

The Feminine Presence and the Mystical Dimension in the Narrative Dream: Ru'ya al- 'Ayn (Novel) as a Case Study

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Abstract

Dreams, in their manifold forms, constitute a parallel world that intersects with the crowded ordinariness of lived reality. The dream thus functions as an unconscious seedbed that enters the texture of the novel and enlivens it — linguistically, through the narrative discourse's shift away from a merely referential, descriptive idiom toward a more poetic language, and psychologically, through its rendering of the inner layer of the unconscious by probing psychic depths. The novel Ru'ya al- 'Ayn (Vision of the Eye) offers an integrated model of narrative and storytelling poetics, creating its own singular world through a discourse marked by stylistic distinctiveness and rhetorical density, in which the presence of woman is interwoven with the narrative's various ramifications through the emergence of those obscure and profound flashes bearing the anxieties, hopes, and aspirations of which woman has been, and remains, a part.

Keywords: Narration; Dreams; Narrative discourse; Ru'ya al- 'Ayn (novel); The feminine presence.

Introduction

Since ancient times, human beings have accorded dreams a significant place in their lives, making them an object of sustained interest — in their telling, their reception, and their interpretation. Dreams were regarded as a channel for receiving divine messages, a window onto what had been, what is, and what is yet to come. With the succession of eras and the development of methods of inquiry and interpretation, dreams came to be understood as an unconscious expression of the individual's repressed desires. Against the backdrop of this enduring interest — renewed with every advance in the fields of human knowledge — humankind moved from merely recounting the dream to committing it to writing, giving rise to numerous works: some devoted to celebrating dream-texts, others laying down rules for their expression and interpretation, and still others drawing on the dream's form and properties to create dreams that were never actually dreamt. These creative dreams have at times taken the shape of a complete narrative text, and at other times have appeared as a constitutive element or narrative technique within literary and cultural texts and discourses, enriching and deepening their meanings and renewing their forms. Dreams accompany our lives with an obscure dimension that makes them extend further than our personal existence; within the space of the dream — a space untouched by triviality, never mere nonsense — lies a lost part of ourselves, an essential part bound up with the human soul and spirit. At the same time, the dream need not be anything grand: it remains a phenomenon embodying fragment of human emotion, whether negative or positive. The dream is often a mosaic of mental associations that come cloaked in disguise and merge with part of the

personality, a configuration in which dreams arrange concealed private worlds that crowd within the human interior and are closely bound to one's outlook on the surrounding world.

From this vantage point, I have sought to address a number of questions, foremost among them:

To what extent can woman serve as an icon of the dream? What are the principal ideological and anthropological dimensions that dreams trace within the novel?

Since dreams reveal, through their visionary flashes, the pattern of the character and the various concerns of her life, these premises — in their broad outlines — remain no more than tentative, provisional answers, whose true weight can only be established through the signatures of applied analysis.

In pursuing this subject, my aim has been to examine the "phenomenon of the dream" as one of the new modes of expression in the art of the novel, to investigate the particulars of its structure, and to probe the significance of woman's presence within its construction — as though she were a feminine, human icon inseparable from it through her constant intercourse with the world of masculinity.

There is no doubt that the problem this research addresses situates the study within the domain of heritage; the inductive and psychological method is therefore the most appropriate for helping the study pursue the truth of this subject, in addition to the analytical method that I have adopted in analyzing the historical data.

It is my hope that, through this modest study, I will have touched upon a part of our literary heritage, shedding light on the dream as a narrative strategy that allows the writer to achieve expansiveness, release, and escape into a psychological world inseparable from the web of emotional, psychological, and social relationships in which the sensible is transformed into truths bound up with the self, life, and the cosmos.

The Narrative Dream: Concept and Term

Before the modern era, human beings believed that the dream conveyed information about the future — a sign or a vision (ru'ya), akin to fortune-telling by divination or by omens. With the advent of the monotheistic religions, this reading acquired a doctrinal form, whereby dreams, in symbolic language, disclose what will happen to us or around us. It is related in the noble hadith: "Prophecy has departed, but glad tidings remain."¹

For Ibn Manẓūr, the dream (ḥulm) signifies "the vision (ru'yā), plural aḥlām,"² — one says ḥalama, yaḥlumu, ḥulman and ḥuluman: "he saw a vision in his sleep." It is also said that a youth ḥalama, meaning he grew composed and settled after anger or hardship, thereby proving himself sensible and level-headed rather than foolish; and a man's ḥalama means he attained maturity and reached the stature of manhood. The word al-ḥālim denotes surrender, as in "waking dreams" (aḥlām al-yaqẓah). Al-aḥlām, the plural of ḥulm, are what the sleeper sees during sleep — psychic phenomena occurring during sleep and appearing to the sleeper in the form of symbols and successive images without any fixed order.³ Accordingly, the dream represents those mental and psychic images seen by the sleeper, arriving in a form marked by symbolism and complexity.

Dreams occur abundantly in the ancient records of peoples, forming an important part of their cultural world and attempting, like myth, to explain the phenomena of existence. They also constitute a kind of

¹Ibn Qutaybah al-Dinawari: *Kitab Ta'bir al-Ru'ya* [The Book of Dream Interpretation], ed. Ibrahim Salih, Dar al-Basha'ir, Damascus, 1st ed., 2001, p. 24.

²Ibn Manzur: *Lisan al-'Arab* [The Arabic Language], Dar Sader for Publishing and Distribution, Beirut, Vol. 12, 6th ed., 1997, p. 145.

³A Group of Authors: *Al-Munjid fi al-Lughah al-'Arabiyyah al-Mu'asirah* [Al-Munjid in Contemporary Arabic], Dar al-Shorouq, Beirut, 2nd ed., 2011, p. 321.

discourse through which the dead communicate with the living and the gods with human beings: the dreams of the offspring of the gods and of kings are visions whose veracity is beyond dispute, whereas the dreams of ordinary people are not accorded the same reverence. This distinction persists in the monotheistic religious cultures, where the dreams of prophets are called *ru'yā* (visions), whose truthfulness and the necessity of compliance with them are absolute — as in the vision of the sacrifice given to Abraham, peace be upon him, in God's saying:

﴿ فَلَمَّا بَلَغَ مَعَهُ السَّعْيَ قَالَ يَا بُنَيَّ إِنِّي أَرَىٰ فِي الْمَنَامِ أَنِّي أَذْبَحُكَ فَانْظُرْ مَاذَا تَرَىٰ ﴾⁴

"And when the boy reached the age to work with him, he said, 'O my son, indeed I have seen in a dream that I [must] sacrifice you, so see what you think.'"

and the vision of the Prophet Joseph, peace be upon him, in God's saying:

﴿ يَا أَبَتِ إِنِّي رَأَيْتُ أَحَدَ عَشَرَ كَوْكَبًا وَالشَّمْسَ وَالْقَمَرَ رَأَيْتُهُمْ لِي سَاجِدِينَ ﴾⁵

"O my father, indeed I have seen [in a dream] eleven stars and the sun and the moon; I saw them prostrating to me."

and the vision of Pharaoh, which the interpreters of the court were unable to explain.

In Islamic culture, the truthfulness of a vision likewise depends on the moral standing of the one who sees it, a standing determined by the norms and conventions of the culture as derived from Sharia: "The most truthful of people in vision are the most truthful of them in speech."⁶

The term "dream" soon splintered off and settled unmistakably at the core of literature; whereas it had denoted what appears to a person during sleep — expressive scenes and images, or visions laden with meanings requiring interpretation — it acquired a literary garb, becoming a signifier of anticipatory visions or prophecies expressing the writer's unruly desire to change his condition and lived reality, on the premise that this reality is bitter and wretched.

Narrative dreams have not received an adequate share of scholarly attention, even though literature — poetry and prose alike — teems with them. The presence of dreams in the literatures and cultures of nations is evidence of their efficacy in the social and spiritual life of peoples, for dreams disclose what is left unsaid, reveal the future, and expose repressed and suppressed desires.

It is well known that the dream is a form of unconscious catharsis, a view supported by Dr. 'Abd al-Qādir al-Qaṭṭ's definition of the dream as an attempt to recover a past that cannot return, or to anticipate a future that cannot be born of a wretched and barren present.⁷

The poet resorts to the dream when reality fails to satisfy his desires; in turning to it, he draws inspiration from nature in its purest sources and from existence in its most sublime forms. Narrative dreams require no "interpreters" but rather "critics" equipped with the tools of critical and literary analysis, capable of uncovering and analyzing them according to established literary and critical laws — for they belong to the creative, invented imaginary deployed for particular narrative ends. Within the literary work, imaginative, creative narrative dreams are deliberate rather than spontaneous, possessing meanings and interpretive codes that complete the value of the literary work and enrich the narrative scene; they are selective, attending to

⁴The Holy Qur'an: Surah Al-Saffat, verse 102.

⁵The Holy Qur'an: Surah Yusuf, verse 4.

⁶Al-Kharkushi: *Al-Bisharah wa al-Nidharah fi Ta'bir al-Ru'ya* [Glad Tidings and Warnings in Dream Interpretation], ed. Bilal Al-Arfah, Abu Dhabi Arabic Language Centre, 1st ed., Abu Dhabi, 2023, p. 62.

⁷Abd al-Qadir al-Qatt: *Al-Ittijah al-Wijdani fi al-Shi'r al-'Arabi al-Mu'asir* [The Emotional Trend in Contemporary Arabic Poetry], Maktabat al-Shabab, Cairo, 1st ed., 1978, p. 356.

certain things while omitting others as artistic necessity requires, and occupy a place on the map of literary construction, with numerous functions and meanings. Moreover, the narrative dream possesses artistic and poetic properties within literary texts, and a formal and semantic structure; narrative dreams likewise possess a network of cultural and semantic symbols amenable to interpretation and its methodological mechanisms.⁸

Scenes of the narrative dream are an outgrowth of ancient marvel-narratives (*sardiyyāt 'ajā'ibīyya*). In Islamic culture, the celebrated wondrous text of the *Isrā'* and *Mi'rāj* (the Night Journey and Ascension) — notwithstanding its factuality and historical occurrence — is among the texts most generative of the narrative genre, spawning marvel-narratives and dream-worlds in both classical and popular literature that blend the historical with the imagined, the magical with the real, and the oneiric with the actual. The account of the *Isrā'* and *Mi'rāj* left a profound mark on world and Arabic culture: al-Ma'arrī (d. 449 AH) drew on it in his *Risālat al-Ghufrān*, and al-Wahrānī (d. 575 AH) drew on it in his book *Al-Manāmāt*. Three centuries later, Dante was influenced by the *Risālat al-Ghufrān* and wrote the *Divine Comedy* between 1308 CE and the year of his death, 1321 CE — an epic poem recounting an imaginary journey undertaken by Dante to Paradise and Hell, a journey that mirrors al-Ma'arrī's own imaginary voyage.

When life deals harshly with people, this is usually reflected negatively in their psychological state: nightmares take hold, and the human being flees into the dream, for it discloses the character's inner worlds. This disclosure affects not only the psychic structure of the fictional character but also the artistic structure of the work itself,⁹ such that dream technique and the theme of recurring nightmares have become among the most prominent subjects dominating the new novelistic corpus for some novelists, at times blending with the events of reality in ways difficult to disentangle — some novelists have devoted entire chapters bearing the title 'The Vision' or 'The Nightmares.'

The dream also held a place among ancient thinkers and philosophers: Plato discusses it in the *Phaedo*, and in Book Nine of the *Republic* regards it as originating from an irrational element within us,¹⁰ whereas Socrates cast the dream in a sacred light — a view contested by Aristotle, who denied that dreams were warning messages from another world or revelations of supernatural sources; for him, the dream is rather "a species of psychic activity issuing from the sleeper according to the circumstances he finds himself in during sleep."

The dream has likewise been celebrated throughout the ancient and modern Arabic narrative corpus — popular and learned alike — appearing in biographical and campaign literature (*maghāzī*), in accounts of the Prophet's life, in popular and marvelous tales, in *maqāmāt* and travel narratives, down to the short story and the novel. Scarcely any of these texts is devoid of concentrated or elaborated dreams that form constitutive elements or textual units within them, or in which the dream serves as a mask or frame for its events and constitutive particulars. Following the 1970s, the Arabic novel became a fertile ground for the creative construction of dreams and dream-worlds, founded upon imagination, doubt, possibility, contradiction, and difference — upon the possible and the impossible — and establishing uncertainty in place of certainty, multiplicity and difference and otherness in place of unity and cohesion, and strangeness in place of familiarity.

Because the vision (*ru'yā*) carries an oneiric dimension, and because the dream bears predictive signals, it maintains a close relationship with science fiction as, par excellence, a literature of vision; here, the visionary dimension means that the discourse of science fiction shapes its vision on the manifest plane in

⁸Ghanem Hamid Abboudi: "Al-Ru'a wa al-Ahlam al-Sardiyyah (Dirasah fi al-Waza'if)" [Narrative Visions and Dreams: A Study of Their Functions], *Maysan Research Journal*, Vol. 17, No. 34, 2021, p. 6.

⁹Nazih Abu Nidal: *Al-Tahawwulat fi al-Riwayah al-'Arabiyyah* [Transformations in the Arabic Novel], Arab Institute for Studies and Publishing, 1st ed., Beirut, 2006, p. 277.

¹⁰Plato: *Plato's Republic*, trans. Hanna Khabbaz, Al-Muqtataf Press, 1st ed., Egypt, 1929, p. 239.

order to present the vision in its latent structure — the vision helping us uncover this latent structure, which matters more than what appears at the level of sight, for "artistic writing is a vision (ru'yā) embodied in an image and a rhythm."¹¹

The term "dream" acquired an important, foundational place in literature, being one of the aesthetic dimensions in which our venerable literary tradition abounds, as poets and writers vied with one another in deploying dreams within their works as a form of renewal and a rejection of habit.

The Feminine Presence in the Narrative Dream

The presence of woman has long been interwoven with the various associations arising from those obscure, profound flashes, bearing the anxieties, hopes, and aspirations of which woman has been, and remains, a part; the feminine presence is thus entangled with the space of the dream and its subject matter through a reading of the various signals scattered throughout the architecture of the narrative — particularly those that render woman present, as though she were an icon of the dream, for "her bricks were enriched, and its structure was quenched by the essence of woman's presence, so that images burst forth and diverse hues of life poured down."¹²

The dream is not separate from the events of the novel; rather, it opens a window onto vast worlds more slippery than reality, worlds into which the presence of the self is immersed toward the horizon of the event's outline. Behavior and action may overflow within it and become an intellectual dimension, coming to complete and interweave deeply with the events, as though carrying within it the very essence of the novel in order to concentrate upon its crisis. We, in turn, pause at the figure of the woman as a vital mutation within the dream, one that represents its signatures upon the terrain of the narrative — the dream being a human sensitivity and specificity with its own role in developing the dynamic of the character from outside to inside, and from the described to the symbolic, and so forth.

Woman's presence within the dream embodies a generous feminine being who dwells between the duality of the real and the imagined, filling life with a wealth of drama; the dream's composition summons fragments of memory and activates the mind within a technique for disclosing what churns within the rings of the unconscious and the burdened part of the human psyche — resembling hallucinations within dream scenes that emerge from wakefulness. The waking dream thus arrives rich in the mantles of description and visual imagery, arising from the burden of a memory laden with spectres of the character's unconscious suffering, for "the being of the dream transcends time and place just as waking thought does."¹³

Mustafa Musa gave form to his outlooks in an attempt to feminize his realistic worlds, whereby the dream came to carry echoes from which flashes of feminine participation burst forth. Dreams have taken on varied meanings among individuals and different peoples: at times religious manifestations or personal prophecies, at times dangerous demons; they have also been regarded as sexual symbols and imaginary illusions, and have often contributed to medical miracles or been used as therapeutic means, hidden achievements, or stimulants for creativity; for others, dreams have amounted to no more than nonsense devoid of meaning, whether neurologically or mentally, while still others regard them as free-running films.

Abla's Dreams in the Novel *Ru'ya al-‘Ayn*

¹¹Assaf Sassin: *Dirasat Tatbiqiyah fi al-Fikr al-Naqdi al-Adabi Mihwaruha al-Ru'yah wa al-Ru'ya* [Applied Studies in Literary Critical Thought: Vision and Dream as Their Focus], Dar al-Fikr al-Lubnani, 1st ed., Beirut, 1991, p. 133.

¹²Salim Karam: *Surat al-Mar'ah fi al-Shi'r al-Jaza'iri al-Mu'asir – Dirasah Tahliliyyah Muqaranah* [The Image of Women in Contemporary Algerian Poetry: A Comparative Analytical Study], unpublished doctoral dissertation, supervised by Tayeb Boudarbala, Department of Arabic Language and Literature, Faculty of Arts and Languages, University of Batna, 2015, p. 113.

¹³Sigmund Freud (1982): *The Interpretation of Dreams*, trans. George Tarabishi, Dar al-Tali'ah, Beirut, 4th ed., p. 112.

Abla transfers a treasure from her father's room to her own spacious hall — books and manuscripts that she has reserved to accompany her solitary communion with the wonders of plants, spices, and the seeds of the earth, which have failed to bring her a child to gladden the eye of her husband Malik, whose body has abstained from procreation for four years of marriage. She finally resigns herself to her fate in this world, setting down a burden she had long carried and struggled against, and boldly tells him that her womb is barren and hopeless, asking him to remarry. He brings the orphan Kawthar into the household, while Abla remains in her cell, steadfast in a strange resignation. The novel opens with a scene in which Abla rescues her co-wife Kawthar during the birth of her twin sons, Ismail and Harun, through her skill in blending healing herbs. Malik has not forgotten a vow he swore to make pilgrimage to Mecca with his wife and children; once the two boys grow older, he reveals his intention to his two wives and resolves to travel, preparing his caravan of camels, loads, and merchandise, and readying his young sons and his wife Kawthar for the notable journey.

We now turn to the image of the dream in the novel *Ru'ya al-‘Ayn*, where it assumes a character charged with linguistic, symbolic, and expressive energy, dense with an overflow of feeling — solitude, turmoil, anxiety, and fear...

The Secret of the Night:

"It is a jumble of dreams, yet it produces for her a vision that seemed to her true. She saw herself sitting on a white sheepskin, spread out on the surface of yellow sand in a desert she did not know. From afar, the sails of ships appeared, moving across the sand toward her — vessels of varying sizes, rising and falling with every rise and fall of the desert's hills and dunes. As the sails drew near, her fear grew, until they passed around her toward a sea she had never seen. She stole a glance at one of the vessels and beheld coarse-bodied men wrapped in robes and enormous white turbans, their faces without noses, their eye-sockets empty of eyes, their mouths twisted. She felt her breath trapped in her chest until her face turned pale. She looked at the ground, and a spring of water split open beneath her; she scooped from it with her hand and wiped her face of sweat and scorching heat, then raised her eyes to the sky, and it too split open, and from behind a veil of seven colors two corpses were lowered, their features indistinguishable, until they drew near her: they were Ismail and Harun, dead. She was seized with a painful terror as their two bodies lay stretched beside her. She scooped again from the spring and gave the two children to drink; they raised their heads and gasped, then screamed. She gave them to drink once more, and they fell silent after opening their eyes."¹⁴

This terrifying vision, resistant to interpretation, which Abla sees, drives her to refuse the journey; she begs her husband Malik to abandon his plan... and finally succeeds in keeping his two beloved sons with her, while Malik later perishes together with his wife, victims of tragic events that occur at the Meccan sanctuary during that pilgrimage season — "Malik, as he sees the edge of the sword falling upon him, remembers Abla before the light fades from his eyes, saying: 'You spoke the truth, O Abla, you spoke the truth, O daughter of my uncle.'"¹⁵

The Feminine Dimension in the Novel *Ru'ya al-‘Ayn*

The dreams of the character Abla are intimately bound up with the value of safety, bearing a warning character: the graver the impending situation the vision warns against, the greater Abla's fatigue and sense of exhaustion and pain, and the more difficult it becomes for her to emerge into direct reality and grasp its data. The novel excels in leaving room for the reader to share in Abla's astonishment and in the dream's

¹⁴Mustafa Musa: *Ru'ya al-‘Ayn* [The Vision of the Eye], Dar Sard and Dar Mamdouh Adwan, Cairo/Damascus, 1st ed., 2018, pp. 17–18.

¹⁵Mustafa Musa: *Ru'ya al-‘Ayn* [The Vision of the Eye], *ibid.*, p. 22.

obscurity, for it hints rather than declares — its language is that of symbols — and Abba does not resort to an interpreter or exegete, but relies solely on intuition, striving to avoid what the dream suggests, or waiting, together with the reader, to see what will come to pass.¹⁶

The novelist Mustafa Musa turns to "the dream" as a deep narrative pulse and tactic within visionary spaces and worlds, one that enables him to diffuse feminine consciousness. Its presence within the narrative space reflects spectres of despair, pain, and a sense of psychic instability that torments the characters, driving the author to charge his central character with an abundance of linguistic, symbolic, and expressive energy overflowing with feelings of solitude, turmoil, anxiety, and fear — psychic imprints engendered by the complexities of life and the transformations of society.

The contemporary novelist Mustafa Musa enriched his novelistic material with tributaries from diverse arts. In his novel *Ru'ya al-ʿAyn*, one perceives the poeticity of the text and the pleasure it creates for the reader through the overall fabric of the novel, drawing on summary at the pivotal junctures of the narrative, expressive symbolism that never slips into mere obscurity, intertextuality, contrast, reliance on the significance of proper names, circular events, and dream-narration in detail.

Dreams recur throughout this novel, most of them marked by Abba's bewilderment and by violence and terror, which unsettle her repose and preoccupy her mind for a long time without explanation; it is often the novel itself that clarifies the content of the dream for the reader only after dozens of pages,¹⁷ as is the case with Abba's vision in which she saw what resembled the Day of Judgment, with people trying and failing to seize their books in their right hands — among them Harun and Ismail, her husband Malik's sons, and beside Ismail his wife, though he had not yet married at the time of the vision: "She was struck by something harsh: the blueness of the sky turns to grey, the clouds heavy with rain collide with one another, thunder resounds, and rain falls, but mud instead of water. The earth splits open, and Abba comes to know that it is the great Day of Gathering."¹⁸

There is a second vision, which remained unknown, shortly before Abba's death — a kind of reassurance and an invitation to another world where the Lote Tree of the Utmost Boundary (*Sidrat al-Muntahā*) stands, and she is clad in a white garment. Of this the novelist Mustafa Musa writes: "She heard a voice unfamiliar to her, saying: it is the *Sidrat al-Muntahā*. She opened her eyes as a powerful gasp burst from her chest; she feared that those in the house would hear it. The taste of honey lingered in her mouth, and the scent of musk lingered about her nose."¹⁹ Abba told everyone around her that she was departing, as though closing the final page of her life with all it had held, having come to peace and safety after all she had witnessed of the parting of loved ones, and joy at having secured the good she wished for other loved ones.

The Mystical Dimension in the Novel *Ru'ya al-ʿAyn*

There is no doubt that the term *ru'yā* (vision) confers upon the value of the dream a signification pointing to an Islamic, or more broadly religious or mystical, cultural reference, insofar as the vision is associated with prophets and righteous persons, or with kings and leaders blessed by the divine. The vision is deemed true, and is distinguished in this regard from the ordinary dream; the dream's constitution, however, departs from the title, in that it lacks affiliation with the aforesaid reference or any other — it belongs instead to the class of narratively stimulating dreams.

¹⁶Alya al-Dayah: "Jamalyyat al-Ahlam wa al-Rawa'ih fi Riwayat Ru'ya al-ʿAyn li-Mustafa Musa" [The Aesthetics of Dreams and Scents in Mustafa Musa's Novel *The Vision of the Eye*], *Qannas Journal*, Borges Library, Syria, No. 8, 2022, p. 3.

¹⁷Alya al-Dayah: "Jamalyyat al-Ahlam wa al-Rawa'ih fi Riwayat Ru'ya al-ʿAyn" [The Aesthetics of Dreams and Scents in *The Vision of the Eye*], *ibid.*, p. 4.

¹⁸Mustafa Musa: *Ru'ya al-ʿAyn* [The Vision of the Eye], *op. cit.*, p. 50.

¹⁹*Ibid.*, p. 223.

The author has laden the text with symbols that engage with reality, allowing the tales to pour forth in a distinctive linguistic eloquence on the tongue of the narrator and protagonist "Abla," who recounts two parallel tales running side by side, interwoven with a third, traditional tale unfolding across long years, in which destinies intersect, fates are drawn, and the truths of an eternal conflict are unveiled. The events of the novel and its dramatic ascent proceed through this remarkable character, so skillfully crafted by the author — "Abla" — who knows the secrets of the night and believes them, trusting what her grandfather, the great perfumer, told her: "When we think it has become barren and parched, the vision of the eye (ru'ya al-'ayn) comes to us, and our life proceeds with one eye, and with the other, certainty." These mystical sayings and passages harmonize with one another within the narrative context to form marvelous aesthetic worlds, alongside a language the author intended to resemble that of the great masters of Sufism, replete with symbols and meanings that disclose and illuminate, delivered through a translucent narration akin to a whisper. The author likewise excels in description, depiction, and the capture of scenes from a lived reality dominated by wretchedness, in order to express the weight and burden of life through passages resembling tender Sufi poetry and prose, through which he manages to shed the burden of political weight. Among these passages we read: "I knew no house but that one; I spent within it days that resembled one another, among loved ones who did not resemble one another. If I depart, the house departs with me and grows old, and the loved ones abandon it."²⁰

The Sufi vision holds that woman, in her nature and in her attributes and manifestations, constitutes signs pointing to existence in its truth, its ranks, its beauty, and its manifestations, this being achieved through a relationship formed by the blending of feminine attributes that signify the truths of existence in its nature, its configuration, and its transformation. Ibn 'Arabi holds that the attributes of the human being, in the duality constituted by masculinity and femininity — apparently opposed to one another — serve as a mirror of the Creator in His self-knowledge, through the idea of femininity that runs through the elements of existence, though it is most gloriously manifested in woman.

The vision, for the Sufis, is thus an expression through symbol of meanings and spiritual stations, for the Sufi experience is a species of tension and passion from which the Sufi cannot free himself except through language, its letters, and its cadence; and when he beholds it, he is struck by its incapacity to bear his ecstatic, gnostic state, which transcends reason — a state that cannot be disclosed or expressed in ordinary human language, so that language had no recourse but to move from declaration to allusion. In this vein, Ibn 'Arabi says:²¹

أَلَا إِنَّ الرُّمُوزَ دَلِيلُ صِدْقٍ عَلَى الْمَعْنَى الْمَخْبِيَةِ فِي الْفُؤَادِ
وَ كُلُّ الْعَارِفِينَ لَهُمْ رُمُوزٌ وَ أَلْغَاؤُ تَدَقُّ عَنْ الْأَعَادِي
وَ لَوْلَا اللَّغْزُ كَانَ الْقَوْلُ كُفْرًا وَ أَدَّى الْعَالَمِينَ إِلَى الْفَسَادِ

"Truly, symbols are a faithful guide to the meaning concealed within the heart; and every gnostic has symbols and riddles that ward off adversaries; and were it not for the riddle, speech would have been unbelief, and would have led the worlds into corruption."

Ru'ya, then, spelt with the tā' marbūṭa — ru'ya (sight) — is a trait possessed by every writer who seeks to fashion an artistic language, "its images resting upon a passing emotion that quickly dies after its birth,"²² whereas the ru'yā, spelt with the alif maddah — the vision, in its true nature — is "an emotion seizing the

²⁰Op. cit.: Mustafa Musa, Ru'ya al-'Ayn, p. 224.

²¹Ibn 'Arabi (n.d.): Al-Futuhāt al-Makkiyyah [The Meccan Revelations], ed. Ahmad Shams al-Din, Dar al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, Beirut, 1st ed., Vol. 1, p. 188.

²²Adonis: Zaman al-Shi'r [The Time of Poetry], Dar al-'Awda, Beirut, 1st ed., 1978, p. 155.

essence of things in a moment of poetic gestation, and of wondrous births that carry the emotion of sight over into the act of vision."²³

In the dream, the highest thing in the human spirit unites with the lowest thing in the human body; it thereby discloses the essence of the human being and accounts for the hidden relations between him and things,²⁴ for dreams, through their imaginative and practical visions, expand the domain of the imagination and open artistic relations, thereby strengthening expression. The instruments of dream-creation are richer and afford a wider scope than the instruments of waking language's creation, and the dream, in this respect, is a manifestation and epiphany of the imagination — one which the gnostics have linked to the depiction of what admits of no image, such as the impossible, making of it a decisive proof of the existence and presence of the science of imagination. Indeed, Ibn 'Arabi took it as evidence for the soundness of his theory of existence,²⁵ and the grandeur of the vision created by the dreaming imagination lies in its condensation of meanings, for it does not stop at the Sufi's thoughts alone but extends to his deepest emotions, its luminous scope thereby widening to encompass the whole of human existence.

Manifestations of Dream Language in the Novel *Ru'ya al-'Ayn*

Since its artistic inception, the Arabic novel has drawn on certain modernist narrative devices, such as letters, memoirs, and the stream of consciousness (the association of thoughts and the depiction of character from within); yet its deployment of the dream remained quite rare.²⁶

The dream is a narrative pattern belonging to the domain of mythological narrative, which is itself one of the constitutive pillars of anthropological and ideological consciousness, forming part of ancient human experience. Contemporary novelists have deployed it as a kind of psychological or social escape. The narrative dream in the novel, moreover, approximates the structure of "poetic narrative," which is distributed between poetic writing founded on figuration and metaphor, and novelistic imagining founded on description, evocation, and personification; the language of dream-narration is thus dominated by an imaginative, constructive style built on interrogation, repetition, and ellipsis, together with the predominance of short verbal sentences. Among the manifestations of the novelistic narrative dream are the following:

1. **The Poeticity of Language:** The novel is the literary genre most receptive to embracing every beautiful artistic experimentation that moves away from a flat, referential language aiming merely at an informative function, toward a language that wagers on achieving "narrative poeticity through the breaking of narrative order, the dismantling of the traditional plot-knot, the shattering of linear time, and the threatening of the entrenched structure of language."²⁷ Mustafa Musa's novel *Ru'ya al-'Ayn* offers a fully integrated model of narrative and storytelling poeticity, creating its own singular world through a discourse marked by stylistic distinctiveness, rhetorical density, and a tendency toward linguistic concentration and economy — a mode of writing in which the word acquires its own law and its own distinctive rhythm.

2. **Place:** The popular character of place is evident from the very first lines of the novel and retains its distinctiveness to the end, as the inhabitants of "Darb al-'Attar" insist on remaining in their popular quarter,

²³Sassin Assaf: *Dirasat Tatbiqiyah fi al-Fikr al-Naqdi wa al-Adabi Mihwaruha al-Ru'yah wa al-Ru'ya* [Applied Studies in Critical and Literary Thought: Vision and Dream as Their Focus], Dar al-Fikr al-Lubnani, Beirut, 1991, n.p. [no edition specified], p. 139.

²⁴Ahmad Muhammad Futuh: *Al-Ramz wa al-Ramziyyah fi al-Shi'r al-Mu'asir* [Symbol and Symbolism in Contemporary Poetry], Dar al-Ma'arif, Cairo, 3rd ed., 1984, p. 115.

²⁵Sulayman al-'Attar: *Al-Khayal wa al-Shi'r fi Tasawwuf al-Andalus* [Imagination and Poetry in Andalusian Sufism], Dar al-Ma'arif, Cairo, 1st ed., 1981, p. 41.

²⁶Ahmad Haykal: *Tatawwur al-Adab al-Hadith fi Misr* [The Development of Modern Literature in Egypt], Dar al-Ma'arif, Cairo, 6th ed., 1994, p. 182.

²⁷Nabil Sulayman: *Fitnat al-Sard wa al-Naqd* [The Fascination of Narrative and Criticism], Dar al-Hiwar for Publishing and Distribution, 2nd ed., Syria, 2000, p. 106.

twice refusing, over the span of several decades, generous offers to relocate to grand new neighborhoods that welcome them. The perfumer's shop, for its part, is a cherished place of aesthetic value, holding the history and memories of Ablā's family and the place in which she acquired her skill and cultivated her talent for learning the secrets of healing and helping people.

3. **Intertextuality:** The novelist Mustafa Musa recognized the impact and aesthetics of intertextuality within the text of the narrative dream, seasoning his novelistic experiment with it and enriching it with numerous allusions, symbols, and linguistic elements drawn from the spirit of the Qur'an and the stories of the prophets. He likewise managed to dissolve the boundaries between the narrative dream and the intertextual phrases, as exemplified by certain titles occurring within the substance of the novel *Ru'ya al-ʿAyn*, such as "The Secret of the Night" and "A Flock of Ababil Birds"... representing the highest form of linguistic economy through which the novelist can capture the reader's attention. Hence the importance of the text lies as much in its titles as in the aid they provide in securing the text's coherence and in the essential light they shed in determining its deeper meanings.

4. **Short Verbal Sentences:** If the verb is anchored in the event, the repetition of verbal sentences serves to portray the psychological life of the principal character, "Ablā": (she repeatedly refused Malik), (she answered him while folding the clothes), (the screams rose), (the alley stifled her breaths), (she told him what was in her heart), (she touched the first foetus)... These verbal sentences reflect a state of psychic bewilderment and inner turmoil, this psychological signification being essentially bound up with the event — the fear of the dream's fulfilment — while these actions also reflect the kinetic dimension, lending the image a pictorial depth; and these actions carry a negative signification in their event and in their onerous meaning for "Ablā."

"When the sleeper awakens, the dream is extinguished — but when the dreamer himself is extinguished, what becomes of the dream?"

Conclusion

As this modest study reaches its intended end, we may draw together a number of conclusions, the most important of which are as follows:

- The novel *Ru'ya al-ʿAyn* embodies the presence of woman within the dream, where realism may be interwoven with an imagined mosaic in figurative, panoramic images that trace semantic pathways taking the form of several narrative branches, whereby repressed desires and inhibitions are liberated. Woman constitutes an icon par excellence, interwoven within the space of the dream through panoramic images that oscillate between the real and the unreal, between the weight of the natural and the supernatural, between the chapters of consciousness and the unconscious, and between the showers of feeling and unfeeling.
- The openness of narrative texts to human creativity, knowledge, and culture, and their drawing upon these in constructing their worlds and meanings, is what expands the possibilities of their reading in light of various critical approaches, conceptions, and frames of reference. Sufficient evidence of this lies in Mustafa Musa's intensive investment, in his novel, of the findings of psychology, of religious and mythical narrative and their symbols, of the corpus of classical and modern Arabic poetry, of the historical novel, and of his own experience of resistance and writing, in constructing the novel's night-dreams, or what he called "The Secret of the Night" — all of which requires the reader to return to a variety of critical frames of reference in order to engage with it.
- To venture into the world of the novel *Ru'ya al-ʿAyn* is a difficult undertaking, given its marvelous character, brimming with a poetic spirit drawn from the Sufi lexicon and the literary heritage, availing

itself of the displacements of the poetic image to convey events, its language marked by concentration and density in order to hold the reader's attention. It is only right to acknowledge that this novel constitutes, in truth, a distinctive addition to the Arabic novel, since every one of its particulars discloses a sincere effort to write an experimental novel that departs from what is customary on the novelistic scene. Accordingly, the presence of woman in the dream embodies a generous feminine being who dwells between the duality of the real and the imagined, filling life with a wealth of drama.

- The narrative heritage concerning the subject of the dream is among the most seductive of subjects for reading and interpretation, for it is the narrative that transforms the imaginatively perceived into the linguistically communicable, and which is, in its essence, an attempt at disclosing and articulating meaning — these being open texts charged with a high energy of imagination for the creation of an absolute, unseen space.

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