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The Meeting of East and West as Literary Theme in Arabic Novels of 20th Century

The conference paper provides discussion of the issue of meeting of east and west and confrontation of the cultures in the Arabic Novels written from 30s to 60s of the 20th century. Interesting similarities can be found in the novels dealing with the issues of meeting of east and west and based on these similarities certain literary universalities can be found in the themes taken for discussion of Arabic prose. The fables of the novels are similar: the main character is in the center of meeting of two – eastern and western cultures, he is brought up in the traditional Muslim family, leaves for Europe to receive education where, as a result of collision with the western values, suffers mental block, the problem of cultural identity is very acute. The main character is confused, he transforms and after many years returns to his native country absolutely changed, though, after sharing European civilization and cultural traditions, feels estranged in his native country, and his self-identification crisis becomes deeper. In sculpturing of the main character the significant role is given to on one hand European and on the other – eastern woman. The metaphor of romantic relations is some kind of norm in such novels, they symbolize different cultures. In relations with the western woman the main character attempts to join her culture and later, after returning to his native country, he strives for reintegration with the eastern society through marriage with the eastern woman.

In Arabic literature of 20th century, the novels dealing with the meeting of east and west, describe psychological development of the main character transformed after meeting with the western culture and attempting to get the sense of purpose, place in his society. Protagonist's intention is to reconcile two different sets of cultural values. It is the impression that such texts are the hybrid literary place for the writer where he attempts to create the third space from reasonable synthesis of the eastern and western values.