

The Image of the Prisoner in the Novel "Cell No. 6" by Hamza Karira A Thematic Approach

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Abstract

This article, titled "The Image of the Prisoner in the Novel Cell No. 6," examines how the prisoner figure is rendered in interactive fiction, with particular attention to the interactive novel as a literary form. Through the thematic approach, the study seeks to elucidate how the prisoner's character is constructed and manifested in Hamza Karira's novel Cell No. 6. The analysis yields a number of conclusions pertaining to the ideological, political, social, and aesthetic dimensions that shape the imprisoned self and its representation within the narrative.

Keywords: *Prisoner; Prison; Interactive Novel; Thematic Approach.*

1. The Concept of Prison Literature

The literature of political detention has constituted one of the defining fronts of political struggle in the Arab world. For many years, the subject of political imprisonment

was considered a taboo — a topic from which writers in the Arab world were effectively barred. Yet as peoples began to awaken and to reject every manifestation of tyranny and political repression, this genre gradually claimed an expansive and prominent space within the contemporary literary landscape. The emergence of a constellation of writers ushered in the dawn of prison literature, and with it an explosion of concepts and definitions that varied from one author to another in their modes of expression while converging in their essential content.

Some critics have regarded prison literature as *"an extension of resistance literature, insofar as it functions to condemn and expose the various authoritarian practices that govern the political behavior of Arab regimes, and to illuminate the problems that afflict the Arab nation — chief among them the absence of democracy and the monopolization of power."*¹

¹Lakhdar Munir. "Prison Literature and the Resistance to Political Despotism in Morocco: Papers Written in the Consciousness of Prison." Al-Hiwar al-Mutamaddin

(The Civilized Dialogue), Electronic Journal, No. 1903, 02 May 2007.

This definition establishes prison literature as a vehicle for the rejection of political repression in Arab states — a form of literature that functions as an oppositional and resistant front against injustice, authoritarianism, and tyranny, impelled by the pursuit of freedom, hope, and a better tomorrow, one in which democracy, peace, and justice of every kind prevail. Its subject is the Arab citizen as a human being, and its ultimate address is that same human being.

Prison literature has been defined as *“the humanistic, activist literature born in the darkness of dungeons and detention cells, behind iron bars, emerging from the womb of daily anguish and psychological torment and personal subjugation. It gives voice to the bitterness of torture and the pain of abuse, to the prisoner’s burdens and longing for the light of freedom. In the hell of prison and its impenetrable darkness, the imprisoned writer takes up the pen to recount a new life and immerses it in feeling to depict the experience of captivity and daily suffering, inscribing the contours of steadfastness, defiance, heroism, and the battles of empty stomachs in texts that are among the most truthful, wondrous, and beautiful ever written.”*²

Prison literature is, in essence, a genre dedicated to portraying the life from which it

springs — life behind bars and in the recesses of detention centers. It speaks, most often, of the injustice suffered by prisoners, of the circumstances that brought them there, as the prisoners themselves record their suffering and all that befell them — the events and crises within their dark cells that smell of death.

Dr. Ra’fat Hamdouna argues that prison literature is *“resistance literature and a part of contemporary Arabic literature, of national and patriotic literature, and of modern Arabic and world literature... It encompasses all that prisoners have written while detained, and not outside of detention, provided it belongs to the recognized literary genres.”*³

One observes from the latter two definitions that scholars have imposed a condition of place for this body of writing to be legitimately designated prison literature: the actual prison, where physical imprisonment and the act of writing under the duress of torture are both deemed necessary.

A number of scholars and writers have, however, dispensed with the spatial condition. The researcher Fatima Muslimani, in her article on prison literature, defined it as: *“a form of literature successfully written by those who endured imprisonment and torture during their incarceration, or after it, or by*

²Zakariya Boughrarah. Al-Akuf al-Mumazzaqa [The Torn Hands]. Preface by Sheikh Yasser al-Sarri. Wa Islamah Foundation for Media, 1st ed., p. 2.

³Ra’fat Hamdouna. "Prison Literature: Definition and Characteristics." Available at: <https://eljadidelyawmi.dz/2019>. Accessed: 15 April 2023.

those who documented the experiences of prisoners they knew personally or had heard about.”⁴

In this formulation, Muslimani sets aside the requirement of physical location and orients her definition around content: the suffering and torture of prisoners, wherever and by whomever that experience is recorded.

Drawing together all the preceding definitions, prison literature may most comprehensively be understood as: a combative literary genre that records the life of prisons and prisoners — a life permeated by misery and subjugation born of bitter suffering and harsh existence — conveying the torment that prisoners endure in dark cells where death reigns, countered always by defiance and resistance in the pursuit of freedom. Its author may be one who personally experienced imprisonment, or one who faithfully rendered experiences narrated to them or imagined the tragedy of prisoners. Prison literature is, as a rule, a form of resistance to which writers turn in order to articulate political and social conditions, expose corruption and reality, and combat every manifestation of injustice and tyranny.

1.1 The Presence of Prison in the Arabic Novel

The themes of prison, torture, and the suppression of freedoms occupy a substantial

space in the discourse of both the world novel and the Arabic novel in particular. Many novelists have engaged with this subject, transforming the depiction of torture, degradation, and deprivation into a novelistic text that is simultaneously compelling and deeply disturbing.

The novel is the most suitable and capable literary form for accommodating the subject of prison, since it is, as one critic has observed, *“the literary genre most capable of giving voice to what is silenced in general cultural and social discourse, in the face of repression, of laying bare the problems of intolerance, and of curtailing the claws of backwardness and ignorance.”⁵*

The novel is the most fitting form for embracing the theme of imprisonment, and achieves this through its artistic instruments and the spaciousness its various elements afford — characters, spatial configurations, temporal structures, narration, description, and dialogue.

The Arabic novel began its search for a path in the final decades of the nineteenth century, in the writings of al-Tahtawi, al-Kawakibi, al-Bustani, Ali Mubarak, and al-Shidyaq, among others. These writings affirmed the values of freedom, planting this concept at the heart of their civilizational project, shaped by the social, economic,

⁴Fatima Muslimani. "Prison Literature." Philadelphia Knowledge Website, 28 January 2018. Accessed: 12 April 2023.

⁵Jabir 'Asfur. "The Dawn of the Arabic Novel: Marginalized Pioneering." *Fusul Journal*, Vol. 16, No. 4, Spring 1988, p. 13.

political, and European transformations that influenced them. They affirmed the meanings of freedom, yet remained captive to the forms of autobiography and personal memoir, and could not rise to the level of the novelistic art. They accommodated the concerns of Arab society, drawing on the Romantic school, but did not engage with the subject of prison.

It was Jurji Zaidan's novel *The Ottoman Coup* that stands as one of the earliest works to explore the theme of prison and link it to freedom; while Faris al-Shidyaq gave voice to the injustice and humiliation his brother endured in prison in his work *Leg Over Leg, or The Turtle in the Tree*. Zaidan may be counted among the very first writers to venture into prison literature, and he was followed by many others: Tahir Haqqi, Amin al-Rayhani, Gibran Khalil Gibran, and Tawfiq al-Hakim.

As political life evolved and began to exert a more pronounced influence on writers and poets, they expressed their ideas and positions with increasing freedom. Many rulers perceived this as rebellion and illegitimate defiance of their authority, and these writers found themselves imprisoned. The subject of political order thus occupied a larger place in their writings. Numerous and varied examples exist of writers who immortalized their experiences of arrest and

imprisonment in the human heritage. Modern Arabic literature has been enriched by hundreds of collections and narrative works on this subject, especially during the colonial period and its aftermath, as the conflict between political authority and intellectual authority intensified. Among these enduring works are the collection *Behind Iron Bars* by the Iraqi poet Muhammad Bahjat al-Athari, and *The Tyranny of Strangers* by Najib al-Kilani, among many others.⁶

Prison literature has come to constitute a point of convergence among the countries of the Arab world, expressing a bitter human experience of constraint, pain, and suffering. Countries such as Iraq, Egypt, Morocco, and the Levant have occupied the foremost positions in the Arab world in terms of output in this genre, which in Morocco has diversified across poetry, the short story, the novel, cinema, and the visual arts.⁷

The Palestinian literary tradition has likewise been saturated with prison literature as a result of the repression exercised by the Israeli occupying authority, establishing itself as a literary phenomenon shaped by the distinctive circumstances of the Palestinian situation — one that predates the occupation of June 1967.

⁶Al-Kabir al-Daydisi. *Masarat al-Riwaya al-'Arabiyya al-Mu'asira* [Trajectories of the Contemporary Arabic Novel]. Al-Rahab al-Haditha Foundation for Printing, Publishing and Distribution, Beirut, Lebanon, 1st ed., 2018, p. 179.

⁷Ra'fat Hamdouna. "Prison Literature: Characteristics and Features." Available at: <https://eljadidelyawmi.dz>. 28 August 2019. Accessed: 20 April 2023.

No Arab country is without a defining work in this vein, most of them written by intellectuals who tasted the bitterness of detention and chose to record their prison memories in diaries that, more often than not, attain the level of the novelistic experience.

In sum, prison literature has constituted a pivotal juncture in the history of Arabic literature and has given embodiment to human suffering, in an attempt to convey the world behind bars in the pursuit of freedom and the lifting of oppression. The body of work devoted to this art is vast, and its goals are far-reaching.

1.2 Aesthetic Features of Prison Literature

Prison literature is distinguished by the vitality of its emotional register and the authenticity of its experiences, drawing from the wellspring of a suffering that rises from the depths of those who have sacrificed themselves for the liberation of the dignity of homeland and family, and whose commitment to values and principles has remained steadfast. The principal aesthetic features of this literature include:

- Depth: Prison literature is characterized by depth of expression in its signification, its content, and in the coherence between idea and style.
- Symbolism: The writer frequently turns to symbolic language to express what stirs in the depths of experience and feeling.
- Imagination: The writer's recourse to imagination does not constitute a flight from reality but rather an attempt to penetrate and plumb it. The creative impulse is driven by the desire to transcend reality and to reconstruct it anew.
- Condensation: The art of controlling and compressing ideas that would otherwise require lengthy elaboration into brief, concentrated passages.
- Breadth of Culture: Prison literature has a profound and positive impact on the psychology of prisoners and on the reality of detention, giving voice to their individual and national aspirations and releasing them from the atmosphere of repression and constraint into a realm of imagination and openness.
- Humanitarian Impulse: Conditions of repression and the suppression of freedoms have illuminated human consciousness. The writers of prison literature have depicted both the absence of humanity among their jailers and the contrasting human virtues of the imprisoned — portrayals that move the reader and touch their spirit.
- Ethics: Authentic literature is humanistic, purposeful, and earnest: it serves the individual and society and exposes the injustice of one human being toward another. The Arabic prison novel has aimed to expose the darkness and those who benefit from it, so that the world might know the methods of brutality and dehumanization practiced by certain Arab regimes and the forces of occupation.
- Sincerity: The most immediate quality one perceives in prison literature is that its meanings are authentic and commanding,

whether the writer is speaking of personal feelings or portraying what they witnessed in prison. Among the manifestations of literary sincerity are confession and intimate self-expression — the most fitting release for a soul charged with burdens and pain.

- Grief Suffused with Defiance: A tinge of sorrow scarcely departs from literary passages, across all their subjects — even those that aspired to carve out a space for joy are rarely free of pain, sighs, or tears. Their joys are best expressed through the smile that crosses a wound.
- Ardent Emotion: One scarcely encounters a passage that is labored in form or meaning; rather, each is organically consonant in its content and structure with the emotion that governs the linguistic vessel employed.
- Description: The imprisoned writer did not impose a predetermined framework upon feelings and objects but sought to convey them faithfully, with description that is direct in its images and diction, reinforced by the power of feeling and lived experience.
- Artistic Imagery: The significance of artistic imagery lies in the manner in which it compels attention toward the meaning it presents, and in the way it enables the reader to engage with and be affected by that meaning.
- Eloquence: Writers of prison literature deploy rhetorical instruments with consummate skill: every simile is in its proper place and every metaphor in its rightful position, born of the overflowing emotions that possess the writer. What distinguishes rhetoric in prison literature is that its figurative transformations arise

naturally and fulfill their functions without artifice or affectation.

- Intertextuality: Every text stands at the intersection of multiple other texts, functioning simultaneously as a re-reading, an extension, a condensation, a displacement, and a deepening of those texts.

A reader of certain prison novels will clearly observe the writer's care in deploying religious heritage — the Islamic tradition above all — owing to the centrality of religion in Arab life, whether through direct evocation or through suggestive allusion that allows the reader to perceive its dimensions and symbolism. The appropriation of popular heritage — including folk proverbs, whose function is twofold: one connected to the environment in which the writer was raised and the other to the situations experienced within prison — is likewise among the defining features of Arabic novelistic narration. The use of colloquial language, as a medium that reflects reality in its beauty and spontaneity, and the influence of the popular song in capturing and holding the reader's attention are equally significant. The accomplished novelist is the one who can persuade the reader of the text's realism.

The experience of prison and the deprivation of freedom is among the most severe ordeals a human being can endure. The details of this experience have been recorded in literary works and distributed across poetry, the short story, and above all the novel. The

admiration that prison literature has earned was not achieved in a vacuum but through the distinctive artistic qualities that mark and ennoble this creative register.

1.3 Prison as a Reflection of the Political Space

Space is among the critical terms that have entered the world of literary studies and research relatively recently and have since asserted themselves with considerable force, after having long been overlooked — owing to critics' and scholars' preoccupation with other elements such as time and character. Yet space is equally an element of the novelistic text.⁸

Novelistic space encompasses all the elements that constitute the novel: time, narration, and character. Scholars have accorded it the attention it deserves, recognizing that, alongside character, novelistic time, and event, it forms one of the artistic and aesthetic foundations upon which the novelistic text rests.

The mere mention of the word “**detention center**” immediately conjures that narrow space with a specific geometric form, unlike other institutions, designated for imposing punishment upon criminals and protecting society from them, or as a specialized institution for the rehabilitation of offenders — a concept that has oscillated

between being an instrument of protection and an instrument of coercion. It is, in other words, a double-edged weapon: it aspires to ensure security and stability while simultaneously exerting pressure on those confined through penalties and procedures that vary according to the nature of the criminal act. This institution manifests in its material form, which is itself subdivided into two types: national, exercised by the national authority as a formal institution against any who threaten the security of the country; and colonial, such as the colonial prison in which patriots were imprisoned.

The moral prison, by contrast, consists of “*those constraints that we cannot see with our eyes but that we feel in our consciences and our souls — customs and traditions emanating from society that function as a kind of private constitution imposed upon us, sometimes fairly and sometimes not.*”⁹

Those who attempt to escape its grip do not attain freedom; rather, they accumulate the greatest possible number of opponents — those who sanctify everything their society dictates and regard every attempt to step outside the path it has drawn as a deviation from its sacred course. This recalls the system of tribes and the narrow vision imposed by

⁸Faysal al-Ahmar. *Mu'jam al-Simya'iyyat* [Dictionary of Semiotics]. Al-Dar al-'Arabiyya lil-'Uloom Nashirun, Algeria, 1st ed., 2010, p. 123. See also: Al-Mu'jam al-Wasit [The Intermediate Dictionary]. Academy of the Arabic Language, p. 694; and Al-Munjid fi al-Lugha wa

al-A'lam. Dar al-Nashr al-'Arabi, Beirut, Lebanon, 27th ed., 1995, p. 587.

⁹Abu Nidal Nazih. *Adab al-Sujun* [Prison Literature], p. 14. See also: Ibn Taymiyya. *Majmu'at al-Fatawa* [Collected Fatwas]. Dar al-Wafa', al-Mansoura, Egypt, Vol. 35, 3rd ed., 2005, p. 237.

their elders: whoever transgressed their laws was classified among the outcast.

The human being is by nature a social creature, inclined toward contact with others and bound by social relations, sharing the same duties and claiming the same rights. Since human beings are not immune from error, they sometimes fall into situations that paralyze their movement. On this matter, Ibn Taymiyya states: *“The restraining of a person and the prevention of their independent action, whether in the home, in the mosque, or through the appointment of the adversary or the adversary’s representative over them.”* The imprisoned individual is thus deprived of all independent activity except that permitted by the prison institution, living under the constant scrutiny of intense surveillance and bereft of the sense of freedom. It is perhaps this very feeling that impels the prisoner to reexamine themselves and aspire to be a productive individual within society — an individual who had long yearned to live as they wished, seeking to escape the grip of the social customs and traditions noted above. Yet they must now submit to the dictates of an institution with its own strict laws, and any attempt to breach its constitution will carry grave consequences, quite apart from the psychological disturbances — depression,

grief, anxiety, and more — that inevitably accompany life within the prison.

- **The Prison Cell (al-Zinzana)**

The prison represents a civic space tied to the life of the city. It is a space that declares perpetual enmity and relentless war against the individual, through its closure, its narrowness, its darkness, and its cold. Because prison is a place of frustration and alienation, the individual is compelled to move into it — with all that this transition entails in terms of a transformation of values and habits and a burdening with obligations and prohibitions. As one scholar has put it: *“If human freedom is the essence of existence and the fundamental value of life, then prison is the alienation of that freedom, and is therefore the alienation of existence and the squandering of life.”*¹⁰

Prison is thus a fixed truth in societies hollowed out of freedom. Given the profound negative effects that prison leaves on the psyche, it has occupied a prominent place in the novel. In the novel *Cell No. 6*, the cell is the most important space in terms of presence and influence on the course of events. The novel's very title — bearing the name of the cell — is itself an index and testament to its centrality: the novel's events recount how the protagonist **"Mourad"** was captured and found himself confined within this cell.

¹⁰Hussein Bahrawy. *Bunyat al-Shakl al-Riwai: al-Fada' – al-Zaman – al-Shakhsiyya* [The Structure of the Novelistic Form: Space – Time – Character], p. 69.

2. The Prisoner Figure

2.1 The Political Prisoner

It is natural to assume that a prisoner is one who has committed some crime or infraction, upon whom punishment is imposed by the competent authorities — punishment that varies in severity, accompanied by financial penalties commensurate with the criminal act or offense committed. This is the general perspective. However, when seeking to understand the prisoner figure and how it manifests in literary production, one encounters multiple faces, representing the various strata of society: the intellectual, the schoolboy, the university student, the professor, the political militant, the revolutionary journalist, the military officer, the ordinary citizen.¹¹

In the overwhelming majority of cases, the prisoner is a member of the educated elite who represents the beating heart of a given country — someone with a particular intellectual orientation and a different outlook from that of others, seeking through their thought to chart a new course and effect change, because the reality they inhabit does not suit them. These individuals regard themselves as being in the right, while their opponents view them as attempting to undermine the stability of the country. Here begins the conflict between opposing forces

and supporting forces. In most instances, the prisoner at the center of this struggle is the political prisoner — the holder of a free opinion. The Arabic prison novel presents this figure and *“extends their defining characteristics: a university student who belongs either to the Muslim Brotherhood or to the Communist Party; a young person saturated with Leninist and Marxist thought, committed to revolution and change. For this reason, the university became a space for the dissemination of Marxist-Communist ideas, a place for meetings and discussions and the recruitment of other militant students — and as a consequence, universities witnessed many arrests in the ranks of their students.”*

¹²

The university thus functions as a nexus between different opinions and orientations, sheltering the educated elite — the youthful, insurgent force — which considers itself qualified to carry the banner of the nation and govern it well. The university campus becomes a crucible of protest and a pulsing heart from which political demonstrations are launched.

The desire for change drives these individuals toward different paths: either through peaceful means, raising popular slogans calling for the realization of demands, or through acts of disorder and the creation of

¹¹Muhammad Dani. *Al-Riwaya al-'Arabiyya al-Sijniyya: Dirasa Naqdiyya* [The Arabic Prison Novel: A Critical Study]. 1st ed., 2016, p. 89.

¹²*Ibid.*, p. 91.

chaos as a second resort after the first has failed to achieve the desired objectives. In doing so, they commit an infraction or offense that leads to their imprisonment and necessitates serving the prescribed sentence. This is undoubtedly regarded as a crime against society as a whole, which must be protected from such individuals.

The political prisoner is defined as *“one who is detained or imprisoned on account of their opposition to the prevailing system — in opinion, in belief, or in political affiliation — or on account of their sympathy with or assistance to the opponents of that system.”* Such a person commits a political crime, and the political crime is one carried out by the perpetrator with a political motive.¹³

This novel presents the political prisoner and defines their characteristic as being a university student: **“It gets worse when you realize there is no hope of working in the specialty you studied at university... I have forgotten all the laws we studied, since most of them have changed since I graduated.”** Mourad, the prisoner, had been a university student in the Faculty of Law, studying law — and, like every Arab student, had not been able to practice it, falling victim to unemployment.

Without being fully aware of it, Mourad had placed himself in a zone of suspicion. His circle of acquaintances at university had been extremist, and their constant company cast a shadow of suspicion over him: **“I remember clearly the conflicts I had with my cousin Zaki and his group in the university residence, arguing with the Quran and the Sunna, while my friend Radwan and I would debate them and provoke them. In truth, we were just joking — pointing out contradictions — and they would become so fanatical that on one occasion they tried to beat us when we raised the question of the verse concerning stoning.”** Mourad was accustomed to arguing with extremists and terrorist groups without fully understanding the gravity of what he was doing, which served to build the case against him.

He was eventually thrown into the wretched cell on a charge whose details he scarcely knew: **“They threw me into the cursed cell; I was screaming at the top of my voice... I am not the perpetrator, you must understand... I did not send any message; I had left my Facebook page open at an internet café.”** Mourad became a prisoner in solitary confinement because of a message sent to his cousin Zaki through Facebook — but

¹³Law on the Institution of Political Prisoners, No. 4, Iraq, 2006. See also: Hamza Karira. Al-Zinzana Raqm 6 [Cell No. 6], "Hazan Musafir" [A Travelling Sadness]. Available at:

<https://www.litartint.com/2018/11/normal-0-false-false-false-fr-none-ar-52.html>.

Mourad had no idea that Zaki had become a terrorist, for Zaki had kept his life secret: ¹⁴ **"He never told me any details of his life; I had no idea he would become what he became. Besides, his news had reached me since graduation, and had it not been for curiosity I would not have sent him a friend request."**

Despite his recent acquaintance with his cousin Zaki, Mourad had not troubled himself to inquire into the details of his life. On the day they met, he had taken him around the university district and introduced him to everyone — and from that day they were under surveillance. **"I should have known they were watching the family name, especially me."** Mourad had been a center of suspicion from the moment of his encounter with his cousin Zaki, who had gone to fight in another Arab country, making Mourad a constant subject of surveillance. What made matters worse was that Mourad had a political history he had not taken seriously: **"I had been present at the demonstrations of the previous year and they recorded my name; had it not been for my uncle Sa'id I would not have gotten out of that... And what further implicated me were the explosives they found at Sufyan's, my friend who had**

come from another Arab country... Everything is against me." The young man's rebellious energy and his indignation at his wasted youth had led him to acts to which he had paid no particular attention — yet these acts amassed evidence against him.

2.2 The Social Dimension of the Prisoner

Charybat Ahmad has remarked that the social dimension *"concerns itself with the portrayal of the character in terms of their social standing, their culture, their inclinations, and the milieu in which they move."* The character occupies a social position and inhabits a social environment, struggling within it to change conditions and achieve something better.

The social dimension is manifested in the network of social relations and the ensemble of customs, traditions, and conventions that reveal the principal source of the values driving a given individual, as well as the factors of belonging, means of social regulation, social standing, social centers, and the roles that people perform.¹⁵

The social dimension is thus present in everything that surrounds the character and influences their actions and conduct, through which we are able to know all that concerns this character.

¹⁴Hamza Karira. Al-Zinzana Raqam 6 [Cell No. 6], "Mawt dun Maw'id" [Death Without Appointment]. Available at: <https://www.litartint.com/2018/11/06.html>.

¹⁵Hussein 'Abd al-Hamid Ahmad Rashwan. Al-Shakhsiyya: Dirasa fi 'Ilm al-Ijtima' al-Nafsi

[Personality: A Study in Social Psychology]. Alexandria Centre for the Book, Alexandria, Egypt, 1st ed., 2006, p. 69. See also: Hamza Karira. Al-Zinzana Raqam 6, "Hazan Musafir." Available at: <https://www.litartint.com/2018/11/normal-0-false-false-false-fr-none-ar-52.html>.

Mourad, the prisoner in this novel, assumes the role of the principal character and becomes the engine of the narrative as he recalls the events of his past life before his imprisonment — as well as those he encounters in the notes of the unknown journalist who had previously been confined within the same cell. The prisoner's character thus controls the center of narration and of events. The novel *Cell No. 6* adopts a singular protagonist, who constitutes the axis of narration — a consequence of the novel's structural nature, revolving as it does around a single protagonist within a solitary cell, which imposes a monological narrative pattern. Mourad is the source of the events and is the most consistently present from the beginning of the novel, which takes the form of Mourad's narration of his entire life: his family, his friends, and his entry into the cell.

Mourad is a young man in the prime of his life, a graduate of the Faculty of Law: **"It gets worse when you realize there is no hope of working in the specialty you studied at university... I have forgotten all the laws we studied, since most of them have changed since I graduated."** Mourad graduated from the Faculty of Law and, like every Arab student, suffers from unemployment. His certificate remains a source of grief, and the

years since graduation lengthen until he has forgotten what he studied and what he learned.

His unemployment did not prevent the energetic Mourad from remaining active. He earned small sums by various means: **"I have never worked a day in my life at any regular job — for more than a few days at a time. I always managed my livelihood by different means: selling lecture notes, helping a friend who owns a café in exchange for some money, or sitting at an internet café in return for searching the internet for research papers for schoolchildren on behalf of the café owner."** Despite not having secured employment in his field, Mourad managed his daily sustenance through various means such as selling lecture notes.¹⁶

It is worth noting that in the interactive dimension of the novel, clicking on the name **"Mourad"** — written in blue — brings up an identification card for the character, thereby underscoring the novel's distinctive interactive architecture.

Conclusion

- The novel *Cell No. 6* is distinguished by its mode of presentation and the coordination between audio-visual arts and the linguistic dimension, which lends it a distinctive aesthetic quality. Its use of images and designs particular to itself makes it all the more singular and reflects the ideas the author has embedded in the text.

¹⁶Hamza Karira. *Al-Zinzana Raqm 6*, "Hazan Musafir." Available at:

<https://www.litartint.com/2018/11/normal-0-false-false-false-fr-none-ar-52.html>.

- The novel represents the various forms of authority exercised over the prisoner-intellectual: the authority of the stepmother — the first authority the prisoner encounters in life, bearing a prominent role in the social formation of Arab society — alongside the authority of the devoutly religious, the authority of the ruler, and the authority of society at large.
- In its portrayal of the prisoner figure, the novel draws on several significant manifestations of the ideological dimensions that drive the imprisoned self, most notably: the political dimension, the social (sociological) dimension, and the religious dimension.
- The subjection of the spaces in Cell No. 6 to the principle of openness and closure — with closure predominating — reflects the constriction and limitation of rights and freedoms.
- The author Hamza Karira has diversified the images employed in digital narration, drawing on both photographic and visual art images. Mental images appear in the narration, opening the field to the reader's imagination; visual images carry in their colors and forms many meanings and enigmas; and sound introduces movement that immerses the reader in the novel's atmosphere. The author has succeeded in binding all of these to the narrative text.
- The novel presents the image of the university graduate who is met by unemployment immediately upon graduation — a systemic portrait of what the majority of Arab societies suffer in terms of wasted youthful energies,

owing to the absence of economic strategies in their states. This drives these young people to seek means of livelihood that may end in the unknown, as is the case of the prisoner "**Mourad**" in Cell No. 6.

- The author Hamza Karira has demonstrated, with a capacity that reveals genuine mastery, the ability to produce a narrative text that addresses the prisoner's condition within interactive literature, adapting interactive features and aligning them with the narrative content — in a language distinguished by its simplicity, its eloquence, and its remarkable style.

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