INTRODUCTION

In the words of Henry H H Remak:

Comparative literature is the study of literature beyond the confines of one particular country, and the study of the relationships between literature on the one hand and other areas of knowledge and belief, such as the arts (e.g., painting, sculpture, architecture, music), philosophy, history, the social sciences (e.g., politics, economics, sociology), the sciences, religion, etc., on the other. In brief, it is the comparison of one literature with another or others, and the comparison of literature with other spheres of human expression.¹

The subject of Comparative Studies generally explores various literatures of the world or the literatures within one particular nation. It stresses the influence of literatures of different historical periods and countries upon one another. It studies their use of similar forms and their treatment of similar themes, etc. Comparative study, whatever the subject it explores and analyses, brings enlightenment and gives birth to new thoughts and concepts. It examines and tries to find new modes of analyzing literatures written in the world. Its exploration of varied approaches to analogous problems or common subjects and practices in the literatures written in different cultural environments, gives birth to a feeling of professional relationship between these literatures. It helps to find out relationship, at both surface and deeper level, between apparently distant cultures, traditions and historical milieus. Comparative study generally deals with the literatures from different countries or communities with different languages, cultures and traditions. In this way it motivates us to pay attention to the contribution and the socio-cultural functions of literatures and how these

literatures offer a comprehensive understanding of life and its various aspects. It helps literatures as well as readers to go beyond the limits of their national language. It has been seen that the literature of one nation absorbs influences of literatures from other nations and cultures and even the writers who know nothing of each other, show fascinating resemblances apart from differences. The basic plan of Comparative Literature is to encourage reading across linguistic borders. By doing so it makes readers aware about the issues and themes that are generally circumvented and ignored by the exclusive focus on a national literature and national language. Comparative study helps us to study creative writing and literary movements rising above the national and cultural limitations. It teaches us to observe life from multiple points of view. According to Henry H H Remak, “Comparative literature requires that a work, author, trend or theme be actually compared with a work, author, trend or theme of another country or sphere…” Comparative studies is in many ways a new approach to deal with literatures. The studies which have been carried out using this approach demonstrate that when well executed, it adds significantly to our comprehension and appreciation of literature and authors. Comparative study of writers from different cultures is in a way a comparison between diverse literary traditions. This approach encourages assessment of a silent affiliation between the workings of the minds of writers who are on the whole universally similar. It is very rewarding to study the relationship between the literatures of different periods and different countries. The interdisciplinary nature of Comparative studies’ means that the scholars working in this area, in general, have some knowledge about translation studies, sociology, critical theory, cultural studies, religious studies, history, etc.

2 Ibid., p. 107.
This thesis will embark on a study in comparative literature comparing two great romantic poets, William Blake and Kahlil Gibran. It is an examination of the impact and influence of Blake on Gibran. It is a study of influences and literary indebtedness. According to J. T. Shaw, “The study of literary indebtedness has never given up its place as an important branch of literary research within particular literatures, and especially in comparative literature.”

Though the genesis of works of Blake and Gibran are from different literary environments, the two poets, to a large extent, share spiritual and social insights of a same kind. According to George Nicolas EL-Hage, “I assert that Gibran owed more to Blake than any other poet or philosopher and that Blake’s influence on him was the most enduring.”

I have tried to bring together the points of association shared by these two writers. We know that there are times when two writers emerge from different periods and literary backgrounds and have in common with each other more than they do with other writers of their own time and national literature. Similarities between Blake and Gibran, more at a spiritual level, transcend dissimilar literary backgrounds. They share a common way of contemplation and communication that binds them in an exceptional relationship. Gibran read Blake and was greatly influenced by his thought and style. He was overwhelmed by his poetic philosophy, his visions and the prophetic charge of both his poetry and paintings. “Blake is the God-man. His drawings are so far the profoundest things done in English – and his vision, putting aside his drawings and his poems, is the most godly.”

However he did not imitate him blindly. His found that his own ideas were similar to those of Blake. Whatever he learnt from Blake he made that his own in an original and innovative way. We can trace this influence by

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3 Ibid., p. 58.
5 Quoted in EL- Hage, p. 141.
focusing on the intrinsic themes and the form employed by these two writes. J T Shaw aptly writes,

Influence, to be meaningful, must be manifested in an intrinsic form, upon or within the literary works themselves. It may be shown in style, images, characters, themes, mannerisms, and it may also be shown in content, thought, ideas, the general Weltanschauung presented by particular works.\footnote{Comparative Literature: Method and Perspective, p. 66.}

He further writes,

The center of interest should be what the borrowing or influenced author does with what he takes and what effect it has upon the finished literary work. The study of direct literary relationships and literary indebtedness can be indispensable to understanding and evaluating the individual work of art, not only for placing it in the literary tradition, but also for defining what it is and what it essentially attempts and for determining wherein it succeeds.\footnote{Ibid., p. 71.}

This thesis argues that Blake and Gibran have enough in common to justify the creation of a new, better defined area of research between the fields of English and Lebanese-American-Arabic literature. Blake and Gibran lived in different political and even religious environments and yet both were rebels and mystics at odds with the affairs of state and religion. As poets they wrote in different countries and their literary traditions vary greatly, yet both made prolific use of symbols. Through five chapters of this thesis Blake and Gibran are compared and their essential common characteristics are explored. It is argued that these poets display a very radical stance against orthodoxy of all kinds and an intense focus on inner spiritual life and these
subjects were of higher priority to them than creativity. This thesis is a journey from the poetry into the poetics of two writers. The interminable drama of existence is played out on the pages of both men. Gibran was not a mere replica of Blake. He found the support and affirmation for his early principles and beliefs in Blake’s works and developed them in his own distinctive way.

My method of approach will be fundamentally individual one. I shall first read separately Gibran’s and Blake’s writings in their own contexts and then compare them with each other. This research employs a biographical approach and also focuses on the close readings of the writings of original texts of the two writers. As such, the research presented here could be called conventional. It does not make use of any special theory whether classical or modern. Focusing on the texts of two writers and discovering the similarities between the two poets’s from two different traditions is in itself a useful method and criteria for examining these poets. This set of criteria will enable examination of not only literary methods in the works of such poets, but also establish a relationship between their imaginative faculties. Blake and Gibran are poets whose reputation as poetic masters extends beyond the boundaries of their countries and beyond the centuries in which they lived. Within the current field of literary studies, it is difficult to establish a comparative approach when dealing with poets who do not fit in the same literary tradition or period. Such an approach requires in the first instance a great breadth of knowledge concerning diverse literary traditions. For example in order to compare Blake and Gibran one would first have to begin with the separate traditions of English romanticism, and Arabic romanticism as well as pay attention to the social and political backgrounds of the poets.
While some remarks about Blake’s influence on Gibran can be found scattered in books on the Lebanese American poet, no attempt except by George El-Hage has been made to bring the two writers together in a thorough comparison with a detailed analysis of their works. The title of his PhD thesis which is now in a book form is *William Blake and Kahlil Gibran: Poets of Prophetic Vision*. But throughout this book his focus is on imagination, nature and prophecy only. The majority of comparative literature studies taking Blake as the predominant figure compare him with some other western poet. Numerous scholars have compared Blake with poets such as Coleridge, Wordsworth, Yeats and other European poets. Only a small number have set Blake beside eastern poets. Rosy Sing attempts a comparison between the east and the west in her work *Tagore, Rilke, and Gibran: A comparative Study*. These comparative studies are infrequent, however, and do not seem to be consolidated into a particular field.

The worlds Blake and Gibran inherited have similarities outnumbering their differences, one may assume because of their living in different countries, culture and times. Both were poets, painters, mystics and visionaries. Both were romantics and like all romantics valued nature, children, emotions, intuition and discarded reason giving foremost importance to imagination. Both poets considered themselves as one with the bard and the prophet. More so, they viewed themselves as the witness of the absolute truth, the spectators of all time and existence. Blake and Gibran through their writings fought for the rights of women and criticized the patriarchy and religious institutions for suppressing the weak. Both the writers vehemently criticized orthodox religions taking an example of Christianity for it committed wrong against humanity by propagating false morality.
The thesis is divided into five chapters excluding introduction and conclusion. Blake and Gibran are not compared in all the chapters but the main chapters thoroughly compare the works of the two writers. Their social, political, and economic context, their vision and worldview are also evaluated in comparison with each other. As Henry H H Remak says, “A comparative literature study does not have to be comparative on every page nor even in every chapter, but the overall intent, emphasis and execution must be comparative.”

In Chapter I of the thesis Blake and the context against which he wrote are discussed at length. The chapter discusses the inception of romanticism in England whose chief originator was Blake himself. This chapter deals with Blake, his writings and his other preoccupations. However its focus is on Blake as the originator of English Romanticism. It talks at length about how the Romantic Movement started and tries to define romanticism. This chapter tries to differentiate Romanticism from its preceding Enlightenment ideology and general eighteenth century literary culture. It traces the changes in the intellectual history from Enlightenment thought of the 18\textsuperscript{th} century to the Romantic thought at the close of the 18\textsuperscript{th} century and during the first half of the 19\textsuperscript{th} century. It is seen that the Romantic Movement was influenced by foreign philosophers and poets like Rousseau and Goethe. The chapter also introduces those writers who came before the Romantic Movement but contributed to its growth and can be called pre-romantics like James Thomson, William Collins, Thomas Gray, Robert Burns, William Cowper, William Godwin, Mary Wollstonecraft, James Macpherson and Thomas Percy and tries to establish Blake as the originator and pioneer of Romantic Movement in England. Then some poems from *Poetical sketches*.

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\item[\textsuperscript{8}] Ibid., p. 15.
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and *Songs of Innocence and Experience* are discussed in detail in order to see the romantic themes employed by Blake. Examples from some of his other later works are also given.

Chapter II deals with Gibran, his life, his writings and his chief preoccupations as a writer. It traces Gibran’s evolution as a writer and the foreign influences he absorbed after migrating to the US. This chapter focuses on Gibran’s contribution to Arabic romanticism and chief romantic qualities of his writings. It also talks about how Gibran was influenced by English romantics especially Blake whose influence on him was the greatest. It discusses Gibran’s childhood, his love of nature and his sensitiveness and the influence of his homeland Besharri on him as a man and a poet. It talks about his emigration to America in 1895 and how he interacted with Boston’s social and intellectual life and discovered its flourishing world of art and literature; also how he met Fred Holland Day, who supported him greatly in his artistic endeavors. It also recounts influences like those of Mary Haskell whose support and guidance was very important for Gibran’s growth as a writer. The chapter also mentions how Gibran with the help of Day and Mary came under the influence of English language poets especially the English romantics. Next, this chapter relates in detail the publication of his books from time to time and discusses the themes of his works, focusing on the romantic sensibility and elements and compares some of his prose poems with Keats’ and Shelley’s poems for his love of beauty, nature and innocence etc. This chapter tries to establish him as the pioneer of Arabic romanticism. It talks about how he introduced western romanticism into Arabic literature. He developed a new form called the prose poem. The chapter also discusses his social rebellion, mysticism, social reform, isolation, love of instinct and intuition.
and his immense contribution to Arabic literature and his innovations in Arabic literature.

Chapter III compares mystical thoughts which run through the works of Blake and Gibran. It expresses their differences as well as similarities as mystics living in different traditions. This chapter traces their development and evolution as mystics and the influences which helped them to evolve. The chapter establishes that the essence of their mystical thought was same though apparently different. It starts with the definition of mysticism and talks in detail about mystic perception in relation to reality i.e., how different mystics choose different paths to reach the same reality and to experience divine consciousness, enlightenment and oneness with the one who contains all. The chapter discusses in detail about different schools of mysticism like Christian mysticism, Islamic mysticism, Kabala, Gnosticism etc. It talks about how mystics have chosen poetry as a vehicle to convey their message because it is not easy to pass gnosis in any other medium. It tries to relate romanticism and mysticism and tries to establish Blake as the mystic proper and a supreme creator. It talks in detail about Blake’s mystic status and how Blake saw himself as the instrument of the divine and how he spent his life for the purpose of revealing higher truths. His spiritual life was more important to him than his creative life. He was a visionary mystic and a poet mystic. Blake’s search for spiritual truth has been studied by analyzing his poems and mystical thoughts focusing on the poems from *Songs of Innocence and Experience*. Lines from ‘*The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*’ are also quoted. In the same way Gibran’s prose poems have been analyzed for their mystical content. *The Prophet* is analyzed in detail.
Chapter IV is a comparative study of Blake’s and Gibran’s social rebellion, social protest and social reform. It deals at length with Blake’s and Gibran’s development as social critics. They both abhorred injustice of all kinds. They stood for the poor and the week. They were severe critics of Orthodox Church and tyrant state. Blake and Gibran, though born in different countries and contexts, had strong affinities with each other. This chapter discusses in detail how Gibran came under the influence of Blake’s revolutionary vision, and how he like Blake abhorred outdated social customs and stood in rebellion against the institutions of state and church. Both stood for woman’s emancipation and liberation. The religious beliefs of both Blake and Gibran were at odds with the common people as well as with religious authorities. It analyses in detail some important passages from the works of both writers for their revolutionary and rebellious content and compares them with each other in order to see the similarities as well as the impact of Blake on Gibran. It shows that Blake and Gibran were actively involved in the political development of their times. The chapter gives a detailed analysis and comparison of Blake’s *Vision of Daughters of Albion* and Gibran’s *Broken Wings* and how both championed the rights of woman and criticized false morals of the society. A detailed study of *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* and Gibran’s “John the Mad Man” and “Cry of the Graves” has been made. Blake’s *America, a Prophecy* and Gibran’s “My Countrymen”; Blake’s *Tiriel* and Gibrans “Kahlil, the Heretic” have been also compared and analyzed. Some poems from *Songs of Innocence and Experience* have been compared to Gibran’s “Decayed Teeth”, “Slavery” and “Narcotics and Dissecting Knives”.

Chapter V of this thesis discusses the style, use of prosody, symbols and myths employed by these two writers. It talks at length about Blake’s use of myths and symbols. This chapter talks about Gibran’s use of symbols and his deft use of
language. However it is found that there are not many similarities in their style and
the use of myths and symbols. Gibran’s works can be compared to Blake’s songs in
their style but there is no comparison when it comes to the Blake’s prophetic works. It
talks in detail about the relation of myths and symbols with poetry in general and
romantic poetry in particular. Blake invented his own mythology and used fresh
symbols. The chapter talks in detail about the mythic world and symbolic characters
created by Blake and it nuances and subtleties. Blake had to take recourse to these
myths and symbols because it was not possible to present his gnosis otherwise. Some
poems from *Songs of Experience* are analyzed stylistically for their grammar,
prosody, metaphors, structure etc. Gibran style and use of symbols is also discussed in
detail. It is said that though Blake and Gibran had many similarities in terms of
subject matter and themes of their works but their styles didn’t match with the
exception to Blake’s earlier works such as *Songs of Innocence and Experience* have
the simplicity of diction and melody which we find throughout Gibran’s writing. The
influence of Blake, Bible and Nietzsche on Gibran’s style is discussed in detail.
Gibran’s contribution to Arabic literature in terms of style is highlighted. Some
passages from *The Prophet* are also analyzed stylistically.
Kahlil Gibran was born on January 6, 1883, in Besharri. It is a hilly and a mountainous area in Northern Lebanon. Psalmists have sung and poets have composed verses of exquisite beauty in praise of this place and the famous cedars which grow in the foothills of Mount Lebanon. Gibran’s family was very poor and for that reason, he had no formal early education. Nevertheless, he received a strong spiritual legacy from his ancestors. His mother came from a respected religious background. He was frequently visited by priests who taught him basics of Bible and other sacred scriptures. They also gave him lessons in Arabic and Syriac languages. One of the priests recognized Gibran’s inquisitive and observant nature quite early in his childhood and began teaching him the basic principles of language and letters. With the help of this early exposure to learning and language Gibran started exploring the world of history, science, art and literature with great interest and tremendous zeal. Gibran was very perceptive and insightful from the very early days of his youth. He grew up in the greenest and verdant region of Besharri and he loved to live in the company of nature from the very childhood. He was fascinated by the beauty and majesty of natural world surrounding him and he would spend most of his time observing the natural world. He was an introverted and contemplative child who relished and exulted in the beauty of cascades and mountains. Such was his love for nature that he would forget his meals and spend the whole days playing amidst the green cedars. All the natural wonders of his homeland fascinated him. In the words of Alexandre Najjar:

Can one say enough about the influence of Bscharri on Gibran? Everything: the sun, the storms, the shepherds, the wheat, the myrtle, the mist, the wind,
the streams, the ‘secret hills and songs of forests’, the plough, the flute, the reed, the gesticulations of the villagers who were selling, folding, stifling their merchandise… all of these images are inherent in each of his books, and in particular in The Prophet, where all the symbols find their origins in the author’s native village.\textsuperscript{1}

Gibran’s father was arrested in Lebanon for tax evasion and his property was confiscated. As a result his family was left homeless. Gibran’s family including his mother, his two sisters and his half brother, with the exception to his father moved to America in 1895. The motive behind this emigration was to guarantee a healthier prospect for the children and to have some economic security. The family settled in Boston’s South End. At that time this place provided a refuge to the second largest Syrian community in America after New York. The family was in an impoverished state and the pain which Gibran felt in these early years of immigration left a permanent mark on his mind. These experiences compelled him to visit his childhood memories again and again. Visiting his childhood memories he would try to dispel the dirt, the poverty and the humiliation of those difficult and harsh days. During the early period of his hard life and even after settling in America Gibran used to live quite in isolation from society. This intensified his already gloomy temperament. It was with his strong willed mother Kamileh’s help that he overcame his deep melancholic sadness. She took the responsibility of the whole family on her shoulders. She was very much aware of her son’s taste for art and literature, therefore, she allowed him to intermingle with Boston’s social life and discover its flourishing world of art and literature.

Although without formal education, which at that time was considered useless, if not dangerous, for women, she possessed an intelligence and wisdom that had an enormous influence on her younger son, who later said of her: ‘It is her mothering me I remember – the inner me’. Fluent in Arabic and French and artistic and musical by temperament Kamileh ignited Kahlil’s imagination with the folk tales and legends of Lebanon, and stories from Bible.²

Gibran's inquisitiveness led him to discover the cultural side of Boston. He observed and took a profound interest in its thriving world. He frequently visited the theatre, opera and artistic galleries. His mother sent Gibran to a school meant for immigrants and later to an art school. His teachers came to appreciate his flair for art on noticing his primary drawings. It was his favorite activity from the very childhood and he would spend hours drawing pictures of different hues and colour. According to Suhel Bushrui and Joe Jenkins, “From an early age Kahlil was consumed by a love for drawing. If there was no paper to be found in the house he would go outside and spend hours sketching shapes and figures on the fresh snow.”³ Gibran joined school on September 30, 1895, just two months after his arrival in America. Since, he had no earlier formal schooling; he was admitted in an ungraded class which was meant for immigrant children. The class was ungraded because these children did not know anything about English language. In the school, a registration error changed the spelling and shortened his name forever from Gibran Khalil Gibran to Kahlil Gibran, which remained unchanged for the rest of his life.

In America itself, Gibran met an artist by the name of Fred Holland Day. In the words of Suhel Bushrui and Joe Jenkins:

³ Ibid., p. 30.
Fred Holland Day, one-time bibliophile, publisher, man of letters, and devotee of Oscar Wilde, was a leading light in bohemian Boston. During his thirty-six years he had explored many of the alternative fashions of his time. Flamboyant in appearance, Day had spent his working life challenging the conformist attitudes of his peers. He was infatuated with English literature and on his many visits to England had ardently collected literary and illustrative material, a pastime that was to earn him a reputation as an artistic bridge between American and English letters.4

Day was a great supporter of artists. He discovered Gibran’s enthusiasm and eagerness for literature and art. Day found him a natural genius and became his mentor. It was he who later in his life set him on the path to artistic renown and raised his self esteem. He introduced him to the writings of various famous writers which were quite in accord with Gibran’s literary taste and temperament and later on had a great impact on him. According to Paul Nassar, “It was Day who introduced Gibran to Blake, Shelley, Emerson, Whitman, and various turn-of-the century British, American, and continental poets.”5 It was under the guidance of Day that Gibran started exploring the world of Greek mythology, world literature, writings of contemporary authors and even photography. Day was extremely liberal, avant-garde, and unconventional. He believed in unregulated adoption of the strange for the sake of novelty and for his own personal interest. The temperament and personality of Day had a strong impact on Gibran who later on in his life came to abhor the conventional and the orthodox. He incessantly encouraged Gibran and helped him improve his

4 Ibid., p. 45.
5 Eugene Paul Nassar and Kahlil Gibran, “Cultural Discontinuity in the Works of Kahlil Gibran.” 
drawings and sketches. Quite early in his artistic career Gibran began to develop his own technique and style, encouraged by Day’s enthusiasm and wholehearted support. Slowly and steadily Gibran entered the Bostonian circles and his artistic talents brought him recognition at an early age. At this time his family decided to send Gibran back to Lebanon to finish his education and learn Arabic. In 1898, Gibran arrived in Beirut speaking poor English and even little Arabic. Though he could speak Arabic fluently, he was very poor at writing the language. To improve his Arabic, Gibran chose to register in the college by the name of Madrasat-al-Hikmah. This college offered a nationalistic curriculum which was limited to church writings, history and liturgy. Gibran because of his rebellious and individualistic nature, refused to follow this insular and inadequate curriculum. He asked for an individual curriculum which would cater to his educational needs and suit his artistic temperament. His overconfidence and pride was not less than a heresy keeping in view the orthodox mindset of the then society. However, the college accepted his demand and edited course material to Gibran's liking. He chose to engross himself in the Arabic-language Bible and was greatly impressed by its style and diction. The stylistic features of the holy Book reverberate in many of his works. In this college he read classical Arabic literature as well as modern Arabic Christian literature. Here, he also became fluent in French. Gibran’s teachers had a great liking for him because of his rebellious and unconventional nature as well as for his writing and artistic skills. He gained enough proficiency in Arabic and French at Madrasat-al-Hikmah and did very well in his studies and excelled in poetry. Gibran completed his studies in 1902 and he left Lebanon in the same year. After returning back to America Gibran met Mary Elizabeth Haskell who became his patron and tutor in English for two decades. She was a highly educated, resolute and independent woman and an active champion
of women’s emancipation. Suheil Bushrui and Joe Jenkins writings about the relationship between Gibran and Haskell say, “…It was Mary Haskell, a school teacher from Carolina, his ‘guardian angel,’ who reassured him that he was ‘not a stranger in a strange land,’ and who became his patroness and confidante. … Mary Haskell’s role is crucial to Gibran’s development that at times biographers find two destinies woven in one.” Mary was indeed a great help to Gibran in those hard and difficult years of his life. She supported him both financially as well as at an emotional level and after a while Gibran started enjoying her company and was most comfortable in her presence. She also provided Gibran with intellectual support. It was she who convinced Gibran to give up translating his Arabic works into English and focus instead on writing directly in English. Mary cooperated with Gibran in editing his various English works and helped polish Gibran’s work. She would spend hours with Gibran, examining his manuscripts, correcting his errors and even suggesting new ideas especially related to the linguistic aspects of his works. She also encouraged him to explore the treasures of English literature and Gibran read many great works of English literature in her company. English authors and poets highly impressed Gibran and he found them very enlightening. It was especially English Romantic poets who captivated his interest. He found that they mirrored his personality and his temperament. He found a perfect muse in them and they inspired him throughout his literary career.

Gibran, whose English was improving all the time, was awestruck when he heard the utterings of the great English poets, and his reverence for them remained with him all his life. He saw in Keats one of the ‘very few true worshippers of true Beauty – Beauty which is the only Truth …. [a] flame

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dancing in the immeasurable sky’; in Shelley: ‘a world by himself. His soul is that of an exiled god who, being sad and weary and homesick, passed the time singing his memory of other planets’; and in Blake the ‘God-man,’ whose work represented for Gibran ‘the profoundest things done in English – and his vision... the most godly.’

From 1908 to 1910 Haskell provided resources for Gibran to study painting and drawing in Paris. Gibran was enthralled by the enormous French cultural panorama, and he spent his days and nights exploring and examining paintings at the various art museums and exhibitions. It is in Paris that Gibran met Auguste Rodin, the famous French artist who is generally considered to be the progenitor of modern sculpture. It is commonly believed that he saw some of Gibran’s paintings and appreciated them. And it was Rodin himself who as some biographers of Blake write, introduced him to Blake’s writings and called Gibran, ‘the William Blake of modern age’. Suheil Bushrui and Joe Jenkins write, “In Paris Gibran met Rodin who introduced him to the art and poetry of William Blake. Gibran immediately felt a ‘kinship’ with the visionary Englishman, and the benign shadow of Blake was to fall on virtually all of his English writings, as well as many Arabic works.”

In 1905, Al-Mahajar (The Emigrant), an émigré newspaper meant for Arabic speaking public, published his first Arabic book entitled *Nudah Fi Fan al-Musiqa* (On Music, a Pamphlet) which eulogizes music. A book in Arabic and translated into English by the name of *Nymphs of Valley* was published in 1906. *The Nymphs of the Valley* is a collection of three allegories having Northern Lebanon as their setting. The allegories – “Martha”, “Yuhanna the Mad”, and “Dust of Ages and the Eternal Fire”-

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7 Ibid., p. 47.
8 Ibid., p. 5.
deal with subject matter pertaining to prostitution, religious persecution, rebirth and predetermined love. These allegories were profoundly influenced by the narratives he had heard during his childhood in his birth place Bsharri and by his own interest in the Bible and the spirituality. The nature of love as treated by Gibran also contributes to make this book profoundly solemn. This book also expresses the youthful writer’s antagonism against feudal order and clerical institutions.

In autumn of 1906, Gibran published *The Nymphs of Valley*, an anthology of three allegorical stories in Arabic. …The work coloured with romanticism, exposes themes dear to the author’s heart: the greatness of Christ contrasted with the pettiness of the Clergy; madness as a source of truth and liberty; …

*Spirits Rebellious* is a compilation of four short stories and it was published in 1908. It is an early collection and the titles included are “Rose-AlHani”, “The Bridal Couch”, “The Cry of the Graves”, and “Khalil the Heretic.” All of these stories portray people who confront and resist authority and social tradition. The book censures the authority that both the church and the state force on people. The book was burned in Beirut for its revolutionary and anti-establishment thoughts. Najjar, referring to the book says, “It is a work marked with such commitment and romanticism, one is tempted to compare it to the works of Victor Hugo.”

*The Broken Wings* published in Arabic in 1912 augmented Gibran’s reputation in the Arabic world. The book is one of the longest of his Arabic books and it deals with the story of Selma Karameh’s ill-fated love affair with a young man, her subsequent marriage against her own wishes and her death as she gives birth to a dead child. This is Gibran’s only novel. It is a delicate story of young love that vanishes away and is

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9 *Kahlil Gibran: Author of the Prophet*, p. 57.
10 Ibid., p. 63.
ruined by the evil forces of tradition, custom and ritual. Gibran angrily depicts the predicament of the Arab woman of his time. After the success of *The Broken Wings*, the Arabic daily Al-Fanun (The Arts) published Gibran’s collection of prose poems and essays entitled *A Tear and a Smile* and titled in later translations as *Tears and the Laughter*. It is an anthology of Gibran’s early newspaper prose poems and stories. The poet finds consolation in his tears and in the company of nature. He sings of his prophet-like role. Najar writes about the book, “The fifty-six articles are inspired by a humanistic outlook and contain reflections on life, love and the situation in Lebanon and Syria. Gibran was certainly one of the pioneers of poetic prose, a literary form that was still a novelty in Arabic literature.”

*Tears and Laughter* is full of romantic themes, ideas and aspirations. In the prose piece “Life of Love” the poet calls his beloved to be with him in all seasons so that they can share the rich banquet which pristine nature has to offer. He wants to appreciate the rich variety and beauty of nature in the company of his beloved. He calls his beloved so that they can both together enjoy the crystal clear features of beautiful nature. This prose poem reads like a romantic ode. It has all the beauty and splendor one can find in the odes of English romantics especially Keats, Shelley and Wordsworth. The language used by Gibran is simple and melodious. The message of Gibran in this prose piece is that love never dies. It grows stronger with the passing seasons. Peace can be attained only in close association with the beloved. If one wishes to live life in real terms, he is to live in the company of one’s beloved.

Come away my beloved, let us walk amid the knolls,

For the snow is water, and life is alive from its

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11 Ibid., p. 111.
Slumbers and is roaming the hills and valleys.
Let us follow the footprints of Spring into the
Distant fields, and mount the hilltops to draw
Inspiration high above the cool green plains.\textsuperscript{12}

In “The Play Ground of Life” Gibran expresses his view that one hour of true love and pursuit of beauty is as good as living a life of eternity. It is love and beauty which make life worth living. What is the use of struggle and what to strive for if our heart has not something beautiful to adore, worship and love? He says that restoring the confidence and peace of the weak is worth infinity. He believes that it is only our spiritual deeds which matter in the eyes of divine power. Here once again we come across Gibran’s romantic and transcendental thought currents which constituted the fabric of his personality.

One hour devoted to the pursuit of Beauty
And love is worth a full century of glory
Given by frightened weak to the strong.\textsuperscript{13}

In ‘The Poet’ Gibran exalts the poet and calls him divinely inspired. He believes that the poet’s character is chaste both within and without. Gibran believed that divine inspiration is necessary for a poet as he embarks upon writing about sublime thoughts and profound feelings. A poet acts as a bridge between men and gods. He spreads happiness and mirth everywhere. His message is full of hope. It acts as a balm on the wounds of suffering masses. The poet quenches the thirst and satisfies the hunger of craving hearts. This poem in its beauty resembles Shelley’s melodious lyrics. When

\textsuperscript{13} The Greatest Works of Kahlil Gibran, p. 26.
Gibran talks about poet as a solitary figure and lover of nature, we are reminded of Wordsworth’s and Shelley’s theory of poetry. Gibran talking about the poet writes:

He is a solitary figure, robed in simplicity and
Kindness; He sits upon the lap of Nature to draw his
Inspiration, and stay up in the silence of the night,
Awaiting the descending of the spirit.\(^{14}\)

He further writes:

He is a link between this and the coming world
He is a pure spring from which all thirsty souls may drink.
He is a tree watered by the River of Beauty, bearing
Fruit which the hungry heart craves;
He is a nightingale, soothing the depressed
Sprit with the beautiful melodies.\(^ {15}\)

Wordsworth in his Preface to the *Lyrical Ballads* says that poet quite instinctively loves solitude and peace and nature provides him with inspiration. Poetry comes to him spontaneously but he has to wait for the right moment. Wordsworth’s very famous words about poetry are: “Poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings: it takes its origin from emotion recollected in tranquility.”\(^{16}\) Gibran’s ideas related to poet and poetry are not different from Wordsworth’s ideas on poetry. Shelley’s concept of poet is also similar to Gibran’s. Shelley compares the poet with a nightingale and believes that the poet possesses a celestial power and he creates great melody by the help of words. Poetry transports by virtue of its rhythm, music and sublimity. Shelley writes in his *A Defense of Poetry*:

\(^{14}\) Ibid., p. 40.
\(^{15}\) Ibid., p. 39.
A poet is a nightingale, who sits in darkness and sings to cheer its own solitude with sweet sounds; his auditors are as men entranced by the melody of an unseen musician, who feel that they are moved and softened, yet know not whence or why.17

“Yesterday and Today” is a story of a gold hoarder who compares his past with his present. In his past life he was a devotee of nature and lived a life of love and innocence. But his present state is one of greed and ambition. His past life was the life of peace but now he has grown restless with the increase in wealth. He was free when he had little but he is a slave now of his own pomp and wealth. This story seems to have a stamp of *Songs of Innocence and Experience* on it. For Blake innocence is a blissful state and experience is a state where man grows greedy, ambitious and restless. Innocence is allied with truth, sincerity and honesty; experience is related to falsehood, duplicity and corruption. The gold hoarder of the story says loudly

Yesterday I was grazing my sheep in the green valley, enjoying my existence, sounding my flute, and holding my head high. Today I am a prisoner of greed. Gold leads into Gold, then into restlessness, and finally into crushing misery.18

Gibran wrote extensively in Arabic, because as a native of Lebanon, Arabic was his mother tongue and he also had learnt the language from great teachers at Madrasat al Hikmah. Living in America he achieved an expertise in English language and most of his writings and works published after 1918 are in English. As Gibran started writing in English, his mentor and close friend Mary Haskell was always there to encourage, help and guide him. *The Madman: His Parables and Poems* was published in 1918.

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17Ibid., p. 699.
Gibran had started working in 1913 on *The Madman* and he was preoccupied with the subject of madness from the very early age when he learned about the stories of how mad men were treated in Lebanon. He heard that in his hometown people who had gone mad were thought to be possessed by the spirit of the jinn (the devil) and the church had the sole authority for exorcizing the devil out of the haunted people. It was his first book originally published in English language. It contains illustrated parables and aphorisms and its tone is ironic, satirical and rebellious against erring human race and its transgressions. Gibran’s message in this book is that one should follow the inner voice of the self. This book is full of Sufi thoughts and these thoughts have been illustrated by Gibran in beautifully written allegorical tales and maxims. *The Forerunner: His Parables and Poems* followed in 1920 and is a reminder of the human being’s latent potential for progress towards a higher self. Like *The Madman: His Parables and Poems*, in this book also Gibran finds expression for his mystic thoughts and once again he makes ample use of parables and aphorisms.

With his immense contribution to the field of art and literature Gibran became best known of the “Mahajar poets” or the Immigrant Arabic writers. He became president of Arrabitah Al-Qalamyiah, a literary society founded in New York in 1920. Its aim was to infuse a new life in modern Arabic literature. Throughout the years that it was active, Arabantah was guided by Gibran’s call for greater artistic autonomy as he always encouraged writers to smash the rules and seek out individual styles. The members of Arabantah immensely praised lively Western ideas and rebelled against the dead traditional values in Arabic literature. In the words of Joseph P. Ghougassian: “On April 20, 1920, the immigrant Arabic writers headed by Gibran as their president, formed a literary circle called “Arabitah” (Pen Bond), whose purpose was to update Arabic literature ‘from the state of sterility and imitation to the state of beautiful
originality in both meaning and style.” According to Suheil Bushrui and Joe Jenkins, “Gibran’s pervasive influence on his colleagues in Arrabitah made them reassess their own work, and his Romanticism answered a latent need in them to liberate their own Romantic expression.”

_The Prophet_ which made Gibran a celebrity and a legendary figure across the world was published in 1923. _The Prophet_ is a spiritual chronicle related to the journey of a man who is in exile and who is called Al Mustafa which means the Chosen One. It is a book which consists of 26 sublime poetic essays, illustrated with some of Gibran’s sublime mystical drawings. Almustafa, the prophet, shares his timeless wisdom and insights on varied topics related to life. Three years after _The Prophet_ , _Sands and Foam_ was published in English. This book consists of captivating and inspiring aphorisms and parables which Gibran has presented in marvelously musical language. This book contains gems of wisdom expressed in very precise and perfect apothegms. In 1928, the longest book Gibran ever wrote was published entitled _Jesus, the Son of Man_. To write the story of Jesus was a great ambition which Gibran harbored from his youth. His aim was to portray Jesus as no one else has done before. For Gibran, Jesus was like any other human being acting in natural surroundings, living a life full of enthusiasm and love. For him Jesus was a man of passion who could love immensely and suffer immensely. Jesus had a fine humor, he had human weaknesses too, but he was the most sensitive human being who could empathize and lay down his life for humanity. _The Earth Gods_ came in 1931. Gibran was 48 when he died in New York on April 10, 1931. The Arabic world sang praises of him and commemorated him as a genius and a patriot.

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Kahlil Gibran’s writings infuse our emotional and spiritual consciousness with new zest. He comes out as a poet-rebel and as a sensitive soul full of romantic ideals. Like a typical romantic writer, his writings have an autobiographical tone. He had a firm belief in the superior power of imagination. He exulted in the beauty and the variety of the natural world and craved for freedom from age old rigid norms and established rules. His early short stories, prose poems and later collections of aphorisms made him famous far and wide as he was celebrated as the greatest of Arabic Romantics. According to Suheil Bushri, “Few would contest Gibran’s status as the greatest of Arabic 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.”

Gibran introduced western romanticism and a freer style to the extremely pompous and ostentatious Arabic poetry. He brought freshness and novelty in the Arabic literary style. He helped Arabic poetry break away from the conventional norms of prosody. Najar says, “The word ‘tradition’ was anathema to him. He gave free reign to his unbridled imagination without attaching much importance to the constraints of the prosody or the stringent rules governing Arabic which he often came to ignore in his writing.” He developed a new poetic form called “prose poem”. Gibran’s poetics was a shift from the sterility of imitation to the poetics of originality in expression, style and meaning. Gibran’s works both in Arabic and English are full of lyrical outbursts and express his profoundly spiritual and mythological bent of mind. Almost all his works and in particular later works were influenced by legends and Biblical stories which were narrated from generations in the picturesque vicinity close to the primeval cedars of his homeland, Lebanon. He had a great knowledge of myths and

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22 Kahlil Gibran: Author of the Prophet, p. 124.
legends in general but the legends, myths and folklore of his homeland had taken a deep root in his psyche and can be found both in his literary works and paintings.

Gibran’s writings were influenced by varied elements. Boston’s literary world, William Blake, Nietzsche and all that he read and observed helped him to be one of the great creative masters with a prophetic tone, style and vision. He like English Romantics was interested in imagination, nature, childhood, revolution, love, beauty, liberty etc. Gibran was also influenced by American romantics like Emerson, Whitman and Thoreau. His work bears the influence of their ideas of ‘self reliance’, ‘reincarnation’ and a presence of ‘greater self’ that each individual is able to grow into. But among all the writers American as well as English, William Blake’s romanticism, Mysticism, symbolism and prophetic vision had a great impact on his mind and his influence can be seen in both his writings as well as drawings. Najjar says, “Gibran identified with Blake’s expressionistic symbolism, his rejection of slavish imitation of nature, his dream like fascination, the mythical content and almost mystical quality of his art, and his vision of a last union to be regained.”23 Blake’s work contributed in shaping Gibran’s thoughts. From an early age he started inquiring about the religion of his birth and the role of the priests. He reckoned Jesus as a leading figure of human kind. For Gibran true religion is not organized and orthodox but liberating and personal. Gibran like Blake was a rebel as well as a reformer. He abhorred conventions. He lived a life of a lonely poet believing resolutely in his imagination. Paul Nassar writes, “Gibran was of the mold of William Blake: both angry social reformer of old cultural contexts and the prophet of an expanding cosmic consciousness beyond any need of a given cultural context. Most often and

23 Ibid., p. 127.
fundamentally, however, he emerges as a lonely poet finding solace only in the poetic consciousness or imagination.”

Gibran’s works venerate individual autonomy. He valued choice and free will. He abhorred and strongly condemned sectarianism and class oppression. His observations on brotherhood of men and man’s unity with nature and God appeal both to the youthful as well as to elderly readers. His Biblical style presents an invigorating, new way of looking at the world that has a worldwide appeal. Gibran worked to unite various religious sects as he believed that it will help eradicate the religious egotism, discrimination and violence which were widespread in his age. He advocated and preached lasting human, ethical, moral and sacred values which are essential to the creation of a world vision based on mutual understanding, brotherhood, love and unity of all. He raged against the evils that reigned in his beloved homeland as well as against all ills that contaminated human life and brought humanity to disgrace and decadence. Much of his writings deal with Christianity but he hated religious bigotry. He was a secular saint and appreciated all the religions of the world. Gibran wrote on spiritual and religious themes adopting a somewhat pagan theology. His spirituality is essentially pantheistic undermining cultural barriers. What he appreciates most in Christianity or in any other religion is spiritual love. Gibran loathed false civilization. He was preoccupied with the themes like equality between man and woman. He preached and all his life fought for justice, freedom and democracy. He had a firm belief in faith and reason. The themes related to ecology and environment find ample place in his writings. He craved for universal peace and unity of all religions. He fought for common people’s rights and persuaded them to awaken from the deep slumber. Andrew Sherfan writes, “His work reflects fully his rebellion against both

civil and religious authorities. He considers himself a kind of a ‘prophet’, with a special mission to speak up for the masses and liberate them from the various evils that had befallen them as a result of their inertia, customs and traditions.”

Gibran was a man who loved beauty in all its manifestations. He shares the romantic trait of beauty worship with Keats as well as with Wordsworth. He writes in *The Prophet*, “… Beauty is life when life unveils her holy face.” He like Blake was a great advocate of liberty and raged in opposition to man made laws for they afflict severe injuries. Gibran was a man of immense imagination, a great dreamer and an exponent of love. In one of his prose poems “The Goddess of Fantasy” from *Thoughts and Meditations*, Gibran like Blake writes about the importance of dreams. He also highly praises the power of imagination because it is through the power of imagination that one reaches the realm of gods and sees the reality face to face. There is nothing base in the kingdom where thoughts dwell and imagination rules.

Truly I say to you that thoughts have a higher dwelling place than the visible world, and its skies are not coloured by sensuality. Imagination finds a road to the realm of gods, and there men can glimpse that which is to be after the Soul’s liberation from the world of substance.

He further writes:

He who passes not his days in the realm of dreams is the slave of the days.

Gibran’s poetic genius primarily lies in his use of figures of speech. He is a specialist at using metaphor. The simplicity of his language is unmatched in its sublimity and

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26 *The Greatest Works of Kahlil Gibran*, p.89
27 Ibid., p. 75.
28 Ibid., p. 75.
majesty. Gibran indeed creates beautiful images that are charged with emotions and that expand the reader’s vision and his horizon of imagination. He dealt with varied subjects related to life and humanity like love, beauty, truth, justice, good and evil etc. Gibran’s interest swung to mysticism and primitivism in his later writings but his writings turned 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. He was more of a pantheist as he saw God and nature as one phenomenon. He repeatedly points out to the contrast between 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. Gibran laments that modern man runs away from serene nature and takes refuge in concrete structures which are in so many ways like prisons. He writes in *Voice of the Master*:

> Nature reaches out to us with welcoming arms, and bids us enjoy her beauty; but we dread her silence and rush into the crowded cities, there to huddle like sheep fleeing from a ferocious Woolf.

Gibran often depicts himself as a solitary poet who is more receptive and sensitive than other people and who is proficient at revealing eternal truths. In the prose piece “The Lonely Poet” from *Between Night and Morn*, Gibran subscribes to the romantic view of the poet where a poet is an isolated and a solitary figure. The narrator, who is a poet, is lonely and stranger in this world. He says that people don’t seem to comprehend his language. But the poet has hope that his dreams are eternal and one day he will have the glimpse of that which he has never seen. The strain of mysticism also runs throughout this prose piece as the poet craves for the union with the ultimate

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reality and thinks that he can attain peace. He calls this world a dark world and wants to escape into the world which belongs to his dreams and imaginings.

I am a stranger in this world, and there is a severe solitude and painful lonesomeness in my exile. I am alone, but in my aloneness I contemplate an unknown and enchanting country, and this meditation fills my dreams with specters of a great and distant land which my eyes have never seen.30

He has a solid belief that the modern world corrupted by convention, oppression and hatred can be redeemed through love, goodwill and freedom. Kahlil Gibran was among the younger generation of Arab American writers who contributed immensely to the current Arabic literary renaissance and revitalization. Gibran along with other literary members of the Pen Bond did not endorse a sweeping linguistic restructuring of the Arabic literature. He could never think of profaning the holiness of formal Arabic. He rather campaigned for breaking out of conventional patterns in favour of an individual style. His early works in Arabic popularized the romantic tradition in Arabic arts and letters. He paved a way for the new kind of creativity. Gibran’s writings and especially his Arabic pieces were part of a shift from craftsmanship to inspiration, from imitation to expression. Irfan Shahid writes:

Although his creativity as a man of letters took place in America, he and his group of Arab- American writers revolutionized the course of Arabic literature in the Arab homeland as representatives of the new school of Romanticism in Arab literature antedating and preluding the rise and development of the romantic movement in the Arab world, through the Divan school and the Apollo school, both in Egypt. Thus, from their base in America, the Arab-

30 Ibid., p. 150.
American writers presided over by Gibran, proved to be the catalyst in the literary renaissance of the Arab world in its vast Afro-Asian extent. 

Gibran sought beauty of thought as well as beauty of form. He created new metaphors and adopted a Blakean approach and method in treating imagination as the divine vision. He did not corroborate to the traditional norms of the past. Gibran like Blake preferred a free and spontaneous verse and blended classical Arabic with colloquial Arabic, hence gave birth to a new style. He embraced a simplified language that even unsophisticated audience could relate to. In the words of Joseph P. Ghougassian:

If today’s Arabic literature feels at ease with the rules of rhyme and rhythm, it is because Gibran, along with some other literary friends, broke away from the stagnant traditional prerequisites of the Arabic verse by proposing as early as 1920 a new poetic form called ‘prose poem’. 

He followed the same rule and method in his English writings. They have the simplicity of Biblical psalms and remind us of Blake’s *Songs of Innocence and Experience*. Gibran’s work draws from two cultural traditions, English and Arab, but it is not bound by any biases, prejudices and restrictions favoring one culture over the other. In his work the two distant cultures and traditions find a perfect synthesis. His early work, though later translated into English, was originally written in Arabic. From Arabic language and literature he drew the majesty and grandeur of his language. And his exploration of English art and letters, above all his reading of the Romantic poets taught him to rely on personal experience and individual style. He came to saw individuality as the benchmark of poetic expression and spiritual

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32 *A Third Treasury of Kahlil Gibran*, p. 189.
transformation. His simple style is graceful, reverberating, lyrical and able to communicate profound thoughts and feelings. His thoughts appeal to our hearts as well as our minds. Gibran believed in a romantic idea of eternal birth, reincarnation and continuity of life. He had a great faith in the transcendent power of romantic love and its ascendancy over custom and ritual. Gibran as a man as well as a literary artist devoted his life to contemplation, to peace, to love, to the life of the soul and the varied forms of beauty. Gibran loved nature, especially the natural beauty of his homeland and used it as a setting for all his literary works. He all his life in nostalgia went to his homeland while living in America. He constantly felt an irresistible pull for his native land. According to Najjar, “Throughout his life, out of nostalgia for his country and his childhood, Gibran would delve voluptuously back into his past.”

Gibran despised the Americans' greed for money, property and luxury. He yearned for the majestic mountains, the graceful cedars and for the air and the light of the Lebanon. Gibran is most Wordsworthian poet when it comes to the portrayal and depiction of nature. He raged against the degradation of pristine nature and the exploitation of natural resources and he knew that severe injuries were being inflicted on environment in the name of scientific progress. Gibran opposed Darwinian science and its materialistic stance, for Gibran always believed that matter and spirit are inseparable realities. Gibran saw in nature a divine presence and used it as an example to counter Darwinism.

Writing as he was when Darwinism was at its height, Gibran’s extraordinary receptiveness to the appeal of nature may in many ways be seen as offering a

33 Kahlil Gibran: Author of the Prophet, p. 21.
positive counterpoise to the Darwinian metaphor. The most powerful imagery in his work is borrowed from nature, her rich and beautiful store of symbols providing him with the emotional and intellectual apparatus of his poetry and intensifying his most dream like moods with the ‘unfathomable mystery of Nature’s secrets’.34

Like all the romantics he distrusted materialism and civilization for their ignorance of the importance which spirituality has for a human being. Gibran believed that it is in spirituality that the real essence of beings and non beings can be experienced and it is spirituality that gives meaning to the world of matter and substance. *Between Night and Morn* starts with a prose piece called “The Tempest”, in which Gibran shows his romantic tendencies in their full bloom. The influence of Rousseau and Wordsworth is evident because the main character Yusif shares their distrust of civilization and wishes a spiritual awakening both for himself and for the people. The narrator is impressed by a solitary person living in a forest and gets a chance to talk to him. This solitary figure is none other than Yusif who has fled from the civilization and has taken refuge in a forest and is now living a life of meditation and contemplation. Yusif lives in a self imposed exile and Gibran seems to appreciate his personality, and thereby showing his own faith in a romantic tendency to escape from the harsh realities of mundane world into the lap of nature, where one can seek a perfect communion with the divine reality. This story also shows Gibran’s belief in global peace and through Yusif he strongly condemns the politics of bloodshed which is devouring the whole world. Yusif addresses the narrator and says:

If you place belief in your own words you should leave civilization and its corrupt laws and traditions, and live like the birds in a place empty of all things except the magnificent law of heaven and earth.\textsuperscript{35}

The prose piece, “The Enchanting Houri” from \textit{The Secrets of the Heart}, reads like a typical romantic ode. This is a poem about a dream which Gibran wants to follow in order to free himself from the shackles of the mundane workaday world. Like Shelley in “Ode to the West Wind”, Gibran is reminded of his own past when he was as free as a bird enjoying the beauties of nature. He is reminded of the times when he was as swift and agile as the elements of nature. Gibran’s poem resembles Shelley’s ode both in terms of style and content. Shelley and Gibran both lament the loss of strength which they had in their youth and want to relive those carefree and blithe moments. The way Shelley came under the spell of the West Wind, in the same fashion Gibran feels more and more attracted to the enchanting houri. Gibran like Shelley wants to reach the utopia of his dreams where he can live a life of complete communion with imagination.

Oh Houri, listen to me! I was as free as the bird, probing the valleys and the forests, and flying in the spacious sky. At eventide I rested upon the Branches of the trees, meditating the Temples and palaces in the city of the colourful clouds which the sun builds in the morning and destroys before twilight.\textsuperscript{36}

Shelley wrote in his Ode to the West Wind:

\begin{quote}
If I were a dead leaf thou mightest bear;
If I were a swift cloud to fly with thee;
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{35} \textit{The Greatest Works of Kahlil Gibran}, p. 105.
A wave to pant beneath thy power, and share

The impulse of thy strength, only less free
Than thou, O Uncontrollable! If even
I were as in my boyhood, and could be

The comrade of thy wanderings over Heaven,
As then, when to outstrip thy skiey speed
Scarce seemed a vision; I would ne'er have striven

As thus with thee in prayer in my sore need.
Oh! lift me as a wave, a leaf, a cloud!
I fall upon the thorns of life! I bleed!

A heavy weight of hours has chained and bowed
One too like thee: timeless, and swift, and proud.37

As Gibran was a great idealist dreamer he wanted to revolutionize the world according to his own outlook and beliefs. According to Najjar, “The young man was ambitious and idealistic; he imagined he could change the world and tried to convert people to his ideas and theories on art, God and nature.”38 Gibran being a reformer wanted liberty for every human being. For him rebellion is essential in order to attain freedom and love as well as life can flourish only in the free atmosphere. In “Vision” from Thoughts and Meditations, Gibran says that life, love, and beauty are three

38 Kahlil Gibran: Author of the Prophet , p. 71.
persons in one. He also says that life can not be without rebellion. He again says that freedom and life are integral. For Gibran love, freedom and life are one with God. Man can reach God through love, beauty, rebellion and freedom.

Life without love is like a tree without blossom and fruit. And love without Beauty is like flowers without scent and fruits without seeds. … Life, Love and Beauty are three persons in one, who can not be separated or changed.39

He further writes:

That which love begets,
That which rebellion creates,
That which freedom rears,
Are three manifestations of God.
And God is expression
Of intelligent universe.40

Gibran emerges as a Romantic poet as he realizes the necessity of creating his own unique individual style in order not to be enslaved or confined by those who came before him. For him instinct was a higher faculty than reason. His reading of English romantic poets sharpened his already rebellious nature. He regarded natural impulse and passions as ideal creative force.

Gibran’s Romanticism was a health-restoring revival of the instinctual life in contradistinction to the constraints that sought to sublimate human freedom in the united name of social tradition or religious conformity; in many ways his

39 The Greatest Works of Kahlil Gibran, p. 60.
40 Ibid., pp. 60-61.
rebellion was akin to the beginnings of Romanticism in England a century earlier, when Blake, Wordsworth, and Shelley strove to explore the literature of internalized quest and Promethean aspiration.\footnote{Kahlil Gibran: Man and Poet, p. 10.}

Gibran’s life was a romantic expedition. It was a progressive development from innocent childhood to disillusioned experience as he came to know the world and its corrupt practices. However, he finally achieved higher innocence and found solace in the world of knowledge and wisdom. Gibran’s belief in sorrow, suffering and pain as a means of purification and refinement grew up to be a dominant theme in his early writings. Romantic escape from the sordid reality of a mundane workaday world into the world of dreams became a favorite technique especially during the early phase of his artistic career. Gibran following Keats is seen calling upon sweet death in many of his poems and prose pieces. Whether Gibran speaks of nature as an independent entity of natural objects or their relation to each other, his firm belief that nature is a living being is always evident. Gibran laments with Wordsworth the brutality and inhumanity of ‘what man has made of Man’. Gibran rebelled against the decayed and rigid laws of church and society. He like Blake rejected reason in the name of imagination. Imagination for him was fundamental for he believed poetry is impossible without it. He had a prophetic vision and held an apocalyptic view of universe. He felt that the older order needed to be changed. Gibran’s Arabic heritage and legacy helped him to celebrate life and he would love to travel back to a time when people lived more fully and felt much more strongly. He celebrated the glorious past of the Arabic world but scathingly criticized what he considered its backward present. In the west he was impressed with the ideals of freedom and democracy, values which Americans cherished most, in addition to scientific progress, but he
rejected the excessive dependence of modern man on materialism and machine. In his later writings Gibran started to advocate 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. Deeply influenced by Greek mythology, Gibran expressed his concept of the artist and of Art. To him the artist and art are inseparable; they have a divine origin, and the poet’s self is an intermediary between the gods and humanity. Gibran’s inimitable poetic idiom characterized by beauty and spirituality became known as “Gibranism”. It is characterized by a loose and flowing verse which is both rich and modern. Gibran’s writings establish a mystical union with nature and a relationship of love and harmony. His writings stay beautiful and timeless. They are as insightful and relevant in our present time as when Gibran first composed them. There is no question that Gibran’s work in Arabic was vital to the progress of twentieth-century Arabic literature and one can declare with confidence that Arab Romanticism begins with Gibran as he was the pivotal figure in the Mahjar movement of émigré Arab writers centered in New York. Suheil Bushrui and Joe Jenkins quite aptly write:

In his ‘outpost’ of New York, Gibran initiated a Romantic movement and school in Arabic literature that echoed a generation’s instinctive call for change and renewal. Living five thousand miles away from the stern and sanctimonious gaze of those whose vision could not transcend the inherited and inhibitive methods of their age, this first true rebel in Arabic literature enjoyed an unparalleled freedom that allowed him to revolutionize the literary sensibility of the time.42

42 Ibid., p. 11.
Even a common reader of Gibran can find that Gibran is generally romantic, meditative and spiritual. His works brought hope and happiness to millions as he emphasized necessity of religious tolerance, cross cultural understanding and human love. Gibran is a writer who irrevocably changed modern Arabic poetry, and who is probably the one modern Arab writer known throughout the world. He gave modern Arabic literature a new and creative impulse. He was full of energy and youthful vigor; he was daring and he brought to Arabic literature an entirely new and inventive vocabulary which challenged the formalized language of tradition. He is the only poet who truly represents Arabic Romanticism in all its forms and shades and is definitely a poet laureate of Oriental Romanticism.