

Kahlil Gibran

Gibran Khalil Gibran (Arabic: جبران خليل جبران, ALA-LC: *Jubrān Khalīl Jubrān*, pronounced [ʒʊˈbrɑːn xɑˈliːl ʒʊˈbrɑːn], or *Jibrān Khalīl Jibrān*, pronounced [ʒɪˈbrɑːn xɑˈliːl ʒɪˈbrɑːn];^[a] January 6, 1883 – April 10, 1931), usually referred to in English as **Kahlil Gibran**^[b] (pronounced /kɑːˈliːl dʒɪˈbrɑːn/ *kah-LEEL ji-BRAHN*),^[3] was a

Lebanese-American writer, poet and visual artist, also considered a philosopher although he himself rejected the title.^[4] He is best known as the author of *The Prophet*, which was first published in the United States in 1923 and has since become one of the best-selling books of all time, having been translated into more than 100 languages.^[c] Born in a village of the Ottoman-ruled Mount Lebanon Mutasarrifate to a Maronite family, the young Gibran immigrated with his mother and siblings to the United States in 1895.

As his mother worked as a seamstress, he was enrolled at a school in Boston, where his creative abilities were quickly noticed by a teacher who presented him to photographer and publisher F. Holland Day. Gibran was sent back to his native land by his family at the age of fifteen to enroll at the Collège de la Sagesse in Beirut. Returning to Boston upon his youngest sister's death in 1902, he lost his older half-brother and his mother the following year, seemingly relying afterwards on his remaining sister's

income from her work at a dressmaker's shop for some time.

Kahlil Gibran

جبران خليل جبران



Gibran in 1913

Born

January 6, 1883

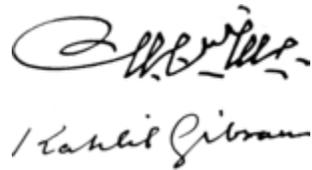
Bsharri, Mount

Lebanon

Died	<u>Mutasarrifate,</u> <u>April 10, 1931</u> <u>Ottoman Syria</u> (aged 48) <u>New York City,</u> United States
Resting place	Bsharri, Lebanon
Nationality	<u>Lebanese</u> and <u>American</u>
Occupation	Writer, poet, visual artist, philosopher
Notable work	<u><i>The Prophet</i></u> , <u><i>The Madman</i></u> , <u><i>Broken Wings</i></u>
Movement	<u>Mahjar</u> (Arabic

literature), Symbolism

Signature



The image shows a handwritten signature in black ink. The signature is written in a cursive style and reads "Khalil Gibran". Below the signature, the name "Khalil Gibran" is printed in a smaller, black, serif font.

In 1904, Gibran's drawings were displayed for the first time at Day's studio in Boston, and his first book in Arabic was published in 1905 in New York City. With the financial help of a newly-met benefactress, Mary Haskell, Gibran studied art in Paris from 1908 to 1910. While there, he came in contact with Syrian political thinkers

promoting rebellion in the Ottoman Empire after the Young Turk Revolution;^[6] some of Gibran's writings, voicing the same ideas as well as anti-clericalism,^[7] would eventually be banned by the Ottoman authorities.^[8] In 1911, Gibran settled in New York, where his first book in English, *The Madman*, would be published by Alfred A. Knopf in 1918 with writing of *The Prophet* or *The Earth Gods* also underway.^[9] His visual artwork was shown at Montross Gallery in 1914,^[10] and at the galleries of M. Knoedler & Co. in 1917. He

had also been corresponding remarkably with May Ziadeh since 1912.^[8] In 1920, Gibran re-founded the Pen League with fellow Mahjari poets. By the time of his death at the age of 48 from cirrhosis and incipient tuberculosis in one lung, he had achieved literary fame on "both sides of the Atlantic Ocean,"^[11] and *The Prophet* had already been translated into German and French. His body was transferred to his birth village of Bsharri (in present-day Lebanon), to which he had bequeathed all future royalties on his books, and where a

museum dedicated to his works now stands.

As worded by Suheil Bushrui and Joe Jenkins, Gibran's life has been described as one "often caught between Nietzschean rebellion, Blakean pantheism and Sufi mysticism."^[8] Gibran discussed different themes in his writings, and explored diverse literary forms. Salma Khadra Jayyusi has called him "the single most important influence on Arabic poetry and literature during the first half of [the

twentieth] century,"^[12] and he is still celebrated as a literary hero in Lebanon.^[13] At the same time, "most of Gibran's paintings expressed his personal vision, incorporating spiritual and mythological symbolism,"^[14] with art critic Alice Raphael recognizing in the painter a classicist, whose work owed "more to the findings of Da Vinci than it [did] to any modern insurgent."^[15] His "prodigious body of work" has been described as "an artistic legacy to people of all nations."^[16]

Life

Childhood

...



The Gibran family in the 1880s^[d]

The Gibran family's home in Bsharri, Lebanon

Gibran was born January 6, 1883, in the village of Bsharri in the Mount Lebanon Mutasarrifate, Ottoman Empire (modern-day Lebanon).^[17] His parents, Khalil Sa'd Gibran^[17] and Kamila Rahmeh, the daughter of a priest, were Maronite Christians. Kamila was thirty when Gibran was born, and Gibran's father, Khalil, was her third husband.^[18] Gibran had two younger sisters, Marianna and Sultana, and a half-brother, Boutros, from one of Kamila's previous marriages. As a result of his family's poverty, Gibran received no

formal schooling for his first twelve years in Lebanon: in 1888, Gibran entered Bsharri's one-class school which was run by a priest, and where he learnt the rudiments of Arabic, Syriac, and arithmetic.^{[19][20][21]}

Gibran's father Khalil initially worked in an apothecary, but with gambling debts he was unable to pay. He went to work for a local Ottoman-appointed administrator.^{[22][23]} In 1891, while acting as a tax collector, he was removed and his

staff was investigated.^[24] Khalil was imprisoned for embezzlement,^[25] and his family's property was confiscated by the authorities. Kamila decided to follow her brother to the United States. Although Khalil was released in 1894, Kamila remained resolved and left for New York on June 25, 1895, taking Boutros, Gibran, Marianna and Sultana with her.^[22]



F. Holland Day, c. 1898



Photograph of Gibran by F. Holland Day, c. 1898

Kamila and her children settled in Boston's South End, at the time the second-largest Syrian-Lebanese-American community^[26]

in the United States. Gibran entered the Josiah Quincy School on September 30, 1895. School officials placed him in a special class for immigrants to learn English. His name was registered using the anglicized spelling 'Kahlil Gibran'.^[2]^[27] His mother began working as a seamstress^[24] peddler, selling lace and linens that she carried from door to door. His elder half-brother Boutros opened a shop. Gibran also enrolled in an art school at Denison House, a nearby settlement house. Through his teachers there, he was

introduced to the avant-garde Boston artist, photographer and publisher F. Holland Day,^[25] who encouraged and supported Gibran in his creative endeavors. In March 1898, Gibran met Josephine Preston Peabody, eight years older than him, at an exhibition of Day's photographs "in which Gibran's face was a major subject."^[28] Gibran would develop a romantic attachment to her.^[29] The same year, a publisher used some of Gibran's drawings for book covers.



The Collège maronite de la Sagesse in Beirut

Kamila and Boutros wanted Gibran to absorb more of his own heritage rather than just the Western aesthetic culture he was attracted to.^[24] Thus, at the age of 15, Gibran returned to his homeland to study three years at the Collège de la Sagesse, a Maronite-run institute in Beirut. In his final year at the school, he created a student

magazine with other students, among whom Youssef Howayek (who would remain a lifelong friend of his),^[30] and he was made the "college poet."^[30] Gibran graduated from the school at eighteen with high honors, then went to Paris to learn painting, visiting Greece, Italy, and Spain on his way there from Beirut.^[31] On April 2, 1902, Sultana died, aged 14, from what seems to have been tuberculosis.^[30] Upon learning about it, Gibran returned to Boston, arriving two weeks after Sultana's death.^{[30][e]} The year after, on March 12,

Boutros died of the same disease and his mother died of cancer on June 28.^[33] Two days later, Peabody "left him without explanation."^[33] Marianna supported Gibran and herself by working at a dressmaker's shop.^[25]

Debuts, Mary Haskell, and second stay in Paris ...



Portrait of Mary Haskell by Gibran, 1910

Gibran held his first art exhibition of his drawings in January 1904 in Boston at Day's studio.^[25] During this exhibition, Gibran met Mary Haskell, the headmistress of a girls' school in the city, nine years his senior. The two formed a friendship which lasted the rest of Gibran's

life. Haskell would spend large sums of money to support Gibran and would also edit all of his English writings. The nature of their romantic relationship remains obscure; while some biographers assert the two were lovers^[34] but never married because Haskell's family objected;^[13] other evidence suggests that their relationship never was physically consummated.^[25] Gibran and Haskell were engaged briefly between 1910 and 1911.^[35] According to Joseph P. Ghougassian, Gibran had proposed to her

"not knowing how to repay back in gratitude to Miss Haskell," but Haskell called it off, making "clear to him that she preferred his friendship to any burdensome tie of marriage."^[36] Haskell would later marry Jacob Florance Minis in 1926, while remaining yet Gibran's close friend, patroness and benefactress, and using as such her influence to advance his career.^[37]



Portrait of Charlotte Teller, c. 1911 *Portrait of Émilie Michel (Micheline), 1909*

In 1905, Gibran's first writing to be published was *A Profile of the Art of Music*, in Arabic, by *Al-Mohajer's* printing department in New York. His next work, *Nymphs of the Valley*, was published the following year, also in Arabic. On January 27, 1908, Haskell introduced Gibran to her

friend writer Charlotte Teller, aged 31, and in February, to Émilie Michel (Micheline), a French teacher at her school,^[6] aged 19. Both Teller and Micheline accepted to pose for Gibran as models and became close friends of his.^[38] The same year, Gibran published *Spirits Rebellious*, a novel deeply critical of secular and spiritual authority.^[39] According to Barbara Young, a late acquaintance of Gibran, "in an incredibly short time it was burned in the market place in Beirut by priestly zealots who pronounced it 'dangerous,

revolutionary, and poisonous to youth.' "[40]

The Maronite Patriarchate would let the rumor of his excommunication wander, but would never officially pronounce it. [41]



Plaque at 14 Avenue du Maine in Paris, where Gibran lived from 1908 to 1910

In July 1908, with Haskell's financial support, Gibran went to study art in Paris at the Académie Julian where he joined the *atelier* of Jean-Paul Laurens.^[6] Gibran had accepted Haskell's offer partly so as to distance himself from Micheline, "for he knew that this love was contrary to his sense of gratefulness toward Miss Haskell"; however, "to his surprise Micheline came unexpectedly to him in Paris."^[42] "She became pregnant, but the pregnancy was ectopic, and she had to have an abortion, probably in France."^[6]

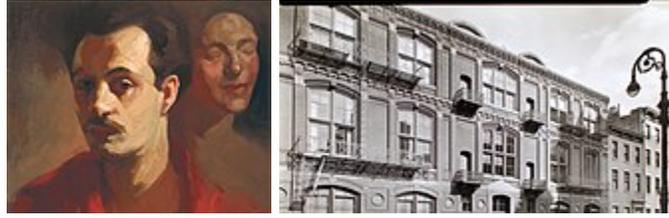
Micheline had returned to the United States by late October.^[6] Gibran would pay her a visit upon her return to Paris in July 1910, but there would be no hint of intimacy left between them.^[6] By early February 1909, Gibran had "been working for a few weeks in the studio of Pierre Marcel-Béronneau";^[6] he "used his sympathy towards Béronneau as an excuse to leave the Académie Julian altogether."^[6] In December 1909,^[f] Gibran started a series of pencil portraits which he would later call "The Temple of Art,"

featuring "famous men and women artists of the day," and "a few of Gibran's heroes from past times."^{[43][g]} While in Paris, Gibran also entered in contact with Syrian political dissidents, in whose activities he would attempt to be more involved upon his return to the United States.^[6] In June 1910, Gibran visited London with Howayek and Ameen Rihani, whom Gibran had met in Paris.^[44] Rihani, who was six years older than Gibran, would be Gibran's role model for a while, and a friend until at least May 1912.^{[45][h]} Gibran biographer Robin

Waterfield argues that, by 1918, "as Gibran's role changed from that of angry young man to that of prophet, Rihani could no longer act as a paradigm";^[45] Haskell (in her private journal entry of May 29, 1924) and Howayek also provided hints at an enmity settled between Gibran and Rihani sometime after May 1912.^[46]

Return to the United States and growing reputation

...



*Self-
Portrait,
c. 1911*

*The Tenth
Street Studio
Building in New
York City
(photographed
1938)*

Gibran sailed back to New York City from Boulogne-sur-Mer on the Nieuw Amsterdam October 22, 1910, and was back to Boston by November 11.^[36] By February 1911, Gibran had joined the

Boston branch of a Syrian international organization, the Golden Links Society.^{[45][i]}

He lectured there for several months "in order to promote radicalism in

independence and liberty" from the

Ottoman Empire.^[47] At the end of April,

Gibran was staying in Teller's vacant flat at 164 Waverly Place in New York City.^[43]

"Gibran settled in, made himself known to his Syrian friends—especially Amin Rihani,

who was now living in New York—and

began both to look for a suitable studio

and to sample the energy of New York."^[43]

As Teller returned on May 15, he moved to Rihani's small room at 28 West 9th Street.^{[43][j]} Gibran then moved to one of the Tenth Street Studio Building's studios for the summer, before changing to another of its studios (number 30, which had a balcony, on the third story) in fall.^[43] Gibran would live there until his death,^[48] referring to it as "The Hermitage."^[49] Over time, however, and "ostensibly often for reasons of health," he would spend "longer and longer periods away from New York, sometimes months at a time [...], staying

either with friends in the countryside or with Marianna in Boston or on the Massachusetts coast."^[50] His friendships with Teller and Micheline would wane; the last encounter between Gibran and Teller would occur in September 1912, and Gibran would tell Haskell in 1914 that he now found Micheline "repellent."^{[45][k]}



May Ziadeh

In 1912, Broken Wings was published in Arabic by the printing house of the periodical Meraat-ul-Gharb in New York. Gibran presented Lebanese writer May Ziadeh, who lived in Egypt, with a copy of his book and asked her to criticize it.^[52] As worded by Ghougassian,

Her reply on May 12, 1912, did not totally approve of Gibran's philosophy of love. Rather she

remained in all her correspondence quite critical of a few of Gibran's Westernized ideas. Still he had a strong emotional attachment to Miss Ziadeh till his death.^[53]

Gibran and Ziadeh never met.^[54]

According to Shlomit C. Schuster,

"whatever the relationship between Kahlil and May might have been, the letters in *A Self-Portrait* [Ferris, Anthony R., ed. (1959),

translated by Ferris] mainly reveal their literary ties. Ziadeh reviewed all of Gibran's books and Gibran replies to these reviews elegantly."^[55]

In 1913, Gibran started contributing to *Al-Funoon*, an Arabic-language magazine which had been recently established by Nasib Arida and Abd al-Masih Haddad. A *Tear and a Smile* was published in Arabic in 1914.

Poet, who
has heard
thee but
the spirits
that
follow thy
solitary
path?
Prophet,

In December of the same year, visual artworks by Gibran were shown at the Montross Gallery, catching the attention of Albert Pinkham Ryder. Gibran wrote him a prose poem in January and would become one of the aged man's last visitors.^[56] After Ryder's death in 1917, Gibran's poem would be quoted by Henry McBride in the latter's

who has
known
thee but
those who
are driven
by the
Great
Tempest
to thy
lonely
grove?

*To Albert
Pinkham
Ryder
(1915),*

posthumous tribute to Ryder
then by newspapers across
the country, from which

first two
verses

would come the first widespread mention
of Gibran's name in America.^[57] By March
1915, two of Gibran's poems had also
been read at the Poetry Society of
America, after which Corinne Roosevelt
Robinson, the younger sister of Theodore
Roosevelt, stood up and called them
"destructive and diabolical stuff";^[58] Gibran
would nevertheless become a frequent

visitor at Robinson's starting in 1918, also meeting her brother.^[45]

The Madman, the Pen League, and The Prophet ...

Gibran acted as a secretary of the Syrian–Mount Lebanon Relief Committee which was formed in June 1916.^[59] The same year, Gibran met Mikhail Naimy after the latter had moved from the University of Washington to New York.^[60] Naimy, whom Gibran would nickname "Mischa,"^[61] had

previously made a review of *Broken Wings* in his article "The Dawn of Hope After the Night of Despair" published in *Al-Funoon*,^[62] and would become "a close friend and confidant, and later one of Gibran's biographers."^[63] In 1917, an exhibition of forty wash drawings was held at Knoedler in New York from January 29 to February 19 and another of thirty such drawings at Doll & Richards, Boston, April 16–28.^[57]

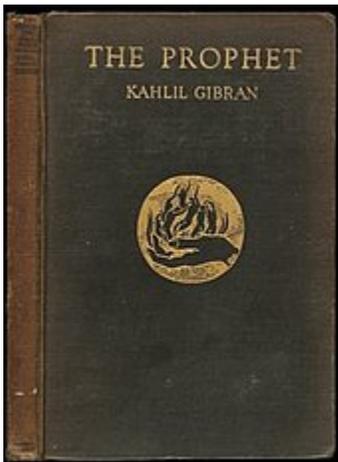


Four members of the Pen League in 1920. Left to right: Nasib Arida, Gibran, Abd al-Masih Haddad, and Mikhail Naimy

While most of Gibran's early writings had been in Arabic, most of his work published after 1918 was in English. Such was *The Madman*, Gibran's first book published by Alfred A. Knopf, in 1918. *The Processions*

(in Arabic) and *Twenty Drawings* were published the following year. In 1920, Gibran re-created the Arabic-language New York Pen League with its original founders Arida and Haddad; Rihani, Naimy, and other Mahjari writers such as Elia Abu Madi. The same year, *The Tempests* was published in Arabic in Cairo, and *The Forerunner* in New York. In a letter of 1921 to Naimy, Gibran reported that doctors had told him to "give up all kinds of work and exertion for six months, and do nothing but eat, drink and rest";^[64] in 1922, Gibran

was ordered to "stay away from cities and city life" and had rented a cottage near the sea, planning to move there with Marianna and to remain until "this heart [regained] its orderly course";^[65] this three-month summer in Scituate, he later told Haskell, was a refreshing time, during which he wrote some of "the best Arabic poems" he had ever written.^[66]



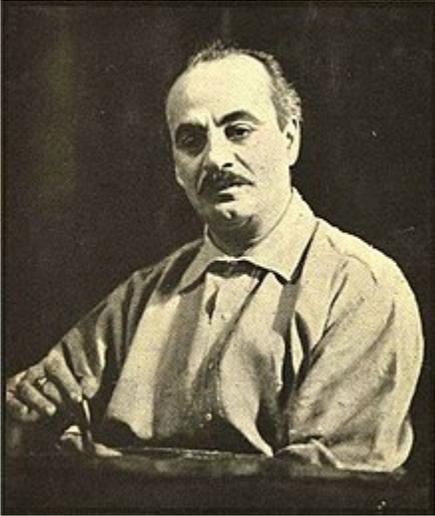
First edition cover of The Prophet (1923)

In 1923, *The New and the Marvelous* was published in Arabic in Cairo, whereas The Prophet was published in New York. *The Prophet* sold well despite a cool critical reception.^[1] At a reading of *The Prophet* organized by rector William Norman Guthrie in St. Mark's Church in-the-Bowery,

Gibran met Young, who would occasionally work as his secretary from 1925 until his death (no remuneration was paid).^[67] In 1924, Gibran told Haskell that he had been contracted to write ten pieces for *Al-Hilal* in Cairo.^[66] In 1925, Gibran participated in the founding of the periodical *The New East*.^[68]

Later years and death

...



A late photograph of Gibran

Sand and Foam was published in 1926, and *Jesus, the Son of Man* in 1928. At the beginning of 1929, Gibran was diagnosed with an enlarged liver.^[50] In a letter dated March 26, he wrote to Naimy that "the rheumatic pains are gone, and the swelling

has turned to something opposite";^[69] in a telegram dated the same day, he reported being told by the doctors that he "must not work for full year," which was something he found "more painful than illness."^[70]

The last book published in Gibran's lifetime was *The Earth Gods*, on March 14, 1931.

Gibran was admitted to St. Vincent's Hospital, Manhattan, on April 10, 1931, where he died the same day, aged 48, after having refused the last rites.^[71] The cause of death was reported to be cirrhosis of

the liver with incipient tuberculosis in one of his lungs.^[49] Waterfield argues that the cirrhosis was contracted through excessive drinking of alcohol and was the only real cause of Gibran's death.^[72]



The Gibran Museum and Gibran's final resting place, in Bsharri

Gibran had expressed the wish that he be buried in Lebanon. His body lay temporarily at Mount Benedict Cemetery in Boston, before it was taken on July 23 to Providence, Rhode Island, and from there to Lebanon on the liner Sinaia.^[74] It reached Bsharri in August and was deposited in a church nearby until a cousin of Gibran finalized the

"The epitaph I wish to be written on my tomb: 'I am alive, like you. And I now stand beside you. Close your eyes and look around,

purchase of the Mar Sarkis Monastery, now the Gibran Museum.^[75]

All future American royalties to his books were willed to his hometown of Bsharri, to be "used for good causes." Gibran had also willed the contents of his studio to Haskell.

you will
see me in
front of
you'.

Gibran"

Epitaph at
the Gibran
Museum^[73]

*Going through his papers,
Young and Haskell discovered*

that Gibran had kept all of Mary's love letters to him. Young admitted to being stunned at the depth of the relationship, which was all but unknown to her. In her own biography of Gibran, she minimized the relationship and begged Mary Haskell to burn the letters. Mary agreed initially but then reneged, and eventually they were published, along with

her journal and Gibran's some three hundred letters to her, in [Virginia] Hilu's Beloved Prophet.^[76]

Haskell donated her personal collection of nearly one hundred original works of art by Gibran (including five oils) to the Telfair Museum of Art in Savannah, Georgia, in 1950.^[35] Haskell had been thinking of placing her collection at the Telfair as early as 1914.^{[77][m]} Her gift to the Telfair is the

largest public collection of Gibran's visual art in the country.

Works

Writings ...

Forms, themes, and style ...

Gibran explored literary forms as diverse as "poetry, parables, fragments of conversation, short stories, fables, political essays, letters, and aphorisms."^[79] Two plays in English and five plays in Arabic

were also published posthumously between 1973 and 1993; three unfinished plays written in English towards the end of Gibran's life remain unpublished (*The Banshee, The Last Unction, and The Hunchback or the Man Unseen*).^[80] Gibran discussed "such themes as religion, justice, free will, science, love, happiness, the soul, the body, and death"^[81] in his writings, which were "characterized by innovation breaking with forms of the past, by symbolism, an undying love for his

native land, and a sentimental, melancholic yet often oratorical style."^[82]

About his language in general (both in Arabic and English), Salma Khadra Jayyusi remarks that "because of the spiritual and universal aspect of his general themes, he seems to have chosen a vocabulary less idiomatic than would normally have been chosen by a modern poet conscious of modernism in language."^[83] According to Jean and Kahlil Gibran,

Ignoring much of the traditional vocabulary and form of classical Arabic, he began to develop a style which reflected the ordinary language he had heard as a child in Besharri and to which he was still exposed in the South End [of Boston]. This use of the colloquial was more a product of his isolation than of a specific intent, but it appealed to

*thousands of Arab
immigrants.*^[84]

The poem "You Have Your Language and I Have Mine" (1924) was published in response to criticism of his Arabic language and style.^[85]

Antecedents and influences

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Portrait of William Blake by Thomas Phillips (detail)

As worded by Ghougassian, "among the Anglo-Saxon authors, [William] Blake (1757–1827) played a special role in Gibran's life."^[86] "Most particularly, Gibran agreed with Blake's *apocalyptic vision* of the world as the latter expressed it in his poetry and art."^[86] Gibran wrote of Blake

as "the God-man," and of "his drawings" as "so far the profoundest things done in English—and his vision, putting aside his drawings and poems, is the most godly."^[87] According to George Nicolas El-Hage,

There is evidence that Gibran knew some of Blake's poetry and was familiar with his drawings during his early years in Boston. However, this knowledge of

Blake was neither deep nor complete. Kahlil Gibran was reintroduced to William Blake's poetry and art in Paris, most likely in Auguste Rodin's studio and by Rodin himself [on one of their two encounters in Paris after Gibran had begun his Temple of Art portrait series^[g]]. [88]

Another influence on Gibran was Walt Whitman (1819–1892), whom Gibran followed "by pointing up the universality of all men and by delighting in nature."^[89]^[n]



Francis Marrash

Gibran was also a great admirer of Syrian poet and writer Francis Marrash (born between 1835 and 1837; died 1873 or 1874),^[91] whose works he had studied at the Collège de la Sagesse.^[92] According to Shmuel Moreh, Gibran's own works echo Marrash's style, "many of [his] ideas on enslavement, education, women's liberation, truth, the natural goodness of man, and the corrupted morals of society," and at times even the structure of some of his works;^[93] Suheil Bushrui and Joe Jenkins have mentioned Marrash's

concept of universal love, in particular, in having left a "profound impression" on Gibran.^[92]

According to El-Hage, the influence of Friedrich Nietzsche (1844–1900) "did not appear in Gibran's writings until *The Tempests*."^[94] Nevertheless, although Nietzsche's style "no doubt fascinated" him, Gibran was "not the least under his spell":^[94]

The teachings of Almustafa are decisively different from Zarathustra's philosophy and they betray a striking imitation of Jesus, the way Gibran pictured Him.^[94]

Gibran was also influenced by the Bible, with, in the words of Waterfield, "the parables of the New Testament" affecting "his parables and homilies" and "the poetry of some of the Old Testament books [...]"

affecting his devotional language and incantational rhythms."^[95]

Critics

...

Gibran was for a long time neglected by scholars and critics.^[96] Bushrui and John M. Munro have argued that "the failure of serious Western critics to respond to Gibran" resulted from the fact that "his works, though for the most part originally written in English, cannot be comfortably accommodated within the Western literary tradition."^[96] According to El-Hage, critics

have also "generally failed to understand the poet's conception of imagination and his fluctuating tendencies towards nature."^[97]

Visual art

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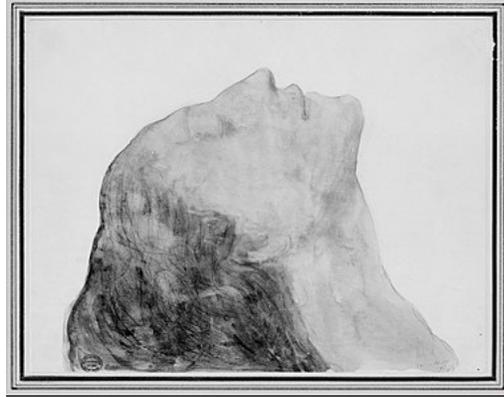
*The Ages of Women, 1910 (Museo
Soumaya)*



Self Portrait and Muse, c. 1911 (Museo Soumaya)



Untitled (Rose Sleeves), 1911 (Telfair Museums)



Towards the Infinite (Kamila Gibran, mother of the artist), 1916 (Metropolitan Museum of Arts)



*The Three are One, 1918 (Telfair
Museums), also The Madman's
frontispiece*



The Slave, 1920 (Harvard Art Museums)



Standing Figure and Child, undated (Barjeel Art Foundation)

According to Waterfield, "Gibran was confirmed in his aspiration to be a Symbolist painter" after working in Marcel-Béronneau's studio in Paris.^[6] Oil paint was Gibran's "preferred medium between

1908 and 1914, but before and after this time he worked primarily with pencil, ink, watercolor and gouache.^[35] In a letter to Haskell, Gibran wrote that "among all the English artists Turner is the very greatest."^[98] Haskell recorded Gibran in her Diary entry of March 17, 1911, to have told her that he was inspired by Turner's painting The Slave Ship to utilize "raw colors [...] one over another on the canvas [...] instead of killing them first on the palette" in what would be *Rose Sleeves* (1911, Telfair Museums).^[99]

Gibran has made more than seven hundred visual artworks, including the Temple of Art portrait series.^[13] His works may be seen at the Gibran Museum in Bsharri; the Telfair Museums in Savannah, Georgia; the Museo Soumaya in Mexico City; Mathaf: Arab Museum of Modern Art in Doha; the Brooklyn Museum and the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City; and the Harvard Art Museums. A possible Gibran painting was the subject of a September 2008 episode of the PBS TV series *History Detectives*.

Religious views



*A 1923 sketch by Gibran for his book *Jesus the Son of Man* (published 1928)^[100]*

Although born and raised into a Maronite Christian family and having attended a Maronite school, Gibran was also

influenced by Islam, and especially by the mysticism of the Sufis. His knowledge of Lebanon's bloody history, with its destructive factional struggles, strengthened his belief in the fundamental unity of religions, which his parents exemplified by welcoming people of various religions in their home.^[92] Gibran's mysticism was a convergence of several different influences.

Gibran's meeting c. 1911–1912 with 'Abdu'l-Bahá, the leader of the Bahá'í Faith

who was at the time on a visit to the United States, to draw his portrait, made a strong impression on him.^{[22][101]} One of Gibran's acquaintances later in life, Juliet Thompson, herself a Bahá'í, reported that Gibran was unable to sleep the night before meeting him.^{[92][102]} This encounter with 'Abdu'l-Bahá later inspired Gibran to write *Jesus the Son of Man*^[103] (which depicts Jesus through the "words of 77 contemporaries who knew him – enemies and friends: Syrians, Romans, Jews, priests, and poets").^[104] After the death of

'Abdu'l-Bahá, Gibran would give a talk on religion with Bahá'ís^[105] and at another event with a viewing of a movie of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, Gibran would rise to talk and proclaim in tears an exalted station of 'Abdu'l-Bahá and leave the event weeping.^[101]

In the poem "The Voice of the Poet" (صوت الشاعر) published in *A Tear and a Smile* (1914),^[9] Gibran wrote:

انت اخي وانا احبك -
احبك ساجداً في
جامعك وراكعاً في
هيكلك ومصلياً في
كنيستك ، فأنت وانا ابنا
دين واحد هو الروح ،
وزعماء فروع هذا الدين
اصابع ملتصقة في يد
الالوهية المشيرة الى
[107]كمال النفس -

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
that 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.

—Translated by H. M.
Nahmad^[108]

Syriac Orthodox Patriarch Ignatius Aphrem
I Barsoum, while still Archbishop of the
Americas, once met with Gibran, who told
him that people only deserve to read the

poems of St. Ephrem, asking him to translate them.^[109]

In 1921, Gibran participated in an "interrogatory" meeting on the question "Do We Need a New World Religion to Unite the Old Religions?" at St. Mark's Church in-the-Bowery.^[105]

Political thought

According to Young,

During the last years of Gibran's life there was much pressure put upon him from time to time to return to Lebanon. His countrymen there felt that he would be a great leader for his people if he could be persuaded to accept such a role. He was deeply moved by their desire to have him in their midst, but he knew that to go to Lebanon would be a grave mistake.

"I believe I could be a help to my people," he said. "I could even lead them—but they would not be lead. In their anxiety and confusion of mind they look about for some solution to their difficulties. If I went to Lebanon and took the little black book [The Prophet], and said, 'Come let us live in this light,' their enthusiasm for me would immediately evaporate. I am not

a politician, and I would not be a politician. No. I cannot fulfill their desire."^[110]

Nevertheless, Gibran called for the adoption of Arabic as a national language of Syria, considered from a geographic point of view, not as a political entity.^[111]

When Gibran met 'Abdu'l-Bahá in 1911–12, who traveled to the United States partly to promote peace, Gibran admired the teachings on peace but argued that "young

nations like his own" be freed from Ottoman control.^[22] Gibran also wrote the famous "Pity the Nation" poem during these years, posthumously published in *The Garden of the Prophet*.^[112]

When the Ottomans were eventually driven from Syria during World War I, Gibran sketched a euphoric drawing "Free Syria" which was then printed on the special edition cover of the Arabic-language paper *As-Sayeh* (*The Traveler*; founded 1912 in New York by Haddad^[113]).^[114] Adel

Beshara reports that, "in a draft of a play, still kept among his papers, Gibran expressed great hope for national independence and progress. This play, according to Khalil Hawi, 'defines Gibran's belief in Syrian nationalism with great clarity, distinguishing it from both Lebanese and Arab nationalism, and showing us that nationalism lived in his mind, even at this late stage, side by side with internationalism.' "[114]

According to Waterfield, Gibran "was not entirely in favour of socialism (which he believed tends to seek the lowest common denominator, rather than bringing out the best in people)".^[115]

Memorials and honors



Gibran Khalil Gibran Garden in Beirut (left), and *Kahlil Gibran Memorial Garden in Washington, D.C.* (right)



Bust of Gibran in Belo Horizonte, Brazil (left), and Yerevan, Armenia (right)

Lebanon

- Gibran Museum in Bsharri
- Gibran Khalil Gibran Garden in Beirut

United States

- Kahlil Gibran Memorial Garden with sculpture by Gordon Kray (dedicated May 24, 1991, by President George H. W. Bush) in Washington, D.C.^[116]
- Gibran Memorial Plaque in Copley Square, Boston, Massachusetts
- Khalil Gibran International Academy (opened September 2007), a public high school in Brooklyn, NY
- Kahlil Gibran "Spirit of Humanity" Awards from the Arab American

Institute^[117]

Brazil

- Sculpture on a marble pedestal inside the Arab Memorial building in Curitiba, Paraná
- Bust in Belo Horizonte, Minas Gerais

Other

- Gibran Khalil Gibran Memorial, in front of Plaza de las Naciones, Buenos Aires, Argentina

- Bust (inaugurated 2005) in Yerevan, Armenia^{[118][119]}
- Sculpture (inaugurated July 2012), since 2014 at the Reading Garden of the Bankstown Library and Knowledge Centre in Bankstown, New South Wales, Australia^[120]
- Kahlil Gibran Street (inaugurated September 27, 2008, for the 125th anniversary of Gibran's birth) in Montreal, Quebec, Canada
- Monument sculpted by Ricardo Santander Batalla, located on Avenida

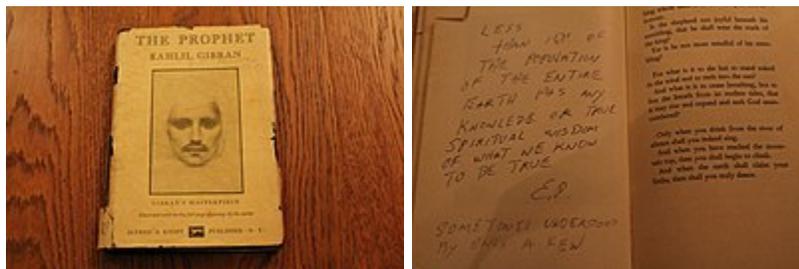
Marina, Viña del Mar, Chile

- Promenade Gibran Khalil Gibran, 15th arrondissement of Paris, France
- Khalil Gibran School Rabat, Moroccan and British international school in Rabat, Morocco
- Khalil Gibran Park (*Parcul Khalil Gibran*) in Bucharest, Romania
- Espacio Gibrán Khalil Gibrán (inaugurated February 2, 2013), at the northern end of Avenida San Juan Bosco, Caracas, Venezuela

Legacy

The popularity of *The Prophet* grew markedly during the 1960s with the American counterculture and then with the flowering of the New Age movements. It has remained popular with these and with the wider population to this day. Since it was first published in 1923, *The Prophet* has never been out of print. It has been translated into more than 100 languages, making it among the top ten most translated books in history.^[121] It was one

of the best-selling books of the twentieth century in the United States.



*Handwritten notes in Elvis Presley's copy of *The Prophet**

Elvis Presley referred to Gibran's *The Prophet* for the rest of his life after receiving his first copy as a gift from his girlfriend June Juanico in July 1956.^[122]

His marked-up copy still exists in an Elvis Presley museum in Düsseldorf.^[123] A line of poetry from *Sand and Foam* (1926), which reads "Half of what I say is meaningless, but I say it so that the other half may reach you," was used by John Lennon and placed, though in a slightly altered form, into the song "Julia" from the Beatles' 1968 album *The Beatles* (a.k.a. "The White Album").^[124]

Johnny Cash recorded *The Eye of the Prophet* as an audio cassette book, and

Cash can be heard talking about Gibran's work on a track called "Book Review" on his album *Unearthed*. British singer David Bowie mentioned Gibran in the song "The Width of a Circle" from Bowie's 1970 album *The Man Who Sold the World*. Bowie used Gibran as a "hip reference,"^[125] because Gibran's work *A Tear and a Smile* became popular in the hippie counterculture of the 1960s. In 2016 Gibran's fable "On Death" from *The Prophet* was composed in Hebrew by Gilad Hochman to the unique setting of soprano,

theorbo and percussion and premiered in France under the title *River of Silence*.^[126]

Notes

- a. Also transliterated as *Jibrān Xalīl* *Jibrān*^[1] (EALL), *Ġibrān Ḥalīl Ġibrān* (DIN 31635).

b. *Due to a mistake made by the Josiah Quincy School of Boston after his immigration to the United States with his mother and siblings , he was registered as Kahlil Gibran, the spelling he used thenceforth in English.*^[2] *Other sources use Khalil Gibran, reflecting the typical English spelling of the forename Khalil, although Gibran continued to use his full birth name for publications in Arabic.*

- c. *Gibran is also considered to be the third-best-selling poet of all time, behind Shakespeare and Laozi.*^[5]
- d. *Left to right: Gibran, Khalil (father), Sultana (sister), Boutros (half-brother), Kamila (mother).*
- e. *He came through Ellis Island (this was his second time) on May 10.*^[32]
- f. *Gibran's father had died in June.*^[6]

g. *Included in the Temple of Art series are portraits of Paul Bartlett, Claude Debussy, Edmond Rostand, Henri Rochefort, W. B. Yeats, Carl Jung, and Auguste Rodin.*^{[6][13]} *Gibran reportedly met the latter on a couple of occasions during his Parisian stay to draw his portrait; however, Gibran biographer Robin Waterfield argues that "on neither occasion was any degree of intimacy attained", and that the portrait may well have been made from memory or from a photograph.*^[6]

Gibran met Yeats through a friend of Haskell in Boston in September 1911, drawing his portrait on October 1 of that year.^[43]

h. *Gibran would illustrate Rihani's Book of Khalid, published 1911.*^[43]

- i. *Arabic: الحلقات الذهبية, ALA-LC: al-Halaqāt al-Dhahabiyyah. As worded by Waterfield, "the ostensible purpose of the society was the improvement of life for Syrians all around the world—which included their homeland, where improvement of life could mean taking a stand on Ottoman rule."*^[45]
- j. *By June 1, Gibran had introduced Rihani to Teller.^[43] A relationship would develop between Rihani and Teller, lasting for a number of months.^[8]*

- k. *Teller married writer Gilbert Julius Hirsch (1886–1926) on October 14, 1912, with whom she lived periodically in New York and in different parts of Europe,^[51] dying in 1953. Micheline married a New York City attorney, Lamar Hardy, on October 14, 1914.^[51]*
- l. *It would gain popularity in the 1930s and again especially in the 1960s counterculture.^{[13][25]}*

m. *In a letter to Gibran, she wrote:*

I am thinking of other museums ... the unique little Telfair Gallery in Savannah, Ga., that Gari Melchers chooses pictures for. There when I was a visiting child, form burst upon my astonished little soul.^[78]

- n. *Richard E. Hishmeh has drawn comparison between passages from The Prophet and Whitman's "Song of Myself" and Leaves of Grass.*^[90]
- o. *Daniela Rodica Firanescu deems probable that the poem was first published in an American Arabic-language magazine.*^[106]

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- Gibran Museum , Bsharri, Lebanon

- [Works by Kahlil Gibran at Project Gutenberg](#)
- [Works by or about Kahlil Gibran at Internet Archive](#)
- [Works by Kahlil Gibran at LibriVox](#)
(public domain audiobooks) 
- [Online copies of texts by Gibran](#)
- [Kahlil Gibran: Profile and Poems on Poets.org](#)
- [BBC World Service: "The Man Behind the Prophet"](#)

- The Kahlil Gibran Collective , website including a digital archive of his works
- Kahlil Gibran in the *New York Times* Archives

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