

Kahlil Gibran – Changes and Curiosities in ‘The Prophet’

By Philippe Maryssael, retired translator and terminologist, Arlon, Belgium, 17 July 2023

Dear reader,

This paper is a development on the oral presentation that was given under the aegis of the Lebanese American University (LAU) in Beirut, Lebanon, on Monday 17 July 2023, within the scope of the international conference on Kahlil Gibran’s masterpiece ‘The Prophet’ as a celebration of the book’s 100th anniversary.

Adding to what has already been said and written by learned scholars far and wide on a book like ‘The Prophet’ is no easy task because so much has already been said and written. That is the reason why my approach will be different from that of the many scholars before me. Indeed, my approach will be a ‘lighter’ one, focusing on text changes and other curiosities in and about the book. That off-the-beaten-track approach will however contain a few ‘new things,’ i.e., comments that have, as far as I know, not yet been made regarding the text itself, regarding its different editions and, within each edition, regarding the various prints in the course of time.

My reflections as a translator of Kahlil Gibran’s books can and will be different from those of biographers, historians, specialists of Lebanese immigration at the turn of the 20th century, and scholars who are well versed in the literary movements of that time in the Near-East region.

I shall first focus on the different early editions of ‘The Prophet’ that were published by the New York based publisher Alfred Abraham Knopf, on the early translations of Gibran’s masterpiece, and on some new ‘formats’ in which ‘The Prophet’ is available to the public.

Following this general introduction, a short, yet not insignificant, change in the text of the book’s prologue will be revealed.

After that, two topics that are loosely related to each other will be discussed, i.e., the place of the first Counsel ‘On Love’ following the prologue or forming a separate chapter; and the fact that a table of contents was added to the book about two and a half to three years after it was first published.

Further in the text, two Counsels, ‘On Reason and Passion’ and ‘On Prayer,’ appear to have been swapped. I shall develop on that curious fact that has never been spotted before.

In Gibran’s mind, from as early as 1920, when he was working on the Counsels that eventually would make up ‘The Prophet,’ his intention was to write a trilogy. Quite a lot is known about the second instalment of the trilogy, ‘The Garden of the Prophet.’ Little, on the contrary, is known about its third and final instalment, ‘The Death of the Prophet.’ Even less is known about four other books that are loosely connected to Gibran’s intended trilogy.

Some additional comments will be made on the illustrations in the various editions of Gibran’s masterpiece, and on their dust jackets and covers.

Introduction

Gibran’s third book written in English, ‘The Prophet,’ was released on 23 September 1923, one hundred years ago. The first print (and all subsequent prints) of the so-called standard edition has

the famous 'Hand of God' drawing on the front cover. That drawing, designed by Gibran himself, first appeared on the cover of the 'second first' print of 'The Madman' that was released in November 1918, whilst, one month earlier, in October 1928, the 'first first' print of 'The Madman' was released with a plain black cover.

During Gibran's lifetime, no fewer than twenty-five prints of his masterpiece, 'The Prophet,' were published by Knopf:

1. Published 23 September 1923
2. Second printing, March 1924
3. Third printing, August 1924
4. Fourth printing, January 1925
5. Fifth printing, May 1925
6. Sixth printing, September 1925
7. Seventh printing, December 1925
8. Eighth printing, February 1926
9. Ninth printing, October 1926
10. Tenth printing, December 1926
11. Eleventh printing, April 1927
12. Twelfth printing, July 1927
13. Thirteenth printing, December 1927
14. Fourteenth printing, January 1928
15. Fifteenth printing, March 1928
16. Sixteenth printing, October 1928
17. Seventeenth printing, December 1928
18. Eighteenth printing, February 1929
19. Nineteenth printing, July 1929
20. Twentieth printing, September 1929
21. Twenty-first printing, December 1929
22. Twenty-second printing, March 1930
23. Twenty-third printing, July 1930
24. Twenty-fourth printing, October 1930
25. Twenty-fifth printing, February 1931

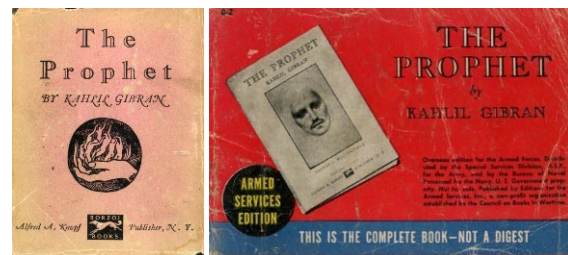
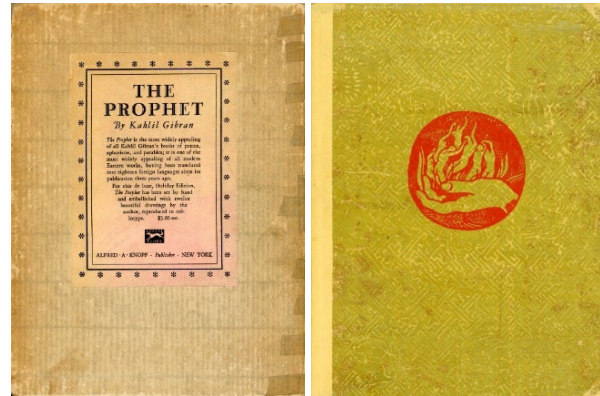
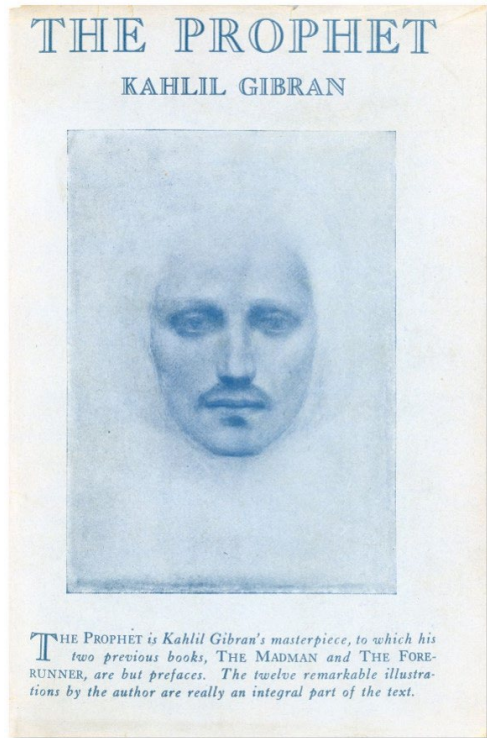
The 26th printing of October 1931 was the first posthumous printing.

In addition to the book's standard edition (15.5 cm x 22 cm), Knopf also published two other formats: a special, holiday deluxe edition in a slipcase (21 cm x 27.5 cm), and a pocket edition (11.5 cm x 14.5 cm). Of the deluxe edition, only one printing was published during Gibran's lifetime. It was in November 1926, the second one dating posthumously from October 1938. Of the pocket edition, seven printings were published during Gibran's lifetime, namely:

1. First published March 1927
2. Second printing, July 1927
3. Third printing, January 1928
4. Fourth printing, September 1928
5. Fifth printing, July 1929
6. Sixth printing, January 1930
7. Seventh printing, September 1930

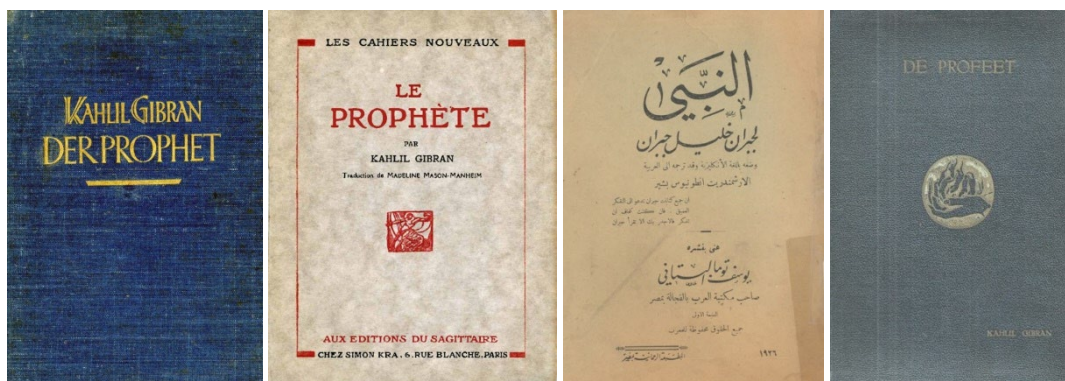
The eighth printing of July 1931 was the first posthumous printing of the pocket edition.

In 1943, during World War II, an Armed Services Edition (ASE) of 'The Prophet' was published by the Council on Books in Wartime. Alfred Knopf was supportive of this effort to help keep the US servicemen and women's morale as high as possible. That year, 32 ASE paperbacks were published. They were all, except for two, by American poets and authors. The two exceptions were Gibran's 'The Prophet' and the Belgian writer Georges Simenon's two short novels 'Hometown' and 'The Green Thermos,' bundled under the title 'On the Danger Line.'



'The Prophet' is a multi-record phenomenon, with an unprecedented number of sales in the US alone, and with 116 translation languages to date. For example, until now, there have been 31 different, complete or partial translations into French ever since Madeline Mason's translation in 1926.

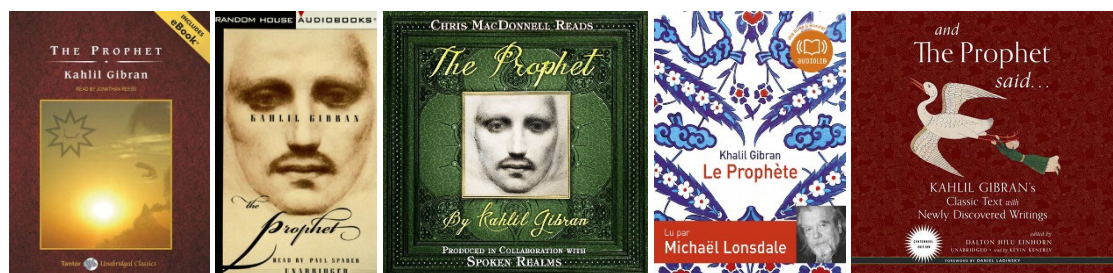
The first translation of 'The Prophet' was in German in 1925 (translated as 'Der Prophet' by Baron Georg-Eduard Freiherr von Stietencron), followed by French and Arabic in 1926 (translated respectively as 'Le Prophète' by Madeline Mason-Manheim and as 'Al-Nabi' by Antonious Bashir). Then came the Dutch version (translated as 'De Profeet' by Elisabeth Visscher Valckenier) in 1927.



Recently, there have also been quite a few illustrated editions and an animated film; for instance: three French editions of 'The Prophet' illustrated by calligraphers, the animated film with Salma Hayek and Liam Neeson, and Pete Katz' graphic novel based on Gibran's masterpiece.



And for those who prefer to read with their ears instead of their eyes, audiobooks are more and more widely available nowadays. Just a few examples of such audiobooks are...



1. A Small Change in the Text of the Prologue...

'And you, vast sea, sleeping mother,' a short, six-word piece of text at the top of page 10 of the first standard edition of Kahlil Gibran's 'The Prophet' was later changed to 'And you, vast sea, sleepless mother.' When exactly did the change occur? Why did Kahlil Gibran ask his publisher to change his text? And who could have influenced Gibran to change it?

On 23 September 1923, the New York-based publishing house that was founded in 1915 by Alfred Abraham Knopf and his wife Blanche Knopf published 'The Prophet,' Kahlil Gibran's third book in English. That book became Gibran's true masterpiece. In the ninety-five years between September 1923 and the end of 2018, Knopf (and subsequently the Penguin Random publishing house that acquired Knopf's publishing house in 1960) released no fewer than 188 uninterrupted printings of the book. According to some sources, a mere 1,159 copies of 'The Prophet' sold in the first year. Sales would then double with every subsequent year, eventually reaching the 240,000 mark in 1965. 'The Prophet' became one of Knopf's most successful books, with total sales figures for the English book estimated at over ten million copies in the United States alone.

Working together for several years, Francesco Medici, a renowned Italianist who translated several of Gibran's works into Italian, including 'Il Profeta' in 2005, and Glen Kalem-Habib, an Australian filmmaker and Kahlil Gibran scholar who enthusiastically maintains the Kahlil Gibran Collective website (www.kahlilgibran.com), have irrefutably established that, to this day, Gibran's masterpiece was translated into more than one hundred different languages ever since it was first published. On 1 January 2019, after ninety-five years of copyright protection under United States law, the text of 'The Prophet' eventually entered the public domain. The number of publications of the book in English has since been rocketing skywards, with more and more translations being identified on a regular basis.

Way back on 23 September 1923, Kahlil Gibran held in his hands the first copy of his third book in English and, a few days later, on 2 October, Mary Haskell, Gibran's closest friend and benefactress, who meticulously helped him to correct and improve his text, received by post her own copy that Gibran had sent her. On that very day, as quoted in Virginia Hilu's book 'Beloved Prophet,' Mary Haskell wrote Kahlil Gibran the following letter:

Clarksville, Georgia October 2, 1923

Beloved Kahlil,

The Prophet came today, and it did more than realize my hopes. For it seemed in its compacted form to open further new doors of desire and imagination in me, and to create about itself the universe in nimbus, so that I read it as at the centre of all things. The format is excellent, and lets the ideas and the verse flow quite unhampered. The pictures make my heart jump when I see them. They are beautifully done. I like the book altogether in style.

And the text is more beautiful, nearer, more revealing, more marvellous in conveying Reality and in sweetening consciousness—than ever. The English, the style, the wording, the music—is exquisite, Kahlil—just sheerly beautiful. Bless you, bless you, bless you, for saying it all, and for being such a worker that you bring that inner life into form and expression—for having the energy and the patience of fire and air and water and rock.

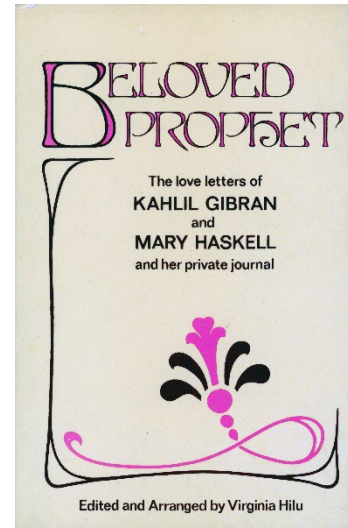
This book will be held as one of the treasures of English literature. And in our darkness we will open it to find ourselves again and the heaven and earth within ourselves. Generations will not exhaust it, but instead, generation after generation will find in the book what they would fain be—and it will be better loved as men grow riper and riper.

It is the most loving book ever written. And it is because you are the greatest lover, who ever wrote. But you know, Kahlil, that the same thing happens finally, whether a tree is burned up in flame, or falls silently in the woods. That flame of life in you is met by the multiplied lesser warmth of the many many who care for you. And you are starting a conflagration! More will love you as years go by, long long after your body is dust. They will find you in your work. For you are in it as visibly as God is.

Goodbye, and God bless you most dearly, beloved Kahlil, and sing through your mouth more and more of his songs and yours.

Love from Mary

In the first and third printings of 'The Prophet,' the latter being part of my personal collection, the short phrase at the top of page 10 reads as follows: 'And you, vast sea, sleeping mother.' To my surprise, when I acquired the 12th printing, I came upon the same phrase and realized that it was not quite the same indeed: 'And you, vast sea, sleeping mother' had become 'And you, vast sea, sleepless mother.' The first deluxe edition of November 1926 and the first pocket edition of March 1927 both contain the updated sentence.



And you, vast sea, sleeping mother,
Who alone are peace and freedom to
the river and the stream,

Only another winding will this stream
make, only another murmur in this glade,
And then shall I come to you, a bound-
less drop to a boundless ocean.

And you, vast sea, sleeping mother,
Who alone are peace and freedom to
the river and the stream,

Only another winding will this stream
make, only another murmur in this glade,
And then shall I come to you, a bound-
less drop to a boundless ocean.

Left - 1st printing of the standard edition (September 1923)

Right - 3rd printing of the standard edition (August 1924)

And you, vast sea, sleepless mother,
Who alone are peace and freedom to the river and the
stream,

Only another winding will this stream make, only an-
other murmur in this glade,

And then I shall come to you, a boundless drop to a
boundless ocean.

And you, vast sea, sleepless mother,
Who alone are peace and freedom to the river and
the stream,

Only another winding will this stream make,
only another murmur in this glade,

And then shall I come to you, a boundless
drop to a boundless ocean.

Left - 1st printing of the deluxe edition (November 1926)

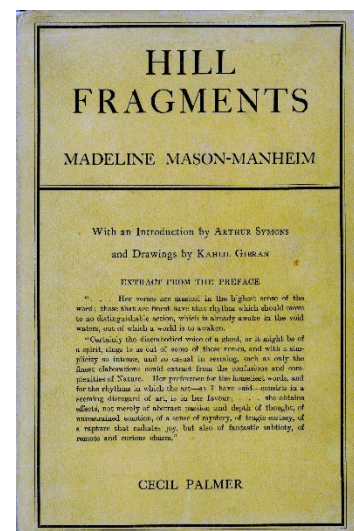
Right - 2nd printing of the pocket edition (March 1927)

So, I concluded that, betwixt August 1924 (3rd printing of the standard edition) and November 1926 (deluxe edition), something had happened that made Gibran want to change that very piece of text. Madeline Mason's 'Le Prophète' (1926) contains the following translation: 'Et vous, onde infinie, mère sans sommeil' (literally: 'And you, boundless waters, sleepless mother'). Considering that Madeline and Gibran were close friends, and that he could read and write French, we may assume with some degree of certainty that the two of them reviewed her French translation together. Most probably, Madeline translated 'The Prophet' in the course of 1924 and 1925, during the same period her collection of poems, 'Hill Fragments,' was completed and prepared for publication. At that time, she must have interacted closely with Gibran for the selection of his personal drawings that he let her use as illustrations in 'Hill Fragments.'

Could it be that one of Madeline's poems from 'Hill Fragments' triggered in Gibran's mind the change from 'sleeping mother' to 'sleepless mother?' That is a hypothesis that I believe to be plausible. Unfortunately, it cannot be confirmed because neither of the protagonists is alive today. From 'Hill Fragments,' one poem is titled 'The Ocean.' It clearly refers to the restlessness, or sleeplessness, of the ocean, or sea, that knows no pause...

THE OCEAN

*O thou restless one,
What mighty urge is in thy bosom
That nor night nor day
Thy striving knoweth pause?
Thou toilest ever to outreach thy bounds; Thou movest onward,
Though the shroud of Night
Lie heavy on thy breast;
And in the golden sun
Thou leapest merrily
To distant goals.*



*Earth fain would stay thee.
 O, thou art merciless:
 Thou woundest her
 Until the bonds are rent
 That hold thee.
 And yet thou lovest her well.
 But in thy longing for thine own fulfilment Is thy passion,
 And though thou bringest treasures
 And with tender sighing
 Layest them before her,
 Yet art thou ever distant,
 Lonely, unapproachable.
 O thou restless one,
 What mighty urge is in thy bosom
 As down the timeless aisles of Space
 Thou criest evermore: "Beyond! Beyond!"*

In Gibran's body of writings, I have managed to identify two texts that refer to the restless or sleepless sea. The first, titled 'Revelation,' is from the collection of poems, under the title 'Prose Poems,' that was published by Knopf in 1934, with a foreword by Barbara Young. It was translated from Arabic by Andrew Ghareeb. The Arabic version of the poem first appeared in Al-Funoon in March 1916, whilst its English version appeared for the first time in the Syrian World in June 1931.

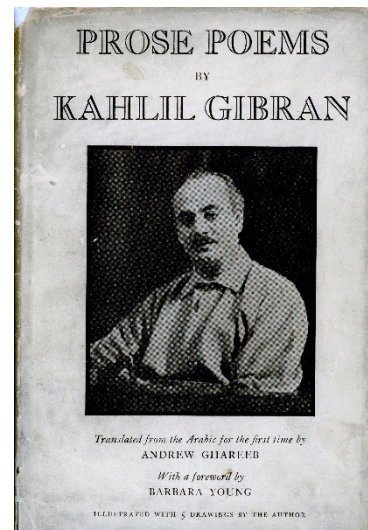
REVELATION

*When the night waxed deep and slumber cast its cloak upon
 the face of the earth,
 I left my bed and sought the sea, saying to myself:
 "The sea never sleeps, and the wakefulness of the sea brings
 comfort to a sleepless soul."
 When I reached the shore, the mist had already descended
 from the mountain tops
 And covered the world as a veil adorns the face of a maiden.*

*There I stood gazing at the waves, listening to their singing, and considering the power
 that lies behind them—
 The power that travels with the storm, and rages with the volcano, that smiles with
 smiling flowers and makes melody with murmuring brooks.*

*After a while I turned, and lo,
 I beheld three figures sitting upon a rock near by,
 And I saw that the mist veiled them, and yet it veiled them not.*

*Slowly I walked toward the rock whereon they sat, drawn by some power which I know
 not.
 A few paces off I stood and gazed upon them, for there was magic in the place
 Which crystallized my purpose and bestirred my fancy.
 And at that moment one of the three arose, and with a voice that seemed to come from
 the sea depths he said:*



*"Life without love is like a tree without blossoms or fruit.
And love without beauty is like flowers without fragrance, and fruit without seeds.
Life, Love, and Beauty are three entities in one self, free and boundless,
Which know neither change nor separation."
This he said, and sat again in his place.*

*Then the second figure arose, and with a voice like the roar of rushing waters he said:
"Life without rebellion is like the seasons without a spring.
And rebellion without right is like spring in an arid and barren desert.
Life, Rebellion, and Right are three entities in one self,
And in them is neither change nor separation."
This he said, and sat again in his place.*

*Then the third figure arose, and spoke with a voice like the peal of the thunder, saying:
"Life without freedom is like a body without a spirit.
And freedom without thought is like a spirit confounded.
Life, Freedom, and Thought are three entities in one eternal self,
Which neither vanish nor pass away."*

*Then the three arose and with voices of majesty and awe they spoke:
"Love and all that it begets,
Rebellion and all that it creates,
Freedom and all that it generates,
These three are aspects of God...
And God is the infinite mind of the finite and conscious world."*

*Then silence followed, filled with the stirring of invisible wings and the tremor of the
ethereal bodies.
And I closed my eyes, listening to the echo of the saying which I heard.*

*When I opened my eyes, I beheld naught but the sea hidden beneath a blanket of mist;
And I moved closer toward that rock
And I beheld naught but a pillar of incense rising unto the sky.*

The second text in which Gibran wrote of the restless sea is his epic poem 'The Earth Gods,' which was published on 14 March 1931, just a few weeks before he passed away on 10 April.

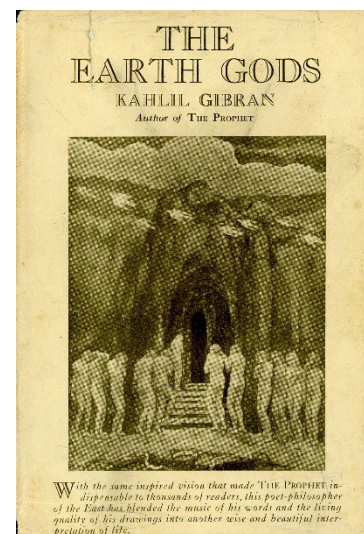
THE EARTH GODS

*When the night of the twelfth æon fell,
And silence, the high tide of the night, swallowed the hills,
The three earth-born gods, the Master Titans of life,
Appeared upon the mountains.*

*Rivers ran about their feet;
The mist floated across their breasts,
And their heads rose in majesty above the world.*

*Then they spoke, and like distant thunder
Their voices rolled over the plains.*

(...)



FIRST GOD

Weary is my spirit of all there is.
I would not move a hand to create a world
Nor to erase one.

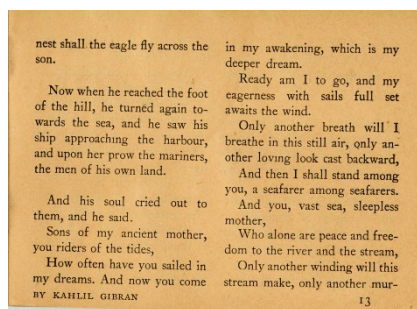
I would not live could I but die,
For the weight of æons is upon me,
And the ceaseless moan of the seas exhausts my sleep.
Could I but lose the primal aim
And vanish like a wasted sun;
Could I but strip my divinity of its purpose
And breathe my immortality into space,
And be no more;
Could I but be consumed and pass from time's memory
Into the emptiness of nowhere!

I recently managed to acquire copies of the 2nd, 3rd, 4th, 9th and 10th printings of the standard edition, and the Armed Services Edition (ASE - 1943). The phrase at the top of page 10 appears to be a mixture of the first text and the updated one: 'And you, vast sea, sleeping mother' and 'And you, vast sea, sleepless mother.'

And you, vast sea, sleepless mother,
Who alone are peace and freedom to
the river and the stream,
Only another winding will this stream
make, only another murmur in this glade,
And then shall I come to you, a bound-
less drop to a boundless ocean.

And you, vast sea, sleepless mother,
Who alone are peace and freedom to
the river and the stream,
Only another winding will this stream
make, only another murmur in this glade,
And then shall I come to you, a bound-
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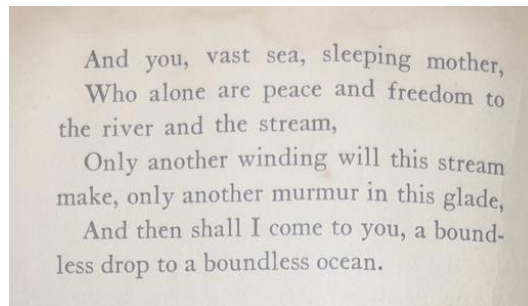
Left – 2nd printing of the standard edition (March 1924)
Right – 4th printing of the standard edition (January 1925)



Armed Service Edition (ASE – 1943)

1. First printing (September 1923): 'sleeping mother'
2. Second printing (March 1924): 'sleepless mother'
3. Third printing (August 1924): 'sleeping mother'
4. Fourth printing (January 1925): 'sleepless mother' (also in the 9th, 10th and 12th printings, and in all subsequent printings)

When I shared this piece of information with Glen Kalem-Habib in Australia, he told me that his personal copy of the second printing reads 'sleeping mother.' So now we have two copies of the second printing that are not the same!



*2nd printing of the standard edition (March 1924)
owned by Glen Kalem-Habib (Australia)*

From the 1st to the 4th printing, Alfred Knopf seems to have messed it up. What happened? Could it be that, faced with the early success of 'The Prophet,' the printer ran two lines of production to shorten the time-to-market? It remains to be ascertained whether or not the third printing (and any subsequent ones) also has the two versions.

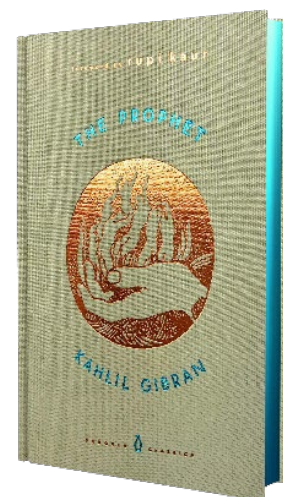
In the 188th print by Penguin Books, 'sleepless mother' is the definitive version.

Anyway, with or without the confusion in the second printing, the change occurred between the first and the second printings.

Confusion between 'sleeping mother' and 'sleepless mother' also arose from the fact that the British publisher of 'The Prophet,' the London-based William Heinemann Ltd publishing house, failed to align their publications with the version of Gibran's masterpiece that was published in New York. Indeed, they first published 'The Prophet' in January 1926, one full year after Knopf published the 4th printing of the book with the updated phrase. The Heinemann version contained the original phrase 'And you, vast sea, sleeping mother.' The text has remained unchanged until recently: suffice it to consult their 8th printing of November 1935 and their 23rd printing of 1962, and the Penguin Books paperback edition of 1992.

The situation regarding the change eventually got clarified once and for all in the ultimate, world-wide edition of 2019 by Penguin Books, which includes a foreword by Rupi Kaur, an Indian-born Canadian poetess, visual artist, and illustrator. At last, at long last, the sea-mother has forevermore become sleepless.

*'The Prophet' by Penguin Random House, 2019, with a foreword
by the Canadian-Indian poetess Rupi Kaur*



Forevermore? Well, not exactly... In 2011, Macmillan Collector's Library (Pan Macmillan) published a gilt-edged pocket-size version of 'The Prophet' that contains the original, first-edition phrase. And in early 2019, a lavish, leather-clad, slipcase-protected deluxe edition of 'The Prophet' with exquisite, high-quality color reproductions of Gibran's original drawings and paintings was published by the London-based publishing house The Folio Society Ltd, also reproducing the text in its original version, thus keeping the phrase 'And you, vast sea, sleeping mother.'

As a conclusion, it has been established without any possible doubt that the original text at the top of page 10 of 'The Prophet,' as it was published for the first time in New York on 23 September 1923, was changed from 'And you, vast sea, sleeping mother' to 'And you, vast sea, sleepless mother' from the fourth printing of January 1925 onwards. There are copies of the second printing (and possibly of the third printing) with either the original version or the updated version. We have also identified that, contrary to the updated American version, the British version of the text has not been updated until fairly recently.

Based on my investigation into the versions, it can be established that the definitive version of Gibran's masterpiece should be the one with the updated phrase 'And you, vast sea, sleepless mother,' and this, irrespective of the fact that recent editions by other publishing houses than Knopf or Heinemann, or the ones that bought them up, contain the original, non-updated version.

It can be assumed fairly reasonably, although it cannot be proven with absolute certainty, that, in the course of their interactions within the scope of Madeline Mason and Kahlil Gibran reviewing the former's translation of 'The Prophet' into French on the one hand, and within the scope of the selection of Kahlil Gibran's drawings used as illustrations for Madeline Mason's 'Hill Fragments' on the other hand, the change from 'sleeping mother' to 'sleepless mother' may have been influenced by a poem from 'Hill Fragments.' However, two texts from Gibran's body of works refer to the sea being restless, sleepless or ceaseless in its moaning. One of the two identified texts dates back from years before the publication of 'The Prophet,' at least in the original Arabic language, whilst the other was published at a later date.

2. The Counsel 'On Love' following the Prologue or starting as a new Chapter

Starting on page 15 of the standard edition, the first Counsel after the prologue is 'On Love'. For about a quarter of a century since the 1st printing of the standard edition, this Counsel, 'On Love,' has been a continuation of the book's prologue. Starting from the 57th printing, the text was reset and printed from new plates. And the Counsel 'On Love' became a separate chapter in the book.

Speak save of that which is even now
moving within your souls?

Then said Almitra, Speak to us of
Love.

And he raised his head and looked upon
the people, and there fell a stillness
upon them. And with a great voice he
said:

When love beckons to you, follow him,
Though his ways are hard and steep.

And when his wings enfold you yield to
him,

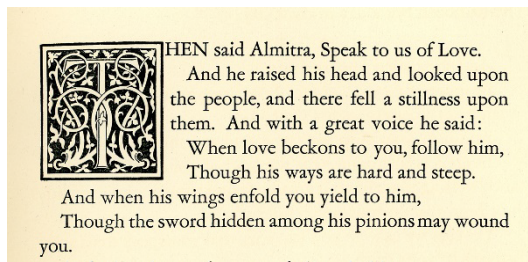
Though the sword hidden among his
pinions may wound you.

And when he speaks to you believe in
him,

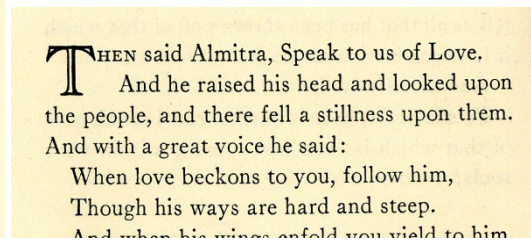
Though his voice may shatter your
dreams as the north wind lays waste the
garden.

4th printing of the standard edition (January 1925)

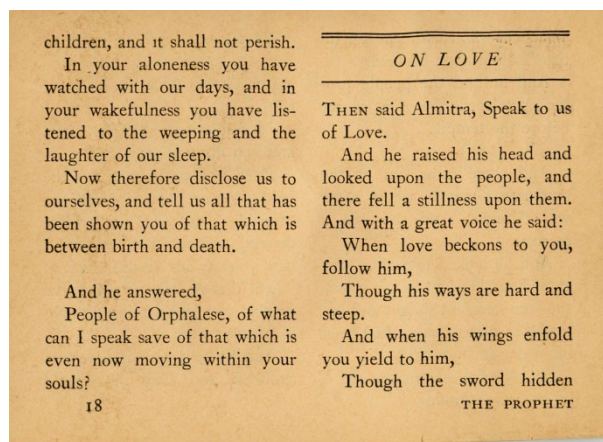
Contrary to the standard edition, the Counsel 'On Love' has been a full-fledged chapter from the 1st printings of the deluxe and pocket editions, and also in the Armed Services Edition (ASE) of 1943.



Left - 1st printing of the deluxe edition (November 1926)

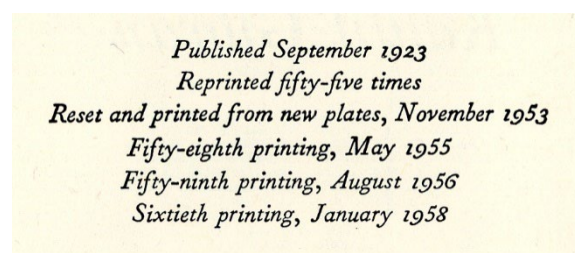


Right - 2nd printing of the pocket edition (March 1927)

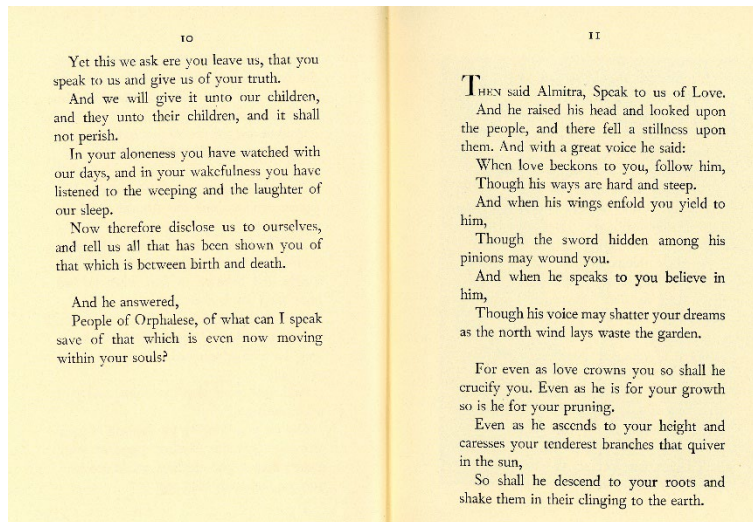


Armed Service Edition (ASE - 1943)

Except for the change of 'sleeping mother' to 'sleepless mother' that has been discussed above, the same printer plates were used to print the standard edition up until prior to November 1953, i.e., from the first to the 55th printing. The full text of 'The Prophet' was reset and printed from new plates in November 1953. In my personal copy of the 60th printing that dated from January 1958, the Counsel 'On Love' also starts on a new page. And this has been so until the 188th printing from 2019.



Copyright page of the 60th printing of the standard edition (January 1958)



Page 10 and 11 of the 60th printing of the standard edition (January 1958)

3. The Table of Contents

The third topic addressed in this paper is about the introduction of the table of contents. In the early printings of the standard edition, there was no table of contents and readers who wanted to read a specific Counsel had to browse through the pages.

A table of content was added to the book between the 5th printing of May 1925 and the 9th of October 1926. I could not identify the exact date when the table of contents was added because I could not find copies of the 5th, 6th, 7th, and 8th printings.

In the first printing of the deluxe edition (November 1926), there is a table of contents. Half a year later, the first print of the pocket edition also had one. And, in 1943, the ASE also had it.

CONTENTS			
	PAGE		
THE COMING OF THE SHIP	7	ON FRIENDSHIP	52
ON LOVE	13	ON TALKING	54
ON MARRIAGE	16	ON TIME	56
ON CHILDREN	18	ON GOOD AND EVIL	58
ON GIVING	20	ON PRAYER	61
ON EATING AND DRINKING	23	ON PLEASURE	63
ON WORK	25	ON BEAUTY	66
ON JOY AND SORROW	28	ON RELIGION	69
ON HOUSES	30	ON DEATH	71
ON CLOTHES	33	THE FAREWELL	73
ON BUYING AND SELLING	34		
ON CRIME AND PUNISHMENT	36		
ON LAWS	40		
ON FREEDOM	42		
ON REASON AND PASSION	45		
ON PAIN	47		
ON SELF-KNOWLEDGE	49		
ON TEACHING	51		

Table of contents of the 1st printing of the deluxe edition (November 1926)

CONTENTS		
THE COMING OF THE SHIP	3	
ON LOVE	11	
ON MARRIAGE	15	
ON CHILDREN	17	
ON GIVING	19	
ON EATING AND DRINKING	23	
ON WORK	26	
ON JOY AND SORROW	31	
ON HOUSES	33	
ON CLOTHES	37	
ON BUYING AND SELLING	39	
ON CRIME AND PUNISHMENT	41	
ON LAWS	47	
ON FREEDOM	50	
ON REASON AND PASSION	54	
ON PAIN	57	
ON SELF-KNOWLEDGE	59	
ON TEACHING	61	
ON FRIENDSHIP	61	
ON TALKING	65	
		67
		69
		73
		76
		80
		81
		86
		88

Table of contents of the 2nd printing of the pocket edition (July 1927)

CONTENTS		
THE COMING OF THE SHIP	II	
ON LOVE	18	
ON MARRIAGE	22	
ON CHILDREN	23	
ON GIVING	25	
ON EATING AND DRINKING	28	
ON WORK	30	
ON JOY AND SORROW	34	
ON HOUSES	36	
ON CLOTHES	39	
ON BUYING AND SELLING	41	
ON CRIME AND PUNISHMENT	42	
	3	
		48
		50
		53
		55
		57
		58
		60
		62
		63
		65
		68
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		74
		77
		79
		81
	4	

Table of contents of the ASE (1943)

The first copy of the standard edition that I own in which there is a table of contents is the 9th printing.

CONTENTS		PAGE
THE COMING OF THE SHIP		7
ON LOVE		15
ON MARRIAGE		19
ON CHILDREN		21
ON GIVING		23
ON EATING AND DRINKING		27
ON WORK		31
ON JOY AND SORROW		35
ON HOUSES		37
ON CLOTHES		41
ON BUYING AND SELLING		43
ON CRIME AND PUNISHMENT		45
ON LAWS		51
ON FREEDOM		55
ON REASON AND PASSION		57
ON PAIN		60
ON SELF-KNOWLEDGE		62
ON TEACHING		64
ON FRIENDSHIP		66
ON TALKING		68
ON TIME		70
ON GOOD AND EVIL		72
ON PRAYER		76
ON PLEASURE		79
ON BEAUTY		83
ON RELIGION		87
ON DEATH		90
THE FAREWELL		92

Table of contents of the 9th printing of the standard edition (October 1926)

Based on the dates of the 9th printing of the standard edition (October 1926) and the first printing of the deluxe edition (November 1926), and until copies of the 5th, 6th, 7th and 8th printings of the standard edition can be consulted, it is fairly reasonable to suggest that the table of contents was

added to the 9th printing of the standard edition, because it is the closest to the 1st printing of the deluxe edition.

4. Two Counsels swapped

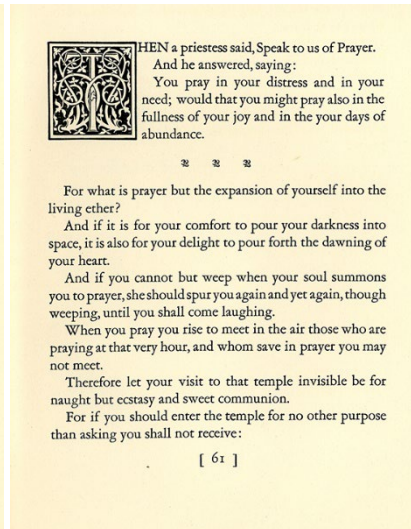
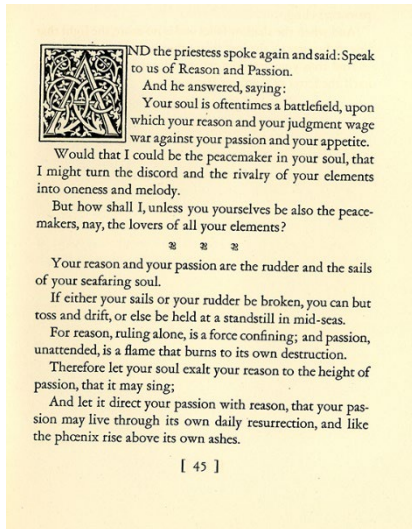
Another curiosity in the text of 'The Prophet' is the sequence of two Counsels. As all the people of the city of Orphalese are assembled before the temple to listen to the Prophet Almustafa, a priestess takes the floor twice and asks him to speak, first, about reason and passion, and then about prayer. Like all the other Counsels in the book, these two begin with a brief introductory sentence, either a question or a request by one of the people of Orphalese. The curiosity lies in the fact that, since the order of the sermons originally laid down by Gibran and Mary Haskell had apparently been altered shortly before the manuscript was submitted to the publisher, neither Gibran nor Mary Haskell paid any attention to the logic of the sequence of these short introductory sentences, nor did they take the trouble to adapt, as they should have done, those that introduce the two sermons 'On Reason and Passion' and 'On Prayer.'

In all the English editions of the text, and in all the translations – whether French ('Le Prophète'), Dutch and Afrikaans ('De Profeet,' 'Die Profeet'), German ('Der Prophet') or Italian ('Il Profeta') – that I have been able to consult, the introductory sentences of these two Counsels appear in an illogical sequence. The Counsel 'On Reason and Passion' is introduced by *And the priestess spoke again and said: Speak to us of Reason and Passion*, whilst that 'On Prayer' begins as follows: *Then a priestess said: Speak to us of Prayer*.

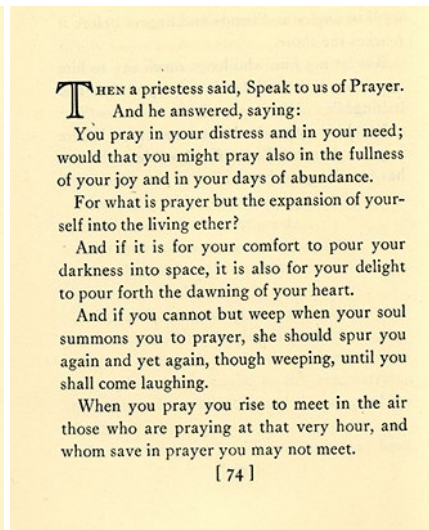
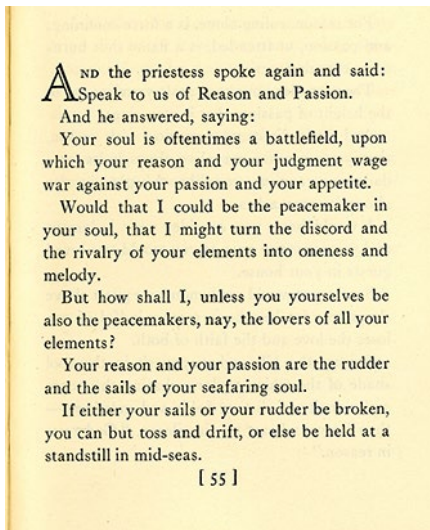
<p>And the priestess spoke again and said: Speak to us of Reason and Passion. And he answered, saying: Your soul is oftentimes a battlefield, upon which your reason and your judgment wage war against your passion and your appetite. Would that I could be the peacemaker in your soul, that I might turn the discord and the rivalry of your elements into oneness and melody. But how shall I, unless you yourselves be also the peacemakers, nay, the lovers of all your elements?</p> <p>Your reason and your passion are the rudder and the sails of your seafaring soul. If either your sails or your rudder be broken, you can but toss and drift, or else be held at a standstill in mid-seas.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">57</p>	<p>Then a priestess said, Speak to us of Prayer. And he answered, saying: You pray in your distress and in your need; would that you might pray also in the fullness of your joy and in your days of abundance. For what is prayer but the expansion of yourself into the living ether? And if it is for your comfort to pour your darkness into space, it is also for your delight to pour forth the dawning of your heart. And if you cannot but weep when your soul summons you to prayer, she should spur you again and yet again, though weeping, until you shall come laughing. When you pray you rise to meet in the air those who are praying at that very</p> <p style="text-align: right;">76</p>
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Left – 'On Reason and Passion' (page 57 of the 1st printing of the standard edition, September 1923)

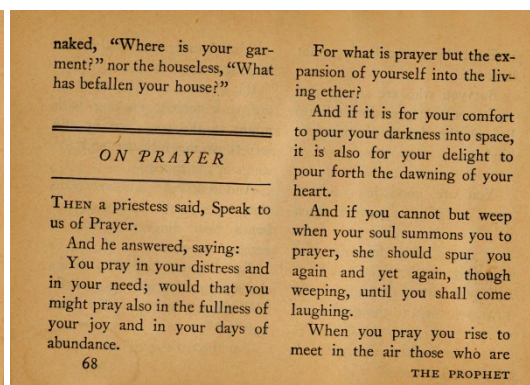
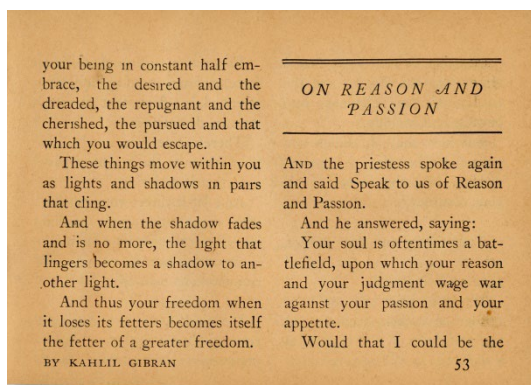
Right – 'On Prayer' (page 76 of the 1st printing of the standard edition, September 1923)



Left – ‘On Reason and Passion’ (page 45 of the 1st printing of the deluxe edition, November 1926)
 Right – ‘On Prayer’ (page 61 of the 1st printing of the deluxe edition, November 1926)



Left – ‘On Reason and Passion’ (page 57 of the 1st printing of the pocket edition, March 1927)
 Right – ‘On Prayer’ (page 76 of the 1st printing of the pocket edition, March 1927)



Left – ‘On Reason and Passion’ (page 53 of the Armed Services Edition (ASE), 1943)
 Right – ‘On Prayer’ (page 68 of the ASE, 1943)

In all editions, from the very 1st printing to the latest, the introductory requests to those two Counsels by a priestess read as follows:

And the priestess spoke again and said: Speak to us of Reason and Passion.

Then a priestess said, Speak to us of Prayer.

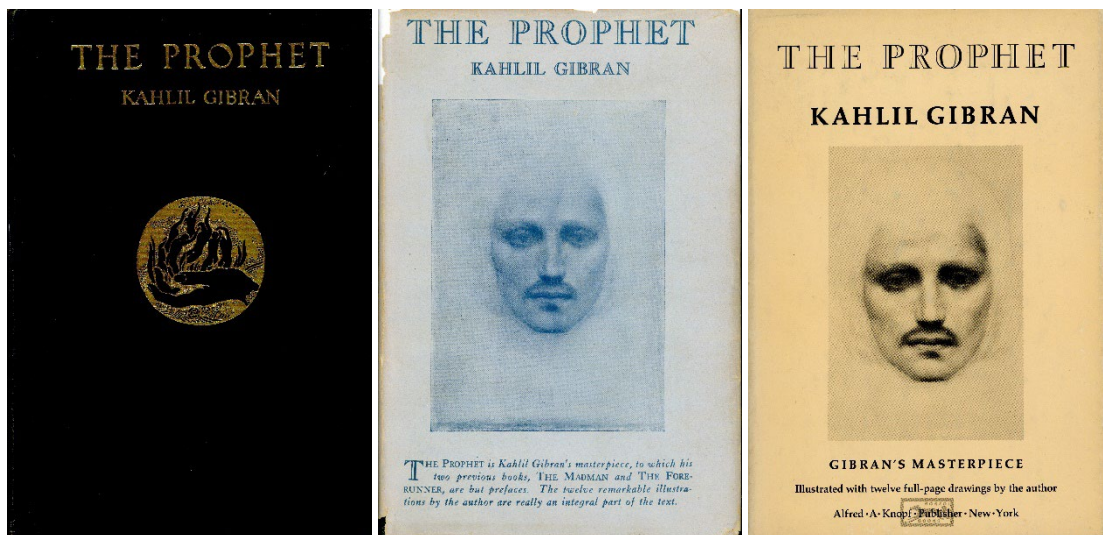
To be logical, the sequence should have been reversed:

Then a priestess said: Speak to us of Reason and Passion.

And the priestess spoke again and said, Speak to us of Prayer.

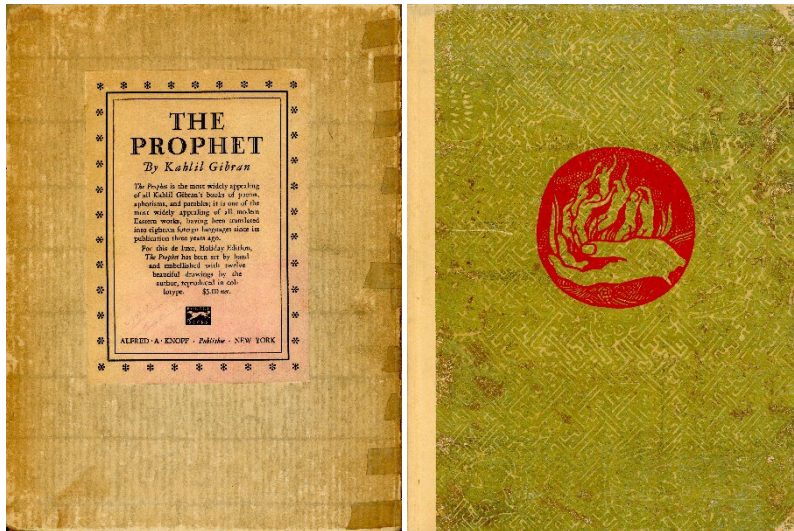
5. Illustrations and Dust Jackets

Over the years, the standard, deluxe and pocket editions of 'The Prophet' have had different covers and dust jackets (or slipcases). The standard edition's cover has always been in black cloth with a black spine. As for dust jackets, the most common one has been beige. However, it is particularly difficult to know for certain what the color of the early dust jackets was because most copies that are available today no longer have dust jackets. I have been fortunate enough to have bought a copy of the 12th printing (July 1927), complete with its blueish dust jacket in excellent condition.



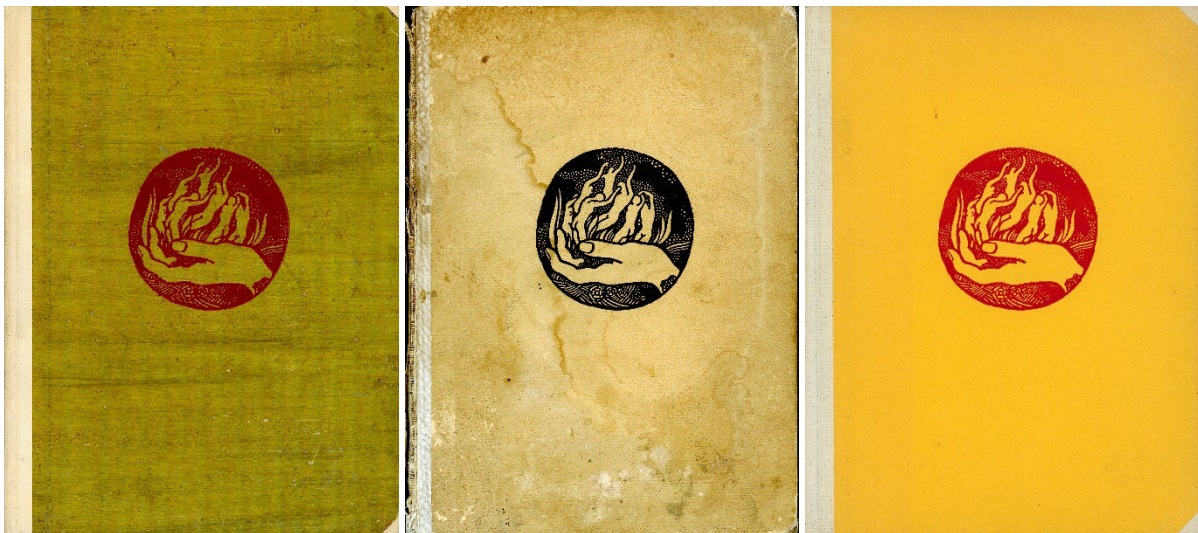
Left – cover of the 2nd printing of the standard edition (March 1925)
Center – dust jacket of the 12th printing of the standard edition (July 1927)
Right – cover of a post-WWII printing of the standard edition

The deluxe edition was meant to be a very special, holiday-season edition. The first printing was in November 1926. Its cover has a unique gold-leaf pattern that was never to be reproduced in later printings. Gibran's 'Hand of God' drawing is featured in red on the cover. And it was presented in a slipcase.



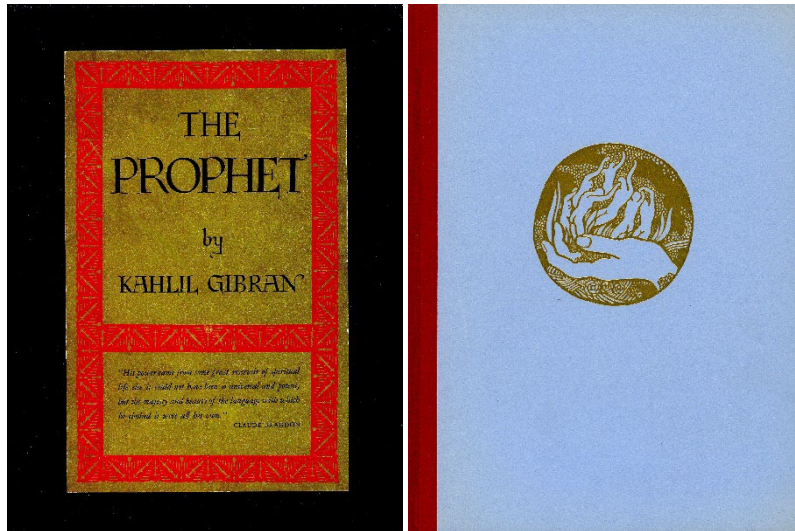
Left – slipcase of the 1st printing of the deluxe edition (November 1926)
Right – cover of the 1st printing of the deluxe edition (November 1926)

The second printing of the deluxe edition was sold twelve years later, in October 1938. The ‘Hand of God’ drawing is featured in red on the gold-like pattern-free cover. An alternate copy of the 2nd printing with a beige-ish cover (shown below in a very bad condition) featured a black ‘Hand of God’ design. And the third printing was released in September 1946. Its cover is golden yellow. The spines of those two printings are beige. I have not been able to confirm whether those printings had slipcases, but there is no reason to think they did not, because all subsequent printings also had slipcases.



Left – cover of the 2nd printing of the deluxe edition (October 1938)
Center – alternate cover of the 2nd printing of the deluxe edition (October 1938)
Right – cover of the 3rd printing of the deluxe edition (September 1946)

The fourth printing of the deluxe edition (August 1952) has a bluish cover with a red spine and a gold-leaf ‘Hand of God’ design. It has a black slipcase with a mini poster glued to it.



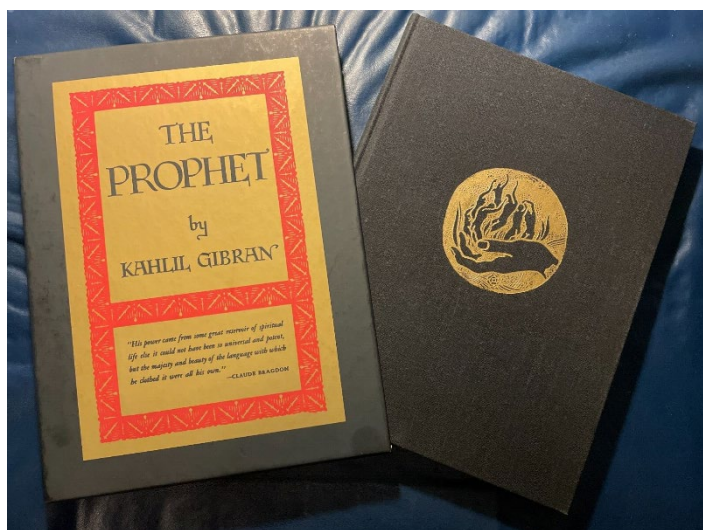
*Left – slipcase of the 4th printing of the deluxe edition (August 1952)
Right – cover of the 4th printing of the deluxe edition (August 1952)*

All subsequent printings of the deluxe edition have similar slipcases and the gold-leaf 'Hand of God' design (with some hue variations). Only the colors of the cover spines differ slightly over time.



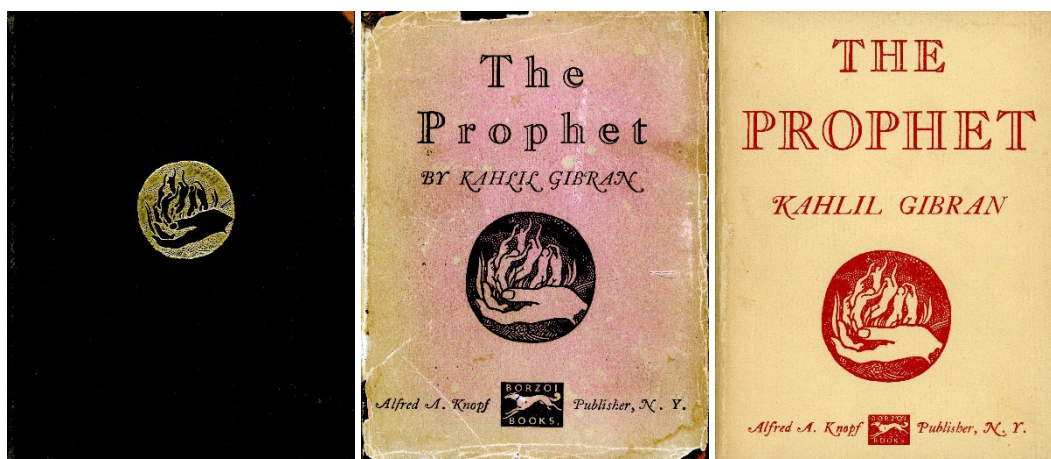
*Left – cover of the 7th printing of the deluxe edition with a light beige spine (May 1962)
Right – cover of the 13th printing of the deluxe edition with a white spine (December 1969)*

A very recent printing (34th of November 1997) has the same slipcase, but the cover cloth is black from front to back, including the spine.



Slipcase and cover of the 34th printing of the deluxe edition with a back spine (November 1997)

Like the standard edition, the pocket edition of 'The Prophet' also has had different dust jackets over time. However, dust jackets for copies of early printings are very often missing. Below, the dust jacket of July 1931 was dark pink (much faded due to exposure to sunlight). The color of the 'Hand of God' design was either red or black.



Left – cover of the 2nd printing of the pocket edition (July 1927)

Center – dust jacket of the 8th printing of the pocket edition (July 1931)

Right – dust jacket of the 30th printing of the pocket edition (November 1962)

As for the twelve illustrations by Kahlil Gibran that are presented in the standard and deluxe editions, they have been the subject of learned comments by high-caliber scholars such as Annie Salem Otto in her book 'The Parables of Kahlil Gibran: An Interpretation of the Writings and Art of the Author of The Prophet' (1963), and Francesco Medici in his essay 'Il Profeta di Kahlil Gibran riletto attraverso le sue tavole illustrative (which I translated into French in my bilingual publication of Gibran's masterpiece in 2020). I shall therefore not develop on the interpretation and artistic value of Gibran's illustrations. Suffice it to mention in this paper that the standard edition had grayscale reproductions of the drawings and paintings, whilst the deluxe edition had beige/sepia reproductions of them.



Left – illustrations from the 2nd printing of the standard edition (March 1924)
Right – illustrations from the 1st printing of the deluxe edition (November 1926)

The early printings of pocket edition had no illustrations at all. The first copy of the pocket edition in my possession that contains an illustration is the 8th printing of July 1931. That illustration is the Face of Almustafa opposite to the title page. As for the Armed Services edition, it only has one illustration, the ‘Hand of God’ design, at the end of the short introductory essay.

6. ‘The Prophet’ and its Sequels

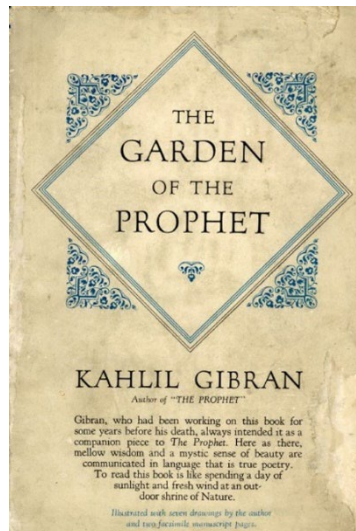
For the 6th and last topic of this paper, I’ll briefly discuss the sequels to ‘The Prophet.’

By 1920, when Gibran was working on the Counsels for ‘The Prophet,’ he had in mind a trilogy. After the publication of ‘The Prophet’ and of ‘Sand and Foam’ (in 1926), he had already started writing sections of ‘The Garden of the Prophet.’

But he postponed it and worked on ‘Jesus the Son of Man’ (that was published in 1928) and on ‘The Earth Gods’ (that came out in March 1931, just a couple of weeks before he died on 10th April).

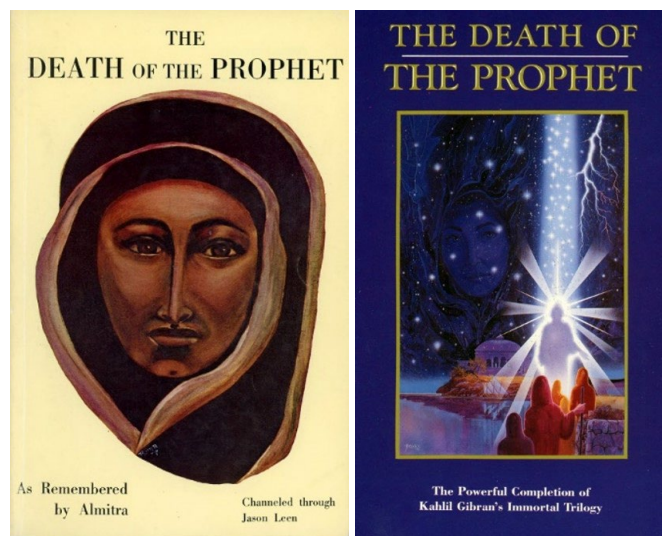
In his last days, he finalized the text of ‘The Wanderer,’ which his secretary, Barbara Young, brushed up and sent to Knopf for a posthumous release on 13 January 1932.

Barbara Young brought together the bits and pieces of ‘The Garden of the Prophet’ that Gibran had already written, completed the missing sections, and ‘The Garden of the Prophet’ was released in 1933.



The Garden of the Prophet (1933)

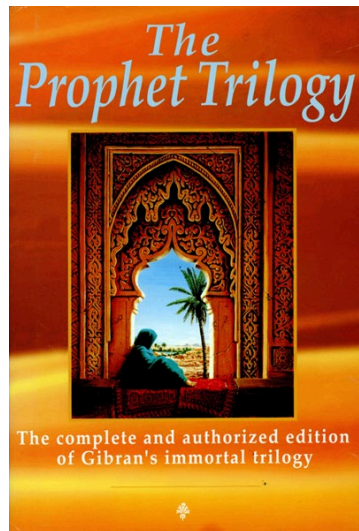
Gibran's 3rd instalment of his trilogy, 'The Death of the Prophet,' was written by one Jason Leen. Jason Leen, who is more famous for his after-life writing dictated to him by John Lennon of Beatles fame, claimed he received the text from the prophetess Almitra. Quite surprisingly, 'The Death of the Prophet' fits perfectly in the style and rhythm of Gibran's masterpiece. After being first released in 1979, an update came out almost a decade later.



Left – first version of 'The Death of the Prophet' (1979)

Right – second, revised version of 'The Death of the Prophet' (1988)

And in 2003, 'The Prophet' (by Gibran), 'The Garden of the Prophet' (by Gibran and Barbara Young) and 'The Death of the Prophet' (by Almitra and Jason Leen) were bundled together as 'The complete and authorized edition of Gibran's immortal trilogy.'

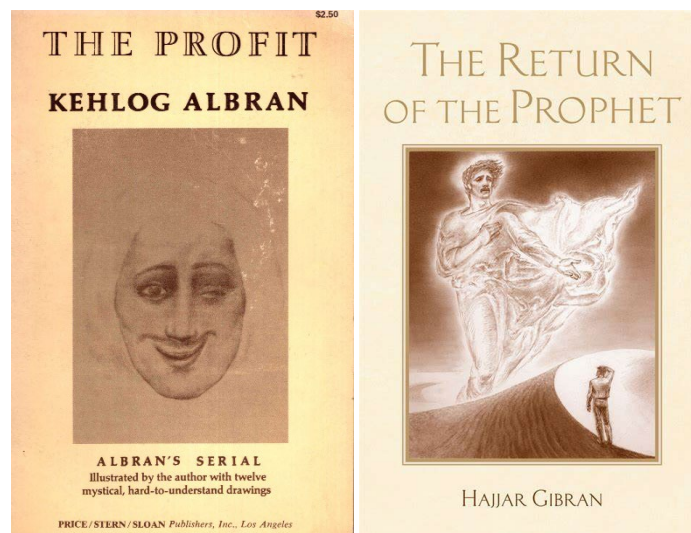


The Prophet Trilogy (2003)

But there's more to 'The Prophet' than the trilogy...

In 1973, an odd book was released: 'The Profit,' by Khellog Albran. This book was inspired by 'The Prophet' but is meant as a sheer joke. It definitely is a must-read for open-minded Gibran aficionados, because it humorously stretches the concept to unexpected limits.

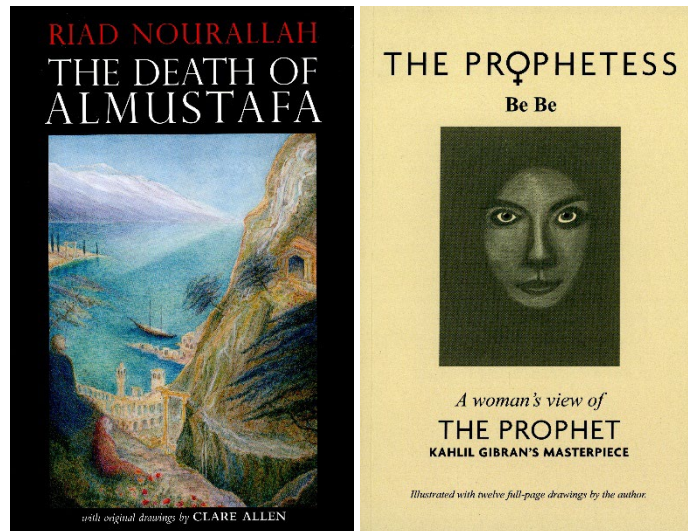
And, in 2008, Hajjar Gibran, a distant relative of Gibran through his mother, wrote 'The Return of the Prophet.' The book was, for him, part of a healing process when his elder brother died. He found in Gibran's masterpiece the ultimate ingredient of inner peace: Love.



Left – 'The Profit' by Khellog Albran (1973)

Right – 'The Return of the Prophet' by Hajjar Gibran (2008)

In 2010, Riad Nourallah wrote 'The Death of Almustafa,' his own, very personal dramatic narrative in which Almustafa faces up to his mortality and to questions on life and death asked to him by the people of Orphalese. And in 2020, the American authoress Be Be ventured into an exercise of feminizing Gibran's masterpiece as 'The Prophetess, a woman's view of The Prophet.'



Left – *'The Death of Almustafa'* by Riad Nourallah (2010)
Right – *'The Prophetess'* by Be Be (2020)

Is this the end?

There is no doubt that Gibran's masterpiece will continue, for the next one hundred years, to be a source of inspiration for new generations of readers, scholars, authors, and translators.

So, my final word will be: **Long live 'The Prophet' by Kahlil Gibran!**