Chapter III
Gibran Khalil Gibran: Reconciling the Irreconcilable

Gibran Khalil Gibran was born on January 6, 1883, to the Maronite family of Gibran in Bsharri, a mountainous area in Northern Lebanon. Lebanon was a Turkish province part of Greater Syria (Syria, Lebanon, and Palestine) and subjugated to Ottoman dominion, which granted the Mount Lebanon area autonomous rule. The people of Mount Lebanon had struggled for several years to gain independence from the Ottoman rule, a cause Gibran was later to adopt and become an active member in. The Mount Lebanon area was a troubled region, due to the various outside and foreign interferences that fostered religious hatred between the Christian, especially the Maronite sect, and Moslem populations. Later in his life, Gibran was to seek and unite the various religious sects, in a bid to abolish the religious snobbery, persecution and atrocities witnessed at his time. The Maronite sect, formed during the schism in the Byzantine church in the 5th century A.D., was made up of a group of Syrian Christians, who joined the monk St. Marun to lead their own sectarian thought. His mother Kamila Rahmeh was thirty when she begot Gibran from her third husband Khalil Gibran, who proved to be an irresponsible husband leading the family to poverty. Gibran had a half-brother six years older than him called Peter and two younger sisters, Mariana and Sultana, whom he was deeply attached to throughout his life, along with his mother. Kamila’s family came from a prestigious
religious background, which imbued the uneducated mother with a strong will and later on helped her raise up the family on her own in the U.S. Growing up in the lush region of Bsharri, Gibran proved to be a solitary and pensive child who relished the natural surroundings of the cascading falls, the rugged cliffs and the neighboring green cedars, the beauty of which emerged as a dramatic and symbolic influence to his drawings and writings. Being laden with poverty, he did not receive any formal education or learning, which was limited to regular visits to a village priest who doctrined him with the essentials of religion and the Bible, alongside Syriac and Arabic languages. Recognizing Gibran’s inquisitive and alert nature, the priest began teaching him the rudiments of alphabet and language, opening up to Gibran the world of history, science, and language. At the age of ten, Gibran fell off a cliff, wounding his left shoulder, which remained weak for the rest of his life ever since this incident. To relocate the shoulder, his family strapped it to a cross and wrapped it up for forty days, a symbolic incident reminiscent of Christ’s wanderings in the wilderness and which remained etched in Gibran’s memory. At the age of eight, Khalil Gibran, Gibran's father, was accused of tax evasion and was sent to prison as the Ottoman authorities confiscated the Gibrans’ property and left them homeless. The family went to live with relatives for a while; however, the strong-willed mother decided that the family should immigrate to the U.S., seeking a better life and following in suit to Gibran’s uncle who immigrated earlier. The father was released in 1894, but being an irresponsible head of the family he was undecided about immigration and remained behind in Lebanon. On June 25, 1895, the Gibrans embarked on a voyage to the American
shores of New York. The Gibrans settled in Boston’s South End, which at the time hosted the second largest Syrian community in the U.S. following New York. The culturally diverse area felt familiar to Kamila, who was comforted by the familiar spoken Arabic, and the widespread Arab customs. Kamila, now the bread-earner of the family, began to work as a peddler on the impoverished streets of South End Boston. At the time, peddling was the major source of income for most Syrian immigrants, who were negatively portrayed due to their unconventional Arab ways and their supposed idleness.

Growing up into another impoverished period, Gibran was to recall the pain of the first few years, which left an indelible mark on his life and prompted him to reinvent his childhood memories, dispelling the filth, the poverty and the slurs. However, the work of charity institutions in the poor immigrant areas allowed the children of immigrants to attend public schools and keep them off the street, and Gibran was the only member of his family to pursue scholastic education. His sisters were not allowed to enter school, thwarted by Middle Eastern traditions as well as financial difficulties. Later on in his life, Gibran was to champion the cause of women’s emancipation and education and surround himself with strong-willed, intellectual and independent women. In the school, a registration mistake altered his name forever by shortening it to Kahlil Gibran, which remained unchanged till the rest of his life despite repeated attempts at restoring his full name. Gibran entered school on September 30, 1895, merely two months after his arrival in the U.S. Having no formal education, he was placed in an ungraded class reserved for immigrant children,
who had to learn English from scratch. Gibran caught the eye of his teachers with his sketches and drawings, a hobby he had started during his childhood in Lebanon. With Kamila’s hard work, the family’s financial standing improved as her savings allowed Peter to set up a goods store, in which both of Gibran's sisters worked. The financial strains of the family and the distance from home brought the family together, with Kamila providing both financial and emotional support to her children, especially to her introverted son Gibran. During this difficult period, Gibran's remoteness from social life and his pensive nature were deepened, and Kamila was there to help him overcome his reservedness. The mother’s independence allowed him to mingle with Boston’s social life and explore its thriving world of art and literature. Gibran's curiosity led him to the cultural side of Boston, which exposed him to the rich world of the theatre, Opera and artistic Galleries. Prodded by the cultural scenes around him and through his artistic drawings, Gibran caught the attention of his teachers at the public school, who saw an artistic future for the Syrian boy. They contacted Fred Holland Day, an artist and a supporter of artists who opened up Gibran’s cultural world and set him on the road to artistic fame. Gibran met Fred Holland Day in 1896, and from then his road to recognition was reached through Day’s artistic unconventionality and his contacts in Boston’s artistic circles. Day introduced Gibran to Greek mythology, world literature, contemporary writings and photography, ever prodding the inquisitive Syrian to seek self-expression. Day’s liberal education and unconventional artistic exploration influenced Gibran, who was to follow Day’s unfettered adoption of the unusual for the sake of
originality and self-actualization. Other than working on Gibran’s education, Day was instrumental in lifting his self-esteem, which had suffered under the immigrant treatment and poverty of the times. Not surprisingly, Gibran emerged as a fast learner, devouring everything handed over by Day, despite weak Arabic and English. Under Day’s tutelage, Gibran uttered his first religious beliefs, when he declared "I am no longer a Catholic: I am a pagan," after reading one book given by Day. During one of Fred Holland Day’s art exhibitions, Gibran drew a sketch of a certain Miss Josephine Peabody, an unknown poet and writer who was to later become one of his failed love experiences; later on, Gibran was to propose marriage and be met with refusal, the first blow in a series of heartaches dealt to Gibran by the women he loved. Continually encouraging Gibran to improve his drawings and sketches, Day was instrumental in getting Gibran’s images printed as cover designs for books in 1898. At the time, Gibran began to develop his own technique and style, encouraged by Day’s enthusiasm and support. Gradually, Gibran entered the Bostonian circles and his artistic talents brought him fame at an early age. However, his family decided that early success could cause him future problems.

Gibran came to know the Romantic poets and philosophers, who later had a considerable impact on his output. Gibran’s writings, indeed, adopted an autobiographical tone and embraced such themes as the power of imagination, the natural world, and freedom from norms and established rules.

As an artist, the young teenager was growing. He saw much potential in himself and became attached to the attractive aesthetic world around Day. In 1898, Gibran attended an exhibition of Day’s
photographs, some of which presented the 15-year-old as the model. The exhibition received positive attitudes and allowed the young teenager to gain a foothold within the atmosphere of Boston Society. Gibran was, for example, introduced to Josephine Preston Peabody, a young poet and playwright who attracted him with her beauty and cheerfulness, and later came to play a significant role in his life. Gibran left for Lebanon, but he did so after he had drawn Josephine Peabody from what he remembered of her. He left the drawing for Day and asked him to give it to her (Waterfield, 1998, p. 52).

In Beirut, Gibran joined the Maronite Catholic College (Madrasat-al-Hikmah) from 1898 to 1901 or early 1902, where he cultivated his knowledge of Arabic language and literature; he read classical Arabic literature as well as modern Arabic Christian literature. He also became fluent in French.

Young Gibran was very successful. He was honored to win the “college poet prize.” Also, with the help of other students, he produced a student magazine called Al-Manarah (The Beacon) of which he was the editor, designer, artist, and main contributor. However, his relationship with his father was deteriorating, mainly because the latter discouraged the writer and the artist side in his son. Gibran’s relationship with Josephine Peabody, on the other hand, was fed with an exchange of sweet letters. She thanked him for the drawing and praised his talent. One of Josephine’s comments was: “You have eyes to see and ears to hear. After you have pointed out the beautiful inwardness of things, other people less fortunate may be able to see, too and to be cheered by that vision” (J.P. Journal, December 12, 1898).
There is evidence that Gibran started to see things with open eyes during his student years. For example, he took a position against “enforced” man-made laws; he had frequent arguments with school authorities, and as early as the age of nineteen he was not only excommunicated from the Maronite church, but also was sent to exile in France as a punishment for propagandizing his antiestablishment ideas.

In Paris, Gibran learned of his sister Sultana’s death in April 1902. Soon after his return to America, family tragedies succeeded. In March his half-brother Peter, who like Sultana had tuberculosis, died. Then in June of the same year his beloved mother died of cancer. Gibran received a lot of sympathy from Josephine, and their relationship became deeper and deeper. They exchanged letters and he showed her his drawings.

The young man was so in love with Josephine, he considered her a guiding light in his life as an artist. But this love was one-sided; Josephine saw him rather as a friend or fellow artist. She continued to introduce him to interesting people because she believed he was a genius, and even a prophet (Waterfield, 1998, p. 18).

But after Josephine’s marriage, the two were not close friends anymore. Gibran was still a protégé of Fred Holland Day. In 1904, he had his first exhibition in his mentor’s studio, and it was very successful. His drawings, which presented a transcendental metaphysical vision, made a profound impression on influential members of Boston Society, and some of his pieces were sold. During the exhibition, Gibran met Mary Haskell, a wealthy woman and the
principal of a private school in Boston. She was impressed by his
talent and interested in his work. One of the questions she asked
Gibran was, “Why do you draw the bodies always naked?” to which
the young artist replied, “Because Life is naked. A nude body is the
truest and the noblest symbol of life. If I draw a mountain as a heap of
human forms, or paint a waterfall in the shape of tumbling human
bodies, It is because I see in the mountain a heap of living things, and
in the waterfall a precipitate current of life” (Naimy, 1964, p. 59).

Mary invited Gibran to join her circle of artists and educated
friends. She soon became his confidante and was to follow him as his
“guardian angel.” She was so willing to cultivate his talents that she
later paid for him to attend an art school in Paris and fulfill his
aspiration to be a symbolist painter.

Gibran’s stay in Paris was an important phase in his life, a
phase of growth and self-discovery. He read Balzac and Voltaire and
became more familiar with Rousseau and Tolstoy. Furthermore, he
met prominent figures like the French Romantic sculptor Auguste
Rodin who announced the young artist “the Blake of the 20th century”
(Irwin, 1998, p. 1). He also became friend with Ameen Rihani, a
Lebanese writer and political thinker he admired.

Gibran started to contribute to Al-Mohajer (The Immigrant), a
prominent Arabic-language newspaper in New York. Its publisher,
Ameen Goryeb, had met Gibran and was impressed by his prose
poems recorded on his notebook.
Gibran’s column had a popular appeal and was entitled “Tears and Laughter”, the pieces of which later formed the basis of his book *A Tear and a Smile*.

Gibran’s relationship with Mary veered toward romance. His letters became increasingly intimate and he gradually shifted from addressing a mentor and a friend to expressing warm feelings. But upon his return to the States, they both remained undecided about the direction of their relationship. Eventually Mary confessed to Gibran her desire to keep him only as a friend and to bring his potential as an artist and man of letters to its fullest. In his biography of Gibran, Naimy writes: “What of Mary? She loves him dearly, values his talents, understands his ambitions and aspirations and looks condolingly on his weaknesses and sins” (Naimy, 1964, p. 99).

In Boston, Gibran made a living through his sketches, poems, and prosepoems. He started to contribute to other Arabic newspapers like *Mir’at al-Gharb* (the Mirror of the West). In 1905, Al-Mohajer published his first Arabic book entitled *Nubdah fi Fan al-Musiga* (On Music, a Pamphlet) which eulogizes music and was probably inspired by Gibran’s visits to the opera. Gibran’s writing, however, started to reflect a rebellious spirit against human oppression and injustice. *Ara’is al-Muruj*, published a year later and translated as *Brides of the Meadows* or *Spirit Brides*, but referred to by Gibran as *Nymphs of the Valley*, expresses the young writer’s anti-feudal and anti-clerical convictions. The book is a collection of three allegories which take place in Northern Lebanon.
Much in the same tone is *Al-Arwah al-Mutamarridah (Spirits Rebellious)*, another collection of four short stories published in 1908. The book criticizes the power that both the church and the state display and was burned in public in Beirut for its revolutionary ideas. “Kahlil the Heretic” is particularly defiant. As the title of the story suggests, Kahlil is condemned by authority in the village for questioning the monks’ wealth in relation to the poor peasants, and for encouraging the latter to reject the authority’s control over their lives.

Through his publications and the political awareness he developed during his stay in Paris, Gibran became well-known within the American Syrian community. He was invited by the Syrian Student Club to give a talk and he joined Al-Halaqat al-Dhahabiyyah (the Golden Links Society), an international Syrian organization with US branches, the purpose of which was the improvement of the lives of Syrians around the world.

Gibran moved to New York in 1912 with the encouragements of Mary and his friend Ameen Rihani who had already moved there and for whom Gibran had done the illustrations in his book *The Book of Khalid*. Gibran, too, was convinced that a wider audience awaited him.

In New York Gibran cultivated his contacts and was introduced to dealers of the galleries of art. He exchanged visits with Mary who remained his financial, intellectual, and emotional support for the most part of his life. Mary, indeed, saw Gibran as a higher person with prophetic qualities. In 1913, she encouraged him to move to a bigger studio so he would be able to work more comfortably, and she paid his rent.

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The Broken Wings, which was published in Arabic in 1912 and dedicated to Mary Haskell, increased Gibran’s fame in the Arab world. Then the Arabic newspaper Al-Funun (The Arts), created in 1913, furthered his literary career. Its editor Nasib ‘Arida, a close friend of Gibran, published his poems, prose-poems, essays and parables including a collection entitled A Tear and a Smile which won him a further public acceptance. Through Al-Funun, Gibran also met Mikhail Naimy, another Lebanese immigrant writer who was to become his closest friend.

Gibran expanded his influential acquaintances of painters, poets, and playwrights. He became a popular member of the Poetry Society where he sought favorable reception of his English writing by English-speaking readers.

Gibran would read his parables that would become The Madman and The Forerunner, and then later pieces that would make The Prophet.

Among other members of the Poetry Society was Corinne Roosevelt Robinson, a sister of Theodore Roosevelt and an established poet. She, who had described his read pieces from The Madman as “destructive and diabolical stuff...contrary to all forms of morality and true beauty” (Chapel Hill Papers, March 14, 1915), became a fan of Gibran and an admirer of his writings.

Gibran also met the novelist and poet James Oppenheim who led him to become a member of the advisory committee of The Seven Arts (1916). This was a widely acclaimed literary journal which published Gibran’s work along with other prominent writers like
Sherwood Anderson, D. H. Lawrence, and Eugene O’Neil. It was, therefore, a vehicle for Gibran’s success in the English-speaking world, especially that he was the first immigrant to join its board.

Gibran was also developing as an artist. He started to work with wash drawings but remained faithful to a symbolist style that focused on naked human bodies delicately intertwined (and for which Gibran became famous, even though his art has received much less attention than his literary work).

Starting from 1914 and with Mary’s help, he arranged exhibitions in New York and Boston, and every time he was satisfied with the results. The painter Albert Pinkham Ryder is said to have visited Gibran’s exhibition of December 14, 1914, and to have praised the young artist’s work saying: “Your pictures have imagination, and imagination is art” (Chapel Hill Papers, April 11, 1915).

Gibran continued to give talks to the Syrian audience in New York which welcomed him as a writer and also as a spokesman for their causes, especially Arab nationalism and Syria’s independence from the Ottoman Empire. Gibran, indeed, was an advocate of Syria relying on herself and her resources to solve her own problems as well as unity among his people rather than sectarian divisions.

After the outbreak of World War I, Gibran’s political activism increased. He worked with the Syrian-Mount Lebanon Volunteer Committee, advising Syrian residents in the United States on how to join the French army involved in the war, and advocating Arab independence from the Ottoman Empire. This goal, Gibran maintained, should be achieved through revolution rather than
"patience" which he called “The Oriental poison” (qtd. in Bushrui & Jenkins 1998, p. 134)

Gibran also conducted fund-raising activities after the war to help his starving people in Lebanon in addition to writing political pieces. His two war poems of 1916 reveal a bitter tone of an angry young man; “Dead Are My People” mourned his dying countrymen and “In the Dark Night” appealed for help from the West. His English book The Madman, published in 1918, included a famous short prose-poem entitled “Defeat, My Defeat” in which Gibran converts his failure into a sharp sword:

“Defeat, my Defeat, my shining sword and shield.
In your eyes I have read
That to be enthroned is to be enslaved,
And to be understood is to be leveled down,
And to be grasped is but to reach one’s fullness
And like a ripe fruit to fall and to be consumed.
Defeat, my defeat, my deathless courage,
You and I shall laugh together with the storm,
And together we shall dig graves
For all that die in us,
And we shall stand in the sun with a will,
And we shall be dangerous”.(Madman 68)

From 1915 onwards, Gibran’s writings started to reflect a more universal and metaphysical discourse. Gibran, indeed, developed what Waterfield refers to as an “evolutionary philosophy” (Waterfield, 1998, p. 195). He started to preach the role of poets and artists in developing human consciousness and helping the human soul in its journey towards a higher order, a more divine realm. Gibran always thought of himself as a poet. He told Mary once: “Better a poor
thought, musically said, than a good thought in bad form” (M.H. Journal, April 21, 1916). From the 1920s, he adopted the role of poet-as-prophet, confirming Josephine and Mary’s thought of him as a messianic figure. Gibran eventually became a mystical and isolated hermit; especially that he had already called his studio in New York “The Hermitage”. In a sense he isolated himself from society on the strength of his idealism.

His short story Al-‘Awasif, published in 1920 and translated as The Tempests or The Storm, celebrates withdrawing from society and civilization and joining the natural world. The book criticizes humanity and advises it to seek self-transcendence towards a divine stage. Likewise, his famous volume of pictures entitled Twenty Drawings and which was published in 1919 reflects this philosophy.

Gibran started to write in English, and Mary was his main consultant. The Madman: His Parables and Poems (1918) was his first book originally published in the English language. Writing in English definitely increased English-speaking readers’ recognition of Gibran’s abilities as a writer, since now they started reading his original work rather than a translated one.

Critics argue that The Madman represents a turning point in Gibran’s career also in terms of the writing style; the sense of pessimism and irony in it reflect Gibran’s own disenchantment following the war. The book embraces the Sufi notion of the poet as an isolated figure whose madness is a sign of wisdom. For Gibran, the madman in his book was “[his] only weapon in this strangely armed world” (Beloved Prophet, 1972, p. 89).
The following year “Al–Mawakib” (“The Procession”) came out. It is a long philosophical poem accompanied by eight drawings by Gibran. It rejects civilization and suggests a simpler “recipe” for humanity to step into a better life.

*The Forerunner: His Parables and Poems* followed in 1920 and is a reminder of the human’s potential for progressing towards a greater self. Gibran’s studio had become a meeting-place for leading Arab-American intellectuals who were known as Al-Mahjar or “immigrant writers” like Naseeb ‘Arida, Mikhail Naimy, and ‘Abd al-Masih Haddad.

In 1920, they formed a literary society called Al-Rabita al-Qalamiyya, translated as the Pen Club or the Pen League and sometimes The Pen Bond, which furthered their fame in the Arabic-speaking world. Gibran was elected President, and Naimy a Secretary. The members would meet to talk about common goals like Arab nationalism and Renaissance of Arabic literature. Naimy talked about the first meeting when “the discussion arose as to what the Syrian writers in New York could do to lift Arabic literature from the quagmire of stagnation and imitation, and to infuse a new life into its veins so as to make of it an active force in the building up of the Arab nations” (Naimy, 1964, p. 154).

Gibran worked hard to keep the Pen League group together, but he started to be less openly involved in politics. Indeed, having told Mary “Perhaps the best form of fighting is in painting pictures and writing poetry” (M.H. Journal, August 27, 1920), he wrote a famous prose-poem in 1920 entitled “You have your Lebanon and I have my
Lebanon” the publication of which was banned by the Syrian government. In the poem Gibran contrasts the Lebanon he envisions, of beautiful nature and peace between its people, with the current Lebanon of political turmoil, the Lebanon he describes as the “chess game” between church and state.

Gibran relied less and less on Mary as editor and financier, but they stayed close friends even though their collaboration came to an end with the publication of The Prophet in 1923. In the same year Gibran told Mary in one of his letters: “I care about your happiness just as you care about mine. I could not be at peace if you were not” (K.G. to M.H., April 23, 1923). It is worth mentioning at this point that Gibran was involved in a twenty year literary and love relationship with May Ziadeh, an established Lebanean writer living in Egypt. The two, however, never met; their relationship was carried on wholly by mail and Gibran wanted to keep it secret. In the beginning, Gibran and Ziadeh addressed one another as literary critics, seeking comments on each other’s work. From 1919, their letters became more intimate, more passionate. Ziadeh came to replace Mary’s role as consultant, editor, and conversant. She became for Gibran a remote soul mate and another guiding spirit in his life. He idealized her as a “spiritual being – almost an angel rather than a human being” (Waterfield, 1998, p. 163-164).

Gibran started to contribute to a new magazine, The Dial, which became his main vehicle for reaching the Western audience after the demise of The Seven Arts. Gibran was also still writing
pieces for the Arabic newspapers and maintained solid relationship with the Syrian community both in the United States and abroad.

In 1923, Gibran’s most famous book *The Prophet* was published and immediately received favorable reactions. Gibran knew it was his greatest achievement and the most important book he ever wrote. He had kept the manuscript for years before he had it published, seeking further moments of inspiration. He planned it to be the first of a trilogy; the second book was to be *The Garden of the Prophet* (edited and published in 1933 after Gibran’s death) and the third, *The Death of the Prophet*, was left a fragment.

Barbara Young, a writer and a friend of Gibran, tells the story of her gathering with friends one January 6th, Gibran’s birthday, in remembrance of him.

Each person was to tell his/her first encounter with *The Prophet*. Young writes:

There was a young Russian girl named Marya, who had been climbing in the Rockies with a group of friends, other young people. She had gone aside from them a little and sat down on a rock to rest, and beside her she saw a black book. She opened it. There was no name, no mark in the book. It was *The Prophet*, which meant nothing to her. Idly she turned the pages, then she began to read a little, then a little more. (Young 36)

Another young woman, a teacher in a private school, who is also a fine poet, had a curious story.

The room in which she was teaching was a hall—was a short distance from the outer door. One morning as she stood before her class the door of the room opened and a man, a stranger, entered holding an open book in his hand. Without preliminary he said, “I
have something to read to you, something of most vital importance,” and he read aloud, forthwith, the chapter on children from *The Prophet*.

The young woman was so amazed at the proceeding, the swiftness and ardour of the visitor, as well as the words that she heard coming from his lips, that she was unable to utter a word. He closed the book and left the room. Thus had she come to know of the little black book.” (Young, p. 64-65).

Three years after *The Prophet* and at the height of Gibran’s success, *Sand and Foam* was published in English. It is a book of beautiful sayings (322 of them) accompanied by seven illustrations by Gibran. *Sand and Foam* was followed a year later by another collection of aphorisms under the title of *Kalimat Jibran* (translated as *Spiritual Sayings*). At the time, Gibran started also to contribute articles and drawings to a quarterly journal entitled *New Orient* and which had a universal appeal for East West understanding. The journal echoed Gibran’s message of peace and unity in diversity, and gave him a more international exposure. In 1928, the longest book Gibran ever wrote *Jesus, the Son of Man* was published. It is widely acclaimed as his second most important book, after *The Prophet*. It portrays the life of Jesus and its human rather than supernatural aspect, and reflects Gibran’s inspiration by the teachings of the Christ. Then *The Earth Gods* came out in 1931. It is a dialogue in free verse between three titans on the human destiny. Gibran also wrote a play in English, *Lazarus and his Beloved* and *The Blind*, but it was not published in his lifetime.
In the later years of his life, Gibran suffered from a fatal disease, cirrhosis of the liver. He started to seek refuge in heavy drinking and solitude in his studio (see Appendix B on page 54). The man strong in mind and spirit became increasingly weak and knew that his abilities as a writer were fading away. In a 1930 letter to May Ziadeh he confessed: “I am a small volcano whose opening has been closed. If I were able to write something great and beautiful, I would be completely cured. If I could cry out, I would gain back my health.” (*A Self-Portrait*, 1959, p. 91).

By 1931, Gibran spent most of his time in bed. According to Naimy, Gibran refused an operation that might have saved his life (Naimy, 1964, p. 218).

He instead waited for death, and it came to him at the hospital, at 10.55 pm, on April 10, 1931, at the age of 48. Among other people close to Gibran, his sister Marianna and his best friend Naimy were by his side. Gibran left behind a rich literary production and four hundred pieces he drew and painted. He bequeathed a considerable amount of money to the development of his homeland, Lebanon. His people mourned his death and honored him with a hero’s funeral. The Lebanese minister of arts paid homage to his body with a decoration of fine arts. Gibran’s body was buried in his birthplace, Bsharri, and his belongings and books were later sent to the Gibran museum in the Mar Sarkis monastery.

Kahlil Gibran’s unique poetic expression, characterized by beauty and spirituality, became known as “Gibranism.” His language touches the inner souls of readers and his parables teach them spiritual
lessons. His early short stories, prose poems, and later collections of aphorisms made him widely acclaimed as the greatest of Arab Romantics.

Mikhail Naimy recorded his fascination with his friend saying:

“What shall inscribe the name of the present generation in the scrolls of Time, who they are and where they are? I do not find them among the many “nightingales of the Nile and the warblers of Syria and Lebanon,” but among the few whose lips and hearts have been touched by a new fire. Of those some are still within the womb of Creative Silence; some are breathing the air we breathe, and treading the ground we tread. Of the latter --, nay, leading latter --is the poet of Night and Solitude, the poet of Loneliness and Melancholy, the poet of Longing and Spiritual Awakening, the poet of the sea and the Tempest – Gibran Kahlil Gibran.” (Naimy, 1950, p. 159-60)

Many critics think that Gibran’s poetic genius predominantly lies in the use of metaphor. Gibran indeed creates beautiful images that are charged with emotions and that expand the reader’s vision and imagination. He addressed various subjects about life and humanity like love, beauty, truth, justice, good and evil.

He, for example, described a kiss that is “a goblet filled by the gods from the fountain of love” and talked about love as “a trembling happiness” and poetry as “a flash of lightning; it becomes mere composition when it is an arrangement of words” or as “a deal of joy and pain and wonder, with a dash of the dictionary.”

As Gibran’s interest shifted to mysticism and primitivism, his writings returned again and again to the beauty and purity of nature. He romanticized nature and found in it an inspirational power for his poetry. He identifies the divine essence with the natural world, a
pantheism he had absorbed from his readings under Fred Holland Day’s tutelage. Gibran’s writings establish a mystical union with nature, a relationship of love and harmony. The natural beauty of Gibran’s home village Bisharri was a strong source of inspiration and nurture to his imagination. His poetry is nostalgic of the magnificent scenery of his childhood. It portrays Gibran rejoicing in peace and freedom among the immortal cedars of Lebanon, the famous holy valley of Qadisha, and the mountains of Sannin and Famm al-Mizab.

Yet, inspired by Rousseau’s ideas on the innocence of the natural man as opposed to the man corrupted by civilization and materialism, Gibran repeatedly points out to the contrast between the natural world and the human world. In the former there is peace, harmony, and innocence whereas in the latter there is chaos, injustice, and sorrow. In a letter to Mikhail Naimy dated 1922, he writes: “…the future shall find us in a hermitage at the edge of one of the Lebanese gorges. This deceptive civilization has strained the strings of our spirits to the breaking point. We must depart before they break” (Naimy, 1964, p. 255).

According to Naimy, Gibran once said: “I shall be happy when men shall say about me what they said of Blake: “he is a madman.” Madness in art is creation. Madness in poetry is wisdom. Madness in the search for God is the highest form of worship” (Naimy, 1950, p. 89). Such is Gibran’s poetic expression: a spiritual and prophetic one. Gibran’s romantic philosophy was influenced by what Waterfield called “the Platonizing stream” (Waterfield, 1998, p. 226). As we have already seen, the autobiographical tone of his writings depicts him as a poet-prophet with a sacred mission to humanity.
In one of his aphorisms in *Sand and Foam* Gibran compares himself to Jesus saying: “Crucified One, you are crucified upon my heart; and the nails that pierce your hands pierce the walls of my heart. And tomorrow when a stranger passes by this Golgotha he will not know that two bled here” (p. 61-62).

Gibran often depicts himself as a lonely poet who is more sensitive than other people and who is capable of revealing eternal truths. Again in *Sand and Foam* he writes: “There lies a green field between the scholar and the poet; should the scholar cross it, he becomes a wise man; should the poet cross it, he becomes a prophet”. This more elevated role that Gibran started to play continued to live with him. It, however, reached its profoundest expression through *The Prophet* in which Almustafa seems to voice Gibran’s own spiritual teachings. Indeed whe in an interview Gibran was asked how he came to write *The Prophet*, he answered: “Did I write it? It wrote me” (Daoudi, 1982, p. 99).

Gibran’s writings are known for their prophetic tone against the evils that reigned in his beloved homeland at the time and against other evils that bring humanity to decadence. His message, however, is a healing one. He asserts that this modern world, corrupted by conventions, oppression, and hatred is redeemable through love, good will, and freedom.

Gibran embraced the American Transcendentalists like Whitman, Emerson, and Thoreau. His work bears the influence of their ideas of selfreliance, reincarnation, and the presence of a greater self that each individual is able to grow into. For Gibran human
beings are able to progress toward a divine world. He repeatedly celebrates joining the metaphysical realm as the key to better understand the world and discover higher meanings of life.

Together with Nietzsche, William Blake’s works also contributed in shaping Gibran’s religious ideas. From an early age, he started to question the religion of his birth and the role of priests. He, however, never questioned the existence of some kind of God and continued to be fascinated with Jesus throughout his life.

Gibran, indeed, found in Christ a source of inspiration, an idea that was recurrent in his earlier stories like “Khalil the Heretic” and then later in his English book Jesus, the Son of Man (1928). He considered Jesus a lasting leading figure of humankind. He once wrote in a letter to Mary Haskell: “My art can find no better resting place than the personality of Jesus. His life is the symbol of Humanity. He shall always be the supreme figure of all ages and in Him we shall always find mystery, passion, love, imagination, tragedy, beauty, romance and truth” (K.G. to M.H., April 19, 1909).

Although there are critics such as Najjar (1999) and Hawi (1972) who suggest that Gibran’s writing, which is characterized by a romantic mystical style, had little influence on American letters, his impact particularly on Arab-American literature is recognizable.

Kahlil Gibran was among a younger generation of Arab-American writers who contributed to the ongoing Arabic literary renaissance. This movement had started by the end of the 19th century with revivalist figures in the Arab world like Butrus al-Bustami, Kahlil Mutran, and al-Aqqad, among others who were attracted to
Western poetry and particularly English Romanticism. Living in the American environment undoubtedly helped Arab American literati in their quest to revolutionize the classically conservative Arabic literature. In a way, they reflected the culture of freedom they found themselves in. They freely developed new styles whereas their counterpart modernizers in the East had to moderate them. Arab-American modernists were highly influenced by Western cultures in attempting to reform the traditional use of Arabic language and applying new ideas to Arabic literature. They developed the prose-poem and also introduced Western themes like romanticism, individualism, humanism, and secularism.

It is interesting that Ameen Rihani was a pioneer of this revolution before Gibran, but Al-Mahjar or Pen League writers turned to Gibran’s own ideas and experimentation with language as a source of inspiration. His literary beliefs shaped the views of colleagues. Indeed ‘Abd al-Masih Haddad, a member of the Pen League, described Gibran’s input on the issue as “the awakening of spring in a barren land” (Hawi, 1972, p. 113).

It is worth emphasizing at this point that before even the formation of The Pen League, al-Funun (the arts) contributed widely to the Arabic literary renaissance. Its main goal, indeed, was to lift Arabic literature from the stagnation it fell into. Al-Funun became the main channel for Gibran’s Arabic writings as well as the work of other Lebanese immigrant writers (Waterfield, 1998). The journal sought to promote new forms of literature for the Arabicspeaking world. It spread a new orientation towards the renewal of the Arabic
language, and drew attention to what Arabic literature should be like, not what it currently was like (Naimy, 1967, p. 112-13). Gibran, as well as other members of the Pen Bond, did not promote a radical linguistic reform of the Arabic literature or a destruction of the “sanctity” of formal Arabic. He rather advocated breaking out of traditional patterns in favor of an individual style. As Popp puts it, “[it] was not to be equated with the felling of a tree, but the pruning away of the tree’s dead branches and leaves” (Popp, 2000, p. 132).

In a prose poem entitled “You Have Your Language and I Have Mine,” a response to the old school Arab critics’ attack and what they labeled as “excessive sentimentality…and weak style” (Badawi, 1975, p. 182-3), Gibran writes:

“You have of the Arabic language whatever you wish and I’ll have what pleases my thought and emotions. You have its words and I’ll have its hidden powers you have its preserved stiff corpse and I’ll have its soul you have its dried up rules of grammar and I’ll make of it melodies that echo in the mind and overwhelming dashes of affection that calm the senses”. (qtd. in Najjar, 1999, p. 93).

Gibran’s early works written in Arabic popularized the already burgeoning Romantic tradition. They are considered crucial to the development of modern Arabic literature as they paved the way to a new kind of creativity. Critics even went further in drawing a similarity between Gibran’s impact on 20th Century Arab romantic writers and that of 19th Century Western Romantic figures on their fellow writers.

Gibran’s Arabic pieces were part of a new literary culture that experienced what Waterfield (1998) calls a shift from craftsmanship to inspiration. Gibran indeed sought the beauty of thought more than
the beauty of form. He created new imagery and seemed to adopt a Blakean approach to imagination as the “Divine Vision”.

His writing did not match traditional forms of the past that the neoclassical poets of the 19th and early 20th Centuries were faithful to. Gibran, for example, rejected complex grammar, flamboyant rhetoric as well as meters of classical Arabic poetry. In his Arabic poem *Al-Mawakib (The Procession)* for example, Gibran promoted the idea of using more than one meter in a single poem. The delicate tones of the lines, however, are deeply felt.

Gibran challenged what was considered to be criteria of great poetry. He preferred a free and spontaneous verse, and blended classical Arabic with colloquial Arabic. He embraced a simplified diction and a language that unsophisticated audience could understand and relate to Yet, his simple style is elegant, resonant, and able to communicate profound thoughts. It touches on aspects of our experience as humans. It appeals to our hearts as well as to our minds. Gibran’s writings strikingly create an element of timelessness and universality that penetrate even the translated work.

In The *Broken Wings*, for example, Gibran talks about love as: “the only freedom in the world because it so elevates the spirit that the laws of humanity and the phenomena of nature do not alter its course” (*The Broken Wings*, p. 35).

Also in *A Tear and a Smile*, Gibran describes the Poet as:

“A link Between this world and the hereafter;
A pool of sweet water for the thirsty;
A tree planted
On the banks of the river of beauty,
Bearing ripe fruits for hungry hearts to seek.
An angel
Sent by the gods to teach man the ways of gods.
A shining light unconquered by the dark,
Unhidden by the bushel
Astarte did fill with oil;
And lighted by Apollo”.
(From A Tear and a Smile, p. 134-135).

Gibran’s early publications are also characterized by bitter realism, and unlike traditional Arabic writings, they dealt with challenging themes. For example, *Arayis Al-Muruj (Nymphs of the Valley)*, reflects Gibran’s anti-clerical ideas. One of the issues “Martha”, “Yuhanna the Mad”, and “Dust of Ages and the Eternal Fire” dealt with was religious persecution.

For Gibran, true religion is not an organized but a liberating and personal one. His poem “The Crucified” echoes his life-long belief that the mission of Jesus was not to build institutions and structures, but to build the human spirit.

Gibran writes: “Jesus was nor sent here to teach the people to build magnificent churches and temples. He came to make the human heart a temple, and the soul an altar, and the mind a priest” (*Secrets of the Heart*, 1947, p. 215).

*Nymphs of the Valley*, in addition, addresses social injustices in Lebanon like the exploitation of women and the poor by the rich and the powerful.

Gibran’s early other Arabic writings also point out to the ignored rights of Arab women and call for their emancipation and education. *Al-Arwha Al-Mutamarridah (Spirits Rebellious)*, for
example, portrays a married woman’s emancipation from her husband and a bride’s escape from a forced marriage through death, themes that had remained untouched in Arabic literature.

Gibran’s attempt at bridging the gap between Arabic and Western literature in terms of both form and content presents him as a mediator between both worlds. Gibran communicated a message of reconciliation between his own heritage and the new environment he grew in. He imported Western themes and infused an element of avant-garde experiment into Arabic literature, but he in return had something to offer to the West.

**Bridging East and West**

Former US President Woodrow Wilson once told Gibran: “You are the first Eastern storm to sweep the country, and what a number of flowers it has brought!” (qtd. in Daoudi, 1982, p. 11-12). Gibran, indeed, brought to his adopted land flowers of Eastern spirituality which balanced America’s emerging values of materialism and progress.

Inspired by his own experience as an immigrant writer, Gibran aimed at uniting East and West and creating an intercultural reconciliation that transcends the barriers of language, religion, and politics. Through his contributions to magazines and journal, *The New Orient* in particular, Gibran advocated peace and understanding between the Arab and Western world. Syrud Hussein, editor of *The New Orient*, wrote about Gibran: “There is no more sincere and authentic or more highly gifted representative of the East functioning today in the West than Kahlil Gibran” (qtd. in Gibran & Gibran, 1981, p. 382).
Gibran considered himself as a spokesman of both cultures. He admired America’s achievements and its values of individualism, dynamism, and freedom.

On the other hand, he praised the Arabs’ contributions to the world, but advised them to evade the past and build one’s own future, and to adapt the good aspects of Western civilization instead of blind imitation. Gibran appealed to the new generation of Arab Americans to be proud of both their Eastern and their Western background. In his famous poem “I Believe in You,” also known as “To Young Americans of Syrian Origin,” 1927, Gibran writes: “I believe that you have inherited from your forefathers an ancient dream, a song, a prophecy, which you can proudly lay as a gift of gratitude upon the lap of America.

I believe you can say to the founders of this great nation, “Here I am, a youth, a young tree from the hills of Lebanon, yet I am deeply rooted here, and I would be fruitful.”

Barbara Young recorded Gibran’s impact on the Arab-American community saying:

“To the younger generation of his countrymen, those born in the West of parents who had grown up on their native soil, Gibran was one of the elect of God. They went to him in their perplexities, and he met their problems with quick understanding and divine gentleness that won their undying gratitude and devotion.” She added: “I have never entered one of these [Syrian] restaurants without hearing some mention of him, without someone knowing, and saying, ‘You are the friend of Gibran?’” (Young, 1945, p. 135, 139).

Waterfield, however, argues that the cultural dualism Gibran experienced made him act out different roles among his Western friends of literary circles and his Syrian compatriots. The first were
often radicals and socialists, whereas the latter were rather nationalists. He describes Gibran as a “chameleon” who adapts himself to the demands of both worlds (Waterfield, 1998, p. 149).

Nevertheless, it could be argued that Gibran balanced both the Eastern and Western sides of his identity and came to resolve his cultural division. Mostly in his early Arabic writings, such as The Broken Wings and A Tear and a Smile, Gibran perfectly blended his being an exotic Easterner with being a wounded Romantic. But, broadly speaking, he harmoniously merged his mystic beliefs in a sense of continuity among various faiths and in an inner, personal experience of the divine with his Romantic ideals of universal love and unification of the human race. As a firm believer in the “Divine Unity”, his work addresses the common and the universal. This can be traced to the Poet-Prophet image that Gibran started to evolve into in the 1920’s. For Waterfield this “Romantic fusion of poet and prophet was undoubtedly Gibran’s best opportunity for bringing East and West together” (Waterfield, 1998, p. 238). This is because Gibran is known in the Arab world mostly as a sensitive poet, whereas to his English speaking readers, he is rather a wise philosopher, a prophet.

In his lifetime Gibran created his own spiritual philosophy that relates to different faiths and religions. He called for cultural and religious tolerance and a Christian-Muslim dialogue in particular. Bushrui points out that “Gibran’s name, perhaps more than that of any other modern writer, is synonymous with peace, spiritual values and international understanding” (Bushrui, 1996, p.4). Also Robert Hillyer, an American poet and critic who occasionally visited Gibran
in his studio recorded his memory of him as “a man who had devoted his life to Contemplation, to Peace, to Love, to the Life of the Soul and the myriad forms of Beauty” (Hillyer, 1949, p. 7).

Gibran’s finest work, The Prophet, for example, is written in the language of unity in diversity. It carries with it themes of unity of religions and oneness of mankind. Almustafa’s message in the book, as Bushrui asserts, is “a passionate belief in the healing power of universal love and the unity of being” (Bushrui, 1987, p. 68).

Many critics point to the autobiographical dimension of The Prophet. The fact is there is evidence that Almustafa is a mouthpiece for Gibran’s own teachings. According to Mary Haskell’s journal, Gibran said, while in the process of writing the book, “In The Prophet I have imprisoned certain ideals, and it is my desire to live those ideals…Just writing them would seem to me false” (M.H. Journal, May 12, 1922). This, however, does not seem to be a turning point in Gibran’s life. As early as 1912, he had told Mary: “I have to live the absolute life, must be what I believe in, practice what I preach, or what I practice and what I preach are nothing” (M.H. Journal, April 3, 1912).

Indeed, The Prophet has a colossal readership all over the world, having been translated into a host of different languages. Nevertheless, this most intimate of works remains a book for individuals rather than multitudes. And its presence by the bedside of an individual such as the General provides the best evidence of where its author stands in the conscience of the nation. Who knows how many other great individuals have had their lives touched by the work
of Kahlil Gibran? A putative list would include several US Presidents, among them Woodrow Wilson, who told Gibran: ‘You are the first Eastern storm to sweep this country, and what a number of flowers it has brought!’ Did Wilson’s predecessor, Teddy Roosevelt, share the unbounded enthusiasm which led his sister to host a grand banquet in Gibran’s honour? And when John F. Kennedy memorably exhorted Americans: ‘Ask not what your country can do for you, but ask what you can do for your country’, was he consciously quoting words written by Gibran and addressed to the people of Syria and Lebanon half a century earlier? Or did Gibran anticipate with uncanny accuracy a President with a gift for passionate oratory who appealed as much to the hearts as to the minds of his audience?

These rhetorical questions cannot be satisfactorily answered. Indeed, they are not meant to be answered, but to point the way to a much larger question: what is the secret behind Kahlil Gibran’s astonishing success in America, a success matched by no other writer whose mother tongue was not English? The answer is that he succeeded uniquely in articulating the noblest values of this great country in terms that are powerfully direct and simple, but enlightened by his Oriental soul.

Impressed by the great technological achievements of America, and mindful of the material well-being of the majority of its citizens, Gibran viewed his adopted home from the vantage-point of his own cultural heritage and recognized that the picture was incomplete. Consequently he sought to infuse some Eastern mysticism into Western materialism, believing that humanity was best served by a
man capable of bestriding the two cultures and acknowledging the virtues of each.

His English writings, especially *The Prophet*, represent the best of both worlds, a richly harmonious blend of East and West.

Gibran, however, was not only a man from the East who brought a much needed element of spirituality to the West. He equally became a man of the West, benefiting from an environment in which freedom, democracy and equality of opportunity opened doors before him as would have been possible nowhere else in the world. His achievement thus symbolises the achievement of America herself, a nation of immigrants which through its ingenuity and largesse has created a truly international society thriving on unity in diversity.

America is in some ways entitled to claim Kahlil Gibran for one of her own sons as his native Lebanon. For he spent only the first twelve years of his life in Bisharri, the village where he was born in 1883, before emigrating with his family to the United States. Apart from two brief return visits to Lebanon and a two-year studentship in Paris, he lived out the last two-thirds of his life, including virtually all of his adulthood, entirely on American soil. It was in New York that he died at the age of 48.

Precocious youth though he was, he could scarcely have guessed at his destiny when he and his family set out from Bisharri on the path trod by many Lebanese before them, the journey to the ‘Promised Land’. A rosy future might well have seemed implausible when these ‘five bewildered emigrants’ eventually arrived and settled in Boston’s Chinatown. In 1895 the area was a notorious slum and a
chaotic amalgam of diverse races, cultures and religions, including the largest Syrian enclave in America after New York. A hard life awaited them, especially Gibran’s mother Kamila, to whom fell the task of earning enough to sustain four children, her husband having remained in Lebanon.

The young Kahlil, however, was not deterred by these unpromising beginnings. He was here to make his mark in America; but first, America was to make a significant mark upon him. His full name in Arabic was Gibran Khalil Gibran, the middle name (in its standard transliteration) being his father’s as convention demanded. Not long after he had begun attending the Quincy School in Boston, his teacher of English suggested that he should drop his first name and change the correct spelling of ‘Khalil’ to ‘Kahlil’, making it easier for Americans to pronounce. It is by this modified form of his name that Gibran’s English readers have always known him; only in his Arabic writings did he revert to the original.

At this stage of his life, Gibran’s command of the English language was no more than rudimentary, and the Quincy School duly placed him in a polyglot class where everyone had to start learning English from scratch. His quick wit and verve that helped him to thrive, no doubt well aware that few were likely to succeed in America without a good command of English. A few years later, a decade after arriving in Boston, he wrote to his cousin N’oula, about to embark on the same transatlantic journey from Bisharri be brave and work hard so that you can speak the language,’ he urged his young kinsman. ‘After that you will find America is the best place on earth.’
By then Gibran had good reason to be grateful to his adopted country, having benefited substantially from the percipience and generosity of several Americans. First among these were Florence Peirce and Jessie Fremont Beale of Denison House, the social centre or ‘settlement house’ in Boston where Gibran’s talents as an artist began to burgeon. So impressed were they by the work of the young immigrant that Jessie Beale felt compelled to bring him to the attention of Fred Holland Day, an avant-garde photographer and publisher with an interest in nurturing gifted young people. Besides becoming Day’s favourite photographic model, the adolescent Gibran gained much from the older man’s guidance and support. Through him he met the poetess Josephine Peabody, another who helped his career and the first person known to have dubbed him ‘prophet’.

By 1904 Gibran had developed sufficiently as a painter to begin exhibiting his work in Boston, with moderate success. More important than the critical reception accorded to his paintings, however, was the presence of a young headmistress at one of these exhibitions; Gibran thus met the woman who became his selfless patroness, benefactress and collaborator, Mary Haskell. This prim, sensitive, dynamic schoolteacher, arguably by far the most important individual in his life over the next two decades, perhaps best personifies the bounty of America as experienced by Gibran. Yet it was an ambivalent relationship, Gibran’s joyous gratitude at times turning to a burdensome feeling of indebtedness.

Such ambivalence equally characterised his attitude towards America, perhaps not surprisingly in one who longed for the place of
his birth and would himself come to symbolise the struggle to
reconcile East and West. The ‘best place on earth’ in 1905 had three
years later become ‘this mechanical and commercial country whose
skies are replete with clamour and noise’. A further three years on,
Gibran was describing America as ‘far greater than what people think;
her Destiny is strong and healthy and eager.’ By June 1912 he had
amplified this into the observation that What is real and fine in
America is hidden to the foreigner...the real splendor of America is in
her ideal of health, her power to organize, her institutions, her
managements, her efficiency, her ambition October of the same year,
by contrast, found him musing on the advice of the writer Pierre Loti,
who had urged him to ‘save your soul by going back to the East.
America is no place for you.’

The years 1911 and 1912 were of great consequence for Kahlil
Gibran. After two years in Paris studying art at Mary’s expense, he
was ready to start making a proper living from his paintings and
drawings. His writings, not yet in English, were also beginning to win
him some renown, albeit purely among Arab readers. It was time for
him to move to New York, where the ambience and consciousness
would be better suited to his aspirations than stately Boston. Not that
Boston had played an insignificant part in his intellectual and artistic
upbringing. It was there that he was exposed to the transcendentalism
of Emerson, Thoreau and Whitman, fashionable in 1890s Boston, and
the influence of which is discernable in those of his writings which
display a joyous feeling of oneness with nature. There, too, Gibran
had inevitably been cast in the role of an exotic attraction, ‘a talented
and precocious visionary who could draw like an angel’. But that airy world was far behind him now, and the youth was a man of very nearly thirty years with no patience for transience or superficiality.

Gibran came to live in New York at the instigation of his fellow Lebanese émigré writer Ameen Rihani, another whose life was devoted to the promotion of East-West understanding; in 1911 he provided the illustrations for Rihani’s pioneering work *The Book of Khalid*, the first attempt by an Arab at a novel in English. At once Gibran was struck by the difference between Boston and New York. ‘And what can I tell you of New York?’ he wrote to Mary:

> I have met many people with a saintly respect for art - people who are hungry for the beautiful and the uncommon. Of course I love Boston- but Boston is full of fear- and one must be very strong to live in such a calm and solitary place. (beloved prophet, 24)

> Here, despite his origins in a small village in Lebanon, was a big city with which Gibran could readily identify. Mary observed as they took the bus down Fifth Avenue that ‘he sat as if the city and he were an orchestra, and the air was full of their music’. Later she noted his comments on his developing relationship with the city, once again characterised by ambivalence:

> New York is a strange place, it has its own technique in bringing a man out. It is to begin him socially and end him professionally. I want to begin professionally. But I can’t change New York technique, and I don’t feel the strength to combat it besides doing my work. So to a certain extent I accept it and am being known in the New York way. (beloved prophet 38)

> Although in every other sense his home would always be the much longed-for Bisharri, New York became Gibran’s professional home. Crucially, New York provided him with the ‘fine, large studio’ at 51 West Tenth Street where he was to produce his finest work, and which he dubbed ‘The Hermitage’. He moved in early in 1913.
Gibran the artist was about to recede into the shadow of Gibran the writer. He urged by the incessant calls for enfolding of the twin sisters lovingly nursed by his soul—Poetry and Art—was far from being content with the small and slow conquests he was making in the world. To the American public he offered his art without his poetry. To the Arab public, his poetry without his art. The English-speaking world could not read his Arabic poetry; the Arabic-speaking world could not understand his western art. The twins must be made to work as one team. For that he must write in English.

In his attempts to master the English language, Gibran was fortunate indeed to have the unstinting help and encouragement of Mary Haskell. As early as 1912 he told her of his determination to write in English, and his plans for two works in particular. One of these he was already calling The Madman, under which title it was published six years later. The other, as yet untitled and simply referred to as ‘My Book’, was to be built around the teachings of an ‘Island God’ in exile. This took a full eleven years to evolve into the work we now know as The Prophet.

Mary was used from the start as a consultant on Gibran’s English writings, a role she undertook with relish. At first she was like his teacher, helping him appreciate the nuances and subtleties of idiomatic English. Gibran was no beginner, but he was a quick learner; before long her help was confined to correcting his punctuation and grammar, and occasionally suggesting an alternative word for greater felicity of sound. Beginning in June 1914, he sought her comments on most of his English output as it was being written.
and rewritten: first *The Madman*, then *The Forerunner*, and finally *The Prophet*, whose publication in 1923 marked the end of their collaboration of the corrections she made to the galley proofs of *The Prophet*, Gibran wrote:

> Your blessed touch makes every page dear to me. The punctuations, the added spaces, the change of expressions in some places, the changing of ‘Buts’ to ‘Ands’ and the dropping of several ‘Ands’-all these things are just right. For her part, Mary said of him in 1920:

> He knows more English than any of us, for he is conscious of the bony structure of the language, its solar system. (from beloved prophet, P - 68).

Mary was also the first to see, and edit, the prose poem he wrote in 1915 to the distinguished American artist Albert Pinkham Ryder, whom he described as ‘the one painter whom I honour with all my heart’. The aging Ryder had delighted him by unexpectedly attending his exhibition at the Montross Gallery, and examining in detail the paintings which moved one of Gibran’s friends to say: ‘He came West for the spirit of the West - but he is the East as it works upon us.’ It was then Ryder’s turn to be doubly delighted, first by the poem addressed to him and later, after sitting for Gibran, by a very fine pencil drawing of his distinctive bushy-bearded features. Apart from Thomas Edison, in Gibran’s opinion ‘so representative of America,’ there was no American whose likeness he wanted to capture with his pencil more than that of Ryder.

The poem to Ryder was Gibran’s first published work in his adopted tongue, and as such represents a considerable achievement, despite being touched with hyperbole. The following lines already show traces of the style that would later become familiar to millions,
as well as illustrating Gibran’s attachment to the idea of the poet as prophet:

Poet, who has heard thee but the spirits that follow thy solitary path? Prophet, who has known thee but those who are driven by the Great Tempest to the lonely grove? And yet thou art not alone, for thine is the Giant-World of super-realities, where souls of unborn worlds dance in rhythmic ecstasies; and the silence that envelops thy name is the very voice of the Great Unknown. O, poet, who has heard thee but the spirits that follow thy footprints? O, prophet, who has known thee but those the Tempest carries to the lonely fields? O, most aloof son of the New World, who has loved thee but those who know thy burning love? (beloved prophet 220.)

It was to be some time before Gibran would again strike such a resoundingly positive note in his writings. It is as though he aged overnight, made melancholy by the cloud of World War I which extended to all parts of the distant Ottoman empire including his beloved Lebanon. The Madman, published as the war came to a close, is by and large a sombre collection of parables and poems, characterised principally by a strong sense of irony; likewise The Forerunner, published two years later. The astringency of these books contrasts sharply with the consoling tone of Gibran’s most famous work.

In June 1918, Gibran met another of that small band of Americans who could justifiably claim to have contributed materially to his success. After The Madman had been refused by a number of publishers, he turned to the young and inexperienced Alfred Knopf, whose name has since become inextricably linked with that of Gibran in the minds of the reading public. ‘Everybody speaks highly of Knopf as a man, and also as a publisher,’ wrote the poet shortly before their first meeting. ‘He is young and has an eye for the beautiful [and]
he is honest - he does not leave anything unsaid,’ Gibran noted with approval when the contract to publish *The Madman* was signed a few days later. It was a bold gamble on Knopf’s part, but his remarkable faith in a writer unknown to English-speaking readers was to be richly and deservedly rewarded. He subsequently published all of Gibran’s English works including *The Prophet*, as well as several works originally written in Arabic and translated by others into English.

Both *The Madman* and *The Forerunner* enjoyed largely favourable critical reviews which ensured enough sales for Knopf to persevere with Gibran. Ironically *The Prophet* was much less sympathetically received, gaining its vast readership almost exclusively by word-of-mouth recommendation. It was *The Madman* which established his credentials as a writer to be taken seriously in America and this was reflected in the many invitations he began receiving to read, speak or just appear at a variety of functions. The Poetry Society of America, at first unsure how to respond to him, became a useful testing ground for reaction to his latest piece in English. It was here that he made the acquaintance of one of his most notable champions, Corinne Robinson, sister of Theodore Roosevelt. The Society invited him, among other things, to lecture on Walt Whitman and his influence.(beloved prophet p.311).

Although there is no record of what Gibran said on this occasion, he may well have referred to Whitman’s fine poem ‘Prayer of Columbus’, containing a passage which foreshadows *The Madman* as well as reinforcing Gibran’s view that the line between poet and prophet is a thin one:
Is it the prophet’s thought I speak, or am I raving?
What do I know of life? what of myself?
I know not even my own work past or present,
Dim ever-shifting guesses of it spread before me,
Of newer better worlds, their mighty parturition,
Mocking, perplexing me.(Whitman p.202)

In 1919 Gibran’s success as an artist, which contributed in no small part to well-founded comparisons between him and the great poet-painter William Blake, reached its zenith with the publication by Alfred Knopf of a volume entitled Twenty Drawings. The enthusiastic introduction by Alice Raphael, a leading art critic of the day, offers some illumination of this aspect of Gibran’s creative genius.

It is at [the] dividing line of East and West, of the symbolist and the ideationist, that the work of Kahlil Gibran presents itself as an arresting type in our conception of painting.

He senses the meaning of the earth and her productions; of man, the final and the consummate flower, and throughout his work he expresses the interrelating unity of man with nature.

His centaurs and horses have a charm beyond their natures so that they are never wholly animal in character. …in regarding these centaurs we sense the beast that is yet man and again the man which is and must be animal; we become conscious of that evolution upward which is in itself a miracle, although there is a barrier which will forever prevent man from clutching the stars. (Bushiri p.100)

This most productive period of Gibran’s life also saw him reach a peak as a writer in Arabic, with the publication in 1920 of al-‘Awasif (The Tempests), a collection of short narratives and prose poems
which had appeared in various journals. At the same time Gibran also became founder-president of a literary society called *al-Rabita ‘l-Qalamiyya (The Pen Bond)*. The original members of *Arrabitah*, as it was known for short, were all leading Arab-American writers: Mikhail Naimy, Naseeb ‘Arida, Nudra Haddad, Rashid Ayyub, Ilya Abu Madi, and Gibran himself. The society was to exert enormous and lasting influence on the renaissance in Arab letters, both in America but in other parts of the globe including the Arab world itself. In particular, its members developed a unified approach to Arabic literature and art, and introduced a much-needed spirit of avant-garde experiment into a largely fossilised institution. Fired by Romantic ideals of individual inspiration, pantheism and universal love, they revitalised a great literary language by bringing it closer to the colloquial. And like so many pioneers in different fields throughout history, their unfettered approach was fiercely reviled by reactionaries while being vigorously embraced by those who were hungry for innovation. (Gibran his life and work p.17)

The success of what can only be described as a literary revolution, spearheaded by Gibran, was due in no small part to its genesis in New York, far away from the seat of the traditions to which it offered an unprecedented challenge. There was no Ottoman regime to oppress these writers of al-Mahjar, as the Arab literati in America were known collectively. By the same token, their very remoteness from their roots induced powerful emotions which, coupled with the many-sided influence of Western culture, inspired some exceptional poetry and prose, not least from Kahlil Gibran himself.
Few would contest Gibran’s status as the greatest of Arab Romantics and father of a 20th-century Romantic tradition whose impact on Arab writers has been at least as strong as that of 19th-century figures such as Wordsworth and Keats on their English-speaking counterparts. He was not just a Romantic, however. His success as a writer in both Arabic and English gave him a platform for the expression of views which he felt his fellow Arabs needed to hear, and on occasion he could be quite didactic. His Arabic articles in the early 1920s were dominated by the message that the developing nations should adopt only the constructive aspects of Western society. He feared that the East was either being seduced by the more dangerous attractions of the West or else turning its back altogether. The eminent Indian writer Rabindranath Tagore, whom he met in December 1920, was given a stern lecture on this subject, as Gibran subsequently reported to Mary Haskell:

You know Tagore has talked about America as a money-grabbing land without a vision. I tried to say that spirit may be manifest in machinery, that material and spiritual are not opposed, but that spirit is in all of life and in everything. (beloved prophet p.337)

However, the ambivalence which Gibran still felt about the West is evident from a letter which he wrote barely a week later to Mikhail Naimy. Upset by the delayed publication of one of his works due to problems with a printing press, he complained: ‘The West is now a machine, and everything in it is tied to the machine.’ (Naimi, Gibran his life and work 19) Yet at the same time Mary Haskell records his view of America and the newly-republicised Soviet Russia as the joint exemplars of a ‘new consciousness’ grounded in the search for ‘goodness and reality’. (Chapel papers73)
However homesick Gibran may have been, and despite his variously expressed with to ‘go back to Lebanon, and withdraw from this civilization that runs on wheels’, (self portrait p.94), he was never slow to declare his appreciation for the nation which had taken him to its bosom. One of the letters which he wrote to May Ziadah, a Cairo-based Lebanese writer with whom he maintained a remarkable 20-year literary and love relationship entirely through correspondence, contains a witty and perceptive passage written in June 1919:

The Americans are a mighty people, indefatigable, persistent, unflagging, sleepless and dreamless. If they hate someone, they kill him with indifference; if they love someone, they smother him with kindness. He who wishes to live in New York should keep a sharp sword by him, but in a sheath full of honey; a sword to punish those who like to kill time, and honey to gratify those who are hungry.(bushiri love letters p.23)

In another letter to Mary, in January 1925, he wrote more affectionately:

The Americans are, of all peoples in the world, the most fond of celebrating birthdays and of sending and receiving birthday presents. And for a reason that has escaped me, the Americans shower their kindness on me on such occasions. On the sixth of his month I was embarrassed by their overwhelming kindness and filled with a deep sense of gratitude.(beloved prophet p.140)

The first of these two passages was written a year after the publication of The Madman; the second just over a year after The Prophet, whose success sealed the unreserved acceptance into American society which Gibran had always craved.

The overall effect of such acceptance on Gibran was to make him feel more truly a ‘citizen of the world’, a genuine cosmopolite bestriding both East and West. As if to underline this, in 1925 he was invited to become an officer of the New Orient Society in New York, which was dedicated to the promotion of East-West understanding. It
was a singular honor, for the Society’s quarterly journal, to which he was also asked to contribute, boasted a distinguished list of writers including Annie Besant, John Dewey, Bertrand Russell, H. G. Wells, and Claude Bragdon. Bragdon, who thought very highly of Gibran and his writings, once asked him for his impression of America. Gibran is said to have replied:

Conceive of the world as a rose-bush in a sky-garden, with races and civilizations for its blooms. Some flourish, from others the petals are falling, here one is withered, and just beside it, where once was a great red-hearted blossom, only an empty stalk remains to tell the tale. Now on this rose-bush America represents the bud just pressing at its sheath, just ready to blossom: still hard, still green, and not yet fragrant, but vigorous and full of life. (Bragdon p.27)

Gibran was to complete four more books in English: Sand and Foam, The Earth Gods, The Wanderer, and the best of his late works, Jesus, the Son of Man. But the work on which his fame rests will probably always be The Prophet, which Mary Haskell called ‘the most loving book ever written.’ (beloved prophet p.417)

The character of Almitra is thought by many to be based on Mary Haskell, a logic which identifies Gibran himself as Almustafa, and New York or perhaps America as a whole as the city of Orphalese. If such an interpretation is valid, Gibran not only saw himself as the teacher bringing a breath of spirituality to the West, but as the recipient of many bounties in his adopted land. For Almustafa departs for the isle of his birth with a heavy heart, grateful to the people who have given him his ‘deeper thirsting after life.’(The prophet p.88)
And though I have eaten berries among the hills when you would have had me sit at your board, And slept in the portico of the temple when you would gladly have sheltered me, Yet was it not your loving mindfulness of my days and my nights that made food sweet to my mouth and girdled my sleep with visions. (The prophet p.89)

In truth, The Prophet is a work of such universal appeal that there is little to be gained from speculating on the identity of persons or places represented in it. For Gibran’s purpose was a lofty one, and his belief in the ‘unity of being’, which led him to call for universal fellowship and the unification of the human race, is a message which retains its potency today as do the messages of all great poets. Inspired by his experiences in a country far from the land of his origins, he strove to resolve cultural and human conflict, in the process developing a unique genre of writing, and transcending the barriers of East and West as few have done before or since. He became not only Gibran of Lebanon, but Gibran of America, indeed Gibran the voice of global consciousness: a voice which increasingly demands to be heard in the continuing Age of Anxiety.

The Prophet

The Prophet is Gibran’s literary and artistic masterpiece. It remained during the 20th Century America’s best selling book, after The Bible. As of 1998, it has sold 9,000,000 copies in North America alone (Waterfield, 1998, p. 257). It has been translated into at least twenty languages and has become one of the greatest classics of our time. The book is said to be a testimony to the genius of Gibran.

Before The Prophet was born, Gibran told Mary Haskell of his aspirations to satisfy the spiritual hunger of the world: “The world is hungry, Mary, and I have seen and heard the hunger of the world; and
if this thing is bread it will find a place in the heart of the world, and if it is not bread it will at least make the hunger of the world deeper and higher” (*Beloved Prophet*, 1972, p. 264).

Although there are critics like Najjar who argue that Gibran’s idealistic symbolic message of balancing Eastern spirituality and Western material progress did not relieve human suffering around the world (Najjar, 1999, p. 156), readers have found themselves returning to *the Prophet’s* pages to reabsorb its wisdom. Its beloved poetry is commonly read at weddings, baptisms, and funerals throughout the world. The *Chicago Evening Post Literary Review* said of *The Prophet:*

> “Truth is here: truth expressed with all the music and beauty and idealism of a Syrian…The words of Gibran bring to one’s ears the majestic rhythm of Ecclesiastes…For Kahlil Gibran has not feared to be an idealist in an age of cynics. Nor to be concerned with simple truth where others devote themselves to mountebank cleverness…The twenty eight chapters in the book form a little bible, to be read and loved by those at all ready for truth” (qtd in Young, 1945, p. 61).

The book presents Gibran as a writer of prophetic vision who shares his spiritual sensitivities with his readers. It portrays the journey of a banished man called Almustafa, which in the Arabic language means the chosen one. As he prepares to go back to “the isle of his birth,” he wishes to offer the Orphalese, the people among whom he has been placed, gifts but possesses nothing. The people gather around him, and Almitra, the seeress, asks him to “give us of your truth” and the man’s spiritual insights in twenty-six poetic sermons are his gift.
As a wise sage and man of great vision, Almustafa teaches moral values, the mysteries of life, and timeless wisdom about the human experience: marriage, children, friendship, pleasure, death. He, for example, calls for balancing heart and mind, passion and reason, and for giving without recognition because the giver’s joy is his reward.

Almustafa describes the yearning of the soul for spiritual regeneration and self-fulfillment. He teaches that man’s purpose in life is a mystic quest towards a Greater Self, towards Godhood and the infinite. He talks about “your larger selves” (The prophet p. 91) and pictures “together stretch[ing] our hands unto the giver”.

Then at the end of the book Almustafa closes his farewell address saying: “A little while, a moment of rest upon the wind, and another woman shall bear me” (p. 96). This image reflects a romantic vision of eternal rebirth, reincarnation, and continuity of life. It evokes the Unity of Being which Gibran believes in rather than fragmentation. Almustafa’s soul, hence, will return again to its mystical path towards a greater soul.

The Prophet’s words are lucid and beautiful, powerful and inspiring in such aphorisms as “Work is love made visible,” “Your pain is the breaking of the shell that encloses your understanding,” “The soul unfolds itself, like a lotus of countless petals,” and “Thought is a bird of space, that in a cage of words may indeed unfold its wings but cannot fly” (pp. 28, 52, 55, and 60 respectively).

Bushrui remarked that the secret of the book’s success is “Gibran’s remarkable ability to convey profound truths in simple yet
incomparably elegant language” (Bushrui, 1996, p. 4). Yet, this is no surprise; simplicity and delicacy of language are distinguishing aspects of Gibran’s writings. In his sermon on Joy and Sorrow Almustafa says:

“When you are joyous, look deep into your heart and you shall find it is only that which has given you sorrow that is giving you joy.

When you are sorrowful look again in your heart, and you shall see that in truth you are weeping for that which has been your delight.”

(The Prophet - p.29)

The positive and optimistic teachings of the book are appealing. Almustafa strongly believes in the power of the human soul. He speaks with a tone that is consoling and filled with hope and compassion for humanity, seen to be in need for self-realization. Speaking of God and Evil, Almustafa has this to say:

“You are good when you are one with yourself yet when you are not one with yourself you are not evil. For a divided house is not a den of thieves; it is only a divided house. And a ship without rudder may wander aimlessly among perilous isles yet sink not to the bottom.” (The Prophet - 64)

Gibran also beautifully combines his Romantic thoughts of nature with his teachings. In his sermon on Reason and Passion, for example, he writes: “Among the hills, when you sit in the cool shade of the white poplars, sharing the peace and serenity of distant fields and meadows-then let your heart say in silence, “God rests in reason.”

And when the storm comes, and the mighty wind shakes the forest, and thunder and lightning proclaim the majesty of the sky, -- then let your heart say in awe, “God moves in passion” (p. 51).

Critics agree that The Prophet is partly autobiographical. Mary is often said to be the inspiration for Almitra, and America or New York for the city of Orphalese. The twelve-year wait Almustafa
experienced before returning home from the land of the Orphalese seems to equal Gibran’s own twelve-year stay in New York City.

In regard to Almustafa’s departure for the land of his birth and his gratefulness to the people who have given him his “deeper thirsting after life” (The Prophet - p. 88), it reflects Gibran’s everlasting dream to go back to his homeland and his gratefulness to the country which he made his home for the last twenty years of his life.

While creating the prophecy of Almustafa, Gibran undoubtedly considered his own experience as an “exotic Easterner” living in America and his interest in teaching Eastern spirituality to the West. Bushrui and Jenkins emphasize the image of the wise man coming from the East and argued: “the idea of a sage dispensing wisdom among the people of a foreign land no doubt appealed to Gibran” (Bushrui & Jenkins, 1998, p. 99).

The book apparently also draws on Gibran’s readings, thoughts, and contemplations through the years. It is inspired by Biblical literature, Christian and Sufi mysticism, Buddhism, Hinduism…But we can also trace the influence of the Romantics and Transcendentalists. Talking about The Prophet, Mary Haskell promised Gibran that “in our darkness and in our weakness we will open it, to find ourselves again and heaven and earth within ourselves” (M.H. to K.G., October 2, 1923). Mikhail Naimy added: “Such books and such men are our surety that Humanity, despite the fearful dissipation of its incalculable energies and resources, is not yet bankrupt” (qtd in Bushrui 1975, p. 9).
*The Prophet* seems to reflect Gibran’s efforts to unite various faiths and religious. Gibran himself declared that *The Prophet* wrote him instead of him writing *The Prophet* (Daoudi, 1982, p. 99). Behind Almustafa’s global vision of a harmonious universe healed by the power of love and unity, there is an underlying theme of the unity of all religions and the essential oneness of humanity. Gibran communicates a universal humanist message and truths relevant to all cultures and times. In *The Prophet*, according to Bushrui & Jenkins, “East and West meet in a mystic union unparalleled in modern literature” (Bushrui & Jenkins, 1998, p. 228). Gibran’s reputation in the Western world rests on his masterpiece *The Prophet*. He is looked up to as a master of philosophy whose teachings are immortal. The fame of *The Prophet* in terms of its worldwide readership, however, has shadowed the fame of Gibran’s earlier Arabic writings through which he had already established a literary name for himself as a distinguished writer in Arabic.

It should be noted that experts in modern Arabic literature have noticed that some of Gibran’s translations into English may sound artificial and inadequate, mainly because Arabic and English belong to two different families of languages, but they do not sound as such in the original Arabic.

For example, with the English translation of Gibran Arabic poem “The Procession,” which was his first attempt at writing in classical Arabic with its rhetorical decoration, metric patterns, and musicality, a certain charm and elegance seem to fade. It is evident that the original flavor of a literary work stands alone. It must be
emphasized, however, that a fair degree of grace and greatness penetrates the translation task and Gibran’s message can still be captured.

**The Broken Wings**

First published in 1912, *The Broken Wings (Al-Ajniyah al-Mutakassirah)* is one of Kahlil Gibran’s early experimental works through which he sought to reform the Arabic literature and culture. In a manner unknown in traditional Arabic writing, it is free from rhetorical flourishes but more importantly, it debates the issue of the oppressed Arab woman in the Middle Eastern society of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

The novella was, naturally, attacked by conservatives, but overall it received a wide vogue and favorable reviews in the Arab world which at the time was thirsty for new ideas. It even boosted Gibran’s literary career. According to Gibran himself, *The Broken Wings* was welcomed as “a wonderful work of art,” “perhaps the most beautiful in modern Arabic,” and as “a tragedy of subtlest simplicity” (K. G. to M. H., May 6, 1912).

It is Gibran’s longest sustained narrative, written in the tradition of “Romeo and Juliet” and based on oriental settings and images. Inspired by his own first love and bitter experience in his home village Bsharri, *The Broken Wings* gives the taste of the bittersweet, of the beauty and pain of young love. It is an alive and profound story characterized by beautiful prose and evocative imagery, a tale of passion doomed by the restrictions of society and the power and greed of the clergy.
From another romantic perspective, Gibran once again describes the beautiful nature in North Lebanon which fired his imagination and stirred his homesickness up to his death. In the “Forward” we see him rejoicing in spiritual exaltation from remembering “those valleys full of magic and dignity,” and “those mountains covered with glory and greatness trying to reach the sky” (p. 18).

Young Kahlil is introduced to Faris Karama, a wealthy widower, and immediately falls in love with Selma, Karama’s only child. Selma is equally attracted to Kahlil. But a powerful priest, who is after the family’s fortune, puts pressure on Faris Karama and demands Selma’s hand for his nephew Mansoor Bey. Despite Selma’s protests, her father accepts the match and sends his daughter to a loveless life. With Fares’ death, Mansoor Bey takes over Selma’s inheritance and begins to waste it in gambling and other thoughtless spending. Meanwhile, Selma resumes her chaste relationship with Kahlil. But when Mansoor Bey becomes suspicious, he demands that Selma gives him an heir. She chooses to confine herself to her new life and thinks of her future infant as a guide out of the unhappiness that imprisons her. Selma’s baby dies minutes after birth and she follows him because of weak health. Kahlil finds himself alone in agony by Selma’s tomb.

Gibran’s narrator delicately paints his feelings when describing the blossoming of his love. He talks about Selma’s unparalleled beauty and virtue, her sweetness and nobility of spirit. She lives inside him as a “supreme thought, a beautiful dream, an overpowering emotion” (p. 52).
He believes in the transcendental power of Romantic love and in its ascendancy over tradition. For him, true love is a supreme way of achieving selfrealization and is the noblest of human attainment. It becomes a spiritual accord that brings him heavenly inspiration, for through Selma’s eyes he sees the angels of Heaven looking at him (p. 20).

Selma, however, tells her beloved that the true nature of a woman’s soul is a mixture of love and sorrow, affection and sacrifice (p. 105). Her understanding of the situation is deeper and more complicated. Unable to overcome the values of her society, she chooses commitment to her father and unloving husband over running away to Kahlil’s love, and so she sacrifices true love for social customs. She prays: “help me, my Lord, to be strong in this deadly struggle and assist me to be truthful and virtuous until death” (p. 77).

Powerless and resigned, she is convinced that “a bird with broken wings cannot fly in the spacious sky” (p. 114). For Waterfield, the “broken wings” of the title are “the wings of love on which the young couple first explore the exalted domain of love, only to find themselves brought abruptly down to earth by harsh realities” (Waterfield, 1998, p. 60).

Gibran’s narrator also sees himself as a wounded bird, but takes a stronger stance against convention, male chauvinism, and corruption of the Lebanese aristocracy. His criticism is especially harsh when it comes to the heads of religion whom he accuses of maintaining the oppression of women. He says: “the Christian Bishop and the Moslem imam and the Brahman priest become like sea reptiles who clutch
their pray with many tentacles and suck their blood with numerous mouths” (p. 62).

Gibran sympathetically describes women in his native Lebanon as victims of a despotic patriarchal system. They are prisoners of social expectations and are treated as a commodity to be purchased, like in the case of Selma whose function was to take her father’s riches to a husband who treated her like another possession. Gibran draws attention to “the miserable procession of the defeated” and “innocence defiled” (p. 84). He urges Selma to liberate herself from the chains of social norms and to run away with him from a world of suffering, or what he calls “slavery and ignorance” (p. 113) to another world across the oceans (presumably the West) where “real freedom and personal independence…can be found” (p. 114-115).

In *The Broken Wings*, Gibran is not just a story teller but a culture analyst and a reformer who seeks to correct the wrongs. Najjar writes “that Gibran’s purpose for that story was to satirize in order to reform is evident in his frequent didactic intrusions by which he introduces his dissenting views regarding the conditions of the Arab woman” (Najjar, 1999, p. 168).

The story, however, illustrates Gibran’s attempts at approaching universal truths. He reflects on the meaning of the human existence and portrays himself as a champion of women and of the values of human freedom and dignity. For Shahid, Gibran’s works that speak of women “have a ring of modernity about them as they deal with issues that are still burning and being addressed in our times” (Shahid, 2002, p. 15).
Gibran’s other earlier stories also touch on similar native themes and classify him as a rebel against old culture. In “The Bridal Couch” in *Spirits Rebellious*, Gibran depicts an oppressive patriarchal system that caused bloodshed. Laila is trapped by her father’s social ambitions and is misled by the society’s lies. On the evening of her wedding to an arranged husband, Laila sees her beloved Salim and asks him to run away with her. But bound by social expectations, he refuses and asks her to go back to her new husband. She stabs him to death and then kills herself over his body after she gives a sermon on life and love. In “Rose al Hani”, another narrative in *Spirits Rebellious*, we meet Rose as another victim of forced marriage. But unlike Selma Karama, she breaks her social image of a good wife when she leaves her husband to live with her beloved. Rose tells the narrator the story of her bitter past, but at the same time she seems to tell the story of the plight of the Arab woman in general. She says:

“It is a tragedy written with the woman’s blood and tears which the man read with ridicule because he cannot understand it; yet, if he does understand, his laughter will turn into scorn and blasphemy that act like fire upon her heart” (*A Treasury of Kahlil Gibran*, 1951, p. 186).

**A Tear and a Smile**

*A Tear and A Smile (Dam’ ah wa-Ibtisamah)*, first published in 1914, is an anthology of Gibran’s youthful writings in the Arabic-speaking Émigré newspaper *Al-Mohajer (The Immigrant)*. Gibran’s column, “Tears and Laughter,” attracted a wide attention from his readers both in the Arab world and among the Arab literati in
America. The book contains 56 poetic prose pieces close to the aphoristic, and illustrated with 4 of Gibran’s paintings. In a beautiful and splendid language, the poems, stories, and parables included exhibit the youth’s world of imagination; his self-reflective thoughts and romantic philosophy of life and death, which although at the burgeoning stage, is quiet insightful and universally appealing.

Gibran’s reflections in *A Tear and a Smile* are especially pleasing to those sensitive and emotional souls which are his most fervent admirers.

As the title evokes, the book is a mixture of tears and smiles, mourning and celebration of a wounded lover and solitary poet. But the tears seem to be much more abundant than the smiles. The poet lives in agony and longing for his beloved, for a restoration of beauty in the world, and for a peace of mind, but is convinced that human life is a world of suffering to be lived through until death.

Gibran, indeed, sings of the glory of his tears (p. 48) and the beauty of sorrow. He tells us that a person experiences joy only if he or she has experienced sorrow. Tears have illuminated his heart and mind; they have given him sight and deeper knowledge of life: “A tear to purify my heart and give me understanding of life’s secrets and hidden things” (p. 3). In other times, however, the poet seeks transcendence. In “Have Mercy My Soul,” for example, he asks his soul how long she will continue to torment him.

Gibran strikingly expresses a romantic fascination with death. For him death marks the end of suffering and becomes a life-giver, a transcendental and eternal world where the spirit rests in timelessness.
In “A Poet’s Death is His Life,” the dying youth addresses death as “sweet” and “beloved” friend (pp. 19, 20 respectively) which alone can set his soul free from the sorrow of the world and take him to a greater life.

In addition to “A Poet’s Life is His Death,” other selections in the book like “A Poet’s Voice” and “The Poet” suggest a familiar emphasis on the prophetic role of the poet and, chronologically speaking, these pieces seem to anticipate Gibran’s ripened philosophy in the later years of his career (Hillyer, p xx, in “introduction” to A Tear and a Smile, 1972). Gibran portrays the poet as the one who brings society to a state of harmony and sacrifices his life for the redemption of humanity. In his homeland he is in exile, a stranger in a strange land because his people undervalue his teachings and fail to see his virtues.

The poet is a visionary and, unlike the rest of humankind, clear and universal perceptions are his gift. He is the one who bears ripe fruits for the hungry souls (p. 134) and is capable of opening people’s eyes into eternity and enlightening generations. For Gibran the poet is a “singing bird” (p. 134), “A shining light unconquered by the dark” and even an “Angel sent by the gods to teach man the way of gods” (p. 81).

The poet lives somewhere between a real world and a transcendent world. He is the final stage in the evolution of man which he describes as a process from descent into the material world to alienation to a return to the spiritual universe. Hence he reveals his passionate belief that men are capable of discovering their inherent
divinity because humanity is the spirit of divinity on earth (p. 191). He emphasizes the deeper power of the soul, for true light comes from within man. Gibran rejoices in feelings of self-fulfillment through a mystical union with God who is “the Ocean of Love and Beauty” (p. 4). He invites us to a contemplative life rather than the comfort of materialism. He opens “The Playground of Life” saying:

“A minute moving among the patterns of Beauty and the dreams of Love is greater and more precious than an age filled with splendor granted by the weak to the strong” (p. 120).

Gibran accomplishes transcendence also through union with nature. In several of the selections he expresses an aesthetic and spiritual affinity to the valleys and the flowers, the shore and the wind. In “Meeting”, for example, he describes the glorious valley of the Nile and its magical cedars and cypress trees. He associates nature not only with beauty but with purity and friendship. He tells us that nature’s sweet words and tender smile fill the spirit with joy (p. 113).

The hard edge to the book, however, represents Gibran’s frustration and anger with the corruption of humanity. In bitter and ironic tones, he describes a world that glorifies power and the pursuit of richness rather than human values.

He expresses his sympathy with the poor and the wretched who are being exploited and abused by the rich and the powerful. In the same mode as The Broken Wings, Gibran rejects orthodoxy and organized religion. He attacks priests for he believes they embody falsehood, immorality, and evil. He writes: “I beheld priests, sly like foxes; and false messiahs dealing its trickery with the people” (p. 40).
In his famous poem “A Vision,” Gibran reemphasizes his concern for individual freedom in society. He uses an allegory between a caged bird and a caged human heart that laments the imprisonment of men by convention and civilization. The human heart reflects Gibran’s criticism of the oppressiveness of man-made laws which he believes strip the human being of his life and essence.

From a biographical point of view, it is probable that Gibran’s relationship with Josephine Peabody at the time inspired his thoughts in the book. This probability seems consistent with Waterfield’s argument that the poet’s painful love for Josephine created “the melancholy habits and wounded eyes of the Romantic hero” (Waterfield, 1998, p. 88). We can also find a parallel to the feelings of alienation and dissatisfaction with humankind in Gibran’s own life. Nadeem Nainy sees the book as a bridge between a first and a second stage of Gibran’s career, the poet’s longing for his homeland evolved into rebellion against humanity in general. Nainy points out that the tears in A Tear and A Smile “are those of Gibran the misfit rather than of the rebel in Boston, singing in an exceedingly touching way of his frustrated love and estrangement, his loneliness, homesickness and melancholy” (Nainy, 1974, p. 59).

**Khalid and The Prophet: Similar Universal Concerns:**

In spite of the fact that most scholars, in English and in Arabic, have mentioned a kind of relationship between the two apostles, Khalid and the Prophet, very few, not to say none of them, have drawn up a comparative study between the two major works of Arab American literature. It is significant, at this point, to trace a series of
similarities and differences between these two monumental works written in the first quarter of the twentieth century.

The prophetic characteristic of the two heroes paves the way for both of them to discuss with their audience basic issues of a universal and substantial nature. Both Khalid and Al-Mustafa preached among the people of a new city, a city that could possibly make their dreams a reality. Both are ill-tempered and do not hesitate to burn books, pictures and other items to express their anger and dissatisfaction. While Khalid burns pamphlets and books (Khalid, 1911:58,61,65,74) as a sign of refusing conventionalism, the Prophet talks about burning laws and pictures (Gibran, The Prophet, 1966:37,48) as an attempt to obtain liberation from traditions. Both bid farewell to their cities of prophecy-making, New York and Orphalese, going back to their homeland. (Khalid, 1911:138; The Prophet, 1966:3, 95). Both Khalid and Al-Mustafa had their disciples who were at the same time their interviewers and their best listeners and pupils. In that sense Al-Mitra played a similar role to that of Shakib. Both introduced and interrogated the prophet Khalid and the prophet Al-Mustapha.

What common issues were discussed by both prophets? What were their common concerns? In reviewing both texts I could point to several similar topics dealt with in both works. I have tried to cut down the list to eleven. These common topics are: suffering, friendship, soul, truth, knowledge, democracy, falsehood, solitude, work, love and the desert. In the flow of these topics I took the first book as a guide.
For Khalid, suffering is the result of crucified hopes and dreams and one should be prepared for this kind of crucifixion: "if your hopes are not crucified," he says, "you pass into the Paradise of your dreams. If they are crucified, the gates of the said Paradise will be shut against you" (Khalid, 1911:29). As a result "when you dream you are in Jannat. you must be prepared to go through Juhannam the following day" (Khalid,1911:31). This confrontation of dream and reality that ends up with suffering and pain is expressed in the Prophet when Al-Mustafa says: "your pain is the breaking of the shell that encloses your understanding. Much of your pain is self-chosen. It is the bitter potion by which the physician within you heals your sick self" (The Prophet, 1966:52). Both recognize the role of unpleasant feelings in shaping man's perceptions and insights.

Describing the friendship of Khalid and Shakib, the Histoire Intime highlights the ethical standards of this relationship. It says: "One would never permit himself an advantage which the other could not enjoy, or a pleasure in which the other could not share" (Khalid, 1911:46). The Prophet sees in friendship a similar level of ethics where "all thoughts, all desires, all expectations are born and shared with joy that is unclaimed. And in the sweetness of friendship let there be laughter, and sharing of pleasures" (The Prophet, 1966:58-9). Comparing these two definitions of friendship, a short statement could link both very closely: friendship is the act of sharing with joy. A condition of "unexampled friendship" is a "complete oneness" as expressed in the chapter entitled "The Cellar of the Soul" (Khalid, 1911:46), while according to Al-Mustapha "your friend is your needs answered" (The Prophet, 1966:59).
If friendship unites, as Khalid explains, each partner answers the needs of the other, as the Prophet expresses. It is obvious that one concept leads to the other. The first prophet's perception helped shape the second prophet's comprehension.

Both Khalid and the Prophet believe in the power of the soul. Khalid asserts that "The power of the soul is doubled by the object of its love, or by such labor of love as it undertakes" (*Khalid*, 1911:128). This labor of love, or act of love, that supports the power of the soul is highlighted by the Prophet by drawing in words the power of the soul "for the soul walks upon all paths. The soul walks not upon a line, neither does it grow like a reed. The soul unfolds itself, like a lotus of countless petals" (*The Prophet*, 1966:55). In this belief both Khalid and Al-Mustapha attempt to discover each their own soul and shape their own foresight.

When it comes to truth, both prophets try to put this concept on the prism of reality where the variations and variables lead one to see the different sides of a truth. Khalid says: "Of a truth, many attractions and disattractions are here" (*Khalid*, 1911:52). Likewise the Prophet carries on, twelve years later, by saying: "Say not 'I have found the truth', but rather, 'I have found a truth'." (*The Prophet*, 1966:55). Both prophets, in spite of their eastern mystic background, attempt to unfold the reality of this concept to find out that there is a truth to every little aspect of life and that it is unreal to replace a certain truth by the ultimate universal one.

On the other hand, both prophets express their immediate need for knowledge. While Khalid "asks for a few of the fruits of
knowledge" (Khalid, 1911:51), the Prophet goes further in this image and sees that "your ears thirst for the sound of your heart's knowledge" (The Prophet, 1966:54). Both prophets realize the significance and role of knowledge in their mission. Both of them seek the intellectual self-support that enriches prophecy and highlights its efficiency and effect. In a more accurate comparison we notice that the first prophet "asks for." while he second prophet "thirsts for." The first prophet looks for the "fruits of knowledge" while the second prophet looks for the "sound of your heart's knowledge." This could be one of the keys to understanding both prophets. The first looks concretely at knowledge as such, while the second looks at it symbolically. The first talks about the knowledge of the mind and the second talks about the knowledge of the heart. A rational, pragmatic and enlightened prophet has paved the way for an emotional, spiritual and foresighted prophet.

Both prophets meet in their perspective on democracy and freedom. Both highlight the moral values directly attached to these social and political concepts. Khalid tries to reverse the pattern and says: "Instead of canvassing and orating for Democracy's illustrious Candidate and the Noble Cause. One ought to do a little canvassing for Honesty and Truth among Democracy's leaders." (Khalid, 1911:106). Isn't the Prophet, on the other hand, "canvassing" the moral values of freedom and democracy by asking: "how can a tyrant rule the free and the proud, but for a tyranny in their own freedom and a shame in their own pride?" (The Prophet, 1966:48-9). Both prophets agree that fear is against freedom and democracy. For Khalid, "we
obey either from reverence and love, or from fear. We are either power-worshippers or cowards, but never, never traders" (Khalid, 1911:112). Al-Mustapha carries on with a similar idea of fear, suggesting that "if it is a fear you would dispel, the seat of that fear is in your heart and not in the hand of the feared" (The Prophet, 1966:49). If we want to describe freedom according to both prophets, then it is that fearless act characterized by ethics and moral values.

Both prophets were concerned about determining falsehood or good and evil as part of their focus on moral values. To Khalid "what is unlawful by virtue of the Divine Law the wealth of all the Trust-Kings of America cannot make lawful" (Khalid, 1911:170). This boldness is expressed in Al-Mustapha's words: "you are good when you walk to your goal firmly and with bold steps" (The Prophet, 1966:65). Both prophets are seeking for the giant virtual self that could play the role model in facing difficulties. "In your longing for your giant self," says Al-Mustapha, "lies your goodness; and that longing is in all of you" (The Prophet, 1966:66). Virtue to both prophets is the oil painting with which you draw your good self, and the path through which your vision is clarified and your goal is achieved.

Solitude is another common ground between Khalid and Al-Mustapha. "Disappointed, distraught, diseased. excommunicated, crossed in love, but with an eternal glint of sunshine in his breast to open and light up new paths before him, Khalid. Suddenly disappears. But where he lays his staff, where he spends his months of solitude, neither Shakib nor our old friend the sandomancer can say" (Khalid,
1911:181). This state of solitude is similarly described by the second Prophet as a means to discover ourselves and meet our immediate needs: "Appease your hunger with our bread and quench your thirst with our wine. In the solitude of their souls they said these things. But were their solitude deeper they would have known that I sought but the secret of your joy and your pain. And I hunted only your larger selves that walk the sky" (The Prophet, 1966:90-1). It is quite striking how both prophets draw a line from loneliness and isolation to the spacious sky. In his solitude Khalid sees the pine tent "too narrow at times for its crowded guests; but beneath the surface there is room for every root, and over it, the sky is broad enough for all" (Khalid, 1911:189). Later on, Al-Mustapha addresses his audience saying: "You have sung to me in my aloneness, and I of your longings have built a tower in the sky" (The Prophet, 1966:95). It is as if both prophets considered and experienced solitude and loneliness as the spiritual highway to the above where only the sky is the limit.

When it comes to work, both prophets designated for it a certain value system without which work becomes meaningless. It is honesty and perfection with Khalid, and an act of love with Al-Mustapha. The first prophet notices that "the voice within me asked if I were honest in my peddling. What is the difference between the jewelry you passed off for gold and the arguments of the atheist-preacher? Are they not both instruments of deception, both designed to catch the dollar?" (Khalid, 1911:68). Khalid does not hesitate to give one answer to these questions: "Honesty should be the cardinal virtue of the soul" (Khalid, 1911:68). Al-Mustapha, for his part, looks
at work from a similar perspective equally labeled under a parallel value system called the love of life. "In keeping yourself with labor" he says, "you are in truth loving life. When you work with love you bind yourself to yourself, and to one another, and to God" (The Prophet, 1966:25-26). When labor is characterized with honesty and love then one might reach perfection "and so thoroughly the work is done" (Khalid, 1911:206) according to Khalid. It is remarkable how both prophets once again use the same image, a temple this time, as a place of refuge while discussing their notion of work and labor. Khalid confirms that "everyone's life at certain times. is either a Temple, a Hermitage, or a Vineyard; everyone. takes refuge either in God, or in Solitude, or in work. And of a truth, work is the balm of the sore mind of the world" (Khalid, 1911:209). While the first prophet considers work as an act of the mind, the second prophet looks at labor as an act of the soul, but again using the symbol of the temple. To Al-Mustapha "Work is love made visible. And if you cannot work with love but only with distaste, it is better that you should leave your work and sit at the gate of the temple to take alms of those who work with joy" (The Prophet, 1966:28). Once again, when both prophets show their concern about the same universal issue, one deals with it pragmatically, the other theoretically.

One would ask, at this point, what is the meaning of love according to the two prophets? The first prophet experienced a difficult love story with all its ups and downs; the second prophet gave a special sermon on love and both prophets used this word frequently in their talks and narratives. Both recognize the difficulties
that come together with this beautiful experience. According to Khalid
"To be truly, deeply, piously in love, one must need hate himself! For
would he be always inviting trouble would he be always bucking
against the dead wall of a Democracy or a Church, if he did not
sincerely hate himself - if he were not religiously, fanatically in love -
in love with Najma, if not with Truth?" (Khalid, 1911:171). In spite of
this trouble that love may invite, the second prophet asks people to
follow the path of love, even its hard path: "When love beckons to
you, follow him, though his ways are hard and steep. And when his
wings enfold you yield to him, though the sword hidden among his
pinions may wound you. For even as love crowns you so shall he
crucify you" (The Prophet, 1966:11). To use a common language for
both prophets, for both of them love cannot be attained without
fighting it. Both of them suggest the sweet-and-sour taste that comes
with love.

Finally, it is quite interesting to find out that both prophets used
the notion of the desert as a metaphor for an exhausted yet cheerful
and courageous human being. "Now, in this austere delicacy of the
desert, where is the softness of pure sand, Khalid is perfectly happy.
Here are joys manifold for a weary and persecuted spirit" (Khalid,
1911:335). Al-Mustapha, later on, asks: "And what desert greater
shall there be, than that which lies in the courage and the confidence,
nay the charity, of receiving?" (The Prophet, 1966:21).

Going through the experience of intellectual immigration and
facing the challenge of creating a multicultural identity was, most
probably, a good background for having and dealing with common
universal concerns. However, if the first prophet delivered the sermon of the real identified superman and his great city, the second prophet conveyed the discourse of the ideal superhuman and his imaginative city. This observation would lead us to highlight some of the contrasts in the two works.

**Khalid and The Prophet: Different Perspectives:**

Perhaps the first comparison between Khalid and Gibran was the one made by a friend of both, Charlotte Teller. On December 13, 1911, Charlotte wrote to Mary Haskell saying: "To be quite frank Kahlil has never made me feel *Syria*, the book [of Khalid], does. And yet how much more I feel Rihani because of his stiletto - like satire and humor. Rihani's personality has suddenly become large enough to conceal most of the rest of Existence. His pain, is powerful." (Gibran, J. and K., *Gibran His Life and World*, 1974:228). This comparison highlights two major points in the author of *Khalid* where Charlotte Teller finds him differing from Gibran. These points are:

The self and national identity as revealed in *The Book of Khalid* were never brought to light by Gibran when addressing himself to the West.

The ironic and caricaturistic style expressed in *The Book of Khalid* was less felt in Gibran's diction and sentence structure. One might ask, if these statements were written in 1911, seven years before Gibran ever wrote and published in English and twelve years before he published *The Prophet*, with what was Miss Teller comparing *The Book of Khalid*? My guess is that she was comparing Rihani's work with Gibran's personality as she knew him during that
period. However, Miss Teller seems to be right in highlighting these two differences.

To elaborate on the self-identity and the national concern we can easily refer to three main chapters in *The Book of Khalid*. These are chapters V, VI and VII of Book The Third discussing respectively Union and Progress, Revolutions Within and Without, and A Dream of Empire. Khalid's Union and Progress tour in Lebanon, Syria and Arabia "is bound to have more than a political significance. the days must soon unfold the ideas of Khalid" (*Khalid*, 1911:286). These political concepts are not found in the discourses of Al-Mustapha. To Khalid "a political revolution must always be preceded by a spiritual one, that it might have some enduring effect" (*Khalid*, 1911:290). The concept of revolution Al-Mustapha speaks nothing about, and his attitude towards revolution is far beyond the wise, calm, inspiring attitude of Al-Mustapha. When it comes to the dream of an Empire, Khalid's enthusiasm and clear vision are manifested in these words: "Out in those deserts is a race which is always young. With my words and your love and influence, with our powers united, we can build an Arab Empire." (*Khalid*, 1911:303). This kind of a dream is totally absent in Al-Mustapha's words and vision. The national identity that the first prophet carried was exchanged for a general human identity with the second prophet.

The sarcasm, wit, irony and sense of humor in *Khalid* that was often expressed in almost every chapter of the three books of the work is not found in the solemn, earnest, peaceful and straightforward sermons of Al-Mustapha. Khalid draws keen caricatures of people
surrounding him like "second-hand Jerry", or "Im-Hanna", or "Father Farouche" (*Khalid*, 1911:58-69, 72-75, 176-7) and others.

The reader can discover more differences than those which Miss. Teller had pointed out in 1911. I will mention here two more before ending this paper. The suffering of Khalid is the real, continuous, deep and human suffering that Al-Mustapha did not know. Khalid's personality is dramatic, growing through the experience of emigration and always ready for intellectual, emotional, and spiritual confrontations, while Al-Mustapha's personality is stagnant where the same features are alike whether at the beginning or at the end of his mission. Khalid went through pain and suffered in the "Via Dolorosa", "The Howdaj of Falsehood", "The Stoning and Flight" (*Khalid*, 1911:25-33, 167-180, 325-332) as well as in other phases of his life. Al-Mustapha, in his one sermon on pain, says: "Much of your pain is self-chosen" (*The Prophet*, 1966:52). The reader can easily notice that Khalid's suffering is not paralleled by Al-Mustapha's pain which he talked about but never experienced. Al-Mustapha, on the other hand, discussed issues that were never part of Khalid's concerns such as "Eating and Drinking", "Houses", and "Clothes" (*The Prophet*, 1966:23-24, 31-34, 35-36, 60-61).

Finally, the language of the first prophet carries two main characteristics that are not to be found in the language of the second prophet. Khalid's English language, first of all, carries with it many expressions and words that are directly and purposely borrowed from the Arabic language, such as *Al-Fatiha*, *Allah*, *billah*, *Janat*, *Jouhanam*, *aymakanen-kan*, *ya Muhtaram*, *mojadderah*, *Im-Hanna*,

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ya habibi, howdaj, kaimkams, masnad, medjadi, Kaaba, awafy, mafsudin, inkhitaf, kulmakan, sidr, amirs, sheikhs, Tammuz, seraj, dastur, mutafarnejin, Barr'ush-Sham, jubbah, Al-Khatimah, and wassalamu aleik. (Khalid, 1911:16, 21, 24, 44, 45, 64, 75, 92, 121, 122, 133, 142, 151, 153, 155, 159, 160, 163, 167, 174, 175, 178, 179, 180, 181, 197, 202, 203, 204, 224, 247, 257, 261, 270, 283, 288, 291, 308, 334, 336, 341, 349). This made the spectrum of this prophet expand to the East and the West, where both "can almost touch" (The Nation, March 21, 1912) in the text itself maybe for the first time in English literature. Also, Khalid's English language is a sophisticated one, able to challenge the native speakers in order to reach them and create Khalid's own audience with full confidence and credibility.

One can find some justification for saying that the prophecy of Khalid paved the way for the prophecy of Al-Mustapha. Both had common universal concerns related to knowledge, truth, freedom and love. Both addressed themselves to the City of their vision or imagination. Both prophets are the result of the emigration experience and the multicultural theme of world literature. Both brought prophecy from the East and addressed themselves to a Western and international audience. However, the first prophet expressed himself in a novel form in what is considered the first Arab-English novel of its kind, while the second prophet expressed himself in a series of sermons on different subjects.

The first prophet identified himself with rational, pragmatic, and universal visionary philosophy, while the second prophet associated himself with mysticism, utopia and worldwide human
good. Both were seeking the bright future of their communities and of mankind at large.

While we are bidding farewell today to the 20th century we are, at the same time, looking forward to bringing together the disciples of both prophets and preaching to the nations of the 21st century a rational idealism and a post-modern practical mysticism. The message is carried only when striving for the new Superman of the coming century and of the coming Great City whether we call it New York, Orphalese, or Beirut.
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