



كلمة من كحلل جبران

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**THE ENDURING LEGACY OF
KAHLIL GIBRAN**

Papers delivered at the Second International Conference on Kahlil Gibran:

**"Reading Gibran in an Age
of Globalization and Conflict"**

May 3-6, 2012

The George and Lisa Zakhem Kahlil Gibran Chair for Values and Peace

Suheil Bushrui and James Malarkey, Editors
with the assistance of Taraz Darabi

Foreword by George Salim Zakhem

University of Maryland

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Mr. Mourad Boutros
Mr. Anthony Dawton
Mrs. Faiza Ali Reza
Mr. David Richmond
Mrs. Maria Shammass
Mr. George Shweiry
Mrs. Lisa Zakhem

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Dedication

IN HONOR OF LEILA TANNOUS DAWTON AND IN HER MEMORY (1921-2013)

Read at a memorial service held in London

A Tribute
by
Suheil Bushrui
Research Professor Emeritus
Professor and Director of
The George and Lisa Zakhem
Kahlil Gibran Chair for Values and Peace,
Center for Heritage Resource Studies,
College of Behavioral and Social Sciences
University of Maryland

We are gathered here today not to mourn the passing of a remarkable woman of unique qualities of mind and spirit, but to celebrate her luminous life and her ceaseless efforts to enrich the lives of all those who came to know her intellectually and spiritually. Leila Tannous Dawton has left us a rich legacy of noble ideals and set a perfect example of how East can meet West in friendship and unity, and in peace and dignity.

The end of any life on this earth can be a cause of either sorrow for a life wasted, or gratitude and joy for a life well lived. Leila Tannous Dawton lived a life full of great achievements, a life in which she single-handedly opened new frontiers, for she was a pioneer in every sense of the word.

If May Ziadeh was the first Arab-woman editor of an Arabic newspaper, and Huda Sha'rawi the leader *par excellence* of women's emancipation in Egypt, then Leila Tannous Dawton was most certainly the first woman broadcaster and radio program editor whose voice internationally enriched the British Broadcasting Corporation Cultural and Literary Programs in Arabic. In this way, she spoke to the whole world and conquered not only the minds, but also the hearts, of her listeners everywhere.

Leila Tannous, on completion of her university studies in Beirut, and with an outstanding academic record, arrived in London in 1946. A year later she married Bernard Dawton (1918-2004), a mathematician, a graduate of Cambridge University, and the perfect English gentlemen. She bestowed her special bounties of love as a loyal wife to her husband and a loving mother to her talented and gifted sons, Julian

and Anthony. To Bernard Dawton, she was a true partner and a real inspiration, as he was to her in his unstinting support and encouragement for her manifold literary and social activities in London. To meet Leila and Bernard for the first time, one realized what an extraordinary relationship existed between those two very special human beings. One was reminded of the Arabic adage:

No relationship between two people is genuine or true
Until each to the other speaks as I instead of you.

Through her remarkable work for the BBC, Leila united the Arab world in a way that no other person could have done. She developed a special voice that spoke the beautiful Arabic language in a manner and a style that was understood by the speakers of Arab dialects everywhere, covering an area from Morocco to Baghdad. Perhaps her greatest achievement is that she represented, spiritually and intellectually, a meeting point between East and West. She shared those eternal values of both cultures with her audiences everywhere, honoring every human being, regardless of religion, color, race, language, or gender.

In her own person, she exemplified the coming together of East and West, and in many ways she represented the promise of a future united world. She was bilingual in every sense of the word. Her Arabic could be described as *al-sihr al-halal* (lawful magic), and her English can only be described as Her Majesty's English at its best. She and her dear husband were world travellers, but they belonged to two great cities, Beirut and London. Leila's erudition was impressive. Her great knowledge of Arab culture and civilization was matched by her remarkable understanding of English literature, and particularly English poetry. Her BBC work provided her with the experience she needed to create the British Lebanese Association in London.

When the civil war in Lebanon forced many Lebanese to live abroad, a large group ended up in the British capital of London. Leila felt it her duty to gather together the various members of the Lebanese community in diaspora and unite them in a collective effort to serve the best interests of Lebanon during those difficult years, as well as devise ways in which those Lebanese in Britain could make a valuable cultural and artistic contribution to many aspects of British life and thought. She organized lectures, artistic performances, exhibitions, dramatic productions, and a variety of different cultural events in London.

In addition to all this, she realized the importance of honoring and preserving the Arabic language, and she was the founder of the first Arabic language school in London, an institution which reflected that creative aspect of the language and its literature. She took the lead in founding the British Lebanese Association's scholarly fund to support Lebanese students who were anxious to complete their higher

education in Britain, and she assisted in training experts who went back to Lebanon to rebuild the country after the devastating civil war.

Leila was Lebanon's unofficial ambassador everywhere. Her home became the center of Lebanese diplomatic, cultural, and literary activity, and she devoted the last two decades of her life in the service of Lebanon. Like Kahlil Gibran, she believed in a Lebanon unified in all its endeavors, a Lebanon of justice, of religious harmony, and of progressive thought. Towards this end, she served on the International Advisory Board of the George and Lisa Zakhem Kahlil Gibran Chair for Values and Peace at the University of Maryland. The University, therefore, is deeply indebted to many services she has rendered.

In honor of her blessed memory, Sir David Miers, former Ambassador of Great Britain in Lebanon and, until recently, the Chairman of the British Lebanese Association, paid the following tribute:

Leila Tannous Dawton was an exceptionally talented person. She was for many years the conscientious, efficient and inspirational administrator of the British Lebanese Association. Being fully conversant with the key characteristics, as well as the more subtle nuances, of both cultures, she was able to give sound and much-valued advice to both the British and the Lebanese elements in the Association and played a key role in the success of its events. She combined perceptiveness with discretion, wisdom with modesty, and invariably used for constructive and achievable objectives the universal respect in which she was held.

In honoring her memory today, the George and Lisa Zakhem Kahlil Gibran Chair for Values and Peace in the College of Behavioral and Social Sciences at the University of Maryland announces the establishment of an annual memorial lecture, the title of which will be "The Leila Tannous Dawton Annual Memorial Lecture in the Dialogue of Civilizations."

In that same spirit, this collection of papers from the Second International Conference on Kahlil Gibran is dedicated to her indefatigable efforts.

Foreword

by George Salim Zakhem

During the late 1970s, in a bookstore at the Galleria in Houston, I came across an anthology of the writings of Kahlil Gibran entitled *The Treasures of Kahlil Gibran*. As I was buying all five copies the shop had on its shelves, the young woman at the till, surprised by the number, said, “You’re like me. You love Gibran. I even chose a reading from his writing at my marriage ceremony and I know many friends who will do the same at theirs. In fact, I keep a copy of *The Prophet* on my bedside table so I can read it when I feel the need for deep reflection.”

As I left the bookstore after thanking her, I felt so proud that a Lebanese writer, born just fifteen miles away from my own birthplace, should be so popular all over the world and that his work should be regarded with such love and awe. I felt it incumbent on me to promote his insight and words of wisdom into the frailties of the human condition all over the globe, if I was able.

It was fortuitous, therefore, that around the same time I met Professor Suheil Bushrui and learnt of his great admiration for Gibran, and also of his affiliation with the University of Maryland. Our relationship developed into a lasting friendship, with our common interest in furthering the work and significance of Gibran’s legacy.

However, the lack of academic interest in Gibran was prevalent at that time, especially in London. At Professor Bushrui’s suggestion, and with the advice and encouragement of Leila Tannous, I decided to set up a permanent Chair for the study and celebration of Gibran at the University of Maryland. I was deeply grateful that the University took such an enlightened course of action and accepted my offer.

This second international conference, entitled “Reading Gibran in an Age of Globalization,” testifies to the fact that establishing a permanent Chair has ensured that Gibran’s profound vision will continue to make an important contribution toward understanding and addressing those conflicts which currently engulf so many parts of the world.

I need only add my gratitude to Professor Bushrui and his team for organizing this event and producing this account of its proceedings, along with my appreciation for all those distinguished participants who contributed to the Conference’s self-evident success.

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Introduction

As crises proliferate across the globe in this era of accelerated globalization, where are the voices that can bring us the kind of wisdom, awareness, and balance so needed if we are to achieve justice, peace, and unity envisioned in humanity's perennial philosophies? In a world where anger, disintegration, corruption, disorientation, and anarchy are the order of the day, Kahlil Gibran stands on his own, as one of those rare writers who truly transcends the barrier between East and West, emphasizing the importance of reconciling reason and passion, of balancing the physical with the spiritual, and of finding practical and moral solutions to the major global issues facing humanity. The 1960s Flower Children and their embrace of Gibran's message of peace and unity, perhaps portrayed most powerfully in John Lennon's "All You Need is Love," carry forward the hopes of Gibran into younger generations. Yet they, and we, must remember his admonition that love is a serious matter which calls us to a deeper understanding of ourselves, and to revitalize our relationships with both the natural environment and the full range of humanity diversity.

Inspired by the success of the First International Conference on Kahlil Gibran, "The Poet of the Culture of Peace," which was hosted by the University of Maryland at College Park in 1999, this Second International Conference addressed a wider perspective: "Reading Gibran in an Age of Globalization and Conflict." The event was organized by The George and Lisa Zakhem Kahlil Gibran Chair for Values and Peace in association with a group of distinguished organizations. The Conference focused on Gibran's life and work and also explored his art and artistic contributions. During the conference sessions, particular emphasis was placed on recent research; translations into new languages; the production of new films; and the preservation and enhancement of the legacy of Gibran throughout the world. In addition to assessing Gibran's contribution to twentieth-century literature, the conference honored the works of his contemporaries, Ameen Rihani and Mikhail Naimy, and the issues they addressed connected with the theme of globalization and conflict, such as the unique role of Lebanon in the Middle East and the world.

In fact, this Conference devoted special attention to Lebanon, Gibran's homeland, as the meeting point of great civilizations such as the Phoenicians, the Chaldeans, the ancient Egyptians, the Assyrians, the Greeks, the Romans, and the Arabs. In the words of Gibran himself, "The phantoms of past ages walk in the valleys, on the heights the spirits of kings and prophets wander. My thoughts have turned towards the places of remembrance and shewn to me the might of Chaldea and the pride of Assyria and the nobility of Arabia."

Early in his life, Gibran came to love his beautiful homeland, a love that developed over the years to become the greatest passion in his life, instilling in him a greater

love for all mankind: “I am kindled when I remember the place of my birth, and I lean in longing towards the house wherein I grew...I love the place of my birth with some of the love for my land; I love my country with a little of my love for the world, my homeland.”

For Gibran, Lebanon was not only the name of a mountain, but a “poetical expression” and the very essence of his spiritual and intellectual creativity, hence his immortal statement: “Were Lebanon not my homeland, I would adopt Lebanon as my homeland.”

The opening of the Conference coincided with a special ceremony launching the publication of the Arabic translation of *The Spiritual Heritage of the Human Race* under the title *Turathuna al-Ruhi: Min Bedayat al-Tarikh ila al-Adyan al-Mu'aserah*. This unified program was under the distinguished patronage of His Excellency Antoine Chedid, Ambassador of Lebanon to the United States of America, who addressed the meeting and emphasized the significance of Gibran studies in today's world. Dr. John Townshend, Dean of the College of Behavioral and Social Sciences, chaired the meeting and introduced a number of distinguished guests who also addressed both the delegates attending the conference and the guests honoring the launch of this major publication of the Gibran Chair.

The speakers at this joint meeting included Dr. William E. Kirwan, Chancellor of the University System of Maryland; Dr. Wallace D. Loh, President of the University of Maryland, College Park; Mr. Salim Zakhem, Member of the International Advisory Board of the George and Lisa Zakhem Kahlil Gibran Chair for Values and Peace; Ms. May Rihani, Chair of Min Ajl Lubnan; Dr. Tarek Chidiac, President of the Gibran National Committee of Lebanon; Ms. Alison Van Dyk, Chairman of the Temple of Understanding of New York; Dr. Mona Khazindar, Director of the Institut Du Monde Arabe in Paris, France; and Mr. Muhammad Ghuneim, lead translator of *The Spiritual Heritage of the Human Race* into Arabic.

The keynote address for both programs was given by Professor David Cadman, former President of the Prince of Wales' Foundation. In his invocation, Professor Cadman addressed the lack of balance and harmony in our world today and the need for inner transformation such as prefigured in the poetic works of Gibran.

During the presentations at the Conference that began the following morning, Suheil Bushrui began by reminding us that for Gibran, “the challenges faced not only necessitated a global and interdisciplinary approach, but required first and foremost a spiritual revolution and a concomitant shift in human consciousness.” This remains eminently true today. In his paper, Riad Nourallah showed how the universal message of Almustafa in *The Prophet* could help shape the education of future diplomats if we would like them to contribute to “peace, unity, and intellectual and

spiritual growth” instead of polarization and war. Henri Zoghaib reviewed the attachment of Gibran to his beautiful homeland of Lebanon, as well as his aspiration that she awaken from her slumber and embrace her potential greatness. James Malarkey unraveled Gibran’s potent aphorisms which suggest that the misperceptions and conflicts dividing us will disappear as we recognize the inherent unity of life and restore mutual awareness and empathy. Alexandre Najjar returned to Gibran’s earlier writings that condemn oppression and submission, and promote freedom and revolt. In pointing up the connections with “The Arab Spring,” Dr. Najjar concluded, “The calls of Gibran have finally been heard.”

Tania June Sammons addressed Gibran’s visual art, particularly his evocations of the “feminine divine.” She linked these powerful portrayals with both Gibran’s awareness of the image of the goddess in earlier civilizations and his relationships with special women in his life such as his mother Kamila, May Ziadeh, and Mary Haskell. Edmund Ghareeb reviewed the vital accomplishments of the Arabic language press in America at the time of Gibran, Naimy, and Rihani, and offered a vivid account of the experiences of his father, Andrew Ghareeb, as translator of the Arabic works of Gibran into English. Ernest Tannis reported on his research to assess the credibility of the often-repeated claim that President Kennedy took the lines “Ask not what your country can do for you...” from Gibran. The researcher’s conclusion is likely to surprise the reader. Fatma Essassi addressed the central theme that pervades Gibran’s later writings and that offers a key to his philosophy: the “unity of being.” This discovery informed Gibran’s criticism of the inequality between men and women, between rich and poor, and it reinforced his belief in the oneness of humanity and the unity of all religions.

Glen Kalem shared a personal story about his search to answer the questions: “Who is Gibran?” and “How does he fit into our world?” In his travels, he encountered many individuals inspired by the words of Gibran, “kindred spirits around the globe,” and learned of their commitment to inspire yet others. Mr. Kalem’s documentary displayed the world-wide radiation of Gibran’s message. Taraz Darabi pursued the relationship between Western economic theory that engenders increasing inequality and Gibran’s concept of the relationship between land, labor, commerce, and human relations. In accord with Gibran, Mr. Darabi suggested, “a truly productive and sustainable society will result if the fruits of the earth benefit all men.”

Susan Halsted wrote of the impression that Gibran formed of ‘Abdul Bahá whom he met, heard speak, and painted in 1912. Though Gibran had also been influenced by various Western writers, Ms. Halsted contends that it was the person and vision of ‘Abdul Bahá that formed the model for Gibran’s *Jesus, the Son of Man*. Like Gibran imagined Jesus, this man from the East “typified for Gibran all that was highest and holiest in the calling of a prophet...to create harmony and unity among all the

peoples of mankind.” Judy Saba showed how, in her practice as a Diversity Trainer, she incorporates the deepest themes in the writings of Gibran to help people reassess their assumptions and perceptions as they overcome prejudice, hatred, and indifference. Her work demonstrates that to achieve a true “culture of peace,” we need to “re-engage mind, heart, and soul.” In training, “we engage rather than enrage.”

Guy Jones reported on the historical linkages and cultural parallels between his adopted country of Ireland and his native country of Lebanon, as well as the influences of Gibran’s work on Irish literature, painting, and music. Francesco Medici traced Gibran’s long fascination with Italy, including the inspiration he found in the classical painters and the poetic “genius” of Dante. Mr. Medici described how Italians have returned the favor by translating virtually all of Gibran’s books and by producing ample scholarship, films, and recordings. Rana Kazkaz’s contribution described her process of creating a film screenplay about the life and work of Gibran. She explained how the dramatic themes of his life would resonate with the American audience today and offer a very different image of the Arabs than those featured in headline news. Ms. Kaskaz’s presentation included dialogue from her script.

Mehrdad Nosrat focused on the reception of Gibran’s work in Iran. He reported that the poet is especially popular among younger people who respond to Gibran’s critique of social injustice and inequality. Noting the increasing translations and Gibran’s growing popularity, Mr. Nosrat indicated that Gibran “has brought a fresh message of hope from the land of prophets and has become a prophet-like figure himself. People feel that he speaks for them, and from their hearts.” Dr. Ma Zheng outlined the emerging trends in scholarly translation and literary criticism on Gibran in China. The cultural differences between East and West pose challenges to interpretation, but Dr. Ma Zheng shows how, as a result, the study of Gibran serves to enhance cross-cultural understanding. “Indeed, the real classics belong to the whole world, transcending East and West, and brightening the harmonious world with cultural diversity.”

Although Joseph Wakim was unable to attend the Maryland Conference from distant Australia, his essay (included in this volume) connects with Gibran’s affirmation of the common humanity of all men and his commitment to social justice. Mr. Wakim uses this perspective to contrast Australia’s shortcomings in her treatment of native Aboriginals, her aggressive anti-immigration policies and her proclivity for foreign wars. But Mr. Wakim reports that on the margins of society, social media is now transcending national boundaries and igniting mass movements for social justice. He sees hope in these developments for a new configuration of identity and a new future in the spirit of Gibran—more inclusive, with greater justice and peace between peoples.

As the stellar presentations at this Conference amply demonstrated, for Gibran, the challenges that confront the human race and life on this planet urgently necessitate not only a holistic and global approach, but, at root, a spiritual revolution, a paradigm shift, and a quantum change in human consciousness. Gibran's English and Arabic prose and poetry represent an anguished cry to humanity to rediscover its lost harmony with nature; to evolve a universal code of human rights; to promote the emancipation of women; to build bridges of understanding between cultures and religions; to lessen the gap between the rich and the poor; and to curb all forms of exclusivity—whether ethnic, nationalistic, or religious—in recognition of one common humanity and a shared spiritual heritage. If kept to the fore through research and study, these and other values enunciated in Gibran's works will continue to inspire many, touch their lives in countless ways, and give them comfort, hope, and joy in the prospect they afford of a genuine Culture of Peace—one in which the East and the West are equal partners.

1. A CRISIS OF PERCEPTION

By David Cadman

I am rather nervous this evening, for I find myself addressing an audience almost all of whom are either scholars of Gibran or, at the very least, are well-versed in his work. I am neither of these, and I am only here because my dear brother, Professor Suheil Bushrui, saw fit to invite me to be part of this gathering. And his request is, of course, a command.

I think Suheil may have commanded me to be here because of the work that he and I are doing in editing and publishing an archive of the speeches by His Royal Highness The Prince of Wales—a forty-year history of utterances! And so, I thought I might take from that work two of its key themes and say something about them in a way that might strike a chord with those who study Gibran.

The two themes are these: first, that the crisis presently facing Western civilization—and perhaps the entire world—is not, at root, a technical or economic crisis, but what His Royal Highness has referred to as “a crisis of perception”; and the second is that this crisis of perception arises from our having become disconnected with that “golden thread” of timeless wisdom that His Royal Highness refers to as “tradition.”

It is not for me to speak for His Royal Highness—his own thoughts are set out clearly in his most recent book *Harmony: A New Way of Looking at the World*, and they will be presented in the archive volume that Professor Bushrui and I will be publishing later next year. Suffice it to say, however, that I share his analysis of the “crisis” when he says:

[A]t the heart of the matter lies a crisis in our perception—the way we see and understand how the world works. Grasping the causes of this ultimate crisis is the first important step if we want to find solutions to [our] problems...For we have to understand what is missing from our present picture of the world in order that we can put it back again so that any solutions are well-rooted and work in the long term.¹

I wonder if there is, here, an echo of Gibran, when he said:

Your living is determined not so much by what life brings to you as by the attitude you bring to life; not so much by what happens to you as by the way your mind looks at what happens.

And, of course, it is there in the opening stanzas of the *Dhammapada* when the Buddha says: “With our thoughts we make the world.”

And so it would seem that the manifest world is shaped by an inner world. If you like, the “language” we use to describe our world becomes concrete in all we make manifest—not least in what I want to call our “governance,” which, given our present difficulties, most especially includes, by way of example, the governance of our economies. In this analysis, the failure of Western banks and economies is revealed not as an aberration of an otherwise good system, but as an inevitable consequence of something that is flawed and poorly founded, of values and principles rooted in greed and selfishness. To that extent, we should not expect any economic transformation unless, until, and to the extent that we experience an inner transformation.

Those who defend the old and broken economy and who seek to drag us back to its unsustainable form—growth without limit founded upon debt—will no doubt tell us that their economy is the only one that is possible. But this can surely not be so, since there is no absolute form of economy, only different economies founded on different values and principles.

In a short paper that I am to give to the annual gathering of British Quakers later this month, I shall be proposing what I have called “The Good Economy,” set upon values that are the opposite of the old and broken economy—accepting limits to growth, lowering levels of indebtedness, nurturing community, and working towards narrower differences of income. I shall argue that such an economy might seek to follow those principles of goodness and justice of which Aquinas speaks when he says:

Now, a thing participates in the good precisely to the extent that it becomes like the first goodness, which is God. So all things tend through their movements and actions towards the divine likeness, as towards their ultimate end.²

This is a goodness that is as natural as it is all-pervading; a goodness that is within all that is; a goodness that will, if we but align ourselves to it, bring us to that Divine goodness that some of us call God. And as justice is embedded within this goodness, it is also of our true nature and an inseparable part of Nature. It may be taken away but it cannot be given; it can only be recovered. For it is “a granting to the other what *belongs* to the other.”³ It is “grounded in the Good”⁴ and thereby grounded in that which is True.

And, in this, we might remember another saying of Gibran: “They deem me mad because I will not sell my days for gold; and I deem them mad because they think my days have a price.”⁵

And when a merchant said to him, “Speak to us of Buying and Selling,” he answered and said:

To you the earth yields her fruit, and you shall not want if you but know how to fill your hands. It is in exchanging the gifts of the earth that you shall find abundance and be satisfied. Yet unless the exchange be in love and kindly justice, it will but lead some to greed and others to hunger.⁶

So, if there is “a crisis of perception,” what, then, is this “golden thread,” this timeless tradition of which His Royal Highness speaks, and how might it help us?

In the third chapter of his book *Harmony*, which is entitled “The Golden Thread,” His Royal Highness refers to the thread in this way:

The high points of human civilization have all been framed and shaped by what I have come to see as “shared insights.” These insights belong to humanity as a whole. They are not the preserve of one tradition or one school of thought, nor do they come from a particular moment in time. They are timeless and universal.⁷

And he goes on to say:

I have come to believe that these insights are tremendously important to humanity, but my contention here is that our modern approach has lost sight of them, and in so doing the Westernized view that now dominates so much of the world has become disconnected from its important anchors.⁸

His Royal Highness speaks much of something that has been lost and which needs to be recovered. For my own part, I think this “thread” is both a remembrance and a presence. As Gibran says, “It lies asleep in the dawning of your knowledge.”⁹

And so, in my book *A Way of Being*, I propose a time without past or future, a time of perpetual moment in which this “thread” has both its origin and its ending. Midst flux and impermanence, there is only Being:

The material world is at the same time the field of mysticism—the union of the mind and heart with the eternal reality underlying all

that exists, the ultimate fulfilment of the love of Truth. The mundane and the divine are one. What may at first seem to be realms separate and apart are, in truth, so interdependent that the one cannot be understood, or even spoken of, without the other. Thus, if we seek Truth, we cannot discuss any matter, however mundane, other than in a language that brings us to a Oneness of Being, a way of being that draws us into union with the Great Mystery, The Divine.¹⁰

This tradition or perennial philosophy can sometimes be supposed to evoke the past, but in truth it speaks of the ever-present and, for me at least, is best expressed in silent reflection. It was Rumi who said, “Silence is the language of God, all else is poor translation.”

And, perhaps ironically since here I am talking, I take comfort from these words of Gibran:

You talk when you cease to be at peace with your thoughts; And when you can no longer dwell in the solitude of your heart, you live in your lips, and sound is a diversion and a pastime...For thought is a bird of space, that in a cage of words may indeed unfold its wings but cannot fly...And there are those who talk, and without knowledge or forethought reveal a truth which they themselves do not understand. And there are those who have the truth within them, but they tell it not in words. In the bosom of such as these, the spirit dwells in rhythmic silence. When you meet your friend on the roadside or in the market place, let the spirit in you move your lips and direct your tongue. Let the voice within your voice speak to the ear of his ear; for his soul will keep the truth of your heart as the taste of the wine is remembered; when the colour is forgotten and the vessel is no more.¹¹

I am sure I have, this evening, failed in all of this. But I hope that something of what I have tried to report will help to draw us at this conference to the right place, to the inner realms of the heart from which all else comes — as His Royal Highness urges us, to find the lost “thread” and begin, perhaps, to help to clarify our “perception” and see things as they really are.

And as we proceed over the next few days, perhaps we might remember these words of Gibran, to which I have already referred to in part:

No man can reveal to you aught but that which already lies half asleep in the dawning of your knowledge. The teacher who walks

in the shadow of the temple, among his followers, gives not of his understanding but rather of his faith and his lovingness. If he is indeed wise, he does not bid you enter the house of wisdom, but rather leads you to the threshold of your own mind.¹²

Biography

David Cadman is a Quaker economist. He has, from time to time, been a university professor and is presently a visiting professor at the University College London. He is the author of *Holiness in the Everyday* (published by Quaker Books) and *A Way of Being* (Zig Publishing). His work can be found at www.zigpublishing.com. He is currently working with Professor Suheil Bushrui on a volume of the speeches of His Royal Highness The Prince of Wales.

¹ His Royal Highness The Prince of Wales, Tony Juniper and Ian Skelly, *Harmony: A New Way of Looking at the World* (London: Blue Door, 2010), 87.

² Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Contra Gentiles*, trans. Anton Pegis, Book 3 Part 1, 19.5, 1973.

³ Joseph Milne, "Justice and the Good," Quaker Universalist Conference, 2009, and published in the QUG Journal.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ Kahlil Gibran, *Sand and Foam* (London: Heinemann, 1974), 44.

⁶ Kahlil Gibran, *The Prophet: Annotated Edition*, ed. Suheil Bushrui (Oxford: Oneworld, 1995), 48.

⁷ *Harmony: A New Way of Looking at the World.*

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ *The Prophet: Annotated Edition*, 70.

¹⁰ David Cadman, *A Way of Being* (Zig Publishing, 2010), 1.

¹¹ *The Prophet: Annotated Edition*, 123.

¹² *The Prophet: Annotated Edition*, 119.

2. THE ENDURING MESSAGE OF KAHLIL GIBRAN

By Suheil Bushrui

* * *

*We have come together on this day not to glorify a dead man
but rather to be glorified in a living one.*

From Mikhail Naimy, *Kahlil Gibran: A Biography*

* * *

*I shall live beyond death, and I shall sing in your ears
Even after the vast-sea wave carries me back
To the vast sea-depth.*

From Kahlil Gibran, *The Garden of the Prophet*

I.

Twenty-three years after the convulsion that was World War II, Aurelio Peccei founded the Club of Rome, which defined what it saw as the crucial problems facing humanity as the “world *problematique*,” specifically those relating to the political, economic, technological, environmental, and cultural realms. What the Club of Rome defined in secular terms was, in a sense, what the great Lebanese poet, Kahlil Gibran, had already been aware of, decades earlier, in spiritual terms. That is, for Gibran, the challenges faced did not only necessitate a global, holistic, and interdisciplinary approach, but required, first and foremost, a spiritual revolution and a concomitant shift in human consciousness.

In assessing the prescience of Gibran and his relevance today, it is useful to examine the Club of Rome’s essential mission:¹ “The communication of [the world’s] problems to the most important public and private decision-makers as well as to the general public.” As far as the latter is concerned, Gibran fulfilled this aim in a way that no other organization or individual has been able to achieve.

Gibran’s message had a humanitarian appeal, prescribing at base the need for personal transformation, essentially spiritual in nature, though also practical and implementable. Take, for example, this simple advice:

My brothers, seek counsel of one another, for therein lies the way
out of error and futile repentance. The wisdom of the many is your

shield against tyranny. For when we turn to one another for counsel, we reduce the number of our enemies.²

Negotiation, consultation, and dialogue are the very foundations of conflict resolution in today's world and must be conducted at every level.

Another example of the practical relevance of Gibran's words is his recognition of the necessity for commercial activity. But in place of an ethic of global capitalism, he proposed a more equitable and humane approach that excluded no one, seeming to identify what material globalization needs to achieve in order to create a unified and harmonious world-market:

And before you leave the market place, see that no one has gone his way with empty hands.
For the master spirit of the earth shall not sleep peacefully upon the wind till the needs of the least of you are satisfied.³

While some have dismissed his impact—and with it the spiritual and cultural dimension of peace building—Gibran has, in fact, been nothing less than a catalyst for change in human consciousness and a bridge between cultures and religions. It is therefore fitting that this commemoration of his life and achievements is dedicated to the British poet Kathleen Raine, whose unique vision equipped her to recognize his true worth at a time when his reputation had not yet developed as it deserved. Gibran's legacy is, in fact, more apparent than ever in the pressing need for increased cultural exchange between the West and the Arab world. To be sure, Gibran—on behalf of both the East and the West—functioned as a cultural ambassador, bringing to each the wisdom of the other.

II.

The exigencies of our time demand not only mutual understanding and generosity of spirit, but a critical evaluation and constant awareness of our own prejudices, which can divide and alienate the peoples of our world. Early on in his writings, Gibran emphasized the need to acknowledge the oneness of humanity and the essential oneness of all religions. This became the central theme of his thinking as expressed through the following:

You are my brother and I love you.
I love you when you prostrate yourself in your mosque, and kneel in your church, and pray in your synagogue. You and I are sons of one faith—the Spirit.⁴

These lines encapsulate Gibran's strongest conviction and inspired his greatest achievement: the leadership of a spiritual revolution, which took place in America. His feeling of exile in Boston and New York, as well as the consequences of the First World War, had sharpened his awareness of the need for an alternative to the cultural chauvinism—a relic of colonialism—that continued to taint both extreme right- and left-wing ideologies. Like Wordsworth, Gibran might have exclaimed:

The world is too much with us; late and soon,
Getting and spending, we lay waste our powers.⁵

Gibran had drawn from the Arabic works of Ibn al-‘Arabi, Ibn al-Farid, and al-Ghazzali the concept of the Unity of Being, and with it a deeper vision of the nature of the universe. Through a combination of practical and spiritual wisdom, replete in Arabic literature, he nourished his imagination from an early age and realized that within a unity of man and nature itself, there can be no place for internal strife and spiritual division. “If we were to do away with the [non-essentials of the] various religions,” Gibran once proposed, “we would find ourselves united and enjoying one great faith and religion, abounding in brotherhood.”⁶

And of that mysterious source of all faith, he dared to write:

[A] God who is good knows of no segregations amongst words or names, and were a God to deny His blessing to those who pursue a different path to eternity, then there is no human who should offer worship.⁷

His attempt at a reconciliation between Islam and Christianity, and in fact all religions, made him a forerunner of an interfaith movement that was yet unborn. Ecumenical in every sense of the word, his statements with regard to religion leave us in no doubt as to the purpose of his open letter addressed to all Muslims entitled “To Muslims from a Christian poet.” He announced:

I am a Christian and I am proud to be one, I also love the Arabian Prophet and exalt his name. I cherish the glory of Islam and fear its passing. I honor the Qur’an but I condemn those who use it as a means to thwart the endeavors of Muslims, I also deride those who use the Bible as a means to enslave Christians...
O Muslims, take my word: I am a Christian who has made a home for Jesus in one part of my being, and for Muhammad in another.⁸

Yet Gibran's belief in the power and efficacy of an all-embracing unity did not allow him to blur the distinctions between male and female, body and soul, reason and

faith. He sought instead to reconcile all opposites, create harmony, and recognize the complementary values of each entity.

He finally found this vision, which had permeated all he had done, fully manifested in the person and the teachings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, the son of the founder of the Bahá’í Faith, whom he met in New York City in 1912 and who allegedly provided a template for Gibran’s portrayal of Jesus in *Jesus, the Son of Man*. The poet was deeply impressed, proclaiming that: “For the first time, I saw form noble enough to be a receptacle for the Holy Spirit.”⁹

III.

Gibran was a universalist who placed his voice at the service of all those unable to speak for themselves. Had he been with us today, he would have been grieved to observe the belated recognition of the terrible consequences of global warming. He would have reminded us that we should hold this planet in trust for our children and their children’s children, and that our time on it is short but that the outcome of our actions will leave its traces for many generations to come.

Closely associated with Gibran’s lifelong and deep-rooted love of nature was his reverence for the capacity of women. In this area, he was far ahead of his times and his cultural background. As he wrote, God gives to the spirits of both women and men “wings to soar aloft into the realms of love and freedom”¹⁰ and a faith that “makes us all brothers [and sisters] equal before the sun”¹¹; to oppress women was thus a crime against God Himself, implying an attempt to thwart His purposes. In a letter written to May Ziadeh in 1928, Gibran described the central role women had in his life:

I am indebted for all that I call “I” to women, ever since I was an infant. Women opened the windows of my eyes and the doors of my spirit. Had it not been for the woman-mother, the woman-sister, and the woman-friend, I would have been sleeping among those who seek the tranquility of the world with their snoring.¹²

He specifically criticized the sufferings of women in an unjust social system maintained by equally corrupt religious and political establishments. He called for a transformation in the traditional relationships between men and women, and expressed the importance that each should recognize the sanctity and integrity of the other.

IV.

The question to ask at this point is: Why was Gibran's message—lyrical in language and vital for our times—so slow to gain the recognition that it merited? The answer may well be in the very accessibility, simplicity, and directness with which he addressed his readers. In purely literary terms, Gibran was swimming against the current. Academia, alarmed by the popularity of *The Prophet* in the 1960s, associated it with the Flower Children. And although his adventurous use of form and language gave Arabic literature a new freshness, his particular brand of Romanticism struggled to find ready acceptance in Western scholarly circles or among the literary avant-garde at a time when the forces of Expressionism, Naturalism, and Realism, in the tradition of Upton Sinclair and Theodore Dreiser, were strong in American drama, fiction, and poetry.

Nevertheless, poets such as the Irish AE (George Russell) and the American Robert Hillyer recognized his genius and the need for a new critical methodology to evaluate it. More recently, two distinguished major British poets have given Gibran's work a stamp of approval: Francis Warner and Kathleen Raine, who stated the following in the foreword to *Kahlil Gibran: Man and Poet (A New Biography)*, co-authored by Joe Jenkins and myself:

Communism and capitalism alike have believed that mankind could be fed on "bread alone," but once again the prophets of the ever-living spirit have shown that the "Word of God" is the necessary food of the soul. It is as if one mind had spoken through their several voices, none more eloquent or beautiful than the lonely voice of the Christian Lebanese Arab, Kahlil Gibran.¹³

V.

Perhaps Gibran today has now been confirmed as one of the most important writers of the twentieth century, as Penguin Press claimed back in 1995 when it included him in its honorary 60th anniversary series. His most famous book, *The Prophet*, is without doubt among the most widely read of our time and is still in print since its first publication in 1923, despite its humble beginnings. It turned Gibran into an international name and is second only to the Bible in copies sold in America. From 1918 until his death, he wrote exclusively in English, a fact that consolidated and broadened this international appeal. Today, Gibran's work is available in more than forty different languages, including some vernaculars within the one language. This has enabled him to be read and appreciated in places as far apart as Tokyo, Beijing, Delhi, Manila, Nairobi, Rome, Paris, London, and New York.

In America, Gibran's achievement as an influential literary figure received dual confirmation in the academic and public spheres in the 1990s when the University of Maryland established the Kahlil Gibran Chair for Values and Peace Project, while the United States government created a memorial garden in his honor in the heart of Washington, D.C. The first was an institutional decision by a major American university, ending years of unwarranted academic reluctance to include Gibran in the curriculum. The second was the result of a bill passed by Congress and the House of Representatives, followed by a special commemoration ceremony in May 1991, over which the then-President of the United States of America presided. Gibran must surely be the only immigrant poet ever to have been accorded such academic and national recognition.

VI.

Many poets, from Horace to Pushkin, have described their imperishable legacy in terms of a lofty monument more enduring than bronze, but Gibran's own words are closer to the simple vision of the English poet John Clare:

In every language upon earth,
On every shore, o'er every sea,
I gave my name immortal birth
And kept my spirit with the free.¹⁴

Truly this prefigures and testifies to the truth of Gibran's own prophetic statement:

I came to be for all and in all.
That which alone I do today shall be proclaimed before the people
in days to come.
And what I now say with one tongue, tomorrow will say with
many.¹⁵

Biography

Suheil Bushrui is the first incumbent of the George and Lisa Zakhem Kahlil Gibran Chair at the University of Maryland, and founder of the International Association for the Study of Kahlil Gibran. His research work, extending over the last fifty-seven years, has resulted in a variety of publications: books, articles, and monographs in Arabic and English on the life and times of Kahlil Gibran and his contemporaries. He has also lectured internationally promoting the legacy of Kahlil Gibran throughout the world.

¹ See the Club of Rome's website at <http://www.clubofrome.org/about/mission.php>.

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- ² Kahlil Gibran, *The Voice of the Master*, trans. Anthony R. Ferris (London: Heinemann, 1958), 66.
- ³ Kahlil Gibran, *The Prophet* (New York: A.A. Knopf, Inc., 1973), 38.
- ⁴ Kahlil Gibran, *A Tear and a Smile*, trans. H.M. Nahmad (London: Heinemann, 1950), 168.
- ⁵ William Wordsworth, "The world is too much..." in *The Complete Poetical Works of William Wordsworth*, ed. Andrew J. George (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1932), 349.
- ⁶ Kahlil Gibran, "Iram, City of Lofty Pillars," in *A Treasury of Kahlil Gibran*, ed. Martin L. Wolf, trans. Anthony Rizcallah Ferris (New York: The Citadel Press, 1965), 135.
- ⁷ *Ibid.*, 142.
- ⁸ Published in *Al-Funoon*, qtd. *Jubran Hayyan wa Mayyitan*, ed. Habib Masoud (Beirut: Rihani Publications, 1966), 37–8.
- ⁹ *Vignettes from the Life of 'Abdu'l-Bahá*, ed. A. Honnold (Oxford: George Ronald, 1982), 158.
- ¹⁰ Kahlil Gibran, *Spirits Rebellious*, trans. H.M. Nahmad (New York: A.A. Knopf, Inc., 1948), 121.
- ¹¹ *Ibid.*, 110.
- ¹² Kahlil Gibran, *Kahlil Gibran: A Self-Portrait*, trans. ed. Anthony R. Ferris (New York: The Citadel Press, 1959), 84.
- ¹³ Kathleen Raine, Foreword to *Kahlil Gibran: Man and Poet (A New Biography)* by Suheil Bushrui and Joe Jenkins (Oxford: Oneworld, 1998), vii.
- ¹⁴ John Clare, qtd. John Press in *The Fire and the Fountain: An Essay on Poetry* (London: Eyre Methuen, 1966), 6.
- ¹⁵ *A Tear and a Smile*, 172.

3. “PIPING TO THE SPIRIT DITTIES OF NO TONE”: ALMUSTAFA FOR OUR TIME!

By Riad Nourallah

The pre-Islamic Arabian poet ‘Antara begins his *mu‘allaqah* with an expression of despair: “Have not the other poets said everything that can be said about love, its torments and joys, transience and durability, illusion and truth?” What more can *he* say?

Like him, though lacking his genius and the subtlety of his dissemblance, what more can *I* say about Gibran, our beloved and challenger? This is particularly the case since so many brilliant people (here and elsewhere) have given and will give the subject so much from their brilliance, blending with Gibran’s own.

I had, in 1999, read a paper at the First International Gibran Conference on the role of literature in creating a culture of peace. The paper then figured as a chapter in my futilely provocative book *Beyond the Arab Disease*, a collection of essays on diplomacy, politics, culture, and literature.¹

It is this blend of these seemingly unrelated disciplines which the first part of my presentation this morning promises to tackle, at best skim over, within the span of twenty minutes. Almustafa, perhaps Gibran’s most consummate and iconic persona and alter-ego—indeed his finest creation, as Gibran himself, millions of readers, and, most crucially, Professor Bushrui, believe²—will serve a dual purpose: functional and personal.

The first part of my presentation will endeavor to connect Almustafa’s universal message to some key principles and components of a modern graduate course in diplomacy, placing both in a long-standing and evolving tradition of addressing human and contemporary challenges, upholding values, and contributing to peace, unity, and intellectual and spiritual growth.

At the London Academy of Diplomacy, University of East Anglia, which has recently received a “Diplomat of the Year” award in recognition of its contributions to diplomacy and diplomatic studies,³ members of staff, many of whom with decades of experience in practicing and teaching the art, view diplomacy in the round. Rather than perceived as a mere handmaiden to a Ministry of Foreign Affairs or as a tangential option exercised by nation states, diplomacy is treated by the team as an activity vital to the peace, stability, civility, prosperity, and sanity of the global community, the larger human family.

Diplomacy has been notoriously described by Sir Henry Wotton, in one unguarded moment or perhaps in a runaway punning mood, as the effort of “a good man sent to lie abroad for the sake of his country,”⁴ a sentiment that would have been heartily and loudly approved by Louis XI in his pursuit of “Italian techniques of force and fraud.”⁵ However, there is a near-consensus in the diplomatic literature that diplomatic success rests on the “word of an honest man,” with “integrity” and “credibility” being the very bedrock of diplomacy.⁶ Harold Nicolson’s expert words here are telling:

My own practical experience, and the years of study which I have devoted to this subject, have left me with the profound conviction that “moral” diplomacy is ultimately the most effective and that “immoral” diplomacy defeats its own purposes.⁷

The London Academy of Diplomacy, used here as a model and framework for discussion, offers MA and PhD degrees in Diplomatic Studies, which include modules on the Theory and Practice of Diplomacy, Foreign Policy Formulation and Assessment, International Security, Public International Law, Strategic Defense Diplomacy, and Management—all to be expected, but also Media Communication Strategies; Science Technology and International Policy; International Market Policy; Economic Global Governance; International Protocol and Etiquette; Cultural Awareness; Religion, Diplomacy, and Security; Diplomatic Discourse; and Research Methodology, a new module on Translation Theory and Practice to be shortly introduced.

The obvious differences between a university course and a book of wisdom notwithstanding, it is relatively easy to discern here a common area of concern between the above range of subjects and those addressed by Almustafa, such as his discourses on Laws; Crime and Punishment; Buying and Selling; Work; Freedom; Houses; Friendship; Reason and Passion; Religion; Self-Knowledge; Talking; and, pertinently here, Teaching—the spread of topics in both cases serving a need and addressing a challenge.

Since the epoch-making speech President Woodrow Wilson gave to the American Congress on January 8, 1918, diplomacy has been moving (or has been meant to move) from the concealments, elitism, and guile associated with Old Diplomacy to the “open covenants openly arrived at” advocated bravely, poetically, and in a typically American fashion, by President Wilson. Certainly, that process has not yet reached (and may never do) the complete openness and transparency envisioned in the 1918 speech. However, the process to take diplomacy from behind closed doors and beyond exclusive circles was to reach a high point in the establishment of the League of Nations, yet another Wilsonian dream (one to which Kant and others had

contributed), and for that dream to be updated and refined (to the best of that generation's ability) in the shape of the United Nations.

In due course, the relentless processes of democratization, human rights advocacy, technology, and globalization, along with their tools and texts, were to help create newer variants of the New Diplomacy. So students and practitioners of the art now have to be familiar with and respond to Multi-Track Diplomacy, Public Diplomacy, Media Diplomacy, Citizen Diplomacy, Small State Diplomacy, Niche Diplomacy, Cultural Diplomacy, Human Rights Diplomacy, Faith-based Diplomacy, Environmental Diplomacy, and, among several other subgenres, Sport Diplomacy. Arrayed against these, though in no recognizable battle formations, are the morbid forces of *anti-diplomacy*.⁸

Of course the range of human experience is way beyond any one literary work or a university program. But is it not axiomatic that both education and literature, science and art, divinity and diplomacy, though using methodologies and instruments of their own and addressing audiences or clients with different abilities and expectations, share common objectives and values? They all endeavor to address human needs and aspirations (a special tribute here on this campus to the much-missed Edward Azar!), and in the process of addressing those needs, enhance knowledge and awareness while contending with specific and often interconnected human negativities and failings, and “all” that “which is between birth and death,” as put by Almitra.⁹ In the course of that endeavor, the human ideals of nobility, compassion, courage, altruism, creativity, and the sanctity and unity of life also need to be celebrated and enhanced, as Almitra surely intended. Ideals will always challenge, perhaps ever elude, us, but, pithily phrased by Browning, “a man must exceed his grasp, or what's a heaven for?”¹⁰—“man” here to mean men and women and all humanity.

The process of Cultural Diplomacy, one may need to note, is never a quick fix. It is slow, long-term, and cumulative. It cannot set out to coerce or convert or deceive. Like great literature, which Aristotle differentiated from rhetoric,¹¹ it is *subtly*, rather than overtly or loudly, *persuasive*. Simon Anholt, a young guru of Nation Branding, warned at our recent London conference (interestingly on the theme of Commerce and Security in the Age of Heteropolarity), that a good brand, a good image, comes from doing good or being good to the world. Professor Bushrui reminded me yesterday morning at breakfast of Shelley's assertion, “Poets are the unacknowledged legislators of the world,”¹² an assertion that hints at the power of art, subtle as it may be, to serve and transform. Diplomats, too, have been defined by the Renaissance theorist Bernard du Rosier as people who labor for the public good and act for the general welfare.¹³ James Der Derian, noting the traditional ascription of angels as messengers, argued not that diplomats belong to that celestial breed, but that they too mediate, if not between humanity and an alien God, then between humanity and itself.¹⁴

World history provides many instances of what diplomacy has done or could have done for humanity, perpetually afflicted by and somehow providing for the scourge of war. One very poignant example was supplied by the young Michael Dravis in the course of a casual conversation we had here in Maryland. Humane and eagle-eyed in his ongoing PhD research into modern diplomatic history, Dravis cited the case, pointed out by William M. Johnston, of a querulous Austrian court official who blocked a state funeral which should have been organized for Archduke Franz Ferdinand, who had just been assassinated with his wife in Sarajevo on June 28, 1914. The aborted event, which would have been attended by all of Europe's monarchs, might have provided an opportunity and a forum, Johnston had argued, to settle the Austrian-Serbian dispute by negotiation instead of war.¹⁵ Perhaps little would have changed even if that conclave had taken place, but the enormity of that "missed opportunity" and the millions of lives it would have saved will haunt all of us whose families have been directly or indirectly impacted by that war.

The world is vast, often driven, skeptics contend, by self-interest and can be manipulated by fear. Ancient history apart, masses of people could still at various stages of the twentieth century be maneuvered and steered by Hitlers and Saddams and Pol Pots to commit unspeakable atrocities, hopefully a less likely occurrence nowadays. E.M. Forster, perhaps realizing the stiff resistance of some human institutions to change, was content to appeal to the "sensitive, the considerate, and the plucky," an aristocracy, yes, but one found in all classes, nations, and ages, he asserts.¹⁶ Still, isn't the giving of hope and confidence in human commonality and an inner light (as Almustafa endeavors to do), and the giving of a second and wider life by allowing that inner transformation and conviction to join and shine within another human being, ultimately within the larger human spirit (the Simurgh-bound pilgrim birds in Attar's metaphor or the people's "procession," in Almustafa's words, towards their "god-self")¹⁷ part of Almustafa's mission and that of diplomacy, art, and education?

I can give several examples of how this works out in an academic program on diplomacy. Two or three examples may, however, suffice here. One involves the exhortation by Almustafa: "Say not 'I have found the truth,' but rather, 'I have found a truth.'"¹⁸ The statement, which I have been in the habit of citing as a preamble to a very tough module on Research Methods, serves more than one function. Often remembered by graduates of the program several years later, it serves to instill a sense of humility in the young researchers. It also helps inculcate in them, other exercises and workshops assisting, a measure of respect (by no means unquestioning) for the rich and varied body of scholarship that went before them and from which they will benefit, prompting them to view data from as many angles as possible, and themselves as part of and possible contributors to a universal and ongoing scholarly endeavor.

Our world, “so various, so beautiful, so new,”¹⁹ still echoes to claims of superiority, exclusivity, and sole guardianship over an absolute, immutable, indivisible, and un-negotiable truth—claims seeming to simplify life while mutilating it. Great religions, ideologies, nations, can be hijacked by the anti-mind brigades and the anti-diplomats. An awareness of the immense diversity of the world without and within, and of the endless possibilities as well as uncertainties therein, gives the diplomat and the scholar a compass and the freedom and confidence to make a choice or a stand. After all, a good diplomat, as is sometimes noted, perhaps in contrast to Azo of Bologna’s view of a *nuncius* as “just like a magpie...an organ, and the voice of the principal sending him,”²⁰ is one who stands up *for* as well as *to* their government. An equally good, or perhaps better diplomat (alternatively researcher, scientist, artist, etc.) is one who stands up for the whole of humanity, though standing up to one’s own government is not a less worthy (or less difficult) task.

In all events, the growing skepticism about hard power and zero-sum games (in favor of soft power and win-win solutions) has been much celebrated in recent diplomatic and academic circles. This is particularly the case as the endeavor to *win*, rather than *compel*, hearts and minds is at a premium in campaigns of various types and by various actors in today’s world. And as the Diplomatic Studies program deals with public and cultural diplomacy, reflecting the increasing use of them by states and other actors, an increasing number of students on the program are opting to write dissertations on related themes exploring, among other cultural activities and institutions, the work of such organizations as the British Council and the Goethe and the Cervantes Institutes, with the Confucius Institute being a recent addition. True, Frederick the Great, accomplished in various arts, is on the record for noting that “diplomacy without power” is like “an orchestra without a score,”²¹ while Machiavelli had also observed that all armed prophets prevailed while unarmed ones were destroyed.²² However, the often-misquoted Florentine had gone on to note that conquest or empire was not a guarantor of achieving “glory” and “renown.” But like other prophets who went unarmed and who had escaped in this instance Machiavelli’s notice, Almustafa has also prevailed, though not in a conventional sense and not with a conventional armory.

The concept of *sharing*, implied in Almustafa’s take on “truth” (in the discourse on Self-Knowledge) but equally in the simple and highly effective metaphor of the intertwining of black and white threads in the discourse on Crime and Punishment,²³ has also been emerging as a much talked-about diplomatic tool to resolve long-running disputes or pre-empt future ones. Admission of the guilt “within” and engaging “the other” in debate (for which simulation exercises on the MA program provide a good training, with cases like South Africa’s TRC, the Good Friday Agreement, and the Dayton Agreement being staple case studies) are in themselves acts of sharing, sharing of self and time and space, as well as of the ever-present

opportunity for understanding and healing, which, if “missed,” would warp the “seed of hope” into a “Poison Tree”:

I was angry with my friend;
I told my wrath, my wrath did end.
I was angry with my foe;
I told it not, my wrath did grow.²⁴

Such warping of an otherwise gentle growth of the goodness (or potential for goodness) within the human psyche prompts Almustafa time and again to speak of the need to address the injustices and inequalities of our world even as he urges forgiveness and promotes transcendence of the kind the TRC was to attempt to do. “It is [he famously asserts] in exchanging the gifts of the earth that you shall find abundance and be satisfied. Yet [as we live in an international system described by IR theorists as “anarchic” but in need of laws] unless the exchange be in love and kindly justice, it will but lead some to greed and others to hunger.”²⁵

The emerging diplomatic concepts on sharing (with implications for the world’s economy, ecology, public health, science and technology transfer, and, among other things, security) are being applied to disputes ranging from those over water and mineral resources to those over national artifacts taken in colonial times to European museums. These are serious cases in which diplomatic negotiation and bargaining is invariably involved. In these and in other discussions, the need is often invoked (usually by NGOs) for the sharing of trusteeship over the earth’s resources and for a reassessment of national accountability. The very concept of *identity* (national and otherwise) is debated.

Almustafa himself derives his layers of identity, as suggested by his very name and genesis and the language and images he uses, from a diversity of sources.²⁶ This diversity, expressed in a deceptively simple but imaginative language, accounts for much of the universal appeal of his lofty but egalitarian moral code relevant to one emerging worldwide and articulated in a language accessible to ordinary people rather than to a select priesthood. We may all appreciate the extended and complex metaphors of John Donne and the intricate sprung rhythms of Gerard Manley Hopkins; but the splendid directness and beauty of Christ’s Sermon on the Mount and Blake’s *Songs of Innocence* has also warmed, sustained, and uplifted the hearts of millions, as has the simple homily of the Ancient Mariner—“He prayeth well, who loveth well/Both man and bird and beast.”²⁷

Be that as it may, nowhere does Almustafa, concerned as he is with a humanity “standing in twilight” and pulled about by the “repugnant and the cherished,”²⁸ suggest an avoidance of what Yeats calls “the fascination of what’s difficult” or the need to start “where all the ladders start.”²⁹ “[T]o be idle [he declares] is to become a

stranger unto the seasons, and to step out of life's procession."³⁰ Diplomacy itself, both in its texts and activities, is undergoing such leveling and engagement with roots, the inevitable lock and encryption notwithstanding.

Gibran, a product of Lebanon and of the United States, each wonderfully unique, each an inheritor but also transformer of many traditions, could not have come to his full blossoming without that twain. And yet he goes on every day to take their and his own discourses more widely and intimately into the universal heart and mind with their potential for positive action, mediating, negotiating, at times transforming assumptions, canons, and identities, creating bridges and multiplicities where barriers and monoliths existed. "The basis of diplomacy [Feltham asserts] is communication—of thoughts and ideas,"³¹ traditionally between states, but increasingly beyond them, promoting dialogue, participation, and pluralism, ever widening and drawing the circle Edwin Markham so pithily spoke about³² to take more and more people in. Almustafa, a Lebanese-American ambassador *par excellence*, is like Tennyson's Ulysses, part of all that he has met, a ceaseless seafarer and a wayfarer, a native and an exile. He is also the universal man of Ibn al-'Arabi and the composite ideal of Ikhwan al-Safa.³³ Might he also add a new vein to Leonardo's Vitruvian Man? Might he also find in this Center at the University of Maryland, and in the association to be set up, the body and the confidence to stand side by side, perhaps lead, preferably *share* with other renowned centers and institutes, an endeavor to take his discourses boldly and innovatively into the "living ether" of humanity?³⁴

I would have loved to speak at some length of my attempt to translate my long personal journey with Gibran's hero into a creative and relevant form, namely my *Death of Almustafa*.³⁵ Not meant as a sequel or an elegy, the book celebrates the *life* of Gibran and his deathless and borderless hero, and is a tribute to them and to the peoples of Lebanon and America, an offering that is respectful of Gibran's many-sidedness and the many-sidedness and challenges, fears, and aspirations, of our world in transition. It is also a celebration of and a tribute to the influence of my Gibran-loving parents and teachers in Beirut, most notably Professor Bushrui, who introduced the study of Gibran, along with that of Rihani and Naimy, so bravely and brilliantly into the syllabus of the AUB's English Department, and more widely into the public and cultural life of Lebanon in the 1970s onwards, but I must draw to a conclusion.

I had chosen as a title for this presentation "'Piping to the spirit ditties of no tone': Almustafa for our Time." The quote comes, as you know, from Keats's "Ode on a Grecian Urn." It is a poem of curious paradoxes and tenacious riddles. Is piping to the spirit ditties of no tone—i.e., to the inner pulses, the hushed, the latent, the incorporeal, the inexpressible—sufficient for human needs and the human soul? Might it also be a celebration of the creative and unbridled spirit that unites

humanity, knows no distinction, and transcends conflict and convention? Is the final assertion “Beauty is Truth, Truth Beauty,” really *all* that we know on earth and *all* we need to know?³⁶ Is it an assertion made (in earnest, envy, or exasperation) by the poet to the urn, or a reflection by the urn itself based on its own little world with its own little truths? Is it meant to edify or to baffle, to limit or to expand, to weld art into life or raise one above the other? The urn is nowhere to be seen, perhaps dropped by human carelessness or smashed in some human conflict. Perhaps, most probably, it was an artifact, a synthesis, of Keats’s imagination. The Ode, however, remains, like our world, with its uncertainties and affirmations, triumphs and challenges, as does *Almustafa*!

Biography

Riad Nourallah has an MA from the American University of Beirut and a PhD from the University of Cambridge. He has taught at the American University of Beirut and the universities of Cambridge, Salford, the UAE, Durham, and Westminster. Professor Nourallah is currently Director of Research at the London Academy of Diplomacy, University of East Anglia. Among his recent publications are *Beyond the Arab Disease: New Perspectives in Politics and Culture* (Routledge, 2005, 2011) and *The Death of Almustafa* (Quartet Books, 2010).

¹ Riad Nourallah, “Literature and Peacemaking: a Role Explored,” *Beyond the Arab Disease: New Perspectives in Politics and Culture* (London: Routledge, 2006), 115-24.

² Suheil Bushrui, Introduction to *The Prophet* by Kahlil Gibran (Oxford: Oneworld, 1995), 44.

³ The award, by the magazine *The Diplomat*, was received by Professor Nabil Ayad on behalf of the Academy at a ceremony in London on April 24, 2012.

⁴ Keith Hamilton and Richard Langhorne, *The Practice of Diplomacy: Its Evolution, Theory and Administration* (London: Routledge, 1995), 61.

⁵ Adam Watson, *Diplomacy: The Dialogue Between States* (London: Eyre Methuen, 1982), 99.

⁶ Alexandra Guisinger and Alastair Smith, “Honest Threats: The Interaction of Reputation and Political Institutions in International Crises,” *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, vol. 46, no. 2 (April 2002), 175-200 (179-180).

⁷ Harold Nicolson, *Diplomacy*, 3rd ed. (Oxford University Press, 1963), 49.

⁸ See James Der Derian’s early engagement with the concept in his classic *On Diplomacy: a Genealogy of Western Estrangement* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1987), 134-67.

⁹ *The Prophet*, 73.

¹⁰ Robert Browning, “Andrea del Sarto,” *Browning: Poetical Works 1833-1864*, ed. Ian Jack (Oxford University Press, 1970), 675.

¹¹ *Aristotle’s Poetics*, trans. James Hutton (New York: Norton, 1982), 21.

¹² See his “Defence of Poetry,” *Shelley’s Prose or the Trumpet of a Prophecy*, ed. David Lee Clark (London: Fourth Estate, 1988), 297.

¹³ Keith Hamilton and Richard Langhorne, *The Practice of Diplomacy: Its Evolution, Theory and Administration* (London: Routledge, 1995), 41.

¹⁴ *On Diplomacy: a Genealogy of Western Estrangement*, 44-45, 65-67, 74-75.

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- ¹⁵ William M. Johnston, "Systems of Reference as Stimuli to Creativity, Or How Austria Dealt with the Incongruous (Das Skurrile)" (address given as part of a course of lectures co-sponsored by the Resident Associate Program of the Smithsonian Institution and the Embassy of Austria delivered in Washington, DC, in 1987), in *Austria Between Wars: Dream and Reality*, ed. Walter Greinert (Smithsonian Institution, 1987), 85-87—the reference kindly provided by Michael Dravis.
- ¹⁶ E.M. Forster, *What I believe and Other Essays*, ed. Nicolas Walter (London: G.W. Foote & Co., 1999), 23.
- ¹⁷ *The Prophet*, 104.
- ¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 118.
- ¹⁹ Matthew Arnold, "Dover Beach," *The Poems of Matthew Arnold*, ed. Kenneth Allott (London: Longmans, 1965), 242.
- ²⁰ Azo, *Summa Codicis*, qtd. in Hamilton and Langhorens *Practice of Diplomacy*, 22.
- ²¹ As cited in Watson, *Diplomacy*, 53.
- ²² Niccolo Machiavelli, *The Prince*, trans. W.K. Marriott (London: Everyman, 1908), (1992), 26.
- ²³ *The Prophet*, 105.
- ²⁴ William Blake, "A Poison Tree," *The Poems of William Blake*, ed. W.H. Stevenson (London: Longman, 1971), 212-13.
- ²⁵ *The Prophet*, 100.
- ²⁶ *Ibid.*, 25-57.
- ²⁷ S.T. Coleridge, *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, illustrated by Mervyn Peake (London: Chatto and Windus, 1978), 36.
- ²⁸ *The Prophet*, 106, 110.
- ²⁹ William Butler Yeats, "The Fascination of What's Difficult," and "The Circus Animals' Desertion," *Yeats's Poems*, ed. A. Norman Jeffares (Macmillan, 1989), 188, 472.
- ³⁰ *The Prophet*, 90.
- ³¹ R.G. Feltham, *Diplomatic Handbook*, 6th ed. (London: Longman, 1993), 1.
- ³² Edwin Markham, "Outwitted," *Poems of Edwin Markham*, ed. Charles L. Wallis (Harper & Bros., 1950).
- ³³ See a rendering into English of the synthesis suggested by Ikhwan al-Safa in Theodore Zeldin, *An Intimate History of Humanity* (London: Sinclair-Stevenson, 1994), 456.
- ³⁴ *The Prophet*, 130.
- ³⁵ Riad Nourallah, *The Death of Almustafa* (London: Quartet Books, 2010).
- ³⁶ John Keats, *The Poems of John Keats*, ed. Miriam Allott (New York: Longman, 1970), 532-37.

4. GIBRAN'S LEBANON

By Henri Zoghaib

In 1925, Kahlil Gibran wrote:

There are in the Middle East today two challenging ideas: old and new. The old ideas will vanish because they are weak and exhausted. There is in the Middle East an awakening that defies slumber. This awakening will conquer because the sun is its leader and the dawn is its army.¹

He then stated, in his essay entitled "The New Frontier":

The Middle East, today, has two masters. One is deciding, ordering, being obeyed; but he is at the point of death. The other one is silent in his conformity to law and order, calmly awaiting justice; he is a powerful giant who knows his own strength, confident in his existence and a believer in his destiny.²

This statement, coming only two years after the enormous success of *The Prophet* (1923), clearly shows Gibran's life mission to awaken the peoples of the Middle East, specifically the people of his native Lebanon.

Though he was often severe in criticizing the people of his homeland, he always had an indisputable love for his country, evident when he declared, "If Lebanon had not been my country, I would have adopted Lebanon for my country."

I.

What was it about Lebanon that so moved Gibran, one who made his fame in the new world, to have such a perpetual nostalgic longing towards his homeland? What did Lebanon provide him that America could not?

Gibran was very young (12 years old) when he left his hometown of Bsharri for America with his family. He was to briefly return 15 years later to learn Arabic (1898-1902), an experience that left its shadows in his Arabic novel *Al-Ajnihah al-Mutakassirah* (*The Broken Wings*).

After 1902, he was never to return to Lebanon, spending the next 30 years in the United States igniting the literary and artistic life that would bring him international fame, which continues to grow generation after generation.

During his 16 years in Boston—a period interrupted by two trips abroad: four years in Lebanon and two years in Paris—most of Gibran’s writings were in Arabic. His writings were mainly inspired by people and places in Lebanon, showing that he still had his romantic connection to Lebanon. We see this close relationship with Lebanon in his first Arabic books: *A Note on Music* (1905), *‘Ara’is al-Muru’ij (The Nymphs of the Valleys)* (1906), *The Rebellious Spirits* (1908), *Al-Ajniyah al-Mutakassirah (The Broken Wings)* (1912), *A Tear and a Smile* (1914), and *The Procession* (1918), many of which have their settings in Lebanon or are about Lebanese persons.

However, Gibran spent the majority of his life in New York City, during which time he almost quit writing in Arabic; he began to write almost wholly in English and adopted America as his new country to live in, to work in, and to find the fame he was looking for. Nevertheless, if Lebanon did not appear in his English pen, it appeared in his brush. We notice in many of his paintings a background of mountains and valleys that are typically reminiscent of the Qadisha Valley, an incredibly beautiful site that lent many memories of his childhood. In other words, between Boston and New York, Lebanon was between his pen and his brush.

What was his relationship with Lebanon? What was it about Lebanon that captured his imagination? Was it the nation, kneeling under the harsh rule of the Ottomans, leading his father to jail and his mother to emigration? Was it that old history of glory and civilization? It is some of each aspect, in addition to the romantic nature within Gibran, coupled with his revolution against the despotism in his home land.

Let us listen to how he nostalgically sees his Lebanon:

You have your Lebanon and its dilemma. I have my Lebanon and its beauty. Your Lebanon is an arena for men from the West and men from the East. My Lebanon is a flock of birds fluttering in the early morning as shepherds lead their sheep into the meadow and rising in the evening as farmers return from their fields and vineyards. You have your Lebanon and its people. I have my Lebanon and its people.³

Let us now listen to how he sees his countrymen:

Is there, among the children of your Lebanon, anyone who represents the strength of the towering rocks of Lebanon, the purity of its water, or the fragrance of its air? Who among them vouchsafes to say, “When I die I leave my country little better than when I was born”? Who among them dare to say, “My life was a

drop of blood in the veins of Lebanon, a tear in her eyes or a smile upon her lips”?

Let me tell you now who the children of my Lebanon are:

They are the farmers who would turn the fallow field into garden and grove.

They are the parents who tend the nurseries, the mothers who spin the silken yarn.

They are the husbands who harvest the wheat and the wives who gather the sheaves.

They are the poets who pour their souls in new cups.

They are those who migrate with nothing but courage in their hearts and strength in their arms but who return with wealth in their hands and a wreath of glory upon their heads.

They are the victorious wherever they go and loved and respected wherever they settle.

They are the ones born in huts but who died in palaces of learning.

These are the children of Lebanon; they are the lamps that cannot be snuffed by the wind and the salt which remains unspoiled through the ages.

They are the ones who are steadily moving toward perfection, beauty, and truth.⁴

II.

But was Gibran always happy and always proud of his people? Surely not. He wanted to be the horn that awoke them from their sleepiness, weakness, and fear.

He knocked on their conscience and hearts:

What is it you would have me do, my countrymen? I have sung for you, but you did not dance; I have wept before you, but you did not cry. Your hearts are withering from thirst, and yet the springs of Life are streaming about your homes—why do you not drink? I

have called you in the silence of the night to point out the glory of the moon and the dignity of the stars, but you startled from your slumber and clutched your swords in fear, crying, "Where is the enemy? We must kill Him first!" At morning tide, when the enemy came, I called to you again, but now you did not wake from your slumber, for you were locked in fear, wrestling with the processions of specters in your dreams. And I said unto you, "Let us climb to the mountain top and view the beauty of the world." And you answered me saying, "In the depths of this valley our fathers lived, and in its shadows they died, and in its caves they were buried. How can we depart this place for one which they failed to honor?" I have loved you, my countrymen, but my love for you is painful to me and useless to you; and today I hate you. Come, now, and see how ugly you are! Look and meditate! Fear has turned your hair grey as the ashes, and dissipation has grown over your eyes and made them into obscured hollows, and death has kissed your lips and left them yellow as the autumn leaves.

What is it that you seek, my countrymen? What ask you from Life, who does not any longer count you among her children? I hate you, my countrymen, because you hate glory and greatness. I despise you because you despise yourselves. I am your enemy, for you refuse to realize that you are the enemies of the goddesses.⁵

To this point Gibran wanted to shake and awake his people and his country. He surely gained from his life in American society, where he experienced liberty and freedom, human rights and fame, chances and opportunities. Looking from afar, he could see his Lebanon locked in fear, humility, and blocked horizons.

But when he looked at his own people in the States, who they are and what they achieved, he beckoned Lebanon to its roots and achievements, and he loudly showed his pride:

I believe in you, and I believe in your destiny.

I believe that you are contributors to this new civilization.

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 that you can say to the founders of this great nation, "Here I am, a youth, a young tree whose roots were plucked from

the hills of Lebanon, yet I am deeply rooted here, and I would be fruitful.”

I believe that you can say to Emerson and Whitman and James, “In my veins runs the blood of the poets and wise men of old, and it is my desire to come to you and receive, but I shall not come with empty hands.”

I believe that it’s in you to be good citizens, who would stand before the towers of New York and Washington, Chicago and San Francisco saying in your heart, “I am the descendant of a people that built Damascus and Byblos, and Tyre and Sidon and Antioch, and now I am here to build with you, and with a will.”

You should be proud of being an American, but you should also be proud that your fathers and mothers came from a land upon which God laid His gracious hand and raised His messengers.⁶

Here is the duality in Gibran's relationship with Lebanon: he loves his people, yet he wants them to lose their fear. He loves his country, but he wants it to be as beautiful as it is in his poems:

Give me the Nay (the flute) and sing,
Singing is the secret of eternity.
The laments of the Nay will linger beyond the decline of existence.
Have you, like me, chosen the forest dwelling rather than the castle?
Have you followed the stream and climbed the rocks?
Have you anointed your body with fragrance distilled in light?
Have you been drunk with dawn in the goblets full of pure air?⁷

It is obvious here that the scheme he dreamt of and pointed out is so far from the atmosphere of New York and the rushing rhythm of the American life. It is obvious that the scheme he dreamt of is there, far, very far, in those mountains he left so many years ago, but they never left his mind or his memories, his pen or his brush.

III.

How do we read Gibran today in our era of globalization and conflict, the topic of our current conference? Before so-called “globalization,” Gibran spoke about the universal Man.

In *The Prophet*, the “chosen and the beloved” has no identity, and spoke to the people of Orphalese who could be anywhere at any time. This is what caused the universal fame of the book, read by millions all over the world in over 40 different languages. But even in this “global” appeal of the book, we could point out the shadow of Lebanon.

He said “the seventh day of Ielool, the month of reaping,”⁸ rather than the seventh day of September. “Ielool” is the name of September in his native language, and the month of reaping in his native homeland.

He chose to name his Prophet “Almustafa,” continuing to qualify him as “the chosen and the beloved,” maintaining the Arabic word of his native language. What are those “twelve years” Almustafa spent in Orphalese, and why twelve?

Could they be the twelve years Gibran, who was always longing to go back to his beloved homeland, spent in New York (1911-1923) until the publication of the book? Let us remember here what he said to his friend Mikhael Nouaïma while he was painting his portrait on October 16, 1920. Gibran told him, “My wish, Misha, is to visit the Qadisha valley before I die.” When Nouaïma asked him, “Why don’t we plan for it soon, and we go back this coming spring?” Gibran replied, “I wish I could. I have so many tasks to achieve.”⁹

Before Almustafa left Orphalese, he climbed the hill without the city walls and looked seaward; he saw his ship approaching the harbor, and upon her prow the mariners, the men of his own land. His soul cried out to them, and he said:

Sons of my ancient mother, you riders of the tides, how often have you sailed in my dreams. And now you come in my awakening, which is my deeper dream.¹⁰

He accordingly said “my ancient mother,” well aware of what he always wrote about his homeland as the old world of civilization.

Furthermore, the Prophet was waiting for the ship that was to return and bring him back to the isle of his birth. And where is this isle? It is, obviously enough, in the Orient: “[H]e made a signal to the seamen, and straightaway they weighed anchor and cast the ship loose from its moorings, and they moved eastward.”

Gibran could have made the ship leave to an unknown destination. But he specified: “eastward,” which shows his everlasting longing to return back to his beloved hometown, to his beloved Lebanon.

Therefore, with Lebanon in his mind, he wrote a universal book for a universal reader. Once again, he reached the idea of globalization out of his own Lebanization, romantically and realistically at the same time.

IV.

As for the conflicts which Gibran experienced in his time, which are the same conflicts we experience in our era, he spoke about the one-world-man, who adores one God, in a human brotherhood that may eliminate many conflicts.

For him, all conflicts could be resolved by the blood of a new generation, the old one being the ashes of yesterday. This is what he explains, once again, in his very meaningful text “The New Frontier”:

The children of yesteryears are walking in the funeral of the era they created for themselves... The children of tomorrow are the ones called by life, to follow it with steady steps and heads high; they are the dawn of new frontiers, no smoke will veil their eyes and no jingle of chains will drown out their voices. They are few in number, but the difference is as between a grain of wheat and a stack of hay. No one knows them, but they know each other. They are like the summits, which can see or hear each other—not like caves, which cannot hear or see. They are the seed dropped by the hand of God in the field, breaking through its pod and waving its sapling leaves before the face of the sun. It shall grow into a mighty tree, its root in the heart of the earth, and its branches high in the sky.¹¹

V.

How do we read Gibran today? We read him preaching globalization instead of conflict. While conflict results from political and economic self-interest, and ethnic and religious problems, globalization makes the world a fraternal atmosphere in a futuristic option of life. This is the world Gibran belonged to, and the one he was seeking in his vision.

We see his vision in his paintings of asexual bodies, longing upwards, seeking freedom. In some of them, we do not know if it is a woman’s body or a man’s, for Gibran’s goal was to look into the inner soul of human beings, regardless of their sex or identity, and to the whole of humanity.

Are Gibran's ideas applicable in today’s world?

He was a poet in all his writings and paintings. To believe that poets foresee the destiny and its consequences is also to believe that Gibran's ideas are widely applicable today. This is why his sayings are known worldwide, his texts read in ceremonies, his books endlessly printed and re-printed, making his ideas permanently up-to-date.

The interaction between cultures is the main aim of Gibran's vision for a new world with one God, one World, and one universal Man.

This is the universal vision of Gibran, who wanted his people back home, and his readers everywhere, to adopt and to live by. He lived his convictions and behaved accordingly with everyone around him. In my newly-published book *Gibran: Testimonies of Persons and Places*, I write about meeting, in the mid-eighties, some of Gibran's acquaintances who related to me incidents or happenings of his life or behavior which confirm that he lived exactly what he preached.

By this universal vision, he knew how to bridge East and West, as well as his American pragmatism with his Lebanese romanticism. He never went far from his romantic flavor of poetry, as he didn't want to go far from his realistic life in New York. He was the star of his circles, the American as well as the Lebanese. The Pen Bond created a new era in Arabic written literature, and Gibran was at its helm.

He kept his love for Lebanon in his mind and soul even after he focused on his English writings, starting in 1918 with the publication of his *Madman*. At one point, when Monsignor Mansour Stephen met him in New York in 1924, Stephen introduced himself as the editor of Gibran's latest book in Arabic, *Beautiful and Rare Sayings*, published in Cairo one year before. Gibran thanked the bishop very coldly and continued his way out. Though he cared less about his books and writings in Arabic, Gibran never forgot about his Lebanese feelings.

In Mary Haskell's diaries and letters, well-kept at the University of North Carolina Chapel Hill, she always wrote about his attachment to his homeland. She always felt that aroma of his Lebanese childhood. Knowing that she was keeping a daily diary, he would insinuate what he wanted her to write. Through his stories and visions, he left impressions on her that she later recorded in her diary.

VI.

Gibran left Lebanon, but Lebanon never left Gibran. This exceptional homeland remained in his mind, his feelings, his early Arabic writings, and his later English writings.

From the cocoon of this tiny yet immense heritage, he spread out his universal vision towards a new world, towards what we call now *globalization*. He carried Lebanon with him to Boston and New York, and from Boston and New York, he carried his Lebanon to the world. By doing so, he became a global identity for his country.

During my two stays in the States (1984-1985 and 1988-1994) when I was asked where am I from, I would proudly answer, "From Lebanon." For those people who did not know about Lebanon, I would identify it as the homeland of Gibran, and everyone would immediately recognize my country because of his name. Lebanon had given Gibran life, but Gibran has given Lebanon a universal fame that no one else could have given.

VII.

Many aspects have been unveiled about Gibran, but many others have not yet unveiled. This man from Lebanon succeeded in creating his enduring legacy not only through the metaphoric suggestion at the end of his *Prophet* that "another woman...shall bear [him],"¹² but also through many questions about his life and thought that are left to be answered.

The right answers to those questions will for a long time remain without end. The right answer will always be a right question. With this last aspect, Gibran will never perish. He will always be alive in yet-to-come testimonies of persons and places.

Biography

Henri Zoghaib (b. 1948) is a Lebanese poet and writer with many poetry and prose books to his credit. Co-chairman of the International Association for the Study of Life and Works of Kahlil Gibran, for Lebanon and the Arab world (since 1999), in 2002 he founded the Center for Lebanese Heritage in the Lebanese American University (LAU) and still runs it. His latest book, *Gibran: Testimonies of Persons and Places*, sheds new horizons on Gibran's life and creativity.

¹ Kahlil Gibran, "The New Frontier," *A Third Treasury of Kahlil Gibran*, ed. Andrew Dib Sherfan (Secaucus: Citadel Press, 1975), 49.

² Ibid.

³ Kahlil Gibran, "You Have Your Lebanon and I Have My Lebanon," *Mirrors of the Soul*, trans. Joseph Sheban (New York: The Philosophical Library, 1965), 30-31.

⁴ Ibid., 31-32.

⁵ Kahlil Gibran, "My Countrymen," *A Treasury of Kahlil Gibran*, trans. Anthony R. Ferris, ed. Martin L. Wolf (New York: Citadel Press, 1965), 159-160.

⁶ Kahlil Gibran, "I Believe in You," *Mirrors of the Soul*, trans. Joseph Sheban (New York: The Philosophical Library, 1965), 34.

⁷ Kahlil Gibran, “The Nay,” *A Treasury of Kahlil Gibran*, trans. Anthony R. Ferris, ed. Martin L. Wolf (New Jersey: Castle Books, 1978), 361.

⁸ Kahlil Gibran, *The Prophet: Annotated Edition*, ed. Suhel Bushrui (Oxford: Oneworld, 1995), 67.

⁹ Henri Zoghaib, *Gibran: Testimonies of Persons and Places* (Beirut: Dergham Publisher, 2012), 110.

¹⁰ *The Prophet*, 68.

¹¹ “The New Frontier,” 53.

¹² *The Prophet*, 155.

5. NUTS TO CRACK ON THE PATH TO ENLIGHTENMENT: THE ENIGMATIC APHORISMS OF KHLIL GIBRAN

By James M. Malarkey

* * *

*Only once have I been made mute. It was when a man asked me,
“Who are you?”*

*Many a doctrine is like a window pane. We see truth through it but
it divides us.*

*When two women talk they say nothing; when one woman speaks
she reveals all of life.*

*Wit is often a mask. If you could tear it you would find either a
genius irritated or cleverness juggling.*

*Love is a word of light, written by a hand of light, upon a page of
light.*

*Half of what I say is meaningless; but I say it so that the other half
may reach you.¹*

I.

This paper consists of a speculative inquiry into the form and meaning of Gibran’s aphorisms principally from the slim volume *Sand and Foam* (1926). In the chronology of his writings, this work appeared three years after *The Prophet* and two years prior to *Jesus, the Son of Man*, although some of these aphorisms were originally published in the Arabic work *al-Badayi’ wa’l-Taray’if* in 1923.² A few of these aphorisms may strike the reader as baffling at first reading. Some remain mysterious after a second, or may even increase the reader’s perplexity at a third reading—a circumstance which prompted one impatient critique to refer to the aphorisms in *Sand and Foam* as “a mixture of pungent observations, absurdities, and meaningless mysticism.”³

However, in this presentation I take the position that, although many of Gibran’s lines do not instantly yield their meanings, a more careful review in the context of his wider work reveals not only a remarkable range of experimentation in form, but also a constellation of themes that express both Gibran’s pointed social criticism and his emerging spiritual standpoint. It would not be surprising that readers

insufficiently informed or persuaded by Gibran's uncommon social and spiritual outlook would find themselves disoriented. We know that Gibran wrote to educate as well as to please, and as Zen masters so strikingly illustrate, education sometimes requires the abrupt suspension of prior habits of word or thought.

I do not pretend to fully decrypt Gibran's aphorisms during the course of this presentation, but I hope that the few steps taken in this direction will encourage the reader to approach his more enigmatic writings more methodically and reflectively. In the introductory remarks to follow, I will sketch four of the questions I aimed to answer during the course of my inquiry, and I will share some initial findings that I later elaborate on in the body of the paper. I will say a few words about the genre of "aphorism," including its unique as well as universal value as a form of discourse, then speak briefly about its significance in the evolution of Gibran as a writer before proceeding with my analysis of his work. In the last section, I will address Gibran's pivotal premise of Oneness, both as an inherent condition of creation and as a way of seeing and knowing. We will consider how Gibran applies this premise to the refractory issue of human faults, sin, and crime, and how his aphorisms on this topic echo powerful themes in *The Prophet*.

II.

Four questions ultimately guided my inquiry into *Sand and Foam* in an effort to fathom its riddles: (1) What variety do we notice in the particular linguistic forms Gibran employs for his aphorisms in the volume? (2) What might Gibran's use of these particular forms tell us about his rhetorical strategy? (3) What particular ideas or wisdom does Gibran convey through these graceful and arresting forms? (4) What does this collection of diverse insights as a whole reveal of Kahlil Gibran, the man, the thinker, and the poet?

In perusing *Sand and Foam*, I quickly discovered that Gibran's aphorisms are not just a series of declarative propositions from a writer who simply wants to "tell it like it is." Rather, Gibran's selections take a surprising variety of forms and convey a series of stunning insights. He employs six forms in particular which I have taken the liberty to differentiate as: one-liners, definitions, rhetorical questions, progressions, mini-narratives, and imaginary dialogues. Examples of each will be given in the paper when I define these terms.

Of the major issues Gibran addresses in his aphorisms, I am most struck by these: the inherent duality of our nature; the perennial misperceptions and misunderstandings between self and other; the truths we ignore when we rush to label ourselves and others as "good" and "evil"; and the seminal concept—at once ontological and spiritual—of the Oneness of Being. Throughout the pages of *Sand and Foam*, Gibran casts an oblique and disarming light on our habitual ways of thinking about rich and

poor, the momentary and the timeless, the material and the spiritual, the superficial and the authentic, the guilty and the innocent, and the loud and the silent.

The messages expressed in his aphorisms, whether crystal clear or indirectly suggestive, resonate with themes expressed in his other more famous works where Gibran compels us to confront and transcend our preconceptions and prejudices. Unlike much of his earlier work in Arabic, Gibran does not advance his ideas and attitudes by condemning or preaching. Rather, Gibran's entries are predominantly evocative and thought-provoking, universal in intent and reference. I do not recall any allusions to particular people, cultures, or places. His aphorisms portray our inherently contrary human impulses for self-interest and goodness, hate and love, vengeance and forgiveness, war and peace. He does not idealize. Instead, Gibran acknowledges the full range of human tendencies, which it is easy to imagine that he had experienced at different moments in his life. "Lovers embrace that which is between them rather than each other," reads one aphorism. And another: "Strange that we all defend our wrongs with more vigor than we do our rights."

Whichever the aphorism, that Gibran comes out on the side of unity, love, compassion, and forgiveness will not surprise anyone who has read him. But he knew that sloganeering and moralizing will never reach the heart if old ways of thinking inhibit access to the deeper truths, if we needle the reader to defensiveness, or if the poet's writing fails to communicate in accessible language. Gibran had faith, I believe, that his writings can help us wake up and get in touch with our "greater Self." In this age of globalization, rich with possibility but beset with conflict, Gibran's work motivates us to struggle against that side of our nature which divides us from one another; it inspires us to embrace that other side which takes us beyond narrow-mindedness, self-absorption, greed, and vengeance.

III.

Before plunging into *Sand and Foam*, just what are so-called "aphorisms" anyway, and what precedents in this genre likely influenced Gibran?

The word "aphorism" evidently originates from the Greek, meaning "distinction" or "definition." The first appearance of it as a title was in *The Aphorisms of Hippocrates* (the great physician, author of the famous oath). Incidentally, Hippocrates' volume begins with this lovely aphorism which has hardly lost pertinence with age:

Life is short, art long,
Opportunity fleeting,
Experience deceptive,
Judgment difficult.⁴

Beyond serving the function of definition, a good aphorism, like the above, conveys a universal truth of some kind—an insight in just a few words, but for the generations. Aphorisms are also widely appraised for their pithiness or eloquence. It is a creative art form, not a mere occasion for declamation. Thus, an aphorism should be surprising and elegant as opposed to cliché-ridden and banal. Each also should be self-contained.

Other terms used for these kinds of short and sharp expressions include maxim, epigram, proverb, or adage—or even the word “saying,” which is more appropriately applied to works that were originally oral in form. Aphorisms have come down to us in a wide variety of forms with no set length, unlike the sonnet, limerick, or haiku. The function of the aphorism is clear, but the form is open. What matters is the universe of meaning enclosed within this most economical of forms.

This said, many classical aphorisms had clear moral intent and were didactic in form, such as this instruction from the *Avesta* which I happen to like: “Man’s duty...is threefold: To make him who is an enemy a friend; to make him who is wicked righteous; and to make him who is ignorant learned.”⁵ Or from Confucius: “When you see someone of worth, think of how you may emulate. When you see someone unworthy, examine your own character.”⁶ Aphorisms may be humorous or ironic, such as the Nietzsche’s pithy line: “The vanity of others offends our taste only when it offends our vanity.”⁷ But some can be aggressively perplexing, more fit for young men. It is reported that Zen Buddhist Master Yunmen held up his staff and asked: “What is this? If you say it is a staff, you go to hell. If it isn’t a staff, what is it?”⁸ He also said other things, of course, aiming to hammer his pupils to stopping their thinking—at least in the wrong way to which they had been accustomed.

Aphorisms have appeared across the breadth of cultures and civilizations, East and West, to the point that it would be hard to find a time or place where this form has not been employed and admired. Sometimes referred to as “wisdom literature,” one can find collections of aphorisms in the books of Ecclesiastes and Proverbs as well as in the Gospels, in Hesiod’s *Works and Days*, *The Echiridion* of Epictetus, *The Meditations* of Marcus Aurelius, the Hadith of the Prophet Mohammad, or the short poetry of the Sufis and other poets of the East. Aphorisms also appear generously in the writings of Shakespeare, Pascal, Blake, Goethe, Nietzsche, and Wittgenstein, not to mention those scattered in the journals and novels of many other writers.

Gibran may have been fond of the modality of aphorism because the required concision appealed to the poet in him, but also because the truths he sought took him beyond the obvious, superficial, and prosaic. Although he only used the term as a subtitle of *Sand and Foam: A Book of Aphorisms*, Gibran exquisitely embedded this form in narratives of *The Prophet* (1923) and *Jesus, the Son of Man* (1928). He was influenced particularly by the writing of Blake and Nietzsche, as well as by the

Gospels and Sufi poetry.⁹ Regarding Gibran's literary debts, his close friend Mikhail Naimy explains that while many of the ideas in Gibran's work were not entirely new, his style was unique and compelling. A better way to think of it, Naimy argues, is that "Gibran was able to tap the ever bubbling springs of the Spirit Universal where all thirsty spirits must slake their thirst...." More specifically, judges Naimy:

[H]e culled those ideas, bravely and independently, from the same garden where men with an imagination unshackled of weights and measures have always culled theirs. The ideas may not be new...But they are put forward in words which look and sound almost new; so rhythmic are they, so palpitating with life, so bright of color and so graceful of line, and yet so few in number, that only a pedant, or one color-blind, or one deaf to music, can really find any major fault with them.¹⁰

This process of creating an original synthesis, that in the case of Gibran appears almost magical in its unpretentious simplicity and beauty, reminds me of Karl Lagerfeld's keen tribute to the great architect Tadao Ando: "His work has all the roots of Bauhaus and Le Corbusier. But he saw everything, learned everything, then forgot everything and remade everything. And that ability to digest the past without mimicking it," argues Lagerfeld, "is what makes a genius."¹¹ Gibran likely developed his own voice and unique style in just such a way, even as his words reverberate with the ideas of the great thinkers and prophets who had preceded him.¹² And Gibran was particularly adept at crafting aphorisms, one might say audacious as he did so, for his words and images stand in brazen contrast to the post-war American culture swirling about him, an era marked by feverish extravagance, over-indulgence, and promotionalism.¹³

IV.

To proceed with the analysis, I now turn to Gibran's aphorisms themselves. The great variability in the form and content of these pieces instantly manifests Gibran's ease of experimentation. His wide range of themes reveals the many observations, moods, musings, and imaginings of a young man of multiple interests. The genre is congenial to the eclectic, of course, and Gibran made full use of its freedom. As I began to make a list of the literary or grammatical forms he employed, I noticed patterns, the six discernable types that I itemized earlier.

First, Gibran's *one-liners* consist of short declaratives such as the following, which may require the reader to think twice:

Only the dumb envy the talkative.

Our most sacred tears never seek our eyes.

You cannot laugh and be unkind at the same time.

Every dragon gives birth to a St. George who slays it.

Second, dispersed throughout *Sand and Foam* is a series of what may be considered classical aphorisms given the Greek meaning of the term, *definition*. Examples include:

A fact is a truth unsexed.

Art is a step from nature toward the Infinite.

Love is the veil between lover and lover.

Thinking is always the stumbling stone to poetry.

Some of these definitions are compounded or elaborated:

Generosity is giving more than you can, and pride is taking less than you need.

A poet is a dethroned king sitting among the ashes of his palace trying to fashion an image out of the ashes.

Poetry is not an opinion expressed. It is a song that rises from a bleeding wound or a smiling mouth.

Third, I was struck by the large number of questions embedded in Gibran's aphorisms. But these were not just innocent wonderings. Further review revealed that virtually all of his aphorisms in question format were actually *rhetorical questions*. Consider, for example:

How shall my heart be unsealed unless it be broken?

If your heart is a volcano how shall you expect flowers to bloom in your hands?

If the Milky Way were not within me how should I have seen it or known it?

In one instance, Gibran pairs two questions that convey parallel meanings:

How can you sing if your mouth be filled with food?

How shall your hand be raised in blessing if it is filled with gold?

A number of these rhetorical questions launch from an initial proposition, the premise of which gives occasion for the question. But, again, in each case the question is rhetorical.

Nay, we have not lived in vain. Have they not built towers of our bones?

They say the nightingale pierces his bosom with a thorn when he sings his love song.

So do we all. How else should we sing?

Fourth, a more complex style incorporates four or more propositions that advance toward a conclusion; I call it a *progression*. For instance, this thought-provoking pair:

Wisdom ceases to be wisdom when it becomes too proud to weep, too grave to laugh, and too self-ful to seek other than itself.

I have learned silence from the talkative, toleration from the intolerant, and kindness from the unkind; yet strange, I am ungrateful to these teachers.

Fifth, Gibran also uses a story form, or *mini-narrative*, of usually five to seven lines. This offers a poignant example of how the author draws the reader into one line of inference only to supplant it with a deeper insight.

You may sit at your window watching the passersby. And watching you may see a nun walking toward your right hand, and a prostitute toward your left hand.

And you may say in your innocence, "How noble is the one and how ignoble is the other."

But should you close your eyes and listen awhile you would hear a voice whispering in the ether, "One seeks me in prayer, and the other in pain. And in the spirit of each there is a bower for my spirit."

Sixth, Gibran employs another variation of this dialogic technique in his seemingly serendipitous *imaginary encounters*, some of which may be read allegorically. Notice here how Gibran—surely with a grin—challenges the self-important intellectual:

Said a philosopher to a street sweeper, “I pity you. Yours is a hard and dirty task.”

And the street sweeper said, “Thank you, sir. But tell me what is your task?”

And the philosopher answered saying, “I study man's mind, his deeds and his desires.”

Then the street sweeper went on with his sweeping and said with a smile, “I pity you, too.”

As a whole, I think that this diversity of literary forms allows Gibran to express his wide-ranging observations and insights in forms precisely suited to his intentions. Far from coming across as a dogmatist or moralist, these *kinds* of indirect discourse reveal a mind that is continually exploring, questioning, wondering, and formulating insights from standpoints beyond conventional thinking and polite conversation. Gibran’s liberal use of interrogatives, similes, allegories, irony, and enigmas provoke the reader into reflection and, I would argue, give him or her space for interpretation. As a result, Gibran’s aphorisms both enable the reader to imagine the mind of the poet who composed them and engage us to join with him in a deeper awareness of being, truth, and meaning. But this is also where the mystery begins, where enigmas proliferate, and why some critics may think he is but a madman muttering “meaningless mysticism.”

V.

In spite of the discrete nature of aphorisms and the variety of forms they may take, a collection by a single author may reveal particular themes to which that author frequently returns, viewed from varying angles. Appreciative readers likely differ in how they interpret Gibran’s words and in what themes stand out for them in *Sand and Foam*. As indicated earlier, among the themes that stand out for this reader: the misperceptions between ourselves and others, our reckless labeling of people as “good” and “evil,” our tendency to hate when we could love, to seek vengeance when we could offer forgiveness, or to pursue self-interest when we might recognize our essential Oneness. Gibran’s work during this period of his life showed his interest in connecting this emerging spiritual perspective with the social ills surrounding him. Even though we be different in appearance and origin, how ought

we to regard each other? At the end of the day, what do we owe one another? Should we prefer the rich over the poor, the loud over the silent, the visible over the invisible? How should we weigh our material possessions in relation to our spiritual values?

Sand and Foam covers a remarkable span of considerations such as these. But central to Gibran's work during this period is the theme of Unity of Being (or Oneness) which is expressed in many aphorisms. Perhaps this master key to his new spiritual outlook informs his perception of virtually all of the issues Gibran considers. I would like to focus on this particular theme because I believe that it also accounts for much of the incomprehension on the part of readers who are accustomed to conventional ways of seeing and speaking. This is a particularly productive concept since, once adopted as a frame of reference, it challenges our inherited notions and practices in virtually every sphere of life. Oneness of being is not based on the mere observation of the visible world. Rather, this Oneness derives from an awareness of profound and invisible patterns of unity. Gibran frequently speaks of Oneness as an ontological reality, that is, as unity that is inherent in the very nature of being even if we do not fully realize it. And yet, this Oneness seems also to be a spiritual truth and power that gathers energy once it rises to our awareness; thereby, it reframes our perceptions of others and transforms our behavior across the spectrum of life situations.

The emergence of this formative perspective in Gibran's life was observed first-hand by Naimy. It was the time after which Gibran had overcome poverty and anonymity as a writer and achieved temporary tranquility in the affairs of the heart. "[H]e went back to his soul in search of new spiritual comforts. He threw its windows open to the inflow of the rays of the All-Soul,"¹⁴ says Naimy. "Lovingly it began to teach him and to crystallize the mist he called 'I' into a jewel of pure light reflecting in itself every self, yet remaining clear, transparent and beautiful."¹⁵ Naimy quotes a letter he received from Gibran that explained how the poet was now revisioning the world from this perspective:

My soul taught me and convinced me that I am neither superior to the dwarf, nor inferior to the giant. But before my soul taught me I treated all men as either weaklings to pity or to deride; or as mighty ones to follow or to rebel against. Now do I know that I, as an individual, was formed of the same elements as the whole race. Their clay is my clay, their soul is my soul, their inclinations and their goal are my inclinations and my goal. When they sin I share in their sin and when they do good I glory in their deeds. When they march forward I march with them; when they slink back I also slink with them.¹⁶

This was a vision different from that expressed by Gibran the rebel who had pitted the people against the State, the faithful against the establishment. Apart from the earlier example of the Transcendentalists, this was also a vision dramatically different from the worldview pulsating throughout American individualism that was flying high in the 1920s in reaction to the years of distress and austerity due to the Great War.¹⁷

If we accept the premise that we all are One, if we regard the inherent interconnectedness of life as ontological, that is, in the nature of our very being, then the central question becomes this: are we consciously *aware of* this deeper reality? This issue is not merely for the air-headed romantic. Rather, it inescapably evokes some deeply troubling questions. As we will see, there is also a clear implication in Gibran's writings that this deeper awareness is a precondition for the cultivation and practice of love, truth, justice, and peace. However, it is precisely this transformation in Gibran's awareness or consciousness that engenders ways of writing that will strike the uninitiated as unintelligible if not disturbing.

An early aphorism in *Sand and Foam* attests to the poet's transformation:

It was but yesterday I thought myself a fragment quivering without
rhythm in the sphere of life.

Now I know that I am the sphere, and all life in rhythmic
fragments moves within me.

We notice immediately a central contradiction between two moments and modes of perception. In the first line our physical selves are manifestly different and divided from all else in the world. Who can deny the persuasiveness of this daily distinction – at least on the surface? As the existentialists say, we are often aware of being alone in the world. This perception is reinforced by the fact that we do have to manage our separate selves in myriad ways every day as if we were a thing or an entity on its own, even expendable. Yet the next line in the above aphorism bespeaks a revelation, “now I know that...,” and what I now know is that I am a vast “sphere” within which “all life” revolves not merely “quivering” as in the first line, but in rhythm. Note that Gibran does not say that I *see* this sphere or that I am *in* this sphere. Rather, the line reads “I *am* the sphere.”

In another aphorism, Gibran presents this perspective of Oneness in this form:

Should you really open your eyes and see, you would behold your
image in all images.

And should you open your ears and listen, you would hear your own voice in all voices.

This aphorism starkly presents Gibran's awareness of a contradiction between ordinary consciousness and transcendental consciousness, which affords a deeper way of seeing and hearing in which individual being is inseparable from all being. This, of course, is a theme we recognize from Sufism (e.g., Ibn al-Arabi) as well as Hinduism (particularly Advaita Vedanta where Atman, or individual soul, is regarded as one with Brahman, the Universal Soul). In the *Chandogya Upanishad*, for instance, the father discloses to his son:

[F]rom the very essence in the seed which you cannot see comes in truth this vast banyan tree...an invisible and subtle essence is the Spirit of the whole universe. That is Reality. That is Atman. Thou Art That.¹⁸

This awareness of Oneness implies that ordinary conceptions and emotions associated with egoism, sectarianism, or nationalism are both illusory and harmful:

When you reach the heart of life you shall find beauty in all things, even in the eyes that are blind to beauty.

Distinctions entail divisions in ordinary thinking. But in consciousness of Oneness, all things are beautiful, even those beings among us who are unable to notice it. This principle is not easy to sustain, given the ingrained tendency of the human mind. Even those who appear the most open and spiritual tend to distinguish between those convinced of their superior perspective and those who display no interest. Gibran expresses this challenge in a very simple way, so smoothly stated that many readers may well miss the point on the first reading. Rather than carping about enlightened hypocrites given to looking down on those who are uninitiated, Gibran praises those among the enlightened who apply the principle of Oneness without qualification—those able to see beauty even in the eyes of those who are blind to it, that is, those unaware of the Oneness of life even as they are a living example of it. Another test may be the human tendency of ingratitude.

For instance, one of Gibran's "progressions" goes like this:

Your most radiant garment is of the other person's weaving;

Your most savory meal is that which you eat at the other person's table;

Your most comfortable bed is in the other person's house.

Now tell me, how can you separate yourself from the other person?

This aphorism is composed of a string of three ways in which the best that one can experience in response to our primordial needs comes from the generosity of others. On the surface level, the argument bucks the assumption of self-sufficiency, that “if I want it done right I will have do it myself.” It may jar the proud who are more than confident regarding the superiority of their tastes, skills, and accommodations. But the meaning of these lines may have to do with the value-added nature of giving. An additional sweetness is conveyed and experienced when someone gives to us in the spirit of love. “They give as in yonder valley the myrtle breathes its fragrance into space,”¹⁹ reads a line in *The Prophet*. And we have likely all had the experience of a warmth that comes from the memory of a special gift, dinner, or night of hospitality given and received with equal pleasure. The way this four-line aphorism is framed also may inspire generosity as readily as gratitude, without harping on either. Rather, it is the theme of Oneness that is conveyed in the enigmatic last line, rhetorically framed: “How can you separate yourself from the other person?” At this level of unity, the distinction between self and other collapses as both parties transcend and deepen the meaning of giving and receiving.

And yet there are greater challenges that Gibran confronts with this arresting aphorism: the truly good is he who is one with all those who are deemed bad.

This one-liner daringly extends the meaning of oneness beyond what any ordinary person would delight in accepting—even those beginning mystics who have not yet achieved the higher stages of initiation. Is it not our abiding moral business to distinguish good from bad, to befriend the good and avoid the bad—or make them pay? And surely we do not wish to be counted among them, even if, admittedly, our own behavior falls short of virtuous once in a while. So to assert that the “truly good” (unlike the superficially good) are “one with all those who are deemed bad,” is shocking and requires some explication if it is not to be summarily rejected. So what could Gibran possibly have in mind here? Oneness is not the same as helping, befriending, praying for, or defending in court, yet it may share these attributes in the form of actions taken. Rather, Oneness presupposes identification. We are being urged to acknowledge ontological or spiritual unity with those “deemed bad.” But just what is “bad” in the first place? Notice Gibran’s use of the verb “deemed.” After all, he who is *deemed* bad may not in fact *be* bad. He may just be *defined* that way—but by whom? By what criterion? We will pursue this line later when we explore Gibran’s aphorisms regarding criminality and culpability.

Meanwhile, in this next aphorism Gibran suggests that Oneness is not a mere inescapable fact of being that we should recognize, but also a dynamic power that we can exercise, a greater potential that we can realize:

My friend, you and I shall remain strangers unto life,
And unto one another, and each unto himself,
Until the day when you shall speak and I shall listen
Deeming your voice my own voice;
And when I shall stand before you
Thinking myself standing before a mirror.

Here, Oneness appears as a challenge-requiring endeavor. The aphorism contrasts a consciousness of separateness with a consciousness of identification. We shall remain as strangers unto one another and to life generally unless and until we learn to listen “deeming your voice as my own” and to see yourself as me. We all know the precept that we should try to put ourselves in the shoes of another. But that formulation leaves room for difference. “Yes, I can imagine being in her shoes, but *I* would still do things differently.” However, *being* her translates not into second-guessing her. Instead, it conveys the requirement of imagining myself being, choosing, and doing *as she* in the sense of complete identification:

Deeming your voice my own voice
And when I shall stand before you
Thinking myself standing before a mirror.

Empathy (which may be the best English equivalent expressing passage from egocentrism to oneness) implies the process of feeling how another feels, *being* that person, not, for instance, merely feeling sad because that person feels bad.

Yet if one presumes that to know oneself one must first and foremost “look inward,” or if one supposes that the Golden Rule is a universal guide to ethical decision-making (in determining how to treat others all I need to know is how *I* would like to be treated), then Gibran’s next aphorism, if read carefully, will give pause for reconsideration. It too suggests that we must first learn to listen—to others.

They say to me, “Should you know yourself you would know all men.”
And I say, “Only when I seek all men shall I know myself.”

Notice here that Gibran appears to view Oneness from yet another angle which questions just how well we can know ourselves, much less others, by gazing inward. In this aphorism, the first proposition is clearly stated as conditional: “Should you know yourself...” But then the poet’s reply reverses the sequence: to know myself in the first place, I must seek (to know) all men and only through *this* process will I eventually come to know myself. That is, Gibran enjoins us to study “all men” if we are to come to know ourselves (perhaps with no guarantee that we will ever arrive at complete knowledge). Even if you have lived and slept with yourself for decades, thought every day about who you are, what you are doing, and why you are here, and tallied up your shortcomings and assets, you will never fully know yourself *if you do not seek to know others as a necessary means of self-understanding*. This concept forms a bracing rejoinder to the ancient Greek maxim, so often repeated, and so thoughtlessly self-serving in our age of narcissism, “Know thyself.” But from the perspective advanced by Gibran, one must smile at this conceit if it is not matched with the indispensable injunction to “Know others,” a maxim all too rarely advocated. This said, Gibran’s aphorism does not discount the aspiration contained in the first proposition;²⁰ it only situates it as dependent upon the intentional learning prescribed in the second. So the benefits of self-understanding as a vehicle for understanding others who are like me are enriched and nuanced with the benefits of learning that others may be different in as many ways as they are the same.

When Gibran regards history through the lens of Oneness, further enigmas appear. Reminiscent of his letter to Naimy quoted earlier, Gibran writes: “Every man is the descendant of every king and every slave that ever lived.”

This statement of identity, expressed in a variety of forms in Gibran’s writings, seems not intended to convey biological inheritance as a geneticist would have it, but rather a different kind of identity: we embody all of life that precedes us and envelops us from the highest to the lowest. There is an inherent unity of life forms that both makes possible the continuity of life and makes possible reciprocal awareness and empathy—provided we become aware and intentional, see ourselves in others and all others in ourselves. The implication is that there is no one who we are *incapable* of recognizing and empathizing with, from the top to the bottom of the social hierarchy, if we but open up to that capacity and practice it. There is no assumption that you *will* understand the Other just because you are both human; nor is the alibi tenable that you cannot understand another because they are from a different social class (from royalty to slavery), culture, region, or nationality. These are unavoidable implications of Gibran’s trail of aphorisms.

Two others from *Sand and Foam* corroborate these points:

If you would rise but a cubit above race and country and self you would indeed become godlike.

Let us not be particular and sectional. The poet's mind and the scorpion's tail rise in glory from the same earth.

Differences exist at the surface level—physical, cultural, linguistic, and religious. But Gibran maintains that we ought not cynically accept the assumption that differences irrevocably divide us. If we see differences in surface form as but varying manifestations of our unity of being, there arise manifold consequences in our attitudes and actions even if Gibran does not spell them out in a tedious or preachy way. In the privacy of one's reflective consciousness, each reader is drawn into this awareness and invited to experience a change of disposition, provided that this development is not immediately foreclosed due to the ingrained rigidity of thought that pervades conventional society.

In another aphorism, Gibran acknowledges the seductive power of divisive dogmas when held as absolute: "Many a doctrine is like a window pane. We see truth through it, but it divides us from truth."

By seeing truth through it, I take Gibran to mean that the doctrine affords insight, clarity of vision, meaning, possibly a set of priorities. But then how does a doctrine divide us from the truth while at the same time it brings us truth? Interpretations may differ concerning Gibran's precise meaning here. However, one possibility is that different windowpanes, or perceptual lenses, enable us to see fragments of the truth that never amount to all of it. The more windows we see through, as it were, the greater our awareness; whereas, to maintain that any single view expresses the whole truth essentially precludes consideration of other truths and inclines us to oppose others who experience different viewpoints. History, of course, presents no shortage of examples of ideological bigotry and persecution, although historians today readily acknowledge that there were, and inherently are, multiple narratives of any one event. Though each narrative may be partial and imperfect, access to them all does enhance one's knowledge of the whole. But the point of recognizing Oneness as both an ontological reality and an ethical responsibility is to advance us beyond the seductive forms of blindness and deafness that divide us.

VI.

Let's now look at the consequences of this majestic vision when we use it as a framework to analyze our problems on the ground. The issue that I believe is most striking in this regard is the distinction between good and bad people, between the innocent and the guilty, the victim and the criminal. In *Sand and Foam*, Gibran's aphorisms circle around this issue, probing virtually every angle having to do with the enigma: how is it that we are One, and yet in defining the criminal we separate those designated from the rest who are regarded as innocent? We tend to define convicts as wholly Other, pariahs who need to be locked up and who forever carry

the stigma of a “record.” Although biographies of Gibran undoubtedly would shed light on his interest in this subject, it seems clear that empathy associated with his philosophy of Oneness drove him to question the status of the outcast, the convict, the Jean Valjeans of the world. (We must also not forget the salient figures of Jesus and Mary Magdalene in Gibran’s early education and anticipated work.) Yet, it is also true that some criminals have committed horrific crimes. So how can empathy be always justified, even given the criterion of Oneness? Should we really feel as much One with the perpetrator as with the victim?

Gibran worked through this puzzle in a particularly striking and thoughtful way. In *Sand and Foam*, we see parts or dimensions of this effort—diverse perspectives on the issue. In *The Prophet* (whether composed before or after these aphorisms I am not certain) we can see a more coherent resolution.²¹ But let us consider his aphorisms first.

We have already quoted the saying that “The truly good is he who is one with all those who are deemed bad.” It sets a baseline for the oneness principle. But consider these four propositions that address how we perceive our faults and those of others, and the difficulties in achieving accurate awareness of self and other, and in forming an honest appraisal of what we know:

Please do not whitewash your inherent faults with your acquired virtues. I would have the faults; they are like mine own.

How often have I attributed to myself crimes I have never committed so that the other person may feel comfortable in my presence.

When you see a man led to prison, say in your heart, “Mayhap he is escaping from a narrower prison.”

And when you see a man drunken, say in your heart, “Mayhap he sought escape from something still more unbeautiful.”

We are all prisoners, but some of us are in cells with windows and some without.

Only the last of these aphorisms involves use of metaphor that gives pause for reflection, whereas the first three are straightforward and easily understood and appreciated, provided one’s compassion is evoked. The first two sayings critique dishonesty in how we communicate; the third asks us to step back from the newly designated criminal and look at the possibly sordid world he came from. Was this world perhaps worse than the official prison he is about to enter? Was he attempting

to escape another prison of sorts through crime—and thereby not an entirely free man? Gibran stops short of excusing the offender. But he raises the uncomfortable question: Might the offender be a victim as well as a perpetrator? And how might the earlier context have contributed to the later action? The fourth aphorism generalizes this point about the metaphorical prisons we live in, but this time as a declarative: We are all “prisoners” even though our “cells” differ widely in form and name. This ironic thesis is left hanging. But perhaps it makes a contribution to his larger settlement of the question of culpability, as we shall see.

The following straightforward aphorisms, which at first sight are easily grasped, conspire to shake the conventional moorings of judgment and justice, particularly as arranged in this sequence:

Is there a greater fault than being conscious of the other person's faults?

The truly just is he who feels half-guilty of your misdeeds.

The only one who has been unjust to me is the one to whose brother I have been unjust.

Crime is either another name of need or an aspect of a disease.

While the first of this set rhetorically questions the human propensity to criticize others while ignoring one’s own failings, the last three of these aphorisms are composed as declarations conveying the argument that the criminal or perpetrator of injustice may be guilty, but so are those whose actions have conduced to this state of affairs. In the second proposition, the “truly just” possesses an abiding awareness of some responsibility for the misdeed. Was it a provocation? A misdeed done, a responsibility shirked, or a favor never granted? Gibran does not say. But the third proposition expresses the powerful concept that the injustice done to me may be a direct response to the injustice my brother did to the perpetrator. In this sense, the two are half-guilty.

Naturally one might then ask, what prompted the first injustice? Must we go all the way back to the fabled original sin? Before we can answer, the fourth proposition then decriminalizes the crime by making the flat-out assertion that crime is either an expression of need or a symptom of disease. But who then is responsible? What then justifies punishment? How many others besides the accused should submit to punishment? This proposition, then, may not resolve any particular case, but it exposes the uncertainties around all cases. In *The Prophet*, Gibran resolves this tension in a conception of crimes and punishment that would require more than an

aphorism to articulate. Through the mouth of Almustafa, Gibran dispenses with the rhetorical questions.

In *The Prophet*, Almustafa claims that, despite our pretensions, the best of us cannot rise above the best that is in each of us, and the worst cannot fall below the worst that is in each of us. If this point be conceded, we can still condemn the action without condemning the man. But through the mouth of his prophet, Gibran goes further. “And as a single leaf turns not yellow but with the silent knowledge of the whole tree,” says Almustafa, “so the wrong-doer cannot do wrong without the hidden will of you all.” The implications of this formulation are staggering. A *hidden will* is ascribed to all of us that directly or indirectly drives others toward crime. Almustafa goes on to acknowledge that the doer of his act is not blameless. But, he observes, “The guilty is oftentimes the victim of the injured. And still, more often the condemned is the burden bearer for the guiltless and unblamed.” What are the judges then to do given this widening circle of responsibility, the power of myriad invisible forces at work, the many interwoven threads of cause and effect? “Verily,” concludes Almustafa, “he will find the roots of the good and the bad, the fruitful and the fruitless, all entwined together in the silent heart of the earth.”

Almustafa goes on to pose even more challenging questions pertaining to culpability and justice. How is crime in the flesh any different from crime in spirit? How is remorse as justice different from public punishment? He arrives at this unanswerable admonition: “You who would understand justice, how shall you unless you look upon all deeds in the fullness of light?”²² It is hard not to shrink from the requirements that this vision entails. With remarkable courage, Gibran is bringing us face-to-face with our insufficiency, our weakness, our arbitrariness, and, hence, our harshness. And in the final analysis, who are “we” in this tribunal, if not all men and all women, at every moment in our lives both the jury and the accused? So indeed, the taut aphorism of old Hippocrates still speaks to our condition:

Life is short, art long,
Opportunity fleeting,
Experience deceptive,
Judgment difficult.²³

However, Hippocrates was a physician not a poet, so he had added this commentary: “[Therefore] the physician must not only be prepared to do what is right himself, but also to make the patient, the attendants, and externals cooperate.”²⁴

VII.

We can read Gibran’s aphorisms on many levels from the interpersonal to the international. However challenging the metaphors, allegories, and riddles he lays

before us, Gibran's spiritual insight shines through. But the discomfort experienced by a careful reading of his poetry is, I submit, a testament to its increasing pertinence during our times when the forces of individualism, sectarianism, stratification, and nationalism threaten to shred our sense of common humanity. While Gibran's land of birth continues to endure contention, conflict, and bloodshed, in his adopted land the prison population has vastly increased proportional to every other developed country. At the same time, America remains ensconced in her longest wars ever with no peace in sight while her domestic divisions keep deepening on both the material and ideological levels.²⁵

In this age of globalization where everything is possible and nothing is certain, a thousand distractions, obstacles, and evasions clutter the way to truth and justice as time and again brother turns against brother—with our sisters paying twice the price while men are at war, in prison, or interred. However, Gibran's eloquent vision remains a vital and powerful countercurrent and alternative that deserves a place in the conversation of each succeeding generation.

Biography

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¹ All selections are from Kahlil Gibran, *Sand and Foam: A Book of Aphorisms* (New York: A.A. Knopf, 1926). Since I reproduce many selections from this small book in this essay, which are easy to locate in the original, I have not included page references for each quote.

² Suheil Bushrui and Joe Jenkins, *Kahlil Gibran: Man and Poet* (Oxford: Oneworld, 1998), 336 fn 61.

³ *Ibid.*, 247.

⁴ Hippocrates. *The Genuine Works of Hippocrates*, trans. Charles Darwin Adams (New York: Dover, 1868).

<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3atext%3a1999.01.0248%3atext%3dAph. Qtd. in http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aphorism>, a useful initial source on the subject.

⁵ Qtd. in Will Durant, *Our Oriental Heritage* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1935), 369; taken from Miles Dawson, *Ethical Religion of Zoroaster*, 1931.

⁶ Confucius, *The Analects*, qtd. in *The World's Religions* by Huston Smith (New York: HarperSanFrancisco, 1991), 159.

⁷ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Basic Writings of Nietzsche*, trans. Walter Kasufmann (New York: Modern Library, 1966), 283.

⁸ Master Yunmen, *From the Record of the Chan Teacher "Gate of the Clouds,"* trans. Urs App (New York: Kodansha International, 1994), 172.

⁹ For the literary and personal influences on Gibran's life and work, the most reliable source is Suheil Bushrui and Joe Jenkins, *Kahlil Gibran: Man and Poet* (Oxford: Oneworld, 1998).

¹⁰ Mikhail Naimy, *Kahlil Gibran: His Life and Work* (Beirut: Khayats, 1964), 189.

¹¹ This quote originally appeared in an article in an airline magazine I carefully wrote down in mid-flight many years ago. Regrettably, I have been unable to locate the original source.

¹² "Originality does not mean being unlike the past or unlike the present, it means being the origin, acting out of your own center. Out of your spontaneous heart you may do something reminiscent of the very old, and [yet] it will be original." Stephen Nachmanovitch, *Free Play: the Power of Improvisation in Life and the Arts* (New York: Tarcher, 1990), 179.

¹³ A highly colorful and readable account of this era of post-war exuberance is by Frederick Lewis Allen, *Only Yesterday: An Informal History of the Nineteen Twenties* (Harper & Bros., 1931).

¹⁴ *Kahlil Gibran: His Life and Work*, 179.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ *Ibid.* For an account of the full episode, see pages 177-181.

¹⁷ A major theme of *Only Yesterday*.

¹⁸ Adapted from the translation of Juan Mascaro of *The Upanishads* (London: Penguin Books, 1965), 117. The wider context of this quote: "The young man, Svetaketu, returns home after studying the Vedas for twelve years. Now 24, he is quite proud of his learning. Noting this, the father says to him: 'Svetaketu, my boy, you seem to have a great opinion of yourself...[but] have you yet acquired that knowledge whereby what is not heard is heard, what is not thought is thought, and what is not known is known?' Baffled, the boy has no idea of this kind of learning. So his father begins to teach him of the realm of reality beyond language and things:

Bring me a fruit from this banyan tree, my son.

Here it is, father.

Break it.

It is broken sir.

What do you see in it?

Very small seeds, sir.

Break one of them, my son.

It is broken, sir.

What do you see in it?

Nothing at all, sir.

Then his father said to him:

'My son, from the very essence in the seed which you cannot see comes in truth this vast banyan tree...an invisible and subtle essence is the Spirit of the whole universe.

That is Reality. That is Atman. Thou Art That.'"

¹⁹ Kahlil Gibran, *The Prophet: Annotated Edition*, ed. Suheil Bushrui (Oxford: Oneworld, 1995), 85.

²⁰ This principle is overstated well by Hobbes in his *The Leviathan*: "But to teach us that for the similitude of the thoughts and passions of one man, to the thoughts and passions of another, whosoever looketh into himself and considereth what he doth when he does think, opine, reason, hope, fear, etc., and upon what grounds; he shall thereby read and know what are the thoughts and passions of all other men upon the like occasions."

²¹ In speaking of the earlier published *The Prophet* as containing a "resolution" to puzzles in *Sand and Foam*, I am frankly imagining that a critical number of entries in Gibran's *The Book*

of *Aphorisms* were penned earlier, at least in rough form, though published later in English (some had been published earlier in Arabic).

²² Kahlil Gibran, *The Prophet* (New York, 1926 [1923]), 36-39.

²³ *The Genuine Works of Hippocrates*.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ Kate Pickett and Richard Wilkinson, *The Spirit Level: Why Greater Equality Makes Societies Stronger* (New York: Bloomsbury Press, 2011).

6. READING GIBRAN IN THE MIDST OF THE ARAB SPRING

By *Alexandre Najjar*

The revolutions that have recently rocked the Arab world caught the most insightful analysts and political experts off guard. The dictatorial regimes seemed immutable for decades, well padlocked by their secret services and their one-party rule, immune to any winds of change. The Arab population appeared lethargic, completely conditioned by the regime's propaganda, and unable to react. And yet, the storms that swept through the Arab world since February 2011, when thousands of Lebanese took to the streets to demand the withdrawal of the Syrian army, provoked a series of tsunamis that swept away the old regimes and led the tyrants into exile, imprisonment, or death. A century earlier, a writer had predicted these storms and called on the Arab nations to reject submission and to revolt. This man is none other than Gibran Khalil Gibran, the man who brings us together today.

Gibran was not a politician. His text *The Tempest* tells the story of Yusuf Fakhry who, at the age of thirty, decides to retire from the tumultuousness of society and settle in a rural haven. Gibran has his hero say, "I ran away from the politicians who were seeking power and in the process destroying their people by throwing gold dust in their eyes and filling their ears with empty talk."¹

Although Gibran was not a politician, he was a rebel. His aim was to use his pen to eradicate the oppressors of his peoples' material and spiritual freedom. Bsharri, his village, lay in a region that was largely under the thumb of the Ottoman occupation, feudal lords, and religious leaders. He rebelled against this domination and wished his people would rebel against slavery and traditions. In a prose poem entitled "Slavery," he wrote that slavery is "placing man's neck under the domination of the tyrant" and submitting "strong bodies and weak minds to the sons of Greed for use as instruments to their powers."² Later, when in Boston and New York, his sense of responsibility did prompt him to get involved when duty called. Gibran hastened to convince the Lebanese and Syrian communities in Boston to start an organization to defend the cause of the Arab countries under Ottoman control. The association was created in 1911 and was called *Al Halaqat al-Zahabiya* (The Golden Circles).³ In February, at a large meeting organized by the association, Gibran delivered a speech to the Syrians to beware of the promises of the sultan and to rely on themselves to throw off the Turkish yoke:

Whoever does not walk with his head held high will remain his own slave, and he who is his own slave cannot walk freely. Freedom is a ray that emanates from the inside and not one that shines from without.⁴

Two years later, *Al-Funoon* published an article of Gibran's under the title "To the Muslims from a Christian Poet."⁵ In this open letter, he called for all Muslims to rise against the occupation, as the Ottoman state was responsible for the decadence of Islamic civilization. During World War I, Gibran published a text entitled "Dead are My People." In this article, which reminds us of the current Arab revolutions, and particularly Syrian, where pacific people die every day, facing the ferocity of the regime and the indifference of the world, he wrote:

If my people had attacked the despots and oppressors and died rebels, I would have said, "Dying for freedom is nobler than living in the shadow of weak submission, for he who embraces death with the sword of Truth in his hand will eternalize with the Eternity of Truth, for Life is weaker than Death and Death is weaker than Truth..." But there was no rescue from the closing jaws...My people did not die as rebels; they were not killed in the field of battle; nor did the earthquake shatter my country and subdue them. Death was their only rescuer, and starvation their only spoils. My people died on the cross. They died while their hands stretched toward the East and West, while the remnants of their eyes stared at the blackness of the firmament. They died silently, for humanity had closed its ears to their cry. They died because they did not befriend their enemy...They died because they were peacemakers.⁶

Gibran felt guilty about being far from those who were "dying in silence." He knew that "lamentations would not appease their hunger and that tears would not quench their thirst,"⁷ so when he was appointed secretary of the Syrian-Mount Lebanon Relief Committee, (Ameen Rihani being the vice president of that committee), he did not hesitate to fulfil his duties. Gibran mustered up all his energy and solicited contributions from the Syrio-Lebanese communities in Boston and New York. With the support of the American Red Cross, he managed to send his stricken countrymen a shipload of food.⁸ In 1917, the day after the United States entered the war, Gibran became even more involved. He joined the Syrian-Mount Lebanon Volunteer Committee⁹ which was recruiting Syrians and Lebanese from America who were ready to fight with the Allies to liberate the region from Ottoman rule. Gibran was primarily a reformer preoccupied with the human condition, which he wanted to liberate from all forms of slavery, and he relentlessly advocated his philosophy of freedom, calling for the liberation of all Arab territories occupied by the Ottomans.

By comparing the Arab world from which he came to the New World which had welcomed him, Gibran was able to better understand the weaknesses of his fellow

citizens, and he focused his writing to encourage them to seek their own liberation. According to Dr. Bushrui:

All of Gibran's writings express a passionate urge to improve the lot of an exploited humanity...He became one of the most fervent and outspoken champions of human rights. He waged a long, ferocious, and sometimes bitter battle against the vicious inequalities that exist between men and women, religious extremism and feudalism...His early works are tales of courage, stories in which the downtrodden struggle for liberty and proclaim a message of justice—a whip, in Gibran's words, as he unleashes his vituperation on those who exploit the poor.¹⁰

His calls for liberty now appear to have foreshadowed the current situation in the Arab world. It is as if the Arab peoples finally heard the exhortations of the author of *The Prophet* to throw off the yoke of dictatorship. The notions of rebellion and freedom were always present in the works and thoughts of Gibran. The titles of some of his books, such as *The Tempests* and *Rebellious Spirit*, allude to these topics. Gibran quotes:

Life without rebellion is like the seasons without spring. Rebellion without truth is like spring in a bleak, arid desert...Life, rebellion, and truth—three persons in one substance, accepting no separation or alteration. Life without liberty is like a body without spirit. Liberty without thought is like a disturbed spirit...Life, liberty, and thought—three persons in one substance, eternal, never-ending, and unceasing.¹¹

In his short story “Kahlil the Heretic,” published originally in Arabic in the collection *Rebellious Spirits*, we read the following “Hymn to Freedom,” translated by Dr. Bushrui:

From the depths of these depths we call you, O Liberty—hear us!

From the corners of this darkness we raise our hands in supplication—turn your gaze toward us!

On the expanse of these snows we lay ourselves prostrated before you, have compassion upon us!

We stand now before your terrible throne wearing the blood-smearred garments of our fathers; covering our heads with the dust of the tombs mingled with their remains; drawing the swords which have been sheathed in their entrails; raising the spears that have pierced their breasts; dragging the chains that have withered their feet; crying aloud cries that have wounded their throats, and lamentations that have filled the darkness of their prisons; praying prayers that have sprung out of the pain of their hearts—

Listen, O Liberty, and hear us!¹²

Gibran was not concerned only about his own homeland. He was concerned about the fate of the Arab world as a whole, from the Nile to the Euphrates, from the Gulf States to Lebanon. He had a pan-Arab vision of freedom and addressed all Arab peoples struggling under the yoke of dictatorship:

From the sources of the Nile to the estuary of the Euphrates

The wailing of souls surging with the scream of the abyss rises;

From the frontiers of the peninsula to the mountains of Lebanon

Hands outstretched to you, trembling in the agony of death;

From the coast of the gulf to the ends of the desert

Eyes are uplifted to you with pining hearts—

Turn, O Liberty, and look upon us.¹³

Gibran addresses young men and women who crave freedom in their schools, thus bringing to mind the youth who, during the Arab Spring, spearheaded the revolutions. This idea is also present in another text called “The New Era,” where the author writes that “the youth of spring” are calling for uprising. Gibran talks about confiscated justice, thus reminding us that, under dictatorship or occupation, justice becomes an instrument of censorship and death in the hands of the authorities. He writes:

In the corners of huts standing in the shadow of poverty and humiliation, Breasts are being beaten for you; In the emptiness of houses erected in the darkness of ignorance and folly, Hearts are cast before you;

And in the corners of houses buried in the clouds of oppression and tyranny, spirits are longing for you—Look upon us, O Liberty, and have compassion. In schools and offices, despairing youth calls upon you; In the churches and mosques, the forsaken book invites you; In the counsels and courts, the neglected law implores you—Have pity, O Liberty, and save us.¹⁴

Gibran deplored the indifference of the world that scoffs at the suffering of enslaved peoples instead of coming to their rescue, a reflection of the complacency of the Western powers with respect to the tyrannical regimes in power for the last 30-40 years:

From the very beginning the darkness of the night has descended upon our souls—How long until the dawn?

From prison to prison our bodies move, and the mocking ages pass us by

How long are we to bear the mockery of the ages?

From yoke to heavier yoke our necks do pass

And the nations of the earth look at us and laugh—

How long shall we endure the mockery of nations?¹⁵

Gibran denounces the exploitation of the Arab peoples by their leaders, who enrich themselves at the people's expense, appropriate the wealth of the country, show nepotism by sharing the profits with their family, and build their palaces on the corpses of their subjects. He writes:

With the strength of our arms they erected the pillars of their temples and shrines to glorify their gods;

On our backs they brought clay and stones to build castles to strengthen their strongholds;

And with the power of our bodies they built pyramids to render their names immortal;

How long are we to build castles and palaces and live but in huts and caves?

How long are we to fill granaries and stores and eat nothing but garlic and clover? How long are we to weave silk and wool and be clad in tattered cloth?¹⁶

Gibran does not spare the duplicity of the tyrants who provoke divisions between clans, tribes, and communities to strengthen their ruling power. He writes:

Through their cunning and treachery they have set clan against clan; Have separated group from group; Have sown the seeds of hate between tribe and tribe—

How long are we then to wither like ashes before this cruel hurricane and fight like hungry young lions near this stinking carcass?

In order to secure their power and to rest at heart's ease they have armed the Durzi to fight the Arab; Have instigated the Shi'i against the Sunni; Have incited the Kurd to slaughter the Bedouin;

Have encouraged the Mohammadan to fight the Christian—

How long is a brother to fight his brother on the breast of the mother?

How long is a neighbour to threaten his neighbour near the tomb of the beloved?

How long are the Cross and the Crescent to remain apart before the eyes of God?

Listen, O Liberty, and harken unto us.¹⁷

Having described this alarming situation, Gibran calls for the awakening of the populations and urges them to fight against what he calls “the dark clouds.” He knows that this movement can snowball, that revolution is contagious and can spread rapidly to ignite the fire. He asserts that “one spark from the dry straw catches fire,” a phrase that reminds us of the immolation of the Tunisian street vendor, Bouazizi, who sacrificed his life on December 17, 2010, before the governorate of Sidi Bouzid, an act which inspired the Moroccan writer Tahar Ben Jelloun to write an essay about the Tunisian revolution entitled “L’Etincelle” (“The Spark”). Gibran writes:

Turn your gaze towards us, O mother of the earth's inhabitants,

For we are not the offspring of your rival; Speak with the tongue of any one of us; For from one spark the dry straw catches fire;

Awaken the sound of your wings the spirit of one of our men

For from one cloud one lightning flash illuminates valley-lanes and mountain-tops.

Disperse with your resolve these dark clouds;

Descend as a thunderbolt,

Destroy like a catapult

The props of those thrones erected on bones and skulls,

Plated with the gold of taxes and bribery

And soaked in blood and tears.

Listen to us, O Liberty,

Have compassion on us, O Daughter of Athens,

Rescue us, O Sister of Rome,

Save us, O Companion of Moses,

Come to our aid, O Beloved of Mohammad,

Teach us, O Bride of Jesus,

Strengthen our hearts that we may live;

Or strengthen the arms of our enemies against us

That we may wither, perish, and find peace.¹⁸

The mention of Jesus in this passage is by no means accidental, because for Gibran, Jesus was a revolutionary. In an article entitled “The Crucified,” Gibran wrote:

The Nazarene was not weak! He was strong and is strong! But the people refuse to heed the true meaning of strength. Jesus never lived a life of fear, nor did He die suffering or complaining...He lived as a leader; He was crucified as a crusader; He died with a heroism that frightened His killers and tormentors. Jesus was not a bird with broken wings; He was a raging tempest who broke all crooked wings. He feared not His persecutors nor His enemies. He suffered not before His killers. Free and brave and daring He was. He defied all despots and oppressors...He came to demolish the majestic palaces, constructed upon the graves of the weak, and crush the idols, erected upon the bodies of the poor.¹⁹

This idea can also be found in the novel *L’Espoir* by the French writer André Malraux who wrote: “Le Christ? C’est un anarchiste qui a réussi, c’est le seul!”²⁰ (“Christ? He is an anarchist who was successful, He is the only one!”)

This call for the destruction of the established order is recurrent in Gibran’s writings. This storm lover considers that it is not enough to treat our sick societies, tainted by corruption and tyranny. For him, desperate times call for desperate measures. He thus calls for radical solutions, for the extraction once and for all of what he calls “the decayed teeth,” because the filling, the patching, and half-measures lead only to the prolongation of the suffering of the people instead of shortening their pain. In a famous parable called “Decayed Teeth,” he states:

In the mouth of Society are many diseased teeth, decayed to the bones of the jaws. But Society makes no efforts to have them extracted and be rid of the affliction. It contents itself with gold fillings. Many are the dentists who treat the decayed teeth of Society with glittering gold. Numerous are those who yield to the enticements of such reformers, and pain, sickness and death are their lot...The doctors have attempted cures with gold fillings instead of extraction. And the disease remains. A nation with rotten teeth is doomed to have a sick stomach. Many are the nations afflicted with such indigestion.²¹

In other texts, like “Between Drugs and Scalpel,”²² “You and Us,”²³ and “My Countrymen,” Gibran was even more virulent and, aiming at inciting the people to revolt, puts the blame on their lethargy and resignation, which he equates to an “infirmity.” He does not call for Liberty to save the Arabs, as he did in his “Hymn to

Freedom,” but directly addresses the subjugated peoples, urging them to rise. Using words of a rare violence, he declares that he hates them because, according to him, “hatred is a flood that sweeps away the dry branches;”²⁴ he mocks at them, for laughter is, according to him, “a raging thunder that precedes the tempest.” Gibran asks:

What do you seek, My Countrymen?
Do you command me to destroy what the liars and tyrants
have built?
Shall I uproot with my fingers
What the hypocrites and the wicked
Have implanted? Speak your insane
Wish!
(...)
Your souls are freezing in the
Clutches of the priests and
Sorcerers, and your bodies
Tremble between the paws of the
Despots and the shedders of
Blood, and your country quakes
Under the marching feet of the
Conquering enemy; what may you
Expect even though you stand
Proudly before the face of the
Sun?²⁵

In another text entitled “Your Thought and Mine,” Gibran renewed his attacks against his countrymen, further criticizing them and encouraging them to revolt. He wrote:

Your thought is a tree rooted deep in the soil of tradition and
whose branches grow in the power of continuity.

My thought is a cloud moving in the space. It turns into drops
which, as they fall, form a brook that sings its way into the
sea. Then it rises as vapour into the sky...

Your thought is an ancient dogma that cannot change you nor
can you change it.

My thought is new, and it tests me and I test it morn and eve.

Your thought instils in your heart arrogance and superiority.

Mine plants within me love for peace and the desire for independence...

You have your thought and I have mine.²⁶

Instead of extremism, which unfortunately “hijacked”²⁷ the Arab revolutions, and which allowed the Islamists to gain possession of the Arab Spring they were not the artisans of, he calls for tolerance and ecumenism. In this respect, Dr. 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.”²⁸ In the aforementioned “Your Thought and Mine,” Gibran wrote:

Your thought advocates Judaism, Brahmanism, Buddhism, Christianity, and Islam. In my thought, there is only one universal religion, whose varied paths are but the fingers of the loving hand of the Supreme Being.²⁹

Gibran proclaims the supremacy of labor, wisdom, and knowledge over armies and tyranny:

According to your thought, the greatness of nations lies in their politics, their parties, their conferences, their alliances and treaties.”

But mine proclaims that the importance of nations lies in work—work in the field, work in the vineyards, work with the loom, work in the tannery, work in the quarry, work in the timber yard, work in the office and in the press...

Your thought sees power in armies, cannons, battleships, submarines, aeroplanes, and poison gas.

But mine asserts that power lies in reason, resolution, and truth...

You have your thought and I have mine.³⁰

He then adds this premonitory sentence: “No matter how long the tyrant endures, he will be the loser at the end.”

Later, in his book *The Prophet*, Gibran reminds us that before struggling against tyrants, it is necessary to free our own hearts from fear and to believe in ourselves. He writes:

And if it is a despot you would dethrone, see first that his throne erected within you is destroyed.

For how can a tyrant rule the free and the proud, but for a tyranny in their own freedom and a shame in their won pride?

And if it is a care you would cast off, that care has been chosen by you rather than imposed upon you.

And 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.³¹

Certainly, the love of freedom and the call to revolt in Gibran's works are not only purely political. During his life, he thirsted for social and metaphysical freedom, defended the rights of women in the East, and called for freeing Arabic literature from the yoke of classicism that constrained it. But if it is the political message that we call for today, it is to emphasize how this writer was a visionary, concerned about the future of the Arab world, and how pleased and proud we are to see the Arab peoples finally waive their weakness and cowardice after decades of lethargy and resignation under foreign occupation and local tyranny. For despite the dangers of deviation that threaten our unfinished revolutions, one thing is clear: a century later, the calls of Gibran have finally been heard!

Biography

Alexandre Najjar was born in Beirut in 1967. He is a lawyer and the editor-in-chief of *L'Orient littéraire*. He has published, in French, many novels, essays, and biographies, which have been translated into twelve languages and obtained numerous awards in Lebanon and France. He is the author of four books about Gibran and has contributed to the complete works of Gibran published in the famous collection *Bouquins* in Paris. He received the Gibran Prize in September 2012.

¹ Kahlil Gibran, *The Tempests* (in Arabic), Naufal, 3rd ed. (Beirut, 1994), 160.

² *The Tempests*, 40.

³ Suheil Bushrui and Joe Jenkins, *Kahlil Gibran: Man and Poet* (Oxford: Oneworld, 1998), 118-119.

⁴ *Mir'at el-Gharb*, March 3, 1911.

⁵ *Al-Funoon*, Nov. 1913.

⁶ *Al-Funoon*, Oct. 1916; *The Essential Gibran*, comp. Suheil Bushrui (Oxford: Oneworld, 2007), 43.

⁷ Jean and Kahlil Gibran, *Kahlil Gibran, His Life and World* (New York: Interlink Books, 1974), 292.

⁸ J.-P. Dahdah, *Khalil Gibran*, Albin Michel (Espaces libres, 2004), 373; Letter of Gibran to Mary Haskell, November 5, 1916, *Beloved Prophet: The Love Letters of Kahlil Gibran and*

Mary Haskell, comp. Annie Salem Otto (Houston, Texas: Southern Printing Company, 1967), 279.

⁹ Kahlil Gibran, *His Life and World*, 304.

¹⁰ Kahlil Gibran: *Man and Poet*, 22.

¹¹ Kahlil Gibran, "Vision," in *The Tempests* (in Arabic), Naufal, 3rd ed. (Beirut, 1994), 120.

¹² *The Essential Gibran*, 15.

¹³ Suheil Bushrui, "Jubran Khalil Jubran," *Essays in Arabic Literary Biography* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2010), 180.

¹⁴ Gibran, *Beautiful and Rare Sayings* (in Arabic), Naufal, 2nd ed. (1987), 145.

¹⁵ *The Essential Gibran*, 17.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 17-18.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ Tahar Ben Jelloun, *L'Étincelle. Révolte dans les pays arabes* (Paris : Gallimard, 2011).

¹⁹ *The Tempests*, 50.

²⁰ André Malraux, *L'Espoir* (Paris : Gallimard, 1972), (coll. «Folio», n° 20).

²¹ *The Tempests*, 126.

²² *Ibid.*, 100.

²³ *Ibid.*, 80.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 75.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ Antoine Kawwal, *Al-Hilal (1924-1925), Gibran, Texts Outside the Compilation* (in Arabic), vol. 33, 2nd edition (Dar al-Jil , 2000), 88.

²⁷ John Bradley, *After the Arab Spring* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2012).

²⁸ Kahlil Gibran: *Man and Poet*, 4.

²⁹ *Al-Hilal, Gibran, Texts Outside the Compilation* (in Arabic).

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ Kahlil Gibran, *The Prophet* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1923), 43.

7. KAHLIL GIBRAN'S VISUAL REPRESENTATION OF THE FEMININE DIVINE

By Tania June Sammons¹

As with writing, Kahlil Gibran (1883-1931) sought to evoke the essence and meaning of life through oil, watercolor, pencil, pen, and gouache. He wanted to elevate humanity through his work, and to inspire and stretch the imaginations of his audiences by conveying his message of oneness. Much like the myths and stories related through a plethora of religious ideologies past and present, Gibran's art must be viewed in layers. At once simple and complex, his work pushes the viewer to seek beyond the obvious—a face, a nude, figures in nature—to envision a larger, more universal idea of the Omnipotent. To achieve this goal, Gibran used both everyday events, such as the embrace of a mother and child or a tender kiss between lovers, as well as imagery of mythological figures and settings, Christ, and the Feminine Divine.

Of these examples, the imagery of the Feminine Divine is least understood because we are so far removed in time from the period when Goddess ideology prevailed. The obstacle of time did not sway Gibran, but his invocation of the Feminine Divine was perhaps his most esoteric theme. Only knowledgeable viewers or “initiates” could understand and embrace this message. Using examples from the collection of Gibran's patron Mary Haskell Minis, now housed at Telfair Museums in Savannah, Georgia, this essay offers a preliminary investigation into Gibran's message as portrayed in his visual representations of the Feminine Divine.¹

In many ways, Gibran's depiction of female icons seems obvious. Gibran's feminine representations of deities, to some degree, reflect the women who helped him achieve great success, beginning with his mother Kamila Gibran (d. 1903). She gave him life, recognized his talents, and ensured he had opportunities to build upon his strengths—even at a cost to herself and her other children. His sisters, Marianna (1885-1972), who outlived Gibran, and Sultana (1887-1902), who died at age 14, provided the artist and writer with emotional support. Several independent, creative, and strong-willed women supported, encouraged, and pushed Gibran to fulfill his greatest potential. Among those were Josephine Peabody (1874-1922), a poet and early muse to the young, budding artist and writer; Gertrude Barrie (dates unknown), a pianist and educator in Boston; May Ziadah (1886-1941), a writer living in Egypt; and Barbara Young (1878-1961), Gibran's secretary during the last years of his life.²

Perhaps most significant, however, was the financial, emotional, and educational support offered by Mary Haskell, later Minis (1873-1964). Haskell, a transplanted

¹ The author gratefully acknowledges the research assistance of Kate Hoernle.

Southerner and the principal of an elite girls' school in Boston, met Gibran at his first major exhibition held at Fred Holland Day's studio in Boston in 1904. Haskell immediately recognized his talents. She invited him to display his work at her school; sent him to Paris to study art between the years 1908-10; set him up in a studio apartment in New York City upon his return to the United States; encouraged him to write in English; and edited his works written in English. She also critiqued his art work and sometimes facilitated connections with key people in the art world. Like many of Gibran's relationships, their complex bond ebbed and flowed. However, their relationship remained strong, even when obstacles created difficulties in their friendship. Of all his friends and relations, Gibran entrusted Haskell with the dissemination of his estate after his death in 1931, attesting to the closeness of their association. Following his wishes, she sent the contents of his studio to Lebanon.³



Figure 1
Portrait of the Artist's Mother,
c. 1908-1914
Oil on canvas
23 1/2 x 28 3/4 inches
Collection of Telfair Museums,
Savannah, Georgia²

Gibran documented the images of many of the important women in his life in drawings and paintings. Several of these works are included in the Telfair's Mary Haskell Minis collection. Two paintings depict his mother and sister Marianna. In *Portrait of the Artist's Mother*, c. 1908-1914 (Figure 1), Gibran shows his mother with her head tilted back, eyes closed, and her arms crossed over her chest. The background image of the *Dying Lioness*, c. 669-633 BC, a relief from the Palace of Ashurbanipal in the city of Nineveh in the area of present-day Iraq (now housed at the British Museum in London), suggests an inner pain and anguish within the calm, dignified foreground figure. The *Dying Lioness*, whose body, while writhing in pain, shows great strength despite her roaring out at her imminent death. With this image,

² Unless otherwise noted, all illustrations are from the Mary Haskell Minis Collection at Telfair Museums, Savannah, Georgia.

Gibran creates a reference to the power of his mother and perhaps all mothers, as well as the Universal Mother.



Figure 2
Portrait of the Artist's Sister,
Marianna Gibran, c. 1908-1914
Oil on academy board
17 5/8 x 14 5/8 inches (sight)

Portrait of the Artist's Sister, Marianna Gibran, c. 1908-1914 (Figure 2), depicts a quiet, youthful face juxtaposed with a non-descript image within an atmospheric environment. Reminiscent of French painter Eugene Carriere's work, this painting suggests the layers of individuality—the tangible, physical figure, and the intangible soul or spirit. In addition to his mother and sister, the collection holds several other drawings of women in Gibran's life, including Charlotte Teller (1876-1940) (Figure 3) and Emilie Michel (d. 1931) (Figure 4), both women he met through Haskell, as well as images of Mary Haskell (Figure 5).



Figure 3
Charlotte Teller, 1908
Charcoal on paper
14 1/4 x 19 inches



Figure 4
Micheline, 1910-12
Graphite on paper
15 7/8 x 9 7/8 inches



Figure 5
Mary Haskell, 1908
Charcoal on laid paper
17 3/4 x 12 inches

Moving beyond the most obvious reason to depict feminine deities—a nod to the significant women in his life—a closer look at Gibran’s art reveals a deeper meaning to his interest in portraying imagery of the Feminine Divine. For example, Gibran draws upon a variety of historic myths based upon Goddess ideology, such as Astarte:

[Astarte], [o]ne of the oldest forms of the Great Goddess in the Middle East, identified with Egypt’s Hathor, Mycenae’s Demeter, Cyprus’s Aphrodite. Her shrine at Byblos dated back to the Neolithic and flourished throughout the Bronze Age. She was the same creating-preserving-and-destroying Goddess worshipped by all Indo-European cultures, and still typified...as the symbol of Nature. Astarte was the “true sovereign of the world,” tirelessly creating and destroying, eliminating the old and generating the new.⁴

Art critic Alice Raphael, the author of the introductory essay to *Twenty Drawings*—the only publication dedicated to Gibran’s art during his lifetime, clearly recognized Gibran’s use of the Feminine Divine in his art work:

He needs only a small sheet of paper to give us the meaning of the “Erdegeist” [Earth Spirit]; we see a body of a woman who rises out

of the vast form of the All-Mother, carrying in her arms man and woman...There is the story, interpret it as you will; Erda—Amida—Ceres—Mary—the choice is a matter of time and temperament. The meaning is the same and Gibran is working with fundamentals.⁵

Raphael wrote these words in 1919, as Gibran was beginning to make a name for himself in America. The previous year, Gibran had published *The Madman*, his first book written in English. Very likely Raphael discussed Gibran's work with him, including the use of Goddess imagery in his art, before writing her introduction to *Twenty Drawings*.

Raised as a Maronite Christian, Gibran knew from personal experience the ideologies of the religion, much of which he dismissed. He held "a firm belief in the unity of religion and the unity of being [and] forged his own personal spiritual philosophy in which he would connect all the traditions and join William Blake in declaring that 'all religions are one'." In addition, Gibran knew about ancient Goddess-worshipping beliefs, probably through common knowledge within Lebanon, part of the geographic region where this early religious form existed. Gibran was also well-versed in knowledge about ancient mythologies.⁶

In addition to ancient myths, the influence of contemporary psychological thought filtered into Gibran's work, especially the ideas of Carl Jung. Using universal archetypes and world religions as a basis for much of his work, Jung derived an understanding of life largely motivated by what he called the "collective unconscious":

The collective unconscious—so far as we can say anything about it at all—appears to consist of mythological motifs or primordial images, for which reason the myths of all nations are its real exponents. In fact, the whole of mythology could be taken as a sort of projection of the collective unconscious.⁷

Jung's theories corresponded with Gibran's own ideas about life, which he communicated through both his written and visual work. Gibran had the opportunity to discuss these concepts with the psychologist over several meetings during Jung's visit to New York in 1913. In addition to their conversations, a drawing of Jung resulted from their meetings, as well as an invitation for Gibran to visit with Jung in Zurich for two weeks when he went abroad (this trip never happened).⁸

Several works in the Telfair's Mary Haskell Minis collection depict feminine deities, including three untitled works created in Gibran's earlier period, *Untitled (Figure with Flaming Hair)*, 1903 (Figure 6); *Untitled (Woman Holding Two Children)*, 1907

(Figure 7); and *Untitled (Seated Figure)*, 1910 (Figure 8). These works show that Gibran's conception of the Feminine Divine began early in his career, and he continued to revisit and develop the subject throughout his life.



Figure 6
Untitled (Figure with Flaming Hair),
1903
Colored graphite or pastel on paper
15 1/3 x 16 1/2 inches



Figure 7
Untitled (Woman Holding Two Children), 1907
Graphite on paper
12 1/2 x 4 3/4 inches

In *Untitled (Figure with Flaming Hair)*, Gibran portrays a large female figure scooping up a smaller, human-like silhouette with arms reaching upward to the feminine being with flaming orange, yellow, and red hair. The goddess form appears to descend from the sky to embrace the smaller entity ascending from an orb, presumably the earth. The colored drawing suggests the return of a soul to the Mother or source of life. This early work depicts elemental themes, which Gibran

would come back to and explore throughout his visual arts career—a goddess or feminine deity guiding or interacting with spirits/souls/humans.



Figure 8
Untitled (Seated Figure), 1910
Crayon and pastel on paper
23 1/2 x 16 7/8 inches

In *Untitled (Woman Holding Two Children)*, Gibran again creates a larger-than-life female figure with flame-like hair. However, in this drawing the figure is standing erect, draped in robes and holding two seated babies in her bent arms. Haloes encircle the heads of all three figures, suggesting that all three individuals are holy, spiritual beings. As with most of Gibran’s work, this drawing offers several meanings. For example, the triangular composition created by the bent arms, babies and goddess head at the center of the work alludes to the Gnostic Trinity, which represents mystery/gnosis/wholeness; consciousness/spirit; and psyche/soul, which was transformed into the Christian Holy Trinity: Father/Son (as Christ)/Holy Spirit (as Sophia). With this concept in mind, Gibran likely meant for the two babies to represent both the Goddess and Christ as two components of the same ideology.

The triangular formation of these works also recalls the influence of the work of Italian artist Leonardo Da Vinci, specifically *The Virgin and Child with St. Anne*, c. early 16th century. Gibran considered this painting “the most wonderful picture in the world.” Jung viewed the Christian Trinity as an archetypal example.⁹

The Trinity consists of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, who is represented by the bird of Astarte, the dove, and who in early Christian times was called Sophia and thought of as feminine. The worship of Mary in the later Church is an obvious substitute of this. Here we have the archetype of the family “in a supra celestial place,” as Plato expresses it, enthroned as a formulation of the

ultimate mystery. Christ is the bridegroom, the Church is the bride, the baptismal font is the womb of the Church.¹⁰

Another reading of this drawing makes reference to Jung's ideas of the "dual mother" which gives rise to the concept of "dual descent" and leads to rebirth from both "human and divine parents." According to Jung, the dual mother is "an archetype to be found in many variants in the field of mythology and comparative religion." Jung cites numerous mythological and religious examples of such duality including Heracles, who became immortal through adoption by Hera; Egyptians' belief in the human and divine origins of their pharaohs; and Christians' belief in rebirth through baptism. In Gibran's drawing, the two babies held by the goddess may represent these archetypal dual identities, seen as holy manifestations in their infancy.¹¹

Unlike the other two works, the draped female figure in *Untitled (Seated Figure)* is seated in an interior space. A faintly-depicted orb loosely rests in the left hand of the Madonna-like figure. The orb is supported by her upraised right hand, while a larger figure with Asian features hovers above and behind the female presence. In this work, Gibran broadens the visual elements of his work to indicate a connection of religions, that of Western Christianity and Eastern Buddhism.

Female deities also figure prominently in Gibran's later works from the Telfair's Mary Haskell Minis collection. Arguably the most compelling works in the collection, these images of the Feminine Divine include *The Dying Man and the Vulture*, 1920 (Figure 9), and *The Heavenly Mother*, 1920 (Figure 10), from *The Forerunner*; *Mother Earth*, c. 1931 (Figure 11), from *The Earth Gods*; and, *Life*, c. 1931 (Figure 12), from *The Garden of the Prophet*.



Figure 9
The Dying Man and the Vulture
from *The Forerunner*, 1920
Graphite on paper
22 x 16 3/4 inches



Figure 10
The Heavenly Mother
from *The Forerunner*, 1920
Graphite on paper
22 1/4 x 14 1/2 inches

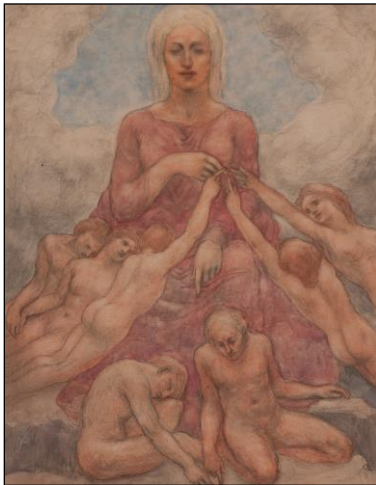


Figure 11
Mother Earth from *The Earth Gods*,
c. 1931
Watercolor and graphite on paper
11 x 8 1/2 inches

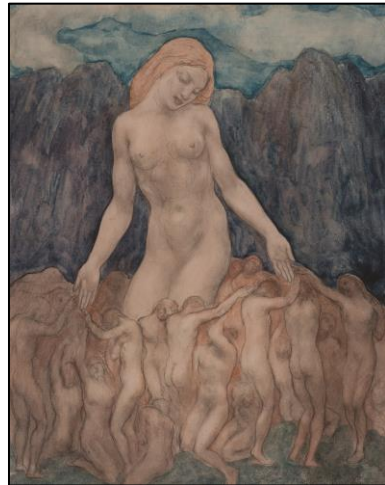


Figure 12
Life from *The Garden of the Prophet*,
c. 1931
Watercolor and graphite on paper
11 x 8 1/2 inches

Gibran indicates the layered levels of life in his drawing *The Dying Man and the Vulture*, which he used to illustrate his second book written in English, *The Forerunner*. The dying man lies on his side in a nondescript exterior landscape. His face and left arm reach upwards in the direction of a vulture which hovers in front of a larger, female figure. This goddess extends her arm gently from above to carefully support the head of the dying man. Representing the spirit, a pale likeness of a human figure hovers above the dying man, mimicking his position. Jung's interpretation of the use of vulture imagery also relates to the archetype of the Goddess. With reference to Freud's interpretation of the vulture in the context of Leonardo da Vinci's work, Jung explains:

[In] *Hieroglyphica of Horapollo*, a book much in use in Leonardo's time, there you read that vultures are female only and symbolize the mother. They conceive through the wind (*pneuma*). This word took on the meaning of "spirit" chiefly under the influence of Christianity...This fact...points without doubt to Mary, who, a virgin by nature, conceived through the *pneuma*, like a vulture. Furthermore, according to Horapollo, the vulture also symbolizes Athene, who sprang, unbegotten, directly from the head of Zeus, was a virgin, and knew only spiritual motherhood. All this is really an allusion to Mary and the rebirth motif.¹²

Whether or not Gibran and Jung discussed this idea during their 1913 meetings, no one knows. But the possibility is strong given that Gibran credited Leonardo da Vinci as "the most wonderful personality in the world," and believed "Leonardo painted *mind*. He wanted to paint what men could not understand."¹³

In *The Heavenly Mother*, Gibran's drawing illustrates a feminine deity emerging from a swirl of non-specific human forms, representing the collective consciousness. The Goddess connects with a child with the touch of a fingertip. This clear reference to Michelangelo's *Creation of Adam* in the Sistine Chapel upturns the creation story of a male god as originator. Although not well known, this drawing also alludes to a mystical depiction of the Goddess Sophia via imagery generated by the Rosicrucians.

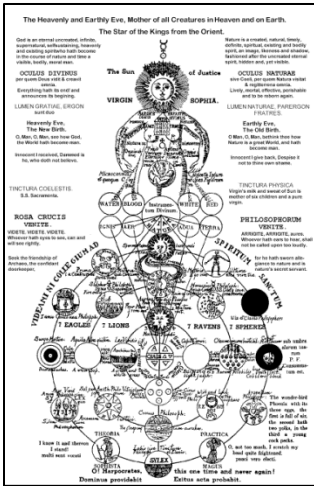


Figure 13
Virgin Sophia (Book Two,
 1st diagram)
 Rosicrucian Library
<http://www.crcsite.org/VirginSophia.htm>

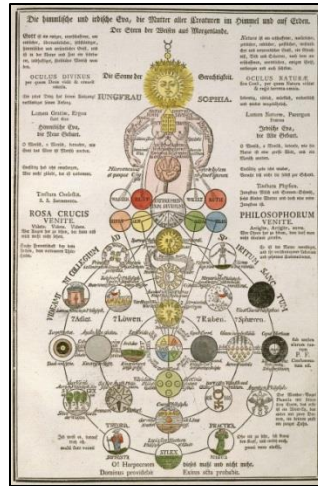


Figure 14
Geheime Figuren der Rosenkreuzer,
 Altona; 1785, *Secret Figures of the
 Rosicrucians of the 16th and
 17th Centuries*, Altona, Hamburg
 Germany, 1785

This 18th century Rosicrucian print in the collection of the Morgan Library and Museum of New York (Figures 13, 14) illustrates the layered, hierarchical composition of the Sophia principle, which depicts many lesser manifestations emanating from a large central female figure, the Goddess Sophia. In this work, as well as *Mother Earth and Life*, Gibran portrays the figure of the Feminine Divine surrounded by or issuing forth from a circular configuration of smaller, “lesser” satellite beings similar to the Rosicrucian model. Here the material world is represented as a circular formation (world/earth/globe) comprised of smaller orb-shaped components which encircle the large central “creation” figure. Adding to the Rosicrucian imagery, Gibran creates a triangular composition in *Mother Earth and Life*, again referencing the Trinity.¹⁴

William Blake’s *Mirth*, 1816-20 (Figure 15), an illustration for Milton’s *L’Allegro*, may have also inspired Gibran. Although the subject presented in Blake’s work is a personification of joy, the artist chose to use a female image to illustrate the emotion. The work also shares a number of compositional similarities. Playful in mood, both feature a large female deity, nude in both instances, surrounded by a cluster of smaller nude, or nearly nude, figures. The central figure extends her arms toward these bodies in a benevolent gesture, perhaps to share her spirit and vitality, as they

dance or move rhythmically around her. Blake's visual and written work inspired Gibran, so Gibran likely knew of Blake's illustrations for this publication.

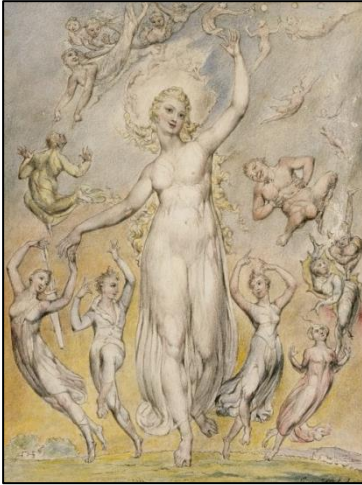


Figure 15
William Blake
(British, 1757-1827)
Mirth, illustration
to Milton's *L'Allegro*, 1816-20
The Pierpont Morgan Library, New York
Photography: Joseph Zehavi

In addition to creating goddess imagery, Gibran also produced many images of Christ, including several works housed in the Telfair's Mary Haskell Minis collection. Examples of works with Christ as subject include *Head of Christ*, 1920 (Figure 16); *Untitled (Head and Hand of Christ)*, n.d. (Figure 17); *Untitled (Head of Dead Christ)*, n.d. (Figure 18); and *Jesus, the Son of Man*, c. 1928 (Figure 19), the frontispiece from *Jesus, the Son of Man: His Words and His Deeds as Told and Recorded by Those Who Knew Him*. Unlike the images of the Feminine Divine, Gibran chose to portray Christ as human. Gibran brought Christ to Earth, so to speak, while he rendered works depicting the Goddess as Omnipotent beings. This distinction carried over into his written work as well.



Figure 16
Head of Christ, 1920
Graphite on board
8 x 6 inches



Figure 17
Untitled (Head and Hand of Christ),
n.d.
Graphite on paper
10 1/2 x 8 inches



Figure 18
Untitled (Head of Dead Christ),
n.d.
Graphite on paper
10 1/2 x 8 inches



Figure 19
Jesus, Son of Man from *Jesus, the Son of Man*, c. 1928
Graphite on paper
47 1/2 x 18 inches

Gibran published *Broken Wings* in Arabic in 1912. In this narrative, Gibran conveys the story of an ill-fated love connection between two young people living in Northern Lebanon. In a chapter titled “Between Astarte and Christ,” Gibran describes an ancient temple with imagery depicting “Astarte, the goddess of love and beauty, seated on an august throne” (83) on one wall, and a rendition of “Jesus of Nazareth crucified” from the “fifth or sixth Christian century” on another (84). A third wall encompasses “two circular apertures through which the rays of the sun entered...onto the two friezes and making them appear as though they had been laminated with golden water” (84). The temple becomes a “sublime” meeting place for the doomed lovers. This reference to the merging of goddess worship and Christianity alludes to the practice of dual devotion among certain early Christian sects of Gnosticism. The layered imagery shows the evolution of religion and demonstrates the transition away from the early Goddess-centered veneration. The tragedy of the lead character’s life, Salma Karama, alludes to an unbalanced world dominated by a patriarchal system that leads to death.¹⁵

Again and again, Gibran references the Feminine Divine in his writings. Elsewhere, in *Broken Wings*, for example, he writes:

Everything in nature symbolizes and speaks of motherhood. The sun is the mother of this earth, which it nurses with its warmth and hugs with its light, and which it never leaves in the evening without first putting it to sleep with the lullaby of ocean waves...This earth is a mother to the trees and flowers, to which it gives birth and which it nurses and then weans...The mother of all things in existence is the Universal Spirit, which is immortal and everlasting, and filled with beauty and love.¹⁶

Gibran also alludes to nature as a feminine deity in *A Tear and a Smile*. Written in Arabic in 1914, Gibran uses feminine pronouns to make reference to nature or the earth, and shows reverence to the personified entity of Nature by using a capital “N” in the word “nature”:

At the hour of dawn, before sun’s rising from beyond the horizon, I sat in the middle of a field communing with Nature...I felt my spirit growing, drawing me near to Nature and revealing to me her hidden things and teaching me the language of her wonders.¹⁷

He also writes, “The sun rose from behind a mountain and crowned the treetops with gold, the while I asked myself why men pull down what Nature has builded up.” Later, in his 1928 English-written book *Jesus, the Son of Man*, “Rachael, A Woman Disciple,” states, “I often think of the earth as a woman heavy with her first child.”

In the same book, “Susannah of Nazareth, a Neighbor of Mary,” says, in reference to Mary:¹⁸

You have not seen such a woman, for you have not stood in the presence of Mary; and you have not been enfolded by the Mother Invisible... And I looked at Mary. And her face was not the face of a woman bereaved. It was the countenance of the fertile earth, forever giving birth, forever burying her children.¹⁹

Here Gibran venerates Mary, the Christianized version of Astarte, which he addressed in his earlier work, *Broken Wings*.

Like Gibran, Haskell also alluded to Nature in the feminine. Recalling her observation on such a trip, she wrote to Gibran in 1915: “High in the mountains summer goes mad: she takes but a few weeks and she brings forth and ripens, all in those few weeks.” Haskell, a nature lover, spent many of her summers hiking in the Western mountains and valleys with the Sierra Club in the first two decades of the twentieth century.²⁰

Gibran’s renderings of the Goddess or the Feminine Divine, in particular Mother Earth, speak to the issue of balance:

Gibran’s English and Arabic prose and poetry [and I add art, for his visual creations illustrate elements of his written work that cannot be expressed in words] represent an anguished cry to humanity to rediscover its lost harmony with nature; to evolve a universal code of human rights; to promote the emancipation of women; to build bridges of understanding between cultures and religions; to lessen the gap between the rich and the poor; and to curb all forms of exclusivity—whether ethnic, nationalistic, or religious—in recognition of one common humanity and a shared spiritual heritage.²¹

With the use of Goddess imagery, Gibran takes his viewers back to the beginning of human consciousness, to a primordial origin when the Goddess was “worshipped for her capacity to create and sustain life.” In many ways, Gibran’s images of the Feminine Divine serve as the proverbial canary in a coal mine: they’re reminders to find balance. During an era when war, humanitarian, and environmental issues prevail, Gibran’s message of the oneness of life still resonates a century later.²²

Biography

Tania June Sammons is the curator of the Owens-Thomas House and Decorative Arts for Telfair Museums. In addition to managing the Telfair's historic house museum, Sammons oversees the Museums' decorative arts collection and produces original exhibitions and catalogues featuring the Telfair's decorative and fine arts collections. In 2010, she and Suheil Bushrui co-wrote *The Art of Kahlil Gibran*.

¹ Publications about Kahlil Gibran's art include: Tania Sammons, "The Art of Kahlil Gibran," in Suheil Bushrui and Tania Sammons, *The Art of Kahlil Gibran* (Savannah: Telfair Books, 2010); Christine Crafts Neal, "L'art de Khalil Gibran," in *Khalil Gibran: artiste et visionnaire* (Paris: Institut du monde arabe, 1998); Wahib Kairuz, trans. Alfred Murr, *Gibran in His Museum* (Bacharia, 1997); Pamela D. King, "The Art of Kahlil Gibran," *To Discover Beauty: The Art of Kahlil Gibran* (Savannah: Telfair Academy of Arts and Sciences, Inc., 1994); Annie Salem Otto, *The Art of Kahlil Gibran* (Port Arthur: Hinds Printing Company, 1965); and Alice Raphael, "On the Art of Kahlil Gibran," *Twenty Drawings* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1919). A number of biographies about Kahlil Gibran have been produced; those consulted for this essay include: Suheil Bushrui and Joe Jenkins, *Kahlil Gibran: Man and Poet* (Oxford: Oneworld, 1998); Jean Gibran and Kahlil Gibran, *Kahlil Gibran: His Life and World* (New York: Interlink Books, 1991) (first published in 1972 by the New York Graphic Society, Ltd.); Alexandre Najjar, trans. Rae Azkoul, *Kahlil Gibran: A Biography* (London: Saqi, also San Francisco, Beirut, 2008) (first published in French in 2002); and Robin Waterfield, *Prophet: The Life and Times of Kahlil Gibran* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998). Sources consulted for information about the Feminine Divine include: *Goddess: A Celebration in Art and Literature*, ed. Jalaja Bonheim (New York: Stewart, Tabori & Chang, 1997); Timothy Freke and Peter Gandy, *Jesus and The Lost Goddess: The Secret Teaching of the Original Christians* (New York: Three Rivers Press, 2001); Tikva Frymer-Kensky, *In the Wake of the Goddesses: Women, Culture and the Biblical Transformation of Pagan Myth* (New York: Fawcett Columbine, 1992); Stephen L. Harris and Gloria Platzner, *Classical Mythology: Images and Insights*, 2nd edition (Mountainview: Mayfield Publishing Company, 1995); Caitlin Matthews, *Sophia Goddess of Wisdom: The Divine Feminine from Black Goddess to World-Soul* (London: The Aquarian Press, 1992); and Barbara G. Walker, *The Women's Encyclopedia of Myths and Secrets* (Edison: Castle Books, 1996).

² Gibran's older half-brother Peter Rahme (d. 1903) was also supportive of his younger brother, serving as a breadwinner for the family before his death.

³ For further information about Mary Haskell and her relationship with Kahlil Gibran, see: Tania Sammons, *Walking a Fine Line: The Patronage and Travel of Mary Haskell*, Master's thesis, Armstrong Atlantic State University, Georgia, 2002; Tania Sammons, "Un plan plus eleve: les vies de Kahlil Gibran et de Mary Haskell," *Khalil Gibran: artiste et visionnaire* (Paris: Institut du monde arabe, 1998); and Tania Sammons, "Mary Haskell & Kahlil Gibran," *To Discover Beauty: The Art of Kahlil Gibran* (Savannah: Telfair Academy of Arts and Sciences, 1994).

⁴ *The Women's Encyclopedia of Myths and Secrets*, 69-70.

⁵ "On the Art of Kahlil Gibran," *Twenty Drawings*.

⁶ *Kahlil Gibran: Man and Poet*, 266.

⁷ Carl Jung qtd. in *The Portable Jung*, Joseph Campbell, ed. (New York: Penguin Books, 1976), 39.

⁸ Mary Haskell's Journal, April 6, 1913, qtd. in *Beloved Prophet: The Love Letters of Kahlil Gibran and Mary Haskell and Her Private Journal*, Virginia Hilu, ed. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1972), 120.

⁹ *Ibid.*, August 30, 1913, 137.

¹⁰ *The Portable Jung*, 43.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 63.

¹² *Ibid.*, 64.

¹³ Haskell Journal, August 30, 1913, qtd. in *Beloved Prophet*, 137.

¹⁴ Biographer Robin Waterfield claims Gibran "was opposed to Rosicrucianism" in note 34, page 32.1, in his biography. Nonetheless, given Gibran's knowledge of mythology, world religions, and various spiritual avenues such as theosophy, Gibran likely knew of (and mimicked) this drawing used by the Rosicrucians.

¹⁵ Kahlil Gibran, *Broken Wings*, trans. Juan R. I. Cole (London: Arkana, 1998), 83-84.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 76-77.

¹⁷ Kahlil Gibran, *A Tear and a Smile* (1914), qtd. in *Kahlil Gibran: Man and Poet*, 73.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 142; Kahlil Gibran, *Jesus, the Son of Man, His Words and His Deeds as Told and Recorded by Those Who Knew Him*, 13th printing (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1975), 68.

¹⁹ *Jesus, the Son of Man*, 163.

²⁰ Mary Haskell to Kahlil Gibran, February 2, 1915, qtd. in *Beloved Prophet*, 231.

²¹ Suheil Bushrui, "Reading Gibran in an Age of Globalization and Conflict," The Second International Kahlil Gibran Conference prompt, Fall 2011.

²² *Classical Mythology: Images and Insights*, 85.

8. ANDREW GHAREEB AND THE ART OF TRANSLATING GIBRAN THROUGH THE ARAB AMERICAN [AL-MAHJAR] PRESS¹

By Edmund Ghareeb

I would like to express my gratitude to Dr. Suheil Bushrui, the holder of the Gibran Chair at the University of Maryland, for organizing the Second International Conference on Gibran and his works. Dr. Bushrui has, over the years, contributed more than any single individual I know to the preservation and promotion of the legacy of Gibran and the *al-Mahjar* poets in the United States and beyond. Dr. Bushrui has kindly asked me to speak about the work of my father, Andrew Ghareeb, and his translations of Gibran's early poetry. I will also briefly discuss the Arabic language press in America and its role in the development of the *al-Mahjar* literature.

Andrew Ghareeb was born in 1898 in Aitha Al-Fakhar, a small village on the slopes of the Anti-Lebanon mountain chain. His father Issa had left Lebanon a few months after Andrew was born to follow in the footsteps of his older brother and cousins who had migrated to the United States. When Andrew's brother As'ad turned 14, his father sent for As'ad to join him in the U.S. Andrew remained with his mother and attended a village school established by the Russian Oriental charitable society for Orthodox Christians. He studied mathematics, geography, and Russian, as well as Arabic. In 1913, his father wrote asking that Andrew join him in the U.S. His Uncle Ferris took him to Beirut where he paid the owner of a small boat to take Andrew to a ship bound for Marseille. This was the first trip for this young man from his small village, and Andrew missed his mother and his friends. After arriving in Marseilles, Andrew was told that he had trachoma and would not be allowed to travel to the U.S. One of the other passengers suggested to Andrew that he pay the interpreter some money and he might be able to continue his journey to America. Andrew paid from the meager amount of money he had on him and was allowed to continue.

Upon his arrival in New York, Andrew was asked his age by the immigration official, and he answered that he was 14 years old. Andrew was tall, and the immigration official did not believe him, telling him he looked much older than fourteen. Andrew raised his right hand in front of the official's face and told the interpreter, "Ask him if all the fingers of his hand are equal." The official laughed and told Andrew, "Welcome to America. Go ahead and good luck." The interpreter later recounted this encounter to Andrew's uncle.

Andrew headed to Chicopee, Massachusetts, where his uncle and his father jointly owned a dry goods store. With the beginning of the school year, Andrew joined the Chestnut Street Junior High School. Three years later, Issa sold his share in the store and moved with his two sons to the city of Northampton, where he opened a new

store. Andrew attended the local secondary school during the day and helped in the store after school. He had a phenomenal memory and a talent for language. He quickly mastered English and picked up Polish as well, as many of their customers and neighbors were Polish immigrants. For Andrew, the move was an important turning point in his life. He discovered the Forbes Library in town, and it quickly became his favorite haunt. In addition to its many books in English, Forbes was one of the few libraries which carried numerous historical and literary books in foreign languages, including Arabic. Andrew began to spend a lot of his spare time at Forbes and befriended the librarian who noticed the frequent visits by this young immigrant and helped introduce him to the literary classics at the library.

Andrew was an avid reader and remained so throughout his life. He became interested in American and world literature as well as books on history and religion. It was also during this period that Andrew began to frequent the numerous used bookstores in town and acquired an interest in antiquarian and first-edition books. This interest remained with him throughout his life. Over time he became an expert on books related to literature, history, and the Middle East, and began to deal in rare and second-hand books.

During World War I, Andrew and many of his relatives became very concerned about the deteriorating situation in their homeland and with the mounting plundering and repression by Ottoman troops and officials. Many of their countrymen were suffering from hunger. Desperate for news from their homeland, they turned to the Arabic-language press published in the U.S.

In its heyday, from 1900 to 1930, a diverse and vibrant Arabic-language press emerged in the midst of the small community of Arabic-speaking immigrants. This press not only played a major role in the lives of this community in the U.S., but its political, intellectual, and technological influences reached the Arab world as well.

Almost as soon as they set foot on the new land, Lebanese and Syrian immigrants began to publish their papers and magazines. Between 1892 and 1928, over 70 newspapers, magazines, journals, and other publications were issued. In New York alone, 35 papers were published, with five in Boston, five in Detroit, three in Lawrence, and two in Philadelphia. Some of the papers survived for only a few months, others for years, and *Al-Huda*, before its demise in the early 1990s, was the oldest surviving Arabic paper in the world, after *Al-Ahram*. The large number of papers was due to the fragmented nature of the community and to its intellectual vibrancy.

The immigrants' real numbers during this time are still unknown. Estimates vary from about 10 to 50 thousand by the 1890s, to a little over 250 to 300 thousand by the 1920s. It was within this small community that we saw the rise of a diverse and

vibrant press which served as the incubator of a lively and far-reaching literary and artistic movement. This movement rejected the traditional techniques, forms, and styles of the homeland authors, and launched an extraordinary literary and cultural movement which was imitated by new generations of writers and poets in *al-Mahjar* and in the Arab world. This movement took its shape in literary societies in North and South America. Among them were the Golden Circle and the Pen League (*al-Rabitah al-Qalamiyah*) in the U.S., and the Andalusian Band (*al-Usbah al-Andalusiyah*) in South America. The press was the main arena for the literary activities of the immigrant poets, writers, and intellectuals. Some of the publishers of the leading papers were prominent *littérateurs* in their own right, and opened the pages of their newspapers to the intellectual products of many of the young and budding writers, historians, poets, novelists, and journalists.

The papers provided the opportunity for writers such as Ameen Rihani, Mikhail Naimy, Abd al-Masih and Nadra Haddad, Iliya Abu Madhi, Afifah Karam, Nasib Aridha, Ibrahim Katibah, and many others to reach a wide audience and to test readers' reactions to their contributions.

The press served as a school to educate immigrants, the majority of whom did not know English, and it provided them with knowledge about the rest of the world. They learned about their new country, its system of government, and its politics. The papers also were an important tie between the immigrants and the "old country." They were informed of its news and were often mobilized to help meet humanitarian crises. The press also adopted major nationalist causes and issues, and called on readers to help achieve the liberation of Syria, Lebanon, and other Arab lands, first from the Turks, and later from the French and English. The press additionally provided an important link with other immigrant communities in Canada, South America, Australia, Egypt, and Europe, as well as within the United States.

The freedom of the press, which these immigrants experienced in the U.S., was a great boon to them. The journalistic tradition of the intellectuals and activists ran deep in their modern history and they found in the press an effective and meaningful instrument to voice their opinion, and to declare their aspirations and objectives.

Some of the papers adopted the American definition of news coverage: comprehensiveness and diversity in scope, and brevity in news reports, as well as reliance on authoritative and credible sources. Some of the papers had correspondents in North and South America, Syria, Egypt, and other Arabic-speaking parts of the Ottoman Empire. They also sought articles and advertisements from its readers.

One of the leading newspapers was *Al-Huda*. Its layout, material, and professionalism contributed to its leading role. It incorporated the most

technologically innovative methods and up-to-date presses, which made it easier and cheaper to print and read the paper. Other Arabic newspapers in the United States, and later in the Arab world, imported the new technology. This took a new step with Salloum Mokarzel's adaptation of the linotype machine to Arabic. The paper later bought a Webb press which printed and neatly folded four-to-six thousand papers an hour. Its publisher Naoum Mokarzel, and his brother Salloum, not only wanted excellence in appearance, but in content as well. Naoum reportedly read every line in the paper. They were innovators willing to try new ideas and techniques, despite the cost.

Al-Huda, *Miraat al-Gharb*, and *Kawkab America* were the leading papers at the time. They separated news from opinion in their coverage and followed the American style of using headlines, display captions, and pictures. They set the standard for the Arabic-speaking press which was later followed by many papers. The paper was one of the main instruments to alert and mobilize the immigrants to humanitarian and political crises in their homeland, as was the case during World War I when one-fourth of Lebanon's citizens died of famine and disease.

The Arabic newspapers also set aside their feuds and in-fighting when vital interests of the community were at stake. One of the early issues which angered and mobilized the community and united the press was a U.S. court decision declaring the Syrians "non-white Asians" unworthy of becoming Americans. Both Mokarzel and his rival Najeeb Dhiyab of *Miraat al-Gharb*, and others who at times were at each other's throats, worked hard and long to change the ruling. A committee for the freedom of immigration was also established to pursue the right of the immigrants to U.S. citizenship. The decision was finally reversed after several years of active lobbying of judicial and immigration authorities.

Most of the papers were active opponents of any efforts by the Ottoman government to undermine Lebanon's autonomy. Mokarzel, for example, launched the Lebanese League of Progress (*al-Nahdhah*), which came to have over 50 branches in the U.S., and many others abroad, to safeguard Lebanon's autonomy, and later to demand its independence.

The press and the community were greatly alarmed by the famine and political oppression in Lebanon during World War I. Lebanese communities in Egypt and other places sought help from immigrant communities in the U.S. The aid that was given by the different communities to the families in Lebanon reached 2.5 million dollars, which was an amazing amount, taking into account the small size of the community at that time and the fact that many of them were quite poor.

Several editors and writers said that the newspapers in the old homeland were chained and their voices paralyzed, and therefore the Arabic press abroad had a

special role to play. They used their pages to promote consciousness among the immigrants. Specifically, they had an excellent result in instigating and mobilizing Lebanese and Syrians to support those who were stricken and in need. In the same vein, the papers played a major role in defending the image of the immigrants and their rights, and called on the community to support them in their efforts. The United States' denial of the rights of citizenship led to fierce battles. Some editors and intellectuals successfully sought the aid of other American groups including the Foreign Press Association, of which Naoum was a board member. The sharp criticism against Turks led to the banning of some of the papers from the Empire on several occasions. This, however, did not deter its editors. The publisher of *Al-Huda* was among those editors who were sentenced to death in absentia. Some other editors, however, were caught and executed, while others were exiled.

The press also served as a training arena for young writers and journalists. One of these examples is Afifah Karam, a young woman who became a pioneer of the American and Arabic women journalists. She benefited from her work with *al-Huda*, where she started in 1899. In 1912, she decided to start her own magazine, *The New Woman's World (al-Alam al-Nisai al-Jadid)*, one of four magazines focusing on women's issues in the entire Arabic-speaking world. She said that women were equal to men, and called on immigrant families to end their oppression of women, and not to deny them their natural, social, and scientific rights.

It was through this media that Andrew began to discover the new genre of literature offered by *al-Mahjar* poets, writers, and scholars. In 1918, he discovered Gibran's writings in *al-Funoun Magazine*.

In an interview with Tom Shea in *The Republican*, under the title "Translating Art for Love's Sake: Kahlil Gibran Poems Live Through 93-year-old," Andrew told Shea, "It would be an understatement to say that his work moved me. It moved me so much I wanted to share his work with the English-speaking world. Gibran's writing has a universal message." In the early 20s, Andrew began to visit New York and Boston frequently, where he came to meet a large number of *al-Mahjar* editors and writers. He began to publish some articles and poems in this press. It was also during this period that he began to closely follow Gibran's work and showed interest in translating to English some of his writings. Andrew came to meet one of the great *al-Mahjar* poets and critics, Mikhail Naimy. Andrew began to show his writings and translations to Naimy, who encouraged him to continue. Naimy introduced Andrew to many of the members of the Pen League as well as a number of other writers and editors in New York. Andrew would always say that he owed a great debt to Naimy for his constant encouragement and support

At this stage, Andrew began to make short contributions to various *al-Mahjar* publications such as *Al-Nasr*, *Miraat al-Gharb*, *Al Sameer* and *The Syrian World*.

During this period, he began his new mission of introducing the works of some of the al-Mahjar poets to a broader American audience. His first translations and articles in English first appeared in *The Republican*, a newspaper that devoted space to poetry, book reviews, and literary criticism. Andrew met and befriended two of its editors; they were impressed with the energy enthusiasm of this young immigrant who had mastered spoken as well as written English. His friendship with Alice McCausland and Michael Barone allowed him to help publish in the literary section some of the poetry and writings of Naimy and other *al-Mahjar* writers who wrote in English.

When Gibran's poem "My Soul Counseled Me" appeared, Andrew translated it and was able to publish it in *The Republican* in 1926. When "O Night" was published in Arabic in 1926, Andrew considered this poem to be one of Gibran's most beautiful works. He later translated it and sent it to the literary editor of the *The Republican* who was impressed by the poem and published it. Andrew then sent a clipping of the translated poems to Naimy; he in turn showed it to Gibran, who was pleased with the translation and asked, "Who is Andrew Ghareeb?" Naimy told him, "He is a young compatriot." Andrew later translated Gibran's poem "The Earth," and again sent it to Naimy who passed it along to Gibran. Gibran said that Andrew had succeeded in translating "the spirit of the poem," and that "the branch, in some passages was more beautiful than the original." In one of his letters to Andrew, dated October 9, 1928, Naimy wrote:

Peace unto your soul and unto the flame which attracted you to poetry and brought you to the wide space of literature. I received your letter and two clippings of your translation of Gibran's poem. Gibran returned yesterday from Boston, and I met with him today and I showed him your translation and told him about you and your efforts in translating the beautiful works of our literature to the English. He was pleased with your translation, as I was.

Naimy also told him that Gibran wanted to meet him the next time he visited New York.

A few weeks later, Andrew visited Naimy in his office in New York. He found him at his desk on the phone discussing Gibran's book *Jesus, the Son of Man*. Andrew did not know who Naimy was talking to in the beginning, but later realized that Gibran was on the other end of the call. Naimy motioned him to sit down as he continued the animated discussion for close to half an hour. Andrew remembered Naimy saying, "The book is wonderful, but to each of us his own Jesus." During the call, Naimy told Gibran that he understood his taking license in interpreting some passages of the New Testament, but he said to Gibran, "You cannot take license with the Sermon on the Mount and you cannot change a word in it." Andrew could hear

Naimy, but not Gibran's response. Before ending the call, Naimy told Gibran that he had Andrew Ghareeb with him. After hanging up, Naimy turned to Andrew and said, "This was Gibran, and he wants you to immediately go see him at his studio."

In an interview with Lebanese poet and writer Henri Zoghaib published in *Al-Naqid* in 1990, Andrew said that he took the subway to Tenth Avenue West to Gibran's studio. Gibran met him, wearing his painter's smock:

The door was open (as it always was on later visits), and Gibran was alone. I remember the moment as if it is now. I stood in front of a pale elegant-looking man in the center of a cluttered studio (which he named the Hermitage) and in the middle of the room was an ancient fireplace. He asked about me and about my family, and many other matters. He seemed to be genuinely interested in my affairs and was warm in his reception of me. I learned later that he was also very much interested in the affairs of his compatriots as if he had responsibility toward them and their concerns. I felt that, in part, he was pleased that a fellow countryman was translating his work. He then asked me to read to him my last translation of his work. He listened silently and seemed visibly moved.

Before his departure, Gibran inscribed a copy of his new book *Jesus, the Son of Man* as a present to Andrew. It was the beginning of a friendship that would continue until Gibran's death in 1931.

From then on, the visits to the studio continued. On another visit in 1928, Andrew translated Gibran's poem "The Mystic" which was originally published in *Al-Sayeh* without mentioning the name of its author, which saddened Gibran. Andrew told him it must have been an unintended error. He also alerted *Al-Sayeh's* editor to the mistake. In its next issue, *Al-Sayeh* apologized for the error and noted that the poem was written by "our genius Gibran Khalil Gibran." Andrew wanted to publish his translation of this poem in the *Golden Book Magazine*, but on the way to their offices, he met Salloum Mokarzel, the editor *Syrian World*. Salloum asked him about his latest translation and was shown "The Mystic." Mokarzel asked Andrew to allow him to publish it and he agreed. Andrew also translated the poem "Fame," which Gibran liked very much, saying that some of the words used by Andrew were closer to what he wanted to convey, and adding, "This is exactly what I wanted to say, and you translated my thoughts, not my words."

In another one of his visits to Gibran, Andrew told him he would like to publish his collection of translated poems in a book. Gibran promised to assist him by contacting his publisher Alfred A. Knopf. Andrew also asked Gibran, that, if he was satisfied

with his translations, he hoped he would be given written permission to translate from Gibran's Arabic into English. Gibran did not hesitate; he took a sheet from his desk and wrote: "I hereby give Mr. Andrew Ghareeb full permission to translate from my Arabic writings into English." It was signed Kahlil Gibran and is dated, July 15, 1929. This was the only permission given by Gibran to any translator.

On one other visit, Gibran asked Andrew about the reaction to his work in the Arabic-speaking community. Andrew told him that he was widely read and greatly admired. Gibran then asked, "Andrew, do you know how much I have earned from all of my Arabic works?" Andrew replied, "No." Gibran answered, "All that I got from my Arabic works was zero." Indeed, the economic situation of Gibran did not improve until he began to write and publish in English, and especially after the publication of *The Prophet*, which has since been reprinted numerous times and which sold millions of copies. Gibran began to help the needy members of *Al-Rabitah* and other writers facing financial difficulties.

A few weeks before Gibran's death, Andrew visited him at the studio and read to him the manuscript he wanted to publish. They sat together for four hours. As poet, novelist, and co-editor of a collection on *al-Mahjar* poetry, Gregory Orfalea told Tom Shea, "Andrew is a special man. Gibran loved Andrew's translations." When he was sick, dying really, he continued to ask Andrew to come to New York to read the translations. He was impressed with Andrew's work. Gibran would close his eyes and say, "Keep reading, my brother, keep reading." At the end of the visit, Gibran gave Andrew an inscribed copy of his latest book, *The Earth Gods* which was released that week, and told him he would contact his publisher, Knopf, to start preparing for the publication of the new book.

Andrew did not know that this was to be his last visit to Gibran, although he noted how pale and frail he looked. After several weeks, Andrew was walking down the street when he heard a newspaper vendor calling, "Extra, Extra!" He picked up the *New York Times* and saw on the front page the news of Gibran's death. His premature and tragic death was a blow to Andrew and to the whole community. Andrew later visited Knopf to start work on the manuscript. The publisher told him that he must contact Barbara Young as the executor of Gibran's will. After long negotiations with Young and Knopf, the book *Prose Poems* was published in 1934. The book became a bestseller and was reprinted numerous times.

During this time, Andrew received news of his father's illness and his request that Andrew return to Lebanon.

Andrew had hoped to return to the United States quickly, but the death of his father, then his mother, led him to stay longer in Lebanon. He later married Hanni Al-Dabaghi, and they gave birth to four children: Edmund, Edna, Gladys, and Mary.

During this period, Andrew began to teach English language and literature in schools in Lebanon and Syria. He continued to do some translations in Arabic and English, including of a number of poets he admired such as Yousef Ghossoub, Salah Al-Asir, Edvique Chayboub, Albert Adib, Yusuf al-Khal, Kahlil Hawi, Nizar Qabbani, and others.

In 1974, Andrew returned to the U.S. with his wife. In 1981, he visited Lebanon, but was forced to leave earlier than anticipated as a result of the 1982 war.

In 1991, Gibran was celebrated in Washington through the establishment of a Memorial Garden bearing his name. This came about after years of intensive effort by a group of Arab-Americans and other Gibran admirers. Andrew was invited to the inaugural ceremony, and he was also invited as a special guest to the conference organized at the Library of Congress to celebrate Gibran and his work. Andrew spoke to the audience about his memories of Gibran, saying, "I am proud to say Gibran was my friend. He was as fine a man as he was a writer." He also read some of his translations of Gibran.

Gregory Orfalea, a prominent poet, novelist, and academic who was one of the organizers of the Library of Congress Memorial, told *The Republican* that Andrew's talk "stole the show. We had many prominent poets and writers in attendance, but it was this 93-year-old man's eloquent speech—in a deep and resonant voice—that earned the longest and loudest standing ovation."

On August 4, *The Republican*, in which Andrew published his first translation of Gibran, had a full-page article by its literary editor Tom Shea on Andrew. Shea interviewed a number of people who knew Andrew and his work, including academics who often consulted him on Gibran, *al-Mahjar* poets, and on literary matters. One academic described Andrew as a "gold mine" and an "encyclopedia of information on the history of the Middle East and on Arabic and English literature."

Dr. Suheil Bushrui, one of the world's leading experts in Gibran, wrote, "Andrew Ghareeb was one of the finest translators from Arabic to English, especially of the works of Kahlil Gibran."

Lebanese poet Henri Zoghaib wrote in *al-Huda* in 1990 an article titled "Andrew Ghareeb and *al Huda*: Two Oaks from Lebanon" in America.

Throughout his life, Andrew remained a great admirer of Gibran. He told Tom Shea:

The interest in Gibran has never waned in the sixty years since his death...Most know Gibran's many contributions as a poet, philosopher and artist, but I want to share a side of him I knew as a

friend. He was a man of high moral integrity and ideals. He fought fearlessly against religious intolerance and against social, economic, and political oppression. Yet despite his great achievements, I was awed by his modest and quiet nature. I still remember the warmth and care with which he greeted me whenever I visited him at the studio. He always had time to ask about me and my activities.

In her book *This Man from Lebanon*, Barbara Young expressed:

[G]ratITUDE to the devoted and untiring work of a young countryman of Gibran's whose understanding of the originals has resulted in a splendid reproduction of twelve of Gibran's early prose poems. This young man is Andrew Ghareeb and through his labor of love he has given us the only volume of work thus translated. Mr. Ghareeb was a frequent visitor to the poet's studio, and had Gibran's permission to undertake the difficult task of rendering into English the magic of the original Arabic. The difficult task has been well done.

Biography

Edmund Ghareeb is an internationally-recognized expert on Middle Eastern and media issues. He was the first Mustafa Barzani Distinguished Scholar in Kurdish Studies at American University. He has taught at Georgetown, George Washington, McGill, and the University of Virginia. His works include: *The Kurdish Question in Iraq*, *The Historical Dictionary of Iraq*, *Split Vision: Portrayal of Arabs in the American Media* and *War in the Gulf*. Ghareeb has served as a regular commentator for numerous U.S., Arab, and international media outlets.

¹ All quotations are extracted from the memoirs of my father, Andrew Ghareeb.

9. THE ORIGINALITY OF THE FAMOUS “ASK NOT...” QUOTE FROM PRESIDENT KENNEDY’S INAUGURAL ADDRESS IN THE USA

By Ernest G. Tannis

The question posed in this article is what is the connection between President Kennedy’s famous quote, “Ask not what your country can do for you, ask what you can do for your country” (January 20, 1961, Inaugural Address), and a similar phrase from an essay written by Kahlil Gibran in 1921?

Central conclusion: The Kennedy quote is original, and the Gibran quote, like others before Kennedy, is similar in meaning, but independently written.

I. The Background to this Research on the Gibran-Kennedy Connection Concerning the “Ask Not...” Famous Quote

For a long time, in different places, a number have people have asserted, claimed, speculated, opined, wondered, guessed, and hoped that this “Ask not...” quote can be attributed to something previously written by Gibran. About twenty years ago, I remember reading a book of Gibran’s works in which the editor stated, without citing any source, that President’s Kennedy’s famous quote was actually first written by Gibran. I always was curious about this statement, especially when I heard President Kennedy’s quote being quoted. I was sparked to make inquiries, but never got around to it, and there was no occasion, or time, to pursue it. I also was influenced by something Gibran wrote, which essentially said that people of Lebanese and Syrian descent should be artisans of peace in, and with, the West. I never really made the connection between these two Gibran references until December 2007, when I went to the Middle East with about 180 people from over 60 countries to discuss peacemaking. We visited, among many other sites, Tiberius, Jerusalem, Bethlehem, Nazarus, and Ramullah, all world-renowned places recorded in history books and many texts of all areas including those of the Abrahamic Faiths (Judaism, Christianity, Islam).

At the beginning of that conference in Tiberius, at a place next to the Sea of Galilee, one of the keynote speakers ended his presentation with this quote: “As President Kennedy said, ‘Ask not what your country can do for you, but what you can do for your country.’” Right away, that connection plagued my mind. Why is Gibran not given proper credit? I wrote a note to that speaker, asking if he knew that Gibran had written that phrase long before, and I met with another speaker who said he never heard or knew of such a connection. I checked with others at the conference, some of whom knew and some of whom did not know of any such connection between Kennedy and Gibran. One of them from the U.S admonished me to “find the

evidence” of the connection, and being a solicitor and mediator, I appreciated the need to get the facts. So, I embarked on a serious research assignment beginning then, in mid-December 2007, which was completed in April 2009.

It has been an amazing research journey to see what, if any, connection there was to President Kennedy’s quote and the allegation that it was from an earlier Gibran quote. I started that day in Tiberius on the computer, but it was very difficult to find anything. Eventually, I found an essay Gibran had written, though it did not have a year or place of publication, entitled “The New Frontier.” In this text, the exact phrase, as translated, appeared: “Ask not what your country can do for you but what you can do for your country.” I was ecstatic, particularly when I further found that in 1960, when Kennedy won the Democratic nomination to run for president at the Los Angeles Memorial Coliseum, he said on July 15, 1960: “We stand at the age of a *new frontier*...” This “New Frontier” is tied to Kennedy in some research engines. Therefore, like a lawyer who believes he has found all the evidence he needs to prevail, I thought it was “case closed.”

Wikipedia further explains the use of the phrase “New Frontier” by Kennedy in 1960, claiming, “Although it is not widely known, ‘Ask not...’ comes from a piece written in 1952 called ‘The New Frontier,’” with no author cited. This is a good representation of the confusion that exists with regard to this quotation; here it is given as the wrong year, with the wrong title, and the wrong conclusion. Another instance of confusion occurred when a prominent university recently received a collection of Gibran’s original manuscripts and the university spokesperson/curator wrote an article making reference to this topic. He noted that Gibran’s words also have turned up in other interesting places. According to Princeton University Curator William H. Shehadi, in the June 18, 2007, *Princeton Weekly Bulletin*:

It is believed that President John F. Kennedy’s inaugural address in 1961 paraphrased Gibran’s essay “The New Frontier,” in which Gibran had written about the Middle East: “Are you a politician asking what your country can do for you or a zealous one asking what you can do for your country?”

The April 2007 edition of *Forward Magazine* claims that “The New Frontier” was originally written in Arabic, and was first published in 1925 by Gibran. Again, the same quote appears with the wrong year, wrong translation, and wrong conclusion. Another example can be found in the November 20, 2006, blog of Dr. Javeed Nayeem, who quotes Joseph Sheban’s *Mirrors of the Soul* calling it “Patriotic Plagiarism”:

But what most of us do not know is that more than fifty years before Kennedy rose to fame, this phrase was actually penned in an

article entitled “The New Frontier” by Kahlil Gibran, the controversial Lebanese mystic philosopher, poet, and writer.

Again, erroneous conclusion and incorrect facts. The list goes on, these are only some examples to make the point and give a flavour of the dimension of the spreading of this “rumour” which this article seeks to redress; as indicated, I myself, was misled in my beginning research but now have found the truth. Strangely, even though this phrase impressed the Americans very much well within his lifetime, which Kennedy knew very well, he never once gave credit to its original source. Dr. Nayeem, too, was taken in by Sheban’s manipulated 1965 translation.

For some reason, I was invited to be one of the last plenary speakers at that international conference at its closing in Jerusalem in December 2007, on an idea for an event called “Mediation in Jerusalem.” I revealed that the true source of the “Ask not...” quote was, in fact, Gibran, and mentioned Gibran and his essay.

Over the next few months I dug deeper into this reality. All that I read was filled mostly with allegations, some “evidence,” but not many facts. Against my legal training, I paid attention only to the allegations of the Gibran-Kennedy direct quote connection instead of searching for the evidence, and therefore my first impression was wrong. Eventually I understood that although the Gibran quote is similar, it is not the source of the Kennedy “Ask not...” quote. Upon my return to Ottawa, Canada, I embarked on the next step of this research journey.

II. Continuing the Research

In 2008 and early 2009, I continued my research, which seemed as if it would not end. Finally, in April 2009, I finished my research, which culminated in this definitive article. A summary of this research is available upon request.

Conclusions

Central conclusion: The Kennedy quote is original, and the Gibran quotes, like others before Kennedy, are similar in meaning, but all independently written.

1. In Egypt, the essay by Gibran from which the similar quote appears was first published in Arabic. “The New Era” was published first in an Egyptian magazine entitled *Al-Hilal* on April 1, 1921. It was later published in a book entitled *Al-Bada'i' wa- 't-tara'if (The Beautiful and the Rare)* in Cairo (Yusuf Bustani, 1923) (original phrase in Arabic below **))
2. The proper translation for the title of this essay is “New Era.”

3. This essay first appeared in its English translation in 1958, in Chapter Two of *Voice of the Master*, an eclectic collection of various Gibran pieces (translated by Anthony Ferris). The essay appeared without any reference to the original source, which made it very hard to find.
4. The actual English translation provided in the 1958 book for this similar phrase is:

Are you a politician who says to himself: “*I will use my country for my own benefit*”? If so, you are naught but a parasite living on the flesh of others. Or are you a devoted politician, who whispers into the ear of his inner self: “*I love to serve my country as a faithful servant*”? If so, you are an oasis in the desert, ready to quench the thirst of the wayfarer.” (*emphasis added*)

5. This 1921 essay by Gibran was also reprinted in a 1965 book entitled *Mirrors of The Soul* (translated by Joseph Sheban). However, it had two key differences, which I believe are the source of the misunderstandings. Sheban titles this Gibran essay “The New Frontier” (matching President Kennedy’s theme on his 1960 acceptance speech to run for president for the Democrats). The phrase in question was also translated in such a way that it matched, word for word, President Kennedy’s own originally-crafted, “Ask not...” phrase as it appears in the 1961 inaugural address. It can only be concluded that this translation was manipulated to make it appear that President Kennedy plagiarized Gibran’s phrase, but this research article has uncovered, finally and conclusively, that this is not historically correct and is a misrepresentation of the literary truth. However, it is my thesis that Gibran’s 1921 essay, as translated into English in 1958, and which pre-dates the 1961 inaugural address, should be given due acknowledgement as a similar quote amongst those already listed by the John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum, as suggested in conclusion paragraph 10 below.
6. The following translation that Sheban provides in his 1965 book, as explained above, was manipulated and is incorrect:

Come and tell me who and what are you. Are you a politician asking what your country can do for you or a zealous one asking what you can do for your country?

No scholar of Arabic with whom I consulted supports this 1965 translation by Sheban, nor do any of them support his translation of the title “New

Frontier.” Accordingly, it is postulated that this became the source of the rumours that spread over the decades about the unfounded allegation that President Kennedy’s “Ask not...” phrase was taken or borrowed from Gibran. I also originally thought this when I began my research, as described below, but realized after about 18 months of study that this connection needed correction, hence this article.

7. The Kennedy Library website has similar quotes from previous writers of the past in Western literature (the website also warns about plagiarism and takes care quite properly to differentiate between taking someone else’s phrase and coming up with one’s own phrase, which may have a similar meaning and even similar words); one of the famous previous quotes is from Oliver Wendell Homes, Jr., in his Memorial Day speech on May 30, 1884, at Keene, New Hampshire:

It is now the moment when by common consent we pause to become conscious of our national life and to rejoice in it, to recall what our country has done for each of us, and to ask ourselves what we can do for the country in return.

Maybe Gibran himself had read this speech from Oliver Wendell Holmes. Maybe President Kennedy even read it. Everyone hears and reads things throughout their lives which somehow influence them, consciously and unconsciously. But to assert unequivocally that the famous “Ask not...” quote from President Kennedy was taken from any previous quote is not supported by any type of historical or literary analysis. It is, however, fair to say that just as there were great writers of Western literature who wrote a similar thought, so, too, should there be acknowledgement of writers from the East, in this case, Gibran, who originally penned a similar phrase as President Kennedy; no more, no less. Gibran should be provided the same credit that Holmes was given.

8. Any references in other historical texts or articles on this subject that are inconsistent with the above conclusions are incorrect, and are to be ignored. Except for the 1965 translation noted above, it is accepted that any errors which appear were not intentionally manipulative, but were made in good faith with reliance on other authorities, which became akin to intellectual rumours. Unfortunately, all of these were based on false premises which appeared in various places over the decades. It is the intention of this article to unravel these misconceptions.
9. My intention in this research was to find out the truth about this connection between Gibran and Kennedy, and that intention has now been fulfilled.

10. My hope, as the research was unfolding, and as expressed to the Kennedy Library, is that, with this conclusive article, it *cannot* be said that the “Ask not...” Kennedy quote was taken from Gibran; however, the Gibran quote should be noted on the Kennedy website as a similar quote just as Oliver Wendell Holmes is. Indeed, in these modern times, with tensions in the world between East and West and among cultures, what better way to honour the legacy of Kennedy and of Gibran than to share with the world that two great thinkers from different cultures do not clash, but coincide, sharing a common thought. It is that oneness of thinking that should be expressed as part of the healing process, and to remind us that we are one and the same, sharing the same planet, looking for harmony and honesty, not violence and vitriol. This is what President Kennedy lived and died for: to ensure that we care for one another. This is the essential message that the lives and writings of both Gibran and Kennedy have left us: to search within ourselves for genuine empathy towards one another. Let us recognize this joint heritage, acknowledging that just as there are similar teachings in religions, with an underlying universal message emanating independently from different sources, so, too, in philosophy and critical analysis, there are similar concepts and wording, as already accepted on the Kennedy Library website. This posting of Gibran’s 1921 quote would be a much-needed contribution to changing the way we think, to see how we are alike, not different. The excerpt from the Gibran 1921 Arabic quote translated in 1958 reads as follows:

Are you a politician who says to himself: “I will use my country for my own benefit”? Or are you a devoted politician, who whispers into the ear of his inner self: “I love to serve my country as a faithful servant”?

It should be noted that others who are versed in Arabic and English would subscribe a different literal translation from the original 1921 Arabic Gibran essay, different slightly from the one above, but, for historical and literary purposes, it seems to me that the reference to a similar quote should, for the sake of the integrity of the research and published chronology, stay with the quote as it appears in the 1958 Ferris translation:

**The title: العهد الجديد

The quotation:*

في الشرق اليوم رجلاّن: رجل الأمس ورجل الغد. فأَيُّ منهما أنت أَيُّها الشرقيّ؟

[...]

أسياسيُّ يقول في سرّه: "أريد أن أنتفعَ من أمّتي؟" أمَ غَيورٌ متحمّسٌ يهمس في

نفسه: "أتوقُّ إلى نفعِ أمّتي؟"

إن كنتَ الأوّل، فأنت نبتةٌ طفيليّةٌ. وإن كنتَ الثاني، فأنت واحةٌ في صحراء.

I cite all of the sources drawn upon, and, in order to maintain a precise but simplified articulation of the outcome of this 18-month research project, I have succinctly outlined the conclusions, background information, sources of knowledge that were accessed, whether published or by personal contact, and overall intention with specific recommendations. Details of all of the references are available upon request.

There are other nuances involved with this topic, and it may be that in the future others may have more to add, or correct, about this issue, which will require much more sustained academic analysis; all such additional enlightenment is welcomed. Nevertheless, notwithstanding any other revelations which may emerge from more scholarship, it is confirmed with the authorities cited, backed by the soundness of these research findings, that the conclusions reached as described will stand the test of time and should survive as conclusive on this question.

Biography

Ernest G. Tannis has been a lawyer in Ottawa, Canada, since 1976, practicing as a solicitor and a mediator. He is in the "professional" category of the Canadian Authors Association. He is also counsel to a law firm and is president of ADR Centre (Canada), Inc. In 1989, he wrote the first book in Canada on *Alternative Dispute Resolution That Works!* His recent book is titled *Is Everyone at the Table? 18 Life Lessons in Problem Solving* (2010).

Acknowledgments

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this original quote from the Arabic. I should also note that, notwithstanding any incorrect or misquoted attributions made to him to the contrary, he assures me that in knowing fully about this question, and in studying this topic for the Kennedy family, he had already arrived at the conclusion concerning the existence of this 1958 English translation of this Gibran essay. I thank Professor Bushrui for endorsing this article and its conclusions/suggestions in their entirety, and for his incredible encouragement and support for this research.

In addition to Professor Bushrui, I wish to thank the following persons without whose guidance, expertise, scholarship, historical knowledge, input, feedback, suggestions, advice, and information, this article could not have been written. The content and conclusions are all mine.

Henri Zoghaib, poet, Chair of the International Association for the Study of the Works and Life of Kahlil Gibran, Lebanese American University in Beirut, Chair of the Department of Lebanese Heritage

Professor Abdullah Obeid, Chair, Arabic Studies Program, University of Ottawa (Canada)

Tony Shasha, editor in the Daheshist Publishing Company (New York: New York (USA)

Ted Sorenson who kindly, ultimately, replied to two questions that were essential to the conclusions in this article

A great deal of thanks is also due to the librarians at the Ottawa Public Library

I unsuccessfully sought a reply to questions posed to Richard Tofel and Thurston Clarke, so this article is published without any response from either of these historians.

I also appreciate the communications with Stephen Plotkin, Reference Archivist, at the John F. Kennedy Presidential Library, who had respectfully and thoughtfully explained to me, “It is possible we may revisit the question at some point, but for the moment we are not including Gibran within the compass of the genealogy of this quotation” (i.e., the “Ask not...” quote). It is truly hoped that this article would encourage such revisiting, as requested in paragraph 10 of the conclusion above.

Many thanks to Chin Radio, Ottawa, Canada (www.chinradioottawa.com), and specifically to Arabic show producer Jerry Absi (station manager Gary Michaels) for arranging for two radio programs with Professor Bushrui concerning this topic.

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Gratitude to Professor Suheil Bushrui, Henri Zogaib, and Professor Abdullah Obeid, for their scholarship; and to the Ottawa Public Librarians; Hassan Mahdi and Eli Nesrallah, and Tony Shasha, all of whom contributed in their own ways to helping me form my own insights into these matters, but the analysis and conclusions are my sole responsibility

Many books about and by Gibran, far too numerous to mention or remember, but ones that are specifically part of the conclusion of this article are identified.

Many articles, too many to mention or remember, about Gibran, both in English and Arabic with translations provided for me

Many miscellaneous other inquiries; attempts to communicate with Richard Tofel and Thurston Clarke were unsuccessful.

¹ Kahlil Gibran, *The Voice of the Master*, ed. Anthony R. Ferris (New York: The Citadel Press, 1958), 34.

10. KAHLIL GIBRAN AND THE CONCEPT OF THE UNITY OF BEING

By Fatma Essassi

“In a brilliant analysis of the nature of metaphor, the 11th century Arab critic Abd al-Qahir al-Jurjani argued that the magic of metaphor arose from its power to discover similarity between dissimilar objects.” Elaborating on this principle, al-Jurjani added, “The greater the difference between the objects, the more thrilling the metaphor, as it shows you two objects united and yet different at the same time.”¹ He crowned his discussion with a powerful phrase which depicts the ideal outcome of imaginative creation as embodying “*Shiddatu 'ikhtilafin fi shiddati 'itilafin* (intensity of harmony in/with intensity of difference).”²

Seven centuries later, another critic, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, reiterated the same principle as it represents the finest manifestation of the most creative faculty man possesses: his *imagination*. To him, the power of the imagination is potentially infinite. The moment man approaches the universe in which he lives through his inner eye, through imagination and vision, and sees it in its naked reality, he instantly realizes that all things, though constituted in appearance of finite dimensions and seem to be different, are in essence dimensionless, infinite, and boundless. According to Coleridge, “*Imagination* characteristically reveals itself in the balance or reconciliation of opposite or discordant qualities as it presents them similar yet different.”³ Hence, the Romantic celebration of the imaginative creative power over rule-bound rational systems and the elevation of the personal inner experience over prosaic external facts.

“Fascination with difference has permeated notions of creativity ever since.”⁴ In America as in Europe, fresh new visions electrified artistic and intellectual circles. Characteristically, the dominant tenet of the Romantic era, including the period in which Symbolism, Surrealism, and Postmodernism have flourished, has been the belief that difference is the most essential principle of creativity, artistic achievement, and individuality.⁵ Against a rigid classical age within which the individual writer was valued in terms of blind conformity to inherited rules and mere reproduction of the conventional aesthetic and moral values, reducing him or her to a hollow copy of outworn systems, the Romantics established being different as the source of individual distinction, the mark of creativity, and the essence of human diversity. Given such Romantic ethos, originality became an important positive value in art and in life. Experimentation with new experiences, new forms of expressions, and new systems of thought and vision became the motto of the true Romantic spirit.

Romanticism as such opened the gates to the different, the weird, the mysterious, the distant worlds, and more specifically to the so-called “Orient.” This *enigmatic* site

was perhaps the first place to offer a spiritual and cultural alternative to both the Western and the European materialism. Indeed, the Oriental impact was for a long time the generating power of a new sensibility, the core of a new sense and search for freedom, and a fertile source for a new exploration of reality as well as mystical experience, the imagination, the transcendental, and the supernatural. As such, “a new vision of the Orient as a means of redemption emerged and swept across European countries.”⁶ To this impulse Europe owes *The Arabian Nights*, Omar Khayyam, and much Sufi and love literature. More significant perhaps than celebrating difference within the metaphorical spectrum and the literary contexts, and with respect to the various cultural dislocations, the different revolutions, and the serious crises that surged in an age when the world was crumbling and reforming itself with terrifying speed, the Romantic revolution glorified difference in the real world, on the level of ethical values, behavior, and human existence.

In our days, the fascination with the “different other” is manifested in the growing interest in the literary works produced by figures who belong to marginal places or to minorities. Theoretically at least, this has been the age of the different and the individual.⁷

Kahlil Gibran, an Arab-American secular “prophet,” introduced himself to the Western world as a very special and specific “other,” someone not only different but a madman, someone who “found [himself] a wheel turning right among wheels invariably turning left.”⁸ In an age of great cultural and political conflicts, moral crises, loss of faith, and anxiety, this poet of love and hope projected a new vision of human interrelatedness and reconciliation calling, through his various writings, to a holistic world of values, spiritual awakening, and individual regeneration. Here is someone who discovered his divinity, realized his real “freer self” and purified his mind from rigid pragmatism, outworn conventions, social restrictive norms, and conditioned morality. This is precisely how *The Madman*, Gibran’s first English book, gained its title. His masks stolen, he was walking naked inwardly. Seeing his nakedness, someone on a housetop cried, “He is a madman.”⁹ Looking up, the sun, his “higher self,” kissed his naked face for the first time. He fell in love with the sun and wanted his masks, his physical and social attachments, no longer. Thereafter he was always known as a madman. And as a madman, he was at war against human society. He attacked oppressive political systems, confused and confusing ideologies, hollow social conventions, arid religious institutions, distorted ethics, impersonal organizations, and all the modern forces inimical to communication at a more reflective level between individuals reducing man to a mere inhuman mask easily manipulated and morally barren.

In *The Madman*, themes such as malevolence, hypocrisy, injustice, conformity, blindness, and Puritanism are expressed in the various parables with poignancy, ferocity, and bitterness through the key symbol of “masks.” Gibran’s revolt indeed

was not directed toward institutions so much as toward the individuals who became the accomplices of abstract evil, of greed, injustice, and bloodshed. In "Faces," the madman has seen a "face with thousand countenances," but with his new found perceptiveness, he is able to "behold the reality beneath."¹⁰ In "My Friend," the narrator maintains that people's appearances differ from their reality and mask their true selves in a futile attempt to cross "the unbridgeable gulf" to others.¹¹ In "The Sleep-Walkers," Gibran illustrates the subconscious emotions behind everyday civility.¹² In "The Two Hermits," the demand for legal justice, for correct weight and measure, is another "mask" that really hides a secret desire to fight for the sake of fighting.¹³ "The Perfect World" of "Complete Laws" is perhaps the most striking expression of *The Madman*, where in the "civilized" world "virtues, Oh God, are measured...sins are weighed, and even the countless things that pass in the dim twilight of neither sin nor virtue are recorded and catalogued."¹⁴ All spontaneity is lost and is replaced by rigid determinism. It is a perfect world of man-made order where God is suppressed and hidden among men's gods.

Another key theme of *The Madman* is concerned with the liberation of the "Greater Self" from the shallow selves that manifest themselves in humankind's multiplicity. In "The Grave Digger," inner freedom can only be attained if individuals can let go of their "dead selves,"¹⁵ lost in a meaningless existence. Yussef al-Fakhri, another madman, and the hero of Gibran's *The Tempest*, is depicted as a man who left behind all forms of traditions, dogmas, and even logic to reach the "inner light" that led him to the divine truth: "It is an awakening of the spirit," he says, "...an overwhelming and magnificent power that descends suddenly upon man's conscience and opens his eyes, whereupon he sees Life...with man standing as a pillar of beauty between the earth and the firmament."¹⁶ Looking at his worldly contented fellow-men from his "god-self" at a rare moment of enlightenment and awakening, Yussef al-Fakhri sees them in their earthly existence as disgusting pigmies, shackled in chains, but in chains of their own creation, forged by their own minds, unwilling to lift their eyes to the divine in themselves. In addition to the oppressive external authorities, people contribute to their own servitude by internalizing the commands of their oppressors. He explains to his guest:

I have deserted people...I have not sought seclusion for prayer or hermitic practices. Rather have I sought it in escape from people and their laws, teachings, and customs, from their ideas, noises, and wailing. I have sought seclusion so as not to see the faces of men selling their souls to buy with the price thereof what is below their souls in value and honor.¹⁷

In "The Grave Digger," another parable in *The Tempest*, these human forgeries are dismissed as dead; "finding none to bury them, they remain on the face of the earth stinking disintegration."¹⁸ The hero's advice to the narrator is that for a man who has

reached the “Greater Self,” the best service he can render society is digging graves. At this level, human society at large has become the main target of Gibran’s disgust and bitterness. Such disgust constitutes the central theme in his Arabic poem *al-Mawakib* (*The Procession*, 1919) and his Arabic book *al-‘Awasif* (*The Tempest*, 1920) and also his first English books, *The Madman* (1918) and *The Forerunner* (1920). Having emptied all his wrath, Gibran crossed over to a new stage in his thought and vision, the stage of *The Prophet* (1923), *Jesus the Son of Man* (1928), and *The Earth Gods* (1931).

Unlike Nietzsche’s nihilistic vision, Gibran’s mystic romantic attitude to life and existence manifested itself in the framework of a “destructive-constructive dialectic,”¹⁹ a process by which he protested against the oppressive religious and political authorities bringing about a new mode of existence freed from all conventional rules, and guided by the ideals of a new humanism which conceived of man as being at the very center of all life and all experience, and conceived of his freedom, happiness, and unity as one great brotherhood. In this new stage of hope and harmony, Gibran introduced his readers to a new world imbued with heavenly light to uproot any malignant ego distancing individuals. According to Annie Otto Salem:

Gibran’s parables delineate repeatedly the possibility that man’s dreams or fancy, which are man’s ability to perceive the ideal or universal character of experience, can, rather than separate man from man, create a communion or a sharing in the existent spiritual essence of man. In this possibility lies man’s only hope of resolving the recurrent useless conflicts in him and consequently in earthly experience, which collectively is called civilization.²⁰

Gibran’s vision introduces man to a transcendental world beyond reason, dogmas, and codified laws, a world where all antagonisms, conflicts, and complexities of civilized life, as well as of man’s anxiety in the face of ultimate questions, are resolved. He came to realize that in so far as individuals are able to transcend cultural conditioning in order to know their real divine selves, and in order to reach out beyond the immediate to the spiritual and the global—regardless of the diversity of cultures—then they could reach their “god-self” and achieve something of what is to be really human.

Gibran’s belief in the unity of being has become, with all its implications for human life and conduct, the prevailing theme in the rest of his works. If life is one and infinite, then every living thing, particularly every human being, is infinite and bears within herself or himself the longing that is God. “Every seed,” Gibran asserted, “is a longing.”²¹ In other words, every man as a “conscious being,” or “enlightened soul,” is a divine seed. Yet, if a union with the “Omnipresent” is to be meaningful, man

“must renounce his individual self to find it in the ‘All-Self’ or the ‘Greater Self.’ He must not hate any man, for he becomes all men.”²² Self-realization thus lies in growing out of one’s egocentrism and earthly scope so that the self could embrace everyone and everything. Consequently, man’s only path to his “Greater Self” resides in love, the essence of human existence. To Gibran, the love of human beings for one another is the basic rule of life. There all things meet, all differences vanish, and all quarrels fade to nothing. Love lies at the basis of faith and freedom. Talking about Christ’s teaching, Gibran explained, “If the Kingdom of Heaven is within you, if you have that calm in yourself, that quiet in your center, if you are in love with life, you love your enemy because you love everybody.”²³ In *The Prophet*, love is perceived as the original principle of life:

You have been told also that life is darkness... And I say that life is indeed darkness, save when there is urge, and all urge is blind, save when there is knowledge. And all knowledge is vain save when there is work, and all work is empty save when there is love; and when you work with love, you bind yourself to yourself, and to one another, and to God.²⁴

Gibran’s writings project timeless universal truths, expressing with great passion the deep human yearning and hunger for true liberation. To him, any change should be from within in order to purify the soul from its psychological, social, religious, and conventional conditionings, and be able to realize the divine self. “True light,” he maintained, “is that which radiates from within man.”²⁵ He focused on the need for an individual to undergo a spiritual change before he attempts to understand the world around him or even to change human society. Gibran had a fundamental belief in the value of self-knowledge. To him, God is latent within man as a “Greater Self.” If man therefore is to find his way to God, the Absolute and Infinite, he only has to know his way to the absolute and infinite within himself; he only has to know himself or rather his *real self*. True knowledge as such is attained when the self, melting with the inner light, meets with the “Greater Self.” Thus Gibran warned:

Say not I have found the path of the soul, say rather “I have met the soul walking upon my path,” 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.²⁶

The real journey then is toward a spiritual vision, toward a purified heart and an awakened soul, toward reunion with the “Divine Ground.” Within this realm, Gibran described Jesus Christ as “the most powerful personality in history,” the greatest liberator who attempted to break the traditional bondage that blinds human’s hearts, the “Son of Man” who “first perceived the Kingdom of Heaven in man’s own heart, a world of beauty, of goodness, of reality, of truth.”²⁷

Gibran perceived the individual as a concrete unique reality whose life is torn between external forces—political ideologies, educational systems, religious institutions, social laws, family environment, and even friendly relationships—that tend to suffocate that subjective spiritual power and inhibit self-identity. He strove for genuineness because he realized that the so-called common virtues are merely social mechanisms emanating from shaky, acquired personality and not *true being*. He denounced the spirit of conformism as a detrimental social pattern that reduces human beings to mere impersonal statistical entities. His contempt for hollow social figures is matched by his loathing for a civilization that binds men and women to a multitude of useless laws and buries them in frozen materialistic caves, a fact or rather a nightmare that moved a dog to cry out: “For God’s sake, run for your lives. Civilization is after us.”²⁸ It is worth noting that his mad-heroes were madmen simply because they all refused to identify themselves with and behave like the rest of the crowd.

One of the parables in *The Wanderer* offers a powerful expression of a youth who willfully escaped from the presence of his parents and his teachers and came to live in a madhouse which he “finds sane,” because there, he says, “At least I can be myself.”²⁹ By truly *being* there, he could escape from the world of illusionary freedom. Gibran elevated the individual and his inner being over social man and his corrupt human society. He heralded the freedom of the human spirit, his passion and imaginative power, as the purest enlightened guide to the right path. He emphatically insisted that every single man is a new dimension in the world and is called upon to fulfill his particularity in this world with liberty. Indeed, to Gibran the key to individual freedom is personal autonomy, the freedom to make choices as a result of mature, reflective analysis arising out of a sound knowledge of one’s self. This kind of freedom involves great responsibility for the realization of human values through purposeful behavior; it allows the individual to operate in the world with moral awareness and outcomes, and thus participate efficiently in the handicraft of the Infinite. It is indeed this kind of innate freedom that is the hallmark of the truly mature and autonomous human being.

Gibran is essentially a man of unity. This is the result of his mystic transcendental trend of thought as well as his great attachment to the Sufi philosophy. The unity of existence is a reality in his various works. He advocated the unity of life and death, unity of body and soul, unity of good and evil, unity of time and place, unity of religions, and the unity of humankind and collective responsibility, all of which are encapsulated in one powerful imagery: “A tear and a smile;” such is the essence of human existence. He called for a future where all dichotomies vanish and all fragmentations disappear. *The Prophet’s* insistence on the essential identity of love, joy, pain, and sorrow is actually part of the work’s rejection of the limiting dualism of the material world and its recognition that truth never *is*, but is always in the process of *becoming*.³⁰ Hence Almustafa’s refusal to admit absolute good and bad,

and his defense of the guilty as being members of the whole: “Righteous is not innocent of the deeds of the wicked,” and “You cannot separate the just from the unjust and the good from the wicked.”³¹

In the same vein, Gibran’s longest Arabic poem “The Procession” offers a striking expression of the unity of being. It is about life and the search for happiness, freedom, and immortality. It is the image of humanity that has lost its way, lost the forest, symbol of unity and harmony, symbol of the wholeness that has vanished through mistaken perceptions of duality, and grown deaf to the awakening tune of the melodious reed. Gibran’s choice of a youth to express the unity of existence stresses indeed the sense of harmony, equilibrium, and perceptiveness he targeted. To him, “the essential truth of all things rejects fragmentation, and in its perfect condition, humanity does not suffer from opposing forces pulling its internal pendulum in opposite directions.”³² Gibran’s vision of the unity of existence perceived inspiration as “seeing a part of the whole with the part of the whole in you.”³³ He believed that “all things in this creation exist within you,” and “all things in you exist in creation.”³⁴ He would have agreed with Walt Whitman’s transcendental affirmation that “what is called good is perfect, and what is called sin is just as perfect.” To him, human achievements are more precious than peoples’ contradictions; finding the similarities among nations and making the best of their differences were among his major concerns. Therefore, common goals and a common vision for a better future should be the underpinning factors in the wider context of humanity.

Gibran constantly expressed his deep belief in the oneness of humankind: “You are my brother,” he asserted, “and we are the children of one universal Holy Spirit.”³⁵ All of his writings stress the generally understood, yet completely ignored, fact that but few things in life have importance. To him, the bonds of a common brotherhood without any demarcation must be strengthened. Indeed, the best goals of individuals, society, and humanity at large are not separate; they are the common goals of freedom, peace, goodwill, and welfare, the ability to develop potential and creativity, to enjoy the beauty and pleasures of life, to be respected and understood. Tolerance of diversity and plurality is essential for a balanced existence on earth. Gibran asserted, “Love is stronger than death, and death is stronger than life, it is sad that men divide amongst themselves.”³⁶ He bitterly cried out:

Humanity is the spirit of the Supreme Being on earth, and that humanity is standing amidst ruins, hiding its nakedness behind the tattered rags...calling for its children in pitiful voice. But the children are busy singing their clan’s anthem; they are busy sharpening the swords and cannot hear the cries of their mother.³⁷

The complexity of modern life, characterized so much by impersonalism, speed, and subtle pressures, runs the danger of encouraging people to be more self-centered in a fight for some kind of balanced existence. Race, sex, class, religion, nationalism, and a multitude of other factors combine to militate against the identity of any individual with the rest of humanity. Learning to shift one's perspective from the parochial to the global is an important stage of personal evolution. Gibran taught that compassion is the guiding light of a person's action: "A word of comfort in the ears of the feeble, the criminal, and the harlot is worthier than prayers recited in the temple."³⁸ His final message proclaims the spiritual relatedness of man in society as a process of uniting man with himself and with his fellow men. "Love gives naught but of itself and takes naught for itself. Love possesses not, nor would it be possessed, for love is sufficient unto love."³⁹ Love is the sublime light of human existence. "Remember my brother," he wrote, "that the coin which you drop into the withered hand stretching toward you is the only golden chain that binds your rich heart to the loving heart of God."⁴⁰

Gibran's doctrine is principally of kindness, justice, brotherhood, and charity. To him, human rights are simply the codification of universal laws of the spirit applicable to all humans, as they share the same fundamental reality regardless of their cultural milieu. In *A Self Portrait*, he declared:

I do not love man-made laws and I abhor the traditions that our ancestors left us. This hatred is the fruit of my love for the sacred and spiritual kindness which should be the source of every law upon the earth, for kindness is the shadow of God in man.⁴¹

Justice is essential in social and global existence. Yet justice is not only something that is meted out by the legal system; it is essentially about fairness, honesty, truthfulness, and integrity between individuals.

Gibran's attack has been harsh against traditional obstructive norms and patriarchal societies for their agonies and exploitation of women. He waged a long bitter battle against the vicious inequalities that exist between men and women, and against the sublimation of love in the name of tradition. In his various Arabic works, he elevated the prostitute's image just to ridicule the despotic society that was at the origin of women's miserable life.⁴² Considering the inhumane subjugation of women in the East and in the West, Gibran emphatically asserted that a "woman shall be forever the womb and the cradle but never the tomb."⁴³ Both male and female are the dual components of humanity. Any denial of this fact would create an unbalanced and incomplete human world. He constantly expressed his wonder at the beauty and mystery of womanhood. He confessed:

Women opened the windows of my eyes and the doors of my spirit. Had it not been for the woman-mother, the woman-sister,

the woman-friend, I would have been sleeping among those who seek the tranquility of the world with their snoring.⁴⁴

In this respect, the idea of equality really becomes a social philosophy, a desire to create a certain harmony that suggests tolerance, fairness, and respect.

Coming from a part of the world that had been convulsed by religious strife, Gibran constantly expressed his belief in the fundamental unity of religions and the many ways to truth. He challenged established religions which separated themselves from their original spirit through excessive focus on artificial forms and rituals. His portrayal of Almustafa is a striking model uniting both the Christian figure and the Muslim universal man, projecting the essence of the spiritual traditions of both East and West. Gibran rejected the notion that human rights are incompatible with religious beliefs, as the true reality of religion is universal and transcends cultural accretions. He was calling for peaceful coexistence. In *A Poet's Voice*, he declared:

You are my brother and I love you. I love you when you prostrate yourself in your mosque, and kneel in your church, and pray in your synagogue. You and I are sons of one faith—the Spirit. And those who are set up as heads over its many branches are as fingers on the hand of a divinity that points to the Spirit's perfection.⁴⁵

The essence within the diversity of forms is the love of God. Gibran maintained that true religion was joyous and liberating, “teachings that free you and me from bondage and place us unfettered upon earth, the stepping place of the feet of God,”⁴⁶ a God who has given men and women “spirit wings to soar aloft into the realms of love and freedom,”⁴⁷ a religion of justice which “makes us all brothers equal before the sun.”⁴⁸

Gibran realized that the original source of chaos is not in the universe, but in human hearts; in that lays the darkness and the tangle. This is what Suheil Bushrui called “a psychological sleep lying heavily on the human heart.”⁴⁹ For this reason, Gibran ardently re-affirmed in the face of an ascendant dehumanized world the reality of the living spirit as the true agent of liberation and peace. To him, nothing is higher than the human. He had utter faith in man's ability and potential to become divine by realization, that is, by making real the divine in the human life. In other words, if love and peace are the ultimate goals of man in life, he should ever strive to transcend earthly limitations and absurdities, reach the god in him, and regain unity with God. “The whole Prophet,” he explained, “is saying just one thing: ‘You are far greater than you know—and all is well.’”⁵⁰ Gibran's motto was that self-knowledge is power, but it is the power to learn, to feel, to see, to comprehend, then to be shaken, and ultimately to aspire to transcend. It is the power to create, the power *to be*.

The modern century has an appalling record for inhumanity. Today's society manifests considerable imbalance with a record of brutal atrocities that lessens the impact of its many great achievements. Uprooted from his old world, alienated in his new one, shocked by the atrocity of the events around him and the inflicting repercussions of the war, Gibran realized that the key to the future lies in balance emerging from polarities of freedom and discipline, spirit and matter, idealism and reality, faith and reason, illusion and truth. It is easy to reject one and adopt the other. It is much harder to connect those polarities and find the hidden harmony among them. Gibran understood that "West should go East and East should go West not as rivals, but to give and get the best from each other."⁵¹ What is needed, then, is a civilization of human brotherhood in which there can be no place for enmity, hatred, and discord. Gibran devoted both his art and writings in his endeavor to build a new vision of "unity in diversity," a vision of hope, harmony, and love for the human being of the future.

Biography

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¹ In Kamal Abu Deeb, *al-Jurjani's Theory of Poetic Imagery* (Warminster: Aris & Philips, 1979), 265-266.

² *Ibid.*, 266.

³ *Biographia Literaria*, vol. II, chp. XV (London: Everyman Library, 1965), 74.

⁴ Kamal Abu Deeb, *Celebration of Difference*, inaugural lecture delivered on November 11, 1993 (London: School of Oriental and African Studies, 1995), 2.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 3.

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ *Ibid.*, 4.

⁸ "The Tempest," in *A Treasury of Kahlil Gibran*, ed. M.L.Wolf, trans. A.R.Ferris (London: Madarin, 1991), 21.

⁹ Kahlil Gibran, *The Madman* (London: Heinemann, 1963), 7.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 54.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 12.

¹² *Ibid.*, 15.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 19.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 71.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 41.

¹⁶ "The Tempest," in *The Treasured Writings of Kahlil Gibran* ed. M.L.Wolf, trans. A.R.Ferris (New York: New Castle Books, 2010), 115.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 21-22.

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- ¹⁸ Ibid., 391.
- ¹⁹ Adonis, *al-Thabit wa al-Mutahawal*, 3 vols. (Beirut: Dar al-Awda, 1976-1979).
- ²⁰ Annie Salem Otto, *The Parables of Kahlil Gibran: An Interpretation of His Writings and His Art* (New York: Citadel Press, 1963), 48.
- ²¹ Kahlil Gibran, *Sand and Foam* (London: Heinemann, 1954), 16.
- ²² Mikhail Naimy, *Kahlil Gibran: a Biography* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1950), 195-199.
- ²³ Virginia Hilu, *Beloved Prophet: The Love Letters of Kahlil Gibran and Mary Haskell and her Private Journal* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1972), 349.
- ²⁴ Kahlil Gibran, *The Prophet* (London: Studio Editions, 1995), 36-37.
- ²⁵ Kahlil Gibran, *Spirits Rebellious*, trans. H.M. Nahmad (London: Heinemann, 1949), 71
- ²⁶ *The Prophet*, 73.
- ²⁷ Hilu, 363.
- ²⁸ Kahlil Gibran, *The Wanderer* (London: Heinemann, 1965), 31.
- ²⁹ Ibid., 43.
- ³⁰ Suheil Bushrui and Joe Jenkins, *Kahlil Gibran: Man and Poet* (Oxford: Oneworld, 1998), 227.
- ³¹ *The Prophet*, 104-105.
- ³² *Kahlil Gibran: Man and Poet*, 177.
- ³³ A.R.Ferris, ed. and trans., *Spiritual Sayings* (London: Heinemann), 19.
- ³⁴ Ibid., 37.
- ³⁵ Kahlil Gibran, *A Tear and a Smile*, trans. H.M. Nahmad (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1994), 83-84.
- ³⁶ M.L.Wolf, ed, trans. A.R.Ferris, *A Treasury of Kahlil Gibran* (London: Madarin, 1991), xiv.
- ³⁷ Ibid.
- ³⁸ *Spirits Rebellious*, 73.
- ³⁹ *The Prophet*, 21.
- ⁴⁰ *A Treasury of Kahlil Gibran*, xiv.
- ⁴¹ Kahlil Gibran, *A Self Portrait*, 15-16.
- ⁴² Kahlil Gibran, *Nymphs of the Valley* (New York: al-Muhajer, 1908).
- ⁴³ Kahlil Gibran, *Jesus, the Son of Man* (Oxford: Oneworld, 1993), 167.
- ⁴⁴ *A Self Portrait*, 84.
- ⁴⁵ *A Tear and a Smile*, 193.
- ⁴⁶ *Spirits Rebellious*, 98.
- ⁴⁷ Ibid., 107.
- ⁴⁸ Ibid., 93.
- ⁴⁹ *Kahlil Gibran: Man and Poet*, 6.
- ⁵⁰ May 29-30, 1922, Chappell Hill papers, qtd. in *Kahlil Gibran: Man and Poet*, 238.
- ⁵¹ *Kahlil Gibran: Man and Poet*, 228.

11. LOVE IS WORK MADE VISUAL

By Glen Kalem

* * *

I hope I shall always be able to paint pictures that will make people see other pictures out beyond the left and right edge. I want every picture to be nothing but a beginning of another unseen picture.

From Annie Salem Otto, *Letters of Kahlil Gibran and Mary Haskell*

My paper deals with the lesser-known, non-academic initiatives fuelled by the inspiration of Kahlil Gibran’s life and work. The selected themes and topics are by no means comprehensive, nor do they represent an entire picture. Rather, they highlight inspirational popular events that are connected to Gibran. This fascinating intellectual archaeology is, by definition, a work in progress.

I began this journey 14 years ago with two questions: “Who is Gibran?” and “How does he fit into our world?”

To answer these questions, allow me to share a personal story on how I first met Gibran. While desperate to console a friend in need, I was lost for words and wanted to avoid platitudes while easing her suffering.

This “word therapy” may have been inspired by my mother who would mostly sing her philosophy through such songs as “*Aminti bilah*” (“My Faith is in God”) by Laure Daccache, or pounce on any hatred with a quote from the Bible: “He among you who is without sin, let him let him cast the first stone” (John 8:7). This always seemed to happen as she stirred her lentils on a hot stove. But on a rare occasion, often around the full moon, I was privileged to experience my mother’s other side.

She would often tell me about writings by a Lebanese poet she read at a younger age who had written this amazing book that was well known around the world. Although I do not remember which quotes she entertained me with, I do remember whom they were from. Hence, the seed was planted into the fertile soil of my imagination and it germinated from within, with its whispering and its wisdom.

I am not sure what year mother packed away Gibran’s books, but I do feel that it had to do with fear: the fear of God that others had instilled in her, and the fear of a husband who didn’t understand this poet who made Mother talk about freedom of

spirit and the emancipation of women.

My father was neither a learned man, nor a man of many words. He was, and remains, simply a loving man with *Philah* (peasant farmer) origins.

Mother was a little more adventurous and often would push him to his limits with her thinking. Hence her philosophy would be sung, not preached, as it was a softer way of expressing her liberties in an otherwise suppressed world that is usually governed by the traditional Lebanese man. “A song that lies silent in the heart of a mother sings upon the lips of her child.”¹

I suppose this is where I enter. I purchased the book for my desperate friend, but unfortunately the book never reached her hands as we parted ways. Sad and torn between her departure and life’s unruly timing, I packed my things and set off to live in my “caravan of thinking,” searching the “oasis of the heart” with *The Prophet* securely packed and ready for reading.

Upon my gypsy-like journey into self-discovery with Gibran as my beacon, I found many kindred spirits around the globe, common people mixed with the extraordinary individuals who have made room for Gibran in their hearts and on the forefront of their lips as they journeyed through life.

Whenever there was a need to express a moment of beauty or truth, Gibran would almost always have a line or verse that curled snugly around it like a comma, causing the reader to pause and ponder every word of the feeling. He was the match that lit the candle, inspiring imagination mingled with prayer and hope, whilst filling the heart with warmth and contentment.

Whenever he is discussed, his name evokes many titles that start with the letter “P”: poet, philosopher, painter, and prophet. He may be all these things to some, yet to the majority, including myself, he was more of a “B”: brother, beacon, blessed, and brave. Gibran not only inspired millions, but also gave them the motivation to inspire others.

In making a documentary film about Gibran, I am one of those inspired individuals, and as I digested the words and gazed with awe at the brush strokes “bringing forth good deeds to be planted in the good earth,”² I also found my curiosity of his personal life and philosophy equally strong.

Like finding a lost friend that I never had, I came across many other individuals who expressed their interest, love, and admiration for the poet as I did. Using forms such as poetry, music, performing arts, and film, each one of these spiritual siblings felt the need to express a deeper appreciation for their hero.

While most are humbling and modest one-off expressions that would never impact a global audience, they do connect and reach a select few who need to hear or relate to another brother or sister travelling a similar path to enlightenment, affirming a direction or a way to higher learning and spiritual growth. Here lies the success of Gibran's message: "A truth is to be known always, to be uttered sometimes."³

As he dipped his pen and brush into the heart of us all, his ink and paints were made of thoughts and longings we kept from the light. His vision was the X-ray into our hearts, tears, and joys, past and present, an art-erial route he journeyed and chronicled so well, linking all living things to the higher spirit.

We measure time according to the movement of countless suns;
and they measure time by little machines in their little pockets.
Now tell me, how could we ever meet at the same place and the
same time?⁴

As fascinating as they are, the numbers and figures that represent Gibran's readership, to me, add a deeper intrigue, posing further questions. Sure, we know that his words are echoed in global spaces and places, from homes to cafés, lecture rooms and places of worship, but who are these people? And what do they look like? Was their attraction to Gibran as mysterious as mine?

I believe great artists come with great mystery. The spice of this mystery is what attracts our longing and journey to enlightenment. The dangling of that blissful rope of mystery is what makes our way to the higher spirit all the more fulfilling. With each pull upward, we experience a new level of strength or weakness we never thought we had, a dawning unlike the previous, and an awakening that reverberates in our daily lives till death comes by to reclaim us.

The significance of Man is not what he attains but rather what he
longs to attain.⁵

As the heartbeat of humanity moves forever closer to the collective consciousness linking us at smashing pace, it is a timely reminder of the utterance of past poets, mystics, and visionaries:

Keep walking, though there's no place to get to, don't try to see
through the distances. That's not for human beings. Move within
but don't move the way fear makes you move.⁶

Not only is a new leaf being turned in the book of co-existence, but a new book is also emerging on its bookshelf. The preface is nearly written, and not far yonder is the awaiting content that shall be written by those who belong to and are connected with our higher selves.

Gibran is undoubtedly mentioned in the preface; he is noted for bridging the gap between the upper and lower worlds, but more importantly, he is one of those rare artists who bridged the gap between ourselves and our God-like self.

As humanity keeps searching for answers, people will keep turning to the poetic echoes of artists such as Gibran. What I want to do here is give you a glimpse into who these people really are and, more importantly, what I found within these seekers of higher learning, the same thing which I hope you will find in yourself.

A great singer is he who sings our silences.⁷

Gibran, for me, was a wakeup call, an alarm bell that rang within. He switched it on and also gave it a distinct tone only I could hear. When one attains an awakening from such inspiring individuals, there is an evident need to tell others of their findings. Why? Put simply, it's a gift we acquire but cannot keep, one which we have to share. How this is passed on varies from person to person, and from country to country, but the gift and its message remains the same.

The Prophet is one of the most gifted books in history. You only have to enter a secondhand bookstore in the Western world or troll the web to find thousands of copies for sale dating as far back as the 1920s.

Much to the dismay of my credit card, I have embarked on purchasing numerous secondhand copies of Gibran's books, specifically, copies of *The Prophet*. The reason for doing so, besides adding to my rare collectable editions, is that they make great eco-friendly gifts. I tend to buy, and really love, the copies with handwritten notes by the previous owner, gifting them to a loved one. They really are an insight into Gibran and his readers, as seen in the example that follows:

It occurred to me that I have given this book to several other people in my life, but never to the one person who was meant and means the most to me. This book is such a part of me, so I guess I'm giving you a piece of myself. I love you so very much and I hope you can appreciate this book as a part of me. You have given me so much, helped me through so many difficult times, I hope this book can give you back some of that generosity. Happy 19th birthday. Love, Jennifer

Another area where I witnessed Gibran's spirit at work was in an online video I compiled and posted on *YouTube* about five years ago. This video montage of significant events relating to Gibran's life before and after his death was intended to give a glimpse into his life and world. What I was not prepared for was the passion of the comments that followed. Nearly 80,000 views later, this simple 10-minute

video has become so much more to the seeker of Gibran, and I would like to share some of those comments over the last five years from around the globe.

The world has so much to learn from Kahlil Gibran. I'm grateful that I was able to learn from his writings and his wisdom. Thanks for sharing this documentary. I also produce documentaries, so I encourage you to continue this important project.

Don Ray, coderharnischfeger
January 2012

This man's words about God, love, life, and death changed my life. It is such beautiful work. I especially enjoy the use of symbolism. I know that it is considered by many as purely poetical and not philosophical, however, it makes me wonder how anyone could read Gibran's book and come away with this conclusion.

Bigbubba883
July 2011

I will learn more. I am new to his teaching, however I already feel as though his words should be shouted from the rooftops.

nukldrgr
July 2011

Kahlil Gibran has changed my life, he is a genius because of him I will study philosophy.

vedato
2 years ago

Just finished reading *The Prophet*. WOW! It can answer what you've been asking or open what you thought was locked. Peace be with you.

TVME
2 years ago

Wonderful. Thank you for taking me on this journey...it gave me goosebumps all the way through.

danallyr
3 years ago

Thank you for this piece. I've been reading Gibran for nearly 30 years. I continue to learn from his writings.

808Monkseal
3 years ago

Bravo!

Gibran is The Prophet.

May he be here with us today in spirit and whisper the wind into earthly ears. His is my favorite poet and an inspiration to us all.

davidpaul8

3 years ago

Gibran reminds us, “A turtle will tell you more about the road than the hare.”⁸

Time and again I would search and find Gibran’s voice through his countless admirers, expressing their admiration and thanks via book, song, poem, theatre, film, and online video, to name a few.

As mentioned earlier, one can be quick to infer these people are simply numbers and figures that make up a collective audience. As a whole, these statistics make great headlines and titillating preface factoids within books and news articles, and, not forgetting, supply content for academic papers, per se. For me though, I have chosen the road less travelled and taken the time to read, watch, and listen to these statistics. They pave a road filled not with numbers and figures, but with real people who have real admiration and love for Gibran; I suppose you could say they are *his work made visible through love*.

This brings me to the video [presented at the conference]. It’s a compilation of some of the more popular events that have taken place since Gibran’s passing in 1931. But equally important is that the video also highlights some of the lesser-known individuals and events that culminate in the global voice of Gibran today.

As a guide to the video, I have outlined the respective categories that relate to Gibran in popular culture. The list, although not comprehensive, illuminates the popular figures we have come to know, love, and hate.

I. Gibran in Popular Culture

Film

As early as 1931, a few months after Gibran’s passing, talk of a movie and exhibition based on *The Prophet* were being discussed or planned by Barbara Young and her chosen Syrian collaborators, such as Andrew Ghareeb. The film never saw the light of day, and besides the mainly U.S. exhibitions of his paintings, some posthumous publications, translations, studies, and biographies both in Arabic and English, little by way of artistic expression or reference in the visual arts was produced until the 1960s.

A phrase from *The Prophet* is read aloud by Norma Shearer's character in *The Women* (1939 film) just before her daughter gives her the information that sends her to get her husband back.

The Broken Wings is a 1962 film adaptation of the 1912 novel by Gibran. The film, directed by Yousef Malouf, was the first Lebanese film to have a cinematic release in the U.S.

The Prophet is seen in the Johnny Cash biopic *Walk the Line* when June Carter hands it to J.R. to read in the motel.

Gibran is quoted in *South Central*: “You may tie my hands with chains and my feet with shackles, and put me in the dark prison, but you shall not enslave my thinking, for it is free, like the breeze in the spacious sky.”

Gibran's poem “For What is it to Die” is read during a funeral in Todd Field's 2001 film *In the Bedroom*.

Lines from Gibran's poem “On Love” from his book *The Prophet* are read to a sleeping Rachel in the movie *The Poet* (U.S. title: *Hearts of War*).

“Your children are not your children,” a phrase from *The Prophet*, was used by Lualhati Bautista in her book *Dekada '70* (Decade '70s), where Jules, a radical and the eldest son of Amanda Bartolome, told his mother that she has nothing to do with his ideology. The original novel is written in Filipino, and the phrase was translated to Filipino.

In Sidney Lumet's 1973 film *Serpico*, Serpico's new girlfriend tells him the story of “The Wise King” as found in Gibran's 1918 *Madman*.

In the 2010 film *Faster*, the warden asked the driver (Dwayne Johnson) to recite a Gibran poem (referring to *The Prophet*).

In 2011, BAFTA-nominated director Gary Tarn takes Kahlil Gibran's classic novel and spins it into a contemporary documentary essay, illustrating Gibran's themes of love, life, and loss.

In 2012, Salma Hayek, Doha Film Institute (DFI), and Participant Media align with Academy Award-nominated director Roger Allers (*The Lion King*) along with ten internationally celebrated directors, to bring *The Prophet* to the big screen using animation.

Television

Gibran is referenced briefly in the episode titled “Wingmen” in the show *The Boondocks*. When Huey Freeman (the central character, voiced by Regina King) is asked by his grandfather to say something “deep,” he recites part of the poem “On Pain” from *The Prophet*.

In the hit TV show *One Tree Hill*, Lucas Scott (Chad Michael Murray) quotes Gibran.

Gibran is referenced in the popular American sitcom *Friends*. Richard, played by Tom Selleck, quotes from the friendship passage of *The Prophet* during a meal with Chandler and Monica. (Season 6)

San Diego Padres shortstop Kahlil Greene was named after Gibran.

In the 2000 TV series *The Invisible Man*, the lead character Darien Fawkes quotes Gibran on the subject of parents and children in the season two episode “The Camp.”

In episode five of season six of the TV series *Bones*, Angela Montenegro’s husband attempts to win her back by quoting Gibran, albeit incorrectly: “Ever has it been that love knows not its own depth until the hour of separation.” In the show, the word “hour” is changed to “pain.”

At the end of an episode of *Criminal Minds* entitled “Perfect Storm,” Gibran is quoted as saying, “Out of suffering have emerged the strongest souls. The most massive characters are seared with scars.”

During the “Sound Bodies” episode (third year, 2003-2004 season) of *Law and Order: Criminal Intent*, Gibran is mentioned by Robert Goren as one of the authors who Connie Hale has been reading.

In the American sitcom *The New Adventures of Old Christine*, the title character has a flashback to her wedding where she and her husband are reading an excerpt from “Marriage” in *The Prophet* as their wedding vows, but for some reason they cannot stop laughing, and decide not to read the poem after only about three lines.

In season five, episode 22, of the TV show *The Wonder Years*, Norma Arnold reads “On Children” from *The Prophet* during the wedding ceremony for her daughter Karen.

The Syrian mini-series titled *Gibran Khalil Gibran* broadcast on the Syrian state television in November 2008.

In 2010, the Lebanese Broadcast Channel commissioned and aired a documentary series on Gibran.

Theater and Musicals

Legendary Lebanese singer Fairuz and the Rahbani brothers performed the first Gibran musical at the International Baalbeck Festival.

Michel El-Ashkar's play *A Child of Life* was staged in December 1999 as part of The First International Conference on Kahlil Gibran, held under the auspices of the University of Maryland.

In 2005, Oussama Rahbani composed, orchestrated, and produced *Gebran wel Nabi*, an adaptation of *The Prophet*, which was performed at the Byblos Festival and Forum de Beyrouth.

In 2007, the musical *Gibran, a Lifetime Painting* was created and directed by Joe Moukarzel.

Like Ink and Paper-the Love Letters of May Ziadah and Kahlil Gibran, performed by Felicia Leicht in 2004, and directed by Adrienne Mackey, tells the story of these two Lebanese writers who maintained a nearly twenty-year long correspondence while Gibran lived in New York and Ziadah in Egypt.

In 2011, *Sons of the Prophet* by Stephen Karam was released to rave reviews in New York City. A luckless Lebanese-American Douaihy family, distant relatives of Gibran, lives in a run-down section of Nazareth, Pennsylvania, where all is definitely not well and may never be.

Rest Upon the Wind (2011) is a play by Nadim Sawalha which was inspired by the life and times of Gibran. The play is directed by Tanushka Marah.

Music

The Egyptian-Australian Oud Virtuoso and Joseph Tawadros wrote an entire album to Gibran's *The Prophet* in 2009, and in 2011 continued the theme with "Greater Sea."

The Lebanese tenor Gabriel Abdel Nour dedicated a complete album to Gibran. Gabriel Abdel Nour sings *Gibran Khalil Gibran*, where all the songs are extracts from Gibran's writings. Gabriel is the only singer to dedicate a complete album to Gibran. He has celebrated, as well, the memorial of Gibran in different countries.

The song “Broken Wings,” a U.S. number-one hit for the band Mr. Mister, was inspired by Gibran’s book of the same name.

The Egyptian singer Tony Kaldas presented in 2008 Big Concerts Celebrating the Jubilee 125 Years of Gibran Khalil Gibran’s Birth in The Egyptian Opera House and in Bibliotheca Alexandrina in Egypt. Also, he released two new songs from Gibran’s words.

Jazz saxophonist Jackie McLean’s “Kahlil the Prophet” is on his album *Destination...Out!* (1963) (Blue Note BLP 4165).

Brisbane-based improvisational jazz quintet The Neighborhood Groove Collective named two songs, “The Firefly, the Stars” and “Love Crowns,” on their second release titled *Pieces*, which was inspired by imagery from *The Prophet*.

Jason Mraz’s song “God Rests in Reason” on the album *Selections for Friends* features words from the *The Prophet*.

The lyrics to David Bowie’s “The Width of a Circle,” from his album *The Man Who Sold the World* (1970), relates a surrealist scene in which the narrator and his doppelgänger seek the help of a blackbird, who just “laughed insane and quipped Kahlil Gibran.”

Michigan experimental screamo band Men as Trees quote Gibran in the liner notes to their 2008 album *Weltschmerz*: “We wanderers, ever seeking the lonelier way, begin no day where we have ended another day; and no sunrise finds us where sunset has left us.”

The R&B singer Chuck Jackson performed a song entitled “The Prophet” in the 1960s with references to Gibran’s work.

Tyrannosaurus Rex’s second album *Prophets, Seers, Sages – The Angels of the Ages*, released in October 1968, was dedicated to Gibran’s memory.

Guitarist Derek Trucks and blues singer Susan Tedeschi named their son Charles Kahlil Trucks for saxophonist Charlie Parker, guitarist Charlie Christian, and Gibran.

The Prophet is mentioned and quoted in the Mad Season song “River of Deceit”: “My pain is self-chosen. At least, so *The Prophet* says.”

The Chicago-based metal band Minsk’s second album *The Ritual Fires of Abandonment* has lyrics inspired by Gibran, who also is credited as an author of the lyrics in the CD booklet.

Gibran is briefly mentioned in the Common Market song “Connect For.”

Gibran is referenced in the Van Morrison song “Rave on John Donne.”

The *a cappella* ensemble Sweet Honey in the Rock’s song “On Children” is a musical version of Gibran’s poem by the same name. The song was also covered by the *a cappella* group The Flirtations.

Electronic band Children of the Bong use samples quoting from *The Prophet* in their track “The Veil.”

Samir Touma composed the first English theatrical dance composition incorporating the 26 poetic essays of *The Prophet*.

An album on Atlantic Records, *The Prophet by Kahlil Gibran: A Musical Interpretation Featuring Richard Harris* (K50109 Stereo) (1974), was produced and composed by Arif Mardin.

In the Beatles’ song “Julia,” John Lennon references Gibran’s quote: “Half of what I say is meaningless; but I say it so that the other half may reach you.”

In the summer of 2010, a piece based upon the text of “Your children are not your children” was commissioned and sung by the 2010 Minnesota All-State Mixed Choir. The piece was composed by Joshua Shank with text adapted from the poem.

Memorials and Honors

The Lebanese Ministry of Post and Telecommunications published a stamp in Gibran’s honor in 1971.

The Gibran Museum in Bsharri, Lebanon

The Gibran Kahlil Gibran Garden in Beirut, Lebanon

Kahlil Gibran Street in Ville Saint-Laurent, Quebec, Canada, was inaugurated on September 27, 2008, on the occasion of the 125th anniversary of his birth.

The Gibran Khalil Gibran Skiing Piste in the Cedars Ski Resort, Lebanon

The Kahlil Gibran Memorial Garden in Washington, D.C., was created in 1990.

The Pavilion K. Gibran at École Pasteur in Montréal, Quebec, Canada

The Gibran Memorial Plaque in Copley Square, in Boston, Massachusetts

Kahlil Gibran International Academy, a public high school in Brooklyn, New York, opened in September 2007.

Kahlil Gibran Park (*Parcul Kahlil Gibran*) is found in Bucharest, Romania.

A Kahlil Gibran sculpture is found on a marble pedestal indoors at the Arab Memorial building at Curitiba, Paraná, Brazil.

The Australian Lebanese community in Sydney unveiled a monument commemorating Gibran in July 2012.

Other Mentions and Attributions

In the popular video game *Deus Ex*, one of the three possible ending quotes is from Gibran: “Yesterday we obeyed kings and bent our necks before emperors. But today we kneel only to truth.” The Western spelling of his name, “Kahlil Gibran,” was used to credit him.

New York Public Library’s Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture named Dr. Kahlil Gibran Muhammad the next director. Dr. Muhammad is author of *The Condemnation of Blackness: Race, Crime, and the Making of Modern Urban America*. He is currently an Assistant Professor of History at Indiana University.

In his inaugural address, President Kennedy paraphrases Gibran’s “The New Frontier”: “Are you a politician asking what your country can do for you or a zealous one asking what you can do for your country?”

“Love has no other desire but to fulfill itself,” is quoted on page 571 of the novel *Georgia* by Leslie Pearce.

Jodi Picoult quoted Gibran in one of her novels to begin another section of the story.

In his novel *The Shack*, William P. Young quotes Gibran at the start of the chapter titled “The Great Sadness”: “Sadness is a wall between two gardens.”

In 2006, a fashion designer from Pakistan, Nilofer Shahid, made an *haute couture* collection inspired from the work of Gibran.

An excerpt from Gibran’s poem “Joy and Sorrow” was quoted by author Karen Marie Moning in her bestselling novel *Bloodfever*.

In the computer game *Civilization V*, a quote upon finishing the Eiffel Tower is from Gibran: “We live only to discover beauty. All else is a form of waiting.”

Social, Academic, and Political Events

In 1975, the Gibran Museum opened in Bsharri, the village of Gibran’s birth.

Under the patronage of Sheikh Amine El-Gemayel, the president of Lebanon, 1983 was declared the “Gibran International Year.” On this historic occasion, scheduled events included the inauguration of the Gibran Memorial Museum in Bsharri, the issuing of a commemorative stamp, and the founding of Gibran archives, education programs, and conferences. Tragically, however, the bitter and bloody conflict in Lebanon deprived it of the opportunity of honoring its most illustrious son, and these events, with a few exceptions, did not take place.

The centennial celebrations in the United States and Britain, however, went ahead and were marked by the publication of *The Blue Flame: The Love Letters of Kahlil Gibran to May Ziadah*, as well as an exhibition assembled by Suheil Bushrui entitled *The World of Kahlil Gibran*.

The University of Maryland College Park declared its intention to establish an endowed Kahlil Gibran Chair for Values and Peace—the first academic program in Gibran studies.

Kahlil Gibran Park was created in 1977 at Copley Square in Boston. The Mayor of the city of Boston designated January 1983 “Kahlil Gibran Month,” during which centennial celebrations included an exhibition of forty of Gibran’s paintings at the Boston Public Library.

In 1991, the Kahlil Gibran Centennial Foundation Memorial Garden Dedication Weekend took place at Embassy Row in Washington, D.C. The privately-funded meditation garden was inaugurated by President George H.W. Bush after the Congress of the United States passed legislation providing the land for the memorial, with three American presidents signing the legislation including Former President Jimmy Carter, who chaired the honorary committee of the Foundation, and who described the event on May 23–27 as “a joyous and memorable occasion.” Gibran’s contribution to American literature was immortalized in the heart of Washington, D.C. For a poet who was only beginning to be recognized by the academic world, this was a remarkable achievement.

In Italy, the prestigious publishing house Biblioteca Universale Rizzoli published an annotated edition of *The Prophet* in parallel text, thus giving Gibran a permanent place among the leading writers in world literature in the Italian library.

U.N.E.S.C.O. housed an exhibition called *The World of Kahlil Gibran: A Pictorial Record of His Life and Work* at the U.N.E.S.C.O. palace in Paris during March 19–22, 1996.

In 1996, Gibran’s *The Prophet* was voted by British readers as one of the most popular books of the century. “A man can’t soar too high, when he flies with his own wings.”⁹

On December 9, 1999, the First International Conference on Kahlil Gibran was held under the auspices of the Kahlil Gibran Research and Studies Project at the University of Maryland, with the theme “Kahlil Gibran and the Immigrant Traditions.” This seminal event, which was designed to establish a Gibran canon worthy of his exceptional accomplishments, attracted experts and laypeople alike from all parts of the world, and brought together for the first time most of those in the field of Gibran studies in English and other languages.¹⁰

II. Conclusion

I am proud to say that I was one of the laypeople, and the only Australian, who attended that life-changing First International Conference on Kahlil Gibran. Apparently I had travelled the furthest. Then again, “Love is a quenchless thirst” and the love that engulfed me, and others, in December 1999 inspired the man, the work, and the study you see before you today. More importantly, it also brought me to life, and for that I am blessed and grateful.

I do wish to thank Professor Suheil Bushrui for allowing me to spread my wings once again. Without his continued inspiration, mentorship, and encouragement, I would never have arrived at this station today. One thing I have kept close to my heart since the 1999 conference was the memory of four simple words he said to me: “You have great potential.”

Today, I stand before you a man who flies with broken wings and, like my dear friend Professor Bushrui, teaches others to do the same.

Biography

Glen Kalem is an accomplished international Kahlil Gibran researcher and independent filmmaker producing factual films and fictional short stories. His passion and research for Gibran, spanning 15 years, is currently being developed into a feature-length documentary film by his company Elucidate Pictures. A proud father and food aficionado, he currently resides in between Sydney, Australia, and his father’s village in the Wadi Qadisha of North Lebanon, not far from his beloved poet and mentor.

¹ Kahlil Gibran, *Sand and Foam* (New York: A.A. Knopf, 1928), 25.

² Kahlil Gibran, “Imran City of Lofty Pillars,” in *The Voice of Kahlil Gibran—An Anthology*, ed. R. Waterfield (London: Penguin Books, 1995).

³ *Sand and Foam*, 15.

⁴ Kahlil Gibran, *Sand and Foam* (New Delhi: Sterling Publishers, 2007), 10.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 12.

⁶ *Jalal al Din Rumi* in “Unseen Rain—Quatrains of Rumi,” by John Moyn and Coleman Barks, *Shambhala* (Boston, 2011), 20.

⁷ Kahlil Gibran, *Sand and Foam* (New York: A.A. Knopf, 1928), 24.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 72.

⁹ William Blake, “Proverbs of Hell,” *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975), xviii.

¹⁰ Suheil Bushrui and Joe Jenkins, *Kahlil Gibran: Man and Poet-A New Biography* (Oxford: Oneworld, 1998), 24.

*Some notes on Gibran in popular culture are referenced from the World Philosophy and Science page: the chronicled timeline notes on Gibran “mentions in popular culture,” Suheil Bushrui and Joe Jenkins, *Kahlil Gibran: Man and Poet-A New Biography* (Oxford: Oneworld, 1998), Epilogue notes 287- 294.

12. EXCHANGING THE GIFTS OF THE EARTH

By Taraz Darabi

* * *

It is in exchanging the gifts of the earth that you shall find abundance and be satisfied. Yet unless the exchange be in love and kindly justice, it will but lead some to greed and others to hunger...Invoke then the master spirit of the earth, to come into your midst and sanctify the scales and the reckoning that weighs value against value.

From Kahlil Gibran, *The Prophet*

* * *

But by acting according to the dictates of our moral faculties, we necessarily pursue the most effectual means for promoting the happiness of mankind, and may therefore be said, in some sense, to co-operate with the Deity, and to advance as far as in our power the plan of Providence. By acting other ways, on the contrary, we seem to obstruct, in some measure, the scheme which the Author of nature has established for the happiness and perfection of the world, and to declare ourselves, if I may say so, in some measure the enemies of God.

From Adam Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*

* * *

Thus does the first touch of humanity's selfishness make criminals of the humble, and make killers of the sons of peace; thus does the early greed of humanity grow and strike back at humanity a thousand fold!

From Kahlil Gibran, *The Criminal*

I.

In our analysis of exchange, it is imperative that we first look towards the foundation of social relationships. Undoubtedly, these relationships have transformed and evolved over time, but the nature of their inception was crucial towards the evolution of exchange. Adam Smith, according to David Graeber, believes that "...the origins of language—and hence of human thought—as lying in our propensity to 'exchange one thing for another,' in which he also saw the origins of the market."¹

Additionally, Friedrich Nietzsche, in *On the Genealogy of Morals*, observes that personal obligation stems from "...the oldest and most primitive personal relationship there is, in the relationship between seller and buyer, creditor and debtor."²

The theory that human interactions stemmed from the necessity to exchange is a key framework for this discussion. Given that the interactions of constituents are the building blocks of every society, we are compelled to analyze the development of society through commerce. A key element with respect to Gibran's view on exchange is the nature in which people treat each other. Thus, how has the commercial foundation of human interaction impacted the way we view and treat each other? Nietzsche provides a telling affect it has had on our society as a whole: "Here for the first time one person moved up against another person, here an individual *measured himself* against another individual."³

This notion of measuring gives rise to the question: What is the true function of buyers and sellers within society? Each provides a function the other needs, and together they form the market. However, this market creates not only the ability to exchange, but also the characterization of buyers and sellers as winners or losers. Thus, in every exchange someone wins and another loses; a hierarchy is instantly created.

Within this construct, as Nietzsche stated, individuals are constantly measuring themselves against each other in a struggle to be the best. This struggle is not unique to Nietzsche's time, as we can see the own effects of hierarchy and struggle present in today's society as well. There is a constant desire to excel above another, rather than for oneself in the name of the betterment of humankind. This obsession with success and winning consumes the thoughts of individuals to the extent where thought and commerce are one and the same, as Nietzsche asserts:

To set prices, to measure values, to think up equivalencies, to exchange things—that preoccupied man's very first thinking to such a degree that in a certain sense it's what thinking *itself* is.⁴

Societies are clearly centered upon exchange, as evidenced by the commercial roots of human interaction. Even the dynamic passions of the world such as the arts, or even love, which poets like Gibran cherished, are enveloped in commercial dogma. What are paintings without appraised monetary value and a market to sell? What value does music hold without record labels and sales; where have Gibran's songs fled? Such commercialization of the arts is all too commonplace, a telling example of the extent to which this phenomenon has entrenched itself into society. In the words of Gibran, "The most pitiful among men is he who turns his dreams into silver and gold."⁵

This system, partly due to its distinct winners and losers, breeds a great deal of mistrust within society. Gibran outlines such mistrust in *The Pomegranates*:

There was once a man who had many pomegranate trees in his orchard. And for many an autumn he would put his pomegranates on silvery trays outside of his dwelling, and upon the trays he would place signs upon which he himself had written, "Take one for aught. You are welcome." But the people passed by and no one took of the fruit. Then the man bethought him, and one autumn he placed no pomegranates on silvery trays outside of his dwelling, but he raised this sign in large lettering: "Here we have the best pomegranates in the land, but we sell them for more silver than any other pomegranates." And now behold, all the men and women of the neighborhood came rushing to buy.⁶

This tale illuminates the sad reality of the affect commercial roots have had on pure social interaction. Mistrust within the hierarchical struggle has led to a plethora of dogmas, for example, "nothing is free." Trust is one of the most vital elements in human interaction. This presents us with quite the conundrum: interaction is based on commerce, yet devoid of trust because of the hierarchy commerce creates.

II.

With the understanding that social relationships were founded through exchange, it is pertinent for us to consider if this has continued into the future as a fundamental issue or one bred by a particular system of governance. Karl Marx establishes the framework for Marxism in simple terms: "The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles."⁷ With this definition of history we can clearly see the role social relationships have played. Classes of people were devised in order to separate the initial "winners" from the "losers," in effect a reward of power for the former. Hitherto, society has been a struggle between each individual to better his or her standing.

This struggle, Marx predicts, will end with a proletariat-led movement ending the class system and establishing societal ownership. While the elimination of the class system would undoubtedly reduce competition and ranking amongst the people of the earth, would it truly eliminate the commercial nature of social relationships? Furthermore, would it eliminate greed and push every citizen towards complete cooperation? Milton Friedman thinks not:

Is there some society you know that doesn't run on greed? You think Russia doesn't run on greed? You think China doesn't run on greed?...The world runs on individuals pursuing their separate

interests. The great achievements of civilization have not come from government bureaus, Einstein didn't construct his theory under order from a bureaucrat. In the only cases in which the masses have escaped from the kind of grinding poverty you're talking about...they have had capitalism and largely free trade...So that the record of history is absolutely crystal clear: that there is no alternative way so far discovered of improving the lot of the ordinary people that can hold a candle to the productive activities that are unleashed by a free enterprise system.⁸

Friedman is undoubtedly referencing the ranking system previously alluded to, and the flexibility of capitalism for someone to "make it." Even when a form of Marxism was implemented in Soviet Russia, greed was not absent. Josef Stalin's rule as Premier is a well-documented example. Soviet Russia began to look more and more like a dictatorship than a communist state as Stalin became paranoid and claimed greater control. Despite the removal of rankings and competition in main society, this does not absolve leadership of greed. The greatest problem with implementing a classless system such as Marxism is indeed the fundamental nature of social relationships.

Therefore, we must conclude that the problem lies in the foundation of our interactions, not within particular systems. Gibran notes the human inclination to seek out material success, and the dissatisfaction that may subsequently result after its attainment, in *Yesterday and Today*:

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.⁹

While Gibran discusses the successes of today as dictated by societal standards, he notes the longing for yesterday. This speaks to true human nature and the desire to live through fulfilling our passions rather than our idle fancies. The subjugation of man's passions to commerce and wealth is the fundamental problem in the application of any social system. Until these interests are reconciled, the ills of society will persist.

With that said, Gibran also notes, in the conclusion of *Yesterday and Today*, that the accumulation of wealth is not an ignoble pursuit:

The man of riches entered into his palace, saying: "All things in life are good, even riches, for they teach man a lesson. Riches are as a musical instrument that gives off only discord to him who

cannot play on it. Wealth is as love in that it destroys him who withholds it but grants life to him who gives freely of it.”¹⁰

This leads us to consider that perhaps it is not just the focalization of our passions that is necessary, but also the naturalization of various modes of exchange. Although social relationships were founded upon such a commercial premise, it does not necessarily mean that this is natural conduct.

III.

As Friedman discussed the concept of freedom within economic systems, this paper will consider if such a free market truly enables natural exchange. Furthermore, what is natural exchange?

While a “free market” may be perceived to be one unconstrained by government, allowed to function “naturally” under the laws of supply and demand, this notion of “natural” raises many points of contention. One of the greatest issues with commerce today is when considering modes of exchange; exchange has been focalized rather than the mode, as we can see through this story:

As a group of Westerners traveled through Africa, they noticed a caravan traveling with elephants. One of the Westerners approached a native and immediately offered a large sum of money in exchange for an elephant. The native politely declined and continued on his journey. The Westerner then continued to up his offer to the native and some of his counterparts. Every offer was declined, no matter how much the sum of money was. Finally, the Westerner exclaimed: “What is it that you would like in exchange for an elephant? Name your price!” In response, the native responded, “I do not wish money for this elephant, he is yours to take; however, if you have the time to sit down for dinner, that would be delightful.”¹¹

This is a perfect example of the development of exchange and the subsequent standardization of modes into one: currency. Basic exchange lies with two parties determining what the other wants and is willing to give in return. Over time, desire has morphed into simple currency. The thought of taking time out to sit down to dinner is dismissed as a legitimate mode. This is either since it is “free,” since no currency is exchanged, or because people value their time above that of another man and would rather spend money for what they want, in order to avoid human interaction. Time, of course, always relates back to money in this day and age.

However, the common mistake made in this scenario is the assumption that in exchange both parties classify winning and losing in the same manner. The same phenomenon occurs in *The Pomegranates* where perhaps the man desired just the satisfaction of pleasing others, yet this is only a farfetched notion to those who pass by because of their experiences in society. This is as a result of the conditioning each individual has gone through to seek out the best possible scenarios for themselves as individual actors, the same individual actors that free market economists believe will enable the collective good of society by acting in their own best interests.

Contrary to our experiences, exchange is not just exchanging money for an item. It is exchanging, literally, the fruits of the earth or the fruits of our labor so that they may benefit another as we find value in what he or she can offer us. The marketplace will undoubtedly continue to operate on supply and demand; however, the humanistic elements of exchange are sorely missed. Moving forward, emphasis must be placed on the mode of exchange, thereby enabling “naturalness” to return to commerce.

IV.

As we consider natural exchange, we must not only focus on the multiplicity of modes, but also the nature of exchange itself. In this analysis of exchange, Gibran’s wisdom is most pertinent:

To you the earth yields her fruit, and you shall not want if you but know how to fill your hands. It is in exchanging the gifts of the earth that you shall find abundance and be satisfied.¹²

Gibran’s words illuminate several of the central problems plaguing our current system of exchange. What use is the fruit of the earth if our commercial interests are not fulfilled through their attainment? No industries could develop, no markets could boom. Irrespective of beauty, value must be driven by simple economics for one to truly desire an item in this day and age. Furthermore, beauty is no longer perceived by man to manifest itself in the fruit, but rather the value attributed to such an item. If an item is commercially viable, then it is indeed beautiful and desirable to fill our hands with.

Gibran further notes that exchange is a necessary function for all to find satisfaction in life. However, this comment should not be taken in a strictly materialistic sense. In various poems, Gibran refers to the marketplace as a center for exchange not only for physical items, but also for ideas and wisdom. Gibran lauds exchange and the benefits it yields to society. However, as we have seen, exchange must be harnessed in order to allow all people to partake of the fruits of the earth. Gibran, undoubtedly mindful of this, gave a warning in accordance: “Yet unless the exchange be in love and kindly justice, it will but lead some to greed and others to hunger.”¹³

A truly productive and economically sustainable society will result if the fruits of the earth benefit all men. The inequality in the exchange of this day and age, undoubtedly fueled by the commercial nature of social relationships, has indeed led us to greed and hunger. The societal hierarchy enables distrust within the system, automatically rendering all men cautious to bestow love upon his fellow men.

In a system of constant comparison and competition, what incentive does man have to exchange in “love and kindly justice”? By doing this he will undoubtedly relegate himself to the status of a “loser,” as others will continue to take advantage of him through their greed. In true exchange, however, “love and kindly justice” are indeed present. They are key pillars that help facilitate the exchange of ideas and beauty. Such exchange undoubtedly leads to successful, productive economies, which will bear the fruits of high intellectualism and innovation. With this said, what is the role of the individual and the concept of freedom under these circumstances?

V.

It is essential for us to now consider the role freedom plays in exchange. Political, social, religious, and economic freedom took centuries for a nation like America to achieve. The concept of freedom within the markets and society is a classic debate, fought for centuries by the greatest economists. However, freedom was not always focalized in such an economic matter as it now is in the developed world.

The broad concept of freedom was the very basis for many of Friedman’s economic arguments for a free market: “Underlying most arguments against the free market is a lack of belief in freedom itself.”¹⁴ The greatest issue with Friedman’s approach is that he neglects the other realms of freedom in society, which, as we have seen, have even become tools of commerce over time. Suddenly, economic freedom has become the definition of freedom itself. The prioritization of economics and subsequent subjugation of other societal interests is all too recurrent of a theme in our analysis.

However, we must also bear in mind that while freedom is a blessing, it can be a burden, as Gibran writes in “On Freedom”:

At the city gate and by your fireside I have seen you prostrate
yourself and worship your own freedom,
Even as slaves humble themselves before a tyrant and praise him
though he slays them.
Ay, in the grove of the temple and in the shadow of the citadel I
have seen the freest among you wear their freedom as a yoke and a
handcuff.

And my heart bled within me; for you can only be free when even the desire of seeking freedom becomes a harness to you, and when you cease to speak of freedom as a goal and a fulfillment.¹⁵

Gibran's perspective on freedom is quite apposite to this discussion. While freedom is something which humans have sacrificed so much for, we must not allow it to enslave us. It appears that this is exactly what has happened with the "free market" economy. In our desire to maximize profits and production through unrestricted business, this narrow-minded view became our reality and thus handcuffed the world. Thus, the only way to continue to advocate while handcuffed is to invoke the name of freedom itself, similarly to the methods Friedman used.

Friedman expands upon his beliefs of freedom with respect to corporations, stating that:

There is one and only one social responsibility of business—to use its resources and engage in activities designed to increase its profit so long as it stays within the rules of the game, which is to say, engages in open and free competition, without deception or fraud.¹⁶

His argument is that it is an individual's decision whether or not to give back to society, not the corporations. While this is logical in terms of a corporation's obligation to investors, the flaw is that individuals do not always uphold their moral obligations. Friedman would counter this point, championing the freedom that individuals are allowed, stating that within such freedom, individuals will ultimately make the correct decisions, collectively, for society as a whole, a concept that stems from the work of Adam Smith.

Smith believed that by individuals inherently striving for their own profit, the "domestic industry" at large will collectively benefit. Smith's idea of the "invisible hand" pertains to the individual efforts of a community combining to form a self-regulating force under which intervention would only serve to disrupt the natural inclination of the market.¹⁷ Smith's work and development of the "invisible hand" set the foundation for *laissez-faire*, "free market" advocates. The "invisible hand" that Smith discussed, however, is much more than the marketplace's self-regulation.

VI.

In Gibran's view of exchange, human responsibility and the market are not the sole players. He alludes to a similar concept as Smith's "invisible hand," one that will allow the markets to fairly operate:

When in the market place you toilers of the sea and fields and vineyards meet the weavers and the potters and the gatherers of spices,
Invoke then the master spirit of the earth, to come into your midst and sanctify the scales and the reckoning that weighs value against value.¹⁸

Similarly to Friedman's perspective, Gibran does not advocate any direct intervention in the marketplace. Economic freedom is indeed enabled, to Friedman's delight. However, while Friedman incorporates an individual's decisions into part of their personal freedom, Gibran notes that their decisions and actions are an integral part of the way exchange operates. Gibran implores individuals to treat each other with love and kindness, and to invoke the master spirit.

One could liken the master spirit Gibran writes of to Smith's "invisible hand." Both are said to regulate the market and both are rooted in religion. The master spirit will enact fairness through sanctifying the scales, rendering our exchange fair and holy. The master spirit, speaking to the equality of those who exchange, also sanctifies value, preventing the triviality of measuring one man against another in terms of their exchange. Exchange is a sacred and holy event, according to Gibran; this can be seen through the fact that the master spirit finds it incumbent to share our presence and ensure such equality.

Smith lays out most of his famous economic beliefs and arguments for self-interest in *The Wealth of Nations*, his most renowned work. However, nearly twenty years earlier he wrote *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, which he regarded as a superior work and where he first mentioned the invisible hand.¹⁹ *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* discusses mutual responsibility within society, similar to the comments of Gibran. The invisible hand is often misunderstood; Smith wrote as if it were Providence, and that this hand was literally the hand of God. However, this theme was lost as Smith attempted to establish economics as a science in *The Wealth of Nations*.²⁰ This immediately leads us to see the clear connection with Gibran's master spirit. Perhaps they were both attempting to describe the same influences of God within exchange that act as true regulators of the marketplace.

While Smith believes individuals acting in their own best interests, coupled with the invisible hand, will lead to economic prosperity, Gibran takes it a step further. He discusses different peoples and the necessity for all to enjoy the fruits of the earth:

And if there come the singers and the dancers and the flute players,—buy of their gifts also.

For they too are gatherers of fruit and frankincense, and that which they bring, though fashioned of dreams, is raiment and food for your soul.

And before you leave the marketplace, see that no one has gone his way with empty hands.

For the master spirit of the earth shall not sleep peacefully upon the wind till the needs of the least of you are satisfied.²¹

No matter what form of beauty is brought to the marketplace, value can be attributed to it. Turning away such beauty because of any reason, such as lack of commercialization, will disrupt the master spirit. Gibran builds on Smith's model with this responsibility towards each other to ensure the respect of the master spirit and the prosperity of mankind as a whole.

Biography

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¹ David Graeber, *Debt: The First 5,000 Years* (New York: Melville House, 2011), 76.

² Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Genealogy of Morals* (New York: Boni and Liveright, 1918), 57.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Kahlil Gibran, *The Collected Works* (London: Everyman, 2007), 201.

⁶ Ibid., 498.

⁷ Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The Communist Manifesto* (London: Pluto, 2008), 33.

⁸ Milton Friedman, "Milton Friedman: Greed." *Youtube.com*. YouTube, 14 July 2007. Web. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RWsx1X8PV_A>.

⁹ Kahlil Gibran, "Yesterday and Today." *4umi.com*. Trans. Alfred Knopf. Web.

<<http://4umi.com/gibran/smile/12>>.

¹⁰ *The Collected Works*, 770.

¹¹ Robert Wosnitzer, "Modes of Exchange," *Business and Its Publics* (New York: NYU Stern, Mar. 2010). Lecture.

¹² *The Collected Works*, 120.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Milton Friedman, *Capitalism and Freedom* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1982), 15.

¹⁵ *The Collected Works*, 127.

¹⁶ Milton Friedman, "The Social Responsibility of Business is to Increase Its Profits," *Business and Its Publics: Inquiry and Discourse*, 3rd ed. (Boston: Pearson Learning Solutions, 2010), 37-41.

¹⁷ Adam Smith, "An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations," 1776. *Business and Its Publics: Inquiry and Discourse*, 3rd ed. (Boston: Pearson Learning Solutions, 2010), 87-88.

¹⁸ *The Collected Works*, 120.

¹⁹ John Rae, *Life of Adam Smith* (New York: Macmillan Publishers, 1895).

²⁰ Graeber, 44.

²¹ *The Collected Works*, 120.

13. KAHLIL GIBRAN AND ‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ: ‘PORTRAIT OF A PROPHET’

By Susan Halstead

At first sight it might not appear that the ideas of Kahlil Gibran and Friedrich Nietzsche could have had much in common. Gibran, whose writings were imbued with a profound sense of spirituality, would seem to have little to share with a philosopher notorious for claiming that “God is dead.” However, when we look more closely at the reasons for Nietzsche’s controversial statement, we gradually become aware that they were indeed united by a surprising number of common traits. Both Gibran and Nietzsche detested cant, hypocrisy, and a false attitude to organized religion as a form of social coercion to conform to the norms and values of a limited vision of humanity and of God. Zarathustra’s anguished cry that it was humankind that had killed God finds an echo in Gibran’s own view of the German author:

What a man! What a man! Alone he fought the whole world in the name of his Superman; and though the world forced him out of his reason in the end, yet did he whip it well. He died a Superman among pygmies, a sane madman in the midst of a world too decorously insane to be mad...And what a pen! With one stroke it would create a new world, and with one stroke it would efface old ones, the while dripping beauty, charm, and power.¹

Yet despite the many features which Nietzsche and Gibran had in common, the German philosopher could not meet Gibran’s need for a perspective from which to address the profound and increasingly tormenting dilemma facing modern man. In an age of ever more rapid progress in science and technology, humanity’s spiritual development had failed to keep pace. This became more and more apparent to Gibran during his time in Europe, despite the intoxication which he experienced as he immersed himself in the exciting and stimulating culture of his new surroundings. He was aware that the West did not, despite the atmosphere of intellectual ferment and confidence in progress which he observed, hold the answers to the deep need for something capable of transcending its limitations. But he would, in 1912, meet a figure who, in his eyes, possessed that very capacity, along with the ability to awaken others to the limitations of human skill and ambition and the urgent need to look beyond them.

Alongside the influence of the writers and philosophers from whom Gibran drew insight and inspiration, there was another and equally significant one without whom neither *The Prophet* nor *Jesus, the Son of Man* (1928) could have been written—certainly not in the form in which we now have them. It proceeded from yet another

in the series of distinguished figures whom Gibran immortalized in a portrait, and perhaps the greatest of them all: `Abdu'l-Bahá.

Significantly, Gibran's account of the occasion on which he attempted to capture this person's likeness in visual form coincides with his letter to Mary Haskell of Friday, April 19, 1912. Gibran mentions a tragedy which has recently been commemorated: the wrecking of the white Star liner *Titanic* on her maiden voyage through a collision with an iceberg, resulting in the loss of over 1,300 lives. That this mighty liner could be unable to resist the forces of nature and prove a "ship of fools" demonstrated to him that a blind belief in the omnipotence of man through technology could only lead to disaster, as the terrible events of the First World War were to confirm.

Parallel to these events, Gibran wrote:

I went to sleep at 3.30 this morning. The air was so charged with the *sic*] sea tragedy that I was not able to go to sleep earlier. At 6.30, I was up. Cold water and strong coffee brought light to my eyes. At 7.30, I was with `Abdu'l-Bahá. At 8, we began to work—and then people, mostly women, started to come—but they all sat quietly gazing at me with thirsty eyes. At 9 o'clock, the drawing was finished and the noble `Abdu'l-Bahá smiled. Then the 25 or 30 persons in that large room began to shake my both hands as if I had done something for each one of them. "It is a miracle." "You were inspired." "You have seen the soul of the Master,"...and so on and so forth. Miss Thompson said...nothing. Tears were running down on her cheeks. Then `Abdu'l-Bahá: "Those who work with the Spirit work well—" Then he said, quoting Muhamad [sic], "Prophets and poets see with the light of God," and he smiled again, and in his smile there was the mystery of Syria and Arabia and Persia. The followers of `Abdu'l-Bahá like the drawing because it is a true likeness of their master. *I* like it because it is a real expression of my better self! It is as good as that of Rodin—perhaps better in some ways!²

This description of his work on the portrait of `Abdu'l-Bahá indicates not only the powerful impression which he made on Gibran, but the latter's conviction of the power of art to capture and convey spiritual qualities, and of the affinity which existed between Gibran and this great spiritual leader. His appreciation of the spiritual properties of art had developed during his time in Paris, when he was plunging into the stimulating and refreshing atmosphere of intellectual debate in the cafés to which he went with his best friend from al-Hikmah, Yusuf Huwayyik, who was studying art and sculpture in the French capital. Every Sunday, when admission was free, they joined the impoverished students who thronged the Louvre, where,

like “pilgrims visiting a holy shrine,”³ as Gibran expressed it, they could contemplate the works of Carrière, Puvis de Chavannes, Moreau, Michelangelo, and above all, Leonardo da Vinci. Of all these artists, it was the last who had been the source of Gibran’s greatest revelation about the potential of visual art to convey spiritual truth and beauty in their purest and most direct form:

Leonardo was the most wonderful personality in the world...His picture of S. Anna, Mary, Jesus and the Lamb is...the most wonderful picture in the world...Leonardo painted *mind*. He wanted to paint what men could not understand.⁴

Alongside the masterworks of the Renaissance, Gibran encountered examples of contemporary French art which produced an almost equally powerful effect on him, notably the painting by Puvis de Chavannes in the Pantheon depicting St. Genevieve, the patron saint of Paris, confronting the barbarian hordes of Attila the Hun. Gibran described the expression of “solemn tranquillity”⁵ which her features conveyed, and was deeply impressed by the artist’s ability to portray the radiant calm, the token of complete faith and confidence in God in the face of peril, which protected the saint against the threat of violence from earthly powers. It was this portrayal of the mind towards which he strove in the portrait of `Abdul-Bahá, and in doing so brought into being a likeness not only of his subject but, as he explains, of his own inmost self.

The pairing of intellectual and artistic stimuli to which Gibran was exposed in Paris affected his spiritual development and thinking for the rest of his life. Unlike Plato, with his distrust of visual art as a source of error for human beings, seducing them by attractive externals and spreading flawed impressions which could only distract them from gaining sight of the truth represented by the ideal Forms, Gibran was vividly aware of the capacity of painting and sculpture to function, like the frescoes and carvings which made up the *biblia pauperum* of poor and illiterate congregations in the Middle Ages, as a means of transmitting the highest spiritual and religious values and leading the unlettered, as well as the scholar, towards that which was beyond all power of expression through words.

For him there was no conflict between aesthetic and spiritual perfection. Art was not, in the spirit of the languid aesthetes of the “art for art’s sake” persuasion, a mere end in itself, but a vehicle for the noblest and greatest concepts known to humanity. He was at one with Keats in proclaiming the oneness of truth and beauty, and his own efforts as a painter were deeply imbued with this ideal. Gibran’s experiences of seeing great art first-hand in the galleries, museums, and churches of Paris confirmed him in his belief that the true artist had not only an aesthetic mission but a spiritual one, and it was this conviction which was constantly evident in his sensitive and empathetic portraits of those whose exceptional qualities he sought to preserve and transmit. These were not, however, to be found solely among the famous and

distinguished whom he portrayed; he was equally able to perceive them in the humble and obscure, as another letter to Haskell makes clear:

When I am not working I feel so restless. I run away from all things that give joyless pleasure to men and women. I am really tired of all those fantastical lies which people call pleasures. My soul seems to find rest in strange, silent places...And now it is time to go and make a drawing of an old man who looks so much like Renan. I found him yesterday in the street gazing at little children.⁶

Here we have an example of Gibran's ability to see beyond the unprepossessing appearance of a poor and aged man and perceive in him an affinity with the author of the *Vie de Jésus*, understanding that spirituality was not the preserve of the exalted and fêted members of intellectual society, but was equally likely to be found among those who would have escaped public attention. Studying the literary as well as the artistic heritage of Europe, he was especially drawn to the writings of Voltaire and Rousseau, and above all to the latter's belief in the innate innocence of uncorrupted natural humanity, his outspoken rebuttal of materialism and injustice, and his concept of nature herself as a teacher.⁷ The unity of being, too, was among the ideas of Rousseau with which he felt the strongest empathy.⁸ Gibran also shared with Nietzsche a deeply-rooted belief in the spiritual and redemptive nature of art, and would have been horrified to see how his philosophy was twisted and distorted in the twentieth century in a Germany which had cast aside the civilized values of the age of Goethe and Schiller. He described Nietzsche as "probably the loneliest man of the nineteenth century and surely the greatest."⁹

One of Nietzsche's doctrines which held a special fascination for Gibran was that of the madman—a term, indeed, used in default of any more fitting description of a figure whose values and behaviour are so completely at odds with his social milieu that only insanity serves as an explanation of them to his "rational" or "sane" neighbours. This idea finds expression in St. Paul's description of the innate wisdom of Christianity as "folly to the Greeks" in the eyes of sophisticated philosophers practised in the arts of debate and intricate word-spinning. Such people retain their childlike innocence in the midst of a corrupt world and, in their refusal to conform to its false values, stand as witnesses to a higher and more genuinely spiritual order despite, and indeed because of, their lack of worldly "wisdom." In Gibran's eyes, then, the nature and calling of a prophet was not one which led to acclaim and reverence, but was far more likely, if lived in accordance with inner truth and personal integrity, to expose the one who obeyed it to mockery, isolation, obloquy, and profound suffering as just such a "madman." Yet to reject such a call would result in a betrayal not merely of the prophet's individual values, but of those to whom he was required to witness and minister, and of his responsibility towards them. If the price of this calling was condemnation as a madman, it must be accepted

in good part. For Gibran, as he was to declare in *The Prophet*, perhaps his best-known and most popular work, the true prophet must draw apart from society and experience solitude, and even loneliness, to the full, as Almustafa explains:

And some of you have called me aloof, and drunk with my own
aloneness...
How could I have seen you save from a great height or a great
distance?
How can one be indeed near unless he be far?¹⁰

This is the price which he must pay to redeem the spiritually uninitiated, and it must be paid freely and ungrudgingly if the prophet is to fulfil his mission as completely as possible.

The Prophet was published in 1923, and represents the summing-up of Gibran's ideas on the vocation of the prophet and his message to mankind. It has frequently been noted that the influence of Nietzsche is extensively visible throughout the book, especially in Gibran's evocation of the figure of the prophet who, like Voltaire and Rousseau, functions as the conscience of mankind, unsparingly calling it to acknowledge the falsity of the values of the world and the artificial divisions to which humanity is subject. At the same time, however, Gibran achieves this without a trace of Nietzsche's nihilism and despair, offering a message which avoids facile sentimentality while proclaiming an immanent divinity closer to that found in the Psalms and the poems of William Blake.

Born in Tehran in 1844, `Abdu'l-Bahá, the elder son of Bahá'u'llah, the founder of the Bahá'í Faith, had been declared by his father to be his successor as the head of that faith, and the infallible interpreter of his teachings. He spent forty years as a prisoner in the fortress city of Akka in the Holy Land, and was only released in 1908, when the Young Turk revolution deposed Sultan Abdu'l-Hamid and liberated all the prisoners throughout the Ottoman Empire who had been incarcerated for reasons of religious belief. He earned the respect of politicians as well as religious leaders throughout the world, and was knighted by the British for his contribution to famine relief in the Holy Land during the First World War. Between 1911 and 1913, he embarked on an international mission to bring the teachings of Bahá'u'llah to the West which took him to Britain, France, Germany, Austria-Hungary, the United States, and Canada, spending nine months in these last two countries. His extensive travels took him up and down the Eastern seaboard, into the Chicago heartland, and across the continent via Montreal, Minneapolis, St. Paul, and Denver to the West Coast before returning to New York, where, in 1912, Gibran encountered him and drew his portrait. In December of that year, `Abdu'l-Bahá made his second visit to Britain, docking at Liverpool, where he spoke at the Theosophical Society and the Pembroke Chapel before proceeding to London and thence to Oxford, where, on the

last day of 1912, he addressed a meeting at Manchester College. Although this visit fell during the Christmas vacation, a large audience assembled to hear him speak on the subject of "Aspects of Nature and Divine Philosophy," and the two branches of human knowledge, science and religion, emphasizing the origins of the latter in love and the need for all religions to combine to create peace.

Science, `Abdu'l-Bahá declared, distinguishes man from the animals, enabling human beings to comprehend the mysteries of God as well as to transcend the laws of nature which bind the rest of creation. He also differentiates between the blind obedience to these laws which creates "warfare in the world of nature," and deplors the reflection of these conflicts in "the warfare that is carried on in the minds of men." He continues:

The foundation of all the religions of God is one. Pure religion invites men to love each other. The Balkan War is the result of the fundamental basis of religion having been set aside. All the horrors of that war have been brought about by religious prejudice, while all the religious teachings of God beckoned to love and unity. Through dogmas and superstitions, religion, which should have become the cause of love, prosperity, and happiness, has become the cause of hatred, destruction, and strife. Praise be to God, the intellect of man is broadening; his perceptions are becoming clearer, and the enlightened universities are carrying on a great work of peace and reconciliation. This is the century for the establishment of universal peace between all countries. This is the day-spring of the future.¹¹

For `Abdu'l-Bahá, there could be no discord between intellect and religion; indeed, the only way forward for humanity was to recognize the harmony between them and their common purpose, and harness their powers to that end. A short time before, he had addressed this very topic at another great university when on October 8, 1912, he delivered the speech "To the World of Science" at Stanford University, Palo Alto, California, in which he praised the timeless nature of the sovereignty of science, which for him included philosophy: "The past sovereignties of the Orient are but memories, whereas the sovereignties of Plato and Aristotle still continue." He contrasts the conquest of new territories by violence with that of the "land of ignorance" by the scientist. Moreover, his doctrine of unity is supported here by scientific observation of the processes of life and creation: "An old philosophical statement in Arabic declares that, 'All things are involved in all things,'" as he demonstrates with reference to cellular metabolism in animal, vegetable, and mineral matter, to conclude that "existence is fundamentally one." He continues: "If all phenomena in existence are possessed of that oneness, how much more should man possess oneness in its state of idealism?", declaring that man, as "the noblest of

creatures,” with the sensibilities which raise him above the animal kingdom, should reflect the peace and interdependence of all natural phenomena rather than descending into strife and sedition. Unlike animals who kill for sustenance and lack the “benefit of intellect,” human beings exercise ferocity for mere greed. Reminding his hearers of their calling to become wise teachers lifting their students above the level of brute nature, he invokes the words of Baha’u’llah himself:

He declared the necessity of peace among the races and peace among the countries. He says that the fundamental basis of all religions is one, that religion was aimed to be a bond to unite in fellowship all men, that the differences which have arisen are due to blind imitation (or dogma), and that these dogmatic institutes are distinct from the foundations of the prophets, that because the blind imitations are various, they have caused differences and seditions, but that if the reality underlying religious teachings should be investigated, all religions will be the cause of unity and accord, the cause of binding together the hearts.

If religion proved to be the cause of dissention and discord, he declared, it is better to do without religion entirely, for religion then is a harmful thing, and the absence of that which is harmful is better than its presence.

Religion was destined to be a remedy of God. It was to be a panacea for the ills of humanity. It was to be a salve for the wounds of man. But if its misapplication, or misuse, has caused such havoc, causing battle and war among men, causing bloodshed among humanity, irreligion is better than religion.

Throughout his journeys, `Abdu’l-Bahá constantly preached the basic principles and teachings of the Bahá’í faith: the equality between men and women, the harmony of science and religion, the need for universal education and a universal language, the independent investigation of truth, the oneness of God, the oneness and continuity of the prophets of God, the unity of the human race, and the need to extirpate all forms of prejudice and discrimination. Indeed, in a speech given during his visit to Howard University on April 23, 1912, he identified the most urgent of all the problems requiring solution at that time:

Today I am most happy, for I see here a gathering of the servants of God. I see white and black sitting together. There are no whites and blacks before God. All colors are one, and that is the color of servitude to God. Scent and color are not important. The heart is important. If the heart is pure, white or black or any color makes

no difference. God does not look at colors; He looks at the hearts. He whose heart is pure is better. He whose character is better is more pleasing. He who turns more to the Abhá Kingdom is more advanced.¹²

In these words he anticipated the struggle which continues today as a result of the emergence of militant forms of multiculturalism, and the spiritual and moral crisis afflicting the world. Long before America had risen to its current position of ascendancy, 'Abdu'l-Bahá perceived it as a microcosm of a future global society, and brought to it a double message, both universal and specific, challenging a society based on unity in diversity to assume the spiritual leadership of the world in an independent search after truth, liberated from the ties of superstition and convention, which would extend to economic, political, and social issues too.

He condemned the “thousand false dreams” which had led mankind astray, causing discord and disunity, and spoke in the strongest terms of the overriding need to heal these rifts and bring humanity together once more. Moreover, he foresaw the terrible catastrophe which was to overwhelm the world just two years later: “Just now Europe is a battlefield of ammunition, ready for a spark and one spark will set aflame the whole world,” and proclaimed the need for America to raise on high “the standard of international peace,” declaring that no other country had “greater capacity for such an initial step.”¹³ As he knew well, the position of the West at this time was already one of great danger, although the Christians of the West had no idea whatever of the retribution that was confronting them. 'Abdu'l-Bahá briefly explained what had happened in one of his Tablets which begins with the following lines:

O Army of Life! East and West have joined to worship stars of faded splendour, and have turned in prayer unto darkened horizons. Both have utterly neglected the broad foundation of God's sacred laws, and have grown unmindful of the merits and virtues of His religion. They have regarded certain customs and conventions as the basis of the Divine faith, and have firmly established themselves therein. They have imagined themselves as having attained a glorious pinnacle of achievement and prosperity, when in reality they have touched the innermost depths of heedlessness and deprived themselves wholly of God's bounteous gifts.¹⁴

Only through the establishment of justice, which would lead to unity and unity to peace, could a lasting resolution of these conflicts ever be achieved, as President Woodrow Wilson would subsequently recognize in his Fourteen Points, reflecting the need to guarantee international peace through a system of collective security and shared responsibility. Speaking in Cleveland in 1912, 'Abdu'l-Bahá proclaimed:

This revered American nation presents evidences of greatness and worth. It is my hope that this just government will stand for peace so that warfare may be abolished throughout the world and the standards of national unity and reconciliation be upraised. This is the greatest attainment of the world of humanity.¹⁵

Without a level of spiritual development to equal America's rapid progress in the sphere of material prosperity, though, this ideal could not be realised.

It was Gibran's encounter with this exceptional man who, in his vigorous advocacy of an active and vibrant approach to an urgent issue, could be deemed a true "prince of peace," that inspired Gibran to two notable creative enterprises. The first was the portrait of `Abdu'l-Bahá, already mentioned, which he executed on April 19, 1912, shortly before the latter delivered two speeches at Columbia University and the Bowery mission in New York where he proclaimed his message of unity:

All the divine Manifestations have proclaimed the oneness of God and the unity of mankind...The fundamental truth of the Manifestations is peace. This underlies all religion, all justice...Read the Gospel and the other Holy Books. You will find their fundamentals are one and the same. Therefore, unity is the essential truth of religion, and, when so understood, embraces all the virtues of the human world.¹⁶

Gibran heard `Abdu'l-Bahá address an audience at the Astor Hotel in New York, and realized that the speaker's views were closely akin to his own idea of Jesus, not only as a prophet but as a bringer of peace:

His sword was to be a sword of iron...He did not conquer by the physical power of an iron rod; He conquered the East and the West by the sword of His utterance...He conquered and subdued the East and West. His conquest was effected through the breaths of the Holy Spirit, which eliminated all boundaries and shone from all horizons.¹⁷

Wherever `Abdu'l-Bahá spoke, in churches, sanatoria, synagogues, or universities, to Christians, Jews, freethinkers, Esperantists, suffragettes, theosophists, Bahá'is, the sick and the poor, he frequently referred to Jesus Christ, and Gibran at once understood that their idea was fundamentally the same. Gibran's own view of Christ was expressed to Mikhail Naimy when, in 1926, he was preparing to start work on the second of these creative endeavours and his most ambitious project, *Jesus, the Son of Man*, begun on November 12 of that year. He was "sick and tired," he told Naimy, of those who depicted Jesus as a "sweet lady with a beard," and of so-called

“scholars” and their disputes about “the historicity of his personality.” For his own part, he regarded Jesus as the most “real personality” in human history, “a man of might and will, a man of charity and pity. He was far from being lowly and meek. Lowliness is something I detest, while meekness to me is but a phase of weakness.”¹⁸ These words have a pronouncedly Nietzschean ring, and roundly dismiss any notion of Christ as a Uriah Heep-like figure notable for his specious humility.

A facet of `Abdu'l-Bahá's teaching which struck a particularly strong chord in Gibran was his proclamation of the concept of unity in diversity:

The sun is one but the dawning-points of the sun are numerous and changing. The ocean is one body of water but different parts of it have particular designation, Atlantic, Pacific, Mediterranean, Antarctic, etc. If we consider the names, there is differentiation, but the water, the ocean itself, is one reality. Likewise the divine religions of the holy manifestations of God are in reality one, though in names and nomenclature they differ.¹⁹

Gibran clearly understood that the task of uniting the peoples of the world under the banner of universal peace and concord was not one for the faint-hearted, and could not be undertaken by a weakling such as the popular image of Jesus Christ too often suggested. As he wrote *Jesus, the Son of Man*, the portrait of `Abdu'l-Bahá as he had seen and drawn him was constantly before his eyes—the figure of a man who had inspired him to declare, “For the first time I saw form noble enough to be a receptacle for the Holy Spirit.”²⁰ This recollection spurred him on to build up another portrait, that of Christ Himself as a human being in the fullest sense, not an insipid, bloodless creature, but as a man who embodied the most complete realisation of human potential for true goodness in action. This is apparent over and over again in Gibran's emphasis on Jesus' sheer humanity; for him, the niceties of theological hair-splitting are not of the essence, and the disputes about the Virgin Birth and the Resurrection have no place in his account of Jesus' life and miracles, which are the result of natural phenomena more intrinsically wondrous than any attempt to override them by divine intervention. Gibran's Christ is part of a tradition of other avatars who have walked the earth at different times to bring the truth to humankind:

Many times the Christ has come to the world, and he has walked many lands. And always He has been deemed a stranger and a madman... Have you not heard of Him at the cross-roads of India? And in the land of the Magi, and upon the sands of Egypt?²¹

Moreover, as Gibran makes plain, if these manifestations of Christ have been “despised and rejected of men,” it is not on account of their own perverse seeking of a dubious humility, but of the blind stupidity and wilful refusal of mankind to accept

their message; as George Bernard Shaw expresses it in *St. Joan* (whom Gibran might surely have considered just such an avatar), “Must then a Christ perish in torment in every generation to save those that have no imagination?”²²

Other unconventional features of Gibran’s portrayal of Christ include his teaching of the doctrine of reincarnation, part of a syncretic approach which also affirms the idea of the prophet as an outsider, a “madman” as well as an eternal awakener of the heart, an implicit acceptance of the portrayal of Christ found in the opening chapter of the Gospel of St. John, and a depiction of Him as the exemplar of compassion: “And were it not for sorrow in all of you I would not have stayed to weep.”²³

The title of “Son of Man” claimed by Jesus is reiterated sixty-nine times in the first three Gospels, and has the same meaning as the assertion that Jesus is the “image of God”; we should also recall the biblical description of man as made “in God’s image.” It is the only designation which Jesus actually applied to Himself, and is unique in its ability to embrace the totality of His work on earth. The concept was not exclusive to Judaism, but reflected the ideal prototype of a divine “original man” in Chaldaean, Gnostic, Egyptian, and Persian thought, and indeed some prominent New Testament scholars believe that a Christology based on the concept of the “Son of Man” would have put an end to the controversies which dominated Christological debates for many years. The descriptions of Jesus’ friends and followers, too, corroborate the idea of His fully-developed humanity, as does the portrait which Gibran sketched as a frontispiece to the book, emphasizing the strength and character of His powerful head with its steep forehead, heavy eyebrows, full mouth, strong chin, and stalwart neck—a pronounced antidote to any notion of a weakly effete Christ-figure. This corresponds to the words in which John, the son of Zebedee, expresses Gibran’s own belief in the divine nature of his subject:

He is the first Word...Jesus the Nazarene was born and reared like ourselves; His mother and father were like our parents, and He was a man. But the Christ, the Word, who was in the beginning, the Spirit who would have us live our fuller life, came unto Jesus and was with Him. And the Spirit was the versed hand of the Lord, and Jesus was the harp.²⁴

This viewpoint is complemented by those of many others who knew and walked with Jesus, including the disciples; the Virgin Mary; Mary Magdalene; Mary’s neighbour Susannah of Nazareth, and His grandmother Anna who recall His boyhood; anti-heroes such as Barabbas, Pontius Pilate, and Judas; and the voices of those who evoke His physical as well as His spiritual beauty. The composite picture which they create is one of a compelling and overwhelming humanity in its most perfect and persuasive form, that of a man indeed capable of bringing humanity into harmony with itself, and summed up by Gibran’s statement, “It is the mighty hunter I would

preach, and the mountainous spirit unconquerable.”²⁵ With these words, we come closer to an understanding of what `Abdu'l-Bahá signified for Gibran. At the time when he encountered him, `Abdu'l-Bahá had only nine years left to live, but, pushing himself on to carry out his mission despite increasing physical frailty, he did indeed display that “mountainous spirit unconquerable.” In his unceasing insistence on the role of the spiritual in bringing into being a peaceable kingdom of truth, justice, and equality, `Abdu'l-Bahá typified for Gibran all that was highest and holiest in the calling of a prophet in the truest sense to create harmony and unity among all the peoples of mankind.

Biography

Susan Halstead is curator of Czech and Slovak Studies at the British Library, London. She read *Literae Humaniores* at Lady Margaret Hall, Oxford, and taught European languages, literature, philosophy, and history for many years for the Oxford Overseas Study Course. Her publications include *The Enlightenment in Bohemia* (Oxford: SVEC, 2011); articles on Czech-German cultural relations, Goethe, and Thomas Mann; and poetry and translations from many languages, including the first complete version of Karel Jaromír Erben's *Kytice*.

¹ Mikhail Naimy, *Kahlil Gibran: A Biography* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1985), 92.

² Kahlil Gibran to Mary Haskell, Chapel Hill papers, April 19, 1912.

³ Yusuf Huwayyik, *Gibran in Paris* (New York: Popular Library, 1976), 67.

⁴ *Beloved Prophet*, ed. Virginia Hulu (London: Barrie & Jenkins Ltd., 1992), 37.

⁵ *Gibran in Paris*, 95-96.

⁶ Kahlil Gibran to Mary Haskell, Chapel Hill papers, Oct. 20, 1909.

⁷ Khalil S.Hawi, “Kahlil Gibran: His Background, Character, and Works,” *Publication of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences: Oriental Series, Issue 41* (Third World Centre for Research & Publishing, 1982), 167.

⁸ Ronald Grimsley, *The Philosophy of Rousseau* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1973), 1062-63.

⁹ *Beloved Prophet*, 93.

¹⁰ Kahlil Gibran, *The Prophet* (Oxford: Oneworld, 1995), 150.

¹¹ “`Abdu'l-Bahá's Address” in *Christian Commonwealth* (March 27, 1912), ii.

¹² `Abdu'l-Bahá, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace* (Wilmette: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1982), 44.

¹³ *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, 151.

¹⁴ `Abdu'l-Bahá, qtd. in *Christ and Bahá'u'llah* by George Townshend (Oxford: Alden Press, 1990), 88.

¹⁵ *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, 103.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 32.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 200-202.

¹⁸ *Kahlil Gibran: A Biography*, 208.

¹⁹ *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, 151.

²⁰ *Vignettes from the Life of `Abdu'l-Bahá*, ed. Annamarie Honnold (Oxford: George Ronald, 1982), 158.

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- ²¹ Kahlil Gibran, *Jesus, the Son of Man* (London: William Heinemann Ltd., 1954), 37.
- ²² George B. Shaw, "Epilogue," *St. Joan* (New York: W.H. Wise, 1930).
- ²³ *Jesus, the Son of Man*, 3.
- ²⁴ *Ibid.*, 38.
- ²⁵ *Ibid.*, 54.

14. UNITY IN DIVERSITY – CAN HUMANITY BE TAUGHT?

By Judy Saba

Please note: It is intended that this paper will be presented as an interactive session with demonstrations of the impact of diversity training. It is these interactions and dialogue that will give breadth and depth to the thinking behind the words. I have in my most humble way attempted to capture the essence of what is created when learning occurs through human interaction.

First, I would like to acknowledge the traditional and spiritual owners of the land on which we meet.

Because I come from a tradition with an oral history, I would like to begin with a story:

Here I am in the FBI offices in New York, nervously awaiting a few people who I know are extremely busy and who have agreed to allow me to interview them. One of these people was John Anticev, a special agent with a wealth of experience. Talk about expectations and assumptions! I was expecting a somewhat daunting person just like those depicted on crime shows, but instead in walks a strong but quietly-spoken man who has history and experience etched on his face. He begins to tell me the story of his involvement in the investigation of the earlier bombing of the Twin Towers and the more recent September 11 losses. As he walks me through what seems a nearly unbelievable series of encounters, I stopped to ask him a question: “John, when I go back to Sydney and stand up in front a group of investigators training them in diversity skills, what, to you, is the key, sole unnegotiable skill that is necessary and which I should ensure is in my training?” Without flinching and in the same breath, he said, “Empathy: without it you have nothing. Whether it is an offender, a witness, a victim, or an observer, finding that point of commonality, that point of reminder that we are all human, is the greatest attribute and tool that any investigator can use.”

Stephanie Dorwick, an Australian writer, posts the following excerpt from Rolf Jacobson¹ on her website:

All people are children when they sleep.
there's no war in them then.
They open their hands and breathe
in that quiet rhythm heaven has given them.

They pucker their lips like small children
and open their hands halfway,
soldiers and statesmen, servants and masters.
The stars stand guard
and a haze veils the sky,
a few hours when no one will do anybody harm.
If only we could speak to one another then
when our hearts are half-open flowers.
Words like golden bees
would drift in.

– God, teach me the language of sleep.²

More than 100 years ago, the pioneering psychologist William James, and many others since his time, stated that “the greatest revolution in our generation is the discovery that human beings, by changing the inner attitudes of their minds, can change the outer aspects of their lives.” How true is this when it comes to suffering? How true is this when it comes to the search for peace?

Further, Dorwick wrote of the possible power each of us has to be a true peacemaker. This meditation that follows arose from her retreat (October 2010) at Mana Retreat Centre, NSW, Australia:

I have the power to affect others peacefully and compassionately.
Offering careful listening, I bring peace.
Allowing my heart to be open, I bring peace.
Cooling my self-righteousness, I bring peace.
Biting back a hurtful remark, I bring peace.
Questioning my assumptions, I bring peace.

This story and reflection inspires three key things I would like to share with you. First, the introduction of a few key words, namely: what is this thing called *diversity* and what place does it have on the world stage?; what is *empathy* and how can it be utilized as a tool for engaging each other?; and, what is *humanity*? Second, can we, through diversity, actually activate our humanity and teach it? How do perceptions, assumptions, bias, and prejudgement hinder or harness diversity? Finally, how do we as writers, academics, educators, creative minds, and activists put actions to the many wonderful masses of thinking that engross our work, and make it our business to put actions to words and hence turn words on a page into a dance in the streets?

Diversity encompasses all the dimensions of individuals. It includes, at the center, the self, and from this flows the dimensions that make us who we are: age, gender,

sexuality, culture, ethnicity, language, ability, religion. We are all immensely diverse, yet we are very much the same.

Humanity is defined as the quality of being human, the peculiar nature of (wo)man by which (s)he is distinguished from other beings. What, then, makes humans superior, when in fact we are the only species that consciously kills its own?

Across all aspects of the work and interests I have encountered, there has been one common element: the presence of human interaction, and it is this that is at the core of my passion. I was awarded a Churchill Fellowship this year to pursue a lifelong dream of researching and developing the Australian brand of cross-cultural capability. This dream stems not only from a sense of human rights, but also the journey of my parents and grandparents which was gifted to me through stories rooted in Lebanon, America, and Australia. As the only Australian-born and the youngest of eight, I have been piecing together the mosaic of my ancestry through the lens of human experience. Psychology, the arts, poetry, inner reflection, and public speaking have been the vehicles through which I have followed a commitment to my dream of a world where culture, ethnicity, religion age, gender, and sexuality are seen as gifts and not barriers to human interactions.

My interest and love for the work of Gibran is born out of my relationship with my husband Charlie, also an avid reader of Gibran, coupled with my lay reading of Gibran's work and the recognition of its currency in the here and now. My thirst for an understanding of the man and his works is nourished every time I engage him, and this touches not only the intellect but the heart, soul, and spirit. I feel that I am such a novice regarding Gibran when there are, universally, so many experts, many of whom are in this room today, which fills me with not only excitement but at some level, sheer terror. I make particular reference here to my dear friend and visionary Glen Kalem, whose passion and knowledge of all things Gibran has re-opened the door of discovery to me. I hope that through my lens—simply as someone who loves and is drawn to the work of Gibran—I, too, can contribute to a collective passion for the prophet, the artist, the man, and the spirit. How can I possibly take it upon myself to share with you my humble perspective when all of you have done endless work and research, and are the authors who have given depth and breadth to my "Gibranian" passion?

The unique and compelling nature of Kahlil Gibran's works, words, and wisdom has universal appeal that transcends culture, language, religion and conflict. His legacy is our responsibility and our inspiration.

In Gibran's words, "Humanity is a river of light running from ex-eternity to eternity."³ Yet he also says that "the tribune of humanity is in its silent heart, never

its talkative mind.”⁴ How do we bring head and heart together to affect and effect world peace and our contribution to humanity?

What, then, is the most diverse place in the world? Australia, with over 240 ethnicities, over 400 languages, and over 500 aboriginal languages, is the second most diverse place in the world today. Its unique brand of diversity is the platform for asking the ever-present question: Can we *learn* “humanity”?

Can we influence and build the capacity of individuals, groups, leaders, and nations to affect change in a world plagued with assumptions, perceptions, prejudice, racism, hate, bias, and indifference? Can we, as individuals, ignite and articulate our empathy and choose to create the world that our poet writes about? In Gibran’s work, in his creativity, and in his loving, we see passion in the struggles, and struggles in the passion. How does this powerful premise translate into our present struggle to reduce conflict and increase peace? It is through love and humanity that we heal, and this begs yet a further question: Is healing the universal preface to peace? Can we teach this? Can we re-engage mind, heart, and soul as the necessary trinity in learning?

I believe that we can, and I believe that we are. In Australia, only recently, we as a nation apologized for the wrongdoings that had occurred two centuries before to our indigenous aboriginal people. Something as simple as the word “sorry,” an acknowledgement of the acts which at the time were incorrectly perceived to be humane, acts against a people who were incorrectly perceived as lesser, set the nation in motion on a path of emotional and physical recovery. This act was a well-known scar on our history that was at the time perceived as the Christian, the humane, and the right thing to do. How could it have been seen to be right? To take aboriginal children away from their parents, from their tradition, from their spirituality, and from their land, in a misguided vision that it would give them a chance at life. Oh, how we know from history, and from Gibran, that “mother” is the essence, and the loss that is created when the “mother” is taken.

I want to walk you through the Australian brand of diversity training and do what is often not done on a conference of this scale: ask you to move.

Activity 1

Please fold your arms. Does it feel right? Now I want you to unfold them and refold them in the opposite direction. This feeling of discomfort is exactly what we, as individuals, families, groups, and nations need to feel. It *is* uncomfortable to do it differently, and it is through this discomfort that adjustment comes, and through adjustment comes a way forward.

When I consider Gibran and look at, for example, the women in his life, universally they were women from whom he drew strength, inspiration, and even energy. It nurtured the feminine in him; the tortured creative finds solace and rest; the absorbed artist finds recognition and affirmation; the prolific writer finds a vehicle for his voice. In every domain, Gibran had something to say, portray, or infuse. I often ask myself: “If Gibran were here right now speaking with us, what would his perception of the world be? And what lens would he be viewing the world through?”

For me, the power of perception began at the age of five when my class was asked to write a story titled “My Holidays.” Never did my story make it to the gold star wall. While the other students wrote of holidays at the beach and ski trips to the mountains, I wrote of the sheer bliss of spending holidays with my favourite aunt and uncle, and the excitement of being allowed to serve customers in his supermarket. My stories, though eloquently written, never made it to the gold star wall. Why didn't these teachers see how fantastic *my* uncle was? Why couldn't they feel the laughter and joy that being with my aunt created? Now, as an adult and as a woman, I understand. Their perception of value was different.

Gibran, too, in many of my readings of his works, was somewhat perplexed by how clear the answers were. Yet, people swerved around them with fear or even avoidance.

I remember at the age of 12, I was struggling with my Lebanese and Australian identity. It was a common story: Lebanese at home and Australian at school, a cross-cultural, schizophrenic dichotomy. There was nothing in the curriculum, books, library, or reference room that was in any way relevant or reflective of *me*. I stumbled across my first copy of *The Prophet* in a opportunity shop and purchased it for a shilling because I thought it was a prayer book. Yet when I took it to school to be placed in our class library, I was told that it may not appeal to the “mainstream class and surely better kept at home.” Was that ignorance? Was that racism? Was it sheer indifference? Or, was it merely based on one teacher’s perception of what was valuable? I stand here many, many years later, and this is what I recall.

Yet I would go home to a supposedly illiterate mother whose wealth of knowledge was born of experience, not text, and a self-taught father who, through prayer and reflection, chanted poetry every day. That was my reality, that was my greatness, and that was my experience.

And then it dawned on me; I don't have to choose. I am both, I am neither, I just am.

We are not of the east, we are not of the west...we are free
Ameen Rihani

For me, personally and professionally, it is these messages that have echoed through Gibran's works. They are even found in his art, where the human form is so beautifully portrayed and is meant to be in its naked form, as though there is nothing that should come between the person and the earth, the person and the soul, or the person and the spirit. Who we are, therefore, must not cage us, but rather free us.

So, what is perception? Can we change it? Can we reframe it? Are these simple skills the key to reducing conflict and increasing peace?

Ladder of Inference Activity

(At this point the delegates are shown a series of images that challenge their perception and create a heightened awareness of the diversity of thought in order to illustrate the immediacy and strength of internal voices. Images include boxes, a man, New Orleans paper clippings, female police officers, and Washington police officers)

Why has peace become so elusive today? Why is it that the international dialogues are somewhat like a broken Coca-Cola machine? The can does not come out, but we keep putting in coins. Could it be that we are so able to articulate, that we have become unable to actually do? The mantra must be “Don't just articulate—activate.”

Frogs may bellow louder than bulls, but they cannot drag the plough in the field nor turn the wheel of the winepress, and of their skins you cannot make shoes.⁵

The difference between the prophet and the poet is that the prophet lives what he teaches and the poet does not. He may write wonderfully of love and yet not be loving.”⁶

I want to heed these words, stop speaking of diversity training, and, instead, engage you in it. I will engage you in a journey through diversity training drawing on practical, personal, and research experience in the arts, policing, psychology, and education—all spheres that influence our world and the enduring dream of “Unity in Diversity.”

I. What is Diversity?

Let us introduce the idea of perception. How old am I? What is my gender? What is my culture and what is my ethnicity?

At no point can we deny that the perceptions we have of the “other” stem from an innate ability to, within seconds, make a decision about the other, whether we like

them or not, what they are like, even what their story is. Yet the starting point is that ever-present self-perception which comes from the ability to allow divine breath to flow through us. As Gibran says, “You are good when you are one with yourself.”⁷

What is hate, and can it be transformed? In my work with the NSW Police, there has been an influx of prejudice, or bias-motivated, crime. The escalation occurs when silence takes hold locally, nationally, and globally. Eventually the silence was broken. Over the last eight years, I have seen that engaging on a personal, human, and proactive level has made a huge difference in police reporting, recording, investigation, and prosecution of hate-related violence.

(Video of Andrew Denton’s interview with John Cleary, the ex-head of the Ku Klux Klan, and his encounter with one man who would not give in to hate)

As Professor Suheil Bushrui so clearly states:

For Gibran, the challenges that confront the human race and life on this planet urgently necessitate not only a holistic and global approach, but, at root, a spiritual revolution, a paradigm shift, and a quantum change in human consciousness. Gibran’s English and Arabic prose and poetry represent, in fact, an anguished cry to humanity to rediscover its lost harmony with nature; to evolve a universal code of human rights; to promote the emancipation of women; to build bridges of understanding between cultures and religions; to lessen the gap between the rich and the poor; and to curb all forms of exclusivity—whether ethnic, nationalistic, or religious—in recognition of one common humanity and a shared spiritual heritage. If kept to the fore through research and study, these and other values enunciated in Gibran’s work will continue to inspire many, touch their lives in countless ways, and give them comfort, hope, and joy in the prospect they afford of a genuine Culture of Peace.⁸

Octavio Perez also says:

What sets the world in motion is the interplay of difference, their attractions and repulsions. Life is plurality, death is uniformity...By suppressing differences and peculiarities, by eliminating different civilisations and cultures, progress weakens life and favours death. The ideal of a single civilisation for everyone, implicit in the culture of progress and technique, impoverishes and mutilates us...Every view of the world that

becomes extinct, every culture that disappears, diminishes the possibility of life⁹

II. What is Peace?

He approached her with a greeting of tears and laughter, then took her hand and placed against it his flaming lips. And with a voice which bespoke past sorrow, and joy of union, and uncertainty of her reaction, he said, "Fear me not, for I am the object of your plea. Be glad, for Peace has carried me back safely to you, and humanity has restored what greed essayed to take from us. Be not sad, but smile, my beloved. Do not express bewilderment, for Love has power that dispels Death; charm that conquers the enemy. I am your one. Think me not a spectre emerging from the House of Death to visit your Home of Beauty."¹⁰

How does one define peace? Is it the antithesis of conflict? Is peace a culture, a state of mind, a place, or a feeling? Is peace relative? One person's peace may be another person's fear. A culture of peace is an integral approach for preventing violence, and an alternative to the culture of war and violence based on education for peace; the promotion of sustainable economic and social development; respect for human rights; equality between women and men; democratic participation; tolerance; the free flow of information; and disarmament.

This definition combines the approaches taken by two important United Nations resolutions: the Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace adopted in 1999, and the 1998 United Nations resolution on the Culture of Peace.

In working for many years as a cross-cultural psychologist, I spent 10 years counselling survivors of torture and trauma. Often they would be found in the early hours of the morning just walking. Why? Because in this new place of refuge, they can! Behaviors that we see as risky—for example, walking the streets late at night—are experienced as freedom. As one respected person said, "What does peace look like?...Peace is when there are no raids and no bombs."

"Productive diversity" is the term used to describe strategies and initiatives which are implemented locally, regionally, nationally, and globally, that use diversity to benefit the collective.

As Hofstede said in 1991:

It is based on the belief that ultimately, the success of organizations, the peace and prosperity of nations, and the survival

of humankind will depend on the ability of people who think differently to act together.¹¹

It certainly does not take much to create change. I want to tell you yet another story, and to play you a moment of a documentary that was made. It is the story of Menorahs in the Windows in Billings, Montana. I am also aware that only a couple of weeks ago, the Southern Poverty Law Center, which facilitated my knowledge of this story, received the Gibran Spirit of Humanity Award here in Washington.

In Billings, Montana, when a hate group started targeting members of the Native American community, the community responded by repainting houses that were defaced with graffiti. Then, when the group targeted African American churches, the wider and white community responded by attending the churches, escorting and protecting the congregation. It again escalated; a brick was thrown through the window of a six-year-old boy. The window had a menorah in it. The boy's mother arranged for the local paper to print full-page menorahs for the community to put in their windows. In every window, regardless of religion, the community came together by placing the Jewish menorah in each of their windows. "If you don't know who is Jewish and who isn't, then you can't target. We will not accept hate, NOT IN OUR TOWN." The attacks continued, but every time it happened the community responded, which eventually lessened the attacks over time.

(Film clip: "Not in Our Town - a testament to the power of one and the humanity of all.")

The following table briefly outlines the two sides of a powerful coin in considering the culture of peace and the culture of violence:

CULTURE OF WAR AND VIOLENCE	CULTURE OF PEACE AND NON-VIOLENCE
Belief in power that is based on force	Education for a culture of peace
Having an enemy	Understanding, tolerance and solidarity
Authoritarian governance	Democratic participation
Secrecy and propaganda	Free flow of information
Armament	Disarmament
Exploitation of people	Human rights
Exploitation of nature	Sustainable development
Male domination	Equality of women and men

Many speak of true peace as only a dream in a world of conflict, but I cannot help but hear loud and clear the words of Gibran: “Trust the dreams, for in them is hidden the gate to eternity.”¹² It takes a thousand dreams to create just one reality...may we always dream.

I ask you to engage with me in one last activity.

Activity 2

Note: For the purpose of affecting the outcome of this activity, I will not outline the key learning as to not pre-empt the effectiveness.

In this experience we are taking away a primary skill. In this exercise you cannot speak. Two participants are handed one pen and asked to draw a house.

Some key questions in the debrief are: How did you draw it? Who took the lead? Who followed? How did you decide? This links the notion of other, working together, the common view and humanity.

Why is it then, in a room with such diversity, that your houses look the way they do? What does that say about our imprinting? Our values are created at an early age, yet it is as adults that we are given the task of creating peace. How do we change the picture that is in our mind's eye and replace it with another? Why is it that we have learnt nothing from past wars and injustices? Could it be the mere fact that the human-to-human pain that is inflicted far outweighs the cries of Mother Earth to heal our earth in order to heal our souls? The human psyche recovers far more effectively from natural occurrences or disasters than it does when humans hurt other humans.

In working with diversity, assumptions are to be used as a tool for self-reflection. Reframing our perception begins here, with the gift of assumption. We do make them because we are human, but we must reframe them into questions that we apply to the person in question. The key to working with our assumptions is three-fold. It involves self-awareness through the engagement of reflexive praxis, insight as to the impact of our assumptions on the self and other, and mindfulness. In training, assumptions are the tool for engaging bias and reframing it through clarification, understanding, and presence. If we can be aware of our assumptions, using them as questions of enquiry, then we engage rather than enrage.

Therefore, in truly Eastern manner, I want to conclude with the same questions with which I began: Can we teach humanity? Can we reach a place where peace is a pathway, not a dream? Can the vision of Gibran, who has captured the hearts, the minds, and the souls on a global level, be realized at a time in our human journey that begs for humanity?

It is the small deeds and actions and a collective conscience that unites us. Gibran, through the strokes of his brush, the capturing of his thoughts, and the immersion of his goals, paved a way for so many. He was surrounded with his loves, be they physical, metaphysical, spiritual, and imaginary. The true impact of Gibran's contributions is still to be realized and yet his voice, although silent, resounds in all of us.

In my work I am as solid as a rock, but my real work is neither in painting nor in writing. Deep inside me...there is another dynamic intelligence which has nothing to do with words, lines or colours. The work I have been born to do has nothing to do with brush or pen.¹³

Thank you for this opportunity of a lifetime. I think now my story just might make it to the Gold Star Wall.

Thank you.

Biography

Judy Saba is an accredited trainer, cross-cultural psychologist, and public speaker with extensive experience in applied diversity training in the fields of education, policing, health, counselling, and psychology. She has, over 25 years, contributed to the Australian brand of diversity training. Saba has a passion for training practitioners in working with assumptions, bias, prejudice, and racism. A psychologist with the Maronite Catholic Diocese, and a diversity trainer with the NSW Police Force, Sydney, Australia, Saba's 2010 Churchill Fellowship researched diversity training and human rights integration into policing in the U.S, Middle East, and U.K.

¹ Rolf Jacobsen (Norway, 1907-1994), Reproduced and obtained on line at Stephanie Dorwick.com.

² Obtained online at Stephanie Dorwick .com.

³ Kahlil Gibran, *Sand and Foam* (New York: A. A. Knopf, 1928), 7.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 47.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 16.

⁶ Mary Haskell's journal in *Beloved Prophet: The Love Letters of Kahlil Gibran and Mary Haskell and Her Private Journal*, Virginia Hilu, ed. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1972).

⁷ Kahlil Gibran, *The Prophet: A New Annotated Edition*, ed. Suheil Bushrui (Oxford: Oneworld, 2012), 65.

⁸ Suheil Bushrui, "Reading Gibran in an Age of Globalization and Conflict."

⁹ Octavio Paz, *The Labyrinth of Solitude* (New York: Grove Press, 1978), page undefined.

¹⁰ Kahlil Gibran, source undefined.

¹¹ Geert Hofstede, *Cultures and Organisations: Software of the Mind* (London: McGraw-Hill, 1991).

¹² *The Prophet: A New Annotated Edition*, 81.

¹³ *Kahlil Gibran to May Zaidah, letters*, November 3, 1920.

15. GIBRAN IN IRELAND

By Guy Jones

In spite of being an island off another island off the continent of Europe, Ireland is linked to Lebanon in the course of history in many ways. Our twelve years of study and research into the history of Lebanon and Ireland revealed that all the information was well documented, but found scattered or withheld in archives.

We at the Irish Lebanese Cultural Foundation made it our mission to sort the information obtained and to compile it all in a book that we intend to release in 2013.

In each historical episode of Irish and Lebanese history, there unfolds powerful and compelling evidence of multi-faceted historical facts that are sometimes associated with literature, and at times closely tied with religion and language.

From a small bead of colored glass found in Ireland in 1932, we were able to indicate with some level of precision that Ireland's connections with the Phoenicians date back to circa 1300 BC. The bead originated from one of the cities in Phoenicia proper. This was proof that in their quest for tin, the Phoenicians landed and traded with Britain and Ireland, keeping their sources a secret in the mystery that lies beyond the columns of Melkart, known to the Greeks as the Columns of Hercules. The Phoenicians were merely interested in tin and had no settlements built or port reinforcements made. A few words in Gaelic give away those links. The words for "fire," "dagger," and "wool jumper" in Gaelic are synonymous to old Lebanese mountain linguistic words of "titine" (*toutton*; تتن), "scian" (*sikkin*; سكين), and "ganzi" (*kanzi*; كنزة). These may be a clue to that connection.

Wherever the Phoenicians went, they bore with them their religion and their worship, and throughout their wide dominion, the same gods were worshiped with the same rites and with the same observances. Such is the case when the Celtic god Bel was celebrated with a bonfire on the Hills of Ushnagh Co Westmeath on the first of May. Similarly, the Phoenicians celebrated Baal on the same day in Phoenician proper, using the same observances.

With religion comes belief and customs that are passed on from generation to generation. In our case, religion is the obsession with saints, the obsession with freedom, and our common firm belief in the power of words.

During our twelve-year journey of research on the history of Lebanon and Ireland, we have come across revelations of important significance that relate Syriac and Maronite liturgy to Ireland's most valuable treasure: the Book of Kells. The book is ornate, with monograms illustrating angels holding a flabellum, an item associated

with Syriac Maronite liturgy. The Book of Kells is believed to have been written in the seventh or eighth century AD.

Gibran was quoted as saying: “The Bible is Syriac literature in English words. It is the child of a sort of marriage. There is nothing in any other tongue to correspond to the English Bible.”¹

Gibran had always been fascinated by the language of the Syriac Bible, which reflected Gibran’s views on the creation of “an absolute language,” a task he tried to achieve through his various English writings through the creation of a unified universal style.

This revelation of a Maronite influence on the Book of Kells would have made Gibran very proud as it cements his spiritual connection to Ireland. This brings us to the core subject: Gibran and Ireland.

Lebanon and Ireland share common values. For example, both are emigrating nations; at the time of Gibran, both were under occupation; both nations have struggled long to achieve freedom; and finally, both became the invigorating force of their neighbors’ languages and culture.

The Lebanese and the Irish each influenced the development and enrichment of their larger linguistic area in a way far beyond their own size in territory or population.

The cultural links between Ireland and Lebanon manifested themselves in the beginning of the twentieth century with a connection between the Irish poet W.B. Yeats and Kahlil Gibran. There were many similarities that the two poets shared, in particular their strong nationalistic sentiments. Gibran held, with great admiration, the ideals of Yeats. He attended a lecture given by Yeats in New York, which was the first encounter between the two men.

In 1911, Gibran drew a portrait of Yeats in a series which Gibran called *The Temple of Art*. The series featured face-to-face portraits of renowned figures such as Auguste Rodin, Sarah Bernhardt, Gustav Jung, Charles Russell, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, and many more. Yeats’ portrait today has a place in Gibran’s museum in Bsharri where, along with Gibran’s other personal belongings, a book of Yeats’ poetry was found, insinuating a great admiration of Yeats and his work. Above all, both men wrote beautifully in their native languages and were innovative in their adopted language of English.

There are many facets to Gibran’s relationship with the Irish, one of which is perhaps more intimate. Gibran was in a constant quest to unravel the secrets of love, and the Irish had a fair share of that quest. In *The Prophet*, Gibran describes love as an

equally positive and negative emotion. Unlike Yeats, Gibran notes that for all the good things love can do or bring, a bad thing is just as likely. One line from *The Prophet* shows just how two-sided love can be: “Even as he ascends...and caresses your tenderest branches...so shall he descend to your roots and shake them in their clinging to the earth.”² While love can make you feel safe and at peace with everything else, love can just as quickly turn your life into hell. One of the main points Gibran makes is that people should respect love and understand that it can be a very selfish emotion. He mentions, “Love has no other desire but to fulfil itself,”³ and, “If you seek only love's peace and pleasure, then it's better for you that you cover your nakedness and pass out of love's floor.”⁴ For those people who believe that only good can come of love, and who possibly even take it for granted, they can't win. But even with that, love can be a positive feeling. Gibran makes it seem as if love is an entity, or an actual being, not just a mental state. This is far different from Yeats' take on love, as he treated it as if it is nothing but a jinx for bad luck and eventual misfortune.

It is believed that Barbara Young and the beautiful pianist Gertrude Barrie, with whom Gibran had personal relations, were women of Irish descent.

Although Yeats and Gibran viewed matters such as love differently, the men shared strong and deep-rooted nationalistic feelings. Their ideals and principles concurred to a limited extent; however, Yeats was never forced to be in exile. James Joyce, in his self-exile, would have had more to share with Gibran, who was always reminiscing of his beloved Lebanon. All this happened in the wake of World War I. World leaders were already conferring with regard to the Ottoman Empire and its widespread dominion. The peoples' right to autonomy was loudly expressed in Paris and in London. Groups of divergent views and ideas were canvassing. The superpowers were lobbied. The focus was on the fall of the Ottoman Empire, and the famous Third Bill, or the James Redmond home rule for Ireland, was as distant as ever.

Gibran's early writings and publications in Arabic had limited readership until *The Prophet* made its way to the Americans and Europeans. The success of his book was the cross-over. Language, religions, and cross-culture barriers were conquered, and the fame of Gibran became universal.

After the Independence of Ireland

Gibran's reconciliatory tones and calls for openness had an impact on Ireland, a young state trying to reconcile with itself. Many scholars had in one way or another been affected by Gibran as well as by his contemporaries, Yeats, Joyce, and John Millington Synge.

Many writings bear a resemblance to those of Gibran. Joseph Mary Plunkett's poetry in *The Presence of God* echoes Gibran's *The Prophet* when he speaks about how to find God:

And look into space; you shall see Him walking in the cloud,
outstretching His arms in the lightning and descending in rain. You
shall see Him smiling in flowers, then rising and waving His hands
in trees.⁵

In Ireland today, the flame of Gibran lives on. It was renewed at the launch of a book entitled *Myriam of Lebanon*. Gibran's influence, for example, permeates the works of Richard McSweeney, a philosopher who until November 2011 campaigned for the presidential election in Ireland.

McSweeney reincarnates the spirit of Gibran in his own writing, including: *A Jesus of Nazareth*, *Generations Reaching*, *Hearing in the Write*, *Innkeeper's Fire*, *Unto Lineage Royal*, and *Bridging Al-Serenities*.

Myriam of Lebanon is unique. It is founded on Gibran's *The Prophet*, and it was debuted and warmly received at a conference on Gibran held in the Holy Spirit University of Kaslik (USEK) in April 2006.

Given the state that the world is in today, the author is of the strong opinion that a woman's word would be more effective in bringing about a qualitative change, and even more warmly received by the peoples of the world than say a man's would, especially if she were perceived by men to be, in every way, exceedingly beautiful. The work *Myriam of Lebanon* has been his answer. It presents a philosopher-poetess named Myriam from the Phoenician port city of Byblos of the land of Lebanon who visits the isle of Eire and, while there, shares of her profound wisdom.

Later, when I mentioned to McSweeney that the valley of Fermoy in County Cork, from which he hails, was once called the Valley of the Phoenicians, he seemed to be pleasantly surprised and extremely inquisitive.

In Painting

Lebanese-born painter Richard Hearn speaks on how his paintings were inspired by Gibran not in style, but in substance and inspiration. Many of his paintings bear quotations from *The Prophet*, including one entitled *The Navigator*.

In Music

One of the most and direct influences of Gibran on music in Ireland is in the lyrics of a song composed by the musician Eoin O'Sullivan based on the words of "Pity the Nation."

One of the best references to Gibran was made by George Russell, an inspirational writer, activist, and Irish mystic, who wrote at the beginning of his book:

I do not think the East has spoken with so beautiful a voice since the *Gitanjali* of Rabindranath Tagore as in *The Prophet* of Kahlil Gibran, who is artist as well as poet. I have not seen for years a book more beautiful in its thought, and when reading it I understand better than ever before what Socrates meant in the Banquet when he spoke of the beauty of thought which exercises a deeper enchantment than the beauty of form...I could quote from every page, and from every page I could find some beautiful and liberating thought.

On Lebanon Day in November of 2011, Kevin Connolly of the Kilkenny Writers Club read excerpts from *The Prophet*. His reading was well received and I found that, for many, it was a breath of fresh air that was much appreciated. For some it ignited a flame for Gibran and his work. A few days later, a writer from Kilkenny, Maria Marshall, sent me an article about Gibran that I forwarded to the Lebanese press for publication.

In serving that purpose, the Irish Lebanese Cultural Foundation, in collaboration with the Luke Wadding Library at Waterford Institute of Technology, launched the Irish Lebanese Book Collection in 2008. It is now looking forward to creating an Irish Literature research center in Lebanon dedicated to Sir Desmond Cochrane, a valued Irish diplomat who supported the publication of many Irish writers in Arabic, and to whom Dr. Suheil Bushrui dedicated his book *James Joyce: An International Perspective*, with these words:

He gave generous moral and material support to a wide variety of projects: he sponsored exhibitions on Yeats, Synge, and Joyce; encouraged translations of Irish literature into Arabic; and was the main driving force behind the publication of the two first studies in Arabic on Yeats and Synge, and of several guides and handbooks on Ireland and her literary achievement...As a diplomat, he rendered invaluable service in strengthening Lebanese Irish and Arab Irish relations.⁶

The world now recognizes the work of such devoted men and women who dedicate their lives and talents to promoting peace and understanding among nations. American political scientist Dr. Milton Cummings once said:

[Cultural diplomacy is] the exchange of ideas, information, values, systems, traditions, and other aspects of culture, whether they promote national interests, build relationships, or enhance socio-cultural understanding.⁷

Gibran's work and worldwide influence, whether in Ireland or Lebanon, and the effects of his advocacy, laid the foundations of cultural diplomacy.

Gibran's work is a beacon of hope and strength for our times and beyond; a beautiful and endearing spirit that hovers gently over the green meadows of Ireland and the snow-capped mountains of Lebanon.

Biography

Guy Jones is the chairman of the Irish Lebanese Cultural Foundation. As a lecturer and researcher, he focuses on the history of Ireland and Lebanon, Bishop Pococke's visit to Lebanon in 1738, and UNIFIL (the Irish outstanding peacekeeping mission in Lebanon). Jones is a committee member of the Tipperary Peace Convention, and is helping to launch the Sir Desmond Cochran Irish Literature Research Library at the University of the Holy Spirit in Lebanon.

¹ Jean Gibran and Kahlil Gibran, *Kahlil Gibran: His Life and World* (New York: Naufal, 1974), 313.

² Kahlil Gibran, *The Prophet: Annotated Edition*, ed. Suheil Bushrui (Oxford: Oneworld, 1995), 74.

³ *Ibid.*, 75.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 75.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 140.

⁶ Suheil Bushrui and Bernard Benstock, *James Joyce: An International Perspective* (Buckinghamshire: Colin Smythe Limited, 1982), ix.

⁷ John Hemming. "Comment on Cultural Diplomacy." Academy for Cultural Diplomacy. Institute for Cultural Diplomacy, accessed July 26, 2013.

<http://www.culturaldiplomacy.org/academy/index.php?Comment-on-Cultural-Diplomacy-4>

16. GIBRAN IN ITALY

By Francesco Medici

“Forgive me my curiosity—what country do you hail from? You look to me like a Frenchman or an Italian.”¹ These appear to have been the first words spoken by Mary Haskell to Kahlil Gibran in the spring of 1904, during their first encounter at an exhibition of his paintings which was held at the Harcourt Buildings in Boston.² Undoubtedly, it wasn’t the first time that he was mistaken for an Italian whilst he was in America. The same thing had also happened when he was in Paris, as recounted by Yusuf Huwayyik, his study companion and fellow countryman.³ Furthermore, Haskell believed Gibran to be the reincarnation of Dante Gabriel Rossetti, the poet and Pre-Raphaelite painter of Italian origins who was born in London in 1828 and died in 1882, the year before Kahlil was born.⁴ Gibran himself also maintained that he had had a past-life connection with Italy. One day, when speaking to Haskell about his past existences, he told her that he once lived in Italy until the age of twenty-five.⁵

Gibran’s predilection for Italy can be traced back to his childhood in Lebanon when he was six, and his mother—according to some biographers—gave him some old Leonardo da Vinci prints (including *The Head of Saint Anne*), which made a considerable impression on the young boy.⁶

His passion for Leonardo possessed him from that hour, so much so that when his father rebuked him for some childish misdemeanor, the boy flew into a rage and shouted, “What have you to do with me? I am an Italian!”⁷

In 1895, during the journey from Beirut to Marseille—before setting sail on a boat bound from Boulogne to New York with his mother, half-brother, and two sisters—it is possible that the ship made a brief stopover in Italy, maybe in Naples; more than likely it merely lapped briefly against Italy’s shores, allowing him to glimpse the country of his dreams only fleetingly. Years later, filled with nostalgia for his overseas homeland, he confided to Haskell, “Syria and Italy are the two countries I love. I feel that I will be able to see Italy many times, but not Syria.”⁸

In 1908, when Gibran enthusiastically welcomed Haskell’s suggestion to go and study art in Paris at the Académie Julian, he also planned to finally visit Italy; testimony to this is a letter he sent on March 28 to his friend Ameen Guraieb, editor of the literary and informative Arab-American weekly *Al-Mohajer (The Emigrant)*:

I told you ere your departure to Lebanon that I would spend a whole year in Paris, and now I have also decided to visit Italy after

the expiration of my time in Paris. I intend to spend another year visiting Italy's great museums and ruins and cities. I shall visit Venice,⁹ Florence, Rome, and Genoa; then I will return to Naples and board a boat to the United States.¹⁰

During his sojourn in the French capital, he met many young Italian artists and musicians,¹¹ and among the models who posed for him was also a certain Rosina, "one of Botticelli's nymphs...a nice young Italian woman"¹² from Anticoli.¹³

Gibran didn't hesitate to suggest a trip to Italy to Huwayyik, who had mastered the Italian language and at that time was attempting to translate Dante's *The Divine Comedy* into Arabic:

I always feel a certain loss because...my feet don't come into contact with the earth of Rome, Florence, or Venice. I am constantly disturbed by this. How lucky you are, Yusuf, to have visited and lived in those cities! Do you think if we economized enough we would be able to save for a trip? You understand the language, so we would be spared the fees for a guide!...How I would love to visit Florence and walk the streets of Dante, Giotto, [Beato] Angelico, Botticelli, Leonardo, Michelangelo, Machiavelli, and many others who lived and worked in that city. I shall eternally grieve if I am denied the opportunity to climb to the top of Fiesole.¹⁴

In 1910, the two friends prepared "to leave shortly for Istanbul, Athens and Rome,"¹⁵ but the cost of the journey revealed itself to be an insurmountable obstacle. Gibran took it as a sign of destiny, yet he did not lose hope: "But I feel that I must not go to Italy now. I hope that in two or three years I will be able to come to Italy and stay a whole winter."¹⁶ And again, "I feel...that I must go back to Boston...And perhaps in few years I shall be able to come back and see Italy."¹⁷ At the end of June, he had to content himself with a month-long trip to London with Ameen Rihani whilst Huwayyik departed for Italy alone.¹⁸ Gibran returned to Boston in November, and after that, he would never leave America again.¹⁹

And so the relationship between Gibran and Italy, as much as it was profound and visceral within, was destined to remain indirect; that far away peninsula in the heart of the Mediterranean existed almost as a metaphysical location, yet at the same time very real within his conscience and sensitivity. In a letter sent to Haskell a few days after the 1908 Messina earthquake, he mourns the death of the thousands of victims of that tragedy as though they were his own countrymen:

The cries of the bereaved Italy has filled the heavens...That fair land, so much loved by the Sun, is so hated by the heart of the “mighty deep.” And Messina, the beautiful city, has become one great cemetery.²⁰ O how weak and insignificant Humanity seems before the blind forces of Nature. And Italy, the spiritual home of all the lovers of beauty, is the most hated enemy of those blind forces.²¹

Gibran felt “the art of the Italians is in beauty,”²² as he acknowledged one spring day in 1912, whilst walking with Haskell along Boston Common, America’s oldest public park:

This Common makes me ill...It could be so glorious! Look what the Italians would do with a place like this. And see! (the Civil War monument) Did you ever see anything uglier?²³

In 1915, he wrote to his patroness and confidante: “The warmth of the Italian soul is in everything they do. Even the most commonplace thing that comes out of that Sun-loved land has a touch of the flame. God *uses* them.”²⁴

It is not surprising that his New York studio was home to “a small collection” of “Italian paintings.”²⁵ If Gibran was a great pioneer and brave innovator of the Romantic movement in modern Arabic literature, his relationship with figurative art was far more traditional. This was clear to him from early on. During his time in France, he displayed a closer affinity with the classical tradition—from Greek art to masters like Andrea Mantegna (1431-1506), Sandro Botticelli (1445-1510), Perugino (1450-1523), Raphael (1483-1520), Titian (1485-1576),²⁶ and Caravaggio (1571-1610)—than with Fauvism, Cubism, and the other “currents of artistic activity in Paris” that were, according to him, a “mad revolt...in full swing against art and beauty.”²⁷

One of his favorite Italian artists was, as previously mentioned, Leonardo (1452-1519). As he wrote to May Ziadah: “I have never looked on any of Leonardo da Vinci’s work without experiencing deep within myself the awareness that a part of his soul penetrates my own.”²⁸ The “Leonardoesque quality”²⁹ of many of Gibran’s paintings is obvious. One calls to mind for example, *Silence*, which clearly bears resemblance to *Virgin of the Rocks*. However, his admiration for Leonardo is possibly surpassed by that for Michelangelo (1475-1564), regarded by Gibran as a more complete personality, as he remarked in 1913 to Haskell: “Michelangelo was a great painter—he painted superman—superman physical and male.”³⁰ About ten years or so later, he was more precise:

Michelangelo was not the best painter, nor the greatest artist, but he was the greatest being of the Renaissance painters. Leonardo was the greatest painter but Leonardo is on the earth—and on its remotest horizons. Michelangelo is one with the earth, and the horizons, and the sky.³¹

Michelangelo's influence on Gibran art is detectable, for example, in three of *Twenty Drawings: Women with Garment* recalls the *Prisoners*; *The Flight* displays similarities to *The Creation of Adam* from the Sistine Chapel in the Vatican City; and *The Triangle* appears to resemble Christ's deposition, similar to Michelangelo's *The Lamentation over the Dead Christ* and some Italian Mannerist works. Here we must also mention *The Blind Poet*, a drawing published in the 1925 July-September issue of *The New Orient*, which is clearly inspired by the renowned *Pietà*.³² Gibran, who planned to write a book about him,³³ also admired Michelangelo the poet:

There is something in these sonnets of Michelangelo that touches my very depth...something that moves me as no other thing does. Perhaps they would have moved me much less if they were written by someone else, but this is a case where it so hard to divide between the man and his work. I have often felt that the greatest and the deepest element in Michelangelo's soul was a dumb, motionless element. He went to his grave with a silent power in his heart...a power which he himself did not understand; and perhaps that is why he was always so unutterably sad.³⁴

Gibran was also an avid admirer of the great authors of Italian literature. He probably read Dante Alighieri's *The Divine Comedy* translated by Henry Francis Cary (1772-1844), published for the first time in London in 1814.³⁵ Huwayyik shared a touching anecdote, significant in understanding how much Gibran felt for the Florentine poet's masterpiece. Gibran insisted one evening that his friend read him an excerpt of his Arabic translation of the work: "How far did you get in translating *The Divine Comedy*? Many times you have promised to read some parts of it to me." Huwayyik satisfied his desire:

I read the translation of the fifth canto to him, in which Dante discusses love. I repeated some phrases in Italian for the sake of clarity. I raised my voice when I came to a dramatic passage until I reached the last part where Dante says, "And I dropped like a dead body." I turned toward Gibran to see the effect my reading had to him, and there he was, with his head downward and his eyes wet with tears.³⁶

When Gibran offered his *amanuensis* Barbara Young his definition of “genius,” he cited Dante as an example: “Genius is a protest against things as they seem to exist...Dante...was the greatest of all protests”³⁷; he also listed Dante among the Western authors whose influence was crucial on the *Nahdah*:

The renaissance in Arabic culture which has taken place within the last century has a strong admixture of Western influences. Certainly we are acquainted with your best. In Syria and Egypt, we know Dante.³⁸

In 1912, he told Haskell that Selma Karamy, heroine of *The Broken Wings*, was “half Beatrice and half Francesca.”³⁹

One must not forget that Francesca da Rimini, central figure of Dante’s fifth canto in *Inferno* and a literary character of whom Gibran was particularly fond, is also the eponymous character of one of the dramas penned in 1902 by Decadent writer Gabriele D’Annunzio (1863-1938)—among the principal masters of the myth of the *femme fatale* figure, as well as that of the female consoler and another of Gibran’s favorite authors—to whom he was even compared in his youth:

In the Arabic world...they said then—I was 19—that my work was like D’Annunzio. They said, “And D’Annunzio is nearing 40 and this youth is 19.” I did not then know what they meant. I had never heard of D’Annunzio. But since I grew older and have read his work, I realize they were wrong. I cannot do work so good as his.⁴⁰

Gibran was equally fond of Western and Oriental music. Among his favorite European music styles were symphonies, sonatas, and cantatas. In addition to Beethoven and Debussy, he preferred the Italian composer Gioachino Rossini (1792-1868). Joseph Nahas, who was employed as an assistant to Ameen Guraieb, met Gibran at the offices of *Al-Mohajer*; he shares a delightful anecdote about “an Italian barber named Squazzo”:

Squazzo, having a good baritone voice, would be singing music from *The Barber of Seville* to entertain customers. Both Gibran and I were on the waiting list that particular day for his tonsorial service, and enjoying the rendition. Before leaving, Gibran complimented Squazzo and urged him to seek an audition at the Metropolitan Opera House.⁴¹

When Italy declared war on Turkey in 1911, Gibran interpreted it as a sign that foretold the future carving-up of the Ottoman Empire which revived hopes of independence for Syria, but the Italian victory over the Ottomans in Tripolitania

merely resulted in Turkey losing those territories and so his hopes were quashed. Nevertheless, he strived to make the Muslim community understand that that war was “not a strife between Mohammedanism and Christianity.”⁴² He believed that the Italian bombardment of Beirut in 1912 was an important fact that demonstrated how Turkey was indifferent to the fate of the people of Syria.⁴³ A figure who appealed to Gibran’s revolutionary sympathies was Giuseppe “Peppino” Garibaldi (1879-1950), the namesake grandson of the popular Italian patriot, who served as general of a brigade in the Greek army during the Balkan Wars, a hero—in his words—who used to go “from one part of the world to another to fight with the people against any form of slavery.” Gibran fantasized about General Garibaldi leading a regiment of immigrant Lebanese and Syrians to overthrow the Turkish yoke. But Gibran’s activist plans, conceived with his Italian friend,⁴⁴ would remain only “great dreams.”⁴⁵

Gibran’s standing in Italy, as in the rest of the West, is related mostly to the great success of *The Prophet*. The first Italian to read *The Prophet* might have been Eleonora Duse (1859-1924), to whom the author may have given, as suggested by Haskell, a copy of the book in the autumn of 1923, when the famous Italian actress and D’Annunzio’s lover was doing her last tour of the United States.⁴⁶ The first Italian edition of *The Prophet* (*Il Profeta*) was published in 1936, five years after the author’s death, with a translation by E. Niosi-Risos and an introductory essay by the philologist and politician Augusto Mancini (1875-1957), which states, “Writers and books of such elevated and liberated spirituality are worthy of being known and widespread.”⁴⁷ The deciding factor in the book’s success in Italy was, however, its 1968 translation by the poet Gian Piero Bona (b. 1926) —published with the English version as a parallel text and still reprinted today—who in his well-grounded introduction comments:

Gibran chose a messenger, an enlightened spokesman who inspired reverence, a prophet by the name of Almustafa. The poet, fearing not being heard, made himself a prophet.⁴⁸

The author of the preface is the late literary critic, university professor, and life senator Carlo Bo (1911-2001), who, when commenting on Gibran’s style, confirms that “his poetry bows before prophecy.”⁴⁹

In Italy, *The Prophet*—alongside other works including *Siddartha* (1922) by Hermann Hesse, *The Little Prince* (1943) by Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, and *Jonathan Livingston Seagull* (1970) by Richard Bach—became a cult, which began during the years of the student uprisings. Unfortunately, its circulation, demonstrated by the hackneyed use of quotations transformed into aphorisms in all manner of contexts,⁵⁰ has often provoked a systematic process of either trivialization or mythicizing of the author in the eyes of society, causing the disinterest or hostility of

the most authoritative literary critics who were on the other hand unable to understand Arab immigrant literature.

Furthermore, even in Italy, they made the fatal error of ignoring the era in which Gibran lived and operated—i.e., the decades between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, of the crisis of Western values, the Avant-gardes, the progress in technology, the First World War, nascent Arab nationalism. Instead, society looked at that in which he was rediscovered all over the world—the sixties and seventies, a fact which caused a misinterpretation that from then onwards never left the author, so much so that it elevated him to the definitive symbol of the hippie generation.

In Italy in particular, Gibran's writings are often used in Catholic and parochial contexts, substituting in some cases their own sermons, especially for baptisms, weddings, and funerals.⁵¹ And so, the works of the poet—who in life was excommunicated by the Maronite Church and even when on his death bed was still able to summon up his last energies to refuse Christianity and escape the Last Rites—instead ended up becoming a catechism text whilst *The Prophet* has become an easy, exotic breviary filled with consolatory truths. And that is why in Italian bookstores, Gibran's works are often found on the shelves with books on religion or, worse still, in the esoteric or New Age section.

Great credit is due to the tireless work of Isabella Farinelli (b. 1957), who from the late eighties to the present day—sometimes alongside her sister Giovanna—has translated almost all of Gibran's works from English to Italian. The translations from Arabic were done by Younis Tawfik (b. 1957), an Iraqi journalist and writer naturalized as an Italian citizen, side by side with the poet Roberto Rossi Testa (b. 1956), as well as Lebanese author Hafez Haidar (b. 1953) and the Arabist Valentina Colombo (b. 1964). Additionally, in 1999, the theologian Edoardo Scognamiglio (b. 1970) published the only monograph about Gibran written by an Italian scholar.⁵²

The only Italian display of Gibran's works was held at the Museum of Folklore in Rome, part of the *Lebanese Painting and Handicraft* exhibition (October 8-13, 1977), organized on the occasion of the canonization of Charbel Makhlof (1828-1898) by Pope Paul VI.⁵³

As for me, I have studied Gibran and Arab-American literature for over ten years. I translated *The Prophet* (*Il Profeta*, 2005, 2006, 2010) and the two one-act plays *Lazarus and His Beloved* (*Lazzaro e il suo amore*, 2001) and *The Blind* (*Il cieco*, 2003), which were staged in Italy by the *Teatro della Fede* (Theatre of Faith) company in 2001 and 2004, directed by Alfredo Traversa (b. 1962) and commissioned by the Lebanese Embassy. I also worked on the collection of short writings and unpublished fragments *La stanza del Profeta* (*The Room of The Prophet*, 2004) and the Italian edition of *Twenty Drawings* (*Venti disegni*, 2006). In

2009, my anthology *Poeti arabi a New York. Il circolo di Gibran (Arab Poets in New York. The Gibran Circle)* was published, which also includes *poèmes en prose* by Ameen Rihani, Elia Abu-Madi, and Mikhail Naimy.

My translations of the letters written by Gibran to Antony Bashir and the correspondence between Gibran and Rihani are also included respectively in my essays “Un abito arabo per *Il Profeta*. Lettere inedite di Kahlil Gibran a Antony Bashir” (“An Arab Garment for The Prophet. Unpublished Letters from Kahlil Gibran to Antony Bashir,” 2010) and “Figli dei cedri in America. Il carteggio tra Kahlil Gibran e Ameen Rihani” (“Children of The Cedars In America. The exchange between Kahlil Gibran and Ameen Rihani,” 2011). Finally, I am also the author of the comparative study *Il dramma di Lazzaro. Kahlil Gibran e Luigi Pirandello (The Drama of Lazarus. Kahlil Gibran and Luigi Pirandello)*, 2002) and of a commentary on Gibran’s paintings entitled *Kahlil Gibran. Parlaci della bellezza. Su Venti disegni (Kahlil Gibran. Speak to us of Beauty. On Twenty Drawings)*, 2008).

For references to the Italian language titles by and about Kahlil Gibran, please see the complete bibliography, below.

Biography

Francesco Medici, born in Bari, Italy, in 1974, is an Italianist, literary critic, translator, and one of the foremost Italian experts on the work of Kahlil Gibran. He edited and translated several books of the poet and artist, including *The Prophet* and *Twenty Drawings*. He is also the editor of the first Arab-American poetry anthology published in Italy.

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¹ Mikhail Naimy, *Kahlil Gibran: A Biography* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1985), 57.

² Mary was headmistress of a girls' boarding school in Boston where she taught using the method developed by Italian educationalist Maria Montessori (1870-1952). "Montessori is epochal," Gibran said to Mary some years later (Mary Haskell journal, Apr. 6, 1913, qtd. in Jean Gibran and Kahlil Gibran, *Kahlil Gibran: His Life and World* (New York: Interlink Books, 1991), 263).

³ Yusuf Huwayyik, *Gibran in Paris* (New York: Popular Library, 1976), 56: "Are you Spanish or Italian?"

⁴ Jean Gibran and Kahlil Gibran, *Kahlil Gibran: His Life and World* (New York: Interlink Books, 1991), 204.

⁵ Mary Haskell journal, Feb. 22, 1911, qtd. in Robin Waterfield, *Prophet. The Life and Times of Kahlil Gibran* (London: Penguin, 1998), 149.

⁶ Gibran confirmed this story to May Ziadah in 1925. See also Suheil Badi Bushrui and Salma Haffar al-Kuzbari (eds. and trans.), *Blue Flame: The Love Letters of Kahlil Gibran and May Ziadah* (Harlow: Longman, 1983), 88.

⁷ Barbara Young, *This Man from Lebanon: A Study of Kahlil Gibran* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1945), 7. See also Jameel Jabr, *Gibran Kahlil Gibran in His Stormy Life* (Beirut: Nawfal, 1981), 9: "Gibran later told Haskell that his grandfather, Father [Estephan] Rahme, used to host Italian pilgrim priests who stayed at the Mar Sarkis monastery next to Bisharri. They used to bring with them paintings of religious significance. Gibran used to contemplate those paintings for a long time, and wish he would be able to paint similar masterpieces in the future," and "He also copied some of the paintings he had seen painted by the Italian priests who visited his grandfather," qtd. in Joseph Habib Helou, *Kahlil Gibran. A Nonpareil Artist* (Beirut: Joseph D. Raidy, 2002), 18, 20. It's worth remembering that the Maronite Christians—to which the Gibrans belonged—are one of the largest Eastern-rite communities of the Roman Catholic Church.

⁸ Kahlil Gibran to Mary Haskell, Dec. 19, 1909, qtd. in Jean Gibran and Kahlil Gibran, *Kahlil Gibran: His Life and World* (New York: Interlink Books, 1991), 204.

⁹ *The Master's Journey to Venice in The Voice of the Master*, trans. Anthony R. Ferris (New York: Citadel Press, 1958).

¹⁰ Kahlil Gibran, *A Self-Portrait*, trans. Anthony R. Ferris (London: Heinemann, 1960), 30.

¹¹ Kahlil Gibran to Mary Haskell, Paris, May 10, 1910, qtd. in Jean Gibran and Kahlil Gibran, *Kahlil Gibran: His Life and World* (New York: Interlink Books, 1991), 189.

¹² Yusuf Huwayyik, *Gibran in Paris* (New York: Popular Library, 1976), 112. Another young model of Italian origin who spent time with Gibran in New York during the twenties was Mariita Giacobbe Lawson, who he addressed as "Princess."

¹³ Anticoli Corrado is a village in the Province of Rome, in the Italian region of Lazio.

¹⁴ *Gibran in Paris*, 69, 90.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 138.

¹⁶ Kahlil Gibran to Mary Haskell, Paris, May 10, 1910, qtd. in *The Letters of Kahlil Gibran and Mary Haskell. Visions of life as expressed by the author of "The Prophet,"* arranged and ed. by Annie Salem Otto (Houston: Southern Printing Company, 1964), 44.

¹⁷ Kahlil Gibran to Mary Haskell, Paris, June 5, 1910, qtd. in Jean Gibran and Kahlil Gibran, *Kahlil Gibran: His Life and World* (New York: Interlink Books, 1991), 194.

¹⁸ *Kahlil Gibran: His Life and World*, 193.

¹⁹ Therefore Naimy's account of Gibran's time in Paris is not entirely accurate: "Three years of Paris with visits to Rome, Brussels, London, and their rich museums" (*Kahlil Gibran: A Biography* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1985), 98). The missed trip to Italy is also confirmed by another of many projects by Gibran to finally visit Italy, mentioned in Mary Haskell journal, Dec. 20, 1914: "Then I can go to Italy and work for the exhibit," qtd. in *Beloved Prophet: The Love Letters of Kahlil Gibran and Mary Haskell and Her Private Journal*, ed. and arranged by Virginia Hilu (London: Quartet Books, 1973), 217.

²⁰ The 1908 Messina earthquake (also known as the 1908 Messina and Reggio Calabria earthquake) and tsunami took some 100,000-200,000 lives on December 28, 1908, in Sicily and Calabria, southern Italy.

²¹ Kahlil Gibran to Mary Haskell, Jan. 3, 1909, qtd. in *The Letters of Kahlil Gibran and Mary Haskell. Visions of life as expressed by the author of The Prophet*, arranged and ed. by Annie Salem Otto (Houston: Southern Printing Company, 1964), 19.

²² Kahlil Gibran, *The Arts of the Nations*, in *Spiritual Sayings*, trans. Anthony R. Ferris (New York: Citadel Press, 1962).

²³ Mary Haskell journal, Apr. 1912, qtd. in *Beloved Prophet: The Love Letters of Kahlil Gibran and Mary Haskell and Her Private Journal*, ed. and arranged by Virginia Hilu (London: Quartet Books, 1973), 71. When Mary visited Kahlil in New York, the two often used to dine at Gonfarone's Italian restaurant (he also liked to eat at Delmonico's and Moretti's).

²⁴ Kahlil Gibran to Mary Haskell, Sept. 22, 1915, qtd. in *The Letters of Kahlil Gibran and Mary Haskell. Visions of life as expressed by the author of The Prophet*, arranged and ed. by Annie Salem Otto (Houston: Southern Printing Company, 1964) of life as expressed by the author of "The Prophet," arranged and ed. by Annie Salem Otto (Houston: Southern Printing Company, 1964) *Visions of life as expressed by the author of "The Prophet"*, arranged and edited by Annie Salem Otto, Southern Printing Company, Houston, 1964, 441.

²⁵ Kahlil Gibran to May Ziadah, Jun. 11, 1919, qtd. in Suheil Badi Bushrui and Salma Haffar al-Kuzbari (eds. and trans.), *Blue Flame: The Love Letters of Kahlil Gibran and May Ziadah* (Harlow: Longman, 1983), 11.

²⁶ See also Mary Haskell journal, Sept. 30-Oct. 7, 1922, qtd. in *Beloved Prophet: The Love Letters of Kahlil Gibran and Mary Haskell and Her Private Journal*, ed. and arranged by Virginia Hilu (London: Quartet Books, 1973), 393: "The greatest artist was Titian... Raphael was just a painter. Someone says of him, he has nothing to say, and says it extremely well. His best period was when he was young, still in Perugino's studio and under the influence of Perugino."

²⁷ *Gibran in Paris*, 65.

²⁸ Suheil Badi Bushrui and Salma Haffar al-Kuzbari, eds. and trans., *Blue Flame: The Love Letters of Kahlil Gibran and May Ziadah* (Harlow: Longman, 1983), 88.

²⁹ Claude Bragdon, *A Modern Prophet From Lebanon*, in *Merely Players* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1929), 143. See also Alice Raphael, *On the Art of Kahlil Gibran*, introduction essay to *Kahlil Gibran, Twenty Drawings* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1919), 1-16.

³⁰ Mary Haskell journal, Aug. 30, 1913, qtd. in *Beloved Prophet: The Love Letters of Kahlil Gibran and Mary Haskell and Her Private Journal*, ed. and arranged by Virginia Hilu (London: Quartet Books, 1973), 140.

³¹ Mary Haskell journal, Sept. 30-Oct. 7, 1922, qtd. in *Beloved Prophet: The Love Letters of Kahlil Gibran and Mary Haskell and Her Private Journal*, ed. and arranged by Virginia Hilu (London: Quartet Books, 1973), 393. See also Kahlil Gibran to Mary Haskell, Feb. 7, 1909, qtd. in *The Letters of Kahlil Gibran and Mary Haskell. Visions of life as expressed by the author of The Prophet*, arranged and ed. by Annie Salem Otto (Houston: Southern Printing Company, 1964), 21: "I am sure, dear Mary, that you remember my telling you once of an Arab who went to Italy from the desert and saw the work of Michelangelo and was so moved by its power that he wrote a beautiful poem called 'The smiling Marble'."

³² See also Mary Haskell journal, Jun. 26, 1913, qtd. in *The Letters of Kahlil Gibran and Mary Haskell. Visions of life as expressed by the author of The Prophet*, arranged and ed. by Annie Salem Otto (Houston: Southern Printing Company, 1964), 134: "Kahlil always gets back to Michelangelo and Rodin for illustrations. 'They sought to express Life'—Life itself—nothing less."

³³ Kahlil Gibran to Mikhail Naimy, Mar. 26, 1929, qtd. in *Kahlil Gibran: A Biography* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1985), 261: "What say you of a book consisting of four stories: Michelangelo, Shakespeare, Spinoza, and Beethoven?"

³⁴ Kahlil Gibran to Mary Haskell, Feb. 8, 1912, qtd. in *The Letters of Kahlil Gibran and Mary Haskell. Visions of life as expressed by the author of The Prophet*, arranged and ed. by Annie Salem Otto (Houston: Southern Printing Company, 1964), 137.

³⁵ Mary Haskell to Kahlil Gibran, Mar. 25, 1912, qtd. in *The Letters of Kahlil Gibran and Mary Haskell. Visions of life as expressed by the author of The Prophet*, arranged and ed. by Annie Salem Otto (Houston: Southern Printing Company, 1964), 158-159.

³⁶ *Gibran in Paris*, 90-91.

³⁷ *This Man from Lebanon: A Study of Kahlil Gibran*, 169-170.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 80.

³⁹ Kahlil Gibran to Mary Haskell, May 6, 1912, qtd. in *Beloved Prophet: The Love Letters of Kahlil Gibran and Mary Haskell and Her Private Journal*, ed. and arranged by Virginia Hilu (London: Quartet Books, 1973), 78. It was probably the tragic tale of Francesca da Rimini that inspired another of Gibran's works, *The Bride's Bed, in Tears and Laughter*, trans. Anthony R. Ferris (New York: Philosophical Library, 1947), 87-94.

⁴⁰ Mary Haskell journal, Jan. 27, 1911, qtd. in *The Letters of Kahlil Gibran and Mary Haskell. Visions of life as expressed by the author of The Prophet*, arranged and ed. by Annie Salem Otto (Houston: Southern Printing Company, 1964), 55-56.

⁴¹ Joseph Nahas, *Seventy-eight and Still Musing: Observations and Reflections: With Personal Reminiscences of Gibran as I Knew Him* (Hicksville, NY: Exposition Press, 1974), 49. Gibran spent time in New York with various musicians including the Italian violinist Ettore (Hector) Bazzinello, wife of his friend (and ex-lover) Gertrude Barrie.

⁴² Kahlil Gibran to Mary Haskell, Oct. 20, 1911, qtd. in *Beloved Prophet: The Love Letters of Kahlil Gibran and Mary Haskell and Her Private Journal*, ed. and arranged by Virginia Hilu (London: Quartet Books, 1973), 52.

⁴³ Mary Haskell journal, Apr. 1912, qtd. in *Beloved Prophet: The Love Letters of Kahlil Gibran and Mary Haskell and Her Private Journal*, ed. and arranged by Virginia Hilu (London: Quartet Books, 1973), 75-76.

⁴⁴ Mary Haskell journal, Jun. 22, 1913, qtd. in *Beloved Prophet: The Love Letters of Kahlil Gibran and Mary Haskell and Her Private Journal*, ed. and arranged by Virginia Hilu (London: Quartet Books, 1973), 132: "General Garibaldi [...] and Kahlil are twins in mind. Garibaldi [...] will be great in carrying out of the revolution."

⁴⁵ Kahlil Gibran to Mary Haskell, May 27, 1913, qtd. in *The Letters of Kahlil Gibran and Mary Haskell. Visions of life as expressed by the author of The Prophet*, arranged and ed. by Annie Salem Otto (Houston: Southern Printing Company, 1964), 262. Gibran didn't miss the opportunity to add a portrait of General Garibaldi to his "Temple of Art."

⁴⁶ It is impossible to verify whether he was able to carry out her wish due to the actress' poor health (she died a few months later). See Mary Haskell journal, Nov. 26, 1923, qtd. in *Beloved Prophet: The Love Letters of Kahlil Gibran and Mary Haskell and Her Private Journal*, ed. and arranged by Virginia Hilu (London: Quartet Books, 1973), 415: "I asked whether he couldn't send *The Prophet* to Duse, and so find out whether she wouldn't be glad to be drawn." With reference to Duse, see also Kahlil Gibran to Mary Haskell, Jan. 26, 1913, qtd. in *The Letters of Kahlil Gibran and Mary Haskell. Visions of life as expressed by the author of The Prophet*, arranged and ed. by Annie Salem Otto (Houston: Southern Printing Company, 1964), 235.

⁴⁷ Kahlil Gibran, *Il Profeta*, introduction by Augusto Mancini, trans. E. Niosi-Risos (Lanciano, Chieti: Rocco Carabba, 1936), XI.

⁴⁸ *Il Profeta*, 12.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 8. Among the most important Italian editions of *The Prophet*, it's also worth noting *Il Profeta*, introduction and comm. Suheil B. Bushrui, trans. Ariodante Marianni (Milano: Rizzoli, 1993).

⁵⁰ Passages from *The Prophet* have even ended up within the packaging of well-known Italian chocolates "Baci Perugina."

⁵¹ For example, my translation of *The Prophet* (Edizioni San Paolo, Cinisello Balsamo, Milano, 2005) was sold in 2010 as a supplement in *Famiglia Cristiana* (*Christian Family*), the most popular Catholic magazine in Italy.

⁵² Edoardo Scognamiglio, *Il cammino dell'uomo. L'itinerario spirituale di Kahlil Gibran (The Path of Man. The Spiritual Itinerary of Kahlil Gibran)* (Rome: Herder-Miscellanea Francescana, 1999).

⁵³ This information was given to me by a curator of the Gibran Museum (Bisharri, Lebanon) in September 2001, and confirmed by Dr. Tarek Chidiac, Chairman of The Gibran National Committee, on May 5, 2012, during my presentation at the Conference.

17. KAHLIL GIBRAN: A FILM IN THE MAKING

By Rana Kazkaz

I. Fade In

In 1997, I started to focus on writing a feature film screenplay in order to combat the prevalent image of Arab men as subhuman and violent. It was pre-9/11, and already I had had enough of the misperceptions and intolerance directed towards Arabs. It hit me like a brick! I realized that the greatest manifestation of my desire resided in telling the story of the life of Kahlil Gibran.

Who better than Gibran could give the world a new perspective on the stereotype of an Arab man? Rather than portrayed as having decayed teeth, teaching six-year old boys how to use a Kalashnikov, and being misogynistic, what would it be like if the image of an Arab man conjured in people's heads was one of an elegant, sensitive, caftan-wearing poet?

II. Dramatic Conflict

Prior to the research, all I knew of Gibran came from *The Prophet*. My parents read the passages to me as a small child and played the recording of Richard Harris' reading of it. The author of this glorious, loving book, I naively believed, must have been nothing short of a self-actualized, enlightened, peaceful, God-like being.

How else could Gibran write: "The soul walks not upon a line, neither does it grow like a reed. The soul unfolds itself like a lotus of countless petals"¹? Or, "Could you keep your heart in wonder at the daily miracles of your life, your pain would not seem less wondrous than your joy"²?

Of course what I ended up learning of Gibran's life left me heartbroken. It was, it seemed, far away from the film I had intended to write.

His family was poor; his father was abusive; Lebanon, then part of Syria, was suffering under Ottoman rule; he lived in the disease-ridden tenement homes of Boston; his mother, sister, and brother all died within a year of one another; his attempts at love, marriage, and fatherhood all failed; he suffered lifelong physical pain as a result of a childhood injury; the Maronite church banned his writing; he subsisted on a diet of alcohol, cigarettes, and coffee; he suffered from a lack of self-esteem as a result of his short 5'3" stature; and he finally died of tuberculosis and cirrhosis of the liver at the young age of forty-eight.

This was not at all what I had wanted to find out. In denial, I clung to the image of Gibran I wanted to believe in and started to write the first draft, censoring anything that could possibly be construed as negative about Gibran’s life. As a result, the first draft of the screenplay ended up reading like a clinical timeline of events—cold and false.

After several more failed attempts at subsequent drafts, yet armed with the knowledge that hypocrisy infuriated Gibran, I proceeded with trust that an honest depiction of his life is what he would have wanted.

Re-inspired, I wrote and rewrote with the goal of addressing the reality of Gibran’s life. Providing the necessary conflict and drama a film requires allowed me to come up with the thesis or over-riding dramatic question that the film would pose: How do we derive meaning from a painful life? I was also able to create the tagline and logline:

Tagline: He gave us *The Prophet*, discover the man.

Logline: Kazkaz chronicles the epic and turbulent life of renowned artist-poet Kahlil Gibran, from his poverty-stricken boyhood in Ottoman-controlled Lebanon to his adult travels in Paris, Boston, and New York in the early 1900s. Although born with a broken heart and a tortured soul, Gibran struggled to deliver his message to the world: “You are far, far greater than you know.” In the end, this dream, combined with the tragic and breath-taking events of his life, compelled him to write *The Prophet*.

III. What Kind of Movie is it?

Deciding what kind of film this should be posed many questions.

Should it be epic like *Lawrence of Arabia* or *Gandhi*? Should it go back and forth in time like *Ray*? Should it be part narrative and part documentary like *Reds*? Should it follow a linear path like *Amadeus*? Should it explore the whole life like *Frida*? Or should it stick to a particular moment in time like *Capote* or *The Motorcycle Diaries*?

Then there is the question of location. Should the film take place in Bsharri, Beirut, Paris, Boston, and New York? Or only in one or two of those cities? Is it necessary for an actor of Arab origin to play Gibran? What should the budget be? Should it be a big-budget Hollywood blockbuster or a small independent film? Should the film be in Arabic, either in its entirety or just in pieces? Would Arabic put off an American

audience? How political should the film be? And finally, what would Gibran have wanted?

Answers came and went, changing as new people came on board the project and others left.

IV. The First Scene

Nearly each new draft ushered in a new first scene. Some drafts opened with a scene in Bsharri and others in New York. Some started with Gibran as a little boy and others with him near the end of his life.

Most drafts opened with a scene of Gibran about to give his first reading of *The Prophet* in a Greenwich Village, New York, church. Imagine Gibran sitting backstage, nervously peeking out to look at the packed crowd. The church pews, his audience, are filled with people of different age, race, nationality, and class.

Finally, Gibran stumbles out to the stage, hands shaking slightly, his nerves getting the better of him. He looks out at the audience, pleasantly surprised at how many people came to hear him read his “strange little book.”

He opens the book and his voice, unlike his body, echoes with grace and reverberation as he recites from memory: “Almustafa, the chosen and the beloved, who was a dawn unto his own day, had waited twelve years in the city of Orphalese for his ship that was to return...”³

The film cuts to the mountains of Bsharri as we continue to hear Gibran’s voice: “...and bear him back to the isle of his birth.”⁴

It felt right to start in Orphalese, i.e., New York, and then transport the audience, both in the church and in the movie theaters, to the isle of Gibran’s birth, Bsharri.

As for the decision to have the screenplay address the whole of Gibran’s life, what other way could we honor Almitra’s request: “Now therefore disclose us to ourselves, and tell us all that has been shown you of that which is between birth and death.”⁵

That opening has felt right for years. But while rewriting the last draft, it occurred to me that something was missing from it. Gibran needed to invite us into the film—his story. But how could this be done?

I have watched, numerous times, an 8-millimeter clip, the only footage of Gibran known to exist. Each time I regretted not being able to hear the sound of his voice. What was he thinking, sitting in that chair, smoking a cigarette, his body in pain?

I had always imagined that this clip would appear at the end of the film. But what if it appeared at the beginning? What would he have said? As the screenwriter, what words could I dare to put into Gibran's mouth?

This is what I came up with:

FADE IN:

INT. GIBRAN'S NEW YORK STUDIO – NIGHT

Utter darkness and silence, except for labored breaths. Then, with a voice ravaged by age:

GIBRAN (V.O.)

I was a child, then a man—alive and then dead, just like you are and one day will be. Some of you are loved more that I was.

(pause, he coughs)

And others, painfully, are loved less. But, I loved. Just like you are loving others now. Some more, others less, but hopefully more and more and not less and less. And like you, while I was alive, I wanted to believe, was desperate to believe, that my life had meaning. That I was here, there, to offer something unique, during my, our, brief, and mostly painful, lives.

Gibran lights a cigarette, slightly illuminating the silhouette of his body, sitting in a chair...

GIBRAN (CON'T)

Eventually, I discovered my purpose, my destiny. But the journey, the moments in life leading up to this discovery, were painful. I did find it, though.

(he coughs hard)

And, like you, I was not born with wisdom but gained it slowly, after becoming more aware. But, yes, I did find it...my destiny.

(he smiles, sips Arak)

Take heart, dear ones, and do not envy me if you have not yet found yours, because my destiny was to help reveal yours to you. And if you listen and become aware, then my life can help yours, the one you are living now, be less...painful...For you see, my friends... my destiny, as is your destiny...was, is, has been, and will be, forevermore...you.

And from here we dissolve to the previously mentioned church scene.

V. Why Now?

Presently, the Arab community is in a very precarious position. Not only are we still battling misinterpretation and oversimplification, but also many of us have family and friends who are suffering at the hands of neglectful, corrupt, and murderous regimes.

Sadly, little seems to have changed from the birth of Gibran in 1883 to the present. During his life, Gibran saw the beginnings of the dire issues currently affecting our community.

Gibran witnessed the British and French occupation of Greater Syria and the subsequent divisions made between Palestine, Jordan, Iraq, Lebanon, and Syria. He witnessed the beginning of the Zionist movement and the steps leading up to the creation of Israel. He was aware of the recent discovery of oil in Iraq and expressed concern that it would lead to the demise of co-existence.

His willingness to speak out politically about such issues eventually put Gibran and the Church at odds with one another.

Again, always with an eye to Gibran's life, allowing it to guide and inform the course of the film, I decided that the film, like Gibran, should also not shy away from politics.

Thus, wanting to make the film politically relevant for today's audience, I became inspired by Gibran's essay, "To Young Americans of Syrian Origin." And again, daring to put words in Gibran's mouth, I wrote a scene in which he delivers a speech to New York's Arab community, warning them of the perils that lie ahead:

INT. AUDITORIUM, NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY –
NIGHT

Gibran walks with a silver tipped-cane across the stage towards the podium. He looks out nervously at the faces of mostly Arab men, women and children.

GIBRAN

I, like many of you, come from that part of the world known as Greater Syria. As you know, the British and the French have chosen to divide us: Syrians, Lebanese, Palestinians, into separate countries. Like you, my longing and concern for my country melts my heart.

Gibran clears his throat from the emotion. Mikhail Naimy and Ameen Rihani stand in the wings supporting him.

GIBRAN (CONT'D)

The Arab world has contributed richly in the past. We gave the world the alphabet, algebra, and instruments on which to play music.

Gibran wipes the sweat from his brow and musters the courage to continue.

GIBRAN (CONT'D)

But now we are facing a crisis: the struggle for self-determination. We must be allowed to govern ourselves without threat of occupation by the British, French, or whomever. If we're allowed to do this, I'm sure we will have much more to offer the world again. I encourage Easterners living in the West to adopt only the constructive parts of Western society. Let us imitate their educational system rather than their guns, machines of destruction, and improved technologies for slaughter. While the East has much to offer in terms of spirituality, it seems that the West is more concerned with materialism and militarism.

Uninterested, some audience members get up and walk out. Gibran stops. He looks at Naimy, who gives him a reassuring nod. Gibran rubs his left shoulder and looks at the faces of children in the audience, one after another, as he grows increasingly dizzy.

GIBRAN (CONT'D)

To you especially, young Americans of Syrian origin, I believe in you, and I believe in your destiny. I believe that you are contributors to this new civilization. I believe that it is in you to be good citizens. And what is it to be a good citizen? It is to acknowledge the other person's rights before asserting your own, but always to be conscious of your own. It is to be free in word and deed, but it is also to know that your freedom is subject to the other person's freedom. It is to be proud of being an American, but it is also to be proud that your fathers and mothers came from a land upon which God laid His gracious hand and raised His messengers. Children of Easterners living in America should preserve proudly their heritage even while pursuing their citizenship. But also remember when you stand before the buildings of New York, that your ancestors built Damascus, Baghdad, Cairo, Jerusalem, Beirut. Unless we unify, our old Ottoman masters will simply be replaced by new European ones.

(holding back tears)

Citizens of the world, I love you when you prostrate yourself in your mosque, kneel in your church, and pray in your synagogue, but remember, we are all the children of one universal spirit. Don't believe those politicians dressed as holy men, who only seek to divide your allegiance along religious lines. For those who wear their morality as their best garment were better off naked. Please, my brothers and sisters, unite, so that we may stop dying.

With one final look to the audience, finished, Gibran returns to the wings. Exhausted, he loses balance. Rihani and Naimy rush to prevent his fall.

GIBRAN (CONT'D)

Remind me to stick to writing as my primary means of communication.

VI. Love

In reflecting on Gibran's love life and how that should factor into the film, I chose to focus on Mary Haskell and May Ziadeh.

Although strong and gifted, May was still bound by Arab rules of conduct for women—often a source of conflict between her and Gibran. And although they were

fated never to meet, I couldn't resist the idea of writing a scene in which they met in a dream sequence:

INT. GIBRAN'S NEW YORK STUDIO - NIGHT

Gibran sleeps in bed, dreaming. A woman's hand caresses Gibran's hair. He wakes up slowly to find May sitting at the foot of the bed.

MAY
Hello, Gibran.

GIBRAN
May? It's you, isn't it?

MAY
I wanted to see you. To see where you live.

GIBRAN
Welcome to my heaven and my hell.

Gibran reaches out to caress her face. She backs away and looks around the apartment.

MAY
I really shouldn't be here. It's better if you come to visit me. For real, I mean. Not in a dream.

GIBRAN
I can't do that.

MAY
Why not? Are you afraid you won't like what you see?

GIBRAN
No. I'm afraid you won't. Reality is too painful. Dreams are better. If you want my true self, then this is the only way I can do it.

MAY
I can't have a relationship like this, Gibran. We can't keep writing love letters to one another. What if someone found out? It would be horrible. What would the Arabs say?

GIBRAN

Try not to worry about that.

MAY

Easy for you to say. You're not a woman. I've worked hard to have the life I do. One rumor could ruin my reputation, not to mention my family's honor...I should go.

GIBRAN

But you write about women's rights, freedom. Don't you believe...

MAY

Change doesn't happen overnight, Gibran. I still have to live in society the way it exists today.

May gets up to leave.

GIBRAN

No, May, please don't go.

MAY

Gibran, if you love me, then come be with me.

GIBRAN

Can't you see that this way is more beautiful?

MAY

Why are you tempting me? I'm not free like you, Gibran. I can't do what I want, love who I want, whenever I want. I'm not an American woman.

GIBRAN

Women are no freer here, May. They struggle just as much as you do for their rights.

MAY

I can't stay here.

GIBRAN

No, May! Don't go! Please...

May fades away.

GIBRAN (CONT'D)
...don't go.

Gibran wakes up from the dream, sad. He walks to the bathroom, turns on the bath water, takes off his clothes and gets in the tub. The water is freezing.

VII. The End

And finally, just as there was a question about how to begin the film, there is the question of how to end it. The answer: back in the church. Gibran is still reading, the audience is still listening, and he finishes:

The audience is silent and attentive, some moved to tears. Gibran is still reciting from memory.

GIBRAN

A little while, a moment of rest upon the wind, and another woman shall bear me.

Gibran pauses, then closes his book. Silence.

The audience explodes into a respectful standing ovation. The sudden adulation causes Gibran to stumble again. Moved, he looks out at the audience and nods towards them humbly.

A beautiful ray of sunlight beams down on Gibran through a window. He looks up into the light, his face in a halo. A smile, barely perceptible, appears on his face.

VIII. Roll Credits

Throughout this decade-long process, I've been very humbled to learn how unoriginal my desire to tell Gibran's story is. I am only one of a long line of artists who have struggled, even while Gibran was alive, to bring his life to film. May we all succeed.

IX. Bibliography

Kahlil Gibran, *The Prophet* (New York: A.A. Knopf, 1923).

Kahlil Gibran, "To Young Americans of Syrian Origin."

Rana Kazkaz, *Gibran*. Protected by copyright law and the Writer's Guild of America; permission must be granted in order to duplicate or transmit any and all portions of this screenplay.

X. Fade to Black

XI. The End

Biography

Rana Kazkaz's screenplay *Gibran* was selected for development by Tribeca All Access; the Sundance/Middle East Screenwriter's Lab; and MFCB, Cannes. Her short films include *Deaf Day*, *Kemo Sabe*, and *Exquisite Corpse*. In addition to *Gibran*, she is developing two other feature films: *The Sytuation* and *Damascenes*. *Damascenes* was selected for development by Crossroads Thessaloniki, the Mediterranean Film Institute, the Abu Dhabi Shasha screenwriting competition, and the Melbourne International Film Festival. She is married to filmmaker Anas Khalaf. They have two children.

¹ Kahlil Gibran, *The Prophet: Annotated Edition*, ed. Suheil Bushrui (Oxford: Oneworld, 1995), 118.

² *Ibid.*, 114.

³ *Ibid.*, 67.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ *Ibid.*, 72.

18. GIBRAN IN THE PERSIAN LANGUAGE

By: Mehrdad Nosrat

I. Introduction: Early Translations

Iran is a country with a rich literary and mystical poetry heritage spanning back one-and-a-half millennia. Producing literary giants like Rumi, Hafez, Ferdowsi, and Omar Khayyam just to name a few, Iran has provided its people with a tremendous number of mystical and philosophical literary works. However, with the recent increasing popularity of Kahlil Gibran in Iran, it is evident that Gibran has offered a new insight and a fresh perspective that has resonated with the people of this troubled nation.

Early and limited translations of some of Gibran's more popular work into Persian can be traced back to around the late 1950s. These partial translations started to appear as scattered, short articles in magazines, newspapers, and literary periodicals. Gradually, over the next three decades, more complete translations of more of his work started to appear. These limited print translations were well received and enjoyed by a larger and more literate population—mostly intellectuals and academics. Although partially available to the Iranian public all this time, it has only been in the last two decades that his work has been in great demand, resulting in translations of almost everything that he has ever written and published. Over this recent period, more than sixty individuals have translated his Arabic and English creations, some repeatedly, into the Persian language, also known as Farsi.

II. Why Has Gibran Become So Appealing to the Persians?

1. The Present Iran

The current state of Iran is one of despair and depravity. Many Iranians are deprived of some of the most basic human rights that most of the world enjoys and takes for granted. The majority of the population of Iran is under the age of 30, and this younger generation is becoming increasingly aware of the injustices and inequalities they face. During the Iran-Iraq war, these people were preoccupied and were, for the most part, unable to pursue a quality education. However, after the war ended, many people had the time and the means to educate themselves. This, along with the advent of the Internet, has created a better-informed public who are willing to speak out against the inequalities they face. Unfortunately, their voices and cries for justice, liberation, and equality are, for the most part, being suffocated and their efforts thwarted.

With nowhere else to turn, many are looking to poetry as a means to escape their harsh reality. Iranians have an inherent attraction to spiritualism and mysticism. With a very rich history in poetry, it has been imbued in Persian culture and is still very culturally present.

With more access to the outside world through the Internet, many are discovering that the inequalities they face are not the norm. Iranians are now able to compare their lives to those of others, making them more aware of the injustices present in their society. They are also able to find the parallels between their current oppressive government and that of Gibran's almost a century ago. Gibran's words resonate deeply with those under the oppression of their government. Iran is a country governed by a controlling, corrupt, and fanatical religious system that creates an atmosphere of fear and limitations. Amidst all this distress and hopelessness, the people have discovered a man who speaks directly to their hearts.

2. Gibran's Appealing Traits and Works

Gibran had a refreshing philosophy of life, and his attention to the minutest or most complex social issues is quite remarkable. Gibran was all too familiar with tragedy, human pain, and suffering. He had a deep understanding of how social injustice, inequality, exploitations, and lack of freedom can cause so much darkness and anguish in the world. While recognizing these dark aspects of life, he was more importantly able to see the good in the world. He was able to recognize and glorify the light and the power of love, hope, and faith. He believed in man's virtues and his vast capabilities to see the beauty in things. The combination of a strong base of moral principles and his inherent intellect, wisdom, spirituality, and mystical nature gave him a unique vision.

He was able to bring it all together in a romantic, emotional, and spiritual context to create poetry so masterful and meaningful that it touches one's soul. His powerful words play with our emotions and provoke our thoughts. With his rebellious style of writing and his continuous cry for freedom from the control of any deceptive political system, he has become the voice and advocator of justice.

His poems and other writings also reflect that he was a strong advocate for peace and unity between religions and people. Gibran was truly a great exemplar and role model for integration of the East and the West. Serving as a bridge between old and new traditions, he strongly believed in the unity of mankind and even the interconnectivity of the universe. He was well aware of the significance of our role in contributing to and affecting its entire existence. He was a visionary and a pioneer, recognizing the need for unity in all aspects of life.

Gibran was able to produce a world of deep and meaningful ideas in small volumes of stories, essays, and poems. The phrase “short and sweet” cannot better describe any other collection of works. His ability to condense massive ideas into brief passages is unparalleled. He was a unique prescription who, with his magical and colorful words, was a relief for the aches and pains of many social issues.

3. Conclusion

Through all the trials and tribulations caused by the Islamic Revolution, the people of Iran who have an inherent thirst and passion for poetry have turned to Gibran as their refuge.

One may wonder how and why these people, who are the repositories of such universal lights as Rumi and Hafez, chose Gibran as the answer to their quest, as their mystical healer.

One possible explanation is that the Iranian people have finally realized that seeking guidance and looking for answers for personal enlightenment alone is no longer sufficient. They needed someone who was able not only to guide them on their individual paths of salvation, but would also act as a lighthouse dispelling the darkness that surrounded them, a darkness filled with social, spiritual, and environmental concerns as well as the struggle for human rights. They needed a guide with a recipe for walking a spiritual path with practical feet. Thus, the people found Gibran.

Especially in recent years, Gibran’s popularity and influence has reached an all-time high. His avant-garde approach and his mystic style of writing make him truly a shining star from the East. As a thinker, philosopher, and a revolutionary who stood for human rights, he has brought a fresh message of hope from the land of prophets and has become a prophet-like figure himself. People feel that he speaks for them, and from their hearts.

With a large audience and fan base of readers, he has become a wondrous phenomenon, especially among the young demographic such as college students. It is very common amongst college students to hold regular study groups for the sole purpose of discussing Gibran. There are numerous websites dedicated to sharing his works and promoting discussions about them. Almost the entire collection of his work, as well as many books written about him, has been translated several times by over 60 different individuals. Very often, these books hit the bestsellers list due to the great demand for them.

In a world hungry for freedom, equality, intellect, and true spirituality free of deceptions, his works seem to be the answer for many people.

III. Evaluation of the Quality and Quantity of Gibran's Current Persian Translations

1. Introduction: An Overview of the State of Translation in Iran

In order to better understand the nature of Gibran's translations to Farsi, the state of publishing and translation in Iran needs to be carefully examined.

The ever-growing field of publishing and translating in Iran has undergone many changes in the past three decades, mostly for the better yet some for the worse. Some of these changes are related to the role of publishers and editors, and some to the translators. Of course, the important role of globalization through social media and the Internet is undeniable. The Internet has benefitted both sides, serving as a great tool for translators while also increasing reader expectations for better translations. Naturally, the translations of Gibran's work into Farsi have been affected by this trend.

Although there has been great advancement in protecting the rights of publishers, authors, and translators in Iran, there is still a strong need for improvements in the field of publishing itself. Several large Iranian publishers seem to be unconcerned about establishing a good reputation due to the fact that readers will continue buying their books as long as they are from a famous author. Out of their negligence, or possibly ignorance, regarding the importance of a good editor, the companies often publish translations without the benefit of a thorough editing. Often times, a translator's performance is based on the publisher's demands with minimal attention to details. They are more concerned with publishing as many of Gibran's works as possible without any care to the quality of these publications.

This leads to instances where publishers are inattentive in selecting respectable translators based on financial considerations. Highly accurate translations take more time and money, and, unfortunately, don't necessarily mean higher profits for a publisher. The publishers are aware that even with inadequate translations, they can rely on the name of a world-famous author to ensure sales. The existence and survival of these irresponsible publishers, who translate these works solely in hopes of extracting as much profit as possible, have been the major contributing factors to the low quality of current Gibran translations.

Fortunately, for every bad publisher, there are responsible, dedicated, and honorable publishers. The field is bound to improve itself, as these quality publishers continue their efforts to create better translations.

The person doing these translations must also be taken into account. Often times, college students who study foreign languages in Iran decide to jump right into

translating a book almost immediately after graduation. What needs to be understood is that translating literature is an art. Its quality depends on the translator's knowledge of world literature, their mastery of both languages, and their ability to pay close attention to the details and subtleties of the word selection. A good translation must flow in such a way that the reader would not feel that he is reading a text that has been translated from another language.

Luckily, more professional, experienced, and talented translators have begun doing most of the work. One of the byproducts of these efforts by the more experienced translators with strong linguistic knowledge is the creation of new words. These new words can express equal meanings of their counterparts in the original language. The creation of new words in the Farsi language has been a great contribution to the quality of translations in the last two decades.

Despite of all the negative and challenging elements which still exist today, the new generation of Iranian translators is more talented and more dedicated to converting literary works to Farsi. They seem to put more effort and dedication into the task, paying close attention to the details and subtleties of the original word choice. They make sure to have a deep understanding of the original language so their translations appear as though they were originally written in Farsi rather than a conversion from a different language. These translators are going to great lengths to ensure quality translations, not necessarily for a monetary gain, but for the love and appreciation of the power of literature.

Increasing exposure to media, along with Internet access, has made the general population of Iran better informed of other cultures. Translators now have easy access to the cultural context of the writings they translate. This allows for a deeper understanding of the writings and gives contextual reality to what needs to be translated. Readers also have greater access to information about other cultures. This access has increased the demand for quality translations by the readers. Readers now fully expect the translators to be faithful to the original style of the writer, contrary to the previous readers who were content with just the general ideas.

Although past Iranian readers seem to have been more forgiving or indifferent to poor translations, this does not seem to be the case any longer. The public is increasingly demanding and supporting better translations. Publishers and translators cannot afford to repeat past mistakes and old translation habits. The book publishing industry is beginning to realize that they can expect better returns if, instead of cutting corners, they attempt to produce higher quality products.

2. Gibran's Persian Translations in Iran

As mentioned previously, Gibran's work has gained enormous popularity amongst the general public, especially the young, in the past 15 years. This is evident by the numerous and repeated translations of most of his literary works in recent years. As an example, his masterpiece *The Prophet* has been translated and published by at least 11 different individuals in the past 14 years, and there are surely more to come.

Gibran is clearly capable of touching the soul and striking a chord within almost everyone. Over the last few decades, over 60 individuals have attempted to translate some of the same works with the hope of capturing that spirit and eloquence. However, regardless of all the efforts that have been made, it seems as though in many instances some of that eloquence and spirit of his style of writing might have been lost in these translations.

It is very obvious that if the translator, in addition to the mastery of the knowledge of both languages and cultures, shares the same philosophy, vision, and values of the author, the final product will be much truer to the original.

The literary critic Allan H. Gilbert has said:

Every translation is inevitably an adaptation...The merit of books lies in the beauty, richness, and adequacy of their symbols. The greater the work, the less it will suffer from the translation.¹

It is that greatness of Gibran's writings that still allow them to captivate his Persian readers.

3. Statistical Information on Gibran's Persian Translations in Iran

I was introduced to Gibran's work through a friend about four years ago, and immediately became very fascinated and enamored with this great man. It was just a few months ago when I undertook the task of researching Gibran's work in Farsi and looking at how he has been received in Iran.

I left my homeland of Iran about 35 years ago and have not returned since. Therefore, I wasn't expecting to learn that my fellow countrymen have been far ahead of me in knowing Gibran and studying his works. To discover Gibran's popularity and how he has captivated the Iranian's minds and hearts was a joyous surprise in itself. His works have been continuously in great demand in Iran for the past two decades. Repeated translations of each masterpiece, by over 60 translators, have gone through multiple reprints.

Due to the fact that I was not in Iran, and didn't have any direct contacts in the country, it has been challenging to carry out this research. Out of the more than 100 volumes of translated books, I only had access to a handful of them. Unlike here in the Western world, the information provided online about the contents of a book, book reviews, translators, and publishers in Iran are very limited, if available at all. Despite these limitations, I can, with great certainty, draw conclusions on the magnitude, influence, and importance of Gibran's works in Iran.

After reviewing the available information in this study, there have been at least 60 individuals (see Attachment A) who have tried their hand at the rather difficult task of translating Gibran's works to Farsi. The qualifications and reputations of these individuals are varied, and in many instances unknown. Some are well known, with years of experience in the field, and a few are first-time translators. Often, the first-time translator attempts to translate one of the lesser-known works of Gibran that had not been translated before, for example, *Al-Musiqā* translated by Mossa Beydaj, and *A Self-Portrait* translated by Zahra Hosseinian.

Najaf Darya-Bandari is one those experienced translators who has offered one of the better translations of Gibran's *The Prophet* and *The Madman*. These two translations are even available in audio book format, which is an indication of the popularity of the product. There are also those individuals like Mohsen Nikbakht who have produced many translations of Gibran's works and, in the process, have gotten little carried away with including his own thoughts and writings, while still showing Gibran as the author on the cover. For example, in his book *I Am Not a Madman*, Nikbakht starts with a translation of Gibran's *The Madman* and then continues the book with his own writings, attempting to imitate Gibran's style.

Some of the Persian translations of Gibran's works that I encountered online have such titles that once translated to English do not resemble the title of any of the known books by or about Gibran. With no additional information about the books available, and without having a copy of them, one can only guess what the original book(s) might have been. Massiha Barzegar, with many translations of Gibran's works, including Professor Bushrui's works on Gibran, has many examples of such books. I have placed these types of translations in a "compilation" or "selection" of works of Gibran category, or based on the closest resembled English or Arabic title.

A handful of translators have found a niche in translating Gibran's works, making it their specialty: gentlemen like Moosa Asvar and Mohsen Nikbakht, with more than eight titles each; Mehdi Sarhadi and Mohsen Shojaie, with more than 15 titles each; Massiha Barzegar, with 20 titles; and Ms. Simin Panahi-Fard, with eight titles, top the list.

The majority of the translations are marketed as books that include only one or two of the titles together. However, it is not uncommon to see a collection of several translations by one or two of these translators appearing in a larger volume. The best example of this is the book entitled *Shahryar Mashregh* which translates to “The Prince of The East,” referring to Gibran. This is a compilation of some of Gibran’s earlier works in Arabic and a few of his posthumous works in English. It is true that one should not judge a book by its cover; however, this rare-looking book, which is printed on high-grade golden edge paper with a golden plate displaying the title on a very impressive, embossed black cover, is definitely befitting of encasing such great literary works. It also serves as another testimony as to how much the Iranian people respect and value Gibran Khalil Gibran.

Generating a complete and accurate list of Gibran’s books, and of books related to Gibran, which have been translated to Persian requires a longer study and the availability of many additional resources. However, the following, which possibly is a semi-complete list of the titles that have been translated to Persian, should provide the reader with a gauge of how wide the reading of Gibran in Iran is. It also shows the number of times each title has been translated by different individuals. Obviously, with the assurance of a high-market demand for Gibran’s works in mind, those translators who had repeated past translations must have felt that they can do a superior job relative to their predecessors.

Title	# of translations
<u>Works in Arabic</u>	
1. <i>Music, Nubthah fi Fan Al-Musiqa</i> (1905)	at least 1
2. <i>Nymphs of the Valley, (Spirit Brides and Brides of the Prairie)</i> (1906)	at least 3
3. <i>Spirits Rebellious, al-Arwah al-Mutamarrida</i> (1908)	at least 5
4. <i>Broken Wings, al-Ajniha al-Mutakassira</i> (1912).....	at least 9
5. <i>A Tear and A Smile, Dam'a wa Ibtisama</i> (1914).....	at least 5
6. <i>The Processions, al-Mawakib</i> (1919)	at least 3
7. <i>The Tempests, al- 'Awāsif</i> (1920).....	at least 3
8. <i>The New and the Marvelous, al-Bada'i' waal-Tara'if</i> (1923).....	at least 4

Works in English, Prior to Gibran’s Death

1. *The Madman: His Parables and Poems* (1918)..... at least 9
2. *Twenty Drawings* (1919)
3. *The Forerunner* (1920)..... at least 4
4. *The Prophet* (1923)..... at least 11
5. *Sand and Foam* (1926) at least 5
6. *Kingdom of the Imagination* (1927)
7. *Jesus, the Son of Man* (1928) at least 8
8. *The Earth Gods* (1931) at least 5

Posthumous, in English

1. *The Wanderer* (1932)..... at least 6
2. *The Garden of the Prophet* (1933, completed by Barbara Young) ... at least 7
3. *Lazarus and his Beloved* (play, 1933)..... at least 1

Collections

1. *Prose Poems* (1934)..... at least 1
2. *Secrets of the Heart* (1947)..... at least 3
3. *A Treasury of Kahlil Gibran* (1951) at least 1
4. *A Self-Portrait* (1959)..... at least 1
5. *Thoughts and Meditations* (1960)..... at least 1
6. *A Second Treasury of Kahlil Gibran* (1962)
7. *Spiritual Sayings* (1962) at least 4
8. *Voice of the Master* (1963)..... at least 1

9. *Mirrors of the Soul* (1965) at least 3
10. *Between Night & Morn* (1972)..... at least 2
11. *A Third Treasury of Kahlil Gibran* (1975)
12. *The Storm* (1994)
13. *The Beloved* (1994)..... at least 2
14. *The Vision* (1994)
15. *Eye of the Prophet* (1995)..... at least 2
16. *The Treasured Writings of Kahlil Gibran* (1995)..... at least 1
17. *Beloved Prophet: The Love Letters of Kahlil Gibran and Mary Haskell, and her Private Journal* (1972)..... at least 1
18. *Miscellaneous Compilations and Selections of Gibran's Works* (exact contents unknown at this time)..... at least 12

Books by Professor Suheil Bushrui

1. *Blue Flame: The Love Letters of Kahlil Gibran to May Ziadah* (1983)
..... at least 6
2. *Kahlil Gibran of Lebanon: A Reevaluation of the Life and Works of the Author of The Prophet* (1987)
3. *Kahlil Gibran: Man and Poet* (1998)
4. *Gibran: Love Letters* (2000) at least 2
5. *Kahlil Gibran: A Spiritual Treasury* (2001)..... at least 2
6. *Gibran's Little Book of Love* (2007)..... at least 1
7. *Essential Gibran* (2007)

8. *The Little Book of Love* (2008)..... at least 1
9. *The World's Favorite Love Poems* (2008)
10. *The Art of Kahlil Gibran* (2010)

Other Related Books:

1. *The Death of a Prophet*..... at least 1

4. Conclusion and Recommendations:

The demand for translations of both Gibran’s works and books about Gibran is still high. It appears this trend will continue for years to come. Gibran, a genius indeed, has become a very influential trendsetter in a new style of literature in Iran.

Careful study and examination of the current Persian translations of Gibran’s works could shed light on what other possible measures can be taken to improve the accuracy of any future translation attempts.

Apart from those Iranians who lived in the motherland and found refuge in Gibran’s work, attention needs to be given to another community of interest: the post-Islamic Revolution Persian immigrants residing in large metropolitan cities in Europe, Canada, and the United States.

The majority of these immigrants are highly educated in literature and the arts. What we are witnessing in this group is a deep longing for a reconnection to their roots. But as they are experiencing the sad reality that they may never be able to physically actualize their reunion, they have reconciled this nostalgic desire for return by sublimating it with reading and studying art and literature in their mother language. They also turn to Gibran to accomplish this reconciliation. The recital of his poems has become an essential part of congregational programs and ceremonies such as weddings and funerals.

It is at times like these, when we hear his poems in, typically, an inadequately translated form, that the word “unfair” comes to mind. It is unfair to those listeners who are being deprived of the heart and the soul of his message.

There is a wealth of human resources available in the Persian communities residing in Europe and North America who have mastered both the English and Persian languages. It would be ideal to form a task force for the review and editing of the

currently translated works or any future attempts. This will benefit the Iranian community worldwide.

Biography

Mehrdad Michael Nosrat was born and raised in Iran. In 1976, he immigrated to the United States in pursuit of higher education. He has not visited Iran since before the 1979 Iranian Islamic Revolution, which created harsh conditions for minority groups in the country. However, he has continued to study Persian and Eastern literature, poetry, mysticism, and history in his spare time. Currently Nosrat is a licensed civil engineer residing in Los Angeles, California.

¹ Allan H. Gilbert, "Translation," *Dictionary of World Literature: Criticism, Forms, Technique*, ed. Joseph T. Shipley (Paterson: Littlefield, Adams & Company, 1960), 425.

19. THE STUDY OF KAHLIL GIBRAN IN CONTEMPORARY CHINA: NEW DEVELOPMENTS AND INFLUENCES

By Dr. Ma Zheng

At the First International Kahlil Gibran Conference, held in 1999, the famous Chinese translator Yihong presented the paper “Kahlil Gibran in China,” which concisely and correctly summarized the translation history of Gibran’s works into Chinese. Yihong pointed out that from the 1920s to the 1990s, nearly all of Gibran’s works had been translated into Chinese. Indeed, thanks to the translation and introduction of Gibran in China, the academic and comprehensive studies on Gibran have been flourishing since the 1990s. There have been two master dissertations, two doctoral dissertations, and two monographs concentrating on Gibran over the past twenty years. Furthermore, the developmental studies on Gibran not only demonstrate the growth in depth and breadth of this field, but also bring research in the area of Arab-American literature. This new development has spurred further discussions on the teaching and research of foreign and Arab literature in China.

Generally speaking, there are four main developments in the study of Gibran in contemporary China.

The first is the deepening and expanding of the study on the works of Gibran. In China, the translation and publishing of Gibran’s works have flourished, as he is one of the most important Arab writers. However, despite great praise for Gibran as “a pride of our Orientals” and “the eastern wiseman” (sic) who enjoyed equal fame with Tagore, objective and academic research on Gibran has been lacking for many years.¹ It was only in the 1990s that objective, rational, and comprehensive academic study on the works of Gibran reached the new breadth and depth it now enjoys.

The Prophet and *A Tear and A Smile* are some of the most influential Gibran works for Chinese readers and researchers because of their thoughts, aesthetic values, and the high quality of their translations. The most famous translator of *The Prophet* into Chinese is Bingxin, who also enjoyed high recognition for her prose writing. Her elegant and tasteful translation of *The Prophet*, considered the most classical Chinese translation among nearly ten other versions, spurred further reception and understanding of Gibran. It quickly became one of the most important and fundamental texts for Chinese researchers.

There has also been a recent trend to analyze different Chinese translations of *The Prophet* from a linguistic perspective. In the past five years, at least three papers have studied the notion of death, rhymes, and ecological thoughts in *The Prophet*. The Chinese translations of *The Prophet* also attracted some English language researchers. For example, “The Aesthetic Features of the Chinese Translation of *The*

Prophet” analyzes “the beauties of language and philosophy”² of the translated work by Bingxin and compares it to the original *Prophet* in English. Another notable article is “The Language of Gibran’s Poems and the Principles of Translating His Works—*The Prophet* and *Sand and Foam*,” published by Huang Shaozheng. This paper points out that the Chinese translation of Gibran’s poems should, besides a literal translation of the text, notice the tone, lingering charm, inner rhythms of free verse, and the “Bible style” of the book.³ In *Gibran in China*, Gan Lijuan not only talks about the translation of *The Prophet* in mainland China and Taiwan, but also offers a beneficial discussion on *The Prophet* as translated by Qian Mansu, Xiaoyu, and Bingxin.⁴

Because of its harmonious and beautiful rhymes in Chinese, *A Tear and A Smile*, translated by Zhong Jikun, a famous Arabic literary translator in China, is now included in the Chinese language textbooks of junior middle schools. This has further attracted some teachers and researchers to its study.

In addition, there are a number of other papers on Gibran, such as “*The Earth Gods: The Dialogues on the Meaning of Life*”⁵; “Rebuilding the Holiness of Life and the Metaphorical Meaning of the Jesus Image in *Jesus, the Son of Man*”⁶; “The Style of the Bible: The Study of Gibran’s Genre of English Literature”⁷; and one paper about *The Madman* and *The Forerunner*. Since 2000, the perspectives of the studies on literary works written by Gibran have widened in scope and breadth. Some papers discuss the features of the thoughts and forms of his prose poetry, while some researchers study the ecological, religious, or Sufi thoughts in his works. Some examples include: “The Ecological Artist—The Ecological Thoughts of Gibran,” published by Guojie⁸; “On Gibran’s Transcendental Religious Notion,” published by Zhang Lina⁹; and “A Brief Analysis of Gibranism and Sufism,” published by Zheng Ma.¹⁰

The comparative study of Gibran from a cross-cultural perspective truly deepens the literary study of his work. Lin Fengmin is the earliest scholar to have completed a comparative study on Gibran in China. In Peking University in 1992, Fengmin completed his master’s dissertation about the parallel comparison of Gibran and the modern Chinese writer Wen Yiduo. Besides this, Fengmin is the first scholar to compare Gibran to one of the foremost Western writers, Walt Whitman, in his paper “Whitman and the Arab Immigrant Poet Gibran,” published in 2002.¹¹ There have also been four papers since the 1990s comparing Gibran to the famous modern Chinese writer Luxun.

In 2006, I completed the first Chinese doctoral dissertation on Gibran, “The Literary Study on Kahlil Gibran in the Western Context,” at Sichuan University. I drew from the contemporary English studies on Gibran, especially regarding the creative notion that his English literature is an important part of American literary legacy, as

advanced by Suheil Bushrui. Through historical investigation and analysis, my dissertation studies the close relationship between Gibran's literary publications and Western culture. In my opinion, the life and works of Gibran are an important part of modern American literary and art circles. The "holiness" motif in his English works is identical with the soul of modern Western context. In China, this is the first investigation and analysis of the close relationship between Gibran's literature and his Western background. This dissertation is regarded as a "pioneer" in the study of Gibran by some specialists.

In the following three years, I continued my post-doctoral study on Gibran at Beijing Normal University, and in 2010, I published the first comprehensive monograph on Gibran in China, *The Study on Kahlil Gibran in an Intercultural Perspective*. Based on the results of my doctoral dissertation and postdoctoral research, this book studies Gibran's influence on the relations between Arab-Islamic and Western culture. Thus, the cross-cultural study on Gibran became an important trend in China and further spurred the study of Arab-American literature.

I have attempted to pioneer the study of Arab-American literature in China. Since 2010, grant funded projects directed by myself, in addition to my papers and articles, prove that the study of Arab American literature has received notice in the Chinese academic field.

In 2010, the project "The Study of Early Arab-American Literature" was supported by the Chinese Ministry of Education. In 2012, the project "The Study of Arab-American Literature" was supported by the National Social Science, which is the highest-ranking social science fund in China. In 2012, that program received a major award from the China Postdoctoral Science Foundation, and "The Study of Contemporary Arab American Literature" was chosen by The Young Core Teachers of Colleges and Universities in Henan Province. In the same year, the China Scholarship Council supported my visit to The George and Lisa Zakhem Kahlil Gibran Chair for Values and Peace in the Department of Anthropology at the University of Maryland.

Since 2011, I have published or presented papers and speeches including "Arab-American Literature: Beyond the East and the West"¹²; "The Rediscovering and Study of Ameen Rihani in the Contemporary English World"¹³; "Arab-American Literature: Research Status and Values"¹⁴; "The English Works Written by Ameen Rihani and its Contributions to Arab-American Literature"¹⁵; and "Kahlil Gibran: One of the Founders of Arab-American Literature,"¹⁶ in China's important newspapers, periodicals, and at academic symposiums. Apparently, the study of Arab-American literature, beginning from the cross-cultural study on Kahlil Gibran, remains an active research area in China today.

The study of his personal life is the second main development in contemporary China's work on Gibran.

Because of his rich and complex life and his emotional experiences, Gibran's journals and letters with Mary Haskell, May Ziadeh, Mikhail Naimy, and Ameen Rihani are widely read in China. As early as 1994, Gibran's letters and journals were collected and edited into *The Complete Works of Gibran* by Yihong,¹⁷ and in his foreword, Yihong studies Gibran's literary, artistic, and emotional worlds. In 2001, Xue Qingguo, who later translated and introduced the works written by Adonis, the Arab immigrant poet in France, translated and published *The Love Letters of Gibran*. This book collects 209 letters which Gibran wrote to Mary Haskell and May Ziadeh. With an introductory phrase, "Love is like the blue flame," the translator interprets Gibran's love for Mary Haskell and May Ziadeh with subtle emotion and style.¹⁸ More recently, in 2004, *The Complete Works of Gibran's Love Letters* was translated and published by Li Weizhong.

Since the 1990s, the study of Gibran's philosophy has become more and more objective and penetrating. "Gibran's Sorrow and Fortune as a Stranger," written by Li Yuejin, was the first paper to discuss Gibran's psychology and how it is represented in his works.¹⁹ In 2002 and 2005, I published two papers, "*The Broken Wings and the Writer's Inner World*"²⁰ and "Idealized Self and Gibran's Literary World,"²¹ that probe into Gibran's creation psychology. In the monograph *The Study on Kahlil Gibran in an Intercultural Perspective*, I consider his "holy" lifestyle through two most unusual incidents in his life: giving up marriage and his special attitude towards death, combining the "holiness" motif in his literature.

Among others, the contemporary American biographies of Gibran provide a referential source for Chinese researchers. On December 15, 2007, in the seminar of "The Study of Biographies on Eastern Writers" held at Peking University, I presented the paper "The Analysis on Contemporary English Biographies of Gibran," which comparatively analyzed two contemporary American representative biographies: *Kahlil Gibran: His Life and World* and *Kahlil Gibran: Man and Poet*. This paper holds that, unlike the mystification of Gibran in the English descriptions in the early 20th century, contemporary American biographies take a more objective and academic position. These two works in particular complement each other with their respective strong points and characteristics.

In addition, in the "2010 Annual Meeting of the Study of Arab Literature" held at Peking University, I spoke on the developments of English biographies on Gibran and pointed out the deficiency of the studies on his life in China, suggesting that Chinese researchers should learn from the contemporary American biographies and write an academic biography on Gibran in China, from an objective standpoint. My opinion has influenced the beginning of the translation of American biographies and

the writing of such an academic biography. China Social Science Publishing House has obtained the translation copyrights to *Kahlil Gibran: His Life and World*, and the translation or writing of this form of Gibran biography will be an enormous potential research area in China.

The study of the reception and influence of Gibran in China is the third main development. Gibran works translated into Chinese from the 1920s reached high levels in three different periods during those years. Most of the translators and introducers were celebrities or famous writers such as Maodun, Zhang Wentian, Liu Tingfang, Bingxin, Shi Zhecun, Lin Xijia, Xi Murong, Fu Peirong, Lin Qingxuan, Aiqing, Shuting, etc. These writers claim they love the works of Gibran or are influenced by his works. So the study of the translation and influence of Gibran in China has been an unavoidable topic in the study of Gibran himself, and this topic is expanding and deepening, showing great potential.

In 1999, Chinese scholar Ge Tieying began a column called “Arabian Booktalk” for the periodical *The Study of Arab World*, using the pseudonym Gaishuang, to discuss the association between Chinese celebrities and Arab literature. In these discussions, two articles refer to the reception of Gibran in China. One is the story of Bingxin and Arab literature. According to this article, Bingxin’s translation of *The Prophet* is the first translation from English into another language, as it is believed in China.²² Another article shares little-known anecdotes of some important translators of Gibran in the early period.²³ In 2008 and 2009, I published two papers about Gibran’s image in China and in the United States, highlighting the different images of Gibran in those two countries. In China, Gibran is an “eastern wiseman” (sic). However, in America, Gibran’s image is that of “a pioneer Arab American writer and artist.” These different images represent different national perceptions.²⁴

In 2010 and 2011, Gan Lijuan completed her doctoral dissertation and published a second Chinese monograph, *Gibran in China*, which systematically studies the translation and reception of his life and work. More importantly, this book notices the influence of the works of Gibran on Chinese writers, and notes that this field will expand in the future.²⁵

The series of questions initiated by the studies of Gibran are the fourth main development. These questions show that contemporary studies on Gibran stimulate a profound intellectual enlightenment for Chinese scholars. Besides approaching these questions in my monograph *The Study on Kahlil Gibran in an Intercultural Perspective*, I published some papers to discuss these questions in periodicals. In my opinion, the study of Gibran can enlighten some disciplinary and theoretical questions of Arab and foreign literary teaching and research in China. For example, the study of Gibran reminds Chinese researchers of the necessities of studying “cross-cultural writers” in relation to their different cultures, the religious

connotations of foreign literature, the reconstruction of foreign literary history in China, and the study of relations between Arab-Islamic literature and Western literature.

Among these questions, the most important is the characteristics of Arab-Islamic culture and literature. Because of the Arab-Islamic culture's special location and interactions with Eastern and Western cultures in history, one of its most prominent features is the fact that it is inter-cultural. Although it has been included in "the Oriental" from the Westerner's standpoint, Arab-Islamic culture is an inclusive culture with different regional variations. According to the opinion of the historian Ahmad Ameen, Arab-Islamic culture is comprised of three kinds of cultures: the original Arab culture, the Islamic culture, and the foreign cultures including the Persian, Greece, Roman, Indian, and so on.²⁶ For example, to some extent the religious spirit of Arab-Islamic culture is closer to the Western culture than Eastern. The different receptions of Gibran in America and China provide good examples. Western readers usually identify with the religious sense in Gibran's works, so his works with stronger religious connotations are more popular there. However, Chinese readers pay more attention to the Eastern wisdom in his works, and highlight *The Storm* as "close[r] to the Arab and [E]astern reality and more powerful and revolutionary."²⁷

Moreover, Arab-Islamic culture connects and interacts with the Eastern and Western cultures in history, so it is necessary to study Arab-Islamic literature through analyzing the relations among world cultures. For example, Sufism spread to the European and American world, India, Russia, and China, and it influenced both world thought and literature. *The Arabian Nights* and *The Rubaiyat* not only belong to the Arab world, but also belong to the literary legacy heritage of the world.

Indeed, the real classics belong to the whole world, transcending East and West, and brightening the harmonious world with cultural diversity. Perhaps Gibran's work may sound a bit different, but people all over the world can hear his words, feel them, and understand them. This is what Gibran's work has achieved, "love, beauty and life," the eternal topic which is shared and appreciated by people from different nations as well as different cultures.

Biography

Dr. Zheng Ma is an associate professor from Henan University in China. Her main research interests are in the study of Kahlil Gibran, Ameen Rihani, and Arab-American literature, as well as the comparative study of Arab-Islamic and Western culture. Dr. Zheng Ma received her PhD from Sichuan University in 2006 and completed the first doctoral thesis and monograph on Kahlil Gibran in China. She serves as director of The Study of Early Arab-American Literature, which is

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20. GIBRAN'S RIPPLES IN THE LAND DOWN UNDER

By Joseph Wakim

The Land Down Under is not immune from the social tsunamis that are beached on its shores such as desperate refugees. These boat-people flee from collapsed regimes, some of which Australia has proudly aided to overthrow. They are part of a global humanitarian conflict that has been treated as a regional border protection crisis. Gibran sheds light on the amorphous and divisive nature of borders, while cyberspace has both resurrected homelands and created a global village. As the world's multicultural metropolis, Australia endeavors to reconcile with the colonial genocide of its indigenous people and its Islamophobic moral panic, begging some soul-searching over identity.

While my widowed body was unable to leave the nest to bask in the glory of this historic summit, my free spirit danced across the Pacific Ocean like a migratory bird to witness the hatching of ideas. It is both ironic and comic that I am writing about peace under the shadow of a rod that I made for my own back, a rod that is as compelling as the whispering wisdom of our esteemed and beloved professor: He who humbles himself will be exalted.

My first encounter with Gibran via his Bsharri museum in 1988 was uneventful. My relatives from the neighboring village of Bekaa Kafra, birthplace of Saint Charbel, used their *wasta* (connections) to open the museum for our private tour, as it was closed intermittently during the war. A lute player greeted us, and his melancholy melodies resonated in the chambers of the former monastery, but they did not resonate in the chambers of my heart.

Instead, I felt smothered by what I then believed were depictions of naked and tormented souls. In this village on a misty mountain, I felt as if I were wallowing in a miserable valley. My experience with the (un)civil war was riddled with other paradoxes: my relatives who often bunked underground with candles and tuna cans would feast and dance on most nights. Yet in Australia, "the land of plenty," we would collectively sigh and whinge about what was missing. While the Lebanese bodies were unable to leave their nest, their spirits could never be caged.

After I married later that same year, Gibran remained an elusive companion, ever present in the corner of my eye. It was not until I was widowed that his words and wisdom began to resonate, front and center. I had to be still and listen, as his voice could not be heard in the din of haste. Like a mature wine, his offering had to be sipped slowly, and savoured for the meaningful moments.

Gibran's disdain for the notion of "otherness" paralleled my relentless efforts to combat racism in my adopted homeland Down Under (Australia). His vision for a world where leaders were responsible, where governments were just, and where people were safe is evident in many of his works. He wrote to have his message heard; he painted to reach those who may not read; and his spirituality transcended his creativity. I too, through the tool of print media, have become a writer of messages, a learner of responses, and a believer of ultimate good. "Faith is the oasis of the heart which cannot be reached by the caravan of thinking."¹

Australian society can be perceived as three mountains exchanging smoke signals, where populations sometimes hoist their flag on the summit, and at other times visit the Other. The indigenous aboriginals have both a physical and spiritual connection to Mother Earth through their Dreamtime version of Creation. From their mountain, they saw the arrival of a foreign race whose skin was as white as ghosts. These ghosts hastened to hoist their own flag, the Union Jack, on the mountains of *terra nullius*—a land without a people.

Then the migrants flocked from all corners of the earth, by sea and by air, by choice or by circumstance. They became the new Other. This last group was encouraged to build mountains and hoist their cultural flag to enrich this vast continent in the spirit of multiculturalism.

The challenge was then to visit each other's mountains and campsites rather than create cozy cocoons and turn their backs on the other mountains. Do they merely notice each other's smoke signals or navigate their way through the valleys—engaging, exchanging, enlightening each other, until there was no Other?

I see myself a stranger in land and an Alien among one people. Yet all the earth is my homeland and the human family is my tribe. For I have seen that man is weak and divided upon himself. And the earth is narrow and in its folly cuts itself into kingdoms and principalities.²

The indigenous aboriginals have had a sacred and continuous connection to their motherland for over 40 millennia. When the white sails of 11 convict ships appeared on their horizon in 1788, an awesome spectre that inspired the iconic Sydney Opera House, the aboriginals had no idea that the imminent invasion would change their world forever.

The invaders brought firearms, violence, disease, criminals, and Western "civilisation." This inhuman tragedy is not peculiar to Australia, especially at that time when other European conquests sought to hoist their flags to expand their respective empires. The real trauma was the Other law of relativity: the invaders

arrogantly and honestly believed that what they were doing was right to civilize these natives. The way we see the world places *us* at the center and anyone who is not *Us* as *Other*.

As successive shiploads of British convicts in the eighteenth century morphed into planeloads of European and Asian and every other type of emigrant in the twentieth century, the skin colour was no longer black or white. The third *Other* had arrived, refugees from war-torn countries who literally kissed Australian soil, and hoisted their own flag in an effort to cut-and-paste their life.

While anti-immigration sentiments had bubbled away in the background, these xenophobic voices reached a fever-pitch when different sails traversed our horizon in the twenty-first century. These boat people epitomized the ultimate *Other* and everything that the British descendants feared; the *Other* to be feared was now the dark-skinned Muslims.

Ironically, the descendants of those white seaborne invaders now fear the dark seaborne invaders. However, the irony runs deeper. Imagine a child decides to destroy an anthill. He enjoys the power of flattening it to the ground and trampling on the escapees as the colony literally runs for its life to escape genocide. To the child, they were simply small black dots and he has no emotional connection to these faceless crawling creatures. To the child, they all look identical and are therefore dispensable. To the child, they are two dimensional objects of no value.

While the child sleeps at night, the “holocaust” survivors pick up the fragmented pieces, regroup collectively, and seek a new home. They head for the nearest shelter which is the veranda closest to this child’s bedroom window. They find food crumbs inside his bedroom and create a long trail inside.

When the child wakes up to a tingling sensation on his toes, he notices not just an ant, but an invasion. He leaps up in fear and anger. How dare they exist *here* of all places? Why *me*? Why in *my* home? How did they walk through my *walls*? Why are they now my *problem*?

The child cannot join the black dots all the way back to the anthill in chapter one. He sees no connection between cause and effect, between rights and responsibilities, between the invader and the invaded.

This metaphor mirrors the national moral panic over border protection and boat people that has consumed too much political discourse in Australia for over 10 years. Like the child, our political leaders have failed to join the dots.

Our nation was a proud partner in the Coalition of the Willing that overthrew the Iraqi regime in 2003, at the cost of the thousands who perished in the crossfire. We proudly participated in a coalition that used weapons of mass destruction to destroy a regime that we mistakenly accused of possessing weapons of mass destruction. We aided and abetted the operation that recklessly trampled over their colony until it was flattened and scorched, all in the name of freedom and democracy.

The mass exodus of refugees across many borders as they literally ran for their lives without their passports was inconsequential and incidental to the theatrical toppling of the Saddam statue. Our coalition rendered families homeless and stateless, and the lost passports rendered them nameless. “Collateral damage” was the euphemism for these (in)human fatalities, the “unintended civilian casualties by a military operation.”³

If you sit upon a cloud you will not see the boundary line between one country and another, nor the boundary stone between one farm and another. It is a pity you cannot sit upon a cloud.⁴

Gibran’s notion of no boundaries between countries is pertinent in the discourse on “border protection.”

Similarly, Australia’s proud participation in the military campaign *Operation Enduring Freedom* to dismantle al Qaeda in Afghanistan since 2001 rendered similar results. The minority groups caught in the crossfire fled to escape the fire from above.

In both cases, those desperately fleeing sought a safer haven. When opportunities and promises were offered by people smugglers, this was embraced as hope.

Nowhere in the public or political discourse did Australia see any moral connection drawn between its military role in rendering them homeless, and our responsibility to offer them a home.

Instead, they are caged like chickens behind barbed wire detention centers for “processing.” They are conveniently out of sight, out of mind, on some remote island, as an “offshore solution.” Our national borders are sacred, and these outsiders must be quarantined until deemed deserving.

As the spectre of these leaky boats appeared like small black dots on Australian ocean horizons, typically from Indonesia to northwestern Australia, they were demonized as potential terrorists, diseased vagrants, queue jumpers, Islamic fanatics, mini Bin Ladens. In short, the quintessential Other.

Your most radiant garment is of the other person's weaving; your most savoury meal is that which you eat at the other person's table; your most comfortable bed is in the other person's house. Now tell me how can you separate yourself from the other person.⁵

The Islamophobia triggered by al Qaeda's terrorist attacks in 2001 was compounded by fear of homegrown terrorists, gangs, rapists, bikies, and other criminal activities—all labelled as Islamic. The ultimate solution was to ship them all back to their country, even though the youth in question were Australian-born, had no home abroad, and were more influenced by the Afro-American rappers than any Muslim *mufti*.

This was epitomized in December 2005 when more than 5,000 intoxicated white Australians descended upon Cronulla Beach chanting, "No more Lebs." The ugly spectre turned violent as the mob targeted anyone of dark skin. It made global headlines crossing many borders, juxtaposed against the sandy beaches of Australia's national border.

Hence, there was a perceived continuum of black dots between al Qaeda globally, the boat people nationally, and the criminal "other" locally.

The obsession with the national borders on this island continent ignores the global refugee tsunami where people are fleeing war, occupation, genocide, torture, persecution, famine, or sinking islands. Amongst the insanity, the one sane fact is that migration is here to stay. On one hand, we are proud of our commitment to the UN Conventions on Refugees, but on the other hand, we want to keep them at arm's length.

We are all seeking the summit of the Holy Mountain, but shall not our road be shorter if we consider the past a chart and not a guide.⁶

What is missing in this xenophobia is perspective on the current realities:

Australia only receives about 0.5% of the 1.18 million new global asylum applications.

The number of boat people who reach Australia in one year is equivalent to the number who reach Italy in one weekend.

Australia is ranked forty-seventh as a world refugee host country.

In Australia, there is only one refugee for every 1000 people, which is *a tenth of one per cent* of the population.

About 44% of asylum seekers arrive by boat and 56% by air, yet the *boat* arrivals are more likely to be granted refugee status.

Ninety-seven percent of Iraqi and 92% of Afghani “boat people” (Irregular Maritime Arrivals) are deemed to be *genuine* refugees.

The highest number of illegal immigrants includes those who overstay their visas, most of whom come from the US and the UK.

There is no evidence that asylum seekers who have arrived in Australia by boat have connections to terrorism.

Is it not that they have fled from the same things we fear?⁷

Australia’s second longest-serving Prime Minister, John Howard, protracted his political term and won the 2002 election by lying about the “children overboard,” a fabricated story that these Others were so inhuman that they would throw their children overboard a sinking boat because they were so selfish. It propelled the government’s propaganda that Australia definitely does not want “people like that” on our soil. Australians were literally sucked in to the story because it neatly joined the dots.

Tony Abbott, Australia’s next Prime Minister hopeful, has parroted the same theme of “Stop the Boats” throughout the 2010 federal election campaign, galvanizing the sentiment against these black dots. This is ironic given that Australia’s national anthem sings in joyful strains: “For those who’ve come across the seas, we’ve boundless plains to share.”

Catholic Abbott did not join the dots back to about 2000 years ago when another family took their baby Jesus and fled King Herod’s mass murder of newborn boys. The family feared for the life of their baby and were prepared to cross as many borders as necessary to save his life.

So long as the boatloads of Others remained faceless and nameless, they could be dehumanized. So long as Australians believed that they had nothing in common with the Others, they could be detained out of sight and therefore out of mind. So long as Australians could be blinded by the discourse on boats, there was no need to have dialogue with people.

This is why the Australian government panicked when the media attended a secret burial at Rookwood Cemetery in Sydney in February 2011, and filmed an eight-year-old boy, Sinan Khaligy, sobbing uncontrollably as his father was laid to rest. The boy

was a survivor of a tragic shipwreck off Christmas Island on December 15, 2010, where 50 asylum seekers perished. His heartfelt grief for his father was repeatedly replayed on news bulletins nationally, and it was impossible not to be moved at this raw re-humanization.

These scenes highlighted the most threatening aspect of their difference: they are *not* so different. If we listen to their narratives, from chapter one—their love of family, their fear of persecution, their experience of war, their loss of relatives, their prayer for a safe haven—They become Us.

You are my brother and I love you. I love you when you prostrate yourself in your mosque, and kneel in your church, and pray in your synagogue. You and I are the sons of one faith—the Spirit. And those that are set up as heads over its many branches are as fingers on the hand of divinity that points to the Spirit's perfection.⁸

However, the Australian government's message has been that these black dots were not like us and did not share our values. This enabled Australia to define itself by who it was *not* rather than who it was. Yet the Howard government spearheaded a national debate to define Australian values in 2006. How can the Other be jealous of our values if we do not even know our values?

Australian politicians capitalized on the Beaconsfield gold mine rescue in Tasmania in May 2006, where an earthquake triggered the collapse of a gold mine in this Tasmanian town on April 25, 2006. The locals and the nation pooled together to orchestrate a historic rescue mission after two survivors were trapped a kilometer under the ground until May 9, when they were brought to safety.

Australian politicians defined Australian values as integrity, respect, freedom, honesty, mateship, and courage. But I was trapped in the war inside Lebanon that same year, and personally witnessed these same values on display. Were the Lebanese therefore Australians?

The debate on values became the framework from which the perceived non-Australians, such as the Muslims and boat people, could be framed and hung. It divided Australian society into the “valuers” and the valued.

As a metaphor for the relationship between white Australians (valuers) and subsequent settlers (valued), Australia could be the name of the motherland and the citizens are her children. Some citizens assume their place to be close to the heart of the mother. They sit in her lap and pretend that they are the natural heirs to her

throne. They kiss the mother's cheek and experience love. They gaze down upon the adopted children at the feet of this mother.

The adopted children are not the same and must be kept at arm's length, preferably at foot's length. The adopted children must always be reminded to kiss their mother's feet and to feel privileged to drink the milk of this motherland. The natural children have inherited unconditional love, while the metaphoric adopted children need to earn that love, and conditions apply.

Successive Australian prime ministers are the voice of the motherland, humming a bedtime lullaby about these adopted children being valued, not loved.

One of the most defining moments in Australia's history was "Sorry Day" on February 13, 2008, when former Australian Prime Minister Kevin Rudd issued a public apology to the stolen generations of indigenous people:

The hurt, the humiliation, the degradation, and the sheer brutality of the act of physically separating a mother from her children is a deep assault on our senses and on our most elemental sense of humanity. These stories cry out to be heard, they cry out for an apology...The time has come...for all Australians, those who are indigenous and those who are not to come together, truly reconcile, and together build a truly great nation.⁹

Rudd spoke of removing a "stain from the soul of Australia." The power of that gesture, reconciling the indigenous inhabitants with the white colonizers, and acknowledging the profound injustice and scars, was historically healing because it rewrote history with the truth.

And the Other became Us.

Australia has struggled to define the uniqueness of its national culture because virtually every culture lives within its borders. It continues to debate its national identity as it straddles its indigenous inhabitants, its Asian geography, its British inheritance, and its American alliance.

Perhaps this is a futile journey, as the nation-state is a notional state rather than a state of being. The closest Australia may come to a national identity may lie in the unique aboriginal art—a series of colored dots on a canvass, like stars in the night sky. And yes, there are many small black dots which make big beautiful images when put into perspective.

The wisdom of Gibran may be the torchbearer to guide Australians out of their soul-searching tunnel towards their personal and national identity.

The advent of social media that transcends national boundaries has devalued this journey of creating a national identity. Individuals derive identity from multiple cultural and sub-cultural groupings of inheritance and choice, respectively.

We have already seen how exiled people from Arab countries have used social media to mobilize and collaborate from abroad. They can retain their national identity from beyond the national borders. Social media has enabled global mass-movements in city centers, and oppressive governments are seeking ways of disabling them. While national borders are part of the domain that governments conventionally controlled, cyberspace is beyond territorial control and stretches beyond the very long arm of the law.

Cyberspace has also enabled the virtual resurrection of homelands along bygone borders, such as Assyria. These websites enable virtual tours of the old nation, language courses, and even matchmaking to perpetuate that identity.

As Gibran knew last century, national borders cannot define individual identity, especially when they are eroded and transcended by the tsunami of social media.

Biography

Joseph Wakim is one of Australia's most prolific freelance opinion writers. Hailing from Lebanon, he founded the Australian Arabic Council which produced a TV documentary *Zero to Zenith: Arabic Contributions Down Under*. He was the youngest ever appointed Commissioner for Multicultural Affairs and awarded the Order of Australia Medal for his anti-racism campaigns. He also composes for his band *The Heartbeats* and is writing his first book on his journey as an accidental advocate.

¹ Kahlil Gibran, *Sand and Foam* (New York: A. A. Knopf, 1926), 71.

² Kahlil Gibran, *A Tear and a Smile*, 33rd ed (New York: A.A. Knopf, 1989), 190.

³ [<http://www.thefreedictionary.com/collateral+damage>].

⁴ *Sand and Foam*, 81.

⁵ *Sand and Foam*, 30.

⁶ *Sand and Foam*, 57.

⁷ Main sources:

<http://www.aph.gov.au/library/pubs/bn/sp/AsylumFacts.pdf>

<http://www.sbs.com.au/news/article/1295782/asylum-seekers-myths-and-facts>

http://www.ajustaustralia.com/informationandresources_factsandstatistics.php

⁸ *A Tear and a Smile*, 193.

⁹ Excerpt from Prime Minister Kevin Rudd's "Sorry Speech."

