

The Feminine Cultural System and Representations of Human Integration between the Self and the Other: Adham Sharqawi's Novel Nabd as a Model

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Abstract:

The conditions imposed by the contemporary cultural context on postmodern critical discourse have made feminine identity a central problematic in establishing an integrative union between the self and the other and in formulating a foundational system that transcends the concepts of superiority, hierarchy, and discrimination entrenched by dominant culture. This has prepared the feminine subject to emerge in a form that rejects all manifestations and repercussions of masculine domination. From this perspective, the present approach seeks to investigate the feminine cultural system and the representations of human integration between the self and the other, with the aim of revealing the implicit cultural dimensions through which the image of woman is manifested within narrative discourse. It proceeds from the premise that the novel establishes an integrative relationship between the self and the other, founded on affection, compassion, union, and fidelity, far removed from the constraints of domination and conflict. The study explores representations of woman through her firmly established relationship with the other, as manifested in her emotional, aesthetic, ethical, and even epic presence. It ultimately concludes that femininity in the novel constitutes a thematic motif that embodies various human values. It is precisely here that the effectiveness of systemic cultural criticism becomes evident in uncovering the cultural structures embedded within the fabric of the novel.

Keywords: system / femininity / masculinity / authority of war / systemic criticism.

Introduction:

As long as artistic writing remains responsive to the realities of its time and the demands arising from them, it is capable of producing a distinctive creative legacy that both embodies reality and captures its transformations. The novel, as a linguistic form capable of accommodating diverse epistemological and aesthetic systems, provides an especially effective discursive space for addressing such issues and exploring their complex dimensions through an engaging mode of expression shaped by renewed artistic craftsmanship.

The novel *Nabd*, which has been selected here as an artistic model, gives rise to a constellation of interconnected systems characterized, in terms of their structural configuration, by a carefully constructed dramatic architecture and a refined artistic texture. It creates for the reader a semiotic space layered with meanings arising from intertwined and contradictory cultural conflicts: the passion of love, the authority of war, the instinct for survival, and the haunting presence of death...

In our estimation, the positioning of the feminine within the novel *Nabd* constitutes the central axis of the narrative and the focal point of its intended meaning, particularly because the novel is essentially romantic in nature. The narrator attempts to reveal the demands of the psyche and his emotional inclination toward the other, as well as his intense desire to penetrate the emotional worlds of the woman by invoking her identity and portraying her feminine features—with their distinguished intellectual qualities and captivating physical attributes—while rendering this experience with remarkable descriptive precision, yet through a refined language grounded in an authentic Arabic lexicon. This is in addition to the narration of other details intertwined with the progression of the contexts, whose compelling presence touches upon the central theme at the very core of the discourse.

The aesthetic value of this art lies in its close engagement with human reality in all that it encompasses of values, passions, and epic experiences... What is even more striking is the density, flexibility, and systematic arrangement characterizing the composition of the text, together with the manner in which events are selected and skillfully incorporated into this engaging structural configuration.

Based on this research perspective, the study seeks to address the following question: What are the manifestations of the feminine system within the novel?

On the basis of this epistemological question—grounded in the systemic approach—methodological necessity requires an investigation of the semantic dimension of the implicit feminine system and an examination of its concealed features, alongside a theoretical discussion of the fundamental concepts. The study then concludes with a set of findings intended to make it possible, to some extent, to uncover the dimensions of this scholarly issue.

First: The Female as a Modern Systemic Project:

The characteristics that distinguish an artistic system and enable it to develop and take shape within the structure of discourse require the systemic researcher to rely on a set of reliable scholarly mechanisms grounded in cultural and epistemological backgrounds that have embraced such systems, or what has recently come to be termed the epistemology of discourse—which reveals the system's references and its concealed articulations. In its most precise sense, the system “is a partial set of language that is necessarily closed... that is, every proposition within the language whose necessity is established by another proposition, or by a set of propositions belonging to the system, must itself also belong to that system.”¹

Kamal Abu Deeb, meanwhile, defines it as a complex dual process; at its roots, it arises from the similarity of certain phenomena within the body of the text or narrative, followed by their repetition a number of times, and then by the dissolution and disappearance of these

phenomena. Through this characteristic, the system acquires a dialectical nature, since repetition within the system constitutes an infinite feature.²

Femininity, as a cultural project, is no longer conceived as an idea subordinated to the authority of masculinity; rather, it has become an independent semantic system that rejects all forms of domination and asserts its centrality through diverse forms of art and practice, “signifying the reality of radical transformations that reject the logic of appropriation... Western culture has undermined the masculinity/femininity binary founded on domination and authority—that is, the dominance of the central over the marginal, the latter being associated with the feminine—in order to establish a new conception based on competitiveness and difference through the abolition or dismantling of this dialectic. In this direction, a new tendency has emerged that seeks to consolidate the centrality of the feminine within culture in all its patterns and forms through creativity/writing... Through this feminist criticism, which emerged as the product of revolutionary feminist movements in the West, it became possible to construct a distinctive emancipatory project aimed at dismantling what are known as the centralities of Western civilization in order to recover the absent or repressed voice...”³

Accordingly, the feminine text, as manifested in these paradigmatic trajectories of Western thought, is a systemic text that takes counter-cultural conceptions as a point of departure for shaping its worlds and constructing the mythology of the feminine self, with the aim of reconstructing centrality and formulating an intellectual system that transcends the concepts of objectification, delimitation, and projection entrenched by dominant culture. Its discourse thus moves from the sphere of passivity to that of agency, a shift that is more clearly embodied in the image of the rebellious woman who continually strives for liberation... Her highest aspiration has consequently become liberation from the authority of the masculine approach and the affirmation of her own existence beyond all forms of dependence.”⁴

In this regard, de Beauvoir articulated her famous statement: ‘One is not born a woman, but rather becomes a woman⁵,’” which encouraged women to turn to these creative arts to articulate their lived experiences: “Some women have demonstrated remarkable expressive creativity in refining and adapting language so that it becomes capable of conveying women’s distinctive characteristics, whether at the level of vocabulary or sentence structures...”⁶ In general, the aims of this orientation can, in brief, be seen in the dismantling of dominant masculine thought, the cultivation of a culturally enlightened awareness of women’s status, and the elevation of their human and intellectual standing.

Second: Feminine Centrality and Manifestations of Human Integration: Adham Sharqawi’s Novel *Nabd* as a Model

Within this fertile semantic space, the dynamics of the novel unfold through a set of cultural systems—sociological, epic, psychological... Its linguistic material is drawn from the Arabic lexicon and expressed in a refined artistic language characterized by semantic precision and carefully crafted diction, while its intellectual content is inspired by Arab culture, the epics of history, and the ideology of reality. Although this content is interwoven with an expansive imagination, the element of fictionalization constitutes one of the secrets of its effectiveness, lending the narrative a degree of suspense and ambiguity in certain passages and thereby

allowing the reader's horizon of expectations to rise to the level of this artistic form and to follow the gradual unfolding of its creative trajectories.

Among these implicit systems, the feminine system has been selected as a stimulating cultural system that, in some of its manifestations, is characterized by elusiveness and ambiguity. From another perspective, it can be seen weaving interconnected images and conveying them to the reader's consciousness through a distinctive artistic plot that leads the reader into a world of signified meanings. Viewed from this perspective in its entirety, the notion of femininity becomes central to its presence at both the literary and real-world levels. It therefore requires the researcher to undertake a meticulous examination informed by appropriate epistemological backgrounds in order to identify its features according to its position within the context, as follows:

1. Relational Integration: Between the Centrality of Femininity and the Authority of Masculinity

The narrative discourse centers on an integrative system imbued with a human dimension. The writer sought to embed the emotional dimension deeply within the narrative structure, yet it remained intersected with a range of other systems whose artistic qualities contributed to shaping and expanding the image for the reader, enabling the latter to experience it and perceive the affective bonds associated with the paired system of femininity/masculinity and to explore their respective positioning within the novel.

This is precisely what the writer sought to achieve throughout the novel: to evoke the feminine, describe her through a masculine perspective, introduce her into the narrative worlds, and reveal the nature of the relationship between Qass bin Sa'ada and Nabd. Recognizing this duality as a creative polarity of existence is, in itself, an eternal and indisputable reality. A discourse of this kind necessarily entails a set of principles, foremost among them equality, humanity, union, and affection... Accordingly, the attributes of differentiation and superiority are displaced, allowing both poles the legitimacy to express their ontological presence at the levels of reality and artistic representation as a relationship between two shared poles that are not oppositional but rather mutually complementary in themselves. This, in itself, constitutes a rejection of discrimination and hierarchy and their replacement with the principle of relational complementarity between femininity and masculinity.

Considering the narrative trajectory of the novel "Nabd," the reader is drawn into a narrative labyrinth that reveals events in which reality and imagination are intertwined. It is the narration of a strong relationship and the disclosure of sincere emotions between Qass bin Sa'ada and his beloved, Nabd. If an attempt is made to trace the features of this duality, it becomes evident that it pervades the novel and undergoes a qualitative transformation from a mere linguistic symbol into active subjects. The novelist seeks to articulate the bonds they share and to reveal the nature of this dual relationship. Within the novel, he states:

"Through the intensity of love, some become *we*."⁷ This is an exceedingly concise statement, yet its semantic dimensions encapsulate the noblest of values: intimacy, connection, affection, harmony... It reflects the profound relationship that unites Qass and Nabd within a single bond despite the compelling circumstances and harsh conditions surrounding them, including wars

and tragedies, to the extent that he says: "Every person in this war has a battle that he fights alone; for him, that battle is the entire war. My own battle within this war is you. Or rather, you are my entire war. Everything I fight for is to see this war come to an end while you remain with me. If I win the war but lose you, I will have triumphed with the collective yet been defeated in my heart and in my very existence.... Nabd, you are my entire war, not merely one of my battles. Either I win you and emerge victorious, or I lose you and am defeated."⁸

This narrative situation is charged with dramatic intensity, recounting the circumstances of Qass's relationship with Nabd under the weight of war and its calamities. This particular scene heightens attraction and suspense to such an extent that the reader becomes convinced of the depth and sincerity of their relationship. The true struggle pursued by Qass bin Sa'ada lies in whatever can preserve his beloved for him and whatever can lead him back to her. The greatest loss, therefore, does not lie in military defeat, but in losing the beloved.

Through this duality of Qass/Nabd, the emotional relationship deepens and extends its fabric throughout the novel, intertwining with the details of reality, life, war, struggle... Like other narratives, this novel revolves around presenting characters who embody the two poles of the story. From this perspective, another dimension of Qass's personality becomes apparent: in addition to being a patriotic citizen, a fighter, and a man devoted to his country, he is also a young man in the prime of life who has fallen in love with a woman endowed with exceptional and distinctive qualities. This explains to the reader his intense attraction toward her.

Accordingly, the integrative system between Qass and Nabd eliminates the principle of superiority or internal conflict between femininity and masculinity and instead encapsulates the genuine mutual attraction between them. This does not threaten masculine centrality or embody a diminished form of femininity; rather, it constitutes an incentive and a source of motivation for both parties. This is what the novelist seeks to convey to the reader by demonstrating that his masculinity remains incomplete in the absence of his woman: "Nabd... every victory from which you are absent is a defeat..."⁹

From the foregoing, it becomes evident that human nature necessitates harmony between the two sexes and that the fullness of this relational nature cannot be attained unless this duality is brought into union. What can be discerned from this creative work is that the ontological existence of masculinity does not possess sufficient vitality or emotional completeness except in the presence of the feminine.

2. Feminine Passion in the Face of the Authority of War

Between an explicit utterance and an implicit intention, the details of this novel are formulated and its events intricately woven, laden with emotional intensity. The writer attempts to elevate the emotional energy overwhelming him and diffuse it throughout the narrative text, allowing the reader to sense the unrestrained force of passion, the yearning of the lover, the impulse toward resistance, and the magnitude of sacrifice... It is as though, through these emotional stimuli, he seeks to elevate human feelings and give free rein to the expression of what he inwardly experiences toward his beloved, as well as the calamities and wars that constrain him... If an attempt were made to summarize the significance of this particular system, the words of Sheikh Jalal al-Din Rumi may be invoked: "They are preoccupied with blood, with

annihilation... As for us, we are preoccupied with survival..¹⁰. They beat the drums of war, while we beat only the drums of love.” Anyone who examines the details of the narrative and carefully reflects upon this statement will perceive the general significance of the central system underlying this discourse.

Throughout this narrative sequence, the writer seeks to control the course of events and regulate their movement with considerable precision, demonstrating an exceptional capacity for visual selection and an orderly transition across the different temporal moments that brought him together with his beloved. He recalls the past, then describes the present, and subsequently looks toward the future.

A temporal architecture therefore governs the narrative space, one that can be perceived and sensed through its carefully orchestrated timing: it takes the reader back to the earliest days of their encounter, then draws the reader into the congestion of present reality, before detaching the reader from that world and carrying his horizon toward what the narrator longs for and aspires to attain. He states: “Now, Nabd, I take you/me back to the beginning of the story... This story, if I were to return to the beginning of the road, I would walk it again until its very last step despite the stumbling ending... Let us return to the opening of the poem, where the first measured beat of my heart began upon the meter of your eyes... Today is my birthday, Nabd... I do not know why, whenever this day passes, I remember the first time I saw you...”¹¹

The writer begins his third chapter, entitled *The Drums of Love Are Beating*, with this scene as a point of retrospection recalling his first encounter with Nabd. He identifies the spatial and temporal setting in which this meeting took place and narrates the circumstances of the moment when he first caught sight of her: “I remember you sitting in the university library... enchanting, as though you were a pre-Islamic poem composed by Ibn Abi Sulma after he had reached an advanced age in life/poetry... playing with the heart like the love poetry of Ibn Abi Rabi’a... sweet like the verse of Abu Nuwas... surrounded by an aura of wisdom as though you were a poem by al-Mutanabbi... in your left hand a book, and in your right hand a pen that I wished were me...”¹²

These are a series of embodied images upon which the writer relies to describe his beloved through an intensely metaphorical expression imbued with symbolic and suggestive force. Their instrumental function is to provide a sensory description of a character who occupies a central position in the writer’s consciousness. The reader cannot possibly pass casually over such images; rather, the writer deliberately seeks to transmit the particular qualities of this character to the reader’s consciousness, while these stylistic devices create a form of contemplative extension and sensory immersion in the characters of the novel. Among the expressions of disclosure charged with affection and emotional sincerity are those perceived in the fragrance of his letters to Nabd:

“To you, the secret too difficult to conceal: I know nothing else but you as I examine my shortcomings, which now appear in an embarrassingly obvious way, and hesitate to approach the empty spaces lest I fall further and my fragility become exposed... There is an astonishing flow of you within me, a flow whose source and destination are your eyes. I know of no magic more powerful than them, and this is not an ordinary, commonplace matter... but a truth.”¹³

Within this letter lies a series of confessions and intimations revealing what Qass bin Sa'ada harbors toward his beloved. Anyone examining this amorous discourse can perceive the sincerity of affection and the depth of the relationship between him and Nabd. The forms through which this love is expressed are diverse, including gestures, letters, the endurance of waiting, close attention to details, an almost compulsive gaze, curiosity... This reveals the psychological dimension of the writer through his reliance on such emotional stimuli and his emphasis on their effectiveness in generating excitement and attraction.

The artistic function of this system lies in revealing the motivating factors and underlying reasons for this intense inclination toward Nabd through evocative artistic language. It also involves recounting the memories they shared, which represented a decisive turning point in his life, through meaningful and expressive semiotic symbolism, alongside the narration of driving forces and stirring thoughts conveyed through vivid sensory representation. Here, the artistry of Adham Sharqawi becomes apparent in the manner in which he addresses psychological themes and artistically structures them, showing a tendency toward symbolism and sensory representation, which opens the text to further interpretive readings.

3. The Female and Her Physical Features as an Aesthetic System

The narrative horizon of the language of the female body constitutes a sensory system, an aesthetic symbol, and an engaging interactive nexus. Arab writers have long associated this captivating feminine mystery with the woman's physical appearance, which has consequently become a meaningful semiotic requirement. The feminine can simultaneously evoke astonishment and admiration; it can become a source of acceptance and rejection, agitation and calmness, obedience and rebellion... It is a revolution of contradictory emotions. Anyone who closely examines body language can readily perceive these characteristics, because the body, if the expression may be permitted, is the most stable entity and the most capable of encompassing a range of behaviors and translating a mass of energies directed toward a particular and deliberate matter.

It is from the body that the movement of events begins, that events intertwine, meanings expand, and narrative structures deepen. It is precisely through the body that the narrator's language and artistic technique can be classified, while it is also within the body that all sensory impulses originate and all latent possibilities converge... This is because such a sensory system is accompanied by tensions and reactions that reflect an accumulation of stimulating impulses. The absence of the body from fictional discourse would therefore imply the absence of the sensory world through which the characters of the novel are perceived and their defining features revealed. Returning to the novel *Nabd*, it becomes evident that the writer draws the reader in through a series of sensory attributes that portray the female body together with its distinctive characteristics, as in the following passage:

"With every encounter between us, Nabd, I felt as though I were opening another door in the labyrinth of your being. The more I discovered a part of you, the more intensely I thirsted to know you further. What is delightful about you is that contradictory qualities, when gathered within you, harmonize in a strangely compelling way. Your outward appearance suggests that you are the calmest of creatures, yet whoever draws close to you realizes that you carry within

you a fierce blaze, as though you were a volcano of ice. There is a silent sadness in your eyes, perhaps intensified by their darkness, while your face bears the freshness and joy of spring. Your heart is as soft as cotton; no one can enter it without wishing to remain there forever... Your tenderness is indescribable, yet it does not weaken you; rather, it makes you stronger... When you raised your eyes toward me, there was something different in them, something beyond the ordinary. You looked at me enchantingly... Passion gave the darkness of your eyes a magnificent gleam, making them appear like a piece adorned with stars... I contented myself with gazing at you as though contemplating a masterfully executed painting or a flawless sculpture..."¹⁴

He then delves even more deeply into describing his beloved, Nabd: "I was trying to find an expression on your face from which I could determine how much of my secrets I might reveal, but at that moment I realized that I was too weak for words and yet too daring for silence. The steadiness of your features encouraged me to draw closer to your face... Beautiful like spring; wherever you arrive, the universe around me blossoms all at once. Calm like the night; whenever I see you, I feel the desire to take refuge in you. You know how to be entirely feminine without resembling any other woman..."¹⁵ I became so addicted to her voice that I feel my soul thirsts to hear it before my ears do. My heart is not accustomed to such an intensity of love... Your face was glowing red, and your eyes resembled a cloud struggling to release its rain... Nothing equals the pleasure of watching the face of the person you love..."¹⁶

The sensory function of these scenes lies in highlighting her physical features alongside her feminine qualities: the calmness that envelops her body, the sadness inhabiting her eyes, the tenderness emanating from her voice, the freshness reflected in her features, and the gentleness conveyed by her smile... Thus, every movement carries its own significance. This demonstrates the writer's refined and precise artistic craftsmanship.

What these complex sensory images evoke is closely connected to modes of expression and techniques of representation, aiming to make the inanimate speak, to embody the invisible, and to draw the absent into the realm of presence. In this way, they assume an artistic form that transforms them into visible and expressive images. Their interpretation requires significant linguistic indicators, "as words move beyond their ordinary communicative context within the imagistic system toward meanings that transcend their conventional literal significance, and these latter meanings depend upon the senses," since "the perceptible world occupies the foremost position among them, for most images are derived from sensory experience"¹⁷. Accordingly, the image is "the product of the cooperation of all the senses and all faculties, and it constitutes a form of inspiration resulting from the writer's readings, observations, reflections, and experiences, together with the strength of memory, the breadth of imagination, and the depth of thought."¹⁸

A close examination of the positioning of physical features within the novel reveals a semantic field rich in meaning. Through the body, the characteristics of femininity emerge in its very being and contours; moments of recollection and anticipation become perceptible; moments of stillness and impulsiveness become distinguishable; and the features of calmness and anxiety, love and aversion, become apparent... Through this linguistic formulation, narrative meanings

emerge and are incorporated as actual stimuli and effective triggers that govern the direction and movement of the body. Within these images, the body thus appears as an active element within a symbolic cultural system densely charged with suggestion, translating a range of tensions and flowing responses generated by preceding stimuli.

4. The Female and Her Moral and Intellectual Distinctions as the Ideal Model of Arab Womanhood

To say that femininity, deeply rooted in every woman, inherently requires a set of characteristics may, to a certain extent, lead beyond the outward appearance that clothes her toward those qualities that crown her intellectually and spiritually. What distinguishes a woman is the way she thinks, the skill with which she interacts, the quality of her choices, and the firmness with which she handles matters. These particular aspects determine her stature, because outward appearance is a common denominator shared by all women. Even though women may differ in their degree of attractiveness and capacity to captivate, physical appearance nevertheless remains a shared characteristic governed by divine creation.

The intellectual and ethical dimensions, however, are what establish distinctions and determine varying degrees of attraction among women. In this sense, al-Rafi'i's statement is particularly relevant to this context: "True love, that which may genuinely be called love, does not reside in what one sees of color, form, composition, harmony, and the other features that display human beauty in its fullest and finest manifestation in the beloved, as people mistakenly assume. Rather, it lies in the opposite: in that which conceals the entirety of human nature, with all its virtues and imperfections, and reveals in its place only the qualities of the beloved soul. Thus, the beloved appears to you, in whatever form or appearance, as though a celestial figure had been fashioned exclusively for your own soul."¹⁹

Returning to the novel *Nabd*, which presents woman as an active and compelling system, the writer also addresses the effectiveness of moral and intellectual qualities in creating distinction and fostering affection toward her. Among the feminine characteristics and virtues upon which he particularly dwells is the following:

"You possess a heart more compassionate than any I have encountered in this universe. You share in people's suffering as though it were your own. Whenever someone tells you about a problem, you do not merely listen; you immediately begin searching for a solution. I knew that you never stopped at simply sympathizing with others, but did everything within your power to help them. I loved this about you and hated it at the same time. I loved it because it revealed with absolute clarity what a magnificent heart you possess and what a profoundly sensitive soul you carry, and I hated it because I knew how much it exhausted you and caused you to bear the sorrows of others beyond what you could endure. Yet I also knew that you possessed a strength that enabled you to transform every sorrow you encountered into energy and motivation to remain standing for as long as possible."²⁰

In this scene, the writer brings together a range of qualities deeply embedded in *Nabd*'s character. He assigns a distinct meaning to each characteristic, and each meaning refers to an enduring principle that reinforces the value of devotion toward her, as reflected in his words: "Deep within myself, I was never afraid to admit that I loved you, *Nabd*, nor was I delaying

before making the confession. Every day I spent in your presence offered me conclusive proof that my life before you had been nothing more than a succession of empty nights and days. The truth was simply that I enjoyed discovering you day after day—or perhaps discovering myself through you. When we love, we do not merely discover the other person; we also discover the extent of our own capacity, the extent of our patience, and the magnitude of our hearts... It is as though love were the discovery of new doors within ourselves whose keys we find buried in another soul, and once we find them, we find ourselves...”²¹

Among the characteristics that Qass further elaborates upon in describing his beloved is his statement: “You taught me so much without saying anything to me; you reshaped me... You spoke spontaneously despite the deep thought that seemed to occupy you. You tended toward a certain madness when it came to emotions, yet your appearance and behavior were largely governed by rationality...”²²

Across these passages, a set of moral and intellectual values can be discerned that deeply attracted Qass bin Sa‘ada toward Nabd. Throughout the novel, he gathers these qualities in numerous instances, including forbearance, humility, patience, intelligence, and perceptiveness... The purpose of such descriptions is to highlight her feminine characteristics as well as her moral and intellectual distinctions. Despite her physical beauty, she also possesses a considerable degree of wisdom and nobility.

The aesthetic value of this system lies in demonstrating the extent of a woman’s moral and intellectual influence on a man, independently of any clothing she wears or any outward appearance she may adopt.

5. The Female and the Tragedy of the Ending: Between the Authority of War and the Pain of Loss

The specter of death and the instinct for survival preoccupy many writers whose creative works open renewed horizons for addressing realistic and epic themes. This necessarily requires scholarly preparedness informed by epistemological awareness capable of tracing the shifts, transformations, and reversals accompanying the movement of time and the impact these changes exert upon prevailing patterns of thought. Literature, therefore, does not reproduce reality literally, nor does it document historical periods mechanically; rather, it invests them with affective and artistic dimensions, thereby expanding the semantic space within the narrative design.

A reading of this novel reveals a series of motivating forces that contribute, through their evocative power, to directing the movement of the artistic scene. Among these are the inevitability of confrontation, the obsession with loss, and the passion of love... The writer adopts an epic trajectory in constructing this system, within which a multitude of complex events converge around two figures who constitute the two poles of the novel, Qass and Nabd. As he narrates the features of war and the severity of its impact on those who endure it, he expresses his attitude toward it: “I have always been against war, Nabd, because I know that everyone who enters it inevitably loses, whether victor or defeated... This is the worst thing about war: it transforms us either into killers or into the killed—a victim who does not know the face of his killer, and a killer who will always remember the face of the victim. Yet some

wars choose us; we do not choose them, Nabd, and this is precisely what happened to us with this war. It chose us, so we fought it. People cannot escape their destinies, and this war was our destiny.”²³

From this perspective, war is neither voluntary nor optional; rather, it is an inevitable course and a decisive stage in destiny, ending either in loss or victory, although both sides ultimately taste the bitterness of its burdens. On this basis, it may be argued that war is among those destinies from which there is no escape.²⁴

In acknowledging the causes that ignite the flames of war and unleash bloodshed, war may be regarded as the direct heir to the absence of humanity and the complete disappearance of awareness: “Cannons have taken on a tongue, and bullets have become the language of dialogue.” Among the most painful scenes that the writer depicts with such precise and sensory detail that the reader can almost feel and magnify its impact is the assassination of his beloved, Nabd, during the war. He makes clear that in every war, each individual fights a private battle alone, and that this battle becomes the entire war for that person: “You were my entire war, Nabd... and now I am defeated through you... When I lost you, there was nothing left that could repair the loss of you, not even winning the war alongside everyone else. This homeland, despite its vastness, is too narrow for me to have another beloved after you.”²⁵

The devastation that wars inflict today upon Arab homelands through killing, destruction, and ruin is unequalled by any other loss and unmatched by any other pain. This is precisely what the writer attempts to embody through an artistic plot that enables the reader to witness and emotionally experience its events. The assassination of the beloved is the decisive factor that alters the course of the narrative structure of the story, and this scene reveals Nabd’s status and the magnitude of her loss: “Life without you is unbearable, Nabd. A deadly loneliness... They took everything from me the day they took you away... There is a fire in my heart, Nabd, that all the rivers of the world could not extinguish even if they were poured over me. As long as I remain alive, I will continue turning upon the embers of your departure, and nothing but death can extinguish them and reduce them to ashes...”²⁶

He surrounds these scenes, laden with elegy and praise, with tightly woven and evocative threads within a specific spatial setting and a clearly framed temporal moment. He draws the story from the very core of reality, yet renders it through an elevated artistic formulation. He narrates the man’s loyalty and immense sacrifices, while also describing the condition of a woman whom life refused to treat justly in a world where the powerful oppress the weak and where the victor becomes master of the situation even when corrupt.

The voice of the narrative rises above the formal structure of storytelling to express human values in their most profound dimensions, transcending beliefs, geographical boundaries, color, and race in the pursuit of safety and security. It ultimately suggests that life loses its value after the loss of loved ones.

Anyone who examines the narratives embedded within this system can perceive a range of concepts and understand the value of the binary relationship between man and woman: a relationship of complementarity, harmony, compassion, and protection. At the level of the novel, the male protagonist symbolizes masculinity, sacrifice, and loyalty, whereas the woman

symbolizes nobility, vulnerability, and beauty. Accordingly, the novel may be regarded, to a considerable extent, as a reflection of the culture and values deeply embedded in the consciousness of the Arab world, a reflection of Arab masculinity and of the value accorded to women within society.

In general, the aesthetic quality of this system, which takes war as its central theme, lies in revealing the anxieties endured by the protagonist and the obstacles he confronts, while emphasizing the impact of the war as manifested in the assassination of his beloved, Nabd, and in his desire to withdraw because, after losing his beloved, the passion for confrontation no longer remains.

Conclusion:

In conclusion, the ultimate point may be expressed through a fundamental premise: systemic criticism, in its multiple forms—epistemological criticism, cultural criticism, ideological criticism...—constitutes an effective intellectual orientation for exploring the absences embedded within the literary text, tracing the effectiveness of implicit systems, and identifying their semantic positioning within the structure of language. On this basis, it may be argued that systemic reading, owing to its intellectual foundations and epistemological intersections with other disciplines, represents an effective mode of perception and a methodical means of examination through which cultural codes and latent systems embedded within literary discourse may be made to speak. Based on this perspective, the study arrives at a set of findings that constitute the essence and principal outcome of the present research, as follows:

- _ One of the aims of the modern cultural renaissance is to consolidate an intellectual system capable of establishing the worlds of the feminine self, defining its centrality, and dismantling the dominant thought directed against it.
- _ The novel *Nabd* is fundamentally romantic in character, yet it intersects with various intellectual orientations that reflect the writer's cultural depth and his intention to communicate his ideas to the reader through a literary and philosophical style. It engages with numerous themes, although most of them, if not nearly all, remain closely connected to the passion of love as a source of energy and to the impact of war as a crime against humanity that has caused immense losses.
- _ The ontological existence of the masculinity/femininity binary necessarily requires the abandonment of principles of superiority and discrimination and the fulfillment of human nature through the establishment of relational complementarity between the two sexes.
- _ The function of the system of passionate attachment toward the female lies in revealing the motivations underlying this psychological inclination and the reasons behind this intense emotional attachment through explicit and meaningful artistic representation.
- _ The female body may be regarded as a stable entity governed by a range of sensory stimuli; on this basis, it may be considered an active element within a symbolic cultural system.
- _ What distinguishes the female is her intellectual and moral qualities, independently of any outward form or appearance she may adopt. Principles alone are what create distinction and uniqueness among women.

Citations:

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