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FRAMEWORKS AND PRESUPPOSITIONS  
OF MAHĠAR\* LITERATURE<sup>1</sup>

TIME AND SPACE

The beginning of the modern Arabic literature is often linked by its historians to the period of Napoleon's expedition to Egypt in 1798. Not only does it mark precisely the beginning of this literature, known as the *Renaissance*, but it also indicates several other things which contribute to a closer definition of the term "modern literature". On the one hand, an emphasis is placed on the leading role of Egypt in the renaissance of Arabic literature, and on the other, the renaissance is unequivocally linked to Europe. It is basically indisputable that the Arabic literature had been isolated for centuries and was outside the streams of the world's literature; it was decisively directed to supporting its mediaeval models: it formed its classic frame, within general traditionalism. It was only through its contacts with the literature of European cultural circle and with the European culture in general that the Arabic literature began to free itself from classicism. The strict and general polarisation of authors into "traditionalists" and "modernists" produced valuable literary works, including some new types and genres, requesting by their authenticity a new evaluation of tradition and a radical break with uncreative traditionalism.

It arises from the above that the term "*modern Arabic literature*" does not refer only to the literature born in the modern era, but also – and primarily – to the literature which brought into the Arabic tradition some new values initiated by the influences of the European cultural literatures.<sup>2</sup>

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\* See: "Okviri i pretpostavke književnosti mahdžera". In: *POF* 34/1984, Sarajevo, 1985, pp. 45-77.

<sup>1</sup> This paper is an introduction to the doctor's dissertation *Poetika mahdžera u SAD* [Mahġar poetics in U.S.A.] defended at the Faculty of Philology in Belgrade, in May 1982.

<sup>2</sup> For this period of Arabic literature, three names are used: *the period of renaissance* ('aṣr al-naḥḍa or 'aṣr al-inbi'āi), *contemporary literature* (al-adab al-mu'āṣir) and *new literature* (al-adab al-ḥadīth). A more serious analysis would show that the use of either of these terms is not viable in the same meaning. We have decided to use the term 'modern Arabic literature', aware that it can also be a source of misunderstanding. It refers to the Arabic literature as from the above-mentioned year until modern times. At the same time we would like to add to it something of the valuable substance. It seems to be more appropriate than the term 'contemporary' for

However, the linkage of the beginning of Arabic literature renaissance exclusively to Napoleon's expedition either requires further explanation or omits the role and importance of some other Arabic countries within which new literary trends were no less important than those in Egypt.

Almost simultaneously with Egypt, both Lebanon and Syria were struck with strong social, political and cultural changes resulting from the Western and Russian influences, so that the literature in those countries, enriched with a series of authentic values, went through renaissance as well. Moreover, new ideas, a new understanding of art followed by a new artistic production in terms of quality, which was anti-traditionalist rather than non-traditionalist, instilled freshness from those two countries into the major part of the Arabic world, including Egypt.

It is important that the literary renaissance of Lebanon and Syria did not develop in these two countries only. On the one hand, it was represented by the authors who lived and wrote works in their native countries – Lebanon and Syria – while on the other hand, by migrant authors who had matured artistically, mentally and theoretically in the United States of America, Russia, Latin America and other non-Arabic countries.<sup>3</sup> The fact that they created their works in various countries of the world was not irrelevant to the variety of their understanding of literature and most probably to different literary achievements. A literary theoretical thought, as a specially fostered form of creativity of the Arabic emigration, has a certain value not only within the literature of emigration, but even wider. Within a modern Arabic literature, their literary and theoretical shaping of dominant trends of Arabic renaissance contain the value which makes that shaping unavoidable in studying the Arabic literature in general. The mental and theoretical maturity of Arabic emigration was not the same in all countries: the undoubtedly biggest contribution to the establishment of the modern Arabic literature was made by a homogenous emigration in the United States which was organised in a period between the two World Wars.

The most frequently used term used to refer to its creativity was the "literature of *mahğar*" (literature of immigration) which, as such, points to its importance in reference to the creativity of immigrant groups in other countries. Although the term is broad enough to encompass the whole Arabic literature outside the Arabic countries, in the histories of literature it almost always implied that the Arabic literature was created in the United States between the two World Wars.

However, there are at least two more relatively clear names.

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two reasons: the term '*contemporary*' covers the literature which is modern to us and it does not seem to have the value of the term '*modern*'.

<sup>3</sup> The literature of Arabic immigrants was noticed in France too, although it had much less value than the literature of immigration in the US and Latin America. For more details see: A. E. Krymskij, *Istorija novoj arabskoj literatury* [*History of the New Arabic Literature*], Nauka, Moskva, 1971, page 209-219.

The first is "Syrian-American" school which appears to be unclear to a certain degree. It does not reveal whether it was the emigration in the United States or in Latin America, especially in Argentina, in which literature was written in the Arabic language at the same time, although it was less important than the literature developed in the United States. On the other hand, one could conclude that the Arabic literature was developed by ethnic Syrians rather than the Lebanese, quite numerous at that time.

The other term used is "literature of Northern and Southern immigration" i.e. immigration in the United States and Latin America. It is used consistently in Arabic sources and seems to be more appropriate than the first one, as the word "immigration" refers to immigrants from all Arabic countries and rather precisely defines the countries in which the authors wrote their works. In order to avoid long, explicative terms and imprecision of the term "Syrian-American" school, we shall name the literature of Arabic immigrants in the United States, the most fruitful period of which was between the two World Wars, as the "literature of *mahğar*" which is in frequent use. True, it does not solve the problem of division into immigrant literature in the United States and Latin America, nor does it define a span of its life.<sup>4</sup> However, "literature of *mahğar*" marks primarily the creativity of Arabic immigrants in the United States in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

For the purpose of giving a more precise definition of the *mahğar* literature in terms of time and space, it is necessary to establish a social, political and cultural situation in the native countries immediately before and during the immigration. In that way we would depict a milieu which affected the formation of the attitude of immigrant authors toward art. For, that is a part of their tradition in broader terms with which the *mahğar* literature was not in relation of a one-way influence: as a sum of values, it is also the *mahğar* literature that influenced the tradition. Eventually, the time and circumstances under which Arabic authors immigrated to the United States represented a turning point in the modern Arabic literature, culture and history in general.

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In the 19<sup>th</sup> century today's Lebanon, Syria and Palestine were not affected by European colonisation as Northern African countries were. Although very loose, Turkish rule remained here until World War One. Colonisation was done in the field of culture and education with a view to expanding religious

<sup>4</sup> The immigration literature is continually being produced in the US and Latin America in English and Spanish. For more details see: 'Īsā al-Nā'ūrī, *Adab al-mahğar* [Literature of Immigration], Cairo, 1977, page 41. (In using the Arabic names we shall use a simplified transliteration, without using signs to indicate phonemes which are unknown to our language. We shall deviate from this only during the first reference to the name, providing a transcription in brackets. The works in Arabic language shall be written in transcription during the first reference, and thereafter they will be given in a translated form only).

and thereafter political influence of America, Russia, France and other European countries. In that part of the Arabic world numerous Christian population harked back to the times when it was a Roman province in which Christianity was taking roots during Crusade War waged in "sacred" countries. Besides, after the invasion of Syria by Egyptian troops in 1831, these countries were under Ibrahim's rule (1789-1848). He was the son of the founder of modern Egypt – Muhammad Ali (1805-1849). This is important because Ibrahim and his allies in Lebanon and Syria, among whom a prominent place was occupied by Prince Basir II (1788-1840) opened up the door to the influences from the West. Moreover, on the pattern of his father in Egypt, Ibrahim invited Christian missionaries and educators from the Western countries to open schools, hospitals, printing companies; they, understandably, accepted the invitation readily. This was the first expansion of various Christian missionaries, so widespread that it was not possible to follow it. The decade of Ibrahim's free-minded rule was the time of providing full protection and equality of the Christian population with Moslems, which was an irresistible attraction for Europeans. Amongst the first ones were European Jesuits whose order was abolished by the Pope in 1773. American and British Protestant missionaries settled in great numbers in Lebanon where they have maintained their strong influence ever since. Lebanon was open toward great Western immigrations more than other Arabic countries in the Middle East region "primarily because their two civilisations, although different in some important points, belong to the same stream. The civilisation of Europe and the Middle East have the same inheritance of Judeo-Christian and Greco-Roman traditions".<sup>5</sup>

Several years after Ibrahim took over the power, a Syrian domestic Protestant Church was established thank to the prominent American missionary V. Thomson. Before that the printing company of American mission<sup>6</sup> was transferred from Malta to Beirut. Jesuit Catholic printing company was established in Beirut. Both printing companies published a translation of the Bible in the Arabic language. The first American school in Beirut seems to have been established by V. Thomson. It was an imposing structure for both Arabs and Europe.<sup>7</sup> American missionaries established the school for girls in Beirut in 1830. That school is in operation today as well. A well-known Austrian Arabist Baron A. Fon Kramer (1828-1889), who was in the Middle East at that time, praised Protestant schools there a lot.<sup>8</sup>

The pinnacle of American efforts in the development of schools, education and printing activity in Lebanon was the establishment of American Protestant College which still exists there, known as the American University, one

<sup>5</sup> Filip Hiti, *Istorija Arapa* [History of Arabs], Veselin Masleša, Sarajevo, 1967, page 672.

<sup>6</sup> Krimskij, quote; page 257.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., page 265.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid. page 269.

of the strongest higher education institutions there. And the pinnacle of the Jesuit efforts was the University of St. Joseph in Beirut, in 1874.<sup>9</sup>

Today's American university in Beirut is very important and it is the reason why something more should be said about it.<sup>10</sup>

The Syrian Protestant College or the American University was established more than one hundred years ago. It was established by the only Protestant Association seated in Boston.<sup>11</sup> The first missionaries of this association in Arabic countries, Parson and Fisk, carried out their basic task rather successfully – to convert Arabic Christians to the Protestant religion. To that end, they established schools, disseminated copies of the Bible and other religious literature written in the Arabic language.<sup>12</sup> The American mission in Lebanon requested in 1861 the establishment of a literary institute. This led to the establishment of the Syrian Protestant College in December 1866. At the beginning it had sixteen students. Arabic and English languages were taught and the following year a whole series of other subjects were introduced after a medical department was established.<sup>13</sup>

It is interesting that the Arabic language, Arabic literature and culture were gradually neglected at the College; in 1880 the Arabic language was no longer taught.<sup>14</sup> Thereafter no Arab teachers at the College had the right to vote.<sup>15</sup> Thus, they could not affect, among other things, the curriculum. Finally, Arab teachers were gradually forced out of the College.<sup>16</sup>

Due to such a development, *al-Muqtataf* magazine attacked not only American but also other Christian missions, accusing them of attempting to achieve their religious and political interests, instead of teaching science.<sup>17</sup>

The influence of the French missions was also important.<sup>18</sup> Fighting against the expansion of "godless" Americans in Lebanon, the lazarets established their boarding school not too far from Beirut, in Aintur. Another similar collegium was established in Alep. The French Catholic missionaries laid the foundation of their influence by opening schools in the areas inhabited by the rich segments of Arabic population, which had far-reaching consequences for a political situation in that region and new trends in the Arabic literature.

<sup>9</sup> On the activity of American Protestants in Lebanon, see: Krimskij, quote, page 267-onwards.

<sup>10</sup> A comprehensive chapter on the history of Syrian Protestant College was written by A. L. Tibawi in his book *Arabic and Islamic Themes. Historical. Educational and Literary Studies*. London, 1974.

<sup>11</sup> Tibawi, quote, page 253.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid. page 257-258.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid. page 269.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid. page 272.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid. page 273.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid. page 278.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid. page 280.

<sup>18</sup> French Consular in Beirut severely fought against Protestant missions and sought that Catholicism be spread in that part of Arabic world (Tibawi, quote, page 258).

The initial interest of America and Europe in Lebanon and Syria is often linked to the Greek fight for independence in the Twenties of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, when voluntary units were established to help strongly supported Greek rebellion.<sup>19</sup> This was the reason why a great portion of funds was donated by the Christian countries, notably by the United States, to the missions in Greece, on Cyprus, Malta, in order to open the door to a strong influence of Protestant and other missionaries. Thereafter, numerous Christians moved to Lebanon and Syria.<sup>20</sup>

Although it was not the case in the beginning, the activities of Christian missionaries were conducted hand in hand with political interests of foreign countries which had felt the Russian inability to launch serious interventions. This became obvious after World War I.

At the same time scientific researches were made independently from political and religious interests. One of the pioneers was American archaeologist Edward Robinson who acquainted the works in 1838 with invaluable wealth of the Middle East past. Another one was the already mentioned A. Fon Kramer, unavoidable Orientalist.

The literature often treats the Russian influence only superficially when depicting social and political and educational situation in Lebanon and Syria.<sup>21</sup>

Although the institutions of Russian missionaries in the Middle East were not as widespread as American or French, they nevertheless played an important role in the cultural renaissance of Arabic world. This fact is very important for us as a number of *mahğar* writers were educated in Russian schools in the Middle East. Mihail Nuayma (born in 1889) and Nesib Arida (1887-1964), for example, had a very good knowledge of the Russian language and literature and became later the leading *mahğar* writers; a well-known Russian school in Nazareth produced not only a leading theoretician and prosaist of *mahğar* literature, but also a whole series of Arabic intellectuals. This is the reason why it is necessary to describe the Russian activity in the field of education and culture in those areas.

The Russian cultural influence was made on Orthodox Arabs in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> and in early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Thanks to a free-minded policy and a broad tolerance of Ibrahim as well as to the fact that Turks did not resist the invasion of foreign traders and missionaries, the Orthodox Churches in Syria and Palestine requested help from Russia alone. Russian Consular General in Beirut, Basili, gave his wholehearted support to such requests. As a result, Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs sent to the "sacred" land a very

<sup>19</sup> As an example how modern and strong was philo-hellenism, we can take Byron's joining the Greek National Army.

<sup>20</sup> See Krimskij, page 257-258.

<sup>21</sup> One of the exceptions is quoted Krimskij's work, who wrote in detail, on the basis of historical sources, about the Russian influence in Syria and Palestine, especially on pages 294-319.

capable missionary Porfirie Uspenski (1804-1885).<sup>22</sup> Lonely Porfirie had his associates from Russia. Russia began to fund richly the construction of the schools in Damascus, Beirut, Tripoli. In Jerusalem, which was his seat, Porfirie established a four-year school for Arabs. On the pattern of Americans and the English, he opened schools for Arabic girls. One such school was opened under his supervision in Jerusalem in 1852.<sup>23</sup>

The efforts of Orthodox Russia toward building educational institutions in Syria and Lebanon, were reduced, at least in the beginning, to religious education. The layman's subjects were taught in schools and were radically subjected to religion in modern Arabic, and not in Greek.<sup>24</sup> For the same purpose the two printing companies were established as well – in Beirut and Jerusalem. They were both very successful until the Crimea War.

Nevertheless, the Americans, the French and the English played a leading role in educating Arabic Christians, until the decisive 1882 year. That year an Imperial Orthodox Palestinian Society was established, which collected funds in churches in Russia and built many hospitals and schools in Syria and Palestine. Those were mainly teaching institutes for men and women, or seminaries with boarding school system, in which the curricula were very similar to those in Russia. Of special importance was the teachers' seminaries for men in Nazareth in which well-known Mihail Nuayma received education as well.<sup>25</sup> The Imperial Orthodox Palestinian Society was not happy with the establishment of schools in Syria and Palestine only. The Society used to send each year six most talented young Arabs to education in Russia, free of charge. This is how Mihail Nuayma completed the Poltavski seminary.<sup>26</sup>

Numerous pages could be devoted to detailed writing about the very rich activity of various missions in Lebanon, Syria and Palestine. Still, it was necessary to present briefly the situation showing the efforts of modern Lebanon, Syria and Palestine as it was only the beginning of a strong European influence on the Middle East and the creation of preconditions for a very intensive cultural development and the advent of modern Arabic literature.

It was precisely in the schools of Christian missionaries that a pleiad of Arabic intellectuals met the great cultural workers and writers Nasif al-Yazidzi (1800-1871) and Butrus al-Bustani (1819-1883) for example, who were scholars of Maronite monastery and American missionary schools. True encyclo-

<sup>22</sup> Ibid. page 294.

<sup>23</sup> Porfirie Uspenski was in favour of spreading Russian influence so much that he was ready to pay some priests alone. When his patriarchy did not respond, he complained to Consular Basili. Cf. Ibid. page 299.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid. page 302.

<sup>25</sup> This seminary worked until the beginning of the World War One.

<sup>26</sup> Nuayma described his education in Nazareth and in Poltava Seminary in a number of his works, especially in his biographical work *Sab'ūn ...* [Seventy...], I, Mu'assasa Nūfal, Bayrut, 1978, then in his letter to Kračkovski, in: *Izbrannye sočinenija*, III, Moskva-Leningrad, 1956, page 223-228.

pedists, linguists, with historical and philosophic background, marked their era with the works such as well-known Encyclopaedia.

An important event of cultural renaissance in the Middle East was the first theatre performance in Lebanon in 1848. Marun Nakas (1817-1855), educated in Italy, played Moliere's *Scrooge*, which was later evaluated positively by the Arabic and European press. Encouraged, al-Nakas established a theatre and began to write texts. George Ebjed travelled to Egypt and established a theatre in the very heart of Cairo. It still bears his name.

The framework of broad European cultural influences also includes the *mahğar* writers of whom a significant number studied Russian language and literature. Although Krimskij<sup>27</sup> mentions that Arabs generally learnt Russian literature through translations in English and French more than through originals, Mihail Nuayma and Nesib Arida read Russian.<sup>28</sup> Writing about that, Nuayma admitted that his style at the beginning of the literary creativity was under a strong influence of the Russian literature.<sup>29</sup> The classics of Russian realism, Tolstoy and Dostoewski, made an effect on him to such an extent that having read their works he was "ashamed of Arabic writers who used to be his model".<sup>30</sup> Nesib Arida knew Russian and literature, which affected his creativity a lot.<sup>31</sup>

Writers and cultural workers in Lebanon and Syria in the 19<sup>th</sup> century held a positive attitude towards Western culture which they got to know thank to the work of his missionaries and educators so that Lebanon and Syria, along with Egypt, became true centres of cultural renaissance. However, as one could expect, an unavoidable consequence of the cultural Renaissance was intensive wakening of national awareness of Arabs and a need to overcome religious division. The most advanced Arab academics (Nasif and Ibrahim al-Jazidji, 1947-1906), Butrus al-Bustani, Faris Sidjak, 1804-1887, and others) appealed to the unity of all Arabs, regardless of their belonging to various administrative centres, fearing a deep national split, the centre of which would be a religious disunion. On the other hand, they took a new stand on their own tradition, with the exception of extreme cases.<sup>32</sup> A positive attitude to-

<sup>27</sup> Krimskij, quote; page 316.

<sup>28</sup> Nuayma wrote his first poem *al-Nahr al-mutağammid* [Frozen River] in Russian and translated it in Arabic in New York. The origin of this poem and its translation into Arabic was described in *Sab'ün ...* [Seventy...], I, page 257-258. See also: George Saydah (Ğürğ Şaydah), *Adabunā wa udabā'unā fī al-mahāğir al-amarikiyya* [Our literature and our authors abroad in America], Cairo, 1956, page 180.

<sup>29</sup> *Sab'ün ...* [Seventy...], II page 190.

<sup>30</sup> Nuayma, *Ab'ad min Mūsū wa Wāşinşun* [Further from Moscow and Washington], Dār al-Şādir, Bayrut, 1966, page 68. Cf. Kračkovskij, III, page 224.

<sup>31</sup> Arida was educated in the Russian school in his birthplace Humsu and thereafter in Nazareth. He should have continued higher education in Russia. He did not go there because of the war between Russia and Japan. Al-Nauri, page 390.

<sup>32</sup> Cf. Abdul Kerim al-Eşter ('Abd al-Karīm al-Aştar), *al-Nağr al-mahğarī – funūn al-Rābiğa al-qalamiyya* [Prose of emigration-art Pen Association], I, Cairo, 1961, page 195-196.



ward tradition is reflected, first of, all in the efforts and resolve to break up with traditionalism, a sentimental approach to the past, but that the present and the future should be built on the foundation of tradition.

The *mahğar* writers belonged to the same spiritual trend. Although their creative maturity belongs to the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, they were born in the area and at the time which has so far been described as a milieu of direct importance to both their creativity and lives. It seems to us that the knowledge about that milieu significantly contributes to shedding light on the reason why those writers emigrated.

There is often a mention of two reasons why they emigrated. The primary reason is often said to have been the lack of religious freedoms and a general economic situation in Lebanon and Syria or the poverty of the families from which the writers emigrated.<sup>33</sup> The first reason is problematic, to say the least, and seems to be prone to becoming an illusion which should be forestalled. For, undoubtedly, the historical facts have been mentioned in this paper in relation to the activity of foreign religious missionaries, which clearly indicate the existence of religious freedoms. Among other things, Turks did not resist a widespread construction of churches and religious and educational institutions, while Ibrahim not only invited foreign missions, but also gave them guarantees for full freedom.<sup>34</sup> Thus, it would be quite risky to mention lack of religious freedoms as the cause of emigration. True, the relation between emigration and religion did exist, although, in our opinion, it is of different nature.

Christian population of Lebanon and Syria did not immigrate because of repression or deprivation of the right to practice religion. At the time of an intensive spread of religious influences in those countries and the creation of a certain type of religious zeal, some young people, systematically educated in religion since their childhood, wished to live in the area from which their teachers came. In other words, we have to call upon Hiti again. He himself belonged to that immigration and rightly concluded that "their two civilisations (Lebanon and the West) belonged to the same original trend, although different in certain points. Civilisations in Europe and Middle East hark back to Judeo-Christian and Greco-Roman traditions".<sup>35</sup>

The reason for immigration, which was the primary reason, was really a difficult economic situation, as economy of that region was declining continually after the water channel from Europe into India around the Cape of

<sup>33</sup> The same was done by, for example, Jordanian professor al-Nauri, reputed to have been one of the eminent experts in this literature, in: *al-'Arabī*, Kuwait, 1975, number 194, page 172. Although not so precisely, Šawqī Ḍayf wrote similarly in *Fuṣūl fī al-šī'r wa naqdih* [Articles on poetry and its criticism], Cairo, 1977, page 291.

<sup>34</sup> Ibrahim's "proclamation from 1839 on equality before law of the members of all religions was immediately in effect and operation. He did not resist to use force against Muslims in Damascus and Safad, who resisted the changes of the status of their fellow citizens Zimi". Hiti, page 670.

<sup>35</sup> Filip Hiti, page 672.

Good Hope was discovered in 1498. This was why numerous Arabic families went to other countries in the world – primarily to America – in search of material goods.<sup>36</sup>

In any case, both factors affected the immigration of numerous Arabic families to the United States or Latin America. Mihail Nuayma could be regarded as an exception, but only conditionally: he was educated in Russia and thereafter he immigrated to the United States.

An imposing Arabic colony in the United States accommodated a number of excellent writers who were organised and who had more or less the same poetics. The pinnacle of their creativity was between the two World Wars, which means that it was in parallel to the life of their association which they had established under the name of al-Rābiṭa al-qalamiyya.<sup>37</sup> Indeed, the writers produced valuable works before and after Rābiṭa and there were some good writers outside the association, although generally speaking, the best literature was written within Rābiṭa.

On the basis of the above it is not difficult to understand the origin of the *mahğar* writers and the time of their immigration: those were Arabs of various Christian sects<sup>38</sup> who moved in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and in the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century from Lebanon, Syria and Palestine to the United States.

The most prominent writers and publishers among those Arabic writers were: Mihail Nuayma (born in 1889), Ğubrān Halīl Ğubrān (1893-1931), Ilya Abu Madi (1898-1957), Amin al-Rayhani (1879-1940), Nasib Arida (1887-1946), Ni‘ma al-Hag (1800-1871), Masud Samaha, Rasid Ayyub (1862-1941), Nadra Haddad (1867-1899), Abdul Mesih Hadad (1890-1946), As‘ad Rustam born in 1875) and Walim Kataflays (1879-1951).<sup>39</sup>

Not one of them lived a life in America which they all had dreamt of and most of their illusions disappeared very soon. Numerous difficulties they faced in the new world may be divided into two groups: difficulties of material or literally existential nature and spiritual ones. Namely, there was no material abundance or golden sources of income. It was very difficult to earn

<sup>36</sup> Although witty, it is more indicative that al-Nauri mentions the resettlement of Arabs to “dollar countries” (*wilāyāt al-dūlār*).

<sup>37</sup> This association was known in literature under the name of PEN club. It had certain similarities with international PEN club, established in London in 1921, whose first president was John Galsworthy – its members were authors, critics, publicists. However, it was not advisable to call it in that way in order not to confuse it with the international PEN club, since it was established only one year before. The association of Arabic immigration had no relation to the PEN club. Al-Rābiṭa al-qalamiyya (pen association) will be referred to as Rābiṭa.

<sup>38</sup> Al-Ešter, I, page 28.

<sup>39</sup> These names are often mentioned as the names of the representatives of Mahğar literature. Some of them did not leave any visible traces in this literature, although their full engagement in the publishing activity of Mahğar contributed a lot to the development of this literature. See: al-Nauri, page 410-415.

dollars: they travelled throughout America with circus groups or opened little shops, or earned money otherwise. Their rather solid education and curiosity made them read and write during any spare moment. Simply, their destiny was to earn a sufficient amount of money for modest lives, more or less comfortable, but not luxurious; and no one managed to link business with art.<sup>40</sup>

For us far more important is an aspect of their spiritual contact with the *New World*. It was almost dramatic and it shaped their attitude toward the world, art and universe. On the one hand, a variety of spiritual values of the West attracted them, while on the other they were repulsive to them or brought them to deep dilemmas and collision because of a different mindset. For, although there were some firm, centuries long links between them and culture of the Western civilisation, there were some important elements which kept them too far from that circle. In other words, those extremely sensible people were of Oriental origin and their way of thinking and relation to the world were significantly different, sometimes even opposite to the way of thinking and relation towards the world of the Western civilisation.

Without any intention to go into details, as it is not in the focus of our attention, it is necessary to stress the basic feature of that difference. It is contained in different values of reason and imagination, or in a different harmonisation of their action. The harmonisation of the relation between reason and imagination or giving primacy to one, represents a type of "disturbance", the consequences of which are almost unforeseeable. Not only is this the source of a different attitude towards the values or material goods which secure or do not secure a solid living standard. The consequences go much deeper, especially when it comes to the writers, as it is the case here. On that depends an attitude toward the world in the broadest sense of the word and consequentially the understanding of the goal and reason for producing art.

*Mahğar* writers understood so well and so early that a series of problems in relation to their spiritual loss in the Western world arises from their imaginative knowledge which in the West has a different value in reference to the rational awareness. That the awareness of this difference was their big problem is supported by the interesting fact that neither of them stressed material difficulties as a decisive element of their feeling to be aliens in the foreign world. Moreover, they ignored it so easily, even carelessly, with a characteristic Eastern indifference towards material difficulties.<sup>41</sup> Believing that the Western material world and a huge trust in reason did not correspond to their

<sup>40</sup> Ğubrān organised periodic exhibitions of his pictures, although the money received for rarely sold pictures was negligible. Mihail Nuayma wrote about that and generally about the life and work of the biggest number of Mahğar authors in his book *Sab'ūn ...* [Seventy...], I-III, Nādīra Sarrāğ, *Šu'arā' al-Rābiṭa al-qalamiyya* [Pen Association Poets] described in detail social and material status of these authors – including the description of pictures displayed on the walls of their modest rooms.

<sup>41</sup> Ğubrān's concern over financial problems does not arise evident from a number of books of his correspondence, although his biography writers say he had plenty of such problems.

nature, their mentality which, in their opinion, contained much more emotions and imaginative features, they felt superior to the people in the West in terms of spirit. The reason for this was a different attitude of reason and imagination, as seen by *mahğar* writers. Critically, artistic and other texts of the *mahğar* literature were rife with that relation.

The point is that a man from the West places much more trust in reason and substance, in his or her experiencing the world with perception. This means that the power of imagination or imaginative and intuitive recognisance is subjected to the power of reason. On the other hand, in the "land of prophets", imagination is a dominant instrument of "cognisance" and believing in *gayb*.<sup>42</sup> Speaking of Ğubrān, Annie Salem Otto recognises: "A man from the East sees everything, even a lotus flower, through divine eyes, while a lotus flower, for someone from the West develops into a decoration of Corinthian pillars – it is decorative".<sup>43</sup> As Hegel would say, "immeasurable improvement of devoted spirituality" arises from that. That is an important feature of Eastern mentality.

It is clear that drawing a clear difference between imagination and reason and improvement of one at the cost of the other had a decisive effect on the formation of *mahğar* poetics, in which imagination appears as its constituent element. But the consideration of imagination as a poetic element deserves special attention. For the time being it is sufficient to say that the described understanding of imagination and an emphasis on its being a primary cognitive instrument is a starting point and an ultimate result of a clash of views between the *mahğar* authors and the world in which they had settled. For, the initial feeling of religious belonging to America did not prove to have been a connective element strong enough to provide them with happiness of spiritual and mental piece of mind. Moreover, their religious feelings in contact with the America's world underwent significant metamorphoses accompanied by nostalgia, over-dimensioned up to a painful feeling and experience of pan-Arabism as a native tranquillity.<sup>44</sup> In fact, awareness of their national belonging acquired an unsurmised dimension so that many texts represent a kind of an emotional correspondence with their native countries. Nevertheless, that feeling did not grow into a nationalistic exclusiveness against any other nation. Oriental broadness and tolerance they continually felt was represented in the best possible way.

On the other hand, as they understood they could melt away into America's spirit and experienced that inability as alienation, their own tradition became

<sup>42</sup> Cf. al-Ešter, I page 68.

<sup>43</sup> Annie Salem Otto, *The Parables of Kahlil Gibran*, The Citadel Press, New York, 1963, page 99.

<sup>44</sup> That the belonging to the same civilisation circle does not provide happiness is described by Spanish writer Ernesto Sabato, whose destiny was similar to the destiny of *mahğar* writers: "In this mess, in a continued change of the hierarchy of values, cultures and races – what is an Argentinean in all that?" Ernesto Sabato, *El túnel*, Cátedra, S. A. Madrid, 1979.

a focus of their interest. This does not mean that they were rejecting all values of the Western culture. On the contrary, new literary trends which, for example, were initiated by Walt Whitman, Ralph Waldo Emerson<sup>45</sup> and before them William Blake, affected the *mahğar* authors strongly but most often their stand towards their own tradition and a review of its hierarchy of values. Namely, even when they wrote on the pattern of Arabic literature, their creativity affected the Arabic tradition by its topicality and values rather than by the fact that it was made in Arabic. True, they wrote quite often about Arabic literary tradition with affection and polemic, but in essence and in the ultimate their attitude toward tradition was positive. This is understandable only if two things are taken into account. Firstly, at their time, classicism was still dominant in the East. An artistic procedure encouraged mediaeval or pre-Islamic literary examples so that literature grew into sheer handicrafts. Secondly, the *mahğar* authors came to know in America and Russia new literary values unknown to Arabic literature. Thus, their creative destiny was the destiny of the people who were at the crossroads of the two ages and at the crossroads of different civilisations and their severe conflict with vigilant guardians of traditionalism was natural; traditionalism and not tradition was a target of their attacks.

Interest in their own cultural heritage and a positive attitude towards the legacy were multifaceted. A feeling of patriotism and pan-Arabism has already been mentioned. However, it is particularly important that their interest in their own cultural heritage appeared as a strong cohesive element of Arabic immigration in the United States. The consequence was the establishment of Rābita in New York.

There is a slight disagreement about the date of establishment of Rābita. Imangulieva wrote<sup>46</sup> that Rābita was established on 28 April 1920, while Mihael Nuayma believed it was 20 April 1920.<sup>47</sup> The idea of establishment was launched by Ğubrān – its thought pillar and president until his death in early stage in 1931 when Rābita broke apart. The secretary was Mihael Nuayma – certainly the best critic of *mahğar* literature.<sup>48</sup> Other members were: Ilya Abu Madi, Nasib Arida, Rasid Ayyub, Nadra Haddad, Abdul Me-sih Hadad, Vedi Bahut and Ilyas Atalah. Emin al-Reihani-allegedly the best

<sup>45</sup> It should be mentioned in this context that Emerson's transcendentalism was based on the sources of classical Oriental philosophy. Cf. *Istorija književnosti Sjedinjenih Američkih Država* [History of Literature of the United States of America, I] (editors: R. E. Spiller and others); Obod, Cetinje, 1962, page 300; Milica Mint, "Emersonov transcendentalizam: izori i uticaji" ["Emerson's transcendentalism: sources and influences"], in R. V. Emerson, *Ogledi*, Grafos, Beograd, 1980.

<sup>46</sup> A. N. Imangulieva, "Asocijacija pera" i Mihail Nuajme ["Pen Association" and Mihail Nuayma"], Nauka, Moskva, 1975, page 14.

<sup>47</sup> Nuayma, *Sab'ūn ...* [Seventy...], II, page 163.

<sup>48</sup> Having the best information, Nuayma wrote a lot about Rābita. See: *Sab'ūn ...* [Seventy...], II, page 163 and onwards, *al-Nūr wa al-dayğūr* [Light and Darkness], Mu'assasa Nūfal, Bayrut, 1973, page 142 and onwards.

*mahğar* poet along with Ilya Abu Madi, Nasib Arida – was not a Rābita member, although his poems were very close to poems of the Rābita members. One reason was that al-Reihani was not in New York when Rābita was being established, and the other, much more important one was personal intolerance between him and Ğubrān.<sup>49</sup> Ğubrān expressed Lebanese local patriotism, while al-Reihani was an ardent advocate of pan-Arabism and the difference grew into their life long intolerance.<sup>50</sup>

The following year, 1921, was the year when the Rābita's anthology was published. It was a treasury of the works produced by Rābita's members.<sup>51</sup> A special value of this anthology was a preface by Mihael Nuayma. He requested that literature be nourished with "life". Basically, it was a strong condemnation of literature in Arabic East where poetry could be created by anyone who had a basic knowledge of metrical system and language. The biggest and most important part of the preface was revealed in the speech delivered during the establishment of Rābita: "Not everything that is put on paper literature, neither is everyone who writes an article or a rhythmical poem a writer", wrote Nuayma.<sup>52</sup> The *mahğar* writers expressed the same notion on different occasions. The East interpreted it as a devastating instinct toward nihilism. Today it is not difficult to see how inappropriate it was to evaluate in that way attitudes of *mahğar* writers and their literature in general, but it was possible to see even at that time that its creators were aware of the need to create on the basis of tradition.<sup>53</sup> The preface included the positions of the Rābita members toward tradition: "Although we are working toward reviving a new literary spirit, we are not intending to break up a link with the old. For, there are those who can teach poets and thinkers whose works will remain a source of respect and inspiration – tomorrow and in the a future. But we think that imitation would mean death of our literature."<sup>54</sup> What were the novelties?

The answer to the question of writing a modern Arabic literature that *mahğar* writers, notably Rābita members, contributed to, is complex and linked to their poetics; that is why it deserves a separate analysis and study.

<sup>49</sup> Nuayma, *Sab'ūn ...* [Seventy...], II, page 163-164.

<sup>50</sup> Cf. al-Nauri, page 357. Al-Nauri should be trusted here as he followed the developments in the Arabic immigration since the beginning. He exchanged letters with many of them. Even today 306 letters he received from him are kept at the University Library in Aman.

<sup>51</sup> *Mağmū'a al-Rābiṭa al-qalamiyya*. We used the Beirut edition from 1964.

<sup>52</sup> Nuayma, *Ğubrān Ḥalīl Ğubrān – ḥayātuh, mawtuh, adabuh, fannuh* [Ğubrān Halīl Ğubrān – His life, death, literature, art]. Mu'assasa Nūfal, Bayrut, 1974, page 177.

<sup>53</sup> Many writers in Arabic East, among them al-Akad and May Ziyada, recognised the works of *mahğar* writers. For more details see al-Akad's Preface to the first edition of Nuayma's book *Girbāl*, then: *al-Ša'la al-zarqā'*. *Rasā'il Ğubrān Ḥalīl Ğubrān ilā May Ziyāda* [Blue Beam. Letters of Ğubrān Halīl Ğubrān of May Ziyada]. Edited by Salmā al-Ḥaffār al-Kazbarī and Dr. Suhayl B. Bišrū'ī, Damascus, 1979.

<sup>54</sup> Nuayma, *Ğubrān Ḥalīl Ğubrān...*, Page 177.

But in this paper we should say at least that the *mahğar* literature was characterised by a free use of language (the so-called ordinary language), breaking mono-rhyme, cherishing prose. Of particular importance was the introduction of drama and poetry in the Arabic literature.

In reference to modernisation of Arabic literature, the problem of relation between *mahğar* and the East or the echo of their writings in their native countries, is much more complex than it was concluded from the above quotes of Nuayma. It is interesting that there was no indifference: either they were accepted with admiration or were criticised strongly.

An ideological confrontation with the guardians of “ancient good habits” brought to *mahğar* writers the biggest number of their enemies and a confrontation with incorrigible traditionalists – which the *mahğar* writers challenged bravely with their literature or criticism. Their art was an important contribution by its frequent violations of the norms of traditional literature. However, the fight they waged against clericalism in favour of liberation of women etc., was abused by their enemies even when they condemned their art, presenting them, among other things, as heretics. A good example is an Ğubrān’s excommunication from Maronite Church and a public burning of his blasphemous piece of art “Rebelled Souls” in Beirut (al-Arwāğ al-matumarrida).<sup>55</sup> Some of Nuayma’s works had a very sad destiny in the East.<sup>56</sup>

In the beginning Egypt rejected the *mahğar* works but it is interesting that the biggest number of supporters were also in Egypt.<sup>57</sup>

Around the same time *Divan* and *Apollo* were active groups in Egypt. The latter was close to the “aspirations of all emigrant movements”.<sup>58</sup> It was also the greatest contribution to the affirmation of the *mahğar* writers in the Arabic East. Three great *Divan* authors – al-Aqqād (1889-1964), al-Māzini (1890-1974) and ‘Abd al-Rahmān Sukri (1886-1958) – who by their works left an imprint on the entire epoch, had a similar spiritual vocation to *mahğar* writers.<sup>59</sup> Akad showed that in the best way by writing an inspiring preface

<sup>55</sup> Otto, page 64; al-Nauri, page 356. This Ğubrān’s book was published for the first time in New York in 1908. See: Nuayma, “Ğubrān fī āṭāriḥ al-‘arabiyya” [Ğubrān in his works in Arabic], in: Ğubrān, *al-Mağmū‘a al-kāmila* [Collected Works], Bayrut.

<sup>56</sup> Al-Ešter, page 115.

<sup>57</sup> Al-Nauri, page 358. Nuayma’s poem *Frozen River* was republished by *al-Hilāl* magazine from the immigration magazine *al-Funūn* and was read throughout the world, “with a resounding success”. Nuayma, *Sab‘ūn ...* [Seventy...], II, page 70-71.

<sup>58</sup> *Anthologie la Littérature Arabe Contemporaine. La Poésie*, éd. Seuil, Paris, 1967, page 19.

<sup>59</sup> For more details on the *Apollo* and *Divan* group’s joining art see: Omer al-Dasuki (‘Umar al-Dasūqī), *Taṭawwur al-naqd al-‘arabī al-ḥadīṭī fī Miṣr* [Development of Modern Arabic Criticism in Egypt], Cairo, page 300-380. The Rabīta’s *Mağmū‘a al-kāmila* had a resounding success in Arabic East as soon as they were published in 1921. N. Serāğ mentions (page 97) that a whole Pleiad of Arabic writers was influenced by this work and that the term “Ğubrān’s style” came into use at that time.

to the best known Nuayma's book of essays.<sup>60</sup> However, there were some failed attempts to establish cooperation between the *mahğar* writers and some literary movements in Arabic countries. For example, there was a disagreement with the literary association (*al-Rābiṭa al-adabiyya*).

Mihael Nuayma gladly received the news that a literary association was established in Damascus in 1921. Its programme proclaimed the modernisation of literature. On that occasion Ğubrān wrote to Nuayma from Boston in 1921: "Since I have read the most recent issue of the magazine of the literary association, I conclude that we have nothing in common with them: whatever we may do, Nuayma, we cannot free them from slavery to expressive models".<sup>61</sup> And sincerely, without leaving any visible traces in literature, the literary association broke apart soon "since it did not have a clear and decisive programme".<sup>62</sup>

The *mahğar* writers were in a slightly better position than writers with an anti-traditionalist orientation in Arabic countries. Namely, they were not under a direct influence of their critics and they were not close to them: they organised their own publishing activity and they were able to write more freely, without any fear that their manuscripts would be rejected.<sup>63</sup> During the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century Arabic immigration in the United States had some thirty gazettes in Arabic.<sup>64</sup> True, most of those gazettes were published with interruptions and after World War One most of them ceased to be published, as immigrants were coming back to their native countries in huge numbers. In any case, they had played a decisive role in publishing the works of *mahğar* authors and some of them should certainly be mentioned in the end.

Nesib Arida established *al-Funūn* in 1913.<sup>65</sup> Ğubrān, Nuayma and al-Reihani were full associates. Their numerous contributions devoted to the modernisation of Arabic literature placed it amongst the leading gazettes of the *mahğar* authors. In parallel, the translations of Western authors' books and reproductions of the best-known artists were also published. The founder was constantly faced with the problem of funding the magazine. As a conse-

<sup>60</sup> Nuayma, *al-Girbāl* [Sieve]. Akad's Preface, written in 1923.

<sup>61</sup> *Rasā'il Ğubrān* [Ğubrān's correspondence], Bayrut, s. a.

<sup>62</sup> 'Umar al-Duqāq, *Funūn al-adab al-mu'āšir fī Sūriyya* [Contemporary artistic literature in Syria], Damascus, 1971, page 70-71.

<sup>63</sup> It is certain that the biggest number of their anti-traditional works at that time would not be accepted by publishers in Arabic countries. Badawī writes that *mahğar* writers, thank to the publishing independence, were able to "make experiments and were less influenced by Arabic tradition" (Badawī, *A Critical Introduction to Modern Arabic Poetry*, Cambridge, 1975, page 180).

<sup>64</sup> Imangulieva, page 13.

<sup>65</sup> N. Serāğ wrote extensively about Arida's activity on publishing *al-Funūn*, in her book *Nasīb 'Arīda – al-šā'ir, al-kātib, al-ṣaḥāfi* [Nesib Arida – poet, writer, journalist], Cairo, 1970, page 161-171. This text contains facsimiles of some *al-Funūn* pages.



quence, only ten issues came out in continuity. Two years later the magazine came out again. However, in two years, in 1918 it ceased to be published again. Aridini, Nuaji and Ğubrān's efforts to revive the magazine did not bring any results. Feeling the gap, they gathered around al-Sāih.

In 1912 Abdul Mesih Hadad established *al-Şāih* and edited it for forty five years. He wrote editorials and numerous essays. In 1927 a special issue came out which included selected works produced by Rābita members. The magazine was published in New York until 1957. After he lost his family and since many *mahğar* writers died or returned to their native countries, Hadad sold Rāġi al-Zuhayr magazine to the magazine owner, *al-Bayān*.<sup>66</sup>

*Al-Muhāğir* was a New York paper. Its editor-in-chief was Ğubrān. Amin al-Gurayyib, the owner, published in 1908 Ğubrān's collections of short essays, *Rebelled Souls* and *Brides of the Field* ('Arā'is al-murūğ). The publisher wrote prefaces for both works, without any special value, though.

Rābita members gathered around these magazines and around *al-Hudā*, *al-Fatāt*, *Mir'āt al-Ğarb*. But they were no match to the previous magazines and had little value in terms of the development of *mahğar* literature.

After Ğubrān, Rābita's founder, died, Rābita ceased to exist. Organised activity of the Arabic immigration in the United States ceased to exist and a number of magazines were no longer published.

However, albeit over a short period of time, *mahğar* authors made a valuable contribution to modern Arabic literature. That contribution is still being examined. In our opinion, it should be viewed in relation to the space and time in which *mahğar* literature was created.

#### PHILOSOPHICAL ORIGINS

*Mahğar* authors are important because they introduced poetics whose elements enrich Arabic literary tradition. One would not be able to understand that poetics or literary artistic production without establishing its "spiritual origin" which leads to several directions. Namely, displaced *mahğar* authors were inspired by various philosophical systems which represent starting points for their poetics and a philosophical literary artistic creativity. This specifically goes for Nuayma and Ğubrān who were the only ones in the *mahğar* literature who tried to resolve problems of literature as art. Others wrote about that in an almost aphoristic way, most often as a reflection of Ğubrān and Nuayma who provided direction to all of them.

American transcendentalism with Emerson at the head takes an "honourable place" amongst philosophical opinions. Similarities, even dissimilarities with Emerson and his opinion could be considered from two different aspects. Firstly, there is a parallel between Ğubrān and Emerson's positions in practi-

<sup>66</sup> Hadad set only one condition for selling his magazine – to have the right to publish in each issue at least one text. He did that all his life, until 1963.

cal, everyday lives. A deeper analysis of that correspondence would lead us to positivist methodological approach. This is why we shall mention only some of them – those which we believe are in a direct connection with a conceptual orientation of the two authors.

Although he was not a priest like Emerson, Ğubrān and his model<sup>67</sup> were excommunicated from church. This was preceded by his fight against clericalism, against church as an institution, although both were deeply religious. A strong individualism, oratorical skill and his personal character in general were the key features of both Emerson and Ğubrān. The judgement about Ğubrān was valid for Emerson as well: “Emerson’s influence on the spirit of his contemporaries was not dogmatic, nor intellectual, but of purely personal nature”.<sup>68</sup> There were some other conspicuous similarities, although it is more important to follow those reflected in his philosophical opinion”.<sup>69</sup>

Ğubrān did not write about Emerson and transcendentalism, although there were some obvious similarities. Nuayma wrote about his teacher with unhidden admiration. The following Nuayma’s sentences do not only represent the core of Emerson’s transcendentalism, but they introduce us to Nuayma and Ğubrān’s transcendentalist concept: “Along with others, Emerson established the transcendentalism movement which implied a cognisance of the truth by intuition, internal sense exceeding the bounds of the senses (...). In his opinion, the Universe has its Creator and it is much better for a man to subject himself to it, instead of opposing it”.<sup>70</sup>

A limitless confidence in the values of intuitive and imaginative cognition and aversion to empirism, positivism of scientific cognition lie in the basis of the entire Nuayma and Ğubrān’s philosophy. How much Nuayma’s interpretation of Emerson was close to his own definition of imagination and reason may show a thought which Nuayma developed in most of his works: the reason praised by the people for too long is nothing else but a child led by imagination. Imagination needs to be freed from the fetters of the reason and one may fly to each corner of Universe, see himself in everything that can be seen and feel or recognise that we spend the whole life in a non-divisive unity.<sup>71</sup>

<sup>67</sup> For more details on Emerson’s rebellion against “formal religion” and excommunication from church, see: Emerson, *The Selected Writings*, The Modern library, New York, 1950, page XIII.

<sup>68</sup> Milica Mint, page 129.

<sup>69</sup> It is interesting that Ğubrān lived near the place in which Emerson’s transcendentalism had been established: it was mentioned in literature as “concord transcendentalism”, which appeared as the school of opinion in Thirties and Forties of the last century; as its name suggests, it was established in the American City Concord, near Boston. Ğubrān lived during the first half of this century in Boston and periodically in New York.

<sup>70</sup> Nuayma, *Fī al-girbāl al-ğādīd* [In a New Sieve], Mu’assasa Nūfal, Bayrut, 1972, page 121-122.

<sup>71</sup> Nuayma, *Zād al-ma’ād* [The Pledge of the Future Life], Mu’assasa Nūfal, Bayrut, 1972, page 10.

It arises from the above that Nuayma did not deny the possibilities and values of scientific cognition, although they had to be led by imagination, while it was not necessary that imaginative cognisance was related to the reason in the same way. Thus, there is no rivalry between scientific truths and truths or values reached by imagination – the former are achieved with the help of imagination, and the latter independently or beyond the reason and their objectivity exceeds that of scientific truths. It can be noticed straight away that this view is not characteristic of transcendentalism only, but also of romanticism. This will be discussed later.

The development of ability to cognise things intuitively and imaginatively is linked by Emerson, Ğubrān and Nuayma with the doctrine of individualism which Ğubrān and Nuayma did not devote their works to, although it was present in their thinking system.<sup>72</sup> In his Chapter on *Self-Reliance*, Emerson elaborated a doctrine of individualism, of which one could not say it was a passive attitude toward the world, which was also close to Ğubrān's thinking: "It is easy to live in the world according to the opinion of that world; it is easy to live in one's solitude according to one's own standards; but great is the man who keeps independence of solitude in a crowd".<sup>73</sup> Emerson did not mind being wrongly understood. On the contrary, "to be great means not to be understood".<sup>74</sup> Emerson was often against the authority, especially religious authorities,<sup>75</sup> and against tradition, believing that a "high level of self-reliance must bring about revolution in all affairs and relations; in their religion; in their education; in their interests; way of life; in their associations; possession; speculative positions".<sup>76</sup> Ğubrān and Nuayma stressed self-reliance, reflected in their numerous attacks on church organisation, priesthood, the whole schooling and education system which had to be removed totally in order to make young people acquire the skills of imaginative, individual cognisance; the whole system of existing institutions was false and wrong, incapable of taking men to the secrets of one's Being.<sup>77</sup>

The major goal of man's existence, Nuayma wrote, was the cognisance of God, or the universal and perfect Law governing the world, which could

<sup>72</sup> On Emerson's individualism, see: *Povijest svjetske književnosti* [History of the World's Literature], VI (edited by: Breda Kogoj-Kapetanović and Ivo Vidan), Mladost, Zagreb, 1976, page 314; *Istorija književnosti Sjedinjenih Američkih Država* [The History of Literature of the United States of America], I, Obod, Cetinje, 1962, page 292-313.

<sup>73</sup> Emerson, *Self-Reliance*, page 150.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.* page 152.

<sup>75</sup> Emerson, *The Selected Writings*, page XIII.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.* page 152.

<sup>77</sup> Ğubrān and Nuayma did not do that as theoretical work only, but also in numerous poems and essays. This is why it would be redundant to list all writings. Almost entire Ğubrān's collected writings *Rebelled Souls* speak about the non-recognition of the authority and breaking tradition. Of Nuayma's writings, one should be stressed in particular, *Zād al-ma'ād* [The Pledge of the Future Life].

absolutely not be achieved through formal education, no matter how good it was.<sup>78</sup> The achievement of that goal was the biggest fortune which a man could experience and it could be achieved by man's cognition of his own being, as the man is scared "by his spirit". Experience of the nature as an emanation of universal and perfect Law.<sup>79</sup> As if we could hear echoes of Emerson's opinion: "The world is not a product of multiple powers, but of one will, one mind" which indicates that "the sole mind is omnipresent, in every beam of a star, in every drop of a lake (...) The recognition of this law awakes a feeling that we call "religious" and which is our greatest happiness".<sup>80</sup>

We could provide an endless list of quotes as evidence of overlapping between Nuayma and Ğubrān's understanding, on the one hand, and Emerson's on the other, but we shall limit ourselves to the presentation of their substance.

Ğubrān and Nuayma found in Emerson's thinking the presence of elements of Oriental philosophical and religious concepts, which they found quite attractive. We know that, for example, Emerson was open to Oriental views of the world,<sup>81</sup> originating from Eastern pantheism. His "concept of universe" was a form of "modernised pantheism".<sup>82</sup> That was a starting point for a comparison between Emerson, Nuayma and Ğubrān's understanding of nature and the world as a whole.

The attitude toward nature has an important place in Emerson's transcendentalism<sup>83</sup> and in Ğubrān and Nuayma's philosophy. It is possible to understand it within broader frames of their thinking. The world is in fact an emanation of God who could be cognised through a cognisance of that emanation of God. This is why one should turn to the perfection of nature which unavoidably points to the existence of its perfect creator. In other words, God is immanent by all of His accidentias and He is transcendent in the Haven, which means that He is within and outside the world at the same time. We have seen that Nuayma, by stressing spirit which is by itself the world, stressed that He is not manifested only through nature, but through a man's conscience as his product. Nuayma's belief proved only later to be very important for further development of his thinking. Nature should not be understood in terms of individualities promoting the supreme Law, but it should be understood as a whole, "composed of "individualities which, on the one hand, are mutually

<sup>78</sup> Nuayma, *Zād al-ma'ād* [The Pledge of the Future Life].

<sup>79</sup> Ibid.

<sup>80</sup> Emerson, "An Address", page 69-70.

<sup>81</sup> *Istorija književnosti Sjedinjenih Američkih Država* [A History of Literature of the United States of America], I, page 300-307.

<sup>82</sup> René Wellek, *A History of Modern Criticism 1750-1950 (The Age of Transition)*, Yale University Press, 1965, page 165.

<sup>83</sup> Emerson's great love towards nature is also proven by mutual devotion to the nature as a basis of his friendship with American writer Toro. For more details see: *Istorija književnosti Sjedinjenih Američkih Država* [A History of Literature of the United States of America], I, page 314-334.

linked, inter-related, since, on the other hand, they promote God or supreme God who, as such, could produce the world only as a meaningful unity.

We could paraphrase Hegel whose writing about Eastern pantheism was close to Ġubrān and Nuayma's understanding of the unity between God and the world. According to him, God is immanent to each individuality, but since He is outside empirical reality of individualities, He is transcendental at the same time. All individualities must be taken as All, as the World, as "the All-spirit" since a perfect being did not create individualities as such, but created the *totality* of specificities.<sup>84</sup> When Nuayma spoke about specificities, he always spoke about specificities as the Nature. He spoke about specificities which made a Universe (*al-kawn*). In that sense, Ġubrān too wrote that a man became perfect when he experienced himself in the unity with limitless Universe (*al-fadā*), with Nature and all of its elements. Once he experienced it all, he becomes perfect (*kāmil*) and becomes a shadow (*zill*) of the divine shadow.<sup>85</sup> Emerson also said: "In nature I become a transparent eye ball (...); the streams of a universal being are circulating through me; I am a part or a particle of God (...). The strongest relish that a field and forest provides is an indication of an occult relation between a man and flora. I am not alone and I am not unrecognised".<sup>86</sup>

Self-reliance and individualism are clear now: realisation of supreme happiness through a cognisance of supreme law is achieved through imagination as the ability which is individual.

In Nuayma's Cosmo-vision, the cosmos as a unity of individualities exists in the unity with the supreme Existence, recognised as emanation of that Existence. Its emanation – or omnipresence – in nature, or in the world, requests that cognisance should be done through nature. We have come to a key term used by Nuayma in his thinking, and we can mention it here, as we have seen the meaning which the individuality has in his understanding of universe. The term "unity of Existence" (*waḡda al-wuḡūd*) – can be treated at the same time as the naming of Nuayma's philosophy, as the unity of Existence – understood in this way, is nothing else but pantheism and pantheistic experience of nature which Nuayma shares with Emerson. The same goes for Ġubrān, although he did not write as much as Nuayma. Concerning Ġubrān's metaphysical system, Sherefan noticed well that the system is pantheistic or "panentheistic", meaning that for Ġubrān God, nature and man are a union in existence, although they are not the same.<sup>87</sup>

Pantheistic experience of nature acted in a manner that everything natural was experienced as spiritualised, since it reflected immanence of God. This is why a focus on observation of spiritualised natural often led to its raising

<sup>84</sup> Cf. Hegel, *Estetika*, II, Kultura, Beograd, 1970, page 71-72.

<sup>85</sup> Ġubrān, "Strange and Rare Things", in *al-Maḡmū'a al-kāmila* [Collected Works], page 529.

<sup>86</sup> Emerson, *Nature*, in: page 6-7.

<sup>87</sup> Sherefan, *A Third Treasury of Kahlil Gibran*, New Jersey, 1975, page 390.

to the level of independent spirituality, although it mainly remained at the level of observation of overall *beauty* of everything natural, as the perfect Law does not create something perfect as inappropriate. It could be expected that at this level pantheism develops into a hedonistic philosophy or into philosophy of hedonism.

If nature is understood as *beautiful*, it is quite possible that something which is the most beautiful is looked for in the nature and that one enjoys in it like in the most beautiful manifestation of God, since, in accordance with that, it was created in order to enable everyone to reach God.

Nuayma's pantheistic category of "marvel" (*dahša*) speaks in favour of the possibility of hedonism, without which it would not be possible to understand his pantheism. At several places and especially in the text on Tagora,<sup>88</sup> Nuayma mentions marvel as an initial phase of cognisance of nature and via nature, a cognisance of God. In noticing omnipresent beauty, the man feels marvel and is aware that he can discover it to the full only if he experiences it intensively. He admires even strongly the power of the supreme Law to create beauty and only beauty. This means that by discovering and experiencing the world as a beauty, the man achieves the supreme happiness, which is the implementation of the task of his being – cognisance.<sup>89</sup> This is why Nuayma "like Tagora" did not believe in the existence of ugly things and admired everything beautiful<sup>90</sup>. Thus, the question is how it is possible to avoid identification with the *soul of beautiful things* in terms of hedonistic treatment, as Nuayma's pantheism (*waḥda al-wuḡūd*) means a true unity which, if understood in that way, leads to beatitude and unconcern.

On the other hand, Nuayma and Emerson believed that it would be better to be subjected to the supreme Law than to oppose it, which means a care-free subjection to the purposeful arrangement of the world and human destinies. This "perfect" world is arranged in a manner that our journey through that world is in no way accidental, as is not accidental any particularity of our lives – full predetermination makes each rebellion totally senseless.<sup>91</sup> It arises from this that even a periodical human pain is possible and "beautiful", as it is ultimately purposeful so that the rebellion is our complaint.<sup>92</sup> The consequence of this belief is not a passive life in beatitude, but a kind of un-

<sup>88</sup> Nuayma, *Fī al-girbāl al-ḡadīd* [In a New Sieve], page 24-32.

<sup>89</sup> Ḡubrān believed in the same.

<sup>90</sup> Nuayma, *Fī al-girbāl al-ḡadīd* [In a New Sieve], page 29.

<sup>91</sup> Ḡubrān, for example, believed so deeply in absolute predetermination that he said that his birth in Lebanon, in Bashari in 1883, and each detail of his life, had an ultimate goal and purpose in an eternal lasting of the world. Nuayma, "Ḡubrān in his Arabic writings", in: Ḡubrān: *Collected Works*, page 8. Nuayma's belief in predetermination may be best expressed in his book *al-Nūr wa al-dayḡūr* [The Light and the Darkness], Bayrut, 1973, page 121-146.

<sup>92</sup> Nuayma wrote about the sources of pain in the Chapter on Yanābī' al-alam ["Sources of Pain"], in: *Zād al-ma'ād* [The Pledge of the Future Life], page 61-69.

concern which finds justification for everything and discovers beauty which celebrates its creator.<sup>93</sup>

However, although it seems that all roads lead to a special type of hedonism, it is avoided at the very beginning of Nuayma and Ğubrān's thinking and again there is a similarity between them and Emerson. In the text in which he expressed his attitude toward nature as his penetration and compression with it, Emerson said: "Well, it is certain that the power to create this satisfaction is not in nature but in man or in their mutual harmony".<sup>94</sup> On the other hand, we have already stressed the importance of Nuayma's thought under which it is possible to become aware of supreme and perfect Law primarily through cognisance of one own's being, as "the man is by his spirit sacred".<sup>95</sup> At least as far as Nuayma is concerned, the importance of this thinking is important for further development of his pantheism.

Namely, Nuayma limited the need to focus to reveal God *in all* natural phenomena as his emanation: although he gave a significant place to the nature which astonishes everyone by its nature, he made a man subordinate to it. Thus, the most beautiful thing created is *the subject* in which the omnipresence of God is reflected in the best and also the most complex way. By shifting the focus on the subject, Nuayma left the pure pantheism and requested that the subject should turn primarily and mostly to itself, as the self-cognisance led to the highest satisfaction possible – the cognisance of God. This means that by calling upon the *unity of Existence*, the subject, with the help of imaginative cognisance feels to be in inseparable unity with God to whom he belongs by creating God and by returning to him and by the God's presence in his subjective awareness.<sup>96</sup>

In this way Nuayma and Ğubrān reached mysticism. For, by feeling *the unity of Existence*, the man melts away into the nature and spreads its subjectivity and becomes united with God, without feeling any difference between him, the nature and God as separate and mutually independent existences. The absolute unification or a feeling of absolute unity is nothing else but a particular state of the mind in which an indescribable feeling of beatitude and eternity exists, which can be achieved, understandably, through imagination only. That state of mind is sometimes called a trance, but in Nuayma's terminology, it is the pinnacle of love we find in that function and in Islamic mystics. Although Nuayma does not use that term, the absolute unifi-

<sup>93</sup> Sherefan, page 400.

<sup>94</sup> Emerson, *The Selected Writings*, page 7.

<sup>95</sup> Nuayma, *Zād al-ma'ād* [The Pledge of the Future Life], page 46.

<sup>96</sup> The whole Nuayma's poem *Man anti yā nafs* [Who are you, Soul] speaks of the soul as an "outflow" of emanation of God. Cf. Muḥis Turayā, *Mihā'il Nu'ayma al-adīb al-ṣūfī* [Mihail Nuayma – Sufi writer], Dār ṣādir, Bayrut, 1964, page 155. In that sense, Nesib Arida's poem *Yā nafs* [Soul] is the same. Cf. Iḥsān 'Abbās, *al-Ši'r al-'arabī fī al-mahğar* [Arabic literature in immigration], Bayrut, 1957, page 66; Badawi, *A Critical Introduction to Modern Arabic Poetry*, Cambridge, 1975, page 193-195.

cation is nothing else but a Sufi nullification of everything – I, in divine Existence (*fanā'*).

The entire Ġubrān and Nuayma's philosophy and Emerson's philosophy are not original in many aspects. It should be determined which philosophical systems were inspiring for *mahġar* authors, aside from Emerson's transcendentalism and via his transcendentalism, as it is obvious that the roots of Emerson's transcendentalism should be sought in Christianity in Eastern religions, in classical German idealistic philosophy, etc.<sup>97</sup>

The fact that they were theologically educated is not insignificant. Nuayma had a sound theological education. As we have seen, he was educated in the Russian Orthodox Schools – the Holy Book translated in the Arabic language was the first literary and philosophical "form seen by *mahġar* authors".<sup>98</sup> Thus, their transcendentalism originates in part in Christianity under which God is both transcendental, taken in abstraction, and immanent, since it is manifested in nature and human awareness. One should keep in mind that a similar thought is found in the new Platonists and Gnostics who believe that the world is also the emanation of divinity; it is also possible to seek the influence of Kant's philosophy: the term "transcendentalism" which referred to metaphysics in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, was adopted by Kant as a priori knowledge, i.e. the knowledge, the origin of which does not lie in experience.

It seems that the origin of Nuayma and Ġubrān's philosophy is in Islamic East which was affected by both Indian and Old Indian religions from the time of Abbasids (750-1258). In studying the whole spectrum of influences made on the *mahġar* authors – especially on Nuayma and Ġubrān – we established that they had accepted a lot from Islamic philosophy, including all the influences on the Islamic philosophy. This is why the positions in which they saw a certain link with Islamic philosophy were very close to them.

As Arabs, Nuayma and Ġubrān knew a part of Islamic philosophy which they read in originals. Ibn Sīnā' (990-1037) and his mystical poem *The Descent of the Soul* left a strong influence on them, although the influence of other Islamic philosophers, notably, Islamic mystics (*ṣūfī*), was very strong. There was a great similarity to their opinions. When we are mentioning the substance of Islamic mysticism (*taṣawwuf*), we do not have to draw parallel with Nuayma and Ġubrān's philosophy – the parallelism will become obvious by itself since we have already seen the substance of their philosophy.

The Sufi see the world as the emanation of God, not in His specificities but in the world as a whole. The world which is felt by perception has a status of, we would say, illusion, since the divine matter is behind and in it. The major objective of human existence is to reach the substance of the world through the world's existence. Also, since the subject is "the effusion of God",

<sup>97</sup> Cf. *Povijest svjetske književnosti* [History of the World's Literature], VI, page 313; *Istorija književnosti Sjedinjenih Američkih Država* [The History of Literature of the United States of America], I, page 300-307; Wellek, page 165.

<sup>98</sup> Al-Ešter, I, page 197.



the task of the subject is to achieve cognisance by turning to himself. In other words, the subject removes his limits by contemplative self-plunging into a special state in which he cognises his divine origin. Further contemplation (and solitude) which includes asceticism – *zuhd* – leads to a trance in which the natural or material is overcome and a full identification with God is achieved, or as Nuayma would say, an absolute unification is achieved. A great Islamic mystic Suhrawardī (1155 – 1191) formulated this identification in five stages: 1. “There is no God except God”. 2. “There is no Him except Him”. 3. “There is no You except You”. 4. “There no Me except Me”. 5. “Everything but his Face will disappear.”<sup>99</sup>

In a situation when Sufī unifies with God, realising the ultimate purpose of His existence, the feeling for time and space disappears, the feeling for up and down, for yesterday and today – everything flows into One Eternity. The blessed state similar to intoxication (*maḡabba*) follows this identification in which there is no difference between God and the subject, or as Suhrawardī says, “There is no Me except Me”.<sup>100</sup> Sufi call this state as *fanāʾ*. For Nuayma too, the pinnacle of love is an absolute unification of God, Man and Nature – everything in everything; God and Man are the One in that state. There is no time or place, life and death, past and future – everything is at one moment and at one place.<sup>101</sup>

It should be said that the Sufī *fanāʾ* on the one hand and Nuayma’s *absolute unification* on the other, has an equivalent in Buddhistic Nirvana.<sup>102</sup> In addition, Nuayma and Ğubrān’s understanding of the soul or of “one own’s self” which merges into God, inevitably reminds one of Brahman’s unification in terms of a full identification of *atman* and *brahman*.<sup>103</sup>

We could add to the similarities between Nuayma and Ğubrān’s philosophy and *taṣawwuf* another important similarity, expressed in understanding and use of the same term *maʾrifa*. Nuayma used this term to refer to the avenue of cognisance, i.e. the absorption with God in a manner which we have already described. For Islamic mystics Hallāġ (852-922) and Suhrawardī, *maʾrifa* is a “methodological orientation” in the identification of a being with the fight (“Gnostic avenue”, as it is often translated in the literature) which exceeds the powers and ideals of a practical mind.<sup>104</sup>

One of the central Nuayma and Ğubrān’s topics with which they were obsessed not only in the texts devoted to thinking about the world and God, but which they wrote about in their essays, is metempsychosis (*taqammus*

<sup>99</sup> Čedomir Veljačić, *Razmeđa azijskih filozofija* [The Boundary of Asian Philosophers], II, Liber, Zagreb, 1978, page 364.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid.

<sup>101</sup> Cf. al-Nauri, page 380.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid. Comparison between Buddhistic teaching and *taṣawwuf*, see: Veljačić.

<sup>103</sup> Cf. Anwari et Gardet, in: *Klasična kultura islama* [Classical Culture of Islam], I, edited and published by Nerkez Smailagić, Zagreb, 1976, page 224.

<sup>104</sup> Cf. Veljačić, page 364.

*al-arwāḥ and tanāsuh*).<sup>105</sup> It is usually said that they found inspiration for metempsychosis in the well-known poem *The Descent of the Soul* written by a medieval Islamic philosopher Ibn Sīnā,<sup>106</sup> but it is also possible that they took this belief from Indian philosophy under which the soul is continually going through reincarnation until full purification.<sup>107</sup> His statement on the influence of Ibn Sīnā may be based on Ğubrān's text on *Ibn Sīnā and His Poem* (Ibn Sīnā wa qaṣīdatuh) in which he admired the mind of the great philosopher.<sup>108</sup>

However, there is a problem concerning metempsychosis, which has no solution in Nuayma and Ğubrān's philosophy of mysticism. Namely, they do not refer to metempsychosis in the sense that the soul goes from one body to another until full purification, but their metempsychosis is limitless in the meaning limitless transmigration of soul, which means that an individual soul is immortal. The question is in which way the teaching of immortality of soul can be reconciled philosophically with the belief in an *absolute unification* with God, since the soul, by eternal moving from one body to another, is eternally "busy" by body-soul dualism, so that its eternal passage through this world takes a possibility away for its final release from body.

Although we said that metempsychosis is one of the central Nuayma and Ğubrān's topics, it should be stressed that they did not try to establish it consistently in their system of opinion. Metempsychosis attracted their poetic being, as the texts of philosophical nature treat it beyond a philosophical system. In other words, metempsychosis is indeed a part of their belief, but the effort to make it a constituent part of their philosophy is not evident – the curious spirit of an artist was attracted by it. Interestingly, the Sufi did not either deal with the immortality of the soul.<sup>109</sup>

It would be difficult to believe that great similarity between Nuayma and Ğubrān's understanding and Sufi understanding was only accidental and that it could be reduced to similarity only. Their education based on the sources of Arabic and Arabic Islamic culture is doubtless. They took pride in their belonging to that culture and they believed that their future could be built on the bases of their own tradition, enriched with the contacts with other cultures.

<sup>105</sup> George Saydah who lived with mahḡar authors, wrote that only Ilya Abu Madi did not believe in reincarnation (*Our Literature and Our Writers in America*, page 157). Nuayma elaborated this topic in an artistic manner in his well-known story *Liqā'* [Meeting] and Ğubrān, among others, in the stories *Ramād al-aḡyāl wa al-nār al-ḥālida* [The Ashes of the Generations and Eternal Fire] and *al-šā'ir al-ba'albakī*. Cf. al-Ešter, page 28-29; N. Serag, page 141.

<sup>106</sup> Cf. Seraḡ, page 135.

<sup>107</sup> Cf. Sherefan, page 398-400.

<sup>108</sup> Ğubrān wrote that Ibn Sīnā's poem on soul was the best poem of all ever written by "the old" and that he felt closest to that poem; "it is a result of an extraordinary imagination and continued, long thinking". Ğubrān, *Collected Works*, page 542-545.

<sup>109</sup> Veljačić, page 365.

It is not so important that the avenue which led them to the sources of Islamic mysticism could be avoided: from Emerson's transcendentalism via a new Platonic pantheism and Buddhism. In any case all these schools of opinions are a kind of a tangle: Emerson was inspired, among others, by Eastern religions, *tasawwuf* was created in contacts of Islam with Indian and Old Roman religions, and Nuayma and Ğubrān communicated with them all – and with Christianity of course – much more with an unstable mind of an artist rather than with a speculative philosophical mind.

A series of inconsistencies arises from the above. This is why their opinion may not be called a system, in terms of a philosophical system, but a kind of syncretic opinion which, as such, is not trying to overcome contradictions. Even more truly – that is a kind of a religious orientation rather than a philosophy. This is why it not possible to group it in any philosophy or any religion without one's having guilty conscience for even attempting to do so. It is true that Nuayma and Ğubrān's opinion had a strong influence on *mahġar* authors, but it is also true that this opinion affected mainly them, only during their personal contacts. It means that we can return to an interim statement by which a personal character and not only their opinion determines their feature. In that sense – they had influence on *mahġar* authors and that Ğubrān's *The Prophet*<sup>110</sup> echoed in the rest of the world – they can be grouped in history of philosophy.<sup>111</sup>

For the sake of the truth, the richness of Nuayma's texts in which he expressed his opinion cannot be read without an extra effort, not because it would be difficult to understand them, but because of their helpless lack of systematic feature. The texts which intend to be philosophical are rarely enriched with a dignity of a peaceful, logical, philosophical expression. Their major feature is emotion and artistic inspiration, generalisation and avoidance of making conclusions in consequences. The elaboration of the same ideas is followed by a literal copying of his own work.

The question is what is the relation between the literature and everything said about Nuayma's speculative system. A response to this question also requires a special and complex answer which may be only indicated on this occasion.

"The mission of literature", Nuayma writes, "is to express man with all of his needs, in all his states; that is a fine and genuine expression which needs to help the man understand himself and goal of his existence and that it

<sup>110</sup> As the original of Ğubrān's work was not available, we used the Arabic translation called *al-Nabiyy*. The translation was made by Nuayma who was familiar th Ğubrān's creativity and writings more than anyone else and his best friend. Meanwhile, a Serbo-Croat translation of the English copy was published, called *Prorok*, Biblioteka Zagreb, 1977 (translation and comment by Marko Grčić).

<sup>111</sup> As far as we know, it was only E. S. Hayman who brought Ğubrān into the history of American philosophy – in: *Dictionary of American Philosophy*, Philosophical Library, 1973.

blazes the trail to that goal. The literature has a supreme mission – that of a prophet (*risāla*).<sup>112</sup>

Emerson maintained a similar opinion about the poet as a “representative” being with a supreme mission to mediate between the truth, nature and “ordinary” people; he firmly believed that “the truth and art will attract all people”.<sup>113</sup>

Nuayma expressed this understanding of literature in most of his thirty books. In his opinion, we are returning to the ancient understanding of literature as an expression of an artist who is a superior being whose task is to declare God in everything by his nice expression. Each individual thing perceived by senses points in a pantheistic manner to the existence of its substance as spirituality, inaccessible to analytic scientific study; it is only accessible to art which leads to a synthesis and final cognisance through imagination.<sup>114</sup> However, Nuayma overcomes pantheism of art to the extent he overcame pantheism and ended up in mysticism. Namely, the function of literature is not only a commendation of *specificities*, no matter whether they are spiritualised. They are always used to achieve the cognisance of God through marvel and inspiration. For example, his poem *The Autumn's Leaves* (*Awraq al-ḥarīf*).<sup>115</sup> The poetic experience of autumn's leaves is not usual, which, nice and yellow, softly falls down – it does not cause in a poet either sorrow or melancholy, or a feeling of mortality, as it is usually the impression of the picture of falling leaves. The vision described by Nuayma in this poem expresses his lack of belief in the existence of life and death, or it expresses his firm belief that life and death are one thing, that death is only one phase of a man's eternity, permanent self-regeneration; death is one of the ways of that absolute unification. Thus, this poem has a mystical and not a pantheistic tone. In that sense, but at a different place, Nuayma says: “If you feel it (art – remark by the author), you will experience it as if you had released yourself from the sense and if you do not try to limit it, it will take you to the limitless word – you will become universal (*šāmīl*), as God is universal.”<sup>116</sup>

Other *mahğar* poets often wrote mystical poems. For example, Arida's Sufi poem is well known, *To Iram* ('Alā ṭarīq Iram) in which he wrote about

<sup>112</sup> Nuayma, *Durūb* [The Roads], Bayrut, 1971, page 45.

<sup>113</sup> Emerson, *The Poet*, page 320.

<sup>114</sup> In developing the thought about writers' devotion, Nuayma resorted to one picture, The human mankind reminds of a pyramid: in essence, there is no difference between people as there is no difference among stones built into the pyramid, except for which ones are at the bottom and which ones are on top. The people on top of the pyramid, in a smaller number than the number of those at the bottom, are different by a strong imagination and belief. They should be writers, Nuayma, *al-Bayādir* [Gumna], Bayrut, page 74.

<sup>115</sup> In the collection of poems, *Hamas al-ğufūn* [The Whisper of Eyelashes], Bayrut, s.a., fifth edition, page 47-50.

<sup>116</sup> Nuayma, *al-Bayādir*, page 76.

his longing for unification with God. This legendary Iram<sup>117</sup> is a symbol often used by *mahğar* authors in poetry and prose when they wanted to express their aspiration to ideal, divine. Then, Abu Madi' s poem *Hospitable Fire* (Nār al-qirā) is also very mystical. This poem stresses Sufi aspiration to disappear in God, represented in the form of a hospitable fire.<sup>118</sup>

These are only some examples of *mahğar* mystical poetry and it should be stressed that there are many mystical poems in *mahğar* literature, although they could not be interpreted in that way at first sight. The essence is that natural elements and phenomena (sea, light, etc.) are used by these poets for a sheer poetic description, but often a means to rise up to the divinity.

These poets – primarily Nuayma – believe that authors are especially capable of mystical achievements, since they have a specially developed imagination, emotions and a special attitude to nature and the achievements should be expressed in literature. That is why, in their opinion, the task of literature is Messianic. As such, its goal is to develop the good in a man; it must lend nobility to a man and educate him. This deserves a separate story.

## OKVIRI I PRETPOSTAVKE KNJIŽEVNOSTI MAHDŽERA

### SAŽETAK

Književnost mahdžera (književnost arapske emigracije u SAD), stvarana uglavnom između dva svjetska rata, predstavlja nezaobilaznu pojavu u proučavanju moderne arapske književnosti. Nastajući u prelomnom dobu razvoja arapske književnosti, ona je u određenoj mjeri obilježena vremenom u kome je nastajala i uticajem književnosti i kulture zapadnog civilizacijskog kruga.

Književnici mahdžera su arapski hrišćani koji su iz Libana, Sirije i Palestine emigrirali u SAD i tamo osnovali znameniti književni pokret koji je bitno obogatilo arapsku književnu tradiciju. U vrijeme koje je prethodilo emigriranju, ove arapske zemlje bile su izložene snažnom evro-američkom i ruskom uticaju. Početno interesovanje ovih zemalja za Bliski istok motivisano je širenjem uticaja hrišćanstva. Zbog toga su brojne vjerske misije osnivale crkve i škole internatskog tipa u kojima su se izučavali najprije vjerski, a zatim i svjetovni predmeti. Ovakva vrsta prosvjećenja praćena je intenzivnim razvojem štamparstva i izdavačkom djelatnošću na arapskom jeziku.

<sup>117</sup> Kuran's sura *al-Fağr* [The Dawn] speaks of Irem (ayat 7). That is a golden city which is believed to have existed in Arabia, the city in which the glittering light would blind one's eyes during daylight. God destroyed it. The search for Irem symbolises search for ideal, supreme values. For more details on this mystical symbol, see: Serag, *Nasīb 'Arīda – al-šā'ir, al-kātib, al-šaḥafī* [Nesib Arida – poet, writer, journalist], Cairo, 1970, page 90-113.

<sup>118</sup> Cf. Badawi, page 190-191.

Zahvaljujući bogatoj aktivnosti francuskih, američkih i ruskih misionara, spomenute zemlje Bliskog istoka su postale prava žarišta kulturnog preporoda. Misionarske institucije stvorile su plejadu arapskih intelektualaca koji su širili duh preporoda ne samo u svojim zemljama, nego po cijelom arapskom istoku i stvarali su u kulturi takvu klimu koja će omogućiti generacijama neposredno poslije njih da ostvare velike domete na polju humanističkih nauka, umjetničke književnosti i književnoteorijske misli.

Ovoj generaciji pripadaju i književnici mahdžera koji su dobro poznavali vlastitu književnu tradiciju, ali su poznavali i evropsku i američku književnost. Kao obrazovani emigranti, u SAD su došli do saznanja o nekim fundamentalnim razlikama između orijentalnog i zapadnjačkog mentaliteta i to su najčešće posmatrali kroz različitu prevalentnost imaginacije i racia, što je imalo dalekosežne posljedice za njihovo shvatanje umjetnosti.

Homogena arapska emigracija, zbližena osjećanjem iščašenosti u stranom svijetu i sličnim shvatanjem umjetnosti, formirala je u Njujorku 1920. Godine književno udruženje *al-Rābiṭa al-qalamiyya* koje je u toku desetak godina svoga djelovanja snažno uticalo na književna zbivanja u arapskim zemljama. Posebno su se istakla dva člana ovog udruženja – Mihail Nuajma i Džubran Halil Džubran – koji su znatno usmjeravali i druge članove Rabite.

Jedan od razloga koji je potpomogao relativno radikalno odnos književnika mahdžera prema tradiciji je bogata izdavačka djelatnost koju su organizovali u SAD. Ne zaviseći od tradicionalistički orijentisanih urednika, kakvi su mahom bili u arapskim zemljama, ovi književnici su slobodno publikovali svoja djela u SAD jer je tamo u prvoj polovini XX vijeka izlazilo tridesetak glasila na arapskom jeziku.

Kada je 1931. umro Džubran – osnivač *al-Rābiṭa al-qalamiyye* – prestalo je organizovano djelovanje književnika mahdžera koji se tada mahom vraćaju u arapske zemlje.

Za potpuno razumijevanje književnog umjetničkog stvaralaštva književnoteorijske misli mahdžera neophodno je upoznati njihova filozofska ishodišta, uticaje i dodire sa određenim filozofskim sistemima.

U njihovom opusu najprepoznatljiviji je uticaj američkog transcendentizma i Emersona kao njegovog glavnog predstavnika.

Emersonov transcendentizam posebno je privlačio književnike mahdžera zbog toga što je postulirao njima inače blisku vjeru u imaginaciju kao osnovni saznavni instrument. Polazeći od toga, književnici mahdžera su zazirali od racionalnog spoznavanja i ističući u prvi plan imaginaciju, stavili su pjesnika u "centar svijeta" – kao biće koje, zbog izrazito razvijene imaginacije, najpotpunije doseže fundamentalne istine. Shodno tome, istaknuta je profetska funkcija pjesnika.

Inspirišući se Emersonom, književnici mahdžera su posebnu pažnju poklonili panteizmu (waḥda al-wuḡūd). Međutim, i sam Emerson se inspirisao istočnjačkim religijama i istočnjačkim panteizmom, tako da filozofska ishodišta književnosti mahdžera predstavljaju svojevrsni koloplet uticaja Istok-Zapad.

Književnici mahdžera su takođe bili bliski islamskom misticizmu (*taṣawwuf*) koji je odgovarao njihovom panteističkom prihvatanju svijeta i vjeri da se jedino imaginacijom mogu doseći fundamentalne istine. Budući da je književnost shvaćena kao posebna vrsta igre imaginacije i riječi, književnici mahdžera su naglasili njenu gnoseološku funkciju. Polazeći sa određenih filosofskih pozicija, vrijednost književnosti su u krajnjem situirali u sferi etike.

#### FRAMEWORKS AND PRESUPPOSITIONS OF MAHġAR LITERATURE

##### SUMMARY

*Mahġar* literature (the literature of Arab immigrants in the U.S.A.), was written mostly between the two World Wars, and is an indispensable phenomenon in the study of modern Arabic literature. Written in a crucial period of the development of Arabic literature, it was to a certain extent marked by the time in which it was written, as well as by the influence of Western literature and culture.

The *mahġar* writers were Arab Christians, who emigrated to the U.S.A. from the Lebanon, Syria, and Palestine and founded there a well-known movement that substantially enriched Arabic literary had been exposed to powerful Euro-American and Russian influence motivated by the spread of Christianity. That was the reason why numerous religious missions founded churches and churchboarding schools, where religious and secular subjects were studied. Such education was accompanied by the intensive development of printing and publishing activity in Arabic.

Owing to the intensive activity of French, American and Russian missionaries, the above mentioned countries of the Near East had become genuine centres of cultural revival. The missionary institutions produced a series of Arab intellectuals who spread the spirit of revival not only in their own countries, but throughout the Arab East, creating a climate which was to enable the generations that followed immediately to realize great achievements in the field of the humanities, creative literature, and literary theory.

This generation includes also the *mahġar* writers, who were well-acquainted with their own literary tradition, but who also knew European and American literature. Being educated emigrants, they gained knowledge in America of certain fundamental differences between the Oriental and Western mentality, and they most often observed them through the different prevalence of imagination and ratio, which affected their understanding of art very greatly.

The homogenous group of Arab emigrants, drawn closer together by the feeling of dislocation in a foreign environment, and with their similar attitude to art, formed the literary association *al-Rābiṭa al-qalamiyya* in New York City in 1920, which very strongly influenced literature in the Arab countries in the course of its 10-year long activity. Two members of the as-

sociation became especially prominent – Mihail Nuayma and Ğubran Khalil Ğubran who influenced other members of the association a great deal.

One of the reasons which contributed to the comparatively radical attitude of the *mahġar* writers towards tradition, was the considerable publishing activity they organized in the U.S.A. Independent of traditional-minded editors, from the Arab countries, these writers published their work freely in the U.S., for in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century about 30 magazines and papers were published in Arabic.

When in 1913. Ğubran – the founder of *al-Rābiġa al-qalamiyya* – died, the organized activity of *mahġar* writers stopped, and most of them returned to their respective countries.

In order to understand fully the literature and literary theory of the *mahġar*, it is necessary to learn something of their philosophy, influence, and contacts with certain philosophical systems.

In their work, the most easily recognizable influence was that of American transcendentalism, and of Emerson as its main representative. Emerson's transcendentalism especially attracted *mahġar* writers because it propounded belief in imagination, as a basic cognitive instrument, an idea in any case close to them. With such a starting point *mahġar* writers shunned rational perception, and putting imagination well to the fore, they placed the poet in "the centre of the world" – a being who, on account of his extremely developed imagination, could reach fundamental truth most fully. Accordingly, the prophetic role of the poet was emphasized.

Drawing their inspiration from Emerson, *mahġar* writers paid special attention to pantheism (*waġda al-wuġūd*). However, Emerson himself was inspired by the Oriental religions and pantheism, so that the philosophical sources of *mahġar* literature represented a peculiar mixture of East-west influence.

*Mahġar* writers were also very close to Islamic mysticism (*taṣawwuf*) which suited their pantheistic acceptance of the world, as well as their belief that only through imagination could certain fundamental truths be reached. Since literature was understood as a special kind of interplay between imagination and words, the writers emphasized its gnoseological function. Starting from certain philosophical positions, the value of literature was in the last resort situated in the sphere of ethics.