

Tributes to Ameen Rihani

(Chronological Order)

I should have to write you an essay in order to answer your very courteous inquiry. I send you the last volume of my *Public Papers*... There you will find out what my views are.

President Theodore Roosevelt,

English Letters to Ameen Rihani (MS), New York, NY, May 10th, 1901.

###

Ameen Rihani's *Myrtle and Myrrh* has a most amazingly Oriental preface...

New York Times,

New York, NY, May 27th, 1905.

###

The reader who takes pains to learn what all of it is about finds a good deal of wit and philosophy in *The Book of Khalid* by Ameen Rihani... Readers... will have a good idea of what perhaps may be the Eastern philosopher's view of our land and its institutions.

The Sun,

New York, NY, November 11th, 1911.

###

In *The Book of Khalid*, Mr. Rihani writes a critique of our Western civilization as it appears to the wisdom of the East, ambition against contentment, activity against sweet idleness. Mr. Rihani is a man of ardent poetic temperament, a clever poet, and a man of unworldly ideals. He thinks nobly of life and writes with ease and grace. His hero, Khalid, explores many creeds seeking to find a way through the labyrinth of human thought.

Edwin Markham,

The American Magazine, New York, NY, January 27th, 1912.

###

Your articles are splendid... I am very happy to have them in *The Bookman*, and will give them all the publicity possible, and perhaps an advertisement as well in some of the dailies.

G. G. Wyatt – editor,

The Bookman Magazine, New York, NY, February 16th, 1917.

###

Here is the opening “chant” [*Chant of Mystics*] for several pages of literary jazz... This is the Mystic in very modern versification...

Montreal Herald,

Montreal, February 19th, 1921.

###

Everything in *The Path of Vision* is frequently gracefully said. How old and yet how new! Much discourse of the soul, the spirit and the ideal.

San Francisco Bulletin,

San Francisco, California, July 2nd, 1921.

###

I am very pleased to carry on our correspondence and our conversations. I have to write to you a long letter in Arabic... In the meantime I am sending you a copy of the second edition of my *Annuaire du Monde Musulman*...

Louis Massignon,

Letters to Ameen Rihani, Paris, February 28th, 1927.

###

It is with a fortunate prescience that Mr. Rihani should have chosen the present moment for writing his eminently informing book about the *Wahabi* King and his people... Mr. Rihani early gained the friendship and confidence of the *Wahabi* King whom he had come to see for the purpose of advancing his theory of Arab unity.

The Times,

London, March 9th, 1928.

###

It would seem that for a long time to come, Mr. Rihani's study must be one of the chief authorities upon the desert tribes making up the Kingdom of modern Arabia.

Boston Evening Transcript,

Boston, Mass., June 2nd, 1928.

###

I am sending you these drafts [on Arabia] on the chance that you may have time to look through them. If you are able to do so, I should be greatly obliged for your very frank criticisms. I imagine that you have firsthand knowledge of some of the points dealt with.

Arnold J. Toynbee,

The Royal Institute of International Affairs, London, February 26th, 1929.

###

Ameen Rihani and [other Arab] representatives had a meeting with Secretary of State Stimson... to aid in the repeal of certain laws which were blamed for the clashes [in the Near East].

The Washington Post,

Washington DC, September 7th, 1929.

###

Ameen Rihani author and chief delegate of the Arabic Societies met, in New York, J. Ramsay MacDonald, Prime Minister of Great Britain. They talked about problems in the Near East. According to Rihani, Mr. MacDonald was better informed on the real facts...

New York Times,

New York, N.Y. October 13th, 1929.

###

Mr. Rihani proceeds on his national mission, seeking to pave the way for an understanding between his Majesty King Hussein and the other ruling princes of Arabia... Mr. Rihani describes pleasantly and comments freely...

The Daily Telegraph,

London, January 17th, 1930.

###

The name of Ameen Rihani is known to every student of contemporary Arabian politics... His insight, his acute observation, and his shrewd judgement of men are still of value for the formation of a judgement even of existing conditions. He writes in a manner that enables even the English reader to understand why he was gained for himself a reputation as one of the foremost of living Arab authors.

Manchester Guardian,

Manchester, U.K., March 13th, 1930.

###

The author of *Around the Coasts of Arabia* is well versed in Arab history and literature, religious, political and social. His knowledge of the subject is first hand...

New York Herald Tribune,

New York, August 24th, 1930.

###

Ameen Rihani's book *Arabian Peak and Desert* is mainly a tale of travel rather than an excursion into politics, though these inevitably emerge... Mr. Rihani's record of experiences is deeply interesting.

The Guardian,

London, January 30th, 1931.

###

For the antithesis of Mr. Philby we may turn to Ameen Rihani... who is never dull, often witty. His observation is acute and he has managed to let quite a lot light into a part of Arabia which has hitherto been almost a closed book to the western world.

Christian Science Monitor,

Boston, Mass., March 4th, 1931.

###

The first conference at Basra... was a young gathering; the average age as estimated by Ameen Rihani is about thirty-three... The second conference was an older gathering says Ameen Rihani... who estimates that the millennium arrived in anything but millennial fashion.

H. G. Wells,

The Shape of Things to Come, pp. 285, 313, 350, London, 1933.

###

The great Arab nationalist who stands alone facing colonialism is the philosopher Ameen Rihani...

La Reforma,

Santiago, Chile, March 16th, 1935, June 6th, 1937.

###

Ameen Rihani a Lebanese American celebrity, whose works are well known in Egypt, Syria, Lebanon as well as all over the United States of America.

Emir,

Mexico City, Mexico, February 25th, 1939.

###

We were brought up with the literature of Ameen Rihani. I knew him personally during his late years and I appreciated tremendously his high ethical values.

Charles Malik,

Rihani Museum Archives, Shouwair, Lebanon, September 18th, 1940.

###

Ameen Rihani is one of our most brilliant minds. His prolific writings and his reputation as an author, both in Arabic and English, rest on solid ground. He was an outstanding poet, and a well-recognized literary and art critic besides being a frequent contributor to prose and verse: *The Atlantic Monthly*, *Harper's*, *The Bookman*, *The Forum*, *Asia*... For the importance of Ameen Rihani to us, and to the world, lies in the qualities of leadership which he displayed...

The Federal,

Boston, Mass., September 28th, 1940.

###

Ameen Rihani was a real leader endowed with ability and character and all the gifts of that leadership... His courage was exemplary. His keen intellect sought the truth and championed it.

The Federation Herald,

Boston, Mass.. December 2nd, 1940.

###

Several European travelers and scholars had visited Arabia before Rihani. But Ameen was the only modern Arabic speaking traveler and writer who brought to his task a proper linguistic and cultural background as well as an adequate training in the Western methods of interpretation...

Philip K. Hitti,

The Federation Herald, Boston, Mass., December 2nd, 1940.

###

The **Arabic Letters of Ameen Rihani** are a series of teachings in literature, politics, sociology, nationalism, poetry and criticism. He dealt with these subjects in a candid and sincere approach... Rihani's letters are another proof of his genius.

O' Oriente Magazine,

Mayo Iseo, Sao Paulo, Brasil, 1960.

###

The Rihani legacy is close to the [Soviet] Russian reader because of its wide diversity. For forty years the echo of his words reached the Arab World and America...

Vitaly Ozerove,

Ameen Rihani After a Quarter of a Century, Metn Cultural Council, Beirut, 1966, pp.35-36; Moscow, Russia, October 24th, 1965.

###

I came here to pay tribute to a great man who defended freedom and mutual understanding between the nations. I came here to pay tribute to Ameen Rihani.

Pedro Martinez Montavez,

Ameen Rihani After a Quarter of a Century, Metn Cultural Council, Beirut, 1966, pp.37-38; Madrid, Spain, October 24th, 1965.

###

We, Orientalists and interested scholars in the contemporary history of the Middle East, consider Ameen Rihani a clear evidence of modern Arab thought... Mr. Rihani, you have struggled to wake up the Arab people when the Arabs needed you most. Your works should be translated into all European languages...

Umberto Ritzitano,

Ameen Rihani After a Quarter of a Century, Metn Cultural Council, Beirut, 1966, pp.39-42; Palermo University, Palermo, Italy, October 24th, 1965.

###

The Czech reader little knows Ameen Rihani from the short translations of his works to the Czech language. Czech Orientalists know him much more. This is an opportunity for us to learn further about Ameen Rihani.

Svetozar Pantoucheck,

Ameen Rihani After a Quarter of a Century, Metn Cultural Council, Beirut, 1966, pp.46-47; Prague, [Czechoslovakia], October 24th, 1965.

###

Sown in the East, but grown across the ocean,
And cultivated in both sides, and blest,
Ameen Rihani, like a dream in motion,
Roamed in-between, tall with a pilgrim's devotion,
To bridge a gap between the East and the West...

Amado M. Yuzon - Member of the Congress of the Philippines; President of the United Poets Laureate International,
Quezon City, The Philippines, May 13th, 1970.

###

Had it not been for Ameen Rihani, today the richest oil fields in the world [the Arabian Peninsula] would be in British rather than American hands.

Leonard Mosley,

Power Play, "Oil in the Middle East", Random House, New York, 1973, p. 59.

###

In the spirit of Walt Whitman Rihani's subjects [in his prose poems] ranged from meditations on nature with philosophic overtones, to criticisms of Arab society... to a celebration of freedom and democracy, and a hopeful outlook on the future of the Arabs. Ar-Rihani never loses the dignity of positive thought, cheered up by hope, optimism, and a healthy joy in life.

Issa Bullata,

Al-Arabiyya Magazine, Toronto, Canada, Spring-Autumn, 1976.

###

It is possible that Gibran was influenced by ar-Rihani's pioneer attempt [of prose poetry] ... Ar-Rihani's attempt probably influenced later generations in the Arab East... The first two volumes of *The Rihaniyyat* (1910) received an enthusiastic reception, thanks to their originality and freshness.

Salma Al-Khadra Al-Jayyusi,

Trends and Movements in Modern Arabic Poetry, Leiden, Netherlands, 1977, pp. 89-90.

###

Remember what your great citizen Ameen Rihani said over seventy years ago: "Our country is just beginning to speak, and I am her chosen voice. I feel that if I do not respond, if I do not come to her, she will be dumb forever." This saying revives in you every national pride and integrity. Let us all respond to Rihani's call.

President Amine Gemayel,

Western Gallery, Huston, Texas, July 24, 1983.

###

I have chosen the works of Ameen Rihani as an ideal example of the concept of nationalism between the two World Wars. Ameen Rihani represents the new critic of the Arab-American school of literature and thought. He highlighted the liberation of the individual and the nation...

Antonino Pelliteri,

University of Palermo, Palermo, Italy, October 15, 1984.

###

The theory of Rihani is an interdisciplinary approach to culture and politics, biography and history, and a blender of the ideal and the real... Ameen Rihani is an Arab testimony of the Twentieth Century.

Carmen Ruiz Bravo-Villasante,

Un Testigo Arabe del Siglo XX: Amin al-Rihani en Marruecos y en Espana, Universidad Autonoma de Madrid, Madrid, Spain, 1993, p. 92.

###

In many respects Ar-Rihani's work can stand alongside the work of the North African revolutionary Frantz Fanon as an exploration of the need to create an identity in order to throw-off the shackles of colonial oppression.

K. O'Connor,

Excalibur Press, London, November 22, 1995.

###

Lauded as the father of Arab American literature, Ameen Rihani has recently gone on-line. He was one of the first people to try to correct misconceptions about the Middle East in other parts of the world.

Anne Renahan,

Bahrain Tribune Newspaper, Bahrain, May 19, 1997.

###

Rihani essays to explore the linguistic register with the employment of exotic and recondite signifiers from the English lexicon, and the importation into the English text of a plethora of Arabic idioms and references. He also experiments with a mix of writings that not only transpose, in English, “material from different texts,” but joins to this the further dimensions of an Arab intertextuality... On the western side, Rihani flits through a phalanx of different American language games... He was able to re-enact the emigrant’s experience of displacement by foregrounding a sense of difference in terms of the unusual...

Geoffrey Nash - Prof. of English Literature, University of Sunderland, U.K.,

The Arab Writer in English, London, Sussex Academic Press, 1998, pp. 26-27.

###

Ameen Rihani is one of those who, because of the fluke of his particular historical circumstances, offers a classical expression of two complementary aspects of the human personality. It refreshes us to imagine ourselves anew through his eyes.

John C. Hawley - Prof. of English Literature at Santa Clara University, California,

Kahlil Gibran & Ameen Rihani Prophets of Lebanese-American Literature, ed. by N. Oueijan, A. Eid, C. Kfoury, & D. Salameh, Notre Dame University Press, Beirut, 1999, p. 62.

###

The works of al-Rihani, were used by M.V. Churakov as an important source on the history and ethnography of Central Arabia. Al-Rihani witnessed “from within” the profoundly significant ideological, ethnic and political processes which led to the political developments of Arabia.

Efim A. Rezvan - St. Petersburg, Russian Academy of Science,

From the book *Ameen Rihani, the Harmony of Cultures and Unity of Man*, Cornet Chehwan, Metn, September 1999, p. 244.

###

Ameen Rihani, one of the earliest Arab Americans, devoted his life to bringing the East and the West together. "We are not of the East or the West", he wrote. "No boundaries exist in our breast: We are free."

Kofi Annan,

Secretary General, United Nations, New York, April 24, 2000.

###

A revealing account of Abdul Aziz's court in the 1920s by Ameen Rihani, a Lebanese-American author, remains just as valid today.

Max Rodenbeck,

The Economist, London, March 23, 2002.

###

There are some important liberal Arab intellectuals who firmly believe a broader revival of Rihani's work would be a balm for the world... Rihani articulated an inspiring sense of dual identity. He was an Arab *and* an American, a perspective critic of both worlds, and his writings are a constant dialogue between two identities he refused to collapse with anything so simple as a hyphen... There is an openness and sincerity in his writing that is charismatic. Rihani is the voice that trumps any notion of a fundamental incompatibility between East and West.

Philip Kennicott,

The Washington Post, Washington D.C., April 22, 2002.

###

Rihani's writings are more directly concerned with restoring dignity to the East and with achieving genuine cultural and political dialogue than with exposing systematic biases in Western scholarship.

Nathan C. Funk - Prof. of International Relations, The University of Waterloo, Ontario, Canada,
Ameen Rihani: Bridging East and West - A Pioneering Call for Arab-American Understanding, eds., Funk, Dr. Nathan C., and Betty J. Sitka, University Press of America, New York, Toronto, Oxford, p. 15, 2004.

###

The Statue of Liberty... has been an inspiration to generations of immigrants. One of these immigrants was a poet-writer named Ameen Rihani. Gazing at her lamp held high, he wondered whether her sister might be erected in the lands of his Arab forefathers. Here is how he put it: "When will you turn your face toward the East, oh Liberty?" My friends, a future of liberty stands before you. It is your right. It is your dream. And it is your destiny.

George W. Bush - President of The United States of America,
January 13, 2008.

###

Ameen Rihani is the most influential, prolific and world-renowned Arab-American author of the 20th century...

Library of Congress,
News Release, Washington, D.C., March 17, 2011.

###

Ameen Rihani's Writings on American freedom and religious tolerance are as relevant today...

William McGurn,

The Wall Street Journal, New York, May 24, 2011.

###

Rihani's heritage will be valued and studied in Russia..., and the rest of his writings sooner or later will be available for the audience in adequate translations.

Mikhail Rodianov,

Ameen Rihani's Arab-American Legacy: From Romanticism to Postmodernism, ed. with an introduction by N. Oueijan, Notre Dame University Press, Beirut, p. 359, 2012.

###

The time for re-assessment of Ameen Rihani's role is long overdue... I might add that... the central cultural space that Rihani so clearly claimed as his own is precisely the venue for a different view of our world and the role of reasoned and esthetically pleasing communication within it.

Roger Allen - Prof. of Social Thought and Comparative Ethics, University of Pennsylvania,

Ameen Rihani's Arab-American Legacy: From Romanticism to Postmodernism, ed. with an introduction by N. Oueijan, Notre Dame University Press, Beirut, 2012, p. 33.

###

Ameen Rihani is a great American story... The little boy grew up in America to become a great intellectual and prolific writer publishing his most famous work *The Book of Khalid*. This groundbreaking work confronts the struggles faced by Arab immigrating to America and the complex relationship between the United States and the Arab world... This "apostle of the Arab-American relationships" had a profound effect on the Arab American experience...

Richard J. Durbin,

United States Senator, June 2nd, 2012.

###

The Book of Khalid broke a number of literary barriers. Not only was it the first novel written English by an Arab... but it was also innovative considering Rihani's national background... He was a man of firsts in a variety of fields of publishing... His free verse poetry was the first of its kind in Arabic, and his historical and anthropological works on the Arabian Peninsula effectively introduced the English speaking world to this part of the globe. His essays were published in major newspapers in New York, London, Cairo and Beirut.

Benjamin Lenox Smith - Harvard University,

From his Ph.D. dissertation entitled **Writing *Amrīkā* Literary Encounters with America in Arabic Literature**, a dissertation presented to The Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations, a chapter on Ameen Rihani (pp. 54-78), August 2014, pp. 56-57.

###

Demonstrating the reach and significance of the work, the [supplementary] essays [in the critical edition of *The Book of Khalid*] address a variety of themes, including Rihani's creative influences, philosophical elements, and the historical context of the novel. Attracting a new generation of readers to Rihani's innovative work, this edition reveals his continued resonance with contemporary Arab American literature.

Syracuse University Press,

Syracuse, New York, March 2016.

###

After the publication of the new edition of Rihani's book *The Trilateral Alliance in the Animal Kingdom* by the New York House *The Perfect Library*, it was found that this edition bears the number of 501 editions of Rihani's Arabic and English works and that the first copy of this edition holds the number of one million of the total copies of Rihani's works around the world to date.

Al-Jūmhūriyyah Newspaper,

Beirut, July 24, 2018.

###

In a doctoral dissertation, at Harvard University, entitled *America in Modern Arabic literature*, Benjamin Lennox addressed *The Book of Khalid* by Ameen Rihani and discussed it from the perspective of intellectual discourse between East and West and whether it is an introduction to the quest for identity or a starting point for the construction of the “Great City” in his book *Ar-Rihaniyyaat*, as well as in the prominent philosophical landmark in *The Book Khalid*. The dissertation refers to the Rihani thought influenced by Abdul Rahman Al-Kawakibi and Mohammed Abdo, and this influence is evident in the “Philosopher of Freike” who called for "religious tolerance" since 1900; as if the beginning of the twentieth century recorded by Rihani a new chapter of modern Arabic literature based on the trilogy of "tolerance", the "intellectual meeting between the East and the West" down to the outskirts of the Great City.

An-Nahar Newspaper,
Beirut, January 23, 2019.

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