged, played its positive role for the further development of their creative works. Their compatriots who had received their education in the Christian missionary schools, but stayed in the Arabic world, were not able to go beyond their Christian influence upon *al-Funūn* diction, symbols and ideas. Meanwhile the Arab Americans developed this influence on the full scale in the new conditions (Moreh 82), under the influence of the Western and the American literary currents. In addition to the bold experiments with the Arabic poetry, *al-Funūn* placed in its pages a good selection of the modern Western European, Russian and American literature in translation (Sab 2 311).

Naimy, who finally found that his theories are turning into the reality, enthusiastically welcomed the appearance of the new Arabic literary journal, seeing in it the possible area for the using of his passion and the creative forces. He wrote:

What was that gripped me when I opened the issue? My eyes were in competition with my hand in turning pages and completely swallowing up what was there. My heart was beating with joy in my chest. To the devil with “contracts,” “things to do,” “misdemeanors,” “felonies,” and everything connected to the courts and statutes. You are never ending chain of problems. And justice is a strange thing for you. You are [nothing but] a foam and soap bubbles. And here is a new beginning and a new world. Here are the letters pulsing with life. And it is remarkable that these are Arabic letters. [For all my life] I had known the Arabic letters as [something like] spiders of stagnation, tradition, hypocrisy, and intellectual and spiritual poverty that woven shrouds over it, the shrouds with the dust piled over them for five hundred centuries. Praise be to whoever revived bones when they were decaying” (Sab 2 310).

Naimy immediately wrote his first critical article “Fajr al-amal ba‘ad leyl al-y‘as” [“The Dawn of Hope after the Night of Despair”] that was soon published in *al-Funūn*. As it ensues from his article’s title, Naimy sharply criticized there the current stagnation in the Arabic literature and laid “a careful outline of the new, living [one] ...expected of the new generations” (NNI 114). It was the first work between his numerous critical ones in English and in Arabic, touching upon practically all the literary genres.

‘Arīḍah highly valued the enthusiasm and the undoubted talent of his Nazareth schoolmate and proposed to him the further cooperation with *al-Funūn*. Soon Naimy sends to it his first critical article “Habāhib” [“Fireflies”] (Ghir 365-372), that he writes upon reading Jibrān’s story “The Broken Wings.” It was praised by ‘Arīḍah, who foresaw Naimy’s future as a great literary critic. At the same time, the lack of Naimy’s knowledge did not escape ‘Arīḍah’s attention. He writes back to Naimy:

All what you have written, is wonderful. I just have one request to you – read more Arabic writers' works, starting from al-Yāzījī, to our contemporaries. Probably, you will become for us like Belinskiĭ for Russians and Sainte-Beuve for French people (Sab 2 312, 313).

As it was mentioned earlier, we think that Naimy almost ignored the advice of his colleague and fellow countryman despite of what he claimed in his *The Sieve*. This means that the main source of his influence was not an Arabic, but the Western one. We would like to claim that at this stage it was first and foremost the Russian one, as in the beginning of his life in the U.S.A., he was still less familiar with the Western sources comparing to the Russian ones, that he really knew well.

Soon 'Arīḍah sent to Naimy the collection of Jibrān's poems in prose "Dum 'ah wa-ibtisām" ["A Tear and A Smile"] for reviewing. They were analyzed by Naimy in details and were criticized for their excessive Sentimentalism and Romanticism in the article "Akhmās wa-'asdās" ["Guesses and Assumptions"] later published in *al-Sā'ih*, that was opened soon after closing *al-Funūn* (Sab 2 316).

Naimy's enthusiasm for writing and his youth impression of the Poltavian theatre made him writing a fundamental work in a new genre. In 1916 the young Lebanese creates a play Fathers and Sons in three weeks (Sab 2 342). He borrowed for its title the name of the famous Turgenev's novel *Fathers and Sons*. Naimy claimed that that title was just as trite, as *East and West*, or *Life and Death*, since he described in his play the workaday topic of conflicts between generations, the same item described by Turgenev, but his approach to the conflict between fathers and sons, their relations and plot development, was different (Sab 2 342). Neither Krachkovskiĭ (3: 50), nor Brocklemann (475), relate Naimy's play to Turgenev's novel. But Dolinina (DAr 89-95), claims that Naimy's position is subjective and cannot be considered

decisive. She made an comparison between his play Fathers and Sons, and Turgenev's novel *Fathers and Sons* and made a conclusion about that Naimy did not blindly reproduce the ideas and images of Turgenev's play, but "obviously, he was inspired by them, pushed [his writing] from them, rethought them...and even started polemic discussion with some of them" (DAR 275). In the same time, Imanquliyeva assumptions about Naimy's role as "[an] innovator of the genre of Realist drama [there]" (AP 195) under the sway of Turgenev, in connection with his authorship of the play mentioned above, must be disputed, as drama as a genre had been founded and developed in the Arab world, especially in Egypt, long ago before Naimy started to write. Though the young Lebanese author for the first time watched theater performances in Russia, and not in Lebanon, and he was deeply affected by the Russian drama.

But Naimy's main concern was the development of playwriting in Arabic, rather than that trivial conflict. In his preface to the first edition of *al-Ābā' wa-al-Banūn*, he speaks of an importance of arts in a human life, as through watching plays conflicts and co-feeling plays' characters, people feel sorrows and joys, beauty and ugliness, and distinguish between the good and the bad, and what it brings to the world. It is possible to develop and advocate the national culture by inserting into plays national motives, such as songs. Naimy was in search of the solution of a question of using a proper language for plays' characters considering the diglossia in the Arabic language to be a sufficient difficulty in the development of art plays performed in this language. He was calling for fight the society resistance to the recognition of plays as a serious art comparing to the other genres, such as novels and poems writings (MNCW 4: 144-146).

In 1917-1918 Naimy created the one of his best writings, the novel *Memoires of al-Arqash* and sent it to 'Arīḍah. Soon he received the reply which says: "I think that al-Arqash is the best

[literary character] born by your sole...He has conquered all our litterateurs” (Sab 2 356-357).  
This novel will be discussed in details further in this work.

### *Participation in the First World War and Studies in France*

In 1917 Naimy's life made one more unexpected turn. The United States declared war on Germany and issued a decree about the registration of all young men in conscription centers. So, Naimy was recruited into the American army and was sent to France in October 1918. He participated in the last First World War battles in Europe for the thirteen months, from June 1918 to July 1919 (Sab 2 354, 408). Naimy's soul that was constantly looking for the world harmony, peace and love, endured a terrible crisis in the European battle fields. Naimy described his moral sufferings and the war horrors in his diary that he was keeping in France in 1918-1919<sup>8</sup> and the second part of his autobiographic more unexpected trilogy (Sab 2 354-407). The young Lebanese soldier, who stayed in his the constant meditation about the ideal world and ideal human, in search of the Lord's nature in everything, and who constantly tried to separate himself from the life realities, had to face the inhuman cruelty, savagery, violence and sufferings. “Man is baser than animal. He who takes pride in his reason, in war becomes reasonless”, - states Naimy about the war time (cit. in NNI 119).

When the war was over, the American army decided to send its several well educated soldiers to the French universities. It was the cause that helped the U.S. army stay in France a little longer. For almost five months Naimy, between some other American soldiers, was listening to the lectures about the history of the French literature and the history of France.

Pen Association

In July 1919 Naimy returned to Walla Walla. Soon he receives the letter from Jibrān Khalil Jibrān with the proposal to move to New York and to join *al-Funūn* group. Inspired, he moves towards his dream to write. Though *al-Funūn* stopped its existence very soon after Naimy's arrival, the new professional society was founded soon after it. After two meetings on April, 20 and 21, 1920, Pen Association was founded. It consisted of ten members: Jibrān Khalīl Jibrān, 'ilīyā 'Abū Māyḍ, Nasīb 'Arīḍah, Rashīd Ayūb, 'Abd al-Masīh Haddād, Nadrah Haddād, Wilīm Kātsīflīs, Wadī'Bāhūṭ, 'Iilyās 'Abd Allah, and Mikha'il Naimy. Seven of them were of Lebanese origin, and three of them were of the Syrian one, all of the Association members were Orthodox Christians, except for Gibrān and Bāhūṭ. Most of the Pen Bond members were from former of *al-Funūn* group. The young talented poet and prosaic Jibrān Khalīl Jibrān became its first president, and Naimy was appointed its secretary (Sab 2 448).

The Pen Association had a brief literary program that was written in a special note. It was decided that every year Pen Association would issue *al-Sā'h*, the literary magazine already mentioned in this work, as its main organ. All the members of this literary organization were obliged to contribute to it. Pen Association participants also agreed upon publishing once a year *The Collection of Pen Association*, the special edition containing their special works dedicated to a particular year item.

*al-Funūn* writers in their multifaceted works embraced and transformed the achievements of the European and American literatures, and synthesized them with the best among the Arabic literary traditions. Despite the fact that the British and American romanticism and Russian critical realism were not developing simultaneously, the Association's members were able to absorb these currencies trend and transfer into a new trend that blended all of them and the Arabic literary traditions. *al-Mahjarī* school not only helped furthering modern Arabic poetry,

but also influenced other literary schools and built an information channel through which Eastern and Western literature exchange of cultural, spiritual and moral values, as it was stated by Imanquliyeva in her *Korifei novoarabskoi literatury: k probleme vzaimosviazi literatur Vostoka i Zapada nachala XX veka* (283). To a large extent, this was the result of the fact that many poets of Pen Association wrote in English. Pen Association raised Arabic literature to a new level through its diversification of themes and genres, and created the new forms of artistic expression. These new accomplishments in the regional literature have expanded the horizons of Arabic literature and became part of the world's literary achievements.

The special role of Naimy in Pen Association follows from his background that was different from his colleagues. In spite of the fact that Nasīb 'Arīḍah and 'Abd al-Masīh Haddād had studied in the Russian Nazareth College, like Naimy had, and also stayed under Russian literature influence, they did not continue their education in Russia, and they had not had a passion for writing as the main craft of their lives at then so young age, like it was in Naimy's case, and they had not certainly read almost all the Russian classics and modern writers in the original language.

Naimy's contribution to the Pen Association was in extensive writing about literary criticism and literary theory. In addition to the Western European and American currents, Naimy, especially in his young age, stayed under the strong influence of the Russian realism, especially the critical one. In *The Sieve*, the collection of critical articles that got its name after Naimy's idea about making the distinction between what is good and what is bad, and what is beautiful and ugly, and what is robust and corrupt. The young Lebanese reflects the esthetic and critical conceptions of the Russian critic Belinskiī, called by Naimy "the head of Russian critics [who opened for him] the sources of the truth, power, the good and the beauty in the literary activities

and the high calling of a litterateur” (Ab 210). Such typical characteristics of Naimy’s style, as the absence of compromises, full of polemics tone, sharp critics against stagnant literature realities, are some Russian critical realism traits, that Naimy was able to transform into just emerging new Arabic literature. Belinskiĭ esthetic influence on Naimy’s is discussed in Chapter Three.

### Return to Lebanon

In April 1932 Naimy returns back to Lebanon after almost thirty years of travelling and attempts of living in the other world parts. But no matter where he was, his heart was in his house in Biskintā, and his native Shakhrūb, with its light flows and shades in Sanin Mountains (Sab 3 624, 625). Naimy, who had had a hard life in the U.S.A., sometime starving, staying jobless or working temporary jobs, suffering from loneliness, his difference from the Americans and the deep nostalgia, was returning back with a small amount of money was sufficient for a short time. He could not even think of a continuation of his career as a writer, as “a writer’s pen fruits... [in Lebanon were] too cheap for rivaling with money” (Sab 3 612). Naimy ends up with an idea of living a life of an ascetic and a hermit (Sab 3 612, 613), or farming in Shakhrūb (Sab 3 638).

But Naimy’s destiny prepared for him one more surprise. He gets many invitations from Lebanese, Syrian and Palestinian educational establishments, societies and clubs that want to meet this already famous writer. He is also invited to the Russian school in Biskinta, where he holds a speech calling his compatriots for peace, love to Motherland and developing its culture and discloses the common myths about the Western and American civilizations’ wealth and



prosperity (Sab 3 644-651). Naimy travels from one place to another, meets different people, reads lectures, shares his thoughts and impressions of long, interesting and unusual life abroad.

Finally Naimy moves to his lovely Shakhrüb village, where he continues writing his literary and critical works. There he tries to combine his natural tendency to isolation to meeting and helping people whom he deeply loved. While replying to the questions of the Ciaran journal *al-Hilāl* about the reasons of his isolation, he said:

I came back from America and the sound of different civilizations is in my ears, volcanoes of thoughts are in my head, and the thirst for isolation is in my heart. [The last]...is necessary for making...ears free from noise, and a head from volcanoes, and to slightly cool passions and desires that live in my heart. Shakhrüb was very kind with me, and was not greedy in providing to me the isolation about which I was dreaming. It opened for me its heart and arms. I began to spend most days in one of its caves. I spent a lot of hours on thinking, on weeding out the past, on soul purification, on opening its windows and let the Lord's light in through them. I spent many hours on work. But is it possible to create anything without meeting people?

I did not go away from people, and people did not go away from me. My house, as my heart, is opened to them in the summer and winter, day and night ... I am seeking for loneliness, my soul and body need it, as bread, water and air are needed [for it]. I need to spend at least several hours away from people in order to think over everything that I am getting from my contact with them” (cit. in AP 64).

During this period of his life, Naimy constantly wrote his literary and critical works and philosophical articles, where he discussed different cultural and academic issues; especially the ones concerning literature and arts, he paid the special attention to the moral, social and life questions. To the end of his life Naimy received hundreds of letters where people asked for his advice, help, or a review of their writings. People from all parts of the Arabic world, and between them professors, journalists, students, writers came to Naimy's house in Shakhrüb, or met him in Beirut. Arabic newsmen started publishing articles and essays about Naimy.

But soon he found himself under the pressure of the new life circumstances. His older brother died from tuberculosis, so Naimy had to carry his family financial responsibility (Sab 3 659,

660). He put together his works that had been written in the U.S.A., into a collection entitled *al-Marāḥil* [*The Stages*], in order to publish it. But at that time it was possible to publish any work only if this process was financed by an author, except for classics and religious editions (AP 64). Naimy decided to do all the publishing work by himself. He bought all the necessary equipment, and published *al-Marāḥil* in 1932. Then Naimy sent one copy of it to the big book stores and libraries in Egypt, Palestine, Syria, Iraq, and several other Arab countries. His project turned out to be successful, as soon he started receiving requests from several libraries' directors to send several copies to them.

Meanwhile Naimy continued getting invitation to different parts of the Arab world. He also gave lectures about literature and arts in the literary circles, cooperated with newspapers and journals, held fiery speeches defending the world peace, and called for fight against its enemies and fraternity, teaching people goodness and mercy, love to a human, and search for a just life and not for a beautiful cover (AP 69, 70; NNI 52-55). During the Second Worlds War in his numerous articles included into the collections of works *al-Bayādir* [*The Stockyard*], *Fī mahabb al-rīḥ* [*In the Wind's Gusts*], and some others, Naimy angrily denounced its vices, saying that the war does not injure people's bodies, but it also injures their soles. He sharply criticized old and harmful traditions that prevent people from seeing the beauty of this world. All Naimy's speeches are included into several collections of his works, like *Zād al-ma'ad* [*Provisions of the Hereafter*] (1936), *Ṣawt al-'aālam* [*World's Voice*], *al-Awthān* [*The Idols*], between the others.

Gradually different publishing houses started publishing Naimy's literary works. In 1936 *al-Muqtaṭaf* publishing house from Cairo issues *Provisions of the Hereafter*, in 1945 in Beirut *Hams al-jufūn* [*The Whisper of Eyes' Lids*], Naimy's poetic collection was released, then Cairo's

*Dar al-ma 'arif* publish published *The Stockyard*, *Word Voice*, *Karam 'alya darb* [*Vines On The Road*], and *The Sieve*.

Among the other significant developments in Naimy's life was his visit to Jibrān's grave in 1932 and the writing of the biography of his great friend and colleague in 1934. It was not just a simple listing of Jibrān's life main events, but it was a book written by his companion who was fighting for the new Arab literature and was looking for its new ways of development, who shared with Jibrān all the difficulties of life in America and longing for his homeland.

At the same time, Naimy enjoyed another part of life that he spent in isolation, reflecting life's sense and its values, seeking perfection. Gradually Naimy buries more and more of his passions, working on self-perfection.

In 1947 Naimy's allegoric philosophy book *Kitāb al-Mirdād* [*The Book of Mirdad*] was released in Beirut. Very soon he received an order for one thousand copies from the one of Bombay's libraries, and in 1954 it was translated into the Gujarati, one of the most common India languages.

Starting from the end of the 1940s, Naimy's popularity outside the Arabic world was rapidly growing. His works were translated into numerous languages, including English, German, Dutch, Spanish, Ukrainian, Russian, Armenian and Italian, and were published in India, Holland, Great Britain, the United States, Brazil, Italy, and several other countries. He enjoyed the special attention of the Soviet Union. In 1957 the collection of his stories was published in Moscow, in 1958 in Ukraine, in 1974 in Azerbaijan and in 1980 the part of his memoirs devoted to Russia was translated into Russian and published.

Naimy himself actively translated his works into English; he also translated his works originally written in English into Arabic. He considered himself not just an Arabic writer, pointing out that he wrote for the entire human race (AP 69).

From the beginning of the 1950s, Naimy made several long trips to Europe and to the Arabic world. He visited the Soviet Union several times. In 1956 the League of Soviet Writers invited him to visit Moscow, Leningrad (now St. Petersburg), Kiev, Stalingrad (now Volgograd) and Poltava. Naimy was amazed at the changes that had accrued during the fifty years he had been away. The scale of industrial development and construction, the quality of life and well-being of the Soviet people pleasantly shocked the Lebanese writer. Naimy gave a speech that was broadcast over Soviet radio. In it he compared life in pre-revolutionary Russia to the new one, and spoke of its people with deep warmth and respect. In this speech he praised the Russian culture, and first and foremost, its literature. He said:

Thanks to [Russian Classical and modern literature, I realized] ... many things that had been closed to me previously. The first [thing] that I know and understood is the sanctity of a human being. I deeply felt how beautiful justice and freedom are, and how vile are oppression and slavery (Naimy. *Polveka spustya* n. pag.).

Upon returning to Lebanon, he wrote *Far From Moscow and Washington*, his memoirs, in which he describes all that he had seen while living in different countries, compares them and talks about Marxism, socialism and capitalism.

In 1962 Naimy visits the Soviet Union once again as a Lebanese delegate of The World Peace and The Global Disarmament congress.

Naimy's life at the end of the 1950s the middle of the 1960s is marked by his work in different genres: he writes his memoirs trilogy and its continuation, short stories, long novels, such as *The Last Day* (1963), and the drama *Auūb [Job]* (1967), in addition to numerous magazine articles.

Naimy gradually obtained world recognition. In 1969 Washington University awarded him an Honorary Doctor degree; in 1972 he received an award from the Association of the Asian and African writers journal for his literary works.

In 1979 Naimy turned ninety years old. This event was widely celebrated in Beirut. Naimy received *al-'arz* order, the highest Lebanese award, for his numerous achievements in the cultural and social areas. Delegations arrived there from the Soviet Union, France, Great Britain, Italy, Holland, India, Brazil, Tunisia, and other countries. Numerous programs about Naimy's life and interviews with him were televised and broadcasted. The central postal department issued a special stamp with the Lebanese writer's portrait.

Naimy passed away in 1988. During his 99 years of life Naimy wrote 99 literary works (Dovgosheī). The full collection of his writings was edited twice, in 1970 and in 1979, by Beirut publishing house *Dār al-'ilm li-al-malān*. His huge legacy is diverse; the second edition of the full collection of his works consists of nine volumes totaling over 6,000 pages. It includes all of Naimy's multifaceted literary efforts: his poems, short stories, biography of Khalil Jibrān, autobiography, plays, novels.

Naimy spent the last two decades of his life actively participating in Lebanon's social, academic and cultural life. He wrote that he was working in the warm atmosphere of

...true love and deep respect. But its limits are much broader than [his] house; its limits are broader than the area of [his] blood relative relations. The limits of [his] house extend as far as [his] thoughts and dreams. The circle of [his] family [was] so wide that it [could] accommodate all those people, whose sole at least one word of [him] entered, and who remembered [him] kindly or with evil [thoughts], and also those who had [never] heard, or saw, or remembered [him] kindly or with evil [thoughts], as [he] had [never] heard, or saw, or remembered them. But [he] breath[ed] one breath with them (Naimy 3 811, 812).

In 2011 a monument to Naimy was erected in Poltava, where he spent his early years. During its opening, Youssef Sadak, the Lebanese ambassador to Ukraine, said that Naimy today is the one of the best five writers of the Arabic world (Dovgosheī).

## *Chapter Two*

### *The Arabic Renaissance (al-Nahdah) and Russian Context*

As mentioned above, Naimy's unusual biography together with the state of Arabic literature by the time when he began writing, and the specifics of the Russian literature, that matched Naimy's nature, enabled creating the special situation, when Russian literature became the main source of Naimy's impact. In this chapter we analyze the second and the third factors.

#### *al-Nahdah*

While describing the evolutionary process of Lebanese literature, we need to first relate it to the state of Arab literature on the whole, and then speak of literature that emerged in Lebanon only in the end of the nineteenth-the beginning of the twentieth century. It was the time when Arab literature started to first fall into small regional ones. This process was a result of the new religious and reforms movements, the influence of capitalism and the enforcement of anti-imperialist and national-liberation thoughts in the Arab world and the displacement of the Classical Arabic language<sup>9</sup> by local dialects (Khalidov 268).

While speaking about the periodization of modern Arabic literature, we shall use Muhammed Badawī's (16) division of it into the three periods. The first (1834-1914) was termed by him a time of translations, adaptations and neoclassicism; the second that took place between the two world wars, was defined by Badawī as an epoch of romanticism and nationalism, and the third period, from the end of the Second World War up until the present he terms "the Age of Conflicting Ideologies" (Badawī 16), when many schools, directions and styles emerged in the Arabic world.

We shall now focus on the first two stages of Arabic literary development first, as it was during that time when the Russian influence was more noticeable on Naimy's creative writing.

### The Arabic literature before al-Nahdah

The state of Arabic literature by the middle of the nineteenth century, could really bring someone who knew European or American writings better than the Arabic ones, into a state of despair. The Arabic literature developed in the narrow circle of educated people who mostly served the interests of powerful feudalists and concentrated uniquely around religious and educational centers and the few courts of arts amateurs. Before the Arab Renaissance it still carried the canonic character that matched the esthetic ideals of the past and the examples of the authoritative precursors (Kirpichenko, Safronov 1: 6). Badawī in "Commitment in Contemporary Arabic Literature" (25) pointed out that the medieval and post medieval Arabic literary tradition was mostly concentrated on linguistic aspects, when its form always prevailed over its content. The only form of imaginative prose that existed at that time was *maqama*.<sup>10</sup>

In addition to this, the Ottoman yoke that had been lasting for centuries contributed to the Arabic literature stagnation. The overwhelming majority of the ruling aristocracy and most of the leading poets of the time were of Turkish, Kurdish and Albanian origins. The content and forms of literary works of that period were limited. It was mostly glorifying the Khedival court, rather than reflecting the aspirations of many nationalities constituting the population of the giant Ottoman Empire.

### al-Nahdah

Men of writing of the most developed Arab countries gradually began deviating from traditions due to the social and the political developments in the region. The rapid growth of the



Arab national consciousness that started in these countries even in the 17<sup>th</sup> century and intensified in the 18<sup>th</sup> century was the natural reaction to the global world changes, the intensification of the contacts between the East and the West, the penetration of European civilization into the Arab culture. It led to the *al-Nahdah* movement emerging in the Arab world. It was inspired by the French Renaissance of the eighteenth century ideas and laid the groundwork for the renewal movement in the end of the nineteenth - the beginning of the twentieth century that started in Egypt and then spread to the Levant and Tunisia. The aim of the Arab Renaissance was to develop the new Arabic philosophical, political social and moral standards that had to become the main tool in the Arab struggle against the feudal ideology and cultural backwardness and return the former glory and power to the Arabs. The new Arab men of letters believed in the education mission of literature and considered the mass enlightenment to be the historical need of that time as well as the reliable tool in the spreading of the new optimistic ideas of progress and the triumph of reason (Och 4, 6). The Arab Renaissance writers stayed in the constant search for the new literary forms and content, meeting the new literature tasks.

The intensification of contacts between East and West in the late nineteenth-early twentieth centuries led to the increasing number of Arab writers and philosophers who travelled abroad and returned with ideas different from the classical Arab ones. The rapidly developing Arab society listened to these ideas carefully.

As for the Arabic Renaissance in Naimy's native Lebanon, it started with such prominent figures, as Nāsif al-Yāzījī (1800-71), who achieved fame in poetry; an outstanding pedagogue and publicist Buṭrus al-Bustānī (1819-83), and Fāris al-Shidyāq (1804-87), a man of letters, among others. They made a sufficient contribution to the development of an Arab press that opposed feudal ideology, Turkish despotism and foreign oppression. All of these intellectuals

were graduates of Western missionary schools. These Lebanese educators carried out a lot of work for creating a new language, style and the literary forms, especially in journalism (Solov'ev, Fil'shtinskiĭ, Jūsopov 131, 132).

ʿIssā Sabā, one of Naimy's literary heritage researchers, noticed (24, 25) the important role of the Renaissance Lebanese poets. They skillfully reflected the rapidly changing life of the new Arab generation by their new fresh literary forms and topics in their writings. He considered the Lebanese lyricists to be the national objects of pride. The Renaissance Lebanese poets, like Farah Anṭūn (1874-1922), were the first ones, who became conscious of the narrative poetry at the beginning of the twentieth century and laid its base in the Arabic literature.

#### The radical changes in the modern Arabic literature during al-Nahdah period

During the last quarter of the nineteenth century-the beginning of the twentieth century the following the Arabic literature experienced the following radical changes:

- (1) The new approach to the content of the traditional *qaṣīdah* (a form of a lyric poetry) and *maqām* literary forms and the search for new literary forms. The Arab writers turn to the new genres, such as historical novel, essays and prose, epic, lyrical and drama together with the new conceptual, thematic and stylistic features in the Arabic literature (MAL 42). At the same time, the new Arab men of letters did not blindly follow the Western styles, but tried to adapt them with an aim to achieve the best articulation (Jabra 16) in their native literature. Egypt, whose literature was represented by a whole cohort of bright lyricists, such as Aḥmad Shawqī (1868-1932), Ḥāfiẓ Ibrāhīm (1872-1932) and Ismā'il Ṣabrī (1886-1953), was occupying the leading place in Arabic verse writing of that time (MAL 41- 42).

- (2) The new clear and precise style that was copied from the Arab literature historians of the 8-9 centuries replaced *saj'* [the rhymed ornate prose] and *badi'* [the complicated system of poetic decorations], attempted to satisfy the requirement of the new times. Specifically, the development of print media demanded fast and precise reaction to events and saving newspaper space.
- (3) The translation movement grew tremendously as a result of increasing contacts with the West and its literary works that began to pervade the Arab world. Most of translated literature was modern European, such as Buṭrus al-Bustāni's (1819-1883) translation of Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*, or the world classics, like Homer's *Iliad* (Yūsufov 183). Another example are Ma'arūn Naqqāsh's (1817-55) plays. He translated several of Moliere's comedies into Arabic, but put its characters into the atmosphere of the Arabic world and into its real life realities, and gave them Arabic names. Naqqāsh founded an amateur theater circle and also performed plays at his house. They included music and dance.

But European poetry was almost never translated into Arabic in spite of the fact that some of the translators, like Najīb al-Ḥaddād (1867-1899), a Lebanese who settled in Egypt, were poets themselves (MAL 38). The other feature of the translation movement of that time was that the Arabic text turned out to be usually more a translator's interpretation of the source with the insertion of the translator's own thought and judgments and keeping the original heroes' names. Dolinina (DAr 290, 291) gives the example of the translation of Lev Tolstoï's *The Kreutzer Sonata* into Arabic by Selīm Qubayn that can rather be called a free-style adaptation of the text as it distorted Tolstoï's idea and confused the readers.

The specifics of the modern Syro-Lebanese<sup>11</sup> literature

The specific of the modern Syro-Lebanese literature at its early stage was that its best examples were mostly written by the Levantine immigrants. The mass emigration from this region started in the 1870s, when the overwhelming majority of Syro-Lebanese gifted writers and journalists moved to Egypt, the U.S.A. and France. The emigrants were looking for a better life, jobs and freedoms. The Syro-Lebanese men of letters took an active part in the cultural life of the countries of their emigration. From the 1890s', the publication of numerous newspapers, magazines and books in Arabic started in America, and Arabic literary and academic societies and groups began to open there. The new cultural strata and conditions enabled the Syro-Lebanese intellectuals' productive work: in America they found much better printing facilities, the absence of the Ottoman censorship, and an entire range of literary and philosophical influences. The second generation of these emigrants founded the emigrant school that played a great role in the creation of modern Arabic literature, especially the Pen Association mentioned above. Krachkovskii (3: 94) wrote that if it was not the physical distance between the U.S.A. and the Arab world, that did not let the Arabs know the Pen Association's creative writings better at that time, then the priority in the creation of the modern Arabic novel must have been given to this literary group.

As mentioned above, Egypt was another important Syro-Lebanese direction for emigration at the end of the nineteenth-the beginning of the twentieth century. This country was an undisputed Arabic world leader at that time. In spite of the fact that it also stayed under the Ottoman yoke, this dependence was formal, as in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, Egypt fell under the British protectorate, first de-facto, and then, in 1914, de-jure. Egypt with its early capitalist economy became a center of *al-ma'arakah li-al-tajdīd* [the battle for the new], whose

main idea was that all the old and traditional was useless in the face of the modern times that came to his country (Jabra 8-10).

Most of the best Syrio-Lebanese men of letters were working in Egypt as during the previous period: al-Kawākibī (1849-1903), the writer and publicist, Khalīl Muṭrān (1872-1949), called by his contemporaries “the poet of the two countries” (Syria and Egypt), Farah Anṭūn (1874-1922), the secularist, editor and a philosopher, and Jūrjī Zeidān (1861-1914), the historian, teacher, journalist, editor and a writer.

Egypt became the center of the Arabic press development, and it was extremely important for the modern Arabic language. Journalism was the only form of literature at the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century that fully reflected contemporary life (Dolinina 17). That is why it was possible to feel there more than in any other literature genre the discrepancy between the old style norms and methods and the new content and rational way of thinking.

It was the Syro-Lebanese journalists who laid the foundation for the major Egyptian media editions that have survived to the present. The newspaper *al-Ahrām* that is extremely popular today, was founded in 1875 by two brothers, Bishāra and Salīm Taqlā’, who immigrated to Alexandria from Syria. The first chief editors of the journal *al-Muqataṭaf* that was moved to Egypt from Beirut in 1870s were the Levantine Christian immigrants Ya’aqūb Sarrūf (1852-1927) and Fāris Nimr (1856-1951).

The Syro-Lebanese emigrants in Egypt were not only able to express their views enjoying more freedoms, but also had a positive impact on the cultural development of the countries of their immigration. al-Manfalūṭī (1876-1924), the Egyptian writer and poet, noted that the Levant

men of letters, who were working in Egypt, “planted in its barren deserts shoots of diligence,” and taught people there how to write and translate, publish newspapers and magazines, transferring this noble pursuit into a profession (Och 6).

The Syrio-Lebanese emigrants in Egypt also edited political magazines, enjoying more freedoms. Between them there were *Lisān al-ʿarab* under Najīb al-Haddād (1867-1899), published by Selīm Sarkīs (1867-1926), and *al-Hilāl*, founded by Jīrjī Zeydān. Most of these editions did not exist for a long time, as they were soon banned by the Ottoman government.

During al-Nahdah the press played an important role in working out the new language and style norms and turned out to be “the gates” through which the new European philosophical, political, historical and naturalistic concepts penetrated the Arab world. The process of replenishing the Arabic language with new vocabulary through borrowing, tracing, the formation of the new terms from the old roots and rethinking the meaning of the old words process was intensively taking place through the media. It led to the fight between the conservative publicists who did not want to accept any foreign words and the enlighteners, who tried to prove that the global world changes would inevitably be reflected in the language, and that all languages develop in their interaction with other languages (Och 17).

As for the literature inside Lebanon at the beginning of the twentieth century, it reflected the country’s complicated political, social and cultural situation. The Ottoman oppression was replaced by the French mandate on the territory of Lebanon in 1920. Naturally, the colonizer’s literature influenced the Lebanese one, and the most common literary currents penetrated into the Middle East several decades later after their flowering in Europe. Adīb MaZhar’s (1898-1928) and Yūsef Ghaṣūb’s (1893-1972) verses carry the signs of the symbolism, and Elīas Abū

Shabakah's (1903-1947) poems were written under the influence of romanticism. The genre of the novella taken from Europe was prevailing above all the other genres in the first third of the last century in Lebanon, though its story structure was weak and it bore a certain sentimentality. More and more artists, like 'Umār Fakhūrī (1896-1946), guided by European symbolism, started to follow the dilapidated formula of "pure art" and mysticism, trying to escape from the bitter reality and the sharp contrast between it and their ideal.

But from another side, the contacts between the Arabs and the West have always carried a contradictory character. The intensification of the cultural contacts with the West led to the conflict between "the new," that was often associated with the Western culture, and "the traditional," defined by Kirpichenko and Safronov (1: 7) as "a complex concept that is changing its content at its different stages of development. "

Though Europe was the center of world civilization, it was also the source of the colonial expansion. This inevitably led to the phenomenon of the attraction of the West that was increasing in Arabic literature with the years and of the local cultures' influence on the literary works of the Egyptian and Levantine writers. It was a natural reaction to the globalization and the penetration of the European cultures into the Arabic one. The Levantine intellectuals, deceived in their hopes for liberation, suffered from the new enslavement of their country. During the colonization period more and more voices were heard about the social inequality and national oppression. At that time *al -Ṭalī'ah*, the popular Lebanese magazine, played an important role in the development of the revolutionary-democratic direction. The new generation of talented writers and journalists, such as 'Umār Fākhūrī, Tawfīq Yūsef 'Awwād (1908-1989), Khalīl Taqī al-Dīn (1906-1987), Karam Malḥam Karam (1903-1959), 'Abd al-Laṭīf Sharārah (1919-1992) and many others, published their works in *al-Makshūf* magazine and were

extremely popular in the Arab world. After the Young Turk revolution in 1908, the Syrian emigrants edited several new enlightening magazines and journals, like *al-Nu'amah* under the supervision of 'Īsā Ma'alūf.

#### The development of literary currents in the modern Arabic literature

By the beginning of the twentieth century the Egyptian and Syrian classicism that emerged in the second half of the nineteenth century had not yet reached its apex. At the same time, the new social and political realities and the Western influence helped replace it with the romanticism and sentimentalism represented by Muṭrān and Shukrī in the Arab world and by the Pen Association in the U.S.A.

The romanticism and sentimentalism prepared the base for the Arabic critical realism that was laid by Mikhail Naimy based on the Russian critical realism. As it follows from this part, Naimy was raised at a time of radical changes in Arabic and Lebanese literature. He had a great potential to develop in many directions as a Lebanese writer at the beginning of the twentieth century, as the global transformations opened all the doors for his growth, as well as his unusual biography.

#### Russian Context

In the second half of this chapter, we analyze the third deep impact on Naimy, that is the Russian context.

First of all, let us provide more details about the critical period in the history of Russia that Naimy witnessed during the five years of his life in Poltava.



## Social and historical situation in Russia

The social and cultural situation in Russia at the time when Naimy was living there for several years was probably one of most interesting periods, when its Golden age (the nineteenth century) representatives were still living and creating their works, although the age itself was on the wane. It was also, however, the blossoming period of the Silver age (the end of the nineteenth century-the beginning of the twentieth century till 1917 (according to some sources 1921)).

Naimy, while summing up his experience in Russia, wrote:

It was a time of abundant literary harvest, a period of intellectual ferment, emotional boiling and spiritual growth. During that period my eyes were opened to the shallow depths [that] my country was living in. Indeed, all the Arab countries and entire East were living in [like this], especially when it came to the world of intellect, art and literature...

That period was also the time [starting] from which the purity of youth was taken out from me and [was] replaced with an experience that I was in an urgent need of (Sab 1 275).

The intellectual life in Russia in the end of the nineteenth – the beginning of the twentieth centuries was “lively, pluralist and [after recovering from the 1880s reaction] once again receptive to Western influences” (HRL 380, 381). The vast number of new artists, who made a sufficient contribution into the Russian culture of “The Silver Age,” came from non-Russian families (Polish, Jewish, German, and Ukrainian) (HRL 381). The new ideas emerged, the old ideas were rejected or reconsidered, and the new aesthetics was proclaimed. It had never happened before when so many people were involved in the Russian cultural and political life as well. At the end of the 1890s, three ways were opened to the Russian spiritual development replacing Chekhov’s pessimism: constitutional liberalism, dialectic materialism and transcendental idealism. Russians, as it had happened before, were looking for a reply to

questions that could have satisfied the whole world. The idea about the special function of the arts as the means of a spiritual truth increased (IIA 510, 557, 562).

At the same time, by the end of the nineteenth century Russia was still a relatively backward country where the religious habit was still dominating and where the economy was based on the traditional agriculture. The Russian intelligentsia tried to make at times naïve changes there by fusing some elements of religious utopianism, as well as forcing the government to take “such partial measures as constitutional reform and representative government” (IAA 44).

In the beginning of the twentieth century, the situation in Russia changed, as the capitalism started to intensively develop and the economy grew. At the same time, Russia experienced the terrible crisis of the political reaction and populism (*narodnik* movement). The constitutional liberalism establishment idea did not work, as well as the idea that Russia has its own way of development with the rejection of the European “rationalism” (HRL 379). The russification of non-Russian provinces, suspending women’s high education (1882), withdrawing autonomy from the universities (1884), *pogroms* against Jews in the cities of the Western Russia that the authorities did little to prevent (HRL 379), the Russian defeat in the Russo-Japanese war, the revolution of 1905, the involvement of Russia in the First World War, causing it enormous losses, and the other tsarist’s government mistakes led to the transformation of the liberal movements into revolutionary and radical ones, like Marxism and Anarchism, from one side, and to the starting of Decadence as the one of the major currents in art. The Decadent Movement found expression in the moral and ethical decline of some representatives of the

Russian intelligentsia and in their rejection of civic consciousness and their immersion into their private, individual worlds.

Thus, from one side the situation in the pre-revolutionary Russian art in the early twentieth century was characterized by the extreme diversity and was “equally exotic and superlative” (IAA 472), but it also mirrored the social and political deep and tragic crisis from another side.

Realism was already not sufficient for understanding life’s realities, and artists turned away from it and searched for new expression forms, making bold experiments. The Russian intelligentsia at the beginning of the twentieth century started to ask deep and eternal questions regarding the meaning of life, good and the evil, human nature, etc. All kinds of religious disputes resumed together with occultism and theological studies. Russian art was also influenced by the rapid development of the scientific and technical progress throughout the world. There arose in people’s minds a feeling that the old and habitual lifestyles were being terminated. This caused a psychological crisis in many people’s minds. Some of people were optimistically looking forward to the new changes, but others turned to pessimism and depression. In both cases people were looking for the new art forms that would help them escape from the modern realities or to adapt to the new world. This led to the nascence of a large number of literary currents, as symbolism (Andreĭ Belyĭ, Valeriĭ Briusov, Vsevolod Ivanov), acmeism (Anna Akhmatova, Nikolaĭ Gumilev), futurism (Vladimir Maiakovskĭĭ, Igor’ Severianin, Konstantin Olimpov) and others.

The turn of some literary figures to the old literary currents in the light of the realities of early twentieth century led to the updating of many of these older currents as they started to

reflect the modern realities. Gorkii's neo-romantic and neo-realist literary works of that time might serve as a good example of some of the Silver Age's best writings where all the shades of complicated Russian life of that time were brilliantly reflected. Even the classical realist Chekhov during his late period of writing remained under the influence of symbolism that enriched his creative writings.

Social criticism established by Belinskiĭ and the grotesque social satire of Mikhail Saltykov-Shchedrin continued to flourish during the Silver age in the works of populists (Nikolaĭ Mikhailovkiĭ, Aleksandr Skabichevskiĭ) and radicals (Aleksandr Lunacharskiĭ, Vatslav Vorovskiĭ) (HRL 387).

It was not only literature where changes took place. Within a short period of time, the whole Russian culture dramatically changed and developed both inside and out under the influence the new historical and philosophical thoughts and the new arts, affecting all the areas.

Realism at that time became a "ruthless and naturalistic honesty" (IIT 476). In the latter part of the nineteenth century, populism became very popular with the Russian intelligentsia. Its representatives thought that they would find their place in this world through their closeness with the common people, The hopeless desire to improve the reality from one side and to see things as they were from another side was the main contradiction of the *narodniki*. It led to internal conflict, as there was a complete lack of clarity between what must be done and realities of life. It certainly influenced the literature of the end of the nineteenth century. Billington (IIT 477) gives the example of contradictions in Tolstoĭ's, novels' and stories' pointing out to the fact that the magnificent realism was also close to Tolstoĭ's muddy moralism. He also illustrated this period with Dostoevskiĭ's merciless realism writings (IIT488).

The end of Russian realism was characterized by apathy and lyrical laments, when the great plans and ideas were gradually declining. Chekhov's dead seagull might serve as a symbol of the emerging of the old Russian nobility into the abyss (IIT 513).

### Russian literature's specific features

The social and political atmosphere of the pre-revolutionary Russia and the blossoming Silver age are a very important part of a Russian context in Naimy's life. In addition, it was the specific features of Russian literature that attracted him and impacted his literary and critical works. We'd like to give more details about these features that we have just briefly touched in the introduction.

The concepts that Russian literature delved into are exactly the ones constantly thought of by Naimy. His early Levant and Russian seminary education when he repetitively read and learned the Orthodox Christianity's scripts and service comparisons and expressions, made him concentrate on the idea of an all-encompassing God (Nijland 38, 95-98; Boullata 181-183) and brotherhood of humanity (Malḥas 53-55; Ghayth 90). As Bell (TRL 3-5) noticed, literary critics points in Naimy's writings' to numerous dilemmas, such as the ones between heart and mind, life and death, good and evil. Though Naimy's spiritual perception over time broadened outside it to include Neoplatonic elements and the traces of some other religions and philosophical schools, sometimes contradictive, such as Islam, Hinduism and Theosophy (TRL 1, 2).

Naimy's writing, especially his poetry, is so highly concentrated on spiritual items that he was even called "a physician of souls and hearts before he is a poet" (TRL 3). The well-known Egyptian man of letters Ibrāhīm 'Abd al-Qādir al-Māzinī noted that Naimy's poems blended

spiritualism with a sound understanding of reality and “emanated compassion and affection” (in TRL 3).

In addition to the spiritual moments, it was hurtfulness, spirituality, and ethics that attracted young Naimy in the Russian literary works. At the early stage of his life, he found them absent in his native literature, though he did not know it as well as he knew the Russian one. That is why Naimy wrote in his diary:

I was inclined towards the poetry that would push me to contemplate the life and death problems more than the one that would stir my emotions, especially when it was a poetry touching vainglory, or boasting, or self-confidence, or [the one speaking about] “striking kings’ necks,” swords, lancers quenching their thirst with blood.

If a poem dealing with emotions pleased me, [then] it was a *ghazāl*, a pure, pleasant poem with [an expression] of a sincere love adoration..., or a secret confidence with someone from a far dwelling, or a heart complaint, [the heart] that is broken by sorrow. [There is] something in my nature that spontaneously identified with the mourning, the wretched, the oppressed and the forgiven. As for those sitting in high places, the haughty, the gluttonous, the tyrannical, the ones puffed up with their money and power, and those [who] are dancing on graves – my spirit shrank from them. I was like this since my young years. And so I am now (Sab 1 146, 147).

Speaking of the other features of the Russian literature that attracted Naimy, we’d like turn once again to the fact that its content aspect has always been more important than its form compared to the European literature (Lukov; IIT 25). It explains a relative weakness of “art for art’s sake” in Russian literature, and the virtual absence of an entertainment genre there compared to the French or British literatures as an example. Only some of their elements could be found there (like, the detective elements in Dostoevkiĭ’s *Crime and Punishment*). Even the creative writings of Oscar Wilde, the head of the European Esthetic School, were perceived by the Russians from the moral point of view (Lukov par. 4).

Pushkin was able to balance content and form, but in Tolstoï's literary works the priority of ethical and moral principles over the literary works content is quite noticeable (Lukov par. 3). This specific of the Russian culture might be explained by Belinskiï's idea that for him, as for many Russians, "to think and to feel, to understand and to suffer is the same thing," that is why their creative art is characterized by huge morality and relative weakness in form.

The Russian literature's morality had always been exalted to the highest degree, when it demanded from a human complete self-sacrifice and giving his life for serving the world's high ideas. Naimy's position was the same. He wrote:

My ideal is to serve people with my pen honestly and incorruptibly. My aim is that my pen could serve this mission with strength and passion (Sab 1 224, 225)...

Once again, I ask myself about how my enthusiasm about poetry can be explained. My reply is the following: I do not recognize art for art. And I believe that art is connected to life and serves its purposes. This art is magnificent and useful, when it speaks of people's sufferings, their sadness and difficulties, in order to wake the consciousness of those who ignore [these poor people's] thoughts. [The art's aim is] to raise [in these miserable people] the aspiration to such a life, where freedom, equality and fraternity dominate (Sab 1 238).

Such position of total self-devotion, naturally led to constant attempts of the Russian literature to attach significance and importance to the global questions of world creation, in an attempt to find answers to them. Russian men of letters have always tried to give a reason for any historic event or a human behavior through their writings (IIT 41), and that is why Russian literature from its early stages has been a tool of a proof of historic events and people's lives and deeds.

Dmitriï Likhachèv, the Soviet scholar, whose studies are concentrated on early Russian literature, introduced the term "monumental historicism." He defines it as a special style used by ancient scribes for judging everything in terms of overall meaning and purpose of human existence. The authors of the Russian Chronicles of the XI-XIII centuries were looking at events

from large distances: spatial, temporal, hierarchical and geographical. Likhachèv argues that since medieval times any event in a human life described in Russian literature has been related to the other people's lives, as well as to their country and even the world destiny. That is why individualism has turned out to be absolutely alien to the Russian literature. A character's successful career, happiness in a private life and well-being belong more to his negative characteristics (Lukov par. 8).

As for Naimy, he felt his complicity as a writer, a citizen and a person to the great changes that were taking place in his Motherland, and his feeling were similar to the ones of the Russian men of letter. He wrote:

My country today is living through the most difficult epochs in its history, and it is in need in educational people that could direct its steps and could disperse the darkness [that has thickened] in front of its eyes. And I want to be the one of these people. I want to spread in my country the spirit that will help identify all the human values and direct ...[my country] towards the way of socialism. I do not want my country to immerse into the Western civilization foam. But it must extract all the beautiful and useful from its civilization depths (Sab 1 231, 232).

One more specific feature of the Russian literature that influenced Naimy, is in composition of its literary works. Lukov (par. 9) points out that the traditional "happy end" of much Western literature is rarely present in Russian literature. Even when it was, its heroes in fact still suffered, as in Nikolaï Ostrovskii's play *Wrongfully Accused* (1881-1883). Russian writers prefer "open endings," like in Alexander Griboedov's novel in verse "Woe from Wit" (1833), or Pushkin's novel in verse "Eugene Onegin" (1823-1831), or Gogol's novel *Dead Souls* (1842). Even when a story has been brought to its logical conclusion, the writer often continues his thoughts and reasoning, like in *War and Peace* (1863-69) and *Anna Karenina* (1873-1877) by Leo Tolstoï. That is why the genre of a story with the open ending is more common in the



Russian literature; meanwhile the novel with its completed end is more typical for Western literature.

It is quite often that in Naimy's stories' the conclusions like the Russian ones, do not have the direct author's assessment. The stories' ideas come out from their content (Bilyk 31). Shahīn from "*The Talisman*" (1919)<sup>18</sup> who loses his faith in the magic power of his mascot, al-Arqash from *Memoires of al-Arqash*, who is painfully trying to understand who he is, what his place in the Universe is, and what his Motherland is, and still does not get an answer, can serve as an illustration to how Naimy concludes his works.

The last characteristic of Russian literature which we'd like to mention is its language that is synthetic, and not analytic. Its long and morphologically complicated words, as well as their unprecedented richness and variety of shades of meaning, and its sentences, both long, with much more difficult punctuation compared to European languages affects how the language is meant to be read. Literary works written in Russian make readers more attentive, slow up reading and lead to a greater saturation of each Russian phrase with ideas, as well as to a smooth and slow style and high emotional outbursts while describing the feeling of characters (Lukov par. 10, 11).

Naimy's thorough description of Abū Nasīf's room and his physiological state when his real thoughts mix with his hallucination in "Her New Year," the long and emotional description of

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<sup>18</sup> Shahīn, the main character of this literary work, was boasting to all his friends about the magic power of his talisman that was, according to Shahīn, a piece of the True Cross on which Jesus had been crucified. It had saved its owner on numerous occasions, according to Shahīn's eloquent stories. When one of his friends doubts its magical power, Shahīn hangs the talisman around his young son's neck and wants to shoot him in order to prove his words. The boy cries and is taken away by his mother, so Shahīn and his friends test whether the talisman's magic power can protect a small kitten. The novel's hero shoots it and immediately kills it. Thus, the myth is dispelled, and at night Shahīn throws his relic into a river.

Jamīlah during different periods in “The Barren Woman,” the detailed description of ‘Azīz, her husband, and al-Bīk’s physical appearance from “His Excellency al-Bik,” as well as lengthy arguments about the universe, the creator and the seasons in *The Last Day* are just very few examples of a kind of syntax that was very unusual for Arabic literature at that time and much more typical for Russian literary writing.

### Naimy and Russian literature

The young Naimy’s diary is the most important source of what was going on in his life and heart during that period. Parts of it were published half a century later in the first part of his trilogy *Seventy: My Life’s Story* (1959-1960). It has its continuation in *Far from Moscow and Washington*.

In Naimy’s memoirs we find a long, very diverse and unorganized list of Russian and Ukrainian men of letters together with his ideals and the first attempts to analyze their literary works. In his *In the New Sieve* written much later, in 1970s’, he made a relatively professional and detailed analysis of Aleksander Pushkin’s, Taras Shevchenko’s, Gorkiī’s, Dostoevskiī’s and some other Russian writers’ works.

Young Naimy with his passion for life in the new country that he was so found of, seemed to be interested in knowing many Russian culture areas, starting from the theater and then up to folk songs and dances. He did not stop reading and writing in Russian about Russia and the Russians, driving himself in the process to health problems related to his eyes (Sab 1 183).

As for his early diary, it all dazzles with Naimy’s spontaneous comments about the Russian writers belonging to different epochs and literary currents. He also used Russian and Ukrainian literature to substantiate what he already felt about this new to him country. Naimy noticed that

Gogol's works helped him to “know better Russian peasantry’s simplicity, its patience kindness and love to its soil” (Ab 209). He argued with Leo Tolstoï in his journal about some of the concepts in *War and Peace*, and at the same time he learned more and more about Russia and Russians while reading about the great battles of the war against Napoleon. Naimy not only passionately read the novels, of Dostoevskiï, Leskov and Ivan Kotliarevskiï, among others; he was fond of Russian poetry, especially Lermontov, about whom he says: “Only the Lord knows how many impressions on me this poet left” (Sab 1 183).

During that period Naimy wrote several poems in Russian, that were discussed in Chapter One. They were undoubtedly written under the influence of the Russian literature he loved and studied. We have already mentioned “The Frozen River,” Naimy’s famous poem that has survived till today. The prerevolutionary atmosphere in Russia could not keep the young seminarian indifferent. In that poem Naimy compared the stagnant Russia to a frozen Sula River that would melt in the spring making a direct reference to the coming revolution.

Naimy’s list of contemporary Russian literary works of the end of the Golden Age and the beginning of the Silver one, is vast. He mentioned in his Poltavian journal the writings of Chekhov, the famous short story and playwright; Dmitriï Merezhkovskiï, the poet, critic and religious philosopher; Leonid Andreev, the writer and the founder of Russian expressionism; the poet Alexeï Tolstoï, and the writer Alekseï Pisemskiï. In addition to this, he was exposed to the ideas of the new pre-revolutionary Russian generation of writers, such as Gorkiï, and Alekseï Zolotarèv, the literary critics and religious philosopher (Sab 1 173-284; Ab 209-211). They were glorifying a new lord, the common people (Sab 1 230), and trying “to bring to the surface ‘the lower depths’ of the society and consequently [pave] the way to the socialist revolution” (NNI 98). Naimy also read the works of Nikolaï Kostomarov, the Russian historian. In addition to all

of this various reading, the young seminarian seriously studied the critical writings of Belinskii and Solov'ev that laid the base of his position as a literary critic (Sab 1 173-284) and to whose influence we shall return in Chapter Three.

Before his arrival in Russia Naimy had been already prepared for absorbing its culture, as he had read the Russian Golden and Silver Age classics, and had dealt with and was impressed by the Russian educators at the Syrian schools. He also stayed under the influence of the positive attitude to the Russians in his motherland. These factors created the favorable atmosphere that let Naimy continue absorbing the Russian culture. This influence was reinforced by the political, social and cultural atmosphere of pre-revolutionary Russia at the time of the interface of the Golden and Silver ages, with all the arts, thoughts and literary diversity.

While staying in Poltava, Naimy bitterly noticed in his diary:

... I could not keep myself from comparing our literature to Russian one. What a big chasm separates us from the West! How dark is the murk in which we live! How much we are attached to life's peel that does not let us reach its pith. How poor you are, my country! Even the world torch like Tolstoï has not yet burned the darkness of your night... (Sab 1 233).

The paragraph cited above was not only the result of youthful maximalism of the Lebanese seminarian and his ignorance about his national literary heritage and the current situation in the Arab culture. It was, probably, also some special psychological situation, that needs more research. That is why Naimy began his journey in so much loved by him world of literature with the Russian one.

The stagnation of Arab literature compared to Russian literature did not discourage Naimy. On the contrary, inspired by the best examples of the Russian art at the earlier stages of his life, and then the masterpieces of world literature, after learning the progressive avant-garde thoughts and

the world philosophy, Naimy was able to stand at the forefront of modern Lebanese literature and to play an important role in the creation of the modern Arabic literature.

## *Chapter Three*

### *The Influence of Russian Literary Critical Writing on Naimy*

As it was mentioned above, it was in the middle of the 1920s that Ignatiĭ Yūlianovich Krachkovskiĭ (1883-1951), founder of the Soviet school of Arabic studies, discovered a young Lebanese writer by the name of Mikhail Naimy. Krachkovskiĭ was in the process of putting together an anthology of Arabic literature that he was editing. As he was making his way through the material, he came upon a critical article by the young Naimy that impressed him. Krachkovskiĭ knew nothing about the writer outside of the fact that he was living in the U.S. at the time. What he saw in this article, however, struck him by its resemblance to Russian critical thinking, particularly that of the nineteenth-century critic Vissarion Belinskiĭ. Almost thirty years later Krachkovskiĭ would write:

I was afraid to succumb to my first impressions, but some sounds of Russian critical thoughts that were little familiar to Arabic literature of the time, seemed to echo from this article. This impression was strengthened by the collection of ... [Naimy's] articles [that] were edited under the significant title, *The Sieve*... In his works, especially in his critical essays, I felt the traces of Russian literary influence, especially that of Belinskiĭ's critical school (Krachkovskiĭ 1: 56).

Krachkovskiĭ's profound knowledge of Arabic and Russian literature as well as his sensitivity as a reader enabled him to recognize Naimy's talent, and he set to work publishing his critical articles as examples of the new trends in Arabic literature.

How it was that a young Lebanese writer schooled in Russian Orthodoxy in his home country should come to be so influenced by Russia's chief social critic of the nineteenth century is the subject of this chapter?

It was, to be sure, an unlikely literary relationship, one that might have seemed counterintuitive given the state of Russian literary life when Naimy first arrived in Russia in

1905. The Golden Age of Russian literature was waning, yet the great philosophical novels of Tolstoī and Dostoevskiī still remained the benchmark of greatness. The early twentieth century witnessed the shorter forms of writers such as Chekhov who turned his attentions to the subtly realized details of the everyday. Realism was ceding its place to symbolism, while the world of tsarist autocracy was slowly coming unraveled through its own lack of engagement with the life and needs of Russia's people. Politically Russia was poised between the abortive 1905 Revolution, and the one that would change it irrevocably in 1917. This is the world that Naimy entered.

The influence that Belinskiī would have on the young Lebanese writer was closely tied to the effect that Russia – its culture and its literary life and its social conditions – had on him. During his stay in Poltava (1906-1911), Naimy witnessed the same unbearable social conditions that led to the mass Syro-Lebanese emigration to Egypt, the Americas and Europe. He saw before him social injustice and oppression, poverty and the ongoing political and economic crisis that had infiltrated all areas of life. But there was a difference between Naimy's life in Poltava and that of his peers in New York. If his Pen Association's peers were living far from their Motherland as he was in Ukraine, they nevertheless remained together as a group in the Arab émigré community in New York.

Naimy, on the other hand, fully immersed himself in Russian and Ukrainian life at a critical and formative period of his life. Here in Ukraine Naimy was finally able to make his passion for active involvement in cultural life that he had been seeking in vain for years in his distant motherland a reality. The Russian influence on him was deeper and sharper compared to that of American culture on his colleagues from Pen Association.

Naimy's background – his Orthodox Christian roots and his seminary education – prepared him for the world he was about to enter. Nineteenth-century Russian literature, heavily engaged as it was with philosophical and religious questions, proved to be both fertile and familiar ground for Naimy and thus provided him with fewer cultural and ethical barriers than non-Christian writers would have encountered.

Naimy's personality played no less a role in his interest in Russian literature than the factors mentioned above. As Imanquliyeva (AP 14) states, he was very impressionable from early childhood, was inclined to deep analysis, and was constantly seeking to understand the universal laws of harmony and perfection. The Lebanese seminarian was not indifferent to the numerous developments in political, social and cultural life both in Russia and in the Arab world and passionately responded to them.

It was no wonder that an impressionable young man brought up on the best examples of Russian literature during the formative period of his life fully immersed himself in Russian life on the eve of the radical transformations in Russia. For Naimy, they reinforced in his memory the decline of the Ottoman Empire and the rise of French colonialism that inevitably led to popular resistance. And it was no wonder that he took to Belinskiĭ, the man who was the undisputed leader of the Russian school of social criticism in the first half of the nineteenth century. His critical heritage had already influenced several generations of writers and critics. It was Belinskiĭ who pointed the way towards new directions for literary development, who founded the Russian school of Critical realism and who advanced a number of critical principles that became key for other critical schools as well and that have not lost their relevance today. Belinskiĭ's writings rang with a passion that touched his audience of progressive thinkers profoundly. His aversion to hypocrisy, idolatry and social injustice resonated in Russian literary



criticism as Russia struggled with an increasing social divide and poverty on the eve of the emancipation of the serfs in 1861.

Belinskiĭ's influence on Naimy was profound not only because of Naimy's fascination with Russian literature, but also because of his despair with the state of literary culture in his own land. Belinskiĭ's works suggested to him the practical ways in which this situation might be rectified. The state of his national literature as he saw it by the time of writing *The Sieve*, a collection of his early critical articles, was one of the defining moments that inspired young Naimy to embark on his critical work just as Belinskiĭ had been inspired by the social and political situation in Russia during his time. Like many young people of his generation, Belinskiĭ considered himself to be a *predtecha* (the forerunner of the truth) and was convinced that it was possible to show the correct way of fighting for the solution to the political, social and cultural problems of his day through his writing.

Naimy employed the same tactics in his polemical articles and the same aggressive uncompromising tone as did Belinskiĭ. Both were convinced that their progressive thoughts and the truth as they perceived it would unite people and inspire them to follow the correct direction in the arts. Naimy and Belinskiĭ continued through all their writings to believe that the current state of their respective literatures and its literary criticism needed urgently to be improved. And it was the critic who would do this.

Naimy wrote in his letter to the Russian professor Krachkovskiĭ:

You can easily understand why my first literary... [writing] in Arabic carried mostly a critical character. There was hardly any literature that I could criticize when I started writing around 1913. Such literature was just emerging. But there was a lot of the so-called literature that needed to be suppressed...before the seeds of the new literature could put down roots (Krachkovskiĭ 3: 225).

#### The Development of critical realism in Russia

This literary current first appeared in the nineteenth century as a reflection of German philosophy's reaction to European idealist philosophy. As a precursor to Marx, critical realism stipulated that people's living conditions and their psychology are conditioned by their social environment. Such writers as Stendhal, Charles Dickens, Honoree de Balzac, George Eliot, Mark Twain, Jack London, along with many others, were the first to follow its principles. The flowering of this artistic method in the nineteenth century was explained by social tensions, the widening gulf between classes and the economic conditions that created the class conflict that Karl Marx sought ultimately to erase. The mercenary nature of bourgeois relations about which Marx wrote set the stage for the deployment of a crushing critique of the social system based on the exploitation of man by man. The task of progressive nineteenth-century literature then was in the disclosure of the hostility of the masses towards the current situation of bourgeois rule (Abramovich 298).

However, the development of and the features of critical realism in various countries were not completely identical, as people in different parts of the world reacted to their living conditions differently. In Russia, where the revolutionary movement was dramatically growing throughout the nineteenth century and sociopolitical conflicts were worsening with each decade, the power and ideological content ...of this revolutionary movement were naturally reflected in the works of Russia's realist writers (Abramovich 301-313).

Vissarion Grigor'evich Belinskiĭ (1811-1848) belonged to the same cohort of so-called revolutionary democrats who were fighting for the abolition of autocracy and serfdom and supported the socialist transformation of the country. Belinskiĭ was the founder and inspiration behind the school of critical realism, the most powerful literary force in Russia in the mid-1830s, whose aesthetic program he formulated.

To say that Belinskiĭ... was a very gifted anti-critic would mean nothing. He was in reality, at a very significant moment of a human evolution, a teacher and an educator of a Russian society, not only in art – its value, its purport, its comprehension – but also in politics, social questions, and humanitarian aspirations (Kropotkin 288).

In paying homage to Belinskiĭ Naimy wrote:

...as for Belinskiĭ, who is undoubtedly the head of the Russian critics... [he] opened to me the hearth of justice, power, goodness, and beauty in the literary activities...[he showed me] the greatness of the writer's role, [in case if a man of letters plays this role]... well towards himself, the surrounding life, and his readers (*Ab'ad min Mūskū wā-Wāshintūn* 73, cit. in AP 181).

Belinskiĭ himself had his own sources of influence. He cut his teeth by reading the works of the Russian Romantics, such as Prince Piotr Vīazemskiĭ, Orest Somov, Nikolai Polevoĭ, and Prince Vladimir Odoevskiĭ as well as the eighteenth-century writer and philosopher Aleksandr Radishchev, and the civil writings of the Decembrists (Wilhelm Kūchelbecker, Aleksandr Bestuzhev-Marlinskiĭ)<sup>12</sup> (BRLC 20-22, Kropotkin 288, 289). Belinskiĭ remained under the influence of varying philosophical and social movements such as the Moscow *liubomudry*<sup>13</sup> [wisdom-lovers], some of the representatives of the Slavophiles<sup>14</sup> and the populists (BRLC 20-22), the political circle of Moscow University student-democrats (Aleksandr Herzen, Nikolāĭ Ogarev, Sergeĭ Stankevich), as well as the atmosphere in Russia after the Decembrist uprising, whose aim was the overthrow of autocracy and the reorganization of government structures.

Pushkin and Gogol provided Belinskiĭ with his second Russian source of inspiration. Through their works he “came to understand that true poetry [was] real; that it must be a poetry of lived reality” (Kropotkin 289).

The German idealist philosophers of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, especially Hegel, were also key in the formation of Belinskiĭ's views as was the French Romantic School, among them Victor Hugo, Charles Sainte-Beuve, and Anne Louise Germaine de Staël-Holstein. The works of Henri de Saint-Simon, and Charles Fourier, Utopian socialists

and Robert Owen, the Welsh social reformer, had also made their way into Russia at this time and provided Belinskiĭ in all probability with food for thought (BRLC 44-46).

Belinskiĭ's merit was not in just taking Western ideas and applying them to Russian realities. He developed these thoughts into advanced political ideas and thus converted his journal of literary criticism into a historic-literature concept that later became a tool in the fight for the revolutionary-democratic ideal. Moreover, his aesthetic system and his literature of practical criticism became "his effort to integrate that literature into the "progressive" political movement among the Russian literary intelligentsia of which he was also a founder" (BRLC 9).

All Belinskiĭ's aspirations towards what he considered high humanitarian ideals along with his passion and his boundless love of truth were targeted at the improvement of the arts and critical writing in the middle of the nineteenth century. Moreover, his works carried a political character, as he pitilessly analyzed the difficult living conditions among the people (*narod*) in Russia during his time. He aggressively fought [for] all forms of insincerity, haughtiness, indifference, despotism, or slavery. His eloquent, ardent, and engrossing writings made him in the judgment of many a brilliant teacher of the highest humanitarian principles (Kropotkin 289, 290).

Among Belinskiĭ's other important achievements were his introductions to basic theoretical concepts, the creation of some of critical realism's terms as well as the creation of an aesthetic program for the realist school in literature. Many Russian writers and critics were brought up on "Belinskiĭ's school of ideas" (Kuleshov 142), and his organic aesthetic theory started to dominate Russian literary criticism and lay the foundations for the school of socialist realism that became the official canon of Soviet art throughout much of the twentieth century.

#### Naimy as a founder of modern Arabic literary criticism

Belinskiĭ's impact on Naimy can be especially felt in Naimy's first critical articles included in *The Sieve*. The title of this collection is quite symbolic, as it reflects the new function of a literary critic as defined by Belinskiĭ. A critic must be a literary "sieve" and examine what

men of letters will write using their intuition, taste, aspirations and competence. It is not a writer or a commercial editor who will decide what must be published or not, but the literary critic who will do this.

The Lebanese writer's first contribution to literary criticism started with his article "Fajr al-amal ba'ad leyl al-ya's" ["The Dawn of Hope after the Night of Despair"] (1913) in Arabic for the literary magazine *al-Funūn*. It was later included in *The Sieve*. In this work, Naimy first announced the arrival of "a new literature," welcomed it and provided a brief description of it. He also sharply criticized the stagnation and sterility that in his view still defined Arabic literature.

*The Sieve* encompassed a period of nine years of his critical writing activity. It contained a preface written by 'Abbas Maḥmūd al-'Aqqād<sup>15</sup>, the famous Egyptian writer and critic, whose thoughts on the state of Arabic literature reflected those of Naimy (Nijland 82). Naimy from his side included his reviews on *al-Diwān*, the fundamental collection of critical essays by al-'Aqqād and 'Abd al-Qāder al-Māzinī, and al-'Aqqād's collection of critical articles entitled *al-Fuṣūl* [*The Chapters*] in *The Sieve*. This book can be called an apogee of Naimy's critical writings if we do not take into account his other important work about Jibrān (1934). Though this work was closer to being a biography of his peer, it was still possible to find in it a reflection of Belinskī's passionate, non-compromising tone. In the middle of the 1930s, Naimy finally turned to other literary directions and only occasionally returned to literary theory in his several essays included in such collection of his works as *The Stages, Provisions of the Hereafter* (1936), *al-'Awṭān* [*The Idols*] (1946), *In the Wind's Gust, Durūb* [*Roads*] (1954) and *In the New Sieve*. That is why we will concentrate here mostly on *The Sieve*.

Naimy belonged to the new generation of men of letters and literary critics who found themselves on the threshold of modern Arabic literature that was fed by the Arabic literary heritage<sup>16</sup> and the numerous Western and American literary currents that had arrived along with the expansion of cultural contacts between Europe, America and the Arab world. The role of the critic was key in managing the confluence of literary heritage and global currents.

The young Lebanese writer's two sources of inspiration were the emerging works of Arabic literary critics, particularly al-'Aqqād's theories and his fellows Jibrān's and al-Rīḥānī's thoughts (Fanous 320) expressed in Pen Association's brief literary program. His second source of inspiration that he took pride in was foreign literature (NNI 128, 129). Though the young Lebanese writer did not participate in any serious political circles, he remained under the influence of his intensive reading of progressive Western and Russian literature, which only strengthened his response to what he perceived as the stagnation of Arabic literature. Naimy expressed his admiration for Western literature, comparing it to the Arabic tradition. Even as Naimy waxed lyrical about the merits of the Arabic tradition, he felt that that tradition had to be raised (by criticism, not by the writer) to the level of the Western canon.

I do not think that it will be so hard to raise one of the Arabic writers to equality of with Homer, Virgil, Dante, Shakespeare, Milton, Byron, Hugo, Zola, Goethe, Heine and Tolstoy. They [the Arab poets] lived and died to sing of the doe of the desert, the scintillating swords, the cantering horses. The spilling of blood, the course of the camel, the remains of the camp, the fire of the guest meals, etc ("*Al-Ghirbāl*" 8, cit. in Nijland 84).

"Why do we not drink from the springs of our neighborhood, especially if these springs are not forbidden to us?" he asked ("*al-Ghirbāl*" 126, in Fanous 312).

We do not want to diminish the influence of the Western school, especially if we take into consideration that the articles included in *The Sieve* were written during Naimy's stay in the U.S.A. where from the late 1910s' through the beginning of the 1920s there was a melting pot of world ideas and literary currents, but we would like nevertheless to claim that along with Arabic influence it played a secondary role in Naimy's development. Only the Russian tradition had produced a developed theory of criticism and an understanding of literature that positioned the critic, along with the writer, as a social reformer, and viewed criticism along with writing as a social labor.

Naimy's approach to both Western literature and Arabic literature was that of a self-proclaimed connoisseur determined to demonstrate the mastery of these repertoires. Naimy in 1916 was "quite keen" to show his broad knowledge of Western literature to readers (Fanous 325). Similarly, he claimed in his article "The Fireflies," which is included in *The Sieve* (365-382), that he had reviewed all the Arabic literature from *Jahiliyah's* (pre Islamic) times to the modern era. His list of Arabic writers that he included in that article was quite short and "not convincing since it did not provide the reader with any case studies under discussion" (Fanous 309). His approach to both the Arabic tradition and the currents of American literature was that in their raw form, they expressed cultural strength, but it was the job of active criticism to mold them into literary excellence. That process seemed to foreshadow social progress.

We might justly conclude then based on his early biography that it was the Russian influence that predominated in Naimy's critical works. As described in the previous chapter, his first writings and most of his first, serious readings were in Russian. Hence, it was the major literary and critical heritage to which he was exposed in detail and under whose tutelage he remained particularly at the earlier stages of his literary writings.

Our second proof of our position about the predominance of the Russian Critical School in Naimy's works is the latter's deep and painful feeling of the sharp contrast between it and his native culture that was still poor and stagnant in his eyes by the time of writing *The Sieve*. He was still lacking in knowledge about the Arabic heritage in spite of his attempts to convince his readers and even himself of the opposite. The appreciation and admiration of it would come later.

By the time he wrote *The Sieve*, Naimy still remained under the impression of Russian philosophical, critical, and social ideas and the literary school to which he had been exposed in depth for several years beginning in middle school. He remembered with anguish and vexation the moment when he moved away from Poltava:

When I left Russia, I noticed literary stagnation in the entire Arabic speaking world. It hurt me painfully, it was enough to bring a person to tears who was brought up on [the examples of] Pushkin's, Lermontov's, and Turgenev's writings, on Gogol's "laughter through tears", on Tolstoy's fascinating realism, on Belinskiĭ's literary ideals, and, finally, on the high humanity of Dostoevskiĭ, the most powerful, deep, and the most penetrating of all the Russian writers (Krachkovskiĭ 3: 224, 225).

In his collection of critical articles, Naimy, like Belinskiĭ, made pronouncements about the old literature and theorized the directions for the development of a new literature. He devoted considerable energy to the criteria according to which the new literature needed to be assessed. Some of the European and Arabic scholars of Naimy's works mention the obvious influence of Belinskiĭ, including Fanous, Karam and N.Naimy, echoing what Naimy himself wrote in his own diaries.

During the Soviet period, when Belinskiĭ became something of an ideological trope, several Russian worked comparatively on Belinskiĭ's principles of critical realism and Naimy's critical articles (Bilyk, Imanquliyeva, Muminov). In Naimy's case it became clear that Belinskiĭ's influence was deeply felt. His ideas had a profound impact on the young Lebanese



seminarian. However, during Soviet times access to foreign sources was limited, and even today Russian libraries still do not provide all the necessary research opportunities for researchers. Thus, Soviet scholars were not able to make a comprehensive picture of the work that had been done on Naimy outside of Russia.

### The Influence of Russian Critical Writings on *The Sieve*

In a comparative analysis of Belinskiĭ's and Naimy's main critical writings, I will focus first on their styles. Both their works are characterized by the same absence of compromise, by polemics and a sharp criticism of stagnant literature. Naimy's rich, eloquent, and versatile language is strikingly similar to the typical manner of Russian Critical Realist writings. Like Belinskiĭ and his contemporaries, Naimy's style can be difficult, even contradictory, in an attempt to bring forth "the new literature."

He was a great master of style, and whatever he wrote was so full of energy, and at the same time bore so truly the stamp of his most sympathetic personality, that it always produced a deep impression upon his readers.

These Kropotkin's (289) characteristics of Belinskiĭ can be fully applied to Naimy as well, as he managed to transfer into his native Arabic Belinskiĭ's passion, eloquence, as well as his great desire to make radical changes coupled with the lack of tolerance for popular, mass literature.

Naimy was certainly not only impacted by Belinskiĭ's style, but first and foremost by the content of his critical works. The Lebanese author set forth four of the most pressing goals for Arabic literature 390-391) in his article "Maqāīis al-'adab" ("Literary Standards") (387-394) included in *The Sieve*. He was more specific in his goals than was Belinskiĭ, particularly on the mission of criticism. But Belinskiĭ's critical articles themselves became a program for the new literary critics' generations.

Since the thoughts expressed by Belinskiĭ and Naimy in their works were so varied, we have identified their three main directions and have placed them in order of importance in Belinskiĭ's and Naimy's writings. First and foremost in their critical works is an analysis of and a manifesto on the directions in which the "new literature" should develop in order to reform and improve culture and society. Second, both see a special role for the literary critic as a kind of "meta-writer," a guide and advisor for writers engaged not merely in aesthetic work but also in cultural and social reformation. Only then, third, comes the role of the writer who produces the raw material of the cultural and social imagination of the future.

#### The New Literature and its Role in Society

A 'new literature' as conceived by Belinskiĭ and Naimy had about a dozen specific functions in envisioning and promoting social change. Each function involved moving language, syntax, oeuvre and genre away from classical aesthetic ideals toward human realities and perceived social needs. The first role of the new literature then was to document existing human realities. Kuleshov pointed out that Belinskiĭ laid the foundations of a new democratic aesthetic and created a program for Russian critical realism as a new literary movement through his sharp dispute with the reactionary opposition of idealistic aesthetics. He argued that since a human depends on a society and since his social life proceeds in accordance with its historical regularities, it was necessary for writers and poets to provide a critical picture of contemporary Russian reality by pointing out its negative sides.

Belinskiĭ's main principle then was verisimilitude. The Russian critic wrote that it was necessary to understand the artist's way of depicting reality not as an exaggeration, or lie, or a product of a child's imagination, but as a fact based in reality. At the same time that fact need not just be copied from the real world, but rather transformed through the imagination of the poet,

illuminated by its light of significance. A writer, according to Belinskiĭ (“Russkaia literatura v 1842 godu” [“Russian Literature in 1842”]), while reflecting the characteristic features of his character’s personality and actions, must describe them in such a way that they reflect actual people’s lives in a way that shows deep understanding. Belinskiĭ sharply criticized Russian contemporary novels about morality in his “Fiziologiia Sankt-Peterburga” [“St-Petersburg Physiology”] (1845), attempting to show that modern writers had no knowledge of Russian society, and therefore their writings suggested more a primitive and simplified depiction of Russian life than a realistic picture.

Belinskiĭ’s position was formed under the ideas of French utopian socialism (Gorkin). He was the one of the founders of the so-called Natural School in literature that was fighting for the ideological consciousness of advanced Russian literature (Kuleshov 142) aimed at building a socialist society based on the fraternity and equality that he saw as man’s natural aspirations. Belinskiĭ arrived at the idea of demolishing the current Russian social foundations. He sought a literature that would reflect the realities of Russian life and that could incite people to fight against the inertia of autocracy and serfdom. His ideas became extremely popular among Russian men of letters in the middle of the nineteenth century. Belinskiĭ wrote:

If [I was] asked about what the essential merit of the new school of literature was... [It has turned] from the [abstract] highest ideals of human nature and life...to the so-called "crowd" and has solely elected it as its hero, examines it with deep attention, and introduced [this crowd] to itself. [This means] that the final turning of our literature, that wanted to become fully national, a Russian [one], [and] original and distinctive, [it also means] making [our literature] the mirror reflection of the Russian society [and] animating it with a vital national interest. The destruction of all that is false, fake, unnatural must be the necessary result of this new direction in our literature [that started with Gogol’s works] (“Russian Literature in 1845”).

Naimy in turn wrote that poetry had only one immeasurable and inseparable source, a life that was everywhere (*The Sieve* 434). The first thing that he was looking at while deciding

whether a piece of writing was a real literary work was “a life breath” (*The Sieve* 435). Only after that did he analyze the next criterion, namely the depth of the writer’s conceptions, and only then did he focus on the composition of the literary work, its melody and elegance. The values of the old literature, such as *arud* (the classical Arabic versification system), came last in Naimy’s critical analysis (*The Sieve* 435-437). He wrote, “we are searching for ourselves in everything we do, say, or write” (“al-Ghirbāl” 35, cited in Fanous 205). Thus literature was for him the only area that presented a human “in all his spiritual and materialistic aspects” (“al-Ghirbāl” 36, cited in Fanous 306) and by doing so helped him to know life more deeply.

To the degree that human conditions and their influence on the mind were a basic principle of critical realism, it is possible to draw a parallel between Naimy’s article “al-Riwāyah al-tamthīliyyah al-‘arabīyyah” [“The Arabic Drama”] (*The Sieve* 359-364) and Belinskiĭ’s “Vzgliād na russkui”u literaturu 1847” [“A View on Russian Literature 1847”] (1: 642-723), as was done by Imanquliyeva (AP 199). The Russian critic spoke in “A View...” of the two types of writers: a painter, who cares about forms and who rivals Nature in his ability to create, and a scientist whose ability to think and to analyze prevails over the artistic side of his work, like Herzen (Belinskiĭ 944, cited in Imanquliyeva AP 199). The “new literature” required a scientific as well as an artistic approach.

Naimy’s ideas in the article mentioned above were similar to Belinskiĭ’s. Naimy called upon Arab writers to explore the rich material of daily life for new ideas and plots instead of working on perfecting their written forms (N.Naimy, *al - Fann wa-al-ḥayāh* 133). Naimy understood that during this time of radical cultural changes there were two opposing ideas about the mission of Arabic literature. The disciples of the first idea considered literature a field where they could demonstrate their profound knowledge of Arabic rhetoric, grammar and vocabulary.

As for the followers of the opposite camp, they were sure that the literature was “an exhibition of thoughts and emotions, of sensitive souls expressing their interaction with the universe, and of living hearts rendering in prose and poetry what they embody of the pulse of life” (N.Naimy, *al-Fann wa-al-ḥayāh* 134).

Naimy’s new approach to valuing literary writings of his colleagues was clearly visible in his analysis of his fellow al-Riḥānī’s works from Pen Association (*The Sieve* 462-466). The Lebanese writer identified al-Riḥānī’s “desire and ability to study a thought, to lay bare specific phenomena and subject them to rigorous analysis; to break them down into elementary components” (*The Sieve* 463) to be outstanding writing qualities, that were different from the old-fashioned abstract topics, unnecessary decorations and exercises in meters. Naimy characterized al-Riḥānī’s as the new type of writer who possessed “a clear thought and iron logic” (AP 198).

One of the most important of Belinskiĭ’s critical principles was that literature needed to reflect modern realities and actively respond to the needs of the times, since those who live during an era of struggle and collision of ideas and opinions, understand their direct connection with art.

Belinskiĭ insisted that the modern men of letters had to paint a critical picture of contemporary Russian realities, paying particular attention to their negative sides. He saw as invalid the mere imitation of life in its external manifestations, and the slavish copying of random features.

Naimy held a similar position. He sharply criticized formalism and the tendency to distance both reader and critic from modern realities in literature. Imanquliyeva observed that sometimes the Lebanese critic accused all the Arab poets of blindly following the old system and

paying too much attention to the theoretical side of *arud* instead of content. Meanwhile young Naimy randomly picked up some literary work from the old Arabic literary heritage that he knew much less than he thought. As a result, he wrote:

Have you heard of a man whose name was Abū 'abd al-Rahmān al-Khalīl ben al-Baṣriī al-Farāhīdī? ... [He died long ago, but we still emerged into] a host of concepts, such as applications and add-ons, defective and broken words, syllabi and syllabic transitions, omissions and gaps and breaches, reductions and other things (*al-ihāf*), so “poetry converted into a job, and a poet into an acrobat” (*The Sieve* 419).

In Belinskiī's opinion, art was not just a tool for discovering the world's beauty, but first of all it needed to play an important social role. In his work “Rech' o kritike” [“A Speech on Criticism ”] (1842) he wrote:

[ Criticism]...is also a social organ... and it carries pieces of art to people's hearts. This mission is high and glorified. The most powerful forces that are the art and the community spirit are based upon [the criticism's] wisdom and rightness. One [of these forces] entrusts it its glory...the other one confides to it its honor and its feelings' of dignity....  
[The criticism] through its analysis distinguishes some shortcomings [that naturally occur] as the result [of each epoch's development]. It does not unsparingly punish writers who honestly served the art in the spirit of their time, for that they did not stop the stroke of fate and did not base their actions on their ideas that did not exist [at their time]. [The critics] pay everyone what they he deserves...

It is quite possible that Naimy was inspired by Belinskiī's example when the former analyzed the literary works of the Arab men of letters. He paid special attention to their response to the modern social realities in addition to the forms of their writing. For example, in his analysis of Shawqī's “al-Durah al-shawqiyah” [“Shawqī's Mother of Pearl”] (*The Sieve* 448-455), Naimy, skillfully employs wit, eloquence and passion, comparing mother-of-pearl, the topic of Shawqī's poem, to its content. Naimy wrote that the poem reminded him of an inlaid shell rather than mother-of-pearl because of its artificial decorations, old-fashioned pathos, and the absence of “the pulse of modern life” (*The Sieve* 196).

In addition to the previous ideas, Belinskiĭ was the one of the developers of populism (*narodnost'*) in the arts. *Narodnost'* is an aesthetic principle suggesting the connection between art and people, specifically how art is a condition of life, its struggle, its ideas, as well as people's feelings and aspirations, and the expression of their ideals, interests and psychology (Polevoĭ). As Belinskiĭ wrote in "O russkoĭ povesti i povestiakh Gogolia" ["On the Russian Novel and the Gogol's Novels"], if life is depicted correctly, then this depiction matches this principle. Decades before the revolution, *narodnost'* was exemplified in literary portraits of the persistent inequities of Russian rural life.

Belinskiĭ's works advocated for the working and exploited people and depicted their sufferings in their struggle against the landlords and government oppression. He argued forcefully against the prevailing idea that the common people's rudeness was the result of their lack of development. He asserted that there is more poetry in a genius *muzhik* [peasant] than in a moronic nobleman, and in fact, if this peasant had been educated, then he would have become more of a genius ("Obshchaia ideia narodnoi poezii" ["The Main Idea of People's Poetry"]) (1841). In this article he reflected the ideas of writers from Turgenev to Tolstoĭ who tended to idealize the spiritual world of the peasant perhaps out of gentry guilt at the inequities and abuses that serfdom had brought with it. Though, from another side, the power of the revolutionary-democratic literature was exactly in its organic unity with the description of people's life and their perspective of it.

As for Naimy, it is possible to notice his adherence to the principles of *narodnost'*, the reflection of true reality and expression of historicism in his introductory article to his play Fathers and Sons (*The Sieve* 359-364), the title for which he took from Turgenev's novel, as it

was mentioned earlier. The Lebanese man of letters speaks about the language of the common people in theater performances. He points out that:

Under the rough shell of the language the nation's philosophy is hidden, [as well as] his experience, wisdom and faith. And if all of this is expressed in [*al-fushā*], it may sound like a bad translation from a foreign language. A writer who makes an illiterate fellah speak the language of poetry of divans<sup>19</sup> insults a fellah, and [also] himself, and his readers and listeners. Moreover, his characters look ridiculous if not comic (*The Sieve* 362, 363).

Such judgments demonstrate Naimy's ignorance of Arabic playwriting, as, in fact, the practical solutions to Arabic diglossia existed there, especially in Egyptian plays. We explain Naimy's absence of awareness of this fact by the specific of Naimy's childhood spent in a poor distant village, and then his moving to Poltava at the age of 16. There he immediately immersed into cultural life without studying his native one and, naturally, he was shocked.

Naimy shared Belinskī's concern that the absence of real life situations in performances eliminated an important component from the presentation and thus distorted the spectators' impressions of real life. He noted:

Literature is based on life, and life is based on literature. And...the most precious literature is as broad as life, [and it] has its deep secrets as [life] has, [life] is reflected in literature, as [literature] is reflected in [life] (*The Sieve* 359, 360).

A world of true beauty in arts against which Belinskī and Naimy, following his example, were fighting made them critical of philosophical minds that constantly sought the human's place in the world and a human's soul. Vasilī Zen'kovskī thought (254) that the main reason why literature attracted Belinskī from his childhood was not so much its artistry, but its humanism and its attention to a person's inner life and destiny. The same thing came to be said about Naimy, who, as was mentioned above, had a predisposition to philosophy from his early years.

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<sup>19</sup> *Divan* is a collection of poems.



In his “Literaturnye mechtaniâ” [“Literary Dreams”] (1834), Belinskiĭ rethought Schelling’s natural philosophy principles. The Russian critic emphasized the inner world of a person paying special attention to “the eternal idea of [a person’s] moral life” (Zenkovskiĭ 255), and the struggle between good and evil that filled the life of an individual and all of humanity. The essay is full of aesthetic humanism, pathos and an inspired call for the good and for creative work:

The whole infinite, perfect God's world is nothing other than a single breath of an eternal *idea* (God’s single [and] eternal thought), which is manifested in countless forms, as a grand spectacle of the absolute unity in infinite variety. Only a burning sense of a mortal person can comprehend, in his enlightened moments, how great is this *body* of this soul of the universe... God created a *human* and gave him mind and feeling, [and let a human] realize this very idea by his intelligence and knowledge, and join [this idea]... in his living and warm sympathy, and share its life in his...sense of an infinite...love! ... Renounce yourself, suppress your selfishness, step on your mercenary “me”, breathe for others’ happiness, sacrifice everything for the good of someone nearby you, for the Motherland, for the good of humanity, love the Truth and the Good not for a reward, but for the Truth and the Goodness, and suffer [hard]... for your connection with God, your immortality, which must be in your destruction of your “Me”, and in the sense of a boundless bliss! (44,45).

For a while Belinskiĭ was fascinated by Hegel’s philosophy, but later, when he felt that it did not contain an accurate enough assessment of the individual, he started to follow the aesthetic ideology of humanism that he incorporated into his study ( BRLC 14; Zen’kovskiĭ 254, 255). It considered a human to be the highest creation of Nature, a notion that prevailed in Russian secularism starting from Belinskiĭ’s times. Increasingly, he turned to the question of the metaphysical justification of individualism, which was the driving force of the Russian thought of the nineteenth century. He wrote:

Even if I could have climbed to the highest rung of [a society] development ladder, [then] even from it I should have asked you to give me the report of all the fates of real life and the history of individuals... (“Pis’mo k Botkinu” [“A Letter to Botkin”] from March 1, 1841).

These ideas led Belinskiĭ to socialist utopianism with its idea of the liberation of an individual from the tyranny of the present system (Zen'kovskiĭ 256). Fighting for people's freedom and happiness gradually became the chief mission of the new literature. Belinskiĭ, Herzen, Nikolaĭ Chernyshevskiĭ and Nikolaĭ Dobroliūbov developed the critical realism's base in their works that not only forged a link between the two generations of nineteenth-century Russian writers, but immediately initiated the development of the revolutionary-democratic ideas in Russia (BRLC).

There is no more noble and high subject for arts in the world than a human... Where life is, there is poetry, but life is just where the idea is - and catch life's pulse, then capture the invisible, and the fragrant air ideas. There are no more noble and lofty subjects in art than a human, and in order to be eligible for art images, a person needs to be a human ("The Main Idea of People's Poetry").

We think that Naimy occupied the same position under the direct influence of Belinskiĭ, and we share Fanous's opinion that by the time he wrote *The Sieve*, Naimy had read the Western philosophical sources in detail as he claimed in his collection of critical articles. He considered a person's inner world to form the basis of his art and the main source of inspiration. A human's feelings, thoughts, his life, his struggles, the social structure, and the reclamation of Nature's forces – all of these components laid the base for literary works (AP 185,186).

Naimy pointed out in his "Miḥwār al-'adab" ["The Literature of the Axe"] (354-358), that a human was:

the most skillful creature and the most mystical one. He does not know where he is coming from and he does not know where he is going. This world had existed for a long time, and [a human] is blinded by what he sees and the beauty of what he hears... so only a person can be a literature king, who will search in the deep corners of his soul. And only a writer, who will discover the world through searching within, is honored. ... Literature, if it is literature, is nothing but a messenger between a writer's and someone else's souls. And a writer who deserves being called a writer is the one who sends out this message from his heart... (354).

For both Belinskiĭ and Naimy, literature was primarily a mirror in which society could, for the first time, see its own reflection. Any aesthetic manipulations made in the service of inherited traditions or in the name of novelty or creativity distorted that reflexivity and destroyed its utility.

In addition to serving as a reflective surface necessary for society to critically analyze itself, both Naimy and the Russian critics thought that literary writings played an important - almost therapeutic - role in an individual human's life. Belinskiĭ called literature "the real life truth" in "Gore ot uma" ["Woe from Wit"] (1 266). In his "Soĉineniia Derzhavina" ["Derzhavin's Works"], he states that this gave "a disembodied idea a sensual life and a wonderful image" (2 16) and expressed a subjective human side that made visible the sensibilities, feelings, and musicality that lay inside a person" (1 266).

In what was clearly a reflection of Belinskiĭ's philosophy, Naimy in his article "al-Maqāṭis al-'adabiyah" ["Literature Scales"] (287-294) defined several goals Arabic literature was facing at that time. First and foremost he saw literature as reflecting a human need in life (378), and that it could serve as a light to guide people in all life situations. The second aim of modern literature was to disclose human inspirations and influences, such as "anticipation, despair, victory, failure, belief and doubt, love and hate, fear and satisfaction" (391).

Belinskiĭ and Naimy both used their literary works as a platform for working out a number of other literary criteria, namely the role of music in fulfilling the human need for beauty. Already in "The Literary Dreams," one of Belinskiĭ's earliest works that was first published in 1834 when he was only 23 years old, the Russian critic pointed out that literature's mission was "to represent, reproduce [Nature's idea] in a word, in a sound, in the features and

colors as a united and eternal art theme” ( 1 47). In his theater criticism Belinskiĭ’ called theater “a true temple of art” in his “The Literary Dreams” (1 93). However, for him it was literature and poetry that he saw as universals. They

...expressed in a free human word [with]...sound and picture [in it]. Therefore poetry contains all the elements of the other arts, as if it ...is enjoying all the facilities that are given separately to each of the other arts, [a lyrical poetry can be compared to music, as it is] a subjective poetry, an internal [one], the expression of the poet... [moreover] there are even lyrical works, which almost destroyed the boundaries between the poetry of the music... [A thought in a lyrical poetry is] "hidden behind the sensation and leads you to a contemplation, which is hard to translate into clear and specific language of consciousness...(1 47).

As for Naimy, he included following in his list of modern literature’s tasks:

...We need beauty in everything. The spirit thirsts for... [needs] only beauty... Our tastes argue about what we can call beautiful and what can be called ugly. We cannot deny that there is absolute beauty in this life, and in that our tastes do not differ..

...Our need in music. A soul has a surprising tendency towards sounds and melodies... It starts with the reverberation of thunder with water gurgling, with leaves rustling, but the dissonant sounds [make him uncomfortable] (390, 391).

In addition to the need for beauty, both writers concurred on the importance of literary language.

Naimy considered language development inseparable from the historical development of the society that spoke it. Moreover, change in language is inevitable. He sharply criticized the old Arabic language amateurs, calling them croaking literary frogs in his article “Naqīq al-ḍafādi” [“Frogs’ Croaking”] (406-418). Without denying its beauty, Naimy mocked the numerous flashy modern men of letters who were trying to fit the old Arabic vocabulary and literary forms into their literary works, ignoring their real feelings and the depth of their thoughts (Imanquliyeva 190). Naimy called on modern writers and poets to work on their literary language to achieve brevity and sharpness (412).

## Historicism

Already in his first article “Literary Dreams,” and considered to be the first work of classical Russian literary criticism (Kuleshov 142), Belinskiĭ passionately advanced the notion that the leading role of the critical writer is the fruit of the nation’s feelings and aspirations. He also pointed out that a critics’ study of literary works was closely tied to their historical epoch. This was as crucial to him as the aesthetic side of a literary work. Historicism for Belinskiĭ must prevail over the other aspects of stylistic analysis. He considered that the new criticism’s challenge consisted in reconciling “the freedom of creativity with the spirit of service to the historic time, with the service of truth” (“A Speech on Criticism”).

Mashinskiĭ considered the principle of historicism to be Belinskiĭ’s most important theoretical achievement, one that ultimately informed his esthetic views. As Mashinskiĭ wrote, Belinskiĭ’s turn to this topic was natural for that time, as in the second half of the 1830s, Russian intellectuals aimed to reveal the internal connection between the past and the present, fascinated as they were by the philosophy of history and the apparent regularities and patterns of historical development. Belinskiĭ noted in his critical article devoted to Friedrich Lorenz’s *The Guide to World History*: “Our age is for the most part an historic [one]. The historical contemplation [that was] powerful and compelling penetrated into all spheres of modern consciousness” (cit. in Mashinskiĭ).

Historicism became a principle of the academic study of both the world and art. Belinskiĭ wrote the following in his article “Ideĭa iskusstva” [“The Idea of Art”]:

...from the first awakening of [the first] forces and life elements, from the first movement of a substance through the whole [ladder]... which developed through the creation of Nature to its top –a human, from the first connection of humans [in the society] to the last historical... [developments] of our times...[This chain of development does not interrupt anywhere, [it is] a

unified ladder from the Earth to the Heavens, where you cannot go up to a higher step without leaning to [the step that is] below it! In Nature and in history it is not blind chance that is dominating, but a strict, immutable inner necessity, because of which all the phenomena are related to each other by ties of kinship...

In his other article, "A Speech on Criticism," Belinskiĭ noted that each piece of art must be studied in its relationship to historical modernity, in an artist's attitude to the society [together] with the study of an artist's life...etc, that may help understanding its history

Naimy's approach as pointed out by Imanquliyeva (AP 199-202) incorporated a similar view of history. In his analysis of the two collections of Jibran's works in his critical article "al-Sābiq" ["The Previous"] (467-472). Naimy studied his friend's works in their historical development. Jibran used the form of parables and fables, trying to convey to people's minds his study about the constant world development (AP 200). Naimy followed in Jibran's footsteps. He stated:

All of us are precursors for ourselves. And our today's life will become our base when tomorrow will come. And our today's life comes from our yesterday's one... the life that comes after it will play its...role in the other life. This process will never stop. We sow [a grain] of the previous crops...then we collect the crops for sowing it for the life that will come after (471-472).

Naimy meant by this statement that all what we do today is the result of our yesterday's deeds and that our tomorrow comes out from today.

In the conclusion to "The Previous," although Naimy's interest in the passage of time lacks the specificity of Belinskiĭ's, so much so that its engagement with parables and fables might be called ahistorical, nevertheless Naimy shared a broad interest in the nature of change and continuity that forms a backdrop for his social critique.

Art for art's sake

Another common direction in Belinskiĭ's and Naimy's literary criticism was an aggressive campaign against "arts for art's sake." The "Natural school's social topics represented by Belinskiĭ were aimed at a broad circle of readers, revealing the life truth, following the philosophy of Social Criticism and Realism fighting against artificial beauty and Romantic rhetoric (Friche 621). As Georgiĭ Plekhanov (1856-1918), the active leader of the international Marxist movement and philosopher noted, "the tendency of artists and people who are interested [just] in art [itself] occurs on the basis of their hopeless dissonance with the social strata that surrounds them" (5 698, cit. in Skvoznikov 194). Belinskiĭ aggressively fought against "arts for art's sake," writing in "A View of Russian Literature" that

if we totally recognize that art must be first of all an art, we nevertheless think that the idea in the arts of something pure, vying in its own sphere ... is an abstract [and] dreamy idea. Such an art has never existed anywhere. It does not matter ... into what fractions you will divide life, it is still [a one whole thing]" (2 667).

As for Naimy's resistance to "art for art's sake" in literature, he wanted to view the poet as a prophet, but not as an acrobat, just as he wanted to find inspiration in poetry, but not a gamesmanship, as was noted by al-'Aqqād in his introduction to Naimy's "The Sieve" (342). The other example of Naimy's fight against "art for art's sake" can be found in his "The Fireflies", where he sharply criticized traditional Arabic poetry for its formal approach expressed in their artificial decorations, exaggerated emotions and bloated pathos instead of life and human thoughts and feelings. (Nijland 84). Naimy sought in his article "al-Shāĭr wa-al-shu'arā" ["A Poet and Poets"] (395-405) to clarify whether poetry was only people's fantasies or whether it was a drawing out of what existed in the real life. He came to a conclusion that

... All [what the poet brings up] is neither lethargy nor a fantasy. It is a perceptible reality... Poet's fantasies are a reality. A poet who deserves this title does not write and describe what his soul's eyes do not see, and what is not ripen by his heart so it becomes a reality, even if

his eyes do not see it. This does not mean that he can call black by white, and red by yellow. This will mean he will deprive the real things of their existing qualities and endow them with the non-real characteristics...This is the difference between “a poet” and “feelings.” A poet does not write about anything that his real senses did not experience or about something that did not touch his soul. His tongue speaks of his heart preference. As for a versifier, he tries to convince us that he had a dream that, we realize, did not really happen to him in his head, neither in his dream, nor in his waking life. He describes us the feelings that neither a human, nor a jinni, nor angels ever felt since the beginning of this world and till now (400).

The real/unreal criteria were one of the main ways Naimy sought to evaluate literary works in his fight for Realism in the arts. He consistently pointed to the truth to life as the main idea in literature. In speaking about the process of the creation of a literary work, Naimy pointed out that

those writers did not create anything like a hill, or a wood, or a sea. But they saw these things and felt them. Then they compared, evaluated, threw too much, picked up the necessary [things], lifted [them] up, threw the extra things, then framed up all your choice in a certain way, and got the picture created by your imagination. [They]...did not change the reality, [they]...did not create anything, but [they]...have actually taken the objects and phenomena that exist in real life, have dropped extra [things], added the missing [ones], and put everything in the way that pleased [their]...soul (400).

After long discussions on what modern literature was, Belinskiĭ developed in his “A Speech on Criticism” an idea of a literary scale, so different critical points must emerge from one united system (1 638). His main criterion was a work of art’s response to the needs of the times. He noted in “Stikhi Lermontova” [“Verses by Lermontov”] that “In our time [the same] poetry like it was with the ancient poets is hardly possible” (1 431). The modern writer needed to get rid of art for art’s sake and reflect social consciousness, so that different critical points can emerge from one united system (1 638).

Naimy expressed the same concern about improving the literary scale. He wrote:



We do not need a stable literary scale. We have it. [We] need to improve the usage of this scale, especially now, as we are now [passing] through the transformation stage. We are in need of writers and poets measuring out what they are composing and writing using this scale. For they [could] move ahead and our literature could move with them in the right way. And in need of critics who distinguish between wretched poetry and the mature ones. So they will not call shells pearls and [name] the lighting bugs stars (394).

Under the influence of German philosophy Belinskiĭ changed the common abstract metaphysical ideas that a human was a subject, and his sphere of activities was submitted to his mind (BRLC 11, 14). He wrote in connection with this in “Proizvedeniĭa Pushkina, stat’ia 5” [“Alexander Pushkin’s Works, Article 5”]:

... poetry is the fruit of the mighty thoughts that took over the poet. If we assume that this thought is only the result of the activities of his mind, we would kill not only art, but also the very possibility of art. In fact it would [be easy] to become a poet, and who would not have been able to [to become a poet] of necessity, for the benefit of or on a whim, if this had only come up with some idea and to force it into an invented form? No, not that it is performed by poets by [their] nature and vocation! ...Art does not allow... abstract philosophical, [and even] much less rational ideas: it allows only poetic ideas, and a poetic idea... is not a syllogism, not a dogma, not a rule, [but] a living passion, a [life reality] pathos” (323).

Thus, Belinskiĭ pointed to the fact that the relationship between the subject (an artist) and an object (that which is depicted by an artist) is closely interrelated. It is not only the subject that affects the object, but it is also an object that impacts the subject.

Similarly, Naimy in *The Sieve* positions a person’s inner world and human dignity above all other world values, together with common sense, justice and obedience to the law of human emotions (hope, despair, triumph, fear, crash, belief, doubt, love, hate, joy, pain, sadness, happiness, fear and courage) (287). The artistic value of a work, according to him, depend[ed] on how well it “satisfies [a human need] to correctly navigate through life” (AP 186). Naimy called it “the light of truth” of literature that it carried within itself (AP 187).

While deeply committed to literature's social and historical function, the two critics spared no effort in defending the literariness of a work of art. Specifically both acknowledged that the unity of form and content were necessary.

Belinskiĭ in "Stikhi Derzhavina" ["Verses by Derzhavin"] was convinced that the organic unity of form and content was the main condition for its harmony (1 17). It could exist only when the form was an expression of the content. He wrote elsewhere in "The Main Idea of People's Poetry":

...neither a form without content, nor content without a form can exist, and if so, in the first case... [they will look like] an empty vessel [that looks] strange and ridiculous, and in the second case...[they will look] as a mirage, which is visible to all, but at the same time they are considered to be non-existent objects. It is obvious only that a literature is really popular [*narodnaia*], which, at the same time, is a common human's literature, and only this kind of literature [is] truly human, which at the same time is also popular [*narodna*]. [Neither any of these two components can exist without a second one]... If in an artwork a form prevails over the idea - it means that the idea is not quite definite and clear for... [its author], and so the form can be... beautiful, and the art product can even be ugly...

Naimy came of age at the time when the first Arabic literary critics began to consider a literary work to be in organic unity with life, and judged the importance and depth of a literary work according to the unity it manifested between form and the literary language.

In "The Fireflies", where he compared Western and Arabic literatures, Naimy criticized traditional Arabic poetry for its passion for forms and stagnant themes, such as missing an abandoned place, or glorifying the poet's tribe, or description of a battle. This approach on the part of Arab authors made their writings mere exercises in rhymes than literary works. Naimy lamented this tendency in *The Sieve*, writing:

while the West [has] plunged deep into the human heart and lifted it up with the higher strata of truth and dazzling light, Arab writers still live and die to sing the praise of glittering swords, of desert camels and deer and of "traces of departed lovers." Indeed their minds compose rhymes of a Patriarch, or a Pasha, or congratulate a friend on a medal, elegize a dead notable or eulogize a new-appointed one (48-50, cited in NNI 132).

## Critic's Aim

The title of Naimy's collection of critical works, *The Sieve*, has symbolic meaning. There had to be a shift in modern literature. It had to throw away the numerous pieces of writings of low taste, esthetic, social and historic value and leave the best that could be termed real literature. It was the critics' job to do this. Both Naimy and Belinskiĭ saw it as one of the main challenges of their respective literatures to create a literary "sieve" for modern literature. Belinskiĭ in "On the Russian Novel and Gogol's Novels" said that critics needed to decide whether a piece of literary writing was a real work of art, whether it was elegant, and whether an author was a real poet (1 144). For his part Naimy opens his collection of critical works with the article "al-Gharbalaḥ" ["Sifting"] (348-353) in which he pointed to the critic's mission of sifting, i.e. "...sorting out what people produce: their thoughts, feelings and preferences - all that comprises what we use to term a work as belong to 'a literature'" (347).

What then are the qualities that a critic must have in order to do literary analysis? In his article "A Speech on Criticism," Belinskiĭ pointed out that a critic must first and foremost possess a feel for aesthetic qualities. Without aesthetic analysis of a literary work, its value would be meaningless and absurd even if it did address society's most burning issues. A critic said Belinskiĭ must also have "more love of the arts and more respect for himself."

In his other article, "Stikhotvoreniĭa Vladimira Benediktova SPb 1842" ["Benediktov's Poems, St. Petersburg 1842"], Belinskiĭ defined aesthetics as expressing a delicate, poetic feeling as well as the ability to accept elegance, and to distinguish real from false inspiration at first glance, separating out fancy rhetorical expressions from a real writer's feelings, and stagnant and artificial writing from the aesthetic side of life. Thus, a critic's assessment of a work of art must be based on authoritative aesthetic ideas, as well as his own inner poetic flair and ability to

perceive what is elegant. Only when a critic has these qualities do other qualities such as extensive learning and a high level of education become meaningful and important. Aesthetic taste for Belinskiĭ is impossible to acquire; it is something one comes by naturally<sup>17</sup>.

Naimy thought that a critic through his analysis of a poet's works could change a poet's talent for the better. A poet must be brought up by the critics to the idea that not only do prosody and language determine poetic language, but the poet's thoughts and feelings do as well (Nijland 92).

The critic's mission for both of these men was ultimately that of an enlightener, one who would develop the reader's taste by separating the ore from the rock as Naimy noted (349).

Belinskiĭ for his part angrily rejected literary idolatry in his "Literary Dreams," claiming that in Russia where reverence for authorities was still common, there was a tendency among critics to glorify celebrity out of fear of saying anything negative about the person in question: "Where is criticism, whose goal is a formulation of taste, where is the truth that must be higher than all the authorities?" (1 57).

Belinskiĭ in his "A Speech on Criticism" fought against critics' manipulation in turning making mediocre men of letters into geniuses:

It is easy and funny for [this kind of a critic], he voluntarily bestows and demotes them, and they are trembling, write according to his orders... and there is no end to novels, stories and dramas... The crowd loves these geniuses with whom it can be too familiar; they are great, famous and glorious, and at the same time they cannot offend [it] by their excellence...

Ironically, this idea was to become more widespread than he recognized at the time. A century later in the Soviet era many mediocre writers and critics used his ideas as their model in seeking acceptance from the official literary establishment. Belinskiĭ was referred to as a great patriot, a fighter against predomination of esthetism predomination in Russian art over its

ideological content, and as a leading figure in the founding of Russian realism by the official Soviet government. His name was used for many Soviet ideological art campaigns. Specifically, it happened during Stalin repressions against theater critics in 1949 that was the first part of the anti-Semitic campaign<sup>20</sup>.

Naimy also sadly noted that since most Arabic works of art were published in newspapers and magazines, these editions determine their literary scale by trying to pique the interest of their subscribers and financial supporters. That is why they proclaim any single poet who published his verses in the media, as a “genius,” or “a distinguished writer”, or “a liberator”, and every single work was promulgated as “a rare pearl” (*The Sieve* 393). He was also concerned that the extraneous sentimentalism in literary works was useless and spoiled the reading audience’s tastes (Imanquliyeva 197). Though, as Naimy remarked in *The Sieve*,

...if we would measure [this writer or poet] according to the scale of well-established literary principles, then we would discover that this person does not do anything except make sounds [*al-rannah*]. And if there was any beauty [in his literary work], [then] there is no emotion. And if there is an emotion, there is no beauty and the truth. And if there was a truth there, it was trivial or distorted [. . .] looking at things from the point of their beauty and truthfulness requires hours of preparation on which a critic expends much spiritual effort and analysis. If a writer manages to correlate these two things, then the critic supports him loyally and enthusiastically (356, 393).

#### Role of the Writer

Both Belinskiĭ and Naimy considered a writer to be a prophet, reflecting both the people’s needs and the current epoch. Belinskiĭ wrote in “Verses by Lermontov” that

art does not emerge from a crowd, but from several people, the selected ones it comes out to a crowd... Poet – is the noblest vessel of a spirit, the Heavens ‘chosen favorite, the secrets of the

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<sup>20</sup> The editorial article “Ob odnoĭ antipartiĭnoĭ gruppe teatral’nyh kritikov” [“About One Oppositional to Party Group of Theater Critics”] published in Jan, 28, 1949, in “Pravda”, the central newspaper of the Soviet communist party, illustrates using Belinskiĭ’s views as an example of the high Soviet arts criteria. (<http://ihst.ru/projects/sohist/books/cosmopolit/100.htm>, Web. May, 5, 2014).

Nature keeper, an Aeolian harp of feelings and sensations, the body of worldly life ... everything that lives in this world and the world he lives ... [echo] in his breast... A poet's [nature] is sensitive, irritable, always active... suffering more painfully than others, taking greater pleasure, loving more passionately hating more violently, and feeling things more deeply ... When he is writing - he is a king, the lord of the universe, the trustee ...of the Nature, who looks into the mysteries of heaven and earth, nature and the human spirit ... (1: 403, 406, 407)...

As for Naimy in “al-Zihāfāt wa-al-‘ilal” [“Substitutions and Inversions”], he expressed a very similar view. He considered that the process of literary creation first originates in the human soul and after “an incubational period [that] precedes the actual poetic creation” (Nijland 87).

As for the poet, Naimy in *The Sieve* considered him to be also a prophet, a philosopher, a musician, a photographer and a priest at the same time (NNI 128). The real man of letters, according to Naimy, is the one who “sees through his heart’s eyes what everyone cannot see, who derives for us from every scene life offers a rewarding lesson, and who, more than others, nature has endowed with a gift of detecting truth” (44, 45, cited in NNI 128).

According to Nijland, “Naimy stressed the function of poetry as a receptacle and vehicle of meaning” and as a mediator between a poet’s and someone else’s souls (90). It is possible to notice the resemblance between Naimy and Belinskiĭ in their eloquent descriptions and ideas of the poet’s personality. The Lebanese critic in “Frog’s Croaking” beautifully and vividly describes an image of a lyrist as a person who

...is] stretching out his hidden fingers of his inspiration to the covering of your hearts and thoughts to lift up an edge of them, and to turn your glances to what lies folded up underneath so that you will see feelings and stumble over thoughts. At first you will reckon them to be thoughts and feelings of the poet. They are in reality your feelings and thoughts which the poet did not invent, create or wake up. He only lifted up a tip of the veil and directed all your glances towards them (102, cited in Nijland 91)...

He also develops the point in *The Sieve*:

A poet is a prophet, philosopher, a painter, a musician and a vicar. He is a prophet, because he sees with his spiritual eye what all the people do not see; a painter- as he is able to catch and embody in the beautiful forms what he sees and hears; he is a musician because he hears the

balanced sounds while we do not hear anything except for roar and squawk... And finally- a poet is a vicar because he serves the Lords of the truth and the beauty [. . .] A poet, and what we mean [by this term] is not “a [poetry] arranger” does not take a pen in his hand until he is pushed by an inner motive power, and there is no any other force above it [for a poet]. He is a slave to this process.. From another side he is an absolute ruler at the time when he is sitting carving out his feelings. His thoughts are the sounds and rhymes’ monuments, as he chooses from them what he wants (400, 401, 403)...

## Conclusion

Naimy introduced into Arabic criticism the ideas of Russian Critical realism discussed above. He enriched modern Arabic literary criticism that was just emerging with Russian philosophical and critical thought that brought with it “that boundless love of the truth, which knows no barriers and pretensions” (Lavretskiĭ, Gusev 1: 508). Naimy tried to introduce a new criticism whose quality would be based on the high artistic principles of the most progressive literary currents of the early twentieth century. His creative writings under Belinskiĭ’s influence can be characterized by many of the same traits that we can apply to Russia’s “creative genius”: they “united the social pathos and philosophical thought, aesthetic feeling and literary talent, the gift of scientific generalization and poetic fantasy” (Lavretskiĭ, Gusev 1: 508). In Belinskiĭ’s footsteps, Naimy was fighting for the ideological content of literary works and for making literature both democratic and accessible to a broad range of readers.

## *Chapter Four*

### *Tolstoī's Anticlerical Writings' Impact on Naimy's World Vision*

While staying in Poltava, Naimy was able to witness lively debates in 1908 when Tolstoī turned 80 years old. Part of Russian society demanded the magnificent celebration of this important event, but there were people who tried to ignore it, as after his excommunication from the church in 1901 he attracted many opponents despite his fame as an outstanding writer and international recognition of his talent.

Tolstoī never regretted his radical disagreements with the church that were extremely serious and had lasted for decades until the Holy Synod was forced to excommunicate him as an extreme measure. The resolution of the Russian Orthodox Church remains standing to this day, since the Tolstoyan position was quite radical. The Russian writer did not accept blind belief and rejected several basic church dogmas, as can be seen in his reply to the Holy Synod decision (1901):

[I consider my renouncement] from the church that calls itself Orthodox, to be right. But I renounced it, not because I have rebelled against the Lord... rather, I did so because I wished to serve him. Before [my] renunciation of the church...I devoted several years to exploring [its] theoretical and practical teachings... And I came to believe that the church doctrine is a theoretically insidious and harmful lie and a... collection of the grossest superstitions and sorcery [that] completely hide the essence of the Christian doctrine.

I reject all the sacraments... [and] consider [them] to be... rude and inappropriate to the notion of God and Christian. They are witchcraft and... a violation of the most direct Gospel teachings.

[But] blasphemy is not in calling ... a partition a partition, instead of calling it an iconostasis.... The blasphemy [is] when people, using all possible means of deception and hypnosis, assure children and simple-minded people that if [someone] cuts [bread] in a special way, and while pronouncing special words, [and arranging pieces of bread in wine, then the Lord... will enter] these things....This is awful! (Tolstoī 16: 543-547).



Naimy certainly would have been aware of this deep conflict between the influential Orthodox Church and Tolstoī, who by that time had become a cult personality in Russia.

The young seminarian's disillusionment with the traditional church doctrines was growing with each year that he spent studying in seminary. At the same time he was rapidly discovering great Russian literature that, probably, remained his favorite till his last days. In his diary Naimy described his observations of the divided reaction of Russian society to Tolstoī's 80<sup>th</sup> birthday in his diary. With bitterness and perplexity he exclaimed on its pages: "It is a shame that there are people in Russia who try to put off the torch that is shining now in all countries around the world!" (Sab 1 214).

Several years later after Tolstoī's anniversary, when Naimy was still living in Poltava, another important and sad event took place. Tolstoī's death shook the entire world. Naimy described the ill-fated day in his diary when he learned about Tolstoī's sudden passing away in November 1910. The young seminarian was walking down a street in Poltava and heard the voice of a street newspaper young vendor who was declaring the breaking news of Tolstoī's death. Naimy snatched out the issue with this article from the boy's hands and read the details of what had happened. Immediately Naimy heard rumors from the crowd gathered in the street about that the great Russian thinker had died on his way to the monastery where he intended to isolate himself from everybody and everything and to think of the fight against his nature and the cruel and unjust world. Though Naimy considered Tolstoī's decision to be too late to achieve the great Russian philosopher's goal, he could not keep himself from admiring Tolstoī's last step. Naimy returned home sad, frustrated and depressed. For several days he remained in isolation, crashed by Tolstoī's death. He was thinking of the development of a person's fight against the world, where it might lead and how it can end up (Sab 1 270, 271).

Before starting the comparative analysis between Naimy's and Tolstoī's creative writing, we would like to provide some brief background about the great Russian writer's philosophical and religious views, as they were formed under the influence of numerous developments that took place during his long and unusual life. He experienced several moral crises during his life, and each time they radically changed his worldview and writings.

Boris Eikhenbaum, the Soviet scholar of the history of Russian literature, performed a detailed analysis of the young Tolstoī's letters and diaries in his work, *The Young Tolstoī* (1922). It is interesting that almost from the very first pages of his diary the nineteen-year-old Russian writer we are reminded of what Naimy wrote at the same age. The young Tolstoī, like the young Naimy, was living in big cities, though the Russian writer enjoyed the lifestyle of high society, which was full of amusements and temptations that we would regret several decades later. He wrote:

Cut a man off from society, let him achieve self-realization – and as soon as reason removes the glasses that showed him things in a false light, and his vision clears, he will not even understand how he failed to see it before. Let reason function: it will point you the way to your destination and will give you rules that you can follow to go boldly into society (*Dnevnik molodogo Tolstogo* 5 in Eikhenbaum 9).

Tolstoī was also struggling to find the answer to the question about of how to transcend his observations of Nature and how people fit within it:

If I begin to reason with a view toward nature, I see that all within it is constantly developing and that each component part unconsciously facilitates the development of the other parts. Man himself is a part of nature, but endowed with consciousness; he ought then to strive, just as the other parts, constantly employing his spiritual [*dushevnyye*] faculties for the development of everything in existence (*Dnevnik molodogo Tolstogo* 31 in Eikhenbaum 10).

Tolstoī in his *Ispoved'* [*Confession*] (1879-80) recognizes that he stopped following the traditional Orthodox lifestyle when he was a teenager. He did not deny God and Christ, but he

could not formulate what specifically it included. He decided to live like most people lived by carrying on with life without relying on faith. Tolstoī bitterly described in *Confession* his “lust for power” that he led in his youth and the impact that it had on his writing: “At this time... vanity, greed and pride [were the main motivating factors that pushed me to write]...In order to earn fame and money... it was necessary to hide the good and to show the bad, and I did this...” (Tolstoī 23: 491).

In 1847, upon returning to Iasnaïa Poliana from life in the big cities, he took up his role as landowner with determination and attempted to become a real benefactor to the inhabitants of his village. We see this projected into Nekhlūdov, his protagonist from *Utro Pomeschchika* [*A Landlord's Morning*] (1856), who was attempting to do the same and failed like Tolstoī did. This story is the explanation of this failure. Tolstoī in *A Landlord's Morning* presents the bleak picture of Russia on the eve of the serf reform of 1862 that will be described in further detail in this chapter. This government action did not solve any problems, but only deepened them.

*A Landlord's Morning* opened a new page in Tolstoī's creative writings. From the description of the estate's harmony, which can be easily traced in his *Childhood, Boyhood, and Youth* (1852) and *Family Happiness* (1859), he turns to exposing social phenomena. With sympathy to peasants and pain from his awareness of powerlessness, Nekhlūdov faces such social issues as absence of peasants' trust in their landlords and his serfs' rapid material stratification.

It is already possible to see in *A Landlord's Morning* Tolstoī's special attention to this back-to-basis lifestyle that he extols as the right one. He opposes it to Nekhlūdov's Western European habits and his father's useless attempts to improve the situation on his estate by

implementing Western social and agrarian models. Tolstoī, though providing a description of village and villagers, concludes that it is only the common people's devotion to their ancestors' wisdom and traditions that make them strong and help them survive.

Tolstoī's early turn to the lifestyle of the common people occurred as a result of the beginning of his deep dissatisfaction with the realities of modern life. But, probably, it was still not related to the democratic trends of the second half the 1840s' about which we shall speak further in this chapter.

Tolstoī participated in the Crimean War. His war stories are considered to be radically different from the ones written before in the history of the world literature. While at the front, Tolstoī worked tirelessly not only on his writing skills, which were rapidly improving with each passing month. His desire to improve himself was no less important to him, and it grew under the influence of the common people with whom he was fighting side by side. He learned about the traditional wisdom of the native inhabitants of the Caucasus and the different ethnic groups from the Crimea. His numerous diaries and letters of this period are full of notes and reasoning of new ideas that he had learned as well as programs and drafts for self-perfection.

During the war, Tolstoī became deeply concerned with people's inequality at all levels – social, political and religious. In 1855 for the first time he mentioned in his diary that he would like to create a religion that would unite all people in the world. It must be Christ's religion, but purified of all mystery and promising Paradise in this life (Biriukov 136).

In 1856 he returned to St. Petersburg and continued the same old lifestyle full of all kinds of amusements. This life did not last long, as in 1857 he left for Europe for a year and a half. He came back disappointed and shocked by the terrible social contrasts between the gorgeous

European façade and the grinding poverty it concealed. At the same time, he was able to meet there such interesting people as Berthold Auerbach, who wrote about the life of the common people, a topic of interest for Tolstoī since his youth.

The Russian writer witnessed the failure of his government to improve the social situation in the country through the Emancipation of the Serfs that took place in 1861.<sup>21</sup> The situation brought the plight of the peasants to the attention of the intelligentsia who began to see in them a wisdom that was inaccessible to the higher classes. This position gradually led to the founding of populism. This ideological movement was already touched upon in the previous chapters. It deeply influenced Tolstoī. He moved to his estate and founded schools there based on his own conviction that the main task of schools was to raise pupils' interest in education. His experiment was successful; he began to write about his pedagogical ideas in numerous articles and even issued a special issue devoted to questions of education and the upbringing of young people.

Though the Russian writer and philosopher found an outlet in his project and was very inspired by it, he was confronted by a dilemma. In his *Confession* Tolstoī notices that he liked teaching at his schools, as he did not see the same type of lie there that was omnipresent in society. He was at one and the same time working for progress and yet against what it brought with it (Tolstoī 23: 492-493).

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<sup>21</sup> This reform amounted to the liquidation of serfdom among Russian peasants. However, in many ways the emancipation only worsened their situation. Serfs from private estates were given less land than they needed to survive which led them having to sell all their grain in order to pay their taxes. Consequently, they had nothing left on which to survive. Moreover, quite often, serfs were forced to rent their land from more wealthy landowners as the land had been distributed very unequally. Frequently the peasants had to work for their landowners in order to pay their "labor [*barshchina*] payments", and as a result did not have time to farm their own land. All these issues led to famine and social tension.

After he married seventeen-year-old Sofia Andreevna Berns in 1862, Tolstoī became inspired and felt as if he was reborn (Biriukov 281). *War and Peace* was written several years after his marriage which brought gave him peace and allowed him to harness his creative powers that replaced his anxiety and doubts about numerous issues. This period in the life of the hermit of Iasnaĭa Polĭana is also characterized by his extreme closeness to common people as a result of his activities at his schools, participation in *zemstvo* [local government] courts, carrying out his estate management and sharing in the hard work of his servants and peasants.

Tolstoī purposely chose the description of the one of the greatest wars for his novel *War and Peace*, since extreme conditions can bring social differences into sharp relief. The novel provided a great creative opportunity for him to mercilessly describe the vanity, emptiness and parasitism of the high society, and oppose it to the lifestyle and thoughts of the common people. This topic would remain a key one and, probably, the most painful for him for the rest of his life.

*War and Peace* also presents Tolstoī's still nascent thoughts about morality, death, happiness and closeness to God.

By the end of the 1870s Tolstoī entered a deep spiritual crisis. During its initial stage Tolstoī became zealously religious but did not find in religion what he was looking for and what was constantly tormenting him: the meaning of life, a resolution to his fear of death and answers to numerous spiritual and religious questions. The Russian writer was extremely upset with the modern way of life which he considered a consequence of spiritual depravity. In addition, he contemplated what meaning life could have given the inevitability of death

Tolstoī's crisis is reflected in his famous novel *Anna Karenina* (1873-1877). Here he showed how the representatives of the nobility, who live their lives without hard work, deep

thoughts and constant struggle. Tolstoī chose the Biblical quotation “Vengeance is mine, I will repay” as his novel’s epigraph, as it reflects his idea that transgressing moral boundaries will inevitably lead to a person’s end. Beautiful and brilliant Anna succumbs to a horrible death as a result of her idle life, and Vronskiī loses himself due to his immoral and shallow lifestyle.

Tolstoī, through his central character Levin, reflects on how one ought to live one’s life and what the values are that make life meaningful. Levin experiences many of Tolstoī’s own spiritual sufferings, among them - the death of a beloved brother and the tormenting thoughts of death as the inevitable end. In *Anna Karenina*, Tolstoī expresses the same idea that can be found in his other late works, namely that death and suffering represent the beginning of a new life. At the time when Levin’s brother Nikolaī dies, Kitty, Levin’s wife, gives birth. Karenin, who is totally lost and angry after he finds out that his wife is having an affair with another man, is reborn spiritually after unbearable sufferings and deep soul searching.

Levin’s search for a suitable lifestyle ultimately leads him back to the institution of the family and adopting the folkways and worldview of the common people. Here he departs from Tolstoī who after several decades became alienated from his wife over issues of money and sexual relations, the latter a result of his religious crisis.

In his later years Tolstoī turned to a simplified lifestyle (*oproshchenie*), hoping thereby to find the right way to live and an answer to his questions through the wisdom of the common people. He started wearing peasant clothing, walked barefoot, grew a long beard as a sign of his religiosity, and took on hard physical labor. Moreover, he became obsessed with the stubborn desire to bequeath all his money to the common people, a decision that encountered strong resistance from his family.

During the last period of his crisis, Tolstoī rethought traditional Orthodox Christianity. He rewrote the theological study of Macarius, the Orthodox Metropolitan of Moscow, which was used in Russian religious schools at that time. He purged it of all of its unclear arguments, ecclesiastical dogmas and concepts. Tolstoī accused traditional Orthodox Christianity of concentrating on redemption, instead of teaching people how to live as other religions do. Tolstoī's religious ideas included his denial of the institution of the Church as holy, his rejection of the apostolic roles of priests as mediators between God and humans, the Holy Trinity as pantheistic, the Immaculate Conception and the efficacy of sacraments that did not make sense to him. All these changes eliminated the mystical significance that Tolstoī so hated in the Christian church. Tolstoī also removed all terms from Orthodox writings that had not been clearly explained by priests in their religious debates.

Though Tolstoī did not have any philosophical or ecclesiastical education, he claimed that his study absorbed the best ideas from all the world's religions while still following Christ's doctrine purified of all that was esoteric. At the same time, before rewriting any Christian tracts, Tolstoī spent years looking for sources that could provide explanations and interpretations that would convince him. He had read theological treatises and studied the Old Greek and Old Hebrew in order to read the original Christian sources. He read a number of works of modern European theology and philosophers in their original languages<sup>22</sup>. He had had numerous talks with monks and priests, including Amvrosiī, who was later canonized by the Russian Orthodox Church. Tolstoī also walked to visit elders at the Optina Pustyn' monastery in 1877, 1881 and 1890. With great interest he studied some sectarian religious tracts, such as those by Shtundists

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<sup>22</sup> Indeed, he read ancient Greek.



(Protestants), Molokans (“The Spiritual Christians”) and Old Believers. He also became close to Vasilī Siūtaev, a peasant who conducted his own religious and moral studies.

Tolstoī based his study on unconditional Love, which he proclaimed to be the supreme law of life, and doing the Good, since these were the only ways to become closer to the Lord.

His position was expressed in his late literary works (such as *Voskresenie* [*Resurrection*] (1889-1899), *The Death of Ivan Il'ich* (1882-1886)), and especially in his so-called “spiritual writings,” or “the religious-philosophical tracts” created during the 1880s’ – 1890s’ (*Confession*, *V chem moia vera?* [*What Do I Believe?*] (1884), and *Tsarstvo Bozhie vnutri vas* [*The Kingdom of God is within You*] (1890-1893), among many others) that focused on religious and spiritual matters.

Tolstoī conceptualizes the terrible violence presented in his late novel *Resurrection* as the result of people’s chronic violations of moral precepts, behavior encouraged by the bourgeois and the official church serving the modern state’s interests. It leads to the formation of a society where figurative “cannibalism” began in “ministries”, committees and departments and ended in the taiga. Thus, the ruling class’ religion was transformed into a practical philosophy justifying “any reproach and violence against human dignity, any destruction of it when it is beneficial.” The Russian official Orthodox Church helps the bourgeois state to protect its decaying morality and all kinds of private property.

Since Tolstoī did not believe in the judicial system created by the modern state, he showed in his *Resurrection* how the system of punishment leads people to lose their real Christian morality and to engage in officially sanctioned violence. The novel depicted how people “are infected” by this moral virus at different levels.

One of *Resurrection*'s central idea is the spiritual growth of Prince Dmitrii Nekhliudov, whose biography and spiritual search were similar to Tolstoī's. He repents his youthful misdeeds and renounces his wealthy lifestyle. He turns to the Sermon on the Mount at the novel's conclusion. Nekhliudov's turning to the Gospel is opposed by Tolstoī to the scene depicting a prison church service, which Tolstoī called "a blasphemy and mockery" of Christ's commandments.

As mentioned above, in 1901 Tolstoī was excommunicated from the church. The church was outraged most of all by the fact that Tolstoī considered his position to be Christian, and that he was convinced that his new study promoted higher moral standards.

Tolstoī's religious, philosophical and ethic study turned out to be his triumph and his tragedy. Though his purpose was finding the truth, first and foremost for himself, but not becoming a messiah, his world fame only grew with his bold statements. He left his house, intending to go to Optina Pustyn's monastery for speaking to monks on the cold fateful late fall night in 1910<sup>23</sup>, as he was entangled in his own judgments.

In spite of Tolstoī's unresolved conflicts, his study gained immense world popularity. It were the Russian writer's independent mind, sincerity and high morality that drew people's attention first and foremost.

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<sup>23</sup> Tolstoī left his house intending to continue his life according to his new principles that were not fully accepted by his family. The 82 years old writer fell sick on half of his way to Optina Pustyn' monastery had to interrupt his trip at the small railroad "Astapovo", where he died in a week of severe pneumonia.

It is not surprising, that young Naimy, who was was painfully trying to resolve several important issues, found their solution in Tolstoī's writings, as both of these men of letters were tormenting from their numerous attempts to resolve the same questions.

Already in Poltava Naimy acknowledged Tolstoī's strong moral influence on him In his diary he wrote this to Tolstoī:

I owe you many thoughts that illuminate what has been vague in my spiritual world. In many of your most recent works that I have read in the last year I found the light that guided me at every step... that is why you became my teacher and supervisor, without even knowing it (Sab 1 189).

Tolstoī's humanistic ideals, passionate discourse on the church and Christianity, as well as his attitude to moral issues resonated in the young Lebanese writer's soul. Living in Russia during the pre-revolutionary political and social crisis described in Chapter One and at time when Tolstoī was excommunicated from the church, Naimy had a heightened awareness of the great Russian writer. He considered Tolstoī his mentor and teacher and in his Poltava diary the young Naimy even argued heatedly with him:

I finished [reading] *War and Peace*... I agree with the author's opinion about Napoleon because I hate war and those who call for it and carry it out ... But, similarly, I can ...see the contradiction in what [Tolstoī] says about Napoleon and Kutuzov. Napoleon, in his opinion, was not motivated by his desire, but by the power of circumstances and people's wishes. At that time, attributes Kutuzov's victory over Napoleon and his ability to drive the French out of Russia to his wisdom and his experience as primary [factors] ....It is ridiculous to me to object to such a great thinker as Tolstoī...I'm sorry, Leo Nikolaevich (Sab 1 189).

During Naimy's youthful years in Ukraine, when he was looking for his place in the world and was going through a long and uneasy stage of personal growth, he wrote about Tolstoī as he would of a close friend,

Half a century later, after becoming a famous writer of international significance, the Lebanese writer still repeatedly claimed that he first and foremost owed his discovery of literature to Russian writers, such as Tolstoī. While speaking to correspondents of the Tunisian newspaper *al-Amal* and Egyptian *al-Kifah*, Naimy mentioned the novels of Gogol, Turgenev, Dostoevskiī, Tolstoī, Chekhov and Gorkiī, Belinskiī's literary criticism, and the poetry of Pushkin, Lermontov and Nekrasov, as the best examples of world writing (MNCW 9: 543, 555, 556). He did not conceal the fact that he used their approaches in his own writings and that they had fostered his spiritual growth.

In the current work we are going to touch the two most important aspects of Tostoī's impact on Naimy, that are the Russian writer's sharp criticism of the traditional religious institutions (the current chapter) and his intolerance to the modern society's social and moral issues (Chapter Five).

Several events in Naimy's life found reflection in Tolstoī's and radically influenced both their world views. The childhoods of the Russian and the Lebanese men of letters childhood were very traditional ones for an Orthodox family. Like Tolstoī, Naimy was raised in a house where fasting and prayers- religious rituals practiced daily by family members, reflected their deep Christian belief. Later, when Tolstoī was already a student, he moved away from the righteous way of life and embarked on a frivolous one that he recorded with profound self-criticism in his diaries. Meanwhile, Naimy spent his student years at the teacher's institute in Nazareth. In addition, the first years that he spent in the seminary coincided exactly with the peak period in his closeness to the church.

One moment that Naimy experienced during the time he studied in Poltava is particularly noteworthy. He was deeply shocked by the lifestyle of Poltavan youth, which included drinking, womanizing and prostitution. This way of life would have been absolutely unthinkable in his native Lebanon. So, he began to read Tolstoī's late essays and novels, many of them impregnated with deep regrets about the Russian writer's former lifestyle and deeds. Immediately Naimy came to a positive resolution to what was oppressing him in Poltava. He felt that he had found in Tolstoī a wise, observant, understanding and attentive counter partner, almost a brother.

The other parallel occurred during the next step in Naimy's growth that covered the Ukrainian period and the entire American one. Naimy's early thoughts on faith, spirituality, and religion were closely tied to his youthful years spent in Lebanon and in Ukraine surrounded by Orthodox Christianity. In spite of the fact that his world view was influenced by different world religions and philosophical and theosophical currents, during the time he spent in Ukraine and America Christianity remained the dominant factor in his outlook as a philosopher, critic and writer.

Religion for the Lebanese writer played a natural role in the development of his personality, and he quickly passed through a period of deep religiosity when he was barely fifteen. His choice of the priesthood or a local teaching career was the result of very limited career options, and it represented one of the ways of obtaining a decent education. Naimy's religious views started to change even before his graduation from the Poltavan seminary. His deep disappointment with the official church ended with his skipping the mandatory seminary service, and as a result he was threatened with expulsion. After describing this situation in his diary, he wrote:

Let God forgive our administrators! If they find that good behavior consists in diligently attending church services, I will please them, so I will diligently attend [the service].... It is not only me alone, who believes that true Christianity is not in presenting oneself at church

for two or three hours on Saturdays, Sundays and on holidays, but in following the teachings of the Gospel...(Sab 1 186)

Tolstoī's period of a deep religiosity was as short as was Naimy's, though the great Russian writer was much older when he became deeply religious. Moreover, the experience of his early years, which pushed him to the church, was different from Naimy's, as discussed earlier in this chapter.

Tolstoī's religious conception was also similar to the Lebanese writer's. As mentioned earlier, the hermit of Iasnaïa Polīana was constantly was looking for the true meaning of life. He was familiar with and influenced by different international philosophical, spiritual and religious trends. But it was Christianity cleansed of its mystical baggage that dominated Tolstoī's his beliefs about life,

Even Naimy's and Tolstoī's other sources of influence, which included various religious, theological and philosophical works, were quite similar. Both were influenced by a number of outstanding thinkers and men of letters, ranging from ancient Greeks, such as Pythagoras and Socrates, to modern European philosophers, like Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Fredrich Nietzsche, Johann Gottfried von Herder, Arthur Schopenhauer, and the modern American thinkers and writers Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry Thoreau, They rethought the best ideas ever created by humanity and worked out a similar world view. At the same time we'd like to point out that Naimy's theological views started to form in Russia under Tolstoī's influence, and all of what he read in America and continued to read and rethink largely developed from his experiences and study in Poltava.

We would also like to mention Elena Blavatsky's theosophical writings since they were influential at the time both men were writing. Her work was broadly discussed in Russia and in

her native Ukraine. It was the one of the first important theosophical sources that influenced Naimy. We have already mentioned in Naimy's autobiography the fact of his living in the same apartment with a Scottish member of the Theosophical circle, though Naimy's interest in this movement did not last long. This is at least what he claims, but his testimony, like that of any author, obviously represents a subjective point of view that should not be accepted at face value (Dar 269). Bell (TRL) researched Naimy's theosophical views and concluded that they had a substantial influence on his post-Russian period of creative writing. Moreover, Nijland, who wrote one of the most detailed studies of Naimy as a promoter of the Arabic literary revival (1975), noted that Naimy adopted at least two of the three basic theosophical concepts outlined by Madame Blavatsky in *The Key to Theosophy* (1893). They include:

1. Belief in one incomprehensible and supreme Deity, or infinite essence, which is the root of all nature and all that is visible and invisible.
2. Belief in man's eternal immortal nature, which, being an emanation of the Universal Soul, is of an identical substance with it (Blavatsky 2, in Nijland 94).

Nijland claims that Blavatsky's third concept—the assertion that “real divine theology requires superhuman purity and holiness of life” (Blavatsky 1893 2, in Nijland 94) is not reflected in Naimy's writings. However, his idea about “the ultimate omnipotence” of humanity is the result of his thoughts and his heart's purification, as well as his belief that he was made in the Lord's image and that it also depends on humanity's “distant and exalted goals” outlined by him in *Risālat al-sharq al-mitajaddid* [*The Message from the Restored East*] included in his collection of writings *Roads*. These ideas closely parallel Blavatsky's third basic point.

As for Tolstoī, he was not a proponent of all kinds of theosophy, clairvoyance and prophesy, although Blavatsky claims in her article that Tolstoī's followed theosophical ideas (1890). Moreover, she gave him her books *The Voice of The Silence* (1890), dedicating it as

follows: “To Count Leo Tolstoī, ‘one of the few,’ from the author.” Tolstoī highly valued this work, called it “Brahman Wisdom” and used quotations from it in his so-called final wisdom tracts (Las’ko, pic. 2).

In addition, Vladimir Nabokov, the Russian and American writer and literary critic, was the first to bring to light the Buddhist idea of Nirvana, such as light in darkness and life in death, at the end of *The Death of Ivan Il’ich* (308). The idea of reawakening through death passes through much of Tolstoī’s late writings. One more example is Count Andreī Bolkonskiī’s epiphany from *War and Peace*. Before his death he felt the beginning of a new, eternal love (Tolstoī 7: 71). At this moment he realizes that love is God. Since Count Bolkonskiī feels himself to be a small part of global love, dying means for him a return back to this source of eternal and unconditional love. He sees his death in his dreams and feels a deep relief, saying to himself upon waking: “Yes, it was death. I died – I woke up. Yes, death is an awakening” (Tolstoī 7: 75).

As mentioned in Naimy’s biography, the Lebanese writer’s eclectic spiritual conception certainly included Buddhist elements that were the result of his exposure to different religions and numerous philosophical and spiritual currents that had their origin in Russia and spread to the United States. He expressed ideas about reincarnation and about light in the darkness at the end of a person’s life in his collection of articles “al-Nūr wa-al-dayjūr” [“Light and Darkness”] included into *The Stages* that were very similar to Tolstoī’s ideas. The same thoughts were expressed by Naimy in “al-Maárifah wa-al-madrasah” [“The Knowledge and the School”], which is included in *Provisions*, as well as in “Mihmāz al-baqā” [“The Urge to Survive”] from *World’s Voice*.



One more parallel between Naimy and Tolstoī exists in their attitude to big cities that became for them symbols of modern civilization. The young Lebanese moved to the U.S.A. in 1911, at the age of 22, and left after twenty-one years in 1932. Though it was also a very productive period for Naimy's creative writing and education about the world, his passion and need for peace and uninterrupted meditation made him decide to leave the big American cities. Their lifestyle and values made Naimy unhappy in the New World.

Upon returning to his motherland, in addition to the presence of French colonialism, Naimy found the same social and political situation in Lebanon that he experienced in the capitalist jungles of the U.S.A. This experience only enhanced his feelings that had been developed during his time in Poltava.

Tolstoī found himself in a similar situation. Like Naimy, Tolstoī made a number of interesting acquaintances that certainly influenced him during his time spent in Russia's big cities and in Europe. But his new life position made life in modern society unbearable for him. Tolstoī moved to his estate and continued to read, trying to find answers to the many questions that concerned him more and more with every passing year. Madame Blavatsky noted in her article devoted to Tolstoī (1890):

[His new views] changed his whole view of life; all he had before striven for, all that counts for so much in the world, including honor, fame, culture, riches, increased refinement of life, of surroundings, of food, of clothing, of manners – all this lost its value in his eyes, and in place of them he came to esteem what the *World* calls bad and low, simplicity, poverty, want of culture.

The other intersection of Naimy and Tolstoī was their life in pre-revolutionary Russia. Both had the same response to its spiritual bankruptcy, unbelievable corruption, and the official fusion of a decaying state with the church that supported all of the government's bloody and repressive

actions. In his interview with the Egyptian magazine *al-Hilal* many years after returning from Russia, Naimy observed:

During the days of my studies in Russia I was able to feel the great pressure that [its]...people were under and I was confident that such situation could not last forever (“□Ashtu makhāq al-thawrah al-rūsiyyah” [“I Lived through the Time of the Birth of the Russian Revolution”], in MNCW 9: 679-680).

Thus while Naimy’s and Tolstoī’s paths towards spiritual understanding differed in their earliest stages, in Russia the young seminarian’s soul searching was similar to what the Russian genius was experiencing, not only in time, but also in content. The young Naimy who was experiencing a deep religious crisis, found the answers to almost all his unanswered questions in Tolstoī’s books.

The following two chapters examine the four areas where the Russian philosopher’s influence on Naimy was the most distinctive: populism, religious and spiritual questions, anticlericalism, a stance against social injustice and wealth distribution, as well as a way of regarding certain aspects of human morality, especially sexual relations.

### (1) Populism

Around the turn of the twentieth century there were ongoing discussions throughout Russia about an alternative way for the country’s non-capitalist development, the rising generation of its peasantry and obtaining freedom through religious and moral conviction.

As mentioned above, Count Tolstoī broke with the luxurious lifestyle and ideology of his social class, and followed the ideology of *oproshchenie*<sup>24</sup>. He started to wear the clothing of the

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<sup>24</sup> Simplified lifestyle and rejection of the benefits of modern civilization.

common people, grew a beard like a *muzhik*<sup>25</sup>, took up the work of peasants and regarded their judgments as a source of wisdom.

Tolstoī gradually came to a special type of asceticism, it was already mentioned above populism, which was typical of some repentant noblemen and intelligentsia in Russia. *The Narodniki* (followers of this ideology) considered beauty and comfort to be unwarranted and immoral luxuries<sup>26</sup>. So the hermit of Iasnaïa Polīana in his work *Tak chto zhe nam teper' delat'?* [*So What Do We Need to Do Now?*] called on everybody to be satisfied with as little as possible:

For someone who is genuinely suffering and notices the sufferings of people around him, there is only one sufficiently clear, simple and easy means possible to heal the evils... [that surround him] and to become conscious of the moral way to live: to have no more than one set of clothes and to have no money, i.e. to not benefit from other people's work (Tolstoī 16: 279).

N.Naimy pointed out that his famous uncle was also a populist (NNI 100), and that he was inspired by several sources, including Tolstoī's writings. Naimy's sympathy for common people is not a surprise. He had peasant roots, and he learned about hard work, poverty and injustice not from books, but from the everyday realities of his poor childhood and adolescence. Naimy did not have to go through the difficult process of separating himself from his social layer, as Tolstoī did. However, Naimy did formally start to associate with the Arab intelligentsia upon graduation from university in America. He did not have to seek out the wisdom of common people or his real roots, since he never separated with this bottom layer of the social pyramid.

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<sup>25</sup> Russian peasant or a Russian man who belongs to a common social layer.

<sup>26</sup> In fact, ascetic propaganda occurs in most philosophical and religious schools.

If we read the record from Naimy's early diary in Poltava, before he came under the influence of all kinds of world currents, then we would conclude that Naimy worked out the following position under the strong influence of Tolstoï:

While walking in city streets, I was shocked at [my] observations, and some of them ...pierced my heart... This lady, dressed in silk [and] and crowned with a hat with an ostrich feather, who is proudly and importantly enthroned in a cab drawn by a troika of splendid horses... [H]ow isn't she ashamed to flaunt herself in front of those whose bodies are in tatters, and faces do not know [the touch of] soap?

And these luxury shops [. . .] what is their benefit to those who are hungry, thirsty and humiliated, insulted and all those who are unable to buy what is sold there?

And truly, one necklace from this store, or a bracelet or one earring will feed a thousand hungry [people], will dress a thousand naked [people], or will buy medicines for thousands of sick [people].

Here is this world – flipped upside down. The world, whose heart is in [its] pocket ... its mind [is] its belly, as for [its] consciousness, it is in the toilet. And the most disgusting [thing] is in that this world openly declares its belief in God, who embodies light, justice beauty and love (Sab 1 221).

At the same time, the young seminarian never completely shared the Russian writer's position on poverty. Till his last days Naimy always remained a proponent of the broadest social pyramid's layer that included all poor people, not only peasants. For a while he was even seriously preparing himself to be an attorney, as he wanted to defend the interests of these people. Naimy's youthful desire to become a writer, which he expressed in his diary, was the result of his deep impressions of life in Poltava and reading nineteenth-century Russian writers, who depicted the unbearable conditions of the life of the common people. He saw himself as a Lebanese writer who absorbs the best foreign literary traditions and enriches his culture. This confidence in his special mission in saving the world was certainly formed under the influence of Russian literature and particularly Tolstoï's spiritual didactic writings, which demonstrated that Tolstoï was sure of his special role in the people's enlightenment. Naimy noted in his diary:

My country is passing through the hardest stage in its life. And it is in the greatest need of intelligent people who would direct its steps and banish darkness. I want to be one of those men. I want to spread a spirit [that is] sensitive to the world's human's values [. . .] through my country. I do not want my country to drown in the Western urban foam [*raghwah*] <sup>27</sup>. But it needs to plunge into this urbanization while following its interests and beauty...How gloomy is the darkness in which we live! And how [much] we are attached to life's superficiality without touching its core! Even the international reach of Tolstoī's world measurements has not burned the darkness of your night! (Sab 1 232, 233)

In 1960 Naimy wrote an article “Umlāq al-rūh wa-al-qalam” [“Giant of Spirit and Pen”] (MNCW 7: 372-377) where he analyzed Tolstoyan spiritual growth and provided a biographical sketch. The Lebanese man of letters considered the study of the *dukhobory* [spirit-wrestlers] to be the one of the most important factors of influence on Tolstoī.<sup>28</sup>

But this Russian religious study also impacted Naimy's largely Tolstoyan works. This moves us to the second influence that Tolstoī had on Naimy through his position on official church dogmatism.

## (2) The Official Church Dogmatism

Tolstoī, following his study of the spirit-wrestlers, considered the Orthodox faith to be a mixture of specially fabricated lies designed to perplex believers and to deceive them in order to gain their mass and blind submission. He accused the Orthodox Church of creating a most serious impediment to the practice of real spiritual life, that included a pervasive non-conditional love and following the covenants of the Sermon on the Mount (though Tolstoī did not accept all

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<sup>27</sup> Here Naimy meant the Western culture.

<sup>28</sup> The *dukhobory* are a religious sect that split from the Orthodox Church, as its representatives disagreed with it on several important issues. Specifically, the *dukhobors* denied the necessity of the church liturgy and believed that Jesus Christ was an embodiment of a pious spirit. They also denied any secular ruling institutions and since, according to the spirit-wrestlers, a human was inseparable from the Lord, he did not need any religious establishments and churches.

of them). The great Russian philosopher started writing furious and passionate critical articles where he castigated official religious institutions that merged with the state and served the insincerities, superfluities, cupidity, complications and cruelties of modern civilization (Hamburg 155) during the last two decades of his life. However, even before this Tolstoī expressed his position directly and indirectly through his novels, and the same topics were also touched upon, either directly or indirectly, in most of Naimy's works.

Tolstoī's anticlericalism and his distinction between Christ and the church deeply influenced Naimy. His nephew, Nadim Naimy, noted:

... of all the manifold aspects of Russian literature, the one that exercised the deepest and most lasting influence on Naimy's life and future career as a writer were undoubtedly spiritual concerns. And in this, to be more precise, Tolstoī remained Naimy's undisputed guide and master (101).

In fact, it is possible to find Tolstoī's spiritual influence in Naimy's collections of works belonging to different periods of his long creative writing career, such as *The Stages*, *Provisions of the Hereafter*, *al-Bayādir [The Threshing Floors]* (1945), *Light and Darkness*, and *The Wind's Gusts*, and, certainly, in his mystical parable *The Book of Mirdad*.

One of the earliest of Naimy's writings, his diary partly published as a part of the trilogy *Seventy: My Life's Story*, concludes with the young seminarian's endless questioning of himself about how our world was created and what the nature of sin was. He was also analyzing God's deeds, Christ's life and the official church's doctrines. Naimy did not find answers to most of his questions and doubts, and found numerous contradictions in Orthodox theology (Sab 1: 270-274). That is why the Lebanese seminarian had to first look for other sources of explanations in order to clarify issues from the Christian doctrines.

At almost the same time Tolstoī, who was much older and became an extremely authoritative figure for the young seminarian, attracted Naimy's attention by developing his famous spiritual and religious ideas. The young Lebanese writer found Tolstoī's thoughts close to his own, and he tried to rely on them. He noted in his diary:

I started discovering my own nature, and I found out that the only source of light that I was turning to was the one that Tolstoī followed – the Gospel. He was upset with the same thing that upsets me...[It concerned the fact] that the church hid [the Gospel,] this source of [divine] light [under the impermeable layer of unnecessary] rites and traditions...and created a Christianity without Christ that differs from paganism in name only ... (Sab 1 271).

Naimy read Tolstoī's spiritual writings and had a clear idea about his concepts. The fact can be proven by the Lebanese writer's recognition of Tolstoī's importance not only as a great novelist, but also as an exciting and exacting spiritual guide who was trying to understand his own and the world's nature (Sab 1 273). But in his later article "Giant of Spirit and Pen" devoted to Tolstoī, Naimy claimed that the Russian philosopher had not revealed for him the real secret of life and death. He had simply told others to avoid evil without showing its sources (MNCW 7: 376). In fact, Tolstoī clearly identified sources of evil in his numerous religious and philosophical works. Probably, Naimy, who by that time remained influenced by several religious and philosophical schools' influence, in the end could not fully comprehend the Russian writer's complicated and at times contradictory concepts.

The more time Naimy spent in religious educational establishments, the more he thought of how the Holy books explain the world order, and the more questions and disappointments he had, the more he became lost. Naimy was asking himself endless questions about Christian doctrines, as they failed to dissipate his doubts. Before his graduation from seminary, he wrote:

“The blanket that the church tailored for my spirit has become tight for me, and I do not have the resources to mend it” (Sab 1 277).

Tolstoī at the beginning of his spiritual crisis was asking himself the same questions that the young Lebanese was asking himself three decades later, so Naimy was able to find help in Tolstoī’s spiritual works. Gradually Tolstoī came to the conclusion in *Put’ zhizni* [*Path of Life*] that

For living well, humans need to know what they need to do and what they must not do. For knowing this, a belief is needed...When a human learns a real belief, what happens to him reminds one of what happens to a human who lights a light in a dark chamber. Everything becomes clear, and his soul becomes cheerful (9, 10).

Since the young seminarian did not find explanations that could satisfy him in the Christian Holy books, and the clergy’s answers only raised more questions, Naimy, following Tolstoī’s example, moved ahead and created his own world where everything was clear and understandable. It was based on his deep belief, as mentioned by Professor Hussein Dabbagh, the British researcher from Durham University who studied Naimy. He wrote that the key to Naimy’s personality and thoughts “was in his deep religious sense..., [the Lebanese man of letters] seemed ultimately to reject the established teaching of the Church, while clinging to the example of Christ and his sublime teachings” (Dabbagh 46). Naimy did not write special books or articles about this topic, like Tolstoī did, but his position is quite clear from his numerous philosophical works, and stories and novels.

While thinking over and over about ecclesiastical life, the Lebanese seminarian could not find a clear explanation for how the church, which discredited itself by its support for the most corrupt social layers and the most unjust and conscienceless government decisions, could be the house of Jesus. Further, he questioned how it was possible for him to keep Christ yet to remove



the church from his spiritual values. The deeper Naimy investigated the church's and Christ's teachings, the more he realized that there was no connection between them. Moreover, the church's doctrines turned out to be anti-Christian. Naimy started to painfully rethink firmly implanted church doctrines that could not satisfy the young rebellious seminarian.

Naimy found the answer in Tolstoī's spiritual writings and the history of the Russian writer's excommunication from the church. The solution was very simple: when the Lord sent to people the Savior, the church that existed at that time and that was founded for serving and glorifying the Lord, his messenger<sup>29</sup>. When nineteen centuries later Tolstoī came seeking a life through Christ's words and deeds, the Russian Orthodox Church excommunicated him. This meant that, in fact, Jesus existed outside the official clerical establishments, and breaking his ties with them did not break Naimy's link with Jesus (NNI 103).

Tolstoī's study turned out to be Naimy's base, from which he could push and find his way through the deep religious fog in which he was wandering and completely lost. He noticed that he had the same questions as had Tolstoī at the beginning of his spiritual crisis, and he ended up completely rejecting the church, leaving for himself the same two values, Jesus and the Gospel.

Naimy wrote:

[Tolstoī] was upset with the same thing that upsets me...[he] did not find any other way for himself than... Christ's [way]...that is why when he saw how far the church distanced itself from this path, he revolted first of all against the church. Then he revolted against himself in order to turn [his] soul against any path, except that of the Gospel (Sab 1 271).

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<sup>29</sup> The four gospels of the New Testament are quite clear that it was the secular Roman authorities that ordered the crucifixion of Jesus (with some assistance from Judas). We suppose that by 'the church that existed at the time' Naimy meant the Pharisees or some other faction within Judaism that was hostile to early Christianity.

The hermit of Iasnaïa Polïana and the Christian seminarian revered the Gospel and considered it be the principle source of life's wisdom, though they differed on some points regarding it.

The most radical distinction consisted in the fact that the old and experienced Tolstoï, who remained in deep spiritual crisis, tried to recapture in his life through studying the Gospel through life-long contemplation. As for young Naimy, his nature, upbringing and educational background allowed him to accept the Gospel's message as it was. He wrote: "The Gospel has been and remains my consolation. And it will remain so forever" (Sab 1 239).

As for Christ's personality and deeds, both Naimy and Tolstoï loved him with all their hearts and admired him, considering his personality to be an example to others.

Several decades later, after leaving Poltava, the Lebanese writer would write an essay about Jesus's life entitled "Wajh yusū' "[Jesus's Face]" and include it in his collection of works *The Stages*. He would go on to depict the Savior in the same way as Tolstoï had done before him in his spiritual studies. Naimy's Jesus is presented as a physically and morally suffering crucified human during his last hours<sup>30</sup>. The Lebanese writer describes Jesus's physiological condition in detail and depicts a heartless triumphing crowd of people opposing it to Jesus's endless love and his desire to save humanity, as well as his despair over his approaching death.

Alyn Desmond Hine, the British investigator into the influence of Russia on Naimy's works, notes that the Lebanese author describes as:

a human being rather than as the intangible, ethereal son of God, [who] alerts the reader to the reality of Christ's suffering on the cross. His pain and humiliation... brings across the horror of

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<sup>30</sup> As a point of comparison, we'd like to bring up Tolstoï's reaction to Russian painter Nikolaï Ge's bleak depiction of the crucifixion (1891): "This painting, which moved Ge's friend Tolstoï to tears, shows a wretched, wasted Christ, no longer capable of resurrection, let alone atonement." (in IAA 482).

Christ's predicament which the Gospels do not achieve, namely because Naimy transposes the point of view of the narrative away from a biographer to the man who is undergoing the torment (Hine 57).

Hine thinks that Naimy's writings about Jesus resemble Tolstoï's late religious tracts, like *Soedinenie i perevod chetyrekh Evangelii* [*The Unity and Translation of the Four Gospels*] (1901-1908), and that these writings inspired the Lebanese man of letters to depict a human Christ.

Despite his admiration of Jesus, Tolstoï, did not accept all the facts about his life and deeds. He considered Jesus to be just one of the outstanding prophets, a group which also included Buddha, Krishna and Muhammad. He did not accept the New Testament idea of atonement and rejected the concepts of the Savior and the Assumption. Tolstoï depicted Christ as a man, but not as God, and denied the miracles performed by Jesus, such as walking upon water or raising the dead. Neither did he believe in miracles performed by the other outstanding spiritual teachers.

Tolstoï also rejected some facts from Christ's biography that did not make sense to him, such as the Immaculate Conception, and similarly rejected the concept of The Holy Trinity (Fomina, E.O., Steblovskaïa, S.B. 10, 11). At the same time, by humanizing Jesus he only raised Christ's dignity, since he made him real, and his sufferings more dramatic.

Hine (57) also sees in the narrative prose style of Naimy's Biblical stories a resemblance to the writings of the other Russian and the European Realists whom the young seminarian was reading and may have subconsciously imitated.

Among them was Joseph Ernest Renan's *Life of Jesus* (1863).<sup>31</sup> Naimy wrote about his impressions of the novel:

I have read Renan's *Life of Jesus*. It seems to me that the author, who tried to take away Christ's divine qualities, [instead] attributed such a degree of human perfection to him that no single person could possibly achieve. The fact that he also remains silent about many of Christ's "miracles" points to the fact that he does not understand them or cannot explain them... (Sab 1 239).

But Tolstoī was also influenced by both Russian and European men of letters, and specifically by Renan's sensational work. Tolstoī's copy of this book can be found in Iasnaïa Polīana's library. It has Tolstoī's numerous notes, as he, while reading *Life of Jesus*, was passionately debating with this French writer and philosopher. Tolstoī shared his impressions from this literary work in his letter to Vladimir Stasov<sup>32</sup>. In spite of the sharp critic of Renan there, Tolstoī recognized in this letter, that the French writer had a new vision of Jesus. He was depicted as a human and not as the distant Son of God presented in the Holy books of the Orthodox Church attracted his close attention ("Pis'mo Stasovu" ["Letter to Stasov"] from April 1878, in Tolstoī 62: 413, 414). This reaction is different from what Tolstoī felt. Renan's works might well have been an inspiration for both men of letters.

From thoughts on Jesus's personality and the Holy books, Naimy, like Tolstoī, moved to such global topics as the Lord's nature and clerical institutions.

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<sup>31</sup> Joseph Ernest Renan (1823-1892) is a French philosopher, writer and a specialist in ancient Middle Eastern languages. His book *Life of Jesus* received a wide public response for its author's new vision of Christ that is radically different from the traditional clerical one. Jesus is presented there as a real historical person. This is a fact that, in Renan's view, only made his feat of saving humanity even greater.

<sup>32</sup> Stasov, Vladimir Vladimirovich (1824-1906) is a Russian art and music critic.

Naimy's philosophical allegory *The Book of Mirdad* was the result of his rethinking of these concepts over the course of several decades, starting from his Poltavan period, if not earlier. Bilyk noted (88) that this literary work contained Naimy's "anticlerical protest" presented in the form of a modern "myth" that [touches] the area of unorthodox mysticism in spite of his affirmation of an ethical-religious ideal.

Naimy considered *The Book of Mirdad* to be "the summit of his thoughts" (Nijland 95). It consists of two parts: the first one is about the prophet who is seeking world salvation, and the second one is about the world itself. The book consists of thirty-seven chapters and is presented as a series of dialogues between Mirdad, the central character of the novel, his disciples and the abbot of a monastery. Mirdad, whose name means "returning back" in Arabic, and who is thirty-three years old, which is the same age when Jesus Christ was crucified, comes to people, teaches them about salvation, and calls them to true faith and universal love. The style of *Book of Mirdad* is similar to the Gospels, with its numerous messages, allegories, and use of rhetorical figures, such as hyperbole and parabola. This literary work shows the influence of several philosophical and religious schools, as well as Tolstoian writings (Bell, Bilyk, Nadim Naimy, and Imanquliyeva among others).

This book is very complicated and multifaceted. We'd just like to touch on several aspects. It is devoted to the Lebanese writer's understanding of religion as a united abstract ideological concept. Bilyk (83) claims that this position was similar to Tolstoī's, as the latter thought that real religion consisted of basic ideas common to all confessions. Tolstoī in his work *Chto takoe religiia i v chem sushchnost' eè?* [*What Is Religion And What Is Its Essence?*] (1902) wrote that the Lord was doubtlessly present in this world as the beginning of everything. And each human

also contained a part of then divine inside himself or herself. In order to augment this divine beginning, a person must suppress his passions and develop feelings of love.

As for Naimy, despite a long series of transformations of his traditional beliefs in the Lord and his bitter disappointment in traditional Christianity, he did not become an atheist. Instead, he worked out an alternative form for practicing his beliefs as formulated in several of his works from the 1940s–1950s, specifically in *The Book of Mirdad*, the collections of articles *Stages* and *Far from Moscow and Washington*, as well as in several interviews. Naimy understood the Lord as a comprehensive substance and a Universal system that is present everywhere in this world (Bilyk 79). The concepts of *al-tawazun al-kāmil* [the complete balance] and *al-nizām al-ʿalīī* [the upper force] govern everything in this world. The Lord is

...an Absolute God who is in the Prophets and who understands and reveals the God of the Prophets. He is...the same God who is [present] in every person who has the capacity to recognize God in everything and in every person (“al-Dīn wa-al-shabāb” [“Religion and Young People”], in MNCW 8:221).

Tolstoī's notion of religion and God evolved with time. When he began to rethink traditional Christianity, he considered the Gospel to be the world source of wisdom and substituted the idea of God with a special form of pantheism. By the end of his life, he claimed that the Lord was not like an abstract belief nor was he something anthropomorphic. Rather, he represented the divine belief inside each person. That is why serving the Lord meant learning more about the Lord and becoming closer to him. Tolstoī noted that God represented the highest divine force given to man (“Pis'mo V.F. Maksimovu” [“Letter to Maximov”]<sup>33</sup> from July 13, 1895, in Tolstoī 68: 119).

Naimy's vision of God is very similar to Tolstoī's. He also rejected deism and blind belief.

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<sup>33</sup> Maximov, V.F. (1844-1911) is a Russian painter.

The Russian writer argued that the Lord exists in the form of a spirit and an idea of the understanding of life, and he also stated that there is a kind of a beginning of everything in every human being, i.e. he argued for solipsism. He expressed these ideas in his spiritual-religious essay “What Do I Believe?” God for Tolstoī is intangible, incorporeal, and invisible. He is “a moral ideal to which people should aim,” something that Tolstoī himself aspired to. God is something that is difficult to understand in material terms, and that is why people call Him [by some name]. But if people knew God, then they would have come to Him, so there would be nothing to seek, and life would not have existed. At the same time, it is possible to approach him, and a person’s entire existence is spent achieving this goal (Tolstoī 23: 304-468).

Naimy also argued that all earthly things are transient, which is another idea about God and the structure of the world that the Lebanese author developed under Tolstoī’s influence.

Tolstoī in his *Path of Life* provided answers to numerous questions asked by people about how to live properly. He claimed that death was only the changing of a person’s shell, but the spirit is not a human’s shell, so it will stay (373).

It is interesting that both Naimy and Tolstoī even used the same terminology in their definitions of the abstract concepts that they worked out. They associated God with the word “Love.” Naimy used the term *al-mahabbah* [love, attachment], and Tolstoī used the word *Ĺiubov*’ [love]. The Russian writer expressed this idea in his story “Gde Ĺiubov, tam i Bog” [“Wherever there is Love, God is also There”] (1885), where he noticed that love for God is a person’s love of everything and everybody, including himself, as this feeling is the highest good

This line of thinking enabled Naimy to develop his ideas about cosmic elements that reflect his and Tolstoī’s idea about our world as a part of an unlimited universe: his character Shūrtī, like his al-Arqash, came from nowhere and does not know his parents, and Naimy’s al-Arqash

considers himself to be a small, though integral part of the universe. He compares himself and the stars to a student and teachers in whom he is able to see God's greatness. But he also knows that his greatness is similar to the God's, and he and the stars are two endless worlds that compose one endless united world for al-Arqash.

Tolstoī expressed a similar idea in a different way. He noted that an intuitive and mystical comprehension of reality existed primarily in relation to empirical knowledge (Gustafson). He repeated this thought frequently in his notes and diaries. Here is one example:

The tenderness and delight that we experience when contemplating Nature represent a memory from the time when we were animals, trees, flowers, and earth. More precisely, it is the consciousness of unity with all concealed from us by time (Diary from April, 25, 1906, in Tolstoī 55: 217).

If, according to Naimy and Tolstoī, the Lord is present everywhere in this world, including inside people, who are closely related to him, then his glory and power are in us. This means that a human himself has unlimited power.

Tolstoī thought that a human has the Lord inside him, and thus people are extremely powerful. God gave them among his many gifts a strong and sensitive mind that can be used to help humans distinguish the truth from the many lies imposed on them by church and society. They can sense the Lord's will despite these lies ("Tsarstvo Bozhie vnutri vas" ["The Kingdom of God is within You"], in Tolstoī 28: 1-322).

Naimy thought that a human was so powerful that he could satisfy his desires by himself and did not need rely on outside resources, since he possesses such resources within himself. For this reason prayers are useless. People just need to discover their main and strong desire within themselves (Naimy 60), as people are so powerful that they are able to fully communicate with the subject of their dreams, passions and prays. Humans must pray with their hearts and do not



need any religious institutions, as those who did not find the Lord in their hearts, will not find him anywhere.

Tolstoī and Naimy argued for having found the way to reach the Lord and learn the absolute truth. Their answer relied on a supposed similarity between God and humans.

The Lebanese writer argued that a person must understand himself in order to understand the Lord, and then through Him he would learn the absolute truth (Bilyk 80).

As for Tolstoī, his thoughts about what is limited and unlimited in our world brought him to formulate a correlation between the divine nature and its relationship with people. He noted in his diaries that the Lord was infinite in time and space, but people are limited and mortal. But since he is a whole, and we are a part, then we represent a part of him. Tolstoī wrote in his diary: “I cannot imagine myself otherwise than as a part of him” (Tolstoī 52: 49). The Russian writer in his *Path of Life* expressed the thought that knowledge of God lay in people and could be attained through the concretization of the Lord through a person’s constant striving for self-perfection and rethinking of his life. He concluded that God exists for everybody who seeks him. So, the most essential definitions of God, such as Love and the Good, are equal to life. According to Tolstoī, consciousness of life is sufficient to know God. It was a position that set put him in direct conflict with the established Orthodox Church.

Tolstoī’s other revolutionary ideas were directed against the hypocritical quasi-Christian society and the mendacious quasi-Christian state. Nikolaī Berdīaev (97-107) assessed his opposition in the following way: as a religious critic and a tireless spiritual searcher, the Russian writer and philosopher genially denounced official Christianity, but his contradictory teaching that united an extreme rationalism and individualism with sometimes a real madness was easy to

refute. Tolstoī's value was to upset the world in which the official church was one with the state in its aggressive inhumane policies. His revolt signified a purification of Christianity and a rebirth that humanity so needed.

Speaking about literary devices used by both men of letters, we'd like to mention the one called *ottorzhenie* [abruption]<sup>34</sup>. Such scenes as Levin's wedding (*Anna Karenina*) and church service at the prison (*Resurrection*) present the Orthodox Church in an unfavorable light. They show the heartless, parasitic and hypocritical nature of the church that is serving the interests of the modern state. Tolstoī's and Naimy's criticism of the official Orthodox Church institutions was the only part of their global criticism of the influence of modern civilization on society.

Naimy used the same Tolstoyan literary device to describe Sunday church services in Poltava. The young Lebanese author at that time was still enrolled in the seminary, but he already started to compare service at church to a theater performance. The clergy are like actors in their symbolic and sometimes unclear movements, in the way that they wear costumes and perform roles that they had learned (Sab 1 187). He, while observing his peers, noticed that one of them was drawing a head of "either a person, donkey, or pig" (Sab 1 187) on the church wall, another seminarian was dying to smoke a cigarette, and a third one was discussing his affair with a local girl with his friend. So, he exclaimed:

This is how our students pray in The Lord's house! Or our superiors want them to pray this way... As for myself, I prefer to pray in solitude, in an isolated place. I prefer to say the words of the prayer myself, not using the priest's language (Sab 1 187).

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<sup>34</sup> This term has been elaborated by the Russian literary critic Lidiā Ginzburg (1977). While narrating events, Tolstoī gives us descriptions through the eyes of their observer. If he does not really believe or lacks knowledge about what this or that action symbolizes, it becomes an absurd and senseless performance.

Naimy's observations of church services where he openly showed his disappointment were written in the same passionate non-compromising Tolstoian manner:

... What is good in worship, when a heart turns away from the deity, and in Christianity, which makes you forget Christ? The difference between the theater and the church is, perhaps, only in the fact that in the theater the actors address their words and sets to the public, while the clergy address themselves to a higher being, [but they] pray, however, only with their lips, but not with [their] hearts and thoughts. So the desire to pray is lost... And how could a prayer raise his heart and thoughts to the God when his eyes are distracted all the time by a stone shining in the crown of a bishop, a candle that lights the sacristan, and a deacon's gestures and a priest, in whose ears sound choristers' voices, and whose nostrils are tickled by the incense smell? (Sab 1 187)

Naimy, following Tolstoī, believed that true Christianity existed inside a person, but not in the outer places for praying and in the official religious institutions insinuating themselves in all areas of life. He even used Tolstoian expressions while writing about these spiritual topics. Hine (57-58) gives examples of Naimy's phrase *malakūt allāh fī qulūbikum* [the Kingdom of God is in your heart] that is very close to Tolstoī's one *Tsarstvo Bozhie vnutri vas* [the Kingdom of God is within you], which was used numerous times in the Lebanese's writer's article "*Jesus's Face*". A quotation from the Gospel according to Luke (17:21), it became the title of the Russian philosopher's work (Tolstoī 28: 1-322). The idea of finding the Lord within a person, and not through the official church rituals expressed in this phrase, provided the groundwork of Tolstoī's and Naimy's Christian belief.

One more example of Naimy's criticism of the traditional church hypocrisy, absence of real love for humans and abstract didactic arguments about the church's morality is present in his

short story “Qalāmat zafar” [“Nail Clippings”] (1956), which is included in his collection of short stories *Akābir* [*High-Ranked*]<sup>35</sup>.

Naimy might have also taken from Tolstoī’s writings was his rejection of miracles and cult attributes. The Russian writer thought that since we need to fight our sins in order to bring our lives closer to the Lord, we need to be strong and be able to resist all kinds of external influences and never count on any kind of miracles.

Following Tostoī’s ideas, Naimy devoted his story “al-Zhāhirah” [“Talisman”], which included into the one of his first collections of short stories *Kān mā kān* [*Once Upon A Time*] (1927), to debunking prejudices and blind belief in religious relics.

Again, it is possible to notice in this story the traces of Russian literature’s trends, when an ordinary event can be transformed into a global conflict between the real and surreal. In “Talisman” Naimy mocked superstitions and did it without dull preaching, but through humor and sarcasm (Hafiz 174), so it reminds us of Gogol’s and Chekhov’s short stories.

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<sup>35</sup> Its narrator describes a merchant who has a small shop at the market place where he sells all kinds of antique and second-hand goods, as well as repairs all kinds of things. This character scrupulously collects his nails clippings in a small box, claiming that each of them represents one of his sins. He is quite rude and haughty with his customers, as he considers his occupation above their shallow interests. But finally he opens up to one of his clients and tells him about his father. For all his life he has been doing the same thing.

But one day a group of young children accidentally flip over the box containing the man’s nails’ clips. One boy picked up some of them and ran away. The merchant’s father ran after the boy and killed him, probably inadvertently. But in any case, a human life and the sin of murder are considered by the merchant’s father to be of less significance than some abstract idea about human misdeeds and the symbolic collecting of sins.

Tolstoī's anti-clericalism is clearly visible in his works that were banned by both the spiritual and secular censors. Examples of such criticism can be found in his social novel *Resurrection* (1899). The Russian writer shows the lifestyle and moral problems of different social layers in Russia at the end of the nineteenth century, where the clergy mechanically and hastily performed the religious rites and the corrupted church was serving the state's interests. Moreover, some people recognized in the cold and cynical attorney Toporkov the procurator of the Holy Synod Konstantin Pobedonostsev.

Tolstoī conceptualizes the terrible violence presented in this novel as the result of people's chronic violation of moral precepts. The Russian ruling class' religion was transformed into a practical philosophy justifying "any reproach and violence against human dignity, any destruction of it when it is beneficial," as the official Russian Orthodox Church helps the bourgeois state to protect its rotten morality and all kinds of private property. Tolstoī concludes that the Russian prison is "the only place befitting an honest man." At the same time, Tolstoī is showing how Christ's commandments are being blasphemed and mocked in the scene of the official church service for the arrested people. Many scenes in *Resurrection* reflect Tolstoī's post-crisis position reflected in *What I Believe*. The narratives about the convicted sectarians who interpreted Christ's commandments according to their views, and Selenin's transformations, which show how the latter turns from the total unbelief to the official faith and how he realized that faith "with all his being " was not quite what he expected it to be, can serve examples of Tolstoian ideas.

Since Tolstoī did not believe in the judicial system created by the modern state, he also showed in *Resurrection* how the system of punishments leads people to lose their real Christian morality and how it promotes violence.

Naimy was also successfully able to apply Tolstoī's ideas concerning the hypocrisy of the official church concerning the realities of the Arabic world. This topic together with the theme of useless prayers is touched on in several of Naimy's first stories, specifically in "Her New Year."

At the same time, Naimy does not just simply judge and condemn his hero. As it was mentioned in the introduction to this dissertation, he, remaining influenced by Russian literature, show compassion with Abū Nasīf's struggle with the Lord's will and involves spiritual and physiological moments in this process. Hafiz (172, 173) notes that Naimy's character's obsession to have a boy that drives him to madness and terrible crime is seen by the story's author (who by no means justifies him) as his desire to continue national traditions, as it is important for an Arab man to have a son. The Lebanese writers' narration about Abū Nasīf's loyalty to traditions and mentioning the fact that family was the only one that refused to pay Columbus tax, turns readers to the idea of the nationalism of the head of the village.

Naimy draws a symbolic relationship between Abū Nasīf's associations of his so much needed and desired son to the icon of the Christ and his further lie about a stillborn girl. The failure of this wish on the eve of the New Year is interpreted by Naimy as the absence of the Savior's birth, who would save the world and Abū Nasīf, mentally, spiritually and socially.

Both Naimy and Tolstoī depicted many sufferings in their literary works. And they both suffered themselves. The beginning of both Tolstoī's and Naimy's spiritual and religious searches were marked by a deep crisis during which they attempted to solve the nature of evil and death. Tolstoī was painfully trying to understand the meaning of life when he became a

famous and wealthy writer<sup>36</sup>. He asked himself: if all people, rich and poor, sinful and sinless, healthy and sick, die, then what is life's purpose?

Naimy experienced his spiritual crisis much earlier, and he was posing these same questions while still at seminary in Poltava. N.Naimy (NNI 102-103) thinks that the spirit of the Russian writer's story entitled "Skol'ko cheloveku zemli nuzhno?" ["How Much Land Does a Man Need"] (1886)<sup>37</sup> is easily detected in Naimy's diary, where he notes that human life is so short that it is not worth it to compete for wealth, fame and glory. Such things captivate us, but they

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<sup>36</sup> Though even before this Tolstoī had been fairly well-to do.

<sup>37</sup> The plot of this edifying story is about Pahom, a greedy peasant, who is punished by his acquisitiveness. A devil overhears Pahom saying "If I had plenty of land, I shouldn't fear the devil himself!" and abruptly accepts this challenge.

Later, the protagonist moves to a larger area of land at another Commune. He collects good crops from it, but he does not want to rent more land. He decides to buy it, but he still has not satisfied his desire for land.

Finally, Pahom is introduced to the Bashkirs, who own a large amount of land. He finds them to be a very simple-minded people who have only the vaguest idea about Russian roubles. This fact inspires him to take as much of their land for as low a price as possible. But their offer was quite unusual: for a sum of one thousand roubles, Pahom could take as much of an area as he wanted on the following condition: he had to encircle the area he wanted on foot starting at daybreak and to mark his route with a spade along the way. If he reached his starting point by sunset that day, then the entire area of land marked by him would be his. But if not, then he would lose his money and receive no land. He was delighted as he believed that he could get a huge area as a bargain.

That night, Pahom dreams that the devil put his foot on Pahom's dead body and is laughing. But this does not stop the greedy peasant from his plan.

He marks out land, though covered with sweat and experiencing increasing pain, hunger and thirst. Just before the sunset, Pahom realizes how far he is from the starting point and runs back as fast as he can. He is able to make it back in time, and the Bashkirs cheer him. But at that moment Pahom drops dead, as he is fatally exhausted by the hard work.

He is buried in an ordinary grave that is only six feet long, and this is the ironic answer to the question posed in this short story's title.

are temporary and unstable. At a certain place and time we shall find ourselves in a narrow, dark and cold ditch, where there will be no glory, no riches, no poetry, no prose, and thus we shall be released from our daily concerns (Sab 1 211).

This story's idea intertwines with the issue of death, which, according to Tolstoī, represents a deep suffering, but nevertheless suffering is good, as all the pleasures in this world are received through it<sup>38</sup>. Thus, if suffering is an evil, then pleasure will be an evil, too, so there will be only an evil in this world. It purifies people, as they opened their boundaries that they begin to feel better through their suffering. But when they die, their boundaries expand so a human's personality is destroyed, but his divine part is discovered. Thus, dying is a process of growing and the illumination of the understanding of Love. And where there is Love, there is life. That is why, according to Tolstoī, death is life (Gustafson 150-155).

Naimy interpreted suffering as the way to something new that will improve people in the end and turn them towards the good. His Sunbim from *Yaa Ibn Adam! [O, Adam's Son!]* (1969) is speaking all the time to his constant interlocutor, a Serpent, about human improvement, modern civilization and the only human eye that can really see, a human's soul. Ramadan (92) notes that Naimy interpreted this Biblical prototypical role differently from its traditional understanding. By turning Adam towards a path different from the Lord's, the Serpent separates Adam from our world's Creator. But the first man returns back to God after his work on his own soul, by his own initiative and through his devotion. Thus, "a man should walk the long way of Duality in order to unfold his own will and unify himself by understanding" (cit. in Ramadan 92). So Adam's fall

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<sup>38</sup> Tolstoī's extreme fear of death that he never overcame. In fact, he died in 1910 while fleeing from it on foot.



and sufferings were necessary in order for him to change, grow and become one with God. In this case, Naimy's the Serpent deserves blessings and gratitude, and symbolizes wisdom, eternity and healing.

Naimy's vision of death is similar, though not identical to the Tolstoian one. Naimy did not consider death to be a tragedy or to be a painful event, since he believed in the lifecycle – if there will be no death, then there will be no physical place for a new life (MNCW 9:671). His al-Arqash speaks to a personification of death and to a cat, whom he considers his friend. The cat ate a mouse, but is still al-Arqash's friend in spite of the fact that it also embodies death in his eyes. Death tells Naimy's main character that it kills people, but for the better, as they are thus reborn to a new life where they attain greater perfection. His other reason for accepting death as a natural phenomenon was in his gradually developing belief in reincarnation. His Shūrtī's suicide is not depicted as a Christian sin or as a sad and horrible event. Rather, Naimy's heroes leave this world after they have learned all the necessary lessons for their current incarnation in order to be born into the next life. Before his death, Shūrtī speaks to the universe and writes a letter to his bride who does not exist in real life. Thus, his departure from life is understood by Naimy as just a transformation from one fictional place to another one.

Naimy's position on the place of death in our earthly life was close to Tolstoī's, who similarly came to the conclusion that death was the beginning of a human's soul waking up preparing for his rebirth. This thought was expressed in the one of the best of Tolstoī's novellas, *The Death of Ivan Il'ich* (1886).

For the Lebanese writer, the world was one single unity containing birth and death cycles that had no beginning or end. He noted that if someone would live and grow for thousands of years,

there would be no place for other creatures to be born and grow. He considered our world to be a station through which people must pass and then leave, aiming towards some other reality that everybody will face after leaving this world (“Iiṭinī al-ḥayyah lā alam fihā wa ahlyan bī al-mawt” [“Give Me Life Without Pain In it, and Welcome to Death” (1967) (Naimy 9: 707). This idea is similar to one expressed in Tolstoī’s story “Tri smerti” [“Three Deaths”] (1859), where he wrote about the natural cycle of people’s lives.

The religious idea of a vengeful deity that punishes humans for their misdeeds, which often seems unjust, was rejected by Tolstoī. If it is God that determines punishments, as we are too imperfect to do this, then he doesn’t exist. As God is Life and Love. So it is not the vengeful God that makes people suffer, but people themselves, who invented an evil God to cover their misdeeds. In order to justify themselves, they consider the Lord to be an evil, and thus they deny Him and do not receive consolation from him. The punishment for sin is loss of love, so people are punished not for their sins, but by these sins (Gustafson 144, 147).

Naimy’s thoughts about pain in our world also carry the traces of Tolstoī’s influence expressed by the Russian writer in his numerous didactic articles, and specifically in “About Life”. The famous recluse of Iasnaïa Polīana claimed there that sufferings only help us grow and avoid mistakes. If we did not have them, whether they are our physical or moral sufferings, then we would continue making the wrong choices, and we would not discover dangerous diseases and other ailments.

The Lebanese writer, like Tolstoī, considered suffering to be the continuation of a new life. In 1967 he said in an interview to the Tunisian newspaper *Mulhiq al-anwar* that if someone opposes pain in this world; it means that this person is against life itself, as he is denying one of

its most powerful organic elements. Only inanimate things do not feel pain, so pain means life, and experiencing it helps us appreciate the joy of painless life better. Pain helps a person grow and beautifies him, as it moves people in the right direction, as when we suffer from our inability to perform something, then the only way to stop our suffering is to be patient and rethink our position. That is why to deny pain and suffering means to deny joy and the value of life (MNCW 9: 702, 703).

As it was stated by Bell in “Mikhail Naimy 1889-1988,” Naimy was able to fully develop these ideas in his *The Book of Mirdad* that was considered by him to be a summary of his views on life and the pinnacle of his thoughts (252, 260, 261). In order to reach a broader audience several years after the book’s publication in Arabic, he translated it into English. In spite of its very specific language and numerous allusions that are not always clear, *The Book of Mirdad* received world recognition and was translated into numerous languages. Osho (par. 2), the famous modern Indian mystic and professor of philosophy at the University of Jabalpur (India), praised this literary work for its spiritual ideas. He said that he would put *The Book of Mirdad* at the head of a list of the greatest books ever written. We do not need to look up meanings in the dictionary, as their meanings are in our hearts.

Naimy, like Tolstoī, thought that people’s final aim was self-perfection, as through it we come closer to the Lord and achieve what we need to achieve in this life.

Naimy and Tolstoī were living in Russia during an epoch of the rapidly developing global transformations, including the appearance of radically new literature. The Lebanese man of letters noted that he was attracted by the new generation of Russian writers that had a new vision of things. Their style was full of life and very colorful, and these writers glorify the new God, the

great people's nation, as they could not find the Christian Lord anywhere after a long search: neither in churches, nor in monasteries, nor in the caves of ascetics and hermits (Sab 1 178). He sharply criticized the ecclesiastical establishment, writing that during several years of studying at the seminary he encountered all the possible vices there.

## Chapter Five

### The Influence of Tolstoyan Social Criticism on Naimy

Vladimir Lenin, Marxist theoretician and the one of the founders of the first socialist state, called Tolstoï “a mirror of the Russian revolution” (cit. in Bychkov 57) due to his passionate exposure of social contradictions in prerevolutionary Russia. Millions of Russians had reached the point of hating their masters, but had not yet entered the stage of conscious, consistent and merciless struggle against them (Lukàcs 127).

Naimy, who witnessed the situation in Ukraine in the early twentieth century and whose impressions were exacerbated by his bitter observations of life in Lebanon during the Ottoman empire’s decline and colonialism’s further aggressive steps and the American capitalist lifestyle, always supported the October revolution and enthusiastically responded to the construction of socialism in the U.S.S.R. Almost half a century after returning from Poltava, he wrote a collection of social and political articles *Far from Moscow and Washington*, which as been refered to before. There he enthusiastically argued about the advantages of socialism over capitalism for people (Ab 158, 159, 174).

He stated that the opposition of these systems in the modern world and the lack of knowledge of many people about what socialism was were among the reasons why he wrote the book. This situation influenced people to make the wrong choice when choosing a social and political system. Ignorance of socialism led to worry, fear and aversion between people. The representatives of the socialist system do not accurately present their achievements to the whole world; they just know that a person is a brother to another person despite his position, race, or nationality. Such brotherhood is characterized by

...cooperation instead of rejection, by deliberation instead of rivalry, by compromises instead of lack of sensitivity to others. Who treats his brother equally, will be treated equally, who oppresses his brother, will be oppressed, and the one who digs a ditch for his brother, will fall into it (Ab 159).

Naimy wrote that he was experiencing growing anxiety due to the fact that America and Lebanon, the two countries that were significant to him in his life, did not follow socialism. If these countries would have chosen socialism, then they would have served the well-being of the population and would have moved towards achieving the social good.

Naimy's judgments combined Biblical quotations with Tolstoī's philosophy of social justice. This Christian Holy book and the study of the life of Jesus were the most authoritative sources of wisdom for Naimy and Tolstoī, and their writings are characterized by repeated references to these sources.

While criticizing the nature of the modern state, Tolstoī in his religious-philosophical essay "What Do I Believe?" claimed that the violation of Christ's injunction to love your neighbor could be seen in the unappeasable appetite of empires to conduct wars and in how the state court and penal system helped one class exploit and rule over another one. Tolstoī compares the modern government to torture instruments that disfigure people's bodies and souls (cit. in Hamburg 145).

Since the modern lifestyle means living under the aegis of the state, modern people found themselves "in a viscous cycle of violence, from which there is no possibility of escape" (cit. in Hamburg 145).

Naimy expressed the same negative attitude towards the state system, since he saw in it a system of possession over people and one of society's vices (Bilyk 85). His Mirdad claims that all the powers and fears existing in the modern world were "foam" in their own eyes. He says:

Any secular authority is false. It digs in its claws and, while threatening to rattle its sword, [it] is haughty passing in front of a crowd, beaming with gold and silver. It must have all this so that no one can see its heart's falsehood.

[. . .] That kind of power is a curse, and it places blinkers on the person who yearns to experience it. It will [pay] any price to maintain itself, and [it will even destroy] a human being, those who obey him, and those who disagree with him.

People cannot together live in peace because of their lust for power. [. . .] And at the same time, the human [in all of us, as all of us represent God]...is trampled underfoot, left alone, without hope and love (Najmi 107, 108).

Emir Bitar, who imprisons Mirdad, embodies an aggressive state in Naimy's view (Bilyk 85), so the Lebanese writer inserts a dialogue between the Emir and his captive into his book where Mirdad debunks the modern state's actions and values that it instills into its citizens. It astoundingly reminds Tolstoï's critics of the modern state system. Naimy's character says:

...[A war] is kill[ing your] neighbors, who wish to live in peace! There is not much merit in [this]. Try to live in peace with the ones who are alive. And if you have to wage war with people whose interests do not coincide with yours, then you make war against God, who gave birth to the whole world and people, [. . .]... Why does your neighbor want to fight against you? ...not because you're blue-eyed, and he has green eyes,...not because you're dreaming about angels and he about demons...[He wants] ... your throne, your wealth, your fame...[so] [. . .] declare war on all those things. When you defeat them...then maybe your neighbor will back down from [his] claims and put down his sword...

... [As for honor] ... The only honor for a human is be a Godlike human. All other kinds of honor are only dishonor.

An honor that is bestowed to a man by [another] man is easy to pick up and destroy. An honor taken by sword in a battle can be taken out.

...True freedom demands your own sacrifice. (Najmi 111, 112).

Mirdad tries to convince people to get rid of their property, since it is not necessary to own lots of things, as they only enslave their owner. Naimy's hero explains that a person who enjoys

the beauty of things, and does not simply own them, is their true owner. So, the spiritual side of any action, even the trivial possessing of things, is for Naimy above simple material possession. He thinks that money, property, and wealth accumulation are disastrous: “What is wealth? It is the blood and sweat of exploited majority” (Najmi 70).

Naimy was deeply dissatisfied with American values and his life in the U.S., where he spent twenty years (1912-1932). The Lebanese writer noted in the letter to his brother written at that period:

I came to America with everything in me speaking loudly against American materialism. or what seemed to me sordid American materialism. Continuous hustle and bustle and rush for money – and for what? It seems to me the whole thing was false and empty...(cit. in Hine 55).

Naimy opposes al-Arqash’s spiritual world to the American material one. His hero does not accept all the fuss and formalities of Western civilization, as writing down people’s formal papers and knowing that some house belonged to some person, is senseless, as it belongs to the mice, cats, dogs, flies who live there. Property also belongs to the universe, so the only true record that can be made is of people’s existence in the universe (Najmi 37).

Naimy’s attitude towards the model of Western civilization is expressed in his novel *The Cuckoo Clock*<sup>39</sup>, which is included in his collection of short stories *Once Upon A Time*. The

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<sup>39</sup> Khattar Masad, “*The Cuckoo Clock*” central protagonist, starts his life in a small Arab village and seems happy until Faris, his neighbor, returns from America. His Western clothes, English language and beautiful cuckoo clock brought from the Europe impress Khattar. These object also impress Zirmud, his bride, who decides to leave Khattar for Faris, since she believes that a relationship with him would be more prestigious. Khattar then decides to go to the U.S. and to try his luck there. After making a successful career in America, Khattar realizes that he has had made a serious mistake, as he had only been attracted by the outside beauty, glamour, convenience and speed of Western life. He had paid too high price for this luxury life that turned out to be unnecessary for him, as it was his own soul. This story is autobiographical and is written in one of Naimy’s favorite literary forms, the diary.



novel's title reflects the nature of Western civilization, where real birds (i.e. life) is replaced by mechanisms, and the toil that people need to do (like self-perfection and understanding the Lord) is replaced by careers in business, competitive jobs and the deification of money and property.

Khattar Masad from *The Cuckoo Clock* probably embodies Naimy's position about the conflict of civilizations and his dream about the victory of Eastern (traditions) over the West (modern life). His hero is certainly autobiographical. Life in "a monstrous Tower of Babel at a demonic pace" with limited material interests makes Khattar return back to his village, just as Naimy was impelled to leave the U.S. to return to his homeland.

In *The Cuckoo Clock* Naimy metaphorically depicts the East and the West, where the latter is represented by two travelers (MNCW 2:314). But if the East rides a chariot of the "heart", driven by horses of "emotions and thoughts" and is reined in by "faith and timeless interruptible traditions", the West's chariot is powered by "steam and electricity, [it is manufactured of] steel and metal, and is powered by conceit and arrogance" (MNCW 2:314). The Eastern rider recognizes the greatness of the Western one and considers his advice, which is compared by Naimy to "rattles and clicks" that encourage the other to speed up and copy him. He glorifies and thanks the West for this valuable advice, though he ends up selling his soul to obtain the same carriage.

Authentic generosity, fullness of heart, and the real human relations of the East are opposed by Naimy to the hard-headed Western mind in numerous stories. Another example that opposes East to West can be found in his short story "Ulbat kibrīt" ["Box of Matches"],<sup>40</sup> which is included in

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<sup>40</sup> The story starts with a question about who is more greedy and disgraceful – the East or West? Then the protagonist narrates two stories, one set in a small village in Lebanon and another in Paris. Both stories feature encounters between people from these opposite parts of the world. The first story takes place in a tiny Arab village where poor and uneducated people help a Western

his short story collection *High-Ranked*. In this short story Naimy opposes the modern disgraceful, greedy and inhumane Western civilization with the traditional East, which is gallant and generous.

Naimy, like Tolstoī, constantly criticized modern civilizations. In his essay “Nahdat al-sharq al-arabiy” [“The Rise of the Arab East”] (1972) (MNCW 5:45-50), which is included in his collection of articles *The Stages*, Naimy again touched on the topic of East and West. The first discovered and gave the West “immutable truths,” to which it still turns occasionally at times of spiritual crisis. Modern civilization concentrates on “making [the world] better,” but since it was created by God, it is as beautiful and perfect as the Lord himself. That is why the East accepts it as it is. But the West is working hard to “perfect” it, claiming that it will not follow the Lord’s way and ignoring what is written in Christian and Muslim Holy books. Such an approach only shows its “arrogance.” Naimy compares the attempts of the West to improve the world to “a fish that tries to improve the sea and comprehend its secrets.”

Naimy stated that if by the Arabic Renaissance we mean indiscriminate copying of Western politics, economics, domineering attitudes, oppression through violence, and other Western cultural phenomena, then the Arab world is destined to follow the Japanese path of quick capitalist development. But he would put stagnant China above Japan, which was rapidly developing at the time when Naimy was writing the article. Naimy, identifying China with

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stranger pull his car from mud, offer him hospitality and refuse to take any material compensation for their assistance. The second situation takes place in Paris where the Arab protagonist stays for several years while studying at the Sorbonne. He becomes quite close to the owner of the hotel where he is staying, buys presents for him and his family, lends the owner money in a critical situation and refuses to collect interest when the latter pays him back. On the last day after very emotional goodbyes, the owner runs after the protagonist’s taxi. When the car stops, the owner insists that he pay for the matchbox that he had forgotten to include on the last bill.

Lebanon, claims that they shall find out that it has real treasures, such as traditions and wisdom. But Japan, which is living through its own Renaissance, does not possess them.

At the same time the East is tempted by the many Western inventions that resulted from scientific technical progress. But modern airplanes, trains, machines and numerous material improvements will not help people discover life's secrets, nor will it raise their spirituality and faith. Though Naimy sadly predicts that one day the West will win over the whole world technologically and economically, he notes at the end of his article that if we pose the question of who must learn from whom, then it will be the West who will remain the East's student forever.

Naimy continued to discuss the East and West throughout his creative writings, including the essay "al-Tawamān: al-sharq wa-al-gharb" ["The Twins: The East and The West"] (MNCW 4:560-585), which was written twenty years after the previous article and is included in his collection *The Threshing Floors*. It provides one more example of how Naimy thought about this issue. He is, as always, very openly hostile about Western civilization. Like Tolstoī, he opposes Western science and reason to the eternal Eastern prophets, and he finds the West to be sick in its stubborn desire to look outward instead of looking inward. But in "The Twins..." he sees the light at the end of tunnel and is more optimistic about the East's future. He claims that at the point when Western materialistic civilization peaks, the East will be reborn.

Naimy's American period was one of his most productive. At the same time, he found it bitter to live far away from Lebanon in a culture that was so disagreeable to his nature. The new life of Arab American emigrants, which was full of crushed hopes and did not allow these people to find themselves as they were forced to serve Mr. Dollar, inspired Naimy to write numerous stories both during his time there as well as much later.

al-Khattar from *The Cuckoo's Clock* is a good example of modern civilization's influence on people. He manages to become wealthy in America, but with time he realizes that he is becoming "a soulless screw" in the bourgeois machine. He returns to his native Arab village, where he is highly revered and receives the name *Bū ma'arūf* (which means someone who possesses fairness, equity, kindness, friendliness, and courtesy (Wehr 710)) from his neighbors. al-Khattar is opposed by Naimy to Alis, his Syrian wife, who has been born and raised in America, so she lives in the total harmony with its lifestyle, judgments and values, full of cunning, tricks and lies. al-Khattar's wife, in turn, is opposed to Zimrud, an innocent and naïve village girl with whom Naimy's hero has fallen in love before travelling to the U.S.

Naimy, who was an attentive observer of the lives of Syro-Lebanese emigrants in the U.S., described how their lives abroad sharpened all their negative character traits. He feels a mixture of squeamishness, sorrow and pity for al-Dawak Bik from *His Excellency al-Bik*. Coming from a wealthy and noble Arab family, the old man is neither able to establish a relationship with his new surroundings in a big American city, nor take care of his appearance nor even get food for himself. But his vanity still controls his behavior, so he immerses himself into an illusory world, sitting at a café table proudly fenced off by a newspaper, even though he is illiterate. He is served free food from the café's Arabic owner.

Here we feel Naimy's charity, which is so typical for Russian literature when it expresses pity for victims of the social changes, who are described with humor and irony.

### Self-perfection

These examples taken from Naimy's stories echo Tolstoī's heroes with their constant self-analysis and concerns about the perfection of the human soul as the only way to live the right life

given to us by the universe and modern society's baneful influence on people. The great Russian writer came to the conclusion that it was impossible and even senseless for an individual to reach some stage of self-perfection, since all of us live in a corrupt society and cannot separate ourselves from it. Moreover, a person's life outside of society is senseless. Thus, the whole society, and not individuals, must seek self-perfection. At the same time, before correcting others, we must correct ourselves as much as we can. Thus, in order to make all people better, we must start by making ourselves (Bulgakov 270).

Naimy admired Tolstoī's decision to devote his life to serving people, self-perfection and fighting the official church in his already mentioned above article "Giant of Spirit and Pen" devoted to the life of the Russian philosopher and writer, which is the first work in the collection *In the New Sieve*.

All the heroes of Naimy's three long novels (al-Arqash from *al-Arqash's Memoirs*, Mūsā al-'Askariy from *The Last Day* and Sunbim from *O, Adam's Son!*) are looking for their path to redemption (Ramadan 76). Each of them chooses to turn away from modern civilization and pursue an idea of self-perfection that must be achieved by going back to their original roots.

*al-Arqash's Memoirs* is written in the form of an unorganized and tragic diary of a strange, quiet and ugly waiter in one of lower Manhattan's Syrian restaurants and who had come to it seemingly from nowhere and later disappeared. Readers find lots of notes in this diary about al-Arqash's sufferings, discoveries, thoughts and his main secret: he is an educated Argentinean man of Lebanese origin who madly loved a girl whom he married. But on the wedding night he killed her and then vanished, leaving a note stating that he had stabbed his love. We shall analyze this crime in detail in the last section of this chapter.

As for *The Last Day*, it is written, as N.Naimy noted, in the form of a mystical novel, a philosophical treatise, where allegory and Mikhail Naimy's biography are combined in a sequence of poetical symbols and carries mystical traces (NNI 71). This novel's plot covers the period of one day, when Mūsā al-'Askariy, an older and educated professor, hears a mystical voice at night telling him that tomorrow will be his last day. Within a short period of time, he radically reconsiders his life and values and realizes the vanity of his deeds and his job. He has several surrealistic dreams about himself and his family members and ends up completely transformed: his personality has radically changed and his soul is relieved.

Naimy used the same Tolstoian idea of death as the beginning of life and the rebirth of the soul. Andrei Bolkonskiĭ from *War and Peace* experiences high inspiration and feels that his death was his awakening during the last several seconds of his life. Ivan Il'ich's death in *The Death of Ivan Il'ich* also causes his soul to reawaken. Before falling sick with a fatal disease this Tolstoian hero had been following an ordinary, bourgeois and careless life by mostly concentrating on his career and material concerns. He rethinks his entire life and comes to the conclusion that it was his aimless lifestyle that led him to experience unbearable pain and premature death<sup>41</sup>.

The hero of *O, Adam's Son!* is Sunbim, a bright scientist. He is looking for truth using modern technologies, and one day he invents a fatal weapon. It could make his government the most powerful in the world. His achievements are highly rewarded by the state, and he receives all

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<sup>41</sup> Literally, it is the injury that Ivan Denisovich sustains when he falls off the ladder when decorating his living room that eventually metastasizes into a fatal illness. But we would argue that this ordinary event is symbolic, so it is his petty, materially-focused lifestyle that leads to his death.

kinds of moral and material encouragement. During this triumphal period in his life Sunbim vanishes and is found later in a deep forest. There he spends time with a Serpent who becomes his best friend, and a reporter, that found him, as his disappearance was a great event since it happened when the a government decided to give Sunbim an one million dollars as an award for this invention. They have endless talks and arguments about modern civilization and life in general.

Ramadan (77) thinks that the characters of Naimy's central novels parallel the writer's growth. First, we read about al-<sup>3</sup>Askariy, who is first totally lost, as he has never stopped to think of what life's real values are until his last day. He is then reborn as al-Arqash, who agonizes and painfully searches for the meaning of life. Afterwards he is finally reborn again as a mature Sunbim who has made a long and successful trip to a higher self. He clearly knows how he needs to live, as "a human is not a bridge, but a goal", and time came to fix this. He failed in his search to find the meaning of life using modern technologies and common sense, as a human's reason in this case is his weakness. Reason does not help him achieve closer understanding of the Lord (MNCW 7: 34). That is why modern civilization cannot understand Nature's physical side without grasping its inner side (MNCW 7: 32). Sunbim is very critical of modern civilization, which is so proud of its numerous inventions. Meanwhile, there is only one kind of weapon (Love) that can be used to win any conflict (MNCW 7: 46). But the modern world is immersed in its pleasures and animal lust (MNCW 7: 34, 48). It is, in fact, "made of tins": people's thoughts are canned, as are their feelings, sciences, art, beauty, conscience, faith and consciousness.

Sunbim comes to the conclusion that all modern values and achievements are nothing but "foam", and that it is not the rational mind, but the inner eye that is able to see the futility of real

civilization. People must not be misguided by lifeless forms (however beautiful they may be), and they must know that the only way to glory, self-satisfaction and happiness for a human is coming to know, which is only possible through the heart (MNCW 7: 65, 66). He expresses his sadness about modern society that has invented all kinds of medicines, except for the one that would kill a disease called *saraṭān al-māl* [financial cancer].

### Utopias, patriotism and pacifism

So what is the society that Tolstoī and Naimy are fighting for?

Both of them are idealists and utopians. Both of them draw a picture of society based on the principles of Love, equality and fraternity, without borders, exploitation, crimes, wars, national, race, and religious conflicts.

In his *Path of Life* Tolstoī proposes a different state system based on an ideal, according to the Russian philosopher, people's morality. The book presents a naïve picture of an ideal society could have been influenced by French socialists-utopists, such as Victor Hugo, George Sand, Charles Fourier, the creator of the phalanstery, and who was one of the favorite French thinkers of the young Dostoevskiī and other members of the Petrashevskiī Circle, and some others.

These ideas of joint work for the mutual benefit and joint efforts for moral perfection are expressed by Naimy's al-Arqash. He thinks that people must not fight each other, but rather themselves.

The same utopian ways of achieving happiness through moral perfection were proposed by Naimy in his several novels. His position is particularly notable in *The Book of Mirdad*, where he presents an ethical-religious utopia in the spirit of "purified" Christianity. This literary work's didactic and dogmatic tone reminds us of Tolstoī's spiritual teachings.



In addition to numerous sources, including both Eastern and Western ones, the Lebanese writer was able to find commonalities with his ideas in Tolstoī's late works.

The conflict between a declared fraternity and social justice and the impossibility of putting these realities into practice due to the nature of a class-based society leads to the deepening of social tensions, continued upper class rotting and the suffering of the common people.

Though Tolstoī aggressively criticized the state's conception in such works as *Tserkov' i gosudarstvo* [*Church and State*] (1891), *Konets Veka* [*Century's End*] (1905), *Rabstvo nashego vremeni* [*Slavery of Our Time*] (1899-1900), "Patriotizm i pravitel'stvo" ["Patriotism and Government"] (1900), among many others. Tolstoī's definition of the state's essence given in his article "O Gosudarstve" ["On the State"] (1909) can be fully applied to Naimy's. The great Russian writer stated:

Armed, rude, cruel people are robbing industrious [and] harmless...people. Sometimes they rob by raids, rob and leave, sometimes they settle among working people in order to arrange permanent robbery, i.e. take out of ... [worker's production] and use it, protecting themselves with weapons.

The entire modern state structure is based on this, and only on this [principle], [as well as] on various homelands, including people of the same or different nationalities; this is a basis for all sorts of public institutions: different senates, councils, parliaments, [this is also a principle of] the power of emperors [and] kings (Tolstoī 38: 291).

At the same time, there was a difference between Naimy's and Tolstoī's position towards socialism. Naimy admired it and noted that the Russian people who carried out the terrific revolution in 1917 addressed all the negative issues that had been poisoning their life for decades: tyranny, dictatorship, exploitation and corruption. They allowed Russia to end the war without shame and to mobilize itself for carry out the greatest social and political experiment in human history (Ab 227).

Tolstoī was much less enthusiastic about socialism. In his work *O sotsializme* [*On Socialism*] (1910), he claims that though it will end the exploitation of workers whose labor has been controlled by their exploiters, it will create new problems, as the socialist state will be forced to use violence to suppress the hostile layer of former capitalists.

But how can an ideal, or a close to an ideal society be achieved? Tolstoī and Naimy came to the same conclusion that in order to change modern society and save people, it was necessary to start by teaching correct values.

In his philosophical tracts, such as “What Do I Believe?” and *O zhizni* [*On Life*], Tolstoī criticized social hypocrisy that results from teaching the wrong values. While chasing material gains, people build enterprises and big cities, prefer living in an unhealthy atmosphere, change salutary physical labor for a more sedentary lifestyle, and abandon proper family lives for the sake of sexual affairs and promotion of all sorts of material gains. All these phenomena of the new social life were presented by the state as progress. Many people in these new “death cultures” followed this new lifestyle without offering any rational explanation. Moreover, the loss of artificial and newly invented values meant that many people suffered (Hamburg 143).

Tolstoī in his work *Path of Life* (1910), which was written after his excommunication from the church, wrote: “... the state’s happiness has an inverse relationship to...people’s happiness... So I ask: were we not happier when we were in a primitive state, when we did not have this culture and civilization” (Tolstoī 31).

In the story “Proezhii i krest’ianin” [“A Passerby and a Peasant”] (1909) Tolstoī expresses his view of false ideals. The peasant, after a long conversation with the passerby, concludes that if we manipulate other people, drink, and hate each other, then we serve the devil. If we follow

people's laws, then we make our life worse. It is only the Lord that we need to follow in order to achieve a good life. Here we can also notice Tolstoī's call to renounce wealth and power and to preach for an ascetic lifestyle:

For the person who sincerely experiences the sufferings of the people who surround him, there is only one simple, easy and accessible set of principles... It is the only one that is capable of curing [them] of the evils that surround them and maintaining the legitimacy of their life: ... have no more than one [set of] clothes, have no money, do not use the labor of others... ("Tak chto zhe nam teper' delat'" 25: 295, 297).

The fact that Tolstoī and Naimy participated in armed conflicts left a deep trace on their souls and hearts and influenced their pacifism and turned them against any kind state machine and the official church. Medzhibovskaya claims that the trigger of Tolstoī's religious crisis can be found much earlier in his life, when he was serving in the Caucasus in the 1850s and participated in the suppression of Imam Shamil's uprising. His memoirs of the bloody battles and later reminiscences of the defense of Sebastopol' during the Crimean War, in which he was a participant, haunted Tolstoī till his last days and overwhelmed him with a feeling of guilt for his actions during these events. They also helped establish the Russian writer's firm position about wars as the product of the violence and arbitrariness of the Russian state supported by its hypocritical Orthodox church.

Naimy in his biography of Tolstoī (*Giant of Spirit and Pen*) wrote about Tolstoī's skillful description of war in his *Sevastopol'skie rasskazy* [*Sebastopol Sketches*], which were written by the Russian writer in 1855 after two months spent in Sebastopol' during its defense against the Turkish army. It is unprecedented in world literature one due to its realistic details (MNCW 7:370). The Lebanese author noticed that this Russian writer's work was a pacifistic protest

against senseless and horrifying war actions where Tolstoī opposed careless and corrupt aristocratic life in St. Petersburg to the bloody realities of Sebastopol's battlefields.

It is not surprising that this literary work drew Naimy's attention. His own experience of service in the American Army on the front line in France during World War I left a deep impression on him for the rest of his life and strengthened his already formulated position about modern society and the cruelty and futility of modern civilization. The young Lebanese soldier, who constantly ruminated on the ideal world and ideal person in search of the Lord's nature in everything, and who constantly tried to separate himself from the realities of life, had to face inhuman cruelty, savagery, violence and suffering. "Man is baser than any animal. He who takes pride in his reason while in war loses that reason," Naimy stated about the experience of wartime (NNI 119). Half a century later he would give a passionate speech full of humanism and pacifism that was broadcast on Soviet radio. He called on all people to stopping feud and to pursue friendship and cooperation.

One of Naimy's first stories, "Shūrṭī" ["A Short Man"] (1918), was written upon his return to the U.S. from Europe after his military service. Its plot and ideas atypical for a creative writer who belonged to the New York Pen League and mostly concentrated on the topics of nostalgia, life wisdom and the inner world of people. The story is the Lebanese writer's protest against wars that do not bring anything to people except suffering and death (Bilyk 36). Shūrṭī is a young cheerful man who is loved by all who meet him. He stays in at a hospital and is dying of an incurable deadly disease. He ends up committing suicide in spite of all his passion for life, as he does not want to wait for his inevitable death from radiation poisoning.

“A Short Man” reminds us of Tolstoī’s *Sebastopol Sketches*, in which Tolstoī does not provide any impressive panoramic descriptions of battles. Rather, he concentrates on the human factor and describes how the war cripples people’s minds and bodies. The Russian novelist also tries to analyze the commander’s vanity and the self-interested motives of the participant countries.

Tolstoī’s relatively early work is fully permeated with ideas of patriotism, people’s self-devotion to their countries as well as the brotherhood of all Christians. In less than twenty years Tolstoī would call love of Motherland a tenet of the rotten ideology of bloodthirsty countries. He would also deny the validity of formal religious establishments. Similarly, Naimy’s Mirdād from *The Book of Mirdad* says that people first divide the Lord’s land into pieces, and then fight and kill each other for them, thus showing the senselessness of war.

Since Naimy and Tolstoī considered all people to be brothers and equal, both writers rejected the idea of Motherland. In their opinion, this concept was introduced by an aggressive state ideology, since the idea of a country with arbitrary borders for a limited number of people seemed absurd to him.

Naimy noted that such false ideas as patriotism as well as slogans are used for waging aggressive wars. He pointed out that

the most difficult thing for a human to do [. . .] is to treat other people as brothers. Very often he noticed that we treat house cats or dogs better than the other people who live in the same household. Thus, how can we expect these people to treat those who are not even neighbors, but rather who are different from us in their skin color, language, religion and whose country is different from ours? (Ab 249).

Tolstoī also rejected patriotism as a foundational concept for the state. In his work “Patriotism and Government,” he characterized this political and moral principle as “rude, harmful,

shameful, and, most importantly, immoral” (Tolstoī 90: 427). He considers patriotism to be an unnatural, unreasonable principle that must be repressed and rejected, as it causes lots of calamities for humanity.

The Lebanese writer’s views about patriotism were similar to Tolstoī’s. The Lebanese man of letters said many times that since the Lord was the beginning of everything in this world, we carry part of him inside us. That is why all borders are unnecessary. His Mirdad says to Shamdam, an evil sorcerer:

I now speak to you not as a master... [to] his servant, nor as a servant to his master, but rather as a brother to a brother... and that is why my words oppress you so much. If you wish, then reject me. Did I not say that my flesh is your flesh? [. . .] Open your heart to me, if you want to protect [yourself] from pain (Najmi 37).

### *Moralities*

One more issue related to Tolstoī’s sharp social critics was related to its moralities. When Tolstoī finally found the meaning of life not in obtaining knowledge, but in obtaining belief and self-knowledge. His long diaries are full of notes about self-perfection. Tolstoī developed his goals for self-perfection in three directions – physical, emotional and mental. He prescribes separate tasks for each group, such as physical exercises, sleeping, reading, making plans, drafting life aims, treating other people with love, and several other goals that he meticulously described.

Naimy’s idea is similar to Tolstoī’s, though he paid less attention to everyday details and errands, and more attention to moral self-perfection. According to him, our life’s aim consists exactly in achieving the highest level of self-perfection through learning about ourselves and then learning about the Universe. It will be opened to those who were able to know themselves. Naimy’s al-Arqash divided people into several groups, including the one with *ṭullāb al-kamāl*

[people that require or are seeking for perfection]. In order to achieve this quality, we need to follow on our intuition and give this feeling priority over the less significant urges of our flesh and blood. al-Arqash's and Shūrṭī's global views and their ways of addressing the universe are opposed by Naimy to people's shallow vanity.

The Lebanese writer's position was very close that of the late Tolstoī, who considered self-perfection to be the main aim of humanity, since only through it can a moral ideal be reached.

Naimy's Book of Mirdad is devoted to those who would like to achieve the highest state of self-perfection. Naimy used the term *al-taghallub* that means "to triumph, gain the mastery, overcome, surmount, master, cope" (Wehr 796) for the action that these people need to perform. And it is the human "me" that must be overcome first and foremost. Naimy wrote:

...there is a giant power in this word, and if you do not become its ruler, you will become weak, your world will be a war, and you will be wandering in the darkness of prisons... *me* is an ocean [that is] thinking and at the same time thought of... *me* is felt and is feeling at the same time... What your "*me*" will be, your world will be... And if your *me* is durable and lasting, then your world will be also. [. . . In addition,] you will be at eternal peace with everything that [exists] on earth and in heavens (Najmi 32).

Naimy's solipsistic and pantheistic world outlook echoes Tolstoī's (Bilyk 77), when the great Russian writer stated that "evil will be destroyed outside us as soon as it is destroyed inside us" ("Tri dnīa v derevne" ["Three Days in a Village"], in Tolstoī 38: 10).

As Nikolaī Berdīaev, the Russian Orthodox theologian, noted (140), Tolstoī in his late work arrived at the idea that a human must build his life based on the idea of Good and exceptional morality. But Tolstoī developed his moralism to an extreme degree, so that it became horrible, exceptional and abstract. It made people think of a demonic Good, the one that destroyed human existence and debased the level of humanity.

Speaking about people's passions and desires in the modern society, Tolstoī in his work *What is to be Done?* expressed the thought that in order to live a proper life, people need to learn and to follow several principles, such as not killing any creature, not usurping property from other people or their labor, not indulging sexual desire and entering into marriage, not lying and judging other people, and not using alcohol or tobacco. He thought that people need to abstain from these vices so their attention could be totally concentrated on themselves. And by learning themselves, they will learn the Lord that is in each of us.

Naimy, who encountered much binge drinking, drunk parties, senseless conversation and womanizing in Poltava, wrote in his diary about these phenomena as deeply disgusting and alien to him. But most of all Naimy was disgusted by uncontrolled sexual relations and lust reigning everywhere (Sab 1 209).

The bloodthirsty government encourages people's bad habits through the mass sale of alcohol<sup>42</sup> and tobacco, and it winks its eyes at the presence of drinking establishments of all kinds that are found in Tolstoī's stories "Son molodogo tsaria" ["The Young Tsar's Dream"] (1894) and *The Kreutzer Sonata*, as well as in his numerous letters and stories.

The state crisis in Russia and the numerous governmental problems in Europe at the end of the nineteenth century led to global cultural changes. Specifically, special attention was paid to Erotic issues that prevailed over Logos (Berdiaev) and that supplanted eternal issues of love and traditional family.

Tolstoī, who was experiencing a deep crisis of the soul at that time and for a while thereafter, tried to follow celibate doctrines. He also worked out a system of his own paradoxical views on

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<sup>42</sup> The sale of vodka was a state monopoly in the Russian Empire. See p. 4 of the following paper: <http://www.helsinki.fi/iehc2006/papers2/Waldron.pdf>



love, family, marriage, motherhood, and the relationship between the sexes that were radically different from those held by a whole cohort of world-famous poets, writers, and philosophers, whether past or present.

In his article “Ob otnosheniĭakh mezhdū polami” [“About the Relations between Genders”] (1890) and in his diaries he claims that sexual relationships lead to human degeneration and defilement. In his opinion, if people do not wish to have children, then their relationship should only try to satisfy Platonic love<sup>43</sup>.

Tolstoĭ’s novel *The Kreutzer Sonata* reflected all what had accumulated in his suffering souls by that time. It was written in 1889, almost a decade after Tolstoĭ’s spiritual crisis of the late 1870s and early 1880s. Immediately it provoked loud debates and a strong reaction all over Russian society, was banned by the tsarist government and censored by the Holy Synod. After its publication Tolstoĭ wrote an afterword, trying to explain this novel’s purpose:

I wanted to say [that], first [of all], our society has developed a widespread social layer that is supported by the false scientific belief that sexual intercourse is a necessary thing for health and that since marriage is a matter that is not always possible, sexual relationships outside of marriage do not oblige a man to anything other than monetary payment, and they are quite natural and must be encouraged. This belief became so common and firm, that parents, [following] doctor’s advice, arrange for their children’s debauchery; governments whose only concern [must be] their citizens’ moral welfare, establish debauchery, i.e. they regulate a whole

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<sup>43</sup> Tolstoĭ’s position regarding this issue was not unique. This was also the view of St. Augustine. His views provide the theological foundation for the doctrine of contraception within the Roman Catholic Church: 'Intercourse even with one's legitimate wife is unlawful and wicked where the conception of the offspring is prevented. Onan, the son of Judah, did this and the Lord killed him for it.' (St. Augustine, *De Adulterinis Coniugiis*, Book II, n. 12). So, any sexual act that does not aim to produce a child is wicked.

Like Tolstoĭ, Augustine had a rather hedonistic youth full of sexual relations with women. So his later ascetic views can be viewed as a reaction to his youthful excesses. Though, this would be the topic of another thesis.

class of women who must physically and mentally die in order to meet men's imaginary needs. Unmarried people indulge in debauchery with a completely clear conscience.

And I wanted to say that this is bad, because it [is not acceptable], since what is good for some people's health can destroy the bodies and souls of others... The conclusion, which I think is [naturally coming out from my previous statement], is that it is necessary to move away from this confusion and deception (Tolstoī 12: 196, 197).

Tolstoī's afterword only raised a stronger reaction. Society received the impression that that Tolstoī supported his hero who had killed his wife, though his idea was to show Pozdnyshev's tragedy, though he never showed remorse about this. Tolstoī's character leads an immoral lifestyle, and influences people around him to act the same way. Moreover, he makes his innocent wife lose her chastity and thus, according to the Russian writer, turns her into a whore.

*The Kreutzer Sonata* reflected what the hermit of Iasnaiā Polīana was feeling in his old age – a deep regret his immoral behavior for decades during his youth, the hypocrisy of making his wife stay almost constantly pregnant while at the same time propagating celibacy during the daytime. In 1888 he decided that he would no longer make physical contact with women, and thus this “indefatigable fornicator,” as he called himself in his letter to Gorkiī (Rancour-Laferriere par. 27), rejected the very important side of his personality. But his small children were the best evidence of his weakness in his old age. Instead of starting with himself, he constantly accused his wife as well as all women in the world of provoking desires and controlling men through their carnality. He hated females more and more for breaking his sex abstinence principle, and his misogyny was growing with every single year (McLean 205). This feeling can certainly be felt through his literary works, such as *Anna Karenina*.

The same idea of celibacy is constantly repeated in Tolstoī's numerous writings, specifically in his *Filosofskiī dnevnik 1901-1910* [*Philosophical Diary 1901-1910*] where he writes about his aims in the form of a sermon of a chaste marriage. He claimed that just a fraternal union between

a man and a woman and complete celibacy until people wanted to have children were the best Christian lifestyle.

Daniel Rancour-Laferriere, an American professor of Slavic literature, has researched Tolstoī's rejection of sex and his negative attitude towards women using Sigmund Freud's and Melanie Klein's theories. He came to the conclusion that the great Russian writer experienced a deep Oedipus complex. Thus, his hero Pozdnyshev, who kills his wife, represents Tolstoī, who is jealous of his mother and hates all the other men who are associated in his mind with his father (par. 24-42, 61).

Moreover, Tolstoī hated women's fundamental principles in life in everything, starting with the relationship and continuing to the female body, to say nothing of marriage. This leads to the murder of Pozdnyshev's wife, as she symbolizes all women for him.

*The Kreutzer Sonata* also concentrates on the other social phenomena described by Laura Engelstein (32), an American Slavist. She applied Michel Foucault's social theories about how power is wielded in bourgeoisie society and claimed that since the hypocritical morality of the bourgeois society considered any topics related to sex to be a taboo, this issue, like all prohibitions, only increased interest in sex (8-9, 36, 58, 177n).

Tolstoī hates sex, as he considers it to be destructive for to human sanctity (Wasiolek 156) and a massive intrusion on a person's wellbeing [as well as] ruthless obliteration of the sanctity of a personhood" (Wasiolek 154).

In *Resurrection* Tolstoī again touched on the question of sex's destructive power (Cruise). Katiusha Maslova does not die like Anna. She is forced to become a prostitute, and she witnesses "the hypocritical underbelly of sexual desire" (Cruise 204). Maslova saves herself by becoming

celibate. Thus, she keeps herself from completely ruining herself both morally and physically and from wallowing in the perdition's depths.

As for Naimy's heroes, al-Arqash, who is, probably, the most outstanding of them, kills his wife for a reason that is very similar to Pozdnyshev's. The Lebanese writer's profound knowledge of Russian, life in Poltava and deep insight into Tolstoī enabled him to understand *The Kreutzer Sonata's* complicated ideas.

Tolstoī's works were familiar to readers of Arabic, but sometimes Arabic translations distorted the ideas of the original. This happened to *The Kreutzer Sonata*. Selim Qubayn, the translator of the work, whose knowledge of Russian language and culture was excellent, was not able to understand the Tolstoīan message in this literary work, and that is why he totally misinterpreted its end. Tolstoī's Pozdnyshev does not kill his wife because of his jealousy; he even introduces his friend Trukhachevskiī to his wife. The real reason is Pozdnyshev's anger at the modern world for overstepping the beautiful and innocent Platonic love and converting it into an animalistic emotion. This Platonic love reflects Tolstoī's idea about establishing the Lord's kingdom on the Earth through several radical changes, including celibacy and avoiding moral slavery by remaining chaste. But the modern marriage only leads humanity to a deadlock. The real reason of this situation can be found in the modern attitude toward women. Their improper upbringing and the ideals that they are taught convert them into sex slaves (DAr 291, 292).

Meanwhile, Qubayn's Pozdnyshev kills his wife for reasons of jealousy, and that is what Arabic readers learn from Qubayn's translation. Qubayn inserts into his translation his own comments and advice to young people about happy marriage and proper behavior in a family.

We'd like to claim that Naimy got the idea for his for his *Memoirs of al-Arqash's* from Tolstoī's *The Kerutzer Sonata* that he creatively rethought. The narrator of this story is going to

lose his virginity in a hotel room, and thus he make a step towards living in a debauchery. Pozdnyshv and al-Arqash are upset, but they do not kill themselves. They murder the real source of lust in the world, their wives, who, like all women in this world, doom them to follow their carnal desires by tempting them and turning them from the righteous lifestyle and even involving other innocent people in this process.

Moreover, according to Rancour-Laferriere (par. 9, 10), Tolstoī hated himself no less than he hated women. That is why his aggression combined masochistic elements directed at himself with sadistic impulses towards women. So, according to the Russian philosopher, not only women but also men (including Tolstoī) must stay virgin. The reason for proposing such abstinence was the following: once people stepped away from a pure lifestyle, they join the source of moral and physical corruption. They not only spoil themselves, but they also draw in everyone with whom they come into contact into the debauchery of modern society. Rancour-Laferriere believed (par. 10) that Anna Karenina's suicide was a literary incarnation of Tolstoī's desire to kill himself or to punish himself for his lust. The suicide also represents the author's hatred against the woman who cheats on her husband. This inevitable duality originates in the ontogenetic baby's mixture of his mother and himself, as he experiences deep attachment towards her as well as deep jealousy. In Tolstoī's case, these feelings are exacerbated because he had lost his mother very early on in his life.

As for Naimy, he lived with his mother, grandparents and siblings during his entire childhood. His father was absent for several years trying to earn a living in the U.S. Naimy's mother was a leader in their family (TRL 254), as the young Lebanese writer's decision to become a teacher was made under pressure from her. He did not see a great future as a teacher for himself. We

scarcely can find anything in his memoirs about whether Naimy had any special relationship with her.

We can detect the character of Naimy's relationship with women from his memoirs and literary works, as well as from his stories and interviews. It is possible to notice a tension there that is very similar to what Tolstoī experienced, though Naimy, in contradistinction from to Russian writer, never married. Most of his comments belong to the early periods of his life spent in Poltava and America. After that time, Naimy stopped mentioning any facts from his private life that bothered him at all. All his later numerous works were devoted only to political, social and philosophical issues. We can only find several sentences explaining why he never married in his interviews when he was asked this question. Naimy explained that he never wanted to marry due to his very deliberate lifestyle as well as his devotion to his writings.

It is very hard to expect Naimy to make the same categorical judgments that Tolstoī made about women when the former was barely out of his teens. But his feeling of discomfort with women as well as self-confidence can be read through his diary:

I understood how [we] might end up [in this situation] and was worried...But I had to [follow her], as I did not want to spoil the atmosphere of our stroll [in the wood]...We lay down in the grass, but my female friend does not lie down quietly. And I know why. Because the same thing is happening with me. There is a fierce struggle inside me: "Misha, you are experiencing an ordeal. Will you overcome it? Or will you give up? No, you must win. You must prove to yourself that you are stronger than this ordeal. You must preserve your honor. You are responsible for this girl. You can turn her towards a debauched way of life. Or you can turn her towards purity; if she has already lost it...It is not love that connects you two. She is just a female body to you. And I armed myself with reticence. Not any movement, not any word...I hated myself [for my physiological reaction to her kisses]... I resisted and controlled myself as much as I could, and I left this battle as a winner, I saved my virginity (Sab 1 194, 195).

I hate impudence, lies, hypocrisy, deceit, flattery and courtesy ... But most of all I hate promiscuity in all its manifestations. I always felt emotional discomfort in an environment where there is fuss and confusion... (Sab 1 209).

In America, Naimy experienced a deep crisis of the soul caused by modern civilization, and it was very similar to the one that Tolstoī had in his late forties. So the Lebanese writer's perception of life's realities was only exacerbated and became even closer to Tolstoī's.

If we briefly analyze Naimy's private life, we notice that he was involved in love affairs with women who were older than him and who were unhappily married, like Variā from Poltava and Nonia from America mentioned in his *Seventies*... And each time he followed the same relationship pattern. The women would take the initiative. He would resist first, but eventually he would express interest. He made these women fall in love with him. Then he called off these relationships, leaving these ladies with broken hearts, but still with some hopes.

Naimy is close to Tolstoī in how he describes the husbands of his women characters. These descriptions are similar to how Tolstoī described the relationship between his parents. Tolstoī might have had a similar reason to Naimy.

Rancour-Laferriere (par. 15) noticed that the Russian writer, whom he considered to be infantile and very much attached to his deceased mother, mentioned in her biography that she had been in love and even engaged to another man before she married Tolstoī's father. Thus he subconsciously makes his readers (and himself) think that she had enjoyed love and sex with another man, who was not his father. It makes Tolstoī win the competition with his father that results from his Oedipus complex.

Naimy prompts the same thoughts when he describes Variā's Kotia and Nonia's husband. They are depicted as ugly, sick creatures and real losers who are neither able to make a firm decision or understand life. According to Naimy, they never make their wives happy, either materially or physically. And they are certainly unloved. Similarly, Naimy showed up in the dark and gloomy lives of his lovers. He gives them hope only to break their hearts and make them

wish for sex with him. The end of the relationship comes when Naimy starts to abhor them for their passions and unclear desires.

Ramadan (62) thinks that Naimy was haunted by “the tragedy of a bedroom” about which Gorkiĭ said in his *Literaturnye portrety* [*Literary Portraits*]: “Man suffers through earthquakes, epidemics and horrors of disease, and all sorts of spiritual torments, but the most agonizing tragedy he ever knows has been and will be – the tragedy of the bedroom” (Gorkiĭ, cit. in Ramadan 62).

Ramadan (62) provides a detailed explanation of Gorkiĭ’s term (“tragedy of the bedroom”) by relying on Freudian psychoanalysis. He writes that men have a tendency to institute a taboo when they feel any kind of danger. The first intercourse with a woman for them stands as an extreme peril. That is why the taboo of virginity as well as the other taboo of woman, because of her menstruations, pregnancy and childbirth, can have a profound impact on the sexual life of men by causing them to feel psychic (and at times physical) impotence. This is a temporary erectile dysfunction, which is caused by neuropsychiatric reasons.

al-Arqash’s diary reminds one of the young Naimy, who is torn between his moral principles about high spiritual love and his base instincts. But if Naimy’s departure from Poltava to Lebanon brought on a painful love affair for both Naimy and Variā, his al-Arqash mysteriously disappears from the place where he had committed his crime. He leaves a note with the following text: “I slew my love with my own hand, for it was more than my body could feel and less than my soul hungered after” (Naimy 4: 446). This phrase almost repeats the phrase “I killed my love with my own hand” from Naimy’s Poltavan diary when he decided to break up with Variā, as their affair entered another stage where he could no longer be chaste. A year earlier or



so Naimy wrote a poem “Love’s Funerals” (Sab 1 185) that unfortunately has not been preserved. But we can guess that he experienced something similar before.

Pozdnyshev’s and al-Arqash’s murders are predetermined from the beginning of their relationships with women. According to Tolstoī’s theory, sexual relationships lead to crime, decline and a fatal end in both the moral and physical senses. We would suppose that Naimy continued to be influenced by the great Russian writer’s idea that was broadly discussed all over the country, officially and unofficially, when Naimy was living there. And it overlapped with Naimy’s deep physiological issues about the physical side of love.

Both Tolstoī’s and Naimy’s heroes are totally aware of what they are doing, and they are sure that they are right, as these innocent women whom they kill embody corporal life. Pozdnyshev’s wife (the term wife, of course, is never used by Tolstoī or by Naimy) and Najlah, al-Arqash’s bride, are considered to be debauched monsters and viruses that have infected the whole society by their husbands. Al-Arqash and Pozdnyshev consider their mission to be high and noble. It is something that will save humanity. Tolstoī thought that even if all people die in this world (which is the result of people never having sex, meaning the end of reproduction), this would be a better outcome than ruining the mother’s image by even admitting a thought for a child that she has had this kind of carnal relationship with his/her father. He also thought that when someone is involved or involves another person in this kind of relationship, he or she becomes dangerous to the society, as he or she turns people’s minds away from real values to serving the shallow interests of the body (TCW 12: 196-197).

There is one more interesting point in both novels. Wasiolek explained Anna Karenina’s deterioration through how Tolstoī views her as representing possessive love, as we cannot possess “something sacrosanct, radically individual, and belonging to no man, but the self-in-

God” (154). When a relationship is built on the principle of possession, the subject destroys its object and himself.

That is why the Russian writer compares the physical act of love between Anna and Vronskii to murder. Anna tries to demand more and more from her lover, and his attempts to act against her wishes make her furious. Anna’s suicide is her way to finally control him through guilt, and in this she succeeds.

Naimy also touches on the issue of destroying the subject together with beloved object. al-Arqash is in fact a living corpse, as he is killed by his sense of deep guilt for murdering Najla, and this feeling does not go away. It only grows and makes him crazier with each passing day. Though the situation described by Naimy is different from what Tolstoī describes, as it is al-Arqash who decides that he can kill his wife, controlling his lust and considering her as just an object. However, in the end he kills himself.

Rancour-Laferriere (par. 19, 27, 33-59) provided an interesting analysis of the details of the murder committed by Pozdnyshev that are similar to the one of al-Arqash. The first thing that attracts our attention is the fact that the dagger is used by the murderers.

In earlier drafts of the novel, Tolstoī was thinking of using a gun as the murder weapon, but then he changed his mind. Rancour-Laferriere (par. 51, 52) hypothesizes that the dagger is a long, pointed object, which in this case is used by a man to penetrate the body of a woman. Hence, it can be interpreted as a phallic symbol, like in Freudian analysis. The same thing happens to Pozdnyshev (and Tolstoī as well) considers sex to be tantamount to murder. Because of this, Pozdnyshev believes that his penis is not just a body part. Rather, it is a destructive tool. The real murder that takes place at the end of the story is the final summation of the numerous crimes performed by Pozdnyshev during the years when he had sex with his wife. Such an

interpretation satisfies traditional Freudian (Rancour-Laferriere par. 50) and Kleinian theory, according to which the male child perceives his penis to be a sadistic weapon an early stage of development.

Following *The Kreutzer Sonata*, Naimy's hero uses a dagger, too. He has been living in Argentina for years and brings his wife to a hotel after the marriage ceremony without any premeditated intention of killing her (though it is still not clear to the reader from where all of a sudden he got a big and sharp dagger in the hotel room). These thoughts occur only after his arrival at the hotel room, where he realizes that his feelings of noble love will be transformed into a sinful act to satisfy low appetitive urges. He could not continue to feel deep feelings for the same woman who, after becoming his wife, embodies Eve by forcing him to violate his puritanical beliefs.

The topic of lust was quite important for both the Lebanese and Russian writers because of their idea of constant self-perfection. In his article "Pervaia stupen" ["The First Step"] (1892) Tolstoï touches on the issue of abstinence as the first step to the good that people desire in life. It is not achieved suddenly, but gradually, as it represents a person's liberation from his lusts. They are numerous. To fight them successfully, a person should start by resisting the most basic ones. This provides a base to grow one's ability to abstain. The complex abstinences are adornment of the body, gambling, amusements, idle conversation, curiosity, and many others, and the basic ones are gluttony, sloth and carnal love. We cannot start from the top to the bottom, if we want to fight against desires, but we should start with the basic ones.

Naimy's *Mirdād* repeats this idea, pointing to the way people can overcome their passions by saying that people must not divide their passions into good and bad because of the dualism that

exists in everything. Thus people could obtain sacred understanding, solve all their accumulated contradictions and find unity in the Lord (Najmi 153-155).

Naimy expressed several other moral issues that he might have developed under the influence of Tolstoī among others. One of these issues was vegetarianism. The Lebanese man of letters equated murdering people with murdering animals, as both of them represent equal parts of the world (i.e. of the Lord, since for Naimy the Lord was the universe). One of the main conclusions of *The Book of Mirdad* is that all the woe that people do, comes back to them.

Tolstoī was also a proponent of vegetarianism. In his article “The First Step” he noted that we cannot bake bread without kneading the flour and preheating the oven. The same can be said about wanting to lead a good life without developing a plan of steps for how to acquire the necessary personality traits. The same principles are taught by Brahmins, Buddhists, Confucians and the ancient Greeks. But currently these steps are lost, as they are confined to an ascetic monastic environment. Moreover, modern secular society admits the possibility of acquiring nobler personality traits without conceding the need to remove lower misdeeds that determine higher ones. All kinds of vices are allowed to develop simultaneously.

If a human is told by his doctor that he needs to eat meat and at the same time he feels shame for killing animals, and if a person desires a good life, and this is his priority and he is not hypocritical, then he will abstain from eating animal meat. Eating meat not only promotes gluttony and idleness, but it excites other vices. However, the main transgression of eating meat is that it requires an act of killing the Lord’s creatures.

#### Naimy’s appreciation of Tolstoī

After describing the steps that Tolstoī took towards the new spiritual life, Naimy claimed that he would like to follow the Russian author:

I knew... this struggle and heartily wished that Tolstoī would emerge from it as the winner. The victory of [even] one person would be for me confirmation of the fact that I, too, can win if I try., when I heard that he had left his house in early November 1910, I welcomed this as news of his victory over himself... (Sab 1 271, 272)

Lack of satisfaction with the current political and social situation made both writers<sup>44</sup> wish to live somewhere else. According to Tolstoī, it is quite easy to be sinless when a person stays by himself, and it is much more difficult for him to remain the same when he is in the company of people, since people influence each other. That is why it is almost impossible for them to stay away from evil in modern society (Gustafson 145). But this certainly was not enough, so they started to look for some ideas and trends to support their position and strengthen it.

Though, as noted in 1910 by Evgeniī Trubetskoī, the Russian philosopher and public figure, Tolstoī contradicted himself, since it was necessary to use violence to resist the state, and Tolstoī was its active adversary. Yet Tolstoī believed in civil disobedience and non-violent resistance. That is why, probably, the reason the great Russian writer secluded himself at Iasnaïa Polīana and the Lebanese man of letters also isolated himself: both writers were absolutely unwilling to live in any kind of a state.

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<sup>44</sup> According to Rosamund Bartlett's biography of Tolstoy, the Russian author, exasperated with the problems that he encountered from the authorities in Russia, at one point seriously considered emigrating to England:

On 15 September 1872 [Tolstoī even wrote to Alexandrine [Aleksandra Andreievna Tolstaia, a lady-in-waiting at the Russian court] to ask if she could put him in touch with some 'good aristocratic families', to enable the family to have a 'pleasant' life in England. Although he admitted that he found European life repellent, he told her he could raise about 200,000 roubles if he sold up everything he had in Russia, which he reckoned would be enough to buy a house with some land near the sea (Bartlett 227).

By the middle of the 1940s Naimy, who was already a famous Lebanese man of letters, would isolate himself from society by settling in Shakhrub village on Mount Sannin, located very close to his native Biskinta where his family had owned a property for a long time. Thus, he found catharsis there, which he had been seeking for many years in hostile capitalist America. He would continue writing his literary and critical works there as Tolstoī did after moving from Moscow to Iasnaĭa Polĭana, his estate in the suburbs of Tula where he escaped from aristocratic and immoral city life. Naimy's decision to return to his native village from the U.S., "where he had gained the world, but lost himself" (N.Naimy 66), was considered by Nadim Naimy in his *The Lebanese Prophets of New York* to be a "Tolstoĭan awakening" (66).

Both of them did not cut their relationships with the world, but by these actions they protected themselves from inevitable everyday contacts with the modern aggressive civilization. Like Tolstoī at Iasnaĭa Polĭana, Naimy in Shakhrūb was constantly meeting and helping people whom he deeply loved. Towards the end of his life, Naimy, like Tolstoī, received hundreds of letters asking for his advice, help, or a review of someone's writings. People from all parts of the Arabic world, including professors, journalists, students and writers, came to Naimy's house in Shakhrūb in the way that Tolstoī's followers came to Iasnaĭa Polĭana to see the great Russian writer.

When replying to a question about his special lifestyle in a small village on Mount Sannin, the Lebanese writer said:

I came back from America and the sound of different civilizations is in my ears, volcanoes of thoughts are in my head, and the thirst for isolation is in my heart. [The last] ... is necessary for making ... [my] ears free from noise... and to slightly cool the passions and desires that live in my heart. Shakhrūb has generously provided me with the isolation about which I had previously dreamed. It opened for me its heart and arms. I started spending most days in one of its caves. I spent a lot of hours thinking and weeding out the past, purifying my soul, opening its windows

and letting the Lord's light come in through them. I spent many hours working. But is it possible to create anything without meeting people?

...I did not get away from people, and people did not get away from me. My house, as my heart, is open to them in the summer and winter, day and night. I seek loneliness, my soul and body need it like they need bread, water and air. I need to spend at least several hours [per day] away from people in order to think over everything that I am getting from my contact with them (cit. in AP 64).

It is notable that many years afterwards Naimy requested to be buried at the foot of Mount Sanīn. Thus, he found his last resting place like Tolstoī did at Iasnaĭa Polĭana. Thus, both writers are not buried at central and prestigious cemeteries. Rather, they remain in the places that were dear to their hearts and far away from big cities.

### *Conclusion*

My dissertation has shown the indispensable influence of Russian literature on Mikhail Naimy's creative writings. This area is understudied and unappreciated, though he indicated its special place in his life and work many times. At the same time, without the precise analysis of

this impact, it is hard to completely understand his multifaceted writings, and the specifics of Naimy's contribution to Arabic literature.

In light of the facts presented in this dissertation, we can draw the following conclusions:

The influence of the Russian literature on Naimy started very early in his life and continued till his last days. It has always been one of the main sources of literary influence on him regardless of where he was living: in his native village or Jerusalem, in Lebanon, which was dear to his heart, or Poltava, or even in more distant America. Such unique situation resulted from several reasons, and the main one was young Naimy's ignorance of his native literature.

During approximately eighty years of dialogue with Russian literature, and, at times, his arguments with it, the character of this relationship, naturally, changed together with his personal and social development. It started with Naimy's admiration of the stunning, but not yet well understood treasure of Russian culture and his passionate desire to create a similar strong literature that would touch people's souls and address topical issues. By the end of his long and unusual life Naimy considered Russian literature to be an important part of the classic canon, and he still considered Russian classic writers, such as Tolstoī, Gogol, Pushkin, Belinskiī, Dostoevskiī, and Gorkiī, to be the best examples of world men of letters.

The nature of Russian literary influence is very multifaceted, as it influenced Naimy's social views (criticism of modern civilization and anticlericalism) and introduced him to theosophy. It influenced how he practiced various literary genres (short stories, poetry, plays and other writings) and introduced him to literary theories (literary criticism), characters' psychological portraits and literary currents (realism).



In this thesis, we have touched upon several of the most distinguished aspects of the Russian influence on Naimy. His notable role in Arabic literary criticism was highly inspired by Belinskiĭ, and his social criticism and anticlericalism, which figure prominently in practically all of his works, were developed under Tolstoĭ's influence.

In the first two chapters we described several factors that drew Naimy's attention to Russian literature and made it one of the most important factors that influenced the Lebanese writer.

Between these factors is Naimy's unusual biography and his exposure to Russian literature as a result of his profound knowledge of Russian, as well as his studies at the Emperor Orthodox Palestinian Society in the Levant and later in the Russian Empire in Poltava, Ukraine. He loved and admired Russia and Russians to his last days.

Naimy not only lived in places in the world that enabled him to synthesize his national literary traditions to world ones, but he also lived at a time of radical changes in Arabic literature and the flowering period of Russian and American literatures discussed in Chapter Two.

His time in Russia occurred at a very special time in its history. He was living in Russia at a time when the Golden Age of its literature had ended and the Silver one had begun. He passionately wished to perceive Russian culture from the perspective of a Russian, and not an Arab man, and he succeeded in this. Even after moving from Russia back to Lebanon and then to the U.S., he continued to sign his letters addressed to his Arab-American colleagues with the Russian diminutive name *Misha* (from Mikhail) and at times referred to himself as "a Russian in America."

Naimy was writing at a time of global transformations in the Arabic world, including ones in its literature. The social and political changes of the first half of the twentieth century

made it possible for Arab men of letters to follow numerous world literary currents. In addition to this, the unique artistic collaboration of very young and extremely talented Arab American emigrants in Pen Association enabled them to incorporate all kinds of literary currents and philosophical ideas that existed in the U.S. at that time into Arabic literature. Naimy's contribution to this literature was to enrich it with the traditions of the Russian literature, philosophy and theosophy that he was able to blend with his national and European ones.

Chapters Three and Four are devoted to specific Russian authors and their roles in Naimy's development as a man of letters. Considering the fact that the topic of Naimy's reception of Russian literature is broad and diverse, we have chosen the two men of letters whose influence is the most distinguished.

Our choice of Vissarion Belinskiĭ, the Russian critic, and Leo Tolstoĭ, the Russian writer and philosopher, illustrates the diversity of Russian writers that had an impact on Naimy. Belinskiĭ and Tolstoy belonged to different philosophical schools: the former, a literary critic from St. Petersburg, was an exponent of Western European philosophy, while the latter, the hermit from *Īasnaĭa Polĭana*, was a proponent of following the common people. They obtained fame in different literary genres, but Naimy was attracted to their constant search for truth in everything, their desire to make literature responsible to social issues and their fight for radical changes, (though they may have differed in their belief in whether such changes would take place through literary criticism, changing people's moral behavior, or by reforming the state's predatory interests). Naimy was inspired by these writers to try to write in different genres.

In Chapter Three we analyzed the influence of Belinskiĭ on Naimy's literary criticism. We noted Belinskiĭ's special role in drawing Naimy's attention to this area. This led to the Lebanese writer's fervid call for the development of literary criticism in modern Arabic literature, as well

as to bring social issues into literary criticism and give special attention to ethical aspects of modern literature. I have shown this influence through a comparative analysis of Naimy's *The Sieve* and numerous articles by Belinskiĭ. Specifically, Naimy and Belinskiĭ shared intolerance for the "art for art's sake" movement, and they emphasized the common people's role in literature.

Chapters Four and Five are devoted to Tolstoĭ's impact on Naimy. We have distinguished the two main areas of this influence in the Lebanese writer's works, such as anticlericalism and theosophy (Chapter Four) and social criticism and moral issues (Chapter Five). We have drawn strong parallels between Naimy's and Tolstoĭ's fight against traditional clericalism, and we have shown how they both denied Orthodox church dogmas. They rethought the human image of Jesus, and they worked out an idea of the all-mighty god as an all-mighty love using similar terminology.

Chapter Five touches on Naimy's and Tolstoy's social criticism. Both of them were deeply upset with modern society's lifestyle and social injustice. They strongly criticized its values, especially the desire for wealth. They devoted hundreds of pages of their articles and literary works to attacking its ideology, which was aimed at promoting bloody wars and social repressions. They were deeply upset with the hypocrisy of those who outwardly promoted morality, but privately engaged in hidden sexual promiscuity that spread throughout modern society. Tolstoĭ and Naimy worked out principles of abstinence in response to this problem.

While analyzing role of the three very different writers in their respective traditions and in world literature, we'd like to conclude that Naimy's reach was much broader and thus he perhaps did not distinguish himself solidly in one particular genre the way Tolstoi and Belinskiĭ did. Naimy is also a lesser talent, but one who made substantial contributions to literary criticism.

The towering Tolstoī's writings enabled the evolution of the world's humanism and realism flavoring in the world's literature, as it was him who was able to genially describe the most complicated contradictions of his time on the world's scale level. Tolstoī's books are translated into numerous languages, and millions of copies of them are sold annually, thousands of researchers are still analyzing his writings, performances are staged and movies are shot based on his novels and his biography, one of the most prestigious literary awards carries his name, and children at Russian schools still memorize parts of his literary works by heart.

But Naimy and Belinskiī are also still important writers, though on a lower scale. Their writings turned out to be an integral part of their national literature and culture. The Russian critic, called by his contemporaries "the vehement Vissarion," turned out to be the teacher of the Russian revolutionary democrats and contributed immensely to the Russian literature's and art's development by his fiery fighting for their new role as people's inspirers. He was also the one who pointed to the critical need for the new function of literature, that is the reflection of life.

As for Naimy, his writings remain in print and are included at high schools all over the Arabic world for mandatory study. His considerable contributions into the modern Arabic literary criticism and modern Arabic literature make his nation proud of him.

#### Areas for Further Research

Our study has also shown the need for deeper research into Naimy's literary works through the lens of Russian literature. Naimy's works, in turn, gave a special impulse to the development of the modern Arabic literature. So Russian literature can be said to have indirectly influenced Arabic literature through Naimy.

Because of space and research time limits, we have not touched on the distinct influence of Russian short stories, poetry and plays on how Naimy developed these genres in his native literature as well as on how the Lebanese writer developed the psychological portraits of his heroes. This opens an area for further research into the influence on Naimy of other Russian writers, such as Gogol', Chekhov, Nikitin, Dostoevskiĭ and Turgenev, that has yet to be explored.

Another area that still needs to be studied better is the influence of Russian literature on American literature through Pen Association and its contribution to a better understanding of Arabic and American modernism. Here first and foremost special attention must be paid to the development of the American realism in short stories under the influence of Russian and European literature.

In addition to this, the Russian influence on the works of the other members of Pen Association (ʿAbd al-Messīḥ Ḥaddād and Naṣīb `Arīḍah) who studied in Russian schools in the Levant, as Naimy did, has not been studied at all. This is one more barely studied topic for potential research.

This interesting case of literary influence can be studied as part of how modern world literature develops as part of a continual process of influences and globalization, when small national literatures become unified and in turn influence world literature. We can see the case of how one particular national literature influences another one in how Russian literature influenced the writings of a Levant writer. And he, in turn, impacted Arabic literature, which eventually became a part of world literature.

For our study, we have applied Dr. Bloom's theory of literary influence. Though it was originally developed for Romantic British poetry<sup>45</sup>, we think that Naimy's growth as a man of letters was similar to the phenomenon described by Dr. Bloom.

One of the biggest obstacles in performing such research is the necessity that a researcher be fluent in three languages: English, Arabic and Russian, as Naimy was trilingual, and he used all three of these languages for his creative writings. In addition to this, until recently very few of Naimy's works were translated into English in spite of the fact that Naimy's works have been translated into approximately forty languages. The number of translations of Tolstoī and Belinskiī is much higher than those of Naimy, but there are still not enough translations of their works to allow a monolingual researcher to pursue adequate research.

The other academic obstacle to such research is in studying Russian-language works, since Russian scholars have made a significant contribution to this question. This is partly explained by the fact that during the Soviet Union the study of Naimy was "safe," and was even encouraged by the official Soviet authorities. He had a deep sympathy towards socialism, supported the October Revolution together with social changes in Russia and was a passionate fighter for peace that the Soviet Union claimed to be its main purpose. Naimy became a friend of the USSR, and he was even specially invited there in 1956, when he gave a speech on Soviet radio.

But very few Soviet works have been translated into English or Arabic. To be more specific, we know only of one of Īmanquliyeva's studies published in 1991 in Russian and translated in 2010 into English.

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<sup>45</sup> Bloom was particularly interested in a Romantic poet William Blake when developing his ideas for *The Anxiety of Influence*.

It is also extremely difficult for researchers to access Russian works, especially the ones written during the Soviet period. Russian libraries seem to be very reluctant to participate in to list their holdings in WorldCat library system, and even still limit the number of pages that can be copied from materials in their collections.

Undoubtedly, further research in the area of Russian influence on Naimy and the other members of Pen Association will uncover more interesting finds and contributions in the area of comparative literature and the development of the world literary process.

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<sup>1</sup> Critical realism is a literary movement that emerged between the 1820s and 1830s in European literature. Many prominent Western European writers, such as Stendhal (Marie-Henri Beyle) and Honorè de Balzac in France, Charles Dickens and William Makepeace Thackeray in England as well as Russian writers, such as Aleksander Pushkin, Nikolaï Gogol, Ivan Turgenev, Fedor Dostoevskiï, Lev Tolstoï, and Anton Chekhov applied it in their works.

Critical realism portrayed a relationship between people and their environment in a new way, whereby human nature is revealed in organic connection with social circumstances. Russian critical realism was developed before the October revolution (1917), after which it helped spawn socialist realism.

Critical realism was not limited to exposing the ugly side of life. It promulgated its positive sides, such as high moral and social ideals and values, by extolling the virtues of the hard-working and morally beautiful Russian peasantry as well as the aspirations of the Russian intelligentsia to help the peasantry (Gorkin).

<sup>2</sup> *Niva* is the weekly illustrated magazine edited in St. Petersburg in 1870-1918. It consisted mostly of fiction, non-fiction and critical articles, as well as some other sections devoted to chess, etc. *Niva* illuminated the socio-political life in Russia and abroad in a moderate spirit. This magazine published the works of the writers that belonged to different literary currents. Among them were D. Averkiev, P. Boborykin, Iv. Goncharov, Dm. Grigorovich, G. Danilevskiï,

N. Leskov, A. Maikov, D. Mamin -Siberiaak, D. Merezhkovskiĭ, Vas. and Vl. Nemirovich-Danchenko, J. Polonskiĭ, I. Potapenko, E.Salias, K. Sluchevskiĭ, S.Solovèv, K. Fofanov.

<sup>3</sup> *Znanie* is the academic critical and bibliographic journal that was monthly edited in St. Petersburg in 1870-1877. It was publishing information about the latest achievements in the area of science.

<sup>4</sup> M. Naimy indicates the different dates of its opening: we can understand, that it was in 1891, or 1892, as, he was at that time “five or six years old (Ab 199)”. Naimy writes in the same source (Ab 199), that the construction of the new building was finished in 1896. But in his *Seventies* he puts the date of the IOPRS school opening as 1899 (Sab 1: 88). The same date is found in N.Naimy biography of M.Naimy (1978 8).

<sup>5</sup> N.A. Mednikov (185-1918) is St. Petersburg professor of the Arabic Language and Palestinian studies, A.A. Dmitrievskiĭ (1856-1929) is The Kievan Theological Academy professor of the Byzantium history. I.Ju. Kravhkovskiĭ (1883-1951) is the professor of St. Petersburg Institute of the Oriental Studies, the founder of the Russian school of the Arabic studies and the author of the numerous works about the Arabic literature, history and culture.

<sup>6</sup> M.O. Attaya (d.1924) is the professor of the Institute of Oriental languages in Moscow and is the author of an Arabic textbook for Russian learners, the Arabic-Russian dictionary and numerous translations from Arabic into Russian, including *Qalilah wa dimnah*. D.V.Semyonov is an expert in Arabic dialects.

<sup>7</sup> Naimy refers to *falak* in his “dictionary” to *Seventies*...: “It is a stick, to the both ends of which a rope is tied. “An offender’s” legs are put in this loop, then it is tightened, and “the offender” is beaten” (Sab 1 55).

<sup>8</sup> This diary is unpublished. It is written in English and is kept by Nadīm Naimy (NNI 118).

<sup>9</sup> The Classical Arabic (*al-Fuṣṣḥah*) is the language used in the pre-Islamic Arabiya, the Holy Qur'an and in numerous literary texts during the Umayyads' and Abbasids' periods (7th to 9th



centuries). Nowadays this term is sometimes applied towards not only a heritage Arabic, but Modern Standard Arabic, or Literary Arabic which is used in writing and in most formal speech.

<sup>10</sup> *maqama* (*maqām* in Arabic) is a picaresque novella written in rhymed prose (*saj*). The central figure of a *maqama* was usually a wandering unsuccessful man of letters, earning his living through his poetical skill and erudition. The narrative interest of the *maqama* is based on the central hero's rascally cunning, while his erudition and poetical skill provide the story's learned content. They abounded in puns, complicated stylistic figures, quotations, and maxims, which often made them accessible only to a narrow circle of connoisseurs of belles-lettres. This genre was extremely popular with the Arabs and was existing for around a thousand years till early twentieth century (Solov'ev, Fil'shtinskiĭ, Jusupov 70, 71)

<sup>11</sup> Lebanon and Syria were a part of Levant, or the Greater Syria, a geographical and cultural formation located between Anatolia and Egypt, so while speaking about the Lebanese culture, it is necessary to relate it first of all to its regional culture. Levant stayed under the yoke of the Ottoman Empire until 1918. Lebanese and Syrian culture had a lot of common moments particularly because the number of the Christians there was high, so they were persecuted more by the ruling regime.

<sup>12</sup> *Decembrists* were the members of the Russian opposition consisting of noblemen who opposed autocracy and serfdom. This name came from the month of December, when they organized the antigovernment uprising in 1825 on the day of coronation of Nikolaĭ I.

<sup>13</sup> *Liubomudry* [Wisdom Lovers] were the members of a secret circle functioning in Russia in 1823-1825. Its members represented different social and political views, from radical to conservative. They studied various works of philosophy, mostly German ones, as well as aesthetic theories and literature.

<sup>14</sup> *Slavianofily* [Slavophiles]– the religious, literature and philosophical Russian current of the 1840s that put forward the idea of Russia's originality and its special ways of development that were different from Western European ones.

<sup>15</sup> ʿAbbās Maḥmūd al-ʿAqqād (1889-1964) is an Egyptian writer and the member of the Arab Academy. He founded a poetic school (al-Diwān) together with Ibrahim Al-Māzinī and ʿAbd al-Rahmān Shukrī. al-ʿAqqād is an author of over 100 books about poetry, philosophy and religion.

<sup>16</sup> As for the Arabic literary criticism before the twentieth century, it mostly existed in the form of critical comments of men of letters in their works about their peers (Nīqūlā al-Turk, Buṭrus Karamāh, Umar al-Yāfī and ʿAbbūd al-Baḥrī), so it can barely be classified as a professional literary criticism (Fanous 7).

<sup>17</sup> Naimy occupied a similar position to Belinskiī in terms of his response to a critic’s qualities. He pointed out in his introduction to *The Sieve* that the critic’s duty was to separate out the good from the evil, the beautiful from the ugly, and the correct from the corrupt. Since beauty, aesthetics and harmony are broad and abstract concepts, a critic needed to draw on his intuitive feeling and his innate taste in order to distinguish between what contained real literary value, and what did not. These are the only criteria he must use. (349, 351, 355).

## **Appendix**

(1) “The Frozen River” by Mikhail Naimy in Russian

Застывшая река

Что ты спишь, Сула,  
Точно мертвая  
Бвъылымъ саваномъ

Вся покрытая?  
Не стремишься вдаль  
Посреди степей  
Не шумишь волной  
Серебристою?  
Иль тебе, Сула,  
Надоело течь?  
Или къмъ то ты  
Заколдована?  
Иль зима пришла  
И мороз лихой  
По рукамъ-ногамъ  
Заковал тебя?  
Берега твои  
Пригорюнились  
И застыли въ нихъ  
Воды чистыя.  
Не плыветь по нимъ  
На челнеъ(?) своемъ  
Удалой рыбакъ  
Съ свѣтью-неводомъ.  
Надъ тобой висятъ  
Вербы грустные,  
Опустивши внизъ  
Вѣтви голыя.  
Не поеть на нихъ  
Соловей-шалунъ;

Не ласкаютъ ихъ  
Ветры южные.  
Только вороновъ  
Стая черная,  
Прилетая къ ним.  
Грустно каркаетъ.  
И сдается мне.  
Что поютъ они  
Тебе пѣсенки  
Погребальныя.  
Что унылый хоръ  
Этихъ вороновъ  
Отпеваетъ все  
Твою молодость

\*\*\*

Но весна придетъ,  
Принесетъ тепло,  
И ты вновь сорвешь  
Цвѣпи (?) зимняя,  
И волна твоя  
Средь лесовъ, полей  
Покатится вновь  
Въ море синее.  
Зацветутъ вокругъ  
Берега твои,  
И покроются

Вербы зеленью.  
Вместо вороновъ  
Соловей на нихъ  
Будет петь тебѣ  
Песни чудныя.

\*\*\*

Но вернется ль вновь  
И моя весна-  
Детство милое,  
Красна молодость?  
Заживет ли вновь  
Сердце бедное?  
Прояснится-ли  
Душа темная?  
Улыбнется-ль мнѣ  
Жизнь суровая?  
И вернутся ли  
Дни счастливые?  
Не вернуться имъ  
Ко мнѣ более,  
Не видать весны  
Одинокому!...  
Улетели сны  
Беззаботные,  
Улетел покой –  
Все утеряно!...

\*\*\*

А проснется-ль Русь,  
Наша матушка,  
С векового сна  
Богатырского?  
Пробежат ли в ней  
Воды вешнія.  
И вольгот-ли жизнь  
Въ степи голыя?  
В небесах ея,  
Вечно пасмурныхъ  
Засияет ли  
Красно солнышко?  
На полях ея,  
Тихо дремлющихъ  
Заиграет ли  
Жизнь веселая?  
И увидит-ли  
Трудовой народъ  
На Руси святой  
Дни счастливые?

\*\*\*

О, мы върیم, Русь,  
Върیم всей душой,  
Что придет весна  
И въ твои края.

Но скажи. Когда  
Это сбудется? -  
Ты молчишь, о Русь!-  
Спи, родимая!...  
(N.Naimy. 1978 16-17)

(2) "The Frozen River"'s translation into English:

Why do you sleep, Sulá,  
As if you are dead,  
Covered all over  
By a white shroud?  
You do not flow ahead  
Through the steppe  
[And] your silvery wave  
Makes no noise?  
Or are you, Sula,  
Tired of flowing?  
Or has someone  
Enchanted you?  
Or did the winter come  
And the dashing frost  
Chain your  
Hands and feet?  
Your shores  
started grieving

and your clean waters  
Are frozen up in them.  
A courageous fisherman  
With a seine net  
Does not fish on [your waters].  
The sad willows  
Stand above you,  
Hanging down  
Their bare branches.  
The impish nightingale  
Does not sing into them,  
[And] the South winds  
Do not caress them.  
Only a black flock  
Of crows  
Sadly caw  
When flying towards them.  
And it seems to me  
That they are singing  
Burial songs  
To you.  
[And] the sad chorus  
Of these ravens  
Is singing a burial song  
To your youth.



\*\*\*

But spring will come,  
[And] it will bring warmth  
And once again you will you rip off  
[Your] winter chains (?)  
And your currents  
Will roll once again  
To the blue sea  
Amid forests and fields  
Your banks again  
Will bloom all around  
And willows  
Will be covered by greenery.  
And nightingales sitting upon them  
And not ravens  
Will sing to you  
Wonderful songs.

\*\*\*

But will my spring  
Come back again  
[My] dear childhood,  
[And] beautiful youth?  
  
Will my poor heart  
Be reborn?  
Will things become clear  
To my darkened soul?

Will my harsh life  
Smile on me?  
And will happy days  
Come back to me?  
They will not return  
To me any more  
[And] I, alone,  
Shall not see the spring!...  
The careless dreams,  
Flew away,  
And my peace is gone  
All is lost! ...

\*\*\*

And will our mother  
Russia  
Wake up from its  
Centuries of sleep  
Like the Russian bogatyrs of yore?  
Will springtime waters  
Flow across her land  
And will life enter  
Her bare steppes?  
And will the red sun  
Shine  
In its heavens  
[That are] forever cloudy?

Will cheerful life  
fill her fields  
[That are] quietly slumbering?  
Will the working people  
Live to see  
Happy days  
In Holy Russia?

\*\*\*

Oh, Russia, we believe,  
We believe with all our hearts,  
That spring will come  
even to your lands.  
But tell [us] when  
It will come?  
O, Russia, you are silent!...  
Sleep, [my] dear! ...

(3) Ivan Nikitin' "Rus" in Russian

Русь

Под большим шатром  
Голубых небес —  
Вижу — даль степей  
Зеленеется.

И на гранях их,  
Выше темных туч,  
Цепи гор стоят  
Великанами.

По степям в моря  
Реки катятся,  
И лежат пути  
Во все стороны.

Посмотрю на юг —  
Нивы зрелые,  
Что камыш густой,  
Тихо движутся;

Мурава лугов  
Ковром стелется,  
Виноград в садах  
Наливается.

Гляну к северу —  
Там, в глуши пустынь,  
Снег, что белый пух,  
Быстро кружится;

Подымает грудь  
Море синее,  
И горами лед  
Ходит по морю;

И пожар небес  
Ярким заревом  
Освещает мглу  
Непроглядную...

Это ты, моя  
Русь державная,  
Моя родина  
Православная!

Широко ты, Русь,  
По лицу земли  
В красе царственной  
Развернулася!

У тебя ли нет  
Поля чистого,  
Где б разгул нашла  
Воля смелая?

У тебя ли нет  
Про запас казны,  
Для друзей — стола,  
Меча — недругу?

У тебя ли нет  
Богатырских сил,  
Старины святой,  
Громких подвигов?

Перед кем себя  
Ты унизила?  
Кому в черный день  
Низко кланялась?

На полях своих,  
Под курганами,  
Положила ты  
Татар полчища.

Ты на жизнь и смерть  
Вела спор с Литвой  
И дала урок  
Ляху гордому.

И давно ль было,  
Когда с Запада  
Облегла тебя  
Туча темная?

Под грозой ее  
Леса падали,  
Мать сыра-земля  
Колебалась,

И зловещий дым  
От горевших сел  
Высоко вставал  
Черным облаком!

Но лишь кликнул царь  
Свой народ на брань —  
Вдруг со всех концов  
Поднялася Русь.

Собрала детей,  
Стариков и жен,  
Приняла гостей  
На кровавый пир.

И в глухих степях,  
Под сугробами,  
Улеглись спать  
Гости навеки.

Хоронили их  
Вьюги снежные,  
Бури севера  
О них плакали!..

И теперь среди  
Городов твоих  
Муравьем кишит  
Православный люд.

По седым морям  
Из далеких стран  
На поклон к тебе  
Корабли идут.

И поля цветут,  
И леса шумят,  
И лежат в земле  
Груды золота.

И во всех концах  
Света белого  
Про тебя идет  
Слава громкая.

Уж и есть за что,  
Русь могучая,  
Полюбить тебя,  
Назвать матерью,

Стать за честь твою  
Против недруга,  
За тебя в нужде  
Сложить голову!

1851

(Rozhdestvenskiĭ, Vs.)

Nikitin's *Rus'* translation

To Russia

'Neath a giant tent  
Of the heavens blue,  
Stretch the verdant Steppes;  
Range beyond the view.

On the distant rim  
Lift the outlines proud,  
Of their mountain walls  
To the drifting cloud.

Through the Steppes there rolls  
Stream on stream to sea,  
Wide meandering,  
Straying far and free.

Do I Southward gaze--  
Like the ocean there,  
Ripening fields of grain  
Wave and ripple fair.

Softest velvet sod  
Decks the meadow floor,  
In the vineyards green  
Swells the grape once more.

Do I Northward turn--  
O'er the waste lands lone,  
Soft as eider down  
Are the snowflakes blown.

And his azure waves  
High the ocean lifts,  
On his cold blue breast  
Now an iceberg drifts.

And as leaping flame  
Burn the Northern lights,  
On the darkness gleam  
Through the silent nights.

Even so art thou,  
Russian realm, become,--  
Thou my native land,  
Shield of Christendom!

Far away hast thou,  
Throughout lands untold,  
In thy glory fair,  
Russia, been enrolled!

Art thou not in space  
E'en o'er well supplied?  
Where a spirit bold  
Freely wanders wide!



Hast thou not always  
Gold and grain rich stored?  
For thy friend a feast?  
For thy foe a sword?

Guards and shields thee not  
With a sacred might,  
Holy altar forms,  
Deeds of glory bright?

To whom hast thou e'er  
Bent a humble knee?  
Or before whom bowed  
Seeking charity?

In the Kurgan deep,  
Met in open fight,  
Thou hast e'en subdued  
The fierce Tartar's might.

Fought to bloody death  
The Lithuanian horde,  
The defiant Pole  
Scattered with a sword.

And how long ago,  
Black clouds, rising out  
Of the distant West,  
Compassed thee about?

'Neath the lightning flash  
Sank the woods away,  
Trembled the earth's breast,  
Pierced with dismay.

And the inky smoke  
Ruinous did rise  
From the village burnt  
To the cloudy skies.

Loudly to the fight  
Then the Tsar did call--  
Russia swift replied,  
Coming one and all.

Women, children came--  
Men from age to youth,  
Gave their evil guest  
Bloody feast in truth!

And in lonely fields  
Under ice and snow,  
To his endless sleep  
Laid the victim low.

Where the snowstorms wild  
Raised o'er him a tomb,  
While the North wind sang  
Dirges in the gloom.

Town and village too  
Over all our land,  
Now like ant hills swarm  
With this Christian band.

Now from distant shores  
O'er the cruel sea,  
Ship on ship draws near  
Homage paying thee.

Blooming are thy fields,  
Soft thy forests sigh,  
Hid in earth's dark breast  
Golden treasures lie.

And to East and West,  
To the South and North--  
Flies thy louder fame  
Through the wide world forth!

Holy Russia, thou  
Dost deserve to be  
"Mother" called by all,  
In our love to thee!

For thy glory fair  
We should face the foe,  
And thy freedom guarding  
Glad our lives bestow!

1851

Web. June, 19, 2014 <<http://allpoetry.com/poem/8623979-To-Russia-by-Ivan-Nikitin>>

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