

The Dialectic of Heritage and Modernity and Its Systemic Representations in Maḥmūd al-Mas‘adī’s Novel *Ḥaddatha Abū Hurayra Qāl*

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Abstract:

Maḥmūd al-Mas‘adī’s novel “*Ḥaddatha Abū Hurayra Qāl*” ranks among the most powerful contemporary texts, because it engages the human being in relation to the self, to existence, and to the cultural and ethical inheritance. This makes it a composite text that joins narration, philosophical reflection, the language of heritage, symbolic construction, and the modernist question of essence and existence. Two systems are therefore found within it: the first traditional, the second modernist, the two interacting within an artistic mold, each carrying its own epistemic load and intellectual frame of reference.

Heritage rests on the sacred, inherited language, asceticism, Sufism, and ethics; modernity rests on doubt, individual experience, existential reflection, and revolt against inherited authorities. The conflict ends in the impossibility of any absolute separation between heritage and its systemic representations and modernity and its coordinating manifestations, all fused within a brilliant fictional text that lays bare the crisis of the contemporary human being.

Keywords: the novel, Maḥmūd al-Mas‘adī, system, heritage, modernity.

Introduction:

Literary criticism, as a discipline, seeks to probe and investigate creative texts through analysis, interpretation, and judgment. This was the image that marked its beginnings, but it soon witnessed striking transformations. Criticism moved from working with aesthetic approaches aimed at raising the value of the text toward an openness to new approaches produced by the revolution of modernity that the twentieth century witnessed. These took the form of cultural approaches cast as systems, which see the literary text as a discourse charged with a set of varied epistemic and social systems. They came as a response to contemporary intellectual transformations and to a rise of cultural studies that obliged criticism to reconsider the concept of literature and its function. The text came to be read as a cultural practice in which language intersects with power, history, and identity, and cultural criticism turned to dismantling the deep structures that shape its discourse and to uncovering the latent systems that it reproduces and interrogates. The scope of critical reading widened to take in questions of representation, difference, center and margin, and the relation between the self and the other. This research is founded on a central problem: the literary text turns into an arena of symbolic conflict between

the values of heritage and the questions of modernity, in a dialectic that the systemic representations enshrine in Maḥmūd al-Mas‘adī's novel *Ḥaddatha Abū Hurayra Qāl*.

Proceeding from the hypothesis that the contemporary novel is the space of conflict between two systems, one a calm traditional system and the other an anxious modernist one, sustained by the language of heritage that conceals the critical modernist vision, the study relied on the appropriate descriptive analytical method to describe the cultural sentences circulating within the fictional discourse and to analyze them aesthetically. The aim is to bring out the relation between heritage as a symbolic authority and modernity as a question rather than an answer, and how the two become manifest clearly in al-Mas‘adī's novel. This gives the research an added value in the field of systemic approaches that uncover the deep structure of the text through the analysis of its systems.

1. The concept of heritage

The subject of heritage is an important field of inquiry in contemporary Arab discourse, given its great importance for reading and analyzing the past with its epistemic abundance, in order to reshape and reformulate it in a way that keeps pace with the present, through an intellectual awareness attuned to this age, an age laden with intellectual and philosophical visions born of the revolution of modernity. A researcher into the linguistic meaning of the term heritage finds that most dictionaries nearly agree on a single concept: that it derives in origin from the root w-r-th, while occurring as a synonym of other terms such as legacy (*irth*), bequest, and inheritance. It has been said: "*Turāth* (heritage), *irth* (legacy), and *mīrāth* (inheritance): that which is inherited. It is also said that *wirth* and *mīrāth* pertain to property, while *irth* pertains to lineage; *turāth* is what a man leaves to his heirs, and the *t* in it is a substitute for the *w*." (Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān al-‘Arab*, p. 201).

Heritage is, moreover, among the least employed and circulated of these sources among the Arabs, and linguists confirm that the letter *t* in the word *turāth* was originally a *w*, since its origin is *wirāth*, the *w* then being converted to *t* to carry the *ḍamma* of the *w*.

The word *turāth* occurs once in the Holy Qur‘an, in the words of God Most High: "And you consume inheritance, devouring it altogether, and you love wealth with immense love." (Qur‘an 89:19-20), that is, you amass the inheritance without scrupulously seeking out the lawful and the unlawful.

From the foregoing it may be said that the old Arabic dictionaries all agreed on the word *turāth* as denoting the legacy and inheritance that fathers leave to their children, whether material or immaterial, which kept its usage limited.

Terminologically:

The connotations of heritage and its derivations are many, and their senses have taken on closely related meanings. Muḥammad ‘Ābid al-Jābirī (*Muḥammad ‘Ābid al-Jābirī*) defines it thus: "It is the intellectual dimension within Arab-Islamic civilization: the legal creed, language, literature, art, notable figures, philosophy, Sufism... and this word did not occur in old Arab discourse; rather it is a term whose presence came after the modern Arab awakening that the Arab countries

knew." (see: Muḥammad ʿĀbid al-Jābirī, *al-Turāth wa-l-Ḥadātha* [Tradition and Modernity], p. 30) Heritage thus becomes all the material, immaterial, and spiritual things that the predecessors left to us, with their full epistemic and epistemological weight. Ṭāhā ʿAbd al-Raḥmān (Ṭāhā ʿAbd al-Raḥmān) does not stray far from this concept when he says: "Heritage is not a mere bequest; it accompanies us historically and actually, that is, it is not only a past but a past that lives in the present" (Ṭāhā ʿAbd al-Raḥmān, *Tajdīd al-Manhaj fī Taqwīm al-Turāth* [Renewing the Method in Evaluating Tradition], p. 19).

In this sense, heritage is made alive in the present, and the present of a nation cannot be read except by a return to its heritage, its identity, and its being rooted in its past. Heritage therefore held a great importance lying in its capacity to create connection and continuity in the present while looking toward the future, and to place the creative writer in constant and pressing need of a bond with heritage, in order to understand it, interrogate it, and employ it in a manner that preserves the writer's existence and belonging to its origins.

2. The concept of modernity

Modernity is one of the thorny subjects, owing to its overlap with the rest of the human sciences such as philosophy, economics, and sociology, and to its sweep across all domains. For this reason the question of modernity has remained among the most circulated questions in the scene of Arab thought.

Linguistically: Ibn Manẓūr's *Lisān al-ʿArab* states: "*al-ḥadīth* (the new) is the opposite of *al-qadīm* (the old), and *al-ḥudūth* (coming into being) is the opposite of *al-qidam* (antiquity). A thing *ḥadatha*, that is, it came into being, *ḥudūthan* and *ḥadāthatan*; one brings it about, so it is *muḥdath* and *ḥadīth*, and likewise one finds it new (*istaḥdathahu*)" (Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān al-ʿArab*, p. 345). The Arabs used *ḥadath* in opposition to *qadum*, which means that modernity signifies newness and that *al-ḥadīth* means the new. What is observed is that the word *ḥadātha* does not depart from the frame of rebellion and revolt against everything old and the call to the new, and this is what all the old Arabic dictionaries agreed upon, affirming that the word *ḥadātha* comes in origin from *ḥadath*, which is held to be the more denotative, falling upon whatever occurs.

Terminologically: since modernity is a comprehensive stance toward the world, expressing a new vision of life, the human being, and knowledge, the viewpoints of philosophers and thinkers have differed over the determination of the concept of modernity, since it is "a revolt against the thought that makes the human being a passive part interacting with nature, so that he becomes himself the agent, the mover, and the cultural and civilizational activator." (Ḥilmī Muḥammad al-Qāʾūd (*Ḥilmī Muḥammad al-Qāʾūd*), *al-Ḥadātha al-ʿArabiyya* [Arab Modernity], p. 55). Yet the concept of modernity remains among the concepts shrouded by obscurity and confusion at the level of its first environment, whether in the West or among the Arabs, because it is not a sociological concept, nor a political one, nor a historical one that allows the scholar to delimit the meaning, being a distinctive form of civilization that opposes the form of tradition. This is the position of Muḥammad ʿĀbid al-Jābirī in his words: "There is no absolute, total, and universal modernity; rather there are modernities that differ from one time to another and from one place to another. In other words, modernity is a historical phenomenon, and like all historical

phenomena it is conditioned by its circumstances, bounded by aesthetic limits that becoming traces along the line of development." (Muḥammad 'Ābid al-Jābirī, *al-Turāth wa-l-Ḥadātha*, p. 15).

Accordingly it may be said that modernity is a revolution oriented toward renewal and the abolition of the old, by enshrining the reason that severs the link between itself and the past, in pursuit of modernization across the various domains of life, since it is a modern and comprehensive intellectual movement that represents a new vision of the world.

3. The concept of the cultural system

The cultural system is a fundamental axis within the approach of cultural criticism, which is concerned with expanding into many fields in order to analyze systems in their entirety and to form the cultural, epistemic, aesthetic, historical, and ideological frames of reference, so as to uncover them, then interpret them and bring back the context that produced them.

The system is an order consonant with the cosmic nature that governs behaviors and beings in arrangement and succession. 'Abd Allāh al-Ghadhāmī ('*Abd Allāh al-Ghadhāmī*) says: "The word system (*nasaq*) is used a great deal in general and specialized discourse, and it spreads in writings to a degree that may distort its connotation. It begins as a simple synonym, as when it means that which followed a single order, as in the definition of *al-Mu'jam al-Wasīt*, and it may come as a synonym for the meaning of structure, or for the meaning of system (*Système*) according to the term of de Saussure." ('Abd Allāh al-Ghadhāmī, *al-Naqd al-Thaqāfi* [Cultural Criticism], p. 76)

Returning to its linguistic origins, the term is found close in its meaning across the various dictionaries.

The system linguistically: *nasaq*, with the plural *ansāq*; the *nasaq* of anything is that which followed a general order in things, and one may say that these things *intasaqat* one to another, that is, they *tanassaqat* (were ordered). (see: al-Khalīl ibn Aḥmad al-Farāhīdī (*al-Khalīl ibn Aḥmad al-Farāhīdī*), *al-'Ayn* [Kitāb al-'Ayn, The Book of 'Ayn], p. 85).

The prominent meaning shared among all the definitions found in the diverse old Arabic dictionaries, then, nearly agrees that it is that which followed a single order. Accordingly, the meaning of system, with all that it carries of senses in the Arabic language, is the order of things, their succession, their concord, and their sequence in a single order that has come perfectly ordered (*muttasiq*).

The system terminologically: the system is, terminologically, among the concepts that are simple and composite at one and the same time, and this has led scholars to differ over its definition without laying a hand on a single concept, since it is a mercurial, slippery term. 'Izz al-Dīn al-Manāṣira ('*Izz al-Dīn al-Manāṣira*) says: "The system is the technical order that distinguishes the interwoven structures in the text; it is multiple and varied, and may recur at one and the same time." ('Izz al-Dīn al-Manāṣira, *Ilm al-Tanāṣ wa-l-Talāṣ* [The Science of Intertextuality and Plagiarism], p. 71). In other words, there is a dialectical relation between the system and the structure. This latter is the one that some researchers insist must be viewed as a whole, apart from the elements that constitute it in their aggregate, by virtue of the relations it sustains, which are structured within the movement of the element.

What can be inferred is that the system is an element with its own order and its own law that governs it; it is multiple in its characteristics, and its interconnected, integrated elements achieve a comprehensive necessary function, since it is a composite of the set of laws and rules that the social and cultural structure produces in accordance with the developments of the age.

4. Representations of the traditional system in the novel *Ḥaddatha Abū Hurayra Qāl*

Most scholars and critics agree that the genre of the novel is the distillation of the philosophical and civilizational awareness of the novelist, since it grants the reader a deep vision in the analysis of important issues, so as to enshrine an interaction that is almost positive in the process of reading. This is perhaps what becomes clear to us in our analysis of Maḥmūd al-Mas'adī's novel *Ḥaddatha Abū Hurayra Qāl*, which he published in full in 1973, parts of it having been published in 1939, among them:

- *Ḥadīth al-Ba'ṭh* (The discourse of resurrection): published 5 January 1939.
- *Ḥadīth al-'Amā* (The discourse of blindness) and *Ḥadīth al-Abad* (The discourse of eternity): published 26 January 1939.
- *Ḥadīth al-Qiyāma* (The discourse of the resurrection): published 4 August 1944.
- *Ḥadīth al-Ba'ṭh al-Awwal* (The first discourse of resurrection): published 6 August 1944.
- *Ḥadīth al-'Adad* (The discourse of number): published 8 November 1944.
- *Ḥadīth al-Kalb* (The discourse of the dog): published 8 November 1944.
- *Ḥadīth al-Ghāya Tuḷab fa-lā Tudrak* (The discourse of the goal that is sought yet not attained): published 6 November 1956.

(al-Ḥafnāwī al-Mājirī, *al-Mas'adī min al-Thawra ilā al-Hazīma fī Ḥaddatha Abū Hurayra Qāl* [al-Mas'adī from Revolution to Defeat in *Ḥaddatha Abū Hurayra Qāl*], p. 32)

The novel as a whole consists of twenty-two discourses (*aḥādīth*), and took a span exceeding three decades, which means that the period of gestation was long and that the labor of its delivery came hard. The author says of the protagonist: "Abū Hurayra may need, in your view, a definition; he is not an acquaintance of yours, yet you have, of what concerns him, what may befall you yourself when you finish this book." (Maḥmūd al-Mas'adī, the novel, p. 11). The frame of reference of the novel thus came draped in the cloak of Arab-Islamic heritage, conversing with various social and historical issues closely bound to the era of the author, on a journey of a character upon whom a halo of symbol and allusion was lowered, opening before the reader divergent horizons that can be reduced to two distinct systems: a traditional system and a modernist system, which enshrined the philosophical vision of the human being and of things. In the system of heritage we can read and understand what will be set out below:

a. The system of the sacred: This system becomes clear in the aim that the novel pursues in rooting itself in Arab-Islamic culture, as values, principles, an identity, and a language. The first traditional symbol with which the author shocked his reader was the title, since he employed the figure of Abū Hurayra (*Abū Hurayra*) as a central character around whom the events revolve, because it refers to the noble Companion (RA), the narrator of the noble prophetic ḥadīth, despite al-Mas'adī's signal toward negating this through a marginalization of it within his novel: "Abū Hurayra is three: the first is the Companion, may God be pleased with him, the second is the grammarian, and the third is this one." (Maḥmūd al-Mas'adī, the novel, p. 12).

This is what enabled al-Mas'adī to break the rule of fictional narration and to divide the novel into narrated discourses, told on the tongue of certain heritage characters such as Rayhāna (*Rayhāna*), Abū al-Madā'in (*Abū al-Madā'in*), Ma'n ibn Sulaymān (*Ma'n ibn Sulaymān*), Kahlān (*Kahlān*), and others among the names that returned the spirit to heritage so as to achieve an authority that determines meaning and frames behavior, not as a religious and traditional dimension, nor as a hortatory homiletic material, but rather making it a cultural, forward-looking horizon within which the characters interact.

Heritage is also manifest in the time of the journey, which the protagonist began from the hour of dawn, with the religious significance it carries, until the hour of sunset, a journey he condensed into two resurrections: the first sensory and material, the second immaterial and abstract, all in order to search for the meaning of truth.

And although the novel folded within it twenty-two discourses, with their chains of transmission (*sanad*) and their texts (*matn*), joining poetry and prose in the manner of al-Hamadhānī, al-Tawhīdī, and al-Ma'arrī, drawing from the Qur'an and its style a creative path and tracing an artistic canvas whose colors and connotations are manifold, this is nothing strange of al-Mas'adī, given his love for the Holy Qur'an, which appeared clearly in his dedication to his father: "Who, my boyhood chanted along with him, to the melodies of the Holy Qur'an and the cadence of the ḥadīth, things I did not understand as a child, but from whose rhythm I shaped, from early on, a melody of life." (Maḥmūd al-Mas'adī, the novel, p. 9).

The linguistic lexicon of the novel came heavily laden with the marvels of quotation and the imitation of the Qur'anic text. He says: "Then I looked, and there they were in a severe drought, faltering, devouring one another, and upon that they pray and call for rain, while they glorify their Lord and extol His most beautiful names. So I said, the son of Adam calls for mercy, and I invited them to gardens and valleys and thresholds lowered with pearl and coral." (Maḥmūd al-Mas'adī, the novel, p. 130). The examples are many, nearly spread across the expanse of the novel, placing the reader before a tremendous displacement whose phonic and lexical structure has migrated toward the Qur'anic text in imitation of it, so that the language appears in its totality a Sufi language drawn from the lexicon of the masters of gnosis and eloquence. (see: al-Ḥafnāwī al-Mājirī, *al-Mas'adī min al-Thawra ilā al-Hazīma fī Ḥaddatha Abū Hurayra Qāl*, p. 152).

al-Mas'adī also tended toward taming and bending heritage by employing the old stories, such as the myth of Asāf and Nā'ila, the symbol of love and sin, the two who were metamorphosed into two stones that the people of Quraysh worshipped, as well as the story of Adam and Eve, and the story of Hāmān and Pharaoh, of Islamic frame of reference. It thus becomes clear that the employment of heritage, in this vast and varied quantity, from the sacred to the profane, is but an attempt by the author to revive the heritage text and to resurrect it in keeping with the spirit of the age, by an authority that is not absolute, within which he directs the characters yet does not deprive them of revolt, and grants them a language and signs, and does not give them a final answer, so that the dialectical relation between the characters of the novel and heritage comes to be in the form of a dialectical relation of give and take.

b. The system of the language of heritage: If the traditional sacred had a striking and distinctive presence in the novel *Haddatha Abū Hurayra Qāl*, a heritage manifest in all its colors and hues, then this presence would not have been achieved but for al-Mas‘adī’s language, which came perfumed with the magic of the radiant letter, in a creativity that joins beauty and the refinement of style, deep in antiquity, laden with the connotations of sanctity and reverence, in search of knowledge through hint and suggestion, in the words of Tawfīq Bakkār (*Tawfīq Bakkār*): "It is a language that says nothing except that it suggested things; for behind the apparent silence there is, like clamor, a teeming within it, and so communication grows dense." (al-Mas‘adī, the novel, p. 38).

The novelist mixed the language of the Qur’an with the old and sturdy Arabic styles, taking the strength of the ancients and the gentleness of the moderns, adding to it something of his own that none knows but he. This is what drove some critics to name it "the Mas‘adian writing." (see: Muḥammad al-Ya‘lāwī (*Muḥammad al-Ya‘lāwī*), *al-Shakl fī Haddatha Abū Hurayra Qāl* [Form in *Haddatha Abū Hurayra Qāl*], p. 92). For this reason al-Mas‘adī’s language was marked by the condensation of the phrase and by loading it with a heavy weight that disturbs the reader and moves him with violence, placing him face to face before the questions of meaning, of philosophical load, that find no absolute answer.

He says: "I lost the sky, and the air recoiled upon me like lead, and I looked, and my whole sight, across the range of the eye, the gaze recoiled into darkness." (al-Mas‘adī, the novel, p. 45). A poetic language that reflects the delicacy of sense and the lyricism of the spirit, and an imagination composed of refined, limpid artistic images that reflect the purity of the author’s spirit, carved in a stark intertextual entanglement with the Holy Qur’an.

al-Mas‘adī interrogated heritage in its various kinds, through metaphor and figurative usage, and treated philosophical questions that have no relation to a particular time or an intended place, because what is intended is greater than geography and than the human being. He says in one of his conversations, speaking of the language he used, that it in truth issued from the depth of his heart, and that he had sung the praise of the Arabic language, which he feels like a pleasing symphony. (see: al-Mas‘adī, conversation (*ḥiwār*), p. 8). al-Mas‘adī subdued the Arabic language and made it an icon that bears the values of the past in a wondrous manner, which produced an act of astonishment and dazzlement in the reader and seduced him into reading time after time, because it colored the course of recounting the report from religious presence to literary function, so that meanings interacted and phrases were refined. It was thus a model for the experimental novel, an authentic creation laden with an existential intellectual provision that touched Arabic names robed in the garb of sanctity, such as Mecca, the Ka‘ba, the dawn prayer, paradise..., and others steeped in Arab-Islamic civilization, such as Abū Hurayra, who refers to the great Companions, and Abū al-Madā’in, and Ma‘n ibn Sulaymān, the symbol of uprightness and piety. Thus the novel is a blend of this immense traditional whole, saturated with a language pure at its source, having filled to overflowing with the Qur’anic text, so that scarcely a discourse among its discourses is free of referring us to a Qur’anic verse, which made its language dense, of deep connotations that express the essence of the self and of existence.

c. The system of asceticism and austerity: al-Mas‘adī returned to heritage, with its sanctity and its language, perhaps to find the mold that suits him as he enshrines his philosophical vision, and he found in asceticism and Sufism some of what he was seeking. The protagonist Abū Hurayra

passed through two completely contradictory resurrections: the first resurrection in the novel embodied sense in the human being and the force of nature, for after a caller came to him, an old friend of his who invites him, he responds and leaves Mecca, the wife, and the prayer, having been raised from among the dead, to the paradise, not the paradise of the sky that he never ceased to dream of, until he revived him with a breath of his clay, from a promised paradise to an existing paradise, the range of the resurrection being figurative and its reach connotative: "Theirs is this world and ours the hereafter."(al-Mas'adī, the novel, p. 21).

Abū Hurayra is impelled toward the experience of sense after he meets Rayḥāna, and the two descend as guests upon one of the quarters of the Arabs, their acquaintance having been made in the assembly of wine that suggests the world of sense, and the relation between them grows firm, as the protagonist plunges into sensory pleasures: wine, sex, and the choicest of food. Yet despite that, his attempt was in vain, for the conflict kept raging between the appetites of the body and the aspirations of the spirit, in search of truth and meaning. This system is manifest in:

- The striving against the self and appetite, for the protagonist tried to rid himself of the dominion of the body and to reach the wisdom that achieves serenity. All of this is embodied in the repeated image of the long travel, the fatigue and the hunger, the refusal to surrender to bodily comfort, and his turning away from emotional settledness. He lived in constant anxiety, searching for meaning within the human being, refusing complete submission to appetite despite his attraction to it.

- He granted asceticism multiple dimensions: an artistic dimension, a Sufi dimension, a philosophical dimension, and a psychological dimension, and all these dimensions came together to trace an arduous journey toward knowledge of the self as it ought to be. He says in *Hadīth al-'Amā* (The discourse of blindness): "Abū Hurayra went out radiant and struck out across the land for a time, then some of the caravans of the Arabs returned him to us, much dust upon him, his staff worn thin, and we asked him about his journey, and he smiled... and he used to say: whoever has lost his qibla, let him journey on and seek neither east nor west."(Maḥmūd al-Mas'adī, the novel, p. 141).

The body becomes a field for testing, a site of conflict between desire and values, between pleasure and purification, the purpose being not the search for a ready answer, but rather placing the human being in the depth of the trial.

5. Representations of the modernist system in the novel

As set out above, heritage took shape in the novel as a symbolic authority that believed in the sacred and tried to enshrine the practice of what it calls for, in an outward form that appears disciplined in shape. Modernity, by contrast, becomes manifest as an existential question that searches for an understanding of meaning. The figure of the protagonist Abū Hurayra does not content itself with receiving meaning from outside, but rather tries to create its own meaning by plunging into experience, the experience of sense and the experience of meaning. The modernist systems thus appear as follows:

a. The system of existential anxiety: The existentialist doctrine is bound to the human being, granting him alone the right to choose the life he desires, on the ground that existence precedes essence and that the human being, in absolute freedom of choice, makes himself and fills his

existence in the manner that suits him. (Jamīl Ṣalībā (*Jamīl Ṣalībā*), *al-Mu'jam al-Falsafī* [The Philosophical Lexicon], p. 665).

Returning to the novel, it is found that al-Mas'adī (*Maḥmūd al-Mas'adī*) was influenced by existentialism in its widest human senses, from a methodological standpoint whose basis is reflection on the essence of humanity, influenced by the philosophy of Sartre, Albert Camus, and Kierkegaard. The existentialism of the protagonist Abū Hurayra thus came embodied in the confrontation of numerous forces, some into which his soul settled and some that lay in wait for him and struck him as animal instincts that drove him to baseness and degradation, those forces being death, the unseen, and the gods. (see: Maḥmūd al-Mas'adī, *Ta'ṣīl li-l-Kayān* [A Rooting for Being], p. 115).

Bewilderment took possession of Abū Hurayra and compelled him to live between terrible contradictions, pulled at times by reassurance and stability and at other times by perpetual search and the question of the meaning of existence, until he realizes that tragedy is an individual experience and adventure that drives him to confrontation and challenge, in pursuit of realizing the human being's relation to himself, to the universe, to society, and to God, while rejecting the prevailing order. He is "a character eccentric in his ways and original in his ideas at one and the same time, because he gathers within himself the inherited and the novel, and looks toward being a contemporary of the generations to come." (Nāṣir Būghānimī (*Nāṣir Būghānimī*), *Adab al-Mas'adī 'alā Ḍaw' al-Riwāya al-Wujūdiyya* [al-Mas'adī's Literature in Light of the Existentialist Novel], p. 106).

Anxiety and tension dominated Abū Hurayra, and he did not settle on one state. He sought sensory pleasure and immersed himself in it, but it did not achieve for him what he wanted, so he left it and went searching for meaning in the absolute, yet he did not find it as he wished, and so he lived a lost anxiety, nothing quenching his thirst for knowledge, in this his condition being the condition of the existentialist philosophers.

b. The system of knowledge and doubt: This system is the offspring of the preceding one, for the protagonist's embrace of existentialist philosophy and his belief in it made him search in the excavations of knowledge and understanding, resorting in that to the doubt that leads to certainty. In the first experience of sense, which was necessary for him because the development of the character required it, he lived upon the duality of faith and unbelief: "Rayḥāna made him taste the varieties of pleasure and brought him into the worship of the two idols, and rites were performed for them, in a country estate at night, rites like the rites of the Magi over a blazing fire." (Maḥmūd al-Mas'adī, the novel, p. 21).

He disbelieved in the promised paradise of the Qur'an and believed in the paradise that he lives, Rayḥāna (*Rayḥāna*) and her pleasure, the wine, and the choicest of food, all sensory things that made him doubt what he had been reading about the paradise of the Qur'an, whose breadth is the heavens and the earth, prepared for the God-fearing. The body became for him a meaning among the meanings of existence, because he realized that these truths latent within him are made absent by force of traditions, customs, and religion, so he took revenge on the conservative life he had been living before the first resurrection, in a long and continuous journey of search for the truth of the human being and the meaning of existence, in order to reach knowledge, which is not a fixed certainty in which one can rest. The protagonist understands well that truth is not attained

easily, and that the human being is destined to remain in perpetual search, resorting to doubt and making of it a means of thinking and of reconsideration, not a state of loss.

He also lived the experience of the collective, and was able to trace for himself a path founded on a purely existential conception, seeking to bring out the value and standing of the human being and to assert his existence and his self, for there is no value in the universe except for the human being, and no value for the human being except in his act. (see: Nāṣir Būghānimī, *Adab al-Mas'adī*, p. 77). Through the experience of the collective, the protagonist suffered baseness, weakness, and failure, for they were nothing but bodies without spirit. Abū Hurayra says: "And the sob of my resolve came to an end, so I cried out: leave me, O bodies, they have no spirit other than what you have stripped from my spirit." (Maḥmūd al-Mas'adī, the novel, p. 134).

c. The system of revolt and symbolic rebellion: If modernity is a revolt in its general sense, comprehensive of all aspects of life and of differing visions and inclinations, then the novel is the embodiment of revolt as its author conceived it, a revolt enshrined by the protagonist Abū Hurayra, who appears as a rebel and an insurgent, rising against religion, values, morals, and customs, regarding them as fetters that hinder the practice of his conduct in full freedom. Yet at the same time he does not find in this revolt what realizes his lost humanity, and at the height of rebellion he feels a desire to rebel against rebellion itself, that he might find what he seeks. If in his first sensory resurrection he believed in the material things that did not cease to disappoint him, then in his second resurrection, in search of the immaterial absolute, he does not attain his object, and so his end is tragic, bearing witness to the trap of human beingness. The narrator Abū al-Madā'in (*Abū al-Madā'in*) says of his last encounter with Abū Hurayra: "Then everything grew still, and I called out but no one answered me, so I kept to my place until morning. When morning came I looked, and there I was on the summit of a mountain that nearly reaches the sky, and there was blood upon the rock, and beneath me an abyss that the range of the eye falls short of. May God have mercy on Abū Hurayra; he was greater than life." (Maḥmūd al-Mas'adī, the novel, p. 184).

Rebellion in the protagonist was thus not merely a rejection of morals, or religion, or heritage, but rather a rejection of stagnation; in other words, the human self revolts and rebels against everything that stands as an obstacle to the discovery of its truth and its essence. For this reason rebellion proves to be existential and modernist, seeking liberation from everything that makes the human being live a life not springing from within himself, from his convictions and his certainty. Whenever Abū Hurayra emerged from the old system, he did not find a new ready-made system in which he could rest, nor could he return to the first reassurance, and thus the protagonist lives between two worlds, these being the essence of the modernist experience.

6. The mechanisms of the systemic conflict between heritage and modernity

From what has been mentioned above of elements that represented heritage, alongside others that enshrined modernity, it becomes clear that the novel is richly abundant, laden with cultural, historical, heritage, religious, and Sufi loads, on an existential course that set out from the birth of Abū Hurayra, the protagonist of the novel, in his first resurrection, when his soul opened to the pleasure of existence, as if he had been raised from among the dead, and ended with his death in his last resurrection from atop a towering mountain, so that existence ends on the edge of death.

The novelist was able to employ a heritage language that he drew from the Holy Qur'an and the noble prophetic ḥadīth, "so the language appears in its totality a Sufi language; it is, on one side, a Qur'anic language, and on the other a language that Maḥmūd Ṭarshūna (*Maḥmūd Ṭarshūna*) described as authenticity." (al-Ḥafnāwī al-Mājirī, *al-Mas'adī min al-Thawra ilā al-Hazīma* [al-Mas'adī from Revolution to Defeat], p. 152). A language that colored the course of his recounting of the report, transforming the ḥadīth from religious presence to literary function, so that meanings interacted and phrases were refined, and it became a model for the experimental artistic novel, with an existential intellectual provision added to it. This is what granted the novel the strength to join the traditional system and the modernist system and made them coexist in a fraught coexistence that reflects the crisis of the contemporary human being as he searches for meaning, placing the reader before the impossibility of deciding in favor of heritage or in favor of modernity.

This is what made the novel form a mosaic panel that brought together authenticity and contemporaneity. It read the Arab heritage, with all its impetus and its intellectual and philosophical frames of reference, in an anatomical and deconstructive reading, and mixed it with the contemporary intellectual currents, so as to reach a resolution of the crisis of the contemporary human being, the one searching for his essence and his torn being in the shadow of this modernist revolt. It thus came as a new form that brought it into the world of singularity and creation, and imagination, truth, authenticity, and contemporaneity mingled, as did the force of creation, the soundness of the structures, and the depth of the issues, which made it "an exceptional effort that has its structural, aesthetic, lexical, and intellectual justifications, both the apparent among them and the unspoken." (see: al-Sa'īd Būṭājīn (*al-Sa'īd Būṭājīn*), *Alāmāt Sardiyya* [Narrative Signs], p. 33).

Conclusion

al-Mas'adī did not concern himself with the generic classification of the novel Ḥaddatha Abū Hurayra Qāl when he began to publish his narrative texts in the form of discourses (aḥādīth), so that some critics attributed it to the short story and some attributed it to a literary narrative telling, until its aspects were completed and it was counted a modernist novel in which literary genres interpenetrated as an expressive form, and the writer's intellectual vision was transformed into a narrative structure in which he resorted to the weight of heritage, recounting it in twenty-two discourses that have no relation to the noble prophetic ḥadīth, the relation being entirely with this lost contemporary human being in all his convictions and ideas, who scarcely embraces an idea before he moves to another, troubled in his thoughts and lost in his thinking, like the protagonist of the novel upon whom visions and relations became entangled.

For this reason al-Mas'adī did not deal with heritage as dead material, but rather as a symbolic energy capable of renewal; yet at the same time it is not a final authority, and modernity, in turn, is not a complete salvation. It grants the human being the freedom of the question, but it does not grant him a healing answer. In conclusion, then, al-Mas'adī did not side with heritage against modernity, nor with modernity against heritage, but rather arrived at the conclusion that the two are interpenetrating worlds, within consciousness, culture, and language: modernity is born from within heritage, and heritage crystallizes and is transformed when it touches the horizon of modernity, and this is realized only through the rejection of the closed system of both faces.

In the end the novel offers no final answer, and this is part of its value, because it places the reader before an open question, so that the text remains great and makes the conflict between the two a field for creation, thought, and invention.

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