



# Autobiography in the Poetry of Elia Abu Madi

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## Abstract:

Elijah Abu Madi, one of the famous poets, expressed this in his poetry, and included the humanitarian and social issues that affected Arab society at the time. It is no secret to anyone that Elijah Abu Madi is considered one of the diaspora poets. Indeed, he is considered one of the most important diaspora poets and is considered one of the founders of the Scientific Association in America at that time. He is One of the fabulous poets in the Arab world. The topic was chosen because of its poetic importance in the Arab world and for the critical analysis of the autobiography of a group of his poems, "A Complaint of Lovers" and "Servants of Mind." The choice of these poems came because they directly touch the poet's life and contain a generous portion of autobiography.

**Keywords** - expressed , included, considered, Association, autobiography

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## 1. Life of Elia Abu Madi

Elia Abu Madi, a prominent Lebanese poet of the Mahjar (diaspora) school, was born in 1889 (1306 AH) in the village of Al-Muhayditha, Lebanon, into a poor family. His full name was Elia Daher Tanios Abu Madi (Al-Hawari, n.d., pp. 5-6). He initially learned to read and write in his small village before deciding to move to Alexandria, Egypt.

There, he began publishing in an Egyptian magazine called Al-Zuhur, founded by literary figures Antonius Jameel and Amin Taqi al-Din. In 1911, at the age of twenty-two, he published his first poetry collection, *Tidhkar al-Madi* (Remembrance of the Past) (Al-Hawari, n.d., pp. 5-6).

Abu Madi travelled extensively, with one of his significant stays being in the United States. He transitioned from commerce to journalism and literature, becoming the editor-in-chief of *Al-Majalla al-Arabiyya*, published by the Arab Youth Association. He also contributed to *Al-Fatat al-Arabiyya* magazine (Al-Hawari, n.d., pp. 7-8). His poetry often had a romantic and sometimes philosophical bent, reflecting his unique philosophy, ambitions, and hopes (Al-Siddiqi, n.d., p. 30). His work was characterized by optimism, love of life, and social themes, which were vividly expressed in his engaging poetic style (Al-Nawari, n.d., pp. 392-393).

According to Dr. Mohammed Yusuf Najm, another significant reason for Abu Madi's emigration was political. The Ottoman government's pressure on its subjects, particularly non-Muslims, drove many to leave. The government feared emerging liberation movements among the people and sought to control them pre-emptively. Consequently, many emigrated to Egypt, where there was more freedom and job opportunities, or to Europe and America, where freedom was even greater (Najm, n.d., pp. 84-85).

Historical analysts often discuss the reasons behind such migrations. It is essential to consider Abu Madi's perspective on his emigration. His poetry reveals a deep connection to his homeland, Lebanon, with extensive poems dedicated to it. Initially, he settled in Egypt, where his career in journalism and poetry flourished. However, despite his success and the publication of *Tidhkar al-Madi*, he felt restless and longed for a new world. Historians attribute his migration to America to three main reasons:

**First:** Being the negative reception of his initial poetry collection in Egypt, which caused significant psychological distress (Al-Hawari, n.d., pp. 5-6).

**Second:** His failure in trade in Egypt, which created a factor of failure within him.

**Third:** From the beginning, the poet made the decision to travel to Egypt, that is, to the new world.

The researcher concurs with the third opinion that the poet sought innovation in his poetry and pursued fame (Salih, 2021, p. 63). When he left Egypt for North America in 1911, he initially settled in the city of Cincinnati. There, he worked in commerce, achieving considerable success while studying literature and poetry during his stay. However, he found the city lacked a conducive environment for publishing his poetry and sharing his literary ideas. Consequently, after five years, he decided to move to New York City in the summer of 1916. In this larger city, he found greater happiness compared to his previous residence. He continued writing poetry, established connections with other literary figures and journalists, and began working for the newspaper *Rahlat Fata*. His name quickly gained recognition among the city's writers and poets, and he became known as a distinguished literary figure, poet, and journalist (Salih, 2021, p. 64).

This positive reception encouraged Abu Madi to publish his first poetry collection titled *\*Diwan Elia Abu Madi\**. Following the publication of his second collection and the improvement in his financial and literary status, his fame and dignity among the public grew. He then utilized the newspaper *\*Al-Sa'ih\** as his platform and later co-founded the Pen League. Although he did not attend the initial meeting, he joined the league later (Al-Sarraj, n.d., p. 294).

Political, social, cultural, and religious factors, along with the experience of exile, significantly impacted the poet's psyche. These factors contributed to the widespread emigration of Lebanese youth at the time. Additionally, the economic hardships and widespread poverty experienced by Lebanese people are evident in his poetry, as demonstrated in the following verse (Al-Hawari, n.d., p. 794):

**" Tell the robots to remove the borders on his land.**

**for those who say the Franks are his protectors**

**You made the world difficult for his family**

**God accepted their swords as a protector "**

Furthermore, Abu Madi had a remarkable ability to evoke emotions in all his poetry, whether it involved nostalgia, patriotism, contemplation, or other poetic forms (Al-Nawari, n.d., pp. 392-393). His work also frequently addressed themes of struggle against injustice and oppression, often proposing solutions for the people. For instance, in his poem "The Poet and the Nation," he recounts a story about a just ruler whose death leads to a period of regret among the people. His narrative style reveals his deep reflection, identifying the source of the problem not as the rulers' strength but rather the people's weakness in confronting tyranny (Salih, 2021, p. 79).

For him, the idea of poetry and life represented an intertwined relationship that he could hardly separate between them. We find the poet defining an opinion in every aspect and detail of its joints. Life is as he sees it in terms of good and evil, bad, or good. The poet expresses his opinion with sincerity, depth, and vision of situations such as the First World War, for example, as we find him treating the topic of peace and war, as his opinion on peace and war is like the opinion of a person who is keen on this humanity (Al-Hawari, Plat., pages 62-63).

**2. The practical side of research:**

**The poem of the servants of gold**

**No one is upset about this world**

**Their consciences died in them out of selfishness**

**Their character is bad, or they have no morals**

**if they see a prominent picture of the dinar**

**They swore that they would not associate anything with Him**

**There is no good in them, but their evil is overwhelming them**

**It will not be published until the drawing is published**

**Except gluttony, altruism, and gluttony**

**They fell down in prostration, all the way up to their chins**

**Evil is the god and evil are the people and the oath**

This piece is part of a complete and beautiful muwashshah, where the poet's "I" is prominently featured, reflecting a self-narrative experience that aligns with the poet's life and the reality depicted in the text. Notice how the poem opens with "What distressed my soul about the world"), using the first-person pronoun "I" to reveal the poet's principles in life, which convey the human values an individual should uphold, such as rising above the pursuit of wealth. Hence, the poem is titled "Worshippers of Gold," a metaphor for the majority who have made the sole aim of their lives the pursuit of money, whether through legitimate or illegitimate means.

What stands out is that the poet begins with a criticism, adopting a satirical tone towards these people, saying "There is no good in them, but their evil is widespread." Here, the poet completely negates any positive moral traits in them, and then, with "but," he leads the reader to expect a redeeming quality, only to shock us by generalizing their evil onto society. The poet uses descriptive narration with phrases like "Their consciences are dead" and "Their morals have prevailed", using past tense verbs "died" and "prevailed" ("prevailed") to indicate that these people's conditions are irreparable, thus justifying the harsh criticism, especially in the line "When they see the world prominent, they fall down in prostration" ("When they see the world prominent, they prostrate themselves").

In this vivid imagery, we observe the poet's life phenomenon and sincere expression of a social: directing the minds of the populace towards a specific goal. The poem's ending, "What a miserable tool, not referring to the one Lord but rather the dinar and dirham"), clearly shows the self-narrative aspect, indicating that the poet He often writes from his personal experience using the first-person pronoun or the "I".

This analysis underscores the poet's disapproval of materialism and his condemnation of those who prioritize wealth more than anything else. His use of vivid imagery and strong language effectively communicates his disdain and reflects his personal beliefs and experiences. The poet's criticism is not just a general observation but stems from a deeply personal place, making the poem a powerful commentary on societal values and the poet's own moral stance.

**The second poem (Complaint)**

**I forgot my promise, so when I came to her**

**She claimed that I had forgotten the vows**

**She claimed that Khali was an ascetic**

**If I were like this, I would be happy**

**She wanted to stop me after that**

**It does not make me sad as much as it does**

**Just as I deny my gap, take it**

**My babe denied those promises**

**Oh, my witnesses when we were together**

**Remind her... Where did she come from, witnesses?**

**The full moon that watched us fell silent.  
these roses withered in the garden.  
And the wind of youth walked confused.  
In the songs, the confusion of the dean's casting  
O love, tell me when you will leave me  
He said: Or make those cheeks smaller.  
I am not calling for her to be oppressed.  
Beware of the jealous, envious one gloating**

In the above poetic excerpt, or in the complaint poems of Elia Abu Madi, the expressions of pain and sorrow are among the most lyrical texts where the self-narrative language is subtly embedded. The poem's theme is emotional, focusing on the field of emotional connotations, and it channels the pain and fragmentation of the "I." Key elements of the poem are evident from the first line, "I forgot my promise when I came to her"), which relies on inversion for psychological necessity. The natural order would be "When I came to her, I forgot my promise," but the inversion highlights the poet's shock upon meeting the beloved, who had forgotten and ignored him, thus revealing the betrayed. "I."

The poet then begins to employ the art of storytelling within the poem, blending literary genres from the second line, "She claimed that I had forgotten the promises." Here, the beloved places the blame on the poet, accusing him of intentionally forgetting the promises. The use of the verb "intentionally forgot" indicates a deliberate act of forgetting. Elia Abu Madi continues with narrative actions ("she claimed, she desired, she denied"), illustrating significant aspects of his emotional relationships marked by betrayal and regret. The line "She desired to turn away from me" highlights the complex relationship and the other who rejects the suffering "I," yet the "I" remains resilient as the poet calls upon witnesses who were aware of their love, integrating them into the poem drawn from the poet's profound personal experience.

The use of storytelling within the poem not only adds depth to the narrative but also underscores the personal and emotional nature of the poet's experience. By invoking witnesses, the poet amplifies the authenticity of his emotional turmoil and the sense of betrayal. This technique enriches the poem, making it a vivid portrayal of personal anguish and unfulfilled love, reflective of the poet's own life and emotional landscape.

### **The third poem (The Souls of Lovers)**

**Yesterday, a confused friend asked me to ask.  
Hell is fire. As the guides claimed and taught?  
Or is it a harsh, harsh roar that is unfair?  
So, I answered him, what is a murmur and what is a burning blast?  
Hell! ...but not to love hell.  
My friend, emptiness is the greatest torment.  
The heart, except for love, is a broken house.  
It is an ointment for surgery, it is a ladder for happiness.  
She shines in the stars; she sings in life.  
She is the souls of lovers smiling in the twilight.**

Themes of love and suffering in the poetry of Elia Abu Madi are among the most significant aspects of his work, aligning him with the long tradition of poets throughout history. In his poem "Anfas al-Ashaq" (The Breaths of Lovers), Abu Madi captures the essence of a lover's experience, which reflects his own emotional

journey, blending personal narrative with his artistic expression of pain as a vital source for his poetry. This sincerity of emotion is evident in lines such as:

**A confused friend asked me to ask.**

**Is hell fire? Or a harsh summer and a dark universe?**

These existential questions about the nature of suffering are soon redirected towards the realm of emotion, as the poet responds:

**But not to love hell**

Here, the poet equates emotional emptiness with hell itself, suggesting that the happiest individuals are those who have experienced the "taste" of love, even if it involves strife. This idea is further elaborated in the line:

**Emptiness Is the Greatest Torment the Heart**

**Except With Love a Broken House**

This perspective closely aligns with a mystical interpretation of the self, where the poet finds fulfillment only through love, leading to a union of souls into one. Thus, Abu Madi refers to these lovers as the most soulful or "Anfas Al-Ashaq," implying that true lovers achieve the highest form of emotional and spiritual existence.

The intertwining of personal narrative and emotional expression in this poem exemplifies the genre of poetic autobiography, displaying how poetry can embrace and integrate various literary forms. This approach validates Aristotle's view on the nature of poetry, which suggests that poetry encompasses all forms of literary expression, reinforcing its universal and timeless relevance.

By portraying love and suffering as intertwined experiences essential for emotional and spiritual growth, Abu Madi not only reveals his own deep-seated sentiments but also invites readers to reflect on their own emotional landscapes. This interplay of personal and universal themes enriches his poetry, making it a compelling exploration of the human condition.

**Results that the search yielded:**

- 1- Modern literature has paid attention to critical analysis in many of its issues, especially the subject of autobiography.
- 2- The poet's clear ego emerged in most of the poems and emerged from the womb of suffering at that time.
- 3- The poet combined sensual and emotional qualities, and two literary genres appeared in the poem (The Souls of Lovers) in one text, indicating the openness of poetry to all literary texts.
- 4- The poet used descriptive narration at that time, which was a particularly important aspect, for example (their consciences, their morals), and the criticism aspect also emerged.
- 5- The character of sadness appeared in most of the poet's poems, even though the story is clearly subjective.

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