CHAPTER: II

CONTEXT: LIFE AND WORKS OF ILIYA ABU MADI

2.1. BIOGRAPHY OF ILIYA ABU MADI

Iliya Abu Madi is a well known poet and Journalist among Arab men of letters in the Americas, whose poetry achieved popularity through his expressive use of language, his mastery of the traditional patterns of Arabic poetry, and relevance of his ideas to contemporary Arab readers.[81]

Iliya Abu Madi was born in a Christian family, in remote Lebanese village of al-Muhaydissa, now part of Bikfaya, Lebanon, in 1889. He was prominent poet of Modern Arabic literature as well as one of the distinguish poets of mahjar literature. He had to leave school when he was only 11 years old to earn his livelihood and he moved to Alexandriya, Egypt. Where he stated his works with his uncle a small business as a tobacconist.[82] Alexandriya, a part from being a tourist centre, is also a city of learning, and Abu Madi took full advantage of his situation. He used his spare time to perfect his knowledge of Arabic and the prosodic rules of classical Arabic poetry.[83]

Largely self taught, Iliya Abu Madi is perhaps the most famous poet as well as an outstanding litterateur of the literary period known

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81. Iliya Abu madi- Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia.com
82. Ali Mohammad Chand, A study of Literary history of the Arab, Layer's book stall,Ghy-1996, p.152.
83. Mahdi, Ismat. Modern Arabic Literature, Hyderabad, 1983, p.162.

as Mahjar (émigré) in modern Arabic literature. His life and works bear testimony to his because virtually none of his contemporaries could be said to have surpassed his achievement in the fields of Modern Arabic literature i.e. prose and poetry, especially the Mahjar category. This work therefore presents Abu Madi's life and works as well as his contribution to the development of Mahjar branch of the modern Arabic literature. The works begins by giving the definition of the word Mahjar as it affects. Modern Arabic literature and followed by the factors that led to emigration of poets and literary figures to the new words. Following then is the presentation of the life and works of our man, Iliya Abu Madi and his contribution to the field of Modern Arabic literature.[84]

Abu Madi, he made Laudable attempts during this period too, and in the year 1911, Iliya Abu Madi published his first collection of poems, entitled 'Tazkar al-madi', (Remembrances of the past) in Cairo. In the same year, he improved prospects, Abu Madi, left Egypt and emigrated to the united States where he settled in Cincinnati, ohio, in business. But he had an asset and fried in his brother Murad, a man of learning and culture. Murad recognized his brothers genius and lessended his burden of work, allowing him greater scope for study.[85]

The alien surrounding of America made Abu Madi nostalgic for his homeland. He gave vent to his feelings by writing patriotic poems.

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84. Iliya Abu Madi, Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia.com
85. Jurj Saidan, Adabuna wa udaba'una fil Mahajir al-Amrikiyyaj p.282.

He also began to ponder on life and its riddles and a sense of philosophic enquiry became an essential feature of his compositions.

In 1916, Abu Madi moved to New York where, he attracted by the pen Association and its founder members, he associated with them and became the main pillar of Mahjar poetry.

In the same year, Abu Madi began a career in journalism. In New York Abu Madi met and worked with a number of Arab-American poets including Gibran Khalil Gibran. Early in 1918, he became editor of more prestigious *Mir'at al-Gharb* published by Najib Diyab (1880-1936), whose daughter Dorothy he later married, (Mr. and Mrs. Abu Madi had three sons: Richard) (born 1922), Edward (1924-1968), and Robert (born 1933). Abu Madi continued to edit this New York daily for over ten years during which its press published two of his poetry collections, i.e. his second poetry collection entitled '*Diwan Iliya Abu Madi'* was published in New York in 1919 and his third and most important collection entitled of *'al-Jadawil'* (The stream or Brooks) was published in New York in 1927. His other books were '*al-Khamail'* (thickets) was published in 1940 and '*Tibr Wa Turab'* (Gold dust and earth) was published 1960, all three printed in Brooklyn, New York.[86]

Abu Madi worked actively as a journalist during this period and edited several newspapers, in 1929, Abu Madi founded his own periodical, Al-Samir, in Brooklyn. It began as a monthly but after a few

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86. Mahdi, Ismat. Modern Arabic Literature, Hyderabad, 1983, p.162.

years appeared five times a week. Later it was converted into a daily and became one of the leading North American Mahjar Newspapers.[87]

In 1949, Abu Madi represented the journalists of Mahjar in the UNESCO conference in Beirut. By then he had become a celebrity not only in Mahjar but all over the Arab World. He was able to turn it into a daily in 1936 and continued to edit it until his death in 1957.

Iliya Abu Madi's poetic output is collected in five volumes of which three were published in the United States and the last appeared shortly after his death in Beirut. They are: Tazhakar al-Madi, (Remembrance of the past) 1911, Diwan Iliya Abu Madi, 1919, Al-Jadawil (Brooks, 1927), al-Khama'il (Thickets, 1940) and Tibr wa Turab (Gold dust and Earth, 1960).

Although largely a self-taught man. Abu-Madi, unlike many of the members of the Pen Association, had a strong grounding in the Arabic language and literary tradition. This, in part, is due to his having spent his formative years in Egypt, where the forces of conservatism at the time, much stronger than in the Lebanon, curbed the extremism of authors and made for a generally more moderate attitude. As it has recently been put by a distinguished Lebanese critic, it was the Egyptian intellectual climate that was chiefly responsible for Abu Madi's general attitudes, his moral and intellectual tendencies.[88] The results is that even in his later productions we find him not infrequently,

87. Josephe el Hachime, al-Mutid fil Adab al-Arabi, Part II, p.526.
88. Edham, Abushady the poet, p.191.

using the more traditional single rhyme *qasida* form. Moreover, he managed to retain his own independent personality when he came into contact with the Pen Association group, unlike others he was not completely dominated by the powerful figure of Jibran, nor did he share his extremist views. This, of course, does not mean that he was not deeply influenced by them. In Abu Madi's early writings the traditional elements is, as is to be expected, strongly pronounced. Poems of a public nature, comments on political or contemporary events tend to recur, and although they never quite disappear from his work it is the subjective kind of poetry that dominates his later writings. The early declamation is replaced by a much quieter tone and a meditative, almost philosophical attitude. Besides, the optimistic note which marks his early works (as, for instance, in his poem 'Life's Philosophy)[89] gradually grows less audible, giving place at times to doubt and uncertainty, and even despair, as we find in the well-known poems "The Phoenix' which is clearly a symbol of human happiness, and 'Riddles[90] both of which come from his volume *The Brooks*. But here, too, we notice that the poet's optimism does not desert him altogether, for in the later volume *The thickets* we find a poem brimful of hope, like 'Smile', where the poet is capable of enjoying fully the pleasures afforded by life.[91]

89. Abu Shadi, Atyaf al-Rabi (Cairo, 1933)p. 191.
90. Edham, Abushady the poet, p.21.
91. Badawi, M.M. A Critical Introduction to Modern Arabic Poetry, Cambridge, 1975, p.190.

In fact, Abu Madi's poetry is essentially poetry of moods. In it we cannot discern a clear and unbroken progression, or a development in a straight line, in the poet's attitude to life. Instead, what strikes us is his eternal restlessness. There is indeed a clearly marked development in his style, for Abu Madi's individual voice begins to make itself heard unmistakably in his volume *The Brooks*, where he announces his new conception of poetry. Addressing the reader, he says 'You are not of my party if you regard poetry to be nothing more than words and metre. Our paths will never cross and there is nothing more between us.[92] But once Abu Madi has attained mastery of his medium he does not adopt a consistent attitude to reality. For instance, at one point he regards the heart as the only reliable guide, at another he clearly admits its insufficiency. In one poem he runs away from the city and civilized life to seek his refuge and solace in nature.[93] In another (as in his poem 'In the Wilderness') he falls a prey to boredom and then nature is no longer capable of healing the poet's soul: its silence then is mere emptiness. But that is not because the poet prefers the noise and bustle of the city, but because the poet's feeling of ennui is so deeply rooted in his soul that he carries it with him wherever he goes: in such rare moments as this he cannot find his escape in nature, and even nature appears to his as hopelessly inadequate.[94]

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92. Ibid p.189
93. Ibid, p. 338.
94. Badawi, M.M. A Critical Introduction to Modern Arabic Poetry, Cambridge, 1975, p.190

Abu Madi, then, is a romantic poet throughout. The titles of his volumes indicate the extent of his interest in nature. To him nature is often a source of moral teaching in a Wordsworthian fashion. He laments the encroachment of the city upon the country as for instance in his poem '*The Lost Wood'*, where he expresses his grief on finding that the natural scene which used to give him so much joy has disappeared and been replaced by a town and human habitation. Of course, his view of nature is highly idealized, and is synonymous with 'beauty', the positive value for which alone the poet is exhorted to live (in a poem called 'Live for Beauty'). As in most Mahjar poetry the poet's yearning for nature is a reflection of his homesickness, a nostalgia for the Lebanon which in Abu Madi's poetry reaches its highest degree of idealization, as, for instance, in his poem '*The poet in Heaven'*. Among his favourite themes is the celebration of human love against the background of harmonious nature, as in 'Come' which is strongly reminiscent of Shelley's short poem *Love's Philosophy* (a poem that proved to be popular with Arab romantics), or the ennobling influence of human love and its greater efficacy than institutionalized religion and fear of hell as a means of knowing God ('The Night of Longings'). Abu Madi's poetry is also riddled with 'obstinate questionings' of the human condition: he writes about meaningless and unnecessary suffering ('*The Dumb Tear*'), the vanity of worldly glory ('*Clay'*), metaphysical doubts ('*Riddls'*), man's eternal restlessness ('*In the Wildness*'). Although not a mystic, Abu Madi has expressed his

vague mystical longing for the ideal in a memorable poem called ‘The Hospitable Fire’.[95]

His third and most important collection entitled ‘*al-Jadawil* (The streams), published in New York in 1927, Abu Madi reached the peak of hs achievement as a romantic poet. In the short preface to the first edition written by Mikhail Nuaymah, he says that not, he feels a definite spiritual link between himself and the author which he had not felt about the first two volumes of Abu Madi’s work. The poet himself wrote a brief introduction in verse in which reflections of some of the ideas from ‘The sieve’ are clearly visible, but it is the first poem in the collection, ‘*al-anqa’*(The phoenix),[96] which provides conclusive evidence of Abu Madi’s new departure: this poem is a long statement of doubt, urgent aspiration, mystery and constant searching. The strange legendary bird is a symbol for something people seek but which constantly eludes them. No precise information is offered about the identity of the object of the search, which is indicated only by the feminine pronoun: it may be beauty, happiness or truth; it may be the poet’s soul or a manifestation of God’s presence; or it may be linked with his beloved who is no longer with him. The extent of the poet’s search assumes cosmic proportions as he ranges far and wide in his anxiety:

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95. Edham, Abushady the Poet. P.19
96. Badawi, M.M. Modern Arabic Literature, Cambridge, 1992. P.103.

I sought her in the bosom of the dawn and in the gloom; even unto the stars I stretched my hands.

Lo, they both are in confusion at a perplexed, enfeebled lover.

Lo, the stars tremble in the broad heavens either from knowledge or ignorance.[97]

Most of the poem proceeds in this atmosphere of vagueness, mystery and trembling uncertainty. Only at the final moment when all seems lost and the poet's spirit dissolves into tears of grief does he get a glimpse of what he has been looking for, but there is no joy in the prospect and it profits him little finally to realize that the object of his search lay within himself all the time;

Grief pressed my spirit, and it flowed out in tears. Then I glimpsed it and touched it in my tears.

I realized when the knowledge was in vain, that what I had lost was within me![98]

Such expressions of extreme individual malaise which flourished in pained atmospheres of vagueness and perplexity became one of the hallmarks of this mahjar poetry, and of romantic poetry in general. The most lengthy and detailed expression of the painful mysteries which beset him is Abu Madi's poem 'Mysteries' ('*al-Talasim*'), the whole

97. Abu Madi (1963 complete works)p. 512
98. Badawi, M.M. Modern Arabic Literature, Cambridge, 1992. P.104.

object of which is to give vent to a long series of statements of confusion and metaphysical doubt, without offering any solutions or evidence of deep thought about the problems raised. The poem as a whole lacks discipline and sustained imaginative power in its choice of detail and situation, but because it is a virtual manifesto in verse of the major themes that appealed to the mahjar writers and indeed to their whole generation, it has enjoyed great popularity. Artistically much more convincing is 'Evening' ('*al-Masa'*): although the general theme is by now more than familiar-confusion and deep unease about questions of youth, love, old age and death. Abu Madi use his favourite device of addressing questions directly to a female companion, in this case a girl named Salma, thus avoiding the abstract, rather mechanical posturing of 'Mysteries'. The language of the poem is subtle and allusive, creating powerful atmospheric effects, and altoghether this short piece is of much greater poetic worth than the rather rambling, undisciplined queries of 'Mysteries":

The Clouds range over the wide heavens, as though in fright,
The Sun appears behind them, pallid round the brow,
The Sea is calm, silent, with the meekness of piety,
But your eyes are bewildered on the far horizon.
Salma – of what do you think?
Salma – of what do you dream?[99]

[99]. Abu Madi (1963 complete works)p. 784.

One of the great strengths of Abu Madi is that, for all his flights of bewildered metaphysical fancy, he retains a sense of bitter realism and depth of perception that is rare, both amongst the mahjar writers and in romantic poetry in the Arab world. In the final analysis, he was never quite able to accept the self-righteous, splendid isolation of the poet's role as expounded by Jibran and others. On the face of it, 'In the desert' ('*Fi' l-qafr'*) is a typical flight from a civilized society which is full of corruption and unhappiness the desert becomes a substitute for the Jibranian ideal of *al-ghab*, the forest of ideal purity and goodness, and this refuge is an enormous temptation for the poet, but with rare honesty he concludes that it is futile to try to escape from people and all their shortcomings; after all, he is one of them and they are all in some sense part of him. The depth of Abu Madi's social conscience emerges in 'The pauper' ('*al-Faqir'*): he recognizes that in the face of such wretchedness there can be no luxury of melancholic star-gazing, neither will the darkness be any source of comfort to one with the pauper's problems. Even to grieve for his condition is almost an act of futility.

'The streams' represents the high point of Abu Madi's poetic development, beyond which he did not progress in his subsequent work: '*al-Khamai*' (The thickets) appeared in 1940, and there was one more posthumous diwan published in 1960 '*Tibr wa turab'* (Gold and dust). In 'The thickets' poems of an 'Occasional' nature being to reappear, and in the posthumous volume most of the material is of this

type: poems for special occasions, people and places, and elegies for friends and colleagues. Abu Madi's career is a fascinating development from unremarkable neo-classical verse to some of the peaks of achievement in romantic poetry. His work also has that extra dimension of imaginative power which on occasion takes it beyond the limits of the romantic experience, and lends it a permanent value which transcends the style of his immediate generation.[100]

[100]. Badawi, M.M. Modern Arabic Literature, Cambridge, 1992. P.163.

2.2. CONTRIBUTION OF ILIYA ABU MADI TO AL-RABITA AL-QALAMIYYA AND THE EXILE POETRY

> The Exile literature- deep-rooted literature, humanistic and truthful-the ages of the Arabic language don't know anything like it has freed literature from the heavy shackles that bound it down toward the free atmosphere to breathe in freedom without restriction, like a survivor.

How did this liberating Mahjar literature, of which *al-Jadawil* is said to be "a treasure", come to exist? And from what exactly was it liberating Arabic literature? The literary society *al-Rabita al-Qalamiyya* (The Pen Association), founded in New York in 1920,[101] became the North American focus of a call for innovation in Arabic literature not limited to the new world, and produced the most successful response to that call. Iliya Abu Madi is considered the best of these Mahjar poets; his poetry has been termed the beginning of modern verse.

The call for innovation in poetry was not confined to the northern Mahjar, as mentioned. The influential Egyptian man of letters Taha Hussein was himself a proponent of innovation. He argued that writers and poets must reflect life and that they should be free to express themselves unhampered by fear, social and literary prejudice, or dogmatic conceptions.[102] Taha, however,

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101. al-Na'uri, Isa. Iliya Abu Madi: Rasulu al-Shir al-Arabi al-Hadith. Beiru, 1977, pp.7, 21,24.
102. Jayyusi, Salma Khadra. Trends and Movements in Modern Arabic Poetry, II Vols. Brill, 1977, pp. 85,69,151.

was a critic, and it is to the activities of poets that we look for manifestations of a ripening trend.

The early twentieth century saw two significant and simultaneous movements in Arab poetry, one in the new world and one in the old, both calling for change in diction, subject matter and form. Jayyusi states that these two movements do not seem to have been aware of each other until a late stage in development after the basic principles of each were already established. She feels that this simultaneous rise of innovative thinking in literature demonstrates the change in the needs of poetry at time and reaction to foreign influence, i.e. western concepts of literature.

The Diwan Group in Egypt directed itself against the entrenchment of the neo-classical revival, in an effort to lay the foundations for a new poetic apparatus upon which the next generation of poets would build. It is characterized by a subjective element, by personal emotions and ideas; they desired to avoid the traditional involvement of the poet with public events and the external of life. Led by ‘Abd al-Rahman Shukri, they required that poetry derive its inspiration from human experience: poetry should probe deep into the self, search for the essential in things, and abandon the poetry of occasion and of public events.[103]

The similar but independent Arab-American movement was of two streams. That of South America was limited in innovation, more in the mainstream of Arab poetry and culture, while those in the north, guided by the

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103. Jayyusi, Salma Khadra. Trends and Movements in Modern Arabic Poetry, II Vols. Brill, 1977, pp. 67,85,152,157.

ideals of *al-Rabita*, were the great innovators in form, content and tone. The southerners openly supported Arab nationalism and retained the rhetorical tone of classical Arabic tradition, while the northerners introduced abstract themes and philosophical attitudes, and stressed the universal brotherhood of all men.[104] It is this North American group that we usually refer to as the Mahjar poets.

The Mahjar poets, then, represent a literary movement, contemporary to and parallel to the Diwan Group, among Syrian immigrants in the United States. They successfully transformed their new prescriptive norms into an impressive literary reality and exercised through their creative writing a greater influence on Arabic letters than did the Diwan Group.[105] Khouri and Algar ascribe the lack of effect of the Egyptian group to "a striking discrepancy between the high level of their conceptual schemes and poetic ideals, and the mediocrity of their actual poetic performances.[106] Jayyusi agrees with their assessment, which cannot be more succinctly stated. It should be remembered, however, that of the three members of the Diwan Group only Shukri was really a poet. The others, al-Aqqad and al-Mazini, were critics, with innovative ideas that simply were not translated into great poetry.

Zubari Mirza recounts the story of the formation of *al-Rabita*. The Syrian immigrants in the United States in the early part of this century, feeling

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104. Jayyusi, Salma Khadra. Trends and Movements in Modern Arabic Poetry, II Vols. Brill, 1977, pp. 67,69.
105. Khouri, Mounah A, and Algar, hamid. An Anthology of Modern poetry, University of California press, 1974, p. 9.
106. Ibid. p.

they were Arab in spite of their Americanization, and that their Arab character was threatened by the currents of American life, established their literary reviews and daily newspapers to be their voice and the indictor of their common response. *Al-Rabita* organized when it was thought that there should be a bond linking the forces and uniting the inspirations of the men of letters.[107] *al-Rabita* thus came to have the honor of publishing the ideas of the immigrants about literature, presenting a unified outlook on literature and art, and introducing into Arabic literature a new, adventurous and successful literary experiment.[108]

The four prominent members of *al-Rabita*, Jibran, Nu'aymah, Abu Madi and Nasib 'Arida, cut out an existence in which the great distinguishing feature of their literature was that it was derived from the core of life and the human soul. And the great length of their work is about the secrets of life and the tendencies of the human soul.[109] It seems generally agreed that of these four, Abu Madi was the late-comer to the new ideas. In *al-Rabita,* Jibran had the position of "dean", or guiding spirit, Nu'aymah was advisor and critic, who formulated the literary criteria, and Nasib 'Arida was initially the most powerful poet of the new current. These three are credited with "the conversion of Abu Madi", whose great poetic talent was channeled from traditional imitative forms of expression to the contemplative, more abstract approach apparent in *al-Jadawil.*

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107. Mirza, Zuhair, Iliya Abu Madi: Shair al-Mahjar al-Akbar. 1963, pp. 37, 39
108. Jayyusi, Salma Khadra. Trends and Movements in Modern Arabic Poetry, II Vols. Brill, 1977, p. 122.
109. al-Na'uri, Isa. Iliya Abu Madi: Rasulu al-Shir al-Arabi al-Hadith. Beiru, 1977, p. 73.

And at this point the question can finally be answered, and a new one presented. In terms of the former, what exactly was this imitation against which the *al-Rabita* poets set themselves? Mirza has considered this point very deliberately.[110] He quotes Nu'aymah's words from the introduction to the *qanun* of *al-Rabita al-qalamiyya*, where the iconoclastic critic calls for a new spirit in Arabic poetry:

> Indeed this is a new spirit which aims for the emergence of our literature from the period of rigidity and imitation to the period of creativity by a beautiful attitude, to liberate our view to be the hope of today and the support of tomorrow. Thus the spirit that tries by all of its efforts to enclose the literature of the Arabic language within the circle of imitation of the ancients in meaning and structure is as we define it a blight that bores into the body of our language and literature. And if it is not resisted it will lead us to no awakening or renewal.

As Mirza points out, the call appears inexcusable, for there is no rigidity in the classical poets. As Nu'aymah goes on, he seems to concur in this:

> When we are activating the new spirit we don't mean to cut the links with the ancients; among them were the superior poets and thinkers and what they left will be a source of inspiration for many of tomorrow and after that. But indeed we don't see in

110. Mirza, Zuhair, Iliya Abu Madi: Shair al-Mahjar al-Akbar. 1963, pp. 38, 41, 42.

> their imitation anything but the death of our literature, so that to keep our literate being we are forced to move away from them and care for our daily needs and our future, which are not like the needs of the past.

So against what is the rebellion? Mirza concludes that what the *al-Rabita* school intended to escape from was the decadence, the lifeless and rigid imitations of the traditions which Nu'aymah feels are not beneficial for expressing the social and literary needs of the modern Arabs.[111] For example, as Badawi notes, while the medieval and post-medieval literary tradition showed great interest in the formal and purely linguistic aspects in poetry, during the period of stagnation poetry often degenerated to verbal acrobatics and linguistic exercises.[112] Not the classical poets, then, but their imitators through the ottoman period are the tyrants of poetry, as well as the rising neo-classicists of the early twentieth century who intended to limit poetry within traditional constraints. It is in this sense then that Abu Madi's retention of some traditional aspects, the achievement of Abu Madi in many cases was his flexibility, his freedom with the tradition which did not, in *al-Jadawil*, and *al-Khamail* confine his talent but was rather a framework, within which he not only proved his poetic ability but introduced innovative facets which his public, and most of his critics, had no difficulty in comprehending and accepting.

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111. Mirza, Zuhair, Iliya Abu Madi: Shair al-Mahjar al-Akbar. 1963, pp. 41, 42.
112. Badawi, M.M. Modern Arabic Literature and the west. London: Ithaca Press, 1985, p. 3.

So what was the lure of these new ideas, that a talent like that of Abu Madi was so quickly drawn to experimentation? Indeed, Jayyusi considers *al-Jadawil* and *al-Khamail* the result of 'intelligence and great poetic power" which "gives authenticity to Abu Madi's experiment with new concepts, basically foreign to him, such as the idea of the forest [or jungle or wilderness] and the trend toward Nature, both adopted from Jibran and Nu'aymah".[113] Her appraisal is borne out when it is noted that the diwan succeeding *al-Jadawil* and *al-Khamail* reverts in many ways back to tradition, and that with his final diwan the relapse is completed. She feels that "Abu Madi's intelligent and impressionable mind responded quickly to what must have appeared to his more in the nature of challenge", and that, in terms of *al-Jadawil* and *al-Khamail* "Abu Madi's peculiar genius lies in his ability to assimilate new concepts and immediately translate them into poetry".

Perhaps the most representative aspect of the new ideas can be seen in the concept of role of poet, which marks a significant break from tradition and which Abu Madi appears to have accepted whole-heartedly in *al-Jadawil* and *al-Khamail*. Traditionally, as previously discussed, the poet was a public orator recording the culture of the Arabs, an historian and a defender of honor. The new concept brought by *al-Rabita* was at the same time more personal and more universal; more personal in that the poet as an individual was thought to have a special position in relation to reality, with special abilities, perhaps God-given, to discern the truths and to perceive the secrets of life, and more universal in that this understanding was applicable to mankind

113. Jayyusi, Salma Khadra. Trends and Movements in Modern Arabic Poetry, II Vols. Brill, 1977, pp. 124, 127.

generally, to those who share equally the condition of humanity, not to any privileged or specified group of individual.

This rather mystical view of the poet results from the recognition that because the poet shares in the general human condition, his individual vision and his poetic drive to articulate his perceptions contribute to the common situation.

The pragmatic al-na'uri speaks of the truthful poet: he is a messenger, teaching life, and what appears in his poetry is pictures of life and a humanistic society, pictures alive with emotion, beauty and a magic vision, carrying hope and desires.[114] Nu'aymah's poet is equally a social creature, and yet more mystical in his role. He has the responsibility to prepare a useful lesson from every aspect of life and his poetry is not less than a message between the soul of the poet and the soul of another person.[115] In another place he defines a poet as prophet, philosopher, painter, musician and priest in one:

> He is a prophet because he can see with his spiritual eye what cannot be seen by other mortals. A painter because he is capable of moulding what he can see and hear in beautiful forms of verbal imagry, a musician because he can hear harmony where we find only discondordant noise…Lastly a poet is a priest because he serves the Goddess of Truth and Beauty.

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114. al-Na'uri, Isa. Iliya Abu Madi: Rasulu al-Shir al-Arabi al-Hadith. Beiru, 1977, p. 34.
115. Nu'aymah, Mikha'il. Al-Ghirbal. Cairo: al-Matba'a al-asriyya, 1923, pp. 51, 28

Mirza paraphrases some lines from the poem “al-Sha’ir” (The Poet)[116] where Abu Madi, shortly after arriving in the United States, presents his new view of the role of the poet: the poet is like electricity in its hiddenness and its appearance; he is the one whose God gave him the power of tracing the hidden things, and it is as if he is not satisfied with their appearances but goes further, questioning what is beyond the visible. Here then is the view from the poet who went on to write the poems of *al-Jadawil* and *al-Khamail.*

It is true that, as far back as pre-Islamic times, the poet was considered a special individual, born with poetic powers beyond those of the average person. What has changed is the material, the new abstract and subjective content of his works, and the way it is conveyed. The *al-Rabita* poets advocated elements such as lyricism and spontaneity, simple evocative language, subjective perceptions and feelings, the sense of mystery and wonder, and a deep reverence for nature and for life in general. Jayyusi speaks of the great influence of *al-Rabita* on Arabic poetry, of the agreement of its members in the necessity for change and the introduction of new tools and attitudes. The change in the concept of the role of the poet, from defender of group honor and recorder of group history to the one endowed with the ability to express the universal condition of man, is a result of evolution and change in the situation f the Exile poets. The change has been attributed to foreign influence, the American and Russian Romantic literature specifically,[117] but both Badawi and Jayyusi find that only one factor of several in the

116. Mirza, Zuhair, Iliya Abu Madi: Shair al-Mahjar al-Akbar. 1963, p. 47.

117. Badawi, M.M. Modern Arabic Literature and the west. London: Ithaca Press, 1985, pp. 116, 117.

crystallization of the new poetic concepts. Badawi acknowledges that the Romantic features in the Mahjar literature are not just imitative intellectual and psychological attitudes but are based in the real facts of the poets' situation in an alien culture: their sense of isolation and heightened sense of individuality, their awareness of modern social and cultural change, the political malaise.[118] And what he terms the awareness of being strangers in an unfamiliar universe, were factors that made the Arab Romantic poets no less original to their evolving tradition than the German or French Romantics, who were influence by the English Romantics, were to theirs.[119] Jayyusi sees the richness and vitality of poetic output of the Mahjar poets as a result of great natural talent combined with the freedom to express themselves without political or social fears or opposition from a conventional hierarchy of literary arbiters.[120]

Another factor has been advance to explain the openness of these poets to new possibilities in literature and their willingness to experiment with non-traditional elements. The Mahjar poets, as Nijland points out, are all of Christian origin, and he feels that they could therefore more easily step outside of the limitations of the traditional concept of poetry which he intimates would not be so deeply impressed in them as in their Muslim counterparts because of their education in foreign missionary schools.[121]

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118. Khouri, Mounah A, and Algar, hamid. An Anthology of Modern poetry, University of California press, 1974, p. 12.

119. Badawi, M.M. Modern Arabic Literature and the west. London: Ithaca Press, 1985, pp. 117, 126.

120. Jayyusi, Salma Khadra. Trends and Movements in Modern Arabic Poetry, II Vols. Brill, 1977, p. 71.

121. Nijland, C. Mikha'il Nuaymah: Promoter of the Arabic Literary Revivel. Nederlands

Jayyusi also mentions the basically different outlook [of the poets] colored by a persistent foreign cultural outlook" and the weaker linguistic heritage "of two *al-Rabita* leaders, al-Raihani and Jibran, compared with the classical training received by most poets of that time. Badawi as well includes these considerations in his analysis.[122] It must be remembered, however, that the similar efforts by the Diwan Group in Egypt were exerted by poets of Muslim background.

In the company of *al-Rabita*, Abu Madi lifted the shackles of imitation seen in his second diwan and "freed his imagination to go forward toward the horizon of existence and nature without fear or caution.[123] Nu'aymah states that Iliya had been a long time searching for his road between imitation and creativity, and he found his road, and with it his soul, and became the great poet of *al-Jadawil*.[124] It was in New York that Abu Maid, searching, had made the acquaintance of Nu'aymah and Jibran, and through their influences had found his own road. Or, as Jayyusi would have it, his challenge.

The idea of the Forest, or Jungle, signifying the innocence and wonder of natural life as opposed to the bustling, mechanical city life in society, and the trend toward nature generally, are both adopted from Jibran and Nu'aymah according to Jayyusi's thesis of *al-Jadawil* as an ephemeral experiment by Abu Madi.[125] al-Na'uri considers that Abu Madi was independent in his strong

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Historisch- Archaeologisch Institute Istanbul, 1875, pp. 2,9.

122 . Badawi, M.M. Modern Arabic Literature and the west. London: Ithaca Press, 1985, p. 117.

123. al-Na'uri, Isa. Iliya Abu Madi: Rasulu al-Shir al-Arabi al-Hadith. Beiru, 1977, p. 24.

124. Nu'aymah, Mikha'il. Fi al-Ghirbal. al-Jadid, P. 148.

125. Jayyusi, Salma Khadra. Trends and Movements in Modern Arabic Poetry, II Vols. Brill, 1977,

poetic character and his humansism, but was still influenced by Jibran in Jibran's great ideology 9of the "unity of existence", although he feels that Abu Madi was not completely converted to the ideas as were Jibran and Nu'aymah. Perhaps Nu'aymah was greater than Jibran in his purity and energy of phrase, as well as in his critical ability;[126] but is as critic, perhaps, that we should see his most profound influence on the poet who was soon to produce *al-Jadawil.* In his well-known critical work *al-Ghirbal* (The Sieve) Nu'aymah states his view that the critic, by guiding the poet, may be able to bring his to better use of his talents.[127] While it has been said that Nuaymah's great influence was in the humanistic brotherhood, the unity of existence, and spiritual philosophy[128] it was also clearly in what Nu'aymah himself called the new tools: the direct language, the stanzaic forms and multiple rhymes, and possibly the varieties of remuneration that are found also in some *al-Jadawil* poems.

Abu Madi himself, in his poety, has given us lines from which his ideas about poetry and his poetic development can be understood. It is within the scope of this paper to point out some of those lines that are found in *al-Jadawil*, where the fruits of his most innovative period are presented.

For example, in the sixth poem "*Barridi ya suhub*" (cool o cluds), the poet introduces himself as one who does not chase wildly after purposeless concepts or endeavors:

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pp. 25, 70, 126.

126. al-Na'uri, Isa. Iliya Abu Madi: Rasulu al-Shir al-Arabi al-Hadith. Beiru, 1977, p. 24.

127. Nu'aymah, Mikha'il. Al-Ghirbal. Cairo: al-Matba'a al-asriyya, 1923, pp. 20, 21.

128. al-Na'uri, Isa. Iliya Abu Madi: Rasulu al-Shir al-Arabi al-Hadith. Beiru, 1977, p. 22.

Each star that has no guidance in it

I don't care if it appears or sets

Each river that has no quenching in it

I don't care if it flows or drys up

2.3. ABU MADI'S POETIC STYLE

Iliya Abu Madi's – poems are very well known among Arabs; Journalist Gregory orfalea wrote that "His poetry is as commonplace and memorized in the Arab world as that of Robert Frost is in ours".

Abu Madi prefers short verse monorhyme and sometimes quatrains. Highly imaginative and a deep thinker, yet Abu Madi never leaves the framework of clarity and simplicity. His verse is smooth and lucid and his ideas are revealed in clear luminous terms.[129]

Abu Madi's verse is rich in imagery. He resorts to metaphors when he wishes to create an atmosphere where the imaginative style is more effective than a factual one.

Many factors helped to shape Abu Madi's poetic style. A good grounding in grammar and prosody that he acquired in his formative years in Alexandria gave him a solid base for his verse, Abu Madi is indeed credited with a more through grasp of the rules of poetry than

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129. Mahdi, Modern Arabic Literature, p. 163.

any other Mahjar poet. His verse is more 'Arabic' in texture and also free from blemishes that theirs.[130]

The 'Abbasid poets, al-Ma'arri and Abu Nawas, were his early guiding lights. Abu Madi was influenced by the skepticism of al-Ma'arri and the changing mood of Abu Nawas from pessimism to optimism. Abu Madi's first diwan shows his debt to Nahda poets, al-Barudi and Shawqi.[131]

A long stay in the United States afforded him a broad education and a close acquaintance with Western literature. His poems composed in Cincinnati reveal the change from the formal style of his first diwan to a more personalized verse.

In New York, Abu Madi came under the inexorable way of Jibran's romanticism and was impressed by his ideal of looking up to nature to find the spirit of love and harmony. But he retained his independence of thought and did not succumb to Jibran's preoccupation with man's sorrows and the dark facts of life that cause despair and malaise. Abu Madi who had a happier outlook harboured no such worries[132]. Nevertheless his optimism is not of one who takes things at their face value, but the result of probing deeply into situations like human suffering. Man, according to Abu Madi, should not rebel against the fate in store for him but accept it with grace.

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130. Badawi, M.M. A Critical Introduction to Modern Arabic Poetry, Cambridge, 1975, p.189.
131. Al-Jundi. Anwar, al-Shir al-Arabi al-Muasir Tatawwuruhu Wa Almuhu, p. 305.
132. Daif. Shawqi, Dirasat fil Shir al-Arabi al-Muasir, pp. 182-3

In the same way, impressed though he was by the ideals of Nu'aima, Abu Madi did not subscribe to his Sufism, nor to his belief in the transmigration of souls.[133]

He responded on the other hand to Umar Khayyam's philosophy and called for the enjoyment of life and its pleasures. These following verses from the poem al-Hayat wal-Hubb (life and Love) also indicate his wide interest in nature.[134]

يريد الحب ان نضحك فلنضحك مع الفجر
و ان نركض فلنركض مع الجدول والنهر
و ان نهتف فلنهتف مع البلبل و القمري
فمن يعلم بعد اليوم ما يحدث او يجري
تعالي قبل ما تسكت في الروض الشحارير
و يذوي الحؤر و الصفصاف و النرجسي و الاس
تعالي قبل ما تطمر اجلامي الاعاصير
فنستيقظ لافجر و لا خمر و لا كاس

Love wills, that we with laughter gay
Should greet the laughing dawn of day;
Come let us laugh and lightly leap
With leaping brook and river deep;
Come let us sings as biddeth love,

133. Saidan.Jurj, Adabuna wa udabauna fil Mahajir al-Amrikiyya, p. 277.
134. Arberry. A.J., Modern Arabic Poetry . pp. 62, 63.

With nightingale and turtle-
dove; Who knoweth when this day is
o'er; What dark adventures lie before?
Come hither, ere the blackbirds
hush Their golden song in golden bush,
Ere myrtle and narcissus fade,
And willow be in ruin laid
Come love before the storms
descend And all my dreams are at an
end, No dawn to greet, no wine to
take, No bowls to pass when we
awake.[135]

Many poems in *al-Jadawil* illustrate Abu Madi's optimism. '*Ta'ali*' (Come Hither) is full of happiness and love of life. The poet asks his friend to enjoy the wine and merge in its spirit and cast away all fear. In "Life's Philosophy," the main idea is that life is beautiful, and its beauty reflected in the human soul. Those who have a healthy outlook see life in a beautiful light and those who are ill, regard it as distorted. Let us then enjoy the moment we are in, and shed all anxiety, especially the most terrible one of death and extinction.[136]

Abu Madi regards life beautiful and nature as containing all elements of beauty and pleasure. Man should focus his eyes on

135. Mahdi, Modern Arabic Literature, p.p. 164, 165.
136. Daif. Shawqi, Dirasat fil Shir al-Arabi al-Muasir, p. 184

beauties of existence. He should neither bother about what has passed nor concern himself with the future yet to come except the presents moment. Like nature he should distribute benefits among all overlooking discriminations. He will find the life beautiful if his soul is beautiful or vice versa.[137]

His poem entitled *"al-Ghibta Fikra"* (Happiness is an Ideal) reflects his such feelings where he says:

أيها الباكي رويدا لا يسد الدمع ثغره
أيها العابس لن تعطي على التقطيب أجره
لا تكن مرا، ولا تجعل حياة الغير مره
إن من يبكي له حول عل الضحك وقدره
فتهلل وترنم فالفي العابس صخره[138]

O you who weep
Tears cannot fill a lack,
O you who frown,
No fee is paid for frowning.
Don't be better
An don't make others' lives litter.
He who weeps
Can also laugh
Rejoice, then, and be marry

137. Al-Fakhuri, Hanna, Al-Jame Fi TArikh al-Adab al-Arabi: al-Hadith p. 593.
138. Abu Madi, Iliya. Al-Khamail, New York, 1940, p.172.

For a frowning man is but a rock [139]

In one of his popular poems entitled *"al-Masa"* (Evening) Abu Madi addressed a woman called Salma whom he caught in a pensive mood one evening as the sun was setting and darkness was creeping. He tried to dispel her feeling of melancholy by calling to her notice that, though certain glorious aspects of daytime were gone, even in the dark there were aspects of night that were worth enjoying .the star the breeze, the fragrance of flowers, the rustle of leaves, the song of the nightingale, the murmur of the brooks, and a thousand other things that ought to be enjoyed before a time comes when she will really be unable to enjoy them. He counsels her to remain cheerful and hopeful, buoyed by love and dreams of good things which, he affirms are as needed in old age as they are in youth. He ends the poem saying.

مات النهار ابن الصباح فلا تقولي كيف مات

إن التأمل في الحياة يزيد أوجاع الحياة

فدعي الكآبة والأسى واسترجعي مرح الفتاة

قد كان وجهك في الضحى مثل الضحى متهللا

فيه البشاشة والبهاء

ليكن كذلك في المساء[140]

Daytime, son of the morning, is dead.

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139. Bullata. Issa J., "Iliya Abu Madi and the Riddle of life in his poetry"' Journal of Arabic Literature, vol. 17 (1986) pp. 78-79.

140. Abu Madi, Iliya. Al-Jadawil, New York 1927; pp.61,62.

Don't ask, how did it die?"
For the contemplation of life
Increases the pains of living.
Leave off sorrow and grief,
And regain the mirth of a lass.
Your face in the forenoon
Was as radiant as forenoon itself,
An overflowed with cheerfulness and splendour.
Let it be so in the evening too.[141]

There is deep calm in the poem, and an absence of obvious music. The poet is talking to a sad person and music would be out of place here. He talks in whispers which nevertheless reach out to the reader's soul.

Abu Madi's verses, dealing with his restless queries, are the most distinctive of his composition. The most admired among these is *'al-Talasim'* (The Talisman) also known as '*lastu adri'* (I do not know). It describes Abu Madi's inability to fathom the secrets of life. And the depth of his perplexity before the mystery of the great universe.

Composed of seventy-one quatrains with the refrain Lastu adri, at the end of each summing up his perplexity and agnosticism the poem is like a beautiful musical composition. It begins with these verse.[142]

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141. Ibid. p.79
142. Mahdi, Modern Arabic Literature, p.166.

جئت، لا أعلم من أين، ولكي أتيت

ولقد أبصرت قدامي طريقا فمشيت

وسأبقي سائرا ان شئت هذا أم أبيت

كيف جئت؟ كيف أبصرت طريقي؟

لست أدري[143]

I came, I know not whence yet came this way;

I say a path- along it made my way;

I must go on – or say I yea or nay!

How have I come?

How do I find the way?

I do not know.

Thus Abu Madi admits to being sad sometimes, but he finds no reason to complain to other of his sadness because he considers this to be unfair and unseemly. A similar theme is found in a poem entitled *"Ana"*(I)[144] Where he says:

إني إذا نزل البلاء بصاحبي

دافعت عنه بناجذي وبمخبلي

وشددت ساعده الضعيف بساعدي

وسترت منكبة العري بمنكبي

وأرى مساوئه كأني لا أرى

143. Abu Madi, Iliya. Al-Jadawil, New York, 1927, p. 139.
144. Ibid. pp. 147,148.

وأرى محاسنه وان لم تكتب

وألوم نفسي قلبه ان أخطأت

وإذا أساء إلي لم أتعتب[145]

If affliction befalls my friend

I defend him, tooth and nail.

I lend him my arm when he is weak

And I cover his body when it is bare.

I turn a blind eye to his shortcomings,

Yet I see his merits all over, though unwritten.

Before he blames me, I blame myself when wrong.

Yet if he offends me I don't rebuke him. [146]

He repeatedly contrasts the person who keeps complaining of one problem or another in life with the person who understands life and accepts it as it is. The poem entitled *"Ibtasim"* (smile) which employs a dialogue between the poet and another person bears the same message:

قال: ((السماء كئيبة !)) ووتجهتما

قلت ابتسم يكفي التجهم في السما !

قال: الصبا ولي! فقلت له: ابتسم

لن يرجع الأسف الصبا المتصرما!

145. Abu Madi, Iliya. Al-Jadawil, New York, 1927, p. 101.

146. Ibid. p.

قال: التي كانت سمائي في الهوى

صارت لنفسي في الغرام جهنما

خانت عهودي بعدما ملكتها

قلبي، فكيف أطبق أن أتبسما؟

قلت: ابتسم واطرب فلو قارنتها

قضيت عمرك كله متألما![147]

He said, “The sky is gloomy, and he frowned

I said, “Smile. Sufficient is the scowl in the sky”

He said, “Youth has gone”

I said, “smile, sorrow will not bring back bygone youth”

He said’ she who was my heaven in love

Has become the hell of my soul

She broke all promises to me after I left her

Posses my heart, How can I beat to smile?”

I said’ “smile and be marry, for if you married

You would have spent the rest of your life in pain”[148]

As in most Majhar poetry the poet’s yearning for nature is a reflection of his homesickness, nostalgia for the Lebanon which in Abu

147. Abu Madi, Iliya. al-Khamail, New York, 1940, pp. 58,59.
148. Ibid. p. 77.

Madi's poetry reaches its highest degree of idealization as, for instance, in his poem *"The poet in Heaven".*[149] He says

God once found me on earth weeping with grief

So he told me, "earth did not suite poetry, so you must return to heaven"

(Then) He created my home over smack (a shining star)

And extended my kingdom up to horizons.

Morning and evening started coming to and fro under my direction. And air used to fetch clouds in such a way that my flag was raised upon them, and stars obeyed me.

Among principals of Abu Madi's philosophy is the brotherhood of man, need of his fellows, to live in harmony with them, to forgive their faults and overlook their mistakes and to offer them the best he has. He believes in the equality of human being. All people are subject to the same human condition, its frailties as well as its possible glories. The best poem expressing Abu Madi's views on this subject in his well known poem *"al-Tin"* (Human lay) in which he addresses an arrogant rich and powerful person and asks him to consider how he is equal to the poor and humble poet, however much they may differ from each other in appearance or in the paraphernalia of power and wealth.[150] He ends the poem saying:

أيها الطين لست انقى واسمى من تراب تدوس أو تتوسد

149. Badawi. A Critical Introduction to Modern Arabic Poetry, p.190.
150. Bullata, Issa J., Iliya Abu Madi and the Riddle of Life in his poetry, pp. 80, 81.

ان قصرا سمكته سوق يندق وثوبا حبكته سوف ينقد

لا يكن للخصام قلبك مأوى ان قلبي للحب أصبح معبد

O human clay, you are not purer or more sublime

Than the soil on which you tread or lie down..

The lofty palace you built will collapse

And the garment you wove will unravel.

Let not your heart be an abode of enmity,

My heart has become a temple of love[151]

Abu Madi re-created in Modern Arabic poetry a number of elements that had been lost as the Arabic poem suffered much the same decline as cultural life did in general. Jibran says: Abu Madi possessed imaginative power which enables him “to express his attitudes, feelings and ideas in terms of images and concrete situations. This may account for his skillful use of the narrative and dramatic elements in his poetry”[152] One of these was a return to real source of poetry, namely fable. Abu Madi was not content merely to borrow fables from the popular tradition but went on to create his own fables that would be appropriate for each of his themes. This tendency of his shows how cute was his understanding of the psychology of the society for which he was writing poetry. He portrayed aspects of their life for them in the kinds of stories they knew and loved. On many

151. Ibid, pp. 321, 322.

152. Badwi, M.M., A Critical Introduction to Modern Arabic Poetry, p. 191.

occasion, he deliberately chose to use the world of animals and plants.[153]

2.4. WORKS: ABU MADI'S JOURNALISTIC INCLINATION

Iliya Abu Madi the poet supported himself and his family for more than forty years as a journalist, associated with Arab-American publications in New York. He went to New York city in 1916 to work as an editor for *al-Mujalla al-arabiyya*. In 1918 he began at *Mirat al-gharb* as an editor and in 1924 it was reported that he had also become an agent for the Cairo journal *al-Mugtataf* in America. Abu Madi resigned the editorship of *Mirat al-gharb* in July of 1928; by April of the next year he had issued the first number of *al-Samir*, his own bi-monthly magazine. *al-Samir* became a daily paper in

153. Allen, Roger., Modern Arabic Literature, p.15.

November 1936 and continued so until it ceased publication in the spring of 1957, only months before the poet died of heart failure in Brooklyn.[154]

Nu'aymah downplays Abu Madi's journalistic career, stating that his editor's pen was seeking livelihood, not like his poetic pen with which he sought to release his yearning soul. But two others who wrote about Abu Madi's poetry see the journalism, albeit a practical pursuit, not alien to the poet's thinking and interests but as a vocation that in some ways paralleled certain aspects of his poetry.[155]

'Isa al-Na'uri acknowledges that prose was not the forte of Abu Madi, but that he was forced to write it in journalism and he became a successful journalist in his exile. He points out that Iliya was very active in the preparation of his paper – that it required of him a working mind, unceasing activity and a limber pen absorbed in all aspects of daily life, politics, news, society and so on. He finds that in Abu Madi's journalism, poetry is no more than the dessert, only supporting the prose.

The writing that Abu Madi regularly contributed to *al-Samir* was its opening article, and in it he treated many social affairs and Arab and world political problems. He defended the Arab nation and contributed to its progress on many occasions, but also used these editorials to treat literary matters or humanistic and general social issues including pieces in which he addressed problems that were contributing to the difficulties being

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154. Salim, Geogre Dimitri, Iliya Abu Madi Dirasat anhu wa asharuhu al-Majhuleh. 1977, pp. 177, 184.
155. Nu'aymah, Mikhail., al-Ghirbal, Cairo, 1923, p. 140.

experienced by the underclasses of Arab society. But these pieces shared some common roots with his poetry, for, as al-Na'uri goes on the affirms that one could fill books with Abu Madi's valuable treatments of sensitive subjects, guided by his soul and his emotions, filled with passages of eloquence and linguistic power.[156]

George Salim takes the subject of Abu Madi;s journalism closer to his poetry, stating that all five of the poet's known diwans show an interest in journalism from as early as the Alexandrina days. Perhaps it was here that his intellect was opened to the role of journalism and its scope and influence on opinion; perhaps it was here that the heart of the poet was opened to journalism and he dreamed of his own pursuit of it as a profession.

Many of the poems cited by Salim are not contained in *al-Jadawil* and so are beyod the limits of this paper. It should be noted, however, that the poems from the Egyptian period (1900-1911) reveal Abu Madi's call for a free press, an interest which he shared with the writers and poets of the nationalist movement in that period. And from the Egypto-American period, the years 1911-1919 which saw Abu Madi's establishment in the United States, Salim find only one poem which mentions journalism, in which Abu Madi portrays the situation of the Mahjar journalism at the beginning of the second decade of this century.

In exile by age 22, Abu Madi concentrated his professional energy on journalism and reached an honored position in its ranks. Salim reproduces the

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156. al-Na'uri, Isa. Iliya Abu Madi: Rasulu al-Shir al-Arabi al-Hadith. Beiru, 1977, pp. 25,26.

text of a moving address made by Abu Madi in 1952,[157] after he had put in almost forty years of struggle in the field of journalism, on the occasion of the death of another Mahjar journalist, the owner of *al-Huda*, Sallum Mukarizil. In this piece the poet declares the journalist to be a soldier of thought who, compared with the soldier of the sword, is not drafted but is a volunteer, and serves not for a period of conscription but for all the years of hs life, not expecting any compensation for his service. And he makes the responsibility taken by this soldier of thought, the Mahjar journalist, clear; it seems to be a double-edged duty. On one side, the Mahjar journalist is the long hand that keeps the compassionate embers blazing in the hearts of the emigrants from the original home. On the other, it is the vehicle that transmits the accomplishments of the genius of the Mahjar, the messenger of the new free thought that awakens the consciousness and inspires the souls and liberates the minds, directing the people to truth and beauty and generosity in life.[158]

So it seems that Abu Madi's view of the journalist is not so different from some aspects in his view of the poet. In *al-Jadawil* only one poem directly addresses the issue of journalism, number 33 "Id al-nahy" (Festival of Prohibition) which was composed late in the period during which Iliya worked for his father-in-law Najib Musa Diyab as an editor of "Mirat al-gharb". It reflects what Salim calls the sincere seriousness of some of Abu Madi's abiyat dealing with journalism and journalist. In this poem, which acknowledges and honors those contemporary ideas and movements in the

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157. Salim, Geogre Dimitri, Iliya Abu Madi Dirasat anhu wa asharuhu al-Majhuleh. 1977, pp. 95, 101.
158. al-Na'uri, Isa. Iliya Abu Madi: Rasulu al-Shir al-Arabi al-Hadith. Beiru, 1977, p. 27.

Arab world that are proscribed by popular tradition and anti-nationalist political entrenchments, the poet places a high value on journalism:

In a journal, the light of the eyes is its black
and its white is of the purity of the race-horses

A spring of knowledge and a skeleton of wisdom
and a container of politeness and a treasure of integrity

And salutes the Egyptian nationalist who show appreciation and respect to their journalists and other writers:

If you are generous to the shaykh of the press, you are generous
to the highest orb in the sky of the Arab

Youth awarded Egypt a shawl
like the spring on the meadows and valleys

The most valuable gifted ones and intellects I saw
residing in palaces of parchment and ink

He introduces himself as an appreciative Arab writer from the exile:

To you and your land, form a poet who is inconvenienced
ever support in you and considering your enemies his

And acknowledges the shared goal of journalism, to brighten the dark night of ignorance:

It is still imposing its light on ignorance
until it shortens the bully night

The role of the journalist is that of a compatriot in the process of building a nation on the foundations of its own history and culture:

In the reality recalling the warrior Khaled
causes the master of the sword and the soldiers to be forgotten

If not for the genius of the powerful ones it will not spread
on the earth, the recollection of the greatest powerful leader

No nation surmounts the difficulties in the paths of
nobility except with the power of a reformer or guide

Perhaps in light of his bayt quoted above, desiring the elimination of ignorance through a responsible press, we find the intellectual context for a poem in *al-Jadawil,* first published in the month after " 'ld al-Nahy" appeared, that conveys the poet's response to a simple news item, the notice of the unveiling of a statue of some public figure.

The poem "*al-Tamthal*" (The Statue) could at first glance fit easily into the stream of Abu Madi's dialy editorials in "*al-Samir*" as al-Na'uri has described them to us above. The poem pre-dates the first of those articles, however, by three years and the subject is rightfully couched in verse rather than prose as it steps beyond journalistic commentary to a poetic endorsement of natural powers greater than men. The poet introduces his subject, the viewing of a new statue of some public figure. The viewers interviewed give

their reasons for the commemoration of this man: we want to immortalize his portrait in recognition of his excellence and his generosity; he lived to defend honor with his strength. The poet then proceeds to discredit each reason, showing each to be insignificant against the magnitude of the eternal natural world: the excellence is in the marble stone, the generosity is in the rain, the strength is in fate. At this point the poet questions the wealth, courage and goodness of the commemorated man and the commemorators themselves. In these *abiyat* he shows a realistic understanding of the gilt which is often mistaken for gold in human society:

> If he was rich or strong then indeed
> he became rich with your money and he gained your strength
>
> So he doesn't love you and you don't care about him
> as you imagined, rather it is benefit and harm
>
> And you don't raise the statue for courage and
> but a goodness weakness that is hidden in yourselves
>
> You don't love the rich one if he becomes poor
> and you don't love the strong if he is defeated
>
> I saw you, you don't come by the meadow
> if there is in the meadow neither shade nor fruit
>
> And you don't feed the sheep except to fatten yourselves
> and you don't have horses except for travel

but concludes that, if true excellence is worthy of recognition and if one makes no mistake, the recognition should be of the excellence of nature:

> Then what is the matter with you, you aren't generous to the night or the day And you don't erect a statue for the sun and the moon

We are reminded of another *al-Jadawil* poem, number 13 "*Fi al-qafr*" (In the Wildnerness) Published in the same year, where the poet, bored by life in society, lists in his grievances against society the situation seen in "*al-Tamthal*":

> My soul was weary of the life with people
> it was bored even with intimate friends
>
> And boredom walked in that life until
> it became dissatisfied with their food and drink….
>
> And with the standing ones as idols
> and with the ones praying to the idols

It is clear that Abu Madi's scornful view of those individuals around whom society flows, who are often treated as demi-gods in the society, was intended to awaken critical thinking. And this critical thinking, which he sees as an individual struggle, is what Abu Madi encouraged in both his poetry and his journalism. This is expressed in two *abiyat* from " '*Id al-nahy*":

> Indeed the truths you who published its articles
> at one time science was like atheism

The people became miserable when they became miserable in their ignorance

and became proud when they became proud as individuals

And Madi was successful as a poet and as a journalist because he felt in both endeavors a drive to lighten ignorance, to improve the quality of life for his people. While al-Na'uri was correct in his observation that Iliya's Journalism did not stand on the poetry,[159] rather, the relationship between poetry and journalism in Abu Madi's work in both spheres can be found in his keen perception of human character and his impulse to use that vision to guide his readers toward, on one hand, a pragmatic philosophical position from which to handle the difficulties of life, and on the other toward a compassionate responsibility for fellow human beings based on an awareness that transcends differences of social position or economic rank. And this impulse, thanks in part to the imperatives of *al-Rabita al-qalamiyya*, is transmitted through the poems of *al-Jadawil* and *Khamail* in a language that is not specific to the Arab world and can be appreciated not only by Arab readers but by the readers of the other nations also.

159. al-Na'uri, Isa. Iliya Abu Madi: Rasulu al-Shir al-Arabi al-Hadith. Beiru, 1977, pp. 25, 27.