CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION: ARAB-AMERICAN LITERATURE

Between the two world wars, a new genre of Arabic literature flourished in North and South America. This new form of Arabic literature is known as *Mahjar* Literature or the Arab-American Literature. This is a hybrid of both the English and Arabic literatures. The writers of this literary movement were influenced by the western thought, culture and literature. They brought a new revolution in Arabic poetry advocating the usage of free verses and simple language without much intricacy. Jibran Khalil Jibran and Amin al-Rihani were the most celebrated Arab-American philosophers and poets.

Like many other world literatures, Arabic literature has also undergone some significant developments outside its geographical territory. Many of the revolutionary writers across the world have been forced to leave their homeland and settle down over a host country temporarily or permanently. Although these immigrant writers left their motherland, they did not leave their own distinct identity and belongingness to their mother tongue. Migration literally means movement of people from one place to another for various reasons like socio-political, socio-cultural, socio-religious etc. When a migration is carried out in large numbers it is dubbed as exodus. Migration for the purpose of livelihood generally takes place from a weak economy to a relatively stronger economy. Migration influences both the immigrants as well as the local inhabitants. Apart from demographic changes, migration results in cross-cultural interactions. Generally, a new environment the immigrant community finds it helpless. They naturally strive hard to earn their livelihood and make their presence visible. The immigrant community makes a significant contribution to the enrichment of art and literature. Historically, migration had long been a part of life of the Arabs

in general and of Lebanese people in particular. Lebanese people were known for their adventurous life.

Arab-American Literature at a glance:

The term *Mahjar* (plural *Mahajir*) is derived from the Arabic word *hijrah* means emigration. The literal meaning of *Mahjar* is the place of emigration, retreat, refuge or sanctuary, emigration, settlement, colony.[1] The term *Mahjar* denotes a school or a literary movement, developed by the Arab emigrants in North and South America in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. They were predominantly Christians who migrated to America due to socio-political and socio-economic unrest that prevailed in their own country Lebanon. The Lebanese emigrants engaged themselves in literary activities along with their struggle for livelihood. Some of them started working as journalists to raise their voice. By means of literature they tried to play the role of a pressure group which encouraged the freedom fighting movements against the Ottoman dictatorship in their homeland. The Lebanese emigrants founded two literary societies viz. *Al-Rabitah al-Qalamiyyah* (The Pen League) in North America and *Al-Usbah al-Andalusia* (The Literary Society) in South America. Long Fellow, Walt Whitman and Edgar Alan were greatly influenced by the literary activities of *Mahjar* writers. Despite large influence of the western literature on *Mahjar* School, it was equally influenced by the earlier modern Arabic literary schools like the Neo Classical School pioneered by Mahmud Sami al-Barudi and nurtured and developed upon by Ahmad Shawqi and Hafiz Ibrahim, the Diwan School of Abdur Rahman Shukri and Ibrahim Abdul Qadir al-Mazini and the Apollo School of Ahmad Zaki Abu Shadi. Actually, the *Mahjar*, the new

[1]. Cowan, J.M. *Arabic-English Dictionary*, Librairie Du Liban, Beirut, 1960, p. 1019

school of Arabic literature is a hybrid form both of English and Arabic literature.

Arab Migration to the Americas: The Causative Factors

Syria (present Syria, Lebanon and a part of Palestine) in the past was home to the large Christian fellowship till shortly before the advent of Islam. Mention may be made here that most of the emigrant poets and writers from Lebanon were of Christian origin. In the course of history, Lebanon fell under the rule of Ottoman Caliph Sultan Abdul Hamid. Being oppressed by the despotic regime of the caliph the oppressed people had no other option but to humbly leave their country. In the last few decades of 19th century and early decades of 20th century, a group of Arab writers especially those of Lebanon migrated to North and South America and produced there a literary form known as *Mahjar* Literature or the Immigrant Literature. The writers of Arab origin not only wrote in Arabic but also in English, Spanish and Portuguese languages. Jibran Khalil Jibran, Amin al-Rihani, Ilya Abu Madi, Mikhail Nu'aima etc. were the prominent figures of the Arab-American literature.

In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, Lebanon witnessed the despotic regime of Ottoman Sultan, Abdul Hamid. His regime was that of oppression, lack of freedom as well as respect for human dignity along with bad economic condition. In such a harsh condition, people were often imprisoned. Due to such an unhealthy environment people started migrating to Egypt and other North African countries. But when they felt that in these North African countries also the Ottoman rulers have some sort of dominance they changed the direction of their migration towards Europe and America. The undergoing colonization of African countries at that time was not a favorable situation for the emigrants. Coincidentally,

the European and American countries, at that time were undergoing the phase of industrial revolution. There were ample opportunities in these countries before the migrant community. Peaceful situation that was prevailing in America and Europe was a reason of attraction. The greatest factor that led to the emigration of the Syrians is the devastating economic situation of the Ottoman rule characterized by corrupt and autocratic styles to the extent that security arrangement became weak, chaos triumphed, educational pursuance obliterated and life became unbearable. Among the economic factors that led to the massive migration of the Lebanese people was heavy taxation on the citizenry by the autocratic regime. There was taxation on farming which compelled people to abandon productive activities. Even one had to pay tax for his or her garments. On the other side there was the lucrative expanding economy of America which attracted the Lebanese folk. Extracting the benefit of this opportunity the emigrant community started business in the host environment and supported their family. Cooperation of the United States' authority with the immigrant community is something deserves to be mentioned specially. There was unhindered freedom of migration which facilitated the Syrians to travel to America. Actually Syrian migration started in 1854 to be precise. It is reported that in between 1870 and 1900 around one third of the total Syrian population migrated to the foreign lands. Lion share of the immigrants went to the United States of America and other North American countries with only a few of them to the other African countries for the reasons that have been dealt with in the previous paragraphs.

Literary Centres of the Arab-American Literature:

It has been mentioned earlier that in the last part of the nineteenth century and the beginning of twentieth century, a group of young talents

of Syria and Lebanon have immigrated to the Americas for some political and economic reasons. Some of them selected North America and some of them chose South America specially Venezuela and Argentina. These young talents had a deep interest towards their own land and language. They left no stone unturned for the development of Arabic language and literature. They even worked as journalists also. Aida Imangulieva writes:

> Those Arab immigrants who succeeded in establishing themselves in America took a keen interest in the life of the homeland they had forsaken, and strove to preserve their national traditions and language. In order to unite still more closely in this foreign land the Arabs joined together in various clubs and societies and started newspapers and magazine.[1]

The literary and political forces of these immigrant Arab talents published many outstanding Arabic periodicals in America. The first of its kinds was *Kawkab Amrika* published from New York in between 1892-1909 edited by Najib Arbili. Some other example of these kinds of journals and magazines are *Al-Ayyam*, 1897, edited by Yusuf Ma'aluf, *Al-Huda*, 1898, edited by Nahum Mukarzil, *Mir'atul Gharb*, 1899, edited by Najib Musa Diyab, *Al-Muhajir*, 1903, edited by Amin al-Ghurayyib, *Al-Sayeh*, 1912, edited by Abdul Masih al-Haddad, *Al-Funun*, 1913, edited by Nasib Arida, *Al-Sameer*, 1927, edited by Ilya Abu Madi, etc. These newspapers, journals and magazines were published mainly from New York, Boston, and Washington in two languages, Arabic and English.

These emigrant writers even founded some literary societies also. Here, I want to highlight on *Al-Rabitah al-Qalamiyyah, Al-Usbah al-Andalusia* and *Al-Rabitah al-Adabiyyah* only.

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[1]. Imangulieva, Aida. *Gibran, Rihani & Naimy*, Inner Farne Press, Oxford, 2009 p. 20

Al-Rabitah al-Qalamiyyah:

Al-Rabitah al-Qalamiyyah (The Pen League) was the first Arab-American literary society, formed initially by Nasib Arida and Abdul Masih al-Haddad in 1915 and subsequently reformed in 1920 under the leadership of Jibran Khalil Jibran. Mikhail Nu‘aima was chosen as the secretary and supported by a group of young writers who has been working closely since 1911.[1]

Al-Rabitah al-Qalamiyyah was the biggest Arabic literary society formed by the writers who were characterized with a new way of thinking. The first members of society were Jibran Khalil Jibran (president) Mikhail Nu‘aima (secretary), William Katzeflis (cashier), Ilya Abu Madi, Nasib Arida, Rashid Ayyub, Abdul Masih al-Haddad and Nadra al-Haddad. However, the famous *Mahjar* writer, philosopher and poet Amin al-Rihani who lived in New York at those times wasn’t a member of this society.[2]

The main objective of *Al-Rabitah al-Qalamiyyah* was to preserve the Arabic language and literature in the New World, to bring it to the level which meets the requirements of the modern world literature, as well as to bring innovations and create the literature with release ideas. For better understanding the objective let us take a look at some of the statements written by Mikhail Nu‘aima:

> Everything which is written in ink on paper cannot be considered as a literary example. As well as not everyone who writes the articles and poems can be a writer. The literature feeds from the land, air and light of life. The real writer is one who is sensitive,

[1]. Starkey, Paul. *Modern Arabic literature*, Edinburgh University Press, 2006, p. 62

[2]. Jihad, Fadl. *Al-Adab al-Hadith fi Lubnan*, Beirut, 1996, p. 256

> attentive, has a clear point of view to all the processes which occur in real life and the ability to express all these in the right way. This new spirit which tries to save the literature from backwardness and imitation is the hope of today and the pillar for tomorrow… However, it would not be right to reject the classic literature completely for the functioning of the new literary spirit. There are the works of such authors which are used today and will be used as a valuable resource in future. The imitation of these works will bring only detriment to our literature. That's why it is necessary to bring new breath and spirit.[1]

The members of *Al-Rabitah al-Qalamiyyah* were in a favour of writing not in classic Arabic language, but in modern simplified one. Thus, they tried to clean up the Arabic language from archaic words. The statements of Jibran due to this fact are very interesting:

> You can take the Arabic language which Sibaveyhi Al-Aswad speaks, but leave me the language that mother speaks with her child, the lover speaks with his beloved.[2]

The prose was dominated in the works of the members of *Al-Rabitah al-Qalamiyyah*. The style, which expresses the release and emotional feeling, draws an attention in the prose works of these writers. Aside from the successful prose works, the members of the society created very beautiful examples of poetry also.

Al-Sayeh (The Traveler), an Arab-American newspaper, published in 1912 under the guidance of Abdul Masih al-Haddad became a press

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[1]. As quoted by Vilayat A. Jafarov and Saadat A. Ibrahimova, *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science* Vol. 3 No. 14, Special Issue - July 2013, p. 201

[2]. Ibid

organ of *Al-Rabitah al-Qalamiyyah*. This newspaper delivered important messages to the Arabic world from the American continent and managed to influence lots of writers. All members of the society published their articles and odes in this newspaper.

Al-Rabitah al-Qalamiyyah was dissolved following the death of Jibran Khalil Jibran in 1931 and the returning of Rashid Ayyub, Nasib Arida, and Mikhail Nu'aima to Lebanon in 1932. One of the famous *Mahjar* writers Jibran Khalil Jibran being the writer, playwright and artist motivated other writers, artists, musicians. As a result, in 1990 in order to perpetuate the memory of a well-known writer the Memorial Garden of Poetry named after Jibran Khalil Jibran was laid out in Washington D.C. by the decree of George Bush.[1]

Al-Usbah al-Andalusia:

It is true that the immigrant Arabs who lived in South America succeeded to establish many societies, but *Al-Usbah al-Andalusia* (The Andalusian Society) was created in the Brazilian city of San Paulo in January 1933 was the biggest one. *Al-Usbah al-Andalusia* was founded under the leadership of Mishal Ma'luf. The other members of this society are: Dawud Shukur (Deputy Chieftain), Nazir Jaytun, Yusuf al-Bayini etc.[2] It was not a coincidence that the society was named *Al-Usbah al-Andalusia* as it is seen from the name; this society has the distinction of the literature of Andalusia. It may also be mentioned here that Shukrullah al-Jurr, a leading person of *Al-Usbah al-Andalusia*, was impressed by the president of the Republic of Turkey, Mustafa Kamal Ataturk. In his poems describing Mustafa Kamal as a wise leader and the Turkish people

[1]. Ibid
[2]. Sheikh, Muhammad Jalilur Rahman. *A Collection of History of Arabic Literature*, Kamrup, 2005

as intelligent nation, he says that Turkey developed due to wise policy of Mustafa Kamal Ataturk:

> Surely the one who is similar to Ataturk and follows his path
> Will never mislead his people
> If only Islam develops in East in the way that Ataturk has put
> He is an innovator,
> He came and adjusted the mistakes of the nation,
> Acquired an important position for Turkey,
> Brought the glory to his country
> Everyone looked with wonder
> The whole world was in wonder [1]

The literature of Andalusia is formed at the junction of East and West and unites the features of East and West. The Arabs called Spain Andalusia. The settlement of Arabs in the early eighth century in Spain and establishing their literature and culture in the Western country for the first time was a significant event in the history of the Arab literature. It had a great impact on the formatting and future development of the Arab literature. The first arrival of the Arabs to Spain is associated with the name of Arabic commander Tariq Ibn Ziyad. Afterwards, when the supremacy of dynasty of Amavy was stopped by the dynasty of Abbasid in the year of 750, one of the Amavy princes Abdur Rahman fled to Spain and in the year of 757 restored the Amavy Government there. The supremacy of Amavy caliphate in Spain lasted till the beginning of the eleventh century. In 1492 the last pillar of Arabs in Spain-Granada collapsed and Arab-Muslim rule in Spain came to an end.

[1]. As quoted by Vilayat A. Jafarov and Saadat A. Ibrahimova, *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science* Vol. 3 No. 14, Special Issue - July 2013, p. 204

The *Mahjar* writers as well as the Andalusian ones have always lived with the sense of longing to homeland. However, there are the differences in the expression of this sense between the poems of Andalusian and *Mahjar* poets. Thus, this theme in *Mahjar* poetry was expressed more frankly and deeply. They wrote about the living conditions and difficulties that migrant Arab writers faced in remote areas, their love and longing to their families and homeland. In this regard, the following verses by Riad al-Maʻluf are interesting:

I wonder, if I could return, dear Lebanon
If the promises are implemented and the time give the deferment
If we could pull up the different kinds of grapes [1]

The other *Mahjar* writers also expressed their longing for their homeland in a sincere manner. In many of his odes, George Saydah writes about his sense and feeling to Damascus. A special place of Damascus in his heart cannot be denied. Damascus is mother, son for him.

Shafiq Maʻluf, Shukrullah al-Jurr, Rashid Ayyub, and George Saydah created the most beautiful examples of poems by expressing their memories in Lebanon. Also, the odes *Khayal al-Watan* (Memories of Homeland) by Ilyas Farkhad, *Ashwaq* (The Longing) by George Saydah, *Hal A Tura Naudu* (I Wonder if We could Return to the Homeland) by Riad al-Ma'luf, *Unshudat al-Garib* (The song of Foreigner), *Hikayet al-Mugtarib* (The Story of Refugees) by Rashid Salim al-Khuri, *Jabal al-Ilham* (The Mountain of Inspiration) by Shukrullah al-Jurr were written with the main theme of homesickness. The famous poet Rashid Salim al-Khuri compares the Sinnin Mountain in Lebanon with the Takuarembo

[1]. Ibid

Top in Brazil in poem *Min Tali Cashembu Ila Jabali Sinnin* (From the Top of the Tacuarembo to the Mountain of the Sinnin).[1]

The *Mahjar* poets Rashid Ayyub, Shafiq M'aluf, Ilyas Farhad who lived in South America also wrote poems about the beauty of nature. As it was mentioned, the *Mahjar* literature disseminated the Andalusian literature so much, that *Mahjar* literature was considered as a continuation of Andalusian literature by many professors. However, one significant difference should be taken into account. Thus, the representatives of Andalusian literature were attentive about the form of the poem. Unlike them, the *Mahjar* poets managed to show the inner world of person much better. That is why the *Mahjar* literature has wider range of themes of poems.

In fact, the *Mahjar* writers who lived in South America also wrote about the similarity between them and those who arrived to Andalusia (Spain) in the 8th century. Thus, as the representatives of Andalusian literature brought differences to the form and context of poems in the Arabic literature, so did the *Mahjar* writers. *Muwashaha* and *Zajal* forms of poem were created by the representatives of Andalusian literature and had a big place in *Mahjar* literature as well. *Agani al-Andalus* (The Songs of Andalusia) by Fawzi al-Ma'luf includes the poets in the style of Maupassant. The tokens of Andalusian literature can be seen not only in poems but in prose as well. *Tahiyyat al-Andalus* (The Greetings to Andalusia) by Ilyas Farhad and *Al-Andalusia* by Rashid Salim al-Khuri were written by impact of Andalusian literature.[2]

Thus, it is known that the *Mahjar* writers contacted with Spanish writers such as Francisco Villiaespesa, who reflected the Arabic literature

[1]. *Diwan al-Sher al-Qaravi*, San Paulo, 1952, pp. 77-78
[2]. Ibid

of Andalusian period in his works. This poet wrote the preface to the *Ala Bisati al-Rih* (Flying over the Carpet) by Fawzi al-Ma‘luf. He also translated the ode *Qirnata* by Villiaespesa into Arabic.

The main objective of the *Al-Usbah al-Andalusia* was to establish the New World to spread the *Mahjar* literature in the Middle East and the literature of Middle East in South America especially in Venezuela, Argentina and Brazil and there was a great role of *Al-Usbah al-Andalusia* in the sharing of the ideas of the community in the Middle East.

Al-Usbah al-Andalusia was continued until 1941. In 1941, the president of Brazil, J. Vargas, banned the publication of all the newspapers and magazines in foreign languages. As a result, *Al-Usbah al-Andalusia* was also stopped to be published.

Al-Rabitah al-Adabiyyah:

Al-Rabitah al-Adabiyyah (The Literary Society) was founded by George Saydah in the capital of Argentina Buenos Aires in 1949. The main objective of this society is to develop the Arabic literature in South America. This society was functioned only for two years as its founder George Saydah was left for Lebanon in 1951. As a result *Al-Rabitah al-Adabiyyah* was stopped in its buds.

As it can be seen, the immigrant writers developed their creative activities by uniting around different societies in order to preserve their own language, customs, and national ideology. To be aware of the political and cultural processes, occurring in their homeland, they tried their level best to develop Arabic language and literature in foreign land. Despite the difficulties of living in alien lands, the main priority for these writers was to immortalize their origins and not to fall apart from the

Arab people. The literary societies that they established brought their contribution in realizing this objective.[1]

Characteristics of the Arab-American Literature:

The real significance of *Mahjar* literature apart from its own intrinsic merit is that it developed in an alien environment separated both physically and culturally from its native context and in an atmosphere devoid of literary traditions, socio-political prejudices and pressures. Most of the chief characteristics and salient features of the Arab-American literature reappeared inside the Arab world especially in Egypt. For instance the book on literary criticism *Al-Ghirbal* of Mikhail Nu'aima published in Egypt in 1923 with a foreword by Abbas Mahmud al-Aqqad. Al-Aqqad discussed some particular points with Nu'aima related to Arabic language and its usage in poetry.[2]

The *Mahjar* poets were romantic, humanistic and mystical as well. They thought that they lived in an age of their own sensibility and its own expectations of literature. At the same time they adopted a new concept of language which was neither sacred nor profane, rather than living medium of expression subject to changes and developments. Consequently they stressed to revive Arabic language and tried to restore simplicity and vitality which was destroyed because of stagnant conservatism. The *Mahjar* poets revolted against the traditional system of Arabic prose and poetry. For example Mikhail Nu'aima revolted against conservative Arabian thoughts and he demanded a new evolution of Arabic language and literature. For Nu'aima, literature should prefer

[1]. As quoted by Vilayat A. Jafarov and Saadat A. Ibrahimova, *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science* Vol. 3 No. 14, Special Issue - July 2013, p. 203

[2]. Naimy, Mikhail. *Al-Ghirbal,* pp. 11-12

spiritual rather than material aspects and portray psychological influences which affect human nature and behaviour.[1]

The idea of liberating influence upon modern Arabic poetry by introducing a new concept was exercised by the *Mahjar* poets. Searching for a quieter and more subdued tone, they turned away from rhetoric and declamation. The *Mahjar* poets concentrated on subjective experience of man in relation to nature and introduced biblical themes and images into metres and stanzas. Moreover, some *Mahjar* writers like Mikhail Nu‘aima composed free verses with light rhythm. Amin al-Rihani experimented with personified poetry which was an imitation of Walt Whitman’s Style. But the views of *Mahjar* poets were rejected by the poets inside the Arab world and their language was severely criticized for not being sufficiently correct.[2]

The *Mahjar* writers entertained a boundary relationship with both Arabic and English traditions. Their cultural root was the main reason for their nostalgic remembrance of the past. They used to write mainly in Arabic and English was their second language for creative writings. Ilya Abu Madi showed more the feeling of being a stranger than the other poets like Rashid Ayyub, Nasib Arida and Mikhail Nu‘aima. He was influenced by new classical poetry of Mahmud Sami al-Barudi, Ahmad Shawqi and Hafiz Ibrahim and it is highly reflected in his first Diwan *Tidhkar al-Madi* published in 1911. The same year he migrated to the United State of America and in 1927, he published his second Diwan *Al-Jadwil*, which clearly proved that without losing the neo-classical virtues he had matured into a romantic poet.

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[1]. Daif, Shawqi. *Dirasat fi al-Sheir al-Arabi al-Mua’sir*, p. 247
[2]. Heywood, J.A. *Modern Arabic Literature*, p. 10

The northern *Mahjar* writers especially Jibran Khalil Jibran, Mikhail Nu‘aima and Amin al-Rihani were influenced by the western romantic literature and American transcendentalists particularly Emerson, Longfellow, Whittier, and Whitman.[1] They were all acquainted with American romantic poetry than their counterparts inside the Arab world.

Their elementary education, which they received in western oriented missionary schools in Syria and Lebanon where they were exposed to western thought and literature rather than their own culture. Moreover, in America, they found a new environment which was completely westernized and their experience from the new conditions of life compelled them to search for new ideas. The strain and doubts which the *Mahjar* writers encountered in the new world made them play a decisive role in revitalizing Arabic letters and to shape the sensibility of their fellows who preferred to stay in their homeland. Here are some important characteristics of *Mahjar* literature:

Liberation from Classical Rigidity:

One of the main characteristics of *Mahjar* literature is that the *Mahjar* writers were free from classical rigidity. They denied classical forms of literature. They openly revolted against conventional style of Arabic prose and poetry. So, there had been an attack in their writings against the conventional trends. The urge for change took hold of the younger generation of poets and critics that rose to fame in the first two decades of twentieth century. The first real impetus for a genuine break with neo-classicism came from the Arab poets who had immigrated to North America. The critical writings of Jibran Khalil Jibran, Mikhail Nu‘aima and Abu Madi, with their iconoclastic intentions and their

[1]. Ibid, p. 173

invigorating insights into new poetic methods, helped to shake the blind attachment of select Arab audience to neo-classical rigidity and traditionalism.[1] The *Mahjar* writers advocated the liberty in the process of construction in all literary genres. In prose, the restrictions of *Saj* and the ornate figures of speech were dismissed. Poetry was no longer adhered to rhyme and metre. The prosodic style of much *Mahjar* verse demonstrated a preference for the shorter, simple metres and stanzic forms. They used regular rhyme and metre, but took ever greater liberties with the classical *Qasida* form.

Gravity of Individual Personalities:

Each *Mahjar* writer was differ from one another in his literary characteristics. They expressed their thoughts and ideologies individually and independently. Their positions are determined on the basis of individual shares and what they endeavored in the development of *Mahjar* literature. Their language always remained a source of consolation with the acute interpretations, pictorials and thoughts. Its prose style turned into a beautiful poem having musical appeal. They tried their best in molding exact words and let them sweet echoes to pacify the readers' mind.

Jibran used his words with a spirit rebellious way against all the conventional rules and regulations of Arabic literature. He was fiercely anti clerical and championed the cause of simple virtuous people who in his eyes were victimized by the hierarchies and institutions of the Maronite Church. Fawzi Ma'luf ascribed with clear explanation, beauty of comparisons, metaphors and acuteness of thoughts and fine choice of the words which indicated on its meaning keeping in view with the

[1]. Jayyusi, S.K. *An Anthology of Modern Arabic Poetry*, New York, p. 4

conservative measures in respect of clear poetic interpretations. But Mikhail Nu'aima attributed with a beautiful soft language; Rashid Salim al-Khuri ascribed with the melting in his longings and his ever outburst for Arab Nationalism.[1]

Inclination towards Humanity:

One of the most significant characteristic of *Mahjar* literature is inclination towards humanity. All the members of *Al-Rabitah al-Qalamiyyah* were basically human in nature. To them the value of humanity cannot be enhanced without a free and blissful motherland where the human feelings of the dominated and degraded people changed towards the vicious adversity. The concept of human feelings and the effectiveness deeds in collaborations are very much essential to make the lofty edifice of humanity. For example, the sympathized and affectionate call like *Ya Akhi, Ya Rafiqi* (Hey brother, Hi friend), touched the core of the heart and thereby took the birth of affection and love therein.[2] Jibran Khalil Jibran portrays a pitiful picture on the fate of his people in his poem *Mata Ahli* (My family died) and *Fi Zilam al-Layl* (In the Darkness of the Night). He devotes both poems to weeping over the fate of the thousand Lebanese who died of starvation, pestilence and persecution in the World War I. He urges the immigrants to contribute to the welfare committee of Syria and Mount Lebanon. Another *Mahjar* poet Nasib Arida also seems weeping over the lot of humanity.

Nostalgia for the Homeland:

Yearning to the motherland was one of the main characteristics of *Mahjar* or the Arab-American literature. The emigrants left their sweet

[1]. Qabsh, Ahmad. *Tarikh al-Sheir al-Arabi al-Hadith,* Beirut, p. 355
[2]. Ibid, p. 357

memories, their loved ones, tearing, forbearance and spirituality which made them dandled. Love and yearning for the motherland where simplicity and spiritualism were a way of life and hopes for its political emancipation frequently found expression in *Mahjar* works.[1] The *Mahjar* writers had to be clashed with material clamors and the troublesome instrumental life which the Arab world had never witnessed. So, the situation forced them to compose poetry being burnt in melancholy, suffered from pang of mind, infuriated with feelings and the ghost like magicians.

Spiritual Meditation:

It is also one of the salient features of *Mahjar* literature. The spiritual meditation is seen in the writings of the northern *Mahjar* writers like Jibran, Nu'aima, Arida and Abu Madi. The poem *Ala Basata al-Rih* (On the Carpet of the Air) of is one of the finest examples of its kind. Another poem *Baina al-Tufulah wa al-Shabab* (Between the Childhood and the Youth) of Iliyas Farhat is also composed on spiritual meditation. Mikhail Nu'aima's works are fully spiritual meditative. His poetry *Al-Arak* shows that good and evil does not exist in the external world only; they also dwell within the soul of the poet. In the poem *Al-Aan* Nu'aima shows the true picture of serene meditations on death and deliverance.

Simplicity and Musical Delicacy:

To the *Mahjar* writers, simplicity, delicacy and musical appeals are the fundamental pillars of poetry and arts as well. Therefore their poetry became fast and more significant and their prose was easy in style and endear to the readers of the Arab world as well as the *Mahjar* literature. This faith, by the passing of time, is on the race and prevails over the

[1]. Mahdi, Ismat. *Modern Arabic Literature*, Hyderabad, p. 139

Arab world reaching to its high level of the development of *Mahjar* literature.

Religious Freedom:

Religious freedom is one of the significant characteristics of *Mahjar* literature. It is that fundamental element which makes the *Mahjar* literature successful with esteem and wonder in every place. As the most of the emigrants were Christian, they often felt less bound by the Arabic literary tradition. They were highly influenced by the western culture and literature. They were very innovative and more inclined towards literary experiment. There was freedom of thoughts, ideologies, arguments, and interpretations for the majesty of religion among the emigrants keeping away from the spirit of fanaticism.

Nature of Love

Nature of love is one of the major characteristics of the Arab-merican literature. Ibn-Mutaz, Ibn al-Khafaza, Imraul Qais and Ibn Humaid al-Saqali were the famous poets of nature love. The Arab emegries developed the ancient style of writings influenced by the western literature. Jibran considered it was the fertile land for lirerary cultivation. So, they loved nature and widened this field emotionally with smiling face, as they loved the animals, birds and planets etc.

Khalil Jibran saw the prosperity in woods where he described about two hundred lines in his poem *Al-Mawakib*. It was his philosophical dialogue in two voices, it following its own meter. The first voice in the meter *Al-Baseet* was of an old man who had seen the twists and turns of life. The second in *Majzu al-Ramal* was of an innocent youth who seemed to represent nature and pure unlike the philosopher sage. He recommended returned to nature where simplicity is supreme. Jibran felt

the sanctuary, solitariness and happiness in woods. Jibran expected to create the uniformity among various creations through the removal of diversity, greediness and other demerits that stood obstracle on the way of progress and prosperity.

Portrayal and Description:

The description is a common characteristic of all the literature. The *Mahjar* group also relied to a great extend upon the beauty of the portrayal and description in poetry and prose. Their description was expanded beyond natural scene to include the description of modern inventions. It also includes poems describing natural phenomena.

Prominent Figures of the Arab-American Literature:

A large number of contributors are found in the Arab-American literature. The most significant and celebrated writers, poets and philosophers of the *Mahjar* literature are Jibran Khalil Jibran, Amin al-Rihani, Mikhail Nu‘aima, Ilya Abu Madi, Nasib Arida, Abdul Masih al-Haddad, Rashid Ayyub and Nadra al-Haddad. About the life and works of Jibran Khalil Jibran and Amin al-Rihani are discussed fully in the second and third chapter of this thesis; hence, the light is poured on the other contributors only.

Mikhail Nu‘aima:

Mikhail Nu‘aima is widely recognized in the Arab world as one of the most important figures in modern Arabic literature. He was born in Biskinta, Lebanon in 1889. Like Jibran Khalil Jibran and Amin al-Rihani, Mikhail Nu‘aima’s works and thought are a blend to East and West. In addition to eastern Christianity and eastern Mysticism, his language is evocative of the Russian mystics and American transcendentalists.

His name is connected with many Arab-American periodicals, especially *Al-Funun* which he referred to as the beautiful and fragrant journalistic lily.[1] He was regular contributor and along with Nazmi Nasim and Raghib Mitraj, he helped Nasib Arida, the editor of the journal *Al-Funun*. After its demise however, only Nu'aima's name became well-known to the Arab-American readers.

Nu'aima was also the secretary and active member of the Arab-American Literary Mouthpiece *Al-Rabitah al-Qalamiyyah*. He also composed the manifesto of *Al-Rabitah al-Qalamiyyah* at the time of its formation in 1920.The following is an extract:

> …… not everything that parades as literature is literature; nor is every trimester a poet. The literature we esteem as worthy of the name is that only which draws its nourishment from life's soil and light and air…. And the man of letters is he who is endowed with more than the average morals share of sensitiveness and taste and the power of estimation and penetration together with the talent of expressing clearly and beautifully whatever imprints life's constant waves leave upon his soul…...[2]

Nu'aima is known for literary criticism. As a champion of reform, his critical writings opened doors to a new concept of literature among his fellow Arab writers. In his first critical article *Fajr al-Amal* (The Dawn of Hope), published by *Al-Funun* in 1913, he rejects traditional Arabic literature as a literature of decoration and imitation. He even goes further to call it *Mummified Literature*.

According to him the poet should focus primarily on imagination rather than language, essence rather than form. The sources on Nu'aima's

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[1]. Naimy, Mikhail. *Kahlil Gibran: His life and Works*, Beirut, 1965, p. 153
[2]. Ibid, pp. 155-156

education and background are limited. But it is known that when he was a law student at Washington State University and before even he met Jibran Khalil Jibran, the twenty four year old Nu‘aima was sent a copy of Jibran’s book *Al-Ajnihah al-Mutakassirah* (The Broken Wings). He wrote a long review of it in which he criticized the simplicity of plot and characterization in the sense that the book conveys a passive attitude and does not give solutions to the problems, but saw it as a departure from the approved canons of Arabic literature and appreciated the fact that it dealt with native social issues. The publication of the review by *Al-Funun* marked the beginning of Nu‘aima’s career as writer and critic.

Mikhail Nu‘aima developed a close relationship with Jibran Khalil Jibran through *Fatat Boston* and *Al-Funun*. Jibran Khalil Jibran lovingly called him Mischa and in his letters he addressed him as My Dear Mischa or Brother Mischa and sometimes Beloved Brother Mischa. Nu‘aima also admired Jibran and became influenced by him. In the introduction to his biography, he emphasizes the fact that Jibran sought to make his soul as beautiful as the beauty he glimpsed with his imagination and so generously spread in his books and drawings.

Nu‘aima produced a significant body of literature: novels, short stories, drama, poetry, critical essays, but his most familiar works are his biography of Jibran, *Al-Ghirbal*, and *Muzakarat al-Arakish* (Memories of a Vagrant Soul). His book *The Book of Mirdad* is not less famous which was written in English and in which Nu‘aima picked up on his predecessors by adapting a prophetic tone in conveying timeless wisdom.

Most of his critical essays are collected in *Al-Ghirbal* which is an attack on Arab culture, including its literary conventions. He describes the Arab society as a society of stagnation and resignation which hopes to

make progress by prayer rather than education and hard works. In the beginning of his career, indeed, Nu‘aima expressed a negative attitude towards Arab culture and a firm belief in western culture superiority. This might be attributed partly to his western education in Russian missionary schools in his native village, Biskinta before he immigrated to United States of America. Again in *Al-Ghirbal*, he claims that Arab classic poets and philosophers are insignificant compared to western figures like Homer, Virgil, Shakespeare, Milton, Hugo and Tolstoy, because he considered western literature to be the highly admired prototype of literary excellence.[1] He writes:

> Our contact with the west has alerted many of our spiritual needs that our writers and intellectuals cannot satisfy…. Let us translate and exalt the translator who introduces us to the bigger human family.[2]

The earlier realistic literature of Mikhail Nu‘aima dealt with the situation of the Arab women vis-a-vis the repressive old traditions. This is evident in *Sanatuha al-Jadidah* and *Al-Mar‘a al-Hazina*. His earlier play *Al-Abau wa al-Banun* addressed the issue of social expectation and generation’s gap in Lebanese society. More importantly, it is considered one of the first attempts to introduce drama into Arabic literature. Moreover, Mikhail Nu‘aima chose a mystical approach to life. His writings became grounded in eastern philosophies and metaphysical experiences. Like Jibran Khalil Jibran he emphasized the importance of individual spirituality and embraces the doctrine of the unity of being and the power of universal love. He advocated a universal mystical

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[1]. Naimy, Nadim, *Mikhail Naimy: An Introduction*, American University of Beirut, 1967, pp. 55-56

[2]. Naimy, Mikhail. *Al-Ghirbal*, 1932, p. 127

philosophy which helped him harmonize his bi-cultural identity as was the case with Jibran Khalil Jibran.

Like Amin al-Rihani, Mikhail Nu'aima did not get his merited recognition in the United States of America, although he was once nominated for the Noble Prize in literature. He did not reach the American mainstream probably because he wrote mostly in Arabic language.

Ilya Abu Madi:

Ilya Abu Madi was one of the prolific gifted poets of the Arab-American literature. He is regarded the purest *Mahjar* poet.[1] He was born in Muhaidatha, Lebanon, in 1889. Ilya Abu Madi immigrated to Alexandria in 1900 where he started business for his uncle as a tobacconist. But he was very much interested in Arabic language and literature. So, at his leisure time he used to learn Arabic language and as a result he started composing poetry. Even before his leaving to the United States of America in 1911, he published his first volume of poetry entitled *Tidhkar al-Madi*. He migrated to America in 1911 and settled in Cincinnati as a merchant. He moved to New York in 1916 and joined the group of Arab writers especially one who wrote for *Al-Funun*. He played an active role as a poet and journalist.[2] And finally he became the main exponent of the Arab-American Poetry Literature.

During his stay in New York, Ilya Abu Madi worked as a journalist and edited some newspapers and magazines. He was the editor of *Al-Majallah al-Arabiyya*, the periodical of Palestine youth, and then he

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[1]. Brugman, J., *An Introduction to the History of Modern Arabic Literature*, Leiden, 1984, p. 111

[2]. Badawi, M.M. Ed. *Modern Arabic Literature*, Cambridge University Press, 1992, p. 101

became the editor of *Al-Fatat* and *Mir'tul Gharb*. He found his own periodical *Al-Sameer* in the year 1929, which appeared as a fortnightly until 1939, then became a daily; it continued until 1957 and it was one of the leading *Mahjar* newspapers in North America.

In 1919, Ilya Abu Madi published his second collection of poetry in New York namely *Al-Diwan al-Thani* with forwarding by Jibran Khalil Jibran. In 1927, he published another volume entitled *Al-Jadwil* followed by *Al-Khamail* in 1940. His last collection of poetry published posthumously namely *Al-Tibr wa al-Turab* by Brooklyn, New York.

Ilya Abu Madi was a ring leader of *Al-Rabitah al-Qalamiyyah*. His house was a meeting place of poets and authors. In 1949, he represented the journalists of *Mahjar* in the UNESCO conference in Beirut. By then he had became a celebrity not only in *Mahjar* literature but also all over the Arab world.[1]

Tidhkar al-Madi, the first collection of poetry by Ilya Abu Madi contains nine poems which are rather heavy, moralistic compositions, all strongly didactic in tone. The second collection contains poetic narratives, a type of composition, which still very much in its infancy in Arabic at that time and some of which remind one strongly of the works of Khalil Mutran. The collection also contains of natural description in which the author has frequent recourse to pathetic fallacy. It also contains some love poems which are described as traditional outputs. Besides amatory poetry, there are numerous poems about Syria and Lebanon; many of them are occasional poetry. They open display the usual nostalgia of the emigrant for his homeland, but they are all concerned

[1]. Mahdi, Ismat. *Modern Arabic Literature*, Hyderabad, 1983, p. 163

with political and military crises which broke out during the First World War.

Al-Jadwil is considered as Ilya Abu Madi's peak achievement. His first poem of this collection is all mystery, constant searching, doubt and urgent but unidentified aspiration. His verses, dealing with his restless queries, are the most distinctive of his composition. Ilya Abu Madi, the great poet of moods, gave memorable expression to intense feelings of joy and sorrow. His changing mood from despair hope can best be seen in a narrative or dramatic context in his excellent poem *Al-Masa*.

Many factors helped to shape Ilya Abu Madi's poetic style. A good grounding in grammar and prosody that he acquired in his formative years of Alexandria gave him a solid base for his verse. He is indeed credited with a more thorough grasp of the rules of poetry than any other *Mahjar* poet.[1] His beautiful Arabic style is greatly admired by the Arabs. His verses are smooth and his style is purer more Arabic in texture that the rest of the Syro-American poets. In the final analysis, he was never quite able to accept the self-righteous, splendid isolation of the poet's role as expounded by Jibran and others. Ilya Abu Madi's career is fascinating development from unremarkable neo-classical verse to some of the peaks of achievement in romantic poetry. His work also has the extra dimension of imaginative power which on occasion takes is beyond the limits of the romantic experience and lends it a permanent value which transcends the style of his immediate generation.[2]

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[1]. Ibid

[2]. Badawi, M.M. Ed. *Modern Arabic Literature*, Cambridge University Press, p. 105

Nasib Arida:

Nasib Arida, one of the *Mahjar* poets, was born in Homs, Syria. He attended a Russian school in Nazareth from 1900 to 1904, where he met Mikhail Nu‘aima and became his bosom friend. Nasib Arida was chosen to continue his higher studies in Russia, but he could not go there due to Russo-Japanese war. In 1905, he migrated to New York where he worked at first in commerce. But he preferred literature and hoped to find some stability for his writing career in journalism. In 1912, he founded the Atlantic Press which was to produce *Al-Funun*. He was not entirely happy and seemed to be beset with difficulties. The First World War caused his magazine *Al-Funun* to fail for a time; and though it revived, it soon died again in 1918. Although Nasib Arida is not so well known for his own work as Jibran Khalil Jibran, Mikhail Nu‘aima or Ilya Abu Madi, much of the credit must go to him for struggling to keep *al-Funun* going during its sporadic career in which it was beset by financial crises.

Like other *Mahjar* poets Nasib Arida also suffered in varying degrees from understanding malaise in the midst of his new environment. This malaise was both material and spiritual. Like Mikhail Nu‘aima, there is a sort of Sufism beneath the surface in some of Nasib Arida’s poems. *Al-Arwah al-Hayirah* is a single collection of his poetry, which was published in New York, 1946.

Nasib Arida was full of sadness about himself, his life and his homeland. We see in his poems weeping over the lot of humanity and its woes.[1] Sometimes he seemed to be in frustration and anger by the spectacle of weakness and degradation presented by the inhabitants of Syria and Lebanon in World War I.

[1]. Mahdi, Ismat. *Modern Arabic Literature*, p. 140

He was also an active member of *Al-Rabitah al-Qalamiyyah* and he was a pessimistic poet in this league. His verses display his pain and tears by nostalgia for his motherland. A general air of gloom and pessimism pervades the whole of his poetry. The verses of Nasib Arida illustrate the prosodic style. He always preferred shorter, simple and stanza forms.

Abdul Masih al-Haddad:

Abdul Masih al-Haddad was also one of the Arab-American writers and journalists. He was born in Syria in 1890 and migrated to New York in 1907 where he established a weekly magazine *Al-Sayeh* in 1912, which was an important outlet for the *Mahjar* writers. After the collapse of *Al-Funun*, this magazine took the place of it as medium through which their works and ideas would appear. He contributed at least one article to every issue of his own magazine. *Al-Sayeh* became the official paper of *Al-Rabitah al-Qalamiyyah*.

The main contribution of Abdul Masih al-Haddad was the collection of short stories entitled *Hikayat al-Mahjar* which was published in 1921. Some of these stories appeared in the *Mahjar* while others were published in Levantine periodicals.[1] These stories mostly deal with the problems which the Arab emigrants face in their new life away from their homeland. In these stories he portrays the disparity between expectations and reality and hardship of yearn for their homeland. He also describes how the emigrant nostalgically work is that he treats nostalgia with humor.

Rashid Ayyub:

Rashid Ayyub, one of the *Mahjar* poets, was born in Mikhail Nu‘aima’s village Biskinta, Lebanon in 1881. He migrated to North

[1]. Badawi, M.M., Ed. *Modern Arabic Literature*, p. 279

America and lived three years in Paris, and another three years in Manchester City. He breathed his last in 1941.

He had three volumes of poetry to his credit was published from New York. *Al-Ayyubiyyat* was his first *Diwan*, published in 1916, which represents a transitional stage between social and occasional poetry and more subjective themes.

Rashid Ayyub was a poet of love, pain and wine. Most of his poems reflect his yearning for his motherland and his service towards *Al-Rabitah al-Qalamiyyah* as a young worker.

Nudra al-Haddad:

Nudra al-Haddad also composed poetry in the similar pattern of his contemporaries. He reproduces the familiar *Mahjar* themes of belief in the primitive goodness of nature, the dual existence of the body and the soul. He has one collection of poems entitled *Auraq al-Kharif*, which was published in New York in 1914. The first poem of this Diwan *Sirr Ma'ii* is an invitation to forget all about life in the real world with its unending and materialistic value. In his verse his passionate love for his motherland is reflected. There are a number of subjects such as perplexed queries about the meaning of life. Yearning to his native land and a strong sense of alienation are found in his poem *Basir al-A'ma*.

Some of Nudra al-Haddad's poems found to be picture of life with its good and evil and sweet and bitter aspects. His poems became expressions of human passion and sorrow. For him pain and sorrow, love and hatred are facets of life.