



The Madman, his Parables and Poems

Kahlil Gibran

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The madman, his parables and poems is a short work by Kahlil Gibran. Kahlil Gibran (January 6, 1883 – April 10, 1931) was a Lebanese-American artist, poet, and writer of the New York Pen League. Kahlil Gibran was born in the town of Bsharri in the Mount Lebanon Mutasarrifate, Ottoman Empire (north of modern-day Lebanon), to Khalil Gibran and Kamila Gibran (Rahmeh). As a young man Kahlil emigrated with his family to the United States, where he studied art and began his literary career, writing in both English and Arabic. In the Arab world, Gibran is regarded as a literary and political rebel. His romantic style was at the heart of a renaissance in modern Arabic literature, especially prose poetry, breaking away from the classical school. In Lebanon, he is still celebrated as a literary hero. He is chiefly known in the English-speaking world for his 1923 book *The Prophet*, an early example of inspirational fiction including a series of philosophical essays written in poetic English prose. The book sold well despite a cool critical reception, gaining popularity in the 1930s and again especially in the 1960s counterculture. Gibran is the third best-selling poet of all time, behind Shakespeare and Laozi. Gibran's best-known work is *The Prophet*, a book composed of twenty-six poetic essays. Its popularity 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. Having been translated into more than forty languages, it was one of the bestselling books of the twentieth century in the United States. Elvis Presley was deeply affected by Gibran's *The Prophet* after receiving his first copy in 1956. He reportedly read passages to his mother and over the years gave away copies of "The Prophet" to friends and colleagues. Photographs of his handwritten notes under certain passages throughout his copy are archived on various Museum websites. One of his most notable lines of poetry is 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". This line was used by John Lennon and placed, though in a slightly altered form, into the song "Julia" from The Beatles' 1968 album *The Beatles* (aka "The White Album"). Johnny Cash recorded Gibran's "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 *Unearthed*. David Bowie mentions 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", because Gibran's work "A Tear and a Smile" became popular in the hippy counterculture of the 1960s.

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