The Ethics of Prophecy, Utopian Dream, and Dystopian Reality:

A Comparative Study of Thomas More's *Utopia* and Kahlil Gibran's *The Prophet*

by

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Abstract

The main purpose of this study is to compare Thomas More's *Utopia* and Khalil Gibran's *The Prophet* in relation to their context, as well as to determine how they were received by the academic community. More and Gibran created imaginary worlds in order to criticize their own communities, and to outline what could be the elements of an ideal society. They were educators who created imaginary places in order to fashion their utopian dream. Although they came from different cultures and eras, they touched on common social problems that are still relevant today in our modern society, such as materialism, fanaticism, and the restriction of individual freedom. They were concerned with what constitutes a utopian society and what are the necessary characteristics of an ideal state.

Chapter one focuses on Khalil Gibran's life and on how his personal life and historical background are reflected in his main work *The Prophet*. The chapter also examines the impact of his hybrid identity as a Lebanese-American immigrant on his writing. Gibran spent his life between the East and the West, and was influenced by both cultures and literatures. This chapter examines how Gibran's biography contributed to the success of *The Prophet* and to what extent it is a multireligious and multicultural text. *The Prophet* went through a long process of gestation before it was published in English which, as now, was the universal language at the time, and which contributed enormously to the popularity of the work.

Chapter two looks at More's biography as the author of *Utopia* and evaluates how it can be read as a critique of England in the fifteenth century. *Utopia* has been interpreted in many ways given the contradictions which arise in the text which are responsible for its many ambiguities. In Book I, More appears to criticize English tradition by presenting his *Utopia* as

an ideal commonwealth. Hythloday, the main character of the work, admires these Utopian traditions when in fact More satirizes them for these same reasons. What More criticizes in Book I corresponds to what is said to be positive in utopian society in Book II. This chapter also discusses how interpretations of *Utopia* differ over time and how some critics have read it as a representation of an ideal commonwealth while others have viewed it as a criticism of English society and culture.

Chapter three is a comparative study of More's *Utopia* and Gibran's *The Prophet* and it deals with their different versions of utopia. The first part of the chapter discusses the major themes that these works have in common such as pride and how it can be destructive in a society when linked to religion or material possessions. Individual freedom is the other major topic they have in common. Both More and Gibran embrace the concept of individualism and reject the idea of a collectivist society. For them, what is destructive of a community is the repression of the individual and his desires. More's and Gibran's dream of Utopia, while related to their specific and different backgrounds, find a common ground in their hopes for a similar ideal society. The thesis concludes with a Conclusion that summarizes the differences and similarities between these two authors.

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Introduction

The dream of an ideal society has always been a human concern from antiquity to our modern time. Literature is the window into human chaos and the desire for utopia. Utopian literary works often draw a vision of an idealistic social and political state. The social philosopher and humanist Sir Thomas More was the first to use the word "utopia" as the name for the country he described in his book *Utopia,* published in 1516. As a result of this usage, he influenced many Western writers and the utopian literary genre has been attached to the West and to the Christian community. The genre, however, is found in other traditions and ideological backgrounds. Utopian literature is universal as it is written and read in a wide range of cultures. Some utopian literary works have gone beyond the boundaries of language as they are translated and read by readers all over the world, which makes the concept of utopia a transnational and transcultural ideal. Oscar Wilde once said, "a map of the world that does not include Utopia is not worth even glancing at, for it leaves out the one country at which Humanity is always landing" (Wilde 27). Seeking a perfect place is part of human nature, and human beings have always been preoccupied with improving their world.

Utopia as a literary notion has evolved over time and has been affected by historical change; it was at its peak during the modern era (Tally 13). Nowadays in the era of post-modernism, there is a trend away from the concept of Utopia. Nonetheless the notion retains interest with many writers and scholars. Various literary movements were founded with the aim of transforming their communities through humanism and romanticism. For example, in the humanist *Utopia* of Thomas More, the author writes about an imaginary country in order

to criticize Europe and in particular England's political and social system during the fifteenth and the sixteenth century. *The Prophet* by the Arabic romantic writer Kahlil Gibran is another example of a utopian imaginative country. The work is a critique of twentieth-century practices such as materialism, injustice and racism.

Although More and Gibran are from different backgrounds and eras, they touch on similar social problems that still exist in our modern world and attract the attention of many readers. Each text emphasizes the human dream of reaching perfection. *Utopia* and *The Prophet* have had many interpreters and translations. Due to the variety of utopian traditions and ideologies, these interpretations are as varied as they are contradictory. By examining More's *Utopia* and Khalil Gibran's *The Prophet,* readers recognize that social reform can take different forms. Gibran and More are educators who create imaginary lands to express their dissatisfaction with their own communities. With their imaginative utopias they share their vision and hope of creating a better society. More's *Utopia* and Gibran's *The Prophet* are comparable utopian texts because they share the same social concepts and critical perspectives, however, they are distinctive in their style of writing because of their personal and historical contexts.

The word "utopia" is derived from the Greek word *outopos*, which means "no place" (More, *Utopia* 142). The "u" in utopia is derived from the Greek word *eu* that stands for "good". The word is a paradox in itself. The first part of the word means a good place while the rest, which means "no place," indicates its impossibility. Utopian literary works depict the writer's dream of a future by creating a perfect imaginary country or a dystopian satire. Utopian literature can also be read as a tragedy or a farce of real communities. Lyman Tower Sargent comments on how utopian literature can be interpreted in these many ways:

> The story can be read as tragedy or farce, but it can also be read, and this is my intention, as a tale of hope, hope engendered, hope deferred, and hope renewed. This is a story of the men and women who dreamed of a better life for all of us and those who tried to create that better life. (Sargent 1)

The writer tries to create an imaginary utopian country because he is the one, as Sargent says, "who dreamed of a better life for all of us." Since the utopian literary text is based on the writer's personal experience and cultural influence, it can be interpreted differently according to the writer's imagination and his lived experience. As a result, Utopia can take different forms: it can describe a perfect social and political system or it can be a criticism of the current contemporary situation.

In order to understand this type of work, readers should be aware of the context from which it was produced, as More's and Gibran's personal lives and historical backgrounds have influenced their writing. Over time, *Utopia* and *The Prophet* have received a new generation of readers and critical opinions, and they were placed in the World Literature category. When a work of art is described as World Literature, it means that it is seen from a transcultural and transnational perspective. Also, it touches on universal subject matters. Therefore, to evaluate one's opinion about *Utopia* and *The Prophet*, the reader should understand the affiliation that surrounds the reader-critic. A literary work is considered World Literature because of the variety of different interpretations, translations, and adaptations of the text. The conflicts in critical opinions and the appearance of new interpretations are a reflection of the cross-cultural journey of the text. Generally, the writer's world is a mosaic of experiences and circumstances: social, cultural, emotional, spiritual, and political that frame the writer's individuality and identity. Likewise, the reader is influenced by external factors

that affect his opinions, and similarly, the scholarly community deals with the literary text as a puzzle by looking within and beyond the writing. A critic will look for the socio-historical background, myths, symbols, and the relation of the text to other works. In addition, the circumstances that surround the critic will also affect the critic's interpretation of the text. Edward Said comments on how the interpretation of the text by the critic is affected by the circumstances surrounding him:

> Critics are not merely alchemical translators of texts into circumstantial reality or worldliness; for they too are subject to and into circumstances, which are felt regardless of whatever objectivity the critic's methods possess… in short, [texts] are in the world. (263)

A literary reading is based on the environment that surrounds the critic and critical theories. Art in general cannot be studied or criticized objectively without including personal opinion. The reader fails to suppress the subjective voice inside him while reading a literary text. Therefore, the critic's analysis is based on his own personal opinion as supported by a school of theory. Said places the text in the world, meaning that it becomes placeless, because it does not belong to a specific nation. Although the criticism of the work might take different paths, the text itself remains solid and unchangeable. Throughout time, *Utopia* and *The Prophet* have been interpreted by many critics while the work has traveled around the world. These two texts stretch and bend differently because of readers' different cultures and theories. Books like *The Prophet* and *Utopia* are national and international at the same time. For example, *Utopia* is highly debated among critics. It is described as a text that criticizes sixteenth-century England, as a humanistic book, as a satire, as an optimistic utopia, or as a dystopia for those who disagree with its ideals. Likewise, in Gibran's *The Prophet,* the majority of critics consider the

work a prophetic vision for the creation of a better society. On the other hand, scholars disagree and claim that Gibran is rejecting traditions and religious values. Therefore, it is important to understand the context and the different interpretations by critics on *Utopia* and *The Prophet* in order to read the text comprehensively.

Chapter one of this thesis is devoted to Kahlil Gibran's life as a writer of *The Prophet* and how personal and historical circumstances affected the production of the text. This chapter will examine how Gibran's personal life is reflected in his works, and how through his writings Gibran expressed his "psychological turbulence" along with his feeling of alienation and "mystic pain" (Bushrui and Jenkins 146). Additionally, this chapter will discuss how his hybrid identity as an Arab- American immigrant is reflected in his works through the use of universal themes. Moreover, I shall outline how being aware of Gibran's biography is important in order to understand *The Prophet* as a multi-religious and multi-cultural text.

Gibran's American experience added to his knowledge of Western culture and literature.America enriched Gibran's English and helped him to publish several books in English along with his Arabic writings. Although Gibran moved to live in the United States at an early age, he did not forget about his Arabic heredity. His knowledge of Arabic literature and culture is rich. At the age of fourteen, he returned to Lebanon in order to continue his education there. His experience in Lebanon deepened his knowledge of Arabic literature and language. Gibran was an Arabic nationalist and wrote critically against the Ottoman Empire's occupation of the Arab world. In his writings, he calls for unity of the Arab world, Muslims, and Christians alike, against the Ottoman Empire. Generally, Gibran in his works speaks about the unity of religions because his nation suffers from the cruelty of religious civil wars. Gibran aims to unite religions, cultures, and ethnicities. He was a member of Al-Mahjar, a group of

writers who wrote about Arabic exile and diaspora. His poetry is a rebellion against the lack of justice in the world.

In addition to focusing on unity, his writings have an anti-materialistic approach. He criticizes the lack of spirituality in the world. For Gibran, spirituality is nurtured within the self rather than only at the temple. He revolts against religions and traditions that regulate a person's individuality. Not only are his notions revolutionary, he calls for a revolution in Arabic writing against a classic poetic style. His aim was not to diminish Arabic culture but rather to free poetry from tradition and to make it universal. Gibran is an Arabic-Romantic writer who was influenced by English-Romantic writers, especially William Blake. As with Romantics, individuality, nature, and imagination played an important role in his poetry. Although his writings are poetic, and imaginative, his aim was not art for art's sake but rather to inspire social reform. Like the English Romantics, he believed that the writer is a prophet who has a prophetic vision that will help to solve the problems of the community. Chapter one examines *The Prophet* as a book that reflects universal themes and how it highlights social problems that are both national and international. Gibran chose to write this book in English, the metropolitan language, in order to make his message universal. This chapter also analyzes how Eastern and Western communities read the book differently.

Chapter two presents a brief biography of Sir Thomas More as the author of *Utopia.* More was a man of many interests: a politician, lawyer, and humanist writer. He was an English scholar who prized tradition along with Roman and Greek literature. He was also a strict orthodox catholic; for him, religion always came first. Although More in his life seemed like a man who appreciated tradition and culture, in *Utopia* he criticizes the European community and in particularly England of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. The main

subject of *Utopia* concerns what makes possible a better society and what are the characteristics of an ideal country. In Book I, More speaks against Europe's political system, including the practices of the king, landlords, and the middle class in general. In contrast, Book II is about Utopia, an imaginary island, which Hythloday, the storyteller, describes as the best commonwealth, whose citizens are a people of virtue. However, the reader realizes that the Utopia Hythloday describes is not a perfect place. The contradictions in his account make the text ambiguous. For example, in Book I, Hythloday criticizes the practices of English noblemen towards their servants, whom they treat like slaves. In Utopia there is also slavery, which makes it an imperfect place. All that Hythloday criticizes about England in Book I also exists in the Utopian community. As a result of these contradictions and ambiguities, scholars of *Utopia* have given multiple readings of the text.Some scholars believe it contributes to communism, while others view it to be a philosophical text, or a representation of Catholicism during More's time. Chapter two illustrates the different interpretations of *Utopia* and how some critics read it as a representation of an ideal place, while others claim it is to be a dystopian portrayal of England.

Chapter three is a comparative study of More's *Utopia* and Gibran's *The Prophet.* It explores More's and Gibran's philosophies of Utopia and the characteristics of a perfect society through a textual and contextual reading of both texts. The chapter examines how the two works discuss similar topics such as "pride" and the dangers of excessive pride. The first part of the chapter explains how *Utopia* and *The Prophet* discuss pride as a virtue only if it is reached through knowledge and self-reliance. However, pride can turn into vice if it is attached to materialism and to religious fanaticism. The second part of the chapter emphasizes how More and Gibran embrace the idea of individualism by criticizing the collectivist

approach that leads to totalitarianism. Chapter three discusses how More's *Utopia* and Gibran's *The Prophet* share the same perspective on pride and collectivism but express them differently. The last part of the chapter explores how both works deal with an imaginative journey that is a reflection of reality. However, More wants the reader to understand the social problems of England, while *The Prophet* wants the reader to undergo a journey of self-realization.

There are many analyses of Thomas More's *Utopia* and Kahlil Gibran's *The Prophet* but there is no comparative study of the two works. This thesis aims to present a comprehensive analysis of More's *Utopia* and Gibran's *The Prophet* and how they are comparable literary works. Although More and Gibran come from different backgrounds, they share a similar goal of creating a better society. Their writing styles are not similar, but they are both educators who believe in the role of the writer as a social reformer. Through their imaginary countries, they attempt to bring change to their own societies by exploring and presenting the problems that put their well-being at risk.

Chapter One

Kahlil Gibran the Man, the Writer, and the Author of *The Prophet.*

Kahlil Gibran is well known for his authoritative works worldwide. He is an artist, philosopher, and above all, a poet. His identity as a Lebanese-American made him a key figure in Arabic and English literature during the twentieth century. His first written works were published in his native language, Arabic. Later, he started to write in English. He published nine works in Arabic, ten works in English, and several articles and poems. In the West he is well known for his spiritual writings, and for his gentle personality (Young 4). In contrast, for Arab readers he is known as a rebellious writer who angered the church, criticized the Ottoman Empire, and revolted against the Arabic traditional style (Young 5). In his works he criticized the lack of justice, spirituality, and love in the world. Throughout his works, he repeatedly called for world peace, unity, love, and social harmony. Gibran's ideas and his philosophy gained great approval internationally. He touched on universal topics such as knowledge, freedom, and love. *The Prophet* is his most well-known work that reflects Gibran's ideology. People look at *The Prophet* as a praiseworthy work, and for this reason it was translated into many languages. As with any work of art, in order to fully understand *The Prophet*, the reader should be aware of the circumstances that surround the work. Gibran's hybrid identity is reflected in the universal themes and spiritual unity he depicts in his works, especially in *The Prophet.*

As a Lebanese and an American, Gibran spent his life between the Arab world and the West. He was born in Besharri, Lebanon, on January 6, 1883 to a Maronite Christian family (Najjar 14). His family was poor, and it lacked the major components of

good family relationships: love and security. His mother Kamila, a widow, had been to Gibran's father, Kahlil Saad Gibran (Najjar 14-15). His father was an alcoholic and a gambler, while his mother was a traditional woman. His mother was born to a religious Christian family, and she did not have a formal education (J. Gibran 12). Kamila struggled to give her four children Boutros, Mariana, Sultana, and Gibran a good education (Najjar 5). Gibran did not have formal schooling in Besharri. At that time, the only education that young boys received was through priests, who taught them the Arabic language and basic mathematics (J. Gibran 15). In terms of his education, Gibran had several tutors, including Father Yusef, a priest who sometimes came to the city in which Gibran lived, along with Salim Dahir, a doctor and a poet, who taught him Arabic and opened up Gibran's world through the reading of history books (J. Gibran 15; Young 96). In his childhood, unlike other children, Gibran found happiness in solitude while using his wide imagination. He describes his childhood by saying:

> As a child I did not know I was sad. I was just longing to be alone, making things. And they could never get me to play… I had room all my own … I draw on the walls of the room … and I wrote compositions … I was the busiest boy that ever was … When I had finished a thing I'd bring it down to be shown. I liked them to look at it while I was not there. The pleasure was while I was doing the thing. I was always unhappy because my vision was so far beyond anything I could do. (J. Gibran 16-17)

Gibran was an active and energetic boy. He created his own universe, where he practiced his art. His mother discovered his interest in art at an early age, and she encouraged his talent. This was opposed by his father, who did not understand

Gibran's interest in art and literature and wanted him to become a lawyer (Najjar 38).

There was a dramatic change in the second half of Gibran's childhood. In 1891, when Gibran was eight, his father, who was working for the government as a tax collector, was accused of stealing money from the taxes (Gibran and Haskell 21). Everything that belonged to the family was confiscated (Najjar 24). After that incident, Kamila left Lebanon with her children for the United States in 1895. Her own family suggested that Kamila move to America in order to escape from her husband's disgrace and public shame (J. Gibran 22-23). Gibran's father did not oppose the family's immigration to America, on the contrary, he even helped them by offering some money to make their trip possible. Kamila refused his offer by telling him: "I have money equal to your weight," which showed that she was independent from him (J. Gibran 22-23). In 1895, Kamila and her children took a ship to Boston (Najjar 24). Gibran continued his education in Boston where Americans recognized his unique and artistic qualities. He learned English and was exposed to American culture. His teacher predicted Gibran's bright future and noticed his passion for literature and painting. She encouraged his talent by providing him with literary works and introduced him to local artists (Najjar 26). She also suggested that Gibran drop his first name "Gibran" and replace the letter "h" in his middle name "Khalil" to become "Kahlil," which better suited American English (Najjar 26-27). Since then he became known to the West as "Kahlil Gibran." However, in the Arab world Gibran's name remained "Jubran Khalil Jubran." Gibran's experience in America aided his knowledge and strengthened his passion for literature and art in general. He started to read romantic writers and was fascinated by William Blake's writings (Najjar 29-30). To Gibran, America was a

bridge that linked him to Western culture, traditions, arts, and literature.

Although Gibran adapted well to American culture, he never forgot his roots as an Arab and a Lebanese. When Gibran was fourteen years old, he insisted on returning to Lebanon to continue his education there, where he attended Al-Hikma college in Beirut from 1898 until 1901 (Najjar 33-34). His experience in the college enriched his knowledge of his mother tongue, Arabic literature, the Bible, and the French language. He started to read Arabic pioneers such as Ibn Khaldun, Al Mutanabbi, and mystic Islamic poetry. He also became fascinated with French writers such as Victor Hugo and Rousseau (Najjar 34). During his time in college, Gibran and his friend Yusuf decided to publish a magazine they called *al-Manara, al-Haqiqa, al-Nahda* (*Lighthouse Truth, Renaissance*), where Gibran published some of his paintings and writings (Najjar 37). He started to make progress as a poet and he won an award from Al-Hikma College for one of his poems (Najjar 39). After college in 1902, Gibran was preparing to return to the United States because he missed his family and because he learned that Sultana, his younger sister, was ill (Najjar 40-41). On his way to the United States, Gibran stopped in Paris where he was informed of his sister's death. Sultana started feeling ill two years before when she was twelve years old. She developed glandular swelling at both sides of her neck. The doctors provided her with treatment but they informed the family that she would not live long. Her health continued to deteriorate. Her death certificate indicates that the cause of her death was "chronic diarrhea and interstitial nephritis" (J. Gibran 92-93). Later, more deaths shook Gibran's family. It was a traumatic year for Gibran. His brother Botrous was diagnosed with tuberculosis, which was common in Boston. Within a short period, his

mother Kamila was diagnosed with cancer. Gibran, writing in Arabic, questioned his fate and expressed his grief.

> I write strange thoughts, ideas passing like flocks of birds. What is my life worth? Who would want it? … What good are all these great hopes, a lot of books and strange drawings? What use this learning that I have acquired? What more is this earth with its gaping mouth and bared chest demanding? (qtd. in Najjar 46)

In this passage, Gibran expresses his anger at the traumatic events of his life. He finds himself powerless to help those who are dear to him. Gibran, who was always passionate about his works, described his writings and drawings as being "strange." He found himself helpless and expressed his emotional collapse. For the first time, he found his work worthless. He always saw nature as beautiful and tranquil, and art as an inspiration for others. Now, Gibran went against all his views on art and nature. He described earth as having a "gaping mouth," suggesting that it demanded more and more grief. In March 1903, Botrous passed away, and a few months later in June his mother also died. Gibran was twenty. After her death, he described her as "the most wonderful being I have known" (J. Gibran 62-63). Within the span of fifteen months, Gibran's sister Sultana, his brother Botrous, and his mother had died (Najjar 43).

From then on, Gibran focused more on his career as an artist. In 1904, he participated for the first time in an exhibition as a painter at Harcourt Studio in New York (Najjar 50). During the exhibition he met Mary Haskell, a woman who became his English editor and promoter and who played an important role in his life (Najjar 51). That same year, Gibran also published his first Arabic book *Al- Moseqa,* which

translates into English as *Music* (J. Gibran 148). The book consists of lyrical eulogies influenced by the music of the Boston Symphony Orchestra (Bushrui and Jenkins 71).

In general, his art and poetry is a mirror of his "psychological turbulence" (Bushrui and Jenkins 146). It is concerned with his emotional experience as a result of the changes that occurred in his life and his experiences with different cultures. His art cannot be separated from his personal life, as it is connected to his feelings of alienation and isolation. His art and poetry are means of transforming his "mystic pain" (Bushrui and Jenkins 146). Khalil Hawi comments on Gibran's writing as follows:

> Gibran is one of those figures in the history of literature who, for one reason or another, invite more comments on their life than on their achievements. Legends often grow up around such people, and fact and fiction become interwoven in their Lives. (Hawi 64)

Gibran's writings are about his experience as a man and about his feelings of agony toward life. His works of fiction have a realistic aspect. In *The Madman,* a book of parables and poems, Gibran expressed his feelings of alienation and isolation. Even when he was among people in Lebanon he felt lonely because he was a Christian from a predominantly Muslim country and he came from a broken family, and he was an Arab immigrant who lived in a materialistic society (Bushrui and Jenkins 168). As an Arabic immigrant, he discussed in his writings topics such as diaspora and identity. He believed that the duty of thousands of Arabic immigrants who became American citizens was to contribute to the development of their Arabic nation's life, art, and literature (Bushrui and Jenkins 8). He saw America as a secular country and felt that Arabic immigrants had the freedom to write about their nation's sufferings. The Arabic poets who lived and

continued to live in North America shared their problems with an international audience (Jayyusi 365). During the early twentieth century, there was a rise in romantic nationalism and social criticism in Arabic literature. The nationalistic Arabic approach was a reaction against the Ottoman Empire that was ruled by the Turks. Arabic romantic nationalist writers tried to revive Arabic literature according to the needs of modern times (Bushrui and Jenkins 54-55). There was a unity between the Arabic spirit in literature, religion, and culture. Christian Arab writers accepted Arabic Islamic culture, but they were against the non-Arabic Muslim community that they believed to be a threat (Bushrui and Jenkins 54-55). During Gibran's lifetime, the Arab Peninsula and North Africa were under the rule of the Ottoman Empire, which had exploited the Middle East for more than four hundred years. During their rule, the land was at its worst economically. Gibran was against the Ottoman Empire from an Arabic nationalistic perspectives, and he saw it as the cause of his nation's poverty and suffering. He revolted against the Ottoman Empire as a political representative of his nation. He was a political activist, and he called for the independence of Arabs from the occupation of the Ottoman Empire (Beshara 145). In 1913, he was invited to be the representative of New York's Syrian and Lebanese community to the First Arab Congress in Paris. He was against Europe's diplomatic approach that the Arabs should accept the rule of the Ottoman Empire. He wanted his nation to obtain independence from it, and he wrote several articles on this issue (Bushrui and Jenkins 134-35). After the Paris conference, he published a poem in the journal *al-Funoon* with the title "An Open Letter to Islam" which opposed the Ottoman occupation (J. Gibran 290). In it he declared:

I am Lebanese and I am proud of that,
And I'm not an Ottoman and I'm also proud of
that. I have a beautiful homeland of which I'm
proud, And I have a nation with the past—
But there is no state which protects me. No
matter how many days I stay away I shall remain
an Eastern—Eastern in my manners,
Syrian in my desires, Lebanese in my feelings—
No matter how much I admire Western progress. (qtd. in J. Gibran 290)

The letter addressed the Arab Muslims and Christians and asked them to unite against the Ottoman Empire. The poem shows how proud Gibran was of his Eastern heritage. He would never accept the situation of Ottoman occupation. He described his nation as "a nation of the past." He was very proud that his Eastern nation had a rich history and a cultural and religious diversity. Gibran expressed his admiration of Western progress but he was always proud of his Eastern heritage. With all the suffering and agony that his nation went through, he prized his homeland as "beautiful," and he always saw it that way.

Generally, nature plays an important role in Gibran's works. Nature for Gibran symbolizes human experience. In most of his writings, he returns to his roots. Lebanese scenery and culture appear often in many of his writings. Lebanon, as an agricultural country, inspired him. All of his early writings are set in Lebanon (Bushrui and Jenkins 59). His writings are filled with nostalgia for Besharri, his place of origin. For example, the cedars that appear in many of Gibran's writings have a long history in Lebanon and

appear on the Lebanese flag. The mountains are also a part of the Lebanese landscape. The lute as a musical instrument appears often in his writings and is related to Lebanese culture. Nature for him was an object of meditation, and generated a feeling of nostalgia for his homeland. According to him, nature was a narrative of identity that spoke of his concern for his homeland and for his nationality. At the same time, he wanted to emphasize the "oneness" of human beings and nature (Young 24).

In his writings, Gibran identifies humans with natural objects. He describes people as being like "the earth," "the ocean," and "the sun" (Al-Khazraji, Abdullah and Eng "Universal" 217). For him, there is a spiritual, intellectual, and emotional link between the internal life of beings and nature (Bushrui xxxiv). Barbara Young, the writer and friend of Gibran described nature in his works by saying how: "everywhere in Gibran's work there is evidence of his realization that man is nature and nature man" (Young 23). Nature for Gibran is also linked to purity and spirituality.

Gibran was also aware of the physical and spiritual poverty of the world (Young 28). He criticized the lack of justice and morality of the modern materialistic world. He believed that social justice and freedom could be arrived at through social solidarity and morality, especially after the terrible experience of World War I (Al-Khazraji, Abdullah and Eng "Critical" 18). He also examined and criticized capitalism and industrialization. This is a major theme of his early work. For him, materialism blinds humans to their real humanity (Bushrui and Jenkins 142). Barbara Young described how Gibran's writings are a "rebellion against hypocrisy and blindness and stupidity" (Young 44). In *The Forerunner,* for instance, he criticized the greed of capitalism:

The Capitalist

…

monster who ate of the earth

and drank of the sea

incessantly…

And he answered saying "Yes, I am

satisfied, nay, I am weary of eating and drinking; but I am afraid that

tomorrow there will be no more earth

to eat and no more sea to drink". (qtd. in Shehadi 129)

Gibran showed materialistic people as greedy monsters who are never satisfied. They will never be fulfilled until the environment is destroyed. He was a humanist and an environmentalist as well. In his works, he sought to protect the environment from harmful human activities. As a solution, he emphasized the importance of the relationship between nature and human beings in order to eliminate man's materialistic drive (Bushrui and Jenkins 142). For Gibran the self could be reincarnated through good deeds. (Bushrui and Jenkins 108).

Like the romantics, Gibran is concerned with imagination and nature. His cultivated imagination is the reason behind his success as a poet and as an artist (El-Hage 16). For him imagination is the source of knowledge. As he claims, "imagination sees the complete reality," and he adds, "imagination does not uplift: we don't want to be uplifted, we want to be more completely aware" (El-Hage 18). He was influenced by English romantic writers such as Coleridge, Wordsworth, and especially Blake. He was called "the Blake of the twentieth century" by Auguste Rodin (Young 22), who said:

> Both warred against reason in the name of imagination. Both defied the snares of logic to cut a straight wing path directly to God.
>
> To both Blake and Gibran these revelations are the gift of the poet. The poet and the Prophet are one. (Bushrui xxxii)

They both called for freedom, creativity, and spirituality over rationalism. Gibran's writings ,like Blake's, are full of mystical symbolism and expression (Najjar 127). Although Blake and Gibran are alike in many respects, there are some differences concerning their views of nature. For Blake, nature does not embody human qualities and reflects the fall of man. On the other hand, Gibran identifies with individualism and nature, as did the romantics (Bushrui and Jenkins 108). Nature for him adds to people's lives: spiritually, emotionally, and intellectually (Bushrui xxxiv). Generally, English romanticism had a great influence on the modernist Arabic writers, especially immigrants like Gibran.

Gibran, as a writer from the Arabic world, belongs to the Arabic modernist genre; in particular, he is part of the group Al-Mahjar, which means diaspora in Arabic. These are a group of Arabic writers who lived in exile. Gibran was also one of the founders of the *Pen League Club* (al-Rabitah al-Qalamiyyah), a movement that liberated Arabic poetry from the classical and aesthetic styles. Like the English romantics, the writers who belonged to *The Pen League Club* revolted against classical Arabic rules. The group wrote for an Arabic newspaper in New York called *Mohjar* (The Emigrant) (Najjar 53). This newspaper was popular among Arabic immigrants at the time. Gibran's first article was entitled "Vision," which criticized the materialistic world (Najjar 53). Al-Mahjar's themes are a mixture of romanticism and Sufism (Bushrui and Jenkins

180). Besides liberating Arabic literature from classical rules, Gibran also promoted multireligious, multicultural, and multi-philosophical texts. His goal was to focus more on the self and on life. His writings are filled with symbols and allegories (Najjar 17). He appreciated the influence of Europe and the West but was against diminishing Arabic culture. According to him, "the spirit of the West is a friend if we can take from it what we need but becomes an enemy if we have to accommodate it and bend ourselves to it" (Najjar 132). He was looking for literary works that reflect the writer's individuality and creativity. For example, his poem "al-Mawakib" ("The Procession") is one of the best Arabic adaptations of English romanticism. At the same time it was the only poem that Gibran wrote in traditional Arabic poetic style. The poem is a mixture of romanticism, Sufism, and Arabic traditional rhyme scheme, "qafiyah".

A major characteristic of Gibran's writings is his use of universal humanistic themes aiming to unite humanity regardless of its ethnicity, religion, and political groups (Al-Khazraji, Abdullah and Eng "Critical" 14). For instance, Gibran was influenced by Islamic mysticism and their idea of oneness. In *The Prophet,* he expressed his belief in immortality and the "God-self aspect of all human beings" (Al-Khazraji, Abdullah and Eng "Universal" 217). In the *The Prophet* in the chapter "Crime and Punishment", the main character, Almustafa says:

> Like the ocean is your god-self;
>
> It remains forever undefiled.
>
> And like the ether it lifts but the winged.
>
> Even like sun is your god-self (K. Gibran *The Prophet* 40).

Gibran was influenced by the Sufi's notion of the internal purification of the self, heart,

and soul (Najjar 97). The Sufist calls the self "nafs." The self is divided into levels; the lowest level is the "tyrannical nafs," which is affected by a collective of forces that influence the self to commit a sin. The tyrannical self can be treated by self-discipline and self-observation. The highest level of the self is the pure self that can be reached only by saints and prophets. The second concept is the purification of the heart. The heart for the Sufist is the place of wisdom and spiritual knowledge. The "heart is a divine temple," and it is the place of love, therefore, human beings cannot love God without loving others (Frager 1-4). Finally, the soul is of a spiritual nature. It is different from physical appearance and psychology. Sufists believe that the soul is located in the brain. For them, spirituality is not restricted to a specific gender, race, or nationality. Gibran believed in self-observation in a character's own choices, such as Jesus in *Jesus the Son of Man* and Almustafa in *The Prophet.* Through these characters' religious teachings, Gibran tried to educate people to be better human beings.

Gibran was also influenced by Christian mysticism. For him spirituality was not restricted to a particular religion. In his book *A Tear and A Smile* (Dam'ah Wa Ibtisamah), Gibran emphasized the idea of his limitlessness. He talks about how he "cleft the vast spaces of the Infinite" and how he was influenced by philosophers and prophets such as Confucius, Brahma, Buddha, Moses, Jesus the Nazarene, the Apostle of Arabia, and many others. Gibran described himself as being "without end" (K. Gibran *The Essential* 35). In *The Prophet,* he claims that God can be found "in the cloud," "in flowers," "in trees," and everywhere (K. Gibran *The Prophet* 70). Gibran emphasized the universality of God without being tied to any religion.

Gibran addressed the unity of religions more often in his Arabic works than in his

English ones. He was aware of the conflict between religious groups that caused hatred and destruction. Lebanon suffered from civil wars as a result of conflicts between religious groups and Western countries. Lebanon is a multi-religious and multicultural country, there are probably eighteen religious groups in Lebanon within Islam, Judaism, and Christianity. The majority belonged to groups within Islam and Christianity. They are the Sunni, the Shi'ia, Druze, Mronite Catholics, and Greek Orthodox (Wiegand 104). The minority religious groups in Lebanon are the Alawities, the Isma'ilite, the Melchite Catholic, the Greek Catholics, the Armenian Orthodox, Armenian Catholic, Syrian Orthodox, Syrian Catholic, Latin, Protestant, and Chaldean (Wiegand 110). Because Lebanon is a multicultural country, people speak more than one language. Arabic is the official spoken language, but most Lebanese are bilingual. Other spoken languages are: French, Aramaic, the language of the Maronites, and English. These different groups lived in harmony until the civil war of 1840. The wars led to economic crisis and poverty. As a result many Lebanese families fled seeking a "New World." Gibran and his family immigrated to the United States because of their family's problems as well as their country's economic crisis. Through his writings, Gibran reflected on his personal suffering and on his nation's suffering as well (Bushrui and Jenkins 143). The conflict between religions and religious groups is not just a problem of the past but rather it lives on until the present time. Conflicts between religions are not a Western or a Middle Eastern issue but are, rather, problems around the world. Gibran deeply cared for his nation in agony. He called for his nation's unity, liberty, harmony, and peace. In "The Voice of the Poet" (Sawt al-Sha'ir) he called for a peaceful coexistence of all the people of Lebanon:

> You are my brother and I love you. I love you when you prostrate yourself in your mosque, and kneel in your church, and pray in your synagogue. You and I are sons of one faith-the Spirit (qtd. in Bushrui and Jenkins 143).

Gibran promoted the idea of the "son of one faith-the Spirit" regardless of a specific religion. He sees his country as one temple that accepts all people from all different religions. He calls for brotherhood among nations without religious discrimination. In *Rebellious Spirits,* he expressed his sorrow and pain for the civil war in his country: "How long is a brother to fight his brother on the breast of the mother? How long is a neighbor to threaten his neighbor near the tomb of the beloved?" (Bushrui and Jenkins 29). He advocated a fundamental spiritual and national unity. These ideas are found again in *The Prophet*, his most significant text, which promotes spirituality and unity among people.

Gibran is always identified as the writer of *The Prophet.* This book is the reason of his international fame. *The Prophet* was published in English in 1923. The book contains twenty-eight prose poetic chapters and twelve illustrations painted by Gibran. It became the second bestselling work of the twentieth century, after the Bible. Although the book is short, it is full of wisdom and life lessons. It is divided into twenty-eight chapters in which Gibran discusses social issues such as love, marriage, laws, and friendship. The story revolves around Almustafa, the main character. He is the "chosen and beloved" prophet (K. Gibran *The Prophet* 3). The opening of the book starts with a farewell scene: Almustafa is standing on a hill looking towards the arrival of the ship that will take him to the isle of his birth. His feelings are in conflict. He is joyful because he is going back home after spending twelve years abroad, and at the

same time he expresses his sorrow in leaving his country of adoption, Orphalese. The citizens of Orphalese gather in front of the temple to bid him farewell and to learn from his wisdom. They express their love for him and how he is precious to them. They describe him as "spirit", "light", and "prophet of God" (K. Gibran *The Prophet* 6-7). Almitra, a seeress and the first one who believes in him, requests that he talk about love. The other citizens also ask Almustafa to provide them with wisdom concerning many essential subjects in life. His answers are full of passion, wisdom, philosophy and spirituality.

The Prophet focuses on idealism and utopia. After its publication**,** the *Chicago Evening Post Literary Review* praised the work by declaring that:

> Truth is here; truth expressed with all the music and beauty and idealism … The words of Gibran brings to one's ears the majestic rhythm of Ecclesiastes … For Khalil Gibran has not feared to be an idealist in an age of cynics. Nor to be concerned with simple truth where others devote themselves to mountebank cleverness … The twenty-eight chapters in the book form a little Bible, to be read and loved by those at all ready for the truth. (qtd. in Young 63)

The Prophet is described as a book of truth and the words of Gibran as "simple truth." The book is considered a holy biblical book. It rhymes perfectly and it was compared to the "majestic rhythm of Ecclesiasts". Gibran's aim was to present an ideal state and a harmonious country through a prophet named Almustafa. Similarly, a critical reading of *The Prophet* by Nida Al- Khazraji, Mardziah Abdullah, and Bee Eng Wong suggests that the text is a reflection of Gibran's motivation to present a model state: "Gibran calls for a utopian city by giving treatments to each issue in life. He presents a world not yet in existence" (Al-Khazraji,

Abdullah and Eng "Critical" 13). The world that Gibran creates is an imaginary island that he hopes one day might be reflected in real life. Through *The Prophet*, Gibran wants to give a picture of a better social system. Like so many writers, Gibran creates a utopia that reflects his own notion of what an ideal country should be.

The book discusses social issues from a prophetic point of view. Almustafa addresses many subjects. The first subject is love, which is the work's major theme. It is mentioned sixty-four times in the text. Almustafa talks about how love is a vital element in all human relationships whether in marriage, friendship, or between parents and children. He discusses how love is a major component of all human activities, like work, teaching, and praying. In addition, love is noble because it brings happiness and gratitude. Second, he criticizes ideologies such as religions and laws. He calls for human individuality and secular spirituality. Third, he talks about equality and goodness in all human beings, and claims that man is created in the image of God. The God-self is about mystical self-discipline and the ability to reach perfection. The third subject that Almustafa addresses is appreciation and joy (Al-Khazraji, Abdullah and Eng "Universal" 2015-221). Almustafa insists that joy and happiness cannot be had without sorrow and pain. He describes how human beings are "like a scale between sorrow and joy," as if they were two sides of the same coin (K. Gibran *The Prophet* 30). The last topic is freedom on a personal and individual level and in a public and national state (Al-Khazraji, Abdullah and Eng "Universal" 220). For Almustafa, freedom is not political or economic, rather it is spiritual (Osho 98). These are the characteristics of a utopian society, and the universality of the topic made the book immortal. On 2 October 1923, the day *The Prophet* was published, Mary Haskell wrote in a letter to Gibran:

> The Prophet came today, and it did more than realize my hopes … I read it as the center of all things … This book will be held as one of the treasures of English literature … Generations will not exhaust it, but instead, generation after generation will find in this book what they would fain be—and it will be better loved as men grow riper and riper. (Gibran and Haskell 417)

Haskell's expectations about the future of the book were correct. Even though *The Prophet* was published ninety-two years ago, the book discusses issues that the world still suffers from in 2016, such as lack of spirituality, love, and freedom.

The first social issue that Almustafa talks about is love. When Almitra asks him about love, he responds by saying, "when love beckons to you, follow him" (K. Gibran *The Prophet* 9). Love should be accepted in all its forms. It is precious and can bring delight as well as pain and suffering. This is related to Gibran's concept of love in one of his letters to May Ziadah where he tells her, "do not fear love, friend of my heart. We must surrender to it in spite of what may bring in the way of pain, desolation, of longing, and in spite of all the perplexity and bewilderment**"** (Gibran and Ziadah 82). The notion of love is discussed more elaborately in the second section of *The Prophet* when Almustafa talks about marriage, and what is a perfect marriage:

> You were born together, and together you shall be forevermore.
>
> […] Love one another, but make not a bond of love:
>
> Let it rather be moving sea between shores of your souls. (K. Gibran *The Prophet* 15)

Marriage is not a bond but rather a harmonious relationship that does not deny the individuality of both people. Osho explains that Almustafa's advice about marital relationships is "not the marriage you know" (29). Almustafa presents marriage in a

different form than people know in real life. As Osho explains, "You were born together, in the moment love arose in you. That was your real birth. And together you shall be for evermore, because it is not lust. You cannot be bored, because it is not lust" (36). He continues:

> People are unaware that they don't know what love is. Love never suspects, love is never jealous. Love never interferes in the other's freedom. Love never imposes on the other. Love gives freedom, and the freedom is possible only if there is space in your togetherness. This is the beauty of Khalil Gibran – tremendous insight … But let there be space in your togetherness. It is not contradictory… The more you allow freedom to each other, the more intimate you are. Not intimate enemies, but intimate friends (Osho 38).

So, love is the basic component in any relationship but it is not lust that controls people's lives. The ideal marriage is found between couples who give each other space. According to Gibran and Osho, true love could not exist without freedom. Real love is based on sharing but at the same time requires distance that allows people to retain their individuality.

Almustafa also elaborates on the importance of individuality and of human relationships. In the third part, he argues against the common view of parent-child relations. He claims that: "Your children are not your children. […] They are the sons and daughters of Life's longing for itself … And though they are with you yet they belong not to you" (K. Gibran *The Prophet* 17). Children have their own lives and the freedom to make independent choices. Gibran is showing the danger of any human relationship that is based on ownership rather that as enjoyment of togetherness in which

each person is free to practice his or her individuality. Parents often force their children to follow their religion, politics, and ideas. The child comes as a tabula rasa, and the parents give him or her no space to explore but rather impose their own ideas (Osho 49). Gibran is against possessiveness, and this applies not only to familial relationships but also to friendship that also requires freedom.

In addition to his focus on freedom, Gibran also emphasizes the importance of giving: "You give but little when you give of your possessions" (K. Gibran *The Prophet* 21). Giving should be done out of generosity. Almustafa says that those who give with joy will have joy as their reward and those who give others pain will receive pain as their reward. However, the best are those who give out of virtue without greed or possessiveness. He describes the generosity of giving when he talks about the sixth life matter, which is eating and drinking. People kill to eat but Almustafa wants the act of eating to turn into an "act of worship" (K. Gibran *The Prophet* 25). A man should know that nature and the forest in which he kills to feed himself are purer than he is. He explains his concept of worship by saying that man should believe, "By the same power that slay you, I too am slain; and I too shall be consumed" (K. Gibran *The Prophet* 26). There is a strong connection between man and nature. Human beings should not be selfish by taking from nature and destroying it without participating in giving back to it. They can do this through working, which is the seventh life matter. When a ploughman asks Almustafa to talk to them about work, he answers, "But I say to you that when you work you fulfill a part of earth's furthest dream […] to love life through labour is to be intimate with life's inmost secret" (K. Gibran *The Prophet: A New Annotated Edition* 27-8). Osho comments on Almustafa's vision on work, by saying that work "mak[es]

your love for existence visible" (Osho 82). Work is about the unity of being between man and nature and how humans should work out of love to help the earth become a better place.

Along with relationships and work, Almustafa focuses on materialism in the sections "On Houses" and "On Clothes." He tells the mason how, "Your house is your larger body," and he refers to his public as "children of space" (K. Gibran *The Prophet* 34-36). Suheil Bushrui discusses the meaning behind the "larger body" and "children of space" and suggests that "the 'larger body' speaks of nature, the forest, the world of freedom, while 'children of space' refers to those who have been freed from the shackles of materialism" (K. Gibran *The Prophet* 34). Almustafa is against materialism and he defends nature from human destruction. He also believes that clothes "conceal much of your beauty, yet they hide not the unbeautiful" (K. Gibran *The Prophet* 37). So, the materialistic beauty of the clothes cannot beautify the inner ugly reality of people.

The remaining sections share an emphasis on spirit fulfillment and on love that exists within the inner soul. They also focus more on personal interests and on the passion of each human being, along with how self-knowledge cannot be reached without pain: "Your pain is the breaking of the shell that encloses your understanding" (K. Gibran *The Prophet* 5). Much of your pain, he adds, is "self-chosen" (K. Gibran *The Prophet* 55). One should not be afraid to accept the remedy "in silence and tranquility" (K. Gibran *The Prophet* 56).

In the section "On Death," Almustafa comments that "life and death are one", where each ending creates a new beginning (K. Gibran *The Prophet* 84). "For what is to die," he adds, "but to stand naked in the wind and to melt in the sun?" (K. Gibran

The Prophet 86). In his farewell, Almustafa says that death might take him away from his people but his words will always remain with them when he is silent. At the end Almustafa leaves the city of Orphalese but he promises that he will be back to visit them later:

> Forget not that I shall come back to you.
>
> A little while, and my longing shall gather dust and foam for another body.
>
> A little while, a moment of rest upon the wind, and another woman shall bear me. (K. Gibran *The Prophet* 100)

The Prophet is about the inner journey of the self, individuality, love, and pleasure. It is a book of parables and maxims that combines literary fiction and religious lessons. Gibran writes in a poetic prose style with a title for each section that illustrates the idea that the work is really a parable. From the title, the reader may get the impression that the book has religious implications. Gibran commented on the meaning of the title, *The Prophet*, by saying that "The difference between a prophet and a poet is that the prophet lives what he teaches—and the poet does not. He may write wonderfully of love, and yet not be loving" (Gibran and Haskell 397). Gibran also remarked that he himself "kept Jesus in one half of his bosom and Muhammad in the other" (Bushrui and Jenkins 6), and on Jesus he added that "My art can find no better resting place than the personality of Jesus. His life is the symbol of Humanity. He shall always be the supreme figure of all ages" (Bushrui and Jenkins 9). As for the name of the main character, Almustafa is an Arabic word that means "the chosen one." Mustafa is also an Arabic male name and "Al" is an Arabic article that stands for "the." Almustapha has a prophetic meaning: Mohammed was also called "almustafa." Although

Muhammad was an Arab, Muslims believe that he was chosen by God to carry a universal religion that does not apply to a specific nation. So, Gibran's choice of the name for his main character indicates that his goal was to write parables that address people all around the world.

The Prophet went through a long writing process before it was published. Barbara Young points out how *The Prophet* started as an idea of Gibran, and how he wrote it.Young says that Gibran had the idea of the book since he was fifteen years old, when he was a student in Al-Hikma College (Young 53). He wrote the first draft of *The Prophet* at the age of sixteen (Young 55), and he carried it with him when he went to Paris and Boston (Young 56). It was first written in Arabic, and later rewritten in English. Young says that the book was written in English five times in five years before it was published (Young 58). Gibran wrote to Mary Haskell about wanting to publish *The Prophet* and he told her that:

> I have the Arabic original of it, in elementary form, that I did it when I was sixteen years old. It is full of the sacredness of my inner life, It has been always in me; but I couldn't hurry it. I couldn't do it earlier. (Gibran and Haskell 323)

When he talked about *The Prophet,* Gibran always used "I" and "me". Of his main character, Almustafa, he said: "That being has always been with me, I think" (Young 55). Mikhail Naimy, a writer and Gibran's friend, put things in perspective when he said that Almustafa is Gibran, Orphalese is New York, Mary Huskell is Almitra and Almustafa's isle of birth is Lebanon (Bushrui and Jenkins 224). The book clearly reflects Gibran's psychological and philosophical experience. It reflects how he was influenced by many religions: Christianity, into which he was born, Hinduism,

Buddhism, and Sufi mysticism (Bushrui xxv). *The Prophet* is a universal soul.

Gibran knew English but he did not master it as a native English speaker. Mary Haskell played an important role in Gibran's English publications. She believed in Gibran's talent from the first day she met him. In one of his letters, Gibran expressed his appreciation of Haskell by saying "I hope that the day will come when I shall be able to say: "I became an artist through Mary Haskell" (Gibran and Haskell 14). Gibran consulted Haskell before publishing his works, even when he was only publishing in Arabic He would outline his ideas in English and discuss them with Haskell on how he would express them (Gibran and Haskell 50). Young comments on how it was difficult for Gibran to think in Arabic and to write in English (Young 58). The concept of thinking in one language and writing in another created a mixed language style, as we can see when Gibran writes in English but thinks in Arabic. Repeatedly, while he was writing, Gibran faced the difficulty of finding the equivalent word in English for his Arabic thoughts. As he remarked, there are "fifty words in Arabic to give expression to the many aspects of love" but in English there is only one word (Young 36). Haskell wrote in her journal on Gibran's proficiency in English that: "He knows English better than any of us, for he is conscious of the bony structure of the language, its solar system. And he creates English" (Gibran and Haskell 352). By the phrase "he creates English" she meant that Gibran added expressions from his Arabic thinking and language to his English writings, thus creating his own expressions in the English language.

Gibran searched for universality in every aspect of his work. He published his book in English because it was one of the dominant languages of his time and continues to be. The English language is the native language of many countries and it is learned as

a second language throughout the world. The widespread usage of English during Gibran's time was the result of British colonialism. In our time, British colonialism has all but disappeared. However, English remains the language of globalization. With the rise of the English language, *The Prophet,* as a text, remains popular in its original language of publication. At the same time it does not belong to any national literature, or ethnic group, but rather it moves freely between cultures and traditions. It was written for an international audience and in an international language, and it remains so.

The Prophet belongs to world literature. It was originally written in English and it was translated into more than twenty languages since its publication. The book travelled to Gibran's place of origin through Arabic translations. There are many Arabic translations but the first one was completed in 1926 by the Archimandrite Anthony Bashir, three years after the publication of *The Prophet*. Although Bashir's translation is not the best, the preface that he provides is very helpful for the reader. Bashir was fully aware of his Arabic audience and the conservatives that he was addressing. Although Gibran was an Arab by ethnicity, he knew that some of his ideas might not be accepted by an Arabic audience that believed that he should have abided by Arabic traditions. In his Preface, Bashir provides a reading strategy, so that the text will not be misunderstood by readers. So he starts the Preface by defending Gibran as a spiritual writer:

> If we confine ourselves to merely the external appearance of religion, then one could call Gibran an atheist, and in that case I would be mistaken to translate this book into Arabic. But this translator is not an atheist, and he examines the essence of religion and not merely its exterior. If we approach Gibran and his works in this way, then it becomes clear that he stands at the head of the most faithful, but at the same time he

> seeks the eternal truth without fear or delusion and without the bustle and vanity of the world. (qtd. in Imangulieva 76)

Bashir explains that Gibran's book is a work based on faith in God; it is about the essence of the inner soul. He provides five points that, in his opinion, the Arabic reader must be aware of when reading the work. First, Gibran as an artist expressed his ideas by painting them first before writing them, and the readers should first pay attention to the illustrations which he provides in the book. Secondly, Gibran's style of writing is poetic and philosophical. The reader should understand the style if he wants to engage with the text. He insists that Gibran is a man of faith, not an atheist, and that for him religion is a lifestyle; that Gibran believes in spirituality in a very mystical and imaginative way, rather than considering it a factual reality. Although Bashir and other Arabic critics insist on the spirituality of Gibran's work, some critics such as Abd al-Karim Ashtar believe that Gibran, through his art, lost his belief in God and became an atheist. He compares Gibran to Nietzsche and suggests that Gibran ends in religious ruin (Imangulieva 82). Barbara Young also commented on how people in the West questioned her about whether Gibran was really a Christian, and she answered them by saying that: "we might call him a Christian mystic"(Young 94). Bashir knows this well and he insists several times that Gibran's faith and his new modern style of expressing his spirituality might be misunderstood. But Bashir tells the reader that he or she should understand what each illustration symbolizes and what their meaning is behind all twelve of them without misunderstanding them (Bashir 10). During Gibran's time, and until today, nudity in paintings had been a taboo for Arabs. However, through nudity, Gibran expressed purity in an age of materialism. Gibran's illustrations are symbolic

and aesthetic. In the chapter "On Clothes," Almustafa comments that "your clothes conceal much of your beauty, yet they hide not the unbeautiful" (K. Gibran *The Prophet* 37). Gibran means that the beauty of the inner self is real and that the ugliness of the soul cannot be hidden by clothes or by appearances. Finally, Bashir advises the reader to look for the truth behind Gibran's book because *The Prophet,* as he sees it, is not a simple story that a reader comes across and soon forgets. *The Prophet* is a poetic, artistic book of wisdom, and a philosophical text; the reader should look for the truth behind the aesthetic language. At the end of his Preface, Bashir gives an example of the negative attitude society held previously towards Galileo and how Galileo is appreciated in modern times. Thus one should not judge too hastily.

Since the first translation of *The Prophet*, there have been many debates within the Arab scholar community. The majority of critics have praised the book as a masterpiece that calls for peace, but a minority considered the work a reflection of Gibran's lost faith. For the Western community, the book was embraced from its first publication. Later on, other translations of *The Prophet* appeared in Arabic by translators such as Tharwat Okasha and Bu-Les but they did not include in their Prefaces suggestions for reading the work. Arabic audiences have changed over time and are less restrictive: they have learned to appreciate *The Prophet* as an artistic work. In the West, *The Prophet* was treated as a book of wisdom. The first time the book was read in public was in New York City, after its first publication and it was a great success. Naimy comments on the success of Gibran and of *The Prophet* as follows:

> *The Prophet* represents the peak of his literary career. Viewed in the light of Reincarnation, a doctrine which embraced and made the cornerstone of his

> philosophy of human destiny, Gibran's life from his own birth to the birth of *The Prophet* may be seen as a steady ascent to this peak. (qtd. in Bushrui and Gotch 1975)

Naimy suggests that *The Prophet'*s steady success can also be applied to our present time, when it has received many awards in the critical press. The problem is that even with all the fame there are only a few critical works devoted to *The Prophet.*

Gibran was planning to follow *The Prophet* with two volumes; *The Garden of the Prophet* and *The Death of the Prophet.* Unfortunately, he met his death in 1931 before he could finish these works. *The Garden of the Prophet* was almost finished and most of the chapters were completed but not arranged in chapters (Young 119). The work was meant to be the second part of a trilogy. Barbara Young arranged Gibran's notes and added some ideas that Gibran had mentioned to her but did not document (Young 120). In *The Garden of the Prophet,* Almustafa returns to his isle of origin and provides his people, once again, with his wisdom. Barbra Young commented on Gibran's ideas behind his trilogy:

> It was to have been a book concerned with the relationship between man and God, even as *The Prophet* is concerned with the relationships between man and man, and *The Garden* between man and nature (Young 119).

In 1989 Jason Leen wrote *The Death of The Prophet* where the Prophet is stoned to death at the end of the book. The only line that Gibran wrote was "and he shall return to the City of Orphalese … and they shall stone him in the marketplace, even unto death; and he shall call every stone a blessed name" (Young 119).

At Gibran's death an headline in *The New York Sun* read "A Prophet is Dead", but his success as a writer remains immortal (Najjar 171). People will always know Gibran as the romantic poet, the poet of nature, the prophet-poet, and as the bridge between the West and the

East. His writings reflect an autobiographical tone about his life and times. A new film animation of *The Prophet* was released in 2014. This indicates that the influence of *The Prophet* still remains strong.

Chapter Two

Thomas More and His *Utopia:* The Dark Side behind the Green World.

Thomas More was an important literary and political figure of the fifteenth century. He was an English lawyer, philosopher, statesman, scholar, and writer. He played an important role on the political stage in England, as he was the advisor to Henry VIII. As a politician his writings always contain a political philosophy. As a humanist he supported the Renaissance Humanist movement of the fifteenth-century that was led by figures such as Desiderius Erasmus, who was a friend of More. In his writings, More writes from a religious as well as a humanistic perspective. According to him, religion cannot be separated from political and social matters. His work as the private advisor to the King of England brought him close to what happened in the court of King's Bench and helped him gain the King's love and trust. Unfortunately, More became the enemy of the King when he opposed his unlawful marriage, as well as his idea that the English Church should break from the Church of Rome. More also refused to acknowledge the King as the head of the Church, for which reasons he met with a tragic death.

More is known for his book *Utopia*, first published in 1516, and its influence and importance continues to this day. In order to better understand this work one has to be aware of the background of the author. The historian Hugh Trevor-Roper has this to say on More's personality:

> Thomas More … is one of the heroes of our age. Everyone venerates him now. Catholic and Protestant, Conservative and Socialist, traditionalist and reformer, English and Irish – all are united in his praise. Sweetness and light, spirituality and good

> humor, scholarship and wit emanate from his portrait … He is a man of marvelous completeness, and for all seasons. And naturally all of us … are very indignant with King Henry VIII and Thomas Cromwell, who sent him to the block (Trevor-roper 19).

Thomas More is "the man of all seasons" and a "man of marvelous completeness." He is a man of multiple interests: a statesman, social reformer, and a man of faith. During his life and through his writings he was considered to be a political and a social reformer. His complex personality is reflected in his writings, especially in his great work *Utopia*, where we can see the politician, the lawyer, the humanist, and the aesthete at work. His main audience was a group of Renaissance Humanists who were interested in Erasmus. However, his approach in *Utopia* evolved and changed through time. The fame of More's *Utopia* has since been associated with this literary genre as he was the first to use the word "utopia" to describe an ideal commonwealth. However, *Utopia* is a rebellious work, very critical of the bourgeoisie of More's time, which he could not voice directly in his lifetime. More was well aware of the political and social corruption in England, and he was fully aware of the dangers of conveying this truth to the public. Therefore, in his *Utopia* he intended to reveal these truths indirectly through the use of ambiguity, satire, and irony that have confused readers for many centuries. They always thought that by Utopia he meant an ideal society, when it is actually a dystopia.

Thomas More belonged to the London aristocracy where he was born in 1478 and where he spent all his life. He was born to a wealthy family. His paternal grandfather William More was a baker and his maternal grandfather Thomas Graunger was a tallow chandler. At this time merchants were very important in London, and they were the "most worshipful" (Ackroyd 6-7). London, in More's time, was ruled by a merchant aristocracy.
Money was the most important factor in gaining a reputation and a position (Marius 5). More

spent his childhood among the wealthiest and most influential London citizens, and he himself later became one of them (Ackroyd 7). He was always connected with the royal family, from his father John's time and his grandfather's, Thomas Graunger (Marius 45). His family had traditionally served the crown. His father John More was a lawyer, and later a judge in the King's Bench, one of the most distinguished common-law courts in England. He was also a landowner and a merchant by inheritance. John More had no children from his wives except from Agnes More, Thomas' mother, who bore him six children. After her death, his father provided him with three stepmothers. John More made fun of marriage and of women even though he married four times. For him marriage was a business. All the women he married were in their childbearing years with wealth and property (Marius 9).

More senior had a great impact on young More's personality, education, and career. He was very paternalistic and from childhood he tried to control his son's choices and decisions. Young Thomas always did what delighted his father and never opposed his will even when it came to choosing a faculty in college or his career (Marius 9). Thomas More mentions his father in several writings and always refers to him as a representative of the old generation and of the old faith (Ackroyd 64). Peter Ackroyd comments on More's use of his father as a character in his works and what fatherhood meant to him:

> More always adverts to the authority of patristic sources, 'the father' whom he addresses as *sanctissimos* ('the most holy') and *doctissimos* ('most learned'). But the image of the father is not simply representative of ancient wisdom; in the context of religious change it becomes of pressing contemporary significance, since the English church could forsake Rome 'then might the child refuse obedience to his natural father.'In this reference of 'father' and 'fathers,' most holy and most learned we can

hear also the cry for authority and restraint. (Ackroyd 64-65)

More believed in the importance of the past for the present and the superiority of fatherly wisdom. He was a traditionalist and relied on the authority of the ancients and on their idea of restraint. Even in parent-child relations he believed that children should respect their parents regardless. In a letter to his daughter Margret, More explained the relationship between a father and his child and told her that "a natural charity bindeth the father and the child" (More *The Last* 105). In another letter to his children he praised his son John, named after his father, by saying that "he does not forget that he is joking with his father, whom he is eager to delight and yet is cautious not to give offense" (More *ST. Thomas* 202). Thus the child should always be "eager to delight" the father but always be "cautious not to give offense", as he himself was always eager to delight and respect his father (Ackroyd 64).

More's father sent him to St. Anthony's School, one of the best schools in those days, where he started the *trivium*, which was the base of medieval education that included Latin grammar, logic, and debating skills. During that time a good speaking skill was a necessity, and it proved to be one of More's greatest assets (Marius 15). It was traditional at the time to send children who were between the age of seven and nine to be raised in another household. They believed that children would learn better manners working as servants for another family (Marius 15). More's father followed this custom and sent his son to live in the household of John Morton (Marius 20). In *Utopia* More praises Morton and describes him as a man "respected for his wisdom and virtue as for his authority" (More, *Utopia* 16). In 1492, when he was fourteen, More enrolled in the faculty of Liberal Arts at Oxford. In Oxford he continued what he had studied at St. Anthony's School. He started to learn the *quadrivium* that included arithmetic, music, geometry, and astronomy. During his years at Oxford, at the age of fifteen,

More began to write short comedies and poetry. However, he left Oxford after two years without obtaining a degree because his father feared that he would pursue liberal studies rather than law (Marius 28; Ackroyd 50). More returned to London to study law at the New Inn, later Lincoln's Inn (Marius 28). In 1501 he concluded his law education and became an "utter barrister" and started to practice. As a lawyer, More believed that laws were made not only to punish criminals but to bring justice to the state as well (Marius 30). Although More was a traditionalist and he respected the wisdom of the fathers, he believed in reformation. He believed in the importance of education and its contribution to creating disciplined and virtuous individuals. As a humanist his goal was to educate the top people of the community whether they belonged to the church or to the government. He believed that if people who are in authority are well educated and virtuous they will be role models for others. He dreamed of "a Republic of virtue" that, in his opinion, would bring up wiser men to decide on behalf of the church and society. Although he believed that the prince should be a man of virtue, he preferred a bad prince to anarchy (Marius 235).

Thomas More was a strict orthodox Catholic. He always tried to control his appetites. He believed that human beings are beasts that needed to be tamed (Marius 14-5). In his enlightened time reason posed a threat to faith, but for him, faith always came first. In his writings he always argued for the supremacy of religion over reason. More believed that religion and reason could not arrive at the same conclusions. In his *Utopia* he showed that anyone who has responsibilities or social duties in a country should also have a faith. They should also believe in the afterlife, in punishment for the bad and reward for the good (Marius 265). More was especially influenced by St. Augustine's *The City of God* (Marius 36). Generally, Augustine had a great influence on the Latin Middle Ages for his defense of the

church against paganism, heresy, and infidels (Marius 36). St. Augustine also influenced More on matters of sexuality, against sensual sin that brings about a person's moral corruption (Marius 37).

A theme that More discusses in his writings and particularly in *Utopia* is the dualism of body and soul. According to him, real pleasure is the soul's pleasure, which comes from spiritual pleasure. As a law student More studied theology and thought of becoming a clergyman (Marius 37). However, he later married Jane Clot (Marius 39), and after her death he married Alice Middelton, a widow and six years older than he. She had inherited her husband's wealth and all his properties. Like his father, More saw marriage as a business and, likewise, he married women for wealth (Marius 41).

In 1505 Henry VII died and Henry VIII became king. More greeted with joy the new king, who was just eighteen years old when he was crowned. More wrote a poem in Latin to commemorate the event, describing him a savior. He wrote: "this day is the end of our slavery, the fount of our liberty, the end of sadness, the beginning of joy". More believed that young Henry was well educated because he had a liberal education (Marius 52-3). Henry VIII elected More to be one of his private advisors and an ambassador to represent England. He was a speaker in parliament and in 1529 he became Lord Chancellor of England (De Silva 2-3).

However More's expectations of the new king were misplaced. Henry was very traditional especially with regard to warfare. He started a battle with France because he believed that France was England's natural enemy as the two countries had been in war for centuries. Along with other people of his time, Henry believed that a great king should lead men into battle (Marius 55). The relationship between the King and More became more tense

when More began to oppose some of the king's decisions which, eventually, cost him to lose his life. While Henry was married to Catherine he fell in love with Anne, and he planned to marry her. As a strong Christian Orthodox, More denied the King a divorce and second marriage, which eventually resulted in the split between the Church of England and the Church of Rome. In 1534, More was locked up as a prisoner in the Tower of London for fourteen months. He was given a chance to change his opinion but he refused. He was "A Christian Saint as a hero of selfhood," as Robert Bolt described him in his play, *A Man for All Seasons* (Bolt xiv).

Utopia is More's most famous work. He wrote it in Latin, which was the lingua franca of the West at the time (Herbrüggen 252). It is about an island called Utopia, which is considered to be the best commonwealth. *Utopia* is divided in two parts: Book I and Book II. In Book I, More introduces his main characters: Thomas More, Peter Giles, and Raphael Hythloday. Book I starts with More telling us about his trip to Flanders. A few pages later he meets Hythloday who talks about his voyages to the new world, where he was sent by the King as ambassador. Raphael Hythloday is introduced to More by his friend Giles, and at first glance More knew that Hythloday was a ship's captain, which is how Giles introduces him: "There is no mortal alive today who can tell you so much about unknown peoples and lands … for his sailing has not been like that of Palinurus, but more that of Ulysses, or rather of Plato" (More *Utopia* 10-11). Hythloday's travels cannot be compared to Palinurus who drowned during his voyage, but to Ulysses who learned from his voyages and from his travel experiences. Hythloday is a Portuguese who spent his lifetime traveling and exploring new places. He accompanied the Italian explorer Amerigo Vespucci in his voyages to explore the new world, but later when Vespucci returned to Europe, Hythloday continued his explorations

and travels. He also tells More and Giles about commonwealths and cities that he had come across in his journeys overseas.

The main topics of discussion are the characteristics of an ideal country and how the government contributes to creating a better society rather than thinking about earning more wealth and property. Hythloday says that in every country that he has come across there are a few he admired or with whose political and social systems he agreed. More suggests to Hythloday that because of his wide knowledge of civilizations and government systems, he should be an advisor to a prince but he refuses by saying that as an advisor he will never be appreciated. In his view, kings are interested more in wars and in enlarging the size of their kingdoms than in peace; they care more about amassing wealth rather than listening to the wisdom of a wise man. Hythloday criticizes the European system of government, particularly England's justice system and how it punishes thieves by taking their lives. He believes that governments must consider the causes of thefts and look for solutions rather than simply punishing the thieves. In his view, governments ought to find solutions to eliminate crime by enabling their citizens to earn a better living instead of punishing them, because men's lives are more important than money (More *Utopia* 21). He is disappointed at England's social system and at class discrimination. He sees noblemen as non-productive people who rely on idle servants to do their work. Noblemen are greedy and all they think about is how to collect and earn more money. Their greediness is very harmful and causes harm to others. He gives the example of farmers and their families that were expelled from their lands because a greedy nobleman wanted to use those lands as grassland for his sheep, so he could earn more money. The nobles live a luxurious life whereas the farmers live in poverty and in need.

Hythloday also addresses the problem of those who come back from the war with a

disorder or a handicap that makes them unable to find work and will end in poverty. The servants, likewise, who work for the nobility are not trained to master a trade in order to earn a living. When they are ill or old they are turned out by their masters, and in the end they find themselves poor and starving, forced by necessity to steal. For this reason Hythloday is against punishing thieves. He admires the Romans, the Persians, and the Polylerites way of punishing thieves. They force the thief to return what he stole and contribute work to the government. Unlike the English, whom Hythloday mocks as " bad school masters, who would rather whip their pupils than teach them" (More *Utopia* 16), Hythloday believes that in order to get rid of poverty and robbery in any society no one should own property. He mentions the country of Utopia, as an example of a great commonwealth in contrast to Europe and England where, in his opinion, governments should learn from the Utopian experience in order to arrive at a perfect society.

In Book II we find out more about Utopia: the land, the rivers, the towns, the people, their manners, institutions and laws. In Book II Hythloday describes in detail the country and the characteristics of utopian society. Their land " crescent-shaped" is two hundred by five hundred miles and is surrounded by a bay (More *Utopia* 39). It is shallow on one side and rocky on the other. The channels are known only to Utopians, and foreigners cannot get there without the help of a utopian pilot. Utopians live in isolation from the rest of the world and prefer to be separate from other countries, because they consider themselves different from the rest of the world. Utopia is divided into fifty-four cities that are identical to each other in terms of language, traditions, and laws. The capital city of Utopia is Amaurot. Each city in Utopia contains households, and each household consists of no more than forty men and women, and two slaves. Every group of thirty household has its own ruler, "phylarch," as he is called. The

land was not at first an island. Its geography was changed by Utopus, who cut a channel to separate it from the rest of the continent, conquered the land, and give it its name. Hythloday speaks highly of Utopus because he is the one "who conquered the country and gave it his name … and who brought its rude and uncouth inhabitants to such a high level of culture and humanity that they now excel in that regard almost every other people" (More, *Utopia* 39). Utopus also determined the basic social, political, and religious structure of the country. According to Hythloday, Utopians are a superior nation, especially in their laws:

> Utopians are so well governed that they need only a few laws. Among them virtue has its reward, yet everything is shared equally, and everyone lives in plenty. I compare them with the many nations, which are constantly passing new ordinances and yet can never order their affairs satisfactorily. (More *Utopia* 35-36)

Utopians are described as a nation of virtuous citizens, well governed by equality and democracy. Utopians feel that they are different from other nations whom they consider to be savage and dictatorial. For this reason they try their best to minimize their contacts with the rest of the world. Geographically, they made a channel to separate their borders from those of other countries. They are very cautious about inviting strangers and foreigners to come as visitors. When Hythloday talks about merchants and foreigners who come to Utopia, he says that Utopians welcome only "special intellectually gifted people, or people who have traveled widely and seen many countries" (More *Utopia* 70). They are keen to learn about the rest of the world, but they do not engage with other nations except by exporting goods. Even the foreigners who live in Utopia are considered slaves. The slave class in Utopia is comprised of either prisoners from battles or foreigners who chose to become slaves. Utopians who commit a crime such as adultery become slaves, according to Utopian law. Hythloday comments on

the treatment of slaves by saying that "such people are treated well, almost as well as citizens are, except that they are given a little extra work" (More *Utopia* 71). Although, the slaves are treated the same as other citizens, the name itself indicates that they are treated as property or as if they were owned by someone.

In *Utopia* Book II, Hythloday appears to praise slavery when he states that slaves are very much in demand by other countries who request them as migrants, because they admire the Utopians and would like to learn from their virtues. Utopians go to their country and live there for one to five years, and they are welcomed as idealists who teach them virtue. When they return home they are welcomed back with honors and prizes. However, when foreigners come to live in Utopia they become slaves. Even in war, which they hate and consider "an activity fit only for beasts," they hire mercenary soldiers from neighboring countries, *Zapoletes*, because Utopians do not like to send their citizens into battle except when their country is invaded (More, *Utopia* 77).

Another distinctive characteristic of the Utopian community is their attitude toward money, gold, and silver. Utopians do not use money in their daily lives as they consider it useless except to pay the soldiers whom they hire. Jewels, gold, and silver have no value for them and they criticize people who wear them. Gold and silver is used to make chains for prisoners and criminals. Jewels are for the children of Utopia to play with. Hythloday agrees with Utopians and criticizes people who consider gold and silver precious and valuable metals:

> Nature granted to gold and silver no function with which we cannot easily dispense. Human folly has made them precious because they are rare. In contrast, Nature, like a most indulgent mother, has placed the best things out in the open, like air, water, and

> the earth itself; but vain and unprofitable things she has hidden away in remote places (More *Utopia* 55).

Hythloday comments on the foolishness of human beings who praise what is rare and hard to get. He considers nature to be more valuable than gold and silver. He stresses how Utopians are different from other nations in pride, but the question is: are Utopians, really a national ideal, as Hythloday points out? And is being different better?

When it comes to the choice of government and religious preference in Utopia, they are democratic and based on freedom of choice. Governors are elected, even though they are basically only from the scholar class. Every year every thirty households elects an official who is called a *phylarch*. Every ten *phylarchs* are ruled by an official who is called a *tranibor* or the head of the *phylarchs*. *Phylarchs* are responsible for electing the governor by secret ballot. The governor rules for the rest of his life unless people think that he is a tyrant at which point he is removed. The king alone cannot make decisions, but the governor and the *tranibors* and some *phylarchs* meet every other day to discuss the business of the state. Utopians not only have the right to vote, to choose their leaders, but they also have the freedom to practice their religious beliefs.

Before the arrival of Utopus there were quarrels over religious matters, which made it easy for him to conquer Utopia because they were too busy fighting each other. Utopus set the rule that anyone who was accused of religious fighting would be punished either by exile or by slavery. He wanted to bring civil peace to the region and believed that "God perhaps likes diverse and manifold forms of worship and has therefore deliberately inspired different people with different views" (More, *Utopia* 86). He saw religious discrimination and wars as a result of pride. Like More, Utopus believes that religious pride leads to "zealotry intolerance and

violence … especially when fueled by political power" (Kessler 219). Utopians believe in religious diversity. They are allowed to worship the sun, the moon, other planets, or a legendary hero without being harassed. Hythloday mentions that he brought Christianity to the utopian community and that it became popular and many utopians converted to Christianity. Because Hythloday, who is a philosopher rather than a Catholic, is the one who introduced Christianity to the Utopians, their Christianity is different from Catholicism. He introduced Christ's teaching to the Utopians rather than what was required by the Church of Rome (Kessler 224).

The section on religion raises the question as to whether More was seeking to reform the Catholic church. He began working at the court of King Henry VIII after completing *Utopia.* In 1520, after its publication, More protested against giving rights to Protestants, which appears to be an intolerant attitude with respect to what he wrote in *Utopia* about freedom of religious belief. Scholars defend More's intolerance as being affected by baneful Church politics, which were amendments made for personal advantage, as Hythloday tells More in *Utopia* (Kessler 227). Many scholars agree that in his lifetime More always spoke against freedom in Christianity, which leaves More's opinion on Church reformation "ambiguous." It is not clear whether More influenced liberal thinkers such as John Locke in *A Letter on Tolerance* who like More saw religious pride as evil (Kessler 227-29).

Hythloday describes Utopian trade, clothes, and houses. As a rule, Utopians have no other trade choice other than farming. Generally, Utopians appreciate nature and agriculture. Their gardening, says Hythloday, is beyond praise: "I have never seen any gardens more productive or elegant than theirs" (More *Utopia* 42-3). They believe in teaching gardening and farming and they educate all their citizens to master farming. Besides the skill of farming that

all Utopians must master, everyone must also learn another trade:

> As a rule, the son is trained to his father's craft, for which most feel natural inclination. But if anyone is attracted to another occupation, he is transferred by adoption into a family practicing the trade he prefers … After someone has learned one trade, if he wants to learn another he gets the same permission. (More *Utopia* 45)

Children in Utopia follow on the footsteps of their fathers when choosing their second trade, they imitate the older generation without following their self-interest. Although some of them will choose a different trade, they have to abide by certain regulations. First, they must have permission from the government, then they have to leave their houses and be adopted by another household. In Utopia an individual cannot act without permission from the State. Laws and regulations are necessary for the well-being of any state, but for Utopians the law controls even personal matters such as marriage, education, and occupation. There are no private matters in Utopia, they are all public. When a person masters two trades and chooses one to practice rather than another, the government may reject his request if the public is in need of the other trade. A child has to leave his home and move to another household if he wants to learn a trade other than his father's. All members of the family, including the parents, have to master one trade if they want to stay in the same household.

It is clear that in *Utopia* More does not represent an ideal agricultural country but, rather, a dictatorial regime that forces its people to become farmers. More writes extensively as "we" and of Utopian laws and restrictions that control the individual. The Utopian community does not respect self-determination, which it considers a taboo. Each individual is restricted to what the law and the rulers dictate, and there is no room for human creativity and freedom. All Utopians must master farming as a career. For them "agriculture is the one

occupation at which everyone works, men and women alike, with no exceptions" (More, *Utopia* 44). When Hythladoy says "man and women alike" he intends to show equality between genders in Utopia; the main issue is that "all" Utopians have to master farming as an occupation. The "all of them" means that there is no such a thing as personal preference.

In many parts of Utopia, More emphasizes the concept of equality. However, equality does not always leads to social justice. The political philosopher F.A.Hayek comments on the difference between treating society equally and reforming an equal society:

> There is all the difference in the world between treating people equally and attempting to make them equal. While the first is the condition of a free society, the second means … a new form of servitude" (16).

Utopia is a country that treats its citizen equally and in the same way but without accepting their individual differences and preferences. The elimination of individual differences results in the deterioration of individual identity. Utopians are similar and identical to each other in what they wear, "their work clothes are unpretentious garments made of leather … when they go out in public, they cover these rough working-clothes with a cloak. Throughout the entire island, these cloaks are of the same color, which is that of natural wool" (More *Utopia* 48). Utopians wear a uniform because they do not believe in fancy apparel and luxury. In fact, they consider other nations who overdress foolish. Utopians are totally controlled by government restrictions and rules are based on a totalitarian authority that controls their public and private lives. It targets communality and omits individuality. Everybody should wear the same clothes, master the same trade, and abide by the will of the community. Even in their own houses they have no privacy. Every house has two doors, in the front on the street and in the back on the garden; these doors open easily with a push so that anyone who wants to enter the house can

do so. Laws that control the individual's public and private life determine everything in Utopia. Commenting on the life of Utopians Hythloday says that "there is nothing private anywhere" (More *Utopia* 42).

Marriage is determined by laws and is controlled by the government rather than by individual choice. Anyone who wants to marry must abide by its rules. When Hythloday describes the process of engagement and marriage in Utopia, there is no indication that individuality is important in relationship between husband and wife. The rules and the laws of engagement, marriage, and divorce are more important than harmony or space in a marriage. There are certain rules that need to be followed in order to be married in Utopia. First, the bride must be 18 or older and the groom has to be at least 22. Second, when a man or a woman are discovered to have been involved in an unauthorized relationship, they are punished and both parties are prohibited from ever marrying, unless the law permits it. Parents are blamed for their children's behavior, and their bad reputation affects the whole family. An individual's mistake brings disgrace to the entire family even though the others did not commit any crime. The reason for the harshness of the punishment is that if people had intercourse before marriage, no one would ever get married. Thirdly, before getting married the woman has to appear undressed to the groom and he likewise to his bride to be. Hythloday finds this custom "absolutely and thoroughly ridiculous":

> In choosing a marriage partner, they solemnly and seriously follow a custom that seemed to us foolish and absurd in the extreme … the women are shown naked to the suitor by a responsible and respectable matron; and similarly, some respectable man presents the suitor naked to the woman. We laughed at

> this custom and called it absurd; but they were just as amazed at the folly of all other peoples. When men go to buy a colt, where they are risking only a little money, they are so suspicious that … they won't close the deal until the saddle and blanket have been taken off, lest there be hidden sores underneath … Not all people are so wise as to concern themselves solely with character; and even the wise appreciate physical beauty, as supplement to the virtues of the mind. (More *Utopia* 72)

To present the bride and the groom naked further emphasizes the lack of privacy in the Utopian community, where marriage is based, essentially, on physical characteristics rather than on matching personalities. Hythloday justifies this practice by saying that not everyone is wise enough to focus solely on the virtues of the mind. More implies that attraction between people and marriage are based mostly on external appearances rather than on personality. There is no real intimacy required in marriage. There is no wisdom or advice given to the bride and the groom in order to ensure a healthy marriage. Hythladoy compares the act of getting married to the act of buying a horse. No one will buy a horse without seeing it stripped of saddle and saddlecloth. Comparing marriage to buying an animal emphasizes ownership. Here there is no place for individuality and self-worth. More is satirizing the marriage practices of his own times and comparing them to buying a horse. A man would rather marry a woman who is wealthy and has property than have intimacy and harmony.

In *Utopia*, More makes fun of the British way of life and society, which is essentially traditional. In Utopia each block has its own dining hall which is attended by all citizens during the hours of lunch and supper. It is not forbidden to have a meal at home but no one does. Hythladoy says that if someone has a meal alone at home, he is "foolish" and his meal

is “an inferior meal.” Utopians are very conscious of their social reputation. More is being ironic here in illustrating how much people care about their social reputations and how others judge them. They consider being alone to be inferior because it is not sociable, while individual values are scorned. Utopia is based on a communal social system living by traditional values. Hythladoy narrates their daily dining habits as follows:

> The syphogrant, with his wife, sits at the middle of the first table, in the highest part of the dining hall … On both sides of them sit younger people, next to them older people …Those of about the same age sit together, yet are mingled with others of different age. The reason for this … is that the dignity of the aged, and the respect due them, may restrain the younger from improper freedom of words and gestures, since nothing said or done at table can pass unnoticed by the old, who are present on every side. (More *Utopia* 52)

In Utopia the older generation is always in control of the younger, and always critical of their actions and speech. There is no space left for the younger generation to express itself freely. The syphogrant and his wife sit at the center of the table so they can observe and control everything that is going on around them in the dining hall.

What Hythloday says of Utopia and Utopians in Book I appears to be contradicted by what he says in Book II. In Book I More describes the characteristics of the world of the Tudors and their laws. Hythloday criticizes the cruelty of punishing the unemployed for stealing, or expelling farmers from their lands for the sake of gaining financially from sheep-grazing. He also talks about the uneven distribution of lands and property, the cruelty of long wars, and the “treacherous treaties” (Surtz 156). On the other hand, the land of Utopia, which he describes in Book II, represents a world of “justice and reason.” In this “new world” no one

suffers from unemployment. Everyone works for six hours a day and they spend their free time learning and attending lectures. There is no war, money, or private property. In fact, More's aim is to produce a book that will not only teach a lesson to his readers, but also increase their amusement through humor, irony, and wit (Surtz 156-57). Arthur Kinney points out, that in *Utopia* the reader is confronted with two "Englands":

> These extremes, between a real England portrayed in a real Antwerp in *Utopia* I and irrational Nowhere in *Utopia* II, retain a general opposition … For it is fantastic Hythlodaeus who supplies much of the faculty grounded criticism in *Utopia* I, while Nowhere in *Utopia* II resembles, in its pseudo-history, geography, and bicameral government, Thomas More's own England rather than a strange unknown land (Kinney 29).

More is criticizing England in both books, but in Book II the criticism is achieved indirectly. There is a dialectical tension and opposition between the two books, and between the names of places and people. Utopia, ironically, is not a good commonwealth but rather the representation of a political regime. Jeffery S. Lehman sees Utopia as the representation of a regime that exists in the real world: "More present[s] two pictures of a regime, each of which is and is not that regime in a variety of senses. This complex dialectical presentation of political regimes encourages the reader to weigh prudently the regimes against one another and thereby come to a clearer knowledge of how political principles apply in the "real world" (Lehman 65-66). Utopia is the juxtaposition of an imaginary place that exists nowhere and in England. More criticizes England as an oppressive state, and he represents it as an imaginary place, as the country of Utopia. Ironically, More criticizes the English while he praises Utopia.

Another contrast is between the figures of More and of Hythloday, whose first name Raphael in Hebrew means "God has Healed" or "messenger of God", and his family name in Greek means "nonsense" (Lehman 66-7). The description of his physical appearance indicates that he is careless about his physical appearance "a sunburned face, a long beard" (More *Utopia* 10). It also shows that he has been on many voyages and seen the world. His travels, as I indicated, are not comparable to Palinurus who died during his voyage, by drowning, but to Ulysses and Plato who learned from their voyages and the experiences they went through. Hythladoy is said to be a heroic philosopher. Although the philosopher is a person who has an open-mind, his ideas are not always based on reason. Quentin Skinner says that when we are first introduced to Hythloday "He is no ordinary traveler; rather he is a voyager in the manner of Plato, a man in search of the truth about political life" (Skinner 131). He devotes himself to philosophy, he is fully knowledgeable in Greek but ignorant in Latin. He is a "Ulysses-style storyteller" (Wegemer 136).

Hythladay describes the country of Utopia to the author who was not familiar with it. So the knowledge that More has about this country is only from Hythladay's account. His name, which means "peddler of nonsense" also implies that what he says about Utopia is nonsensical. In contrast, More is a character who shares the same name with the author. Although More appears to agree with Hythladay because he is a man of wide experience, some of the laws of Utopia seem absurd to him. Marybeth Baggett sees a "striking and comical" opposition between Hythloday, who introduces himself as a conveyer of knowledge, and More, who is concerned about public matters (Baggett 46).

There is also opposition between Hythloday and More. More, in the beginning of Book II, introduces himself as the chancellor of the King of England, and shares his feelings

that he misses his country, and his family which he has not seen in four months. More is very loyal to his country and to his family, unlike Hythloday, who left his family and country in order to explore the New World. Throughout the work More is the one who seeks knowledge and wants to learn more. In contrast, Hythloday keeps giving his opinions and experiences with prejudice. Although he prizes the Utopian lifestyle, he describes the practices of Utopians as absurd. Even More, in the last monologue appears not convinced by the Utopian lifestyle, and expresses his doubts about Hythloday's account:

> When Raphael had finished his story, I was left thinking that not a few of the customs and laws he had described as existing among the Utopians were quite absurd. These included their methods of waging war, their religious practices, as well as other customs of theirs, but my chief objection was to the basis of their whole system, that is, their communal living and their moneyless economy … So with praise for the Utopian way of life and his account of it, I took him by the hand and led him in to supper … And I still hope such an opportunity will present itself someday. (More *Utopia* 96-7)

This last paragraph of *Utopia* has left critics in doubt. Does More the author agree with what he is representing in his book and does he consider a Utopian system ideal or a dystopia? Hythloday is the one who is telling the story, and More the persona appears not to agree with his opinion. More the author creates Hythloday as a character who is an unreliable storyteller and at the same time reflects some of More's own vision (White 148). More the persona describes laws and custom in Utopia as "absurd" but at the same time he hopes that this kind of Utopia could be realized. In the concluding passage, in my view, More is being ironic about creating an ideal utopian society. He is mixing reality with imagination. R. J. Schoeck

describes *Utopia* as follows: "I shall urge that we consider and accept the book as having a serious purpose but argued through an ironic structure. The writer had a strong sense of *Angst*, as we would now say, but his work was full of *festivitas*" (19). Throughout *Utopia* More shows his fears about corruption in society but with a sense of humor. For example, when Hythloday describes the laws of marriage and of choosing a spouse as buying a horse, More satirizes the reality of marriage in English society, which is based solely on physical appearance. *Utopia* is not a straightforward text, it is a text full of irony that requires reevaluation by relating it to its historical, social and political context. In Book I and Book II More criticizes the gluttonous and materialistic world of the rich, full of pride and selfishness (White 136). He wants to bring to scrutiny the morals of his own society through fiction and satire (White 144-46). *Utopia* is a book that takes its reader to the heart of reality through imagination. Hexter comments on the importance of the concluding passage as follows:

> For our understanding of *Utopia* it does not matter how we read that last passage about the jeopardy into which the community of living and subsistence puts nobility, magnificence, splendor, and majesty. If we take it seriously, we will take the condemnation of private property elsewhere in *Utopia* satirically or trivially … If we take the passage satirically, we will take the condition seriously. (Hexter "Intention" 541)

What More is saying in *Utopia* is that materialism has destroyed English society, and in so doing he is being serious and sarcastic at the same time. He is writing about a serious condition in a sarcastic tone. The figure of More represents public opinion that is not based on evidence but rather on an "unreliable guide to morality." As a philosopher, More is aware that public opinion is one of the weakest arguments. In the concluding monologue More presents

the reader with a weak argument based on public opinion in order to signal that he is being ironic (Hexter "Intention" 541). Similarly, Thomas I. White comments on More's last paragraph:

> A conception of worth based on scarcity underlies the persona More's objections at the end of Book II, but it is the moral implications of this position which are so significant … qualities which depend on wealth … that wealth is obtained generally through greed, avarice, and pride … it leads only to "false pleasure" there should be little doubt that More regarded such wealth as immoral, and any qualities which proceed from it as corrupt. " (White 139)

More, the persona, comments that Utopia's moneyless economy takes all the glory away from the commonwealth (More *Utopia* 96-97). He wants to show that real nobility lies in virtue and in learning rather than in the nobility of ancestors and wealth (White 139). On the contrary, the final passage reflects the general point of view that wealth is the source of all glory.

Thomas More's *Utopia* has gone through an evolution of contradictory critical readings. *Utopia* might appear to be a readable short book but its meaning is much debated among scholars. Colin Starnes comments on *Utopia's* multiple readings by saying:

> It is like one of those wooden puzzles, a segmented ball ... By some the work is seen as a simple *jeu d'esprit*, a " holiday work," of no serious consequence,' and by others as a most profound piece of political philosophy; to some it is the expression of the strictest medieval Catholicism, and to others of the most atheistic communism. (Starnes 1)

There are multiple readings of *Utopia.* Some critics read it as a text of political philosophy, as

an example of Catholic ideology, or as a contribution to communism. Stephen Greenblatt, however, suggests how readers should approach *Utopia*:

> Our reading of *Utopia* has shuttled back and forth between the postulate of More's self- fashioning and the postulate of his self-cancellation; both are simultaneously present, … interpretation depends upon one's position at a given moment in relation to the work … *Utopia* insists that any interpretation depends upon the reader's position and because the stakes seem surprisingly high. The struggle is not merely over an isolated work of genius but over a whole culture. (Greenblatt 58)

For Greenblatt, *Utopia* is both a creative work of genius and an allegory of a "whole culture" and readers will respond differently according to how they choose to situate themselves before this text. Readers of *Utopia* can be divided into three groups: those who think that the work is a representation of an ideal commonwealth. They link the text to Renaissance humanist ideas, and compare it to classical Latin and Greek works (Logan *The Meaning* 204). They believe that More is criticizing England by comparing it to a Utopia. For example, Frederic Seebohm in his book *The Oxford Reformers; John Colet, Erasmus, and Thomas More* comments on More's intention behind his work by arguing that:

> The point of the 'Utopia' consisted in the contrast presented by its ideal commonwealth to the condition and habits of the European commonwealth of the period. This contrast is most often left to be drawn by the reader from his own knowledge of contemporary politics, and hence the peculiar advantage of choice by More of such a vehicle for the bold satire it contained. Upon any other hypothesis than that the evils against which that satire was directed were admitted to be real, the romance of ″ Utopia ″ must be also admitted to be harmless. To pronounce it to be

> dangerous was to admit its truth. (248-49)

Seebohm believes that More's intentions behind presenting Utopia as an ideal commonwealth are to invite contemporary readers to compare the country of Utopia to European commonwealths. Contemporary readers linked *Utopia* to their current knowledge by considering *Utopia* a "harmless" text that consisted of a "bold satire" of Europe. They were not aware of the dangers that More was trying to warn his readers about and to encourage them to take action against the injustices of social corruption, such as class discrimination. He criticized his own society in order to reform it. Although *Utopia* is a work of fiction it reflects the "dangerous" truth of political and social systems during the Renaissance. Modern readers are more aware of these dangers because they contrast the text of *Utopia* against the historical and political background of the fifteenth and sixteenth century. They are aware of More's opposition to King Henry VIII's marriage that brought about his death. Karl Kautsky in his book *Thomas More and His Utopia* states:

> Thomas More is one of the few who have been capable of this bold intellectual leap; at a time when the capitalist mode of production was in its infancy … The drifts of his speculations … escaped his contemporaries, and can only be properly appreciated by us to-day … we find in Utopia a number of tendencies which are still operative in the Socialist Movement of our time. (Kautsky 163)

Kautsky's argument is that contemporaries of More could not appreciate his more socialist-communist views. In modern times, More's "bold intellectual leap" has a greater impact on socialist ideas (Starnes 2-3). Kautsky believes that More is ahead of his time and rebels against feudalism and capitalism in order to promote communism.

The humanist interpretation of *Utopia* extends to our day until the fifties and the

sixties (Wegemer 136). One of the major contributors is by Surtz, a literature professor who distinguishes between More the author and his character in the story (Wegemer 136). He believes that More's *Utopia* is "a subtle and imaginative piece of literature and not a mere sober political, social, or economic treatise":

> More paints an ideal republic, composed of ideal men who work only for the ideal of thecommon good. He does not want every law and custom of the Utopians to be adopted by Europeans … More's foremost purpose is the exposure and description of the vices and virtues which ruin a state or cause it to flourish. (Surtz 172)

Surtz interprets More's objective in *Utopia* as a desire to present an ideal commonwealth. According to him, More is not giving an example that he wishes to see replicated in real life or that he wishes to see one day in Europe. For him the characters in the story are not real but the story conveys a moral message by giving an example of how virtue and evil affect the state. He believes that *Utopia* promotes a better state.

In contrast to Surtz, J. H. Hexter, a historian, does not differentiate between More the author and his characters. He agrees with Surtz that More aims at representing an ideal commonwealth but he relates *Utopia* to More's personal life. He follows R. W. Chambers, who wrote a biography of Thomas More in 1935 and related *Utopia* to More's biography claiming that *Utopia* "explains the puzzle" of More's biography (Hexter "Thomas" 23-4; Chambers 168). Hexter believes that Chamber's opinion of *Utopia* is important, and that Utopia must be understood in relation to More's life and to what he died for (Hexter "Thomas" 24). Readers of *Utopia* should keep in mind that the author was, after all, a martyr. He agrees that More "manifests himself in *Utopia*" and that *Utopia* cannot be understood properly without referring it to its author (Hexter "Thomas" 25). Hexter sees More as a "radical

modern" man rather than as a Catholic conservative, or a medieval humanist (Hexter "Thomas" 35). He explains the popularity of *Utopia* today because it promotes "civic equality" for all citizens (Hexter "Thomas" 36). Like Kaustsky, Hexter sees More as "the first modern radical" who revolted against medieval uncivilized life and looked for a different and more civilized life for all men (Hexter "Thomas" 37). Moreover, he agrees that "the disciplining of pride" in *Utopia* is the major foundation that creates the best commonwealth (Hexter "The Roots" 197). He believes that More creates an ideal society that represses pride by downplaying the importance of money and by dictating that people wear uniforms and eat in common dining halls (Hexter "The Roots" 196). He agrees with Chambers's reading that *Utopia* is " a protest against the New Statesmanship … the autocratic prince to whom everything is allowed … against the New Economics … destroying the old common-field agriculture" (Chambers 173). More is a bourgeois who criticizes the rising of capitalism and he is a social reformer (Ames 187).

There is also a contemporary reading that claims that More's character should be identified with More the writer. In 2004, Eric Nelson suggested that More expresses his real opinion in *Utopia* which he could not voice in real life through Hythloday. Nelson quotes Hythloday in Book I and the fact that if he expressed his opinions in court he would be either discharged or laughed at (Nelson 260). Hythloday is totally aware that the English would not accept his advice because he attacks the English from a Greek perspective. He believes that Utopians are happier than Europeans because they do not own private property (Nelson 282).

Although some critics were critical of previous readings that considered *Utopia* a good place, others continued to analyze *Utopia* as an ideal, for example, George Logan (Wegemer 137). Logan suggests that *Utopia* "embodies the results of a best-commonwealth

exercise performed in strict accordance with the Greek rules" (Logan *The Meaning* 139). He sees Hythloday as "a completely reliable commentator on comparative politics and a highly authoritative political theorist" (Logan *The Meaning* 35). However, Logan's interpretation is weakened by the fact that he mistakes Hythloday as a "Platonic figure" and ignores the studies that show Hythloday to be an unreliable character (Wegemer 137).

The second group of critics, who are in the minority, are those who believe that *Utopia* is not a serious book but rather a light-hearted fiction. For example, C. S. Lewis believed it to be "a holiday work, a spontaneous overflow of intellectual high spirit, a revel debate, paradox, comedy and (above all) of invention," not a book by Thomas More the chancellor of England. Lewis sees Utopia as a work of the imagination that describes an imaginative land with an imaginative geography, language, and institutions and that More had no ulterior intentions in mind when he wrote the book (Lewis 200-01). Lewis believed that More did not have a purpose in mind or ulterior intentions. However, a writer like More who admired classical literature, humanist thought, and who believed that Greek and Roman literature were real would never produce a work of fiction that did not have an allegorical meaning. The reader should engage More the lawyer, the chancellor, the humanist, the reformer and the Catholic when reading *Utopia*, even though it is an imaginative work; its realism cannot be ignored.

The third group of readers are the scholars who look at *Utopia*'s darkest side. In the late sixties and throughout the seventies scholars were critical of theories that saw *Utopia* as an ideal society and they began to investigate its darker side. It was popular to see *Utopia* as a work of satire and to suggest that Hythloday was a biased character. This critical reading was led principally by critics like Harry Berger. Their focus was mainly on the irony in *Utopia* and how the country of Utopia appears a good place at first but in fact on close reading is not

(Wegemer 136). Gerard Wegemer comments on the confusion that the reader feels at Hythloday's name. The reader should decide if the "suspicious character" who is telling the story is "a healer of God," as his first name, Raphael, indicates, or "a speaker of nonsense," which is what his family name means (Wegemer 136). The contradiction is not only in the storyteller's name, but also in the morals and philosophies of the Utopian communities. For example, Utopians claim that they promote personal freedom while at the same time they force all citizens to work in farming. Everyone should learn another craft under supervision, but they rely on slaves to do most of their work. They despise luxury but the Utopian children wear jewelry. They scorn butchery but they eat meat. They want peace but at the same time they invade the territories of others. They claim that they are "selfless" but they continue to be "imperialistic". Kinney describes these contradictions as "irrational" and "comic": "such irrationality becomes in time deliberately comic" (Kinney 63). For Kinney, Hythloday's recalcitrant view is not what we expected: "it is finally casuistic and dystopian" (Kinney 63).

So, *Utopia* deceives the reader from the beginning suggesting that it is a good place when in the end, ironically, it is a dystopia. *Utopians* hire warriors that they do not mind seeing killed (Kinney 64). Their citizens are controlled in every way, for example, in the size of their family. They have to abide by rules and wear identical clothes, the only difference being sex and marital status (Kinney 64). They are also restricted in traveling. Kinney proclaims that "Nowhere do the Utopians show a humanist faith in humanity; rather, their state adumbrates a totalitarian regime in which men and farms, like cities, become faceless" (Kinney 64). For him, More "places the fictional against the actual." He believes that More does not represent a better "self-isolated" state or improved state than England, rather, he describes a country that is England. Geographically, both Utopia and England are islands, with

a river. Another similarity is that Britain and Utopia share the same major economical means, agriculture. The book *Utopia* was written in the fifteenth century, which was an age of transition between the Middle Ages and the Renaissance and from feudalism to capitalism. In 1150, England was an agricultural country and it relied, economically, on the work of peasants (Kinney 64). After 1400, parts of the countryside were transformed from villages occupied by peasants who practiced agriculture into "specialist pasture farms" producing meat, wool, and dairy for the market (Dyer 1-2). Another similarity between England and Utopia that Kinney points out is that both countries' systems were based on limiting individual freedom and liberty in order to keep the country secure (Kinney 65). The reader is invited to believe that Utopia is a "good place" that exists in "no place," that is, told from the point view of a messenger of God who is not to be trusted (Kinney 66). In fact, it is a dystopia that gives an image of England from a peddler of nonsense. Kinney believes that *Utopia* is an indirect criticism of English capitalism.

Another critic who reads *Utopia* as a representation of dystopia is Alistair Fox. He states that More "experienced a loss of faith in a utopian vision in the course of creating it" (Fox 32). According to him, More created a text that is full of paradoxes, contradictions, ironies, shifts, and literary complexities that arouse "interpretive uncertainty in the reader" while More's real opinion remains mysterious (Fox 34). He agrees with MacCutcheon's analysis of *Utopia* that it is "an aesthetics of honest deception" (Fox 38). The beauty of More's style inhibits the reader from knowing his intention. Hennery Berger comments that the ambiguity in *Utopia*, especially in the representation of Hythloday, makes the critic believe that More expresses his own ideas through the mouth of Hythloday when, in fact, the ending of the book shows that More and Hythloday have different opinions (Berger 27-9).

Book II exemplifies the difference between More the author and the utopian ideal and represents Hythloday's "green world" as a critique (Berger 27). Berger argues that More has so shaped Hythloday's account in Book I to draw us at first into Utopia, only to push us away from it (Berger 34). Hythloday is a character that More creates to deceive the reader in Book I, where he appears to be a messenger of God, but in Book II he turns into its opposite where the reader finds him to be a blathering idiot. Berger claims that the complications in understanding *Utopia* are explained in the introductory letter that More includes in the first edition of *Utopia* and that he sent to his friend Peter Giles. Readers believed that the letter was simply a friendly letter from More to his friend when in fact it is meant to address them (Berger 34). In the letter More describes Hythloday's language as "casual simplicity," which is the opposite of how Hythloday introduces himself as a man of knowledge and experience (More *Utopia* 5). Additionally, in a letter to his friend Erasmus he wrote about a dream he had that he became the king of Utopia "You have no idea how thrilled I am … For in my daydreams I have been marked out by my Utopians to be their king forever" (More *St. Thomas* 85). The dream of becoming the king of Utopia was a thrill. For More the politician it is a nightmare, especially being King Utopus, the colonist who occupies the land of Utopia and names it after him (Boesky 49). More's fears make clear that he never wanted *Utopia* to be read as an example of an ideal commonwealth. He wanted the reader to be aware that he is not presenting his own ideas to create a perfect social and political system. In the letters to his friends and even in *Utopia* More denies his authorship by claiming that he is writing a story that he heard from Hythloday (Boesky 50). The story that Hythloday is narrating is a criticism of More's time. Utopia was a thrill in More's dream but in his real life it was a nightmare. More wrote about the reality of England during his own time. His criticism is direct in Book I

but indirect in Book II.

In conclusion, as Richard Marius states, *Utopia* remains a "mysterious" text where More wrote in a "heavily ironic mode." It is a text between the "serious" and the "comic." It is a "literary masque, and More never removes the covering to let us see exactly what lies beneath" (Marius 156). Although *Utopia* is open to many interpretations, it cannot be read as a representation of a "utopia." It is a work of art that cannot be separated from the historical events and personal life of its author. More wrote *Utopia* to mock the British regime in the fifteenth century, to reform its society, and to reveal the ugly reality of a green land that is a dystopic nightmare. It is a classic work, which has a modern spirit ripe for new interpretations for times to come.

Chapter Three

A comparative study of Thomas More's *Utopia* and Kahlil Gibran's *The Prophet*.

A. The concept of pride: the problem of materialism and religious fanaticism.

This chapter focuses on a comparative study of Thomas More's *Utopia* and Kahlil Gibran's the *Prophet*. It deals with the notion of pride and the problem of materialism and religious fanaticism. Although there is a five-century gap between the two works they deal with similar themes. There are two types of pride: negative and positive. Pride can be understood as either virtue or vice. The negative type of pride is self-centeredness, selfishness, greed, and feeling superior to other members of the community. The positive type of pride is related to humility and self-satisfaction and can be reached through knowledge. More and Gibran specifically bring their readers' attention to the dangers of exaggerated pride. They discuss human pride in relation to appearances and consider it artificial, and believe wealth to be a vice. They view vanity as lustful and as a temporary illusion of pleasure one gets from material things. More's and Gibran's writings have an anti-materialistic approach against the excess that leads to pride and denies reason, what makes man a human being. They recognize that human values come from through knowledge and the internal spirituality of the soul.

Along with pride, the second major theme that More and Gibran discuss is individualism. They describe how individuality is oppressed by totalitarianism. More and Gibran call for human freedom, self-reliance and independence. They discuss individuality in relation to daily matters, such as the relationships between spouses, and parents with children. They believe that a Utopian system cannot be reached if a destructive pride exists or if members of any society are prevented from expressing their individuality. Although More and Gibran share the same perspective they have different approaches. More presents his ideas

through a satiric lens while Gibran uses parables with the theme of love.

The concept of pride varies among intellectuals and cultures. Some consider pride as a virtue, others as a vice, or label it both as virtue and vice. According to ancient Greek philosophy, pride was considered a virtue (Hinman 273). For example, Aristotle in *The Nicomachean Ethics* describes pride as related to honour. He states:

> Pride seems even from its name to be concerned with great things … the man is thought to be proud who thinks himself worthy of great things and he worthy of them …pride implies greatness … On the other hand, he who thinks himself worthy of great things, being unworthy of them, is vain …The man who thinks himself worthy of less than he is really worthy is unduly humble (Aristotle 67-8).

Aristotle differentiates between pride, vanity, and humility. Pride is the characteristic of honorable men and falls between vanity and humility. A vain person is he who believes to be worthy of success without reason. In contrast, the humble person believes that his worth is less than his real value. According to ancient Greek philosophy, pride is different from arrogance, also known as hubris (Sacks 164). Hubris usually appears in Greek tragedy and is defined as arrogance that leads to chaos. In contrast, the Christian Bible considers pride a sin and humility an attribute of honorable men. As stated in Proverbs, Chapter 29, of the King James Bible, "A man's pride shall bring him low: but honour shall uphold the humble in spirit". Even when Jesus Christ describes himself he says, "learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart" (Kings James Version, Mat.11. 29). Therefore, in Christianity, humility is considered a virtue and pride a sin. Similarly, in Old English *prȳde* means "excessive self-esteem" and during the medieval period it was considered one of The Seven Deadly Sins.

Thomas More and Gibran wrote about positive and negative forms of pride, yet they focused mainly on negative pride since it created animosity in their communities. The two works address social problems in order to reform society. One of the major characteristics that create an ideal society is harmony within the community. Citizens who live in peace together, and accept all the community members, help to establish a harmonious country. Nevertheless, a member of the community who feels superior to others can cause discrimination, clashes, and hatred. A person may think that he is better than others because he is a member of a religious sect, has more possessions and wealth than others, or comes from a noble family. This person will be more concerned with his own pleasures and desires without considering the feelings and needs of others. More and Gibran also discuss negative pride as a source of evil that causes moral deterioration in any society. Pride is a characteristic of dystopian societies that results in the deterioration of morals and brings about social discrimination among community members. *Utopia* and *The Prophet* demonstrate the danger of destructive pride when it is connected to materialism and religious chauvinism.

During More's time, in the fifteenth century, there was aristocratic pride. The proud people were the noble and the wealthy. More lived in a materialistic society where money gave man status in his community and clothes determined a person's rank. More in *Utopia* criticizes pride as a "vice" (More *Utopia* 50). Hythloday in *Utopia* raises the question, "why would anyone be suspected of asking for more than they needed, when everyone knows there will never be any shortage?" (More *Utopia* 50). He argues that human greed is the result of a "fear of want" and he suggests that it:

> Makes every living creature greedy and rapacious— and, in addition, man develops these qualities out of sheer pride, pride which glories in getting ahead of others by a

> superfluous display of possessions. But this kind of vice has no place whatever in the Utopian way of life. (More *Utopia* 50)

More defines the feeling of worth that one gets from acquiring and collecting material things as "sheer pride." A person becomes greedy because he fears shortage even though he does not lack for anything. Pride cannot benefit society, and it does not belong in a Utopia. At the end of the book, Hythloday concludes his tale about Utopia and claims that pride is the source of all evil. He states that pride is a:

> Monster, the prime plague and better of all others … Pride measures her advantages not by what she has but by what others lack. Pride would not condescend even to be made a goddess if there were no wretches for her to sneer at and domineer over. Her good fortune is dazzling only by contrast with the miseries of others, her riches are valuable only as they torment and tantalize the poverty of others. Pride is a serpent from hell that twines itself around the hearts of men: and it acts like a suckfish in holding them back from choosing a better way of life. Pride is too deeply fixed in Human nature to be easily plucked out. (More *Utopia* 96)

More describes pride as a negative trait that exists in human nature; like a monster, it should be tamed, otherwise it will lead to social disaster. More believes that pride is the mother of all sins, the source of wickedness, and a threat to any good social system (More *Utopia* 96). Pride, as More defines it, is the feeling of satisfaction that someone receives from acquiring something others lack. It is the pleasure that comes from feeling superior to others. He illustrates how it is like a goddess who will be pleased only through the pain and misery of the needy. More presents pride as a part of human nature that cannot be overcome without the control of social institutions (White 341). He compares pride to a "serpent from hell" that

controls human emotions and makes man greedy and selfish. For example, as Skinner emphasizes, the nobles practice their "evil greed" to gain more in order to satisfy their pride without contributing anything to their community (Skinner 144-45). In *Utopia* Hythloday speaks of the English bourgeois and claims that they think only about expanding their property and becoming wealthier. They are lazy people who have inherited wealth and treat those who work for them without dignity. Hythloday believes that what makes Utopia a great commonwealth is its ability to suppress pride, which is a major fault of English society.

More presents a Utopian social system that controls people's freedom in an extreme and dictatorial way, and explores through fiction what constitutes a dystopian society. Utopians are educated to believe that a luxurious life is foolish and money "useless" (More, *Utopia* 75). In Utopia, a person who wears jewels and fancy clothes is considered silly. Through the extreme image of Utopians who do not care about their appearance, More wants to point out that human pride should be tamed. For example, Utopians wear the same traditional clothes so that everyone feels equal. In the section "Their Philosophy," More comments on the Utopians' attitude towards a man who feels proud of his clothes, saying that "they are amazed at the foolishness of any man who considers himself a nobler fellow because he wears clothing of specially fine wool" (More *Utopia* 57). More's aim is to criticize pride in one's appearance, or vanity, namely, when the person's clothes identify his nobility. Like Aristotle, More believes that a proud man should be an honorable man who is not vain. More mocks the people who focus only on their appearance and he considers it as "the same kind of absurdity to be pleased by empty, ceremonial honors" (More *Utopia* 62). An unintelligent person who has pride in his clothes is like a compliment without value. More describes the obsession over appearance as a "false pleasure", as an illusion that gives someone pleasure

(More *Utopia* 62). He divides true pleasure into two parts: the pleasure of the mind and the pleasure of the body; otherwise, he considers any other type of pleasure that humans might feel to be false. The pleasure of the mind is experienced by acquiring truth, knowledge, and happy memories. The pleasure of the body is found in the sense of "immediate delight": by taking in food, drink and music. The other pleasures of the body come from being healthy (More *Utopia* 64). Therefore, real pleasure according to More is in what "please[s] the senses" (More *Utopia* 64). More criticizes the aristocratic pride that results in false pleasure while in fact real satisfaction lies in the delight of the mind through knowledge.

Similar to More, Gibran addresses the problem of greed and materialism. *The Prophet* is well known as an anti-materialistic work through which Gibran emphasizes his unselfish approach, especially in the section "On Giving" (Hishmen 103). Almustafa says, "what are your possessions but things you keep and guard for fear you may need them tomorrow?" (K. Gibran *The Prophet* 21). Property and possessions that humans own are not a source of real happiness but are rather a cause of anxiety. When Almustafa describes clothes he states: "your clothes conceal much of your beauty, yet they hide not the unbeautiful" (35). Fancy clothing do not hide the real character behind the garment. Clothes cannot change a person's qualities. More relates the same idea when in *Utopia* he describes how a person is "pleased by empty, ceremonial honors" when taking pride in his clothing (More *Utopia* 62). Furthermore, when Gibran writes about "houses" he claims that: "though of magnificence and splendor, your house shall not hold your secret nor shelter your longings" (K. Gibran *The Prophet* 33). A luxurious house will not provide fulfillment. What makes a home according to Almustafa is peace within, memory and beauty. He writes:

And tell me, people of Orphalese, what have you

in these houses? And what is it you guard with

fastened doors?

Have you peace, the quiet urge that reveals

your power?

Have you remembrance, the glimmering arches

that span the summits of the mind?

Have you beauty, that leads the heart from things

fashioned of wood and stone to the holy

mountain?

Tell me, have you these in your houses?

Or have you only comfort, and the lust for comfort (K. Gibran *The Prophet* 33).

Gibran uses the image of the house as a metaphor that stands for the human body and the contents of the house represent the human soul. Gibran wants to show that beauty comes from within. The real power that a person acquires is through inner peace, which is the peace of the mind and of the soul. The recollections of the mind can be spiritual or, as Gibran describes them, they are "the glimmering arches that span the summits of the mind." The pleasure of the soul can be reached through serenity. Any gratification that a man receives from a source other than the pleasure of the mind and the soul is a "lust for comfort," and that is not true pleasure. The feeling of "lust for comfort" is the same concept that More emphasizes in his *Utopia* and defines as "false pleasure." It is not true pleasure but rather an illusion. Gibran states that the feeling of pleasure can be reached not only through taking but also by giving. He believes that justice can be attained through giving with love: "it is in exchanging the gifts of the earth that you shall find abundance and be satisfied. Yet unless the exchange be in love

and kindly justice, it will but lead some to greed and others to hunger" (37). A community should be built on exchanging benefits through justice and love rather than for selfish purposes. In the section "On Pleasure" Gibran describes human relationship through the metaphor of the flower and the bee.

> learn that it is the pleasure of the
> bee to gather honey of the flower,
> But it is also the pleasure of the flower to yield its
> honey to the bee.
> For to the bee a flower is a fountain of life,
> And to the flower a bee is a messenger of
> love,
> And to both, bee and flower, the giving and
> the receiving of pleasure is a need and
> an ecstasy.
> People of Orphalese, be in your pleasures like the
> flowers and the bees. (K. Gibran *The Prophet*
> 37)

The bee cannot live without the flower because it needs the honey for sustenance and flowers cannot reproduce without the bee. So, real pleasure is found in the cooperation between community members. Gibran ultimately conveys the idea that it is not the quantity of material things that a person owns that brings him happiness but rather the inner peace found through knowledge and love.

More and Gibran not only address the false pleasures that a human being feels from

possessions but also the danger of religious pride that has caused harm in the world for many centuries. Religious fanaticism has always been a major motive of wars nationally and internationally. The illogical religious wars that humanity suffers result in the deaths of millions, in enslavement, and in the deterioration of human rights. When dominant religious groups or sects disregard and disrespect beliefs of the minority, their behavior leads to social discrimination and dehumanization. In *Utopia,* More explores the history of the land. He describes how civil wars between religious sects made it easy for Utopus to conquer the island. While the citizens were busy quarreling over religious differences, Utopus easily gained the upper hand and colonized the land. He was well aware that if religious clashes continued, they would hinder the progress of the nation. He acted to stop the bloodshed and to end the conflict by enacting a law that allowed all members of the Utopian community to practice their religious beliefs freely and without restrictions or harassment. He established a law punishing anyone who disrespected others for their religious beliefs by expelling them from Utopia or forcing them to stay in the country to work as slaves (More, *Utopia* 84-5). *Utopia* insists on the acceptance of religious diversity. Utopus believed that God "likes [the] diverse" and for that reason He inspires people with "different views" (86). Through *Utopia,* More insists that religious diversity is normal and should be accepted by all people. He points out that the act of attacking people for their religious beliefs is violent and that it is an "arrogant folly for anyone to enforce conformity to his own beliefs" (More *Utopia* 86). When More speaks about the religion in Utopia, he never uses a sarcastic or an ironic tone. In contrast to his fiction, however, More did not accept other religions. He was a strict Catholic and was even involved in the prosecution of many Protestants during the Religious Reformation in England. According to George M. Logan, *Utopia* might be a "hypothetical

situation," where More was able to say what he would not say in real life about religious freedom (More *Utopia* 86). In More's *Utopia*, all Utopians practice their religions in the same temple and they all share the same priests. While this may be impossible in real life, More emphasizes that all religions should live in unity and harmony within the same country.

Gibran was also against religious discrimination, a major theme in *The Prophet.* He writes about religious unity that brings social harmony. The key difference between Gibran and More lies in their styles of writing. Gibran expresses his ideas in poetic language in an abstract way. More, instead, uses direct language to discuss how religious diversity should be accepted. Through imagery, Gibran expresses the same idea when Almustapha is asked to speak on religion to the Orphalese:

> And if you would know God be not therefore a
>
> solver of riddles.
>
> Rather look about you and you shall see Him
>
> playing with your children.
>
> And look into space; you shall see Him
>
> walking in the clouds, outstretching His arms
>
> in the lightning and descending in rain.
>
> You shall see Him smiling in flowers, then rising
>
> and waving His hands in trees. (Gibran *The*
>
> *Prophet* 79)

The image of God in the clouds with open arms is one of welcoming and acceptance. In this passage, Gibran tells us that God can be seen in nature: in the "cloud," "lightening," "rain,"

"flowers," and "trees". His aim is to show that spirituality can take many shapes. People can have different beliefs and belong to opposing religious sects but they should live in peace and harmony with one another.

Gibran is against religious pride when it results in religious discrimination. Through his parables, he aims to convey the message that acceptance of religious differences is a major aspect of an ideal community. He conveys the importance of religious unity in the section "On Prayer." He describes the act of praying, emphasizing that "When you pray you rise to meet in the air those who are praying at that very hour, and whom you save in prayer you may not meet" (69). According to Gibran, spirituality does not belong to a specific religion. It is an internal feeling that connects people of different beliefs. The main character of *The Prophet*, Almustafa, is described by Suheil Bushrui as a "Christ and Muhammad merged into one" (Bushrui xxix). In this figure Gibran unites two different religions. Almustafa speaks not only speak from the perspective of one religion; rather, he presents universal philosophies and religions including those of Sufism, Hinduism, and Buddhism (Bushrui xxv). Through the unity of philosophies and religions, his hope is to see this unity in real life. Gibran as a Lebanese writer is aware of the destruction that occurs as a result of religious arrogance. His nation still suffers from civil wars between religious sects. Bushrui states that "Gibran critiques religion as a box, a thing, an identity" and "he saw the institutions of the established church as getting in the way of true communion with God" (K. Gibran *The Prophet* 79). For Gibran, religion is not merely a temple that restricts human beings but rather it is a spiritual pursuit. Almustafa says, "Your daily life is your temple and your religion" (78). Gibran sees religion as an attitude that gives a human being identity. Mary Haskell summarized Gibran's opinion of Jesus' teachings and the teaching of the

church as follows: “The greatest teaching of Christ was the Kingdom of Heaven, and that is within you” (Bushrui and Jenkins 250; Gibran and Haskell 349). Similarly for Gibran, religion is a spiritual feeling that comes from within.

Gibran like More, discusses materialism and religious fanaticism as a disease that, if spread, brings suffering and agony to nations. They address the problem of false pride in their writings. They argue that in order to create an ideal or a Utopian society, we should tame vanity and religious fanaticism. They argue that the pleasure a person receives from materialistic subjects is false, and that true pleasure is discovered in the mind and in the soul. Through knowledge, a person obtains a sense of importance and has the potential to change his community for the better. In addition, More and Gibran address the problem of religious discrimination for personal and political gain. Through their vision of utopia, More and Gibran are not only addressing the problems of their time but they are also providing an idea of what the future will be like. As Fredric Jameson states, “utopia is philosophically analogous to the trace, only from the other end of time … it combines the not-yet-being of the future with a textual existence in the present” (Jameson xv-xvi). More and Gibran critique their present time and warn the reader of the “not-yet-being” of the future. Their views have important implications for our current times. For example, in the twenty-first century, people have become more materialistic than ever. There is a rise in mass production and consumerism. Moreover, religious fanaticism still exists in our modern time. Although the era that we are living in is referred to as multicultural, global, and multinational, peace among nations still does not exist. The problem of religious wars that Gibran addresses in his writings is still continuing in the Middle East. The problems associated with their Utopias and their times are still a problem for our times.

B. Social collectivism and restriction of individual desires.

Throughout history, people have always felt a conflict between their individual desires and the social good (Jendrysik 34). Human beings are different in their attributes, their tone of voice, and facial features. Likewise, people are different in their essence and ways of thinking. All individuals has their own character, way of thinking, and preferences. However, environmental factors such as ethnicity, culture, nation and religion affect and control differences among individuals. Some cultures celebrate the concept of individualism by respecting personal interests, exclusiveness, and individual interpretation. Countries that abide by individualism accept personal opinions and values. In contrast, collectivist cultures favor the idea that an individual is part of a collective of individuals. Collectivism ensures that the group benefits more than the individual. When power enters the hands of a few people, it results in the control of individuals and leads to totalitarianism. Thomas More and Kahlil Gibran embraced the idea of self-reliance and individualism. More employed sarcasm to criticize totalitarian states that control and prevent the freedom of the individual. Similarly, Gibran emphasized the importance of self-reliance and of freedom of choice. Their works address the problem of how totalitarianism controls and oppresses the freedom of choice of the individual.

In *Utopia,* More gives us a collectivist society. The question of whether he presents communism as an ideal society is still being debated by critics. George M. Logan describes the work as a "deeply enigmatic book" (Logan "The Argument" 7). He states that there is a gap between *Utopia* and the reader, as well as between More himself and the text. Because of the humor and the sarcasm that he includes in the book, critics are uncertain about More's intentions (Logan "The Argument" 33). Timothy Kenyon describes how from one perspective

"More posited in Utopia a set of social institutions designed to reduce temptation, limit the available choices, and channel people's wills in the requisite direction" (358). He develops his argument by stating that the main goal of More's utopianism is to use social institutions to illuminate "human conduct" (358). The government restricts individuals' actions in order to create a balance between reason and human will. Additionally, Kenyon writes that Utopians, as well as individuals, should practice their individual will within the confines of their environment. He believes that More wants to establish "an ordered relationship between reason, freedom of the will, faith, grace, and meritorious good works" (Kenyon 355-58). Kenyon insists that human choices should be restricted by reason and by religious law.

According to Kenyon, More believed that divine grace is an important factor that guides people in making good decisions. He reads *Utopia* as having a communist approach that restricts private property. He claims that More illustrated private property as a cultural tradition rather than as a natural law. Moreover, he argues that *Utopia* promotes the notion that an ideal commonwealth should follow secular laws as well as divine laws. He believes that Utopia constricts its citizen's individuality by reducing human pride, which More considered the worst of human sins. Kenyon reads the actions of Utopians, when they restrict the speech of the younger generation at dinner, as being a way of reforming the young generations (Kenyon 363- 68). Furthermore, he claims that More promoted "a positive libertarian" example in *Utopia* against "negative liberty" (Kenyon 373). A positive liberty is based on the value of free choice under religious laws rather than unstructured freedom. *Utopia,* according to Kenyon, promotes positive liberalism by restricting human actions and making better citizens by guiding them in making valuable choices. Kenyon's reading emphasizes that More restricts people's free will and desires, when in fact More is not prizing tyranny but, rather,

criticizing it. Hythloday in Book I criticizes the European states for restricting individual freedom. In Book II, he contradicts himself by prizing Utopia's lack of freedom, by stating that: "there is nothing private anywhere" (More *Utopia,* 42). He also describes Utopians'laws as "absurd" (More, *Utopia* 72). Therefore, we cannot say that More wanted to present a perfect example of an ideal commonwealth.

Other critics do not read *Utopia* as a fully Utopian text. For example, Logan argues that part of Utopia is ideal and part of it is not (Logan, "The Argument" 8). He argues against Kenyon's reading by stating that he has a contextual reading rather than focusing on the contradictions in the text. Logan believes that Kenyon does not give sufficient attention to the disagreement between the characters More and Hythloday. The conflict between them represents the author's intention to present two opposite views of an ideal state (Logan, "Interpreting" 218-19). Logan states that on the bright side poverty and scarcity do not take place in Utopia. Instead of a material lack there is regulation of individuals and public freedom. For Hythloday Utopians ask permission all aspects of life. For example, when they want to travel abroad, Utopians have to obtain permission from the government. Even if they want to travel the country, they have to ask permission from their guardians (Logan, Argument 8). According to Logan, if we compare Utopian laws and regulations to our modern concept of democracy, Utopia is a dystopia that represents a "modern totalitarian regime" (Logan, Argument 8). The modern reader who believes in liberty disagrees with the classical concept of utopianism that people should sacrifice their individuality for the sake of the common good. In Book I, More is critical of the corruption in England during the fifteenth and the sixteenth century, that is, the problem of "the thievery of the rich" (Jendrysik 27, qtd. In Logan "The Argument" 10). Logan argues that Utopians like their freedom but since they fear that it will

bring corruption to the country they restrict their freedom ("The Argument" 30-31). These rules that restrict individual freedom for the sake of security over pleasure make the society imperfect (Logan "The Argument" 33).

Also Gibran in *The Prophet* addresses the problem of fear that restricts individual freedom. Gibran believes that "fear is in your heart and not in the hand of the feared" (*The Prophet* 45). Humans create their own chains by fearing to break the rules that they themselves have established. He demonstrates how freedom can be restricted when Almustafa states, "in the grove of the temple and in the shadow of the citadel I have seen the freest among you wear their freedom as a yoke and a handcuff" (47). The "temple"represents religion, and the "citadel" symbolizes the government that both chain and regulate human beings (47). Gibran is not against the state or religion, but he hates political tyranny and hierocratic theocracy. He refuses the use of religion and state control of individual liberty. He speaks about the rules that humans apply to themselves through the metaphor of sand-towers. When Almustafa is asked to speak about laws, he answers:

> Like children playing by the ocean who build sand-
>
> Towers with constancy and then destroy them
>
> with laughter.
>
> But while you build your sand-towers the ocean
>
> brings more sand to the shore,
>
> And when you destroy them the ocean laughs with you.
>
> Verily the ocean laughs always with the innocent.
>
> But what of those to whom life is not an ocean,
>
> and man-made laws are not sand-towers,

But to whom life is a rock, and the law a chisel with

which they would carve it in their own likeness? (K. Gibran *The Prophet* 45).

Gibran believes that human rules can be changed. He compares life to an ocean, where ocean states vary according to the weather. He compares a person who believes in the freedom of choice and accepts differences to a pure child who is building a sand tower near the ocean. In contrast, people who believe in regulation and restrictions experience life as being like a "rock." Gibran criticizes human laws that make people inflexible. He calls for human independence of mind. He does not want his society to be dependent on the authority of others but rather to be free of outside control. He describes the self as "a sea boundless and measureless" (55). Human beings should not regulate themselves and put themselves in a traditional box. Regulating the human mind without exploring contemporary philosophies will result in the enslavement of the mind. Gibran also argues that powerful or influential people should not create followers. When Almustafa speaks about teaching, he says:

Teacher who walks in the shadow of the temple,

among his followers, gives not of his wisdom

but rather of his faith and his lovingness.

If he is indeed wise he does not bid you enter the

house of his wisdom, but rather leads you to the

threshold of your own mind. (57)

Wise teachers should guide their pupils towards their inner souls rather than creating people who are copies. The teacher is walking "in the shadow of the temple," which shows that he is not restricted by the temple's laws. Teachers should lead to understanding and not to manipulating those who follow their instruction. The teacher is an authority figure who does

not take advantage of his own position to make people follow him.

Almustafa, in contrast to Hythloday in *Utopia*, focuses on the importance of embracing human freedom. Utopians are identical to each other in their physical appearance and in their way of thinking. The critic Mark Jendrysik remarks that "if you meet one Utopian, you have met them all" (35). They wear the same clothes, they eat in the same place and they work in the same trade, which is farming. Restricting individual's freedom is the main goal of Utopians. Hythloday in Book I criticizes European governments by comparing them to "bad school masters, who would rather whip their pupils than teach them" (More, *Utopia* 16). It is the same concept that Gibran emphasizes when Almustafa discusses teaching. Almustafa tells that the teacher should help his students reach self-knowledge rather than giving of his own wisdom. In contrast, Hythloday in Book II prizes the Utopian political system even though it regulates freedom and conflicts with his own opinion about the European system.

There are critics who view *Utopia* as a representation of dystopian tyranny and as a totalitarian state that restricts people's freedom. For instance, Arthur F. Kinney reads *Utopia* as a dystopia that represents England during the time of Henry VIII (54). He states that "nowhere do Utopians show a humanist faith in humanity; rather, their ways adumbrate a totalitarian regimen where men and farms, like cities, become faceless," without identity (64). All Utopians are forced to work in farming as their major trade, as if they were slaves to their farms. This reflects the state of feudalism in England during the Middle Ages, where England turned to serfdom. Although slavery decreased in England during More's time, another form of slavery reappeared (*Utopia* 70). Labourers who worked the land were treated like slaves by the landowner to whom they were bound. Similarly, in 1502, in the New World, African slaves were shipped to America (More, *Utopia* 70). Although Hythloday tries to present

Utopia as a heterogeneous state that welcomes people from different countries, they consider them as slaves. Hythloday speaks of slavery supportively, saying "such people are treated well, almost as well as citizens, except that they are given a little extra work" (70-71). Calling immigrants who come to live in Utopia slaves indicates an anti-immigrant approach in Utopia. Although Hythloday claims that the slaves are treated well, slaves do not share their perspective. Another example that indicates that Utopia is a homogeneous country occurs when Hythloday says that "Utopians had never so much as heard about a single one of those philosophers whose names are so celebrated in our part of the world … but [instead] they equal the ancients in almost all subjects" (58). Utopians rely on ancient knowledge without concerning themselves with new approaches in other parts of the world. Utopians always try to follow the old generation. For example, when Utopians have to choose another trade besides farming they usually follow the trade of their fathers. When a Utopian wants to master another trade different from the house that he lives in, he has to obtain permission from the State (More 75). Tradition is the law in Utopia and through it More criticizes his own society. According to him, Utopia is a place that stifles human freedom, and he is critical of the control that tradition exerts over people.

Gibran was also against the domination of tradition over human liberty. *The Prophet* is a literary text concerned with "self-preservation" and with the "God-self" (Al-Khazraji, Abdullah, and Eng "Universal"217). Gibran describes the soul of a human being by the use of simile: "like the ocean is your God-self … Even like the sun is your God-self" (*The Prophet* 40). Gibran reiterates the Christian belief that man was created in the image of God, which points to the human ability to make decisions based on reason. Gibran believes that freedom and self-reliance are essential components of human relationship. For example, although he

believes that there is something holy about marriage, he argues that marriage should not restrict individuality. He continues by saying, "Give one another of your bread but eat not from the same loaf" (K. Gibran *The Prophet* 15). He intimates that love should take different shapes but it should not be limited to one form (Sherfan 74). He goes further when he says, "sing and dance together and be joyous, but let each one of you be alone" (*The Prophet* 15;Sherfan 74). He advises couples to be together and he emphasizes the concept of "togetherness" in marriage while stressing the need for space (Sherfan 74). He compares marriage to the act of drinking. Partners should cooperate in helping each other "fill each other's cup" but they should not drink "from one cup" (*The Prophet* 74). Each one should have his or her own space and freedom to practice his individuality. He compares marriage to the strings of the lute that "are alone though they quiver with the same music" (*The Prophet* 15;Sherfan 74). He compares marriage to "pillars of the temple which stand apart, and the oak tree and the cypress, which grow not in each other's shadow" (K. Gibran *The Prophet* 15). This notion of marriage goes against the tradition of the Victorian age and the first half of the twentieth century (Sherfan 75-6). In *Spirits of Rebellious*, he talks about the situation of Oriental women and their forced marriages. He mentions the story of Wardeh El Hani who left the luxurious life that she was living with her older husband, to whom she was married by force, in order to live in poverty with the person she loved (Sherfan 75). Gibran was against slavery and marriage that treats women like property; instead, he emphasized mutual understanding and sharing. Sherfan writes that Gibran describes marriage as one body with two spirits (76-77). Mary Haskell quotes Gibran in her journal, saying "the basis for marriage is friendship" (Gibran and Haskell 408). In "On Friendship," Gibran comments that a friend "fill[s] your need, but not your emptiness" (K. Gibran *The Prophet* 60). Each human should

have his own personality without letting others fill his emptiness or becoming copies of them. In one of his letters to Haskell, he comments, "to me friendship is the only sound foundation of all human relationships" (qtd. in *The Prophet* 60). Human relationships should not be based on selfishness but rather on acceptance of the other. Gibran speaks about the right to liberty and space for each individual in all types of human relationships, even between parents and their children. His first line is "your children are not your children. They are the sons and daughter of life's longing … For they have their own thoughts" (*The Prophet* 17). What Gibran means that children should have their own space to become separate human beings (Sherfan 88). Children should have "their own thoughts" and should not be imitations of their parents or their community.

Gibran and More criticize collectivist societies that repress individual freedom. More shows the cruelty of a totalitarian system and how tyranny and social restrictions eliminate individual creativity. He presents a dystopian society that treats human beings as immoral creatures who, if their desires are not restricted, will bring chaos and destruction. Moreover, Utopians take their rules from tradition and from the old generation. Gibran criticizes following traditions blindly without leaving space for the self to express its individuality. Through his, prophetic vision, Gibran emphasizes the idea that there should be space made in human relationships.

C. The Utopian quest: Thomas More's *Utopia* as a travelogue of sociopolitical criticism and Kahlil Gibran's *The Prophet* as autobiography of spiritual yearning.

More and Gibran introduce the possibility of reaching a Utopia. Utopia is a fictional place and a literary genre, however, there has always been disagreement on utopian literature

and in which category a utopian literary text belongs and whether it should it be considered a genre. Utopian texts are written in different forms and modes, and they contribute various concepts and ideas. Utopias are fictional but at the same time they present real-life situations or provide "extrafictional" contexts (Chordas 6). Authors of fictional utopias do not always aim at presenting an ideal place, rather, they discuss contemporary and future issues. Utopia can be a "conglomeration of genres" because each text has its own social history and its own ideas relating to the era it was written in (Chordas 2). The utopian genre is hybrid; it does not have a strict form or mode and it does not follow a set of concepts. The genre is named after Thomas More's *Utopia* which was published in 1516. However, it is not the first utopian literary text but it does contribute to the flourish of writings about imaginary countries in literature (Chordas 3). More was a humanist who believed in social reform and in the role of the writer to create social change (Fox 7). The name of his fictional country is Utopia meaning a good place that exists nowhere. *Utopia* was influenced by the period it was written in. More criticized especially England's political and social system of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. In *The Prophet*, Gibran writes his "Utopia" by taking an anti-materialistic approach that condemns the mainstream culture of the nineteenth century. Unlike More, Gibran is a romantic writer who believed in the importance of the individual and of personal experience. He believed that a poet is a prophet who goes through an inner journey.

Every Utopian text reflects the writer's own ideology. Lyman Tower Sargent states that "ideologies and utopia are closely related … And it is possible for a utopia to become an ideology … it can transform hope and desire into belief and action to transform utopia in a political or social movement" (Sargent 124). More's *Utopia* is a sociopolitical allegory while Gibran's *The Prophet* is an autobiographical text written in poetic language. Both were

influenced differently by the literary movements of their times but both express their ideologies by creating fictional countries that do not exist in reality. *Utopia* and *The Prophet* are both concerned with an imaginative journey. Many symbols that More and Gibran employ give universal meaning to human experience. For example, the protagonists of these works narrate their journey to an imaginative island. This is an island that has a positive meaning as a refuge from the dangers of the sea and from solitude, or it can represent something negative such as isolation or death (Ferber 16).

Thomas More was influenced by the travelogues that flourished during the Renaissance about explorations of the New World. His island Utopia is separated from the outside world and even the channels that surround the island are "very dangerous to navigation. The channels are known only to the Utopians" (More, *Utopia* 39). The fictional characters More or Giles have never heard of Utopia before, and Hythloday describes the land and its culture as if he is narrating a story of exploration. Richard Marius compares *Utopia* to the diaries written by voyagers who wanted to describe their experience to European audiences after their journeys to the New Word. He likens Hythloday's story of Utopia to a tale by an astronaut of his experiences of the new world (Marius 153). Hythloday describes the island's geography, traditions, and politics in realistic detail. He believes that Utopia is an ideal, while the audience questions the perfection of this Utopian society (Marius 160). For the fictional character More, Hythloday is a sailor, "I supposed that he was a skipper," and Giles introduces him by claiming that "there is no mortal alive [who]can tell you so much about unknown people and lands" (More, *Utopia* 10). For Giles, Hythloday seems to be a man with extensive knowledge of nations and cultures. More's *Utopia* is the story of Hythloday, the world traveler, who discovers the country of *Utopia*.

Although *Utopia* is a prose work that recounts a sailor's experiences of the New World, according to Marius, it is a "perplexing" text (153). As an English politician and a lawyer living during the Renaissance, More describes Utopia's political and social system, how politicians are elected, and their duties; its relationships with foreign nations including traveling and trading, as well as going to war. He illustrates each city's population and its environment in minute detail. Along with presenting Utopia as a complex nation, More discusses social and political problems. He writes about the injustice, the poverty, the unemployment, the slavery, and the colonization of his country, which reflect More's own England. Marius argues that *Utopia* is a realistic work on the "noble savage" within the context of European civilization. More's irony shifts from being serious and humorous to creating a "literary masque" that confuses the reader and keeps him from understanding his real allegorical meaning (Marius 153- 59). In Book I, Hythloday seems to be a man of morals and a humorless character in contrast to Book II where he appears to be a man who appreciates the totalitarian system of Utopia (Marius 154). Miller stresses the importance of analyzing Hythloday's language, as he is the main speaker of Book II. He speaks for two-thirds of Book I, while More the persona speaks eleven percent and Giles two and half percent (Miller chap.6 par.2). In one of his letters to his friend Peter Giles, More describes the language of *Utopia* as follows:

> All I had to do was repeat what you and I together heard Raphael describe. There was no occasion, either, for labor over the style, since what he said, being extempore and informal, couldn't be couched in fancy terms … he's a man not so well versed in Latin as in Greek; so that my language would be nearer the truth, the closer it approached to his casual simplicity. (More, *Utopia* 6)

In Book II, More employs plain language, intentionally. George M Logan suggests that *Utopia* is written in a plain style suitable for philosophical dialogue (More, *Utopia* 3). He also claims that Book II and the majority of Book I are written in a simple straightforward style yet some passages, in his opinion, are not written in this manner (More, *Utopia* 3). Clarence H. Miller points out that when Hythloday discusses the injustices of Europe in Book I, his language is more complex than when he describes the country of Utopia in Book II. He comments:

> When [Hythloday] condemns the injustices of Europe, his voice and his sentences are not incompatible with those of More himself. Only as he breaks through to the simplicities of Utopia do his sentences fracture Latin syntax and soar beyond what More's Latin, even at its most muscular, would attempt. And the simple sentences and universalist diction of his description of Utopia do not make him seem merely simple minded. They also help him to make us think that this has happened, that it could happen." (Miller chap. 6 par.1)

Hythloday speaks with a "universalist diction" that makes Utopia sound like it could possibly exist. More's aim was to make the reader believe that Hythloday was presenting a perfect society, while, in fact, he was representing, ironically, a dystopia. The shift in style experienced by the reader results in confusion because one is not sure whether to believe or disbelieve Hythloday's story.

When the reader reaches the end of the book, he realizes that the author presents Hythloday as a "narcissistic idealist" who praises a "heartless and faceless society" that practices totalitarianism (Miller chap.6 par. 3). In Book I, More tricks the reader into believing that his book is about an ideal state but in Book II the reader becomes aware of the totalitarian community Hythloday narrates. These oppositions in the text make the reader question own

society's politics and ethics (Miller chap.6 par. 3). More shifts between real historical events and fictional details creating litotes that perplex the reader. Elizabeth McCutcheon discusses how litotes makes *Utopia* ambiguous and contradictory. As a Renaissance writer, More was "continuously affirming something by denying its opposite" in order to express his admiration or to criticize it (McCutcheon 263). In More's case, he predominantly criticizes his community. He introduces the character of Hythloday, whose name means "speaker of nonsense," who expresses his admiration for the Utopian's way of life and at the same time describes it as absurd. McCutcheon reads *Utopia* as having a dual meaning. It could be read as "praise" or as "dispraise" of real societies (274). She describes *Utopia* as a "two-sided vision" of contraries (274). She claims that the text could have a double meanings from the beginning of Book I (265). For example, when the character More sees Hythloday with Giles, he assumes that Hythloday is a ship captain from his appearance. After Giles introduces him More replies, "my guess wasn't a bad one, for at first glance I supposed he was a skipper" (More, *Utopia* 6). By describing him as a "skipper," More the author is also implying that Hythloday as a "skipper" is both a man of knowledge and a speaker of nonsense. According to McCutcheon, there are many more examples in the text of More's use of litotes, which most English translations conceal (McCutcheon 267). She believes that the translation of *Utopia* from Latin makes the text lose its understatement and ambiguity (274).

There is a hidden sarcastic tone in *Utopia* that can be understood only through scholarly analysis. More's intention is to make the reader believe first that he is going to discuss an ideal commonwealth different from the medieval England of his time. However, the reader easily draws a connection between the perfect society described by Hythloday and the reader's own society. For example, the tendency to make all Utopians similar to each other by

wearing the same clothes represses the freedom of the individual. The clothes symbolize tradition, and English society, likewise, believed in the importance of tradition over individual preference. Another example is Hythloday's appreciation of Utopus the colonizer of Utopia, who even names the country after himself. With his travelogue, More's aim is not to present an ideal state that exists in the new world but rather to force the reader to compare this dystopia to his own nation. It is a journey that appears Utopian and perfect from its title but is dystopian in content.

Similarly, *The Prophet* is a text that mirrors travel writing. Unlike More's *Utopia*, it is not a physical journey about the exploration of a dystopian reality but rather an inner quest. Differently from the reader of *Utopia*, the reader of *The Prophet* senses that Gibran is presenting an ethics of prophecy. Almustafa, the main character, is "the chosen and the beloved" prophet who left his homeland and lived in Orphalese for twelve years. *The Prophet* contains an autobiographical tone, poetic diction and prophetic wisdom. When Gibran was asked about how he wrote *The Prophet*, he answered: "Did I write it? It wrote me" (McHarek 17). Like Almustafa, Gibran lived in exile in the United States as a Lebanese immigrant. Gibran started to write *The Prophet* at an early age and he continued to work on it until its publication in 1923, about seven years before his death. One of the changes that Gibran made in the text was to shift the month that Almustfa leaves Orphalese from Nisan (April), which is the month of Spring, to September, Ielool, the month of complete ripeness (*The Prophet* 3-8). It represents the end of one period and the beginning of another. Ielool poetically symbolizes maturity and wisdom. As Shaeil Bushrui comments, "it seems thus that Gibran wished to emphasize the harvest of Almustafa's wisdom and experience in the autumn of his life" (*The Prophet* 8). With Almustafa, Gibran

shares his own mystic poetic ideals. In his farewell address, Almustafa tells the people of Orphalese that "I must go. We wanderers are ever seeking the lonelier way" (85). "The lonelier way" implies a quest toward God. Almustafa is a mystic wanderer who went through an inner journey to understand self-existence in relation to God. Gibran was influenced by the concept of the Sufi wanderers who underwent a spiritual quest to become better men or to become prophets. Almustafa represents the Sufi's spiritual journey towards God (Bushrui xlvii-xlviii).

The Prophet is a sensual text written by a mystical poet in a romantic and poetic language. It is similar to a biblical parable where Gibran focuses more on human morality from a philosophical perspective, and his writing style is theological and poetic (Sherfan 39). When Almustafa speaks about love he says: "When you love you should not say, 'God is in my heart,' but rather, 'I am in the heart of God'" (11). According to Gibran, love is divine. Loving God is a way of life, and human beings should both express and experience God's love. Alexandre Najjar believes that Gibran's book is a universal message that "belongs to no school, rejects all 'isms,'" and through it Gibran "condense[s] the wisdom of all religions" (148).

Moreover, as an Arabic romantic writer, Gibran's book can be analyzed by applying the romantic theory of imagination and nature. His imagination has been compared to Blake's and Coleridge's (El-Hage 4-5). Gibran believes in the importance of imagination, like other romantic poets, and he sees it as an essential element in literature. Through his imagination and his use of natural scenery such as mountains, hills, and the ocean, Gibran shows how there is a connection between human beings and nature. Nicolas El-Hage describes Gibran's works as "the relation of consciousness and nature." By the use of natural scenery, Gibran

aims not only to express his appreciation of nature but also to use nature as an example of human experience. El- Hage comments that "Gibran is ultimately looking for a nature beyond nature, but at the same time, he is desperate to find a more profound and denser meaning within the Nature around him" (4-5). Almustafa expresses his engagement with Nature that leads him to a sublime purity. The descriptions of the natural scenery in *The Prophet* have the purpose of adding meaning to individual experience.

Northrop Frye comments that readers of utopian literary works "might realize that a utopia should not be read simply as a description of a most perfect state, even if the author believes it to be one. Utopian thought is imaginative, with its roots in literature, and the literary imagination is less concerned with achieving ends than with visualizing possibilities" (219). More and Gibran introduce us to imaginative literary works that suggest many possibilities. Both Utopia and Orphalese are not ideal places. More's tone is pessimistic of his contemporary world and he presents an imagined island that is ironically imperfect. His critique aimed at social reformation. By providing his readers with an entire dystopic system he wanted to make them evaluate their own reality. By contrast, Gibran's tone is optimistic. He was a dreamer who believed that perfection can be reached through the quest of the inner soul.

Conclusions

For many centuries and from different nations, writers have fantasized about Utopia. Utopianism reflects the human desire to better society or for a better society. Writers have been searching for the possibility of creating a better future for centuries. They criticize their communities directly or indirectly through satire. Through the imaginary world that the writer

creates, he deals with the problems of his own society. Utopias such as More's *Utopia* and Gibran's *The Prophet* are timeless because they not only discuss contemporary problems that existed in their authors' time but they also look at problems that humanity has always endured. *Utopia* and *The Prophet* set an example of how literary Utopias can be eternal. At the time they were written, they were considered reformatory literary texts, and they still are. More and Gibran are educators who care about their communities; More expresses his ideas through criticism and satire, while Gibran expresses his ideas through philosophy and poetic language.

Although More and Gibran are from different eras and backgrounds, their texts reflect similar ideas. More presents an imaginative country in order to criticize his own nation: England during the fifteenth and the sixteenth centuries. However, the social problems that More discusses are also universal. Similarly, Gibran's *The Prophet* focuses on universal issues such as materialism, greed, and religious wars. More and Gibran write about the cruelty of man, his human pride, where an individual feels superior to others, because of his ownership of artificial or materialistic things, or for belonging to an elite group. The feeling of pride that accompanies the feeling of superiority is evil, and brings a community to destruction. Possessions and money should not decide the rank of an individual or of a nation. Moreover, the pleasure that a person gets from materialistic objects such as clothes is false. Both More and Gibran argue that real pleasure is not the pleasure of appearance but rather the inner pleasure that can be reached through knowledge and spirituality. Materialism makes human beings greedy; as a result, individuals keep accumulating unnecessary possessions. Nowadays, consumerism has spread, causing chaos to people and to global communities. The rise of consumerism makes people more artificial and empty. Today's capitalist culture

promotes the idea that the more one possesses the happier one is. Consuming more products not only affects an individual's psychology by giving him a sense of false pleasure but also has a harmful impact on the environment as well, such as climate change, and global warming.

Along with materialistic pride, More and Gibran also address the danger of religious pride. Throughout human history, religious pride has been the cause of riots and bloodshed in the world. It creates animosity in a nation but also between countries. Religious extremism often results in violence against other religious sects and extremists. Religious extremists suffer from false pride because they believe that they are holier than others. For example, the extremist Islamic group ISIS in Iraq and Syria has led many terrorist attacks around the world. It is a criminal organization that attacks people of different faiths, as well as people who share the same religion of Islam. They target anyone who has a different belief from theirs, including Muslims from different sects. They claim that they practice the real Islamic religion and fight anyone who opposes them. The criminal actions of ISIS lead to Islamophobia in the world, although most Muslims oppose their views and consider it a terrorist organization.

Like those who criticize ISIS today, More and Gibran wrote against religious discrimination. In *Utopia*, More insists that God "likes diversity" and that any citizen of Utopia who attacks a person because of his religious beliefs will be punished (More, *Utopia* 86). Similarly, Gibran argues that spirituality is not related to the temple but should be concerned with the inner feeling of love towards others, regardless of religion, ethnicity, or race. As Almustafa puts it: "Your daily life is your temple and your religion" where one practices being kind to others (*The Prophet* 78). Therefore, according to Gibran and More, the first aspect of a perfect society is equality and acceptance amongst people, regardless of their

ethnicity, race, nobility, and religious background.

The second quality that creates a better society is the appreciation and respect for human individuality. In *Utopia*, More criticizes the English through the example of a dystopian community. Utopians are like the English during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries because they prefer tradition over individuality. Additionally, both believe that social institutions should restrict freedom of choice because it could lead to social evils. With *Utopia*, More presents the opposite of an ideal world, a dystopia, to shift the reader's attention to the problem of totalitarianism. Utopia is a commonwealth that restricts freedom through fear. Similarly, Gibran argues against the tyranny that restricts an individual's freedom. He embraces individuality in all human relationships, including marriage, friendship and between parents and children. He advocates that everyone should have the ability to practice his own freedom. Gibran and More accept differences among citizens as long as their freedom does not harm the freedom of others.

More and Gibran address the same social problems although they frame their views differently. *Utopia* and *The Prophet* are both about fictional journeys to imaginary lands. Unlike *The Prophet,* More's *Utopia* proves to be a dystopian reality that raises the readers' awareness to social chaos. The reader believes at first that he is reading about a perfect society but becomes weary as to how Hythloday prizes the lack of justice in Utopia. In *Utopia*, More wants to raise the reader's awareness to overcome problems such as materialism, totalitarianism, and injustice. He presents his concerns indirectly through the use of satire and humor. *The Prophet* is also about an imaginative journey but unlike *Utopia* is more personal and spiritual. It is written in a theological and poetic language and is about Gibran's life quest and mystic experiences. *The Prophet* promotes a journey towards God in order for an

individual to become a better human being. Gibran believes that the journey within the self will be spiritually fulfilling. Thus, there is a close connection between More's *Utopia* and Gibran's *The Prophet.* Gibran and More are educators who care about their community and the future of the human race. They are social reformers who write immortal literary utopias that present dystopian realities in order to reform society. They present a humanistic dream to create a better place for humanity to live in.

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