Once, as I was burying one of my dead selves, the grave-digger came by and said to me, “Of all those who come here to bury, you alone I like.” Said I, “You please me exceedingly, but why do you like me?” “Because,” said he, “They come weeping and go weeping—you only come laughing and go laughing.”

_The Gravedigger_, Gibran:

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**Gibran Readings, Session 3**

[On Left -- cancelled Dubai stamp honoring Gibran]

1. Introduction: Overview of Gibran Sessions & Artwork  
2. Maronite Heritage  
3. Political Writing and Views  
4. More about Mary Haskell Minis  
5. Gibran’s Death and Legacy  
6. Gibran, _Spirits Rebellious_ (1908)  
7. Gibran, Spiritual Vision  
8. Gibran, _Pity the Nation_  
9. Mary Magdalen selections, _Jesus, Son of Man_ (1928)  
10. Gibran’s Art: Rodin and Gibran  
11. Gibran’s Art & Writing: Blake & Gibran

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**Reading 1: Overview (a) 3 Gibran Sessions and Gibran’s Artwork**

Email me at menkepamela@yahoo.com & I’ll email back Session 1-2 packets to you!

**Session 1** February 19-20. We read and discussed Gibran’s achievement, early life, his devout Maronite (Catholic) faith, and his openness to other religion (the Baha’i faith). We focused primary on his most famous work (_The Prophet_, 1923) and his earliest work (_The Madman_, 1918). We discussed the voices that appear in Gibran’s _Jesus, Son of Man_ (1928) and read one of the opening narratives from that work.

**Session 2** (March 19-20). We considered the middle part of Gibran’s life followed by a more extensive discussion of _The Prophet_. We also considered the life and work of 13th C. Persian, Sufi poet Rumi, a central influence on Gibran. We continued our discussion of the narratives from _Jesus, Son of Man_.

This is the Third Session packet (April 16-17). We will explore Gibran’s political thought, his relationship to the Maronite Church to Gibran, and Gibran’s death burial, and legacy. We will also explore Gibran’s spiritual vision, focusing on his watercolor _Divine World_ and selections from _Sand and Foam_ (1926) and _A Poet’s Voice_. We will consider the Mary Magdalen series of narratives from _Jesus, Son of Man_, Gibran’s patriotic poem, and Gibran’s artistic influences: poet-engraver William Blake and Parisian sculptor Auguste Rodin. Finally, we’ll work with a PowerPoint of Gibran’s art work.

Link to Gibran’s major works and biography: [https://www.famousauthors.org/khalil-gibran](https://www.famousauthors.org/khalil-gibran)

Project Gutenberg Australia has almost all of Gibran’s works online. Here are the 2 Gibran major works.

*Son of Man* = [http://gutenberg.net.au/ebooks03/0301451h.html](http://gutenberg.net.au/ebooks03/0301451h.html)

*The Prophet* = [http://gutenberg.net.au/ebooks02/0200061h.html](http://gutenberg.net.au/ebooks02/0200061h.html)

**Reading 2. Gibran’s Maronite Heritage**

**2A. Gibran’s Maronite Catholic religious heritage:** The Maronites began in the Near East in an area common language was Aramaic, the same language spoken by Jesus. Aramaic is still used by the Maronites in various hymns and parts of the Mass, especially at the Consecration. Celibacy is not strictly required for Maronite deacons and priests in parishes outside of North America; monks, however, must remain celibate, as well as bishops who are normally selected from the monasteries.
An Eastern rite churches, the Maronite Church is named for St. Maron, a 4th century hermit. After his death around the year 410, his monastic disciples built a large monastery in his honor, from which other monasteries were founded. The Maronite Church is the only one Eastern Church that has maintained an unbroken allegiance to Rome and the Pope (considered the Successor of St. Peter). In fact, in 517, as major controversy arose in other Eastern churches over the Council of Chalcedon’s 451 declaration that Jesus is “true God and true Man.” The Maronites supported the declaration. As a result, 350 Maronite monks were martyred for defending the Council’s degrees. Because of their unwavering support of the Council, the Maronites became known as the “Chalcedonians.”

Even today, on the feast of Saints Peter and Paul, the central Maronite liturgical prayer is “O Lord, preserve your children from all error or deviation, grant us to live and die proclaiming: ‘Our faith is the faith of Peter, the faith of Peter is our faith!’” During the 7th C., the Maronites again suffered persecution and fled for refuge in the mountains of Lebanon. There they maintained and grew in their Christian faith and culture. At the time of the Crusades, close bonds were established by the Maronites with the West which has endured to this day. A number of Maronite monasteries—each consisting of a small number of monks—were established in the natural mountain caves of the most Holy Mountain not far from Gibran’s birthplace.

The Divine Liturgy of the Maronite Mass traces its roots to Antioch where “the disciples were first called Christians” (Acts 11:26). St. Peter fled to Antioch when a persecution broke out in Jerusalem, resulting in the martyrdom of St. James (Acts 12). According to tradition, St. Peter founded the Church at Antioch and became its first bishop, and the early Maronites became the direct descendants of the people who received their faith from the Apostle Peter. Shortly after the time of the Apostles, a liturgy developed in Antioch which exists today in the Maronite rite. The overall characteristic of this tradition is primary belief in the Trinity coupled with emphasis on Jesus as true God and true Man. The liturgy also retains certain aspects of the ancient liturgy of the Sacred Jewish Scripture. For example, at the Consecration, the priest tips the chalice in the four directions of the compass to symbolize the shedding of Christ’s blood for the entire universe.

2B. Gibran: Spirits Rebellious and Excommunication (1908). [Short selections from Spirits Rebellious is included as a reading.] The Church was uneasy about Gibran’s open praise and acceptance of all forms of worship: “I love you when you bow in your mosque, kneel in your temple, pray in your church. For you and I are sons of one religion, and it is the spirit.” But when Church leaders became aware of his 1908 short story collection Spirits Rebellious (written in Arabic), he was excommunicated. The book was publicly burned in the Beirut market place by Maronite Church and Ottoman State officials who judged it fiercely dangerous to the peace of the country. Gibran’s bitter denunciation of both religious and political injustice brought his anticipated exile from the country. He was already living in Paris to study art, but could not return to Lebanon for any purpose. Excommunication was particularly serious in a country where civil identity and justice was based on religious membership. In many ways, Gibran was being torn from his birth religion and his Lebanese roots.

Beginning in the mid-1920’s and concluding in 1931, the hold of the Ottoman Empire was broken, and Lebanon had become part of greater Syria. Sometime around the middle of the 1920’s, Gibran, who had become famous, was welcomed back into the Maronite communion.

2C. Gibran’s Spiritual Vision. As Gibran became more aware of the world, he became increasingly committed to approaching and embracing a vision of the divine. In this reading packet, you’ll find 3 examples of Gibran’s spiritual vision: (1) Gibran’s “Divine World” watercolor that uses the ancient symbol of Hand of God, short selections from the sayings and insights in Sand and Foam (1926), and the conclusion of Gibran’s A Poet’s Voice.

Reading 3. Gibran’s Political Writing and Views

Even though Gibran insisted: “I am not a politician, nor do I wish to become one,” he was a Syrian nationalist. He wrote articles and a column for a U.S. Arabic newspaper denouncing the Ottoman presence in Lebanon. Arguing for Syrian independence, he called for the adoption of Arabic as the Syrian national language, arguing his position from a geographic point of view. His articles were designed to inspire and motivate Arab Americans. He caught the spirit of identify with country that President Kennedy was to espouse years later. Speaking about Lebanon and Syria, Gibran asks: "Are you a politician asking what your country can do for you or a zealous one asking what you can do for your country?"
In another article, Gibran article exhorted Arab Americans to be proud of their mixed heritage: “...stand before the towers of New York, Washington, Chicago and San Francisco saying in your heart, 'I am the descendant of a people that built Damascus, and Tyre and Sidon, and Antioch, and now I am here to build with you, and with a will....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.”

During this years, Gibran published his poem “Pity the Nation” in Arabic. It was not translated into English until after his death; it is published in Gibran’s Garden of the Prophet (1933); selections from the poem (in English) are included in this reading packet.

Note: Ancient Cities Gibran mentions. (1) Damascus, one of the oldest continuously inhabited cities in the world, contains numerous archaeological sites, including some historical churches and mosques. (2) Tyre was an ancient Phoenician city; today it is the 4th largest city in Lebanon; it has a number of ancient sites, including a Roman Hippodrome. (3) Sidon was the most powerful Phoenician city and is the supposed birthplace of Jezebel who became queen of the Israelites during King Ahab’s reign. Recent excavations have exposed part of the ancient Canaanite— and later Phoenician—city, including a massive temple and depictions of deities worshiped at Sidon. By tradition, (4) Antioch is believed to be the site of the first Gentile church was founded (Acts 11:20-21) and where the disciples of Jesus were first called Christians (Acts 11:19-26). St. Paul started on his missionary journey.

When the Ottomans were driven out of Syria during WW I, Gibran’s exhilaration was manifested in a sketch called "Free Syria" which appeared on the front page of the Arabic newspaper’s Victory edition. In an unpublished play Gibran kept among his papers, he expressed great hope for national independence and progress. This unfinished play, according to a political scientist “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.”

A Brief Timeline of Lebanon’s Occupation and Eventual Independence
- British and Arab troops captured Damascus and Aleppo in 1918, and the French took control of modern-day Syria and Lebanon in 1920. These arrangements put an end to roughly 400 years of Ottoman rule in the region.
- The French reign led to uprisings and revolts among the people in Syria. From 1925 to 1927, Syrians united against the French occupation in what’s now known as the Great Syrian Revolt.
- In 1936, France and Syria negotiated a treaty of independence, which allowed Syria to remain independent but gave France military and economic power.
- During WW 2 British and Free French troops occupied Syria—but shortly after the war ended, Syria officially became an independent country in 1946.
- Lebanon gained its independence on November 23, 1943.

Reading 4. More about Mary Haskell Minis (Gibran’s Friend and Editor)
In 1904 Haskell and Gibran met at Gibran first art exhibition (1904) in Boston. Haskell, a respected headmistress, was 10 years his senior. However, the two formed a close friendship that lasted the rest of Gibran’s life. Haskell is responsible financially and psychically for Gibran’s 2-year study of art in Paris (1904-06). Even more importantly, Haskell encouraged his writing and translated (with Gibran’s help) his Arabic manuscripts into English; eventually, Gibran became more fluent in English, but Haskell continued to be his lifelong, talented editor.

In 1923 just after Gibran published The Prophet, she returned to her birthplace Savannah GA and married the wealthy elderly widower Jacob Minis, a family friend and a respected, former diplomat. Even so, she continued her deep relationships with Gibran as his confidante, friend, and editor. While she and Gibran were publicly discreet, their letters (published in 1972) reveal a close and loving intimacy.

Reading 5. Gibran’s Death and Legacy
At Gibran’s request, these words are engraved on his tomb.
I am alive like you, and I am standing beside you.
Close your eyes and look around, you will see me in front of you.

4a. Gibran’s Will, his Death and final Resting Place. Prior to his death, Gibran prepared his will. He willed the future American royalties to his books to his hometown of Bsharri, to be “used for good causes”. He willed the contents of his studio to Mary Haskell Minis and provided a substantial bequest for her and his sister Marianna.

Gibran, who had been in poor health since the early 1920’s, died on 10 April 1931 of tuberculosis exacerbated by cirrhosis of the liver. His body was taken to Boston, and despite his family's fears that he would be denied Catholic rites, his friend Monsignor Stephen El-Douaihy conducted a funeral mass. Hundreds attended—far too many for all of them to get into the church. Several memorial services were conducted during the following weeks.

As Gibran requested before his death, his body was sent in to his native Lebanon village for burial. Since Gibran was a major Arabic literary figure, the procession to Bsharri and the associated ceremonies were elaborate and reflected the reverence, awe, and pride he engendered in his native countrymen and women.

Mary Haskell Minis and Gibran’s sister Mariana purchased the Mar Sarkis Monastery in Lebanon and provided the funds which eventually led to the former Monastery's becoming Gibran’s final resting place and a museum.

4c. His Paintings and Writings Preserved. When Mary Haskell Minis was cataloging the items in Gibran’s Village Apartment, she discovered that he had retained the hundreds of letters she had written him over their 23 years. She initially decided to burn them because of their intimacy, but recognizing their historical value she gave them, along with his letters to her which she had also saved, to the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill Library before she died in 1964. Excerpts of the 600+ letters were published in Beloved Prophet (1972).

Mary donated her personal collection of Gibran’s 100+ original works to the Telfair Museum of Art in Savannah, GA in 1950. She had been thinking of placing her collection at the Telfair as early as 1914. In a letter to Gibran, she wrote “I am thinking of… the unique little Telfair Gallery in Savannah, GA., There when I was a visiting child, form burst upon my astonished little soul.” He responded with delight to the idea.

4d. Gibran Museum. The Gibran Museum in Bsharri possesses 440 original Gibran paintings and drawings, most of his remaining private manuscripts, and his tomb. It also includes his furniture and belongings from his Greenwich Village studio. In 1975, the Gibran National Committee restored and expanded the monastery to house more exhibits and again expanded it in 1995. Happily, the Museum is still intact. Here are separate comments by 2018 visitors (a German woman and a man from Miramar):

- From Germany. “Located on the top of the town road this traditional building is so discreet. Inside you’ll discover this Lebanese painter and writer creations! The display is nice. Don’t miss the crypt where Gibran is buried.” From Miramar, “A must! Absolutely worth the visit. One can enter the world of Gibran and admire many of his paintings while attended by highly knowledgeable staff.”

4e. Gibran’s Final Reputation. Gibran occupies a curious place in literary history. As one of the writers who broke with the old and rigid conventions of Arabic poetry and literary prose, he is among the great figures in the 20th C. revival of Arabic literature. His Arabic works are read, admired, and taught, and they are published and sold among the classics of Arabic literature.

However, a chasm remains between his popularity and the lack of critical respect for his work in English speaking countries. In the 1920s his writings were published alongside those of such authors as T.S. Eliot and Robert Frost; he quickly ceased to be considered an important writer by critics. More recently, he has generally been dismissed as sentimental and mystical. Nevertheless, his works continue to be widely read and are regarded as serious literature by people who do not often read such literature.
The unconventional beauty of his language and the moral earnestness of his ideas allow him to speak to a broad audience as only a handful of other 20th C. American poets have. Virtually all of his English works have been in print since they were first published. His literary and artistic models were the late 19th C. Romantic writers (Wordsworth, Coleridge, for example) to whom he was introduced as a teenager by his avant-garde friends in Boston. Gibran’s continuing popularity as a writer testifies to the lasting power of his work for “everyday people.”

4f. Gibran’s Accomplishment. His poetry is notable for its use of formal language, as well as insights on topics of life and spiritual essays. Gibran’s best-known work is The Prophet, a book composed of twenty-six poetic essays. The book became especially popular during the 1960s with the American counterculture and New Age movements. 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.

One of his most notable lines of poetry in the English-speaking world is from Sand and Foam (1926): "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, who altered in slightly in his song written for his mother Julia Lennon, who died in 1958 at age 44. Here are the lyrics to the song: Gibran, who adored his spirited mother, would be honored.

\[Julia, John Lennon (1968)\]

\[
\text{Half of what I say is meaningless/ But I say it just to reach you, Julia.}
\]
\[
\text{Julia, Julia, ocean child, calls me/ So I sing a song of love, Julia.}
\]
\[
\text{Julia, seashell eyes, windy smile, calls me/ So I sing a song of love, Julia.}
\]
\[
\text{Her hair of floating sky is shimmering, glimmering/In the sun}
\]
\[
\text{Julia, Julia, morning moon, touch me/ So I sing a song of love, Julia.}
\]
\[
\text{When I cannot sing my heart/ I can only speak my mind, Julia.}
\]
\[
\text{Julia, sleeping sand, silent cloud, touch me/ So I sing a song of love, Julia calls me/}
\]
\[
\text{So I sing a song of love, Julia, Julia, Julia}
\]

Here’s link to the Lennon song: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_d-PmEWxIHI

Reading 6. Summary and Quotes, Spirits Rebellious (1908)

Background. Disillusioned with the complicity of the Maronite Church with the Ottoman Empire and the resulting poor treatment of the people, Gibran published 3 scathing stories in his Arabic-language collection Spirits Rebellious (1908). The collection was burned publicly in Beirut and other cities, and Gibran was excommunicated by the Maronite Church, resulting in his disenfranchisement in Lebanon.

1. Madame Rose Hanie. Rosie Hanie marries Rashid, a much older, wealthy Rashid. But she soon longs for love that “unites both hearts and affection.” She leaves her husband and gives her heart to another man whose love makes them “one member of life’s body and one word upon the lips of God.” The price of her freedom is the sacrifice of her body. Society condemns her as a prostitute and exiles her, but Rose is undaunted.

She insists that people “neither understand the law of God nor comprehend the true intent of veritable religion nor distinguish between a sinner and an innocent. They look only at the surface of objects without knowing their secrets... In God’s eyes I was unfaithful and an adulteress only while at the home of Rashid because he made me his wife according to the customs and traditions by the force of haste before heaven had made him mine in conformity with the spiritual law of love and affection... but today I am pure and noble in spirit... they have exiled me now from their society and I am pleased, because humanity does not exile except the one whose noble spirit rebels against despotism and oppression. He who does not prefer exile to slavery is not free by any measure of freedom, truth and duty.”

2. Kahlil the Hermit. Completely disenchanted by the hypocrisy and lack of generosity among the monks, the young monk Kahlil steals away from the monastery that he has been serving. He encounters a young woman Rachel, who assists him while asking question. The monks then persuade the Sheik to have Kahlil arrested, and the Sheik questions him. The final scene is Kahlil’s impassioned speech to the people during which he denounces the alliance of Maronite Father Elias and Sheik Abbas: Church-
State alliance. “They are united in shared power. The noble and the priest joined hands to exploit the farmer who ploughed the land...Since the beginning of the creation and up to our present time, certain clans, rich by inheritance, in cooperation with the clergy, had appointed themselves the administrators of the people. It is an old gaping wound in the heart of society that cannot be removed except by intense removal of ignorance.”

He then calls for liberty and freedom. “Through their wickedness we were divided amongst ourselves; and the better to keep their thrones and be at ease, they armed the Druze to fight the Arab, and stirred up the Shiite to attack the Sunni, and encouraged the Kurdish to butcher the Bedouin, and cheered the Mohammedan to dispute with the Christian. Until when shall a brother continue killing his own brother upon his mother’s bosom? Until when shall the Cross be kept apart from the Crescent before the eyes of God? Oh Liberty, hear us, and speak in behalf of but one individual for a great fire is started with a small spark. Oh Liberty, awake but one heart with the rustling of wings, for from one cloud alone comes the lightning which illuminates the pits of the valleys and the tops of the mountains.”

3. The Cry of the Graves. The Emir condemns 3 people by death: (1) a man who murders another who is about to commit a rape; (2) a married woman who spends an hour with her childhood lover who is not her husband; and (3) a poor man who robs a monastery to feed his starving children. Gibran questions what the people call justice. “When a man kills another man, the people say he is a murderer, but when the Emir kills him, the Emir is just... Shedding of blood is forbidden but who made it lawful for the Emir? Shall we meet evil with evil and say this is the law?”

Reading 7. Divine World and Sand & Foam and A Poet’s Voice Selections

A. The Hand of God and Gibran’s Divine World. Background: [To the left, is an ancient Mayan image representing the Hand of God.] Originating in the Middle East, graphic images are used to represent God’s Protective Hand and the Eye on it that shields its owner and provides the owner energy, the breath of inspiration, and happiness. The “Eye” takes different cultural forms. In Turkey and adjacent areas of Greece (eastern Mediterranean and Aegean), the Eye is blue, protecting one from the effect of the “Evil Eye.” Gibran’s watercolor, while unusual, provides a 20th C. vision of the Eternal presence in our lives. The use of the hand and eye as a symbol is even present in ancient sections of Mexico and the U.S. Evolutionary psychologists believe that animals “from fiddler crabs to humans” use eyesight for collision avoidance, suggesting that vision is for directing action, not for providing knowledge. Thus, the symbol is a bonding or merging of sensing-observing (the Eye) and doing-acting (the Hand).

In 2011, a Maya site (at least 1,000 years old) was discovered in the mountains of Northeast Georgia. The image as was a remnant of the Mayan “eye on hand” image found in American Indian art throughout the Southeast, the Midwest, and Mexico. The image is the symbol of the Maya’s supreme deity, Hanub-ku. The ancient Egyptians also had an image of: the Eye of Horus drawn on the palm of the hand.

Pictured: Gibran’s “The Divine World” (Watercolor, 1923).

In their 1998 Gibran biography, Suheil Bushrui and Joe Jenkins stress the mystical tradition and Lebanon landscape that formed the young Kahlil Gibran.

‘Gibran saw the body of the world as an outward manifestation of the divine essence. To Gibran, boy and man, nature was invested with a life of its own...}; for him it was the link that binds us one to another, within it flowing a divine energy which is the perfect expression of the internal rhythm of all being. To commune with nature was for him akin to a religious experience.

Among the cliffs, gorges, and groves, drenched with the incense of the cedar forests, the boy Kahlil rejoiced in the sounds and silence of nature. Like the mountain itself, the sacred groves of the cedars are a symbol of life. Since ancient times their shadows have fallen on the profusion of cultures that have enriched Lebanon. The hardy trees were used by the pharaohs of ancient Egypt to furnish
their tombs, by King Solomon in the building of his great temple in Jerusalem, and by the Phoenicians in
the building of their mighty boats which brought such gifts as the phonetic alphabet to the world.

For thousands of years they had inspired the mystics and poets of Assyria, Chaldea, Greece, and Rome. All
around the young Gibran the cedars stood in silent majesty, echoing his own words: ‘The cedars upon thy
breast are a mark of nobleness, and the towers about thee chant thy might and valor, my love.’”

**B. Selections: Gibran, *Sand and Foam* (1926).** *Faith is an oasis in the heart which
will never be reached by the caravan of thinking.*

- I am forever walking upon these shores,--Betwixt the sand and the foam. The high tide will erase
  my foot-prints,--And the wind will blow away the foam.--But the sea and the shore will remain--
  Forever.
- The first thought of God was an angel. The first word of God was a man.
- Half of what I say is meaningless; but I say it so that the other half may reach you.
- We live only to discover beauty. All else is a form of waiting.
- Love is a word of light, written by a hand of light, upon a page of light.
- Solitude is a silent storm that breaks down all our dead branches. Yet it sends our living roots
dereeper into the living heart of the living earth.
- Art is a step of nature toward the Infinite.
- There must be something strangely sacred in salt. It is in our tears and in the sea.
- How shall my heart be unsealed unless it be broken?

**C. Selection from “Conclusion” of Gibran’s *A Poet’s Voice*.** My soul is my friend who
consolines me in misery and distress of life. He who does not befriend his soul is an enemy of humanity, and
he who does not find human guidance within himself will perish desperately. Life emerges from within
and derives not from environs.

I came to say a word and I shall say it now. But if death prevents its uttering, it will be said tomorrow, for
tomorrow never leaves a secret in the book of eternity.

I came to live in the glory of love and the light of beauty, which are the reflections of God. I am here living,
and the people are unable to exile me from the domain of life for they know I will live in death. If they
pluck my eyes I will hearken to the murmurs of love and the songs of beauty.

If they close my ears, I will enjoy the touch of the breeze mixed with the incense of love and the fragrance
of beauty. If they place me in a vacuum, I will live together with my soul, the child of love and beauty. I
came here to be for all and with all, and what I do today in my solitude will be echoed by tomorrow to the
people. What I say now with one heart will be said tomorrow by many hearts.

**Reading 8. From *The Garden of the Prophet* (1933), Kahlil Gibran**

**Comment:** Most likely, Gibran wrote this poem during WW1 when the Ottoman Empire was starving the
people of Lebanon by cutting off their supply lines. Gibran considered the horrid Ottoman actions a
genocide of his people, a genocide. Without doubt, the Ottoman actions were ignored by the Western world.
Gibran openly called for freedom of his Lebanon and Syria. But the people did not rise up! Gibran’s
outspoken support for revolution was honored by many (especially young) Lebanese, who revered him as a
courageous vigorous spokesperson for the independence. He was unable to get the poem published in his
lifetime even in the Arabic magazines that usually published his material. He eventually wove his poem
into an unfinished sequel to *The Prophet*: *The Garden of the Prophet*, published posthumously.

**Pity the Nation**

- Pity the nation that is full of beliefs and empty of religion.
- Pity the nation that wears a cloth it does not weave and eats a bread it does not harvest.
- Pity the nation thatacclaims the bully as hero, and that deems the glittering conqueror bountiful.
- Pity a nation that despises a passion in its dream, yet submits in its awakening.
• Pity the nation that raises not its voice save when it walks in a funeral, boasts not except among its ruins, and will rebel not save when its neck is laid between the sword and the block.

• Pity the nation whose statesman is a fox, whose philosopher is a juggler, and whose art is the art of patching and mimicking.

• Pity the nation that welcomes its new ruler with trumpeting, and farewells him with hooting, only to welcome another with trumpeting again.

• Pity the nation whose sages are dumb with years and whose strongmen are yet in the cradle. Pity the nation divided into fragments, each fragment deeming itself a nation.

Reading 9. Selections from Jesus, Son of Man (1928)
Rich Levi, Nathaniel, and 3 Mary Magdalene Narratives

A RICH LEVI IN THE NEIGHBOURHOOD OF NAZARETH, Jesus the Good Carpenter

He was a good carpenter. The doors He fashioned were never unlocked by thieves, and the windows he made were always ready to open to the east wind and to the west. And He made chests of cedar wood, polished and enduring, and ploughs and pitchforks strong and yielding to the hand.

And He carved lecterns for our synagogues. He carved them out of the golden mulberry; and on both sides of the support, where the sacred book lies, He chiseled wings outspreading; and under the support, heads of bulls and doves, and large-eyed deer. All this He wrought in the manner of the Chaldeans and the Greeks. But there was that in His skill which was neither Chaldean nor Greek.

Now this my house was builded by many hands thirty years ago. I sought builders and carpenters in all the towns of Galilee. They had each the skill and the art of building, and I was pleased and satisfied with all that they did.

But come now, and behold two doors and a window that were fashioned by Jesus of Nazareth. They in their stability mock at all else in my house. See you not that these two doors are different from all other doors? And this window opening to the east, is it not different from other windows? All my doors and windows are yielding to the years save these which He made. They alone stand strong against the elements.

And see those cross-beams, how he placed them; and these nails, how they are driven from one side of the board, and then caught and fastened so firmly upon the other side. And what is passing strange is that that laborer who was worthy the wages of two men received but the wage of one man; and that same laborer now is deemed a prophet in Israel.

Had I known then that this youth with saw and plane was a prophet, I would have begged Him to speak rather than work, and then I would have overpaid Him for his words. And now I still have many men working in my house and fields. How shall I know the man whose own hand is upon his tool, from the man upon whose hand God lays His hand? Yea, how shall I know God’s hand?

NATHANIEL, Jesus was not Meek

They say that Jesus of Nazareth was humble and meek. They say that though He was a just man and righteous, He was a weakling, and was often confounded by the strong and the powerful; and that when He stood before men of authority He was but a lamb among lions.

But I say Jesus had authority over men, and that He knew His power and proclaimed it among the hills of Galilee, and in the cities of Judea and Phoenicia. What man yielding and soft would say, “I am life, and I am the way to truth”? What man meek and lowly would say, “I am in God, our Father; and our God, the Father, is in me”? What man unmindful of His own strength would say, “He who believes not in me believes not in this life nor in the life everlasting”? What man uncertain of tomorrow would proclaim, “Your world shall pass away and be naught but scattered ashes before my words shall pass away”? Was He doubtful of Himself when He said to those who would confound Him with a harlot, “He who is without sin, let him cast a stone”? 
Did He fear authority when He drove the money-changers from the court of the temple, though they were licensed by the priests? Were His wings shorn when He cried aloud, "My kingdom is above your earthly kingdoms"?

Was He seeking shelter in words when He repeated again and yet again, “Destroy this temple and I will rebuild it in three days”? Was it a coward who shook His hand in the face of the authorities and pronounced them “liars, low, filthy, and degenerate”? Shall a man bold enough to say these things to those who ruled Judea be deemed meek and humble? Nay. The eagle builds not his nest in the weeping willow. And the lion seeks not his den among the ferns.

I am sickened and the bowels within me stir and rise when I hear the faint-hearted call Jesus humble and meek, that they may justify their own faint-heartedness; and when the downtrodden, for comfort and companionship, speak of Jesus as a worm shining by their side. Yea, my heart is sickened by such men. It is the mighty hunter I would preach, and the mountainous spirit unconquerable.

[Three Mary Magdalene Narratives]

MARY MAGDALENE: On Meeting Jesus for the First Time
It was in the month of June when I saw Him for the first time. He was walking in the wheat field when I passed by with my handmaidens, and He was alone. The rhythm of His steps was different from other men’s, and the movement of His body was like naught I had seen before. Men do not pace the earth in that manner. And even now I do not know whether He walked fast or slow.

My handmaidens pointed their fingers at Him and spoke in shy whispers to one another. And I stayed my steps for a moment, and raised my hand to hail Him. But He did not turn His face, and He did not look at me. And I hated Him. I was swept back into myself, and I was as cold as if I had been in a snow-drift. And I shivered. That night I beheld Him in my dreaming; and they told me afterward that I screamed in my sleep and was restless upon my bed.

It was in the month of August that I saw Him again, through my window. He was sitting in the shadow of the cypress tree across my garden, and He was still as if He had been carved out of stone, like the statues in Antioch and other cities of the North Country. And my slave, the Egyptian, came to me and said, “That man is here again. He is sitting there across your garden.” And I gazed at Him, and my soul quivered within me, for He was beautiful. His body was single and each part seemed to love every other part. Then I clothed myself with raiment of Damascus, and I left my house and walked towards Him.

Was it my aloneness, or was it His fragrance, that drew me to Him? Was it a hunger in my eyes that desired comeliness, or was it His beauty that sought the light of my eyes? Even now I do not know. I walked to Him with my scented garments and my golden sandals, the sandals the Roman captain had given me, even these sandals. And when I reached Him, I said, “Good-morrow to you.” And He said, “Good-morrow to you, Miriam.”

He looked at me, and His night-eyes saw me as no man had seen me. And suddenly I was as if naked, and I was shy. Yet He had only said, “Good-morrow to you.” And then I said to Him, “Will you not come to my house?” And He said, “Am I not already in your house?” I did not know what He meant then, but I know now. And I said, “Will you not have wine and bread with me?” And He said, “Yes, Miriam, but not now.”

Not now, not now, He said. And the voice of the sea was in those two words, and the voice of the wind and the trees. And when He said them unto me, life spoke to death. For mind you, my friend, I was dead. I was a woman who had divorced her soul. I was living apart from this self which you now see. I belonged to all men, and to none. They called me harlot, and a woman possessed of seven devils. I was cursed, and I was envied. But when His dawn-eyes looked into my eyes all the stars of my night faded away, and I became Miriam, only Miriam, a woman lost to the earth she had known, and finding herself in new places. And now again I said to Him, “Come into my house and share bread and wine with me.”

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And He said, “Why do you bid me to be your guest?” And I said, “I beg you to come into my house.” And it was all that was solid in me, and all that was sky in me calling unto Him. Then He looked at me, and the noontide of His eyes was upon me, and He said, “You have many lovers, and yet I alone love you. Other men love themselves in your nearness. I love you in yourself. Other men see a beauty in you that shall fade away sooner than their own years. But I see in you a beauty that shall not fade away, and in the autumn of your days that beauty shall not be afraid to gaze at itself in the mirror, and it shall not be offended. “I alone love the unseen in you.”

Then He said in a low voice, “Go away now. If this cypress tree is yours and you would not have me sit in its shadow, I will walk my way.” And I cried to Him and I said, “Master, come to my house. I have incense to burn for you, and a silver basin for your feet. You are a stranger and yet not a stranger. I entreat you, come to my house.” Then He stood up and looked at me even as the seasons might look down upon the field, and He smiled. And He said again: “All men love you for themselves. I love you for yourself.”

And then He walked away.

But no other man ever walked the way He walked. Was it a breath born in my garden that moved to the east? Or was it a storm that would shake all things to their foundations? I knew not, but on that day the sunset of His eyes slew the dragon in me, and I became a woman, I became Miriam....

MARY MAGDALENE: His Mouth was like the Heart of a Pomegranate
His mouth was like the heart of a pomegranate, and the shadows in His eyes were deep. And He was gentle, like a man mindful of his own strength. In my dreams I beheld the kings of the earth standing in awe in His presence. I would speak of His face, but how shall I?

It was like night without darkness, and like day without the noise of day. It was a sad face, and it was a joyous face. And well I remember how once He raised His hand towards the sky, and His parted fingers were like the branches of an elm.

And I remember Him pacing the evening. He was not walking. He Himself was a road above the road; even as a cloud above the earth that would descend to refresh the earth. But when I stood before Him and spoke to him, He was a man, and His face was powerful to behold. And He said to me, “What would you, Miriam?” I would not answer Him, but my wings enfolded my secret, and I was made warm.

And because I could bear His light no more, I turned and walked away, but not in shame. I was only shy, and I would be alone, with His fingers upon the strings of my heart.

MARY MAGDALEN, THIRTY YEARS LATER: On the Resurrection of the Spirit
Once again I say that with death Jesus conquered death, and rose from the grave a spirit and a power. And He walked in our solitude and visited the gardens of our passion. He lies not there in that cleft rock behind the stone. We who love Him beheld Him with these our eyes which He made to see; and we touched Him with these our hands which He taught to reach forth.

I know you who believe not in Him. I was one of you, and you are many; but your number shall be diminished. Must you break your harp and your lyre to find the music therein? Or must you fell a tree ere you can believe it bears fruit? You hate Jesus because someone from the North Country said He was the Son of God. But you hate one another because each of you deems himself too great to be the brother of the next man. You hate Him because someone said He was born of a virgin, and not of man’s seed.

But you know not the mothers who go to the tomb in virginity, nor the men who go down to the grave choked with their own thirst. You know not that the earth was given in marriage to the sun, and that earth it is who sends us forth to the mountain and the desert. There is a gulf that yawns between those who love Him and those who hate Him, between those who believe and those who do not believe.
But when the years have bridged that gulf you shall know that He who lived in us is deathless, that He was the Son of God even as we are the children of God; that He was born of a virgin even as we are born of the husbandless earth.

It is passing strange that the earth gives not to the unbelievers the roots that would suck at her breast, nor the wings wherewith to fly high and drink, and be filled with the dews of her space.

But I know what I know, and it is enough.

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**Reading 10. Auguste Rodin and Kahlil Gibran**

A. **Auguste Rodin (1840-1917).** Born in Paris, Rodin’s sculpture was a major influence on modern art. Rodin was in his 40’s before his immense talent became recognized. Developing his creative talents during his teens, Rodin later worked in the decorative arts for nearly two decades. Among Rodin's most praised works is “The Gates of Hell,” a monument of various sculpted figures based on Italian Renaissance poet Dante’s *Inferno*. Although he died before he could finish the monument, he completed several related sculptures, including "The Thinker" (1880) pictured left.

B. **Rodin’s “Despairing Man” & Gibran’s “Broken Man.”** Gibran’s *Broken Man* painting (on the right) is clearly influenced by Rodin’s sculpture *Despairing Man* (on the left). Gibran’s painting presents a desolate figure leaning on a rock as a dark sky swirls above him. The figure almost appears to be growing out of the rock as does Rodin’s figure in *Despairing Man*.

C. **Gibran discovers William Blake.** Apparently, Rodin introduced Gibran to the poetry, engraving, and artwork of late 18th C. engraver-poet-artist William Blake. Blake was a social activist, a revolutionary, and a critic of what he viewed a hypocritical Church of England that did nothing to halt the cruelty to children and the poor that haunted London. Blake’s writings which had been little praised during his lifetime had become increasingly recognized during the 19th C. Gibran carefully read Blake’s life and writing and viewed reproductions of Blake’s drawings and paintings. Blake became immensely important to Gibran.

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**Reading 11. William Blake and Kahlil Gibran**

Before his death, **Rodin described Gibran as "the twentieth-century Blake."**

A. **William Blake (1757-1827): Short Biography.** Considered mentally ill and largely disregarded during his lifetime, the visionary poet and engraver William Blake is now recognized among the greatest contributors to English literature and art. A son of former Anglicans who became religious dissenters, Blake was born in London, where he lived most of his life. As boy, Blake recalls having visions of seeing angels in the trees. These mystical visions returned throughout his life, leaving a profound mark on his poetry and outlook. Blake was also particularly sensitive to cruelty. He wept when confronted by the inhumanity of humans.

Like Gibran, Blake’s developed an early interest in painting. Due to his family’s limited financial resources and drawing talent, 14-year-old Blake was apprenticed to an engraver-printer for 7 years. After completing his apprenticeship, he studied at the prestigious Royal Academy, but due to his distaste for the work being done fell out of favor with the Academy president Sir Joshua Reynolds and left.

In 1784, he set up a print shop, but within a few years the business floundered and for the rest of his life Blake eked out a living as an engraver and illustrator. His literature by devoted wife, Catharine, whom he
married in 1782, remained faithful and diligent. Together, they hand-printed the illuminated poetry he created. He also gained some income from illustrating the works of other writers.

In 1789, he published his carefully gentle (but spirited) *Songs of Innocence* followed by *Songs of Experience*, containing an overt expression of church hypocrisy, adult corruption and repression. He went on to create prophetic books and to develop a mythic vision of a New Jerusalem. He had relentless energy and drive. After a long illness, he rested in the arms of his wife and, just before he died, he exclaimed: “I hear angels singing.” Blake was an unorthodox Christian who believed in the divinity of Jesus and who welcomed all religions. In an essay entitled “All Religions are One,” he proposes that “no man can think or write from his heart [without speaking] the truth.” All men, says Blake, have within them a Poetic Genius, a way of reimagining and transforming the world. Thus, those who can truly “see” are the “True Men.”

B. The Holy Quest: Shared Messianic Visions of Blake and Gibran. Gibran shared Blake’s vision as well as his revolutionary spirit, his concern about societal issues, and church corruption. In 1910, 27-year-old Gibran returned from Paris and began writing in Arabic. 7 years later, he published *The Madman*, his first work in English (with major assistance from Mary Haskell’s major assistance).

Gibran and Blake were poets and artists, who rebelled against the decayed and rigid laws of church and society. Both rejected Reason in the name of Imagination and considered the Bible (Jewish Sacred Scripture and New Testament) as their primary resources and Jesus as the ultimate poet, rebel, teacher, and creator.

Although few listened to Blake during his lifetime, Gibran was more fortunate. His major achievement is *The Prophet* (1923), a book of spiritual teachings that still has a huge following. Gibran regarded himself a peacemaker, a spiritual healer, a teacher and a guide, who was destined to carry the burden and the suffering of his own people.

Like Blake, who considered himself to be in "constant communication with visions," Gibran "believed himself to be in communication with the truth—a gift given only rarely to unique individuals." Viewing himself as a poet who had a message to deliver, he took his mission very seriously. He believed that the enlightened poet was a prophet, who bore the responsibility of leading the people to a world of higher innocence and Divine Truth through imagination.

The major message shared by Blake and Gibran was to create a world centered on love, friendship, and above all else, peace. Love was the road to salvation because it had a healing and redemptive power. Blake and Gibran shared a quest: a progressive evolution from innocent childhood to disillusioned experience and finally "Higher Innocence" that became possible when knowledge is enriched by the imagination.

Importantly, Gibran and Blake’s poetry, prose, and (often) artwork draw from the mythic reality of Sacred Jewish Scripture and the New Testament. For them, these texts provide an inexhaustible source of inspiration. Blake and Gibran connected poetry and art with Christianity because to them, Jesus was the supreme poet, visionary and artist.

For Blake and Gibran, the basic purpose of our existence is to discover and record new truths. Like Blake, Gibran was dedicated to opening the channels of our perception so that we might embrace our visions and understand that everything is infinite. Blake promises us that when we see the infinite in everything, we see God and our souls-selves become enlightened.

C. Blake, “Rout of the Devil Angel” on left. Blake earned a significant portion his extremely modest income from wealthy patrons who commissioned him to illustrate great works. Just such a commission resulted in his illustrating John Milton’s 17th C. epic poem: *Paradise Lost* (1667). In *Paradise Lost*, Milton creates what has come to be known as “the Fortunate Fall”: the myth of the Fall of Man. Milton envisions a beautiful and vibrant archangel Satan, who challenges God and loses.
Thus, suggests Milton, the rebellion of Satan is the source of sin, death, and evil--all resulting in the expulsion of a now-mortal Adam and Eve from Paradise.

In this triumphant battle scene, a virile archer god, presses his divine bow forward shoving all the rebel angels to Hell. Notice that the bow is unstrung, but is given weight by semi-circle of angelic beings. The divine archer (God/Jesus) is bending over the lip of a round, open space. This presumed opening into Paradise is imagined by Blake as the flower (a sunflower, a lily) or the eye in a divine whirlwind, or a cosmic space in the body of the sun.

D. Blake, *Sun at the Eastern Gate*. This spectacular painting is an illustration for an epic poem Blake wrote. He entitled his poem *Milton* and dedicated it to the 17th C. poet of the same name. Blake’s *Milton* honors and transforms the author Milton’s ideas in *Paradise Lost*.

Blake was deeply impressed by his predecessor’s vision of Paradise and Hell, but insisted that Milton was “of the devil’s party without knowing it.” In other words, Milton got much of the myth right, but missed what Blake believed was THE WHOLE POINT: opposites are essential and eventually merge. He acknowledged that we mortals live by these opposites—good & evil, innocence & experience, God & Satan, etc. He sees them as positive and their merger, transformative. He would honor this equation: Passion & Experience + Goodness & Innocence = “The Divine Human.”

E. Blake, Word Play, & Transformed Meaning. Blake loved word play. Blake created his own mythology. The central figure in his mythic structure is LOS, the figure in “Sun at the Eastern Gate.” LOS emerges from the flame of circling, naked figures. He is carrying and striding forward on a cloud banner above the English country side. Now for the word play. LOS backwards is SOL. SOL is Spanish for SUN. SUN can also be spelled SON as in Jesus, the Son of God and Son of Man. And SOL spoken aloud is the same word as SOUL.

This figure is connected to Blake’s poem *Jerusalem*, also known as the unofficial British National Anthem. Here are verses 3 and 4 from that remarkable poem: (3) Bring me my Bow of burning gold: / Bring me my arrows of desire./ Bring me my Spear: O clouds unfold! / Bring me my Chariot of fire! (4) I will not cease from Mental Fight. / Nor shall my sword sleep in my hand: /Till we have built Jerusalem, / In England's green & pleasant Land.

F. Gibran, the Lanceur. While there is not a direct correspondence to the Blake illustrations, there are similarities between the style and content of Blake’s illustrations: the mythic dimension of both, the entwining of the human figures, and the suggestion of the bow and an archer.

In Gibran’s painting, the upright, naked, somewhat androgynous figure is thrusting an unstrung bow toward the cosmos. Unlike Blake’s bow in “Rout of Devils,” Gibran’s bow has no wooden form. The Gibran “bow” is entirely composed of entwined human beings who are holding on to one another as the archer or launcher propels them forward. Gibran’s white, almost translucent archer with pale blond hair appears to be standing firmly on something solid. This archer is more human; the figure is not surrounded by flaming petals, but by spiraling white clouds against a dark blue form or windy void.
F. Gibran’s Word Play and Message. Although Gibran’s “theology” has strong connections with Blake’s as do his ideas about the importance of the enlightened poet, the need for restorative rebellion, and the critical importance of Jesus. However, Gibran is clearly influenced by his Christian Maronite background. In the 2nd Blake illustration (Sun at the Eastern Gate), Los is holding a spear in his right hand. No spear is evident in Gibran’s painting, but there is the possibility of a hidden clue in the title “Lanceur.”

Gibran, who was fluent in French, may be purposefully “playing” with the French word “Lanceur” and the English word “spear.” In French, a Lanceur is a “launcher,” an individual who propels or launches something (a ball or a rock into space). The English word “spear” translated in French is “lance.” Gibran knew the Bible, particularly the New Testament. Given his openness to mysticism, faith, and imagination, it is quite possible that Gibran has focused either on a key concept he learned from his early education by priests or from his own reading and re-reading of the New Testament, specifically the Gospel of John, whom Gibran found particularly important. The John gospel is based on the firm Maronite conviction that Jesus is fully human and fully divine at one and the same time.

John first mentions the connection of water and blood in the 5th chapter: This is the One who came by water and blood, Jesus Christ; not with the water only, but with the water and with the blood. (1 John 5:6). At the crucifixion, a soldier pierces Christ’s side with a spear; blood and water flow from the wound. Greek Christian convert and Biblical scholar Origen (c 185–c.254) considered the flowing of blood and water miraculous—a confirmation of Jesus as the merged human-divine entity.

The presence of a spear in the hand of LOS in Blake’s “Sun at the Eastern Gate” resonates with the interpretation I’m suggesting for Gibran’s hidden reference to the Gospel of John. Blake, too, believed that Jesus was fully human and fully divine; he also believed that enlightened mortals were as well at least momentarily...and then eternally.

4. Blake-Gibran Summary: The Enlightened Soul. A talented critic provides this summary of Gibran and Blake’s shared belief in the critical mission of the enlightened soul:

“Only the elected and gifted soul is capable of creativity, of reading the world differently, and of rebelling against evil clothed in a lamb’s garment. Art knows no boundaries. It transcends all national limits and is only satisfied with the universal.

There, time and place lose their ability to imprison the artist in a closed cell. The inspired poet becomes a winged soul floating over life, embracing the infinite. It is in the midst of this vast expanse where the responsibility of the artist becomes eternal and his mission turns holy that we can speak of Kahlil Gibran and William Blake together. Both believe that the function of poetry is to lead the people to the transformed Eden and that the function of painting must help us step from nature toward the infinite.”