

DIFFERENCES IN THE PERCEPTION OF TIME BETWEEN THE MIDDLE EAST AND THE WEST AS DEPICTED IN AMEEN RIHANI'S ANGLOPHONE WORKS

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Abstract

The bilingual and bicultural Arab emigration writer Ameen Rihani believed that his lifelong mission was cultural mediation between the Orient and the Occident, with the aim of reconciling, bringing together, and ideally merging the two entities, which he perceived as complementary, though traditionally opposed. Rihani used his extensive knowledge of the Western cultural canon to subvert prevailing stereotypes about Arabs and to negotiate his own competence as an expert on the Orient, thus presenting his ethnicity in a favourable, authoritative light. Accordingly, his Anglophone works contain examples of cultural translation of the Orient for American readers. The writer operates within the framework of existing preconceptions about Oriental societies, reformulating them in a more positive light and adjusting the interpretation of perceived facts to the attitudes of his intended audience. According to Rihani, one of the aspects in which the Orient and the Occident differ most is the perception of time and history as related to lifestyle and mentality. Thus, Rihani vividly describes the unhurried, deeply spiritual life in the Syrian province of the Ottoman Empire in the shade of millennia of Middle Eastern history, comparing it to the hectic, rushed life of New York, which he portrays as the epitome of Western materialistic modernity driven by the lust for gain. A close analysis of Rihani's Anglophone texts shows his deep understanding of the two culture-specific temporal frameworks, which appear as an integral part of the Orient and the Occident as distinct macro-constructs forming a binary opposition.

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Introduction: Rihani and cultural mediation

The Lebanese-American writer Ameen Rihani (1876–1940) is recognized as a leading thinker of the Arab Renaissance whose prolific work helped shape modern Arabic literature [Imangulieva 2009; Hajjar 2010]. His collected Arabic works span twelve volumes and include poetry, short stories, essays, literary criticism, travel memoirs, and several books on Arab history [Hassan 2014]. At the same time, he is celebrated as the “father of Arab American literature” [Abinader 2000],¹ having pioneered the Anglophone literary tradition with the poetry collection *Myrtle and Myrrh* (1905), the novel *The Book of Khalid* (1911), and the play *Wajdah* (1909), each representing a first of its kind authored by an Arab immigrant in English within the United States [Hassan 2014: 38]. Rihani also became the first Arab to translate Arabic poetry into English [Hassan 2016: 369] and helped inspire the foundation of Al-Rabita al-Qalamiyya (the Pen League or Bond of the Pen), a literary society dedicated to the renewal of Arabic literature [Badawi 1975: 182]. In addition to being a writer, critic, translator, philosopher, and traveller, Rihani was also a charismatic political activist committed to promoting peace, tolerance, and cultural exchange between East and West [Traboulsi 1995; Hajjar 2010]. One of Rihani’s chief ambitions, as W. Hassan phrases it, was “an overarching project of cultural translation that ambitiously aimed to reinterpret the “East” and the “West” to each other and bring about a civilizational synthesis” [Hassan 2014: 39]. Within this framework, Rihani explored the origins and potential of globalization as well as cultural and religious hybridization in both the Arab world and the West. His ideas, carefully adapted for Anglophone readers, are most fully expressed in *The Book of Khalid* (1911) and the essay collection *The Path of Vision: Pocket Essays of East and West* (1921).

Rihani’s “dual Arab-American identity” and particular lifestyle which involved frequent travel between his two homelands [Hajjar 2010: xi], as well as writing for both Arab and Anglophone readers, required constant negotiation and cultural translation, which gradually shaped his concept of himself as a “cultural ambassador and mediator” [Bushrui 2012: xi]. Moreover, as W. Hassan explains, life between two cultures involved a growing awareness of the prejudices and limitations of each, and Rihani appears to have believed that these deficiencies could be ameliorated by replacing the corresponding better traits and values from the other culture. In short,

¹ See also: *Ameen Rihani: The Founding Father of Arab-American Literature*. Ameen Rihani Organization. <https://ameenrihani.org/?srsltid=AfmBOorsIjPA8n0dRFbTsbCRoXD sLncIMUbsQxih5Nla1-9UD4KZTOxB>

“Heir to two literary and cultural traditions, Rihani not only contributed to both but also tried to fuse them together” [Hassan 2014: 40]. This idea is explored in-depth in *The Book of Khalid*, where many of Rihani’s theoretical insights are ostensibly playfully presented, masking their serious intent. In general, the novel appears to be a largely autobiographical work, paralleling many events of Rihani’s life and reflecting, often ironically, the author’s thoughts, aspirations, and failures. It must be noted that the novel contains a direct explanation by the Editor, stating that the perceived playfulness is only a method to present serious ideas to readers of his time: “no matter how important or trivial these, he who would give utterance to them must do so in cap and bells, if he would be heard nowadays” [Rihani 1911: 5]. From this point of view, *The Book of Khalid* might be regarded as Rihani’s retrospection on his own naivety, illusions, and daydreams of youth, which he later developed into notable achievements in politics and literature. As explained by the narrator of the novel, “the principal aim of Khalid” was “to graft the strenuousness of Europe and America upon the ease of the Orient, the materialism of the West upon the spirituality of the East” [Rihani 1911: 248]. The fusion of these opposites was seen by Rihani as a positive process both for nations and for individuals; furthermore, he believed that such composite beings would combine the best qualities of each while mitigating their respective weaknesses. As Khalid argued, “My Brothers, the most highly developed being is neither European nor Oriental; rather, he who partakes of the finer qualities of both the European genius and the Asiatic prophet” [Rihani 1911: 246]. The serious intent of the writer is confirmed by the fact that he expressed the same ideas concisely as his own reflections in the little essay collection *The Path of Vision* (1921). In short, in his Anglophone works, Rihani articulated a vision of intellectual and spiritual exchange between the Orient and the Occident, which he perceived as necessary at the time of increasing migration, fast technological progress, rapid worldwide change, and early globalization.

Temporal frameworks in Rihani’s East–West binary opposition

While critical literature has primarily focused on Rihani’s cosmopolitanism and culture mediation [e.g., Hassan 2014; Hajjar 2010; Imangulieva 2009; Abinader 2000; Traboulsi 1995], there has been significantly less attention to the structural mechanisms through which his texts encode cultural differences, in particular, temporal perceptions. However, it is possible to argue that Rihani constructs the Orient and the Occident as geographical and civilizational contrasts, at the foundational layer characterized by different perceptions of time, which appear as a part of lifestyle, and a set of embedded civilizational values, and therefore, part of the cultural code. Through recurring binary oppositions, such as spirituality and materialism, contemplation and productivity, continuity and progress, he encodes

distinct temporal models that shape experiences of representatives of these different cultures. For instance, in *The Book of Khalid*, Rihani vividly describes the unhurried, spiritual rhythms of life in the Syrian province of the Ottoman Empire as “such picturesque languid stream” [Rihani 1911: 16; cf. 126], contrasting them with the frenzied, accelerated pace of New York, the epitome of the Western materialistic world [e.g., Rihani 1911: 34–35]. These two dissimilar models are neither mutually exclusive nor hierarchically ordered; rather, they function as complementary temporal dimensions of human civilization. Rihani presents them as belonging to two different mindsets, both available to the hybrid consciousness of the bicultural person who may inhabit any of these temporal regimes as a native, or mediate understanding of them to the Other. In doing so, Rihani strategically manipulates prevailing Orientalist stereotypes [Hassan 2014: 42], such as the mysticism, passivity, or “loafing” of the East, to assert the intellectual and spiritual robustness of Arab culture, demonstrating to his American readers that perceived vices may accompany profound mental and ethical labour [e.g., Rihani 1911: 10]. Thus, in Rihani’s Anglophone texts, the perception of time constitutes the very foundational layer of cultural code, which determines lifestyle and value differences. However, this aspect is not overtly positioned as such, and it might be deduced that the argumentation is rather intuitive and pragmatic. Instead of building theory on temporal experience as the foundational layer of cultural code, signalling lifestyle and value differences, Rihani uses specific examples of divergent temporal perception, related to negative stereotypes, to re-explain them in a more favourable light.

Culture-specific temporal models, in general, can be interpreted as the least obvious yet pervasive layer of reality, expressed through language and potentially shaping habitual worldviews and social practices. As Sapir famously observed, “the ‘real world’ is to a large extent unconsciously built up on the language habits of the group” [Sapir 1929: 207]. According to cognitive linguists, language used to describe time influences habitual conceptualizations of time and temporal schemata [e.g., Sapir 1921; Whorf 1956; Lucy 1992; Boroditsky 2001]. Similarly, anthropologists tend to treat the perception of time as culturally constructed rather than universal, that is, based on collective memory and social logic of a particular community [cf. Gell 2001]. For instance, Hall emphasizes that time perception is socially and culturally encoded, specifying how that cultural groups organize, perceive, and use time differently, for example, linear, schedule-driven “monochronic” systems versus relational, flexible “polychronic” temporalities [Hall 1983]. The discussed frameworks suggest that linguistic and anthropological approaches converge in viewing temporal perception as culturally mediated, with the differences being that linguists emphasize the role of language [Sapir 1921; 1929; Whorf 1956; Lucy 1992], anthropologists focus on embedded value systems [Gell 2001; Hall 1983]. Likewise, culture semiotics treats

culture as a system of codes shaping the very experience of reality [Eco 1976; Lotman 1990], and thus may provide a methodological basis for understanding temporal experience as well. The position of Eco who treats culture codes as mechanisms that structure perception and meaning [Eco 1976: 66–68; 130–135; 151–155], is compatible with the approach of Lotman who defines culture as a semiotic mechanism organizing collective memory and continuity [Lotman 1990: 40–43; 272–276]. Thus, within this framework, temporal perception may be understood not as a neutral dimension but as a culturally encoded mode of experience.

Binary constructs in Rihani's Anglophone texts: Layers and levels

Rihani's Anglophone texts, *The Book of Khalid* and *The Path of Vision*, systematically portray the Orient and the Occident as distinct macro-constructs forming a binary opposition. Each construct, on a micro-scale, consists of elements of culture code, much of which is arranged in binary oppositions, with each functioning as a positive or negative pole within the corresponding level. At the most granular level, these pairs of opposing qualities contribute cumulatively to the larger worldview, portraying Orient and Occident as distinct, dissimilar yet complementary entities. The dual identity and bicultural affiliation of the writer underpin this structure and are positioned as foundational to his being. Thus, in the novel, Khalid, as Rihani's mouthpiece, emphasizes, "the West for me means ambition, the East, contentment: my heart is ever in the one, my soul, in the other" [Rihani 1911: 241]. He further characterizes both entities metaphorically as "The Orient and Occident, the male and female of the Spirit, the two great streams in which the body and soul of man are refreshed, invigorated, purified" [Rihani 1911: 245]. Similarly, in *The Path of Vision* Rihani, now speaking in his own authorial voice, reflects: "America too is the land of my birth, my second birth, so to speak, which is more significant, to myself at least, than the first" [Rihani 1921: 125]. Rihani describes both constructs in detail, paying particular attention to negative stereotypes associated with each, and seeks to dispel them by translating and reframing them in terms comprehensible to the Other. In his Anglophone texts, the Other is primarily the American audience; accordingly, he focuses on prevalent stereotypes about Orientals, negotiating, redefining, and re-explaining them within a Western conceptual framework. The perception of time functions as a central axis, as the structuring principle of civilizational difference, deeply embedded in the constructs of Orient and Occident through these paired binary oppositions in semiotic code. It is, however, primarily implicit, revealing itself only upon careful analysis. Thus, the East, also called the Orient and Asia by Rihani, is presented not only as a geographical space but also as an abstractly imagined counterpart to the materialistic West.

Western-progressive temporality (The Occident)

In Rihani's works, the West appears primarily as the United States, in particular, New York, and it is linked to a fast-paced, future-oriented, rationalized temporal regime, in which the main goals are productivity, organization, and material progress. The Occident is repeatedly described as the land of "organisation and power, where Science and Freedom reign supreme," and as the home of material abundance symbolized by "the American millions" [Rihani 1911: 34–35; 246; 301]. For instance, the description of an emigrant's first encounter with New York Harbor emphasizes the imagery of monumental human construction, such as "these giant structures tickling heaven's sides" and "these cable bridges, spanning rivers," combined with mentions of industrial dynamism, hectic rhythm and result-oriented activities:

What manifestations of industrial strength, what monstrosities of wealth and power, are here! These vessels proudly putting to sea; these tenders scurrying to meet the Atlantic greyhound which is majestically moving up the bay; these barges loading and unloading schooners from every strand, distant and near; these huge lighters carrying even railroads over the water; these fire-boats scudding through the harbour shrilling their sirens; these careworn, grim, strenuous multitudes ferried across from one enchanted shore to another. [Rihani 1911: 34–35]

Within this framework, time is measurable and primarily linked to efficiency and productivity, and diligence is positively valued [Rihani 1911: 34–35]. Yet this progressive temporality is ambivalent. The hectic life leads also to haste and restlessness, and it has no space for contemplative leisure [Rihani 1911: 35]. The disciplined movement toward the future, while being dynamic, expansionist, and progressive, is threatened by its own excesses of acceleration and commodification. The technological achievement and civic order [Rihani 1911: 246] is accompanied by spiritual depletion, as the West worships "false and unspeakable divinities," namely, "the gods of wealth, of egoism, of alcohol, of fornication" [Rihani 1911: 288], and the "lust of gain" appears as a social plague [Rihani 1911: 197]. In this rendering, Western time privileges ambition over contentment [Rihani 1911: 241], and tends toward moral decline and decadence [Rihani 1911: 317–318]. Furthermore, Rihani conceptually links Western time, with its positive and negative aspects alike, to the cult of success as the base of American modernity:

O Success, our lords of power to-day are thy slaves, thy belots, our kings of wealth. Every one grinds for thee, every one for thee lives and dies [...] Thy palaces of silver and gold are reared on the souls of men. Thy throne is mortised with their bones, cemented with their blood. [...] O Success, what an infernal litany

thy votaries and high-priests are chanting to thee [...] Thou ruthless Gorgon, what crimes thou art committing, and what crimes are being committed in thy name!

[Rihani 1911: 77]

In such a representation, diligence, material ambition, and industriousness, as traits conventionally extolled within Western self-perception, are recoded as being at the same time potentially morally destructive. However, by destabilizing the presumed superiority of Western productivity, Rihani prepares the ground for the reversal of one of the most persistent Orientalist stereotypes: the association of the East with laziness and indolence. As a result, Rihani attempts to modify the self-perception of Westerners, pointing out their imperfections, and softening the message by embedded criticism of the Easterners at the same time. The following excerpt exemplifies his rhetoric of recoding Western attitudes to the Orient from within the stereotypic Western outlook and value system:

Weak and oppressed nations are fundamentally spiritual; strong nations are, as a rule, chiefly materialistic. The one, cherishing religious ideals, soars to certain spiritual heights and now and then produces a seer to justify its languor and indolence; the other, seeking material things, bores into the earth for its treasures and keeps going down, down till its dynamic forces reach an impenetrable sterility and explode in a sudden, terrible reaction. The life of such a nation is symptomatic of a diseased state of the soul. The life of the other undermines, to say the least, its physical strength. The dwarfing tendency is equally potent in both. But a nation without a soul is more grotesque, more hideous than a nation of ascetics.

[Rihani 1921: 9]

Oriental-contemplative temporality (The Orient)

The Orient in Rihani's Anglophone texts appears multifaceted. The very beginning of *The Book of Khalid* attracts the readers' attention with Oriental imagery: the Khedivial library of Cairo, mysterious manuscripts, copies of Koran, drawings of dervishes and arcane symbolism [Rihani 1911: v]. It further unfolds as the scenery of Lebanon, at that time part of the Syrian province of the Ottoman Empire: from the eclectic historical past, represented by multi-layered ruins and temples of Baalbek [Rihani 1911: 15–20] to the detailed depiction of the reality of life and a romantic love story in a Christian community in Bekaa valley [Rihani 1911: 143–166], from the majestic scenery of Mount Lebanon [Rihani 1911: 182–191; Rihani 1921: 112] to Damascus as a thoroughly Ottoman city at the time of growing unrest [Rihani 1911: 311–316]. The real Orient is closely linked with the imaginary land with a "divine message", as the origin of spirituality and cradle of religions:

Syria the land of roses, Syria the cradle and the tomb of the gods! When Byblos adored Tammuz, when Baalbek worshipped Jupiter-Ammon, when Galilee conquered Judea, when Arabia overcame Galilee, thou wert then a Fountain of the Spirit toward which turned a thirsty world. Thy temple was the temple of the universe, thy voice was the voice of God. [Rihani 1921: 132–133]

The mentioned descriptions of the Orient emphasize continuity-oriented, spiritually structured temporality grounded in ritual rhythm, contemplation, and historical depth, which is continuously contrasted with the forward-driven, profit-oriented temporality of the West. Thus, in *The Book of Khalid*, Oriental city life is depicted as “one such picturesque languid stream,” where shopkeepers sit “counting their beads” and sellers intone devotional refrains [Rihani 1911: 16–17]. Time here is not measured and quantified, nor converted into a monetary equivalent, but experienced as embedded in prayer, repetition, poetic utterance, and communal presence. This temporality privileges spiritual light and moral interiority [Rihani 1911: 141–142; 246; Rihani 1921: 174], religious consciousness [Rihani 1911: 17], mystic wisdom [Rihani 1911: 55], and ascetic simplicity [Rihani 1911: 63]. At the same time, Rihani appears to be aware of negative perceptions of idleness, particularly as a stereotype about Orientals in Western discourse, as demonstrated by his describing Khalid’s tendency to outward indolence “gradually reverting to the Oriental instinct” [Rihani 1911: 55] and commenting, apparently sarcastically, “And where, if not in the Lebanon hills, “in which it seemed always afternoon,” can he rejoin the Lotus-Eaters of the East?” [Rihani 1911: 11]. Thus, being aware that within the Western framework, “loafing” is often coded negatively, Rihani reinterprets it as intense intellectual and spiritual labour, in this instance, the creation of a book:

And Khalid once said to me, ‘In loafing here, I work as hard as did the masons and hod-carriers who laboured on these pyramids.’ And I believe him. For is not a book greater than a pyramid? [...] A man who conceives and writes a great book, my friend, has done more work than all the helots that laboured on these pyramidal futilities. That is why I find no exaggeration in Khalid’s words. For when he loafs, he does so in good earnest. Not like the camel-driver there or the camel, but after the manner of the great thinkers and mystics: like Al-Fared and Jelal’ud-Deen Rumi, like Socrates and St. Francis of Assisi, Khalid loaf. [Rihani 1911: 10; cf. 55]

In this manner, the image of Orient is constructed as the counterpart of the materialistic Occident. The East is characterized as the “land of origination, where Light and Spirit first arose” [Rihani 1911: 246], preserving a sacred historical memory and metaphysical depth [Rihani 1911: 55; Rihani 1921: 174], with a tinge of asceticism [Rihani 1911: 63], and a tendency to daydreaming and mysticism [Rihani

1911: i; 14; 125]. Rihani also depicts the more negative aspects of the contemplative, slow temporality which appear as reduced to absurd versions of the positive ones. Thus, contemplation may develop into general neglect of worldly matters and stagnation [Rihani 1911: 55], spirituality may turn into irrationality [Rihani 1921: 174], asceticism into poverty [Rihani 1911: 301], and spontaneity into repressions and violence, chaos and disorder [Rihani 1911: 17; 330]. Nevertheless, within the Oriental temporal framework, a coherent cultural logic is apparent, according to which slowness is linked to depth rather than indolence, and to stability rather than backwardness. Thus, if the Western time is quantified and linked to fast-forward progress, the Eastern time is intuitive and connected to eternal spiritual values.

As a backdrop to the described outwardly slow, contemplative temporality, Rihani constructs the Orient as a monumental-temporal landscape, in which history is spatialized and duration represented by architecture, myth, and epic scenery. Time is not merely experienced but materialized, and it gains a cyclical continuity aspect. For instance, the ruins of Baalbek and Palmyra are perceived as symbols of civilizational epochs likened to seasons of the year: "For right behind Mt. Sanneen is the Acropolis of Baalbek, and farther East are the ruins of Palmyra. The one is a monument to the Spring, the other to the Summer of my country's past" [Rihani 1921: 118–119]. The sheer magnitude of historical events and long timeline is contrasted with the slow motion of seasons in the vast, impressive but static scenery of Mount Lebanon. Thus, historical time is simultaneously transformed into a visible panorama, a "cyclorama of all the seasons," where "The seasons come and go, but the mark of their footsteps on my native horizon are ineffaceable. Here Time has erected eternal monuments to his departing children" [Rihani 1921: 112]. Rather than erasure or progress, temporality here produces sediment and permanence. The East appears "vast, static and majestic," staged as "the Theatre of the Ancient World" [Rihani 1921: 110], a space where antiquity remains theatrically present. Even natural cycles follow one another "with the precision of marching regiments," never hurried nor delayed [Rihani 1921: 109–110], suggesting not chaos but cosmically regulated recurrence. Simultaneously, geographic space becomes overlaid with mythic-historical simultaneity: Seth, Noah, Solomon, Nimrod, and the Tower of Babel coexist within the narrative space of Baalbek [Rihani 1911: 20]. The Orient thus emerges as a civilizational archive, in which mythical, sacred, and historical temporalities coexist in layered density; so "Lethean breezes blowing from the East" [Rihani 1921: 116] make the busy Occidentals pause and contemplate their own place in history. Thus, in contrast to the forward acceleration of the Western time, the Eastern time appears slow and cyclical; and where the Western fast, fleeting time appears ephemeral, the Eastern time is represented by the visible, solid strata within landscape and memory.

Reference temporal models: Western-progressive vs. Oriental-contemplative time

From the previous analysis, it may be deduced that, in Rihani's works, two distinct temporal models are presented, contrasted, and made intelligible for an Anglophone audience of the early 20th century. Namely, the contrast between Western modern temporality and the temporal rhythms of the late Ottoman Levant provides a key interpretive framework for understanding Rihani's cultural mediation. In this section, both models, which were described as poles of the binary opposition Orient-Occident (East-West), encoded through characteristic qualities arranged in binary pairs, are compared to two main frameworks of temporality coexisting in Rihani's timespace. Within this context, the Anglophone writings of Rihani may be read as presenting two historically formed, culture-specific temporal models: the accelerated, progress-oriented time of Western modernity, as contrasted to the contemplative, continuity-oriented temporality of the Ottoman-Levantine world. However, this duality should not be interpreted as an essentialist claim about fixed civilizational identities, but rather as an analytic model exposing the two reference frameworks used by Rihani.

Thus, it may be argued that Rihani's depiction of Western temporality and modernity can be interpreted through Max Weber's theoretical framework, adopted as a historical and conceptual anchor. This choice is justified not only by Weber's foundational analysis of modern Western rationalization but also by the geographical and cultural context of Rihani's life, as the writer spent significant periods in Boston and New York, within the Arab-American Mahjar environment and the wider Anglo-American cultural sphere [Bushrui & Jenkins 1998]. Most important, this environment was permeated by Anglo-American Protestant atmosphere that Weber identifies as formative for the emergence of the 'spirit of capitalism,' characterized by disciplined labour, rational conduct, and the moralization of time [Weber 1930]. Weber's approach thus offers a historically grounded and culturally resonant means of interpreting the temporal contrasts that are central to Rihani's cultural mediation project. In addition, Weber's *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (1905) and *Economy and Society* (published in expanded form 1922) appeared almost at the same time as Rihani's Anglophone works – *The Book of Khalid* (1911) and *The Path of Vision* (1921). This allows one to argue that Weber and Rihani witnessed comparable processes in the society and described similar attitudes to work, time, leisure, and productivity.

Conceptually, Weber provides a rigorous framework for understanding Western modernity as structured around rationalization, disciplined use of time, and economic orientation. In Rihani's texts, the depiction of New York and Western

life as accelerated, efficiency-driven, and future-oriented, though excessively so, and therefore criticized by the writer [Rihani 1911: 34–35; 77; 130], corresponds to Weber's characterization of capitalist temporal regimes, in which the waste of time, that is, the failure to devote the maximum possible hours per day to diligent work, is "the first and in principle the deadliest of sins" [Weber 1930: 157; cf. 47–49; 53–54; 158–159]. Weber's analysis further traces this disciplined, productivity-oriented conception of time to the earlier Protestant moral philosophy, exposing the underlying logic and value system. In *The Protestant Ethic*, he widely cites Benjamin Franklin's practical maxims related to the attitudes towards time and leisure [Weber 1930: 157–159], referring to *Advice to a Young Tradesman* (1748), where Franklin famously admonishes readers to "remember that time is money" and urges them to "Waste neither Time nor Money, but make the best use of both" [Weber 1930: 158]. Thus, Weber demonstrates how time not only was conceptualized as measurable, economically productive, and subject to rational governance, but also, most importantly, directly quantified and monetized, making punctuality and productivity a moral duty. Weber also analyses how this concept of time developed within a strictly religious framework, replacing the earlier, more contemplative attitudes and, finally, forming the ethos of modern capitalist societies [Weber 1930: 40; 81; 187]. In short, there are clearly visible parallels between the Western attitudes to time as described by Weber and by Rihani, in particular, with respect to the material progress, industriousness, and profit, which allows to conclude that both authors refer to the same model of rationalized temporal ethic as a historically grounded framework for understanding the Western temporal regime.

Correspondingly, it may be assumed that the Levantine-Ottoman cultural context of the period may be adopted as the primary referential framework for Rihani's representation of Oriental temporality, as it was prevalent in the region where the writer was born and which he visited in the beginning of the 20th century. Historical studies of the late Ottoman Empire demonstrate that time was not universally regulated by mechanical clocks, but it was organized around prayer cycles, seasonal rhythms, and communal routines. This system was often referred to as *alaturka* time, which coexisted with and only gradually gave way to Western *alafanga* clock-time during the modernization reforms of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries [Wishnitzer 2015; Cantemir 2004]. And exactly this traditional local perception of time is regarded as the stereotypical Oriental loafing in the West, as it stands in a sharp contrast to the capitalist models of clock discipline, characterized by punctuality, industriousness and rationalization [cf. Weber 1930; Thompson 1967]. However, the traditional Ottoman temporal organization reflected a sociocultural logic which prioritized religious observance, spiritual orientation, and social interaction in the context of a strong feeling of historical continuity; thus, unhurried

everyday life was not equalled with passivity, indolence, or stagnation [Wishnitzer 2015]. This temporality remained culturally significant for a long time and existed as a parallel trend in Ottoman-Levantine society even during the transition to Westernized temporal organization [Cantemir 2004]. Possibly, the coexistence of these two temporal frameworks in the late Ottoman empire might have provided Rihani with deeper insights regarding the status and validity of different perceptions of time as the core concepts of cultural identity [cf. Wishnitzer 2015], illuminating his broader project of mediating between two culturally grounded yet potentially reconcilable experiences of time. Rihani's texts repeatedly position the hybrid intellectual subject as capable of inhabiting and mediating between these distinct experiences of time, reflecting different attitudes to life – materialistic and spiritual.

The hybrid subject as “The Most Highly Developed Being”

The key element of Rihani's binary system is the construction of the hybrid subject who is able not only to inhabit both temporal frameworks as a native, but also observe them as a supra-cultural mediator and efficiently perform cultural translation, integrating cultural codes of both civilizations. This figure appears as the protagonist of *The Book of Khalid*, and, apparently, also as the authorial persona in *The Path of Vision*. As explained by the narrator of the novel, “the principal aim of Khalid” was “to graft the strenuosity of Europe and America upon the ease of the Orient, the materialism of the West upon the spirituality of the East” [Rihani 1911: 238]. In this passage, the wording directly points to the already discussed specificities of Oriental and Occidental time, placed as poles of a binary opposition: Eastern “ease” combined with “spirituality” versus Western “strenuosity” combined with “materialism”. The fusion of the two opposites was seen by Rihani as a positive process for both nations and individuals alike, as he believed that such compound beings would possess the best qualities of both, while the worst qualities would balance each other. As Khalid argued, “My Brothers, the most highly developed being is neither European nor Oriental; but rather he who partakes of the finer qualities of both the European genius and the Asiatic prophet” [Rihani 1911: 246]. Khalid also contrasts this figure with Nietzsche's Superman, a concept fashionable at the time: “Ay, in this New World, the higher Superman shall rise. And he shall not be of the tribe of Overmen of the present age, of the beautiful blond beast of Zarathustra [...] In him shall be reincarnated the Asiatic spirit of origination, of Poesy and Prophecy, and the European spirit of Art, and the American spirit of Invention” [Rihani 1911: 113]. It appears that, in positioning this hybrid subject as the Superman of the “New World”, Rihani asserts a cultural and social niche in American society for himself and other multicultural subjects.

Such a move was necessary for integration in American society, as being an Arab emigrant in the early twentieth century meant continuous struggle against prejudice, especially since they were often seen as racially ambiguous or inferior within U.S. classificatory schemes, that is, “not quite white” [Gualtieri 2009; Samhan 1999]. At the same time, Orientals provoked fascination, as they represented the imaginary Orient constructed by Western culture, a mythical, enigmatic, charming, exotic place teeming with sages, disguised princes, supernatural beings, and mystics, and in exceptional cases, if of noble birth, great wealth, or notable talent, might be regarded as roughly equal in standing to the Anglophone majority [Raine 1998]. Thus, as pointed out by W. Hassan, the first generation of Arab-American writers negotiated roles that were available for Orientals within the pre-existing ideological framework: the first option was to adapt to circulating stereotypes, such as mystic, prophet, or nobleman, and the second was to demonstrate to Western audiences their cultural and professional competence in an established role, for instance, as a writer, expert, or even clergyman [Hassan 2014: 41]. However, taking into account the great interest in Eastern spiritual teachings at that time [Bushrui & Jenkins 1998: 3], the most rewarding role appeared to be that of an Oriental sage. In this context, it appears that Rihani learned to use these preconceptions to negotiate his own position in American literary and artistic circles; in particular, he mobilized the stock image of a spiritual teacher from the East, so his multiculturalism appeared as an asset, not a deficiency. This “most highly developed being” [Rihani 1911: 246] who inhabits both worlds but to whom neither can fully lay claim, is used to demonstrate that integration across temporal and civilizational codes is both possible and ethically desirable.

Conclusion

Rihani's Anglophone works demonstrate that temporal perception can function as a fundamental but less immediately visible layer of cultural code in the East–West binary opposition, which influences worldview, moral orientation, decisions and daily activities. They also show that it is possible to envision a hybrid consciousness that is able to comprehend and inhabit both worlds as a native and perform cultural translation, expressing one framework in terms of the other. The writer presents two distinct models of time as expressions of social values, ethical priorities, and civilizational outlooks by encoding spirituality, contemplation, and cyclical temporality as the basic qualities of the Orient as a cultural construct, and linking them to their opposite poles as integral traits of the Occident, namely, to materialism, increasing productivity, and linear progress. However, in Rihani's view, these oppositions are neither morally hierarchical nor absolute: spiritual depth coexists with inertia, just as material achievement coexists with moral and spiritual limitation. The models exist separately but are also constantly juxtaposed,

compared, reinterpreted and re-narrated; however, the differences in value systems are revealed without enforcing synthesis or reconciliation. Thus, Rihani does not seek to merge the temporal frameworks of East and West; rather, he presents each as internally coherent and applicable in its own cultural context, while recoding them for a Western audience. The result is an interlinked system of values, internalized by the hybrid being, and parallelly interpreted in terms of the Oriental and Occidental mindsets, so both interpretations exist simultaneously and it is possible to see them from different angles in their pure form or juxtaposed to different extent. For instance, the hybrid consciousness may inhabit one of the two temporal frameworks, seeing it from both aspects; or combine them according to own wishes and needs. The merge occurs from within the bicultural mind rather than by hybridization of two cultural spaces, two dissimilar worlds, two complementary constructs – the Orient and the Occident – which at all times are described as distinct reference points, with potential of modification existent in the hybrid in-between space. The result is a flexible, nondiscriminatory stance which honours historically formed patterns and traditional cultural structures. Such an approach might prove to be optimal for contemporary globalized world as well, as it allows to preserve local cultural diversity, at the same time, introducing the concept of the hybrid personality as the keeper of both cultural canons and intercultural mediator.

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