



I SPY, WITH MY LITTLE EYE
 . . . one of the mystic illustrations in Gibran's work

—Barr-Afaganis photo

Seventy-six reprintings indicate value of Prophet to Knopf

THE PROPHET by Kahlil Gibran.
 Alfred A. Knopf, \$5.00

The Arabic countries of the Middle East have seen the rise and flourishing of many mystic cultures since the Middle Ages. The Islamic religion seems to have been conducive to the growth of poetry and prophesy embodied in the works of Kahlil Gibran.

When one reads *The Prophet*, he is aware of some great force beyond the mere words. It is as if the author has somehow been plugged in to the heavens and when he is turned on, there is a surge of power which drives him to express that which he experiences.

The Prophet methodically treats of the different things important to human experience. There is a dis-

course on Love, on Marriage, on Time, on Religion, and on Death. With these lofty subjects, Gibran writes also on the mundane aspects of life: Work, Houses, Clothes, Buying and Selling.

"Almustafa, the chosen and the beloved", is the Prophet. He stays twelve years in the city of Orphalese where his meditations are rewarded with wisdom. Finally a ship comes to carry him back to the place of his birth, but before he goes the people of the city ask him to tell them all that has been shown to him between birth and death. He speaks to them of what is moving within their souls.

As the people ask him to speak on subjects they put forth, the Prophet unfolds the wisdom of his heart and his mind. Of children he says, "They are the sons and daughters of Life's longing for it-

self." Of pain he says, "Your pain is the breaking of the shell that encloses your understanding."

The questions of the people, led by Almitra the seeress, at last arrive at Death. The Prophet tells them to look into life to find the secret of death, "For life and death are one, even as the river and the sea are one."

Bidding farewell to the people of Orphalese, the Prophet boards the ship which is to carry him away, but as he leaves on his greatest journey he assures the people he will return to them. When he is gone Almitra meditates on his words, "A little while, a moment of rest upon the wind, and another woman shall bear me."

There is a collection of twelve mystical drawings done by the author spaced at intervals through the book. They are more than simple emphasis to the words of the Prophet. They are attempts to graphically express the sometimes metaphysical, sometimes mystical truths which he proclaims. The drawings culminate in a powerful expression of the death and life continuum.

Although Gibran was Lebanese, the United States was his home for the last twenty years of his life. *The Prophet* was written during this time, in 1923. This work is considered to be Gibran's masterpiece, so all of America is not hostile to artists.

The Prophet is valuable as a teacher or guide to meditations regardless of the professed beliefs of the reader. The style is simple and direct, yet the power is deep and moving. The glimpse into the forces of mysticism afforded by *The Prophet* make it well worth experiencing.

—John Green

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films

I don't know how many of you are necrophilia-fanciers like me, but if you're looking for a really great metaphysical shudder, a love-death to make your flesh creep, let me recommend warmly a sequence from an interesting decadent movie now corrupting the minds of Albertans at the Paramount, to wit, *The Professionals*.

Let me set the situation up for you. Burt Lancaster is one of four men dedicated to rescuing, for money, the Mexican wife of an American billionaire-bully, who's been captured and held for ransom by Mexican revolutionaries, vintage 1919.

It emerges (actually quite a lot of the wife, Claudia Cardinale, keeps emerging too; I'd never have thought that anyone could make it across the Mexican badlands so consistently *en dishabille*) that the wife is really in love with her "kidnapper" (Jack Palance enjoying himself) and wants the ransom money for the sake of the Revolution.

Two of the professionals, Lancaster and Lee Marvin, are ex-revolutionary fighters themselves; Lancaster loves shooting and dynamiting for the fun of it, and Marvin has been embittered by the loss of his wife, tortured to death by the Mexican government troops.

Anyway, Marvin and Lancaster used to be comrades in arms with Palance, and the reason the film is called *The Professionals* is that Marvin and Lancaster aren't going to let this fact get in the way of "rescuing" Cardinale from the man she loves even at the cost of shooting him dead. (At one crucial moment Marvin does save Palance from Lancaster, but even a professional would hardly shoot Jack Palance in the arms of Claudia Cardinale—I mean, *really!*)

The bitter twist, disguised as a happy ending, is that the Professionals finally do throw away their professionalism and give Cardinale back to Palance (half bled to death from the wounds they've just finished chummily inflicting upon him.)

And why? Merely because husband has slapped Cardinale—one of the most civilized pieces of conduct in the film.

. . . .

We can get back to the necrophilia now.

In the revolutionary camp there's a jolly, promiscuous doxy named Chiquita, who wins the hearts of all the males in the audience by bathing in the courtyard at a pleasant angle to Burt Lancaster's binocular-ed line of vision.

She's also a crack soldier, and much given to chuckling at the ribaldries she evokes. Quite the sort of soldier one would like to have occupy one's country, in fact.

So she and Palance and their buddies set out in hot pursuit of Cardinale and her abductors.

Said abductors are in a position to make it to the border if pursuit is sufficiently delayed. So Lancaster (pushing aside the more obviously suicidal Marvin) volunteers to stay behind and hold off the pursuers single-handed.

Naturally he encounters no difficulty in dealing with the thirty-odd buddies. But Palance has to be kept alive for the happy ending—and it's such fun seeing him get wounded again and again—and Chiquita has to be eliminated with a bit more style.

Lancaster and Chiquita kid one another affectionately. Lancaster shoots her from behind a rock.

She lies dying. Lancaster comes over and they kid one another some more. He bends over to kiss her; she contrives to steal his gun. She presses it to his forehead. Then she decides not to kill him, throws down the gun, embraces Lancaster fiercely.

She falls back dead. He hugs her for several more seconds, then puts her down on the sand.

When asked about it afterwards, he grins reflectively and says, "Now I know why a woman's worth \$100,000 (this being the figure billionaire is paying to get Cardinale back)."

A strange film, all in all: one that messes its narrative line up needlessly but that seems to know what it's doing in the way of moral ambiguity.

I hope I haven't suggested that it's a stupid flim; it's an intelligent exploitation of various stupid clichés about the "disinterested mercenary", saved from being a piece of direct message-cinema by the curious general American inability to take any sort of consistent moral position on any issue—an inability as valuable in the cinema as it is disastrous in Viet Nam.

—John Thompson