A Post Colonial Feminist Reading of Ahlem Moustaghenmi Memory in The Flesh (1993)

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by

Aberkane khadidja

Board of Examiners:

Haddad Director

Koussa Member

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Abstract:

This study deals with a post colonial feminist reading of Ahlem Moustaghenmi’s Memory in The Flesh. In fact reading this novel reveals Moustaghenmi as an Algerian woman writer, who fights on two fronts. First, she wants to decolonize the Algerian minds from the ex-colonizer’s culture. Second, she contrives to push the woman from the margin to the centre in a patriarchal society. So post colonialism and feminism share the principle of destroying the dichotomy of Margin / center depicted in Colonized / Colonizer and Female/Male respectively. This study is conditioned by a cross cultural theory which includes post colonialism and feminism.
Résumé :

Cette étude s’intéresse à la lecture postcoloniale et Féminisme à travers l’œuvre d’Ahlem Moustaghenmi « Mémoire de Corps ». La lecture d’œuvre montre que Ahlem Moustaghenmi est une écrivaine Algérienne qui se batte sur deux fronts. Libérer la mentalité Algérienne de conséquences de colonisation et pousser la femme de marge au centre de la société masculine. Donc les deux théories postcoloniale et féminisme ont les mêmes objectifs de se battre contre les binérai marge / centre qui se présent dans colonisateur / colonisé et masculin / féminin.
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Introduction

This research deals with a postcolonial feminist reading of Ahlem Moustaghenmi’s Memory In Flesh (1994). The task of this study has been to focus critical attention on a gendered analysis of literature within a specific cultural and historical context—Algeria. In so doing, I have been guided by the follow in questions: How does Moustaghenmi intervene in the fields of feminist and postcolonial studies; and in what ways are her contributions to these fields an acute critique of written history, languages, and nationalism?

My reason behind choosing Moustaghenmi’s novel as a literary framework is because some of her novels function as a historical memory. In other words, she reconstructs Algerian history by writing over other discourses such as that of the French colonizers’ or that of Algerian nationalism—a form of nationalism that relied on patriarchal traditions to legitimate its social value in the political legislature during post-independence nation-building. Furthermore, drawing from feminist and postcolonial sources, Moustaghenmi’s work proffers an intertextual reading of how fictive writing can illuminate crucial postcolonial and feminist issues through a process of reclaiming identity through history and by doing so illustrates how a novelist restructures relations between politics and poetics, calling into question French critical norms while simultaneously revaluing Islamic tradition.

By reconstructing Algerian history through a writing process that grapples with the patriarchal histories of colonization and Algerian nationalism, Moustaghenmi disrupts the perpetuation of textual violence that mirrors the brutal history of conquest and colonization between the Algeria and France. In fact, reading this novel reveals Ahlem Moustaghenmi as an Algerian woman and writer who fights on two fronts. First, she wants to decolonize the Algerian minds from the ex-colonizer’s culture. Second, she contrives to
push the woman from the margin to the centre in a patriarchal society. So post colonialism and Feminism share the principle of destroying the Manichean Dichotomy Margin Centre depicted in colonizer colonized and female male respectively.

Consequently, our reading will be conditioned by a cross cultural theory which includes post colonialism and feminism. This theory will typically associate with the Algerian context. So, we shall play the role of the reader who is going to interpret the text first, according to post colonialism and feminism. Then, to what we actually perceive.

Post colonial Algerian novel can be regarded as a historical record of the changing consciousness of Algerian people. The sociopolitical transition of the Algerian history was a shared mission between both sexes of writers. Algerian female writers faced difficulties and obstacles in the beginning of post colonial era. Although these difficulties Algerian female writers proved their presence, and gained a good status in the Algerian and Arabic societies. The topics and issues tackled in their writings were varied, but what was common in their works is the inclusion of the situations of Algerian society in the post colonial era or the issue of women in patriarchal society. It is rare when we can find a combination of both issues in one work. Among the novels that introduced post colonialism and feminism we have Memory in the Flesh by Ahlem Moustaghenmi, it represents sociopolitical situations and woman status in the Algerian post colonial society. Moustaghenmi depicts the great morals of revolution and how it was betrayed after the independence by some corrupted fighters she also depicts Algeria (home) in a woman in a reference to the great role of women in our society.
Chapter one: Postcolonial Vs Feminist Writing

Post colonial era in Algeria witnessed a lot of sociopolitical changes that affected literature especially that was written by females. This chapter is an attempt to show how post colonial literature was shaped and how it was the reaction of female writers to the situations at that time. After the independence the attention was necessarily turned to the internal turmoil and the process of self determination ignored women and literature in general. Publishing situations were not good enough to make writers continuity. This is what delayed the emergence of a good literary production.

I-Post colonialism & Feminism:

Postcolonial literature is typically characterized by its opposition to the colonial. However, some critics have argued that any literature that expresses an opposition to colonialism, even if it is produced during a colonial period, may be defined as postcolonial, primarily due to its oppositional nature. Postcolonial literature often focuses on race relations and the effects of racism and usually indicts white and/or colonial societies. Despite a basic consensus on the general themes of postcolonial writing, however, there is ongoing debate regarding the meaning of post colonialism.(Mishra et al, what 2).

Postcolonial critics often have a stake in post colonialism as a political process in the context of specific national struggles. One thinks here of Fanon and Algeria, Said and Palestine. It is common for postcolonial critics to be exiles; their relationship with the colony in the act of becoming «post» is complex. A common criticism of postcolonial critics working in the west is that they cannot appreciate or understand the places they left behind, or those to which they have never belonged. The issue
of location is a key theme. It is the whole question of belonging, and the status of insider/outsider, that post colonialism serves to dislocate (Ashcroft et al, the post colonial 12).

Post colonialism does not imply sameness in the experiences of oppression or of a temporal position; it rather suggests shared features in marginalized groups positions of enunciation and perspectives. Postcolonial writing should be understood as a literature giving voice to oppressed people. It reached its peak in the post World War II period, a period marked by the beginning of the decolonization process, mass achievement of statehood by formerly colonized people, and progressive liberation of people oppressed in the metropolitan area. These writings have been preoccupied with issues of hybridity, creolization and diasporas with the mobility and crossover of ideas and identities generated by Colonialism. (45)

Post colonialism has a counterpart which is feminism. Feminism is the belief in the political social and economic equality of women. It is a discourse that in values various movement theories, and philosophies which are concerned with the issue of gender difference, advocate equality for women and campaign for women rights and interests. Feminism fits strategically into a post colonial framework because it is a mode of critical engagement that is enacted as subjectivity, cognitive practice (Hillyer, Feminism 23)

In this study feminism is understood to be politics_ politics that is directed at changing existing power relations between women and man in society these power relations structure all areas of life, the family, education and welfare the world of work and politics culture and leisure. They determine who does what and for whom, what we are and what we might become. (weedon, Feminist 51)
Feminist discourse shares similarities with post colonial theory and for this reason the two fields have long been thought as associative, even complimentary. Firstly, both discourse are predominantly political and concerns themselves with the struggle against oppression and injustice. Moreover, both reject the established hierarchal, patriarchal system which is dominated by the hegemonic white male, and deny the supposed supremacy of masculine power and authority. Imperialism like patriarchy is after phallocentric supremacist ideology that subjugates and dominates its subjects. The oppressed women in this sense akin to the colonized subject. Essentially exponents of post colonialism are reacting against colonialism in the political and economic sense while feminist theorists are rejecting colonialism of asexual nature. (Delmar, What 85)

II-Algerian Post Colonial Literature:

The beginning of Algerian literature has no clear cut, but we can say that Algerian literature started to be fertile within the fifties of the twentieth century (Abdullah rkibi). Because this literature emerged during the French colonization, it was written in French. Among those writers we find Malek Haddad, Mohammed Dib, Kateb Yassin and others who were taught in French schools, at the time between (1945) and (1964) there were thirty seven novels that were written in French language, but in the postcolonial era between 1965 and 1975 the number decreased to just seventeen novels. (Rkibi, History 45). Algerian writers who used French language argued that it is not their identity, but a tool to express their selves and problems of Algerian at that time as Kateb yassin said:”almost all of my memories, emotions, dreams and inner feelings are about my country, so it is naturally to feel it in my mother tong Arabic, but I cannot construct it and express it, however in French I do” (128).
Writing in French get a lot of fame in the twenties of the last century because of he French colonization of Algeria. The first novel was written in French’1936”Meriem Dans les palmes”. Then emerged other works that took a wide fame in the fifties of the last century “Nedjma” for Kateb Yassin and” La Terre et le sang” for Mouloud Feroun. Although all of these works were written in French but it kept its connections to Algerian situation under French colonization. After the independence some of the writers who were using French language preferred to stop writing in the colonizer language like Malek Haddad and others. (Raissa, Moustaghenmi 120)

Literary works in Arabic were limited in short stories and poems that were about the Algerian revolution and the independence. The first Algerian novel written in Arabic was controversial issue. But recently there is a common comments that it was for Malek Ben Nabi”Labeik” in 1946 then emerged other works like Ahmed Ridha Houhou “Ghada Mother of Towns” in1947 and then emerged Abdu Elhamid Ben Hedougua and Tahar wettar. The new social situation of Algeria and the agriculture revolution also the results of war were the subject of the writers of that time. (55)

Ben Hedougua, wettar were both who laid the basis of Algerian novel written in Arabic, and a source of inspiration of a whole generation of innovators in short stories and novels like Wessini Laaredjend Habib Esseyeh and others. Algerian literary production in post colonial era was an imitation of the real life experiences and socio political situations that were lived in post colonial Algerian.(Zennir, Algerian 4)

III-Algerian Post Colonial Female Writers:
Algerian feminine experience in writing has a difficult beginning in the post colonial era and since freedom is a basic element for writing, it complicated things for Algerian female writers. Social situations in the post colonial era were not stable; Algeria was emerging from colonial period, the society at that time still conservative concerning the woman who was double marginalized in the colonial era, by the colonizer at one sideman the other side stands the patriarchal society. So at that time female pens were rare and it was like committing a sin (zineb). Like the case of Safia Kettou who committed suicide because of the stress and the oppressions that were exercised on her since she was trying to write. Also we have Djamila Zennir and Zineb Elaawedge who started as poets, Elaawedge described the Algerian society as patriarchal and primitive “which walk on dead bodies of women” (Zineb). Zennir was less aggressive in her language describing her experience of writing “I was writing secretly without any encouragement, since I saw the oppression starting from my family and then reaching the society, that society never encouraged me”. (6)

So generally female experience of writing was poor in quality and quantity, especially that was written in Arabic, as an example the female writings lacked the awareness that the oppression of the woman has a social basis, the society that looked at her as a body without any producing capacities or ideological abilities (Fadila Farouk). When feminine pens raised it was few and unknown because of the social situations at that time or the distraction of those works by wrong interpretations since almost all readers- in the early beginnings of the post colonial era-read the text from a position of attack, so they trace the female through the text and they do not except any idea that expresses the problems of the woman as if she took something that does not belong to her. (Rkibi History 120)

As a result accusations are constructed in the reader’s mind (man). He knows that those accusations exist in his behaviors and found in his mind, so here the man reads the
text from negative side refusing the work, not like impressed by a female work. We have a lot of examples Merriam Younes said:”my way in this beautiful city Jijel was all disturbing, it was like torture and oppression especially when I started writing, I faced a sharp criticism but I resisted in silence till I won my existence between Algerian female writers”. (Ahmed doghan). It seems like the resistance of Merriam did not last long because she abandoned writing and her name stretched away may be to save the rest of her reputation, when writing changed to be a source of hurt to female reputation. (Zennir Algerian 6)

The situation of female writers is generally the same, it means that the primary problem for these writers is their sex not as a body problem but as a problem of expressing their selves, woman is aware enough about her body language, its nature, needs and changes but she could not find her writing body to interpret what she recognizes with her mind and senses as a woman. Tracing woman writings at that time we find it do not fit her weight as an innovator equal of man, we find for example thought writing which is one sign that the writer is not adult enough in this field of writing because writing in an organized way and limited frame reflects that the writer still beginner or hanging steps of a writer that does not know her way. What is remarkable is that kind of writers end with silence and then complete disappear as if the push to write was temporally. (8)

Another important remark can be given for female writing within the beginning of the post colonial period is the lack of an ideological context in their texts. The feminine text is limited in emotion discourse in the way of ordinary talks of women with a lot of descriptions and dialogues. It is not understood if it is difficult on female writer to combine between the idea and innovation to give a power to her text like detecting a political situation or analyzing a social or cultural fact. Sometimes we can find a writer that passed the two obstacles, but we find that the depart point started from a broken hearted
self, lost and broken under the authority of man, what makes the female literary production like a mass of disparate emotions. In Algeria we do not find female novelists as much as in other Arabic countries, it means that the Algerian female writer at that time did not know how to write long texts, for many reasons that seem illogical but it was real like the lack of enough time and suitable atmosphere for writing also the absence of a good communication with the cultivated society. (Kemmoun, The experience 12)

Here we have to except Zhor Wennissi and Ahlem Moustaghenmi from this poor representation of female writers in the beginning of post colonial era, because the first fulfilled a high social statute and the second worked in the national radio, married a journalist and lived in France where the situations are suitable for writing. Still the reasons behind the delay of innovation wheel are many and difficult to treat it. Here we have to make it clear that it is right that Ahlem Moustaghenmi was among the first post colonial female writers to write poems and novels in Arabic but she was not the first, here first edition was a collection of poems “On the Shore of Days “but the first in Algeria was “Buds” another collection for Mebrouka Boussaha in(1969), and the first feminine novel was by Zhor Wennissi in 1979, and then that of Ahlem Moustaghenmi Memory in The Flesh in (1993). (Rkibi History 90)

It is clear that the birth of female novelists in Algeria was connected to the cultural situation in the country since the first feminine novel written in Arabic did not emerge until over than ten years after the independence. It means that there was a kind of transformation in woman situations through gaining some aspect of awareness that make her treat freedom and equality as worthy what results in breaking her annexation to man. This does not mean that female writer was headed directly to write novels to express herself to the society but there were poets like Zineb Elaawedge, Rbiaa Djelti in the seventies and short story writers
like Djamila Zennir and others in the eighties, but publishing situations were not good enough to make their continuity. (Farouk Algerian 87)

Post colonial and its counterpart feminism proved to be parallel in the issues and goals of both fields post colonial literature in Algeria was first affected with the colonial legacies like language “French” Algerian writers who were writing in French defended their situation, as they were taught in French schools, but they kept the context pure Algerian since they expressed the miserable situations Algeria was going through in the colonial period, and after the independence when people were trying to identify their selves again without referring to France existence. Some of those writers like Malek haddad preferred to quit writing in the colonial language after independence, haddad argued that it is finished the role of francophone writers and it is the time for the emergence of Arabic writings as a sign of self sovereignty. (Zennir, Female 9)

Post colonial writing was not just for man but also the Algerian female contributed a lot in this task. In the beginning of post colonial era the situation of Algerian society was so hard, Algeria was emerging from a difficult experience of colonialism, Algerian society still conservative concerning women and publishing a female name on papers still a taboo. Also publishing conditions were not good enough to keep the female writings in prosperity. At that time Algerian female writings were suffering oppression starting from family and ending with society. That results in a poor literary production except some works like those of Zhor Wennissi and Ahlem Moustaghenmi. Although these restrictions female writers emerged and fought until they won a presence in Algerian and Arabic world literature.
Chapter two: *Aspects of Post Colonialism in Memory in The Flesh*

This chapter aims to analyze the characters in memory in the flesh to demonstrate how it was the situation of different social classes in the post colonial Algeria, with an exploration of the setting (space and time) and the interaction of characters with it.

I-Characterization in The Novel:

Where the discussion positions the character of Si Cherif and Si Mustafa in the pragmatic minded that were exploiting benefits from their positions in the regime of that time, under the name of symbols of the revolution and collective memory about it. This direction of political men of the post colonial era was represented by two major characters Si Cherif, this character appears through the discourse of the narration as an exploitative man who is using the name of fighters of the revolution from one side and through using faked slogans and the good reputation of his brother:

(Moustaghenmi Memory 57)

In addition the narrator described Si Cherif as a criminal when he gave the country (symbolized in a woman) to faked revolutionists:
The second character that represents this kind of mentalities is Si Mustafa who represents a revolutionist but the one who betrayed the morals of the revolution, believe in nothing but the personal benefit, crushing the national interests. Si Mustafa and his group the cause of the distraction of country future:

This way of thinking was the dominant in the regime of post colonial era, it was presented in those two characters, they are the sample of dirty way of seizing opportunities. Si Cherif is thinking him self as a good and hoest revolutionist, and this reflects the false consciousness adopted by this personality, this ideology was supported with other personalities of military and religion:

In the other side stands characters with morals of revolution and those who want to change the ideological and social situations of the Algerian society at that time, Moustaghenmi in her novel depicted the real situations that were lived in post colonial Algeria through the role of characters and through the social structure. In the novel this direction was represented in the character of the hero “Khaled”,” Ahlem” the symbol
woman and” Zied “the Palestinian poet. Those characters carried the vision of a revolution ideology that rejects the bad and dirty situation of the country and stand against the exploitative personalities, through the character of Khaled who refused the false revolution past and Si Tahar who reject the colonization, Si Tahar was a Muja hid who had no issue but the independence of this country. He scarified his soul for this goal:

And there were others who survived after the revolution but they gave up their values for personal interests and high positions in the independent government:

Through the dialogues of the narrator we can feel the big hatred he has for those who betrayed their selves and the revolution:

Khaled has a vision for changing the cultural life of Algeria or like he called it Cultural Revolution, after the independence he was appointed as a responsible of a house of publication but he left the job after he discovered that he was immersing in the swamp of political life that he refused before thanks to Zied. When he was convincing writers to omit sharp expressions as a respect for the authorities and Arabic regimes:
Khaled preferred to leave Algeria to stay away the political positions and its dirty swamp:

Mushtaghenmi pictures the despair of the young generation and linked it to the negative structure of the awareness of those people, that is what Khaled concludes about the immigration of Algerian young people:

This is why the basis of change is laid in spreading a social and cultural awareness, they give back the self-confidence to the individuals, through creating a new and open image for the future.

**Space and Time in the Novel:**

The relationship between space time and characters is a relation of mutual effect, since the interaction between the character and the space he is living in permits to discover the psychological situation of the character and contributes to the inner changes in it. This interaction produces a special space can be seen in Memory in The Flesh, where we can see the reflection of the places on the lives of the characters, through the description of the city of Constantine that carries images of humiliation, misery and isolation sometimes and Paris that carries images of pleasure happiness and safety to the individuals:
This extract is a basis for the structures that show the social and cultural situations. In another way the space of Constantine is weak and cannot resist, and this space is one cause of isolation of the self and escaping reality to other spaces to fulfill it. That is what makes the individual’s despair and failure in this city that was described as a hypocrite:

The extract above carries a vision about the needs of this social and geographical environment, and the needs of the individuals, that are connected to the practice more than the theoretical. Understanding the ceremonies of this city is basing on learning the skills of its social space, that is what gives an ideological value for the interaction between the geographical space and social space, it is the complete melting in the past of this city. It means in its traditional privacy like the tombs. It gives a view about some individuals who are adopting some traditional ideas, when making those toms sacred:

The convergence between two different cultural visions, Arabic culture depicted in Constantine space and its major character Khaled and Western culture depicted in the Parisian space with its character Kathrin, two different consciousness with two different spaces, and this what constructs the novelistic space. That can be seen in the dialogue between Khaled and his brother Hassan about the difficult social situations of the Algerian society, generally and the society of Constantine in specific. So the effects of the social space appear clearly in both positions when Hassan considered the social space of

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"الذي تمارسه بتفوق، وتشتري شرفها بالدم تارة وبالبعد والهجر تارة أخرى" (148)

"هذه هي قسنطينة.... مدينة لا يهمها غير نظرة الآخرين لها تحرص على صيتها خوفا من القيل والقال (148)"

"لسألmaj wa سيدا راشد يا سي ميروك، يا سي محمد الغراب.... قفو معنا يا أولياء الله" (361)
Constantine as dirty and miserable like its individuals, in opposition to the Parisian social space where Khaled was living, the high and noble space that contain all needs of a good life, it is what make us think that Khaled have no petty sympathy towards the miserable situation of the first space. May be because the long time he spent away from the space of his brother Hassan:

The space of Constantine is limited, this what make Hassan anxious and oppressed. We think that this what pushed Hassan to build another space basing on memories dreams and illusion, by making the space of Algiers his big and impossible dream in the same time it is his escaping space which carries dynamic and different elements of hope:

So the space of Constantine is connected to the psychological dimension of Khaled that is what refreshes his memory when he is in a given space in Constantine for example his presence in Hassan’s house makes him go back to his childhood:
The space of the city is large and has a lot of interpretations. The end of Ahlem and Khaled was connected strongly to the space of Constantine and its dominance. This space exercised a kind of oppression that pushed the characters many times to quit their ambitions. The connection between the space and characters of the novel makes it special with the possibility of dealing with this space in its language. Speaking about the space in the novel in all its kinds makes it a must to speak about the issue of time because there is no event without a space and time, so both are connected.

History has a direct link to the reality. It got a strong presence on the level of literay works since it gives honesty and objectivity to the work. The historical time in Memory in The Flesh appears in two ways: when timing the political events and timing a social situation basing on the historical signs in the text: the historical time starts from the demonstration of 08 May 1945

And ended with November 1988:

So the historical time of the novel started from 1945 until 1988, but the time of the discourse is the opposite since the narrator started from 1988 and goes back till 1945 and then continued the narration until it reached October 1988 again. Basing on this historical time we can divide the time of the text into three periods, first we have the period of the
revolutionist work that started from 8 May 1945 till the independence of Algeria in this period the personality of Khaled was constructed politically and military when he was trained under the supervision of Si Tahar to join the Front of National Liberation:

**> سنة 1955 وفي شهر أيلول التحقت بالجبهة< (33)**

That ended when Khaled was injured in his left hand. The second time period is that of the independence started from 1962 until 1973, when Khaled decided to leave to France where he became a professional in painting art. This period was loaded with a lot of events like Khalid’s meeting with the Palestinian poet Zied Khalil who was one cause of Khaled immigration to France, and Khaled imprisonment in 1971:

>> هل توقعت يوم كنت شابا بحماسة، أنه سيأتي بربع قرن يوم عجب كهذا؟ ليجردني فيه جزائي مثلي من ثيابي و سعدي، وحتى من ساعتي وأشياطني، ليزج بي في ظناني فردية أدخلها باسم الثورة في هذه المرة << (234)

The last period is that the hero’s immigration, started from 1973 and ended with events of October 1988 the time when Khaled return” home”, in this period he also met Ahlem in Paris 1981 that woman “home” that refreshed his memory about his revolution past and connected him with his country again. Each stage has its ideological way of social construction in a given time period presenting the political atmosphere in the Algerian society in the novel responded basically to the time period choice that formed the events of the text. The significance of the historical time appeared in the ideological differences permitted by direct references to those time periods of October 1988:

>> ذات يوم من أكتوبر 1988 كنت على علم بكل الأحداث التي هزت البلاد، والتي كانت الجرائد تساقب بنقلها مصورة، مقاسلة، مفصولة، مطلقة وبإهتمام لبؤس من الشمانة كنت أعرف تفاصيلها وأدري أنها ما زالت في يومها الثاني مقصرة على العاصمة >> (288)
This time period unveiled a divergence in interests visions and created new social classes. That is what Memory in The Flesh shows in the text through historical references. Moving to another level in analyzing the time used in the novel, we can study it basing on its connection to the social construction. This component gives the time its presence, identity and its significance in the text, signs the movement of the social awareness gives the society its timing and its history. The structure of the social time in the text of Memory in The Flesh was based on the social difference in constructing values in one side, and on two different ideas, the first was given in the text molded in the image of past, whereas the second was molded in the image of dirty present. This divergence of visions and views produced a convergence between two times, past and present.

Although this meeting of the past and present is something ordinary in the life of any society, but in Memory in The Flesh this meeting was presented in a confronting way, because one social groups were looking to the past as the needed future with its morals and values, meanwhile other groups were marginalizing this past. And considered the present as dynamic and developed future. The differences between these social groups about selecting a time produced a confronted visions and views. This made the social time took signs of divergence in its textual structure. The value of the social time in the text of the novel is established through the social act, and its presence is connected to the historical period, so a controversial relationship created between time and society value, makes both of them equal.

The foregoing reading of Moustaghenmi’s Memory in The Flesh categorized the characters in the novel into the colonizer/elites and the colonized/lower-class. In the group of the colonizers are si Mustafa and si Cherif who are not interested in the Algerian people situations. Instead, they are looking for profits exploiting names of martyrs and their
participation in the revolution as an opportunity for them to maintain their strong hold on the lower-class. For si Cherif, he profits from the name of his brother who was well known in the revolution for his effective participation and martyrdom. si Mustafa is representative of the exploitative thrust of the military men for names and stars. On the other side of the divide are Khaled, Zied, Hayet and her family. characters that are oppressed and manipulated to suit the whims of the elites. Khaled faced oppression in Algeria and he immigrated to France so in a way he was displaced, Zied the man of Palestinian issue was killed and Hayet (Algeria) married a corrupted military man. The characters were interacting in a given space and time what gives the events a meaning. Space and time of post colonial Algeria affected individuals of the society. Constantine, Algiers and Paris were major spaces included in Memory in The Flesh. These three spaces affected characters in a significant way pushed them to react by moving to another space or building another imaginary space by illusion. The events of the novel cannot be separated from its time frame, time in the novel can be divided into two kinds: historical time with real historical events and social time of the discourse of the narrator.
Chapter three: **Tracing Feminism in Memory in The Flesh:**

In the present chapter we shall analyze Ahlem Moustaghenmi Memory in The Flesh with reference to the feminist language and female body as a site of inscription of gendered alternative history. We argue that there exist feminist aspects in the work that are the language and the body. Throughout Memory in the Flesh Moustaghenmi explore historical analysis of Algerian socio political events addresses women’s role during the war, their publicized subject positions in the aftermath (decolonization). Ahlem her mother and Farida provide a useful and productive entry into the ways which the novel draws upon women’s engagement with the inter connections between gender culture, embodiment and language. The characters illustrate the acute interaction that takes place between the past and the present intersecting within women’s post colonial experiences n Algeria.

**I-Feminist Language In Memory in The Flesh:**

The construction of Memory in The Flesh produces new socio-political and historical knowledges through the experiences of reading and writing from a specifically feminine voice embodied within the various characters’ historical accounts. The novel is composed of a non-linear reconstruction of history that threads together short stories to compose a fragmented, non-linear historical account of Algerian nationhood from a feminine perspective, utilizing women’s experiences of embodiment, voice, and history. Moustaghenmi defies Algerian women’s historical entry point as the symbolic misrepresentation within French colonial and Algerian nationalist histories that have relied on the silent image of woman to stand in for Algerian women themselves. Through their experiences, the women of Memory in The Flesh articulate their histories in relation to colonialism, anticolonial warfare, and their postcolonial experiences. In Memory in The Flesh, women’s stories and their narrations of history convey the feminist ideal that the “very notion of an active voice connotes agency, knowledge, and self-determination”
(Hiddleston 57) and leads to the creation of new knowledges, histories, and autobiographies. Their stories pronounce how their postcolonial experiences in Algeria are interwoven with colonial experiences, Algerian patriarchy, nationalism, social changes, and differing interactions with the representation and objectification of embodiment.

In Memory in The Flesh, Moustaghenmi develops a distinctly feminist language, not through an appeal to an essential female nature but rather through the re-articulation of Algerian women’s experiences. In her novel, Moustaghenmi takes ownership of oppressive representations and refigures them into historically-located socio-political positions in order to narrate a re-formed history that translates Algerian history from a point of view that is spoken through a feminine language and vocalized from women’s embodied experiences. In so doing, Moustaghenmi proffers a narrative that runs counter to the traditional depictions of women as figures of the inanimate Other: Moustaghenmi’s fragmented configurations now seem to want to “give voice” to generations of Algerian women who have been denied the privilege of self-expression; she does so through rearticulating Algerian history where they appear to invoke a particularized feminine language that would accurately convey experiences that slip beyond the limits of sanctioned history (krizm 55).

Moustaghenmi creates a specifically feminine language by “crafting words out of so many tones of voice still suspended in the silences of yesterday’s …Words of the veiled body, language that in turn has taken the veil for so long a time” (Krism ). The feminine language that she articulates is diversified through women’s varied lived-experiences and forms of embodiment. Her stylistic strategy of representing women is narrated through dialogues that enable them to have an authoritative voice through their oral histories that are interplayed within their lived-experiences as part of Algeria’s historical landscape. In
the speeches and dialogues of Hayet the readers are introduced to a way for Algerian women to break their silence without disgracing their honor

The above quotation from Moustaghenmi’s novel Memory in The Flesh exemplifies Moustaghenmi’s practice of turning to the past to revitalize the present. Moustaghenmi uses both her interviewees’ and her own lived-experiences as a narrative device that conveys another form of Algeria that is premised on the foundation that every woman has a story worth hearing and documenting.

In the above quotation, the autobiographic memories of Hayet are intertwined with the images of her maternal ancestors and their collective histories within the nation. The feminine perspectives that are narrated in the novel are reiterated in the creation of a unique language that is structured through “various echoes that intervene in her [Moustaghenmi] prose and…belong neither to a single original language nor to a particular, rooted culture” (raissa57). The novel itself is a re-cognition of Algerian history and a development of a feminine language through the lens of a feminine gaze that has
been a spectator and storyteller for generations but that has typically been denied entry into written historical accounts as an authorial voice.

The narratives that Moustaghenmi weaves explore the experiences of different women through the experiences recounted by female characters whose words contribute to a distinctly feminine history and language. In traditional representations, Algerian women are presented as stagnant preservers of Algerian authenticity. Within conventional historical narratives “women are seen not as inhabiting history proper but as existing, like colonized peoples, in a permanently anterior time with the modern nation” ( ). However, in Memory in The Flesh Moustaghenmi re-articulates Algerian women’s histories and offers an alternate past that disrupts the homogenous patterns of Orientalist and nationalist representations and silencing of Algerian women and their experiences. Similar to other feminist and postcolonial writers Moustaghenmi uses “two strands of memory: linear and circular” (krizm, 51).

The self-reflexive writer of Women of Memory in The Flesh speaks of her work as the authorial process when she says

The above quotation is an illustration of how the structure of the novel elucidates the circulating patterns of Algerian women’s ontological roots that interplay the past and present as ever-present. Moustaghenmi re-conceptualizes valued knowledge and knowledge production to facilitate a rupture with conventional history and, in so doing, to create new knowledge(s) from the vocalization of marginalized points of view Moustaghenmi’s novel exemplifies how autobiographic writing creates new knowledges
within narratives that depict Algerian women’s lives in diverse situations that counteract the homogenization and erasure of their lived-realities.

**II-Body Language in Memory in The Flesh:**

Throughout the novel Memory in The Flesh Ahlem navigates the materiality of history throughout a mediation of the body language that she interprets while the narrator is telling a historical account. The narrator historiography incorporate a strategy of recording history in a way that writes it from the body:

In the above extract the narrator refers to the missing part of his body as a part of his memory about the revolution, since he lost it when he injured in the war. In the narrator’s account of Ahlem, devotes equal attention to her spoken narrative and the embodiment of her narrative:

Throughout the novel the narrator creates a historiography. Moustaghenmi sexualizes the country of Algeria seeing it as eroticized and violated woman. The country is seen as a woman, and Algerian women were viewed as available objects:
The imagery used to describe Algeria suggests the postcolonial regime as a dominator, this domination of Algeria was figured as a metaphorical rape of woman. spivak argues that when the women’s body is used as a metaphor for a nation (or anything else) feminists correctly object to the effacement of the materiality of that body (spivak 1987 257). This what Khaled expresses when he said:

Thus Moustaghenmi’s description of Algeria as an erotic female body has an implicit meaning. On one hand the act of writing the body for Moustaghenmi’s becomes a way of conceptualizing the history of Algerian women whose participation is effaced in the colonial annals. On the other hand it speaks out the violence done to their bodies. To challenge the domestic patriarchy inscribed by the traditional Algerian society that restricts women’s status. Moustaghenmi includes women in the confrontation of Algerians with the French conquest, indirectly by highlighting their roles as mothers and wives, and their silence resistance through their patience concerning the lost of husbands and sons in the revolution:

The returning gaze of the Algerian women from the French colonizer is a kind of resistance for Algerians, women become agents who resist and confront the colonial conquest. The narrator establishes these capacities of resistance:
The narrator gives voice and sets conditions for his gendered subaltern to resist any oppression. Although some women in the novel are passive but the presence of the heroine Ahlem breaks the silence of their voices and speaks for them. The articulation of the different parts of the female body, in Moustaghenmi’s novel, is made to voice women’s experience in the Algerian society, her female character Ahlem resists through her body reactions. And at the same time, break the silence in a way that makes her free from the patriarchal representation of gender. Constantine women sexual desire, the narrator figures the sexual experience that takes place in post colonial time as the incessant desire of Constantine women to speak and express themselves:

Moustaghenmi represents the female body as debased image of destroyed women she politicizes personal stories of the female characters to communicate the history of her country. Individuals in her work reflect broader problems in post colonial Algeria. The historical impact of these problems on women in particular draws her focus in the silencing of women through physical exploitation of female body.

It becomes evident that Moustaghenmi denotes the continuity crisis in Algeria, for her writing the female body is a mean for acknowledging women experience and recording their history, as well as validating their positions. Women bodies in Moustaghenmi’s novel
are rendered space of exploitation to denote the continuous subjugation of women that prevents them from getting equal opportunities.

Moustaghenmi’s writing practice constructs characters and events that rely on the immemorial presence of maternal ancestors that accompany women throughout their lives, residing in their memories within the experiences that they tell during the time Algeria was struggling to rebuild itself after three generation of colonization. Moustaghenmi produces a historical and political ideas communicated through the construction of women’s physicality and through feminist discourse about the history of Algeria, depending on women body with which they may speak and reinscribe themselves in the history of their country. Both aspects “female body” and “feminist language” address the issue of exploitation done to the women in colonial and post colonial times. Moustaghenmi reclaim women history, unseen by the official discourse through the technique of writing in a feminist language.
**Conclusion:**

Moustaghenmi explores the post colonial era and effects of the socio political changes in Algeria. Studying the characterization in the novel we find it reflects the realities of that time, drawn from the dichotomy: elite/mass (colonize/colonizer) that characterizes postcolonial relation. The elites of the new post colonial states are interested in maintaining the distance between them and the mass. Characterization was discussed using post colonial theory, which makes it possible to categorize the characters into elite/neocolonial group and the masses. The memories of the characters are intertwined with the images of their maternal ancestors and their collective histories within the nation.

Moustaghenmi has a preoccupation with the presentation of the female body, land and history which appears explicitly or implicitly in her texts. The analysis has revealed that female body which serves as a metaphor or allegory in the text is a site of recovery of Algeria’s historical memory, returns to the body as corporeal objects as the land and history of Algeria such a metaphor of a raped Algeria who has long suffered from a colonial and nationalist post colonial enterprise or a conversely a debased image of fallen women as Algeria betrayed. The feminist perspectives that are narrated in the novel are reiterated in the creation of a unique language that is structured through various echoes that intervene in her prose.

The conclusion drawn from this dissertation is that Ahlem Moustaghenmi promotes post colonial feminist discourse in her writings. The specificity of this discourse is that written in a feminist language which challenges the masculine biased of literary cannons and seeks the rehabilitation of women literature. The writer seeks path of final liberation of women in her texts and the transformation of silence into language and action. Moustaghenmi explores the post colonial era and effects of the socio political changes in Algeria.
Appendix:

1-“before two years, he was appointed in the Algerian embassy and it is like all positions in the foreign ministry, need a lot of compromises and large shoulders, Si Cherif was able to walk this way to this position and to what is better than it … and with his name that was made immortal by his martyr brother, Si Tahar, but it seems like the past was not enough to guarantee the present, he has to assimilate with all conditions to reach his aims” (Moustaghenmi Memory 57).

2-“They were all here like usual, big bellies … and Cuban cigarettes … and uniforms that can be wore on more than one side men of all times and all generations … men of dirty bargains … men of unknown past … they are here … x ministers x thefts and military men disguised in ministerial clothes … men of the revolutionist theory … men with empty minds and high villas, they are here together always like sharks” (354)

3-“Si Mustafa was a man of secret bargains a man of difficult missions and different currency” (27)

4-“I challenge those with big bellies … and that bearded man and those with uncountable stars, and all those to whom I gave a lot” (362)

5-“He was from those who go to death and do not wait for it” (44)

6-“From those fighters who rode the last wave to guarantee their future, fighters of 62 and heroes of the last battles, and what they put in their pockets on harry for secret accounts” (44)

7-“I used to respect him so much in the past, but my respect for him stretched away every time his account increased with more than one why and more than one currency like those who preceded him” (81)
8-“After I transformed from a cultivated man to dirty policeman who spies on words and letters” (149)

9-“But maybe I came here because of situation that are results of mistakes like these, because one day I have decided to leave this dirtiness … I was responsible in a way or another, and was telling him lies … what makes me do not tell about bloody regimes … do I have to change my job to replace my problems with others” (151)

10-“In front of foreign embassies ranks of our dead people demanding a life visa abroad … and taking visa is the impossible … the youth have no time for meditating or tasting, they prefer a festival of Ray songs to dance scream and sing until the sunrise … that is the only treasure our young has” (180)

11-“That is Constantine … a city interested in nothing but others view to it takes care of its reputation and byes its honor with blood one time and distance other time” (142)

12-“That is Constantine no difference between its curse and mercy no fence between its love and its hatred no clear criteria for its logic” (298)

13-“Salutation Sidi Rached, Sidi Mabrook, oh! Sidi Muhammad elghorab stand with me saints” (361)

14-“Saha Khaled you are living in your prestigious city in Paris and do not know what is happening here and in the world” (369)

15-“Constantine did not fit him its bridges did not take him to his goal, they told him in the capital you will have other choices … its bridges will not take you, Hassan believed it and went to Algiers” (389)
16-“Oh! This is Constantine … I am coming to you from frizzy years from snow city and loneliness” (285)

17-“My presence in the house of family, that I know and it knows me, affected my psychology, in those days may be it was my secret consolidation that I never expected I was coming back to it every night like going back to my childhood to be a baby again” (298)

18-“In the demonstration of 08 May 1945, when Constantine and Setif give the first martyrs to the revolution” (30)

19-“Tomorrow it will be 34 years for the first bullet of the liberation war” (24)

20-“In 1955 April I had joined the front” (33)

21-“I never expected that one day after 25 years when an Algerian like me will take off my clothes … even my watch and my stuff and put me in an individual jail, I have entered it in the name of the revolution” (234)

22-“One day on October 88 I knew about the events in the country, that news papers were recording it with pictures I knew that it was just in Algiers” (388)

23-“I moved to Paris to study … I write novels and stories … in Arabic, I can write in French but Arabic is the language of heart I cannot write but in it” (91)

24-“At that moment I felt that it was the right time to tell you about my last day in the front …. I remember at that day … before Ma Zahra opened the door … I still remember her astonished gaze” (111)

25-“We wrote novels to kill the heroes and to get rid of persons that their existence bothers us every successful novel a crime against a given memory” (123)
26-“How it happens that one day I have found commons with my mother, how I imagined you wearing her red dress and making kessra … that I missed its taste for years” (17)

27-“You were looking to my missed arm and I was looking to the bracelet in your hand it was my identical card” (53)

28-“And you started reading with the astonishment of Zied … I was hearing you for the first time reading poems your voice was a musical sound of a musical instrument that was not created yet … I was recognizing it for the first time … I was looking to your details … what is the most beautiful thing in you” (202)

29-“You are not just a woman you are a country aren’t you interested in what will be written in history one day” (277)

30-“I challenge those with big bellies … and bearded man and that man with a bolt and those with uncountable stars and all to whom I gave a lot and raped her in my presence today … I challenge them with my missing arm with the arm that is mine no more with the memory they stole from me and all what they took from us I challenge them to love here as much as I do … because I am the only one who love here against nothing” (362)

31-“The day my father died … my grad mother stood in the centre of the house crying my mother was crying in silence and trying to calm here” (107)

32-“Volcanic mountains have no summits, it is a mountain in a way of a hill …oh volcano that burned everything around me” (98)

33-“Everyone here knows that behind of its large cities …. And illegal love stories and under its black veil resides the desire it is the desire that gives its women that special Constantine walk and gives their eyes under the veil that special brightness” (315).
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