



## THE NATURE IS A BEAUTIFUL WOMAN: AN ANALYSIS OF FEMINISM IN ILIYA ABU MADHI'S AL-JADAWIL POEMS

Hanik Mahliatussikah and Nur Anisah Ridwan

Universitas Negeri Malang

hanik.mahliatussikah.fs@um.ac.id; nuranisahridwan@gmail.com

**Abstract:** This study aims to describe aspects of of feminism in Al-Jadawil, a collection of poems written by Iliya Abu Madhi. Feminist literary criticism is one that utilizes a variety of literary criticism in interpreting the framework of feminist theory and providing an evaluation of the literature. This research uses qualitative descriptive design. The data is taken from 46 poems in the Diwan. The issues studied are related to the position and role of female characters in literature, the lagging of women in all aspects of life, including education and community activities, and attention to the readers, especially on how the reader responds to women's emancipation in literature. The findings show that Iliya Abu Madhi employs gender as one way of expressing meaning. In the Diwan, he describes the nature as a beautiful woman. This is inseparable from the romanticism that the poet embraces with the use of beautiful language. The beauty of this language becomes an important aspect in the making of meaning

**Keywords:** iliya abu madhi, al-jadawil, gender, feminist literature, poem

### INTRODUCTION

Abu Madhi is a great interpreter of nature in Arabic poetry. To him, nature is often a source of moral teaching in a Wordsworthian fashion. He also believes that nature was the embodiment of the Divine Spirit, which means that the spiritual communion is possible between the dwelling soul of the universe and the soul of man. His emphasis is everywhere thrown upon those spiritual forces within us which give us power and the ability to lift ourselves through conscious and patient effort, above the reach of circumstances and the flux of external things (Ahmad, 2016:8).

In 1920, Abu Madhi became a member of al-Rabita al Qalamiyya (Pen Association) which was founded by Jibrān Khalil Jibrān. Abu Madhi followed the aim of this association which was "to infuse a new life in modern Arabic literature by turning away from the 5 traditional excessive preoccupation with mere verbal skill to write a literature that suites the requirements of modern times and the attempt to rise above provincialism by making literature primarily the expression of universal human thought and feeling" (Badawi, 1975: 182)

The relationship between authority and literature has been one of the closest and oldest relations (Elgebily, 2017: 51 – 60). Self directed and optimistic, Ilya Abu Madhi could be regarded as one of the greatest poet of ar-Rabitah, or in another assessment, the best-known Arab poet of the modern Arabic literary age. The said writings reflected socio-political tones embedded with well-selected dictions beyond the reach of a young person of ages between ten and thirteen or even fifteen. At these early ages, reliance on memorization and reported information rather than self-composed work is expected (Badmus, 2011:3). Ilya Abu Madhi had a good time with literary activities in America contrary to his failure in Egypt. Al-Jadawil (The Brooks) containing his last known poem appeared in 1952 with its introduction written by ar-Rabitah scribe, Mikha'il Nu'aima.

### FEMINIST LITERARY CRITICISM

Feminist literary criticism theory was based on various criticism, namely, women as readers, which put women as consumers and women as writers (Gynocriticism). When it is based on the view that women are readers, the focus of the study includes images and stereotypes of women in literature, misconceptions about women, men-made history of literature, and exploitation and manipulation of female audience or readers (Newton, 1990: 268-269). Meanwhile, Gynocriticism focuses on building a framework of women's work for literary analysis. This criticism develops a new model that is based on case studies of women' experiences instead

of adapting theories that are made from their counterparts (Newton, 1990: 269). Mary Ellman in her book entitled *Thinking about Woman* (1968) stated that female authors often have different perspectives and that they do not always adopt women writers' style (Selden, 1986: 137-138). Another criticism is based on the view of reading as woman, that is, readers who consider gender roles in culture, literature, and life. This criticism leads to some changes in authors' part, their work, and the readers (Culler, 1982: 43-46).

The fourth criticism is moral criticism, which was proposed by Josephine Donovan because of a central problem in West literature where women are seen as objects. This feminist criticism becomes political when it declares that literature and criticism standard must be changed. Aesthetic dimension of literature cannot be separated from its moral dimension. This criticism focuses on how women characteristics are portrayed in literary work. According to Josephin, feminist literary criticism cannot be separated from aesthetic and moral aspects (Newton, 1990: 263). The fifth criticism is political feminism which was proposed by Kate Millet and Michele Barret. In the book entitled *Sexual Politics* (1970), Millet argued that the cause of women oppression is the patriarchal system that put women under men. Patriarchal system regards women as inferior males. They use power to limit women activities. According to Millet (1970), democracy is not effective as long as women are still dominated by this system.

In relation to the development paradigm, feminist Arabic literary criticism consists of literary criticism of Arab feminist ideology, namely feminist literary criticism which involves women as readers. It also includes the criticism of Gynocritisms of Arabic literature, namely feminist literary criticism which is a study of female writers. In its implementation, the study in this criticism is a matter of difference between literary work written by men and women. Feminist Arabic literary criticism also consists of criticism of feminist-socialist Arabic literature or Marxist literary criticism, namely feminist literary criticism that examines female figures from a socialist point of view with a focus on communities of female figures in ordinary old literary works illustrated as an oppressed group employed by certain paid men.

## METHOD

This article uses descriptive qualitative method. The data were taken from poems written by Iliya Abu Madhi (N=46) which were published in *Al-Jadawil*. The data analysis was done by employing analysis model by Miles and Huberman which consists of data reduction, data display, conclusion drawing and verification. This article focuses on the female variables in his poems whose characteristics are used to describe the beauty of nature.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The findings show that the poems by Iliya Abu Madhi in the *Diwan Al-Jadawil* contain expressions that use female markers. Table 1 shows the poems that use these female markers.

Table 1. Poems that contain female markers

No.	Title	Transliteration	Indonesian	English
1.	العنقاء	<i>Al-anqâ`</i>	Burung Fantasi	Fantasy Bird
2.	السجينة	<i>As-sajînah</i>	Yang Terpenjara	The imprisoned
3.	السماء	<i>As-samâ`</i>	Langit	Sky
4.	بردي يا سحب	<i>Bardîyâsachab</i>	Sejuklah Wahai Awan	Cool O Cloud
5.	تعالى	<i>Ta`âlay</i>	Kemarilah	Come over
6.	ريح الشمال	<i>Rîchusy-syimâl</i>	Angin Utara	North Wind

7.	المساء	<i>Al-masâ`</i>	Senja	Dusk
8.	الكنجة المحطمة	<i>Al-kamunjah al- muchath-thamah</i>	Biola Yang Patah	Broken Violin
9.	نارالقرى	<i>Nâr al-Qurâ</i>	ApiDesa	Village Fire
10.	العليقة	<i>Al-aliqah</i>	Makanan Hewan	Animal food
11.	هي	<i>Hiya</i>	Dia (pr)	She
12.	الناسكة	<i>An-nâsikah</i>	Hamba Yang Zuhud	The Servant of Zuhud
13.	الطلاسم	<i>Ath-thalâsim</i>	Teka-Teki	The riddles
14.	الدمعة الكرساء	<i>Ad-dim`ah al-kurasâ`</i>	Air Mata Duka	Grief Tears
15.	عروس الجمال	<i>`arûsuljamâl</i>	Pengantin yang indah	Beautiful bride
16.	ابنة الفجر	<i>Ibnatu al-fajr</i>	Anak Fajar	Son of Dawn
17.	باشذاهن	<i>Yasyadzâhan</i>	Hai Syadzahan	Hai Syadzahan
18.	غرامية	<i>gharâmiyah</i>	Percintaan	Love

Iliya Abu Madhi in *Diwan Al-Jadawil* uses female characteristics such as gentle and beautiful to express the messages that are related to equality and freedom. The use of female characteristics is appropriate to the literary school followed by the poet, that is, romanticism. In his poems, the poet likes to praise and to be praised and enjoys beautiful and natural objects such as flowers, gardens, ocean, stars, the moon, the sun, and universe.

Table 2 presents the examples taken from the poems which use female markers. The poet uses the beauty of a woman to portray the nature. The use of female markers in his poems is employed to express meaning through the use of beautiful wordings.

Table 2. Female markers in Abu Madhi's poems

text	title	no
سلمى...بماذا تفكرين سلمى... بماذا تحلمين Salmâ...bimâdzâ tafkurîn Salmâ...bimâdzâ tachlumân	المساء (11) Al-masâ`	.1
قلت : يا ساكنة الغاب ، و يا بنت التراب لا تلجِّي في اجتذابي ، أو فلجِّي في اجتذابي Qultu yâ sâkinatul ghâbi way â bintu at-turâbi Lâ tulajjî fî ijtizâbî aw falajjî fi ijtizâbî	العليقة (29) Al-`aliqah	.2
يا ليتني البدر الذي تنظرين ! يا ليتني الطير الذي تسمعين ! يا ليتني العطر الذي تنشقين ! أواه ! لو تصدَّق يا ليتني ! Yâ laitani albadru ladzî tandzurîn Yâ laitani ath-thairu al ladzî tasma`în Yâ laitani al-ithru al-ladzî tansyaqîn awwâh ! lau tushaddiq yâ laitani	عروس الجمال (40) Arûsul jamâl	.3
عيناك و السَّحر الذي فيهما صيرتاني شاعرا ساحرا	غرامية (45)	.4

<p>عَلِّمْتَنِي الْحَبَّ وَ عَلَّمْتَهُ بَدْرَ الدَّجَى ، وَ الغصن ، وَ الطَّائِرَا          إِن غَبْتَ عَنْ عَيْنِي وَ جَنَّ الدَّجَى سَأَلْتُ عَنْكَ الْقَمَرَ الزَّاهِرَا          وَ أَطْرَقَ الرُّوْضَةَ عِنْدَ الضَّحَى كَمَا أَنَا جِي الْبَلْبِلِ الشَّاعِرَا          وَ أَنشَقَ الْوَرْدَةَ فِي كَمَّهَا لَأَنَّ فِيهَا أَرْجَا عَاطِرَا</p> <p>Ainâki was sichru lladzî fîhimâ shayyartanî syâ`iran sâchiran          Allamtanî al chubbu wa allamtahû badrud dujâ wal ghushnu wath          thâ`ira          In ghibta `an ainî wa janna ddujâ sa`altu anka al-qamar az zâhirâ          Wa athruqu r rauzhata indadh-dhuchâ kamâ unâjîl bulbul asy-          syâ`irâ          Wa ansyuqqul wardata fi kammihâ liana fîhâ arjan `âthira</p>	<p>gharâmiyah</p>	
--	-------------------	--

The poet expresses his emotions through imagination and emotions. From the perspective of the poet, women are interesting creatures who are beautiful and full of love. He considers women and men as equal. However, not all poets have a similar view regarding this.

The theme of the Mahjar poets are always looked at, on a general note but singling out Iliya Abu Madhi, one would discover he delved into the twin branches of Arabic Literature: poetry and prose though he wrote more of poetry works than prose. The themes of Abu Madhi's poems include eulogy, elegy, love, congratulatory messages, and Qasidah (Ode) forms (Badmus, 2011).

However, in this attempt, the themes of his works have been summarized into three main themes. These compressed themes are based on the employed themes with which he composed his Diwan. They are: (1) Descriptive poetry in its nature, (2) Nationalistic poem's, (3) Emotional contemplations and meditations.

Gender needs to be understood as social structure, an approach that would render it recognizable in various dimensions of social life. Understanding gender as social structure would elevate it to the level of economic and political systems in its ability to influence and mold society (Risman, 2004).

Thus, feminist goals are gender balance and interrelation (Badmus, 2011: 7). Gender equity among men and women is a noble concept that must be transformed into feminism Arabic literature critique that is expected to be an alternative media for the fight of the gender equity. In its implementation, the epistemology construction of feminism Arabic literature critique consisting of source, structure, method, and validity that has not transformed the gender equity maximally. Consequently, epistemology reconstruction must be developed towards feminism Arabic literature critique in which the fight concept of gender equity consisted in its source, structure, method, and validity is reconstructed by accommodating all possibilities relating to the concept without leaving the existing ones

## CONCLUSIONS

Women characteristics found in the poems are utilized to strengthen the romanticism that the poet follows. The choice of words includes female markers which are considered important to symbolize beauty. Using beautiful words and expressing praises towards objects in nature have been the style of Abu Madhi. He employs powerful sentences in his poems to affect readers' emotions. Abu Madhi regards life beautiful and nature as containing all elements of beauty and pleasure. He believes that people should focus their eyes on the beauty of nature. They should neither bother about what has passed nor concern themselves with the future yet to come except the present moment. Like nature, people should distribute benefits among all overlooking discriminations.

Gender needs to be understood as social structure, an approach that would render it recognizable in various dimensions of social life. Understanding gender as social structure would elevate it to the level of economic and political systems in its ability to influence and mold society. Social construction and postmodern



feminisms have only begun to translate their theoretical and linguistic destabilization of the gender order into politics or praxis.

#### REFERENCES

- Ahmad, Imtyaz. (2016). *Abu Madhi: A voice of modernity in contemporary Arabic poetry*. (PDF Journal). Retrieved July 30, 2016. Via [http://pu.edu.pk/images/journal/uoc/PDF-FILES/\(11\)%20Dr.%20Imteyaz%20Ahmad.pdf](http://pu.edu.pk/images/journal/uoc/PDF-FILES/(11)%20Dr.%20Imteyaz%20Ahmad.pdf).
- Badawi, M. M. A (1975). *Critical introduction to modern Arabic poetry*. London: Cambridge University
- Badmus, M. (2011). *Ilya Abu Madi: the profile of a famous mahjar poet of modern Arabic literature*. Department of Religious Studies, University of Ado-Ekiti, Nigeria via <https://www.scribd.com/document/13975702/Life-and-works-of-Ilya-Abu-Madi>.
- Culler, J. (1982). *On deconstruction: Theory and criticism after structuralism*. New York: Cornell University Press
- Ellman, M. (1968). *Thinking about woman*. London: Macmillan.
- Elgebily, S. (2017). The word against the sword: Arabic Poetry in the face of despotism. *Linguistics and Literature Studies*, 5, 51 - 60. doi: 10.13189/lis.2017.050104.
- Millet, K. & Barret, M. (1970). *Sexual politics*. Chicago: University of Illinois Press.
- Newton, K.M. (1990). *Twentieth Century Literary Theory*. London: Macmillan.
- Rizman, B. (2004). Gender as a social structure: Theory wrestling with activism. *Gender & Society* 18 (4).
- Selden, R. 1986. *A Reader's Guide to Contemporary Literary Theory*. Lexington: University Press of Kentucky.