The first English-language novel ever published by an Arab-American author is about to mark its 100th anniversary. "The Book of Khalid," the story of two Arab boys who immigrate to New York City in pursuit of the American dream, explores author Ameen Rihani's hopes for harmony between the two cultures. Funk says author Ameen Rihani also anticipated in the political commentary running through "The Book of Khalid," that America and the Arab world would need skilled cultural ambassadors to bridge the gulf between them and to prevent dangerous misunderstandings. He believes that, at this critical time in U.S.-Arab relations, the title character in Ameen Rihani's 1911 novel might serve the role of cultural ambassador very ably.

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The colloquial Arabic used in the novel is far from base and is often poetic. The author uses a unique talent to show a new dimension of colloquial Arabic that belongs to the poor. He wrote like this despite being born into the aristocracy in Damietta, and having spent part of his life in England. He surprised everyone with his one small story that took up a very special place in Arabic literature. Yusuf Idris considered it the best novel about the 1919 Revolution: "The writer draws strange pictures as if in a magical world, all through colloquial language, never letting one feel for an instant..."