

## Interconnectivity between Feminist Literature and Prison Literature or Feminist Prison Literature: *al-Sharnaqa* Novel as a Sample

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### Abstract

This study confirms the existence of intersection and interconnectivity between Feminist Literature and Prison Literature. Both genres intersect and interconnect in their approaches and aesthetic tools. Since the Feminist Literature is a breaking through revolutionary literature that seeks to achieve liberation and breaking away from the traditional chains on the level of form and content, it intersects with the Prison Literature at these points. Since the Prison Literature is an act of struggle, rebellion and revolution against the regimes of suppression and the political authority and its prisons, the Feminist Literature is nothing but rebellion, resistance and revolution against the masculine norms including breaking of political, social and religious taboos. Thus, the quest for freedom, revelation, unbosoming, revolution against persecution and destruction of all the forms of authority constitute central points of intersection and interconnectivity, which reach their burning point when the writer herself is the prisoner who lives the experience of imprisonment and she reveals her experience through writing a narrative text, in which she does not forget her feminist discourse. Thus, her revolutionary cry doubles against the trilogy of the social, religious and political injustice. The study suggests calling this type of literature written by such women writers as "Feminist Prison Literature" and seeks to clarify this interconnectivity and prove that the prison literature that the woman writes does not differ in its themes and features of its revolutionary content, its artistic devices and techniques from men's prison literature for two reasons: *first*, for the resemblance of prisons and their real conditions, and *second*, for the resemblance of the nature of the human experience between men and women in prison. To achieve these objectives, the study chose the novel of *al-Sharnaqa/ the Cocoon* by the Syrian woman writer, Ḥasība' Abd al-Raḥmān, as a sample.

**Keywords:** interconnectivity, prison, prisoner, feminist, literature, regime, dialectic, traditions, modernism, *al-Sharnaqa*.

### 1. The Woman Writer between Suppression and Freedom

The term of 'Women's Literature' caused a widespread controversy in the Arab world and the majority of Arab women writers rejected this kind of classification to their literature<sup>2</sup> because it is a masculine product in its origin,<sup>3</sup> on the one hand, and because it contains humiliation to the woman and implication that her literature is inferior to man's literature, on the other.

However, some women critics deal with this term objectively considering it a term that refers to the literature that is produced by women who are liberated from traditional masculine norms.

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<sup>2</sup>For more information about feminist literature, see: Saffūrī, Muḥammad (2011). *Dirāsafī al-Sard al-Niswī al-'Arabī al-Ḥadīth* (1980-2007). Haifa: MaktabatKul Shay'; al-Qāḍī, Imān (1991). *al-Riwayaal-Niswiyyafī Bilād al-Shām – al-Simāt al-Nafsiyyawa -l-Fanniyya* (1950-1985). Damascus: al-Ahālilil-Tibā'awa-l-Nashr; Zeidan, Joseph (1995). *ArabWomen Novelists: The Formative Years and Beyond*. Albany: State University of New York Press.; Ṭāhā, Ibrāhīm (2006). "Beware men, They Are ALL Wild Animals", *Arabic Feminist Literature: Challenge, Fight, and Repudiation. AL-Karmil*. Haifa: University of Haifa. Vol. 27, pp. 25-71.

<sup>3</sup>Ṭāhā, Ibrāhīm (2006). "Beware men", p. 2.

The woman adopts new thoughts that depend on her private life experiences<sup>4</sup> through which she emphasizes that her literature, which was marginalized in advance, has regained its right to exist on the literary arena.

While the Arab society wraps the woman's body with a halo of holiness and calls her to cover it up according to the Islamic religious law (Shari'a) and social norms, the feminist narrative resorts to the woman's body as a tool to resist these norms and refuses the man who is in charge of these norms and their maker.

In view of this, most of the women writers in the fifties and the sixties of the twentieth century adopted the issue of sex-freedom as a slogan for the woman's freedom<sup>5</sup> and some women writers started expressing themselves daringly about breaking the familiar and diverting from the prevailing literary norms and standards<sup>6</sup>. In the sixties of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, a major development took place on the woman's creativity and it was no more possible to divide the issue of the 'woman' from the issue of 'society' on all levels because of the strong connection between the woman's liberation and political reformation.

This development accelerated in the seventies and the eighties<sup>7</sup> as the feminist writer became more radical and destructive to the social structure in her treatment of the feminist issues. The activity of the Arab woman in the literary arena reached its peak due to the increase in the women's voices and the increase in the education of academic writers. The Civil War in Lebanon is also considered an important motive for the development of feminist literature<sup>8</sup> as it succeeded in affecting the maturity of the woman intellectually and patriotically and all that is reflected in the literary texts<sup>9</sup>. Besides, the Civil War provided the women writers with an opportunity to produce writing that destroys the masculine structure of literature<sup>10</sup>. In addition, it produced a large number of Arab women writers and contributed to the increase of cultural and political awareness.<sup>11</sup>

However, during the period of the revolution, namely since the eighties of the twentieth century till today, the woman has managed to liberate herself from the image of the 'victim' and emerged as a strong offensive character, and even an initiator to start a sexual relationship. Another important feature that appears in this period is the dependence of the Arab woman writer on herself in publishing her creative works and her rejection of the man's guardianship on her and that is reflected in establishing magazines and publishing houses that are devoted to women's feminist writing. All that increased the confidence of the Arab woman in herself and ensured her position in the literary arena in such a way that resulted in rooting the term of 'women's literature' in the critics' and writers' consciousness and making it familiar.<sup>12</sup>

There is no doubt that when the woman introduces her concept about 'freedom' she does that in an extremely specific way because she represents one of the most persecuted groups in society. The Oriental man practices his authority on robbing her of her liberties and independence especially in her encounter with the extremist fundamental religious tide. The woman is still suffering from the duality of the man's look towards her in a society that fears commission of sin and outrage of modesty in public but does not care about it if it is committed in secret. This duality is reflected in the man's attitude towards the woman in theory and practice. On the one hand, he is attracted to her body and his physical pleasure but, on the other hand, he fears her freedom and therefore, he wraps her body with a halo of sanctification and taboos. Consequently, the woman finds herself compelled to be engaged in two wars, a war against the despotism of the regime besides that of the man, and a war against the factors of suppression that are imposed by the masculine society that is led by men, too.

<sup>4</sup>Saffūrī, Muḥammad(2011). *Dirāsafi al-Sard al-Niswi*, p. 480.

<sup>5</sup>al-Qādī, Imān (1991). *al-Riwāyaal-Niswiyyafi Bilād al-Shām*, p. 32.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., p. 32.

<sup>7</sup>Cooke, Miriam (1992). "Arab Women Writers " in: M.M. Badawi, (ed.), *Modern Arabic Literature*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 457.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., p. 454.

<sup>9</sup>Cooke, Miriam (1987). *Women Write War: The Centering of the Beirut De-centrists*. Oxford Centre For Lebanese Studies, pp. 3-5; Allen, Roger (1995). "The Arabic Short Story and the Status of Women". In: *Love and Sexuality in Modern Arabic Literature*. Roger Allen, et.al., eds. London: Saqi Books, p.85.

<sup>10</sup>Badran, Margot and Cooke, Miriam (1990). *Opening the Gates: A Century of Arab Feminist Writing*. London: Virago Press, p. XXX.

<sup>11</sup>Handal, Nathalie (2001). *The Poetry of Arab Women: A Contemporary Anthology* New York- Northampton: Interlink Books, p.14.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

Despite the qualitative leap that took place in the Arab societies in the last three decades of the twentieth century, the woman is still considered a minor creature that submits to the authority of the man, who violates her rights and imprisons her in his norms, standards and inherited traditions, and seeks to practice all kinds of suppression against her and prevents her from writing her literary products and publishing them.<sup>13</sup> Hence, the Arab woman has suffered many times more than what the man has suffered and has become the closest creature to the problematics of freedom and the suppressive mechanism of the trilogy of taboos: politics, sex and religion.

In the shadow of the formation of the feminist writing in the face of a whole history of taboos<sup>14</sup>, the woman who lives in such a narrow horizon has no choice but to choose between withdrawal and giving up publishing her works or emigration to an exile that secures freedom for her. However, lots of women writers became aware of their literary role and refused to withdraw or choose to escape from one suppressive homeland and emigrate to other Arab countries or European countries in search of lost freedom.

The women writers who escaped from their homelands started writing in a symbolical way, choosing symbolical characters from the heritage or other cultures such as Scheherazade, the mistress of the Arab women narrators, who resisted death by her word<sup>15</sup>. The woman also became more able to talk openly, and writing for her became search for a broader horizon for freedom<sup>16</sup>. She changed her place from the position of rebellion against masculine norms and standards to the position of revolution, breaking the prohibited trilogy of taboos.<sup>17</sup>

In the woman's search for lost freedom, politics were not far from her revolution. MuḥsinJāsīmal-Mūsawī's, who confirms the Arab women writers' tendency to resist their persecution, refers to the correspondence between the policy of the feminist writing and the theory of literature after the era of colonialism<sup>18</sup>. The women writers did not hesitate to defy the censorship of the authorities. They showed strong challenge to it and struggled against the religious and social norms despite the severe punishment that they were threatened by.<sup>19</sup>

There is no doubt that the most prominent signs of the Arab woman's rebellion was her extreme care about the subject of 'sex', which is rarely absent from the feminist narratives, as if the woman was declaring her absence of fear and her rejection to all the kinds of cultural, emotional and political authority. The woman's body was no more prohibited or tabooed, and sex was no more considered a 'sin' in the majority of the woman's writings in the modern period. In fact, the woman started looking at sex as one of her rights and it is a personal issue that has nothing to do with society. In addition to that, it constituted the first step on the road to liberation and rebellion against the masculine authoritative society<sup>20</sup>.

If the woman is looking for a door through which to rebel; if sex in backward societies represents a 'guilt' and in religious societies 'a sin'; if the woman is the source of that guilt or sin because she is the owner of that body, which should be fortified by all types of prohibitions so that it should not become a cause of disorder that threatens the social peace that is based on religion, the breaking of that taboo becomes the first and foremost challenge of the woman writer.

The woman paid a double price for her political activity and violation of the taboos, first. And second, for her being a 'woman'. A lot of women writers were exposed to investigations or put into prison<sup>21</sup> such as: the Egyptian writer Nawāl al-Sa' dāwī, who was imprisoned and her books were banned, the Lebanese writer Ḥanān al-Sheikh, whose novel *Ḥikāyat Zabra* was banned in most of the Arab countries, the Lebanese writer Laylā Ba' albakī, who was tried for her violation of the moral values, the Jordanian writer Suhair al-Tal, who was put in prison for describing sexual scenes in her writing, the Egyptian Salwā Bakr, who was jailed for her political activity<sup>22</sup>,

<sup>13</sup>Lanser, Susan (1997). Toward A Feminist Narratology, in: Robyn R. Warhol and Diane Price Herndl, *Feminisms: An Anthology of Literary Theory and Criticism* New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, p. 684.

<sup>14</sup>AbūNidāl, Nazīh(2009)., p. 12.

<sup>15</sup>Faqīr, Fādyā (1998). *In the House of Silence: Autobiographical Essays by Arab Women Writers*. Reading, England: Garnet Publishing, p.53.

<sup>16</sup>AbūNidāl, Nazīh(2009). *Ḥadā'iq al-'Unthā*.p. 12.

<sup>17</sup>Faqīr, Fādyā(1998).*In the House of Silence*, p. 38.

<sup>18</sup>al-Mūsawī, Muḥsin J. (2006). *Reading Iraq: Culture and Power in Conflict*. London: I.B. Tauris, p. 221.

<sup>19</sup>Tāhā,Ibrāhīm(2006)."Beware men", p. 33

<sup>20</sup>Ibid., pp. 57-61.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid., pp. 31-32; see also:Faqīr, Fādyā(1998).*In the House of Silence*, pp. 175-176.

<sup>22</sup>Tāhā,Ibrāhīm(2006)."Beware men", p. 31.

The Kuwaiti writer Laylā al-'Uthmān, who was accused of outrage of decency and public morals and manners<sup>23</sup>, the Emirate writer Zībya Khamīs, who was jailed and prevented from returning to her homeland, the Lebanese writer Hudā Barakāt, the Jordanian writer Fādyā Faqīr, and the Palestinian Hamīda Na'na'<sup>24</sup> and many others...

Sometimes, the woman writer is likely to be asked to withdraw from her resistance. For example, Farīda al-Naqqāsh was asked to withdraw and give up her struggle for the advantage of her sons. The man, however, was not demanded to give up his struggle. al-Naqqāsh, however, refused this request, pointing out that the woman suffers in the same way as the man-prisoner suffers and even more. In addition to that the woman has to fight to prove her identity and rights.<sup>25</sup>

Nawāl al-Sa' dāwī accounts for the woman's 'crime' in her book *Mudhakkaratīfi Sijn al-Nisā'* saying: "The Great crime is that I am a free woman in an age in which people do not want anyone except maids and slaves. I was born in an age in which they try to cancel the mind<sup>26</sup>", emphasizing that the prison for the woman does not mean the 'walls' only, but the prison of society and its shackles and discrimination against her, where the political oppression becomes at the same level as the religious and social oppression.<sup>27</sup>

During many decades, the man managed to jail the woman and captivate her in his taboos, to imprison her behind invisible suffocating bars that made the woman live in an exile within her home and robbed her of her will. Therefore, the woman writer makes the issue of the woman and her freedom her first concern and places it in the center of the literary text and thus, the feminine-self becomes a fundamental focus in this novel without isolating her private concern from the general national concern.

Despite all these obstacles, the woman has become able to break through the taboos and ancient inherited traditions. She is no more ready to keep silent and started to express her opinion and say her word freely and even exaggerated her daring, careless about punishment and thus, the modern feminist narrative, which is one of the products of modernism, has become a breaking through revolutionary narrative in confronting all the suppressive masculine taboos.

## 2. Prison Literature: Contents and Artistic Forms<sup>28</sup>

The term 'Prison Literature' refers to the writings that are written in prison or are concerned with the prison. It mainly describes the persecution of the educated political prisoner and his torturing within the walls of the prison, and revealing the tools of torture and their brutality.<sup>29</sup> Prison Literature is a product of a real experience and its writer might be a person who lived the experience of the prison in person or he heard about it and lived it through the experiences of others. Prison Literature reveals its connections with the social and political reality and the extent of the authors' attempt to achieve freedom or democracy.<sup>30</sup> It also condemns the methods of political oppression and intellectual terror, which limits the freedom of the citizen, infringes upon his rights and prevents him from having freedom of speech and opinion. Prison Literature is a testimony and a document that is written in order to reveal, expose and incite. It always takes place after the ugly and painful experience in the form of a recollection. It is generally written and published outside the homeland, far away from the existing political regime, either for fear of the reaction of the regime and censorship or after the disappearance of the regime that is accused of suppression.

<sup>23</sup> Uşfūr, Jābir (2001). *Didd al-Ta' aşub al-Dāral-Bayḍā'*: al-Markiz al-Thaqāfi, p. 280.

<sup>24</sup> Saffūrī, Muḥammad (2011). *Dirāsati al-Sard al-Nisā'*, p. 31. See also: Faqīr, Fādyā (1998). *In the House of Silence*, pp. 170-171, 12-13.

<sup>25</sup> Booth, Marilyn (1987). "Women's Prison Memories in Egypt and Elsewhere: Prison, Gender, Praxis". *Middle East Report*. 149, November-December, p. 35.

<sup>26</sup> al-Sa' dāwī, Nawāl (2006). *Mudhakkaratīfi Sijn al-Nisā'*. Cairo: Maktabat Madbuli, p. 12.

<sup>27</sup> For more information, see: Malti-Douglas, Fedwa (1995). *Men, Women, and God(s): Naval El-Sadawi and Arab Feminist Poetics*. California: Berkeley and Los Angeles, University of California Press, pp. 159-176; Harlow, Barbara (1992). "Min Sijn al-Nisā': Riwayāt Nisā' al-'Ālam al-Thālith 'an al-Sijn". *Fuṣūl*. Cairo: Issue 3, Fall, pp. 353-367.

<sup>28</sup> For more information about Prison Literature, see: al-Sheikh-Ḥishmeh, Līnā (2016). *Adab al-Sujunfi Miṣr, Suryawa-l-'Irāq – al-Hurriyyawa-l-Raqib*. Haifa: Maktabat Kul Shay'.

<sup>29</sup> Peled, Mattityaho (1998). "Prison Literature". in S. Ballas and Snir, (eds.), *Studies in Canonical and Popular Arabic Literature*. Toronto, Ontario: York Press, pp. 72-76.

<sup>30</sup> al-Fayṣal, Samar Rūhī (1994). *al-Sijn al-Siyāsī al-Riwaya al-'Arabiyya*. Tarabulus-Lebanon: Jarrouss Press, p. 290.

The beginnings of Prison Literature in Arabic literature started at the beginning of the seventies of the twentieth century and interest in it has been increasing since then. In that period, Arabic literature showed extensive interest in revealing the treatment of the political prisoners and torturing them<sup>31</sup>, which was reflected in the novels, poems, testimonies, documents and autobiographies. Lots of authors and thinkers were born in the prison<sup>32</sup> and many of them revealed in their testimonies their experiences that pushed them to write in an attempt to relieve themselves, to recreate a little, to take revenge on the regime, and to reveal the secrets of torturing and suppression that was exerted on the prisoners.

Thus, writing for them became an instrument to bridge over their torture, to resist, and ultimately to liberate themselves and get rid of the oppression of their bitter experiences. On the psychological level, the narrator at the moment of writing, breaks the shackles and chains, both physically and spiritually, by achieving his/her psychological balance by breaking the shackles of the artistic form and its techniques that are parallel with the chains of the prison.

The Place/ Prison plays the most obvious and significant role in Prison Literature, which is a term that is connected with the identity of the Place as the whole story is abridged into the Place/ Prison.<sup>33</sup> However, the particularity of this Place lies in its being a repulsive, hated, sieging, suppressive, hostile and non-human place which is haunted by terror and fear. As a result of the long period that the prisoners stay in it, they acquire their special features and characteristics and consequently, their countenances get closer to one another till they become nearly similar. The prison might also create out of them different persons whose shapes, manners and behavior conform with his shape, manners and behavior. This is not connected to a specific place - it is the condition of all the prisons in the Arab World.<sup>34</sup>

Since our age is "the age of arrest, torture, cells and crypts, and the age of police vaults"<sup>35</sup>, the Prison is nothing but a synonym to suppression, and since the Prison/ Place is the one who has authority on the characters and events, Time becomes connected to it, and the novelistic hero becomes a time-space character<sup>36</sup> and anyone who discusses the human being actually discusses his time-space<sup>37</sup> entity.

The characters enjoy a dramatic structure because they do not live an ordinary life; they live intensive suffering in which all the good things are destroyed and what remains is only humiliation. Therefore, this type of literature highlights the image of the imprisoned, oppressed and tortured soul.

There is no doubt that the physical and psychological torture is also another significant pillar in Prison Literature as it is the mechanism that connects between the jailer and the prisoner, who is the tool that performs the suppressive actions that aim to break the prisoner's will and smash it. Actually, the conflict between the prisoner and his jailer is not a conflict of heroism as there is no way to achieve heroic victory in the shadow of the despotism of a brutal national authority<sup>38</sup>.

Prison Literature belongs to the trend of Modernism and intersects with it. While the Modernist Novel is a product of the periods of suppression and defeats, the Prison Novel belongs to it from this point of view as it depends on artistic styles, methods and techniques that destroy the traditional artistic systems, *fragmentation of the traditional plot, polyphony, anti-heroism, intertextuality, fantasy, irony, the wondering open text, etc.,...*

If the writer refuses the authority and its suppression, and if the hero is a defeated anti-hero in the shadow of suppression, modernism, after all, is not separate from the Prison Literature that the writer lived and depicted in his words, and it is nothing but the spirit of this non-human world.

<sup>31</sup>Peled, Mattityaho (1998). "Prison Literature", p. 69.

<sup>32</sup>Labīb, Fakhri(1992). "al-Ibdā' wa-l-Mubdi' ūnfi al-Mu' taqalātwa-l-Sujūn". *QaḍāyaFikriyya*. Issue 11-12, June, p. 181.

<sup>33</sup>For more information about the prison/place, see: al-Sheikh-Ḥishmeh, Līnā (2016). *Adab al-Sujūn*, pp. 340-349.

ʿAbdal-Ḥamīd (2001).*Jadalīyyat al-Makānwa al-Zamānwa -l-Insānfi al-Riwāya al-Khalījīyya*.Beirut: al-Mu' assasa al-ʿArabiyyalil-Dirāsātwa-l-Nashr, p. 259.

<sup>35</sup>Ṭarābīshī, George (1978).*al-Adabmin al-Dakbil*. Beirut: Dār al-Ṭalīʿalil-Ṭibāʿawa-l-Nashr, pp. 54-55.

<sup>36</sup>ʿAzzām, FuʿādAḥmad (2010)."Binā' al-Makānfi al-Khitāb al-Sardī".*al-Majmaʿ-Abḥāthfi al-Lughaal-ʿArabiyyawa -l-Adabwa -l-Fikr*. Bāqā al-Gharbiyya, Issue. 2, January, p. 205-231.

<sup>37</sup>Ṭāhā,Ibrāhīm (1990).*al-Buʿd al-Akbar – Qirāʾātfi al-Adab al-Falastīni al-Maḥallī*.Nazareth: Rābiṭat al-Kuttāb al-FalastīniyyīnfiIsrāʾīl, p.126.

<sup>38</sup>al-Sheikh-Ḥishmeh, Līnā (2016). *Adab al-Sujūn*, pp.277-288;301-306.

This ideological fracture in the Arab world and the ensuing violence necessarily created this modernism to revolt against the bitter cruel reality on all its levels and the writer had inevitably to break through it and rebel against it from within. Therefore, the specificity of the experience requires a specificity of form that is able to contain it and thus, modernism and post-modernism are the address of this violation and destruction.

Despite our admission of difference of the feminist literature from the men's literature in general, due to the difference of the woman's experiences from the man's experiences, and despite her different biological and psychological structure, besides her different approach and concerns, we notice that there is no much difference between the experience of the woman's writing about her experience from the man's writing about his experience. The prisoner is a prisoner and the prison is a prison, too, no matter how much different the place and time are because the torturer is the same one – the despotic suppressive regime.

Besides, prisoners are similar in their experiences as a result of their similarity in their human feelings. The woman's experience might be more cruel from the man's experience due to her being a woman. Her jailer is a man and the ruler, the head of the regime is also a man, which means that the degree of the jailer's or the ruler's brutality and suppression doubles because he is a masculine character that belongs to the same biological and physiological structure. He is an authoritative cruel person who has looked at the woman for historical ancient ages in a superior look that considers her 'incomplete in mind and religion.' He does not believe in her mental abilities neither in her legitimacy of political activity nor in her rights and liberties. Therefore, she is more exposed to the suppression of the trilogy of taboos, which are made by the man.

In view of this, and since the woman has chosen not to stand by helplessly but decided to resist all the hindering suppressive circumstances, there is no doubt that she chose writing to be her tool of resistance, revelation and raising her voice. Consequently, her lot was like that of the man, who fully resisted the authority. Hence, the authority persecutes her and puts her in prison because the regime does not care for the gender of the opponent; anyone who resists the regime must be tamed and punished.

Her imprisonment was not something unusual for the authority to do, and her being a female does not do good to her or make her jailer deal with her in a better way; on the contrary, he practiced his suppressive masculine authority and tortured her brutally as he tortured men, and then he would rape her body and her soul.

Sending a female struggler to a political prison is not a strange issue for the authority, but the new thing is that the female political struggler could write about the prison that she was locked in<sup>39</sup> and that she should reveal her experience and tell openly about the torture that she was exposed to and thus, contribute to the enrichment of the Prison Literature.

The revelations of the Syrian writer Nabīl Sulaymān in his novel *Samar al-Layālī* can be quoted as testimonies to the clear interest in prison literature that the woman wrote through dealing with experiences of young political female prisoners, and this can be considered an example of the writer's call that intends to encourage the woman to reveal her experience in prison and the necessity of her contribution to Prison Literature.

This is what the writer stated through the character of Dr. Rāḥī, who encouraged the prisoner Rāyā to write, confirming that the woman's share in Prison Literature is very limited: Are you waiting for a man to write on behalf of you? The prisoner's reply to his question points out the writer's attitude that maintains that the man is the accused one of marginalizing the woman through her words: "Our share is limited because you usurped from us the writing of history, as you usurped its making and reading, and because we left everything for you. It is high time!"<sup>40</sup>

As we see, Nabīl Sulaymān emphasizes and witnesses to the violation of the woman's right to express herself by the masculine authority, as if he were defending the woman's right of writing about her experience without waiting for the man to write it<sup>41</sup> and if the woman becomes able to write, she will become able to determine her life without being subordinate to the man and his authority.

<sup>39</sup>al-Fayṣal, Samar Rūḥī(1994). *al-Sijn al-Siyāsī al-Riwāya*, p. 283.

<sup>40</sup>Sulaymān, Nabīl (2000). *Samar al-Layālī*. Syria: Dār al-Ḥiwār, p. 257.

<sup>41</sup>It should be pointed out that Nabīl Sulaymān wrote in 1972 another novel in Prison Literature called *al-Sijn* in which he published in Syria but it was banned and then he published it in Beirut.

Other examples of writing in the field of Prison Literature include: *Mudbakkaratīfi Sijn al-Nisā'* by Nawāl al-Sa'dāwī; *Ḥamlat Taftīs* by Latīfa al-Zayyāt; *al-Sijn wa-l-Waṭan* by Farīda al-Naqqāsh; *Khams Daqā'iq wa Ḥasb.. Sab'u Sanawātīfi Sijn al-Asad* by Hiba al-Dabbāgh; *Nighatīn min Dhākīrat al-Mu'taqalāt al-Siyasiyyā* by Rūzā Yāsīn Ḥasan; *Fī Arwiqat al-Dhākīra* by Haifa Zankana; *Jidārbayna Zulmatayn* by Balqīs Sharāra; *al-Ḥiṣār* by Fawziyya Radhīd; *al-Ghallāma* by 'Ālya Mamdūh; *Ayyām min Ḥayāt* by Zaynab al-Ghazālī; *'Aynuka 'alā al-Safīna* by May Ḥāfīz and *al-Sharnaqa* by Ḥasība 'Abd al-Raḥmān<sup>42</sup>, which will be studied below as a sample of Feminist Prison Literature. Ḥasība published this novel in 1999 in Beirut, Lebanon for fear to be censored and banned in her homeland, Syria.<sup>43</sup>

## 2.1 Intersection between Prison Literature and Feminist Literature-Women's Prison Literature: *al-Sharnaqa* Novel as a Sample

Prison Literature reflects two images of the man, which are necessarily determined by the reality of the prison: the image of the jailer and the image of the prisoner. The jailer represents the traditional image of the negative and repulsive man who is a representative symbol of the suppressive authority and its brutality.

However, the image of the man-prisoner is different from the image of the woman-prisoner that the woman writer introduced and sought to destroy and rebel against in her feministic literature. The prisoner is not an example of the man who is accustomed to suppress her on the religious or the social level, or the man who is a model of persecution on the level of the family and society; he is not the ruler and the jailer on the political level but the man who suffers like her from suppression and, like her, an oppositionist to the policy of the regime, and the tortured one behind the bars of his prisons. In this, he shares her same oppression, marginalization and exclusion.

Since the educated man is prosecuted because of a thought that he believes in or a political activity that opposes the regime and, consequently, is imprisoned and tortured, and then is released after undergoing a cruel experience, deciding to talk openly and expose the regime through the power of the word and the weapon of 'right of expression'; and since the regime is afraid of this educated intellectual because he threatens its interests and authority, the regime suppresses him and tames him. The woman also seeks in her feminist works to emancipate herself and break through the taboos that prohibit her from practicing her freedom.

In the beginning, she is marginalized and excluded from the literary arena but because she is aware of the necessity of talking and the power of revelation to emphasize her feministic rights and her competence and existence, she starts breaking taboos and challenging prohibitions despite the strict punishments that are waiting for her in the shadow of a masculine authoritative society.

Here, the educated intellectual and the feminist woman meet in their pursuit to achieve freedom by the employment of the power of the word as a weapon in time of silence and taming though their awareness of the role of the pen in deepening the spirit of rebellion and revolution against persecution and despotism. Thus, the experience of the intellectual man identifies with the experience of the feminist woman in her suffering and the pressure of suppression and then in their pursuit to emancipate themselves from this despotism.

Their experiences interconnect when it is time for the revelation in the process of literary writing, when writing for them turns into a tool of liberation from the pressure of the experience and images of suppression. Writing turns into an act of revenge, resistance, revelation, exposure, rebellion and emphasis on the self and its reinforcement so that all these items become central points of intersection and interconnectivity between Prison Literature and Feminist Literature.

However, this interconnectivity intensifies to the point of full identification when the woman-writer is a prisoner who lives the experience of the prison. In this case, she reveals it and exposes the scandalous suppression in a narrative text in which she inserts her feminist discourse and combines in it her being a victim of the suppressive regime, first, and second, her being a victim of the suppressive conservative society. Her rebellious and revolutionary cry doubles against the social, religious and political trilogy of taboos.

<sup>42</sup>Sulaymān, Nabil (2000). *Samar al-Layālī*, p. 246.

<sup>43</sup>See the interview with the novelist and politician Ḥasība 'Abd al-Raḥmān on: <http://www.mokarabat.com/s1743.htm>

Therefore, this study seeks to reveal the features of Prison Literature and its themes in women's writings in an aim to reveal this intersection and interconnectivity especially when the woman is a prisoner who tasted suffering behind the bars. In view of this, the study suggests calling this kind of literature as *Feminist Prison Literature* because I believe that the two types of literature interconnect and contact on the level of form including the stylistic and structural techniques of form, and on the content level, including the themes and thoughts.

The Feminist Prison Literature is a literature in which the woman writer combines between her private concern as a prisoner behind moral bars of norms and social and religious traditions that her conservative society besieges her with, and her general public political concern behind concrete physical bars in the prison of her homeland, which is ruled by a despotic ruler. Thus, this literature combines within its folds the trilogy of the social, religious and political taboos. The prison turns into several physical and moral images. The woman's literature becomes revealing and rebellious against all these censorships together.

Here, I would like to point out that I chose the novel *al-Sharnaqa / The Cocoon* by the Syrian novelist Ḥasība 'Abd al-Raḥmānas a sample that illustrates my approach and arguments. The novel contains a clear presence of all the fundamental pillars of Prison Literature such as: the prison, the prisoner, the physical and moral torture. Besides, it includes the features of women Feminist Literature and its themes.

Ḥasība dedicated her novel *al-Sharnaqa* to the horrible space of prisons: "It is a writing that cries out what a certain career and a testimony leak about the queer Arab day... it is a bloody writing that exposes the suppresser, the suppressed, the space of suppression and its methods in an extreme way".<sup>44</sup>

The writer highlights the world of the political female writers of different political shades that range from religious fundamentalism to al-Ba'ṯh Party and the leftists. They are female prisoners of different human types such as: Kawthar, Da'd, Tuhāma, Lamā and others. Kawthar is probably the most prominent one as she represents the most central characters and the one that is most similar to the writer Ḥasība herself. She is a political activist and bears the code name of 'Sanā'. The novel starts at the moment of her arrest when her home is surrounded and raided, but it seems that this was not the first time that she is arrested.

The reader of the novel notices that the writer breaks all the taboos and this indicates that this narrative text, which combines between the novel and autobiography, is a literary sample that belongs to the feminist prison literature. On the feminist dimension, the writer highlights the list of taboos that the woman lives in the shadow of a traditional masculine culture: "Each year, the list of taboos expands", but Kawthar seeks to demolish the taboos and revolts against all the masculine chains and rebels against anyone that excludes her from decision-taking and refuses that anybody rob her of her freedom.

When she becomes twenty years old, she gets rid of the complex of 'body', taboos', 'shame', 'prohibitions' and 'sacred' things, and the like. Then she starts to plan her way in politics, a way that granted her the ability to escape from her old world, liberate herself from its shackles and enter the secret organizations that are banned by the State"<sup>45</sup>. Her engagement in the political life with no fear or hesitation is considered one of the features of feminist literature that appear in this text besides her appearance as an educated intellectual who is concerned with what happens in her homeland and outside it, politically, culturally and socially, and an activist who belongs to a political organization, and a revolutionary struggler against the suppressive man who is represented in all the forms of the authority.

In her novel of *al-Sharnaqa*, Ḥasībawas one of the women writers who break through the taboo of sex daringly as she dealt with it in an intensive way. No doubt, she did that out of her emphasis on the need to destroy the man's norms and postulations and to prove her daring to break his taboos.

In addition to that, she employed the sexual descriptions as a part of the tools of torture that the jailer practiced against the imprisoned victim. She dealt with the rebellion of the heroine Kawthar against the fore granted sexual postulation that shackles her by the obligation to keep her virginity till she gets married. Kawthar seeks to rebel not because she wanted to achieve a sexual desire at that moment and she justifies that saying:

<sup>44</sup>Sulaymān, Nabil(2004). *al-Sira al-Naṣiyyawa -l-Mujtama'iyya – Dirāsātīal-Riwāya al-'Arabiyya*. Al-Riyāḍ: Mu'assasat al-Yamāma al-Ṣaḥāfiyya, p. 291.

<sup>45</sup>'Abd al-Raḥmān, Ḥasība(1999). *Al-Sharnaqa* (No publisher), p. 20.

"I rebelled against my family and society<sup>46</sup>; "I rebelled against a society that considered sex as an eternal complex and a shame that is made by the devil and an honor for which blood is shed"; "I got rid of my shame and my family's shame and my suppressed society when I took off my clothes... led under the pressure of the hypnotic rebellion rather than a desire at that moment."<sup>47</sup>

Thus, breaking the taboo of sex and rebelling against it becomes a symbol of resisting the man and rejecting his rules. Since marriage in the masculine norms is a masculine tool that the man exploits to prove his social superiority to the woman and to impose through it her subordination and submission to him, the woman's opposition to marriage means her resistance to the man.<sup>48</sup>

If sex can be a woman's right only under the legitimacy of marriage and through her obligation to keep her virginity, she has no way but to rebel against marriage and the sacredness of sex in it. In view of this, the woman writer deals with the virginity of the woman with the intention to break the taboo, like many other feminist deeds.<sup>49</sup>

There is no doubt that this daring in the subject of sex points out the woman's conflict with the masculine authority, and it is considered a medium on which the woman leans in her redefinition of the concept of the Self publicly.<sup>50</sup>

To camouflage reality from the censorship, the writer refers on the cover of her novel to the feature of the imaginary dimension and the illusion of the characters and their unreality. In spite of the fact that she admitted in an interview with her that her novel depends largely on a personal experience that she lived in the prison, and that she had to publish it in Beirut because she realized that the censorship in Syria would not agree on its publishing, she pointed out at the beginning of the novel, that "the characters of this novel are made up of imagination even if they resemble real persons, for artistic and psychological necessities."<sup>51</sup>

The other side on which the novel depends is based on her life outside the prison including childhood memories and the social and religious heritage. She points out that her work was a revelation of the experience of the prison and exposure to the shape of the authority and its nature in Syria, which practices all kinds of suppression against its citizens.

We also find another resemblance between Kawthar's character and the writer's character. What Kawthar mentioned is the same cause as the writer mentions regarding her affiliation with the Association of the Communist Work, through which she was seeking to repel persecution and rebellion in the shadow of a social and political regime that suppresses the woman and practices all kinds of physical, psychological and moral persecutions against her.<sup>52</sup>

In addition to that, there is resemblance between the methods of brutal torturing that the prisoners Kathwar and Ḥasība were exposed to. It sounds that she was describing her suffering in those moments. This is confirmed by the testimony of Rūzā Ḥasan and her allusion in her book *Nighatin*, which will be dealt with later in the study.

Thus, the novel reveals the integration of political topics with social and religious ones. No one of these taboos is separated from the other, which confirms the pursuit towards the desired freedom on the special level of the woman and the level of the peoples that seek freedom and democracy in general.

## 2.2 The Dialectic Relationship between the Jailer and the Prisoner

The relationship between the jailer and the prisoner in the women's literature does not differ in its essence from that in the men's literature. It is also a highly negative relationship that is based on a violent conflict between two sides: a strong suppressive side versus a weak unarmed isolated side. However, the different aspect here is that the weak side (the woman prisoner) is weaker than the man prisoner from the viewpoint of men and the concept of masculine culture.

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<sup>46</sup>Ibid., p. 15.

<sup>47</sup>Ibid., p. 46.

<sup>48</sup>Tāhā, Ibrāhīm (2006). "Beware men", p. 50.

<sup>49</sup>Ibid., p. 41.

<sup>50</sup>Ibid., p. 57.

<sup>51</sup>Ibid., p. 5.

<sup>52</sup>Ibid.

The woman "is described by her physical and psychological weakness"<sup>53</sup> and is considered, in principle, to be subordinate to the man and submissive to him, which indicates the superior outlook that her jailer has for her. In addition to his being the investigator/ torturer/ jailer/ authority servant, he is also the suppressive persecuting man who becomes more brutal when he sees woman prisoner in front of him. First, he covets her body and desires to rape her as a way to suppress her; he enjoys torturing her in order to prove his control of her; *first*, control to the woman, and *second*, the control of the jailer of the prisoner. This is what Kawthar confirms when she says: "Damn it! Our arrest is a catastrophe, menstruation, pain and long hair. Above this and that, our look is exciting sexually."<sup>54</sup>

From this perspective, the jailer/ executor in this novel does not differ from his stereotypical image. He is the cruel character who commits brutal and non-human actions. This also applies to Prison Literature in general. The woman seeks to describe the man in a negative way; he is the cruel and violent hard man who seeks to smash and humiliate her through using all the available tools of physical and psychological violence. The woman prisoner becomes like any other prisoner, a mere number who is deprived of her humanity, a disfigured deformed man, who is robbed of his will and freedom.

In return, the woman prisoner tries to resist and refuses to let him humiliate her or disgrace her honor: "I summon my entity... defend it, I will not be treaded on by his shoes ... I summon my honor, my dignity that was lost like dreams."<sup>55</sup> She looks for all the powers of patience in herself in order to hold fast in the face of her rapist. The woman prisoner Kawthar beats her jailer when she deceives herself that the 'Ṭumīsha' (eye-band) has a different moral benefit. Instead of being a tool of robbery and intimidation, it turns into a tool with which she conceals her countenances and parts of her face. Thus, the investigator cannot pierce her absent looks and interpret them: "Anyway, what is there in the investigation rooms to look at? The drawer? The seat? The electricity? The brutal faces?"<sup>56</sup> The women prisoners declare their strike also challenging the jailer in order to improve their conditions.<sup>57</sup> They also seek to employ the methods that the men prisoners in general employ in order to break the shackles of the prison such as "knocking on the walls" or "hitting on the wall", which is the prisoners, known language, "a new addressing between the deaf and the dumb, a new language according to the newness of the prison."<sup>58</sup>

The dialectic between the jailer and the prisoner in the feminist literature is embodied in the woman prisoner's challenge, not only to her actual real jailer, but to her metaphorical one - that jailer who is representative of the conservative masculine society with all its shackles that suppress her human and creative rights. The woman in the shadow of these masculine societies is in the margin, dumb, concealed, and committed to a stereotypical role as a mother or a housewife or for a sexual object<sup>59</sup>

Therefore, Ḥasība deals with the suppression of society and its shackles. Prisoner Kawthar confirms that through her membership in the party and her political activity pulled her freedom and built her project in the shadow of a social and political system that suppresses the woman and practices all kinds of physical, psychological and moral persecutions against her. By that, they might acknowledge her and admit of her humanity and she would turn from being "an animal that walks on two," as they says about women, into a human being "who has been released despite the heavy cost that she paid."<sup>60</sup>

In my opinion, the sexual rebellion constitutes another reflection to the dialectic between the jailer/ society and prisoner/ woman. That is implied in the rebellion of the female heroine against the sex-taboo after she rebelled against the politics-taboo, declaring her riddance of the complex of the body-taboo. If the man is the protector of the sex-taboo, and if the jailer/executioner is a man, she has no way but to break through this taboo and rebel against it just like Kawthar who gets rid of her virginity in order to get rid of her dishonor. She succeeds in her rebellion and achieves a desire that she wanted to achieve and, thus, she overcame and beat her jailer.

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<sup>53</sup>Ibid., p. 35.

<sup>54</sup>Ibid.

<sup>55</sup>*al-Sharnaqa*, p. 296.

<sup>56</sup>Ibid., p. 32.

<sup>57</sup>Ibid., p. 144.

<sup>58</sup>Ibid., p. 40.

<sup>59</sup>Lim, Shirley Geok-lin (1997). "Feminist and Ethnic Literary Theories in Asian American Literature". In: *Feminisms: An Anthology of Literary Theory and Criticism*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, p. 813.

<sup>60</sup>*al-Sharnaqa*, p. 19.

All this injustice and persecution will inevitably push the prisoner of *al-Sharnaqa* to create an imaginary homeland according to her desires in order to protect herself from the cruelty of alienation: "I entered the cocoon. It is the cocoon, the self of the self; it is the bar in life and in the anonymsities of the veils and marshes of comfort and illusion of the Ego (I), and privacy of the circumstances; the withdrawal from life step by step"<sup>61</sup>.

The irony between prison and freedom appears in this context of dialectic between the jailer and the prisoner and it stems from the irony that the woman prisoner lives. On the one hand, she misses her freedom; her physical movement is limited and her communication with the external world is prohibited but, in return, she breaks the chains of the prison and emigrates through the movement of awareness and imagination into a different reality or imaginary homeland that she created and called *al-Sharnaqa*. She lives in a moral freedom through her intellectual mental movement. Each time the jailer / investigator seeks to rob her of her will and destroy her, the woman prisoner seeks to look for a way to resist, refusing to allow the jailer/ executioner to beat her. This cannot be achieved except by searching into the folds of her soul about light/freedom in the darkness of this place.

Here, the prisoner is likely to know herself for the first time and faces it, dives into it, realizes the spots of her power and her weakness. She might make peace with it after she rejected it and might recollect her memories and dreams. By entering this sharnaqa/cocoon, the prisoner seeks to abate her feeling of alienation in order to give herself the feeling that she is still human with natural sensations and is capable of keeping her psychological freedom and her intellectual independence and controlling her reality even if in her illusion and imagination. It is the spiritual freedom that nobody can take from her and which gives hope to her life. Recollection of memories gives her a feeling of warmth and security and achieves for her the internal balance that she lost as there are no chains nor bars in the folds of memory. This is the quest inward to look for her salvation, the journey of her consciousness when alienation dominates the Place; it is the trip inside the cocoon..

When the woman prisoner summons her memory and her past through the techniques of interior monologue, association and flashback, reveries and daydreams, they turn into compensatory tools and mechanisms that the prisoner needs in the shadow of her moral siege. Ḥasība describes the reveries and daydreams through the voice of her heroine Kawthar that they are "pleasure for the prisoner; the pleasure of being in a reverie and enjoyment of the wonderful dream"<sup>62</sup> which become a kind of salvation through treatment by illusion. She might achieve a kind of partial heroism in that. However, the dreams are likely to turn into nightmares that deprive the prisoner's sleep and comfort after the cruel torture sessions, where one's awareness is mixed with delirium.<sup>63</sup>

### 2.3 The Antihero Prisoner

The image of the woman prisoner is not an image of the traditional woman who is submissive to the man, but the image of the learned, educated, active, political and daring woman. If politics, religion, society and sex are made by men, she rejects them and rebels against them. She is a woman who initiates things even if that leads to her imprisonment and destruction. On the other hand, she can be put behind the bars like a suppressed prisoner who is robbed of his will. Thus, she identifies with him and resembles him in his alienation and defeat in front of the non-human jailer/ executioner and, in this way, both of them become antiheroes in the prison. So, about what kind of heroism can we talk in the shadow of national despotic merciless Arab regimes? In an interview with her, Ḥasība says that her novel *al-Sharnaqa / Cocoon* "is not a novel of heroes."<sup>64</sup> Ḥasība emphasizes that in her "Necessary Note" in the introduction to her novel under the title, saying:

"The heroes of the novel raised the flags and were imprisoned at a time when heroism became 'madness'... the characters of the novel, and, in short, they are the result of the repeated defeats, breakdown of the values of justice, equality, destruction of the human being and extinction of dreams."<sup>65</sup>

In this case, how can the writer talk about heroes at a time of intellectual and military defeats?

<sup>61</sup>Ibid., p. 263.

<sup>62</sup>Ibid., p. 77.

<sup>63</sup>Ibid., pp. 13, 25, 28.

<sup>64</sup>See Interview with the novelist politician Ḥasība 'Abd al-Raḥmān on: <http://www.mokarabat.com/s1743.htm>

<sup>65</sup>*al-Sharnaqa*, p.5.

The prisoner's inability to achieve victories over the jailer/executioner or to free herself from the prison is evidence to her loss of the battle, and this turns her into a destroyed and smashed person. In view of this, the traditional image of the 'hero' disappears and the idea of the 'anti-hero' replaces it.<sup>66</sup> From this perspective, Kawthar was not a hero despite her rebellion against the social, political and religious regime, but she could not find except defeat and debacle in the time of defeats and suppression. She says: "The tax that every woman pays if she raises her head a little, if the authorities fail to destroy, ...her relatives will destroy her... it is the condition of defeats... it is necessary to break the wings of any woman who raises her head and destroy her.... It is the fates ..., we tried to ridicule them ... but they overcame."<sup>67</sup>

Thus, the type of the anti-hero appeared in the last period of the feminist literature.<sup>68</sup> It is the example of the anti-hero woman who fails to achieve her purpose and the masculine institution succeeds in subjugating her and hinders her from achieving her goals. The novel reflected the breakdown of the dreams, aspirations and imprisonment of the Self in a suppressive reality.

The prisoner was well-aware of the fact that she is facing a fascist national authority but she did not fear to be engaged in politics and resistance of the regime and thus, she found herself in prison, where her voice was suppressed and tamed. She sometimes showed resilience and endurance but on other times, she showed her breakdown. She also showed her complete readiness to bear her pain in order to protect her honor but she failed in most times and fell a prey to rape and sexual violence from a deformed jailer/ executor and remained behind the bars submissively.

The impact of the prison on the man prisoner and the suffering that it causes are not different from its impact and suffering on the woman prisoner. Their human feelings, fear and pain are the same; their yearning to freedom, emancipation, and longing to other people are the same. Thus, imagination becomes necessary in prison. Nothing remains for the prisoner after his jailer deprives him of everything except his imagination and dreams. The woman prisoner in the novel "misses an open life; we smell, eat, look for a far horizon that is not limited by walls nor concealed by a tree or guards".<sup>69</sup> "I imagine myself, I imagine it like 'Ashtār picking anemones; I wait for Adūnīs or Ba'1...".<sup>70</sup> The best moments of imagining for Kawthar are: "to smell the smell of freedom, the people in the street... to run, run and embrace them, and see the joy in their eyes embrace me, welcome me from the bottom of my heart...and forget the unhappiness, the sorrow and the torture and prison".<sup>71</sup>

As we see, the prison does not differentiate in its suppression between one prisoner and the other; it does not discriminate between those who stay in it, but it practices its suppression and alienation on anyone who stays in the prison, including the jailer himself. It is the extremely awful psychological distraction and internal laceration that the man and the woman live alike.

In fact, Kawthar confirms that the prison is not more merciful to the woman than the man but more merciless and more brutal. The curse of the prison is identical with the shackles of the traditional society and its authority on the woman. The prison becomes a curse and a pain, and "above this and that, our appearance is sexually exciting... the women are short of religion and mind.

We got lost among the slogans of liberation and blind obedience to our homes, and consequently, to our kitchens, laundry and children, while the men remained on the platforms conflicting about important ranks and sensitive missions and thus, we are marginalized as we used to be before. They say slogans of deception and cunning in order that we remain always behind them".<sup>72</sup>

<sup>66</sup>Tāhā, Ibrāhīm(2002). "al-Riwāya al-‘Arabiyyabayna al-Wāqī‘iyyawa-l-ḤadāthawamāBa‘d al-Ḥadātha." *al-Karmil*, Haifa: University of Haifa, Issues 21/22, p. 367.

<sup>67</sup>*al-Sharnaqa*, p. 296.

<sup>68</sup>Tāhā, Ibrāhīm(2007). "Swimming Against the Current: Towards an Arabic Feminist Poetic Strategy", *Orientalia Suecana*. LVI, pp. 197.

<sup>69</sup>*al-Sharnaqa*, pp. 272-275.

<sup>70</sup>Ibid., p. 275.

<sup>71</sup>Ibid., p. 276.

<sup>72</sup>Ibid., p. 55.

"I look at myself in the mirror and see another woman in shape; how about the internal changes?"<sup>73</sup> Probably, her constant repetition of the expression "I spit on everything" indicates the degree of her feeling of disgust and misery about the cruelty of this reality and its violence.

In the shadow of marginalization to the point of alienation and loss of identity, the wound in the soul of the woman prisoner becomes wider: "Our life became like that of a cocoon..In every bed, there is a silkworm that weaves its silk by itself and its hand... this is the law of the prison."<sup>74</sup>In this way, Kawthar found herself in the prison "without clothes, memories, or personal documents, displaced, and wandering between the prison, the street and secret homes."<sup>75</sup> In prison, all the values and sacrifices that the individual lived for outside the prison are destroyed, and he turns to a personal issue, which is his search for a way to survive and search for his Self. In the shadow of this total destruction, this daily death, the two women prisoners, Zahīra and Mājida, break down and get a psychological disease.

Probably, the regret of the woman prisoner Tuhāma because of her choice of politics at the expense of her daughter is the most cruel suffering that the mother prisoner lives when she loses her belief in the benefit of her struggle. She starts inquiring herself about the futility of political activity.

Tuhāma, who gave birth to her daughter inside the walls of the prison, and lived with her in the cell till she became four years old, and then was released to be taken by her relatives,<sup>76</sup> receives a letter from her daughter that says that she will not live with her when she goes out of prison. This made her ask herself burningly: what did she gain from this experience except her daughter's grudge to her, her hatred and her cruel decision to refuse to live with her? Here, her feeling of irony destroys her. "How can she build a homeland and destroy her own home? What a paradox! She made her an orphan and failed in her motherhood." "I shouldn't have left my daughter and run after a struggling fame and renown". "What does it mean to win the world and lose my daughter?"<sup>77</sup> It is the human deformation of motherhood.

#### 2.4 Images of the Physical and Psychological Torture

The types of torture that Ḥasība described about the prisoners of her novel, and which she herself experienced in the prison, were not less cruel than the types of torture that the jailer practiced against men prisoners as other writers described them. Kawthar was tortured by hitting with sticks, whips, cables, in addition to a German chair, hanging on a ladder, the wheel, and even the use of electric shock in her mouth<sup>78</sup> or torture by starvation and preventing her from drinking water<sup>79</sup>.

Rape or sexual assault for a woman who lives in an Oriental society, who sees her chastity as the most precious thing that she possesses, might be the most horrible, the heaviest and the most humiliating type of torture. Therefore, the jailer would consider denuding the woman prisoner as an important basis before he starts torturing her because this act weakens the woman's determination and breaks her will. The writer Rūzā Ḥasan, in her documentary novel *Nighatīn min Dhākirat al-Mu'taqalāt al-Siyasiyyāt*<sup>80</sup>,

Documents the brutal methods that Ḥasība was exposed to during the period of her imprisonment, and on which Ḥasība depended in her novel, and made her heroine Kawthar be exposed to the same brutality that she was exposed to.

<sup>73</sup>Ibid., p. 277.

<sup>74</sup>Ibid., p. 199.

<sup>75</sup>Ibid., p. 78.

<sup>76</sup>Ibid., p. 250.

<sup>77</sup>Ibid., p. 250, 253, 290.

<sup>78</sup>Ibid., p. 32-33.

<sup>79</sup>Ibid., p. 143.

<sup>80</sup>In the introduction of her book makes it clear that her book is a document that records part of a political feminist history that was made absent for a long time as the experience of the Opposition in general in all its components was made absent. (p. 14), depending on interviews and investigations that she made with several women-prisoners. She introduces the political identity of every prisoner, the cause of her arrest and the period of her imprisonment and in the end, she deals with the methods of torturing her. This document reveals in a special way an authentic source and important testimony about Ḥasība 'Abd al-Rahmān and her experience in the prison and the tools of her torture which are reflected in her novels, which proves the credibility of her autobiography and gives witness to its truth, but denounces the attempt of Ḥasība, who claimed that the events and characters are imaginary. See: Ḥasan, Rūzā Yāsīn (2008). *Nighatīn min Dhākirat al-Mu'taqalāt al-Siyasiyyāt*. Cairo: Markiz al-Qāhira li Dirāsāt Ḥuqūq al-Insān.

Rūzā describes one of Ḥasība's torture scenes saying: "the 'Elements' [jailer assistants] were pushing dirty pieces and rags into her mouth, closing it with those dirty things till she was about to choke, and then they would hit her with four-wire cables on her feet, her arms and other parts of her body while she was tied and lying on the floor unable to move. Each time they noticed that her body was about to collapse, they would pour a bucket of water on her to wake her up. Then they would torture her again and then they would shock her with electricity. She stayed up sleepless and without food for several days hearing nothing except the voices of the tortured ones. She also received a lot of torture by the German chair. The jailer hit her head against the wall, and electricity was on her tongue, mouth, fingers and feet and then, she would be put in an isolation cell for four months. She lost her ability to distinguish between kinds of food and kinds of its taste as a result of torturing her with electricity on her tongue. It took her months to regain that lost ability. She was also exposed to torture of switching cigarettes off on her body."<sup>81</sup> This is exactly what Ḥasība described in her novel *al-Sharnaqa* through Kawthar's character, which turns her novel into an autobiography in prison and clarifies her aim to reveal the truth and expose reality with live evidence that she lived behind the bars.

The text is not void of psychological suffering and description of the suppressed and suffering soul. The psychological suffering starts at the moment of arrest and the woman prisoner is exposed to insults and curses<sup>82</sup> Repulsive smell plays another role in her psychological torture<sup>83</sup>, and what increases her fear is the spread of diseases, insects and animals in the prisons, which sends horror in the soul of the women prisoner<sup>84</sup> or force her to excrete or urinate inside the cell or prevent her from going out to the toilet.<sup>85</sup>

Thus, and according to the testimony of the writer, the woman's torturing was not less brutal than what the man prisoner describes about his torture. She was also exposed to the most horrible types of torture by a brutal jailer, who originally sees her as a female body that arouses his lust, let alone when he sees that body as his own possession with no one to watch him or deter him!

On the other hand, the woman was not afraid of courageously describing the ugliness of torturing her body in detail including sexual descriptions as a cry of challenge to the authorities and exposure to the brutality of the jailer in his violation of the most scared thing that society, mainly the masculine society, boats of. There are no scared things inside the prison, nor value for the human being, whether a man or a woman.

The woman-writer seeks to break the authority rule that prevents the 'word' and forbids its speaker from expressing her thoughts about these sacred things. She does that daringly, which reflects her bravery in defying the suppressive regime and revealing the brutality of torturing in its prisons. It is also an attempt by the writer to confirm to the man-writer that she is not less brave than him or less able to combat the political, sexual and social taboos.

## 2.5 The Artistic Levels

The woman's special presence is reflected in the specialty of her personal experience that is formulated under the pressure of circumstances that do not resemble the man's circumstances. The man writer writes in a masculine society that contributes to his cherishment in forming his language, discourse and norms, while the woman writes in the same masculine society as a marginalized and suppressed voice and at a lower status than that of the man, which lends her autobiography more marginalization and rebellion against the taboos and coercions that she suffers from.

The study found that there is a clear intersection between *al-Sharnaqa* novel, Feminist Literature and Prison Literature on the level of form and style, on the one hand, and on modernism, on the other. In my opinion, the attempt of the woman-writer to break away from the classical form of the novel towards a new artistic form, through which she can bridge over the suppressive reality and reject the different forms of authority, stems from two justifications:

The *first* includes her attempt to liberate herself from the authority of the man, her revolution against the masculine contents and norms that are considered purely masculine product, and her desire to prove her creative ability and knowledge of all the new and modernist experimental tools; the *second* includes her attempt to evade the suppressive regime and break the prohibited trilogy of: politics, religion and sex.

<sup>81</sup>Ibid., pp. 66-69, 119.

<sup>82</sup>*al-Sharnaqa*, p. 33.

<sup>83</sup>Ibid., p. 31.

<sup>84</sup>Ibid., p. 37.

<sup>85</sup>Ibid., p. 38.

She meets at this point with the man writer in his quest for liberation from this trilogy and breaking it, too. These attempts to escape from the captivity of the classical artistic forms and their shackles, consciously or unconsciously, constitute an attempt to achieve an analogy to the freedom of content, on the literary level, by possessing her freedom to choose her literary form.

As mentioned above, the study has found out that the novel adopts several autobiographical elements. In fact, the subject matter of the novel emerges from the writer's subjective experience but the writer mixes it with the imaginary element in an attempt to camouflage and evade the censor and his inquisitions.

Therefore, Nabīl Sulaymān does not consider the work to be a novel and he describes it in the following words: "the structure of *al-Sharnaqa*, as a whole, slips away from affinity with the novel, but it aspires to it and remains a testimony – probably an autobiographical one – to the degree of the Arab suppression".<sup>86</sup> The writer turns her novel into a recording novel within the frame of Prison Literature genre as a form of a documentary that reflects facts and reality, following the men's approach exactly. She aims to write, document, declare and protest, stating that the purpose of the writing process here is to reveal and expose the painful reality of her homeland. Thus, her novel turns into a mirror that imitates the forbidden and exposes it. The element of the creative imagination becomes an ancillary element that helps this document.

Ḥasība, like others, depends on the technique of *metafiction*, which is fiction that includes a commentary on its fictional identity,<sup>87</sup> which positions itself at the dividing border between 'fiction' and 'criticism', and introduces questions about the relationship between 'fiction' and 'reality'. Since this novel is a challenge to the taboo and a revelation to prohibited contexts, there is no wonder that we find the writer mix between 'prison literature' and writing about her 'freedom in creativity and freedom of expression'. Thus, her personal life and private experiences turn into a literary material that is written on paper freely, because reality does not guarantee that desired freedom. Here, met writing becomes a weapon for freedom and a tool for emancipation, and since life has become a nightmare and an illusion, in the viewpoint of the Arab women writers, writing itself has become the real life because writing in itself is a pursuit after freedom, and literature in itself is a free reality. Therefore, it is no wonder that we find several types of met literature everywhere<sup>88</sup> because they are the hope that keeps the women writers alive.<sup>89</sup>

This is exactly what the writer did when she divulged secrets that the regime will not tolerate easily. Besides, writing about the prison is an act of revenge, in which the writer seeks to build her own world by words, and metafiction becomes the most needed tool to reinforce this world and is employed as a weapon for freedom.

Thus, in this hostile reality, the woman is liberated from the power of the man and his dominance, and compensates for that by her pen through which she finds her way to her freedom and realization of her humanity. Consequently, she identifies here with any prisoner who was robbed of his freedom, whether a man or a woman.

*Metafiction* is probably the most important element that she wrote on the first page of the novel under the title "Necessary Note": "The characters of this novel are imaginary, even if they resemble real characters for artistic and psychological necessities. Its heroes raised the flags and were imprisoned in a time where heroism has become a kind of madness, and sacrifice has become nonsense, and principles are treated by shoes, and daring has become submission and spitting on the flags. In short, the characters of the novel are products of the repeated defeats and the collapse of the values of justice, equality, breaking of teeth and extinction of dreams...or their escape to heaven under the pressure of defeat, fear and cowardice. Ḥasība".<sup>90</sup>

Metafiction appears here at the beginning in the note, which she signs under her name at the end, taking care to clarify the imaginarity of the characters and then to emphasize their anti-heroism, as if the writer was playing, *first*, the role of the critic of her text, and *second*, the role of the 'censor' as she blurs and camouflages the reality and tries to keep away from herself the accusation that what she writes has really occurred, defining the relationship between her novel and reality, which constitutes clear metafiction.

<sup>86</sup>*al-Sharnaqa*, p. 296.

<sup>87</sup> Hamad, Muḥammad (2011). *al-Mitāqaṣfī al-Riwāya al-'Arabiyya (Marāya al-Sard al-Narjīs)*. Bāqā al-Gharbiyya: Majma' al-Qāsimilil-Lughā al-'Arabiyyawa-Ādābihā, p. 20.

<sup>88</sup>Tāhā, Ibrāhīm (2007). "Swimming Against the Current", p. 210.

<sup>89</sup>Ibid., pp. 207-209.

<sup>90</sup>*al-Sharnaqa*, p. 5.

This means that the writer interferes in advance in defining the indication of the text, through which she expresses her ideological attitude about the world she is living in, and allows herself to comment and interpret. By that, she defines the type of the desired reading of the 'opening', and defines the relationship between the reader and the text.

Thus, the writer expresses her opinion about her non-human reality and points out its repeated defeats and its injustice and cruelty. Besides, she plays the role of the critic about the 'Antihero' by clarifying her view about heroism in this age. The writer's note constitutes her revelation and uncovering of a suffering soul that seeks salvation in time of fear and violence. All that takes place through her concealment behind illusion and denial of reality of the characters. In this way, metafiction in the woman narrative appears to be as an appearance of the tools of resisting the masculine literary institute, too.<sup>91</sup>

Metafiction also appears in the first threshold, namely, the title of the novel, which can be considered to be a critical practice of the writer about his work his abridgement of the indication of the text.<sup>92</sup> The writer's approach in the title *al-Sharnaqa* follows the approach of the writer Muṣṭafā Khalīfain his novel *al-Qawqa'a / The Shell* (2008) in mentioning the word 'sharnaqa/shell'<sup>93</sup> within the text and commenting on it. Thus, the title constitutes an allusion of the place of the novel, where the suppression of the jailer pushed the woman prisoner to withdraw slowly and enter the sharnaqa/cocoon exactly as the prisoner-narrator did in the novel of *al-Qawqa'a* by Muṣṭafā Khalīfa, who enters the shell looking for a shelter and withdrawal from the painful reality.

Thus, the title of *al-Sharnaqa* becomes a revelation and exposure to the content of the text and even a parallel text with the contents of the novel and its indications. The title itself is symbolic of the illusive compensatory place to which the woman prisoner withdraws in her imagination in an escape from the evil of her actual reality, the reality of the prison as a repulsive and suppressive place.

The end of the novel is like the ends of most prison-novels and it tends to adopt the open end structure.<sup>94</sup> Thus, *al-Sharnaqa* ends in Kawthar's delirium and her dreams, and then with a wonder that emphasizes the open-end text through the employment of the tale of *al-Ghūla* (Female Ghoul) that ate the baby goats. Kawthar addresses her mother: "You were wrong, Mom, when you told the story of *al-Ghūla*; you said that *al-Ghūla* changed her shape and became a she-goat and thus, she succeeded in deceiving the baby goats and ate them. When the goat returned and knew what happened, she went to the Smith and sharpened her horns and went to fight the *Ghūla*, and she triumphed over her?" "and you stopped and did not complete the story. "What changed in the children, Mother, after they spent a while in the abdomen of the *Ghūla*, and after she sucked their blood? What has changed, Mom?"<sup>95</sup> The novel ends with this question as if it were asking: what has changed in the prisoners in the abdomen of the prison, in the abdomen of suppression: suppression of the homeland and its injustice?

There is no doubt that the *Ghūla* is a symbol, and probably, it symbolizes the prison, which robs the prisoners of their humanity and sucks their blood and, consequently, the citizen becomes weak and fragile like the babies of goats in the face of the brutality of the regime and its despotism. The jailer does the same thing to the prisoners.

It certainly changed the prisoner and sucked his humanity. The *Ghūla* might also symbolize the Homeland and the whole Arab Homelands that suck the blood of their citizens and suppress them. Thus, the Homeland turns into a *Ghūla* and a prison because the homeland that suppresses its citizens is their prison and there is no difference between it and a prison with bars and walls. It is a prison that suppresses people's freedom and any attempt of thinking differently.

Thus, the prisoner lives as an alien in his homeland. Probably Nabīl Sulaymān's query about the abdomen of the *Ghūla* confirms this argument: "Is the abdomen of the *Ghūla* a cell or a prison? Or is it this suppressive and suppressed Arab space?"<sup>96</sup>

There is no doubt that the feelings of fragmentation and alienation that the woman prisoner lives after her release is more horrible than the feelings of the man. How can a traditional society that oppresses the woman and looks at her as an inferior creature that lacks mind and religion accept her as a political activist, a rebellion and a prison-

<sup>91</sup>Tāhā, Ibrāhīm(2007). "Swimming Against the Current", p. 212.

<sup>92</sup>Ḥamad, Muḥammad (2011). *al-Mitāqaṣṣī al-Riwāya*, p. 160.

<sup>93</sup>Khalīfa, Muṣṭafā(2008). *al-Qawqa'a – Yawmiyyāt Mutalaṣṣīs*. Beirut: Dār al-Ādāb.

<sup>94</sup>al-Fayṣal, Samar Rūhī(1994). *al-Sijn al-Siyāsī*, p. 242.

<sup>95</sup>*al-Sharnaqa*, p.303.

<sup>96</sup>Sulaymān, Nabīl(2004). *al-Sira al-Naṣīyya*, p. 296.

graduate? It is the prison that conquers the prisoner and robs him of his humanity and does much more to the woman, the more violated, the more torn and the more excluded element in society. Nothing can stay as it is in her and she will not get out of prison as sound as she used to be before she entered it. No matter how much she tries to escape from the conditions of the prison and its effects, she will not be able to get away and survive this damned fate. It is the prison that robs the man of his humanity.

Ending the novel with this query implies that the destiny of the characters is still suspended though we can imagine the degree of breakdown and psychological collapse that the ones who were in the abdomen of the *Ghūla* suffered. Surely, they will get out of it deformed, imprisoned, semi-dead, and carry their prisons inside them. The query is merely a rhetorical question that aims to confirm the brutality of the *Ghūla*/ Prison/ Homeland. The authority might return to the prisoner all his things but it is unable to return his stolen freedom to him. Consequently, he lives a life of loss and fails to make peace with the world outside this 'sharnaqa/ cocoon'. The prison is necessarily, a hopeless and terrible Present; it is also a Future without characteristics and is dwelled by horror and fear. The *Ghūla*/ Prison will certainly reform the character and its identity or rob it and consequently, alienates it and defeats it with no hope of return to what it used to be before it entered the prison, "one year inside the prison makes the person look ten years older".<sup>97</sup>

## 2.6 Yearning for Freedom in Shaking the Traditional Structure

One of the features of Prison Literature is the fragmentation of the traditional plot. Since the experience of the prison is a private experience in its place and time, it certainly introduces a definite particularity of style and form in which everything is destroyed as life is destroyed inside and outside the prison. The novel of *al-Sharnaqa* is a modernist feminist text that yearns for freedom and rebels against the traditional form in order that its form will identify with its content, and destroy the formal writing foundations and thus, its condition will be exactly like the condition of the women prisoners.

The writer employs the literary styles and forms as an expression of her criticism, protest and resistance through achievement of some points of view that are connected to post-modernism and deconstruction. The women writers in their feminist literature aim to resist the traditional writing styles and try to be distinctive or to separate themselves from masculine writing and lead a new unusual tendency in modern Arabic literature. They challenge the men's domination, the mainstream that has always been established by men.<sup>98</sup>

One of the most important features in which Feminist Literature intersects with Prison Literature is the domination of the main character. If the suppressed prisoner is the main character and he is the narrator in most texts, the woman, too, in the feminist fiction, is the main character and she is the one who takes upon herself the role to narrate the events through employment of the first person singular in most texts and, in this way, she controls the events and the process of narration.

Here, the Feminist Literature meets with the Prison Literature through focalization on the Self and the emergence of the Ego (I) in it. Some critics consider the writer's focalization on the Self is the feature that turns the writings of the woman novelist into a type of 'Confession Literature', which is based on one's unbosoming, recollection and association in recalling the components of one's autobiography. The employment of the first person singular narrator is considered an indicator of the breaking into the introduced issues and seriously and a clear-cut indicator of narrating taboo contents daringly.<sup>99</sup>

The Arab women writers intend to offer priority to the Feminine Self and therefore, they employ the first person singular pronoun maintaining that it is the best tool to achieve that goal in literature because the first person pronoun is more able to create correspondence between life and literature.<sup>100</sup> Roger Allen maintains that the majority of the Arab women writers employ the voice of the female narrator in the first person singular, which is the voice of confession. This feature creates the impression that talking about a personal experience makes the reader refuses to be convinced that the pronoun represents the character rather than the writer.<sup>101</sup>

<sup>97</sup>*al-Sharnaqa*, p.217-218.

<sup>98</sup>Tāhā, Ibrāhīm(2007). "Swimming Against the Current", p. 217.

<sup>99</sup>Saffūrī, Muḥammad (2011). *Dirāsati al-Sard al-Niswi*, p. 359.

<sup>100</sup>Tāhā, Ibrāhīm(2007). "Swimming Against the Current", pp. 201-203.

<sup>101</sup>Allen, Roger (1995). "The Arabic Short Story and the Status of Women". In: *Love and Sexuality in Modern Arabic Literature*. Roger Allen, et.al., eds. London:

This argument made critics consider the *woman-literature* as part of *autobiography-literature*.<sup>102</sup> Since Prison Literature tends to be a literature of confessions as a tool of revealing the private experience, it intersects with the *feminist literature* in this aspect, too.

Undoubtedly, the employment of the first person singular pronoun is likely to give the opportunity to the woman prisoner to sail in the space of the soul, which reveals its feelings and thoughts, which, in turn, forms the components of autobiography that depends on "a flashback narration where the present in it is the narrative time and the past is the time of the experience".<sup>103</sup>

This text, which belongs to the Prison Literature and which was written by a woman, deals with the woman and the narration is also performed by a woman, which allows the woman to be both, the narrator of the story and its subject matter at the same time, dominating the authority of narration and the world of the novel itself. These points out the woman's attempt to dominate reality, even if on the level of imagination, through her domination on the text, and also works on the reinforcement of the woman's status by making her dominate the world of the text. If her voice is a shameful defect and is forbidden to have the right of revealing her feelings, expressing herself and writing whatever she likes, now she can speak out and strongly say what she wants without evasion and with the first person pronoun (I).

Thus, she intensifies the employment of a poetic language, which is introduced in a special way that confirms the speciality of her experience and her language that indicates her capability of containing her feelings and suffering and proves that it is a tool that resists the masculine language.

In addition to all this, her adoption of the first person singular (I) confirms the assaulting tendency of the writer on the traditional literary norms and her working on destroying them. Probably, the writer's adoption of polyphony of female voices in this novel through giving each woman prisoner the right to express her feelings occurs as a conscious total rejection of the dominating masculinity and the traditional narrative styles of the text that were established by the man. Distribution of the narrative process onto several female characters reinforces the status of the woman on the text and the democratic spirit in it and also works on putting aside the voice of the omniscient narrator being considered an extension to the authority of the one-man who dominates reality by domination of the text. This technique appears in the writer's distribution of the narrative authority onto several female characters such as Tuhāma, Lamā and Kawthar. There is no doubt that the woman behind the bars of the prison turns into a prisoner who has familiar typical manners and thus, she resembles the man prisoner in his behavior and identifies with him. In the shadow of her involuntary isolation in prison, awareness and imagination must be open and work as a natural reaction to this physical shackle. In order that openness take place, it is necessary to move from external narration to internal self-narration through the stream of consciousness technique.

When the woman prisoner lives under the pressure of the prison, she looks for ways that give her the ability to live. At this stage, the mind becomes a vehicle that absorbs this suppression and reduces its pressure by thinking, imaginative fantasies and soliloquies. When the novelists' interest in the psychological time increased at the expense of the external time in the modernist novelistic work, their interest in the employment of the stream of consciousness, its tools and its different techniques increased too, including the techniques of interior monologue, soliloquy, free association, flashback, space-time montage and dream, which, all together, work on the fragmentation of the traditional plot.

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Saqi Books, p. 88

<sup>102</sup>Miriam Cooke refuses to include the literature of the Arab woman to the genre of autobiography. In her view, writing in autobiography shows self-confidence and possession of authority and this is something that the Arab woman misses. See: Cooke, Miriam (1995). "*Ayyām min Ḥayātī: The Prison Memories of A Muslim Sister*", *Journal of Arabic Literature*. Vol. xxvi: 1-2, p.147. However, Fādyā Faqīr opposes her argues that exactly because the Arab woman misses self-confidence and authority, she writes her own story and autobiography. The Arab women write in the genre of autobiography in order to discover themselves and reinforce themselves. In order that the Arab women find out their individual separate identity, and their desire to define their role in history versus the man's authority and sovereignty of the masculine narrative, they rushed to write their own autobiographies. For more information, see: Faqīr, Fādyā (1998). *In the House of Silence*, p. 8, 22.

<sup>103</sup>al-Bārī, Muḥammad (2005). *ʿIndamā Tatakallam al-Dhāt – al-Sira al-Dhātīyya fi al-Adab al-ʿArabi al-Ḥadīth*. Damascus: Publications of the Union of the Arab Writers, p. 177.

Ḥasība employed these tools in her novel in clear intensity.<sup>104</sup> In her intensification of the stream of consciousness, she emphasizes another feature of the feminist literature as she considers this technique to be, originally, a deeply-rooted femininity.<sup>105</sup>

Since the language focalizes on the monologue and the flashbacks, its sentences are short and intensive without being ruled by logical pauses between the ideas. It is also characterized by queries that express the crisis of the heroine and her alienation. Besides, the large dependence on the employment of the tools of the stream of consciousness in the novel led to division of the novel into chapters that are not arranged chronologically, which shook the traditional structure of the novel. There were no separating borders between one idea and the other and consequently, the events, time and place intertwine into one another, reality with imagination and the logical with the fantastic.

No wonder, then, if we find this structure marginalized and fragmented as an artistic expression of the fragmented reality. All this lends clear ambiguity especially that the writer employed the technique of intersexuality in an intensive way. The writer derives her intertextualities from the human thought, history, religion, and Arab and Western cultural heritage such as: *Shāṭir Ḥasan*, *Laylā wa-l-Dhib*, *Cinderella*, *Sindibād*, *Jesus Christ*, *Prophet Muḥammad*, *Ṣūfī poetry*, *Ibn Sirīn*, *Freud*, *Che Guevara*, and others".<sup>106</sup>

When the woman prisoner loses her consciousness after the cruel torturing ceremonies, she enters a state of severe hallucination but the writer exploits these moments to employ her intertextualities in fantastic forms. Kawthar imagines herself to be "Ashtār who is picking anemones and is waiting for Adūnīs or Ba 'al..."<sup>107</sup> Her imagination slips away to mix with the myths of Gilgamesh's immortality, 'Ashtār, blood of Adūnīs, and the waste land of the poet T. S. Eliot..."<sup>108</sup>

During her delirium, she finds herself entering the mosque, but the Sheikh dismisses her by shouting at her: "You lack mind and religion".<sup>109</sup> Here, the writer deliberately tries to reveal the pursuit of the authoritative masculine society to debase the woman's status and her position and the man's view about religion. When Kawthar returns to her bed after the torturing, the other women prisoners surround her to ask: "Tell us Scheherazade something from *Alf Layla wa Layla/ Arabian Nights*"<sup>110</sup> as if the torturing ceremonies and investigation were tales from *One Thousand Nights Tales*; long fantastic nights with stories of her suffering. Thus, the technique of the *fantastic*, one of the phenomena of modernism<sup>111</sup> comes to give the writer the ability to break through the familiar and look for the creative freedom in the shadow of lost freedom.

Therefore, she exploits the technique of intertextuality to reveal through it the extent of the fantastic that is above human logic and to confirm that our reality is illogical, destroyed, non-human, and cracked because of the severity of suppression, anxiety and alienation.

No wonder, then, that she intensifies these tools as long as the citizen finds himself in a non-human prison, where the logical natural stability of the world is shaken, the human criteria are lost, and the prisoner lives in horrible fear that exceeds the ability of the human being to endure and remain sane and aware of himself. Kawthar summons Mu'āwiya's soul and talks to him, or rides Guevara's head<sup>112</sup> or raves and sees the sheikh of the mosque making love with a dead woman and enjoys it more than ever.<sup>113</sup> These images are intensive samples that indicate the ugliness and violence which our society has reached to.

<sup>104</sup>For more samples of 'flashback', see *al-Sharnaqa*, pages: 12,16, 23, 50, 112, 228. For examples of 'interior monologue', see pages: 21-22, 45, 188, 227, 246-247.

<sup>105</sup>Ṭāhā, Ibrāhīm(2007). "Swimming Against the Current", p. 199.

<sup>106</sup>For example, see *al-Sharnaqa* on pages: 10, 12, 17, 21, 40, 43, 263.

<sup>107</sup>Ibid., p 275.

<sup>108</sup>Ibid., p. 46.

<sup>109</sup>Ibid., p. 47-49.

<sup>110</sup>Ibid., p. 129.

<sup>111</sup>For more information about the 'Fantastic'. See: Aqdād, Muḥammad (2017). *al-Gharā'ibiyayfi al-Riwāya al-'Arabīyya*. Amman: Dār Faḍā'āt.

<sup>112</sup>Ibid., p. 17, 47.

<sup>113</sup>Ibid., p. 49.

She also summons the topic of religious suppression and accusation people of unbelief (takfir) in the past historical ages in order to deal with repressive religious extremism. For example, she summons the period of Caliph al-Mutawakkil who killed anyone who believed that the Koran is a created book. She mentions al-Mu'tazila and their persecution to the Ash'ari sect and accuses anyone who disagrees with Ibn Taymiyya and the interpretation of al-Jawzi and Ibn Kathir and others, confirming that no man has the right to end the life of another man: "The issue of atheism is a relationship between Man and his God, and everyone has the right to look for and explore the entity of God"<sup>114</sup>.

There is no doubt that the writer condemns the Arab homeland in which the suppressive Arab regimes and the patriarchal masculine culture control people through the support they receive from the radical religious allies and the fundamental dark trends that adopt the method of accusing opponents of infidelity and blasphemy. These circumstances made the writer rebel against the religious taboo and break it daringly.

In addition to the writer's pursuit, through intensification of intertextuality, to shake the form of the literary genre and increase its ambiguity and symbolism, she also seeks to confirm the breadth of her intellectual and cultural horizon, and her strong presence in the literary arena. This provides her with the opportunity to break the theory of the official traditional literature as exactly as she broke the chains of the prison by the tools of imagination and awareness in her search of her Self in the shadow of the fragmentation of life that she lived in the sharnaqa /cocoon of the dark wilderness.

## 2.7 Place and Time

All the texts of Prison Literature display one image of the political prison and therefore, their principal physical and moral attributes and dimensions are similar.<sup>115</sup> The prison is always narrow, fortified, and deep like graves<sup>116</sup>. Despite the transfer of the woman prisoner from one prison to the other, the prison in its general shape and size is nearly the same, even if its place and time are different. Isn't the name of 'Prison Literature' connected to the identity of the place?

Entering the prison soon becomes a rejected journey to a rejected place in advance. If each journey is a transference move, it is also a compulsory movement that leads the woman prisoner towards smashing, loss and destruction. There is no room here for talking about the travel after a triumph or elevation but an involuntary movement towards the 'abdomen of the *Ghūla*' that ends up with its residents 'its small baby goats' in defeat and fragmentation in all dimensions; it is a movement towards alienation, anti-heroism and mental estrangement.

There is no existence for the human being without being connected to a place as he cannot detach his psychological or physical entity from the place as it is the principal catalyzer in defining his activity and behavior; it is the central space that affects the interactions of the character with itself and its environment. It also defines the character's feelings and attitudes and it might succeed in marginalizing and excluding it. Thus, the movement of the human being in his place joins with the concept of freedom and his ability to coexist with it or his ability to challenge and defeat it. The significance of the Place in the novelistic text turns into what looks like Fate that controls the fate of the event and character alike. As we are talking about the prison as a suppressive involuntary place, it becomes the focus of the text and the focus of the excitement from the beginning of the text to its end.

The Place here is not an ordinary place but a closed, repulsive and hostile one, which indicates lack and absence of freedom<sup>117</sup>. It is the space of home confinement and punitive practices; it is a place of exclusion of the other, his torturing and taming; it is the master who reformulates the other/the prisoner because the 'other' is short of freedom and is robbed of his will. Thus, the prison becomes the master of the novel in Prison Literature, the element that defines the features and characteristics of this literature and the address of their path. The Place/Prison does not differ from any other prison and the writer is careful to describe it as it is exactly in Prison Literature. She gives accurate description to it according to her perspective and feelings, which are not different from the feelings of any prisoner because the prisoners resemble one another, no matter how much different their races or identities are, due to the similarity of their humanity and feelings.

<sup>114</sup> *al-Sharnaqa*, p. 102-104.

<sup>115</sup> al-Sheikh-Hishmeh, Linā (2016). *Adab al-Sujūn*, p. 340-349.

<sup>116</sup> *al-Sharnaqa*, p. 9.

<sup>117</sup> Azzām, Fu'ād Aḥmad (2010). "Binā' al-Makānfi al-Khitāb al-Sardi, p. 207.

The Prison is able as a repulsive place to "reveal the diseases and defects."<sup>118</sup> "In this place, the bottom of society, its lowest place, many wounds were opened, tragic defeats and endless fantasies. Here, at the bottom of society, the dreams were closed and wounds and defeats were opened"<sup>119</sup>. The prison becomes, as Kawthar says after she has experienced the prison and its cruelty several times: "the prison is Man's mirror and his violator" .<sup>120</sup>

If the Place is so ugly, the Time is synonymous to it in its cruelty and rottenness. However, the Prison-Time is not tied or limited as the Place/Prison. The novel was free in its movement between past and present through the stream of consciousness and its tools in addition to the imagination of the prisoner, in which he achieves this transcendence through mixing and association between the world of the prison and the world of freedom: the closed/open. As the *Psychological Time* is the foundation of the woman prisoner's journey into her Self, into her sharnaqa/cocoon, her withdrawal from her external reality, it means that we have to look at the psychological time as separate and far from the *chronological natural time* in order to embody the feeling of time-passage rather than time itself.

The Prison-Time is not the ordinary chronological time that the ordinary human being knows in the ordinary place. Time here acquires its characteristics from the psychological condition of the character. Time in its slowness and cruelty constitutes a danger to the woman prisoner in pushing her to submission and loss of determination. The time of the prison is never tired and never bored and it seeks to exhaust the prisoner through its conspiracy with the Place against him. Time passes heavily and the days lose their numbers and names; the past is mixed with the present, and delusion with reality.

Since the woman prisoner looks for openness in a closed and restricted place, she will necessarily recall the time that was her own, or will imagine the coming time that will be hers, even if in a delusional way. Thus, Time in the prison depends on different times: Present, Past and Future. If the Present is the time of the prison, it will be established on a specific dialectic in itself: the external time; the natural regular present time, which is the chronological clock time; the Jailer's time and his torture.

However, there is another time - *the internal psychological time*, the internal psychological time, the free time, which is the time of the suppressed prisoner; the time of memory or past or dreams and meditation about the future. Therefore, when the woman prisoner finds herself sieged in a closed place, such as the abdomen of the *Ghūla*/ the bottom of society and homeland, she will open onto imagination and will separate herself from her external ordinary time, the time of the *Ghūla*, in order to enter her sharnaqa/cocoon, and live the psychological time, the time of the sharnaqa / cocoon, in search of emancipation and escape: "We escape to flight, calendar, and irony as a treatment to the impasse that we live in and the repeated routine life"<sup>121</sup>. She seeks to create a special world of her own, creates her cocoon according to her own desires as a compensation for the cruelty of the cell, and self-exile and leaves the hostile place, detaches herself from her world and transcends the pain of the body.

Thus, her alienation becomes a positive thing as a compensatory tool that gives her power. It is a cocoon that helps her to persevere and protect herself through her awareness, and since the journey of the body is impossible, the memory roams through her awareness and recollects her past and contemplates on her present.

Her imagination dives into the folds of the Self to seek hope, freedom and morale. Since the imagination of the woman prisoner is able to break the place restrictions, freedom and openness, this means that we are in front of the dialectic of the closed/open, external/internal and prison/freedom, which is the dialectic of the body versus the soul and thought and the bars of the prison versus a psychological imaginary cocoon that the woman prisoner builds as an escape and a shelter from the brutality of the jailer. It is the journey of the psychological time when the place-space is closed, the space of the soul when the space of the body is closed.

### 3. Summary

This study confirms the intersection and contact between Prison Literature and Feminist Literature in their pursuit of emancipation and liberation through revelation and unbosoming of one's emotions and thoughts. It also emphasizes the argument that both are types of literature that revolt against anyone who confiscates freedom.

<sup>118</sup>*al-Sharnaqa*, p. 217.

<sup>119</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 281.

<sup>120</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 210.

<sup>121</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 275.

Artistically, both genres constitute a breaking through fiction because they confront all the taboos including the prohibition trilogy. If the Prison Literature is a revelation and a rebellion against the suppressive authority, the Feminist Literature is also a rebellion and a revolution against the masculine norms, including breaking of the political, social and religious taboos. The interconnectivity must be at its highest point, especially if the woman-writer is the prisoner who has lived the prison experience and has written about her experience and revealed it through her feminist fiction.

The study also confirms that there is no difference between a woman-prisoner and a man-prisoner. Consequently, the experience of the woman becomes more bitter and painful than the experience of the man in the shadow of a suppressive masculine society that condemns the woman in advance. Her lot of punishment is double of the man's punishment because she is a resistant and a woman, too. Thus, the woman becomes the creature who is closer to the images of suppression of the taboo trilogy. However, this suppression does not repel her from continuing the challenge of all kinds of censorship. On the contrary, she shows strong defiance to all of the social, religious and political norms. She chooses to expose and resist through her word and engagement in her reality and interaction with it. Her behavior rejects the opinions that aim to decrease the value of the woman's literature and claim that it is unable to encounter the world and its issues. The study reveals the woman's participation in the Prison Literature, which constitutes a direct and clear condemnation to this suppressive reality.

Since the feminist fiction seeks first and foremost to resist the man and his rejection, and since the man is the one who plays the role of the ruler, the jailer, the executioner and the investigator, her rejection to him and attack on him is more severe. Consequently, her rebellion against him on the level of smashing of the form, style and techniques is similar to the smashing of the contents of the novel, and reflection to its destruction, violence and non-human reality. The discussion of the novel *al-Sharnaqa/ Cocoon* reveals that it is a model for the Feminist Prison Literature.

While the woman rebels against the masculine authority in her writings and emphasizes the value of writing and freedom in her life and in revealing her suppression in all its forms, she also identifies with every writer who has written literature when he was in prison and defied the authority in order to confirm the value of writing on emancipation and liberation from the pains of the prison and revelation of the suppression of the authority in pursuit of remedial unbosoming.

Ḥasiba 'Abd al-Raḥmān, who tasted the experience of prison by herself and was released to uncover and expose, made her novel a crying feminist sample in Prison Literature, which is not less violent or less cruel in the details of her sufferings or images of torturing than the Prison Literature that we have read and has been written by men. In view of this, writing turns into an act of liberation and salvation to every prisoner, whether a man or a woman. In addition, it becomes condemnation and exposure of the regime because writing is also an act of vengeance, unbosoming, revelation and liberation from all the shackles of captivation of the Self. "The cocoon remains evidence to the degree that the Arab suppression has reached and the suffering that the woman has experienced, exactly like the man, due to her opposition, any kind of opposition".<sup>122</sup>

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