CHAPTER 4

Mikhail Nu`aima (1889-1988)

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4.1. Mikhail Nu‘aima— an outline of his life:

Mikhail Nu‘aima, the iconoclast Arab Christian Romantic poet, great critic and apologist, mystic, essayist, biographer, translator, novelist, famous orator and dramatist, is a major figure in modern Arabic literature, and particularly within what came to be known as the Mahjar School, referring to the literary movement which evolved in the U.S. among emigrant Syro-Lebanese poets and writers, who operated through a literary gathering in New York by the name "الرابطة العلمية" (The Pen Association), during the second and third decades of the 20th century, and until the death in 1931 of Jibran Khalil Jibran, its guiding spirit.

Nu‘aima had an interesting and varied education. Born in Biskinta in the Lebanon, on November 22, 1889, he received his primary education in a Russian school. At thirteen he went to Nazareth to the Russian Teachers’ Training college, where he became a schoolmate of Nasib Arida and showed such promise that in 1906 the college elected him on scholarship to attend the ‘Diocesan Seminary’ in Poltava, Ukraine, where he could able to meet with his friend Mikhail Iskandra. His involvement in a Students’ strike was punished by his removal from the Seminary and the postponement of his final examination for
a year until 1911. In Poltava he studied the great works of modern Russian literature and became an admirer of the social ideas of Tolstoy and began to write poetry in Russian. He himself inclined to the Russian literature and was influenced studying the poems of Данилевский, Пушкин, Толстой, Гоголь, Гибс, Золотарев, Асстрофский, Гюго, Достоевский, Тургенев and others. He joined in the ‘freedom movement of Syria’ (سورية الحرية), an organization which operated for the freedom of Syria from the yoke of Uthmanids in Turkey. Nu’aima showed an early flair for poetry and composed his first poem "النهر المتجدد" (The Frozen River) in Russian.

After five years in Poltava, Nu’aima returned to the Lebanon in 1911. In 1912, he moved to the United States to join his two elder brothers Adib and Hykal, already settled in the U.S., and enrolled as a student of Law and English literature in the University of Washington; Seattle, graduating in 1916 with two bachelors degree in the Arts and Law; (See Appendix B, Figures. 1 & 2, PP. 217- 218). During this period he became acquainted with theosophy, which left a deep imprint on him and his work. While still a student, he wrote articles on criticism and short stories for the Mahjar journal علاجات (al-Funun) and الصانع (al-Sa’iḥ) in New York, explaining what he considered the hallmarks of good poetry. Arida invited him to come to New York to edit the journal with him. However, the financial basis of this enterprise was fragile, and Nu’aima was forced to find employment with the Russians mission purchasing arms at the Bethlehem Steel
factory, until the Russian revolution intervened. He was then drafted into the US Army and sent to France, reaching the front line a few days before the Armistice of 11 November 1918.6

Nu’aima’s first venture in literary criticism was a review of Jibran’s book (The Broken Wings) which, in spite of its critical impartiality, expressed enough of the author’s revolutionary spirit to make Jibran seek to develop his acquaintance.

In 1918 he joined the American army and was sent to the French front, where he had first-hand experience of the horrors of the First World War. After the war he was awarded a government scholarship which enabled him to study French history, art and literature at the University of Rennes.

Nu’aima had close affinity with an intellectual organization named (Al-thayu-sufiyya) and remained faithful to its fundamentals. The most important principles of it were (Al-taqammas i.e. transmigration of souls) and ميزان العدالة والعقاب (Justice of reward and punishment), which clarified him the knot of الخطايا الجدية (The grave offence). His friend Walim, the Scottish, acquainted him with it.7

Nu’aima was an international figure. During his visit to India he met Jawaharlal Nehru and his family in New Delhi (Appendix D, Fig. 1, P.221). His book of short story لقاء (Till We Meet....... ) was published by the Indian institute of world culture, Bangalore, in 1957. The N. M. TRIPATHI LTD. Booksellers,
Bombay, on his consent, published *The Book of Mirdad: A LIGHTHOUSE AND HAVEN* in 1954 A.D.

On returning to the United States, Nu’aima wrote the charter for *(al- Rabita al- Qalamiyyah)*, founded on 28th April 1920 with Nu’aima as its secretary. He plunged into the activities of the Association and propagated its message in his famous book on literary criticism "الفريق" (*The Sieve*), which is almost a manifesto of Mahjar literature. He worked as a travelling salesman until 1932, when he returned to Lebanon and devoted himself to writing. He studied hard and used to go to the library in Biskinta, (See Appendix A, Fig. 2, P. 216). "َنامك الشخروب" (*The Hermit of Shakhrub*), as he is known, Nu’aima was remained a bachelor and passed his life in Biskinta, his native village.

Drawn to Jibran by a spiritual affinity, Nu’aima became very attached to him during the twelve years they were together in New York all through Jibran’s tragic illness till his death. Nu’aima’s biography of Jibran, written with all the love he had for him, is a beautiful testament to their friendship.

During his life in the U.S., Nu’aima had fallen in love with two married women at different periods, and entered into extended, consummated relationships with them, the stories of which and the burden they placed on his conscience and puritanical ideals he relates at some length in his autobiography. In each case, he ends the relationship to regain his peace of mind. The second severance coincides with his decision to depart from the U.S.
at the age of only 43 (forty three) in 1932, this relationship, as it is narrated, marked the end of his carnal knowledge of woman.

Though, as a litterateur, Mikhail Nu‘aima did not deserve the same popularity and quality in the United States as much as Jibran and Rihani had, yet, he was once nominated for the Novel Prize in literature.11 A playwright, writer of fiction, journalist and poet, he was politically temperamental during his days in the Pen League, setting standards against superficiality and hypocrisy in literature. Featured often on the pages of “The New York Times,” his most familiar works are his biography of جبران خليل جبران (Jibran Khalil Jibran) and مرداد (The Book of Mirdad), written after he had turned to Eastern philosophies for solace and guidance in 1932. While his poetry was written in the United States, it was never translated into English, except in anthologies, such as ‘Grape Leaves’, ‘a century of Arab-American Poetry’ (1988), edited by Gregory Orfalea and Sharif Elmusa.

الرابطة الكلامية (The Pen Association) ceased to be effective after Jibran’s death, and Nu‘aima only forty-two, preferred to retire from civilization and society. Returning to the Lebanon, he settled at الشروب (Shakhrub),12 his modest family farm to lead a quasi-hermetic life, devoting himself to literature until his death.

During his study years in Seattle, he first learned of the belief in the transmigration of Souls, mentioned above, through a Scottish room-mate and
member of the 'Theosophical Society,' a belief that he was to embrace with unwavering conviction all his life, and which was to have a profound effect on his life and writing, eventually turning the man into a near ascetic and injecting into his writing a strong element of 'Emersonian Transcendentalism', and a kind of 'pantheistic mysticism'.

Nu’aima wrote around fifty titles of works belonging to almost all literary genres such as - poetry, narrative prose, drama, biography, autobiography, literary criticism, novels, book of parables, short stories, and essays which may be enlisted as follows:

a) In the stranger life Nu’aima wrote the books:
   - (The fathers and sons) – New York, 1918, (Drama).
   - (The Sieve) – Egypt, 1923, (Literary Criticism).
   - (The Stages) – Beirut, 1932, (Essay).
   - (It has happened) – Beirut, 1936, (Short Story).
   - (Click eyelids, namely: murmurs) – Beirut, 1943, (Poetry).

b) Nu’aima, on the other hand, came back in Lebanon, his birth-place, in the year 1932 to settle permanently and wrote the books:
   - (Jibran Khalil Jibran: His life and works) - Beirut, 1964, (Biography).
❖: (Noble- nature depends on practice) - Egypt, 1946, (Book of parables).
❖: (The Reunion) - Beirut, 1958, (Short Story).
❖: (Threatened by Storms) - Beirut, 1959, (Short Story).
❖: (The Magnificent Stories) - Beirut, 1956, (Short Story).
❖: (Father of Duck) - Beirut, 1959, (Short Story).
❖: (The Sidelines) - Beirut, 1965, (Short Story).
❖: (The thrashing floors) - Egypt, 1945, (Essay).
❖: (The voice of the World) - Egypt, 1957, (Essay).
❖: (The light and the darkness) - Beirut, 1950, (Essay).
❖: (The tracks) - Beirut, 1954, (Essay).
❖: (The graven images) - Beirut, 1946, (Essay).
❖: (Far distant from Moscow and Washington) - Beirut, 1957, (Essay).
❖: (The colourful reports) - Beirut, 1949, (Novel).
❖: (The last day) - Beirut, 1963, (Novel).
❖: (The Book of Mirdad) - Beirut, 1952, (Spiritual work).

❖: (Total collected works of Nu’aima in 9 vols.) - Beirut, 1970-75, (Collected works).
c) Nu‘aima, in his credit, either translated or wrote in English a few number of books shown below:

- Mikhail Naimy, New York: Philosophical Library, 1985, (Auto-biography)
- مفاهيم الداخلية - مختارات من ميخائيل نعيمة (The Springs of Arabic Literature). It is a selected works of Nu‘aima published by Antun Sader in several volumes from Beirut.
“Mikhail Nu’aima: Promoter of the Arabic Literary Revival”, a biography on Nu’aima written by C. Nijland and published from Istanbul in 1975, and so on.

Mikhail Nu’aima, the simple man and a great literary figure in Mahjar as well as the Arab World, died on 28th February (in another version 1st March), 1988 A.D. Nu’aima was a man of versatile quality as mentioned above. This is a brief account of the life of Mikhail Nu’aima, the great Ideologist and Thinker.
4.2. Mikhail Nu’aima’s outstanding works:

It has already been mentioned about Mikhail Nu’aima’s works. It reveals from the study that his writings are very contemplative and philosophical and here an attempt has been made to mention his outstanding works and all these have been discussed thoroughly so as to examine his philosophy and thoughts. Here, out of his major works only 4 (four) works have been taken into discussion for the paucity of space and time. These works show the pace of development of modern Arabic poetry and criticism. The mentioned above four outstanding books are as follows:

4.2.1. Hams al- Jufun (همس الجفون) - Whispering Eyelids, 1943 A.D.

It is a philosophical anthology composed by Mikhail Nu’aima during his stranger life in foreign countries like – USA, USSR and others, from 1917 to 1930 A.D. The anthology contains only 44 (forty- four) poems, a small volume, entitled "همس الجفون" (eyelids whispering), published by Sader’s library, Beirut in 1943, and of the contents only some 30 (thirty) poems were original Arabic works in free-verse style, the remainder having been translated into Arabic in prosaic pattern after having been written in English. Nu’aima’s first poem, النهر المتجمد (The Frozen River), dated 1917, is an Arabic version of a poem that he wrote originally in Russian. Though few in number, these poems are important both from the point of view of Nu’aima’s philosophy and the development of Mahjar poetry.
According to Nu`aima, the poet, "A man who closes his eyelids could able to see all things" – as it is justified by his poem "إغض جفونك تبصر" (i.e close your eyelids, you shall see). Hence, it is clear that the title of the anthology leads towards the eternity showing a life which is peaceful and calm and an acceptance of life in all its aspects, and projects the poet's mysticism about the Unity of existence and the belief that God is revealed in all shapes and forms.

Nu`aima's poetry was new. The novelty was both in the content and in the technique. His thematic adventures, however, were mostly of the meditative kind, saved only by an ardour of emotion which proves an authentic spiritual tendency. All his poems, except "أخي" (Akhi) were of the directly subjective type expressing the poet's inner personal experience, spiritual and emotional. "أخي" (Akhi), both a war and patriotic poem, could well belong to the poetry of the fifties, with its social consciousness expressed through the personal consciousness of the poet. It is important to note Nu`aima's tendency to write about a true experience, an element lacking in the poetry of the neo-classicists, including much of Mutran's.

In his poetry Nu`aima remained faithful to the principles of "الرابطة القلمية". He never wrote poems on social or political occasions. Nu`aima conforms to the new values of poetry he laid in the "الغربال" (al- Ghirbal) He frees his verses from the labored effect of classical prosody and its meticulous care for short and long syllables. Considerably influenced by Lebanese folk poetry, he prefers short
metres (al- Buhur al- Majzu). His rhyme is light and he varies it in each stanza to give musical effects. His choice of words is homely, almost colloquial.

The most exquisite feature of Nu'aima's verse is its muted tone, "al- Shi'r al- mahmus" (the poetry of whisper or of the quiet voice) which is suggested in the title to his collection of poems "Hams al- Jufun" (whispering eyelids).17 Nu'aima's touch is soft, musical and light, almost like a faint whiff of air with nothing hard or grating. His poems move from tune to tune and rhythm to rhythm all in calmness.18

Nu'aima was always content in attitude with his lot in life. According to him there is no use crying against hard times for these have no ears to hear or eyes to see the depth of man's misery. Whatever happens, Nu'aima does not surrender to despair. There is no edge to his voice and no anger. He is always humble. These verses are from the first poem of his collection. The poem is "أغصس جفونك تبصر" (i.e. close your eyelids and you shall see).19 (See Appendix C, fig. 1, P. 219).

إذا سمازك يوماً
تحكية بالغيوم
أغصس جفونك تبصر
خلف الغيوم نجوم
والأرض حولك إما
توسحت بالثلوج
أغصس جفونك تبصر
تحت الثلوج مروج
و إن بليت بدء
قبل داء عياء

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If any time your sky
By dark clouds is concealed
If you but close your eye,
The stars will be revealed.
If on the ground should lie
A covering of snow,
You will see, with closed eye,
The grass that lies below.
Should you afflicted be,
And there is no known cure,
Then close your eye, and see
The ill has its own cure.

In (Good and Evil), Nu`aima says if the world were purely good, we would not know the value of its goodness nor its advantages. Man can only make a distinction if he knows the good from the bad and opt for the former. Nu`aima describes the two traits of good and evil as the twins that maintain the balance of existence and are parts of one element. At no time according to him
should evil disappear from the world? Here is an extract from the poem (Good and Evil).

I heard in a dream a devil conversing with an angel,

Saying be friendly, my brother and know, that

Without my Hell Your Heaven could not exist.

Are not we twins in whom the mystery of

Life and Death resides?

Are we not modes of the same substance?

Will you forget your brother if the people are oblivious of him?
The same idea is repeated in "The Conflict." Good and Evil do not exist in the external world only; they also dwell within the soul of the poet. Sometimes the poet senses one trait, sometimes another and he is divided between the two.22

The Devil entered my heart, and in it saw an angel.

And in the twinkling of an eye a violent fight broke out between them.

One said, "This house is mine!" and the other said it was his

While I witness what goes on, without the slightest move,
Asking my Lord: "Is there in all creation a god besides you,
Whose hand, together with yours, fashioned my heart from the beginning?"

And until today I see myself in doubt and confusion

Not knowing whether in my heart is a demon or angel?

In his philosophy of life, Nu'aima is sometimes assailed by fleeting doubts which nevertheless leave their impress on him. In the poem captioned "انشودة" (The Song) Nu'aima complains of the wounds which have been inflicted on him both by life and man. He expresses disillusionment when people return his love with hate and enmity.²³

قدَمت حبِّي لمبغيِّي
لقاء ما قد جئنا عليَا
فكان خطيَّ من مبغيِّي
أن عاد حبِّي بغضِّا إليَا

I offered my love to those who hated me,
As a reward for their spite against me.
My recompense from those who hated me was
That my love returned to me as hatred.
At the end of the poem, Nu‘aima asks his spirit to rejoice, for both joy and sorrow are facets of life. If we revel against them, we revel against the order of life as decreed to us. Life is complete only when we taste both its sweet and bitter fruit. He believes in the immortality of the soul after its liberation from the body. Birth and death are two chains in the never ending chain of life.

In the poem captioned "أوراق الخريف" (Autumn Leaves), symbolize the different stages of man's life up to the hour of his death. As there is no escape from death, Nu‘aima suggests that man should accept it happily for he is passing from one stage to another. He bids the autumn leaves to return to the Earth's fold.  

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عودي الى حضن الزرى
وجموى العقود
والسيجمالاً قد ذوى
ما كان لن يعود
كم أزهرت من قبلك
وكم ذوت ورود
فلا تخافى ما جرى

Cont...
Go back to the bosom of the earth.
Renew the cycle of ages.
Forget faded beauty,
What has been will not return.
How many roses before you have blossomed?
And how many have faded!
Fear not what has happened
And blame not fate.
Whoever has lost a jewel?
Will find it again in the grave!

Nu’aima’s quiet and serene meditations on death and deliverance show a
Sufi stance in the poem “الآن” (Now). He is happy not because he is thinking of
heaven or hell but because he wants to become a part of eternity away from the sensory confines of sight and sound, and time and place.  

Tomorrow I shall entrust 

The remaining dust to dust, 

My spirit I shall set free 

From the prison of 'may be'. 

Death shall I leave to the dead, 

And those who have children bred 

To the world and religion, 

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Evil and goodness I shall leave.

My weakness I shall protect

With a breast plate that can deflect

The blows of th' angelic hand,

And the demon's touch withstand.

I cannot feel any fright

Of the first of Hell alight.

Those houris will not entice;

Assembled in Paradise:

In another poem captioned "الدistracted" (The Distracted) portrays his spiritual crisis. Mikhail Nu'aima addressing God says:

إن لم اكن صداحاً

قصوت من انا؟

If I am not thy echo,

Then whose voice am I?

In the poem entitled 'من انت يا نفسني' (i.e. who art thou, o my soul?) (See Appendix C, fig 2, P. 219) he describes his soul's feeling of affinity with everything else in nature and concludes the poem addressing his soul:
Thou art the wind, the zephyr, the wave, the sea,

The flash of lighting, the thunder, the night and the morn.

Thou art a Divine emanation.

Nu‘aima’s poetry, like his prose, shows an exhaustive insistence on detail, which is an anti-poetic characteristic.26 His desire to express everything in his mind, or at least to give many sides to the same object or idea treated in the poem may be the cause behind the simplicity of his language in verse, a simplicity more characteristic of prose than of poetry. One cannot, however, fully agree with ‘Abbas’ and ‘Najm’ in their suggestion that the parallelism of his style were caused by his prosaic tendency,27 for the short sentences or phrases he crowds into his poems are not always prosaic. Good classical poetry, moreover, abounds with parallelism and antithesis Nu‘aima, however, exceeds anything known before or after him in this, showing this tendency also in his prose, although there is a longer history of such a style in classical Arabic prose.28 This is, in fact, a persistent trend throughout his poetry, but perhaps the most flagrant example of it is his poem “الإيذالات” (The Supplications); the following is a typical extract.29
O my God, colour my eyes

With the Kohl (antimony) of the rays of your light

that I may see Thee

In all creation: in the worm of the grave,

In the vultures of sky, in the billows of the Oceans,

In the cisterns of deserts, in the flowers,
In the fresh herbage, in gold nuggets, in the sand of deserts,

In the wound of the leper, in the faultless façade,

In the hand of the murderer, in the blood of the murdered,

In the bed of the bride, in the corpse of the weaned babe,

In the hand of the benefactor, in the palm of the miser,

Jayyusi commented, "Nu’aima’s achievement as a poet, when dealing with the poetry of contemplation which mirrors the moods and the inner states of mind, Nu’aima is seen to have arrived at the high degree of fluency and charm, a real achievement in view of the difficulty with such poetry to remain poetical. Unlike Iliya Abu Madi, Nu’aima achieved a permanent change of poetic tone. Moreover, he developed the poetry of experience and paved the way for truth and authenticity. He also came closer to the language of daily speech and the simple song than did any of his contemporaries. Unlike al- Aqqad, Shukri and al- Mazini, Nu’aima was able to give in his poetry a successful example of his literary criteria." His poetry with its message of altruistic love in the poem "ابتهالات 30
Oh God, make my heart
An oasis giving drink to friend
And stranger;
Its water faith, its trees hope,
Love and long-suffering,
Its air honesty, its sun loyalty,
Truth and sweet mercy;

Nu’aima’s dualistic attitudes towards life and death, expressed in the poem captioned “بين الجماجم” (Amidst the Skulls):
Speak to me of a breath that gave Adam life from the dust (literally: “after he had been earth and water”)

Such a breath, that showed us a point of light in the darkness of existence- and we became more blind.

We did not wear life till we wore death in the folds of the robe of life.

When we seek consolation, our hopes end in disaster.

By the above discussion it is clear that the anthology “Hams al-Jufun” (whispering eyelids) highlights a calm and peaceful human life similar to the quiet ocean devoid of wind and storm, rather it accepted all the aspects of human life: good and evil, disgrace and insult, doubt and fantasy, feeling the secrets of existence and its mastery, knowing the spiritual mysticism, understanding the unity of God, as the almighty manifests in all shapes and forms. Nu’aima presents all these aspects of life to us instructing the way of getting the contentment which remains concealed into the hardship of human life. However, all these evils, doubts, fantasies etc. could not able to undermine its faith in the unity of God, rather, it would explicit the mystery of the existence restoring peace and contentment.

But despite many achievements of “Hams al-Jufun” (whispering eyelids), Nu’aima’s poetry was also an example of dilution and verbosity, as was Jibran’s poetic prose style. Arabic poetry had to struggle for a long time to rid itself of the
effects of a diluted style, greatly confirmed by the writers of the North Mahjar in the Americas

4.2.2. Al- Ghirbal (الغريبال) - The Sieve, 1923 A.D.

This is an outstanding work of M N which consists of twenty-two critical articles in Arabic. He dealt there mainly on the criticism of poetry in order to understand the main principles of the Mahjar movement. Muhiuddin Reza published this book in Egypt in 1923 A.D. while the prominent critic in Arabic literature Abbas Mahmud al- Aqqad of Egypt appreciated the book and wrote a magnificent preface.

On returning to the United States, Mikhail Nu’aima helped to establish the الرابطة اللفصية (The Pen Association). He took a leading part in the activities of the Association and propagated its message in his famous book on literary criticism الغريبال (Al- Ghirbal), which is almost a manifesto of Mahjar literature.

The theory launched by Mikhail Nu’aima in his famous book الغريبال (Al-Ghirbal) was an open revolt against the قصيدة (qasida) and thereby it attacked the conventions of eloquence and purity of style, which the ancient poets as well as the first generation of النهضة (Al- Nahda) had considered prerequisites to any poetic composition. Nu’aima insists that poetry should be meaningful and relate to the spiritual and emotional needs of man and satisfy his longing for beauty and music. He defines a poet...
“Now we may ask ourselves, what is a poet? A poet is a prophet, a philosopher, a painter, a musician and a priest in one. He is a prophet because he can see with his spiritual eye what cannot be seen by all other mortals. A painter because he is capable of moulding what he can see and hear in beautiful forms of verbal imagery. A musician because he can hear harmony where people can find only discordant noise...... to him the whole of life is but a melody, sad and gay, which he hears according to the way he turns. That is why, he gives expression to it in ringing and metrical phrases...... Metre is necessary in poetry, rhyme is not, especially if it is, as the case in Arabic poetry, a single rhyme that has to be observed throughout the whole poem. There are now many poets among us who plead the cause of free-verse, but whether or not we agree with Walt Whitman or his followers we cannot but admit that the Arabic type of rhyme, which is still dominant, is nothing but an iron chain by which we tie down the minds of our poets, and its breaking is long overdue.

Lastly, the poet is a priest because he has his God whom he serves, namely, the God of Truth and Beauty. This God appears to him in different conditions and guises...... ...He sees Him alike in the faded flower and the fresh flower, in the blushing cheeks of a maiden and in the pale face of a dead man, in the blue sky and in the clouded sky, in the noise of the day and the quiet of the night.”

Nu’aima wrote basically on literature, human life and criticism. The Mahjar journals and magazines like (Al- Funun), (Al- Sa’ih), (Al- Huda)
etc. began to spread into the Arab world. The newspapers (al-Hilal) used to publish the articles of Nu’aima. The people of the Arabian countries and the Mahjar became interested at his writings as they could able to discover a new Arabian life style abounds with depth of life and its abundance having a spiritual trends thereon which they did not know earlier. It was all of a sudden that Muhiuddin Reza collected the articles of Nu’aima and published in a book form in 1922 A.D. entitled "بلاحة العرب في القرن العشرين" (Twentieth Century's Arab Literature) and thenceforth, he considered himself amongst the famous Arab authors.33 In Egypt, Syria and Lebanon he was known as an intelligent and sensitive Mahjar writer in depicting the subject matter as it required for. Nu’aima collected his critical articles in a book form entitled "الغريب" (The Sieve) contains about 250 (Two hundred fifty) pages. With Nu’aima’s request, mentioned above, Aqqad wrote the preface of the book and Muhiuddin Reza published it in the summer 1923 A.D. and thereby "الغريب" (The Sieve) became the first Arabic work on literary criticism finding the correct principles thereon

The book "الغريب" (The Sieve) was written within four intervals in a period of six years from 1917 to 1922 A.D.34

a) The first interval includes the article written in 1917 A.D:

(An account of Arabic Drama): The author Mikhail Nu’aima forwarded this essay as the introduction of the play- "الأباء والبنون" (The Fathers and Sons) where he discussed all about drama in Arabic literature, (الوسمات العربية, 1951, PP.23-29).
b) The second interval includes the articles written in 1920 A.D:

- **محور الأدب (The pivot of literature):** Nu‘aima, in this essay, states about the prime functions of literature, (al- Ghorbal, Beirut-1951, PP.18-22).

- **المقياس الأدبية (The measuring of literature):** Here, in this article, Nu‘aima depicted literature as it required for, ibid, PP. 54-61.

- **الشاعر والشاعرة (The poet and the poetry).** In this article the author Nu‘aima discussed about the poets and their poetry, ibid, PP. 62-73.

- **القرواء ومحفظة الأدب (The croaking of frogs):** Mikhail Nu‘aima explained in this essay about the importance of language in literature, ibid, PP.74-87.

- **المحاذات والأعمال (The drawbacks and shortcomings).** The author, in this essay, highlighted about the significance of the poetry and prosody in Arabic literature, ibid, pp. 88-103.

- **فلترجم (Let us translate):** The author considers western literature as prototype. So, he advises Arab writers to translate it to bring Arabic literature back into the main current of world literature, ibid, p. 104.

- **الدرة الشوقية (The pearl of Shauqi)** It was the first poem composed by Ahmad Shauqi Bek. Nu‘aima criticized the poem rejecting its spiritual value to mankind. The editor of the magazine ‘al- Hilal’ published it in April, 1920 A.D, ibid, pp 121-129.

- **الشمس القائد (The forerunner):** A book of parables and poems and a reminder of the human’s potential for progressing towards a greater self, written by
Jibran Khalil Jibran and Alfred Knopf published in the year 1930, ibid, pp. 143-149.

العواصف (The storms or the tempests): It is a collection of essays and stories written by Jibran Khalil Jibran and was published by إدارة الهلال (Ida rah al- Hilal) lately, ibid, pp. 184- 204.

c) The third interval includes the articles written in 1921 A.D:

آغاني الصبا (The melodies of Zephyr): It is an anthology composed by Najm Muhammad al- Shariqi and مطبعة الحكومة العربية (Matbat al- Hukumat al- Arabiyya) published it from Damascus in the year 1921 A.D. (al- Ghirbal, Beirut- 1951, pp. 159- 61).

الرياحاني في عالم الشعر (Rihani in the world of poetry): Rihani was known as the “father of prose- poetry” in Arabic literature. Nu’aima, in this essay, makes a thorough discussion about his poetry, ibid, pp. 137-42.

النبوغ (The genius): it is a literary work written by “Labib al- Rayyashi” and published by Sader’s المطبوعات العلمية (al- Matb”at al- Alamiyya) from Beirut in the year 1921, ibid, pp. 162- 65.

الديوان (The Diwan or the Register): It is a book on literature and criticism in ten volumes written by Abbas Mahmud al- Aqqad and Ibrahim Abdul Qadir Maziri and in the 2nd edition 1921 the first and 2nd volumes were published by مكتبة المسادات (Maktabat al- Sad”at) in Egypt so far, ibid, pp. 175-83.
d) The fourth interval includes the remaining articles written in 1922 A.D.

- **الفرّيلة** (The Sieve): Here, in this article, Nu’aima presented a description all about the critics and the criticisms, al- Gharibal (Beirut- 1951), pp. 10-17.

- **الفرويات** (The village women): It is an anthology composed by Rashid Salim Khuri al- Qarawi and the magazine (al- karama) published it in Sao Paulo, Brazil, in the year 1922 which Nu’aima dealt with it in an artistic manner, ibid, pp. 130-36.

- **الفصول** (The chapter): It is a collection of essays containing literature, social themes, thoughts and parables written by Abbas Mahmud al- Aqqad and published by ‘Matbat al- S’adat’ in the year 1922, ibid, pp. 205-11.

- **شكسبير خليل مطران** (Khalil Mutran, the Shakespeare): This essays is also known as "تاجر البندقية" (The Merchant of Venice) a play written by William Shakespeare. Khalil Mutran translated it into Arabic from English and published it in the year 1922, ibid, pp. 166-74.

- **الأرواح الحائرة** (The perplexed souls): It is a spiritual anthology composed by Nasib Arida. Nu’aima discussed in it about the mystery of spirits and he finds no solution of it, ibid, pp. 105-20.

- **الحبة حب** (The firefly or the glowworm): In this article Nu’aima severely attacks Arab culture and their literary conventions, ibid, pp. 30-53.
translated this book into Arabic from German and published it in the 2nd edition, ibid, pp. 150-55.

"Mayy Ziyada" (1886-1941) was invited in the University of Egypt by (Fattat Misr al-Fattat) and thereon she delivered her lecture on this topic and "Matbat al-Muktatif wal-Muqattim) published it, ibid, pp.156-58.

Nu’aima’s fame mainly rests as a critic of outstanding calibre. 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 "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”. For him, the poet should focus primarily on imagination rather than language, essence or form.

It is interesting to note that al-Aqqad, the iconoclast, who in the preface to The Sieve attacked Nu’aima severely for not having sufficient concern for the rules and correctness of Arabic grammar and syntax in his writings. In fact, the difference between the two of them was one of priorities. at no point does Nu’aima actually advocate the incorrect use of grammar and syntax, but for him the primacy of the voice of individual subjectivity in poetry was paramount, and for the sake of this cardinal principle he was prepared to tolerate occasional irregularities in the use of language. This point he reinforces further in the
chapter "محور الأدب" (The Pivot of literature), where he states that the man who deserves to be called a writer is the one who derives the content of his message directly from his heart, and the prime function of literature is to act as a message which passes from the soul of the writer to the soul of the reader. Like Verlaine in his plea for musicality in poetry, for the sake of lyrical subjectivity Nu’aima is willing to countenance departure from the normal rules. Language and prosody are the systems which must serve the individual creative writer and not inhibit his artistic liberty. It is sentiments such as these from Jibran or Nu’aima that represent the voice of genuine romantic rebellion in Arabic literature.

Most of his critical essays are collected in "الحباء" (The Sieve). For example, severely attacks 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 work. In the beginning of his career, indeed, Nu’aima expressed a negative attitude towards Arab culture and a firm belief in western cultural superiority. This might be attributed partly to his western education in Russian missionary schools in his native village of Biskinta and Ukraine before he immigrated to the United States.

Again in (al- Ghrbal) he claims that Arab classic poets and philosophers are insignificant compared to western figures such as Homer, Virgil, Shakespeare, Milton, Hugo and Tolstoy. Because, he considered western literature to be the highly admired prototype of literary excellence.
Nu’aima advised Arab writers to translate it. In فلنتترجم (Let us translate), an interesting short chapter in the book, the author strongly advises Arab authors to concentrate upon translating the literary masterpieces of the human spirit as a necessary step in order to bring Arabic literature back in to the main current of world literature. He further 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".37

Nu’aima launched a severe attack on Shauqi and his maiden poem "الدرة الشوقية" (The pearl of Shauqi) for he followed the old classical pattern in composing the poem. Both Nu’aima and Aqqad, says Adham, insulted the way in composing the poetry as there was nothing for upgrading the emotional expression of human being which is the prime objective of poetry.

Nu’aima’s attacks on Shauqi are perhaps too prejudiced.38 Shauqi is depicted here, not as a revivalist of the best of the classical output, but as instrumental in prolonging the classical tradition. However, such misinterpretations cannot spoil the overall picture. The reader can still react to the creative approach and the enthusiasm without failing to realize the radical attitude, Nu’aima’s words must have represented in those days.39 Yet, despite the interest they can arouse nowadays in the educated reader, the feeling persists that they are mostly a part of a bygone era; that Nu’aima is speaking to simple, inexperienced but obstinate readers, whom he must strive to convince.
This is the reason for his long and sometimes over simplified explanation but this also one of the elements that give his writings their charm. He was helped in clarifying his critical methods by a great volubility and fluency of style. His method of explaining his ideas is not to appeal directly to the emotions, as Jibran did, but rather to the common sense of the reader. His essays follow a special method: they are divided into sections that seem to grow organically towards an end. Beginning with a logical introduction, he builds on it, giving details, and clarifying his points through argument and sheer common sense until he arrives at the natural conclusion.

After a thorough study of Ghribal it reveals that the book \( \text{غريب} \) (al-Ghirbal) could able to create a successful revolution in 20\textsuperscript{th} century rendering a major change in Arabic literature and thereby it rejected the conventional methods in writing the prose, poetry and other literary aspects. Moreover, he advises the readers to study the western literature and translate them into Arabic; so that, it may vie along with the world literatures.

4.2.3. The Book of Mirdad (كتاب مرداد):

Among the best known books, written by Mikhail Nu’aima, “The Book of Mirdad”, is an unusual text book based on Sufi mysticism, first published in Lebanon in 1948 in English. This was translated into Arabic four years later by Nu’aima himself. In Nu’aima’s opinion, the books he wrote on his return to Lebanon are the most representative of his philosophy. Of these \( \text{مرداد} \) (al-
Mirdad) is significant. Mirdad is known as "A light house and a haven". Here is an extract to understand this riddle:

"It is that living lamp, not wrought with hands, which I most earnestly commend to all of you. Upon it feast your eyes, and from it light your candles. Behold, it is within your reach. The name of it is Mirdad. May you be worthy of his light."  

Mikhail Nu’aima speaks about the visit of the mysterious stranger, Mirdad, to the remote mountain monastery, 'The Ark'. The culmination and indeed the message of the story is that Mirdad's own Ark is "The Ark of Holly Understanding", which will bring mankind through another deluge, greater than Noah's, when heaven will be revealed on Earth. Actually, Mikhail Nu’aima claimed himself as Mirdad- a prophet after Jesus Christ.

Mikhail Nu’aima was a contemporary of Khalil Jibran and his writing style is very much influenced by him. It has been said that the way the book has been written, unraveling one layer after another, shows that it has descended from some mysterious source. He explained human minds and souls in it concentrating into the reality of life; death, good and evil and thus he could able to establish relationship between human being and the omnipotence (God).

Commending the book the Canadian theosophist Dudley W. Barr said, "Every once in so many decades a book is born into the world, a book which by the authority of its inner power, quietly effortlessly, but inevitably, moves forward..."
through the crowded ranks of bookdom and assumes its place of seniority in the vanguard. Such a book is *The Book of Mirdad* – and aspirants of this generation and of generations to come will be under a debt of gratitude to the author, Mikhail Naimy.

Another scholar **Mr. Gordon Muirhead**, reviewing the book before the ‘Indian Institute of Culture’, called it a heart-searching sermon, teaching the essence of religion, yet wholly free from dogma. Only poetry or music, he thought, could adequately convey the almost inexpressible ideas in the several passages quoted.

Though the first edition of the book was brought out in Beirut, Lebanon, in 1948, after a certain publishing house in London declined to handle it because “it entails such a change from the normal Christian dogma. . . . . .”, yet acknowledged it to be “a most unusual book”.

Mikhail Nu’aima, however, in the book of Mirdad, expounds the theory of love, hate, life, faith and God in a befitting manner in the chapter-11 (eleven). Some of them are the extracts:

Love is the law of God

You live that you may learn to live. You love that you may learn to live. No other lesson is required of Man. And what is it to love but for the lover to absorb forever the beloved so that the twain be one?
You are the tree of life. Beware of fractioning yourselves. Set not a fruit against a fruit, a leaf against a leaf, a bough against a bough; nor set the stem against the roots; nor set the tree against the mother-soil. That is precisely what you do when you love one part more than the rest, or to the exclusion of the rest.

You are the tree of life. Your roots are everywhere. Your boughs and leaves are everywhere. Your fruits are in every month. Whatever be the fruits upon that tree; whatever be its boughs and leaves; whatever be its roots, they are your fruits, they are your leaves and boughs, they are your roots. If you would have the tree bear sweet and fragrant fruit, if you would have it ever strong and green, see to the sap wherewith you feed the roots.

Love is the Sap of life. While Hatred is the Pus of Death. But Love, like blood, must circulate unhindered in the veins. Repress the blood, and it becomes a menace and a plague. And what is Hate but love repressed, or Love withheld, therefore becoming such a deadly poison both to the feeder and the fed; both to the hater and to that he hates?

No love is possible except the love of self. No self is real save the All-embracing self. Therefore is God all Love, because He loves Himself. So long as you are pained by Love, you have not found your real self, nor have you found the golden key of Love. Because you love an ephemeral self, your love is ephemeral.
The love of man for woman is not love. It is thereof a very distant token. The love of parent for the child is but the threshold to Love's holy temple. Till every man be every woman's lover, and the reverse; till every child be every parent's child, and the reverse, let men and women brag of flesh and bone clinging to flesh and bone, but never speak the sacred name of Love. For that is blasphemy.

Love is not a virtue. Love is a necessity, more so than bread and water; more so than light and air. Let no one pride himself on loving. But rather breathe-in Love and breathe it out just as unconsciously and freely as you breathe-in the air and breathe it out. Seek no rewards for Love. Love is reward sufficient unto Love, as Hate is punishment sufficient unto Hate.

Love neither lends nor borrows; love neither buys nor sells; but when it gives, it gives its all, and when it takes, it takes its all. It's very taking is a giving. It's very giving is a taking. Therefore is it the same to-day, to-morrow and forevermore.

There is no 'more' or 'less' in Love. The moment you attempt to grade and measure Love it slips away leaving behind it bitter memories. Nor is there 'now' and 'then', nor 'here' and 'there' in Love; all seasons are Love seasons. All spots are fit abodes for Love.

Love knows no boundaries or bars. A Love whose course is checked by any obstacle whatever is not yet worthy of the name of Love.
I often hear you say that Love is blind, meaning that it can see no fault in
the beloved. That kind of blindness is the height of seeing.

Love is peace athrob with melodies of life. Hatred is war agog with
fiendish blasts of Death. Which would you. Love and be at everlasting peace? Or
hate and be at everlasting war?

The whole earth is alive in you. The heavens and their hosts are alive in
you. So love the Earth and all her sucklings if you would love yourselves. And
love the Heavens and all their tenants if you would love yourselves.

God is your Captain, sail my Ark! 43

Though Hell unleash her furies red

Upon the living and the dead,

And turn the earth to molten lead,

And sweep the skies of every mark,

God is your Captain, sail, my Ark!

Love is your compass, ply, my Ark!

Go north and south, go east and west

And share with all your treasure chest.

The storm shall bear you on its crest
A light for sailors in the dark
Love is your compass, ply, my Ark!
Faith is your anchor, ride, my Ark!
Should thunder roar, and lightning dart,
And mountains shake and fall apart,
And men become so faint of heart
As to forget the holy spark,
Faith is your anchor, ride, my Ark!

The chapter 21 (twenty-one) highlights *The Holy Omni Will*. To Nu’aima, all the occurrences happens or happening in the Universe are completely guided by *The Holy Omni Will*. So, everyone should accept them with gratitude and faith, without opposing whatever comes from the mysteries of *The Holy Omni Will*. To understand it following are the extracts:

Till you are conscious of your will in all things and of their will in you, you cannot know the mysteries of the Omni Will.

I say to you, accept the Omni will if you would turn defeat to victory. Accept without a murmur all the things that fall to you from its mysterious bag; accept them in gratitude and in the faith that they are your just and due share in *The Omni Will*. Accept them with the will to understand their value and their
meaning. And once you understand the hidden ways of your own will, you understand the Omni will.

Accept what you do not know that it may help you to know it. Resent it, and it shall remain in an irritating puzzle. Let your will be a maid to the omniwill till understanding makes the omniwill a servant to your will.

Again, Nu‘aima, in the chapter 34 (Thirty-four) entitled "ON THE MOTHER OVUM" speaks about ovum, ova, Macro-God and Micro-God. These mysterious words are not but somewhat a great question mark to the readers; nonetheless, the problem can be realized pondering over these lines.

Space and all therein is an ovum whose shell is Time. That is the Mother Ovum. Enveloping this Ovum, as air envelops the Earth, is God Evolved, the Macro-God, Life unembodied, infinite and ineffable. Enveloped in this Ovum is God Involved, the Micro-God, Life embodied, and likewise infinite and ineffable.

The countless ova representing all things and beings, visible and invisible, are so arranged within the Mother Ovum that the larger in expansion contains the immediately smaller, with spaces intervening, down to the smallest ovum which is the central nucleus enclosed in space and time infinitesimal.

An ovum within an ovum, within an ovum, defying human numbers, and all God-fertilized—that is the Universe, my companions.
An ovum is your head, your heart, your eye. An ovum is every fruit and every seed thereof. An ovum is a drop of water and every sperm of every living creature. And the countless orbs tracing their mystic charts upon the face of heavens - are they not all ova containing the quintessence of Life - the Micro-God, in varying stages of unfolding? Is not all Life constantly hatching out of an ovum and going back into an ovum?

The Book of Mirdad carries a high philosophy of M. Nu'aima whereby he gives the message that God exists everywhere and also God exists in every human heart. The book also guides the human societies successfully into the right path for achieving their ultimate goals. Therefore, it may be commented that the book of Mirdad is an exceptional book which guides peace and mental satisfaction to the mankind.

4.2.4. Jibra Khalil Jibran - His Life and Works

This famous book of biography on Khalil Jibran, written by Mikhail Nu'aima in Arabic entitled "حياة جبران خليل جبران: مولده، وفته، ونفته" (Jibran Khalil Jibran: His life and works), was published at first in Beirut in the year 1934 A.D., but the English version written by the same author entitled "Khalil Jibran: A biography" published by the philosophical library, New York, in the year 1950 A.D. The book has been divided into four sections and covers thirty-two chapters; "الشفق" (Twilight or Evening-Glow) contains nine chapters; "الغيب" (Dusk) contains eight
chapters, "الفجر" (Dawn) contains eight chapters and "الملحق" (Appendix) contains seven chapters.

Infact, Jibran Khalil Jibrati, one of the finest books in Arabic, is a sensitive account of Jibran's philosophical and artistic traits. Nu'am, in this book, followed the style of the 'biographie romantique' developed by Maurois, Strachey and others, the book, which spoke freely about Jibran's weaknesses, was interpreted by some as an attack on him.\textsuperscript{46}

Nu'am shocked his readers with a critical candour not used in biographies of great men which are usually complementary. This book glorifies Jibran, the man whose greatness appears in the innocence of his spirit. Nu'am wanted to put things in their proper perspective. When he wrote on Jibran, people were raising him to the level of God. Although this book was written in 1934 A.D. it remains radiant and fresh.\textsuperscript{47}

According to Mikhail Nu'am, the author of Jibran's biography, Jibran's outpourings in (al- Ajnihat al-Mutakasirra) helped him to end the period of agony and grief. His will power was restored and he held back his tears.

Mikhail Nu'am developed a close relationship with Jibran through "فتاة فتاة (Fatat- Boston) and "فنون فنون (al- Funun). Jibran lovingly called him Misha, and in his letters he addressed him as عزيزي ميشا (My Dear Misha) or, أخي Misha, (Brother Misha), and sometimes "أخي الحبيب ميشا (Beloved Brother Misha). Nu'am 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 generally spread in his books and drawings.”

Jibran, in his exhibition of paintings in 1904, met Mary Haskell, a wealthy woman and the principal of a private school in Boston who was to change the course of his life and thereby helped him to go to Paris where he studied art under Rodin.

Mary Haskell was impressed by Jibran’s talent being interested in his painting and writing. Once she asked Jibran, “Why do you draw the bodies always naked”? The young artist replied, “Because life is naked. A nude body is the truest and the noblest symbol of life. If I draw a mountain as a heap of human forms, or paint a waterfall in the shape of tumbling human bodies, it is because I see in the mountain a heap of living things and in the waterfall a precipitate current of life.”

Jibran’s relationship with Mary veered toward romance. His letters became increasingly intimate and his addressing gradually shifted from a mentor to a friend to express warm feelings. Both of them remained undecided about the direction of their relationship. To understand their relationship here is an extract:
(By God, Mary, Mary! Really, my helplessness and joy for you do not know its end, who were we and where were we before this life? Whether you were my mother and I was your son, or were you my sister and I was your brother? Whether you were a prophetess and I was a prophet in the service of Astarte or Minerva putting forward together our sacrifices on the same Altar?)

Eventually, Mary confessed to Jibran her desire to keep him only as a friend and to bring his potential as an artist and man of letters to its fullest. Nu’aima, in his biography of Jibran, writes: “what of Mary? She loves him dearly, values his talents, understands his ambitions and aspirations and looks condolingly on his weaknesses and sins”

The main spirit of North American literary forum was Khalil Jibran. His Studio had become a meeting-place for leading Arab-American intellectuals who were known as al-Mahjar or “immigrant writers” like Nasib Arida, Mikhail Nu’aima and Abd Masih Al-Haddad. In 1920, they formed a literary society called “The Pen Club” or “The Pen League” and sometimes “The Pen Bond”, which furthered their fame in the Arabic-speaking world. Jibran was elected President, and Nu’aima a Secretary.
The members would meet to talk about common goals like Arab nationalism and Renaissance of Arabic literature. Nu‘aima talked about the first meeting when “the discussion arose as to what the Syrian writers in New York could do to lift Arabic literature from the quagmire of stagnation and imitation, and to infuse a new life into its veins so as to make of it an active force in the building up of the Arab nations.”

Really, Nu‘aima was true friend to Jibran. He was like a shadow for him. By 1931, Jibran spent most of his time in bed. According to Nu‘aima Jibran refused to an operation that might have saved his life. He instead waited for death, and it came to him at the hospital, at 10:55 P.M, on April 10, 1931, at the age of 48. Among other people close to Jibran, his sister Marianna and his best friend Mikhail Nu‘aima were by his side.

Mikhail Nu‘aima recorded his fascination with his friend saying: “Who shall inscribe the name of the present generation in the scrolls of Time, who they are and where they are?” I do not find them among the many “nightingales of the Nile and, the warblers of Syria and Lebanon, but among the few whose lips and hearts have been touched by a new fire. Of those some are still within the womb of creative silence; some are breathing the air we breathe, and treading the ground we tread. Of the latter- nay, leading latter- is the poet of night and Solitude, the poet of Loneliness and Melancholy, the Poet of Longing and Spiritual Awakening, the Poet of the Sea and the Tempest- Gibran Khalil Gibran.”
In a letter to Mikhail Nu’aima dated 1922, Jibran writes: "......... the future shall find us in a hermitage at the edge of one of the Lebanese gorges. This deceptive civilization has strained the strings of our spirits to the breaking point. We must depart before they break."57

According to Nu’aima, Jibran once said. "I shall be happy when men shall say about me what they said of Blake: 'He is a mad man'. Madness in art is creation. Madness in poetry is wisdom. Madness in the search for God is the highest form of worship."58 Such was Jibran being attributed with these attributions cited above.

Mikhail Nu’aima was the best friend of Khalil Jibran. He had 28 (twenty-eight) letters from Jibran, in a period of 10 (ten) years from 1920-1929 so far. Nu’aima recorded these letters in his famous book entitled- "Khalil Jibran: A Biography"59 under the chapter "رسائل جبران إلى" (Jibran's letters to me).

Jibran, in these letters expressed to Nu’aima and other literary personalities of Al- Rabita al- Qalamiyyah, about the literary mission, mutual understandings and his thoughts and ideologies as to promote and revive Arabic literature from its quagmire of stagnation and set up in an equal position to the world literatures. Here, I would like to quote letter no. 15 bellow:60

Cont...
أخي ميساء، بعد أن قرأت آخر عدد من مجلة الرابطة الأدبية، و بعد أن استعرضت أعدادها القديمة
تمنياتي أن بيننا وبينهم هؤلاء من صحفيين ولا منا إلىهما ولنهم إلينا، مما سلبت تحذيرهم من
العديد القصص من القصص النظرية الحربة المعروفة تتبع من الداخل ولا تأتي من الخارج، أنت أعلم الناس بهذه الحقيقة، فلا
تحاول إيقاظ من أزول الله الأسود على كوبهم لحزمة خفية، أقطع لهم ما شئت وابهث إلىهم ما شئت، ولكن لا تنس
أنك تستعين على وجه "رابطة" نفاذك كثيفاً من الشهيرة و الشاعرة، إذا كان لنا قوة فقوتنا في ودتنا و انفرادنا.
إذا كان لا يد من الاشتراك في العمل فاستشترك مع من بناكما ويقولونا في عقليتي أن عباس محمود العقاد
هو فرد واحد - لأقرب بما لا يقارن من منازعنا ورغانينا الأدبيّة من كل ما ظهر وسيطر من الرابطة الدمشقيّة
- أما أنا أنا كعمالي في الرابطة القلميّة أخضع وأخضع بمسيرة نصوت الأكترية، ولكن أنا كلر لا أريد ولا أقدر
الانفاق على أمر أدبي فيفه مع تلك الفئة الدمشقية التي تحاول غزل القيصر من مادة مخاصمة، قد تأثرت، تأثرت
فما قاله لي عن سابا* - ليتي كبرت قادراً على خدمة هذا الشاب البودي بشين من الأشياء - ولكن العين
بصيرة واليد قصيرة.

حسنًا فعلت ووضعك شيئًا من الحماسة في روح رشيد وندره ونجب إذا بقيت على هذه الحالة تبقى
مجموعة الرابطة لسنة 1924 أو سنة 1924 في جمعية من جيوب الأثير! اتبعوا إلى غير مامورين، بست نسخ
من المجموعة وقيدوا الثمن على حسابي أو اتبعوا إلى بكريدي خواصة، صحتها يا ميسا أفضل مما كانت عليه. وقد
قال لي الأطباء أنني ساعدت إلى الحالة الإعتيادية إذا الصرت ساءت أشد من كل عمل و عن كل إجهاد، بل و عن
كل شيء الآكل والشرب والراحة! الله يساعدني يا ميشا!
إذا أنت على شرف الجنون، هذه بشارة جميلة بهولها هائلة بلجامها - و جمالها. أقول إن
الجنون أول خطوة نحو التجرد الأثري، كن مجنونًا يا ميشا. كن مجنونًا وأخبرنا ما وراء نقاب "الظل" من

(بوسطن، نيويورك) مساء الخميس (1921)
(Boston- New York) Thursday

Evening (1921) Brother Mischa,

Having read the last number of the Damascus Arrabitah's magazine, and reviewed the previous ones, I am convinced that between us and them lays a deep gulf; we cannot cross to them: nor they to us. No matter how hard we try, Mikhail, we cannot free them from servitude to literary trinkets. Spiritual freedom comes from within, never from without; you know that better than any man. Do not attempt to awaken those whose hearts, for some hidden wisdom, God has put to sleep. Do for them what you like, and send them what you like, but don't forget that you shall cast a veil of doubt and suspicion upon the face of our Arrabitah. If we have any power, it lies in our independence and aloofness. If we must co-operate with others let it be with people who are our peers, and who say what we say. I believe that Abbas Mahmud Al-Aqqad – (A well known Egyptian writer- Author) though one man – is nearer by far to our tastes and literary inclination than anything that came out, or may yet come out, of the Damascus Arrabitah. As a worker in Arrabitah I submit – and submit gladly – to the voice of the majority. But I, as an individual, do not and cannot concur in any literary and
artistic agreement with that Damascus group who would weave royal purples out of mucous materials.

I was affected, and very deeply, by what you told me of Saba (N. Arida’s brother- Author). I wish I could do something for that friendly and loyal young man. "But the eye is far of sight, while the arm is short of reach".

You have done well to stir up Rasheed, Nadara and Naseeb a little. If we go on delaying the Anthology of Arrabitah will remain in some pocket of the either until 1923, or 1924! Send me – and this is not an order; six copies of the anthology and debit my account for the amount, else draw on me!

My health, Mischa, is better than before. The doctors tell me that if I give us all kinds of work and exertion for six months, and do nothing but eat, drink and rest, I should be again my normal life! Allah, help me, Mischa!

So you are on the verge of madness, this is a piece of news magnificent in its fearfulness, fearful in its magnificence and beauty. I say that madness is the first step towards divine sublimation. Be mad, Mischa. Be mad and tell us of the mysteries behind the veil of “reason”. Life’s purpose is to bring us nearer to those mysteries; and madness is the surest and the quickest steed. Be mad, and remain a mad brother to your mad brother – Gibran. *

Jibran and Nu'aima are overlapped. It is clear from Jibran's letters sent to
Nu'aima that really he loved him from the core of his heart. Likewise, Nu'aima
also loved him too much. He passed twenty years with him in U.S.A. and was
fully aware of his thoughts and ideologies and accordingly he followed his
(Jibran's) advice. At the behest of Jibran, he launched the literary mission
"Arrabitah" Nu'aima, after the death of Jibran, wrote in his memory the famous
book entitled – "Khalil Jibran. A Biography, 1934", which made him popular in the
East and the West and this is the book which has been discussed above.
4.3. Thoughts and Ideologies of Mikhail Nu’aima

Mikhail Nu’aima was a great thinker and ideologist. He lived a long period in foreign longing for homeland with patience and peaceful manner. Being highly ambitious, Nu’aima inclined towards spiritual guidance, knowledge and these reflect in his philosophy “Hams al- Jufun” (Eyelids whispering). The Russian Teachers’ Training College in Nazareth sent him on scholarship to the orthodox Seminary in Poltava, Ukraine, in 1906 A.D. for studying higher education in religious theology.

As a pious man, the religious feelings being deep-rooted in his mind, he determined to follow the religious study to acquire divine theory. In the meantime, the writings of the famous Russian literary figures, like- نيكين (Nikitin), لارمونتوف (Larmuntuf), بوشكين (Pushkin), نادس (Nadsun), تولستوي (Tolstoy), غنيتاش (Ganidtash), غوركي (Gurki), غوغول (Gugul), تورغينيف (Turghinit) and others, influenced him greatly and thereby he could able to attain the right direction of human philosophy. Consequently, he composed his first poem, الثور المتجد (The Frozen River), in Russian.

A staunch believer in God, Nu’aima, who lived with his brother Adeeb in Walla Walla, America, became grumbled at the pensive atmosphere there which was far from truth and belief. Hence, he denounced the Western Cultural value and its civilization, rather inclined towards the value of Eastern spiritual lifestyle and its philosophy.
Nu’aïma, being loyal and faithful to the fundamentals of (Al-thayu-sufiyya), an intellectual organization and Walim, a Scottish friend, acquainted him with it, believed in التكنص (transmigration of souls) and ميزان الثواب والعقاب (Justice of reward and Punishment) and thereby he became aware of الخطيئة الجدية (The grave offence) which remained much influential on his life and writings, eventually turning the man into a near ascetic, and injecting into his writing a strong element of Emersonian Transcendentalism, and a kind of pantheistic mysticism. He also became a member in the beliefs and practices of الماسونية (free-masons), an organization of international secret fraternity.

After the demise of Khalil Jibran, Nu’aïma returned to Lebanon and passed a greater part of his life in a cave of mount Sanneen named الفلك (al-Falak), (See Appendix A, fig. 3, P 216) being isolated, meditating and thinking over the eventualities, human beings are compelled to face them.

Nu’aïma had been adopting the Islamic Sufi doctrine in thinking, meditation and literary pursuits. He continued his writings as he promised to produce an unprecedented work in Arabic literature and perhaps, for this sake, he never thought of marriage and passed the whole life as a bachelor. Of course, he had fallen in love twice with married women. The first case occurred during his earlier study years in Russia (1906-11) and the second case happened in the U.S. with two married women and thereby he could able to know about the carnal knowledge of women. But, in this respect, he lost the peace of mind;
hence, he decided to end the relationship with women forever and again could able to regain his peace of mind.

Nu’aima wanted himself and others to make free from injustice and suppression. In this regard, his joining in سوريا الحزة (The freedom movement of Syria), an organization, may be cited, which operated for the freedom of Syria from the yoke of Uthmanids of Turkey.

Though Nu’aima was involved in the first world war and sent to the France front in March 4, 1919 A.D., but he did not like war at all. The war, its affairs, experiences, and its sufferings influenced him deeply.

Nu’aima, for financial reasons, being deviated from the original plan to continue with his studies at the Sorbonne in Paris, accompanied with one of his elder brothers and arrived in America in 1911. Actually, in this respect, being reluctant, he did not want to go to the U.S. He explains how he felt in his autobiography, "Sab`un: Hikayat 'umr" (seventy: the story of a life, 1959): "whenever I thought of the (New) world, I felt that a wide gulf existed between me and it..........For the dollar, which attracted millions of people from all corners of the earth, did not attract me because I was looking for things that the dollar could not buy ....... .......

It appears that he arrives in New York, already predisposed against modern civilization. This attitude had already formed in Poltava, which he describes as a mere village, compared to New York. Civilization had led man astray on to paths of greed, devoid of compassion,
justice and love, he tells us. Thus rather than being dazzled by New York on first sight, the city's huge buildings and feverish movement oppress him, and leave him nostalgic for the Lebanese mountains where he grew up.67

Nu’aima, in the context of western and Eastern civilizations, cited the short story "ساعة النكوع" (The Cuckoo Clock) in his book "كان ما كان" (Once upon a time) where he narrates the story of Khattar, Zumurrud and Cuckoo Clock in a fascinating manner and thereby he scans the Eastern and Western cultures:

Happiness is within the soul and nowhere else; it is not to be sought through the change of continents or cultures: “The happy man is he who rejoices in his place, and unhappy is he who seeks contentment in other places”.68

The East riding the chariot of the ‘heart’ driven by horses of ‘emotion’, reined in by timeless ‘faith and traditions’. Conversely, the West rides in a chariot of ‘steel’ driven by ‘steam or electricity’, and powered by ‘conceit and arrogance’.69

The East finds the world perfect because it was made by a perfect God, while the West finds in it many imperfections, which it seeks to “make better”. For him the West’s attempt at improving the world is a form of doomed ‘arrogance’, akin to ‘a fish in the Sea trying to “improve” it and comprehend its Secrets’.70

The East with its faith is closer to the truth than the West with its thoughts and scientific evidence. It is the West, he concludes, that needs to be a disciple in the school of the East.71

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Nuʿaima narrates another story entitled “A Match Box” in his collection “The Magnificent Stories-1956” where he tells about the values of Western and Eastern cultures describing some impressive examples thereon.

Nuʿaima’s vision was deep and far-reached as he preached his message to the communities of the world. When he speaks of the Eastern prophets, their philosophies and immutable ‘revealed truths,’ he does not have in mind only the Semite religion of the Middle-East, but also the ‘Buddhism’ and ‘Taoism’ of the Far East. His article “Thalathat Wujuh” (Three Faces); where he talks about the ‘Buddha’, ‘Lao Tzu’, and ‘Jesus Christ’.

Nuʿaima argues that the Western people have been blessed with the spiritual prophets of the East mentioned above. On the contrary, the West has given ‘science’ and ‘its truths’ to the East, which changed every day. To him, materialism is the motto of the West, while the East is on the high profile of spiritualism.

The famous critical book on poetry (al-Ghirbal) written by Nuʿaima was published from Egypt in 1923, while his poems only 44 (forty four) in number were composed from 1917 to 1930 and collected them in a small volume entitled ‘Eyelids whispering’ and was published by Sader’s library, Beirut, in 1943. Hence, it will be more befitting to highlight first his critical ideas on poetry as he, during his time, remained an undisputed figure in the Arab world as well as the Mahjar by publishing his great critical book “The Sieve.”
Nu’aima launched his career as a poet. He had great interest in poetry. The writers whose work he criticized were poets, and it was on poetry that he lavished in Romantic fashion his most glorious definitions. “Poetry is life, its smiles, its tears, its silence, its expression, its cheering, and its moaning”. It is the answer to a spiritual need in man; in fact, “the poet is the one who stretches the fingers of his inspiration to the curtains of your hearts and thoughts and lifts them to let you see what is hidden under them; then you shall see emotions and thoughts which you might think are the poet’s, but which are in fact your very own.” For the poet is a “prophet, a philosopher, a painter, a musician and a priest” this Romantic picture of the role of the poet is strengthened by Nu’aima's belief in inspiration. “The true poet never writes except when he is driven by an internal impulse that he cannot control. In this he is a slave.”

Moreover, “he will describe what is, spiritual eye sees and what has matured and fermented in his heart.” This reminds one of the insistences of recent avant-garde criticism on experience in poetry.

An iconoclast of the first order, his strongest advice was to do away with the traditional idols, to find the way to truth and authenticity: “clear your temples of the wooden idols to which you have been burning your incense.......[and] build in your hearts new temples for new gods, and lofty pulpits for lamps that burn with the oil of truth, zest and sincerity.”
Nu’aima, the staunch rebel of the early decades seemed, however, incapable and unwilling to adapt to changing conditions. His basic idea of the aims of poetry and literature to expressed beauty, truth and goodness persisted with him for a certain length of time until it later became clouded through an increasing mysticism. When in 1954, he wrote his famous article ماهية الأدب و مهنته (Mahiyyat al- Adab wa Muhimmatuh), he still believed in those criteria and launched his attack on three contemporary trends:

Firstly, the neo-Realistic trend (he never named it as such) which revolved around what he called man’s need to be free from hunger: for him, man does not live by bread alone, and although it is treasonable of literature to forget about hunger and poverty, it is even more treasonable to forget about the hunger of the heart, the mind and the spirit.

Secondly, he attacked the literature which revolved around sex, and the physical passions: no one denied the great effect of the sexual passions but they were only dirt and prostitution when measured against the great aims of man’s existence in this world.

And thirdly, he attacked, without actually using the term, committed literature which revolved in the orbit of state, nationalism and politics.

In this article, however, he was able to reflect other contemporary literary problems. He insisted that Arabic literature was still immature and would remain so until three things were secured. firstly, a tractable language; secondly, a
nation free of an inferiority complex (he attacked here the blind adoption by poets and writers of Western criteria, methods and ideals); and **thirdly**, freedom of speech.

But the contradictions into which Nu’aima falls with regard to his former literary criteria can be exasperating. For, while he condoned in his *Sab’un Il* (al-Ghirbal) he had rejected them in mystical fashion some years before at an Arab literary conference in Damascus in 1956. In this conference, in which he delivered a lecture entitled *Al-Adib wa’i-Naqid*, he declared that no critic was capable of distinguishing absolute beauty, truth and goodness in a work of literature, for “each critic has his own personal criteria”; and that criticism was not really necessary for literature, for “time is the best judge of literary works”. Then proceeding further with his mystical fervour, he advised critics to try to write their own works instead of writing about other people’s works. He gave the example of Nature which embraced all creatures and rejected none. However, his fellow delegates did not quite realize the mystical basis of the aged critic’s attitude, and his lecture caused a great stir at the conference.

If Nu’aima had wanted to shock the audience, he could not have said anything more at variance with the whole mood of the time. He seemed a strange voice coming from another world and preaching acceptance to an Arab world plunged in the heated arguments of committed literature in the ’fifties. In this lecture he not only imposed on himself a spiritual isolation, but also diluted all his
former critical concepts, thereby largely destroying the beloved image of the iconoclast who, in the earlier decades of the century, had led the way when the spiritual and artistic needs of his people were pressing. In fact, it is strange that Nu‘aima should continue to write (and sell his books), when the interests of the majority were quite out of sympathy with his mystical attitudes.

Nu‘aima’s arguments on language are often well informed. “Language is one of life’s phenomena and only obeys the laws of life. It chooses the suitable and preserves the best of it. It is like a tree that changes its dead branches for green ones and its dried leaves for living ones. . . .” Those whom he calls “the frogs of literature” and who would keep the language from growth make of the writer a tool in the hands of language. Their tragedy is that life goes on while they remain static. But to him, language which is mere symbols has no value of its own. It is a means for denoting things that are “greater and loftier” than itself, which are the human thoughts and emotions.

Like Jibran, Nu‘aima believes that it is the poet and writer who are the makers of language and its patrons. There should be no cause for worry if they produce new symbols or change old ones. Al-Aqqad and Mañdur overlooked the observation he makes at the end of his long argument that if people like the newly forged symbol [or word, to be more precise] they will keep it, whether lexicographers and grammarians like it or not, and if people neglect it, it will automatically die.
Nu’aima’s ideas on metre, however, are not quite so mature. He makes many mistakes and falls into some contradictions as he attacks the ‘Sham’* versifiers of his time. His criticism of exaggeration and banality in poetry, which he refers to the laws of prosody, is irrelevant and shows a hasty judgment.88 Every poem has its laws of prosody, whether written or orally transmitted. The laws of prosody are not imposed on language. They are drawn only on the basis of what has already happened in the verse of that language.

It is true that good poets in Arabic need hardly refer to these laws, but there are always poets whose ears are not quite as sensitive. The laws of al-Khalil Ibn Ahmad need not stop any gifted poet from making innovations, for they have basic rules, which apply broadly to any number of variations within their own limitations. Nu’aima’s arguments are out of focus in this respect. The fact that there were many versifiers in Arabic who wrote ‘banal’,* decorative verse is not due, as Nu’aima claims, to their ability to versify according to al-Khalil’s laws of prosody 89 Just because laws of prosody are accessible to would-be versifiers does not necessitate the production of hollow verse. In fact, Arabic laws of prosody should be more difficult to assimilate than, say, English laws of prosody.

* Sham - Feign, Pretend, Bogus, False, Counterfeit etc
* Banal- Common, Commonplace, Compulsory
Indeed, there is no poetry in any language which does not have long trains of versifiers and imitators.

Nu’aima, moreover, claims that the accessibility of the laws of prosody has not only harmed our poetry, but also all our literature. For would-be novelists and dramatists, seeing the possibility of becoming able to write verse (a highly honoured art among the Arabs) through learning the laws of prosody confined their literary activity to poetry and "here we are today with no novels and no plays and no science. . . ." 90 This is really amazing from an intelligent and sensitive critic like Nu’aima.

Nu’aima, like many of his avant-garde contemporaries, never really had any settled ideas about metre. For despite the absurdity of his argument concerning metre, al-Aqqad remarked only on Nu’aima’s much milder attack on language. Nu’aima’s uncertainty on the question of metre is obvious right from the beginning. For while he claims in one article that neither metres nor rhymes are necessary for poetry,91 in another article he says that metre is necessary but rhyme is not.92 However, his verse shows an ear sensitive to music in poetry and a good grasp of metre; and in his attempt to define metre he rightly says that the primary aim of metre is to achieve harmony and balance in the expression of emotions and thoughts.93

Nu’aima is at his best when he speaks about the role of criticism and the role of poetry. To him the aim of criticism is to sift literature and differentiate
between the good and bad in it. The personality of the author is of no concern to
the critic. Every critic, moreover, has his own sieve.\textsuperscript{94} This is, of course, the
attitude of a subjective, impressionistic critic, as Mandur said,\textsuperscript{95} although it is hard
to see how a critic can ever be completely objective in his criticism, even if he
should limit it to an interpretation of the text. Critics, Nu’aima continues, although,
they differ from each other, have one quality in common: a natural power of
discrimination. There are three other qualities which a critic can possess: \textit{firstly},
a critic can be creative, for he can discover the value of a neglected piece of
literature. \textit{Secondly}, the critic can also be an original writer, for in discovering the
beauty of a literary work he gives to his readers his own concept of beauty and
truth. And \textit{thirdly}, the critic can be a guide, for he can show the creative artist his
true path and his worth.\textsuperscript{96}

What was wrong with Arabic literary criticism was the lack of good critics:
the arbiters of the literary world, he insisted, were sham, timid and ignorant.\textsuperscript{97}
The strong stand Nu’aima took concerning this question shows great courage.

If this aspect of Nu’aima’s attack is less relevant today, other aspects of
his criticism are still fresh and alive. His insistence that “man” is the axis around
which literature must revolve is still valid in modern criticism, and was given great
importance in the fifties.\textsuperscript{98} It would be pointless to say that most poetry, even in
Nu’aima’s early days, speaks about things that have to do with “\textit{man}”. What
Nu’aima meant is what the modern critics mean now: “Man’s inner soul” and his
actual experience on earth,\textsuperscript{99} in short, the human condition.
But no great change has taken place in the ideas of critics concerning the "criteria of literature", since Nu‘aima wrote his famous article of the same title. There are literary criteria, in his opinion, which are permanent because they depend on permanent human needs. These needs are primarily four. (i) our need to express our feelings and ideas, (ii) our need for a guiding light in life to show us the truth, (iii) our need for the beautiful (he is speaking here of absolute truth and beauty), and (iv) our need for music. These needs do not vary in their essence with the change in time and place. Literary criteria, therefore, are judged by their ability to satisfy those needs.

Nu‘aima is not quite sure about the role of poetry. He is aware of the two schools of thought existing in his days, the one insisting on art for art's sake, and the other that it should serve the needs of humanity. However, he maintains that the poet must not be a slave to his own time and to his own people, but at the same time he must not shut his eyes and ears to the needs of life around him. He gets out of this impasse quickly by stating that the poet; as long as he takes the nourishment of his talent from life will necessarily reflect that life in his poetry.

Many years later his attitude towards this point was to become even more confirmed: He rejected the concept that literature was a picture of the age, insisting that it belonged to all time. A man of letters in his opinion must feel he belongs to all eternity. A more precise idea is his saying that literature must be purified from the baseness of politics and nationalism, for his insistence that literature should concentrate on nourishing the virtues of the human heart.
Though Nu'a'ima was a gifted poet but not prolific one as he composed only 44 (forty-four) poems collected in a small anthology entitled “8من إلاآ أُمّ” (eyelids whispering). He also composed poems in English and Russian. All of his poems except “8مات” (My Brother), which is both a war poem and a patriotic piece, were composed in a pantheistic mood. Basically, the themes of his poetry are spiritual and emotional having the presence of "wahdat al-wujud" (Unity of God) in them.

Nu'a'ima in his poem captioned “8غلط 8إ لأنه تبصر” (close your eyelids and you shall see) tells about oneness of God visualized through the inner eyesight. To him, nature directs all creatures existed in the world. He hopes a peaceful death as it comes from Him. He advocates having patience with calm and peace even in grave dangers and they will be dispelled automatically.

In the poem captioned “8ما أنا يا نفسى” (O my soul! Who are you?), the poet says that the undying spirit is beyond all bindings and barriers. After death, he finds it being mingled into the existence of superpower in the shape of air, breeze, wave, sea, lightening, thundering, darkness, dawn and super abundance. Actually, to poet, the whole Universe is not but a part and parcel of the omnipotent. Hence, there is the presence of God in all things existed in this Universe.

His emotional poem entitled “8أفاق القلب” (i.e. Roving of the Heart), (See Appendix C, fig. 3, P. 220) symbolizes as the permanent dwelling place wherein
reflects all kinds of human thoughts, imaginations, dreams and utopia. To Nu’aima ‘The Heart’ is an independent element and not a part of the human body which directs a man as it wishes. It rambled at the horizons of the Earth in a restless state of mind and without an asylum. Actually, the heart is like a vast Ocean. Hence, he suggests the heart to be sober like the Ocean and to be a peaceful abode of human thoughts and egos.  

In another poem entitled “الخير والشر” (Good and Evil), he thinks that Good and Evil have an identical origin. They are two sides of a single reality. In his words they are twin brothers. One is complementary to the other and both are equally fundamental realities of all existence. He says if the world were purely good, we would not know the value of its goodness nor its advantages. Man can only make a distinction if he knows the good from the bad and opt for the former. At no time according to him should evil disappear from the world.

The poem “الشودة” (The Song) where Nu’aima complains of the wounds which have been inflicted on him both by life and man. He expresses his disappointment when people return his love with hate and enmity. At the end of the poem, Nu’aima asks his spirit to rejoice, for both joy and sorrow are facets of life. If we rebel against them, we rebel against the order of life as decreed to us. Life is complete only when we taste both its sweet and bitter fruit.

Nu’aima portrays his mystic state of mind in his famous poem “الطمأنينة” (contentment) that when a man comprehends the Unity of Being and identity of
good and evil he has no cause to fear or worry. He is contented with his lot. Come what may he is not going to lose composure of mind. He feels his identity with everything he faces and braves the vicissitudes of times with stoic courage.

An emotional poem captioned “M.D.B. اِلَّا! (To the Mind, Doubt and Belief),”¹¹¹ where he says about spirit (soul), mind and heart, (See Appendix C, fig. 4, P. 220). To him, mind is concealed within soul or spirit and it creates from heart – i.e. heart is the dwelling place of mind and thereby all kinds of doubts and beliefs i.e. thinking either positive or negative come out of it because these are co-related and co-existed for ever as stated in the poem

Even the most insignificant insect reminds Nu’aima of وحدة الوجود ‘wahdat al-wujud’ (existence of God) in the poem “إلى دودة” (To a worm).¹¹² Thus addressing the worm he says¹¹³

In the eyes of Life, thou art not ugly,

Nor thy value is less than that of vultures and eagles.

By thy troth, sister, in our Life,

There are no grades of worth or differences of value.

Life's manifestations in the Universe appear to the onlooker.

in many forms with various colours,

Its hypostasis remains one from the very beginning

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Whether it is manifested as stars or as worms?

After all, “الحنين” (whispering eyelids) shows a life which is peaceful and calm and an acceptance of life in all its aspects, and projects the poet’s mysticism about the Unity of existence and the belief that God is revealed in all shapes and forms.

Jibran’s close friend and a prominent member of ‘Arrabita’, Mikhail Nu’aima, is a thorough going monist and a zealous advocate of "وحدة الوجود" (Unity of Being). According to him, Allah, Nature and Man are synonyms and mean one and the same thing – i.e. the Ultimate Reality. He thinks that the crux of Jesus Christ’s teaching is that Man and God are one and Man is as infinite as God.114 He tells that all men are in reality one eternal Man; that I, thou and he are merely illusions, that the man is not an entity distinct from other natural things and has no separate life other than the life Universal.115 Nature is one body animated by single soul. It does not say that this is mine and that is his. It is for everything that it contains and whatever it contains belongs to her and the notion of private possession is quite unknown to it.116 It is beyond loss and gain and all change is only an illusion. “Imaginative thought خيال (Khayal) tells us that the dead do not die and that the unborn ones are already with us moving among those who are born and bred.117 One who laments the dead laments Allah”.118
"I used to blow," writes Nu’aima, "in the company of men the trumpet of a God who caused his creatures to die and raised the dead to life, a God who punished and rewarded. Today I blow the trumpet of a God who is above life and death and punishment and reward. Everything exists in Him. He causes anything to die it means that the causes Himself to die. How can God efface Himself? If He punishes anybody, He punishes Himself."119

Everything proceeds from the All including Self in which the Smiter and the smitten are but one. ....., Inspiration is the inflow of the All- Self into the individual self, the wider, the inlet, the greater the flow, the broader the shores of the individual self and the keener its sense of unity with all things. ........The few who have come to see themselves in every self, and whose lives were in keeping with their vision, were rightfully called the teachers of mankind and its guides to truth. Little wonder they are worshipped by man; for they have uncovered God in Man.120

The most representative book of Nu’aima’s philosophy is the "The book of Mirdad," where he speaks about Mirdad’s own Ark – i.e. The Ark of Holy Understanding. Actually, Nu’aima claimed himself as Mirdad – a prophet after Jesus Christ. In this book he expounds human minds and souls concentrating into the reality of life, death, good, evil, love and hatred and thereby he could able to establish a relationship between humans and the omnipotence (God).
He also speaks about "The Holy Omniwill", ovum, ova, Macro- God and Micro- God – these mysterious words are not but a great question mark to the readers.

The thinking of Nu’aima were Universal and Natural. He was firmed and stable in his faith and reality. He was peaceful and content with his lots and accepts happily whatever comes from the end of it, because these are the phenomena of life decreed by the omnipotent.

Being influenced by the western and Russian literatures Nu’aima could able to launch a new chapter in the history of modern Arabic literary criticism and poetry. He has propounded his own theories and ideas in criticism and poetry discussed above, and that is why, he will be remembered forever as a critic and poet in modern Arabic literature.
4.4. Impact of Mikhail Nu‘aim’s works on Modern Arabic Poetry – A Critical Study:

Mikhail Nu‘aima is the third literary figure to leave an impact on Mahjar poetry in North America and a dominating personality in the Arab world. As a critic, his greatest service to modern Arabic poetry has been mostly through his essays on criticism, most of which are collected in Al- Ghrbal published in 1923. Other essays on criticism are scattered in his many books of collected essays which he published in the course of his forty and more years of literary activity.

It was in 1913 Nu‘aima discovered his critical abilities. He emerged as a critic being influenced by Jibran’s "(Ayyuha’i La’i) and al- Rihani’s "الله يلبي الموت والحياة" (Bulbul al- Maut wa’l- Hayat) published in the famous Mahjar literary magazine "(al- Funun). In his first critical article he attacked the literature of imitation and decoration as "الاب المومياء " (mummified literature). In this article he expressed the firm and clear ideas on the necessity for a drastic change, even a revolution in literature, must have come from comparisons with European literature, and Russian literature in particular.

Nu‘aima’s writings in "(al- Funun) were all on criticism being appreciated by his readers in the Arab world and other literary figures in North as well as South America. Arida, in 1914, only two years after the publication of his first article, went so far as to write to him and say that his article had made "(al- Funun) popular in Syria, Egypt and the Southern Mahjar. After the suspension of "(al- Funun) permanently in 1916, Nu‘aima continued to
publish his critical articles in other North-Mahjar papers. In this respect the newspaper \textit{(al-Sa'i'h)}, edited by Abd al-Masih Haddad, became the platform for North Mahjar literature and for Nu`aima’s critical writings.

These writings, which were mostly bent on establishing a real change in the form, language, attitudes and methods of approach of Arabic poetry, greatly helped to sow the seeds of change which a critic can detect in the poetry of some of the poets of \textit{(al-Rabita)}. In this respect, Nu`aima’s influence was great, but it could not match Jibran’s direct example of original literature of a high calibre.\footnote{122}

It is interesting that Nu`aima’s critical articles published in \textit{(al-Funun)} and \textit{(Al-Sa'i'h)} were collected and published in a book form entitled \textit{(al-Ghirbal)} by \textit{Muhyi al-Din Rida} in 1923 in Egypt and not in America. Though al-Aqqad wrote the introduction of \textit{(al-Ghirbal)}, but it was not influenced by \textit{(al-Diwan fi'l-Naqd wa'l-Adab)}, the book of criticism written in 1921 by al-Aqqad and al-Mazini, for most of its articles had appeared in the second decade in Mahjar periodicals.\footnote{123}

It was only in 1922, apparently, that the two avant-garde movements in Egypt and America came into contact with each other.\footnote{124} Before that they had been advancing along parallel lines, both answering the desperate need of Arabic literature to forge new links and to free itself from crystallized traditional attitudes. Both groups, moreover, had been exposed to western cultural values.
In 1922, Nu’aima received a copy of *al- Diwan* and managed to include in his collected essays an article on the two volumes of *al- Diwan* in which he hailed the appearance of this works of criticism in the following curious words:

"God bless Egypt, for not all that she

Writes is empty chatter, and not all the

Verse she produces is mere affectation.

I used to think that she...... ..... adored

the decorative word and sanctified the

mere stringing together of rhymes, for

how often she has glorified a clown and

cheered a fake ............. ..... .... .. .. "125

It is his sincere joy in discovering an avant-garde team of critics in Egypt and expressed clearly his former lack of admiration for the literature produced in that country. Such an attitude of Nu’aima was completely overlooked by some Egyptian writers who criticized the two movements and carelessly made Mahjar authors dependent on the Egyptians for their ideas on innovation 126 Nu’aima’s attitude, it seems, was shared by other members of ‘al- Rabita’.127
Unfortunately, neither Nu‘aima in (Sabu‘n), nor Mandur in "المعاصرون" (al- Naqd wa‘l- Nuqqad al- Mu‘asirun), speak in any detail about the reception of الأغبرال (al- Ghirbal) in Egypt and the Arab world on its publication in 1923, although Rida prophesied a storm of protest. But it is known to all that Nu‘aima sold only twenty copies of it in America, which is not a criterion but is a sign that these Mahjar poets wrote for a distant public at home. However, الأغبرال (al- Ghirbal) seems to have been a popular book in the Arab world, says S. K. Jayyusi in his book of criticism “Trends and movements in Modern Arabic Poetry”, for it has been republished at least six times since its first appearance. In it the critic can find the roots of many trends in the contemporary approach to poetry, language, metre and classical heritage.

Nu‘aima himself, although more cultured than the other members of الرابطة (al- Rabita), he was not interested in classical Arabic literature. He studied, besides Arabic, the foreign literatures like- English, French and Russian and his comparatively insufficient knowledge of the Arabic classical heritage led him to believe in its worthlessness, comparing it with ‘modern’ European literature. That is why; he criticized none of the poets of the classical period. The influence of European and Russian literatures on him was somewhat great and it impressed on his whole philosophy of life especially on his writings, but totally free from the impact of American materialism and their so- called modernity. Such attitudes in the writings of Nu‘aima that could able to launch a new trend into Arabic literature and consequently, his writings got widespread support and...
welcome in the Arab world and perhaps most of his books were published either in Egypt or Beirut.

To Nu‘aima, the main purpose of الربطة (al-Rabita) was “to lift Arabic literature from the quagmire of stagnation and imitation, and to infuse a new life into its veins so as to make of it an active force in the building up of the Arabic nations”. With these clearly nationalistic goals in mind, the association encouraged the translation of European masterpieces and sought the publication of its own works as well as the works of other worthy Arab writers.

ثريا ملحس (Thuriyyah Malhas) is probably right in saying that Nu‘aima was the first critic in Arabic who preferred content to form in literature. i.e. literature must be focused on content, not form, for the proper province of literature is life itself. But the history of criticism in Arabic shows the equal value which most classical critics gave to the two.

Again, despite Nu‘aima’s wavering ideas with regard to “committed literature” (a term as yet unknown in Arabic), his basic ‘literary criteria’ are not really obsolete, although to talk about some of them today may seem rather old-fashioned. The need to express oneself, the need for beauty, truth and music are still basic requirements in literature and art (if we exchanged the word “music” for the word “harmony”), whether this art is socially minded or not. The most that contemporary critics can say about Nu‘aima’s early ideas is that they are deficient.
Anyway, Nu’aima had rejected his former ideas in mystical fashion some years before at an Arab literary conference in Damascus in 1956. In this conference, he declared that no critic was capable of distinguishing absolute beauty, truth and goodness in a work of literature, for "each critic has his own personal criteria," and he advised critics to try to write their own works instead of writing about other people’s works. In this regard, he gave the example of Nature which embraced all creatures and rejected none. It is a fact that the terms like "personal criteria", "literary criteria" and "committed literature", launched into Arabic literature are a significant innovation in modern Arabic literature by M. Nu’aima.

Nu’aima, as a Romantic poet, could able to open a new chapter in modern Arabic poetry. The dominant impression left by his small corpus of verse contained only 44 (forty-four) poems entitled "Eyelids Whispering" (Eyelids Whispering), is of a quiet, introspective personality preoccupied with inner problems of the spirit and the emotions. These are expressed in a language which is deceptively simple and without linguistic pretension. True to his own theories, he makes the conflicts within his troubled self the basic theme and justification for his poetry. His work is by no means of even and sustained quality, but some of the examples referred to above rank with the best efforts of Romantic lyrical poetry in Arabic. The fact that he was able to express precise ideas on how such poetry should be written and was also able to demonstrate some of these in some of his
own work, lent him great significance amongst his colleagues both in the Mahjar and inside the Arab world.\textsuperscript{134}

The language of "Eyelids Whispering" (Badawi states, is of artful simplicity and directness, and has a quiet contemplative tone which is able to achieve great intensity of feeling without loud rhetorical effects. Qualities such as these were greatly admired by the Egyptian critic Muhammad Mandur, and this new, restrained, intimate language of poetry led him to coin the term \textit{The quiet voice in literature}, recognizing that this Mahjar verse was a definite new departure in Arabic poetry generally and in Romantic poetry in particular.\textsuperscript{135}

One of Nu’aima’s poems which Mandur rightly singled out for particular attention is "Akhi" (My Friend), a rare example of an Arabic poem which is both a war poem and a patriotic piece, and which is quite devoid of any loud tone of declamation or strained rhetorical effect. Written in 1917, this fine poem was at least a generation ahead of its time, and eventually, the Arab world recognized its value with a great ardour.

Actually, Nu’aima could able to achieve a great change in the poetic tone through his poetry. The achievement of this new, subdued and muted tone was a real victory for poetry which flows like the ripples of a gentle stream and his spirit merged in it with awe and wonder, finding it evocative of emotions and spiritual yearnings.
The authenticity of Nu’aïma’s meditative basis is more significant when set alongside similar poetry of the North Mahjar. Nu’aïma’s influence on his fellow writers was considerable, although his own spiritual attitude was in turn enriched by Jibran’s pervasive influence. His spiritual themes, which steadily increased in their meditative attitude until they gave mystical expression to his beliefs, were accepted by the Arab world without much effort, despite their novelty.

Nu’aïma was writing his poetry during one of the most exciting period in modern Arab literary history, when it was possible to imposed on the reading public a great variety of themes, as long as they did not touch the basic dogma of religion, the sanctity of the heritage or the jealously guarded code of honour. The first four decades of the century are marked by what can be termed an “individual sensibility.”

Nu’aïma early enjoyed a great popularity as a poet and short-story writer in the Arab world when المجموعة الرابطة الفقامية (Majmuat al-Rabita al-Qalamiyyah) was published in 1921; it contained five of Nu’aïma’s poems. These and other poems in the collection were memorized by the growing generation in the Middle East and their influence was great on the following generation of Arab poets.

Abbas and Najm are probably right in their suggestion that Nu’aïma’s poetry may have been influenced by the Lebanese folk-song, and nearly all the mountain people in the Lebanon memorized these songs which covered many happy and sad aspects of life. The Lebanese folk-song is characterized
by the detail and repetitive phrases that give different aspects of the same theme.\textsuperscript{140}

Nu‘aima’s poetry, like his prose, shows an exhaustive insistence on detail, which is an anti-poetic characteristic.\textsuperscript{141} His desire to express everything in his mind, or at least to give many sides to the same object or idea treated in the poem may be the cause behind the simplicity of his language in verse, a simplicity more characteristic of prose than of poetry.

One cannot, however, fully agree with Abbas and Najm in their suggestion that the parallelisms of his style were caused by his prosaic tendency,\textsuperscript{142} for the short sentences or phrases he crowds into his poems are not always prosaic. Good classical poetry, moreover, abounds with parallelisms and anti-thesis. Nu‘aima, however, exceeds anything known before or after him in this, showing this tendency also in his prose, although there is a longer history of such a style in classical Arabic prose.\textsuperscript{143} We find, this trend is not but a persistent flow throughout his poetry.

In fine, it may be said from the above mentioned discussion that Nu‘aima’s writings, either in criticism or in poetry, played a crucial role in the development of modern Arabic poetry. The language of his poem lacks in complexity, free from obscure vocabularies which is easily comprehensible by the reader. He composed his poems in romantic veins, introducing a new, subdued and muted tone which was a real victory for poetry. His free-flowing
(prose-poem) style was highly appealing to the common people in the Arab world. Moreover, he successfully introduced the western cultural values into the Arabic literature. The style he introduced infused a new essence particularly in Arabic romantic poetry.
Reference

1 Variant spelling of his nick name is (Naimy), (Nuaymah) and (Na’ma); Mikhail Nu’aima, Sab’un, vol. I, Beirut, 1959, P 32. In the “Bachelor of Law and Arts” certificates his name is written as ‘Michael Joseph Naimy’. Ibid, vol. II, Beirut, 1960, PP. 64-5. Jibran Khalil Jibran friendly addressed him as ‘ميشا’ (Misha); Mikhail Nu’aima, Jibran Khalil Jibran, hayatuh, moutuh, adbu, fannahu, Beirut, 1964, PP. 283-304.

2 A variant spelling of his name in English is Jubran Khalil Jubran

3 بسكينتا (Biskinta) – means بيت الفضاء (The peaceful house) or, بيت السكن (The gratification house). It is 50 (fifty) Kilometres away from Beirut in the East and 2700 (Two thousand seven hundred) metres height on the rocky surface of Sanneen mountain; Mikhail Nu’aima, Sab’un, vol. I, Beirut, 1959, P. 42.

4 Thuriya Malhas, Mikhail Nu’aima: al- Adib al- Sufi, Beirut, 1964, P. 186

5 Ibid, P. 187.


7 Ibid.


10 During his earlier study years in Russia (1906-11), he first came to know women carnally also through a relationship with a married woman. For the

11 As quoted by Abinader Elmaz in his article, "Children of Al-Mahjar: Arab-American literature spans a century". P.2

12 al-shakhrub (الشخروب): It means ‘عظم الفقار’ (vertebra or backbone). It was a modest family farm of Nu’aima where he led his literary activities like a Hermit. Hence, he was known as "The Hermit of Shakhrub". It is 5 (five) kilometers away in the East and 300 (three hundred) metres height from Biskinta. Mikhail Nu’aima, Sab’un, vol I, Beirut, 1959, PP 44-5.


14 Such as his poem, "الشودة" ; "صدى الاجراس" ; "ابتلاع" ; "من انت يا نفسى". in his only Diwan, . Beirut, 1959, PP. 16, 35, 40, 65.

15 Such as his poems, "فتش لكليك" ; "يا رفيقي" ; "من سفر الزمان" ; "النهر المنجمد" . M.D.B. in Ibid, PP. 10, 26, 75, 94.

16 For an account of the conditions in which he wrote several of his poems, see Sab’un, vol II, Beirut, 1960. 70-1, 156-60 & 254-5. Had this book been out when ‘Abbas and Najm wrote their book on Mahjar poetry, they would have benefited greatly and found adequate answers to their spectulations as to the incentives behind Nu’aima’s poetry, Ibid, P. 191.


27 Ibid.

28 Ibid.


Ism’ail Ahmad Adham, Shu’arau mu’asirun, vol. II (cairo, 1984), P. 565.


Mikhail Nu’aima, Al- Ghirbal, Beirut, 1951, P. 104.

Muhammad Mandur, al- Naqd wa’l- Nuqqad al- Mu’asirun, Cairo, P. 48, where he discusses Nu’aima's harsh comment on Shauqi's poem "الدرة الشوقية."


Jurj Saidah, Adabuna Wa- Udabauna fil Mahjir al- Amrikiyya, Beirut, 1964, P. 268


Ark: It means Mirdad’s own Ark – i.e. the Ark of Holy Understanding.


49 Ibid, P 59

50 Mikhail Nu`aima, Jibran Khalil Jibran, hayatuh, moutuh, adbu, fannahu, Beirut, 1964, P. 100

51 Astarte (عشتروت): The Phoenicians' goddess of love.

52 Minerva (میئرفأ): The Romans' goddess of knowledge.


54 Mikhail Naimy, Khalil Jibran: A Biography, New York, 1950, P. 154


58 Mikhail Naimy, Khalil Jibran: A Biography, New York, 1950, P. 89

59 Mikhail Nu`aima, Jibran Khalil Jibran, hayatuh, moutuh, adbu, fannahu, Beirut, 1964, PP. 278-304.

60 Ibid, PP. 292-93

58 Suryya Malhas, Mikhail Nu`aima Al- Adib al-Sufi, Beirut, 1964, P. 187.


65 Ibid, P. 284.


68 Mikhail Nu’aima, Kan Ma Kan, Beirut, 1956, P. 14

69 Ibid, P. 27.

70 Mikhail Nu’aima, al- Majmua al- Kamila, vol v, Beirut, 1971, P. 47

71 Ibid, P. 50.

72 Mikhail Nu’aima, al- Majmua al- Kamila, vol. v, Beirut, 1971, PP. 7- 44

73 Mikhail Nu’aima, Al- Ghirbal, Beirut, 1969, P. 77.

74 Ibid, P. 80

75 Ibid, P. 102

76 Ibid, P. 84.

77 Ibid, P. 86

78 Ibid, P. 83

79 Mikhail Nu’aima, Al- Ghirbal, Beirut, 1969, P. 64.
Mikhail Nuʿaima, Dumb, Beirut, 1960, PP. 36-59.


Mikhail Nuʿaima, Dumb, Beirut, 1960, PP. 170-89.


Ibid, P. 118.


Ibid, P. 104.


See "الزحافات والعل" in al- Ghirbal, PP 88-103.


Ibid, P. 116

Ibid, P 85; he (Nuʿaima) calls rhyme "an iron chain".

Ibid, P. 117.


Ibid, PP. 72-4
See Muhadarat al-Nudwa, vol. xi, May, 1957, for a lecture by Yusuf al-Khal, “Mustaqbal al-Shi’r al-Arabi fi Lubnan”; and see a resume of this lecture in Shi’r, Beirut, No. 2, Spring, 1957


Namely “al-Maqayis al-Adabiyya”, in Al-Ghirbal


Mikhail Nu’aima, al-Ghirbal, Beirut, 1969, P. 84.

Mikhail Nu’aima, Al-Authan, 2nd ed. Beirut, 1958, PP. 46 & 47


Mikhail Nu’aima, Hams al-Jufun, Beirut, 1959, PP. 55-63.

Ibid, P. 64.


Mikhail Nu’aima, Hams al-Jufun, Beirut, 1959, PP. 102-07

Ibid, PP. 83-86.

S M Nadeem, A Critical Appreciation of Arabic Mystical Poetry, Delhi, 1993, PP. 240-41

Mikhail Nu'aima, "زائد المعاد", PP. 8, 53 and 112.

Ibid, P. 92.

Ibid, P. 7.

Ibid, P. 70.

Mikhail Nu'aima, "زائد المعاد", PP. 18-19.


Ibid.

Ibid.

Mikhail Nu'aima, al-Ghirbal, Beirut, 1951, P. 175.


Mikhail Nu'aima, Sab'un, vol.II, Beirut, 1960, P. 33, Where Nasib 'Arida tells Nu'aima in a letter that al-Manfaluti has written asking them to write a comment on his Al-Nazarat 'Arida adds, "Write and vindicate me from these writers".


Ibid.


133 See M. Z. Sallam, Tankh al- Naqd al- ‘Arabi ila ‘l- Qarn al- Rabi’ al- Hijri, Cairo, 1964, for a resumé of the ideas of classical critics


135 Ibid, P. 100.

136 See for example Nu’aima’s poem ‘al- An’ in Hams al- Jufun, 1959, PP. 108-112


139 Ibid.


141 Ibid.

142 Ibid.

143 Ibid.