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The
BORDERLESS
WORLDS
of
KAHILIL
GIBRAN

Written by Piney Kesting

Photographed by Kevin Bubrski

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

I believe that you are contributors to this new civilization.

*I believe that you have inherited from your forefathers an
ancient dream, a song, a prophecy, which you can proudly lay
as a gift of gratitude upon the lap of America.*

I believe that you can say to the founders of this great nation:

*'Here I am, a youth, a young tree whose roots were plucked
from the hills of Lebanon, yet I am deeply rooted here, and
I would be fruitful.'*

—Kahlil Gibran, excerpt from "To Young Americans of Syrian Origin," 1926





In 1895 the future author of this poem was a 12-year-old boy. With his mother and three siblings, he had recently emigrated from Lebanon to Boston, where they settled with relatives in the South Cove tenements. Left behind in their hometown of Bsharri was his father, whose conviction for embezzlement had thrust his already impoverished family into penury. They arrived with next to nothing. Yet Gibran Khalil Gibran brought with him something precious—an uncommon talent for drawing.

Against all odds, the young immigrant caught the attention of Florence Pierce, an art teacher at Denison House, an experimental settlement house designed to better the lives of immigrant and urban poor families. Impressed by his drawings, Pierce introduced him to well-connected mentors who nurtured and embraced him. These early connections, coupled with his exceptional talent as an artist and later as a writer, would lead him away from the tenements.

Jean Gibran poses in her Boston apartment alongside a bust of writer and artist Kahlil Gibran sculpted and cast by her late husband, sculptor Kahlil George Gibran, lower, who was a godson and namesake of Kahlil Gibran. The couple's research into Gibran's life story has led to three editions of biographies.





This portrait of 15-year-old Kahlil Gibran, left, was made in 1898 by one of his mentors, photographer and publisher Fred Holland Day. Lower: Gibran recalled his family's heritage in a painting of cedar trees in Bsharri, Lebanon.

"Kahlil Gibran was to some 60 million persons whose tongue is Arabic the genius of the age," read the *New York Herald Tribune*. "But he was a man whose fame and influence spread far beyond the Near East."

The world mourned the loss of its quiet, reflective, charismatic writer, whose spirituality and wisdom not only uplifted a generation emerging from the trauma of World War I, but have resonated ever since.

Searching for "The Real Story"

Jean and Kahlil set out in 1970 to reveal the many layers in the life of the young immigrant who emerged from Boston tenements to become an internationally acclaimed writer and artist. "I remember exactly when it began," recalls Jean. "We were driving home from Provincetown, Massachusetts, when Kahlil said, 'Let's do something about Gibran,' and he asked me if I wanted to help him." This started a mission that occupied the couple for decades.

Kahlil George Gibran, who was born in 1922 and grew up to become a well-known sculptor, passed away in 2008. He was named by his godfather, a second cousin whom he referred to throughout his childhood as "Uncle Kahlil." He and his family also lived in the same tenements where his godfather had grown up, and he, too, spent time at Denison House, where the elder Gibran's artistic talent was first noticed in 1896. Memories of the godfather who had encouraged his own interest in art as a child kindled a lifelong desire to understand who Gibran was.

"We searched and searched for the real story," explains Jean. She says that one of the main reasons her husband wanted to research Gibran's life was because of the vast social difference between the tenements in the South End of Boston and the wealthy environment of the Back Bay, just a few streets away. "I remember my husband wondering how Gibran was able to

By the time he was an adult, Gibran was renowned among the literary and artistic circles of Boston's Back Bay, and later of Paris and New York.

Jean Gibran and her late husband, Kahlil George Gibran, Gibran's godson, were the first to document the multidimensional story of his life. Gibran's experiences, observes Jean, across identities of nationality, class and language, along with his universally humanitarian point of view, are as relevant as ever—perhaps even more today. Nearly 90 years after Gibran's passing, new biographies are out. Two museums in particular honor him, and his best-known book, *The Prophet*, has been translated into more than 100 languages. Still in print, it is one of the best-selling books of all time.

These developments would have surprised New York publisher Alfred A. Knopf, who released the book in September 1923. Gibran's first two—*The Madman* and *The Forerunner*—had sold only modestly. Yet in its first month, *The Prophet*, a slender volume of 26 prose poems, sold an astonishing 1,300 copies. The *Chicago Evening Post* lauded it as "a little bible" for those "ready to see the truth."

"My entire being is in *The Prophet*," wrote 40-year-old Gibran. "Everything I have ever done before was only a prelude to this." By the time the book came out, Gibran had become a prolific writer in Arabic and English. He was president of the New York-based Arab émigré writers group, The Pen League (see sidebar, p. 35), and an accomplished illustrator and artist. The acclaim *The Prophet* received, however, catapulted him onto the global stage. His passing at age 48 on April 10, 1931, in New York made front-page news around the world.



hurdle that difference so quickly, how he did it,” she adds.

Gibran’s surviving sibling at the time—his sister Marianna—contributed to the pair’s search. They began with letters in Marianna’s possession from Mary Haskell, the author’s most important benefactor. They also looked into a photograph that hung in Marianna’s home of the elder Gibran at age 15 by photographer and publisher Fred Holland Day, as well as correspondence between the two.

According to Jean, her husband uncovered other photographs Day shot of the elder Gibran’s family in an early-20th-century photography magazine buried in the stacks of the Boston Public Library. Marianna Gibran, who remembered Day, said he often arrived in a carriage to visit the family.

The trail of clues took the pair to Day’s former home in Norwood, Massachusetts, which now houses the Norwood Historical Society. This brought more unexpected treasures, including correspondence from Jessie Fremont Beale, a social worker at the Children’s Aid Society, asking Day to help an artistically talented “little Assyrian boy Kahlil G. ... [whose] future will certainly be that of a street fakir if something is not done for him at once.” This note, and correspondence from poet and dramatist Josephine Preston Peabody, allowed them to gain a fuller understanding of the people who had shaped Gibran’s life from the age of 13 and contributed to his success.

One clue led to another. The pair combed through Haskell’s 47 diaries archived at the University of North Carolina, along with the 615 letters she and Gibran exchanged over 27 years. They located Day’s papers at the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C. Additional correspondence and papers from Peabody and Haskell were found at Harvard University’s Houghton Library and at Wellesley College. And that was just the beginning.

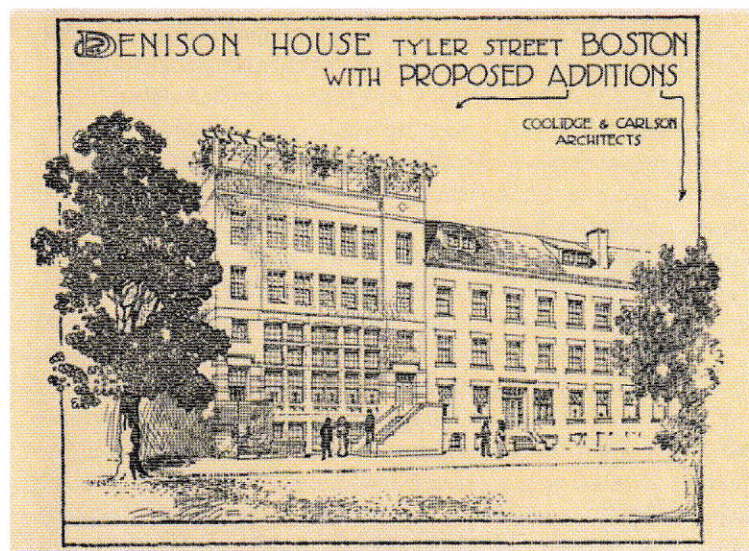
What they discovered, after a national trek, was that fateful encounters and influential mentors nurtured the elder Gibran’s uncommon talent and artistic vision throughout his life. This helped account for much of how he bridged cultures and languages, and how he thrived as both a writer and an artist. “Gibran had a very complex life, and he was a complex person,” explains Jean. She and her husband realized that



to accurately assess his life, they would have to research the milieu in which he lived.

In 1974 the husband-and-wife team published *Kahlil Gibran: His Life and World*. An updated edition of the same title came out in 1991. The biography uncovered the people who had helped shape Gibran’s artistic life. “We were the first to point to Fred Holland Day, Josephine Preston Peabody and Mary Haskell, all enormous influences,” says Jean. She also emphasizes that the story “is by necessity that of his contemporaries, most of whom have since been relegated to the footnotes of history.”

“Gibran’s American journey shaped his life and literature in profound ways,” comments Lebanese author and poet Henri Zoghaib. The biography “proved to be an invaluable key to unlocking many of the mysteries revolving around this towering literary figure whose life is a masterpiece in itself.”



Growing Up Gibran

The journey began in June of 1895 when 12-year-old Gibran, his mother, Kamila, and his siblings Boutros, Sultana and Marianna arrived in Boston. There they joined other primarily Christian immigrants from the Ottoman province of Greater Syria who began arriving in the US in large numbers in the 1870s.

His landing in Boston turned out to be serendipitous. Known as the “Athens of America,” Boston had a thriving intellectual and artistic community. Prominent Bostonians embraced Transcendentalism,

Gibran and his family spent time in Denison House, left, a charitable “settlement house” in Boston for recently arrived immigrants. It was there that art teacher Florence Pierce took note of his talent for drawing. Above: The Tyler Street site of Denison House today.

"SHE-ANGEL"

Mary Elizabeth Haskell

"The she-angel I found in Boston is ushering me towards a splendid future and paving a path of intellectual and financial success for me," wrote 25-year-old Kahlil Gibran to Ameen Ghorayeb in February 1908. "God willing, this is the beginning of a new chapter in the story of my life."

The meeting between Gibran and Mary Elizabeth Haskell, headmistress of a private girls' school in Boston on May 10, 1904, began a 27-year relationship that changed the course of his life.

Born in Columbia, South Carolina, Haskell moved to New England to attend Wellesley College outside of Boston. Ten years older than Gibran, the independent Haskell became his most important patron, confidant and advisor. (She later declined his marriage proposal because of their age difference.)

It was Haskell's financial support that sustained Gibran as he

moved from Boston to Paris and later to New York. "You have given me my life in a literal sense," wrote Gibran in 1914. "It was not just the money but the way you gave it, the love you gave it with and the faith.... I wonder sometimes whether ever in history one soul has done for another what you have done for me."

When Gibran decided in 1918 to begin writing in English, Haskell faithfully edited his manuscripts, continuing long after her move to Savannah, Georgia, in 1923 and her subsequent marriage to Jacob Florence Minis in 1926.

"Do you notice how full these things are of what we have said in talking together, sometime years ago," noted Gibran as they reviewed drafts for *The Prophet*. After Haskell received her copy of *The Prophet* in October 1923, she wrote immediately to Gibran. "This book will be held as one of the treasures of the English language. And in the darkness ... we will open it to find ourselves again.... Generations will not exhaust it, but instead generation after generation will find in the book what they would fain be."

Prior to her death in 1964, Haskell bequeathed her collection of Gibran paintings and drawings to Telfair Museums in Savannah. She donated all of her journals and correspondence with Gibran to the University of North Carolina. It was her preservation of these documents that years later opened the door to Gibran's multidimensional worlds.



a movement that rejected materialism, supported women's rights and believed in the sanctity within nature—all themes reflected in Gibran's future literary and artistic works. They were also exploring the traditions of non-Christian, "Eastern" cultures.

Gibran's artistic drawings soon led him to Day, whom Beale had contacted in the fall of 1896. She had learned of Gibran's talent from Pierce, his art teacher at Denison House. "Miss Pierce feels he was capable of some day earning his living in a better way than by selling matches or newspapers on the street," wrote Beale to Day, "if some one would only help him to get an artistic education."

Day accepted the challenge. Under his tutelage, Gibran learned the arts, classical literature and poetry. Gibran acquired Day's appreciation of Belgian symbolist writer Maurice Maeterlinck's works, whose belief in the "oneness of the individual with the absolute" resonated with Gibran throughout his life. As an apprentice at Day's publishing house, Copeland & Day, Gibran learned the craft of bookbinding. Before he turned 16, Gibran had sold cover designs to New York publishers. Years later he acknowledged Day's role: "You, dear Brother, who first opened the eyes of my childhood to light, will give wings to my manhood."

Day introduced Gibran to Boston artists such as Lilla Cabot Perry, a poet and painter who had studied with Monet and Pissarro. According to Jean, once Gibran gained access to the elite world of the Back Bay, he demonstrated "a lifelong ability to negotiate American intellectual and artistic circles, due to his charisma, innate talent, modesty and will to succeed."

"Being an Arab immigrant in the new world served to shape his distinct identity," writes author Paul-Gordon Chandler in his 2017 book, *In Search of a Prophet*. "[This] identity would later enable him to artistically and spiritually bridge the worlds of the East and West."

The Road to *The Prophet*

Josephine Preston Peabody was a 24-year-old poet when she met Gibran at an exhibit of Day's photography in March 1898. Though he was only 15, she praised the spirituality in Gibran's drawings and later described him as a mystic and prophet. His work, she wrote with prescience, would "shake up the world." (Years later she



Jean Gibrán walks past the mural, "The Muses of Inspiration Hail the Spirit, the Harbinger of Light," by Pierre Puvis de Chavannes, in the Boston Public Library near Copley Square, where Kahlil Gibran spent time studying and writing.

wrote a poem about his childhood in Bsharri and titled it "The Prophet." Biographers have speculated that this may have inspired Gibran's own title a quarter century later.)

In 1902 after two years studying in Beirut at the Madrasa al-Hikmah, Gibran returned to Boston, where he rekindled his friendship with Peabody. She included him in her Sunday salons frequented by artists and intellectuals, and she arranged for his debut as an artist in May 1903 at Wellesley College near Boston.

The following spring, Peabody invited an acquaintance, Mary Haskell, to attend an exhibit of Gibran's drawings at Day's studio. Headmistress of a private girls' school in Boston, her arrival on the last day of the exhibit changed Gibran's life.

"The cross-cultural connection between Kahlil Gibran and Mary Haskell marked one of the 20th century's most important creative partnerships," comments Tania Sammons, a writer and curator who is working on a biography of Haskell. "The Prophet is one of the most important literary works of the 20th century because of its wide-reaching appeal. While popularity in and of itself does not make a work important, the use of the work makes a difference," she continues. "People go to *The Prophet* in times of need for solace and reflection, as

here," he wrote to Haskell. "At other times I am not living." Yet despite this most difficult time, Gibran's reputation as a writer was growing. Syrian Lebanese newspapers in New York began to publish his works.

An Emerging Voice

In 1905 the newspaper *Al Mohajer* (*The Emigrant*) published Gibran's first book in Arabic, *Nubthah fi Fan al-Musiqa* (*On Music*) and launched his column "Dam'ah wa Ibtisamah" (Tears and Mirth), which soon drew a large following. The 1908 publications of his second and third books, *Ara'is al-Muruj* (*Spirit Brides*) and *Al-Arwah al-Mutamarrida* (*Rebellious Spirits*), greatly enhanced his visibility in the Arab American immigrant community as well as abroad in the Arab world.

Gibran's early writings, often embraced in the West, also caught critics' eyes in Lebanon. In *Rebellious Spirits*, wrote editor Ameen Ghorayeb, "The writer combines knowledge of Lebanon with work in the us and the thought of a philosopher." Gibran was emerging as a voice for social reform.

Between 1908 and 1910, Haskell encouraged and funded Gibran's trip to study art in Paris, France. Gibran enrolled

well as for guidance and celebration. I can't think of a comparable 20th-century work, and I don't believe it would have existed without Mary Haskell and their relationship." While Day and Peabody were essential mentors to Gibran during his formative years, it was Haskell who loyally supported Gibran emotionally and financially for the rest of his life. (See sidebar, p. 32.)

Haskell's school soon became Gibran's refuge when he lost, in devastatingly swift succession, his beloved mother, brother and youngest sister. He and his younger sister Marianna, a seamstress who would devote herself to her older brother for the rest of her life, struggled to regain their footing.

"I live here and only

GIBRAN AND THE LANDSCAPES OF ARAB THOUGHT

On March 27 The Kahlil Gibran Chair for Values and Peace at the University of Maryland hosted *Reshaping the Landscapes of Arab Thought*, an academic conference subtitled *The Legacies of Kahlil Gibran, Ameen Rihani and Mikhail Naimy*. It examined works of Lebanese American authors Gibran, Rihani and Naimy.

May Rihani, director of the chair, called Gibran and Rihani “rebels of the Arab literary renaissance. They were the first two voices from the Arab world that defined Arab American literature and redefined the notion of identity by focusing on multiculturalism.”

Naimy, the youngest of the three, joined them in 1916. Colleagues and close friends, the three authored the most significant books to emerge out of the *mahjar* literary movement: *The Prophet* by Gibran, *The Book of Mirdad* by Naimy and *The Book of Khalid* by Rihani, the first Arab American novel, which Gibran illustrated. Paul Salem, president of The Middle East Institute in Washington, D.C., pointed out that together they “re-imagined the Arabic language.”

Throughout the day, nine prominent scholars from the US, Canada and the UK discussed the writers and addressed their shared multicultural vision that contributed to the fabrics of both their native and adopted cultures.

University of Pennsylvania Professor Emeritus Roger Allen highlighted the role each played in crafting the short story narrative in 20th-century Arabic

literature, which he asserted “is the beneficiary of their creativity and initiative.” Elizabeth Saylor of Middlebury College in Vermont explained how the trio were especially important in “pushing the conversation in [gender politics] by producing romantic and social realist fiction in Arabic that dealt with taboo topics.” University of Washington Professor Terri DeYoung discussed the images of democracy in Rihani’s 1910 poem “Crossing Brooklyn Bridge” and referred to him as the poet for the immigrant voice.

“It has been a successful symposium in bringing a more unified view of these three writers,” said Geoffrey Nash of the University of London, one of the nine panelists. “There was an emphasis on their continuing relevance.”

In preparation, Rihani and her staff had identified 75 professors and researchers around the world, all of whom teach about the writers. “Our research is still a work in progress, but this is proof that there is a present and growing interest in these writers,” she noted.

Gibran, Rihani and Naimy, noted Todd Fine, a doctoral candidate at the Graduate Center of the University of New York and a Rihani scholar, “were searching for a new basis of spirituality after the chaos of World War I.... Many of the issues these writers confronted in their works—the status of immigrants, gender equality and political oppression remain unresolved.” Their thinking, he added, is “almost as timely now as it was before.”

in the Académie Julian in Paris, where he met and mingled with luminaries such as Auguste Rodin, Claude Debussy and William Butler Yeats. Paintings by Eugène Carrière inspired him for the artist’s fascination with nature and the “mysterious haze that hung over his paintings.” For the rest of Gibran’s life, nature and mist become prevalent themes. In Paris he decided to start his “Temple of the Arts” series, in which he drew portraits of leading figures of modern art and culture, a project he continued for the rest of his life.

Encounters with Syrian dissident émigrés in Paris awakened Gibran’s interest in the political situation in Greater Syria, which was under the control of the Ottoman Empire. His article “*Ila Suriyeen*” (“To Syrians”), published in the newspaper of Najib Diab, *Mirat al-Gharb* (*Mirror of the West*), expressed his frustrations with attempts to overthrow the Ottoman regime in his homeland.

In 1910 a chance meeting in Paris with Lebanese writer Ameen Rihani led to another critical friendship. Gibran and Rihani shared a common background. Both were raised as Maronite Christians in Mount Lebanon, both shared a love of their homeland, and both came of age as immigrants in the US. Gibran would

At age 15 Gibran met poet Josephine Preston Peabody, who wrote with prescience that he would “shake up the world.” She later introduced Gibran to Mary Haskell, who would become his most enduring muse, benefactor and editor.





The Pen League, from left: founder Nasib Arida, Kahlil Gibran, cofounder Abdul Massih Haddad, poet Mikhail Naimy.

consider the older writer *mu'allimi* (my teacher), and Rihani encouraged him to move to New York, where he could be closer to his fellow Arab émigré writers.

"The immigrant experience elevated and expanded their consciousness," explains May Rihani, director of The Kahlil Gibran Chair for Values and Peace at the University of Maryland and niece of Ameen Rihani. "They were ready to embrace different cultures and different religions and had a vision of a shared humanity."

Gibran wanted to live near Rihani so he could become more involved with fellow émigré writers and publishers in the Lower Manhattan neighborhood known as "Little Syria." In 1911 Haskell financed his move, and he settled into his permanent studio, which he named *al-Sawma'ah* (The Hermitage), at 51 West 10th Street in Greenwich Village.

The Cosmopolite

New York expanded Gibran's horizons further. By the time he arrived, his work was already well-known among his contemporaries, but his background was not. He chose to conceal his early life as an impoverished immigrant.

"His identity among his friends in New York was based less on his personal history as an immigrant adolescent," writes Jean. "Instead, perceptions of him sprang from his arrival as a Levantine newcomer with an unknown past, cosmopolite, fluent in Arabic, English and French, artistically precocious and intent on building a future."

Gibran flourished as both a writer and artist. He and fellow *mahjar* (immigrant) writers were at the forefront of linguistic innovations in Arabic, efforts later underscored by the founding of The Pen League in 1920.

"Gibran in particular was one of the pioneers in the development and introduction of the short story into the Arabic tradition," says University of Pennsylvania Professor Emeritus Roger Allen.

In 1911 Gibran illustrated Rihani's *The Book of Khalid*, the first

AL-RABITAH AL-QALAMIYAH

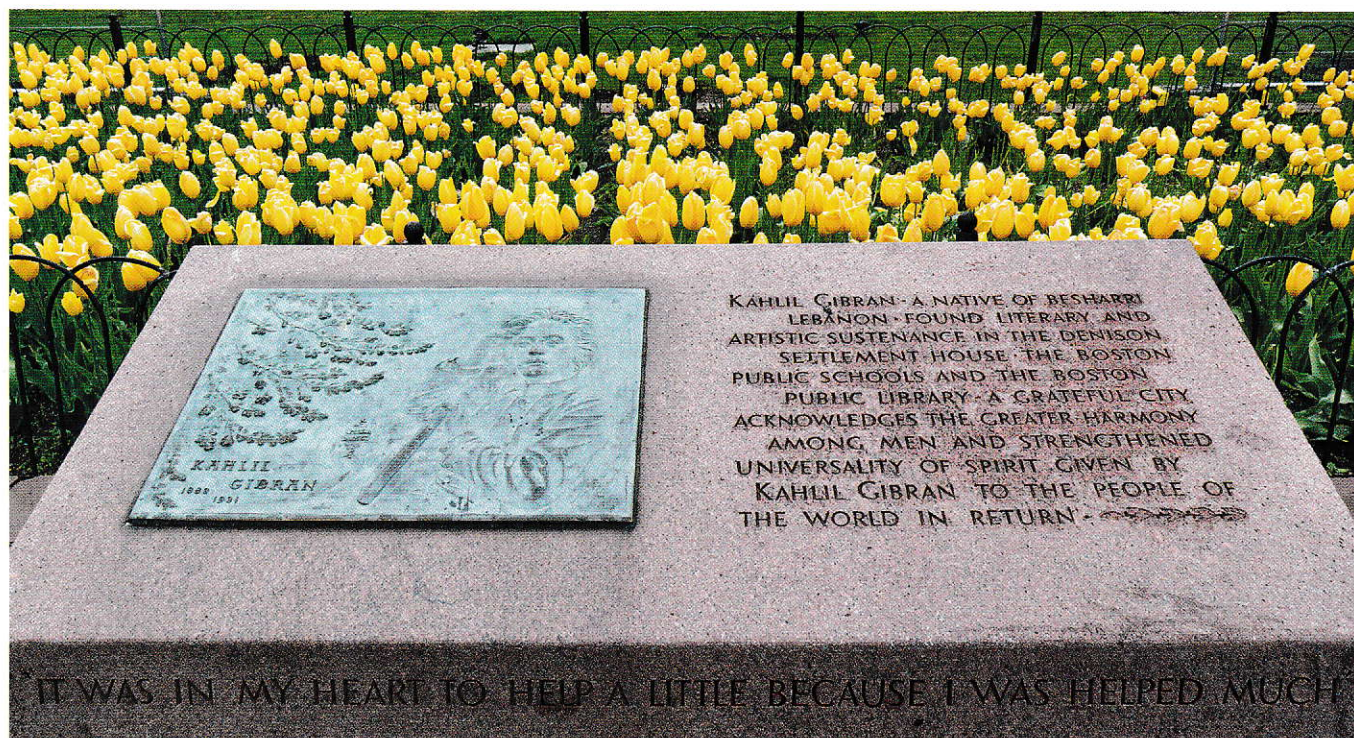
(The Pen League)

In the early 1900s, the proliferation of Syrian Lebanese newspapers, journals and magazines in New York reflected the diversity of the growing Arab immigrant community. These publications also served as incubators for literary works by Gibran and his fellow writers, all members of the *mahjar* literary movement. *Al-Funun* editor Nasib Arida and his colleague Abd al-Massih Haddad, editor of *As-Sayeh* [The traveler], suggested forming a union in order to protect the rights of the *mahjar* writers and to advance Arabic language in literature.

Ilyas Ata Allah became the first writer in May 1916 to sign his work "*Udu fi al-Rabitah al-Qalamiyah*" ("member of the Pen League") in an edition of *As-Sayeh*. Two months later, other leading émigré writers, including Gibran, Ameen Rihani, William Catzeffis, Nadra Haddad, Amin Mushriq, Arida and Abd al-Massih Haddad followed suit, establishing the first informal union of Arab immigrant writers.

They formalized the union in April 1920 with Gibran as president, Mikhael Naimy as secretary and Catzeffis as treasurer. "The tendency to keep our language and literature within the narrow bounds of aping the ancients in form and substance is a most pernicious tendency," Naimy wrote in its bylaws. The challenge, he added, "is to lift Arabic literature from the quagmire of stagnation and imitation and to infuse new life in its veins so as to make it an active force in the building up of the Arab nations and to promote a new generation of Arab writers."

Members of the Pen League produced some of the most creative literary works of the early 1900s. These in turn made significant contributions to the larger *Nahda*—the "awakening" of Arabic letters and culture. The organization was short lived, however, and it dissolved after Gibran's death in 1931 and Naimy's return to Lebanon the following year.



Designed and created by Kahlil George Gibran, a bronze plaque of Gibran holding a copy of *The Prophet*—one of the best-selling books of all time—was set atop inscribed granite in 1977 at the edge of Boston's Copley Square, where it memorializes the writer and artist's legacy of humanitarianism and generosity.

Arab American novel published in the US. The literary journal *Al-Funun* (*The Arts*) dedicated its inaugural issue in 1913 to Gibran, acknowledging his growing prominence. And in 1914 the first New York exhibit of his drawings was held at Montross Gallery on Fifth Avenue.

Gibran broke new ground when one of his short stories in English appeared in the first issue of *The Seven Arts*, a literary magazine founded by James Oppenheim in 1916. Haskell considered it one of Gibran's greatest accomplishments to be the first Arab writer included among influential Western authors such as Robert Frost, D. H. Lawrence and Eugene O'Neill. By 1918 he was writing the majority of his work in English, with Haskell assisting from afar as his faithful editor. At that time he and Rihani were the only two mahjar writers known to publish in both English and Arabic. The gap between the tenements of his youth in Boston and the status he enjoyed as a mature writer and artist in New York grew with each succeeding year.

A Universal Message

As his writing flourished in the 1920s, Gibran became a source of pride for the Lebanese American community, which waited eagerly for his articles in the Arab press. In 1926 Andrew

Ghareeb, a 28-year-old Lebanese immigrant acquainted with a number of mahjar editors and writers, became the first person to translate Gibran's Arabic articles into English for *The Springfield Sunday Union and Republican*, a leading New England newspaper.

"My father liked Gibran's style and the beauty of his work," says Edmund Ghareeb, a renowned Lebanese American scholar and expert in the mahjar press. "He was also very interested in his ideas about the need to fight against discrimination, intolerance and bigotry. That's why he wanted to translate his

works for the English-speaking world."

The elder Ghareeb was a young man when Congress passed the Immigration Act of 1924 (the

Johnson-Reed Quota Act), which escalated anti-Syrian sentiment and severely curbed immigration from the Near East. "He felt Gibran was not only speaking to the people of Lebanon but that he had a universal message," Ghareeb says of his father.

Others point out that Gibran's legacy continues.

"Gibran was the voice of the oppressed and the marginalized," says May Fawaz-Huber, a former Lebanese journalist. "He is still deeply ingrained in Lebanese history, cultural heritage and collective memory, and he keeps me connected to my homeland." She adds that many Lebanese still introduce themselves to

I CAME TO SAY A WORD AND I SHALL UTTER IT....
I CAME TO BE FOR ALL AND IN ALL.

—Kahlil Gibran, *The Syrian World*, April 26, 1926

strangers by saying, "I come from the land of Kahlil Gibran."

Lebanese actress and director Nadine Labaki agrees. "To this day there is no one who more poetically illustrates for Lebanese the importance of coexistence ... than Kahlil Gibran."

By the late 1920s, Gibran's large extended family would gather for long evening celebrations whenever he returned to Boston to visit his sister Marianna. Yet he remained secretive with his New York friends about that part of his life. Until his passing, none of them knew about Haskell, his most significant benefactor, friend and editor—not even his secretary and companion for the last five years of his life, Barbara Young.

In contrast to his family's humble world in Boston, Gibran's New York colleagues, friends and patrons were an astonishing array of leading creative, social and political influencers. He was admired and befriended by prominent Arab American and western publishers and editors. He became a favorite of Mary Khoury, a successful Lebanese American businesswoman who included him in her coveted Manhattan literary gatherings. Corinne Roosevelt Robinson, the sister of early-20th-century US President Theodore Roosevelt, would invite him to read from his works at her New York home. And wealthy New York socialite and arts patron Julia Ellsworth Ford frequently included him in her salons where he mingled with the likes of Yeats, poet Ezra Pound, dancer Isadora Duncan and actor Charlie Chaplin. His two worlds—Boston and New York—rarely overlapped.

Celebrating a Life in Letters

On January 5, 1929, hundreds of guests gathered at The Hotel McAlpin in New York to honor Gibran at a dinner organized by The Pen League. Celebrating Gibran's 25 years as a major contributor to literature, Philip K. Hitti of Princeton University said, "Our hero of tonight ... has become the father of a new school of thought all his own. While others use empty words ... Gibran unfailingly produces gems of thought and is always natural and sublime."

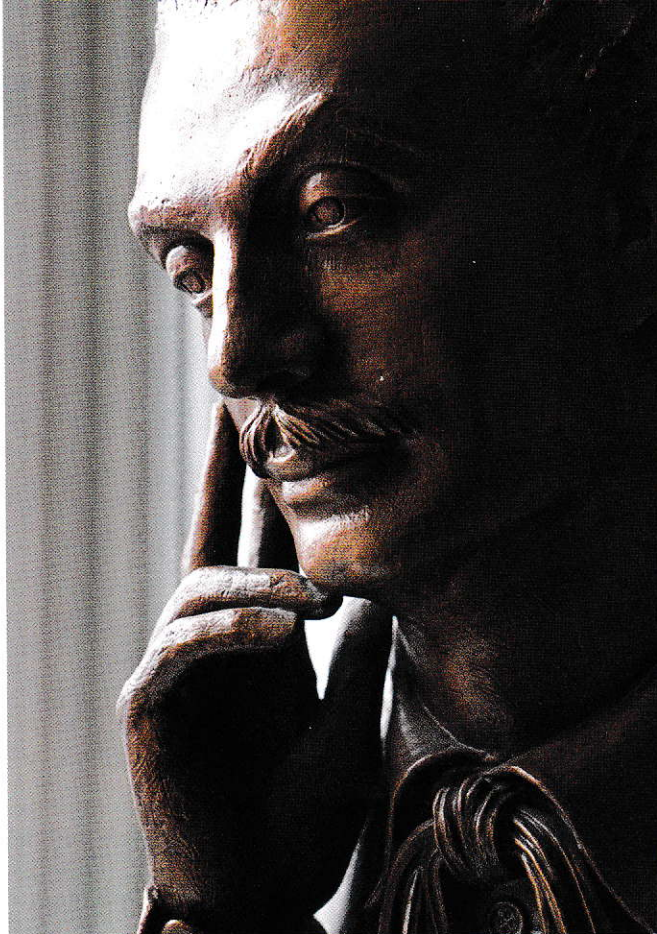
The dinner was held at the pinnacle of the ailing writer's career. He died two years later at 48 from cirrhosis of the liver and tuberculosis.

Today, Gibran's legacy seems larger and stronger than ever.

In Bsharri the Gibran Museum, which also houses his tomb, attracts more than 50,000 visitors a year from around the world. In Mexico City, Mexico, where Rev. Anthony Bashir, a Syrian Orthodox priest, was the first to translate *The Prophet* into Arabic in the late 1920s, the Museo Soumaya houses the largest Gibran collection in the world, which it acquired in 2007 from Jean and Kahlil Gibran.

As an integral part of the Fundación Carlos Slim, the museum incorporates Gibran's literature, art and philosophy into both displays and outreach programs to schools. Cultural Director of the Museo Soumaya Alfonso Miranda explains that by highlighting Gibran's work, the museum recognizes the contributions immigrants make to their adopted countries. "Gibran teaches us that we all live in one world," adds Miranda, emphasizing that this message is as relevant today as it was in Gibran's time.

Publisher Michel Moushabeck of Interlink Publishing also



Although only 48 years old at his death in 1931, Gibran's legacy today grows not only through continuing book sales, but also museum exhibits, academic conferences and a 2017 expanded edition of Jean and Kahlil George Gibran's biography.

views Gibran as especially relevant today. His 2017 publication *Kahlil Gibran: Beyond Borders* is an expanded version of Jean and Kahlil Gibran's 1991 biography. "It's a new book published at a time when its immigrant story and message are needed more than ever before," says Moushabeck.

Jean credits Moushabeck for encouraging her to write *Beyond Borders*. "There was still an enormous amount of new material that I was excited about," she says. "Rediscovering his story in the light of the present brings Gibran as a person more clearly in focus," writes Jean. "An artist in exile, a pioneer and peer among his emigrant compatriots, Kahlil Gibran became a faithful citizen artist without borders." ☺



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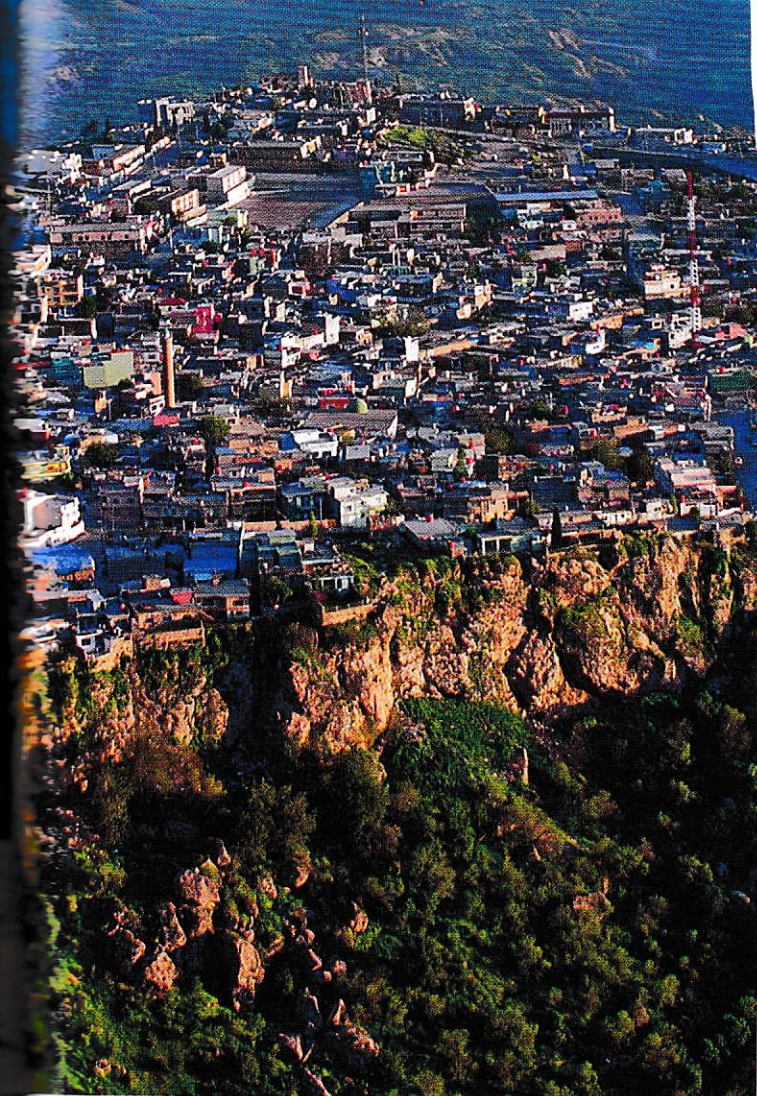


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20 Amedi: Citadel of Culture

Written by Matthew Teller

Photographed by George Azar

Perched on a table-topped, naturally defensive crag overlooking green valleys in Iraq's rugged north, the town of Amedi is one of what were once nearly 200 historic citadels and one of the most intact. Experts at home and abroad are pitching in to meet the town's newest challenge: preserving the history that remains and, at the same time, turning it into a much-needed economic engine.



28 The Borderless World of Kahlil Gibran

Written by Piney Kesting

Photographed by Kevin Bubriski

Arriving penniless in Boston from Lebanon, Gibran Khalil Gibran—whose name a schoolteacher misspelled “Kahlil”—grew up to become one of the early 20th century's most inspiring writers. The story of his against-the-odds rise is one of not only pluck and talent, but also luck and mentors, whose little-known stories are shedding new light on the complex biography of a man whose poetry and prose speak today as richly as nearly a century ago.

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