



## An Outlook of the East-West Problem in the Works of the Immigrant Arab Writers

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### ABSTRACT

*Studying literary-philosophical heritage of the immigrant Arabian writers display how they approached the East-West problem simply from a point of view of creative thoughts also preferring as a framework to present their ideas, nevertheless they have created a whole conception of its with its specific principles. Ameen Rihani introduces the particular accord of Eastern and Western cultural values. The writer characterized the confrontation of two parts of the world with different contrasts in a very interesting way in his book "The White Way and the Desert": "When we go deep enough or high enough, we meet". The major ideas and their sources are examined in this research dedicated to immigrant Arabian writers.*

*The aforementioned facets of the East-West problem can be seen in Mikhail Naimy's works, too.*

**KEYWORDS :** Al Rihani, Naimy, East, West

### INTRODUCTION.

Immigrant literature is a complex literary process that is formed on the basis of the traditions of the various national cultures emerging as a global civilization phenomenon. The Arab Mahjar Literature, established in the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century in the USA and having its own specific role in the development of Arab literature is one of the significant examples of the Immigrant Literature. So, the main characteristics of the Arab Immigrant Literature comprise an expression of the national identity, delivering the Eastern thoughts and philosophy to the West while integrating the national literature with the world's literary-theoretical thoughts.

Learning the Immigrant Arabic Literature and the national and Western influences on the literary works of the immigrant Arabian writers, the first and foremost, requires researching the East-West problem. Studies of the literary-philosophical heritage of the immigrant Arab writers reveal that they haven't only approached the East-West problem simply from a creative thoughts stand-point and as a framework to present their ideas, but also they have created a whole conception of its with its specific principles.

### CASE STUDY.

The East-West problem has come to be in the background of the emerging notions such as Orientalism and Occidentalism and as a result of the distinctive interpretations and commentaries on different subjects. In fact, it is a universal phenomenon created in the literary-philosophical thoughts by the concrete historical and social events.

If we look at the history we cannot help, but notice that the West started taking an upper hand in the East-West problem after the Renaissance. It is also necessary to note that the East, which already had a great historical and cultural progress until this period, played a role in the Western Renaissance. Although, on one hand, the Western Renaissance emerged as one of the greatest achievements of the Eastern-Western synthesis in the history of mankind, on the other hand, it, itself, laid a foundation for the subsequent cultural and philosophical separation between these two centers.

The development of social processes, the emphasis on different cultural values, the attempts to localize and nationalize the fine art eventually created Oriental and Occidental views in the world philosophy.

The more the Eastern countries become socially and politically influenced by the European countries, the more the East-West problem becomes evident. While the East strives to access the technological advancement of its opposite pole, the West shows more interest to the spiritual culture of the East.

The East-West problem stayed as a major problem in the works of the prominent immigrant Arab writers and as such became a special

literary theoretical system. First of all, the immigrant writers contemplated on the deep gap between the East and the West. N.M.Diab, who states that "Contemporary models of globalization aspire to the elimination of economic, political and ideological barriers between nations", in his article named "Ameen Rihani's Vision of Globalization: Matrimony, Not Hegemony" draws our attention to the potentially dangerous consequences of the integration between the East and the West. It is said: "For some, globalization means Western cultural hegemony through the spread of European and American languages, music, art and literature" (Diab, 2004)

Al Rihani, being a writer of the time when the tensions between the Eastern and the Western world had increased significantly in various areas and knowing the both of them very closely, expressed his concern about the real threat in his book "The Path of Vision: Essays of East and West" written in 1921: "In their eagerness to imbibe the spirit of the times or to harness for their benefit both its currents and counter-currents, the Orientals are in danger of losing the most precious heritage of their civilization and their culture" (Rihani, 1970).

By saying this, Ameen Rihani didn't mean to isolate the Eastern countries from the rest of the world, but rather he was seeking the ways to the unity. It is no coincidence that Nathan C. Funk when talking about Abdul Aziz Said specifically mentioned that, Ameen Rihani's thoughts were in sync in many ways with the contemporary researchers of Orientalism: "Rihani was impatient with lies and distortions and anxious to transcend the limitations and deceits imposed by popular misconceptions about the cultural "other" (Funk, 2004).

The stated aspects in the East-West problem can also be seen in Mikhail Naimy's works. The writer-critic seeks answers to multiple questions on the topic in his article of programme kind "The Twins: East and West". M. Naimy searches the nature of the formation process of the Western civilization. M. Naimy points out the incomplete sides of the Western civilization which is based on the industry and technology, wisdom more than imagination, the notions promoting the supremacy of body over spirit, the privilege of the science on religion during the period of cultural crisis in the East. He says: «What Western civilization, however, having now swept all over the world, has not been able to do, nor will, by its very definition, be able to do, is that, having released through science great reservoirs of power in physical nature and put them at the disposal of man, making him the unchallenged master in the world in which he lives, it has at same time failed to effect in him a corresponding spiritual growth that can provide him with a sense of ultimate purpose" (Naimy, 1967).

The Arabian writers, primarily, looked upon the East-West unity from the imbue of high cultural virtues of the East viewpoint. The migrant Arabian writers placed much value on the issues related to the instillation and development of the national culture and they served for these goals with their literary activities, as well as social views and ac-

tivities. Ameen Ar Rihani's works are rich with such facts.

G.Kh.Gibran, A.Ar-Rihani and M.Naimy had great roles in the directing the changes "ethnic isolation" and "ethnic renunciation" to synthesis, as Alixa Naff stated, (Naff, 1993) in the early stages of migration literature, in the USA.

The features considered as contrasts between the East and the West, sometimes refuted by opposite poles, but sometimes unnaturally "co-ordinated", Amin Ar Rihani regarded as the most important reason in the aggravation of the contradictions. In his work "The Book of Khalid" which is evaluated as the look to the West with the eyes of the East (Marshall &, 2000) the writer mentions the morality, faith, satisfaction and motionlessness in the state of the West and the materiality, ambition and dynamism in the state of the East. He doesn't accept the negation or the unevenness of one of these features in the other. Ameen Ar Rihani shows the necessity to rescue the East and the West from neutrality, "Another one" tendencies. Thus, the writer characterizes "Another one" theory in his work "Extremism and Reform" in this way:

He drew a circle and shut me out;

A renegade, a heretic, a thing to flout;

But love and I had the wit to win –

We drew a circle that took him in (Rihani, 1997).

Ameen Ar Rihani reckoned that lack of efforts in reclaiming some spiritual problems in the East and West was contrary to the development of each culture (Rihani, 1970). The Arabian writer described (Rihani, 1970) self-governance, self-determination concerns of the West that were near the genuine progress, as merely temporary truth. He indicated that the values related to the East without a vast source could be emaciated with dangerous thoughts alongwith unilateral experience of the West, hence, materialism, pragmatism and utilitarianism (Rihani, 1970) According to Rihani, the problems in the East and the West can not be solved by political methods only, rather ethic and intellectual sides should be paid heed and approached from mutual love aspect.

The most important ideas of Arab-American writers on the East-West problem were manifested around the synthesis of the two cultures. The migrant writers' migration to America in their early ages, having chances to be acquainted with the Western civilization more closely and essentially, being the carriers of the Eastern culture paved the ways for realizing this purpose excellently.

Ameen Rihani introduced the specific unity of the values of the Eastern and Western culture in his literary activities. The writer characterized the meeting of the two worlds comparing with different contrasts in his book "The White Way and the Desert" in such an impressive way: «When we go deep enough or high enough, we meet» (Rihani, 2002).

Ameen Rihani believed that the greatest thinkers and writers of the world had gained achievements by mastering the history of the mankind culture and he himself also followed that way. He wrote in his book "The book of Khalid": «Give me, America thy hand; and thou, too, Asia. Thou land of origination, where Light and Spirit first arose, disdain not the gifts which the nations of the west bring thee; and thou land of organization and power, where science and freedom reign supreme, disdain not the bounties of the sunrise... And remember Europa, remember Asia, that foreign culture is as necessary to the spirit of a nation as is foreign commerce to its industries» (Rihani, 2000).

As an Arabian-American writer, Ameen Rihani writes in his other book written in English: "A Chant of Mystics' and other poems" "We are not of the East or of the West. No boundaries exist in our breast. We are free" (Rihani, 1970).

### CONCLUSIONS.

The Arabian-American writers, however, touched upon the East and West problem in their works devoted to a wide range of subjects, their activities include many works directly concerning this matter. Several aspects in the literary-artistic, scientific-theoretical and philosophical considerations were verbalized in the Arabian-American writers' activities even at the beginning and the first half of the last century. Furthermore, it enables us to utter that the appeal to the world outlook of the migrant Arabian writers with the ideas being ahead of their time keeps itself up-to-date. The works by the migrant Arabian-American writers are also among important sources which call the integration movement-oriented world to the globalization.

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