CHAPTER- III

MAHJAR LITERATURE AND ITS CHARACTERISTICS:

A. Causes and Factors of the Migration of Arab Writers to America

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CHAPTER - III

MAHJAR LITERATURE AND ITS CHARACTERISTICS

During the late nineteenth century, a group of Arabs mainly from Syria and Lebanon emigrated to North or South America, or to Australia or West Africa, and most of them were Christians. They established progressive merchant colonies in major cities such as New York, Rio de Janeiro and Sao Paulo. There they prospered in commerce but did not forget their homeland and they maintained their own culture and language.

A group of these Lebanese and Syrians had an interest in literature in general and poetry in particular. "By co-operating and helping each other in their literary works and ideas, they were able to form a coherent group with common characteristics, and some of them had the talent to produce work of a quality and originality which played a vital role in the development of romantic poetry in Arabic".¹ The result was a new kind of Arabic literature, known by the Arabs as Adab al-Mahjar (ادب المهجر).

"By the Mahjar literature (ادب المهجر) is usually meant all writings in the Arabic produced by Arab emigrants in North and South America, regardless of whether it is published in America itself or in the Arab East".²

The most significant contribution of the Mahjar (المهجر) writers was in poetry, a few of these poets achieved real eminence. The part played by the Mahjar (المهجر) poets in spreading romantic attitudes was enormous. Both
historically and culturally these poets, who left for America in search of political freedom or livelihood, were an extension of Lebanese and Syrian poetry. In America they had more freedom for literary experimentation than those of their compatriots who chose to settle in Egypt. They seemed to have been influenced by Western literature and culture. They became closely acquainted with Western literature, especially with the works of Longfellow, Walt Whitman, Emerson, and Edgar Alan Poe. The Mahjar (المهجّر) poets, especially those of the United States, exercised a liberating influence upon modern Arabic poetry. They turned away from conventional style of Arabic prose and poetry.

The Mahjar (المهجّر) writers were initially brought together through the magazine of the Arabic speaking community in New York, and by one monthly periodical in particular, al-Funūn (الفنون), edited by Nasīb ‘Arīda. It did not last long due to financial difficulties and it was first suspended from publication in 1914. Though in 1916, al-Funūn (الفنون) came back to life, but it finally disappeared during the war. Another significant twice-weekly paper al-Sā‘īh, established in New York in 1912, by ‘Abd al-Masīh Haddād, was an important platform for the Mahjar (المهجّر) writers. After the disappearance of al-Funūn (الفنون), al-Sā‘īh (السائح) became the medium through which the Mahjar (المهجّر) writers published their literary works. After the collapse of al-Funūn (الفنون), the writers, in order to organize themselves into a literary circle, founded al-Rābiṭa al-Qalamīyya (الرابطة القلمية) "The Pen Association" in New York in 1920. Jibrān Khalil Jibrān was the first president of the association and Mīkhā’il Nu‘āma
became the secretary and other members were Ilyā Abū Mādī (إليا أبو ماضي) (1889-1957), ‘Abd al-Masīh Haddād (عبد المسيح حداد) (1890-1963), Nasīb ‘Arīḍa (تسيب عريضة) (1887-1964) and so on.

Though other Mahjar writers such as Amīn Rihānī (امين ريحاني) (1876-1940) preferred to stay away from the Pen Association, he nevertheless provided inspiration for the enlargement of its literary horizons.3

Al-Raḥīṭa al-Qalamiyya (الرابطة القلمية) was the first genuine literary school in modern Arabic which played an important role for Arabic literature and to promote this newly conceived idea among the Middle Eastern writers. A similar Association was formed in Latin America called al-‘Uṣba al-Andalusiyya (العصبة الأندلسية) “The Andalusian League”.4
A. Causes and Factors of the Migration of the Arab Writers and Poets to America:

Many of the Arab writers and poets especially from Lebanon and Syria immigrated to North America in the second half of the nineteenth century and left their mark on the development of Modern Arabic literature and journalism in that country rather than in the country of their origin. They left their homeland mainly for political, social and economic reasons. Most of the emigrants settled in New York, where they maintained their loyalty to Arabic language and literature for a long period.

Some of the emigrants might have migrated to America because of economic reasons while many of them felt the need to escape from political and religious persecution. In this context, it is significant that most of the emigrants were Christians.

Due to sociological, historical and political factors as well as some important waves Arab writers and Jewish migrated to America. It is a sociological truism that external hostility encourages in group solidarity. Host hostility strengthens ethnicity and even translates into ethnic solidarity. Since the Iranian Hostage Crisis in 1980 and perhaps even longer Iranian emigrants have been periodically subjected to discrimination and prejudice in the United States.

The first flow of emigrants was made up by Greek Orthodox, Maronite and Melchite Christians from Mount Lebanon and the surrounding Syrian and Palestinian provinces. For the first several years, emigration documents identified
these Christians as Turks because they were subjects of the Ottoman Empire but they preferred to identify themselves as Syrians. Most of these easily Christian Arabs were unskilled and often illiterate, many of them found work as traveling hawkers, fanning across the country, and often spending month on the road. It was a life style which assimilated them because it provided enough opportunities to learn English and mix with the local masses. Later, the Syrians settled in widely dispersed communities across the country. The hard working and law abiding emigrants enthusiastically embraced American values. The number of emigrants from Syria came to a half during World War I. Although emigration began again after the war, it came to a virtual standstill when harsh quotas were imposed on Syrians and other unwelcome ethnic groups in 1924.

In spite of the publication of numerous Arabic-language newspapers in the United States, the Syrians were increasingly cut off from events in their origin country. Many Syro-Americans were largely unconscious of the nationalist aspirations in their homeland.

The second flow of emigrations began in the decade following the Second World War. This flow contained a significant number of Muslims. They were educated, skilled professionals and were more likely to be familiar with the nationalist ideologies. Unlike the Syrian Christians, they firmly identified themselves as Arab. The third major flow of emigration began in 1967 and continues to this day.
According to Michael Suleiman, First World War was a turning point in the history of the Arab-American community. Before this day, most Arab-American emigrants considered themselves as temporary workers. They planned to accumulate capital and return to their homeland. So they saved their money, lived in filthy places, overcrowded hovels, and gathered in residential colonies, where they encouraged inter-marriage, associated with relatives and people from the same town and religious sect, and maintained distance from Americans. But all of these changed with the advent of the First World War. During the war, communication with their homeland was disrupted and the community had to fall back on its own resources. The introduction of strict emigration quotas increased their sense of isolation and developed a feeling of communal unity and solidarity. According to Suleiman, only after the World War I, the Arabs in the United States become truly an Arab-American community. The realization greatly speeded up the process of assimilation and led to decrease sectarian conflict, increase calls for unity and more participation in the American political process. During the war, many fought alongside American forces. The experience increased the community's sense of patriotism and made them feel that they were now part of the American community. One of the reasons which compelled the Lebanese and Syrian poets and intellectuals is that they felt insecure in their homeland, where personal freedom was not available, where political inertia, social injustice and outmoded traditions shackled the individual and suffocated his or her life. They did not have the freedom which European and American
enjoyed. The Arabs saw a more modern, more progressive and more potent life in Europe and North America. They sought freedom to allow them to write a literature that sought wider horizons for human thought and action that eagerly yearned to change the world for everyone, in every sphere.

A Syrian Mahjar poet says, “We arrived here to find out our asylums and livelihood”.  

There were some emigrants who came to America only to acquire adventure and an extra–ordinary impression to be had from it.

Hence it is clear that the Arabs immigrated to America due to the molest situation of their motherland, financial straits and political crisis. They immigrated to America in quest of justice, freedom and livelihood. The Ottoman rule was in many respects corrupted; the rich enjoyed privileges either from the clergy or the feudal government while the poor were exploited.

In short, it can be described that during the Turkish reign in Syria and Lebanon the financial, political and social, cultural and religious conditions were too worst which compelled its poets and writers to leave their homeland and migrate to the strange land of America. The above mentioned reasons of migration of the Lebanese and Syrian poets are found abundantly in their poetry.
B. Al-Rābiṭa al-Qalamīyya (الرابطة القلمية) “The Pen Association” and its Role in the Development of Modern Arabic Literature in the North-American Mahjār:

Al-Rābiṭa al-Qalamīyya (الرابطة القلمية) “The Pen Association” was a Mahjār (مهاجر) literary society founded in New York in 1920 by Arab emigrant writers in North America which played a major part in the literature of the North-American Mahjār. Jibrān Khalil Jibrān was the first president and Mikhā’il Nuʿaima became the secretary of the association. After the collapse of the literary magazine al-Funūn (الفنون), the twice-weekly paper al-Sāʾīh (المصباح) took its place as the medium through which the Mahjār (المهاجر) writers and poets published their works and ideas.

Al-Rābiṭa al-Qalamīyya (الرابطة القلمية), one of the most important literary societies established by the Arab emigrant writers, was composed of a small and rather select group of avant-garde men of letters who, although differing in artistic level and output, all believed in the necessity of change and the introduction of a new conception and attitudes. They were imbued with modernist and anti-traditional ideas, and in American they had more freedom for literary experimentation than those of their compatriots who chose to settle in Egypt. They seemed to have been influenced by the latter-day romanticism and transcendentalism of American literature (some by Russian romanticism), and
were on they whole much more anti-traditionalist than those who immigrated to South America.  

In the early twentieth century, some influential writers and critics, both in Egypt and in North America, began their direct attacks on neo-classicism. The emigrant writers such as the most influential Jibrān Khalil Jibrān, the famous critic Mīlkhāʾīl Nuʿāma and the eminent prose writers Amīn al-Rīḥānī brought about a revolution in the style and technique of poetry by their critical, progressive and inspiring writings. Jibrān and al-Rīḥānī, the two early exponents, had been experimenting poetry-in-prose since the turn of the century. Their experiments helped effect the gradual disintegration of traditional formal concepts in Arabic poetry. Jibrān Khalil Jibrān expressed his romantic rebellion against the social and religious practices of his time in a new diction and a captivating style.

The first major contribution of the emigrants in prose was in journalism. The first Mahjar newspaper Kawkab Amrīka (كوكب امريکة) was started in 1888 followed by Jarīdat al-ʿĀṣr (جريدة الأسر) 1894, Jarīdat al-Ayyām (جريدة الأيام) 1897, Jarīdat al-Huda (جريدة الهذى) 1898 and Mirʿat al-Gharb (مرزة الغرب) 1899. Between 1875 and 1900 five newspapers were founded in Brazil. The important literary journals in North America were: al-Funūn (الفنون) 1913, al-Sāʾih (السائح) 1912, al-Samīr (السمير) 1929, and in Latin America were: al-Andalus al-Jadīda (الأندلس الجديدة) (in Rio de Janeiro), al-Sharq (الشرق) (in Sao Paulo). The critical
articles and essays were early indications of their originality in approach to literature.\(^9\)

Prose writing in \textit{Mahjar} (مهاجر) literature includes novels, short stories, plays and literary criticism. The contribution of \textquoteleft The Pen Association\textquoteright in the field of prose is exhibited in the form of novels, short stories and plays. The works of Jibrān and Nu\'aima by their originality, excellent description of character and beautiful expression still seem fresh today.

Amin al-Rhāni, an eminent prose writer in \textit{Mahjar} (مهاجر), migrated to New York when he was only twelve. Though he preferred to stay away from \textquoteleft The pen Association\textquoteright, he contributed much in the field of prose to enlarge its literary circles. He roused consciousness among the emigrants to social problems through his essays and showed ways of reforming them. Some of his best books are: \textit{Mulūk al-‘Arab} (ملوك العرب) \textquoteleft Arab Kings in two volumes\textquoteright, \textit{Qalb al-Iraq} (قلب العراق) \textquoteleft The Heart of Iraq\textquoteright, \textit{al-Rīhāniyyāt} (الريحانيات), Collections of essays in four volumes), of which the most important are: \textquoteleft On the Brooklyn Bridge\textquoteright, \textquoteleft Freedom and Culture\textquoteright, \textquoteleft Literary Revolt\textquoteright, \textquoteleft The Sermon of Christ\textquoteright, \textquoteleft Right and Law\textquoteright, and \textquoteleft The great Civilization\textquoteright.

\textquoteleft The Pen Association\textquoteright played an important role in the development of modern Arabic literature in the North American \textit{Mahjar} (مهاجر). Here discussion will be taken about the roles played by its distinguished members in the field of both prose and poetry, without whose ideas and works the development of
modern Arabic literature inside the Arab world would certainly have been the poorer.

Jibrān Khalil Jibrān, an international figure, played crucial role in the lives of the “Pen Association” poets in North America because of his intellectual leadership and the strong impact of his rebellious romantic personality on other members of the group.

Jibrān Khalil Jibrān had shown a capacity and a taste for intellectual leadership. The Arab writers in America who met him must have seen in him the embodiment of what a man of letters should be; one after another was attracted by his reputation, and a clique grew around him. Some important writers who were drawn into his orbit were Mīkhā’īl Nu‘āma (ميخائيل نعيمة), ‘Abd al-Masīh Haddād (عبد المسيح حداد), Nasīb ‘Arīda (تسبيح عريضة) and Iliyā Abū Mādī (إليا أبو ماضي). In 1920 the group organized itself as a literary society, which they named al-Rābiṭa al-Qalamīyya (الرابطة القلمية) “The Pen Association”. This was the most productive period of his life.

Jibrān Khalīl Jibrān provided ideas, inspiration, encouragement and general education for those of his colleagues who did not possess his range of knowledge and experience. It is in his early prose works that one finds most of the themes and ideas that the “Pen Association” poets found so inspirational. His writings in English and Arabic made him world famous. In the next chapter an attempt will be made to give a detailed account of Jibrān.
Mīkhā'īl Nuʿāma (ميخائيل نعيمة) (1889-1988):

Mīkhā'īl Nuʿāma, the secretary of “The Pen Association” was an able critic and theoretician of literature, and was able to illustrate his ideas in his own poetry. He was born in Biskinta in Lebanon and started his early education in the Russian primary school at his birth place.

At the age of thirteen he joined the Russian Teachers’ Training College in Nazareth. Form there he was sent on scholarship to attend the Orthodox Seminary in Poltava in the Ukraine, in 1906. This was a vital stage in his formative years when he became acquainted with theatre, opera, ballet, and of course the masterpieces of Russian literature.\(^\text{12}\) In 1912 he joined his elder brother living in the United States, and enrolled at the University of Washington in Seattle, from where he took a law degree in 1916. While still a student, he wrote articles on criticism and short stories for the Mahjar journal \textit{al-Funūn} (الفنون). A stint with the army took him to the French front during the First World War, after which he studied French history at the University of Rennes.\(^\text{13}\) On his return to the United States he continued to pursue his literary interests and helped the group of writers to establish ‘The Pen Association’.

Mīkhā'īl Nuʿāma is the second literary figure to have an impact on \textit{Mahjar} poetry in North America. His greatest service to Arabic poetry has been mostly through a collection of twenty-two of his critical articles first appeared in book form in Egypt in 1923 under the title \textit{al-Ghirbāl} (الغراب) “The Sieve”, which is almost a manifesto of \textit{Mahjar} (مهاجر) literature. Moreover, Nuʿāma
became very much attached to Jibrān during the 12 years they lived together in New York all through Jibrān’s tragic illness till his death. Nuʿaima’s biography of Jibrān is one of the finest books in Arabic. Nuʿaima wrote this book out of love and friendship he had for Jibrān. It is a sensitive account of Jibrān’s philosophical and artistic values. This book glorifies Jibrān the man, whose greatness in the innocence of his spirit. Though it was written in 1934 it remains radiant and fresh.14

In 1931 Jibrān expired and “The Pen Association” ceased to play an effective role after Jibrān’s death. Then Nuʿaima preferred to retire from civilization and society. He returned to Lebanon and settled at his modest family farm to a life of literary activity.

Nuʿaima’s subsequent writings in al-Funūn (الفنون) were all on criticism, and seem to have been immediately appreciated by his readers and by other literary figures in North America. In 1914, only two years after the publication of his article, ‘Arida went so far as to write to him and say that his article had made al-Funūn popular in Syria, Egypt and the Southern Mahjar. When al-Funūn (الفنون) was suspended from publication in 1914 owing to financial reasons, Nuʿaima continued to publish his articles in other North Mahjar papers. In 1916, however, al-Funūn (الفنون) came back to life, only to be finally suspended again during the war, and al-Sā’īḥ (السائح), whose editor was ‘Abd al-Masīḥ Ḥaddād, another former schoolmate of Nuʿaima, became the platform for North Mahjar literature and for Nuʿaima’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 the seeds of change which a critic can detect in the poetry of some of the poets of "The Pen Association". But although Nu'aïma's influence was great in this respect, it could not match Jibrân's direct example of original literature of a high caliber.\textsuperscript{15}

Mîkhâ'îl Nu'aïma was one of the most distinguished critics in modern Arabic literature. He introduced so many role of criticism for the modern Arabic poetry as well as its literary principles. A mystical sense of vision or calling that was the hallmark of the author's notion of himself expressed, sometimes directly sometimes indirectly, in his autobiographical writing. The idea of the poet or artist as visionary or prophet is of course one that has been central to romanticism in general, and that has found expression elsewhere in Nu'aïma's critical writing, notably in his famous iconoclastic critical essay \textit{al-Ghirbâl} (الغربال 1923).\textsuperscript{16}

\textit{Al-Ghirbâl} (الغربال) may be considered Nu'aïma's first major work on literary criticism to understand the main principles of the \textit{Mahjar} movement. An open revolt against the \textit{qasida}, \textit{al-Ghirbâl} (الغربال) attacks the conventions of eloquence and purity of style, which the ancient poets as well as the first generation of \textit{al-Nahda} (النهضة) had considered prerequisites to any poetic composition. Nu'aïma insists that poetry should be meaningful and relate to the spiritual and emotional needs of man and satisfy his longing for beauty and music.\textsuperscript{17} Nu'aïma believes that by concentrating too much on the mechanics and
intricacies of prosody, the poet may be distracted from more important considerations. To him the soul which can produce only correct meters and resounding rhymes is barren, but sooner or later it must flourish and discover thoughts and emotions as well as rhyme and metre. At no point does Nu'aima actually advocate the incorrect use of grammar and syntax, but for him the primary 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. To him metre is necessary in poetry, rhyme is not, especially if it is, as is the case in Arab poetry, a single rhyme that has to be observed throughout the whole poem. Like Verlaine in his plea for musicality in poetry, for the sake of lyrical subjectivity Nu’aima is willing to countenance departures from the normal rules.

Nu’aima wrote few numbers of Arabic poems between 1917 and 1928. Only some thirty poems were original Arabic works, the remainder having been translated into Arabic after having been written in English. They were collected in only one small volume of verse entitled Hams al-Jufūn (همس الجفنون) "Whispering Eyelids". Though these poems were few in number, they are important both from the point of view of Nu’aima’s philosophy and the development of Mahjar poetry. One of his earliest poems al-Nahr al-Mutajammid (النهر المتجمد) "The Frozen River" written in 1917, is an Arabic version of a poem that Nu’aima wrote originally in Russian. Hams al-Jufūn (همس الجفنون) "Whispering Eyelids" is a poetic language 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 Muḥammad Mandūr and this new, restrained, intimate language of poetry led him to coin the term al-Adab al-Mahmus (الأدب المهموس), “The quiet voice of literature”, recognizing that this Mahjar verse was a definite new departure in Arabic poetry in general and in romantic poetry in particular.

Though he does write qaṣīda (قصيدة), he shows a preference for short metres; and he also writes free verse. His verse runs smoothly with rhythm untrammeled by too meticulous a care for long and short syllables as demanded by strict classical Arabic canons of prosody. His verse has been described as influenced by Lebanese folk poetry.18 His rhyme is light and he varies it in each stanza to give musical effects. There are several examples in his work where the rhythm and movement of the poem become integral parts of its overall unity, essential elements, which blend with the different moods and varying levels of intensity. Ṣadā’ l-Ajrās (صداع الأجراس) “Sound of Bells”, Awrāq al-Kharīf (أوراق الخريف) “Autumn Leaves, 1921” and Tarnīmat al-Riyāḥ (ترنيمة الرياح) “Song of the Winds, 1923”, all illustrate these particular skills at work.19 One of Nu‘aima’s poems which Mandūr rightly singled out for particular attention is Akhī (أخي) “My Friend, 1917”, 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. The 1914-18 war affected him deeply, and his period
of greatest poetical activity was immediately following that war. His most searing poetic statement reflects his experience as an American soldier of Arab descent who has fought in the First World War.\textsuperscript{20}

Nu‘āima has written with distinction in all branches of literature and he achieved fame in the Arab world. Besides literary criticism and poetry, he has written short story and drama. Nu‘āima was the first among those writers who published their short story in Mahjar journals such as \textit{al-Sā‘ih} (السائح), appeared in 1912 and \textit{al-Funūn} (الفنون) in 1913. Nu‘āima’s first short story \textit{Sanatuhal Jadīda} (ستنها الجديدة) “Her New Year” written in 1914 and appeared in his first collection \textit{Kāna mā Kāna} (كان ما كان) in 1937.

Unlike his compatriots in the Mahjar (الماهجر) Nu‘āima maintained strong ties with Lebanon and his solid knowledge of its reality is clearly reflected in the early short stories particularly in the literary journal \textit{al-Sā‘ih} (السائح). These stories compare favorably with the most mature works of the early pioneers of the genre and are marked by their understanding of the nature of artistic experience and the techniques of its presentation. Nu‘āima was fluent in Russian and his first-hand knowledge of Russian literature was acquired during his years of study at the Seminary of Poltava (1906-1911). The five years he spent there had a remarkable impact on him and introduced him to Russia’s intellectual life and literature. His contemporary, the eminent critic Ismā‘il Adham (1911-1940), elaborated the nature of the impact of Russian literature on Nu‘āima’s work, and
demonstrated the awareness of the cultural movement at the time of the importance of this influence.\textsuperscript{21}

Another effect of the Russian influence on Nu‘aima’s work was his interest in probing the inner psyche of characters and elaborating the personal and social implications of their actions. This is clear in his first short story \textit{Sanatuhal Jadida} (منتها الجديدة), in which the struggle of man against his unjust fate is interwoven with spiritual and psychological elements.

The second story, \textit{al-Aqir} (The Barren) is a mature and well structured work, but it suffers from the writer’s desire to explain the obvious in advocating social justice, a corollary of the lack of narrative conventions. The action and characterization deliver the story’s message in a more effective manner.

Nu‘aima wrote an autobiographical novel known as \textit{Sab ‘ūn} (سبعون). In the first part of this novel he describes his childhood in native land Lebanon, in the second part he portrays his American life in New York and the third contains his last part of his life in Lebanon.

The books he wrote on his return to Lebanon are the summit of his thoughts as well as his depth of philosophy and ideology, of these \textit{al-Mirdād} (المرداد) is significant.

“\textit{In his philosophy of life, Nu‘aima is sometimes assailed by fleeting doubts which nevertheless leave their impress on him. In Anshūda} (أشودة) Nu‘aima complains of the wounds which have been inflicted on him both by life
and man. At the end of the poem, he asks his spirit to rejoice, for both pain and sorrow are facets of life. Life is complete only when we taste both its sweet and bitter fruit".22

Nu'aima is an able critic and theoretician of literature, and at the same time he was able to illustrate his ideas in his own poetry. He showed the Arab writers how to break away from classical rhymed poetry and to feel free with the rhyme. He has elevated the dignity of the Mahjar literature as well as modern Arabic literature.

Iliyā Abū Māḏi (1889-1957):

Iliyā Abū Māḏi was the most prolific gifted poet of the Mahjar group. He was the purest of the Mahjar poets.23 He was born in a Lebanese village of al-Mahaidassa in 1889. He had little formal education and spent the years 1900-1911 in Alexandria in apparently humble circumstances, before he immigrated to the United States in 1911. In Alexandria he started business as a tobacconist. At his leisure he concentrated on Arabic and within a short period he started writing poetry. In 1911, shortly before he left for America, he published his first diwān entitled Tadhkār al-Māḏi (تذكار الماضي).

That same year he immigrated to the United States and settled in Cincinnati as a merchant. He moved to New York in 1916 and joined the group of writers around al-Funūn (الفنون), playing an active role as poet, general writer and journalist,24 and became the main pillar of Mahjar poetry.
He worked as a journalist during this period and edited several newspapers. He became the editor of *al-Masalla al-'Arabiyya*, the periodical of Palestinian youth, then editor of *al-Fatat* and he was editor of *Mir'at al-Gharb* from 1918 to 1925. In 1929 he founded his own periodical *al-Samir* which appeared as a fortnightly until 1939, then became a daily; it continued until 1957\(^{25}\) and became one of the leading *Mahjar* newspapers in North America.

"In 1949, Abū Mādī represented the journalists of *Mahjar* in the UNESCO conference in Beirut. By then he had became a celebrity not only in *Mahjar* but all over the Arab world".\(^{26}\)

The first section of his *dīwān*, entitled 'Remembrances of the past', contains nine poems which are rather heavy, moralistic compositions, all strongly didactic in tone. They show a deep concern for the moral fiber of society and man's shortcomings.\(^{27}\) The second section of this *dīwān* is also more interesting. It contains poetic narratives, a type of composition, which was still very much in its infancy in Arabic at this time and some of which remind one strongly of the work of Khalil Muṭrān. In this *dīwān*, there are sections of natural description in which the author has frequent recourse to pathetic fallacy, with close identifications between the mood and emotions of the poem and the atmosphere of the surrounding scenery. There is no doubt that even at this early stage, Abū Mādī exhibits a certain talent for this dramatic narrative poetry, which was an unusual style for a young poet to cultivate in Egypt at that time.
The second diwan of Abū Māḍī was published in New York in 1919 and the signs of his contacts with the other members of the Mahjar group are clearly visible in it. The preface to this diwan was written by Jibrān who considers primarily on the nature of the poet and poetry. The poet is seen as a strange, peculiar being who has special gifts and insight and who, by his unique powers of thought and vision, rises above the world of ordinary mortals.

In his poem al-Shā‘ir (الشاعر), Abū Māḍī prefers to deal with the problems and sufferings that surround him. This poem is in the form of a dialogue between the poet and a female companion. This piece also illustrates what became a frequent feature of his work, developed from his taste for the dramatic narrative. When Abū Māḍī uses traditional language and imagery of classical Arabic poetry, there is a refreshing simplicity and conversational tone which remove any barrier to the direct communication of his inner feelings. He encourages the people when they are in despair, sees more clearly than they do and point out the error of their ways.

Many of the love-poems in the second diwan can be described as traditional. In the poem Anā (أنا) the poet tried to express the nature and strength of his desires for his beloved. The descriptions and images are frankly sensual and explicit in the best and richest tradition of Arabic amatory poetry. Unlike Nu‘āima and Jibrān, Abū Māḍī did not have any extensive knowledge of literature in languages other than Arabic, and it was natural that he should use the language and imagery familiar to him from his own heritage as he began to
develop new styles and modes of expression. The poem like *Anā wa Ukht al-Mahā wa'l Qamar*, he writes easily and skillfully within his own tradition. He preferred short verse monorhyme and sometimes quatrains.

Besides amatory poetry, in his second *dīwān*, there are numerous poems about Syria and Lebanon; many of them are occasional poetry. They open display the usual nostalgia of the emigrant for his homeland, but they are all concerned with the political and military crises which broke out during the First World War. For example the following lines by Abū Māḍī on the same subject are taken from the poem *Ummatun Tafnā wa Antum Tal 'abūn* (امة تفنا و انتم تلعبون):

Many a tiny one like the chicks of the sand grouse, perish from severe famine.

Their Sinews are weak when it attacks; and hunger will destroy the strength of lions.

Have you seen a necklace when it comes apart? Thus are the tears on their cheeks.

Their spirits have run away like water.

Through grief; God, what a cruel fate!

The third *dīwān* of Abū Māḍī entitled *al-Jadāwil* (The Brooks) was published in 1925. It is regarded by many as the peak of Abū Māḍī’s achievement. The first poem in the collection, *al-'Angā’* (The phoenix) is all
mystery, constant searching, doubt, and urgent but undefined aspiration. The legendary bird is a symbol for something people constantly seek but which always eludes them. Throughout the poem, the mystery remains vague and unsolved. Such expressions of extreme individual malaise which flourished in pained atmospheres of vagueness and perplexity became one of the hallmarks of this *Mahjar* poetry in general. Abū Māḍī’s verses, dealing with his restless queries, are the most distinctive of his composition. The poem *al-Ṭalāsim* (The Talisman) has enjoyed a great reputation. Perhaps this is the most lengthy and detailed exposition of the painful mysteries which surround the isolated figure of the poet. It describes the depth of his perplexity before the mystery of the great universe. It is really a manifesto in verse of the various themes used by the *Mahjar* writers, and probably for this reason it became a significant poem for their whole generation.

Abū Māḍī, the great poet of ‘moods’, gave memorable expression to intense feelings of joy and sorrow. His changing mood from despair to hope can best be seen in a narrative or dramatic context in his excellent poem, *al-Masa’* (المساء). The sight of a girl resting her cheek on her hand in deep distress and looking sad at ‘the dying of the light’ and the approach of night inspires the poet to write a poem in a masterfully controlled stanzaic form about the human predicament. Abū Māḍī ends his poem with this exhortation:

“Dead is the light of day, the morning’s child; ask not how it has died.

Thinking about life only increases its sorrows.
So leave aside your dejection and grief,

Regain your girlish merriment.

In the morning your face was like the morning, radiant with joy:

“Cheerful and bright; Let it be also at night”.31

One of the great strengths of Abū Mādī is that, for all his flights of bewildered metaphysical fancy, he retains a sense of bitter realism and depth of perception that is rare, both amongst the Mahjar writers and in romantic poetry in the Arab world.32 The poem fi’l-Qafr (In the Desert) describes an attempt at a typical Jibrani flight into nature, to escape from people and their society, full of corruption and unhappiness.33 Abū Mādī concludes with rare honesty that it is futile to try to escape from people and all their shortcomings. Abū Mādī’s ‘The Streams’ shows the high point of his poetic development, beyond which he did not progress in his subsequent work,

His fourth diwān al-Khamā’il (The Thickets) was published in 1940, and there was one more diwān entitled Tibr wa Turāb (Gold and Dust) published posthumously in 1960. In ‘The Thickets’ occasional type of poems began to reappear and the posthumous diwān consists of poems for special occasions, people and places, and elegies for friends and colleagues.

Many factors helped to shape Abū Mādī’s poetic style. A good grounding in grammar and prosody that he acquired in his formative years in Alexandria gave him a solid base for his verse. He is indeed credited with a more thorough
grasp of the rules of poetry than any other Mahjar poet. His beautiful Arabic style is greatly admired by Arabs. His verse is smooth and his style is purer more Arabic in texture than the rest of the Syrian Americans. This is perhaps due to Abū Mādī’s prolonged stay in Egypt.

Abū Mādī’s career is a fascinating development from unremarkable neoclassical verse to some of the peaks of achievement in romantic poetry. His work also has that extra dimension of imaginative power which on occasion takes it beyond the limits of the romantic experience, and lends it a permanent value which transcends the style of his immediate generation.

Nasīb ‘Arīḍa (تسيب عريضة) (1887-1846):

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

Like other leading *Mahjar* poets ‘Ariḍa suffered in varying degrees from understandable malaise in the midst of his new environment. This malaise was both material and spiritual. Like Nu‘aima, there is a sort of Sufism beneath the surface in some of his poems. His poetry was collected in a single volume of verse, entitled *al-*Arwāḥ al-Ḥā’irah (Perplexed Spirits) which was published in New York in 1946. Apart from his two stories, his whole output is found in this *diwān*. His scorn for wealth is expressed in the following poem:

"Oh friend of my imagination,

And pardon of my deviation,

Wandering with me around the curtain

Of th’impossible and uncertain;

Come with me, searching for a thought

Which yet no other mind has caught?

Leave other men enamored by

Wealth, and loved-ones for whom they cry!

*Nasīb ‘Ariḍa* is full of sadness about himself, his life and his homeland. But his despair does not lead him to reject his faith. In his poems he seems to weep over the lot of humanity and its woes. But sometimes he is moved to
frustration and anger by the spectacle of weakness and degradation presented by the inhabitants of Syria and Lebanon in the First World War. For instance the following lines have been quoted from his poem *al-Nihāyah* (The End):

"Wrap them in a shroud!
Bury them!
Put them into the deep tomb’s abyss!
Pass on.
Do not mourn them.
They are a dead people who will not wake."

As one of the workers of *al-Rābiṭa al-Qalamiyya* (الرابطة القلامية), he is a pessimistic poet. His verse is characterized by pain, tears and separation, by nostalgia for his native country, and by bewilderment. He dwells at length over Homs which he almost worships. A general air of gloom and pessimism pervades the whole of his poetry.

'Arida’s verse illustrates the prosodic style of much *Mahjar* verse. He prefers shorter, simple meters and stanzaic forms. Along with Abū Mādi and Nu‘aima, ‘Arida makes his own contribution to the poetry of introspective malaise and perplexity with pieces such as *Limādhā* (لماذًا) and *'Awdat al-Fāris* (عودة الفارس), but in the end his poetic vision remains locked in gloom and pessimism.³⁹
Rashīd Ayyūb (رشيده أوب) (1881-1941):

Rashīd Ayyūb was one of the Mahjar poets. He was born in Nu‘aima’s native village, Biskinta in Lebanon. He immigrated to North America and lived three years in Paris, and another three years in Manchester, before traveling to New York where he died in 1941.

His three volumes of poetry were all published in New York. His first diwān, al-Ayyūbiyyāt was published in 1916, which represents a transitional stage between social and occasional poetry and the more subjective romantic themes which dominated his work at a later stage. For him, the wandering mystic becomes the symbol of the poet who is a person of mystery possessed of special secrets unknown to others. Although the poet insists that his sadness for the people who revile him is greater than the pleasure he takes in his superiority over them, he concentrates too much on this pleasure to make the claim convincing:

“I went on, with poetry as my custom and the house of inspiration my shelter.

If the night darkens, I whisper; or if the dawn breaks, I sing.

Nay, by the goddess of my verse, my abode is like the garden of Eden”.40

In his poem Dhikra Lubnān (Remembrances of Lebanon), he depicted the malaise of migration with the sorrows it brings. He was very much impressed by the ideas and personality of Jibrān, which is reflected in his final diwān Hiya ’l-Duniyā (هم الدنيا) published in 1942.
Rashīd Ayyūb was a poet of love, pain and wine. Many of his poems reflect his nostalgia for his homeland and his young years as a worker of ‘The Pen Association’.


Nadra Ḥaddād also wrote poetry in the similar pattern of his contemporaries. He reproduces the familiar Mahjar themes of belief in the primitive goodness of nature, the dual existence of the body and the soul. He has one collection of poems entitled Awrāq al-Kharīf (أوراق الخريف), which was published in New York in 1941. The first poem of his dīwān, Sir Ma‘ī (سیر معی), is an invitation to forget all about life in the real world with its unending burdens and materialistic values. In his verse his passionate love for his homeland is reflected. There are a number of subjects such as perplexed queries about the meaning of life, nostalgia for homeland, and a strong sense of alienation are found in his poem al- Başīr al-Aʿmā (البصر الأعما).

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

ʿAbd al-Masīḥ Ḥaddād (عبدوالمسیح حداد) (1890-1963):

ʿAbd al-Masīḥ Ḥaddād was also one of the Mahjar writers and journalists. He was born in Syria in 1890 and immigrated to New York in 1907 where he established the twice-weekly paper al-Sā’iḥ (السائح) in 1912, which was an
important outlet for the Mahjar writers. After the collapse of *al-Funūn*, *al-Sā’ih* took the place of it as medium through which their works and ideas would appear. He contributed at least one article to every issue of his own paper. *Al-Sā’ih* became the official paper of ‘The Pen Association’.

His main contribution was the collection of fiction entitled Ḥikāyāt *al-Mahjar* (حكايات المهجر), which was published in 1921. Some of these stories appeared in the *Mahjar* while others were published in Levantine periodicals. These stories mostly deal with the problems which the Arab emigrants face in their new life away from home. In these stories he portrays the disparity between expectations and reality, and the hardship of life away from home. He also describes how the emigrants nostalgically yearn for their homeland they left behind. The positive contribution of his work is that he treats nostalgia with humor.
C. Characteristics of *Mahjar* Arabic Literature:

In the second half of the nineteenth century, many of the Syro-Lebanese writers and poets immigrated to Egypt and left their mark on the development of modern Arabic literature in that country rather than in their origin country. Others emigrated to North and South America, where they maintained their loyalty to Arabic language and literature for a long period. Wherever they went, they contributed to the development of modern Arabic literature. It was amongst these emigrants that the first anti-classical revolution emanated in the early decades of the twentieth century under the leadership of Jibrān Khalil Jibrān. By the early 1930s, the Arab romantic school had established itself not only in *al-Mahjar* but also in the Egyptian centre. It was only with the rise of a new concept of poetry in the interwar period, embodied in the *Mahjar* group and, later, in the Egyptian romantic school that a new poetic language came to the fore.42

“Emigrant literature (إدب المهجر), as it is called, from modest yet impressive beginnings, flowered to eminence between the two World Wars and although it found expression in all the genres, its most significant contribution was in poetry”.43

The majority of the *Mahjar* writers came from the Lebanon and Syria and most of them were Christians brought up in missionary schools. They often felt less bound by Arabic literary tradition and they were more accessible to Western cultural and literary trends than those of their compatriots who chose to settle in Egypt.
Though Arabic literature was produced by the *Mahjar* communities in both North and South America, it is the North American contribution that is better known in English-speaking world and indeed, the West generally, largely through the works of Jibrān Khalil Jibrān, many of whose works were indeed originally written in English rather than in Arabic. Interesting poetry was, however, produced not only in North but also in South America, particularly in Argentina and Brazil and indeed although literary activities in the *Mahjar* communities of North and South America initially developed at much the same time, the South American tradition in some respects seems to have been longer lasting.\textsuperscript{44}

There is a basic difference in the poetry of the emigrant Arabs in the United States of America and that of their compatriots in South America. Despite the abundance of poetry in the South it was the North which provided the rebellion in form, content, diction and tone, and introduced abstract themes and philosophical attitudes with whom modern romanticism successfully entered poetry. The South remained more in the main stream of Arabic poetry and culture. There are also differences in outlook, attitude and interests between the two groups, the most obvious of which is perhaps their different attitudes towards nationalism. The Northern poets tended to be universal in their outlook on the world and believed mostly in the brotherhood of man, on the other hand the Southern poets openly supported Arab nationalism. Moreover, artistic as well as environmental causes seem to be there behind this difference.
"As early as the second decade, avant-garde poets and critics, both in Egypt and in North America, began their direct attacks on neo-classicism. The emigrant poets in America were led by Jibān Khalil Jibrān, the poet who was the most influential of the generation in bringing about a revolution in both the outlook and the technique of poetry, reinforced by the critical writings (and to a lesser extent the verse) of Mikhā'īl Nu'āma and by the highly progressive and inspiring writings of Amīn al-Riḥānī. (1876-1940).45

These three were the most influential personalities of Arab-American literature in the North. Their courage, originality and mixed cultural background enabled them to impose new ideas and concepts on their contemporaries. They did a great deal to bring about a thoroughly liberal attitude towards the Mahjar literature as well as modern Arabic literature.

In South America, the Mahjar poet and critic Jūrj Șaidah himself gives the key to environmental differences when, as an eye-witness, he describes the early experience of life and orientation which emigrants to Latin America underwent. In most of the Latin countries there was no political or social freedom. The emigrants in the South found themselves among people who did not surpass them in progress and energy. The pace of life around them was slower. The whole equipment of a traditional, self assertive poetry was immediately reinstated with its stock phrases and exaggerated boasts. Direct emotional links with the home countries were maintained, as well as a deep loyalty to traditions in language and style. In fact, this attachment to the
traditional form, style, diction and attitude was also due to another reason. Most of these poets had little access to forms of literature other than Arabic and many of them had no formal education. These reasons decided their ultimate poetic methods. Forced to remain out of touch with other literatures, they had no alternative but to stick to the only methods of poetry they knew.46

If we look at the poetic output in both the North and South America, it is found to be rich and marked by a great vitality. It is suggested that Arabic poetry flourished in the Americas because the poets came from a people noted for their adventurous spirit and their knowledge of Western literature spurred them on. It has also been put forward that the fact that they were aliens in a strange land stimulated their imagination and stirred in them emotions of homesickness conducive to fruitful creative work and they had a philosophical view of the world.47

In this regard, Nu‘aima and Saidah opine that it was rather natural talent that was responsible for this flourishing poetic activity in the Americas. But a natural talent alone is not enough to explain the great vitality which characterized that poetry. If the poetry in North America was consciously bent on innovation, the poetry in South America was characterized by a vitality and strength of approach, considering of course, the best examples in both places. On the other hand, a number of gifted emigrants got in America the freedom to express them unhampered either by political and social fears or by the jealous opposition of a conventional hierarchy of literary arbiters.
The poetic achievements of the southern *Mahjar* were neither as dramatic nor as radical as those of the northern group. The South American poets did not form a genuine literary movement or school in the same way as did the members of “The Pen Association”. But in 1933, they formed their own literary association in Brazil called “The Andalusian League” (العصرية الأندلسية), devoted to the promotion of Arabic literature in Latin America. This group constituted some of the best poets in Latin America and it helped to publish a few volumes of poetry.

The most significant *diwāns* are: *diwān* of ‘The country poet’ (*al-Shā‘ir al-Qarawi*) Rashid Salim al-Khūrī, entitled *al-‘aṣīr* (الأعاصير), published in Sao Paulo in 1933, *diwān* of Ilyās Ḥabīb Farḥāt, entitled *Aḥlām al-Rā‘ī* (إحلام الراعي), written in Brazil during 1933-34; and the *diwān* of Fawzī al-Ma‘lūf. Among these poets, the work of Ilyās Ḥabīb Farḥāt shows a more marked resemblance to the work of the Arab poets of New York.

The most significant merit of the *Mahjar* poets was that they were able to adapt form and language to their themes and ideas, which they expressed in admirable harmony. They used numerous forms and rhyme schemes ranging from fixed rhyme and meter to couplets and stanzas of various forms with changed rhyme schemes and meters; they also employed various levels of style and vocabulary, which range from those of colloquial songs and the Bible to classical Arabic poetry. It seems that they all adopted the idea, which was behind the tradition of the Protestant hymns that in poetry form is not sacrosanct. Moreover, they were encouraged by the daring principle of the *muwashshah*
(stanzaic verse) which gave freedom in form and rhyme scheme to the poet to develop them according to his talents and abilities. By their genius they were able to carry the development of the muwashshah to a stage which is regarded as the prototype of more liberal forms in modern Arabic poetry.  

There are two sides to the lasting significance of the poetry of the Mahjar especially that produced by the poets of ‘The Pen Association’ (الرابطة التلمي). First, it represents some of the finest romantic poetry written in Arabic. The fact that these poets were removed from immediate contact with their own societies meant that they were less inhabited by the dominant canons of literary taste that prevailed in Damascus, Beirut or Cairo. Hence they were freer to be more adventurous and innovative and this was the secret of much of their success. The themes on which they wrote changed the face of Arabic poetry during the period between the two World Wars. With their preference for short simple meters and stanzaic forms, they paved the way for the formal revolutions that were to occur after Second World War. Second, and even more crucial than the intrinsic value of their work, was the fact that their achievements did not pass unnoticed inside the Arab world. As it happened, much of their poetry and many of their theories did not remain cut off from the Arab world, where they had a catalytic effect of great importance for the subsequent development of romantic verse.  

Besides this, in Mahjar literature journalism played an important role for the development of modern Arabic literature. Prose writing in Mahjar literature includes novels, short stories, plays and literary criticism. ‘The Pen Association’
was noted for its psychological studies, spiritual teachings and moving short stories and novels. The emigrants of South America did not reach the high level of their northern counterparts in prose. They concentrated on the poetic genres and distinguished themselves in epics and mythological poems.50

Another major experiment that had been going on since the turn of the century was that prose poetry and prose poem, whose early exponents were Jibrān and al-Rihāni. Their experiments helped effect the gradual disintegration of traditional formal concepts in Arabic poetry. Jibrān had proven the forms viability in his many highly appreciated prose poems and poetic prose pieces.51 Jibrān was a literary genius, and was able, even through his poem-in-prose, to revolutionize Arabic poetry. However, prose was never taken seriously as a medium of poetry before the fifties.

Most of the Mahjar writers came from the Lebanon and Syria were Christians and educated by the missionaries. They were more open to literary innovation, and were more inclined towards literary experiment than their compatriots in the Arab world including Egypt. The Christian emigrants were soon influenced by the Western cultural and literary trends. They had to moderate their Christian influence upon diction, symbols and ideas. In the Arab society which venerated its literary tradition and poetic heritage, the Christian poets were obliged to serve prevailing literary taste in order to survive and to be accepted. The Mahjar writers got freedom in an American society and felt
uninfluenced by the conventional society as well as felt themselves free from the Arabic literary tradition.

In *Mahjar* poetry, the Christian tradition in literature, which had flowed from the influence of the Western missionaries, was not fractured, as happened with the Christian emigrants to Egypt. The features of Christian Arabic style with its emphasis on clarity rather than eloquence, its grammatical correctness, simple diction influenced by Biblical style, a tendency to use new words appearing in colloquial expressions to replace the hackneyed and obsolete pseudo-classical expressions, its sincerity in expressing deep religious emotions, were also the main characteristics of *Mahjar* literature.

The development made by the Mahjar poets in America was enormous and swift. The most important characteristic features of *Mahjar* literature may be summed up as follows:

1. **Free from Classical Rigidity:**

   One of the most significant characteristics of *Mahjar* literature is that *Mahjar* writers were free from classical rigidity. *Mahjar* writers denied the classical forms of Arabic literature. They had an open revolt against conventional style of Arabic prose and poetry. In view of liberating the Arabic literature from the classical rigidity there had been continued attacks against the conservative trend of the Arabs.
The urge for change took hold of the younger generation of poets and critics that rose to fame in the first two decades of this century. The first real impetus for a genuine break with neo-classicism came from the Arab poets who had migrated to North America. The critical writings of Jibrān, Nu‘aima and Abū Mādi, with their iconoclastic intentions and their invigorating insights into new poetic methods, helped greatly to shake the blind attachment of a select Arab audience to neoclassical rigidity and traditionalism. As a result of persistent criticism by the Mahjar group, a Romantic current was released that was backed by a deep need for new freedom in both art and life.\textsuperscript{53}

Mahjar writers of the North America brought the treasure house of vast thoughts, the liberal human compassion and the substantial energy to the souls of which echoes are not but the means of joy to the souls of the minds of a musician fastening him with vigorous innovations and colors appearing to the human mind to a great extent that had not been ever produced in the Arab world.\textsuperscript{54}

They took the liberties not only with literary forms but even with the observance of the grammatical rules of classical Arabic. They advocated the liberty in the process of construction in all literary genres. In prose, the restrictions of saj\textsuperscript{1} and the ornate figures of speech were dismissed; and poetry was no longer adhered to rhyme and meter. The prosodic style of much Mahjar verse demonstrated a preference for the shorter, simple meters and stanzaic forms. The Mahjar poets used regular rhyme and meter but took ever greater liberties with the classical qasidah form, using lines of irregular length and occasionally varying
meters within individual poems. Some Mahjar writers such as Mīkhā’īl Nu‘āma wrote free verses with a light rhythm. In 1905, Amin al-Riḥānī tried his hand at what he called Shi‘r Manṯūr (الشعر منتثر) “prosified poetry” in imitation of Walt Whitman.

The revolutionary and successful experiments in the form of Arabic poetry and prose attempted by the Mahjar writers, gradually loosened the rigidity of classical form and style, preparing it the most radical and successful formal revolution in the history of Arabic literature.

2. Gravity of Individual Personalities:

The literary characteristics of each Mahjar writer differ from one another. Each of them expresses his thoughts and ideologies independently. The positions of the Mahjar writers are determined on the basis of their individual contributions and affords in the development of the Mahjar literature. Their languages always remained a source of consolation with the acute interpretations, pictorials and thoughts. Its prose style turned into a beautiful poem having musical appeal in them. They tried their level best in molding exact words and let them sweet echoes to calm the reader’s mind.

It was Jibrān Khalil Jibrān who used the words with a spirit of rebellious and agitated way against all the conventional rules and regulations of Arabic literature. His own personality is the first hero of his stories and dominates all the characters and dialogues. He was fiercely anti-clerical, and championed the cause
of simple virtuous people who in his eyes were victimized by the hierarchies and institutions of the Maronite church.

Fawzi al-Ma'lūf ascribed with clear explanation, beauty of comparisons, metaphors, and acuteness of thoughts and fine choice of the words which indicate on its meaning keeping in view with the conservative measures in respect of clear poetic interpretations.\textsuperscript{56} On the other hand, Mikhā'il Nuʿaima attributed with a beautiful soft language and his emotional meditations, while Rashid Salim al-Khūrī ascribed with the melting feelings in his longings and his ever outburst for Arab nationalism.

3. Yearning for the Homeland:

One of the strongest characteristics of Mahjar literature is nostalgia. The memories of their fatherland, of the loved ones they had left behind and of the frustrated dreams and hopes haunted them in their alien surroundings and isolation. Love and yearning for the homeland where simplicity and spiritualism were a way of life, and hopes for its political emancipation frequently found expression in Mahjar works.\textsuperscript{57}

A feature that all the Arab Americans had in common was that they suffered from a sense of exile, a lack of belonging. In a country where the language of their literature and traditions was not spoken they felt their cultural existence to be threatened, and this led them to the formation of associations and societies and set up their own Arabic literary reviews. Their work is permeated by a feeling of homesickness. Most of the emigrants described in their works the
malaise of migration with the sorrows it brings. This feeling often underlies their longings to return to nature and to simple rural life. It compelled them to compose poetry being burnt in melancholy and suffered from pang of mind. The sense of isolation and the heightened feeling of individualism are found in their works.

4. The Spiritual Meditation:

The North American Mahjar writers such as Jibrān Khalil Jibrān, Mīkhā’il Nu‘aima, Nasib ‘Ariḍa and Iliyā Abū Māḏī, had a lot of contributions in this field. The theory of spiritual meditation established ‘The Pen Association’ in a particular rank. It has an outstanding dignity which differentiates the Mahjar literature as well as the whole Arabic literature of past and present.

Many of Jibrān’s works deal with spiritual contemplation. His collection of verses al-Mawākib (المواكب) deals with the philosophy of human life. It communicates a dialogue between a youth full of vigor, an optimist, a believer in the native goodness of man, and worshipper of nature where he dwells and an aged sage embittered by the inhabitants of the metropolis, where the rhythm of life is so mechanized and standardized that beauty, love, religion, justice, knowledge, happiness, gentleness, are veiled by false pretences. In his prose poem ‘Maniyatān’, he describes how death is sent down by God to take away the soul of two men, one rich and the other poor.

Most of Nu‘aima’s poem and prose works are of spiritual meditative. In al-‘Arāk (العراك), Nu‘aima describes that good and evil do not exist in the external
world only; they also dwell within the soul of the poet. In al-Khair wa'l Sharr (الخير و الشر), he says if the world were purely good, we would not know the value of its goodness nor its advantages. Nu'aima’s quiet and serene meditations on death and deliverance show a sufic stance in the poem Alān (الآن).

Fawzī Ma‘lūf’s poem, ‘Alā Bisāṭ al-Rīḥ (On the Carpet of the Wind) and Abū Mādī’s ‘I do not know’, are beautiful example of soul searching. Baina al-Tufulat wal Shabāb (Between the Childhood and the Youthful) is also a beautiful ode composed by Iliyās Farḥāt.

5. Inclination towards Humanity:

All the members of the “The Pen Association” were basically humane in their attitudes. They advocated universal love, compassion, equality and justice through their writings. To them value of humanity can not be enhanced without a free and blissful motherland, because the human feelings of the dominant and degraded people changed towards the vicious adversity. So, the weak and oppressed people should be brought under the shadow of justice and humanity. The concept of human feelings and the effective deeds in collaborations are very essential to make the lofty edifice of humanity. The sympathized and affectionate call such as Yā Akhī (يا اخي), Yā Rafīq (يا رفيق) published in Mahjar literature, touched the core of the heart and thereby took the birth of affection and love therein.59

On humanity Jibrān Khalil Jibrān expresses:
“Humanity is the spirit of the Supreme Being on earth, and humanity is standing amidst unseen ruins, hiding its nakedness behind tattered rags, shedding tears upon hollow cheeks, calling for its children in pitiful voice. But the children are busy singing the anthem; they are busy sharpening the swords and cannot hear the cries of their mothers”.60

Jibrân beautifully portrays a pitiful picture of the fate of the fate of his people in his poems Māta Ahlī (مات اهلی) and Fi Zalām al-Layl (فی ظلام الليل). He devotes these two poems to weeping over the fate of the thousands of Lebanese who died of starvation, pestilence and persecution in the First World War. He urges the emigrants to contribute to the Welfare Committee of Syria and Mount Lebanon.

Nasib ‘Arida also seems in his poems to weep over the lot of humanity and its woes. Thus, the universal love, compassion, humanity and equality are found to be expressed in the Mahjar literature.

6. Love for Nature:

Beautiful descriptions of nature are found in Mahjar literature. The members of ‘The Pen Association’ were the sincere lovers of nature. They had profound feelings, love and union with it. Jibrân Khalil Jibrân also wrote profusely on the various aspects of nature. Jibrân’s love for nature and belief that both nature and man are the creation of God, explain why he portrayed in his art and depicted in his poems the man-nature coexistence. In the essay ‘Nature and Man’ he expresses:
"One of the flowers raised her gentle head and whispered, "We weep because Man will come and cut us down, and offer us for sale in the market of the city". . . .

..."Why must Man destroy what Nature has built?"61

To Jibrān nature is many things, and among them is the pervading spirit of love which is manifested in all natural things. In expressing this he used the imagery of erotic and maternal love, especially the image of embracing.62

7. Interpretational Simplicity and the Musical Delicacy:

Poetry is the excellent art of life; neither is it mannerism nor the custom. This popular belief deep rooted in the minds of the Mahjar writers. To them simplicity, delicacy and musical appeals are the fundamental pillars of poetry and arts as well. That was why, what their poetry possessed became fast and more significant and the style of their prose writings is equally easy and endear to the readers of the Arab world as well as the Mahjar. This faith, by the passing of time, is on the race and prevails over the Arab world reaching to its high level of the development of Mahjar literature.

8. Religious Freedom:

The religious freedom is one the most important characteristics of Mahjar Arabic literature. It has a great and effective influence on Mahjar literature. It is one of the fundamental elements which make the Mahjar literature successful with esteem and wonder in every place. As the majority of the emigrants were
Christians, they often felt less bound by the Arabic literary tradition. They were more accessible to Western influences. They were more open to literary innovation and were more inclined towards literary experiment. There was freedom of thoughts, ideology, argument and interpretation for the majesty of religion among emigrants keeping away from the spirit of fanaticism and rigidity.

The Mahjar writers rose against the established literary tradition. The liberties they took, not only with literary forms but even with the observance of the grammatical rules of classical Arabic, must have an unorthodox impression on their readers in the Arab world.

9. Portrayal and Description:

The description had the tremendous influence on all over the past literature. The Mahjar group also relied to a great extend upon the beauty of the portrayal and the description in poetry and prose. The description is worth consideration in Mahjar literary configuration. The description in their poetry was expanded beyond natural scenes to include the description of modern inventions. It also includes poems describing natural phenomena.

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