



## Woman in Culture and Arts

### An analysis of the portrayal of women in the novels “Body Memory” and “Prune” through the lens of Elaine Showalter’s linguistic theory

Sayad Panahi<sup>1</sup> | Hamid Valizadeh<sup>2</sup> | Mahin Hajizadeh<sup>3</sup>

1. PhD, Department of Arabic Language and Literature, Faculty of Literature and Humanities, Azarbaijan Shahid Madani University, Tabriz, Iran. E-mail: [sayadpanahi@yahoo.com](mailto:sayadpanahi@yahoo.com)
2. Corresponding Author, Associate Professor, Department of Arabic Language and Literature, Faculty of Literature and Humanities, Azarbaijan Shahid Madani University, Tabriz, Iran. E-mail: [drhvalizadeh@yahoo.com](mailto:drhvalizadeh@yahoo.com)
3. Professor, Department of Arabic Language and Literature, Faculty of Literature and Humanities, Azarbaijan Shahid Madani University, Tabriz, Iran. E-mail: [hajizadeh@azaruniv.ac.ir](mailto:hajizadeh@azaruniv.ac.ir)

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#### ABSTRACT

##### Introduction

The critique works written by women is regarded as one of the contemporary feminism's accomplishments. Feminism, an intellectual movement emerged in the late 20th century, instigated a multitude of social, political, cultural, and literary transformations. Feminism distinguished between male and female literature and, on the basis of that distinction, criticized both men and women. Furthermore, it engaged in independent discussions and analyses of the works of women, employing theories and frameworks that were unique to women. Elaine Showalter accomplished this by devoting tremendous effort to the study of women's criticism, language, and women's works and literature. She examines the writing tradition of women, which signifies the prevailing eras and literary techniques in women's literature. Investigating and identifying these traditions, according to Showalter, necessitates familiarity with women's language as well as the dimensions and components utilized by women throughout each era; furthermore, these elements are subject to variation across cultures, political and social hegemonies, time periods, and geographical locations and spatial components. Hence, the current study endeavored to identify two novels "Body memory" by Ahlam Mosteghanemi, written by an Algerian female author, and "Prune" by Nasim Marashi, an Iranian female author, in order to critique women's literature. To deliberate on in order to attain a more comprehensive understanding of the state of women, as well as their ideas and concepts.

The present research deals with a comparative study of one of the four dimensions of Elaine Showalter's writing tradition. The research questions are:

1. According to Elaine Showalter's theory, the novels "Body Memory" and "Pruning" belong to which stage of the writing tradition according to Elaine Showalter's theory?
2. According to the components used, what are the differences and similarities between the novels "Body Memory" and "Pruning"?

##### Methodology

In the tradition of women's writing based on Elaine Showalter's theory, we face three main concepts: the feminine tradition is the first stage of women's writing and the second stage is feminism. According to Showalter, although in some of the works of the first stage, a muted voice of protest can be heard, the second stage is considered a real beginning for women's protest. The third stage is called the feminine tradition. Showalter believes that women writers create a kind of female-centered story at this stage. This article examines the similarities and differences of two postmodern women writers in possessing the characteristics of women's writing and the degree of belonging to the traditions of women's

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writing in Showalter's component, using a descriptive-analytical method with the approach of comparative literature of the American school and using Elaine Showalter's theory.

### **Results**

The novel produced by women at this stage has a tone and expression different from the stage of feminism and presents its new content, which expresses a developed social vision, in a new structure of characterization and perspective. The components of women's tradition are related to the third stage, which itself has four types: "biological, linguistic, cultural, and psychoanalytical."

Five distinguishing characteristics of the linguistic dimension of women's writing, color words, feminine words, brief sentences, details, and supplementary questions are analyzed and compared in the novels under discussion in this article. Notably absent from Elaine Showalter's theory are comprehensive descriptions of the mechanisms underlying each of the four dimensions. As a result, the mechanisms and internal components of the discussed dimension have been chosen in accordance with his general observations and those of other authorities in the field of criticism of women's writings and stylists, including Robin Lakoff, Al Ghazami, Mahmoud Fotuhi, etc. The research findings indicate that both novels are situated in the feminism stage of Showalter's three stages. With regard to the utilization of linguistic elements, such as color words and their frequent and combined application, it has assumed the predominant position in both literary pieces. The results show that the novels give importance to colors and it is not hidden from their eyes and they want to show their feminine coordinates. Both authors discuss the way of covering, clothing and color and its features, which are often common among women. In the novel of Ahlam, short sentences are used abundantly, in single words. In "Prune" novel, short sentences are used abundantly and the war and the crisis of life in the border and southern areas of Iran have affected the frequent use of these types of sentences. In the novel "Body memory" detailing has occurred in a wide way and in various dimensions, and the detailing of dreams is evident even in the observation of events with the mention of history. In "Prune", Nasim Marashi has made a lot of effort for the tragedy and darkness of war, and she tried to record the details and narrate the issues carefully. Supplementary questions after stating the contents and repetition of such questions are used a lot in the novel "Body memory". As we get closer to the end of the novel and Nawal's mood becomes more broken, the use of supplementary questions increases.

### **Conclusion**

Nevertheless, with respect to terms associated with women's issues or women's fields, this element appears less frequently in both pieces of works. This particular element is utilized to a lesser extent in both "Body Memory" and "Prune" as a result of the element of masculinity and war predominating, respectively. The use of specifics and concise sentences is prevalent in both works. This linguistic element has been utilized repeatedly and explicitly with less influence from culture and the intellectual transformation of characters originating from the core of culture. In her novel "Body Memory," Ahlam has shortened the sentences, and numerous instances of truncated or incomplete sentences, among others, strengthen the linguistic dimension of feminine writing, despite the fact that these sentences are spoken by the male protagonist. A limited perspective is presented through the depiction and narration of the topics. Women authors, in fact, have incorporated their contemporary and inherently feminine essence into the thoughtful portrayal of issues, striving not to overlook crucial details or the various facets of the subject while incorporating them all within the narrative framework. Despite the fact that the temporal scope of the two works is relatively brief in comparison to the narrative time, the selected time periods illustrate the rule of meticulously

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describing events. Repetition and supplementary queries are regarded as the preponderant feminine characteristics of both works. Supplementary inquiries are utilized infrequently in the novel *Prune*, a deliberate choice made by the author in light of the external perspective and narration of the characters' actual and external exploits. However, as the novel nears its conclusion and Nawal's spirit further deteriorates, the utilization of supplementary inquiries escalates. Due to the limited opportunity for a decisive presence in this circumstance, inquiries that imply uncertainty and a lack of resolve are typically employed to examine the matters at hand.

**Conflict of Interest**

The authors of this article confirm that the manuscript or any part of it has not been published previously or is not under consideration for publication elsewhere. This research was conducted according to the ethical rules and regulations and no violations or frauds were committed. The responsibility of reporting possible conflicts of interest and financial sponsors of the research rests with the corresponding author, and they take responsibility for the mentioned matters.

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