

# The New Criterion

## Reconsiderations

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### The false prophet

by [Anthony Daniels](#)

On the false profundity of Kahlil Gibran.

*For self is a sea boundless and measureless. We shall never understand one another until we reduce the language to seven words.*—Kahlil Gibran

Among my mother's books was a copy of *The Prophet* by Kahlil Gibran. I remember still the cream color of the cover, adorned with a soft-focus drawing of a young man with a thin moustache staring, Svengali-like, into some kind of philosophical infinity. Although—or was it because?—*The Prophet* was so popular at the time, selling by the million worldwide, I resisted reading it. I suspected that its profundity, or rather its straining after profundity, was bogus, and I was right. It is precisely in its ersatz quality that its popularity resides.

Gibran was an artist as well as a writer, and his drawings, with some of which this *Collected Works* is interspersed, suffer from a defect that is closely kindred to the defect from which his writin ...

**Anthony Daniels's** most recent book is *In Praise of Prejudice* (Encounter Books).

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