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FACULTE DES LETTRES ET DES LANGUES

DEPARTEMENT D'ANGLAIS

جامعة مولود معمري-تيزي وزو

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**Presented by:**

Ms. Sihem HENNEB

Ms. Sabrina MERZOUK

**Supervised by:**

Mrs. Hassiba BENSAFI

**Board of Examiners:**

**Chair:** Mr. Mouloud Siber M.C.A. UMMTO.

**Supervisor:** Mrs. Hassiba.BENSAFI MAA.UMMTO.

**Examiner:** Mrs. Naima Maldi. MAA. UMMTO.

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To

Our families, especially our mothers and fathers.

Sisters and brothers

Our relatives, especially our dear friends.

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## Abstract

*This dissertation is concerned with studying the theme of memory and trauma in Virginia Woolf's **Mrs. Dalloway** (1925) and Ahlam Mostaghanemi's **Memory in the Flesh** (1993). To support our research, we have relied on Cathy Caruth's trauma theory: **Trauma: Exploration in Memory** (1995) and **Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative and History** (1996). We have shown how both novelists have portrayed their characters in a struggle with their past through memories and different conditions that lead to their present situations. We have also discussed the way they raise the issue of memory and trauma as major themes in both novels. Finally, we have studied the modernist and post-modernist techniques; mainly flashback and stream of consciousness, to reveal to which extent the traumatic memories have affected the characters of both works and have occupied a large part in their lives. We have found that both authors have focused on the relationship between the events and its traumatic impact on the characters in the context of trauma theory.*

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## I. General Introduction

The twentieth century is known as a period of change, in this sense Shoshanna Felman writes: "The twentieth century can be defined as a century of trauma"<sup>1</sup> and trauma in this period appears as never it did because great wars had marked this period. These wars had always been behind the different atrocities that marked the people's traumatic experiences in life. The First World War in Britain and the Algerian war for independence that marked the history of both nations-Britain and Algeria- are mainly the best illustration. During this period, Algeria and Britain witnessed economic, social and political crises. All this brought up changes which enriched art as a whole accompanied with great works of literature. The latter shifted from the traditional literature based on the external and objective world to the experimental tradition which emphasizes the personal experience and individual's life and feelings. Contemporary writers adopted a new form of writing related to the inner side of the human being. In addition, they described the struggle that people faced transforming it into the written form.

The present research aims to deal with the theme of memory and trauma in Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway* (1925) and Ahlam Mostaghanemi's *Memory in the Flesh* (1993). On the one hand, Woolf, one English novelist and essayist, is regarded as one of the foremost modernist figures of 20th century. Her novel *Mrs. Dalloway* has been tackled from various perspectives. The novel focuses more on the characters' thoughts, moving deeply from one character to another and from the past to the present. Woolf gives the reader the opportunity to enter the mind and share the memories and the thoughts of her characters. She then explores the theme of memory and trauma as a dominant in *Mrs. Dalloway*. On the other hand, Ahlam Mostaghanemi, a postmodernist Algerian writer, is affected by the colonial period. In her novel *Memory in the Flesh*, she deals with four decades of the Algerian history as she links it with the characters' trajectories and memory. She portrays her characters as being alienated and

suffering from past experiences. Thus, she examines the theme of memory and trauma throughout the protagonists Khaled and Hayat who mainly share some psychological experiences in relation to their past.

The reasons which encouraged us to undertake this study come first from our interest in the kind of works studied in comparative literature. Second, although Virginia Woolf and Ahlam Mostaghanemi belong to two different societies in time and space, whose people had different cultures, beliefs and speak different languages, it seems that their preoccupations in their works are closely similar. Memory and trauma are the common themes in their works.

### **Review of Literature**

Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway* and Ahlam Mostaghanemi's *Memory in the Flesh* has been studied by many criticisms from different perspectives. To start with Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway*, Bernard Blackstone is one of its illustrative critics. In his book, entitled *Virginia Woolf: a Commentary*, he argues that: "Mrs. Dalloway is an experiment with time. It is mingling of present experience and memory"<sup>2</sup>. This means that Woolf establishes a kind of a bridge permitting the reader to travel between the present and the past of her characters and their thoughts about the future.

Apter, T.E in his critique entitled *Virginia Woolf: A Study of Her Novels* claims that: "The capacity of the present to contain the past naturally makes the past appear as immediate memories become entangled in present thoughts and perceptions"<sup>3</sup>. In other words, the characters are trying to protect themselves by force to forget their past feelings, yet those feelings come back to haunt them again through remembering the painful moments that had marked them in a way or another.

In another essay entitled "*The Importance of Time in Virginia Woolf's Mrs. Dalloway*" it is stated that: "the flashbacks in the novel constitute the major psychological



moments of the novel”<sup>4</sup>. Thus, time is flowing from present to past or to the future, describing the psychological experiences and the painful moments lived by the characters. It permits the reader to go from present to past without having a chronological order.

Ahlam Mostaghanemi’s *Memory in the Flesh* had been also a subject matter of several critics. Nabeh Isskander Alhassan, a Syrian novelist and critic, argues that the novel gives us a real image about the war throughout Khaled’s memories and view of post war Algeria. Khaled regards his country as a corrupted and tormented society. Hayat experiences traumatic childhood caused by the death of her father in the battlefield. Another critic by Kim Jensen, through his article ”Ahlam Mostaghanemi’s “*Memory in the Flesh*”“points out :“*Memory in The Flesh*” remains much more than a love story; it is an allegory about the tortured fate of Algeria and perhaps the whole Arab world in its struggle for freedom”.<sup>5</sup> So, the novel is not limited to romantic views but its main concern is mainly the description of the realistic events related to the war and to the post war era.

In her article, “*Memory in the Flesh- Chaos of the Senses –Algerian History*”, Khetam Naamana insists on the importance of the flashbacks in taking the reader to the past Algerian fighting for independence to the present time -late 1980’s accompanied with the civil war and the different troubles the Algerians faced-. Thus, *Memory in the Flesh* represents the story of the Algerians war fighting for independence, and both the victory and the failure of Algeria. Victory mainly lays in fighting for freedom and getting rid of the colonizer, and the failure is shown through the incompetence of the ruling elites of the post independence era which is accompanied with the spread of corruption and the appearance of domestic troubles.

The above scholarly critics have studied the two narratives from different perspectives. They have discussed different issues and struggles in both works. However, one may indicate that they did not associate these matters to major issue of memory and trauma. We think that

the characters' struggle with the various issues leads to trauma. Therefore, our purpose is to draw a comparative study in relation to the issue of memory and trauma in both novels.

### **Issue and Working Hypothesis**

Despite their different geographical and historical backgrounds, Ahlam Mostaghanemi and Virginia Woolf share some similarities concerning the circumstances behind writing their two novels. The two novelists have been studied and tackled from different perspectives. Yet, to our best knowledge the two authors have not been compared. Therefore, in this research we suggest a comparative study between Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway* (1925) and Ahlam Mostaghanemi's *Memory in the Flesh* (1993) where we intend to explore the theme of memory and trauma in the two works. We will attempt to explore the ways in which Virginia Woolf through *Mrs., Dalloway* and Ahlam Mostaghanemi through *Memory in the Flesh* deal with traumatic experiences of their protagonists. Our interest will be mainly on the study of characters, themes mainly the theme of memory and trauma. In order to achieve our purpose, we will rely on trauma theory. The reason for choosing this critical perspective as suitable approach to *Mrs. Dalloway* and *Memory in the Flesh* is because it seems relevant to our investigation.

Our research will be divided into five sections. The first section is devoted to the General Introduction in which we have introduced the topic in general. Then, the review of literature, where we have reviewed some critics about the two novels. We have concluded that to our best knowledge, there is no comparative study between the two novels in relation to the issue of memory and trauma which is the purpose of our research. In this part, we find the Issue and Working Hypothesis that a comparative study between the mentioned novels is missed. The reasons which encourage us to deal with this study come first from our interest in kind of works studied in comparative literature. Then, the affinities between the authors'

experiences, and the issue of Memory and Trauma that are similar. What will follow is the second section Method and Materials. In Method and Materials we shall present the summaries of both novels and Cathy Caruth's theory of trauma. The latter's main concepts are: belatedness, Latency, the difficulties to get access to the traumatic stories, and the unspeakability of trauma. The Result section will show our Findings. We come to the conclusion that: the characters of both works are parallel. Septimus and Khaled are Post Traumatic Stress Disorder since they participated in the war since their traumatic experiences prevent them from enjoying life after the end of the war. They both failed to build new relationships. After that, Clarissa and Hayat who are both traumatized character under the control of their past. They pretend to be strong women occupying themselves with social preoccupations since they are both from the upper class and live within a patriarchal society. As a result, Memory and Trauma are prominent themes in both works. The characters of both novels have a traumatic past or experiences. After that, there is the discussion section which is divided into three chapters. The first chapter is devoted to the analysis of characters in relation to the concept of memory in both works. First, we have the female characters in relation to memory, namely: Clarissa and Hayat. Clarissa the protagonist of *Mrs. Dalloway* stirs up reminiscences from the past. She is recalling her youth in Burton with her best friends Sally Seton and Peter Walsh. Her memories stick to her present life. Then, Hayat the protagonist of *Memory in the Flesh* who is affected by her past. All her memories are related to the hardship that she had witnessed in her childhood and the memories that are occupying a large part in her life. Then, we move to male characters, namely: Septimus and Khaled. Septimus Warren Smith is a sensitive war veteran who witnessed his best friend's death (Evans). He is always attached to that past that haunts him again and again. Then, Khaled is an ex-combatant who loses his arm in the battlefield. Through his memories, he is always displaying his life in the past. The second chapter deals with the effects of trauma on the protagonists of both authors.

The first part is entitled: Personal Experiences and Trauma in Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway*. Clarissa is mainly the female the most traumatized in the novel. She is a victim of her bad choices in the past. She is in struggle with her memories which leave her emotionally wounded and lost. Then, Traumatic Memories in Ahlam Mostaghanemi's *Memory in the Flesh*. Trauma was also experienced by the protagonist Khaled. His traumatic childhood and the injury is the causes of his trauma. As a result, Khaled is a Post Traumatic Stress Disorder Character. After that, Hayat who is a wounded soul experienced a painful childhood. Through writing, she wreaks vengeance of the past. As a result, she is lost in the fragmentations of her past. Then, the last chapter where we will study the modern techniques used by the two novelists, mainly flashbacks and stream of consciousness techniques. Finally, we will conclude with a General Conclusion which sums up the general ideas developed in the research work. There are affinities between Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway* and Ahlam Mostaghanemi's *Memory in the Flesh*, in the way: they present their characters struggling with their traumatic memories, and how they develop memory and trauma as prominent themes in both novels. Both authors express their refusal to the ignorance of war veterans through the exploration of modernist techniques, mainly flashbacks and stream of consciousness.

### **End notes**

<sup>1</sup>Shoshana Filman, "*The Juridical Unconscious: Trials and Traumas in the Twentieth Century*" (2002), 171.

<sup>2</sup>Bernard Blackstone, "*Virginia Woolf: A commentary*", 71.

<sup>3</sup>T.E Apter, "*Virginia Woolf: A Study of Her Novels*", 55.

<sup>4</sup>"*The Importance of Time in Virginia Woolf's Mrs. Dalloway*", an essay.

<sup>5</sup> Kim Jhonson, "Ahlam Mostaghanemi's *Memory in the Flesh*", Al Djadeed a Review & a Record of Arab Culture and Art. 2002.

<sup>6</sup> Nabeeh Iskandar AL Hassan "للأدبية أحلام مستغانمي" \_ "قراءة في رواية ذاكرة الجسد", The Voices of the North, 2017.

<sup>7</sup> "khetamNaamana " *Memory in the Flesh*, "ختم نامنة - ذاكرة الجسد - وفوض الحواس - تاريخ الجزائر" *Chaos of the Senses, Algérien History*", Al Hiwar Al Moutamadin, published, 2002.

## I. Method and Materials

### A-Method

Trauma has been always one of the foremost issues that have been developed in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century. The term trauma was coined by the Greeks for the wound. It is firstly used in the English medicine relating its appearance to modernization and the industrialization of people's lives. Modernization and industrialization are mainly shown in the railways that have caused both body and mind injuries, which caused psychological suffering and loss. Trauma Theory's reputation mainly goes hand in hand with the wave of Holocaust studies that seek to describe the status of the current century. In such circumstances, a group of critics associated with the Yale School of Deconstruction contributed with their works, such as: Shoshana Felman through her work, *The Juridical Unconscious: Trials and Trauma in the 20<sup>th</sup> C* (2002), Roger Luckhurst with his work, *The Trauma Question* (2008), Dominick LaCapra in *Writing History, Writing Trauma* (2001). These critics start to use medical ideas on psychic traumatic development and apply these ideas to the study of narrative texts. In addition there is Cathy Caruth who is among the first critic to apply psychoanalysis vocabulary to the analysis of trauma in literature.

Our concern will be on the theory developed by Cathy Caruth in, *Trauma: Explorations in Memory* 1995 and *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative and History* 1996 since it fits more our study. Caruth's theory is based on the different disciplines that contributed to better understand and explain the notion of trauma, including: psychology, sociology, history and literature. In her books, Caruth explains the difficulties that the victim faces preventing them from understanding a traumatic experience, and argues that vocalizing a traumatic event is needed in order to heal and forget about those painful moments. She asserts that: "Trauma is not locatable in the simple violent or the original event in an

individual past, but rather in the way that its very unassimilated nature”<sup>2</sup>. She explains that the traumatic experience is never fully recognized, it is a “paradoxical event” that moves continuously between the awareness and the absence of identification of the real event that caused the psychic disorder. Trauma then, occurs in the manner that the victim reacts to the effect of that event which haunts his mind later on. In this sense, Cathy Caruth explains:” in its repeated imposition, the trauma seems to evoke the difficult truth of history that is constituted by the very incomprehensibility of its occurrence”<sup>3</sup>. Caruth mainly adopts Freudian terminology employing the term “Latency”<sup>4</sup> to distinguish the period during which the consequences of the experiences are not understandable or even clear.

Trauma can be defined as a psychological illness, a historical event and a collection of symptoms. Three ways are suggested to the use of this word: as a physical injury, a psychological injury and a figure of speech<sup>5</sup>. Roger Luckhurst comments: “[t]rauma is [...] always a breaching of disciplines”<sup>6</sup>. Trauma is an accident of a private history that takes place within a historical context, such as: war. The survivors of the traumatic experience are coined Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, a term defined by the American Psychiatric Association in 1980, in response to the psychological disturbances observed in soldiers of the Vietnam War. Cathy Caruth elucidates this by suggesting that the” Phenomenon of trauma has seemed to become all-inclusive, but it has done precisely because it brings us to the limit of our understanding.”<sup>7</sup>

To understand trauma, one may recognize that it is not limited in space or in time because it is universal and related to humanities. Trauma as a whole permits us to enter to the internal world; mind; where lays the traumatic event, trying to understand and to decipher what had really happened. Thus, the survivor loses the sense of recognition and understanding of the traumatic experience.

Caruth sheds light on the importance of integrating trauma into another one's knowledge. Thus, it is not the narrative that heals, but it is when the survivors' relationship with the listener contributes to understand the truth of their trauma; meaning that conversation should be called. Caruth's theory shows that trauma can be transformed from the victim to others through the articulation of that traumatic event. She mainly emphasized: Belatedness, Latency, the difficulties to enter to the traumatic story, and the unspeakability of trauma as important concepts to facilitate the understanding of the depiction of trauma in literature. All in all, Caruth believes that literature is mainly the perfect location "where the dialectic process of knowing and not knowing the traumatic past can be presented and analyzed by psychoanalytical methods"<sup>8</sup>.

## **B. Materials**

### **a-Summary of Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway***

*Mrs. Dalloway* is a novel about an upper class woman Clarissa Dalloway in her fifties. She is portrayed preparing for a lunch party that she organizes for the sake of her husband's reputation and career as a politician. The story takes place in a single day in June when she went to buy flowers to her party. Meanwhile, she is remembering her youth and past reminiscences. Whilst, there is Septimus Warren Smith, a war veteran who had participated in the war and who came back with a mental injury. This latter is the result of his friend's death Evans.

Peter Walsh came to visit Clarissa after a long journey to India. He is the stimulus that awakens her past memories in Burton, with Sally Seton and Peter her beloved. She remembers her happy life when she used to be a free woman without any disturbances, she was happy with her mother, aunt and sister within a female sphere. The choices she had made in the past especially her refusal of Peter's proposal for marriage caused inside her a kind of



regret leading to her instability. She preferred to marry Richard Dalloway in a way to satisfy her ambitions in life. Now, she wishes and wonders how life is used to be if she had done different choices. She is lost between her present life and the past. She is a victim of her eagerness for a high social position.

Septimus is haunted by his past memories. He is always visited by the hallucinations about his dead friend. His wife Lucrezia is always trying to heal, to console, and to get rid of his fears and pain. Her attempts were faced by Septimus' alienation and estrangement. At the end of Clarissa's party, Sir William arrives to announce Septimus' suicide that day. Septimus decided to make an end to his suffering by committing suicide. At the end of the party, Septimus' death changes the course of Clarissa's sensations. In this time, she decided to leave her sorrows behind her and to free her spirit and soul.

### **b-Summary of Ahlam Mostaghanemi's *Memory in the Flesh***

*Memory in the Flesh* represents four decades of the Algerian history from the event of 1945 till the revolt of 1988. The novel is narrated by the protagonist Khaled, a former war fighter, a painter who lost his arm in the battlefield. From the beginning one may notice that the novel that Khaled writes is a response to his former lover Hayat's published novel. The novel then, goes beyond this love affair between Khaled and Hayat since the narrator plunges in his memories from his childhood and the hard life he had witnessed with the death of his mother. To free himself from his painful life, he decided to participate in the war as a means to escape his loneliness, and substitute the lack of affection with the love of the country. Unfortunately, all his ambitions and dreams are "gone with the wind". Missing his arm in the battlefield was the accident that causes the shock of his life. This accident led to his trauma and redirected his entire life pushing him to exile and to the growing of the feeling of inability. Thus, he turns all his feelings, frustrations and destruction into painting and later on

into writing. It was the turning point of his life: from a hero into a painter without any social status with a remarkable injury with a missing arm.

Twenty five years later, he encountered his beloved Hayat, his friend's daughter, in an exhibition in Paris. Most of the novel is devoted to this love story, as he falls in love with her from the first glance, a love to which he gives a big consideration. Thus, he associates her with his precious things in life; his mother and his beloved town Constantine. Their separation gives birth to his career as a writer, where he transforms his failure in love and life in general into writing gathering all his experiences, and memories. At the end of the novel he loses everything: his lover, his brother and the only thing that remains is his memories and the power of his pen as an artist.

### **Endnotes**

<sup>1</sup>CathyCaruth,"*Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative and History*", 1996, 04.

<sup>2</sup>Cathy Caruth,*Trauma: "Exploration in Memory"*,Baltimore, Md: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995, 153.

<sup>3</sup>Eva Figes,"*A Journey through Trauma*", 2015, 11.

<sup>4</sup>Oxford Dictionary, London: New York: Routledge, (2008),04.

<sup>5</sup>Luckhurst, Roger,"*Trauma Question*,"2008.

<sup>6</sup>CathyCaruth,"*Trauma: Exploration in Memory*",Baltimore, Md: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995 , 04.

<sup>7</sup>Eva Figes,"*A Journey through Trauma*", 2015, 11.

### III-Results

In our research paper, we have compared Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway* (1929) and Ahlam Mostaghanemi's *Memory in the Flesh* (1993). As a result, we have found some similarities in relation to the issue of trauma and memory using Cathy Caruth's theory of trauma, focusing on the main concept concerning traumatic memory caused by the war. We have mainly highlighted the important concepts of Caruth's theory of trauma: Belatedness, Latency, unspeakability of trauma and the uneasiness of access to the traumatic story. As a result, we have noticed that this theory is the suitable one to our study.

The present time of the characters of Virginia Woolf and Ahlam Mostaghanemi is preoccupied with their past. They experience moments of paralysis and a stopped time. Time is displayed empowering memory which unites the present and past time giving birth to moments of insecurity and instability. Virginia Woolf and Ahlam Mostaghanemi unveil the hidden psychological status of their main characters that live moments of despair, loss and estrangement.

In addition, the most characters of both novels are portrayed victims of a traumatized past that prevent them from living peacefully, because they are unable to live their present without the manifestation of their past. Cathy Caruth explains that the insistent reappearance of the past event is accompanied with the inability to remember or even understand the reality of that event. Those characters are always in conflict with their existence.

At the end, we have concluded that both writers rely on the same modernist techniques in order to communicate their reflections about the psychological effects of the war. It is a way to speak up their refusal to the chaos and the loss of faith that had spread within post-war society.

## **II. Discussion**

This section examines the affinities between Virginia Woolf's *Mrs., Dalloway* (1925) and Ahlam Mostaghanemi's *Memory in the Flesh* (1993). It is divided into three chapters: the first one is entitled The Weight of Memory in the Characters, the second: Recalling the Past and Trauma, and the last one is Modernist Techniques and Memory.

### **Chapter One: The Weight of Memory on the Characters**

This chapter is devoted to the study of the characters of Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway* and Ahlam Mostaghanemi's *Memory in the Flesh* in relation to the theme of memory. In fact, both writers present their characters in the two narratives as models of alienated individuals who experienced traumatized events. It seems to us that the parallels which we can make between the two works are through the following characters: Clarissa who is struggling with evoking memories, and Septimus, Khaled and Hayat in relation to their painful past that had shifted the course of their whole life.

#### **a-Female Characters and Memory**

This part aims to draw parallels between the protagonists of the two works in relation to their experiences and the circumstances which make them feel alone and even frustrated, but they are struggling to affirm their identity and existence. Woolf and Ahlam present their characters in the quest for internal peace and harmony. They give us the opportunity to see two different types of memory, since it is mainly the dominant theme: happy memories and painful ones. Through the eyes of Hayat who is living in the past and who refuses to accept the fact that her father preferred to sacrifice his life for the sake of the country instead of living with her, Mostaghanemi aims to shed light on the importance of having a happy and a balanced childhood, painful childhood. Then, Clarissa who remembers her life when she was

young in relation to homeland Bourton and her beloved Peter Walsh, she cherishes those happy moments, happy memories.

*Mrs. Dalloway's* protagonist, Clarissa, who is displayed in a single day in June preparing a party on that evening, stirs up memories and reminiscences from the past in the form of "inner wishes"<sup>1</sup>. Woolf through her female character describes the inner side of her protagonist, thoughts and emotions at both present and past time. In this sense, Cathy Caruth asserts: "the experience is repeated after its forgetting"<sup>2</sup>. This means that past memories are essential to the life of each individual since it constructs an essential part in the building of the individual's history. Most of the time, Clarissa goes back to her youth days in Bourton, remembering her happy moments with Sally Seton and Peter Walsh. She remembers how she was happy with Peter whom she rejects even though she loves him in order to marry Richard Dalloway. Clarissa thought that Peter would lock up her soul, justifying that by saying:

For in marriage a little license, a little independence there must be between people living together day in day out in the same house; which Richard gave her, and she him (where was he this morning, for instance?) Some committee, she asked what. But with Peter everything had to be shared, everything gone into.<sup>3</sup>

Those memories make her aware of the choice she had made once upon a time, preferring her past upon her present life. Her life is full of what a person cherishes in life. She is the wife of a politician Richard Dalloway a remarkable politician, a mother of a beautiful daughter Elizabeth; furthermore according to Peter Walsh she is: "The perfect hostess"<sup>4</sup>. Yet she feels empty, just like a shadow who loves walking in London, as she said: "I love walking in London" and that "Really, it's better than walking in the country"<sup>5</sup>. Mrs Dalloway is not happy because she is attached to a past which seems much more important than her present days. She is lost between her body and name, for people call her Mrs. Dalloway and not Clarissa, she says: "Mrs. Dalloway, Mrs. Dalloway, not even Clarissa any more"<sup>6</sup>.

Thus, the author asserts that memories are brought up through the use of time, from the past to the present till the near future. In Cathy Caruth's terms it is "possession by the past"<sup>7</sup>, that is to say that individual is not free to live in the present without the interference of the past. This time is a psychological<sup>5</sup> time that deals with the internal and external thoughts of each character and individual. Hillis Miller remarks that: "(S)tory telling, for Woolf, is the repetition of the past and in memory, both in the memory of the characters and in the memory of the narrator. *Mrs. Dalloway* is a brilliant exploration of the functioning of memory as a form of repetition"<sup>8</sup>.

This means that Virginia Woolf allows the reader to enter the characters' minds to distinguish similar occupied problems of memory in order to understand the story of each individual in the novel "reliv[ing] the insistent reality of the past."<sup>9</sup> It is a manner to depict the unspoken thoughts. Throughout the novel, Clarissa's mind still being active and this permits the reader a truthful portrayal of the character. This shows the dominance of the past over the present time

The past is always present to subvert the characters' stability. Clarissa considers her past as a refuge to escape the present, for the past represents Mrs. Dalloway's youth where her happy and best memories lay. Bergson in his book *Matter and Memory*, proves that the past can come back at any moment and memories are not only reemerged when characters need that, the case of Mrs. Dalloway, but also when they escape it<sup>10</sup>. Clarissa considers Bourton as a part of herself that she cannot forget or even detach herself from it. She lives solely in memory and isolation. Her unique daughter Elizabeth spends all her time with Miss Kilman who despises Mrs. Dalloway. Even her husband Richard Dalloway is always busy with meetings.

Similarly, Hayat, the female character in *Memory in the Flesh*, is a victim of her past, but contrary to Clarissa she lived a traumatized childhood because of the death of her father

during the war for independence. Hayat had suffered till the present time from the absence of her father. She could not bear the sacrifice that he did. She then searches for him everywhere; in her grandmother's stories about him and in Khaled's memories. She is portrayed in the novel as being self confident, struggling to survive and to occupy herself with writing. She uses her talent as a writer to express her inner feelings, emotions, and the disappointments of her childhood, and all what followed the absence of a father or a man in a patriarchal society. There is also a description of how women became passive objects under the dominance of everyone, the society, religion and tradition. All these are the main source behind Hayat 's pain that lead to her refusal to her father's sacrifice that prevents her from enjoying life .She turns out her painful past into writing,as she points out:

We write to recover that we have already lost or was filched from us .I have had proffered an ordinary childhood and ordinary life and to have had a father and to have a family like anybody in but father become the property of the whole of Algeria. Only writing becomes my property and no body's going to take that away from me.<sup>11</sup>

In this context, Cathy Caruth argues that the traumatized victim"refusing to be silent in the face of the unsayable"<sup>12</sup>, is trying to face and challenge their trauma just like Hayat who resists to survive her trauma.

Furthermore, Hayat always feels a kind of nostalgia for her father, expressing a kind of "unconscious wish"<sup>13</sup>, she misses him so much. The sentiment of paternal absence grows up from her childhood till her adulthood causing the feeling of weakness inside her. In Cathy Caruth's words she is experiencing"traumatic reliving"<sup>14</sup>of the past that becomes a part of her life and dominates her, even if she looks strong and brave.She recalls her past throughout her grandmother stories, she comments:"she was the only person who would find time to tell me about everything. She would return automatically to the past as if she refused to leave it"<sup>15</sup>. Every time she meets Khaled, she asks him questions a series of questions .She confesses in one of her meetings with Khaled that she comes only to know more about her father<sup>16</sup>. So,

this refuge in the past events is achieved through remembering willingly the stories of her grandmother or by receiving an external stimulus mainly khaled who upsets her. Each time she sees him, her mind unwillingly goes directly to her father. This process of remembering goes with a recalling of the past events willingly and consciously as Bergson argues: "Memory does not intervene as a function of which matter has no presentiment and which it does not imitate its own way"<sup>17</sup>. Throughout her protagonist, Mostaghanemi wants to show how the traumatized childhood affected Hayat's whole life.

Throughout the two protagonists, Woolf and Mostaghanemi permit us to enter the inner side of the characters to decipher what is behind their actual situation and life. Hayat experienced a harsh life without the presence of a parental support or even affection. Clarissa, who is living in the past rejecting the present life, cannot distance herself from that happy past that haunted her. Both characters failed to overcome their past feelings. In Cathy Caruth's words: "memory is the re-experiencing of the events" and it is "a repeated suffering of the event"<sup>18</sup>. Both characters have hidden feelings and have an inner suffering due to their traumatic memory known as "Latency"<sup>19</sup> that prevents them from enjoying their lives, Cathy Caruth points out: "the fact of latency, would thus seem to, not in the forgetting of a reality that can hence never be fully known, but in an inherent Latency within the experience itself"<sup>20</sup>. People who suffer from trauma are found with distorted images, isolating and distancing themselves from the rest of the world.



## **b- Male Characters and Memory:**

This part aims to link the two male characters in both works, namely Septimus and Khaled, showing how their traumatic experiences affected their entire lives as they relive the past throughout their memories. This led to a total isolation and alienation from the rest of the world. It seems as if they relive the past in their memories. So both characters seem feeling frustrated, traumatized all their lives. Woolf and Mostaghanemi throughout their characters express the cruelty of the war that lead to trauma and frustrated dreams. This gives an authentic image of traumatized characters throughout their traumatic memories. Septimus then represents a deprived individual, haunted by his past experience in the battle field and the death of his friend that led to his isolation and depression. Then, Khaled who rejects his present life full of troubles, corruption, and chooses to live with his memories.

Septimus Warren Smith is a “shell-shocked” veteran from the First World War, suffering from depression. He is mainly lost between his thoughts. He remembers with his Italian wife the causes of his present status. Septimus has been a young and a brave soldier in Italy where he had married his wife. He still shocked because he had witnessed the death of his friend (Evans) who fell in combat, experiencing “individual suffering”<sup>21</sup>, because Septimus suffers solely without the interference of any savior from his estrangement. From the outside, he is seen as a brave war hero. Now, he is a war veteran who suffers the effects of the war. He wanted to return to the normal life, but the fatality of the war prevents him from doing so. By going back to everyday life after the war, trying to enjoy life, he seems depressed and mentally unstable, because he believes that he is deserted and deserves to die: “kill yourself, kill yourself, for our sakes”<sup>22</sup>, said Septimus. In a passage he has an immense feeling of not belonging to the world, makes him believe that his body is falling apart before his eyes: “the flesh was melted off the world. His body was macerated until only the nerve fires were felt. It

was spread like a veil upon rock. He lay very high, on the back of the world. The earth thrilled beneath him.”<sup>23</sup>

He is tortured with the inner visions of Evans. Septimus seems anguished with those visions seeing Evans as a “ghost memory”<sup>24</sup>. Woolf points out:

Evans answered from behind the tree. The dead were in Thessaly, Evans sang, among the orchids. There they waited till the war was over and now the dead, now Evans himself... But the branches parted. A man grey was actually walking towards them. It was Evans! But not mud was on him; no wounds; he was not changed.<sup>25</sup>

Woolf through Septimus suggests that war can cause profound psychological effects because he is experiencing “a repeated nightmare”<sup>26</sup>, displaying “nightmares of the soldiers who have come back from the war”<sup>27</sup>. Septimus’ memories of the war dominate his mind. Though he struggles to see beauty again in life, the present is interrupted by cruel visions of the past. Thus, Septimus’ closest memories are of violent war-time.

Khaled, like Septimus, is a traumatized character due to his memories related to war. He was a fighter for independence. In this sense Cathy Caruth argues that: «trauma is experienced ....as temporal delay that carries the individual beyond the shock of the first moment»<sup>28</sup>. In this context, the comprehensibility of trauma is manifested later on. He witnessed difficult and hard life during the colonial period as he missed his arm and the death of his close friends such as Si Tahar. So, his memories are associated with death and pain. Khaled cannot overcome them whenever he tries because of the different stimuli that remind him all the time of those memories, one of them is his missing arm, the main source of his alienation and complex that grows up and develops a kind of trauma. In Cathy Caruth’s words, it is an “isolation imposed by the event.”<sup>29</sup>. So Khaled’s isolation is not a choice but determined by his past experiences. Khaled is portrayed as affected by his injury that prevents him to look forward and to get rid of his “traumatic past”<sup>30</sup>. His past returns in the form of “repeated failure”<sup>31</sup> in the battlefield, in love, and in all his life. As he points out in

one of the passages: “One is ashamed of the empty sleeve hidden timidly in the pocket of a jacket, as through trying to cancel a private memory and apologize for the past to those who have no past, the missing hand disturbs them and takes away their appetite”.<sup>32</sup>

Khaled uses his art as a painter to describe his painful memories trying to “retell the lost truths of pain”<sup>33</sup> as it is mentioned in the novel: “I was going back and forth with my brush as if with my lips. I was kissing its soil, its stones, its trees, and its valley. Disturbing my passion over the space with colored kisses, nostalgia, madness and sweating love”<sup>34</sup>. He is connected to his past. He prefers to live with the old generation throughout his memory because he sees the new generation or the youth of 1980s as ignorant about the sacrifice his generation did during the war. So, he relives his past throughout his memories that are personal and intimate, representing his close relation to Algeria and precisely Constantine. He prefers to keep the old image of it rather than the actual image of a new town with new inhabitants, and lifestyle...

Woolf and Mostaghanemi explore the two characters giving the readers the opportunity to share the real image of traumatized individuals that witnessed the horrors of the war. For instance, Septimus who is affected by the war, the death of his close friend Evans in the battlefield and the haunting images of war. The latter haunt him insistently leading him to depression. Similarly, Khaled fails to distance himself from what he had experienced in the past. So he could not detach himself from the memories that haunt him and prevent him from living a balanced life. Cathy Caruth explains that: “to be traumatized is precisely to be possessed by an image or an event”<sup>35</sup>. Both characters are attached to their past “the war”, as their entire life centers in the past.

**End Notes:**

<sup>1</sup>Cathy Caruth," *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History*". (Baltimore the Johns Hopkins University Press 1995), 94

<sup>2</sup>Cathy Caruth,"*Trauma: Exploration in Memory*"(the Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995), 08.

<sup>3</sup>Woolf.Virginia."Mrs.Dalloway".London: The Hogarth Press 1925. London: Penguin books, 1996, 10.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid. 03.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., 03.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., 08.

<sup>7</sup>Cathy Caruth, "*Trauma Exploration in Memory*"(the Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995), 151.

<sup>8</sup>Miller Hillis, 1982, 176-7.

<sup>9</sup>Cathy Caruth, "*Trauma Exploration in Memory*" (the Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995), 152.

<sup>10</sup>Bergson, H. "*Matter and Memory*."Transl: by N.M.Paul&W.S Palmer: New York, 1988, 221.

<sup>11</sup>Ahlam Mostaghanemi,"*Memory in the Flesh*",(Arabia Books2008),67

<sup>12</sup>Cathy Caruth, "*Trauma Exploration in Memory*" (the Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995), 10.

<sup>13</sup>Cathy Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History*. (Baltimore the Johns Hopkins University Press 1995), 96.

<sup>14</sup>CathyCaruth, *Trauma Exploration in Memory* (the Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995), 10.

<sup>15</sup>Ahlam Mostaghanemi, *Memory in the Flesh*, (Arabia Books2008), 67.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid., 44.

<sup>17</sup>Bergson, *Matter and Memory* (1988), 222

<sup>18</sup>Cathy Caruth, *Trauma: Exploration in Memory* (the Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995), 4-5.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid., 07.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid., 07-8.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid., 156.

<sup>22</sup>Woolf, Virginia. *Mrs. Dalloway*. London: The Hogarth Press 1925. London: Penguin books, 1996, 68.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid ., 51.

<sup>24</sup>“The Importance of Time in Virginia Woolf’s *Mrs, Dalloway*” Sample Essay.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid., 52.

<sup>26</sup>Cathy Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History*. (Baltimore the Johns Hopkins University Press 1995), 108.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid., 109.

<sup>28</sup>AhlamMostaghanemi,"*Memory in the Flesh*",(Arabia Books2008), 10.

<sup>29</sup>Cathy Caruth," *Trauma: Exploration in Memory*"(the Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995), 11.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid

<sup>31</sup>Cathy Caruth, "*Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History*". (Baltimore the Johns Hopkins University Press 1995), 108.

<sup>32</sup>AhlamMostaghanemi,"*Memory in the Flesh*" ,(Arabia Books2008), 43.

<sup>33</sup>Cathy Caruth,"*Trauma: Exploration in Memory*"(the Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995), 09.

<sup>34</sup>AhlamMostaghanemi, "*Memory in the Flesh*" ,(Arabia Books 2008), 126.

<sup>35</sup>Cathy Caruth,"*Trauma: Exploration in Memory*"(the Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995), 04-05

## **Chapter Two: Recalling the Past and Trauma in both Novels**

The following part aims to draw parallel between Woolf's and Mostaghanemi's novels in terms of recalling the past and its effects on the present life of their protagonists. It is an attempt to unveil the novelists' position towards this new phenomenon called "Trauma".

### **a- Personal Experiences and Trauma in Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway*:**

The following section deals with the analysis of Woolf's characters in relation to the theme of trauma. Woolf portrays her characters as emotionally unstable and in a disturbed situation, in a way to explain and reveal the life of the traumatized soldiers after the end of the war and to which extent they lost faith in both life and humanity. Furthermore, Woolf goes deeper in her quest to integrate the inner struggle of the individual trying to understand and to recognize their self and identity to prove their existence. Thus, we will deal with Mrs. Dalloway, a traumatized female, and Septimus Warren Smith, "a shell-shocked" soldier, who are the best illustration to understand the theme of Trauma in Mrs. Dalloway.

Clarissa Dalloway is mainly the most traumatized female in the novel. She is portrayed at the very beginning of the novel as an "upper class Lady"<sup>1</sup>, cherishing and enjoying life, preparing for her dinner party organized for her husband Richard Dalloway, a politician, "Mrs. Dalloway said she would buy the flowers herself"<sup>2</sup>. Meanwhile, she is plunging into the past and enters her memory remembering her adolescence at Bourton: "What a lark! What a plunge! For so it had always seemed to her, when, with a little squeak of the hinges, which she could hear now, she had burst open the French windows and plunged at Bourton into the open air"<sup>3</sup>. The author asserts that Clarissa's trauma lays in her choice to marry Richard Dalloway, because being Mrs., Dalloway does not serve her ambitions in life, as Cathy Caruth explains: "Trauma is not locatable in the simple violent or original event in an individuals' past, but rather in the way that its very unassimilated nature –the way it is

precisely not known in the first instance-returns to haunt the survivor later on.”<sup>4</sup>That is to show trauma is not understood or even known to the survivor while he experiences it but is discovered only later on.

The title *Mrs. Dalloway* is a cover to her agony in her marriage which is considered as a death and a birth of new identity with new name and mainly a new social status. Thus, her ambitions in life are redirected with the act of marriage. Woolf displays her gathering the opposite feelings: from the outside she seems happy and enjoying life, and inside her negative emotions are taking place whilst the memories steal out from her past. Freud points out: “The event returns insistently and against their will”.<sup>5</sup> Thus, Clarissa is haunted by her glorious past which returns unconsciously. Her thoughts are always related to the life before marrying Richard, Cathy Caruth explains that it is; “a series of images that is presumably seen by her”<sup>6</sup>. As a result, her mind is full of doubts about the choices she had made, fears and worries. In the context of Caruth’s theory: “Trauma is suffered in the psyche precisely”<sup>7</sup>. Thus, trauma is a wound that is located in the victim’s mind not his body.

Woolf seems trying to lighten the reasons behind Clarissa’s estrangement and isolation, showing how the difficult and the unreal relationship between friends, family and the absence of communication produce injury in the female mind. Consequently, Mrs. Dalloway is always evoking her refusal of a happy and a beautiful future with Peter Walsh and Sally Seton. In addition, while recalling her past, she feels detached and omitted:

[ Her body]with all its capacities ,seemed nothing –nothing at all. She had the oddest sense of being herself invisible , unseen ,unknown; there being no more marrying ; no more having of children now ,but only this astonishing and rather solemn progress with the rest of them, Up Bond Street ,this being Mrs. Dalloway<sup>9</sup>.

Clarissa thus displays the P.T.S.D symptoms that come as an invasion of her consciousness by memories from her past, Caruth claims that: “Post Traumatic Stress Disorder reflects the direct



imposition on the mind of the unavoidable reality of horrific events.”<sup>10</sup>. The past is always within the minds’ of individuals and appears without permission.

Despite all those painful feelings, she is viewed as a happy lady with the title Mrs. Dalloway, having an essential social status. Maya Angelo once remarked:”There is no greater agony than bearing an untold story inside you”<sup>11</sup>. The untold story of Mrs. Dalloway is her declaration of love for Peter Walsh which tortured and tormented her for a long time. What mainly deepened her trauma is being excluded from the female sphere because her female company is restricted to her daughter Elizabeth. Her memories, enjoying life with Peter and Sally are clearly seen in her present time, meaning that she is re-experiencing the past in the present each time she remembers it. In this sense, Caruth puts out:” The historical power of the trauma is not just that the experience is repeated after its forgetting, but that it is only in and through its inherent forgetting that it is first experienced at all.”<sup>12</sup> Clarissa thus is suffering because she remembers her past and cannot escape it. Woolf portrays her as if she had no future to think of, but only a past which possesses her entirely. In addition, she lives her present without having or planning for the future, as Caruth asserts: “the experience of being shot into a future that is not entirely one’s own”<sup>13</sup>, means that the survivor is completely deprived of living peacefully neither in his present time nor in the future.

Being a shell-shocked veteran of the war, Septimus remains unchangeable to the new circumstances. He is in a stressful state since he is experiencing the past experiences repeatedly and continuously. In Caruth’s words Septimus’ trauma is a “wound of the mind- the breach in the mind’s experience of time, self, and the world ...not available to consciousness until it imposes itself again, repeatedly, in the nightmares and repetitive actions of the survivor.”<sup>14</sup> As a result, Woolf portrays Septimus hallucinates of his lost friend Evans who occupies his mind. She describes them, Evans and Septimus,: “It was the case of two dogs playing”<sup>15</sup>. He sees Evans first in Regent’s Park “There was his hand; there the dead.

White things were assembling behind the railings opposite. But he dared not look. Evans was behind the railings”, and “A voice spoke from behind the screen. Evans was speaking. The dead were with him.”<sup>16</sup> He sees death everywhere, as T.E Aptera claims: “Images of death are never merely deadly”<sup>17</sup>.

Septimus used to be an active member in society. He was young and healthy during war time. Thus, when war came, he “was one of the first to volunteer”<sup>18</sup>. By entering the war, his objective was to fight and come back fulfilling something in his life. But the horror and the cruelty he had witnessed turned him mentally unstable. In this context, Cathy Caruth asserts: “It is only through the inherent forgetting that [trauma] is experienced at all”<sup>19</sup>. In this case, the cause behind his unstable state lays in his inability to forget what he had witnessed. Woolf asserts: “his brain was perfect, it must be the fault of the world then—that he could not feel.”<sup>20</sup>

Septimus Warren Smith is portrayed as mentally transported to the past. Memories make him stick to the scenes he had witnessed. Freud argues that: “The reliving of the battle can be compared to the nightmare of an accident”<sup>21</sup>. He is victim and prisoner of the past. Caruth explains that: “The trauma [...] in its unexpectedness or horror cannot be placed in the schemes of prior knowledge that cannot [...] become a matter of intelligence and thus continually returns at a later time”<sup>22</sup>. Woolf presents her character as a traumatized individual who is remembering his unforgettable experiences in an uncontrollable manner, re-living those painful moments. Caruth explains that “in its repeated imposition, the trauma seems constituted by the very incomprehensibility of its occurrence”<sup>23</sup>. This means that the victim is unable to understand and to transform trauma into something understandable and easy to express.

Witnessing pain, horror and traumatic events of the past drive him to moments of paralysis and separate him from the real world to throw him in an imaginary one. Freud elucidates: "We have found by experience that unconscious mental processes are in themselves timeless."<sup>24</sup> Another critic notes that traumatized soldiers who survived the war often feel that they are not fully alive: "In war the experience of death was given not just to those who appeared in the mortality statistics but also to those who were forced to remain in the expanding moment between the extinction of all choice and the extinction of life"<sup>25</sup>. For Septimus to move on and forget the past is a kind of betrayal to his friend Evans. In this sense, Caruth asserts that: "Freedom from madness is that equated with the forgetting that began her sane seeing and knowing, a freedom that is fundamentally a betrayal of the past"<sup>26</sup>. When Doctor Holmes and Bradshaw tried to cure him they became the worst creatures to him, Septimus demanded: "Must, must, why "must"? What power had Bradshaw over him? What right has Bradshaw to say "must" to me?"<sup>27</sup>.

Septimus feels isolated and loses faith in everything. He is degenerating, as Apter points out: "Septimus Smith is the perfect victim: his sensitivity to the pain in the world makes him intolerable to see the pain, the individuality of his vision makes him unable to survive in a world that demands crafty self-defense and shallow self-assurance"<sup>28</sup>. Rezia understands his suffering and always searches for healing his soul and tries to eliminate the feeling of pain, fear and repression; as Krylova shows in his book *Healers and Wounded Souls* "Literature dealt with trauma of the soldiers saying; women the necessary "other" who would recognize the mutilated soldier and help heal his soul."<sup>29</sup> He mainly focuses on the important role of the mother or wife as a detective of trauma. Septimus's severe trauma mainly resulted from the absence of a listener to whom he would deliver his pains, thoughts and hurtful memories. Brison points out: "it is essential to talk about it, again and again. It is a way of remastering the trauma, although it can be retraumatizing when people refuse to listen."<sup>30</sup>. He chooses

another way to free himself from that cruel world to enter the world of pure spirits. Septimus' death results from his inability to express and communicate his traumatic experience, as Cathy Caruth points out: "...if not life-threatening, it is at least threatening to the chemical structure of the brain and can ultimately lead to deterioration. And this would also seem to explain the high suicide rate of survivors<sup>31</sup>. So, Septimus' death is justified by the absence of an ear to listen.

To conclude, it seems that both protagonists are suffering and struggling to prove their identity within society. Clarissa is mainly convinced that it is necessary to sacrifice her glorious past for her family and life. Unlike Clarissa, Septimus decides to make an end to his suffering and to free his soul by committing suicide.

#### **a- Traumatic Memories in Ahlam Mostaghanemi's *Memory in the Flesh*:**

Ahlam Mostaghanemi explores the theme of trauma to give a clear image about traumatic victims, their reactions, behaviors and thoughts due to their repetitive past that returns in the form of memories. As a result, they live an unstable and disturbed life, repeating and re-experiencing the same events of the past accompanied with memories which affect their entire life. Thus, this part will be devoted to the two traumatized protagonists Khaled and Hayat.

Khaled presents a traumatized character that corresponds to the criteria of post traumatic stress disorder victim, as Cathy Caruth defines it:

a response, some time delayed to overwhelming event, which takes the form of repeated, intrusive hallucination, dreams and thoughts or behavior stemming from the event. The event is assimilated or experienced fully at a time, but only belatedly<sup>32</sup>.

Ahlam Mostaghanemi shows Khaled reliving his past everyday throughout his thoughts and traumatic memories. In this sense, Cathy Caruth argues "for the survivor of trauma, then, the truth of the event may reside not only in its brutal facts, but also in the way

that their occurrence defies simple comprehension”<sup>33</sup>. His trauma is deeper than one can imagine, it “is suffered repeatedly”<sup>34</sup>, for it is not only the product of the colonial period but it goes back to his childhood. His deep love for his mother and the bad treatment she receives from his father who neglects completely his family because of his pursuits of his desires is the main cause behind his unstable life. All in all, these circumstances led to the birth of his trauma. When he visits Constantine for the first time after his exile he walks in the town, he stirs up the image of his father while leaving those dirty places. His trauma grows with the death of his mother because of illness and deep pain<sup>35</sup> with the immediate marriage of his father. All this led to the birth of a kind of contempt feeling for his father and caused the formation of a Traumatic childhood.

The suffering of Khaled does not stop at this level, for it follows him till his youth. He participated in the war as a means to escape the lack of affection. Mostaghanemi portrays him enjoying the war to escape that suffering, replacing his mother’s love with the love of his country<sup>36</sup>. He witnessed death, poverty and blood. What makes his life worse is his injury. He states in that day when they had lost six combatants as he was one of the injured with two bullets in his left hand and the only salvation was to eradicate it “I was one of the wounded after two bullets, penetrated my left arm”<sup>37</sup>, said Khaled. This was mainly the great shock of his life which became the main source of his trauma, an accident that affected his life, which triggered him into a kind of a battle with his destiny. Khaled states: “destiny was throwing me out of my only refuge, bringing me from clan destiny in another battle ground ...”<sup>38</sup>. In this context, Caruth points out: “to be a traumatized character is precisely to be possessed by an image or an event”<sup>39</sup>, the event for Khaled is his physical injury that led to the beginning of a painful life<sup>40</sup>. He feels useless, he loses everything, he has no place in the battlefield nor in the society, and he considers himself neither dead nor alive, a man who is rejected by both death and life. He considers himself as: “belonging not to life or death, but an arena of death”<sup>41</sup>.

Thus, he alienates and isolates himself from the rest of the world because of his feeling of disability. This accident makes him re-experiencing the: "feeling that I had become an orphan again"<sup>42</sup>. In this context Cathy Caruth points out: "an individual traumatized by his own past – the repetition of his own trauma as it shapes his life"<sup>43</sup>. Khaled is unable to forget his past.

As a result, he chooses exile to Paris, and denies the social state in which he lives; all this causes the growing of his trauma. This is why most of the time he returns to his past unwillingly. Khaled's trauma then goes beyond his injury, to control his mind, since it goes deeper than the injury of the body. Freud points out: "trauma is understood as wound inflicted not upon the body but upon the mind"<sup>44</sup>. So, Khaled's suffering shifts from body injury to become a wound in the mind. The unique salvation or recovery is his art, using his pen to represent his feelings, as he said: "the colors suddenly started to take on the color of my memory and become a gaping wound very difficult to stop"<sup>45</sup>. Throughout this passage, we understand that the cure for Khaled lays in painting. He uses the power of his art to transform the traumatic events behind his destruction into an art, making them speak about him. The collections of the bridges that he draws represent his important loves; his mother, his town Constantine and his beloved Hayat. All the three are connected and related directly to the source of his traumatic memories. Khaled then finds a cure throughout his art both by painting and writing. In this sense, Caruth argues: "the transformation of trauma into narrative memory that allows the story to be verbalized and communicated to be one's own and others, knowledge of the past may lose both the perception and force that characterizes it."<sup>46</sup> We can say that Khaled feels that his trauma loses its weight and significance after its enunciation.

Trauma is a unique and personal experience that affects people in different ways, depending on the nature of the event that causes it. Hayat, for example, is affected by her traumatic past. The participation of her father in the war leads to his total absence causing heartbreak inside her. This grows later on to be transformed into trauma, as Caruth argues

“psychological trauma noted that the effect of traumatic experience located in memory as Freud famously stated: history suffers for the most part from reminiscences”<sup>47</sup>. Hayat’s suffering is taking place in her memories<sup>48</sup>. The death of her father in the battlefield mainly deepens her agony.

Mostaghanemi explores the character of Hayat as a victim of traumatic past, she grows with the lack of affection and the complex of the absence of her father that marked her entire life. She shows how colonialism destroyed not only the generation of that period but also the coming generation. What creates inside her ambiguous emotions towards her father is that she knows a little about him as a person. She does not bear the fact that he favored the battlefield and forgot his duty as a father; she comments that being a martyr’s daughter means to have a painful life<sup>49</sup>. This feeling which is the parental absence is the main source of her traumatic childhood.

This experience is painful and affects her as an adult, for she remains stuck to her memory. In Caruth’s terms: “the memory of the unwitting traumatic events in one’s past”<sup>50</sup>. Hayat searches everywhere for answers to her questions about her father. As a result, she goes back to the memories of her grandmother and her stories about him. She points out: “she was the only person who would find time to tell me about everything. She would return automatically to the past as if she refused to leave it”<sup>51</sup>. Hayat finds a little about her father in her grandmother fragmented stories and the rest she finds it in Khaled’s memories. Each time she meets him she asks him to tell her more about her father. She suffers in silence; she pretends to be a strong and wise person, in reality behind this sophisticated image there is a sensitive woman with a traumatic past. In this context Caruth asserts: “the language of trauma and the silence of its nature repetition of its suffering...”<sup>52</sup>, trauma is something that occurs inside the victim, precisely in their mind. It comes in a form of repetitive memories. Hayat is portrayed in the novel hiding a deeper wound inside her<sup>53</sup>. She could not find the way

to recovery, as Caruth points out in an interview: "the ability to recover the past is thus closely and paradoxically tied up, in trauma, with the inability to have access to it." <sup>54</sup> Hayat then could not get access to her trauma nor overcome it.

As a "cure" for the trauma that prevents her from enjoying life, Hayat returns to her past and looks for the sources of her inner suffering. Then she decides to forget her traumatic experience. She transforms her pain into writing, and she succeeds by doing so. She asserts: "we only write novels to kill those who have become a burden to us, we write to finish them off" <sup>55</sup>. So her solution lies in writing to get rid of all that reminds her about her trauma among them Khaled that she loves so much. According to her, he is a stimulus that wakes up her pain that she wants to throw far away starting a new life, with a new person. Thus, she decides to leave Khaled because she sees in him the traumatic past. She wants to build her future life but she fails when she commits the error of her life, marrying a man like her father. The husband is more interested in politics and social appearances than her, he neglects her totally and that leads to the awakening of her trauma, thus she is re-traumatized.

As a conclusion, Mostaghanemi portrays her characters as being victims of their traumatic past. Khaled's past repeats itself to become a nightmare that accompanies his whole life. At the end, he mainly embraces the fact that trauma does not eliminate life but can simply be a part of it. Unlike Khaled, Hayat fails in her attempt to defeat her fears since her choice redirects her life to the starting point of her trauma.



## End notes

<sup>1</sup>"Virginia Woolf, *Introduction, Mrs. Dalloway*" (New York: The Modern Library, 1928 p.)

<sup>2</sup>Woolf, Virginia. "Mrs. Dalloway." London: The Hogarth Press 1925. London: Penguin books, 1996, 03.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid

<sup>4</sup>Cathy Caruth, "*Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History*". (Baltimore the Johns Hopkins University Press 1995), 04.

<sup>5</sup>Sigmund Freud quoted in Cathy Caruth's "*Trauma: Explorations in Memory*" (the Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995).

<sup>6</sup>Cathy Caruth, "*Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History*." (Baltimore the Johns Hopkins University Press 1995), 36.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., 61.

<sup>8</sup>Woolf, Virginia. "Mrs. Dalloway." London: The Hogarth Press 1925. London: Penguin books, 1996, 08.

<sup>9</sup>MarriaQibita Sikandar, "*Deconstructing Trauma in Virginia Woolf's Mrs. Dalloway*." A sample Essay posted on August, 09, 2017, 58.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid

<sup>11</sup>Cathy Caruth, "*Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History*". (Baltimore the Johns Hopkins University Press 1995), 17.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid., 71.

<sup>13</sup>Woolf, Virginia. "Mrs. Dalloway". London: The Hogarth Press 1925. London: Penguin books, 1996, 135.

<sup>14</sup>Cathy Caruth, "Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History." (Baltimore the Johns Hopkins University Press 1995), 04.

<sup>15</sup>Woolf, Virginia. "Mrs. Dalloway". London: The Hogarth Press 1925. London: Penguin books, 1996, 69.

<sup>16</sup>T.E Apter, "Virginia Woolf: A Study of Her Novels", 58.

<sup>17</sup>Woolf, Virginia. "Mrs. Dalloway". London: The Hogarth Press 1925. London: Penguin books, 1996, 64.

<sup>18</sup>Cathy Caruth, "Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History". (Baltimore the Johns Hopkins University Press 1996), 17.

<sup>19</sup>Woolf, Virginia. "Mrs. Dalloway". London: The Hogarth Press 1925. London: Penguin books, 1996, 64.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid., 65.

<sup>21</sup>Cathy Caruth, "Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History". (Baltimore the Johns Hopkins University Press 1996), 59.

<sup>22</sup>Cathy Caruth "Recapturing the Past", "Trauma Explorations in Memory" (Baltimore the Johns Hopkins University Press 1995), 153.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid., 153.

<sup>24</sup>. Sigmund Freud quoted in Cathy Caruth "Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History", 1996, 32.

- <sup>25</sup>Leed, Eric j.”*No Man’s Land: Combat and Identity in ww”I*.New York: Cambridge University Press, 1979, 23.
- <sup>26</sup>ChathyCaruth, “*Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History*”. (Baltimore the Johns Hopkins University Press 1996), 33.
- <sup>27</sup>Woolf.Virginia”*Mrs.Dalloway*”.London: The Hogarth Press 1925. London: Penguin books, 1996, 107.
- <sup>28</sup>T.E Apter, “*Virginia Woolf: A Study of Her Novels*”, 61.
- <sup>29</sup>Anna Krylova,”*Healers of Wounded Souls*”, 330.
- <sup>30</sup>Susan Brison ,”*Aftermath: violence and the Remarking of a Self*”, Princeton in, 2002, 16.
- <sup>31</sup>Cathy Caruth,”*Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History*”. (Baltimore the Johns Hopkins University Press 1996), 63.
- <sup>32</sup>Cathy Caruth,”*Trauma: Explorations in Memory*” (the Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995, 3.
- <sup>33</sup>Cathy Caruth, “*Recapturing the Past*”,” *Trauma exploration in Memory*” (Baltimore the Johns Hopkins University Press 1995), 153.
- <sup>34</sup>Cathy Caruth,”*Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History*”. (Baltimore the Johns Hopkins University Press 1996), 69.
- <sup>35</sup>AhlamMostaghanemi,”*Memory in the Flesh*”,(Arabia Books 2008), 27.
- <sup>36</sup>Ibid
- <sup>37</sup>Ibid., 35.
- <sup>38</sup>Ibid.,19

<sup>39</sup>Cathy Caruth, *Trauma: "Explorations in Memory"* (the Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995), 04-05.

<sup>40</sup>AhlamMostaghanemi, "*Memory in the Flesh*"(Arabia Books ,2008),20.

<sup>41</sup>Ibid.

<sup>42</sup>Ibid.

<sup>43</sup>CathyCaruth,"*Trauma: Explorations in Memory*"(the Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995), 5.

<sup>44</sup>Sigmund Freud quoted in Cathy Caruth,"*Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History*". (Baltimore the Johns Hopkins University Press 1996), 03.

<sup>45</sup>AhlamMostaghanemi,"*Memory in the Flesh*"(Arabia Books ,2008), 125.

<sup>46</sup>Cathy Caruth "*Recapturing the Past*", "*Trauma: Exploration in Memory*"(1995),153.

<sup>47</sup>Ibid

<sup>48</sup>AhlamMostaghanemi, "*Memory in the Flesh*"(Arabia Books 2008), 107

<sup>49</sup>.Cathy Caruth, "*Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History*" (Baltimore the Johns Hopkins University Press 1996), 8.

<sup>50</sup>AhlamMostaghanemi, "*Memory in the Flesh*" (Arabia Books 2008), 67

<sup>51</sup>.Cathy Caruth, "*Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History*". (Baltimore the Johns Hopkins University Press 1996), 8.

<sup>52</sup>AhlamMostaghanemi, "*Memory in the Flesh*"(Arabia Books 2008), 60

<sup>53</sup>Cathy Caruth, *Trauma: Explorations in Memory* (the Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995), 152.

<sup>54</sup>Ahlan Mostaghanemi, *Memory in the Flesh* (Arabia Books 2008), 80.

### **Chapter Three: Modernist Techniques and Memory:**

This last chapter is devoted to the use of modernist techniques namely the stream of consciousness and flashback in order to show how these techniques contribute in the development of the theme of memory and trauma. This allows the reader to understand post-war generation and how they are badly treated. It aims also to shed light on the suffering of women at that period. Both authors show the impact of this issue on society.

Virginia Woolf is considered as one of the pillars of Modern Literature, she is known for her modernist narrative style. She was mainly influenced by Sigmund Freud and Henry Bergson. Her style shifts from the conventional plot to adopt a new one. Woolf's innovation mainly lies in "presenting the whole life of a woman in a single day"<sup>1</sup>. She relies on the chronological order to the story only when real time is mentioned, otherwise the plot of the story is not chronological. Woolf aims to explore the re-enactment of the past of her characters. Thus, she relies mainly on the use of stream of consciousness and flashbacks.

To achieve her purpose, Woolf emphasizes the notion of time. The latter plays an important role in moving back and forth, from the present to the past and the near future. The appearance of time in the novel is mainly seen through Big Ben. Its chimes punctuate the novel with reality bringing the reader from and the character back to exterior time, especially while moving from one character to another. The bells of Big Ben seem to remind each character that time is passing and about their existence in the present while they are thinking of the past. Moreover, the role of the Big Ben is to proclaim a new preparatory. It is considered as a sort of a "waking up"<sup>2</sup> to both the reader and the character from the private space – interior time- to the exterior reality. Through Mrs. Dalloway's mind we move from London to her youth time in Bourton. While leaving house to buy flowers for the party, Clarissa experiences a memory of Bourton through the "squeak of the hinges which she could

hear now”<sup>3</sup>. This shows how Woolf moves and jumps from memory to the present and reality, permitting to the reader to get access to Clarissa’s interior time. The flashbacks thus, permit us to enter to Clarissa’s mind which reveals the hidden side of each character in the novel and unveils Clarissa’s attempt to escape the burden of her choice in the past. This technique helps the Woolf to show us the continuity of interior time. In addition, there is Septimus Smith whose internal time is stopped. He is still being stuck to the war time and reflecting about it. This technique permits us to decipher what is hidden in the individuals’ thoughts. Cathy Caruth argues that: “The painful repetition of the flashback can only be understood as the absolute inability of the mind to avoid an unpleasurable event that has not been given psychic meaning in any way”<sup>4</sup>. This means that the victim is not aware of his trauma before its insistent re-appearance in flashbacks. Septimus was always visited by hallucinations each time he remembers his friend Evans. He is depicted in a continuous struggle with the flashbacks of the war. As Cathy Caruth points out:”What returns to haunt the trauma victim [.....] is not just any event but, significantly the shocking occurrence of an accident”<sup>5</sup>. So, Septimus is completely haunted by the vision of his dead friend Evans.

Then, Woolf supports flashbacks technique with the use of stream of consciousness in *Mrs. Dalloway*. By using this technique Woolf aims to describe the social reality rather than focusing on the external side and appearances. Woolf depicts her characters’ thoughts and emotions, especially Clarissa, as Woolf said:”But then these astonishing into tears this morning, what was all that about? Thought him fool presumably, not for the first time”<sup>6</sup>. Tunneling technique helps Woolf to unify the interior with the exterior and memory with the present. According to Virginia Woolf it is the role of the novelist to expose the inner life as it is and as it exists in the mind of each individual. Thus the present and the past go hand in hand, as we see Clarissa’s remembering of Peter’s playing with his pocket knife and Peter’s thoughts and remembrances from the past he shared with Clarissa. Through Peter’s thoughts,

Woolf mainly offers the reader the possibility to understand both characters while they are thinking about themselves and about each other. The author describes the inner life of her characters and their hidden feelings and emotions.

Ahlam Mostaghanemi uses the same modern techniques. Yet, she is known for being influenced by several Arabic writers following their conventions in style and writing which is characterized as modernist and unique. Her style of writing is mainly similar to the Arabic writers such as Ghassan Knifani, Ghada Essaman, Naguib Mahfouz and the Algerian writer Malek Heddad. In her novel, *Memory in the Flesh* she explores flashbacks and stream of consciousness that help her to build a modernist work that serves more in the construction of memory and trauma.

The theme of memory is mainly the dominant theme in the novel that is reinforced by the stream of consciousness technique. The latter permits the reader to enter in the characters' minds, their thoughts, and feelings throughout the use of time from the past till the present as the novel describes four decades of the Algerian history. Fifty years of the Algerian history in the memory of a single person who is Khaled. So, the novel focuses more on the internal and external emotions and thoughts of each character, the characters cannot express only their personal thoughts but goes deeper in other character's thoughts. Khaled does not only reveal his own feelings and emotions but goes further to unveil other's inner thoughts. Thus, throughout Khaled the reader is able to know more about Hayat and her dead father who was mainly the main source behind her trauma.

The novel then allows the reader to move in time since all the events and the emotions take place in Khaled's memories. Through this technique the reader will be able to enter Khaled's mind and feel his pain and grief. The reader then feels a kind of sympathy towards Khaled's situation; his trauma in relation to his injury that was the turning point in his life,



and which caused his alienation and isolation from the rest of the world. He feels paralyzed, a half man. As a result, he describes his loss and reacts as being an orphan again<sup>4</sup>. His frustration and destruction lead to his exile. Furthermore, throughout Khaled's thoughts, we feel Hayat's pain as an orphan after the death of her father. This situation creates inside her a kind of trauma. She adopts writing as a means to escape it, and later on she sacrifices her love for Khaled to marry a wealthy man in an attempt to detach herself from all that reminds her about her tragic past.

The flashbacks technique mainly serves the novel's main theme and plot. Mostaghanemi uses this technique to communicate the story plot which corresponds to the modernist criteria of writing. She is mainly influenced by some Arabic modernist writers such as the Palestinian Ghassan Khatib in the use of flashbacks. In the novel, this technique helps the reader to understand the characters' present situation, their pain, frustrations, and destruction in relation to their past. The flashbacks technique in Caruth's terms: "seems, provides a form of recall that survives at the cost of willed memory or of the very continuity of conscious thoughts"<sup>7</sup>, This means that traumatic memories are saved in the mind of the victims and return instinctively. From the memories of Khaled the reader is able to know more about the characters, the causes of their trauma that are related to their past. Throughout flashbacks technique the reader travels between the past and the present in four decades of the Algerian history. The causes behind Khaled's isolation and exile go back to the war for independence where he loses his arm. Moreover, his childhood, the careless alcoholic father and his mother suffering contributed in the building of his trauma. Khaled opens a window on Hayat's past, her pain which is caused by the death of her father at an early age and how this affected her later as a young woman. As a result, she chooses writing to kill the past that threatens the stability of her life. All this makes her return to her painful past which is an unwanted chapter in her life that she wants to omit so as to rebuild a balanced one, as Cathy Caruth points out: "the story that

the flashback tells ...a history that literally has no place, neither in the past, in which it was not fully experienced nor in the present in which it's precise images and enactment are not fully understood"<sup>8</sup>. The stories or memories are just fragmented images of traumatic events that come back to the mind unwillingly.

**End notes:**

<sup>1</sup>MarriaQibita Sikandar, "*Deconstructing Trauma in Virginia Woolf's Mrs. Dalloway*. A sample Essay posted on August, 09, 2017, 58.

<sup>2</sup>Hawthorn, Kirsty, "*Time and Space in Mrs.; Dalloway by Virginia Woolf*".

<sup>3</sup>Woolf.Virginia".*Mrs.Dalloway*."London: The Hogarth Press 1925. London: Penguin books, 1996, 3.

<sup>4</sup>Cathy Caruth,"*Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History*". (Baltimore the Johns Hopkins University Press 1995), 59.

<sup>5</sup>Woolf.Virginia".*Mrs.Dalloway*."London: The Hogarth Press 1925. London: Penguin books, 1996, 107.

<sup>6</sup>AhlamMostaghanemi,"*Memory in the Flesh*"(Arabia Books 2008), 36

<sup>7</sup>Cathy Caruth"*Recapturing the Past*", "*Trauma Exploration in Memory*"(1995), 152

<sup>8</sup> Ibid, 153

## V- Conclusion

Trauma as an issue cannot be a final fate for a man; but can be a part of life. Time moves on and life keeps going on. Thus, Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway* (1925) and Ahlam Mostaghanemi's *Memory in the Flesh* (1993) permit us to witness the authenticity of the reality lived by the traumatic victims. Memory as an important element in the life of the individual is considered as an engine of the brain which functions under the slogan: a man without a past can never have an existence, neither in the present nor in the future.

Throughout our dissertation, we reached the conclusion that Virginia Woolf and Ahlam Mostaghanemi explore Memory and Trauma in their works as dominant themes. In fact, *Mrs. Dalloway* (1925) and *Memory in the Flesh* (1993) describe the main characters: Clarissa and Septimus, and Hayat and Khaled, and their past memories. Both novels portray them enslaved by their traumatic experiences, and demonstrate the reality of post-war society and the psychological consequences caused by the war. Septimus and Khaled present the suffering of post-war veterans that are unable to be integrated again in a society that rejects them. This reject is caused by the absence of communication and the inability to deal with this new issue which is trauma. Furthermore, Clarissa and Hayat are affected by this new issue, trauma. This latter thus, affects women differently from men, because women are sensitive more than men. As a result women, deal with the consequences of trauma in different ways. Both authors deal with the above issue, thus they wrote about similar concerns showing the failure of society to protect the wounded souls. Despite the previous formal similarities, we have found some differences in relation to the setting of the two novels and their source of influence, since the two writers write in their mother tongue, mainly one in English and the other one in Arabic language. We hope that this research work is helpful for a better understanding of the affinities of the two works in relation to the concept of trauma.

Moreover, we believe that further studies and research can explore other issues in both works such as: feminism, alienation and gender issues.

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