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**Eliot's and Gibran's Understanding of the Essence of  
Being Human: A Comparative Analysis of “The Waste Land”  
and *The Prophet***

A Dissertation Submitted to the Department of English in Partial Fulfilment of  
the Requirements for an M.A. Degree in English Literature and Civilization

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## **Dedications**

To our parents, families, and friends.

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## Table of Content

<b>Dedications.....</b>	<b>i</b>
<b>Acknowledgements.....</b>	<b>ii</b>
<b>Table of Content.....</b>	<b>iii</b>
<b>Declaration of Originality.....</b>	<b>iv</b>
<b>Abstract.....</b>	<b>v</b>
<b>General Introduction.....</b>	<b>1</b>
Literature Review.....	3
Overview of T.S Eliot and “The Waste Land”.....	4
Overview of Gibran Khalil Gibran and The Prophet.....	7
Humanity, the Human Nature, and the Human Condition in Literature.....	11
<b>Chapter 1: Global Comparatism .....</b>	<b>17</b>
Introduction.....	17
Comparative Literature and its Challenges.....	17
History of Comparative Literature.....	18
Understanding the Global Turn and its Impact on Literary Criticism.....	22
Conclusion.....	23
<b>Chapter 2: Biographical and Historical Contexts .....</b>	<b>24</b>
Introduction.....	24
T.S Eliot’s Life and Work.....	24
Gibran Khalil Gibran’s Biography.....	31
Conclusion.....	40
<b>Chapter 3: Eliot's and Gibran's Understanding of the Essence of Being Human .....</b>	<b>42</b>
Introduction.....	42
“The Waste Land” & The Prophet.....	42
Similar Themes, Different Perspectives.....	45
Conclusion.....	49
Summary of Findings.....	51
Recommendations for Further Research.....	52
<b>Works Cited.....</b>	<b>54</b>

## **Declaration of Originality**

We, Thiziri BATACHE and Imad IDIR, hereby declare that this dissertation titled **Eliot's and Gibran's Understanding of the Essence of Being Human: A Comparative Analysis of “The Waste Land” and *The Prophet*** is our original work. We assert that all sources used or referred to in this paper have been properly cited and acknowledged. This paper has not been submitted, in part or in full, for any other degree or qualification at any other institution. We affirm that no part of this paper constitutes plagiarism or academic dishonesty in any form.

**Thiziri BATACHE and Imad IDIR**

May 25, 2024

## Abstract

As we explore the great works of Thomas Stearns Eliot in his poem “The Waste Land” and Gibran Khalil Gibran in his book *The Prophet*, it is important to place these two masterpieces in the context of the early twentieth century, when everything seemed to be in a state of change. The world was moving from the Victorian era to the modern age with its rapid industrialisation, global conflict and rising existential questions. Artists and writers were trying to make sense of this new world, chasing the complex piece of the human experience in the chaos of that change. These two works in particular show simultaneously the anxieties and hopes of their time. “The Waste Land” is a modernist work that criticises and captures the sense of disillusionment and despair after World War I. On the other hand, there was G.K. Gibran's *The Prophet*, full of optimism towards humanity, to guide and invite us to cultivate our own inner wisdom and spiritual growth. By synthesising what other scholars have said about the two works, and adding some new ideas of our analysis, this dissertation will help us to understand how literature can change and help to learn more about the human condition, also it proves that what Eliot and Gibran wrote remains applicable even today; people from all over the world can recognise their ideas on a global scale.

**Keywords:** Humanity, Human Condition, Human Values, Modern World, Global Comparatism, The 20th Century.

Literature is a phase of life. If  
one is afraid of it, the situation is irremediable; if  
one approaches it familiarly  
what one says of it is worthless. Words are constructive  
when they are true; the opaque allusion-the simulated flight  
upward-accomplishes nothing.

Marianne Moore: *Picking and Choosing*

The early 20th century was a crucial period of enormous social, cultural, and artistic changes. This period was also marked by a dominant sense of disillusionment and doubt. Europe was left in ruins after the end of World War I, which served as a powerful metaphor for the tragedy that had befallen the continent. The conflict's scale was such that the damage was so great that it was impossible to describe it in any other way than in terms of ashes, rubble, and destruction. However, it is important to note that despite the trauma and destruction wrought by the conflict, society has been affected by it on all fronts. The war has affected views of human nature, morality, and the very foundations of civilization.

The 20th century witnessed other pivotal events that shaped the cultural landscape of the era, these include the Great Depression, the rise of Fascism, the advent of mass media, and urbanisation and industrialization, which took place at the same time and in the same period as the structural transformation of daily life. The rapid development also led to profound societal problems, such as the industrialization of labour and mass migration from rural to urban areas. The urban lifestyle intensified disconnection and alienation from other human beings, creating a new sense of social distance. Simultaneously, the modernist social and intellectual movement emerged, transforming the world around them and challenging beliefs and traditions.

As a result, a profound impact on the cultural and artistic revolution took place, rejecting realism in favour of experimentation, fragmentation, and subjectivity.

Existentialist literature promoted these motifs of fragmentation, alienation, and anxiety about life and existence in art, particularly in literature. In literature, writers and thinkers attempted to make sense of the changing world they were living in, and questions of morality, spirituality, and the human condition became central. They engaged with these issues in an attempt to find ways of negotiating in a rapidly changing world. Literary icons such as James Joyce, Franz Kafka, Ezra Pound, and many others emerged from this unstable environment full of change. These authors created fundamental representations of their era, including significant events such as World War I, industrialization, modernization, and urbanisation.

Arab writers, both residing within and outside the Arab world, were not immune to the influence of modern culture and its associated challenges. Notable writers like Gibran Khalil Gibran, Ameen Rihani, and Tawfiq al Hakeem, who were contemporaries of T.S. Eliot and Ezra Pound, wrote about modern culture and its discontents. Their literary productions serve as testimonies to the shared experiences and divergent responses to the unfolding modern era, transcending geographical boundaries to resonate with readers across cultures and generations.

The present dissertation focuses on two great authors of the period: T.S. Eliot and Gibran Khalil Gibran. At first glance, comparing these two literary figures may seem improbable, given their seemingly different cultures and backgrounds. Eliot is an Anglo-American while Gibran is a Lebanese-American, and both never crossed paths or had the opportunity to meet each other. The distinct cultural contexts and literary traditions in which they operated may appear to present insurmountable barriers to comparison.



T.S. Eliot's "The Waste Land" (1922) and Kahlil Gibran's *The Prophet* (1923) are in *strictu sensu*<sup>1</sup> and *sensu lato*<sup>2</sup> masterpieces. Both explored the complexities of the human condition and human values during the early 20th century. The first portrays a fragmented world devastated by spiritual desolation and moral decay after World War I while the second reflects upon humanity. Although both texts are different in genre, they express similar concerns concerning the complexities of human nature. As such, they are a suitable subject for profound analysis in our dissertation. Although both works are recognised for all of the above, there is a lack of comprehensive studies that directly compare and contrast their treatment of the human condition. The existing research tends to focus on individual analyses of each work or explores broader themes without a direct comparative perspective.

### Literature Review

The study of human nature and human condition in literature has always been a lifetime quest in literature, it is essentially a basic inquiry into the depths of human existence and the complexities of human nature. In contrast to this vast scene, the literary space of the early 20th century is marked by the two great writers' distinct personalities: T. S. Eliot and Gibran Khalil Gibran. Both writers had their profound reflections of the human condition deeply overshadowed by the troubled times in which they were both living. Among many periods, two literary landmarks addressed existentialist, social disillusionment, and spiritual issues, Eliot's "The Waste Land" and Gibran's *The Prophet*. This literature review will try to address this study as widely as possible, analysing the central themes, and critical debates, taken from scholars and the interpretation of the human condition, as well as how they depicted the writings of Eliot and Gibran. Bringing

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<sup>1</sup> Strict sense.

<sup>2</sup> The wide sense.

these works together will help to decipher these two literary masterpieces and provide insight into the complexities of human experience.

### **Overview of T.S Eliot and “The Waste Land”**

As Jewel Spears Brooker observes, the scholarship on Eliot is both extensive and diverse. Spears Brooker notes that there is no complete edition of Eliot's work, and unpublished material is rare, scattered in research collections in England and the United States, some of them archived into the twenty-first century. There is an abundance of biographies and literary criticism that range from partisan to insulting, often to the detriment of the poet's spirit. Brooker goes on to outline the crucial role that major research institutions -such as Harvard University's Houghton Library, Yale University's Beinecke Library, and the New York Public Library's Berg Collection- have played in archiving Eliot's manuscripts, letters, and his early poetry notebooks. Brooker writes that private collections, such as those held by Eliot's friends and family, are of greater importance in adding weight to our understanding of the poet's life and work. Brooker's review brings to light the diverse nature of Eliot's studies and how different archival resources will play a major role in the development of scholarly investigation into one of modernism's most influential literary figures (236–237).

Giles Mitchell's critical reappraisal of T.S. Eliot's classic work, “The Waste Land”, presents a nuanced interpretation, based on the texts, demonstrating that the characters' fear of death emphasises wider existential questions about the human condition and their anxiety about life. The researcher argues that the poem becomes a grand meditation on human existence as a result of trauma and upheaval. This reassessment, while enriching our appreciation of Eliot's poetic vision, prompts scholars

to re-examine the thematic differences and socio-historical contexts that underpin “The Waste Land” (23–26).

In the article, “The Land and the Waste: Meaninglessness and Absurdity in T.S. Eliot's “The Waste Land” (2022), Dr. Yasir Arafat et al, explore how T.S. Eliot's poem reflects Jean-Paul Sartre's existentialist views of absurdity and meaninglessness. According to the researcher, Eliot presented a world in which characters are disillusioned and spiritually dead, and the poem provides a stark glimpse into the turmoil and waste that characterises modern existence, raising questions about searching for a higher meaning and the restoration of faith. Eliot's search for meaninglessness and absurdity, according to them, has a wider range of effects that can be useful for the contemporary human dilemma, opening the way for further research and a deeper understanding of the solutions (145–156).

The examination of Hindu and Buddhist influences that feature in the work of T.S. Eliot in “The Waste Land” reveals a complex fusion of Eastern philosophies with modernist sensibilities that prove Eliot's masterly syncretism of cultural and philosophical schools. A meticulous examination of the thematic elements, imagination, and philosophical foundations demonstrates that the poem embodies the fundamental concepts of impermanence and existential suffering rooted in Hindu and Buddhist thought. The desolation of man's spirit in Eliot's portrayal within the metaphorical wasteland symbolises the relevance of Indian spiritual heritage even amidst the tumult of modernity. The study further brings out Eliot's appreciation of the pivotal role of humanity within the cosmic system, echoing the Hindu cosmological conception of the Great Chain of Being. The study concludes by advocating for a nuanced appreciation of Eliot's work as a synthesis of Eastern and Western thought, To advocate for rare and

deeper insight into the human condition that maximises personal and societal prosperity in an increasingly fragmented world (Chahal 14).

The enduring relevance and power of T.S. Eliot's seminal poem was the focus of Viorica Pateas's study. The author contended that while "The Waste Land" reveals a dismal and spiritually desolate world, ultimately it represents a path toward redemption and renewal. By making analogies between Eliot's existential search and the thought of Kierkegaard, Patea demonstrated how the poem functions as a guide. Leading readers out of the inner void—a spiritual, almost existential emptiness—it "guides readers toward a transcendental understanding of love and hope"(128). The point is not only that Eliot, as a poet, seeks to integrate cultures—here, Dante<sup>3</sup>, Christian existentialism, and Buddhism—but also that his admiration for Dante and his ambition to unite Western and Eastern spiritual traditions, especially Buddhism and Vedanta, within the framework of Christian existentialism, leads Eliot himself to employ a culturally diverse group of sources to speak to the human being, not only across time but also across cultures and religions. The result is a universal language of spirituality, transcending religious diversity. Patea's analysis, therefore, underscores the relevance of "The Waste Land" as a deep meditation on the human condition and the continuing search for meaning, which does not confine itself to a particular cultural or temporal context (127–128).

In his essay on T.S. Eliot's influence on twentieth-century Anglo-American poetry, Charles Altieri investigates how Eliot's unique style influenced later poets and their work. Altieri picks out the characteristics of Eliot's poetry that other poets have especially succeeded in failing to imitate. He contrasts Eliot with poets like Hart Crane

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<sup>3</sup> Dante Alighieri (1265-1321) was a mediaeval Italian poet renowned for his epic work *The Divine Comedy*, which vividly portrays his journey through Hell, Purgatory, and Heaven. Through rich allegory and intricate symbolism, Dante explores themes of sin, redemption, and the divine, leaving an enduring legacy as one of the greatest poets in Western literature.

and John Ashbery to prove that those poets could not attain the same level of passion and vivid pictures as Eliot's works. Altieri reveals that whereas poets such as Ashbery do share with Eliot this preoccupation with intimacy and self-protectiveness, they can only capture the haunted vision and density that Eliot achieved in his poems. Indeed, even when considering poets like Jorie Graham, who tackles similar issues as those dealt with by Eliot –such as history or spirituality– it is already quite impossible to match the energetic and uplifting depth of his philosophy and songs. Altieri holds the view that what distinguishes Eliot's ability to produce the ecstatic mode without any clear signs of personal presence or syntax and many of the later poets have often failed to achieve that. Altieri's essay mainly reveals the inevitability of Eliot in English poetry and the various efforts of poets who tried to imitate or break loose from his original style. (206–207).

### **Overview of Gibran Khalil Gibran and *The Prophet***

In a distorted world, Gibran Khalil Gibran's work *The Prophet* had been a flame of hope and a source of healing. Many people could be influenced by Gibran's work and change their lives for the better, especially those who view literature as more than just a source of aesthetic beauty and reading pleasure. Abul Mabrur Mohammad Hamed Hassan confirmed this in his work "Gibran's Opus The Prophet: Valuable Lessons for Better Life", where he asserts that Khalil Gibran was a prolific artist who made significant contributions to both American and Arabic literature, and believes that Gibran's work can provide the essence of being a better human and offer a soothing effect to our minds. He also claimed that there is much to learn from Gibran's works despite his assertion that half of what he says is meaningless (543). In the same article, the author asserted that the character Almustafa in Gibran's *The Prophet* is Gibran himself. Gibran, like Almustafa, spent a significant amount of time in New York City

(referred to as Orphalese in the book) and longed to return to his birthplace, Lebanon (542).

The same idea was claimed by Nidaa Hussain Fahmi Al-Khazraji in “Self-insertion as discursive and core-identity of Gibran’s Al-Mustafa” where he suggests that Al-Mustafa, the main protagonist, is essentially the voice of the author. This is a common literary device known as self-insertion or shadowing, where the protagonist echoes the writer. Al-Khazraji’s analysis of the character Almustafa states that the identity of Almustafa is not by nature or established institutions but by the people of Orphalese. This means that Almustafa is connected to them, and this is shown through the use of the first-person plural pronoun “we” (357). He argues that the words of *The Prophet* are not merely his but reflect the collective thoughts of the people of Orphalese (358). This reveals how deeply the people and Almustafa are connected and how that connection reinforces the element of unity and shared human experience. However, this does not mean that Almustafa's identity belongs to the people of Orphalese. Perhaps the author made a connection between the main protagonist and the people to gain their trust or to show them how a prophet should behave.

Al-Khazraji et al, in another article “Critical Reading of Gibran’s World in The Prophet,” explore how Gibran viewed the world and his vision for a more peaceful and harmonious society. The researchers said: “Gibran sees the world as ethically and morally deformed, wishfully, he wants to advise and teach people how to dispose of the evil and vice deeds which they found themselves after the experience of war’s destructive power”(14). This shows one of the reasons and purposes behind writing such a masterpiece and its success.

Annie Jane C. Matthew, in her article that focuses mainly on the character Al-Mustafa, “The Notion of Acceptance and Experiencing Life: Al-Mustafa as a

Reformist Prophet in Khalil Gibran's *The Prophet*," examines Al-Mustafa as a reformist figure who embodies acceptance and the experience of life. Matthew argues that through Al-Mustafa, Gibran addresses the concepts of human morality and the human condition, critiquing a world that he saw to be devoid of love and peace, and filled with corruption and depravity (43). Gibran's aim, as Matthew notes, was to promote a society based on stability and balance (42). By depicting Al-Mustafa as an outsider, Gibran underscores the need for moral reform in the 20th century, reflecting his view of the era as morally distorted.

Gibran's view of the world, which influenced his masterpiece *The Prophet*, imbued it with a strong message. The message in *The Prophet* extends beyond the people of Orphalese; it is universal. In "An Analysis of Universality in Khalil Gibran's *The Prophet*," Brohi et al argue that Gibran's message is intended not just for a select few, but for all humankind, across every place and throughout all time. This universality makes *The Prophet* a timeless piece of literature that continues to inspire and guide its readers in their journey through life (Brohi et al 41).

Religion in *The Prophet* was the focus of many studies. Aslani and Amirian explored the religious perspectives present in the works of Khalil Gibran in "Religious Viewpoints of Khalil Jubran (Khalil Gibran)". According to them, Gibran's views towards different religions, his personal beliefs, Gibran's Maronite Christian background and his exposure to Islamic-Sufi concepts influenced his writings. The authors concluded that though Gibran was born into an orthodox family and respected all religions, he did not formally belong to any religion and did not have a dogmatic position towards any religion, and he never claimed himself as a follower of any religion. Instead, he followed his thoughts and behaviour, which were not entirely in conformity with any of the

above-stated religious thoughts. Freedom from religious limitations was a distinctive feature of his philosophy (125).

Vicky Tchapanian in “The Eastern Philosopher and The Westernized Prophet”, focuses on the combination of Gibran’s beliefs in Christianity, Islam, and pantheism in *The Prophet* and examines the distinctive connection of Eastern and Western philosophy found in Gibran's works where he posited that Gibran's cultural identity, a blend of Maronite Christian and Sufi Arab influences, played a major role in the creation of the character Prophet Almustafa (138).

Khalil Gibran is recognised as one of the most important writers of modern Arabic literature and one of the most successful poets of English in the twentieth century. Suheil Bushrui, in his article “The Enduring Legacy of Khalil Gibran”, argues that in the United States, Gibran’s influence as a literary figure was recognised both academically and publicly in the 1990s. The University of Maryland established the Khalil Gibran Chair for Values and Peace Project and created a new Khalil Gibran Professorship at the Centre for Heritage Resource Studies. Elsewhere, the U.S. government dedicated a memorial garden in his honour in Washington, D.C. These recognitions marked the end of years of academic reluctance to include Gibran in the curriculum and affirmed his status as a significant literary figure ( Bushrui 13).

This significance is shown by the great number of scholars and writers who have explored the life and works of Gibran. Altabaa and Hamawiya in “The Life and Works of Khalil Gibran: A Critical Review”, begin by reviewing the biographical books and then zoom in on books and articles dealing with specific aspects of and influences on Gibran's works, where they argue that the life and works of Khalil Gibran offer a rich field of study for various disciplines, including literary and cultural criticism, history, and religious studies. This article is a helpful pointer to major references about Gibran; it is a



resource that the researchers will find highly valuable in their study of his life and works (117).

### **Humanity, the Human Nature, and the Human Condition in Literature**

Humanity, human nature, and the human condition were widely addressed during the 20th century. Humanity, human nature, and the human condition are three different concepts that can be used synonymously in broader discussions about what it means to be human. For example, when talking about “the essence of being human,” one might touch on aspects of humanity, human nature, and the human condition collectively. However, understanding their specific meanings allows for more precise communication and analysis in philosophical, literary, and social contexts.

Many writers provide readers with a new view of how complex the relationship between development and violence is in the modern era. Niall Ferguson in *The War of the World: Twentieth-Century Conflict and the Descent of the West* grapples with the paradox of unprecedented development together with unprecedented violence in the twentieth century. He argues that The twentieth century, especially the period from 1904 to 1953, was marked by exceptional violence and considered a bloody period of world wars, genocides, and revolutions (37).

Longxi Zhang, in his treatise *The Concept of Humanity in an Age of Globalization*, rethinks humanity as a concept and its relation to the social and political realities of our times. He argues that it is about the two World Wars, the Holocaust, and the violent acts which people have had to face in the last century that they lost faith in the concept of humans being able to be perfect or rational. This was coupled with many questions and criticisms of Western ideas, especially on humanity and humanism. However, despite the darkness and the violence that befalls people, hope remains in their

hearts that the future will be better, and there is still a desire to understand and reclaim humanism (10). That is why we see works such as “The Waste Land” and Gibran Khalil Gibran’s *The Prophet* seeking to reclaim human morals and hold onto hope for change.

Glenn M. Hardie in his book *The Essence of Humanism: Free Thought Versus Religious Belief*, discusses how humanism believes in the common human element, emphasises critical thinking, and insists that we, within our limited lifespan, are responsible for creating a better world. He argues that Humanists actively participate in improving the lives of people in general through the development of empathy, striving for justice, and evidence-based solution advocacy. Their commitment to the well-being of all reflects the very essence of humanism—a philosophy that places humanity at the centre of ethical and moral considerations (30). This is actually what we can notice in both works of Eliot and Gibran.

In *On the Human Condition* (2008), Dominique Janicaud <sup>4</sup> shows how Martin Heidegger <sup>5</sup> and Jean-Paul Sartre<sup>6</sup> utilise two philosophical contexts in trying to answer the question of human existence. He shows how both Heidegger and Sartre reject the classical point of view of a “human nature” that had always existed and focus instead on the theme that “existence precedes essence.” They both oppose the point of view that is based on human accomplishments without deciphering that the human condition is intrinsically complex. Sartre maintains a humanism that is based on free will and responsibility-free.

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<sup>4</sup> Dominique Janicaud, a French philosopher, delved into phenomenology and existentialism, exploring themes like philosophy’s intersection with theology and the potential of the human condition. His work remains influential in modern philosophical discussions.

<sup>5</sup> Martin Heidegger: Influential German philosopher known for his groundbreaking work on ontology, existentialism, and phenomenology, notably in *Being and Time*, his contributions continue to shape modern philosophy.

<sup>6</sup> Jean-Paul Sartre: French philosopher and existentialist writer known for his works on human freedom and responsibility, including *Being and Nothingness* and “Existentialism is a Humanism.” He was a prominent figure in 20th-century French literature and intellectual life.

Heidegger, conversely, criticises such humanistic orientations. Heidegger believes that humans need to break free from this subjective limitation to attain the deeper “truth of Being” and let the relation between humanity and existence itself go by the board. Heidegger shows that this presumed “good” humanism must be reevaluated, and surpass the traditional view of humanity as an individual entity. One has to look to broad, more significant mysteries of existence. Janicaud points out the need to transcend the simple humanistic point of view and to go to a different, more complex view of human existence. This is what Lévi-Strauss advocates for, that one has to look at the essence of humanity from other angles (8–11).

Allan G. Richards from the University of Kentucky, USA in the article, “Improving The Human Condition is a Life’s Journey” talked about the need to understand and address issues that each of us faces to improve the human condition. It emphasises the role of education, particularly through the arts, in providing students with opportunities to encounter issues affecting them, overcome challenges, and find solutions to these issues. It ended by saying that improving the human condition gives us hope for the future and a better world, and this hope depends upon how well educators prepare the citizens of the global community (6).

In “ ‘Humanity’ as The Site For Ideological Conflict in The Twenty-First Century”, Steve Fuller argues that the concept of humanity faces a significant challenge in the 21st century due to advancements in science and technology that blur the distinction between humans and other beings, as well as between natural and artificial qualities. These challenges demand a reassessment of what it means to be human and how society is to be structured to meet the requirements of changes ( 227).

*The Human Condition* was a significant work by political theorist Hannah Arendt in which she introduces the term “vita activa” by distinguishing it from “Vita

Contemplativa” (contemplative life). She maintained that *vita activa* concerns are neither superior nor inferior to the concerns of *vita contemplativa*, nor are they the same. In short, the *vita activa* may be divided into three kinds of activities: labour, work, and action. The book explores the conditions of human life, necessity, work, labour, and society. It has six main chapters, but forty-five subchapters in total, each of which reflects on an aspect of human life and the forces influencing it.

Jiayi Zhang is among the scholars who had explored Hannah Arendt’s exploration of the concepts of Labor, Work, and Action in her work “Human Condition”. In her article “Human Condition” Core Concept Analysis and Philosophical Enlightenment “He used Arendt’s core theory as a starting point to examine the philosophical, political, and human situations. The author concludes that despite the inherent limitations and uncertainties of life, the human condition, shaped by our actions and creativity, has the potential for constant evolution and transformation in the face of adversity ( 5).

The analysis of existing literature reveals that the three concepts of humanity, human nature, and the human condition have been extensively studied, primarily by philosophers, throughout history. These concepts have been explored from various philosophical perspectives, shedding light on the fundamental aspects of human existence, behaviour, and experience. However, in our corpus, comprising the works of Eliot and Gibran, these concepts have not been previously studied in depth. Therefore, our research aims to fill this gap by examining how these concepts are depicted and explored in the context of the selected literary works, providing new insights into the intersection of literature and philosophical inquiry.

The present research aims to comprehend the contexts that influenced the perspectives of Gibran and Eliot on human nature and shaped their literary compositions.

Through these efforts, we hope to make a significant scholarly contribution by providing new perspectives and interpretations of our selected texts and to deliver a different analysis from a new perspective.

The present research work attempts to answer the following questions: What socio-cultural and historical factors influenced Eliot and Gibran's portrayal of the human condition in the early 20th century? In what ways do Eliot and Gibran offer guidance and redemption to humanity under the existential challenges of the 20th century through their literary works? What role does morality play in shaping Eliot and Gibran's understanding of humanity and how do they depict moral decay in their works?

To answer these questions and make the comparison possible, we chose global comparatism for several reasons. The first reason is that traditional comparative literature has been criticised for its lack of methodology. The second reason is that comparative literature ignores differences and diversity and lacks flexibility.

This dissertation comprises three chapters. The first chapter discusses comparative literature after the Global Turn and introduces global comparatism. The second chapter is devoted to the biographical context of the authors involved in this study along with their respective works to show significant events or influences that have occurred during their earlier lives while giving a socio-political cultural and intellectual background within which they lived within the early 20th century. The last chapter offers a detailed analysis of our selected texts. A summary of key findings is provided in the general conclusion. This part of our dissertation highlights the limitations and implications of the research for literary scholarship and suggests directions for future research endeavours.

## Introduction

This chapter provides an account of our methodology: the rationale behind it, and an exploration of comparative literature and global comparatism. The most relevant and significant scholarly works by key figures in world literature and global comparatism. The purpose is to offer clear definitions and explanations that help the readers understand the theoretical underpinnings of our analysis in the subsequent chapters. Global Comparatism methodology is the most suitable approach for extracting commonalities and divergences in the two works of T.S Eliot and Gibran Khalil Gibran. We contend that the methodology of global comparatism will permit a comprehensive examination of the texts, taking into account their cultural, historical, and contextual dimensions.

## Comparative Literature and its Challenges

Comparative literature study has greatly changed in recent times. The 21st century brought new views on literature. The focus shifted from a Europe-centric view to a more global approach—the Global Turn. This change in perspective reflects the cultures, languages, and literary works that are connected worldwide. The Global Turn sees the big picture of how literature works around the globe. At the heart of comparing literature is an important question: how do texts from very different cultural and language backgrounds connect, meet, and form each other? Scholars today are not just comparing Western books. They are looking at a larger group of writings from many regions, languages, and historical times. This approach across different subjects enables researchers to discover deeper connections, trace historical paths, and reveal shared themes that go beyond geography.

## History of Comparative Literature

Comparative literature started in the late eighteenth century to help understand nations better, especially those divided by conflicts. Through the study and comparison of the literature of various nations, scholars would gain insights into the cultures, histories, and values of those nations. Two early proponents of this approach were Germaine de Staël and Johann Herder. They believed that by promoting understanding between nations through literature, it would be possible to encourage more international exchange and cooperation.

In 1948, Ernst Curtius wrote “European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages”. While his work was not highly academic, it had a profound purpose. Curtius sought to bridge the gap that existed between Germany and France in an attempt to address the wounds of war, not only to preach peace but also to the supreme goal of facilitating reconciliation. It was also a way to preserve Western culture, which had been threatened by the war. His book, therefore, became more than just a scholarly text; it was a response to the real needs of the time and a call for understanding, dialogue, and peace (Damrosch 622).

Comparative literature emerged as a subfield of literary history early in the 19th century and gained significant power in the 1820s and 1830s. Juan Andrés, a Spanish Jesuit scholar, was one of the founding figures of this discipline. His work, “Dell'origine, progressi e stato attuale d'ogni letteratura,” laid many new ideas in comparative literature. Andrés had lived in exile in Mantua, Italy, and this experience of displacement often provides a unique perspective that can enrich one's understanding of literature and culture. His work and ideas sparked interest from important figures such as Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, a key figure in German literature who was deeply interested in the kinds of literature of different nations and cultures, and his engagement with Andrés's work reflects this (Domínguez et al 4).

In the early 19th century, Goethe introduced the concept of world literature (Weltliteratur). Goethe's concept of Weltliteratur underlines both universal and specific elements within literary works. By studying world literature, students can understand the diverse aspects of literature from different cultures. They can see how different cultures express similar themes in different ways. At the same time, they can also discover the universally human themes that enable them to interpret and engage with texts from different cultures (Pizer 11).

Pizer argued that Goethe's concept of Weltliteratur or world literature highlighted the increasing interaction between authors and critics from different countries, enabled by advancements such as book production, communication, and transportation. These advancements helped to create a more interconnected literary world. Also, authors were no longer confined to their own country or culture. However, they could be influenced by works from around the world, and their works could reach a global audience. However, Goethe's focus on Europe in describing this literary exchange raises questions about whether his concept is Eurocentric (Pizer 12). On the other hand, it had been argued by Djelal Kadir that the concept of world literature is attributed to Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, but it was already being explored as early as the 5th century BC by the Greek historian Herodotus (Kadir 3). So, world literature is not just tied to Europe or Goethe, but has a broader and older history.

French scholars played a major role in developing comparative literature. One key figure was Abel François Villemain<sup>7</sup>, who gave lectures on French literature from 1816 to 1826, he later published these lectures, comparing authors and movements across different

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<sup>7</sup> Abel François Villemain (1790–1870) was a French writer, scholar, and politician. His multifaceted career spanned academia, politics, and literature



literary traditions and he was the one who introduced the phrase *Littérature comparée* (comparative literature). However, early friction had been manifested when it came to comparative literature and literary history. At the outset, they appeared interdisciplinary, but soon a change was suggested by Villemain's preface in Volume 2 of *Tableau de la littérature au XVIIIe siècle*. Villemain implied that the comparison of literatures was not only a historical act but also reflected the philosophy of criticism. The return to this tendency will bring a turn towards a more theoretical approach, closer to what we now know as literary theory (Domínguez et al 5).

In the twentieth century, scholars in comparative literature focused on mastering a few languages, mainly from Western Europe. Scholars like René Wellek, in their studies and writings, often focused on German, French, English, Italian, and Spanish. This shows that in those days, comparative literature did not need every possible language known to be valuable, just mastering key tongues from Western Europe often seemed enough.

By 1975, Roland Greene<sup>8</sup> recognizes that the discipline, which wanted broader views and deeper understanding, limited itself to the study of European literatures. This was a restriction that had to be dealt with, especially after globalisation. Greene's critique coincides with growing interest in non-European literatures –Chinese, Japanese, Sanskrit, and Arabic. This was a shift towards a more global perspective of comparative literature, and scholars started to incorporate a wider range of world literatures into their studies. But with the inclusion of a wider range of world literatures, this principle became more difficult, because not all scholars could be expected to master all the languages of the literatures they were studying (Damrosch 624).

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<sup>8</sup>Roland Greene is a renowned scholar in the field of comparative literature. He is a Professor of English and Comparative Literature at Stanford University.

Global comparatism is a concept that has emerged in the field of comparative literature, particularly in the 21st century. It challenges the traditional division of territory based on language and nationality and seeks to have a wider view of how writings connect and affect each other. In simple terms, Global Comparatism says that we should read works made in several languages, even from the same land, and in one tongue from different nations. Expanding the scope of the comparative literature's field beyond the traditionally favoured languages and into a global perspective comes with obstacles and barriers.

One of the main challenges is the linguistic barrier due to the vast number of languages represented in world literature, and no individual scholar can master them all. This makes it difficult to engage deeply with the original texts in their native languages, which is a fundamental principle of comparative literature. Indeed, the approach offered by translation allows students to engage with a wide range of world literatures without the necessity to master all the languages. However, this goes hand-in-hand with a few limitations, and sometimes, it fails to capture the full cultural context of the original text. Therefore, this study of literature in its original language is highly valued in comparative literature because it provides a deeper and more authentic engagement with the text. On the other hand, some scholars respond to the challenge of language diversity in the study of literature. Franco Moretti suggests that instead of trying to acquire proficiency in numerous languages via philological study, scholars can rely on secondary sources such as literary histories and publishing data to analyse the global flow of literature. Therefore, scholars can gain insights into global literary dynamics without the need for extensive language proficiency (Damrosch 625).

The influence of globalisation in the contemporary world is affecting everything around us. This includes how we trade, work, communicate, and even how we understand

different cultures. This has led to an interconnectedness of diverse cultures and societies, symbolised by networks and the internet. Global consciousness, which refers to a global perspective, is becoming increasingly prevalent. This global consciousness is challenging traditional academic disciplines to adapt to this new reality or risk becoming irrelevant. Therefore, adapting is essentially the contemporary global context that is shaping our world and influencing academic disciplines.

Globalisation is not a phenomenon that has emerged recently; it has been a constant process over the centuries, from the ancient trade routes to the modern internet. Yet, today's globalisation is different because it is happening faster and on a larger scale than ever before. Actually, globalisation has a big impact on the way we approach and understand literature. Vilashini Cooppan argues that even in an era of globalisation, national perspectives remain relevant, but they need to be approached differently, and we cannot just look at literature from a purely national viewpoint anymore. Globalisation challenges us to examine literary texts for intra-national and extra-national influences rather than focusing just on the nation's narrative connection. This shift involves understanding translation, shaped by human migration and electronic communication (Cooppan 15,26).

### **Understanding the Global Turn and its Impact on Literary Criticism**

The global turn can be defined as a shift in the focus of academic engagement towards the interdisciplinary challenges that are posed by the global issues of the 21st century. Many scholars are now taking up the complexities of globalisation, both its contemporary and historical processes and this engagement goes beyond the recognition of commonalities across multiple disciplines. This can be considered as a new representation of a different perspective that demands a re-examination of the traditional modes of analysis. The “global turn” requires scholars to think globally and develop new theories and perspectives on issues

that have to date been understood within universal, national, or local contexts. It also involves a changed mode of engagement in global scholarship, including scholars from beyond the Euro-American academy, each adopting a different approach. Additionally, it involves identification with diverse societies, alternative ways of knowing, and the marginalised majorities that are increasingly shaping our collective futures.

The Global Turn had profound implications in several domains, including the political, economic, sociocultural, historical, legal, and ethical. Scholars are only starting to unravel these implications, marking an exciting and challenging time for global scholarship (Darian-Smith and McCarty 2). In literature and more particularly literary criticism, the global turn has had a significant impact. It has led to a broader understanding of literature as a global phenomenon that is shaped by transnational flows of ideas and cultures.

### **Conclusion**

In light of this, we may look into some similarities between the works of T.S Eliot, “The Waste Land”, and Gibran Khalil Gibran, *The Prophet*. These works, though arising from very different cultural and linguistic contexts, can be regarded from the perspective of global literary engagement and be intelligible to each other. The global turn urges us to think of how these works speak to each other beyond cultural and geographical differences and contribute towards our understanding of global issues and experiences.

## Introduction

This chapter will group the most important data on the lives and development, philosophies, life experiences, education, and visions of two popular literary figures: Thomas Stearns Eliot and Gibran Khalil Gibran. The course of this investigation will encompass an examination of the lives of each author, with a focus on the similarities and differences that have shaped their identities and contributed to their literary output. Eliot is acknowledged as one of the most significant British-American poets, playwrights, and essayists of the twentieth century. He is thus one of the great pioneers of the modernist movement in literature. His works, like most of the great spiritual literature of the world, are immersed in deep mysticism and examine modernity, tradition, the spiritual and human destiny. Lebanese American artist, poet, and philosopher Gibran Khalil, in his prose, poetry, and philosophical works, dealt with a variety of these themes and much more. Starting from their early formative years and intellectual pursuits, we would take a deep look into the philosophical perspectives. In so doing, we will explore how influences in their lives would help us understand their perspectives on the world. A comparison of their influences will help our research to get to a realisation of the larger cultural and intellectual achievements that swept their age.

## T.S Eliot's Life and Work

Thomas Stearns Eliot was born on September 26, 1888, in St. Louis, Missouri, United States. He was the second of two male siblings and the seventh child of a family with a long lineage dating back to England. His father, Henry Ware Eliot, was a successful businessman and an owner of a brick manufacturing company. Mr. Eliot graduated from Washington University, which was founded by the poet's paternal grandfather, William Greenleaf Eliot. The poet's ancestral roots can be traced back to Andrew Eliot, who emigrated from New

England (Bloom 14). His mother, Charlotte Champe Stearns Eliot, was an erudite woman with a keen interest in literature and religion; she published several works like *William Greenleaf Eliot: Minister, Educator, Philanthropist* in 1904 (Miller 11).

T. S. Eliot grew up in a family that nurtured his sense of art and established the foundation for his subsequent literary works. During his early years of education, Eliot attended Smith Academy in St. Louis, where he excelled academically and showed great passion for the study of philosophy and literature. He entered Harvard University in 1906 to study philosophy for his Bachelor of Arts degree (Behr 1–2). Eliot was deeply involved in the study of classical literature, philosophy, and languages at Harvard, where he developed a deep respect for the writings of authors such as Dante, Shakespeare, and French Symbolists like Arthur Symons. After completing his undergraduate studies, he travelled to Europe where he began studying philosophy, attending Henri Bergson's lectures for a year at the Sorbonne in Paris (Behr 5). He studied German literature and philosophy and read the works of Friedrich Nietzsche and Arthur Schopenhauer during his stay in Germany. He returned to Harvard University in 1914 to pursue graduate studies in philosophy, then he finished his doctoral thesis at Harvard in 1916, but he was never awarded a degree because he did not return to the university to defend the thesis (Bloom 17).

Eliot started to take his writing process more seriously during this period to make a living, using his unique style to publish his essays and poems in student magazines. He also proofread for other writers<sup>9</sup> and worked in Lloyds Bank's foreign section for nine years until 1926. He was hired by Geoffrey Faber as a literary editor for Faber and Gwyer, which later became Faber and Faber (Bloom 19).

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<sup>9</sup> Eliot proofread James Joyce's *Ulysses*.

A mix of writers influenced T.S. Eliot from diverse cultures, philosophical, and literary traditions that shaped his intellectual and artistic development. He was exposed to the writings of many writers and poets of different nationalities and ideologies in his life, and this motivated him to pursue academic endeavours in philosophy and classical languages, foundations that helped enrich his later literary achievements.

One of the figures that inspired Eliot was the British Idealist philosopher F.H. Bradley<sup>10</sup>. Eliot got high esteem and wrote his doctoral dissertation on an epistemological problem raised by Bradley's metaphysics under the title *Knowledge and Experience in the Philosophy of F.H. Bradley* (Frank 1), Frank believes that Bradley is also the source of inspiration for Eliot to the “Objective Correlative” theory that Eliot applied in his work, then he explained it in his essay on Shakespear’s *Hamlet 1919* with :

The only way of expressing emotion in the form of art is by finding an “objective correlative”; in other words, a set of objects, a situation, a chain of events which shall be the formula of that particular emotion; such that when the external facts, which must terminate in sensory experience, are given, the emotion is immediately evoked. (Kenner 257)

Although Eliot did not mention Friedrich Nietzsche directly in his published works, both were interested in Greek myth and tragedy, the aesthetics of creative artistic creation, and the question of future art, but in his correspondence and criticism, Eliot seems to have been influenced by Nietzsche's ideas, praising Nietzsche's aesthetic ideas (Zilcosky 21–22).

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<sup>10</sup> Francis Herbert Bradley (1846-1924) was a British idealist philosopher known for his influential work, *Appearance and Reality* (1893), which advocated a monistic perspective unifying logic, metaphysics, and ethics. As the first British philosopher to receive the Order of Merit, Bradley's career at Oxford's Merton College allowed him the freedom to pursue philosophy without teaching commitments.

Eliot admits in his “A Talk on Dante” that both Charles Baudelaire<sup>11</sup> and Jules Laforgue<sup>12</sup> had influenced him in the way he viewed their poetry, in the sense that he learned from Baudelaire the lyrical possibilities of combining the matter-of-fact and the fantastic to navigate through the different aspects of modern life. For Eliot, this ability opened up new possibilities for poetic art. Eliot learned from Laforgue that it was possible to write poetry from his experiences growing up in a rapidly industrialising America. These two poets inspired Eliot to question traditional ideas about the subject matter of poetry and to look for beauty and inspiration in unlikely places (3).

When Eliot came to mention Dante Alighieri he demonstrated his deep admiration and the impact that he left on him and he expressed it: “I have written because that poet has meant so much to me, but not about myself, but about that poet and his poetry. That is, the first impulse to write about a great poet is one of gratitude, but the reasons for which one is grateful may play a very small part in a critical appreciation of that poet” (4).

We must join the figures above with Ezra Pound, who was not only a friend to Eliot, but also played a huge role in shaping the poem “The Waste Land”, he edited the first manuscript and suggested to Eliot some changes before its publication, adding to that, Pound was considered as a mentor to Eliot (Cogut 1).

Another major influence on his development was his religious upbringing. At a young age, Eliot was Unitarian due to his family roots, citing his grandfather who founded the First Congregational in St. Louis, Missouri and served as a priest there for several years. In 1927, Eliot converted to Anglicanism, which brought a spiritual depth to his work and increased the

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<sup>11</sup> Charles Baudelaire (1821-1867) was a French poet known for "Les Fleurs du mal," which delves into urban decay and existential themes, pioneering modern poetry with his innovative use of symbolism.

<sup>12</sup> Jules Laforgue (1860-1887) was a French poet associated with Symbolism, known for his use of irony and free verse, exploring existential themes with a whimsical and humorous sensibility, influencing later poets such as T.S. Eliot and Ezra Pound.



relevance of his exploration of issues such as sin, redemption, and the search for meaning in a secular age (Tamplin 35). In addition, his involvement in literary modernism and inspiration from figures such as Ezra Pound, James Joyce, and Virginia Woolf led to his blending of experimental techniques and fragmented narrative in his poetry, resulting in innovative and intellectually rigorous works.

The influence of his interaction with The Lost Generation<sup>13</sup> had a major impact on his productivity. As a noted member of this movement, Eliot interacted with authors like Ernest Hemingway, F. Scott Fitzgerald, and Ezra Pound, and as a result, his poetry dealt with existential anxiety, disillusionment, alienation, and disbelief (Glicksberg 5). Eliot incorporated the innovative methods and disjointed storytelling of his peers into his writing; this is especially notable in “The Waste Land”, where he examined the state of mind of a fragmented generation struggling with the effects of war and the collapse of antiquated beliefs. Eliot became a major figure in the literary world in the early 20th century because his language was in line with the concerns and feelings of that troubled time in history (Coote and Loughrey 9).

Throughout his life, T. S. Eliot encountered numerous events that left a lasting impact on him. One such event was his marriage to Vivienne Haigh-Wood. Despite her being an impulsive woman with a keen sense of living and an admiration for Eliot's poetry, their marriage ultimately proved to be a failure for both parties involved. Bertrand Russell<sup>14</sup> suggested to Eliot to share with him the same flat, and he accepted that, but soon, his wife started to have a relationship with Russell, and Eliot knew that. Russell broke that relationship

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<sup>13</sup> the name given by Gertrude Stein to a group of writers and artists disillusioned by the effects of World War I.

<sup>14</sup> Bertrand Russell was a British philosopher, logician, mathematician, historian, writer, social critic, political activist, and Nobel laureate. He is one of the most important philosophers of the 20th century. He was a prominent figure in the early development of analytic philosophy and was influential in the development of logical positivism. Russell was awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1950 in recognition of his numerous literary achievements and his contributions to the advancement of human thought.

after and broke up with her in 1918, and then she had other relations with other men. In 1919, Eliot's father died before he could forgive him for initially rejecting his idea of marrying Vivian and his idea of emigrating. This event triggered a nervous breakdown for Eliot, prompting him to spend three months in a sanitarium in Switzerland to recuperate. Eliot worked on "The Waste Land" during that period. His wife's fate took a different turn; she was deemed mentally unstable, and her brother had her institutionalised. She remained confined until she died in 1947 in a private mental hospital in Stoke Newington (Bloom 17; Tamplin 29). Later on, in 1957, Eliot married his secretary Valerie Fletcher, who had worked for him for the previous seven years; the marriage was a successful and happy one (Tamplin 31).

Eliot marked the 20th century with his diversified works<sup>15</sup>, poems, plays, and essays. He published his first poem *Smith Academy Record* in 1905, *The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock* (1915). In 1922, he published "The Waste Land" in *Criterion*<sup>16</sup>, the magazine that he was directing. In this work, he dealt with the collapse of modern society and the aftermath of WWI, but soon his poetry started to emphasise more religious and philosophical themes because he adopted Anglicanism. This was demonstrated in the poems "The Hollow Men" (1925) and "Ash Wednesday" (1930). In addition to his poetry, Eliot was a noted writer and critic; his work includes *The Sacred Wood* (1920) and "Tradition and Individual Talent" (1919), which highly influenced twentieth-century literary criticism.

T.S. Eliot's influence on poets and critics extended beyond his literary work, through his influential theories and essays that did more than just challenge traditional concepts of poetry. In his essay "Tradition and Individual Talent," Eliot suggested that poetry should move beyond the personal and emotional realm, and be a platform for the whole of human

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<sup>15</sup> T.S. Eliot produced a vast body of work, including poetry, plays, essays, and literary criticism, totaling over 40 major pieces.

<sup>16</sup> The Criterion: Literary magazine founded by T.S. Eliot in 1922, shaping modernism and publishing works by writers like Ezra Pound, Virginia Woolf, and James Joyce. Eliot edited until 1939, featuring essays, reviews, poetry, and fiction..

existence and not just personal feelings. Eliot argues that the greatness of poetry comes not from the poet's immersion in his emotions but from his connection to the shared wisdom of the literary tradition. The poet brings the influences of the past into an ongoing intergenerational conversation and achieves this by internalising other work. This theory denies the romantic belief that suggests the implication of spontaneous emotions of the individual, and advocates for disciplined work with much attention to objective distance (Tamplin 102).

In his essay “The Metaphysical Poets” (1921), he goes right to the root of the critique of modern poetry, where he mentions the concept of “dissociation of sensibility”, and there he shows a profound separation between thought and emotional expression in discourse. For Eliot, when poets fail to connect between the heart and the mind, the result will be the decline of poetry's impact. By reuniting thought and feeling, poets could achieve a deeper understanding of human experience and evoke more profound emotional responses from their readers (Tamplin 109). In the 20th century, this was “the product of a society whose politico-economic and cultural institutions at once privilege and fragment the individual (Shusterman 46).”

Eliot received several awards and honours for the great achievements and work that he provided to the world throughout his life. In 1948, he received the Nobel Prize in Literature for his outstanding contribution to present-day poetry. In the same year, he was appointed the Order of Merit <sup>17</sup> for his achievements in different fields, and for his verse drama *The Cocktail Party* that was first performed in 1949. He won the Tony Award for Best Play in 1950, and for his contributions to the understanding and appreciation of Dante Alighieri's writings, he was honoured with the Dante Medal by the Dante Society of America in 1959. In

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<sup>17</sup> An honour granted by the British monarch to individuals for exceptional achievements in the fields of the arts, literature, science, and public service.

addition to all those awards and recognition of his significant contributions to literature and culture, President Lyndon B. Johnson awarded him the Presidential Medal of Freedom in 1964. On January 4, 1965, Eliot died at the age of 76 in London, England. His death was the end of a prodigious literary career that influenced modern poetry and criticism, and to memorialise him, his portrait was placed in the Poet's Corner at Westminster Abbey (Miller Jr 414).

### **Gibran Khalil Gibran's Biography**

Gibran Khalil Gibran, the Mahjar poet <sup>18</sup>, was a philosopher, prose writer, and artist. While Arabs refer to him as Jubran Khalil Jubran, for the rest of the world, he is known as Khalil Gibran. He played a crucial role in the development of Arab American literature. Gibran was born to a Christian family in the landscape of Lebanon in 1883 and passed away in 1931 at the age of 48. True to his wishes, he was laid to rest in Bişerri Village.

Gibran was born in Bişerri, an isolated village where he faced many difficulties and financial troubles. Despite that, he was a dreamer, hardworking, energetic, and a workaholic who always wanted to be recognized for his achievements and perhaps that is what led him to America where talent and genius are appreciated. Gibran did not have formal education because there were no public schools and most education was provided by priests, but his family was not interested in that. However, there was a man named Selim Dahir who became like a teacher and friend to him. This man had many talents like poetry, painting, medicine, and teaching. Even though he did not pursue writing or painting as a profession, he had a big influence on many lives in his village. Khalil learned the basics of reading and writing from this great man and he introduced him to a vast world of knowledge through books of history,

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<sup>18</sup> The Mahjar poets were early 20th-century Arab émigré writers in the Americas who revitalised modern Arabic literature by blending Western influences with Arabic traditions. They focused on themes of cultural identity and social reform.

atlases, and scientific instruments. Gibran was grateful and thanked Selim by writing him an elegy in 1913 (Gibran and Gibran 17,15).

Gibran's relationship with his father was strained, and he never felt close to him. He harboured a deep fear of his father, Khalil Gibran, who was often nervous, intoxicated, and prone to gambling. Despite the tension, Gibran kept this troubled relationship hidden. In contrast, his mother, Kamileh Rahmeh, was a religious and tolerant woman with no formal education, yet she possessed great intelligence and wisdom. Gibran held deep feelings of affection and admiration for his mother, who exerted a significant influence on him. This influence is evident in Gibran's work "al-Ajniha al-Mutakassira"<sup>19</sup>, where he demonstrates the importance and respect he held for his mother (Bushrui and Jenkins 24–25). This reverence for his mother may also explain why Gibran frequently incorporated verses from the Bible into his writings.

However, this is not the only reason behind using biblical verses in his writing. He admired the style used in the King James Bible, which has a special way of writing that makes the original Hebrew and Greek texts sound consistent. Gibran's writing often reflects the style of the New Testament. He also appreciated the poetic language and tone of *The Song of Solomon*<sup>20</sup>, which we can notice influence in *The Prophet's* theme "beauty" ( Bushrui 54). Additionally, Christianity, particularly the teachings of the New Testament, significantly influenced Gibran's thinking. Raymond Cobin's book, *Spiritual Tendency in the Literature of Gibran and Naimy*, argues that Jesus became Gibran's closest companion from his early years, and Christian teachings left an indelible mark on his philosophical outlook (Altabaa and Hamawiya 107).

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<sup>19</sup> In English, this means the broken wings, originally published in 1912.

<sup>20</sup> The Song of Solomon, also called Canticle of canticles, is an old testament book that belongs to the third section of the biblical canon, known as the *ketuvim*, or writings.

In 1895, during the Ottoman Empire, facing financial troubles and hardships, many saw America as a fresh start, a chance to build a new and better life and the idea of the American Dream gave people hope that they could succeed and be free. Gibran's mother decided to move him and his siblings to Boston. This town was the right destination because it was the second-largest Syrian community and his cousins and friends were in Oliver Place, which is a part of Chinatown today. He pursued education and art, leaving an indelible mark on both fields ( Bushrui and Jenkins 39)

While Gibran was growing and improving, his mother wanted him to return to his origins, learn about their heritage, and improve his Arabic language. Upon his return to Lebanon, he enrolled in the Maronite school called Al-Hikmah, founded by the father Youssef Al Debs in 1875, where he was taught by Youssef Haddad who was impressed by Gibran's style and thoughts. Since then, all his writings have been in Arabic and have been inspired by the beauty of the Lebanese landscape, especially his village (Bushrui and Jenkins 59).

Gibran returned to America again in 1902. In 1903, he began writing prose poems, a style that appeared in *Dama wa- Ibtissama* (1914). His Arabic works include *Al-Musiqa* (1905), *Ara'is al-Muruj* (1905), *Al-Arwah al-Mutamarrida* (1908), *Al-Ajniha al-Mutakassira* (1912), *Al-Mawakeb* (1918), *Al-Awasif* (1920), and *Al-Badia wa-Al-Taraif* (1923) It was during that time that Gibran emerged as an influential figure in both English and Arabic literature (Ansary 35). In 1920, Gibran played a central role with Mikhail Naima, Nassib Arida, and Abdel-Massih Haddad in establishing the "Pen League" for Arab writers, known as "Al-Rabita al-Qalamiyya". This period was the most successful in the career of Gibran, and his writings in both English and Arabic were widely recognized.

Gibran met a remarkable individual named Ameen Rihani<sup>21</sup>, whose influence on him was profound. Gibran held Rihani in high regard, admiring his wisdom, talent, and prowess as both a poet and a teacher. Both hailing from Lebanon and born into Maronite Christian families, they relocated to America at the age of twelve. Rihani's significance to Gibran stemmed from being the first Arab to pen poetry and novels in English. His seminal work, *The Book of Khalid*, published in 1911, left a lasting impression on Gibran, serving as a catalyst for him to embark on his own English writing journey (Bushrui and Jenkins 96, 99).

Gibran's motivation to begin writing in English was likely rooted in his desire to awaken Western audiences to the essence of humanity. According to Bushrui<sup>22</sup> and Jenkins, there were occasions, particularly during the war years, when Gibran found life in the West to be uncomfortable, even intolerable (7). This discomfort may have fuelled his resolve to use his writing as a means to bridge cultural divides and foster understanding between East and West.

Between 1908 and 1910, with the support of Mary Elizabeth Haskell, the owner of the Cambridge School, Gibran travelled to Paris for art studies, focusing primarily on painting. He was also introduced to French Romantic literature, particularly French Romantic works. Despite not mastering the French language, he read translated texts such as *Atala* by François-René de Chateaubriand and *Les Misérables* by Victor Hugo (Bushrui and Jenkins 56).

During Gibran's time in Paris, he was influenced by William Blake and felt a strong connection to him. Both men believed in prophetic vision, freedom, unity, and the importance of humanity's awakening. In Gibran's book *Jesus, the Son of Man*, published in 1928, he

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<sup>21</sup> Ameen Rihani, a Lebanese American writer, intellectual, and political activist, played a significant role in the mahjar literary movement—a community of Arab emigrants in North America. He was an early advocate of Arab nationalism and obtained American citizenship in 1901.

<sup>22</sup> An internationally recognized authority on the work of Kahlil Gibran. He is the Director of the Kahlil Gibran Chair on Values and Peace at the University of Maryland at College Park.

pictured Jesus as William Blake did, portraying him as a man of strength and kindness who forgives and empathises with those whom society condemns, like thieves and prostitutes. This influence of Blake's ideas can be seen in Gibran's earlier work *Sand and Foam* (Bushrui and Jenkins 103). Gibran admired William Blake very much and confessed his impact on his literary works and he appreciated Blake's writings. According to Al Khazraji et al, "Gibran told his closest friend Mikhail Naimy: "I shall be happy when men shall say about me what they said of Blake" (13).

In his article, Nijland Cornelius said: "Nu'ayma was so much impressed by the fact that Gibran had come under the influence of Nietzsche" (Nijland 9). Nietzsche had a big influence on European thinking almost as big as Karl Marx's. Gibran discovered the work of the German philosopher Fredrick Nietzsche, who is considered the loneliest and greatest thinker of the 19th century and he was more fascinated by Nietzsche's ideas when he read his book *Thus Spake Zarathustra* which was like a holy text for poets. Even though some people in Paris thought reading Nietzsche was just a trend, many writers admitted that they were influenced by him. During his time, Germany became a dominant force in Europe, with the progress of technology and science.

However, Nietzsche saw this era as nihilistic and believed that progress was meaningless and felt that people were blind to the truth that God is dead and this message in his book affected Gibran, making him question the meaning of morality, love, and the death of God. Also, the German writer believed that humans could elevate themselves to a higher level of existence by embarrassing their inner power and shaping their destiny through the will to power. He also criticised traditional morality, nationalism, and organised religion, especially Christianity through his character Zarathustra who was described as a wise prophet and used biblical language (Bushrui and Jenkins 93–94).



Gibran started spending more time alone in Paris and he began exploring and studying European literature. After his time in Paris, he relocated to New York, where he made the pivotal decision to begin writing in English. This transition was facilitated by Mary Haskell's assistance in refining his manuscripts. Gibran's first English book was *The Madman* (1918). After that, he produced several other notable works including *Twenty Drawings* (1919), *The Forerunner* (1920), *The Prophet* (1923), and *Sand and Foam* (1926), *The wanderer* (1933). Gibran employs wisdom stories throughout his works, from *The Madman* to *The wanderer*. These stories are written in a figurative and imaginative style that is not new to Arab literature and they can be seen as Arab reflections presented in the English language or a translation from an oriental source. Gibran believed that the Arab world had a rich treasure of mystical philosophy that outsiders had not explored yet. His early work showed a deep understanding of mystical ideas particularly Sufi thoughts as seen in his Arabic book "al-Awasif, where he wrote about important Sufi figures such as Ibn al-Farid<sup>23</sup>, al-Ghazali, and Ibn Sina, seeing them as spiritually aligned with his own beliefs (Bushrui and Jenkins 21, 15).

Gibran's early writings revealed a profound grasp of mystical concepts, particularly those rooted in Sufi philosophy. He held great admiration for Sufi luminaries such as Ibn al-Farid, al-Ghazali, and Ibn Sina, recognizing a spiritual kinship between their ideas and his own beliefs. Despite being raised within the Maronite Christian tradition, Gibran's worldview was significantly shaped by Islamic influences, particularly Sufi mysticism. His upbringing in Lebanon, a land marked by religious diversity and historical conflicts, contributed to Gibran's

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<sup>23</sup> Ibn al-Farid (1182-1235 C.E.), the supreme master of mystical odes, was born in Cairo. A devoutly religious youth, his hour of illumination occurred on the Hajj to Mecca. Many of his odes celebrate the hills and valleys around the holy city, scenes endeared by the visions and ecstasies they recalled to his mind. After fifteen years he returned to Cairo where

conviction in the unity of religions. Moreover, his parents instilled in him a rejection of religious prejudice, fostering a mindset of tolerance and openness (Bushrui and Jenkins 29). This inclusive perspective led Gibran to embrace the teachings of Islam, especially its mystical dimensions, as he sought to transcend sectarian boundaries and embrace the universal truths inherent in all faiths.

Actually, in *The Prophet*, the character of Almustafa resembles more to Muhammad (peace be upon him). Both Almustafa and the Muslim Prophet aimed to guide humanity toward righteousness, compassion, and a deeper connection with the Divine. Both of them emphasised the significance of prayer. They taught that prayer was a direct connection between the believer and God. Almustafa's statement, "God listens not to your words save when he himself utters them through your lips"<sup>(77)</sup>, resonates with the idea that prayer is a sacred dialogue where God's presence is felt. Additionally, in the same discussion on prayer, Almustafa expresses ideas that are closely related to Sufi teachings (Bushrui 55).

Khalil Gibran was influenced by the myths of Adonis and Astarte from Greek mythology - symbolising desire, beauty, love and rebirth -also his country's landscapes and cultural richness played an important role in forming his perspectives and his artistic expressions. Nature poets such as William Wordsworth, John Keats, and William Blake, as well as American nature poets such as Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry David Thoreau and Walt Whitman, influenced Gibran. He became an environmentally conscious writer in the early 20th century and he drew powerful imagery from nature in his writing and saw nature as a source of symbols that informed the emotional and intellectual elements of his poetry (Bushrui 1). He was inspired by the plains, the flowing waterfalls, the various valleys ( the Qadisha valley<sup>24</sup>) in his village and the big mountains that made him feel sacred. Even at the

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<sup>24</sup> The Qadisha valley means "The Holy Valley" and is located in Northern Lebanon.

age of eight, he drew the cedar tree near their house, which explains the influence of nature and landscapes on the emotions and thoughts of Gibran, and reflected later in his writings (Gibran and Gibran 13). Throughout *The Prophet*, Gibran draws inspiration from natural elements such as the sea, the wind, and the sun. Khalil Gibran's use of nature elements invites readers to connect with the natural world, find wisdom in its rhythms, and explore the depths of their souls.

Many writers such as the British scholar Robin Waterfield, Raymonde Cobin, and Mikhail Naimy Khalil Gibran have explored the life of Khalil Gibran and his work, showing his big touch on Arabic and American literature. Although his works have been translated into many languages and globally recognized, Gibran has been less appreciated in the United States than other American poets "including Walt Whitman and T.S. Eliot (Altabaa and Hamawiya 103). However, according to *the New Yorker Journal* by Joan Acocella, Khalil Gibran was classified as the third best-selling poet of all time; his book *The Prophet* has sold more than nine million copies in America alone, its sales increased more in the 1960s, even during the great depression. The book was used in many contexts, such as weddings, funerals, and even in advertisements for different services and products, there are also public schools in Brooklyn, and Yonkers named for Gibran.

*The Prophet*, published in 1923, is a collection of twenty-six wisdom prose poems. Each part talks about different facets of life and world issues. Gibran shares ideas about the perfect city and takes his inspiration from different religions (Al-Khazraji et al 13). According to Buchrui and Jenkins, *The Prophet* is "neither pure literature, nor pure philosophy"; it is a mixture of the two, which makes him more unique. Bushrui in his article asserts that *The Prophet* is described as a solution to the conflict in the world and the message of Gibran is

seen as a source of healing the world that needs balance and harmony (5). The world was so interested in this book that it set sales records and got translated into many languages.

The style of Gibran's writing is still relevant today, and his ideas continue to find a place in the minds of readers all over the world (Soyer 40). The writer wanted to guide humanity to its essence and give advice for a peaceful and meaningful life. Indeed, *The Prophet* reminds us of the Islamic teachings, especially the name of the main character Almustafa, "It is a fact that Prophet Almustafa himself was a combination of Christianity and Islam mingled together in an artistic form" (Vicky 134). This illustrates his aspiration to unite these two distinct yet complementary religions, demonstrating that despite their disparate nomenclature, they share a common set of objectives.

Khalil Gibran faced the complexities of the twentieth century, and this is seen in his works, especially in *The Prophet*. The twentieth century was a period characterised by both crisis and promise; many scholars described it as a "Century of Light" and an "Age of Anxiety." Even though there was lightness, progress and hope, there was also conflict and anxiety. During that period, there were many events, the two big wars, changes in the economy, and a change in the perception of how people saw the world. Suheil Bushrui noted the twentieth century was an era of turbulence but creative experimentation also. Yeats, Eliot, Auden, Gibran, and other writers grappled with the complexities of their era, leaving behind a rich legacy of modernist literature that continues to inspire today (1).

We can underscore that Khalil Gibran belongs to the cohort of writers whose works directly engage with the challenges of the twentieth century. As World War I approached its end, Gibran eloquently remarked on the profound changes undergone by humanity in the preceding years, noting a palpable hunger for beauty and truth. The reverberations of the war deeply impacted societies, leaving them psychologically and spiritually fractured. Historians

acknowledge the pervasive moral and ethical decay that characterised this period, prompting Gibran to recognize the urgent need to steer people away from malevolent and immoral behaviour. His writings thus serve as a guiding beacon, offering solace and moral guidance in a world plagued by turmoil and uncertainty (Bushrui and Jenkins 13; Al-Khazraji et al. 14).

Gibran demonstrated exceptional skill in integrating ideas from a diverse array of sources, including Nietzsche's philosophy, Christianity, Islam, and the works of romantic poets such as William Blake and Wordsworth. Moreover, his experiences in various environments, like Lebanon, Paris, and New York, served as powerful symbols of unity in his writing. He can mix these influences and incorporate the world's rich variety of cultures and traditions. Gibran's vision, expressed in his writings, is a link between Eastern spirituality and Western ideas. This vision aimed to bring people together and enhance deeper understanding between cultures and traditions (Bushrui 5).

## **Conclusion**

From this comparative study of the lives and oeuvres of Eliot and Gibran, it is evident that both writers did not have a direct influence on each other; however, they were influenced by cultural and shared influences, artistic transition and European philosophy. While each poet carved a unique path shaped by their personal experiences, their literary contributions reflect a shared exploration of the human condition. Their exposure to European literature, particularly the works of William Blake, as we have seen in this chapter, played an important role in shaping their artistic visions. In addition, the influence of religious and philosophical ideologies, such as Christianity and the philosophical writings of Nietzsche, resonated in their writings, providing a unique blend of Eastern and Western perspectives. Both writers adopted modernist techniques that marked a departure from established literary norms. The literary legacies of Gibran and Eliot are characterised by the enduring influence of their works.

Gibran's *The Prophet* remains a timeless collection of wisdom while Eliot's "The Waste Land" remains a fundamental work of modernist literature. Despite varying degrees of recognition during their lifetimes, both poets left an indelible mark on literary discourse, and their words continue to resonate across cultures and generations.

“Be a community that calls for what is good, urges what is right, and forbids what is wrong: those who do this are the successful ones.”

(3:104 Quran)

## **Introduction**

As Global Comparatism seeks to understand how cultural products circulate and interact on a global scale, it is essential to study and analyse the works of T.S. Eliot's “The Waste Land” and Khalil Gibran's *The Prophet*. This analysis should encompass both the form and content of these texts through interdisciplinary fields, aiming to understand how the concept of human essence is universally portrayed across multiple boundaries. As argued in this work, despite being from very different environments and writing in completely different literary and cultural milieus, both authors bring deep insight into themes dealing with the complexities of their time and the quest for moral redemption in a fallen world. Through this lens, the authors stimulate readers by using imagination and philosophical exploration as they delve into the profound thoughts and timeless wisdom that flow from their unique writings. Our objective here is to shed light on the discovery of meaning by unveiling the differences and similarities, rather than simply analysing the findings. Eliot is known for his complexity, especially in poetry, dealing with modernity and searching for meaning in a fragmented world, while Gibran is known for his simplicity, with a thematic focus on love, freedom, and spirituality. His primary concerns are generally values and morality, which help him convey his message and touch readers on a universal scale.

## **“The Waste Land” & *The Prophet***

“The Waste Land” by T.S. Eliot and *The Prophet* by Khalil Gibran are two works, which have seen light at almost the same period. The work of Eliot is a poem of five sections, constituting 434 lines. Each section is a blend of voices and images from different cultures

and voices, reflecting modern life back then. The themes of the poem, such as spiritual emptiness and cultural decay, hit the feeling of the time well. On the other hand, *The Prophet* is written in prose poetry, speaking about a man named Almustafa, a wise and knowledgeable man who provides teachings to his people –people of Orphalese– before his departure. The text is divided into 26 essays where the author takes the reader on a journey. “The Waste Land” criticises what the society turned into, by depicting the chaos of the world after the world war, while *The Prophet* is about transmitting a message of wisdom and giving meaning amidst the chaos.

When comparing the narrative structures of the two texts, we notice a significant difference; “The Waste Land” is written with a fragmented narrative structure, with a five-section-division, each one focusing on a different aspect of modern society. The text has a series of voices, texts, and images, with the absence of a clear linear movement, and this non-linear structure reinforces the orientation of the reader, reflecting the chaos and confusion of the 20th century. In contrast, *The Prophet* tends to be more cohesive and linear with its structure, taking the form of a series of teachings delivered by Almustafa to the people of Orphalese. It is divided into different aspects of human life, such as love, work, freedom, and death. The narrative is written in the form of speeches given through wisdom to the audience. The text is rich with imaginative and poetic diction of language, and imagery, allowing the reader to have a journey moving through ideas and themes that Gibran intended to portray simply and attractively.

The tone employed in both texts is contrasting in their approaches when it comes to dealing with the human and humanity subject. Eliot's narrative voice is harsh and critical that looks into the spiritual and moral decay of modern society. The mood of sorrow, irony, and hopelessness gives the picture of a generation confused with the collapse of traditional values and in search of meaning in a barren, post-apocalyptic landscape. On the other hand, the tone



in *The Prophet* is deep and full of wisdom, kindness, and great respect for moral values. Almustafa's voice is a gentle and sympathetic guide, offering a sense of safety to people and inviting them to explore life's profound questions with an open mind and heart.

In Eliot's "The Waste Land," there is a mosaic of persons to reflect mostly the different ones of modern society, persons from Greek mythology, such as Tiresias, to indicate wisdom and blindness as a metaphor for the fragmented consciousness. Marie was mentioned in the "A Game of Chess" section, to represent the struggles of a modern woman trapped in a loveless marriage, and Lil from the same section represents the emptiness of modern relationships. However, the main character of *The Prophet* is Almustafa, a wise, compassionate, and humble man of a deep and complex character who discusses the aspects of life with wise words in a gentle and understanding way. What Gibran is trying to point out to us through Almustafa is that spiritual enlightenment and moral guidance were possible even in the midst of all that craziness in that time and era. The protagonist belonged to another world but was connected to the human experience to give people a perspective and inspiration for spiritual growth.

Eliot captures the disintegration of traditional values and coherence in post-World War I society; presenting his poem with a mosaic of voices, languages, and references from other cultures and works to reflect the chaotic state of that modern world. He also uses myth and symbolism with abundance, drawing many references from the Bible and classical myths from different cultural traditions to create a deeper level of complexity. Through the nonlinear narrative structure, the poem presents a flow of thought that reflects the fragmented nature of modern consciousness. His belief in his theory of "Talent and Tradition" was one of the reasons that made "The Waste Land" rich with intertextuality with historical events, literary works, and cultural texts that provided the text richness of meaning and interconnected it to the cultural and historical processes. The language in *The Prophet* is so

vivid and flowy. Gibran's writing style is simple, elegant, clear, and easy to understand. However, while simple, it is still powerful, and he manages to convey those complex ideas in the most beautiful, straightforward way.

### **Similar Themes, Different Perspectives**

Eliot and Gibran address the theme of love and relationships in their texts from different perspectives. Eliot represents love and relationships through disillusionment and emptiness as one of the reasons for societal decay. The poem gives examples of the breakdown of human connections and the degradation of the true meaning of relationships. An example of this is in the section “A Game of Chess,” where Eliot describes the conversation between a couple that is emotionally detached. The woman is depicted in a luxurious setting, surrounded by wealth and adorned with opulent furniture. However, her interaction with her partner is unstable and disconnected. The conversation shows a deep frustration, pointing to superficiality and the lack of real human warmth in relationships. This poem, as many critics and scholars have pointed out, is gloomy and without any romantic idealism, highlighting the harsh reality of working-class life and the pressures on women.

On the other hand, Khalil Gibran explores love and relationships with great insight and poetic beauty, providing insights into unconditional and pure love. In one passage, we read: “Love gives naught but itself and takes naught but from itself. Love possesses not nor would it be possessed; For love is sufficient unto love”(17). The most important thing about the message on love by Gibran is the fact that it is selfless and unconditional. According to Gibran, love seeks neither to possess nor to control, it lives for its own sake giving and receiving, but not trading. This, in turn, challenges most views of love in contemporary society as being possessive, transactional and materialistic. Gibran teaches a powerful lesson

and his vision of selfless and unconditional love challenges society to think deeply about their relationships to restore the broken connection between individuals.

Redemption and transformation are two other themes that Eliot and Gibran explore in their works. The fifth and final section “What the Thunder Said” is a sign of a possible hope of getting better and getting free from all that preceded in previous sections. Eliot uses references to the Ganges<sup>25</sup> and the Upanishads’ Augur enlightenment<sup>26</sup>, in the last line of the poem, he writes “Shantih shantih shantih” which himself explains in his annotations that it is a Sanskrit word meaning peace, and it was written in the Upanishads, that is significant. The poem indeed describes the world as a troubled one, but it suggests indirectly that there is a way to salvation through reawakening and reconnecting with deeper truths and higher values.

The idea of redemption and change runs deep in *The Prophet* through the teachings of Almustafa. For instance, in the part where Gibran talks about pain, Almustafa says that suffering and hard times can make us grow and even help us find forgiveness. “Your pain is the breaking of the shell that encloses your understanding”(60). This metaphor shows that experiencing pain may help to develop our understanding of self and the world around us, which can accordingly cause huge changes in our feelings toward ourselves and increase our emotional and spiritual maturity. Pain is a part of the human condition, accepting it not as a source of suffering but as an element of growth, also it can serve as a powerful motivator for change and redemption.

Another theme that is worth mentioning is the authors' different visions of spirituality. Eliot attempts to depict society through the lens of spiritual desolation, but Gibran tries to

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<sup>25</sup> The Ganges, a sacred river in Hinduism, is believed to purify sins and aid in attaining Moksha. Bathing in its waters and performing rituals along its banks are integral to Hindu spiritual practices.

<sup>26</sup> The Upanishads, ancient Indian texts, explore profound philosophical concepts and are considered key scriptures in Hinduism. They augur enlightenment by teaching about the ultimate reality (Brahman) and the self (Atman), guiding seekers towards spiritual knowledge and self-realisation.

provide spiritual guidance and enlightenment simultaneously. To illustrate this point, it would be interesting to refer to “The Burial of the Dead,” in which Eliot wrote that “April the cruellest month, Breeding” (1) as a reference to the month when Jesus was crucified and when Christ was slain, as a symbol to the death of religion that left the man alone, and a sign to the absence of spirituality in the modern world. He also used the motif of “The Unreal City”(60) referring to the lifeless period that followed World War I. He describes its people as mechanised inhabitants that were walking on the bridge of London, and this depiction of a dehumanised life in the urban cities, in such a society, superficiality overcomes spirituality, and people are represented as shadows, separated from each other, from themselves and from a higher purpose, it is here that modern society is criticised for its spiritual emptiness.

In *The Prophet*, Khalil Gibran portrays spiritual enlightenment as a complex and continuous process toward self-realisation, love, inner peace, and close connection with the divine. Gibran conveys that enlightenment is achievable through selfless love, continuous self-discovery, joyful work, and internal freedom. All these elements together lead humanity toward a deeper understanding of themselves and the universe, which leads to spiritual fulfilment and enlightenment. One of the most important aspects of spiritual enlightenment is knowledge. Almustafa claims that seeking knowledge is not just a means for acquiring information but is closer to the inner awareness of people and the world. Through the part tackling self-knowledge, Almustafa invites self-reflection as the way to enlightenment: “Say not, I have found the truth, but rather, I have found the truth. Say not, I have found the path of the soul. Say rather, I have met the soul walking upon my path” (63). This statement points out that self-discovery is a process and that truth and enlightenment cannot be terminal locations but proceed in their courses of growth and realisation. As a result, Gibran sheds light on the profound insights of the human condition concerning the journey of spiritual enlightenment, founded on the pursuit of knowledge.

It is interesting how “The Waste Land” and *The Prophet* offer contrasting yet complementary views on morality, the first is a demonstration of moral decay, and the second is a moral guidance. The title of Eliot's poem is a critique of the cultural degradation that the community has reached, as a society deprived of high human values, with no hesitation, he depicts that through a variety of examples touching on different aspects. In the section “The Fire Sermon,” the world is obsessed with ephemeral pleasures at the cost of real connection, mentioning that true love does not exist as it was, and now it is mechanised and emotionally free in terms of relationships. Eliot also refers to the polluted Thames River which once was only for pure water, as a symbol of corruption and morality decay, adding to that depiction the absence of the nymphs which is a sign of the departure of moral guidance.

*The Prophet* offers moral guidance that resonates with the 20th-century audience and provides a source of spiritual solace and moral clarity during existential crises, social upheavals, and fast changes of the 20th century. Gibran says “You shall be free indeed when your days are not without a care nor your nights without a want and a grief, but rather when these things girdle your life and yet you rise above them naked and unbound” (54) to mean that real freedom, achieved through strength of character and ethical living, provides a sense of moral guidance during a period of great flux and uncertainty.

Gibran deals with the human experience, striving to repair and guide society to restore human morals and values in a world that Eliot critiques and portrays as lost and distorted. Interestingly, the two texts are not directly connected; however, both serve as a wake-up call and guidance for 20th-century society.

## **Conclusion**

Through the lens of this chapter, we tried to compare the two texts to prove their utility for the comparative analysis of T.S. Eliot's poem "The Waste Land" and Khalil Gibran's *The Prophet*. From two diverse cultural contexts and different literary expressions, there seems to be a dwelling in both works on great themes like the human entity, moral redemption, or the critique of civilization. In contrast to Eliot, whose sophisticated, disorganised narrative reflects the turmoil of modernity, Gibran is unified and lyrical in prose, full of insight and advice. We get by looking at these texts an understanding of universal themes and particular cultural insight, showing how global comparatism enriches our perception of the role of literature within the global context.

In conclusion, through this comparative analysis of Thomas Stearns Eliot's "The Waste Land" and Khalil Gibran's *The Prophet*, our dissertation represented an attempt to examine the concept of humanity and the human condition in the context of the early 20th century. We tried to understand the universal issues that concern the essence of humanity in its globality. Initially, Eliot's "The Waste Land" is a poem with fragmented parts, full of allusions to an incredibly diverse array of literary, historical, and cultural references, dealing with the gloomy picture of the aftermath of World War I disillusionment and despair that made modern man suffer in screaming silence. In contrast, Gibran's *The Prophet* in the form of poetic essays tends to react positively, relying on spirituality, love, work, and death, among others. Despite their differences in style and theme, embrace the challenge and responsibility of redirecting humanity to the path of high values; one critiques, and the other guides.

Global Comparatism provided a great help in opening up a wider range of analysis that can integrate perspectives across literature, philosophy, cultural studies, history, and other disciplines. This multi-disciplinary approach added richness to our topic, leading it to a large dimension to deal with the two texts. For instance, knowing about the historical context in which both works were produced enabled the drawing of connections between socio-cultural and existential queries that Eliot and Gibran were looking for, leading the works together to create a fully rounded look at the human experience of the early 20th century from the faced challenges, also the possibilities that the man can reach if he fights peacefully starting by surpassing the previous challenges following the path of renewal and rebirth searching for redemption. Bringing these two distinct voices together, our analysis highlights the importance of a global outlook for this study. It shows that beneath the cultural and stylistic differences, there are shared human experiences that can always transcend place and time toward universality. The objective of this study is not limited to an enhanced

comprehension of the authors' works. It also aspires to contribute to the global discourse on humanity and the ongoing pursuit of meaning in a continuously evolving world.

After comparing the narrative structures of the two texts, it was obvious that there was a significant difference. Eliot writes in a fragmented narrative structure, reflecting modern society, by implementing a series of voices, texts, and images, to put the reader in disorientation and to feel himself in that dilemma, reflecting the chaos and confusion of that period. Conversely, *The Prophet* tends to be more simplified for the reader in a cohesive and linear structure, taking the form of a series of teachings and philosophical lessons, touching different aspects of human life. The narrative is presented in speeches imparting wisdom to the audience. The text of *The Prophet* moves through ideas and themes that Gibran intended to portray simply and attractively.

### **Summary of Findings**

Despite the differences in cultural, geographical, and linguistic backgrounds, Thomas Stearns Eliot and Gibran Khalil Gibran discussed almost the same themes of the human condition and humanity in the 20th century. The authors approached these issues from different perspectives but aimed at the same goal, which was to elevate humanity to higher values that support human existence. "The Waste Land" was a constructive criticism where Eliot was seeking the intellectual side of the modern man, to help him in his awakening to see things from their real perspective, and to capture what humanity was turning into, it was like a slap in that we give to a person in a coma in hope to reanimate and bring him back to the conscious state. Even though the accent was harsh and presented in a hard way, or it can go to a gloomy perspective, there was hope under all that in getting humanity on its feet after that decay, especially after all the events that dragged it to those conditions.



Contrary to this, Gibran demonstrates a clear inclination towards optimism, and his work focuses on the inner world and demonstrates that change will come from the inside by peacefully embracing the high values of humanity. The focus is on the spiritual side, with an intensive preoccupation and an invitation for a better connection between all entities, internal and external ones. Gibran chose a didactic approach to spread his hope easily and simplistically, where almost anyone can feel the meaning before fully understanding it. In other words, Gibran addresses the emotional side of humanity.

Our findings prove that the distinct backgrounds of the two authors did not prevent them from addressing the same global concern. For both, the mission was noble and universal, illustrating that themes of humanity transcend cultural and geographical boundaries, through their texts rich and laden with values, to inspire and enlighten humanity leading a life of illumination and connection.

### **Recommendations for Further Research**

Our study introduces a comparison between two of the great outstanding works of literature, “The Waste Land” and *The Prophet*, through the recent Global Comparatism methodology in a relatively new literary scholarship. This new methodology allowed us to explore the similarities and differences between the texts in a broad perspective, thematically from the social, historical, and cultural scenes. The methodology was a challenge since analysing a vast array of resources is necessary to understand completely the entire existing themes at hand. Positively, this methodology enriched our research by affording a wholeness of view on humanity as represented by both authors.

For future research, we suggest analysing themes other than those adopted in our study. Researchers should collect all relevant sources that link the two texts and learn more about them. Additionally, we can emphasise that this topic is too multi-angle to be analysed

in just a few pages. The more perspectives and multiple viewpoints, the more in-depth and valuable the research and its findings will be. This topic can be characterised by a great deal of depth and comprehensiveness, and this offers the possibility of reaching tremendous insights and findings.

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## ملخص

ونحن نستكشف العملين الرائعين لتوماس ستيرنز إليوت في قصيدته "الأرض اليباب" وجبران خليل جبران في كتابه "النبي"، من المهم أن نضع هاتين التحفتين في سياق أوائل القرن العشرين، عندما بدأ كل شيء في حالة من التغيير. كان العالم ينتقل من العصر الفيكتوري إلى العصر الحديث مع التصنيع السريع والصراع العالمي والأسئلة الوجودية المتصاعدة. كان الفنانون والكتّاب يحاولون فهم هذا العالم الجديد، وملاحقة الجزء المعقد من التجربة الإنسانية في فوضى ذلك التغيير. يُظهر هذان العملان على وجه الخصوص مشاعر القلق والأمل في وقت واحد. "الأرض اليباب" عمل حدائثي ينتقد ويصور الإحساس بخيبة الأمل واليأس بعد الحرب العالمية الأولى، ومن ناحية أخرى، كان هناك كتاب "النبي" لجبران خليل جبران المليء بالتفاؤل تجاه الإنسانية، ليوجهنا ويدعونا إلى تنمية حكمتنا الداخلية و نمونا الروحي. من خلال تجميع ما قاله الباحثون الآخرون عن العملين، وإضافة بعض الأفكار الجديدة من خلال تحليلنا للأعمال، ستساعدنا هذه المذكرة على فهم كيف يمكن للأدب أن يغير ويساعد على معرفة المزيد عن الحالة الإنسانية، كما أنها تثبت أن ما كتبه إليوت وجبران لا يزال قابلاً للتطبيق حتى اليوم حيث يستطيع الناس من جميع أنحاء العالم التعرف على أفكارهما على نطاق عالمي.

## Résumé

Alors que nous explorons les grandes œuvres de Thomas Stearns Eliot dans son poème "La Terre Dévastée" et de Gibran Khalil Gibran dans son livre *Le Prophète*, il est important de replacer ces deux chefs-d'œuvre dans le contexte du début du vingtième siècle, où tout semblait être en train de changer. Le monde passait de l'ère victorienne à l'ère moderne, avec une industrialisation rapide, des conflits mondiaux et les questions existentielles surgissent. Les artistes et les écrivains tentaient de donner un sens à ce nouveau monde, en recherchant les éléments complexes de l'expérience humaine dans le chaos de ce changement. Ces deux œuvres en particulier témoignent à la fois des angoisses et des espoirs de leur époque. "La Terre Dévastée" est une œuvre moderniste qui critique et capture le sentiment de désillusion et de désespoir après la Première Guerre mondiale. D'un autre côté, il y a *Le Prophète* de Gibran, plein d'optimisme pour l'humanité, qui nous guide pour cultiver notre sagesse intérieure et notre croissance spirituelle. En compilant ce que d'autres chercheurs ont dit sur les deux œuvres et en y ajoutant de nouvelles idées issues de notre propre analyse, cette dissertation nous aidera à comprendre comment la littérature peut changer et nous aider à apprendre davantage sur la condition humaine, et prouvera que ce qu'Eliot et Gibran ont écrit est toujours applicable aujourd'hui et leurs idées peuvent être reconnues par des personnes du monde entier, à l'échelle mondiale.