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**Voicing Women Struggle in Ahlem  
Mosteghanemi's Bridges of Constantine**

**Thesis Submitted to the Department of English Language in Partial Fulfilment of  
the Requirements for the Master's Degree in Literature and Civilization**

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Candidates,  
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2020/2021

## **Declaration of Authorship**

We, Djaidri Rafik a'd Mekki Yasmine, do hereby solemnly declare that the work we presented in this dissertation is our own, and has not been submitted before to any other institution or university for a degree. We have fully cited and referenced all material and results that are not original to this work.

This work was carried out and completed at Mohammed Boudhief University of M'sila,  
Algeria.

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## **Abstract**

This study addresses the issue of Algerian women representation in postcolonial era in Ahlem Mosteghanemi's *Bridges of Constantine* 2013. This research, entitled *Voicing Women Struggle* in Mosteghanemi's Novel *Bridges of Constantine*, aims at investigating the women struggle in postcolonial society in the light of Postcolonial Feminism Theory. In addition, the study aims at highlighting the fact of women marginalization in society in post independent Algeria. As a result, this research finds out that Algerian women were not credited for Algerian Independence war. It also reveals that women were mainly shattered and lost in their trials to prove their individuality and freedom. According to Mosteghanemi, even if a woman is aiming at self-independence and individuality, the shadow of patriarchal community still limits women energy and passion towards a free status.

**Key Words:** Woman Struggle, Postcolonialism, Ahlem Mosteghanemi, *Bridges of Constantine*.

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## General Introduction

Literature does not only link readers to writers' mind, but it also reveals how authors used it to envision their positions and shape their thoughts. Postcolonial Literature was one of the most influential periods on history of literary works. Many countries went throughout colonialism in the last century. Most of their people have been killed for the sake of freeing their homeland. The struggle to free the country did not take one aspect. Some have chosen to fight with their bodies. Others have chosen to use their words. The effect of words cannot be denied. Eventually, words speak louder than actions. Even after the colonial era, people still choose to raise their voices using their pen. With the claim that colonizer have civilized these colonies, Postcolonial authors were mainly African, Indian and South-American; those belonging to regions which had experienced decolonization. Postcolonial writers attempted to send a clear message for the western world. They wanted to prove that they already have an identity, national belonging and principles. In their writings, Postcolonial authors linked imperial effects and cultural expansion over their communities. Postcolonial Literature has been dealing with many theories. One example is gender issues within postcolonial era, that is called basically postcolonial feminism.

Gender has represented one of the most controversial social issue in the world. The old patriarchal community has reflected on the postcolonial society, and thus affecting its literature. The urge to describe women situation after and within the war by colonizers has been determined as a necessity. The western world has claimed that women rights can be earned only by western women. Accordingly, nonwestern woman can take the role of housewife and mother only. In this sense, Postcolonial woman cannot be neither independent nor successful in other fields of life. This claim starts substantially from the mostly masculine communities that were colonized. Among the African Postcolonial authors is Ahlem Mosteghanemi. Ahlem

Mosteghanemi, an Algerian author, has carried the burden to defend woman voice and has given an echo for women struggle for an identity and place in a patriarchal society. More specifically, a masculine postcolonial society. Women have struggled to find a name among the crowd. Moreover, women have fought for the independence of their country, just like men. In the translated version of her novel, Mosteghanemi highlights these realities. As for The reason behind choosing this novel as the core for this study, it is that it has a huge audience from all over the world. The novel was the first to be written in Arabic language by an Algerian woman, oriented for Arab world, and tackles an Arabic social issue. However, as the woman representation in literature has taken different aspects within worldwide literature, the novel, by Mosteghanemi, a global interest and it has been the target study by worldwide authors.

As the issue of gender and woman struggle has been a subject of discussion in the last decades, many authors have challenged the norms and break the fear of tackling gender issues in many Postcolonial literary works. Some writers committed themselves to undertake and handle the question of gender balance in the *Bridges of Constantine* by Ahlem Mosteghanemi. One work is an article entitled *Unlocking the Female in Ahlem Mosteghanemi* by Laren McLareny 2002. The article aims at indicating the male voice over the female character in the story of Khaled and Hayat in *Bridges of Constantine*. The article basically analyzes the novel under another translation. However, the indication is the same for the translator balanced between the original book and the translation. The work by McLareny has come to a conclusion that the book of *Bridges of Constantine* in its original context could not contribute to the women writings. The author clarifies that the use of male voice by Mosteghanemi reflects her true beliefs as "... she herself admits to the assumption of a male literary voice" (McLareny 43).

Alotaibi has also interested in clarifying Mosteghanemi's vision in her book *Bridges of Constantine*. In her comparison article, entitled *Echoes Of Trapped Voices: The Role Of Women In Doris Lessing's The Grass Is Singing And Ahlam mosteghanemi's Memory In The Flesh*,

Alotaibi reflects on the woman role, character and voice in both novels. The research aims at discussing woman in both novels. Concerning Mosteghanemi's book, Alotaibi detects the illusion of an independent woman within a postcolonial society. In addition, Alotaibi highlights the interchange of colonial and masculine forms of domination from feminist perspectives. The articles found out that women have always been treated inferiorly in a colonial and postcolonial society.

One research paper is entitled *Representation of gendered art through gendered memories in Ahlam Mosteghanemi's Memory in the Flesh and Chaos of the Senses*, By also Alotaibi. The essay attempts at considering Mosteghanemi's views about gender and how she makes use of her views within memories. The author links the memories of each protagonist to their art. In this sense, each gender is represented by his art, not the character. The author applies trauma theory to postcolonial literary work. In this sense, the book finds out that "gendered memories play a very significant role in Mosteghanemi's novels about Khaled and Ahlam/Hayat" (Alotaibi 102). However, the book confirms the patriarchal sense in Mosteghanemi's novel over the matriarchal.

Another research that analyzes Mosteghanemi's novel includes one title that is *The (Im)possibility of Building a Nation: Of Algeria and Memory in the Flesh*, which is devoted to Mosteghanemi's novel analysis. Throughout the book, the author emphasizes the gendered differences between the protagonists. However, the author also highlights and reflects female role and independence within Mosteghanemi's novel. It also indicates the woman hopes for liberation and individuality in a society that is mainly over dominated by male perspectives and women inferiority.

This research stands as an additional work for the previous literature that tackled the gender issue within Ahlem Mosteghanemi's work entitled *Bridges of Constantine*. This work focuses mainly on Mosteghanemi's trials to clarify Algerian woman status in postcolonial communities.

The problematic behind this research is gender issue in Ahlem Mosteghanemi's *Bridges of Constantine* 2013. Thus, study aims at analyzing how Ahlem Mosteghanemi, with her writing techniques and style, has expressed woman within her novel " *Bridges of Constantine*" as a portrait of real situations in and post colonial Algerian community. In her book, Mosteghanemi attempts to defend and indicate women independence and individuality. This research aims at clarifying Mosteghanemi perspectives about women struggle in a society that is guided by masculinity thoughts and shattered because of the colonial domination.

This research has set the following as a basic research question,

- How have women been portrayed by Ahlem Mosteghanemi in her book *Bridges of Constantine* 2013?

This research has based its claim on the hypothesis that,

- Ahlem Mosteghanemi has defended and sought to voice women struggle and independence in her novel *Bridges of Constantine* 2013.

This study uses the analytical method in order to be conducted. It Follows the Postcolonial Approach. The researchers aim at analyzing Mosteghanemi's views in her book *Bridges of Constantine* about woman struggle, independence, and situation in postcolonial Algerian society. The analytical method means following a methodology which allows researchers to firstly search, analyze then synthesize. It is chosen because it suits the aim of the research.

This dissertation is structured into two chapters. The first chapter is devoted to the theoretical and historical background of the study. The first chapter, Entitled Literature Review, attempts at providing a general overview about the settings of the novel. It includes the historical events that are concerned within the novel. It also highlights the theoretical aspects. The first chapter indicates layers of the author that are reflected on the novel. The second chapter resumes the

analysis of the novel from postcolonial feminist perspectives. It analyzes the independence and struggle of women in postcolonial era. It also spots light on how women suffer in a masculine society which could not accept the development of women's potential abilities on a personal level.

# **Chapter One Historical and Theoretical Background of the Study**

# **Chapter One Historical and Theoretical Background of the Study**

## **Introduction**

Literary works have always been influenced by the surrounding circumstances in which they were written. These circumstances are also related to the social events, language change, cultural structure and the literary movement that occurred by that time. The first chapter will be devoted to the historical and theoretical background of this research. First, it highlights significant concepts for the study such as Post colonialism, Postcolonial Literature, Feminism and Postcolonial feminism. It also includes a brief description of African Literature, Algerian literature and culture within French influence. Second, the first chapter sheds light on main subjects tackled by the novel of Bridges of Constantine by Ahlem Mosteghanemi. Hence, it presents different views about the novel, ranging from criticism to support. Then, it moves to analyzing the causes behind the spread of the novel starting from its translation into foreign language. Finally, the first chapter concludes with the role of press in the wide-spread of the novel.

# **Chapter One Historical and Theoretical Background of the Study**

## **I. Historical /Theoretical Background**

### **1. Postcolonialism**

Postcolonialism is a cultural, social and literary study of the impact of the colonizer on the colonized within and after the decolonization of many countries starting from the mid-twentieth century. It is also the study of relations and reactions to the cultural remains of the Europeans and their imperialism upon the many colonies such as: Africa, South Asia and Latin America. Africa occupies the center of postcolonial studies because it was the most colonized territory by European countries. The notion of postcolonialism looks at the influence of the colonizer's culture on the colonized culture (Chousein 2013). Hence, it detects how two different worlds can result in a mixed society and how mutuality of the two worlds appears explicitly and implicitly within the colonized community.

Postcolonialism can be defined as the theory that studies "the impact that colonial and imperial histories still have in shaping a colonial way of thinking about the world and how Western forms of knowledge and power marginalize the non-Western world" (Nair 2017). More specifically, the study attempts at clarifying the effects on language, culture and society structure by the western world on the colonies. As powerful, the western world became a colonizer. Thus, it aimed at spreading their ideology and culture in everywhere possible. By so, it extracted cultural behaviors and restructured the colonized areas as well. In this sense, "The postcolonial studies have, since then, been offering unique perspectives to radically reassess colonialism and its aftermath from the colonized's perspective"(Gouffi and Berrahal 2020). Implementing new ways of thinking and new cultural changes has its effects on society as a whole and humans in specific. Postcolonial theory aims at studying these effects.

### **1.2 Postcolonial Literature**

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Any literary work that has been written after the decolonization of the country is to be considered as postcolonial writings. The literature specifically drew attention to basic ideologies at that time. In addition, Postcolonial sets its focus on "... the processes covering years and decades instead of small events that may seem insignificant"(Iftikhar 2020). Postcolonial literature attempted at understanding the colonial life and clarifying ambiguity about many aspects of life. Quayson adds,

A possible working definition for postcolonialism [literature] is that it involves a studied engagement with the experience of colonialism and its past and present effects, both at the local level of ex-colonial societies and at the level of more general global developments thought to be the after-effects of empire (2020).

By so, Postcolonial literature also investigated life after the colonialism era. By investigating, postcolonial writers reflect on cultural changes, lingual transition, societal movements and people mentality and ways of thinking.

## 1.2.1 Postcolonial Themes

Postcolonial literature deals with many topics. One aspect of postcolonial literature is that it neglected the idea of race and ethnicity which was dominated by the western world. During colonial era, the colonizers showed racism and practiced slavery on dangerous rates. Moreover, Postcolonial writers focused on gender issue. As Postcolonialism coincide with feminism globally, the women role was questioned and targeted in many literary works in postcolonial era. Essentially, the concept of power was a main subject in postcolonial narratives as the authors suffered from colonial oppression in its all aspects, mentally or physically. Tiffin states "most postcolonial literature has attempted instead to investigate the means by which Europe imposed

## **Chapter One Historical and Theoretical Background of the Study**

and maintained...colonial domination of so much of the rest of the world" (cited in Iftikhar 2020). Hence, postcolonialists also responded and reacted to literary works of the colonizer. This reaction was basically to prove that colonized areas had already an identity; and it was not by no mean that colonizer gave them an identity. Writers also raise the question of class and societal structure. Before colonialism, most of countries and regions were prevailed by different lifestyle and a different structure of society. In specific, it was the tribe system that controlled life over the years before colonial period. This social landscape has changed after decolonialism in most of areas. By focusing on the society, authors during postcolonial period also shed light on economic issues, religion, and culture (Iftikha 2020). Other themes of Postcolonial literature were migration, resistance and suppression.

### **2. Feminism**

The women movement that dominated the world over the last seventy years is referred to as Feminism. The movement marked its famous beginning within Counter Culture movement of United States of America. The movement called for women opportunities and equality with men in all aspects of life. These opportunities include with respect to redundancy of the knowledge, experience and strength which women have (What is Feminism 2018).

Many dictionaries and experts have offered definition of feminism. Caprino ,for instance, states that a common definition of Feminism is "The doctrine advocating social, political, and all other rights of women equal to those of men" (2017). Some of those who called for feminism did not only wanted equality of rights and opportunities, but also claimed "sameness" for women as men. They were called radical feminist. However, bias about women's traditional role that a woman can only be a housewife and mother was extensively questioned by feminism establishers. Although, there were some waves for feminism movement before the 1950s-1960s,

# **Chapter One Historical and Theoretical Background of the Study**

the cornerstone step for feminists was by 1950s. Ever since, women have taken more job opportunities, better living conditions, and improved health care services (Olson 2019).

## **2.1 Postcolonial Feminism Theory**

Gender issue is one of the crucial topics dealt by postcolonial authors. Postcolonial Feminism attempts to understand and interpret the acts of colonialists towards the feminists (Verve 2018).

Weedon claims,

Postcolonial feminism is a form of feminism that developed as a response to feminism focusing solely on the experiences of women in Western cultures and former colonies... [it]... seeks to account for the way that racism and the long-lasting political, economic, and cultural effects of colonialism affect non-white, non-Western women in the postcolonial world(2000).

By so, Postcolonial feminism aims at proving that feminism is not only a western pursuit but worldwide quest for women's rights. It emerged as a response for the feminism that was concerned with western women. In addition, Post colonial feminism argued that women around the world, especial non western, were being misrepresented. This misrepresentation was based on that only western women are worthy of equal rights to men. Generally, Postcolonial feminism seeks to highlight the role of woman within and after colonialism and its absolute aim is to well-present women in Postcolonial period.

## **3. African Literature**

African literature represents all the literary works that are written by African authors or poets, regardless of their country. The African literature is not as new as it seems to be. Africans have expressed their ideas and emotions orally since early ages throughout telling stories.

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Storytelling was the first cultural and literary art that Africa has adapted. Many authors have used this art to reclaim later the writing of a novel. Actually, the African novel has appeared to the surface based on oral storytelling. Folks and traditions have been a centre for most of the stories. Now, the novel is the most dominant literary genre over the world. Hence, Africans have also adapted the genre to voice their art (Abiola 2010).

Africa has experienced colonial forces for a long time. The African community was shattered by the colonial and western thoughts. This led to the loss of many traditions and the adoption of foreign customs. As a matter of fact, those customs were a pretext to civilize the African continent. Western colonialists have gone to Africa on the pretext to civilize, spread religion and bring modern ideas to African "traditional" communities. Colonial existence has taken many of the original customs and ideas of Africans. Thus, it has implemented some of the European thoughts. Thus, it changed the society structure of African communities.

After the decolonization of Africa, many Europeans have used the pretext of civilizing and bringing a new life to Africa. European also claimed that African have now an identity and structure thanks to western colonialism. In that regard, African authors rebelled to defend their original identity and their traditions which represented their culture. Africans raised their voices using their pen and wrote extensively about their old life and tradition. They also write about western presence within their countries.

Hence, the postcolonial era highlights the most impressive African literary works. Within postcolonial period, many authors such as Chinua Achebe and Nadjib Mahfouz have introduced remarkable literary works that are recognized globally. In the Postcolonial period of African history, literature reached its peak. Africans have made their voices heard and their words read.

# Chapter One Historical and Theoretical Background of the Study

As they defended their culture and identity, their works made a huge success within the western world.

## 3.1 Algerian Literature and Culture and the French Influence

Algeria has been a center for many cultures for many centuries. As any other African colony after the independence, Algerian authors attempted to prove that Algeria was out of the French influence. Post independent Algerians did not have stable situation culturally, politically or socially. Mainly, Algerian individuals were shattered and destroyed because they,

... have thus been caught between a tradition that no longer commands their total loyalty and a modernism that is attractive yet fails to satisfy their psychological and spiritual needs... []...

Algeria has experienced a dislocating clash between traditional and mass global culture (Cultural 2020).

The French cultural impact on Algerian Literary works and literature as a whole is significant for France had colonized Algeria for 132 years. France, as mostly any other colonial force had built churches and schools to teach their language for colonized. For over a hindered year, Algerians learnt French and used it obligatory in their daily life. Cultural aspects have changed and other structures were built upon the Algerian character (Samuels 2016).

Before the independence, it is important to declare that, Even if they write in French, Algeria has brought brilliant and famous authors such as Mohammed Dhib and Albert Camus. However, as mentioned before, the attempt to establish an identity within the wreck of the colonizer was the aim of many Algerian authors. Thus, this also caused to the rise of a new type of literary focus. This new focus shifted to set on independence, Algerian struggle, and the impact of French colonial existence. Kateb Yacine has represented one of the most important Postcolonial

## **Chapter One Historical and Theoretical Background of the Study**

works. His book *Nedjma* 1956 has interpreted the bleeding fights of France against Algerians and the French influence on Algeria which led to the revolutionary war. The cultural and political struggle was the main focus for Frantz Fanon, an Algerian author who wrote in French. As he experienced war and struggle, Fanon reflected on his experience and had written fiercely about the struggle against the colonial forces and their effects, besides to expressing his desire of decolonization (Samuels 2016).

The pre-colonial Algerian society, even mixed, was a conservative Muslim community. Algeria was a successful region within Ottoman nation. Families were preservative and very careful when raising children. However, the colonizer came with new ideas, some of them belong to the modern world. These thoughts and behaviors included individuality. However, "the pull of traditional values remains strong" (Cultural 2020). Mostly, the Islamic and traditional values have caused helped stabilize the Algerian community.

Nonetheless, some of those traditional values, if not all, have opposed the female individuality and liberation. It is important to say that Islam already gave women all rights they deserve. However, in a society that can be identified as masculine, the voice of women was banned. Women in general were banned from appearance. The position of women in old Algerian society did not pass the role of giving birth to children and raising them. Women were not allowed to work, and in some cases, they were not even allowed to get out of the house yard. The man, as a husband, was considered as the head of the family. Women and men were almost "two different societies". Each of the genders never shared the place in the place of others in usual and daily activities (Chanderli and Sutton 2020).

### **3.2 Algerian Woman in colonialism and postcolonial period**

As mentioned before, women role did not get out of the cycle of founding family and raising children. Male and females never shared places within society concept. In this sense, "Daily

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activities and social interaction normally take place only between members of the same gender" (Chandleri and Sutton 2020). Marriage was not taking the same personal responsibility and personal affair as it is today. Back in that era, it was a family matter and parent's arrangement. However, this tradition has mostly gone now. The decision to marriage has taken more personal preference. Even politically, women have been engaged in public positions. The old closed cycle of women has changed to women emancipation.

It cannot be denied that women were silenced before the Algerian independence war 1954. As a start, Algeria was one of the colonies that Europe had taken under control for over a century. More specifically, Algeria has suffered the French existence for a long period of time. As usual, and as in any colonial acts, Algerian men were taken to work harshly within the boundaries of their homeland; or were brought to fight in World War by French military. On the other side, Algerian woman took her conventional role: raise children and be housewife. However in war, women were abducted and abused in many ways.

Within the war, women's crucial role cannot be ignored. Algerian Women helped and contributed to the liberation of Algeria 1954. Women held arms, led conferences and fights, and sacrificed their souls just as men did. No matter how woman was misrepresented during French colonialism to Algeria, she contributed a great deal to contemporary Algeria.

Despite the French colonial action, Algerian people got their independence in 1962. However, Algeria's identity was shacked and mostly lost because of the very long presence of French colonialist in Algerian lands. Language, traditions and religion were extremely damaged. The role of family was dismissed. Education was hugely ruined. All France left was remains and cracks of a broken country. In relation to the topic of this study, women had been marginalized. Algerian women were positioned by inferiority. Their voice was lost by the form of colonialism (Alotaibi 64, 2018).

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## 4. The Issue of Language.

In their struggle to make their words heard has led African authors to use the colonizer language in their literary works. After the decolonization of African countries, many authors wanted to defend their identities. However, they knew that the western community will not pay much attention to their writings. In this case, African authors choose to target the western audience to claim their position. Many of them tended to use the colonialist languages: English and French.

It is important to note that there is a strong relationship between Algerian and the French Language. There is one significant reason for this, which is the long presence of France in Algerian lands. Due to this, the cultural and lingual background of Algerians has been deeply injured and shackled. After the independence, Algerian authorities declared Arabic the first language in the county, Benrabah states,

... After independence, the government institutionalized this Arabic variety as the sole national and official language of the country. Its spread among the population has been spectacular since 1962 as a result of the authorities' political and ideological commitment to de-Frenchify Algeria via the policy of Arabization, and also because of the substantial increase in literacy and related aspects, such as population growth (2013).

Algeria found in itself under the obligation of adopting French attitudes and traditions. Even most Algerian authors had French Backgrounds. In this regard, their use of French in their writing was very justified. As they used French within their daily lives, their urge to write was on base of using French language (Black 2016).

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Nonetheless, using the colonizer Language by colonized authors crossed the idea of being a means of communication with western audience. In the Algerian community, many authors like Assia Djebbar were famous for their French writings. In the early postcolonial era, few authors used Arabic language for their writings; mostly, for journals or articles (ibid). With regard of the topic of this research, Ahlem Mosteghanemi was known to be the first Algerian author to use Arabic language in her writings. Mosteghanemi felt the need to express her ideas in the language of her people and for her people. Mosteghanemi also felt the need to change her audience as her first book came. The book was written in French and talked about Algerian female and writing. It is also important to note that Mosteghanemi's first language is French. In general, a bestselling book at that time would have about 30000 selling. Mosteghanemi's first Arabic writing, entitled *Memory in the Flesh*, marked more than 50000 selling. The novel was translated in French, English and many other languages. Although a novice, Mosteghanemi has been very successful in using Arabic language and targeting Arabic audience

## **II. About the Novel**

### **1. Writers' Position Towards Ahlem Mosteghanemi's *Bridges of Constantine***

Any work of literature can be subject of acceptance or rejection. As many people may welcome, support and defend a specific piece of writing; others may unwelcome it, criticize or argue it. This act can be determined by many factors. Literary works such as novels can generally depict realities. When this depiction does not match facts, people reject the work. Sometimes, when there is an exaggeration in narration, or there is lessening in the value of events, people unwelcome the work. And often, when authors tell the facts as they really are, they get argued. Writers can also be thanked or criticized for their writing style, for the words they choose, or for the audience they are writing for. However, no matter what the reasons are, any piece of work is valuable in its own settings and according to its author.

## Chapter One Historical and Theoretical Background of the Study

Ahlem Mosteghanemi's *Bridges of Constantine* (1993, translated 2013) is an Algerian novel written by Algerian author about story that happened in 1930s and 1980s. Algerian writings have emerged basically as a postcolonial literature. Mainly, the postcolonial literature received a considerable criticism as it was emerged as a reply for the colonizer. As the novel treats many subjects of life within, it received both criticism and support.

- **Critical View:** One of the most popular critiques against Mosteghanemi herself is that she was not the author of the novel. As she use the male voice within her book, Mosteghanemi's critics used it against her (Bentoumi 2020)
- **Supporters Position:** The novel *Bridges of Constantine* won the Nadjib Mahfouz Award in 1998. It is noteworthy that 1998 Nadjib Mahfouz Medal for Literature was founded in honour of the Nobel laureate. Interestingly, Mosteghanemi was awarded just five years after publishing her book. Gouffi and Berrahal (2020) state that Mosteghanemi "... engaged in a committed process of writing back to the French colonizer in Arabic. In so doing, she rose to national fame and notably her novels paralleled in importance the legacy of iconic names of Algeria's feminist fiction" (3).

### 2. Causes for the Spread of the Novel

The Novel *Bridges of Constantine* was originally written and published in Arabic language. It was the first bestseller novel that is written by a woman. First, the focus of the novel was one cause for the widespread and success of the story. As the novel covers many subjects, it sets its focus on the sense of Loss, remembering, exile and nostalgia. In addition, it is lead by social critique and political thoughts. One main topic is the French Colonialism remains in Algeria. The novel glances the Algerian struggle against the colonizer as well as the post independence situation of the Algerians society. The after independence situation deals with two struggles: one

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against the remains of the French domination for over a century (1830s-1962); and another struggle of Algerian community within itself (Memory 2003). With regard to the latter, the Algerian society, after years of domination and colonization, was destroyed, shattered, and shaken besides suffering identity-loss. At this point, the community has freed itself and should cope with the revolutionary era. The novel highlights this struggle, which was the fight of many postcolonial communities at that era. For this reason, the novel is obligatory studied as a literary work in many Arab universities such as Syria and Morocco and Tunisia (Amalska 2016). In addition, the novel covers the fact of man's domination over woman. Generally speaking, in Arabic community, man is authorized while Arabic woman is under his authority. The novel has distinguished this gender issue. Mosteghanemi has covered a combination of constructions, starting from the Algerian individual's cultural and historical background and ending with national belonging and nostalgia. These subjects contributed a great deal in making the novel very attracting and popular.

Another main reason for reaching a high level of popularity within Arabic world for the novel of *Bridges of Constantine* is the fact that it is written by a woman. Just about thirty years before publishing the novel, the question of Feminine movements highly attracted world attention. Especially in Arab world, countries were in the road to rebuilding themselves. The appearance of a woman author who depicted realities has introduced another subject to tackle as a social issue.

Not only the gender of the writer that contributes to such fame, but also the fact that the novel is Algerian book written in Arabic. Back in the years, most Algerian authors had written books and novels in French. Actually, Ahlem Mosteghanemi is the first woman to accomplish such achievement (Jensen 2000). The idea of Mosteghanemi, as she directs her voice to her own people and her Arabic community in a postcolonial era, is fame worthy.

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The narrative techniques are also a reason for admiring the novel, and consequently, spreading it widely. The story evolves with such special metaphor for post-colonial Algeria that effortlessly floats between the intimate and the societal aspects of life. First, the embodiment of author woman by male voice was challenging. In addition, the novel is illustrated mostly in form of flashbacks. These flashbacks are in the memory of the male narrator. Second, not mentioning the attracting style of Mosteghanemi's writing, her writing gathered both imagery and history. The writing style is full of emotions and passions. It can be said that the novel has a poetic nature that leads the reader deep when reading it. The words choice and the eloquent Arabic language play such a great role in the novel popularity.

### **2.1 Translation of the Novel into Foreign Language**

The novel of Bridges of Constantine was originally published in Arabic language in 1993 under the title of Dhakirat alJassad. It was translated as Memory in the Flesh in 1999 by Baria Ahmar Sreih. And lately, by Bloomsbury Publishing, the novel translation was published under the title of Bridges of Constantine in 2013 by translator Raphael Cohen.

As Memory in the Flesh, the novel was translated by Sreih. The choice of the title comes from the indication of Khaled's loss of his arm within the revolutionary war of Algeria in 1954. Consequently, losing a part of his body leaves a memory, which can be said bad memory, within his flesh. Sreih's translation is soft and dialogical. It lays more affection on the characters. It also gives a distinct voice for the narrator. The title also, considered as the exact literal translation for the Arabic title, indicates the role of body within the story layers. The body expresses imagery for the nation and city of Constantine (Jenson). It can be said that Sreih's version is truthful indication and faithful translation of the original work.

The choice of the title Bridges of Constantine by Cohen offers more concrete picture for the novel. The translator Cohen has a background in Arabic studies in University of Chicago and

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University of Oxford; he also had an exposure to Arabic language in Cairo, Egypt. The translator tries to convey the meaning of the thoughts and the idea of the author, not the terms within his version. Bridges of Constantine has eloquent language. Basically, Cohen provided the same mood of the original story. The translator does not attempt to translate word by word or term by term. Rather, he attempts at producing the same feeling when reading the same passage in both English and Arabic version. Consequently, when reading Bridges of Constantine, there is no trace of translation within the texture.

It is noteworthy claiming that the translation of the novel, in both versions, takes from the originality of the work. In this regard, western perspectives about the English version cannot attribute a full recognition of the real settings within the story. As Jensen states, reading the English version of Mosteghanemi's novel *Dakirat alJassa* makes it "...difficult to gauge the impact of the original work" (2000).

One example from Bridges of Constantine 2013 is

What happened to us was love. Literature was all that did not happen.' I still remember the time you said that. Now that everything is over, I can say: Congratulations to literature, then, on our tragedy. How vast the sweep of what did not happen, enough to fill several books. Congratulations to love too. What happened, what didn't happen, what will never happen - all so beautiful (Mosteghanemi 2013, 1)

The same example taken from *Memory in the Flesh* is

What went on between us was real love. What didn't happen was the stuff of love stories." Today, now that it is all over, I can say,

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"If that's the case, we're lucky that it's just in a book. However, what didn't happen could fill volumes. We're also lucky in the beauty of the love we did have. What will not happen is also beautiful (Mosteghanemi 1999, 1)

The gap between the two versions is very clear. Although the two passages are two translations for the same passage, each one of them give a totally different feeling to the reader from one version to another.

### **3. The Role of the Press in Spreading the Novel**

At the time the novel was published, it was rare for the Arabic individual to read. Most bestsellers achieved 30000 copies. The novel of Bridges of Constantine reached over 50000 copies right after it was published by a woman writer who can be described as beginner (translated Ghazoul 2007). It is important to mention that the critiques against the novel were the reason for this huge success. As the language is eloquent and the metaphor is special, Press attacked Mosteghanemi, the author, as it is impossible for a novice writer such as Mosteghanemi to write such a masterpiece. The press attributed the book to many other authors, mostly: the Algerian Ouassini L'Aredj, Iraqi Saadi Youcef and Syrian Nizar Quabani. Mosteghanemi did not respond much to these accusations as she knew that such reclamations are due to her gender. However, the response of those famous authors, that they did not write the novel and that they appreciate Ahlem Mosteghanemi for her amazing writing and language, made Mosteghanemi's novel even more popular.

### **Conclusion**

The first chapter attempted at outlining the historical and theoretical background of this research. First, the first chapter traced significant concepts for the study as Post colonialism,

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Postcolonial Literature, Feminism and Postcolonial feminism. The chapter introduced details about African literature as a whole and Algerian literature in particular with regard to the French influence on Algerian culture. The first chapter has also tackled the issue of using language within the writings of some Algerian authors. Second, the first chapter was dedicated to highlight the settings of the novel of Bridges of Constantine by Ahlem Mosteghanemi. Thus, it investigated supporting and critiques' arguments for and against the novel from their own point of view. The first chapter has analyzed the causes behind the spread of the novel. The first chapter showed that the many interesting topics which the novel tackled, the gender of the author in addition to the writing style have all contributed to the success of the novel. In conclusion, the chapter concluded with how the press has contributed to the wide-spread of the novel.



## **Chapter Two**

### **Voicing Women Struggle In the Novel**

## **Chapter Two : Voicing Women Struggle In the Novel**

### **Introduction**

The second chapter represents the core of the study. It introduces the analysis of woman gender theme and the issue of women's struggle within postcolonial society in Ahlem Mosteghanemi's *Bridges of Constantine* 2013. Firstly, the second chapter opens with a summary of the novel, focusing on the plot, the characters and the settings in which the story takes place. Secondly, it shed lights on the women struggle within the novel. Next, the chapter moves to analyze the dreams of Hayat as a main woman character and her conditions and causes of marriage in a society which is very committed to traditions. It also discusses the urge of postcolonial female to suffer in a society that can be described as patriarchal. Finally, it concludes with detecting the author personal womanist touch in her novel.

## **Chapter Two : Voicing Women Struggle In the Novel**

### **1. Summary of Bridges of Constantine by Ahlem Mosteghanemi**

The novel tells the story of successful Algerian Female writer, named Hayat, who lives in Paris, France. The story is told by Khaled, the narrator as he writes Bridges of Constantine, the one by Ahlem Mosteghanemi. Khaled had participated in the liberation war of Algeria 1954. He lost his left arm and by so he moved to civil life. Khaled was a friend of Taher. Taher was the father of Hayat. He stayed with the family for a period of time once Taher was dead in 1960s. At that time, Hayat was a child. After a period of time, Khaled recognizes that the established system of Algerian government after independence is not the system and principals he fought for. As a result, he leaves for France and becomes a painter. He leaves his love for his country Algeria and his hometown Constantine behind (Translated, Chodeb 2021).

Couple of years later, as Khaled is manifesting his own art museums, he is attracted to two girls with Algerian lineaments. Khaled decides to know these two girls. By coincidence, one of them is Hayat, the daughter of his old commander. He already knew deep in himself that these lineaments are from Constantine, his lovely city. Khaled gets attracted to Hayat. She is no longer the child he used to play with. Now, she is a pretty young woman. On the other hand, Hayat comes to France to see the man who accompanied her father for a long time in the war, and she finally meets him. Khaled and Hayat fall in love with each other. They get closer to each others and have strong feelings. They together build dreams and endless visions (Mosteghanemi 2013).

Hayat is twenty-five years younger than Khaled. In this sense, Khaled is confused if Hayat really loves him, or it is just that she is comfortable with him as she feels safe. Even when Hayat goes back to Algeria, Khaled lives on the hope that she one day will love him. On that track, Khaled receives an invitation, from Hayat's uncle, to attend Hayat' wedding party. Khaled gets destroyed, as Hayat for him represnted his love for his country and the world he want to

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establish. However, the news that Hayat is going to marry a very corrupt militant man causes him sadness and disappointment ( Translated, Chodeb 2021).

It is highly significant to mention that Bridges of Constantine cannot be considered a womanist literary work only. The novel also tackled the social and political sides of postcolonial Algeria. Mosteghanemi's book did not only encompass the love story of Khaled and Hayat. It can be considered also an attempt to go back to the revolutionary war of Algeria and the time after it. Eventually, the novel indicates about three decades in postcolonial Algeria. However, it is noteworthy to mention that Mosteghanemi's Bridges of Constantine did not refer to any French abusive behaviors in direct. Bamia 2018 interprets that the novel Bridges of Constantine ...describes the people's endless struggle to obtain the basic necessities for survival, instead of channeling their energies in rebuilding the country. While engrossed in such pursuits, people's attention was diverted away from vital political and national issues. Thus, the political authority was assured a period of reprieve with no accountability. The devotion to serve the nation that characterized the Algerian people during the war of independence was replaced by the search for individual solutions and by modest ambitions, or by none at all (87).

The main claim in the story was about the French influence on Algerian community and the pre-independence governmental system. The work can be considered as Mosteghanemi' self assessment as it can be taken as an evaluation to postcolonial Algeria. Probably in the sense of its feminist nature, Mosteghanemi's masterpiece Bridges of Constantine points a call of freedom and individuality from an Algerian daughter of a martyr and a probable lover of an expatriate whose hopes of his country's new government were disappointed. Nonetheless, Mosteghanemi's novel is also an attempt to indicate and express Algerian people situation after the colonial rule.

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The one hundred-thirty years of colonialism had shattered Algerians. Algerians were happy of liberation. However, there was no way to know what to do now. Their dream of new independent and flourishing Algeria was beautiful, but it did not have a clear point to start on. This has led Algerians to be confused for what they fought for as they are seeing corruption and colonialism remains ahead.

### **2- The Independent Women Struggle**

In a different culture and society, Hayat' story as an independent female writer is told and judged by male perspectives, Khaled. The male voice is needed for Mosteghanemi so as to be heard. As she claims, “in order to confront a male-dominated society I would have to ensure the presence of a man at my side” (Mosteghanemi qtd. in Moore 82). In this regard, Bamia 2018 states that Mosteghanemi,

... places herself in a position of equality with men, adopting their language, presenting their arguments, and uttering their sexist opinions. Using a male narrator gives her both strength and freedom. Hidden in the background, she manipulates the action to her advantage, both by using the male to judge the female and by directly revealing his vulnerability. 90

However, Although Khaled presented Hayat as a powerful independent woman with her own thoughts and beliefs, he distorted her presence by the dominate presence of his. As he says, "... You were empty like a sponge, and I was deep and heavy like the sea. And you have been filled by me” (Mosteghanemi 112). Khaled describes Hayat as if she is an empty container. As he states so, he shows the dominant male perspectives that woman, even independent, cannot be present without him. Woman is still dependant according to society.

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Within the story, Hayat holds two names. One is Hayat, the name which Khaled had given her when she was a little child. The other name is Ahlem. The latter is the one she uses as a writer. The duality of names for one female person proves that woman cannot stand in front of the society with one name and one personality. The reason for this according to De Beauvoir is that women are "...involved in the male world they cannot peacefully establish themselves anywhere" (724). This clearly indicates that woman cannot have one absolute voice to face the world. As Hayat personality is contradicted to Ahlem's ; her identity is lost .

The relationship of Khaled and Hayat cannot be considered as real relation for one absolute reason, that is the dominant thinking of Khaled over Hayat. Even with love, when Khaled tells the story of his love of Hayat, he does not treat her as a woman who he loves. Rather, he describes her as an object (Alotaibi 66, 2018). As he writes, Khaled states that Hayat is "...dough, taking the shape of my beliefs, and dreams" (Mostaghanemi 155). Moreover, Khaled feels confused. He states, "You, my celebration and my misfortune, my love and my hate, my forgetting and my memory..."(Mostaghanemi 83). On the one hand, he considers Hayat his world. On the other hand, he cannot determine what she is for him as he thinks she is a woman and a nation.

Yet, Mostaghanemi desperately attempts at voicing Hayat's struggle. The novel embodies the challenges that face Hayat as an Algerian woman who has dreams and has been raised and drowned in Postcolonial ideology. Mostaghanemi tries to give presence for Hayat in the mind and life of Khaled as she states "Cities as beautiful as memory, as close as a tear, as painful as loss. Cities so like you..." (Mostaghanemi 76). The author balances between the love of Khaled for Hayat and his love for his country. He also declares that "I felt as if I was painting you, just you. It was you with all your contradictions. I was painting another copy of you, more mature, yet more complex..." (Mostaghanemi 89). Nonetheless, by so, Khaled makes of Hayat a town and a painting, rather than considering her an individual and a special woman with a spirit.

## Chapter Two : Voicing Women Struggle In the Novel

Women's independence was a matter of heated discussion in the postcolonial era. In other words, it was almost rejected. Western women, as they fought globally for their rights, were considered worthy of independence. However, the postcolonial woman was always considered successful only within the limits of her environment as a housewife and a mother. Within the pages of *Bridges of Constantine*, it is obvious that Hayat found her pursuit in France. There, she is free, independent and successful. Unlike her situation in her town where she is judged and controlled by traditions and old-fashioned ways of living. In Constantine, Hayat is always under control and cannot do what she wants (Alotaibi 65). Even a call from Khaled, the sincere friend of her father and her family, is considered as dangerous and "adventure" (Mosteghanemi 188).

Mosteghanemi also tries to raise women's voice by feminizing the hometown to Khaled. She attempts at showing that everything is feminine around the world, even a town for an expatriate man. Mosteghanemi assures, on Khaled's voice, addressing Hayat "I gathered in you all those I loved..." (24). She makes Hayat everything to Khaled as he loves her. He sees his home city Constantine in her. He tracks Taher's eyes color in her eyes, and he sees his mother through her (ibid 24).

The French colonizer traumatized the life of Algerians, especially women. It made women widows and orphans. However, this cost has led them to freedom. Bamia indicates, "As a matter of fact, the war of independence served as the launching ground for the emancipation of the Algerian woman. Her participation in the struggle for her country's liberation was conceived as a new beginning to take place in the post-independence era. It did not make sense to her that while both men and women paid a high price in the struggle for their independence, only men would benefit from it. This situation seems to be the driving force behind Mustaghanmi's discourse in both her poetry and her prose writings. 90

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Women had to pay price just like men in order to save their county Algeria. Hayat lost her father before she knew him as her mother lost her life companion. Hayat's mother had to raise Hayat and her brother under the tradition of society. Likewise, Khaled's mother had to raise Khaled and his siblings in the same society and died in the sake of getting a better life for her child. Women have always given their lives without asking for something back. By telling the story of both mothers, Mosteghanemi emphasizes the crucial importance of womenist element in society.

Women, on the other hand, had also built dreams on the new Algeria which they sacrificed their lives for. Mosteghanemi positions herself within the novel as the narrator Khaled and the antagonist Hayat. Even if she tells the story as man perspectives, she, however; also explains Hayat's vision of life. Mosteghanemi represents Hayat close as much as far to Khaled. She Also distinguishes the differences between the two genders in the way of thinking. One example can be taken from the novel is the urge of Hayat to write. Unlike Khaled, who writes for the sake of glorifying the past and those he loves, Hayat writes in order to forget the past. Mosteghanemi claims on Hayat's voice "We write in order to kill the people whose presence has become a burden on us, we write to eliminate them" (123).

Bamia suggests that Mosteghanemi 's indication of male voice also points out to many things. One of them is the fact that it reflects on ... the fate ofthe women's emancipation anticipated after the war and it supplements the accounts given by other almost exclusively male Algerian writers. Mustaghanmi is able to stand at a distance to evaluate the situation, comfortably positioned behind the narrator (86).

Mosteghanemi's expressions of women within postcolonial society was protected under the voice of a male narrator. The use of male voice has given Mosteghanemi objectivity on the regard of readers

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### 3- Hayat's Character, Dreams and Marriage

Mosteghanemi's novel *Bridges of Constantine* can be considered as a depiction for reality within the era of French colonialism and post postcolonialism. Many Algerians had migrated to France couple of years after the independence. As Ahlem, the successful author, the Algerian woman is independent, ambitious and hopeful, she is "...a city; a city of many contradicted women" (Mosteghanemi 141). First, Hayat represents a transition between the old and the new Algeria. She was born right after the reclamation of Algerian independence war. She was named Hayat (meaning life) by a warrior who has just lost his arm within the war. A man who was probably looking for the sense of life. "... she is emblematic of the hopes and dreams for the new generations" (McLarney 31).

Ahlem, the writer character, considers writing a bend for forgetting. As she claims that writing for her means "finishing with those people that have become burdens on our lives... of emptying of them" (Mosteghanemi 18). The protagonist Ahlem has drown herself within the world of writing as she put there everything she feels and everything she wants to forget. In contrast, Khaled used his writing of *Bridges of Constantine* to "... Immortalizing those we have loved" (Mosteghanemi 19).

The second name given to Hayat has also its significance. Ahlem, which means " Dreams" has eventually resembled her dreamily character. Throughout the novel, Mosteghanemi spells and explains, on Khaled's voice, the indication from naming Ahlem as,

Between the "A" of pain and the "M" of pleasure was your name. The "H" of burning and the "L" of warning divided it. How could I not be cautious of your name, a small blaze born among the first fires of that war? How could I not be cautious of a name that begins with the 'ah' of both pain and pleasure? How could I not be cautious of that singular-plural noun like the name of this nation

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(watan)? From the start I knew that the whole is always created in order to be separated. (37)

However idealized this explanation is, Ahlem is a passionate strong woman, who cannot detect the relationship between her and Khaled in Khaled's painting of her (McLarney 28). McLarney further explains,

Khalid depicts Ahlam as a bridge, a figure that reflects his desire to bridge the temporal and spatial gaps between them and establish a physical relationship. The temporal divide between them is significant, with twenty-five years separating their age(28).

Throughout the novel, Khaled attempts to represent Ahlem in his paintings. He sees her as an attaching bridge between his desires and her ownself. As he compares her to a bridge, Ahlem claims " "How can you find any relation between that bridge and myself... I would have preferred that you paint me and not that bridge"(Mosteghanemi). Moreover, Ahlem does not see her existence in those paintings. She says "You are dreaming" (167). So, it can be considered as Ahlem's rejection of Khaled's voice and his representation of her. At this passage, Mosteghanemi gives voice to Ahlem, defending who she is, and showing the difference between Ahlem's perspective of herself and Khaled's vision of her. She, while observing Khaled's drawing, does not see any spiritual attachment to her. As if Ahlem feels herself invisible within Khaled's drawings.

Hayat's marriage represents the climax of the story. In the novel, Hayat's innocence, success, self-discovering, individuality and her own dreams oppose the ultimate image that she marries a corrupt man who is to be considered by true Algerians as "Algeria's enemy. As situated with the parameters of specific traditional society, Hayat suffers the fact that she has to follow her family and community rules and traditions. She cannot follow her dreams and hopes. Hayat, eventually,

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surrenders and marries a man from military services. Although the man is famous for his corrupt deeds, Hayat complies to her family pressure and accepts the proposal.

### 4- The Urge to Female Suffer

Although the deep love which Khaled describe immensely throughout the pages of the novel, he has a relationship with another woman, Catrine. Khaled also objectifies Catrine, the French woman. In his mind, Khaled compares Hayat and Catrine "a painting is like a female; they both like the lights" (Mosteghanemi 74). Although Khaled considers Catrine his "... Beautiful exile" (Mosteghanemi 399), Hayat wins the comparison as she is special and amazing in the opinion of Khaled. However, this winning could exist maybe basically because of hayat's background, and not because of Hayat's person herself. By background, we mean the town and the family Hayat comes from and their strong relation to Khaled. Even in the mind of the man she loves, Hayat, as independent woman from Postcolonial society, has to suffer for her individuality.

It is also important to mention that, the only realistic representation of a woman, which Ahlem likes of Khaled's painting, is dedicated to Catrine, his French lover. One painting that really makes Ahlem attracted and makes her feel real about women being, is actually not painted for her (169). This only assures the Postcolonial feminism theory. The theory asserts that only western women were considered independent females, and that nonwestern females weren't considered at the same position.

However, Mosteghanemi's novel *Bridges of Constantine*, has always linked women to another being: man. This can be attributed to her early comment that she needs to confront the masculine world and to do so she needs a man voice. As the story develops, Hayat is always mentioned in relation to a man. One, she was talked about as Taher's daughter. Then, she was taken as Khaled' love.

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### **5- The Man Image within the Novel**

The fact that Mosteghanemi as a writer and a poet can professionally use language and metaphors cannot be denied. In addition, she is very smart in her writings. As she hides using a male voice to let her voice reach the world, she also presents a certain image of man. That is, the weak picturing of man without the love of his woman. Khaled, the courageous freedom fighter who lost his arm in order to liberate his country, could not distinguish if a woman loves him or not. As a result, he is confused and lost. Mosteghanemi here has succeeded in presenting the power of woman in making a man fragile, although courageous in reality, in the simplest terms of life: love. However, Mosteghanemi also reveals the need of bond between the two genders.

Hayat also represents the dreams of her family. In specific, she introduces the vision of Algeria as her father, Si Tahar, had always dream of before his death. Mosteghanemi indicated within the novel that Si Tahar dreamt of Algeria as being ".. free of worn out superstitions.." (105). Khaled indicates himself as he is drown with the past while Hayat, for him, represents the present and future he had always dreamt of. Khaled says addressing Hayat, "I was the past that you did not know, and you were the present devoid of memory that I try to entrust with what the years burdened me with..." (102).

The description above can be considered as the implicit study of Mosteghanemi's vision of man. However, explicitly, Mosteghanemi indicates the society glorification of man above woman. The author has tried to signal the woman position in the man mind within Arab society. Algerian community, as an example, has adopted the same vision.

### **6- The Author' Woman Touch**

As mentioned before, Hayat, the Protagonist of the novel, has also another name: Ahlem. This cannot be anything but a reflection of the author Ahlem Mosteghanemi. As khaled writes

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and tells his love story for Ahlem, so his love will be remembered; Ahlem writes to forget (Ebrahim 237). Ahlem Mosteghanemi's leaves her voice within the story pages.

Although she is the protagonist of the story, Ahlem is clearly marginalized in the novel by the narrator Khaled. The use of masculine voice in the novel makes Mosteghanemi "... silent, and perhaps silenced" (McLarney, 24). Although the claim of this novel being fictitiously written, it portrayed Ahlem's character within its pages by many descriptions and metaphors. In this regard, it can be said that Mosteghanemi attempts to show and reflect on the situation of modern Algerian Literature at that time. That era was over taken and dominated by multiple male authors. About *Bridges of Constantine*, McLarney states,

Through her male narrator, Mosteghanemi meditates on the nature of the authorial voice as it has developed over the last five decades, outlining its characteristics and its inherent faults. She bounces back particular images of herself as an Algerian woman, gleaned from her own extensive study of contemporary Algerian literature... (25).

In her pursuit to uncover women condition during postcolonial period, Mosteghanemi includes all female forms in her novel. She discusses motherhood as the case of both mothers of Khaled and Ahlem. Both mothers sacrifice their lives to raise their children. Also, Mosteghanemi sheds lights on the object woman and the woman symbol. In this regard, a cleta example can be Ahlem as the protagonist of the novel. Khaled, the narrator, considers Hayat botj an object " painting is like a female.. " (Mosteghanemi 74), and symbolizes her as " you are a city" (Ibid 141). Mosteghanemi also explores the foreigner female. As the case of Ahlem, a foreign writer in a foreign society.

Mosteghanemi's use of masculine narrator could also be interpreted as her reading for the male author. Mosteghanemi, in the opening of *Bridges of Constantine*, dedicates the work for

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Malek Haddad, an Algerian author who lived in the exile of France. Then, she dedicates the book for her father. Mosteghanemi's father was a poet. In addition, in the generation before Mosteghanemi, most Algerian male authors were the only who achieved the global writings in Algerian context. Rarely Algerian women existed, such as Asia Djebbar. Before writing the original version of *Bridges of Constantine* in 1993, Mosteghanemi wrote a preceding book named "Algeria : woman and writing 1984". This can indicate Mosteghanemi's passion and interest of woman writing and male authors perspectives (Mclarney 27)

### **7- Mosteghanemi's Aim for Women Emancipation Writing**

As an intellectual, Mosteghanemi's urge to give voice to female in Arabic community come out of her personal perceptions to emancipation. Even in her own book, Mosteghanemi used a male, Khaled, as a narrator and author of her own book within the pages of the story. Mosteghanemi reflects on stealing her voice while trying to give voice to her book character Hayat/Ahlem. As a matter of fact, Mosteghanemi did not only suffer the fact to be silenced and unrecognized. Rather, she is unappreciated and voiceless. As she claimed, she used the male voice to be able to confront the world. Later, this appeared in her following book *Chaos of the Sense* 1998. In this novel, Hayat is the narrator and she is also the author of *Bridges of Constantine* (*Memory in the flesh*). The first novel of Ahlem Mosteghanemi *Bridges of Constantine* has made a huge success and approval. As a result, it can be said that Mosteghanemi felt herself more free and liberated within her Algerian and Arab world, that she adopted the writing of her first story within her second book. As Mosteghanemi expresses female perspectives within *Chaos of the Sense*, it is highly important to declare that her aim of voicing silenced women has come to success, starting by her.

Although not being a part of this research, the researchers felt the need to point to Mosteghanemi's perspectives of writing *Chaos of the Senses*. This breif analysis of the latter is

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not taken into deep measurements. Rather, it only highlights main point which are related to Bridges of Constantine, the main topic of this study. The second novel of Mosteghanemi included the same characters of Bridges of Constantine. Hayat meets Khaled and loves him. However, Choas of the Sense uses a female perspectives "... she [Hayat] shapes, rather than being shaped " (McLarney 41). In Choas of the Sense, Mosteghanemi

... moves from his measurement and his scale [Khaled] to her own [Hayat] , one that more closely corresponds to her life, and on a linguistic level, her name. Her new language is articulated aaccordin to her life, her name, and her desire, expressed here in the more carnal sense of shahwa, rather than hanin, which also denotes desire (ibid 42).

In Bridges of Constantine, Mosteghanemi reflects on her own desires. She realizes that writing is her escape. However, when writing Bridges of Constantine, she could not reflect on herself because of how society see women. This has led her to use masculine voice. When writing Bridges of Constantine, Mosteghanemi states,

I discovered that I had spent my life bypassing those forbidden rooms within me, believing that they did not concern me since I lived somewhere else. In reality, I did live in other rooms and it was they that inhabited me and occupied the largest domain of my inner space and my space on paper. Thus their keys controlled me and their locks were the holes to my freedom and my servitude. (86)

By rooms, Mosteghanemi means the other aspects and desires of her personality. By "other rooms", she points to the society boundaries and vision (of her as a woman) within herself. In the passage above, there is a clear and realistic declaration of women struggle and inferiority within her community. Ahlem Mosteghanemi gives the sense as if she were locked up in some rooms of her personality. These rooms are patriarchal community.

## **Chapter Two : Voicing Women Struggle In the Novel**

However, it is important to note that writing *Bridges of Constantine* has proven the masculinity of the Arab world as a whole and the Algerian community in particular. Generally, when the novel was published, as mentioned before, Mosteghanemi received accusations of stealing the novel from a male author. By no means, Arabs did not believe that such a masterpiece is a woman made. Rather, it is a novice woman made. This can only reflect the very masculine vision which the Arab world has in a Postcolonial period. The novel, written in 1993, is considered a postmodern work. It was published in a time that the whole globe has made a long way into women emancipation subject. Ahlem Mosteghanemi has expressed her society's refusal of woman condition in *Bridges of Constantine*. Then, she expressed herself freely in her next books. Eventually, Mosteghanemi has not only made success by her battle against the critics and accusations, but also she broke woman's subalternity within the society's masculinity and boundaries.

### **Conclusion**

The second chapter introduced the analytical study of the novel *Bridges of Constantine* by Ahlem Mosteghanemi. It tracks the female issue and struggle in postcolonial community as shown by the author. First, the second chapter analyzed the fact that independent women are being silenced, their voice is trapped and their existence is over, shadowed by male control. The example was Hayat, the protagonist of *Bridges of Constantine* as she can be considered as unfairly represented by Khaled, the narrator of the story. Next, the chapter discusses Hayat's Hopes and how they are crushed to the reality of her society in Algeria. This is shown basically as she feels convinced to marry a corrupt military person. Her will and ambitions are silenced as she acts with abeyance to her family and surrenders to the traditions. Then, the chapter sheds the light on the suffering of female in society for just being a woman. The second chapter concludes with revealing Mosteghanemi's touch in her novel *Bridges of Constantine*.

# **General Conclusion**

## General Conclusion

Postcolonial Literature has contributed a great deal to intellectual battle of defending cultural principles and identity in postcolonial communities. In the urge to prove their cultural and societal stand, Postcolonial authors have taken the burden to claim their identity throughout expressing the ideologies before, in and after colonialism. In this regard, women condition in postcolonial community is to be undertaken seriously. Women have contributed a great deal to the independence of their countries. Even though, their role was not admitted widely because of the inferior representation of women within a colonial and postcolonial societies. Even after liberation of the country, perspectives towards female has not experienced liberation. The question of gender has been a main concern of many authors.

The core of this study is to show the misrepresentation of women in postcolonial communities throughout Ahlem Mosteghanemi's *Bridges of Constantine* 2013. According to the events within the story of the novel, Mosteghanemi's book can be considered a portrait of real situations within and post colonial era of Algerian community. In her book, Mosteghanemi attempts at clarifying the society stand and man view of towards women independence and individuality.

The research aims were to clarify and indicate the world towards the postcolonial woman. As researchers used an analyst turn when studying the novel, they come to confirm their hypothesis about the novel. The study has hypothesized that Ahlem Mosteghanemi has defended woman individuality and sought to voice women struggle and independence in her novel *Bridges of Constantine* 2013. This assurance has appeared in many aspects.

First, within the pages of the novel, the male voice narrator has destroyed the female character. Although the love between the protagonist, Khaled's vision of Hayat as a bridges to his memories

and nation decreases the sentimental and societal value of her as a female member. As a successful writer, Hayat did not get enough appreciation within her society first, and within the mind of the man she loves at second. The worth of woman who fights for her reputation and representation in her society should extend to more than a simulation of a bridge or a painting. In the novel, Mosteghanemi expresses her perspectives about women struggle in a society that is dominated by masculinity thoughts and shattered because of the colonial domination.

Second, Mosteghanemi's attempts to voicing woman struggle in the shadow of a patriarchal views and accusations. Mosteghanemi has also distinguished between Woman personality with her postcolonial society and within a western society. In postcolonial community, woman, represented by Hayat, has to be committed to traditions and cultural background. Woman cannot improve her life conditions as her best accomplishment is to be a housewife and a mother. Out of these two options, woman is seen differently. In a western society, Hayat is Ahlem, the successful ambitious writer. Her voice is heard and her struggle is admitted as she is able to express herself freely.

As a result, the extensive male vision of Khaled towards Hayat and the masculine society that controls Hayat's dreams and ambitions have together drown and buried her character within the ashes of her hopes. On the one hand, throughout Khaled's voice, Hayat is destroyed and weak. She is only a bridge to his emotional memories. In the vision of Khaled, Hayat represents all that he assumed to see in his country Algeria. However, she is also a city, a painting and a bridge. Hayat is everything but a successful woman. As Hayat loss of her father made her build hopes over Khaled, Khaled mentality has made her fragile and fragmented about how she is perceived. On the other hand, the life within an Algerian society that is basically very committed to customs and considerably against women's independence has been an obstacle to Hayat's ambitions. The swelling control over Hayat's move and decisions in her community has eventually driven her to

quit her dreams and surrender to her society conventions. In this sense, Hayat lost her battle against the traditions and her dreams come to an end.

As for limitations for this studies, researchers have faced one main problem, that is the lack of good resources in English language for the targeted version of the novel. In terms of Arabic language, there are many and unlimited resources for novel background and analysis. In terms of the English translation *Memory in the Flesh*, there are also considerable number of references. But when it comes to Raphael Cohen translation, there is not much said.

Researchers would recommend other investigators to highlight the main male character. The researchers, throughout their feminist reading for Mosteghanemi's novel *Bridges of Constantine*, have wondered and questioned the masculine dominance not only within the story, but on a societal level. In addition, researchers would recommend of applying Psychoanalysis and construction Theory to the novel. The researchers believe that such theory will help a better understanding of the protagonists' characters. Thus it will help better understand the Postcolonial society structure and nature.

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## **Résumé**

"Les ponts de Constantine" est un roman écrit par l'écrivain Algérien Ahlem Mostaghanemi en 1993, le roman se déroulant à la fois à Paris et à Constantine, il est considéré comme le roman le plus influent et le plus réussi car il est devenu l'un des romans arabes les plus vendus, également il est devenu le centre de beaucoup d'attention dans la littérature arabe, la presse a un grand rôle dans ce succès. Le roman raconte l'histoire de deux protagonistes principaux Hayat ou aussi appelés Ahlem et Khaled ben Toubal et comment les traditions, le mauvais système politique changent leur vie. L'utilisation de la théorie de Trauma, telle qu'elle est appliquée à la littérature post-coloniale, fournit une lentille utile pour analyser les principaux protagonistes et leur approche de la mémoire et de l'art

## ملخص

"جسور قسنطينة" هي الترجمة الإنجليزية لرواية ذاكرة الجسد، و هي الرواية التي كتبتها المؤلفة الجزائرية أحلام مستغانمي عام 1993، تدور احداث الرواية في كل من باريس وقسنطينة ، وتعتبر من الروايات الأكثر تأثيراً ونجاحاً لأنها أصبحت من الروايات العربية الأكثر مبيعاً ، وكذلك أصبحت محط اهتمام كبير في الأدب العربي ، وللصحافة دور كبير في هذا النجاح. تحكي الرواية قصة بطلين رئيسيين حياة، التي تسمى أيضاً أحلام وخالد بن توبال وكيف تغير التقاليد والنظام السياسي السيئ حياتهما. يوفر استخدام نظرية تروما ، كما تم تطبيقها على أدب ما بعد الاستعمار ، عدسة مفيدة يمكن من خلالها تحليل الأبطال الرئيسيين ونهجهم في الذاكرة والفن.