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Mohamed Boudiaf University of M'sila

Faculty of Letters and Languages

Department of English

**The Algerian Woman and the Burden of Representation in
Mosteghanemi's *The Bridges of Constantine***

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Candidate:

Miss. Asma YOUSFI

Supervised by:

Mr. Mohamed GOUFFI

Panel of Examiners

Mrs. Nassira HERIZI	University of M'sila	Chairperson
Mr. Mohamed GOUFFI	University of M'sila	Supervisor
Mr. Bachir SAHED	University of M'sila	Examiner

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the dissertation entitled, “The Algerian Woman and the Burden of Representation in Mosteghanemi’s *The Bridges of Constantine*” is my own work and that all the sources I have quoted have been acknowledged by means of references.

Signature

Date:

26/06/2019

DEDICATION

To the soul of my father,

The one who left my reality to own my imagination. He shall not be forgotten.

To the source of my inspiration, to the light of my life; to my mother.

To the dearest people ever; to all my family and friends.

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ABSTRACT

The present study investigates the dilemma of the postcolonial cultural burden on the Algerian women as represented in Ahlam Mosteghanemi's *The Bridges of Constantine*, in light of colonial, national and patriarchal ideologies. It aims at exposing an authentic representation of the Algerian women, and uncovering Mosteghanemi's sense of the burden to represent these women and to restore their identity. This literary work is analysed through a Spivakian Postcolonial Feminism in order to unveil the doubly subalternized status of the Algerian women. Hence, the importance of this study lies in its ability to delve into the different issues that the female character suffers from within a colonial and a neo-colonial era. Moreover it broadens the analysis of Mosteghanemi's reaction to the burdened, metaphorical, and idealised representation of the Algerian voiceless woman. This research concludes that Mosteghanemi's work can be truly analyzed from a Spivakian Postcolonial Feminist perspective. In addition, the dilemma of the Algerian postcolonial women has been revealed and successfully represented through her creative literary voice and her authenticity of writing.

Key Terms: Postcolonialism, Feminism, Subalternity, Identity, Ideologies.

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GENERAL INTRODUCTION

General Introduction

The European colonial oppression during the second half of 20th century Africa had witnessed such a historical turning point that many remarkable revolutionary movements came into being. Algeria was no exception, as it was the subject of long lasting years of colonial brutality caused notably by the French. Many devoted military combatants, men and women, perceived their salvation from the colonial shackles only in the armed struggle. Significantly, history proves that the Algerian Revolutionary War was and still be one of the bloodiest wars ever waged in the name of independence. Equally important, the success of this revolution is largely indebted to the power of words; many Algerian devoted authors penned endless groundbreaking works for the sake of boosting the process of reclaiming their deprived freedom.

Although most of the Algerian literature of the colonial era was of French expression, it played a paramount role in erasing the concept of ‘Algeria is France’. Besides, it could transmit to the international literary scale a purely Algerian independent voice so that it represents all sorts of oppression and violation practiced on the Algerian population and most notably on the Algerian women during colonialism and after the independence.

In a pioneering attempt to participate in reconstructing the newly independent Algeria, a considerable number of Algerian authors delved into topics related to the Algerian postcolonial reality like the political corruption, women suffering, oppression, and inferiority. Most outstanding, some Algerian female writers used the power of their pen to defend these alienated women and restore their identity that had been marginalized by the long lasting years of colonialism and patriarchy.

Referring to what has been stated earlier, it is reasonable to use one of the postcolonial female literary texts as a sample of the present study to explore these postcolonial issues. Hence, Mosteghanemi, the Algerian best-known woman novelist of

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Arabic expression, published *The Bridges of Constantine* first in Arabic in 1993 as *Dhakhirat al-Jasad* and was translated later into English as *The Bridges of Constantine* in 2013. In this literary work, Mosteghanemi depicts the cultural and patriarchal representation of the colonial/postcolonial Algerian women.

In similar lines, this novel depicts the Algerian wounded history and the traumatic memory caused by the French colonial agenda, and presents the ravages of colonialism on the postcolonial Algeria person. What is more significant is that this novel delves into the complex post-independence issues that are all related to the Algerian women in order to expose their marginalized and inferior status that was mainly due to the social practices and the cultural conventions. Mosteghanemi, however, does not dwell on these problems directly; she depicts them in a form of a passionate love letter written by Khaled, an Algerian militant who loses his left arm and spends his life in exile painting his lover Hayat; the daughter of his war time commander and the one that Khaled has addressed this masterpiece/love letter to her.

This research on Mosteghanemi's *The Bridges of Constantine* is important in terms of dealing with this literary text from a deeper perspective. This research expands the work of Mosteghanemi to include the whole reasons and intentions behind writing this novel so that a new interpretation of previous works would be identified. In addition, it determines the way forward for further research. In doing so, this research attempts to delve into different issues like the marginalization, idealization, mutation, and violation that the female protagonist, together with the other main female characters, suffers from in a colonial and a neo-colonial phase. Moreover, it broadens the analysis of Mosteghanemi's reaction to the burdened, metaphorical, and idealized representation of the subaltern voiceless Algerian woman through the application of Spivak's Postcolonial Feminism premises. In this context, this study investigates the creativity of the Algerian female writer

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and her ability in holding the burden of representation through her creative narrative style written in a form of a memoir.

Moreover, the main purpose of the present research is to reassert and clarify that the motivation of the leading characters' conflict can be analyzed from Spivak's Postcolonial Feminism viewpoint and that *The Bridges of Constantine* is truly a third world feminist work through the analysis of the main characters, the main themes, and the creativity of expression within this literary work. Yet, many other reasons are no exception. In order to inform the rationale of this research, the study regularly aims at uncovering the relationship between the status of the Algerian women and the status of culture in relation to the literature. Added to this, this study seeks to state the reasons behind Mosteghanemi's deconstruction and voicing of the Postcolonial Algerian women, and to reveal the motive behind her choice to hide behind the masculine voice. Plus, the present research seeks to unveil the relationship between Ahlam the author and Ahlam the protagonist, and to examine the factors that arouse the author's sense of burden of representation that enabled her to express the dilemma of the Postcolonial Algerian women through her literary voice. In addition, this research seeks to determine whether the voice that literature gave back to the Algerian women is fertile or not.

Aiming at providing an understandable and coherent work, it is important to identify the questions that this study is attempting to answer. The main question that will give birth to this thesis is: How does Ahlam Mostaghanami feel the sense of burden to represent the dilemma of the postcolonial Algerian women as being doubly colonized and how does she represent them? This study will equally endeavour to deal with the following sub-questions: what is the relation between the status of Algerian women and culture in relation to literature during colonialism and after the Independence? How were the Algerian women essentialized, idealized, oppressed, and deprived of their voices during and

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after colonialism? How does literature give these women back their voice?

Much have been said and written about Mosteghanemi's *The Bridges of Constantine* due to the heavy revolutionary agenda and the post-liberal memoir that this novel held within its pages. Within this respective, the crucial issue that has been mostly discussed by the previous researchers and critics in this literary text is the status of the postcolonial Algerian women. For instance, in her Article "Which Qalam for Algeria? Colonialism, Liberation, and Language in Djébar's *L'Amour, La Fantasia* and *Mustaghanimi's Dhakirat Al-Jasad*" (2009), Tageldin makes a comparative analysis between Mosteghanemi and Djébar's literary works in which she highlights the two writers' different politics of language. She, therefore, describes the oppression, marginalization, and mutation exerted on the postcolonial Algerian women (20-21). In another article entitled as "*Dhakirat al-jasad* (The Body's Memory): A New Outlook on Old Themes" (1997), Bamia critically examines the novel's emphasis on the yoke of traditions that boosted the social oppression on the Algerian women which pushed them to fight on both political and social fronts (03).

Moreover, Suyoufie's "The Uncanny in Aḥlam Mustaghanmī's *Abir Sarir*" focuses on the interpretation and the manifestation of the Uncanny in the closing part of Mosteghanemi's trilogy "*Abir Sarir*". Thus, this author compares this latter with the Uncanny used in her trilogy's opening part "*The Bridges of Constantine*". Hence, Suyoufie spotlights the character Hayat which is present in both novels as metamorphosis to Algeria itself. In other words, this female character represents the Algerian 'Umma' with all its sacredness, victimization, and betrayal. In addition, this author states that the symbolization of the Algerian woman is widely present in the postcolonial masculine discourses (06-20).

Holding in check all the previously mentioned literary works, one can say that

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they are partly limited due to the fact that they cover only one aspect of the issues related to postcolonial women. However, this work at hand deals with Mosteghanemi's work from different angles. It extends the work of Mosteghanemi to include the very important external and internal factors on which the whole work is based. It pinpoints a different interpretation of the previous works, and determines the way for further researches. For instance, it deals with the postcolonial Algerian woman not only as female who has been victimized and oppressed. Rather, it shows the double othering, and the double silencing that this woman suffers from due to the neo-colonial ideologies and patriarchy in general. Moreover, it analyses the way Mosteghanemi feels the burden of representing this woman by deconstructing and breaking her long lasting silence. What is more, it investigates the extent to which Mosteghanemi succeed in holding this responsibility by making a scrutinised study to the relationship between Ahlam as an author and Ahlam as a character, and by analysing her creativity of writing. For that reason, a Gayatri Spivak Postcolonial Theory is going to be applied as a theoretical framework.

As a matter of fact, Spivak's theory of Postcolonial Feminism has been developed by the Indian professor of comparative literature Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak. Hence, her well known contribution to the field of Postcolonial Feminism is illustrated in her essay "Can the Subaltern Speak?" In this essay, Spivak explores the situation of third world women basically focusing on the Indian women. Generally, she highlights the doubly colonized status of these women by both: postcolonial patriarchy and the neo-colonial hegemonies. Thus, she declares their inability to speak or to be heard. Yet, she states that the only way through which these women can be heard is by possessing a narrative voice that would represent them at an international scale.

Interestingly, this selected theory is intended to be applied on the literary text of Ahlam Mosteghanemi's *The Bridges of Constantine* in order to investigate the dilemma of

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the postcolonial Algerian women that have been and maybe are still suffering from the different colonial, patriarchal; and national ideologies developed during the post-independence time period. Besides, it reveals the way postcolonial female writers like Ahlam Mosteghanemi try to represent these women by detaching them from all conventional (mis)representations and by giving them an authentic literary voice.

Structurally speaking, this research is going to be divided into two main chapters. The first chapter, “Socio-historical Context and Theoretical Framework” is going to be divided into two sections. The first section will be devoted for the Socio-historical context which it mainly deals with the Algerian cultural community and the case of women within that community during colonialism and after the independence. The second section will be reserved for the Theoretical Background in which Gayatri Spivak’s Postcolonial Theory is going to be used at the extent of some related basic concepts such as Deconstructing the ‘Other’ Subaltern Woman, and Voicing the Voiceless Subaltern Woman.

The second chapter “Deconstructing the Algerian Female’s Identity and giving her a Voice” will be an analytical framework. It will be divided into two sections. The first section “Utopian Representation of the Voiceless Female in Mosteghanemi’s *TBC*¹” will shed light on the idealisation and metaphorical representation of the subaltern female character that Mosteghanemi tries to deconstruct, and will scrutinize the muted voice of this female that she tries to voice throughout the narrative of this novel. The second section “The Burden of Representation in Light of Ahlam Mosteghanemi’s Semi-autobiography and Creativity of writing” which will deal with the authenticity of representation between Ahlam the author and the Ahlam the character, and the creativity of writing in Mosteghanemi’s *TBC*. This latter analysis is intended to show the extent to which Mosteghanemi succeeds in holding the burden of representing the Algerian female.

¹It is an abbreviation to the title of Mosteghanemi’s novel *The Bridges of Constantine*

CHAPTER ONE

SOCIO-HISTORICAL CONTEXT AND THEORETICAL

FRAMEWORK

Introduction

A literary work is not merely intended to afford pleasure in a form of literary enjoyment. Somewhat, It is also intended to be scrutinized in a way where a reading between the lines is well-afforded either on its characters or on its related events, or even on the direct or hidden messages that can be grasped from it. Therefore, Ahlam Mosteghanemi's *TBC* sheds light on the different cultural facts and socio-historical events that Algeria, together with her women, was going through from the period of colonialism to the period of the civil war. Thence forth, the creativity of this literary text opens it on different interpretations and puts it under the analysis of different theories. One of these theories is Gayatri Spivak's Postcolonial Feminism.

Consequently, chapter one attempts to contextualise the socio-historical time periods within which the events of this novel are set. This latter would provide patent interpretations to the literary text under study because history shapes the memory of any human being. Additionally, this chapter provides an overview on Spivak's Postcolonial Feminism and its main premises.

Hence, the first section of this chapter, "The Algerian Literature, Culture, and Women during Colonialism and the Postcolonial Era", focuses on the Algerian women, culture, and Literature which a researcher cannot analyze each one of them separately due to their tightly bound relationship. Thus, this section is divided into two subsections, namely "Culture and Women during Colonialism" and "Culture and Women after the Independence" which discuss the situation of the Algerian women in relation to culture and their representation in the literary discourses during colonialism and after the independence.

In the second section, “Theoretical Framework”, the study moves to talk about one of the theories that one can use to deconstruct, voice, and represent the third world woman.

I-The Algerian Literature, Culture, and Women during Colonialism and Post-Colonial Era: A Socio-historical Background

It is incontestable that history shapes people’s identity, and, hence, their literature. On the other hand, one can read a nation’s literature to get a hold of its history. The Algerian author Ahlam Mosteghanemi’s best seller *The Bridges of Constantine*, for instance, is influenced by the Algerian revolutionary war of 1954. This novel, which is written after the independence, explores the social and political status quo of Algeria and portrays images related the situation of women within that community before and after the independence.

In fact, the Algerian literature of post/colonialism is a mirror replica to the entire circumstances Algeria has been going through. Therefore, one must refer to the fact that the Algerian male and female authors, like any other Algerian civilians and revolutionaries, had strongly contributed to launching the War of Independence. During the 1950’s and 1960’s, some Algerian writers started expressing themselves in the colonial language and they were seen as assimilating the colonial culture (Smail 39-41).

However, the invisibility of the native language was inevitable due to the colonial cultural hegemony that consequently pushed, and even obliged, the Algerians to build a wall between them and their mother tongue. It is quoted by Malika Rebai Maamri in her article “The Syndrome of the French Language in Algeria,” that the Algerian writer of French expression Rachid Boudjedra makes a similar view to the previously mentioned statement when he says that: “for [him], an Algerian person, [he] did not choose the French

language. It rather chose [him]. It has imposed itself on [him] throughout centuries of tears and blood flowing during the painful colonial period” (Maamri 77-89).

The passage above explains that some Algerian writers, like Boudjedra, found themselves forced to write in the colonizer’s language due to the long years of imperialism. Therefore, their literature found itself between two different civilizations with two different cultures; the one that shapes their thoughts and the other that expresses it into the world. However, what matters for them is not the language itself, but rather the context within which that language is used (77-89).

Kateb Yacine is one of the Algerian authors who considered their writings in the French language as a literary weapon. He and his fellow Algerian writers used this literary weapon in resisting the French hegemony, launching the war for Independence, and consequently bringing freedom to the Algerian people. This is clearly depicted in his novel *Nedjma* where he gives a voice to the oppressed Algerians in order to establish a cultural identity (Igoudjil 170). In other words, the fact that Algerian writers were, to some extent, obliged to write in the colonized language and to be separated from their mother tongue did not stop them from defending the Algerian national community and preserving their country from losing its culture, believes, identity, and freedom.(Bryson 106-107)

Commonly inseparable from the literary scale, female authors’ contribution to the War of Independence has been an endless debate. This latter was mainly due to its significant depiction of the cultural and social oppression of women as being silenced under an Algerian patriarchal and a French colonial and cultural system whose effects lasted even after independence. Assia Djebar is one of the famous Algerian female writers whose work has significantly highlighted the Algerian women’s individual and collective struggles toward independence (Maher 10).

As a matter of fact, popular resistance to the French existence in Algeria dates back the earliest years of the French invasion. Yet, the earliest attempts to attain freedom had not achieved a remarkable success. Political resistance eventually replaced the armed resistance, and political parties and associations were founded. Notably, the Association of Muslim Scholars emerged under the leadership of Abdalhamid Ibn Badis promoting for the belief that freedom can only be attained through peaceful defiance of the French rule including its cultural hegemony. The members of the association, or Ulama, sought to reform the existent educational system in order to prepare for an Algerian generation capable of defending its Arab and Muslim identity and culture. Most of the political parties in Algeria were, nonetheless, dissolute of France (Rahal 107-223).

The Algerian War of Independence was evidently an inevitable account to all the political, cultural, and social oppressions that the Algerians experienced during the French colonialism. Therefore, after a long ferocity, Charles de Gaulle, the French President then, stated in 1959 that the Algerians had the right to determine their own future. Despite the fact that some terrorist acts were carried by the French Algerians who were opposed to the independence, Algeria became independent in 1962 (Windrow 17-19). These circumstances altogether helped in shaping the image of an era of both colonialism and independence as it is depicted by both male and female Algerian authors and writers.

1- Culture and Women during Colonialism

It is noteworthy that Algeria was subjected to one of the most forceful systems of cultural colonialism. That is to say, the long presence of French colonialism in Algeria had a major aim which was to detach the colonized Algerians from their past with whatsoever way and to put an end to the existence of the Arab and Islamic culture. Accordingly, they

managed to disintegrate the Arabic language from the Algerian society and to replace it with the French language as the official language for the Algerian people (Djabri 32).

Furthermore, the French colonial regime has profoundly affected the Algerian culture and society due to its longstanding “*Mission Civilisatrice*” or the civilising mission. The French saw the Algerians, including their culture, as backwards and underdeveloped, including the way that they treated women (Vince 142). Explicitly, therefore, the French set about to fulfil this alleged mission as a part of their ironic pretension of civilizing the country by forcefully integrating the Algerian people into the French culture.

As a matter of fact, the French managed first to establish Francophone educational programs as an attempt to create an Algerian intelligentsia that would reshape the Algerian society and consequently advocate the colonial projects of settlement and cultural domination. They sought to dissolve the Islamic practices and beliefs through weakening the Arabic language use so as to Christianize Algeria instead. Accordingly, the French general secretary of state in Algeria in 1832 stated that: “In the twenty years period, there will not be in Algeria any God except 'Jesus' and if we have no doubt this country is owned by France, there is absolutely no doubt that Algeria has departed from Islam forever.” (qtd. in Djabri 35)

Thus, The French colonial attempts to blur the Algerian Islamic identity did not, nonetheless, go unchallenged. Islam in its nature is an absolute way of life that brings together both its faith and its secular aspects. In other words, it is a set of beliefs and a way of worship, a vast and integrated system of law, a culture and a civilisation. It is at this very point that Algeria, as a Muslim country, differs from France. The position of Islamic

culture in Algeria then was clear evidence to the Algerians' loyalty to their Islamic originality (35).

Islam, on the one hand, dominated the daily life of the average Algerian. Generally speaking, the Algerians became identified with the concept of resistance to what had approximately been considered as a continued Western imperialism. Algerian Muslims, on the other hand, had typically positioned more support to the traditional values rather than to serve a revolutionary ideology. In particular, the influential Muslim clergymen were against the liberation of women. (Fantasia; Eric L 149-150)

Traditionally speaking, the Algerians at that time regarded the father-headed family as the basic unit of society where women were expected to show full obedience to their husbands and provide them with support. In similar lines, a former fighter in the war for independence stated that: Our domestication didn't start in 1962, it happened before independence; even during the war, the FLN started eliminating women from the *maquis*, sending us to the borders or abroad. That's when our role was defined, when we were excluded from public life. (qtd. In Turshen 889-911)

Approaching the second half of the 21th century, public life for an Algerian woman was hardly recognized. The number estimated for literate women was only 4.5% mainly due to the very few chances for education. Thus, even jobs for this literate minority were not totally offered. Not to forget that voting rights were not promoted for these women (Amrane; Danièle; Abu-Haidar62).

Furthermore, the French settlers reckoned that the Algerian women were oppressed by their male peers who were in turn oppressed by the colonizers (Cooke07). Moreover, the French believed that the independence movement would break up if they tended to ameliorate their status, since women were considered as the symbol of the

national identity in Algeria. Therefore, the French adopted different policies which in fact made no significant improvement for women's rights. Some of these policies were the social reforms that apparently granted women with education and gave them some rights to vote, eliminating the veil, provided healthcare, and offered some jobs (62).

In other words, it was apparently seen that the French aimed only to liberate Algerian women by offering them better education, encouraging the unveiling campaigns, and freeing the Algerian society from the domination of the patriarchal majority to achieve gender equality (MacMaster92). Yet, their hidden intentions were obviously targeting the national identity that the Front of National Liberation (FLN) was fighting for, aiming at assimilating Algerian women into the western culture so that the traditional image of women in the Algerian society would be destroyed. In similar lines, Frantz Fanon comments:

The officials of the French administration in Algeria committed to destroy the people's originality, and under instructions to bring about the disintegration, at whatever cost, of forms of existence likely to evoke a national reality directly or indirectly, were to concentrate their efforts on the wearing of veil, which was looked upon at this juncture as a symbol of the status of the Algerian woman (qtd. in Harlow Xvi).

Frantz Fanon here sheds the light on the fact that the French hidden intentions were based on destroying everything that can be associated with the Algerians' originality. Taking the idealized image given to the Algerian woman into consideration, the French tended to attack their wearing of the veil.

As a counterattack to the French reforms, the FLN joined Algerian women as proper fighters in the war for liberation (MacMaster 92). However, their involvement was

a mere propaganda, stating that the real meaning for women's equality is their participation in freeing their country. Besides, the FLN encouraged women to be good housewives and mothers under what they called "patriotic motherhood" with which a new Algerian generation built on Islamic and Arab values and traditions would be raised (Helie; Marie 108). Even though women's involvement in the war was somehow appreciated, they were given no legitimate voice in the movement for independence.

As a matter of fact, there was a kind of disappointment among Algerian women due to the superficial concern that the FLN showed towards women's rights. Algerian women, through their contribution to the war as fighters, were expecting equality to men either in participating in important tasks or in being granted equal rights (Vince 455). However, the tasks that women were generally allowed to do during the revolution were often restricted to those tasks which would not contribute to raising their social status in the future (Helie-Lucas 107).

Moreover, women revolutionaries in particular were harshly treated by the French military. They were persecuted, jailed or raped as being suspected to be activists (Vince 456). Despite all, Algerian women's participation in the war of independence marked the starting point for challenging patriarchy and traditions.

According to the Algerian author and activist Marie-Aimée Helie-Lucas, almost all female participants in the war of resistance prioritized the revolutionary cause over their rights, and believed that equality would be gained once Algeria would have got its independence (Helie-Lucas 107). On the contrary, a small group of Algerian women challenged the FLN patriarchal principles, and supported modernity. Generally, this group was of an upper class of francophone Algerian women. For instance, the Algerian Djamilia Debeche and Aïcha Lemsine were anti-nationalist, feminist, and authors of French

expression. Both of Debech's *Leïla, une fille Algérienne* (1947), and Lemsine's *La chrysalide* (1976) represent women's life in Algeria, and explore their struggle of being caught between modernity, tradition, and social patriarchal system. Thus, they depict the Algerian male's oppression on the female as bitterer than the colonial oppression (Orlando 33-35).

On the other hand, Assia Djebbar is an Algerian, French-educated female writer. In a world of silenced women, Djebbar had chosen the French as her weapon of expression. Unlike the previously mentioned anti-nationalist feminists, Djebbar was supporting the war of independence. In her novel, *La Soif* (1957), she writes about the harsh, long-lasting years of injustice exposed on the colonized Africa in general and her country's internal conflict and struggle for independence in particular. However, in most of her works such as *The Impatient* (1958) and *Children of the New World* (1962), she retraces the Algerian women's deep struggle during and after the war of independence (Kharouby 01). She highlights the difference and the separation between the sexes that were imposed by the Algerian patriarchal society. Similarly, M. Kamel Igoudjil quoted Djebbar in his "Postcolonial Algerian Writers in French: Language as Representation and Resistance":

Every gathering, for a funeral, for a wedding, is subject to rigid rules: the separation of the sexes must be rigorously respected, care must be taken that no male relative sees you, no cousin among the men crowding outside the house must run the risk of recognizing you when you go out or in, veiled amid the host of other veiled women, lost in the mob of guests concealed behind their masks (Igoudjil 178).

Djebbar highlights the very rigid restrictions that were, and maybe are still, forced on the Algerian woman either from a religious, social, cultural, or historical perspective. Thus, she claims that these women were, therefore, marginalized and their identity was shadowed and cannot even be recognized.

1.2. Culture and Women after the Independence

Generally speaking, the French administrations had totally denied the existence of an Algerian nation. Following their terms, General De Gaulle provided financial support for the French cultural activists. He sought to integrate Algeria into a constant dependency on France and, therefore, issued certain policies making of French a dominant language in the Algerian schools. The main reason behind his plan was to stop the continuity of the Arabic language and culture (Djabri76).

Following the country's independence in 1962, the central problem that Algerians faced was related to their cultural identity. For that reason, Algerians sought to restore it; the Algerian writers were most likely to struggle with defining their position at this level. The Francophone writer Mouloud Faraoun, faces similar issues of language and cultural identity; in his novel, *Le Polygone Etoile*(1966), he portrays the cultural chaos that followed the independence. Therefore, such writers played an active role in voicing this problem to the international opinion. (Kashani-Sabet 264-280).

Although they preserved their national identity, most Algerian writers were considered as anti-nationalists. In the early pre-independence period, for instance, female writers chose French to express the struggles that faced the Algerian women after being liberated, and which excluded them from the post-independence discourses on the war (Igoudjil 180).

Actually, the conservative party FLN wanted to restore women to their original places. Their brave actions and scarifies were, at best, seen symbolic. Thus, females had to replay the role of the guardian of cultural values (Salhi116). Women were prevented from such simple rights as education and employment. Hence, veiling and traditional marriage were imposed on them, along with the fact that there were no legalised laws against the harassment and/or the domestic violence to protect them (Helie-Lucas 110).

Nonetheless, the National Union of Algerian Women or (*l'Union National des Femmes Algerienne-UNFA*) was created in 1962. The union's role was to defend and preserve women's rights. Since its establishment, however, the union gave no importance to feminism. It remained a formal state, and never worked for the interest of women (Salhi 116). In 1964, the so called *AlQiyam's* organisation was created. This organization had launched the violation of women's rights and their public harassment (Willis 64). Within the same period, however, the Khemisti Law helped in elevating the minimum age of marriage and thus it became easy for women to continue their education (Moghadam 21). Furthermore, the 1976 National Charter maintained an official decision for ensuring equality between men and women.

A set of other legislations called "family codes" followed. They were proposed by the Islamist conservatives during the 1980's and vindicated men's superiority and women's subordination. These codes made women inferior, humiliated, marginalized, and derogated their citizenship. Algerian women considered these codes as a sequential betrayal by the new patriarchal system to them. Though some women organizations were founded to defend women's rights and repeal the family code like the Committee for the Legal Equality of Men and Women, the number of participants was very limited. Moreover, women were subjected to public harassment, humiliation, and threatening as

their voices were silenced, especially during the period of the black Decade. Long after, a set of changes has been approved to the Family code, and women could finally deconstruct their patriarchal society (Salhi 118-23).

In similar lines, Algerian women's struggle against patriarchy and colonialism has often been a central theme in the writings of many female and few male authors. Hence, they shed light on the important role that women play in the Algerian society as mothers, daughters, wives or sisters. They sought to give a voice to the Algerian oppressed women whose sorrow and misery could not be felt but by them themselves.

In a confrontational step, the poet Zineb Laouadj utilised the term "retardate" to describe the social system under the governance of the FLN. She claims that the FLN left a cultural gap for the Islamic Salvation Front party (FIS) to fill in with its thoughts. In her poetry, she emphasizes the fact that Algerian women were under multiple oppressions including that of the Islamist extremists. Laouadj's claim is well demonstrated in her academically written statement: "By rejecting and demonising women, the Islamic extremists are denying their own humanity." (qtd. in Ditmars 28)

Despite the fact that the Algerian female was previously present at the literary scale, the period of the 1980's and 1990's was known by their remarkable absence due to the social and political upheavals and the civil war of 1990's. However, some Algerian women writers wrote as a reaction to the Islamist extremist thoughts, as well as the political upheavals during this period. Assia Djebbar's three novels: *The white of Algeria* (1998), *So Vast the Prison* (1995), and *Oran, Dead Language* (1997), and Fadhila Al Farouq's novel *Taa Al Khajal* (1998) are of good examples (Daoudi 41-63).

For the Algerian women, writing was an escape from the walls of tradition, culture, and the weights of a whole colonial experience. They therefore found in writing a

way to express themselves and build a strong identity. Therefore, the Algerian feminist writer Zhor Ounissi's literary work has an important role in representing the new free and independent self of the Algerian woman. In her collection *On The Other Bank* (1964), she includes sixteen stories wherein she explores the war of liberation and the sufferance and oppression of men, women, and children to gain their freedom. Moreover, she involves in her collection six heroines, where she represents them with such physical and moral qualities as brave, responsible, and beautiful (Bois and Bjornson103-111).

Additionally, Ounissi, as any other Arab feminist writer, deals with the issue of tradition's dominance over women freedom. She, therefore, reflects the hardships of being a female in a patriarchal society where a woman suffers a lot to prove her existence and to be able to study. Hence, one can say that Zhor Ounissi, in both of her collections, represents the Algerian woman from being a fighter for the cause of independence, to a woman who is liberated yet still imprisoned in a patriarchal society (Hamdar46-47).

II-Theoretical Framework

The term Postcolonialism has been used to indicate a number of meanings; it can be used to refer to the period of time that follows World War II, and it can be used to refer to the effect of the impartiality of the colonial order in the neo-colonial period. Simply, Postcolonialism is used to refer to both the societies that were under colonialism, and their global Post-colonial conditions (Bahri194). Furthermore, this term refers to the oppositional responses to all the contradictions and stereotypes that were repressed within a particular newly decolonized nation. Moreover, Postcolonialism began when the nations that were colonized by the Western world powers sought to overthrow their colonizers and regain their political and economic freedom (Ukaegbu 20).

1-Postcolonial Theory: Epistemological Groundings

Postcolonialism, in a nutshell, is a critical theory which explores the colonial experience from the perspective of the colonised societies. This theory has chiefly been created out of the cultural and the political awareness and experiences that developed as a process of resistance during colonialism. It is therefore viewed as a reaction to the discourses that continuously shaped the colonized subject's collective and personal identity. Thus, colonialism, language, landscape, history, myth, and the notion of the "Other" are the main focus of the postcolonial studies (Young 14). Postcolonial theorists tend to shift focus from the Middle Ages Europe to the rest of the world. In other words, all marginalized countries; India and other Asian countries, African countries, and many Arab or Muslim countries become the centre of the postcolonial studies.

Edward Said, Homi Bhabha, and Gayatri Spivak's unprecedented contribution to the field of postcolonial theory granted them the title of 'The Holy Trinity' (Moore-Gilbert 451). Said has chiefly contributed to this field with the concept of 'Orientalism' in which he addresses the stereotypes made by Westerners on Easterners such as lazy, deceitful, and irrational (441). Secondly, Bhabha's theory of hybridity is built upon the potential that cultures, be they of the colonized or of the colonizer, confluence each other and cannot be separated. Additionally, Spivak's views on the third world subject that she considers as doubly effaced and oppressed are theorised in her essay "Can the Subaltern Speak?" She is said to be a postcolonial feminist theorist and critic par excellence, mainly due to her contribution to widening the scope of marginalized women's literatures. (454)

2-Postcolonial Feminism Theory: Spivakian Lens

Postcolonial Feminism Theory or Third World Feminism is one of the prominent and most debatable literary theories. This theory tends to explore the effect of colonialism on the newly decolonized nations' women in different contexts such as how it affects their rights, subjectivity, and sexuality (Schwarz; Sangeeta 53). Moreover, Postcolonial Feminism treats more complicated issues than the postcolonial theory and western feminism do. It is common that any postcolonial theorist deals with the general misrepresentation and stereotypes projected by the colonial discourse on the third world person. Yet, what is really interesting in postcolonial feminism; is that it goes deeper to deal with the double colonization of a third world woman where she has to resist the oppression of colonialism and the patriarchal society within which she lives (Tyagi 45).

In addition to that, one must note that postcolonial feminists, led by Gayatri Chacravorty Spivak, accuse both Western feminists, who paid no heed to third world women's issues, as well as the postcolonial theorists, who often eliminated them from their nationalist discourses, and disregarded the struggles of the third world female. For instance, little attention is paid to female writers in Edward Said's influential study *Orientalism* (47).

It is noteworthy that the Indian-American, postcolonial feminism theorist and critic Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, has made an extremely important contribution to the field of postcolonial theory and criticism (Morton 40-50). Among her different theoretical works, therefore, she wrote a number of books and essays concerning the Third World women. In her most famous essay "Can the Subaltern Speak?" she supports the voices and texts of those subalternized and marginalized third world women (Gogoi; Handique 09).

The term subaltern was first coined by the Italian Marxist philosopher Antonio Gramsci. It generally refers to the groups of society who are marginalized and subjugated under a certain social class, religion, culture, as well as due to gender roles (Azad 59-69). Spivak borrows Gramsci's term because it encompasses the exact picture of the Indian people who have fought for their independence as well as the lower class people in general. In similar lines, Spivak states:

I like the word subaltern for one reason. It is totally situational. Subaltern began as a description of a certain rank in the military. The word was under censorship by Gramsci: he called Marxism "monism", and was obliged to call the proletarian "subaltern." That word, used under duress, has been transformed into the description of everything that doesn't fall under strict class analysis. I like that, because it has no theoretical rigor. (qtd. InMorton46)

Here Spivak states the origins of the term 'Subaltern' wherein she explains how it was first used by Gramsci as a coded word to call the proletarians with. Thus, she adds that this term became associated with everything that falls within the nothingness of representation.

3-Can the Subaltern Woman Speak Theory? Theoretical Premises

In her essay "Can the Subaltern Speak?" Spivak presents a theory of subalternity. In this theory, she exposes the marginalization, essentiality and otherness of the silenced subalterns. Thus, she sheds light on the Third World subaltern females who are, in this case, profoundly shadowed. Focusing on issues related to the Indian widows or the *Sati* women who scarifice their lives and commit suicide right after the death of their husbands, Spivak tends to give a voice to these silenced, subdued, humiliated women. As any other postcolonial feminist critic, she endeavours to reinstate the presence of the female writers

in the national discourses after being overlooked by their male and Western feminist peers who have been, in return, submerged by Western male discourses (Praveen 47-50).

In the same vein, Spivak criticizes the double oppression and violence imposed on the Third World women. She adds that subaltern woman's voice can be heard only as an element of noise. Therefore, Spivak concludes that Third World women, as all other subalterns, cannot speak. Yet, since they are doubly subalternized, they are doubly othered, doubly silenced, doubly essentialized, and they suffer from an identity crisis (Jooste 14-15).

Deconstructing the Other Subaltern Woman

The term "Other" is extremely relative. It means to place one's self in the centre and all the rest in the periphery or in the margin. The significance of this term is changeable and it depends on the context in which it is used. Specifically, the term "Other" has also been used to refer to the dominance of patriarchy in a certain society where men are placed as the subject and women are seen as the other (Staszak 1-2). In this perspective, the case of third world women comes to be more pathetic than that of western women because they suffer from double colonization, and, therefore, double othering, from their men who label them as the second sex or the weaker sex, and who are in their turn oppressed by the white upper class men (Hasan 31). Therefore, they are seen as the oppressed of the oppressed.

Influenced by the Algerian-born French philosopher Jacques Derrida, Spivak used the notion "deconstructing the other" to vitalize Third World Feminism's discourse. She challenges patriarchy, Western Feminism, and white upper-class by trying to deconstruct the dual relationship between both sides. She therefore places the subaltern woman in the centre and put all of the rest in the category of other (Adami64). For instance, Spivak tends

to defy one of the Western Feminism premises that consider ‘childbirth’ as an unpaid domestic burden, wherein the female’s body gets weaker as the baby feeds on it before its birth, followed by breastfeeding caring for it alone. This is given through her reading of the short story *Breast Giver* in which the female subaltern protagonist of the story, *Jashoda*, gives birth to numerous children and looks after her family (Saha107).

Attempting to understand the relationship between Derrida’s and Spivak’s deconstruction, and Derrida’s phallogentric feminist moves that Spivak was influenced by, one must refer to Spivak’s essay “Displacement and the Discourse of Woman.” In her very first translation of Derrida’s ‘*Of Grammatology*’, she focuses on the practice of phallogentric discourses. In doing so, she categorizes the different symbolic representation of women in these discourses. Spivak asserts that this representation is a mere generalization on women and cannot be associated with each and every woman in particular. Thus, Spivak states that Derrida’s Phallogentrism, by deconstructing the woman into a set of concepts and metaphors, in fact, displaces the female instead of freeing her. She, therefore, adds that women became doubly displaced: first by the colonial discourses, and second by the generalized metaphors associated with them in the discourses of their male peers. Hence forth, their deconstruction would never be real so long as their representation in the literary discourses falls into the concept of impersonation, and their voices are appropriated by their male compatriots (Duyfhuizen165-167).

Nonetheless, Spivak asserts that this deconstruction guarantees no change on the part of the subaltern. It rather raises notions of collective consciousness that she actually criticizes (Adami64). In this context, Spivak states that all the politics, economy, and culture, which are already prearranged by the Western discourses, strengthen rather than weaken the double marginalization of third world women. For instance, essentialism, the

belief that people's partisanship in a particular group is secured by some shared essential nature, has been criticised by feminist criticism because they see that some notions cannot be generalized over all women. Instead, they supported making alliances among women based on their differences (Stone 01).

The Subaltern Cannot Speak: Voicing the Voiceless Subaltern Woman

The last statement in Spivak's essay is that the subaltern cannot speak. According to her, the subalterns have been deprived of their voices by a voice greater than them i.e. the colonizer's voice. Sara de Jong and Jamila M. H. Mascot in their article "Relocating subalternity: scattered speculations on the conundrum of a concept." Quoted Spivak's idea in her essay that "[t]here is no space from which the sexed subaltern subject can speak." (717-29). Spivak concludes that the subaltern, and here she emphasizes women, cannot speak because its voice is muted and lost between the shadows of patriarchy and the imperialism of the colonial order in the colonial and the neo-colonial period.

Moreover, Spivak stresses the fact that the subaltern female was and is still doubly silenced. Although both women and men were seen as an "other" by the colonial oppressors, and they both participated in its resistance, patriarchal dominance eliminated women from the anti-colonial history (Louai 07). Furthermore, Spivak asserts that the subaltern female writer faces a double-othering barrier which prevents her from speaking out. Therefore, she is voiceless and her work could not be elevated to the level of western female works (Adami 59).

Correspondingly, Spivak reflects on the pre-independence Indian women's issues. She relies on the subaltern Sati women's case during the British colonialism to prove that the voice of the Indian woman was silenced and lost between two opposite discourse: that of the colonizer and the other of the male within her society (de Jong; Mascot 721). On the

one hand, the British called for individual freedom and modernization for Sati women as an attempt to save an Indian woman from an Indian man. On the other hand, the Hindu patriarchal rituals encouraged the widows to end their lives for the sake of their dead husbands by declaring that the Hindu women really wanted to die. These two oppositions left no place for the Indian woman to speak out her own decision. While each of them is trying to give her a voice, in short, the Indian woman is trapped between modernity and tradition (Morris 269-270). Women's identities were equally lost between these two polarities. Subaltern women had either to subordinate to their patriarchal codes or to that voice of the British colonialism. In both cases, women are subjugated and do not have proper representation. Therefore, their identity is inscribed into a war of positions which consequently places them within identity crisis (Morris 5-6).

As by R. Radhakrishnan mentions in her article "Postcoloniality and The Boundaries of Identity", subalternity is mixed up with the historiographies of the dominant mode. The subaltern, in general, has to go through the negative identifications made on it, and has to identify itself 'with what is not' through its consciousness of its own self in order to be able to put an end to its self-alienation and thus be able to articulate his own identity. Thus, the task of the subaltern women is, specifically, more complicated. Subaltern women are regarded as male subordinated subjects, as it is exemplified in the Sati case, which have no history and consequently have no identity (Radhakrishnan750-71).

However, Spivak asserts that, by approaching the end of colonialism, it is the role of the Indian woman to save the brown man not only from the white man but also from himself referring to how the female protagonist *Daisy* helps the male protagonist *Roman* from his sexual desires and subsequent guilt at the end of Narayan's novel *The painter of*

Sign (Ross 385-90). Therefore, giving such a positive emphasis on the subaltern woman, Spivak tends to restore her consciousness of her own self and reconstruct her identity.

Conclusion

Different postcolonial Algerian (Feminist) writers have documented the situation of the Algerian women during and after colonialism, and have highlighted the injustice, inequality, inferiority, and oppression that the Algerian women were suffering from regarding both sides: their patriarchal cultural traditions, and the impact of the neo-colonial Algerian mentality on them.

Through the literary theory mentioned in this chapter, it is revealed that Gayatri Spivak Postcolonial Feminism studies the situation of third world women before colonialism and after the independence. It focuses on the subalternity of these women as being doubly colonized, marginalized, and oppressed by their patriarchal societies, and by the neo-colonial hegemony of the newly decolonized nations.

Spivak stresses the struggle of the Third World subaltern Indian woman. She introduces a theory of subalternity in which she casts light on the way these ‘Other’ women are misrepresented by colonialism and its discourses, and how they are idealised by their patriarchal culture within the neo-colonial time period. Hence, she tends to deconstruct this given image. Revealing them as silenced, muted, and lost in the shadows of patriarchy and colonialism/neo-colonialism, Spivak highlights the fact that the voice of these women cannot be heard and their messages cannot be transmitted unless they are literary expressed and represented at the national/international literary scale by these women of letters from their same circle.

In the next chapter, “Mosteghanemi’s —*The Bridges of Constantine*” is going to be analyzed from a Gayatri Spivak Postcolonial Feminism perspective. This latter tends to show how Spivak’s Third World Feminist concepts have a link with what was happening with the main characters, and the social, historical, and cultural circumstances depicted in the novel. In addition, it tends to underline the impact of subalternity on the female characters as well as the key factors that pushed Mosteghanemi to write her novel.

CHAPTER TWO

DECONSTRUCTING THE ALGERIAN FEMALE'S

IDENTITY AND GIVING HER A VOICE

CHAPTER TWO Deconstructing the Algerian Female's Identity and giving her a Voice

“I became a free woman when I decided to stop dreaming, freedom that is waiting for nothing and anticipation is a state of slavery.” (Mosteghanemi’s Chaos of the Senses)

Introduction

After contextualising the socio-historical period within which the events of the novel take place, and highlighting the main premises of Spivak’s Postcolonial Feminism, this chapter delves into the thematic aspects of Mosteghanemi’s narrative *in The Bridges of Constantine*. This chapter attempts to analyse Mosteghanemi’s novel in the light of the theory of Spivak, emphasising in that regard the deconstruction of the female character, and voicing her muted voice. Besides, this chapter indicates the way Mosteghanemi holds the burden of representation through the analysis of her life experiences and her production as a female writer. Accordingly, this chapter is going to be divided into two sections.

The first section “Utopian Representation of the Voiceless Female in Mosteghanemi’s *TBC* focuses first on the essentiality of the characters, Hayat and the narrator, Khaled’s mother, and their representation in a metaphorical and idealised way. It is intended to reflect Mosteghanemi’s literary depiction of these characters under the light of Spivak’s deconstruction of the subaltern woman in order to unveil the utopian image associating with the Algerian female. Furthermore, this section deals with the dominance

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of the patriarchal culture and the impact that the male revolutionary rhetoric in colonial/postcolonial Algeria and the shadows of neo-colonialism had upon the subaltern women's voice.

The last section, "The Burden of Representation in the Light of Mosteghanemi's Semi-autobiography and Creativity of Writing" depicts the reason behind her writing of *The Bridges of Constantine*. It, further, shows the extent to which she succeeds in representing the Algerian woman. This section is divided into three subsections.

First, "Postcolonial Autobiographical Feminist Literature" defines the importance of the semi-autobiographical writing for women to be able to express themselves and transmit their voices in a world that does not recognize them. The second subsection, "A Scrutinized Study of Ahlam as an Author and as a Character" compares Ahlam the author and Ahlam the narrator as two crucial phases in her life that embed her with the ability to voice the Algerian women. In order to provide a clear understanding of the nature and the originality of Mosteghanemi's art, the last subsection, "Mosteghanemi's Creativity of Writing", casts light on the creativity of Ahlam Mosteghanemi, as an Arab female writer, that surpasses that of her male compatriots. In doing so, she challenges the critics that expel the Algerian female's literary works.

I-Utopian Representation of the Voiceless Female in Mosteghanemi's *TBC*

Written in an epistolary style, *TBC* creatively embodies and explores the issues that faced the newly-independent, and to some extent even contemporary, Algerian women due to the cultural and colonial ideologies. In this literary text, therefore, Mosteghameni highlights a variety of metaphorical, idealised, and socially constructed representations that the narratee Hayat, along the story, tries to deconstruct herself from. Moreover, she underlines the different revolutionary and patriarchal barriers that prevent the main female

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characters from raising their voices. She, therefore, aims to give them her voice through this literary work.

1-The Algerian Female between Utopia and Authenticity

Despite the fact that this novel starts as a love letter addressed to the protagonist Khaled's beloved, it gradually loosens the idealization of the motherland and pushes the narrator to reckon a new definition to his identity as an Arab and as an Algerian. Eventually both the protagonist's love towards his beloved and towards his city proves treacherous (Stampfl 4). For this reason, one finds the Narrator Khaled saying: "Cities as beautiful as memory, as close as a tear, as painful as loss. Cities so like you!" (Mosteghanemi 76) Here, Khaled describes the complex relationship between him, his lover, and his country. His lover, together with his homeland, turns from tradition to modernity, and her body becomes imprisoned in the neo-colonial corrupted jails. Therefore, the city, like Hayat, wants no more to be beautifully represented. It stripes itself from all the idealisation and prefers to be authentically represented with all its complexities. For this reason, the search for an identity becomes crucial in this novel (Stampfl 4).

In similar lines, Khaled, who is lost in his exile in France, seeks to find his own identity, home, and belonging in his beloved Ahlam, the Daughter of his wartime commander. Thus, he links her to his homeland, Algeria, in different places in the novel, he then says: "A woman whom my nostalgia has smeared with madness, until she has gradually taken on the features of a city and the contours of a nation where I live, oblivious to time, as though within long locked vaults of memory (...) this is she. If only you knew how like her you are." (Mosteghanemi 6) In linking her to his homeland, Mosteghanemi becomes able to depict the second picture that the patriarchal society represents women

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with. Within this perspective, Khaled's different impressions on Ahlam transform her into a symbol of a nation. He develops a love-hate relationship towards her and at the same time towards his nation (Youssef 8). Similarly, he says: "You, my celebration and my misfortune, my love and my hate, my forgetting and my memory. May you be all of that with every return of the day?"(Mostehanemi 83)

Setting the protagonist Ahlam on two dimensions: as a woman and as a nation, Khaled follows his revolutionary rhetoric and attaches his national belonging to the female gender. He feminizes the nation in resonance with the Muslim family in the light of the Algerian culture which allows a man to explicitly direct his love feeling only towards his mother. Thus, the feeling that embodies Khaled's attachment and love to his mother is later on addressed to the character Hayat (Mernissi 121). Similarly, Khaled calls her Constantine or Hayat when he meets her first as a young woman in Paris, the name that only he uses to call her with. In doing so, one concludes that Khaled links her to the memory of his mother and her father as he finds in her the 'Hanin' to his homeland.

When he says:

I gathered in you all those I loved. I contemplated you: your smile and the colour of your eyes brought back the features of Si Taher. How beautiful that the martyrs lived again in your face. How beautiful that my mother lived again in the bracelet around your wrist. Your appearance brought the homeland back to life. How beautiful that you should be you! (Mosteghanemi 24)

Khaled projects his feelings towards his homeland on Ahlam. He wants to restore his own belonging to his motherland and to forget the bitterness of exile and of his painful memory of colonialism and war for liberation that cost him the amputation of his arm. Like Khaled, Hayat has lost the memories of her father and her childhood, mainly due to the national cause. By growing attached to Khaled, therefore, Hayat is making of him her fatherland

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(Stampfl 134). Saying: "You grew attached to me to discover what you didn't know. I grew attached to you to forget what I did know. Could our love last?"(16) Khaled makes the previous statement clearer.

Likewise, Gayatri Spivak, in deconstructing the double marginalization of the third world women, states that only a postcolonial brown female (or brown male) is able to protect her brown male peer (or brown female peer) from himself and from the white man and his long lasting imperial rule (Ross 385-390). Therefore, Khaled and Hayat are represented as the saviours of each other's belonging and identity that have been lost due to the traumatized years of French colonialism and exile.

Moreover, in connecting his lover, Hayat, to his motherland or his mother, Khaled puts her in a place parallel to the mother who sacrifices herself for her children and her husband without asking for something in return (Stampfl 13). In fact, Khaled's mother scarified her life and held all the misery and burdens that tradition, culture, and society imposed on her. Similarly, in a certain way, and because of the revolutionary cause, Hayat's Mother becomes a widow at the age of twenty, and she has to raise her and her brother 'Naser' on her own. Thus, she holds this burden all along her life. Here, Mosteghanemi depicts the role of women who have been widowed, who sacrificed their femininity and gave without questioning. She, therefore, sheds more light on the situation of these women (Ben Jemaa 01).

This very perspective is similar to that of the Indian *Sati* wife or 'the good wife' who sacrifices herself for the sake of her dead husband (Gilmartin 141). Accordingly, Khaled wants Ahlam to be just like his mother. For this reason, one finds that Khaled's main attractions to the female protagonist were her cultural and ancestral specifications. For instance, when Khaled meets Hayat in Paris, he links her to his mother directly after seeing the bangle she wears which resembles that of his mother and that of every Algerian

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woman. Thus, he reduces her to a symbol of the Algerian nation and detaches her from her individuality:

Before your words reached me, my eyes were drawn to the bracelet that adorned the naked wrist you held out to me. It was a piece of jewellery from Constantine, recognizable from the bright yellow of its gold and the distinctive engraving. It was a bracelet of the kind that, in the old days in eastern Algeria, could be seen on the wrist of every woman and in the trousseau of every bride. I stretched out my arm to you without completely taking my eyes off it. And for a split second my mind went back a life time to my mother's wrist and the same bracelet that never left it (Mosteghanemi 30).

In depicting Ahlam as a metaphor for the nation, Mosteghanemi treats a serious issue related to the representation of Algerian women in postcolonial literature. As a matter of fact, these women were mostly to suffer from the discrimination and cruelty of both the colonial order and their patriarchal society (Leonhardt 43). They were likely the ones who struggled most to liberate their societies and their own selves from these social and historical conditions. For instance, the concept of Mother India or the mother Goddess falls similar to the previous perspective, wherein the Indian country is, based on a patriarchal point of view, feminized and depicted as a suffering mother who sacrifices herself for her own family and nation (Mishra 126). Interestingly enough, since the Algerian women are regarded as the original keepers of the family, one can probably say that these women are clearly seen as representative of the Algerian culture in general, and to some extent as equal to it (Lazreg 225).

On the other hand, Khaled's reduction of Hayat to a symbol is mainly illustrated in his successive portrayal of her in a form of Constantine's bridges. His obsession with her makes him allegorizing and transforming Hayat's body into a blank canvas that represents

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Algeria (Stampfl 138). He, then, explains how he feels whenever he draws his Bridges' portraits: "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..." (Mosteghanemi 89) As he wishes his lover Hayat to be the image of his mother, Khaled reveals his selfishness. Women like his mother suffer from humiliation and violation. For instance, his mother's body has been extremely exploited and despaired, and extremely shadowed by his father. In fact, that is what makes him recall the days through which his mother was suffering from his father's treatments. He says: "To teach my mother patience and get her to accept betrayal with disdain, my grandmother used to say, 'What men do is embroidered on their shoulders!' But my father stitched his adventures on Mother's body. A burning wound he was unaware of." (111) Here, Khaled portrays the burden that his mother was suffering from because of his father. It was, in fact, the case of the majority of women during the colonial/postcolonial period in Algeria. These women's husbands found a way to escape the inferiority that had been basically inherited from the French colonialism and prove their manliness only by treading on their women's bodies (Leonhardt 08).

In effect, this picture of the Algerian woman has widely been depicted in the male literary discourses both during colonialism and after the independence. In her translation of Mahasweta Devi's outstanding story *Stanyadayani* or Breast-giver, Spivak, like Mosteghanemi, demonstrates the occupation of women's discourses, reflecting on the story's heroine, to see their body intimidated, both as mothers or as she names them 'Breast Givers' and as the metaphors of a nation that will always deny their individuality (Castaing 5). While Khaled sympathises with these women's situation, he cannot recognise Hayat's place among them. Thus, she represents the new generation of the Algerian civilized women. This fact makes him categorise Ahlam among those women who take advantage of what life gives them. This second category of women was originally

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associated with what is called “*fitna*” or chaos because it does not follow the social order and cultural heritage (Stampfl 143). Khaled suspects her relation with Ziyad once he starts recognizing that Ahlam/Hayat is not like his mother. He then says:

I read this passage so many times, with new feelings and new doubts every time. I asked myself with the impotence an amateur poet, where did imagination end and reality begin? Where was the line between the symbolic and the real? (...) did you perhaps come that day? (...) was he really alone with you? (...) (Mosteghanemi 91)

What one concludes is that Khaled starts thinking of Hayat only as a disloyal and a playful. For him, the character Ahlam does no longer represent Algeria so long as she does not resemble the socially constructed image of the Algerian woman. Here, one must note that this novel, just like Djebbar's *La Nuba*, is clearly decentred from western feminism due to its spotting of an ‘Algerian Feminism’ basing on “female identity rooted in Algerian culture” as a notion (Khannous 46).

To a certain extent, Khaled goes to the extreme when he represents the protagonist Ahlam as a utopia. In doing so, he reflects on the name that was given to her by her father and registered by him. He says:

Between the letter A (for agony) and the letter M (for pleasure) your name was spelled out. Dividing them was the letter H (for heat) and the letters L and A, the Arabic word *la* (for warning). I failed to heed the warning of your name, born as a small flame in the first fires of the war. I failed to heed the warning of a name that starts with ‘ah’, the antonymic cry of both pleasure and pain. I failed to heed the warning of this noun which means ‘dreams’, both singular and plural, like the name of this country, which means

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'islands', and realise from the beginning that plurals are always created to be split up. (Mosteghanemi 14)

Khaled associates the letter A with the letter M which together mean mother in Arabic, and he ignores the two other letters H and L which can mean together a solution or liberation to Ahlam (McLarney 33). In so doing, Khaled has essentialized Hayat. He links Ahlam to the over-generalized picture of the Algerian woman and ignores any possibility of another liberated category. In doing so, he positions her as an 'Other' weaker and fairer sex whose limitation to motherhood is essential. In this sense, Mosteghanemi's literary work at hand, as depicted in Spivak's Analysis of Julia Kristeva's essay about Chinese Women (1974), brings to the surface the typical patriarchal and Orientalist essentialization of the Other as a woman (Castaing 3).

Furthermore, it is true that the name Ahlam² means dreams in Arabic, yet, in its singular form it refers to mean 'utopia' or the 'unreal'. Thus, this underlines a total opposition to the meaning of her other name Hayat 'life'. Although it is not her official name, the protagonist uses it as her authorial name; it is the one that she used to be called with. The authenticity of Hayat (Life) opposes the idealisation of Ahlam (Dreams) Thus, the continuous use of the name Hayat throughout the novel deconstructs this imaginative view associated with the female protagonist (Mclarney 32).

Similarly, Mosteghanemi depicts Hayat as an independent entity only when she appears on the cover of her book because she always appears either as Si Tahar's daughter, or Khaled's fantasy, or Si X's wife. Simply, Hayat always exists in relation to the men in her life and according to these men's perception she is represented. For instance, Khaled's love letter comes as an inspiration to him after she publishes her novel. By deconstructing

² The female protagonist has got two names: Ahlam and Hayat.

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her name, as stated in the previous quotation, he aims to deconstruct Ahlam/Hayat in a way that resembles his own perception of her (Holt 137). Therefore, one can conclude that Hayat is doubly othered in her society. Taking into consideration the fact that the Algerian person was regarded as an 'other' by the French colonizer and was still affected by this ideology even after the independence, the patriarchal environment in which Hayat lives denies her existence as an individual entity, and subordinates her identity to the men around her. Therefore, Mosteghanemi tries to stress the fact that the newly decolonized man, who is still mentally colonized, aims to tread his inferiority on his female peer. This woman, therefore, becomes doubly marginalized, othered, and subalterned. Similarly, in her essay 'Can the Subaltern Speak?' Spivak, as the first postcolonial theorist who sets a full feminist agenda, widened the scope of the subaltern marginalized women's literature. Besides, she shows the secondary position, and the inferior role given to women in patriarchy (Bertens 211).

While Khaled epitomizes Hayat as a bridge in his homeland, he, in contrast, pictures Catherine, his French lover, in a very realistic way. The term that Khaled repeatedly implies to describe this realism is 'completely exposed' or in Arabic '*Tafaddaha tamamman*'. This latter refers to mean dishonouring and shaming. In contrast to Catherine, therefore, Khaled tries to protect her from himself and her own sexuality. He then veils her body to become the symbol of a nation (McLarney 35). In contrast, Khaled eventually reckons that he is actually painting what he is expecting his lover to be other than what she really is. Therefore he says: "As I painted those bridges, I thought I was painting you. But in fact, I was only painting myself" (Mosteghanemi 137). Khaled became aware that Hayat has her own personality that is impossible to be set under any essentialisation. Moreover, one can obviously figure out that the idealized image that Khaled gives to the protagonist Ahlam does not necessarily reflect her. Thus,

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Mosteghanemi represents her as a young woman who goes to the university, dreams of her own independent future, and follows a westernized fashion.

It is worth noting that the different symbolic and metaphorical representation of Hayat associated with her by the narrator Khaled meet Derrida's Phallogentrism. This latter refers to the deconstruction of the colonized women into a set of metaphors and conceptions (Duyfhuizen 165). This process is adopted by Derrida in order to deconstruct the misrepresentation of the third world women in the colonial discourses. Yet, Spivak argues that by deconstructing these women, they become doubly displaced and misrepresented rather than free (166). Similarly, Mosteghanemi, using the voice of Khaled, tends to fictionalize the displacement that the postcolonial Algerian male discourse applies, wherein male authors tend to preserve the postcolonial Algerian woman from the French colonial misrepresentation by constructing her generalized metaphorical and idealised image. Spivak asserts that this Phallogentric representation is a mere essentiality to these subaltern women. She adds that so long as these subaltern women's voice is still appropriated by their male compatriots in the literary discourses, their freedom, identity, and individuality cannot ever be restored (166-67). Spivak challenges patriarchy and western feminism and reconstructs the 'Other' third world women by deconstructing the dual relationship between both sides, and, more likely, by vitalising these subalterned female literary discourses.

Notably, it can be said that Ahlam devalues and idealises Khaled even more than he does to her (Valassopoulos 122). It is clear in this literary text that Hayat becomes Khaled's inescapable and painfully visible experience once he becomes aware of his idealisation to his beloved. In addition, Hayat has never been able to value Khaled's Art. Thus, when she first visits his studio, she claims that she prefers the abstract. Yet, the reader reveals that Hayat is totally disappointed by his abstract portraits of her claiming

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again that she prefers to be authentically painted. Here, as Hayat does almost reveal herself, Khaled is trapped in his consciousness making of her a 'theme, concept, or thing' (Ahmed 145).

Similarly, Khaled says:

Your gaze returned to the last painting. You studied it for a while then said 'So, that's me!' 'Perhaps it wasn't you,' I said, 'but the way I see you. You have something of the contours of that city, the curvature of her bridges, her pride, dangers, caves and valleys, the foaming river that splits her body, her femininity and secret seductiveness, her vertigo.' You interrupted, smiling, 'You're dreaming. How can you find an affinity between me and that bridge? How did the idea occur to you? (...) I would have preferred it if you'd painted me and not this bridge. Any woman who gets to know a painter dreams in secret that he will immortalise her, paint her – not a city. (Mosteghanemi 59)

In this context, Hayat is, nonetheless, trying to fix Khaled's portrayal of her in an abstract manner. She therefore prefers herself to be drawn as a real woman not as a bridge. That makes Khaled suspects his idealisation of her. He then says: "Had I painted a fake representation of you? Was there really no communion between you and the bridge?" (59). In other words, Hayat wants an art that can be understood and recognized by refusing any possibility of representing her in a way different from her own representation of herself. Her very claim that "I prefer abstract art" (19) has no connection with what she really prefers. This statement serves only in denying the connection of Hayat to Khaled through her father and their common homeland.

As a matter of fact, all the symbols and metaphors and all the dreams that Khaled tries to possess Ahlam with fade away once he stops drawing and starts writing his novel. In his return to Algeria, Khaled gives the protagonist her abstract image 'Nostalgia' or

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Hanin as a gift in her wedding with the neo-colonial state official. In doing so, he has definitely participated in blowing up the bridge that could have possibly consolidated between him, as a representative of the old generation, and her, as a representative of the new generation (Taglden 100). Therefore, his return to Algeria and his abandonment of his very first painting marks the death of the 'Dreams' image that the nationalist males surrounding the protagonist have incarnated in her. For instance, although she is not relieved from patriarchy, Hayat is at the end relieved from the abstraction that has been caused to her by Khaled's paintbrush (Irele 123). In this very sense, Mosteghanemi insists on the assassination of the traditional Algerian woman-canvas depicted in her male peers' literary discourses and represents her as a symbol of the nation (123).

2-Voicing the Voiceless Female Character

Although critics negate Mosteghanemi's feminist voice in the novel, one can obviously understand the message that Mosteghanemi is trying to transmit to her audience. In fact, Mosteghanemi tends to bring to the surface the authentic image of the Algerian woman who had been condemned by the ideals of patriarchal revolutionaries and nationalists after the independence and through which her voice was silenced. The Algerian women, who had been fighters in the war of liberation, were still alienated even in the post-independence phase. Hence, Cooke has commented in similar lines that "women found that their battle for independence had ceased to be theirs. It was their fathers', husbands', brothers' and sons." (qtd. in Al-Musawi 237) Correspondingly, Spivak states that "the relationship between women and silence can be plotted by women themselves; race and class differences are subsumed under that charge" (28). Here, Spivak tends to say that women's voice, be them Muslims, Indian, Arabic, Black or be them of lower, or middle class, cannot be heard in any "colonial production, the subaltern as female

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is even more deeply in shadow” (28). Based on this perspective, the protagonist Hayat's voice appears to be totally lost in the shadows of patriarchy and the neo-colonial hegemony. For instance, the female protagonist was named “Ahlam” according to her Father's dreams for an independent Algerian nation. As a matter of fact, the heroine's birth name has first been Hayat which means Life. Short after her birth however, her father asks the wounded, Khaled, to register her officially under the name of Ahlam which means Dreams. Emphasising these factors, Ahlam is patriarchally rebirthed(Irele 100),. Her father, the wartime commander, and Khaled, his representative and her future lover who regards her, to a certain point, like his baby, makes her Life (Hayat) abstracted in a form of Dreams (Ahlam) (100).

Moreover, Hayat has been forced to marry the X man who represents the new Algerian *Bourgeois*, and who symbolizes corruption, wealth, and status. Thus, even though the heroine seems to be in love with either Khaled or Ziyad, she cannot make her own decision to choose the husband she wants. Therefore, she has to accept her uncle; Si Sharif's wishes whose decision's refusal would be equal to her unfaithfulness to the nation. In fact, her uncle is only interested in his own wealth and selfishly making a better stead on the expense of the Algerian woman, Hayat (Danjuma 102).

Interestingly, one can observe that even Khaled does not stand against this marriage although he is quite aware that it is a barely corrupted deal. However, it is only Nasser, Hayat's brother, who rejects the marriage of convenience between his sister and the wealthy businessman (Ghazoul 24-30). From this perspective, Hayat represents the postcolonial Algerian women who put the national cause over their equality and their own liberty, Thenceforward, Algerian women in the colonial/postcolonial periods were silenced and deeply shadowed; they were lost between the voice of colonialism and the voice of patriarchy. Women during the war of revolution faced a serious dilemma: either to follow

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the *Evolué*; a high-class civilized group of Algerian women who support the notion that Algeria was French and betray their nation, or to support the FLN which used them at the expense of their own rights. Therefore, women's rights were ignored and their identity was lost amid the shrouds of a neo-colonial state (Leonhardt 13).

Thus, one can conclude that Hayat, from her first day of registration under the name of Ahlam until her marriage to Si X, has been lost between the shadows of both patriarchy and colonial/postcolonial hegemony. Her marriage to that X man, in fact, reflects the situation of the postcolonial Algerian females and the inequality and ignorance they were lost in. Simply, Ahlam could not speak up her own desire and could not raise her voice louder so that she could surpass her patriarchal society's walls. She has been confiscated despite the fact that she has been a promising and fascinating author.

In light of Spivak's analysis of the subaltern female, one can conclude that the Algerian women as depicted in Mosteghanemi's novel can also be seen as third world silenced and marginalized women. In addition, their voices are shadowed not only in real life but also at the level of the national postcolonial male discourses. This very similarity is illustrated when Mosteghanemi chooses a male narrator.

As a matter of fact, Mosteghanemi's use of a male narrative voice freed her from the social and cultural boundaries that restrict the female intellectual from writing for or about Algeria. In doing so, she becomes able to voice the Algerian women in general (Youssef 01) and to criticise, in her turn, the national accounts given in male discourses (Bamia 86). Similarly, different critics have come to a conclusion that Mosteghanemi utilises the male character Khaled to confront the patriarchal dominance and explore her own deviations. For instance, Aida Bamia praises Mosteghanemi for her ability to stand comfily at a distance and assess the situation of the Algerian women through the male voice. Her voice is, she states, expressed freely without being considered with or against

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women (86). After having been ignored and dismissed as lesser creatures by their society and by colonialism, postcolonial Algerian women have achieved immense progress by making their voices heard through their writings, because due to its silent nature, their writing articulates. It breaks their silence by creating a space that vocalizes them and, as Djebbar states, enables them to defy the patriarchal structures that ban them from the ability to speak (Solomon 23).

Moreover, Ahlam Mosteghanemi offers the male character Khaled the whole narrative because it gives her back the ability to express her views, as a woman, on the reality she lives (Bouzid 121/22) and to expose, in return, all the sacrifices and suffering that the Algerian female went through before and after independence. Even when she appears trapped in patriarchy, Mosteghanemi's main objective is to depict the way in which patriarchy imprisons and mutes the Algerian woman. On the one hand, when the narratee Ahlam shows jealousy of Catherine who has been authentically drawn by Khaled, he comments by saying: "You answered with a secret happiness of a woman who, I discovered later, loved orders" (Mosteghanemi 33). Here, Khaled illustrates Hayat as a woman who accepts and is devoted to the dominance of her man (Al-Musawi 238).

Similarly, the memory of Hayat's father, Si Tahar, who was his leader and revolutionary father prevents Khaled from taking her as any other ordinary woman. For instance, when Khaled kisses Hayat his attraction to her develops to be a blind adoration and lust. Yet, guided by his revolutionary rhetoric, he soon thinks that he betrayed Hayat's father who is, in his turn, one of the revolutionary symbols. Khaled then says: "How long did our kiss last? Two minutes? Three? Five? Could those few minutes have caused all that happened to me afterwards? How come I felt no regret or shame regarding my memory of Si Tahar? That day, I committed my first moral betrayal." (Mosteghanemi 61) For this reason one reckons that Khaled's love for Hayat cannot exceed his revolutionary rhetoric

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(Al-Musawi 237). Moreover, Si Tahar's name provokes an awe effect on Khaled as it does on Ahlam. He becomes both a bridge and a barrier between them. This fact invites another patriarchal pattern in terms of sacrifice, and promise. Put simple, it is his wounded memory and amputated arm that Khaled wants to equate to the loss of her father at any rate. Khaled therefore says:

Both of us were war-wounded. Fate ground us down without mercy, and each emerged with their wound. Mine was visible; yours was hidden in the depths. They amputated my arm; they severed your childhood. They ripped a limb from my body and took a father from your arms. We were war's human remains. Two smashed statues in elegant clothes, nothing more. (Mosteghanemi 36)

Although Hayat is probably capable of escaping this memory, Khaled, as has been explained in the first section, makes of Hayat an ideal woman, an image that cannot be constructed only in relation to patriarchy or in connection to the revolutionary and nationalist memory. Here, it is important to note that Hayat's voice is barely heard in the novel. What Khaled recalls from their conversations together as well as his comments on the book that Ahlam/Hayat wrote is all that can be heard of her (McLarney 25). Hence, Mosteghanemi sheds light on the mutilated voice of the Algerian woman, both on the literary scale, or in her society. The passages above resonate with Spivak's take on subalternity. Spivak states that the ideological construction of gender keeps the male dominant. Thus, the subaltern as a woman is deeply in shadow; she cannot speak (qtd. in Khannous 47). Spivak's conclusion is that the subaltern woman cannot speak but can only listen, so how would she be able to make a narrative of her own? (49) In fact, by depicting the subalternized, inferior, and silenced picture of the Algerian woman, Mosteghanemi

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could give her a voice to narrate her story and make it heard at an international level. Moreover, this female's voice can be, to some extent, heard in this novel.

For instance, while discussing the moral structures that the female as a writer is not freely allowed to explore, Hayat tells Khaled that:

Agatha Christie's novels contain more than sixty murders. The works of other women writers contain even more. Yet not once has a reader raised his voice in judgement or demanded their imprisonment. But if a woman writes a single love story, every finger points in accusation, and forensic investigators find plenty of evidence to prove it's her story. I think critics really ought to resolve this once and for all. Either they admit that women have more imagination than men, or they put us all on trial!" (Mosteghanemi 45)

Hayat, here, is trying to show how a woman writer is accused by her patriarchal society and how she is marginalized by the revolutionary masculine literary discourses when exploring subjects of her feminine or sensational or maybe sexual interests (hasnawi 44).

Additionally, Atiqah Hassan's wife is the only woman that Khaled does not represent in any idealised way whatsoever. In this sense, Atiqah is represented as a hardworking woman who seeks a good life and a modern home with a 'refrigerator'. Her continuous complaints stand to serve in raising the voice of the Algerian female who is deprived of her rights as a fully-fledged human being. Through this representation, Mosteghanemi shows how the Algerian female is humiliated and oppressed by her society wherein all the traditional or cultural burdens are put on her back (Stampfl 23).

Likewise, Mosteghanemi represents Hayat as a promising writer and as a well-educated woman who speaks and writes in Arabic. Yet, Khaled is in immense need to learn

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how to write in Arabic in order to end his estrangement (Shaden 16). Trying to speak up his own vulnerability, he admits: "I envy the minaret. I envy new born babies. Only they have the right to scream and the ability to do so before life tames their vocal cords and teaches them silence" (Mosteghanemi 15). Here, Mosteghanemi tends to depict the qualities that Ahlam/Hayat has, and which enable her to restore her identity unlike Khaled who struggles to voice himself due to his inability to write in Arabic.

Moreover, Mosteghanemi, in using the Arabic language to write her novel, does not only tend to abandon the French language, she also tends to fill in the blank pages left by the silenced Algerian francophone. Hence, her dedication to her literary father, Malek Haddad; the martyr of the Arabic language who chose silence over writing in French language after independence is an eminent example (Stampfl 130). That is why she states that: "[He] swore after the independence of Algeria not to write in a language that was not his. The blank page negated his existence. He died by the might of his silence to become a martyr of the Arabic language and the first writer ever to die silent, grieving, and passionate on its behalf." (Mosteghanemi 5)

Last but not least, Mosteghanemi investigates the double marginalisation and the misrepresentation of the subaltern Algerian female by the different colonial, nationalist, and patriarchal ideologies which imprison the Algerian woman (writer) within respective constraints. However, Mosteghanemi tries to liberate herself from both obstacles. She tries to free herself and the Algerian women by representing them as new independent subjects free from any idealisation and misrepresentation through her writings.

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II-The Burden of Representation in Light of Mosteghanemi's Semi-autobiography and Creativity of Writing

Generally speaking, feminist writing in the Arab world exceeds the cultural and social borders to discuss and negotiate the issues of women in this world (Masali 291). As a matter of fact, the period of colonialism and Post-colonialism (especially the 1990's) marked a considerable absence of female writers on the literary domain. Thus, few Arabic female authors have raised their pen to claim for change and for an authentic representation. Hence, what is missing in the Arab women life is a literary expression that proves their existence. (Al Ghadami 120/21)

1- Postcolonial Autobiographical Feminist Literature

Female intellectuals, undeniably, try constantly to make their voices heard due to their awareness of the importance of proving their existence. Thus, this latter is generally done through writing (semi)autobiographies and memoirs. Thus, the Arab intellectuals are no exception because they are an escape for them from all historical and social barriers that stand in their ways. The author Mohamed Moâtassim says: "Women are more into the biographical writings where the self finds an escape for itself so that it can express and admit all the oppression and hardships it was feeling under the iron fest (Patriarchy discourse)." (Trans. mine, Moâtassim 07)³

Here, this author explains the way women could express themselves and transmit their voices to a world that does not recognize them through their autobiographical works.

³أن الكتابة النسائية ميالة إلى الكتابة السير ذاتية حيث تجد الذات متنفساً لهاً وتبوح وتعترف بكل ما كانت تحس به من

ضيم ومن ضيق في كنف القبضة الحديدية." (معتمصم 07)

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The Algerian female authors' fictional texts written in the Arabic language, in particular, underline the different phases where fiction and real life experience of the female writer intersect. In other words, Algerian female writers intentionally makes a link between the characters' experiences in the novel and the authors' real life experiences (Ben Jemaa 01).

Moreover, these intentionally recalled experiences give a space for imagination to be coupled with reality. Thus, this latter process of writing preserves in a way the transparency of reality, proves the self, and reassures its presence and uniqueness that has been marginalized and reduced by the Algerian masculine discourses (Masali 33).

Additionally, what makes the contribution of the Algerian woman into the literary field significant is her "literary honesty" in investigating both the national and personal issues. It is simply that this woman generally breaks up with the conventional standards that most authors follow in their writings (Moâtassim 133). It is worth noting that the Algerian female author of Arabic expression Ahlam Mosteghanemi finds herself holding the responsibility of representing the Algerian woman especially, and the Algerian identity in general after having been lost within the shrouds of postcolonial ideologies (Daoudi 08). Therefore, her writing takes, par excellence, the form of a memoir of both: her own past, and her nation's history. Hence, women who write this kind of autobiographical fiction always express their feeling of exile, violation, and the oppression that they face in their patriarchal societies. This latter may probably be the main reason that pushes them to write against and to try to get rid of all the psychological, social, and historical barriers that keeps them apart from being able to access free expression (01).

It is obvious that Mosteghanemi disagrees with the idea that says that all what the female author writes happens in her life because that would put her under superficial judgement ignoring the aesthetic values of her writing. This very notion has been

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addressed in Mosteghanemi's *TBC* when the protagonist Ahlam tells Khaled that when a woman writes a love story every finger points her in accusation (Mosteghanemi 45). However, Mosteghanemi does not oppose the presence of the personal experience itself. Rather, she stresses, in her novel *Chaos of Senses*, the importance of the presence of the personal experience of the writer in his/her literary works wherein it provides their writings with exceptional literary creativity. Thus, she describes it as "The most beautiful thing that a writer impresses the reader with" (Trans. Mine, 88)⁴ Thus, Mosteghanemi asserts that the authenticity that the writer adds in his fictional writings is what makes his literary text unique.

2-A Scrutinized Study of Ahlam as an Author and as a Character

As a matter of fact, there are a lot of common points between Ahlam Mosteghanemi and the main female protagonist Ahlam in her novel *TBC*, either regarding their experiences in life or regarding their personalities. Yet, that does not eliminate the possibility that Mosteghanemi differs from her character Ahlam at a certain level. For instance, the very first point that one needs to highlight is their names. Regardless of the fact that they both share the same name which is Ahlam, the similarity of the two letters 'A' in Ahlam and 'Ha' in Hayat or in Arabic 'ح' and 'ا' form an expression of pain. This very notion is spotted by Mosteghanemi when she says that "Literature is only born from wounds" (Mosteghanemi 137). This expression, in its turn, reflects the suffering that they both share in a memory of a country whose women, like the country itself, have been violated and exploited, during colonialism, and after independence. In doing so, Mosteghanemi, uses this complexity of language as an attempt to invite more audience and

⁴ "هي أجمل ما يتركه لنا"

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expose to them this issue, so as to liberate the Algerian woman as well as to decolonize the Algerian' mind. (Daoudi, 08)

Furthermore, the process of recalling the memory of childhood and youth is very obvious. Thus, the female character Hayat was born in Tunisia during the time of revolution. Then her family moves to live in Algiers after the independence. After that, Ahlam travels to France to continue her higher studies there. Ahlam, then, goes on two periods of studies: the first one in Algeria where she learns about the Arabic and Islamic culture; her original culture; and the second one in Paris, where she learns about the western, 'civilized' culture (Ben Jemaa 50). Here one concludes that Mosteghanemi, through her female protagonist, recalls the circumstances she lived through during her childhood and youth in Tunisia where she was born, Algeria, her motherland and where she lived, and France, the exile, where she continued her Doctoral studies. This process of recalling is set between the present and the past of the author, as it is traced in her memory and expressed on her literary pages. Thus, what helps Mosteghanemi to reach her target with success are: her intellectual and literary status as a creative novelist and poet, her decency which made of her a historical symbol, her traditional/ modern culture, and her female gender that makes her unique among her contemporary dominant male compatriots. Therefore, all these qualities enable Mosteghanemi to voice the freedom of the Algerian woman, and to detach her from all the burden and idealization associated with her (49).

Still, at this very point, Mosteghanemi and her character differ. Although Hayat is quite like Mosteghanemi, an intellectual, a prominent writer, a highly-educated woman who holds the name of one of the leaders of the war for independence, she marries a man for profit. It is true that she is somehow obliged by her uncle to accept this marriage, yet, an intellectual and prominent writer like her could have had a say instead of accepting to

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sell her body in a neo-colonial patriarchal and corrupted bargain. The only time Hayat appears as an independent free woman is when she writes (Holt 137). Therefore, one concludes that through the failure of her character Ahlam to prove and free herself from the jails of patriarchy surrendering her, Mosteghanemi succeeds in addressing the issues that the Algerian woman has long been suffering from.

Based on this perspective, autobiographical literature helps the Algerian female writer to restore her existential self through her illustration of some of her life experiences in her writings (Amer 01). Mosteghanemi proves that only writing can reassure and bring to light her own independent identity that has been exhausted in the shadows of patriarchy. This happens, in fact, due to the creativity of writing that Mosteghanemi shows in her literary works. Here, it is worth noting that the Algerian female writer's creativity, that has long been ignored and reduced to the level of decadence, allows her to hold the responsibility of changing the views that despise the Algerian female author as well as her creativity (Amer 01).

3-Mosteghanemi's Creativity of Writing

Ahlam Mosteghanemi invites the Algerian female intellectuals and authors to revise the perspective that negates the ability of women to be literarily creative like their male compatriots. Consequently, she encourages her Algerian female peers to make of their literary creativity a tough rival in order to surpass their male peers' level of creativity. (Baali 115)

Mosteghanemi, therefore, tries to challenge all the negative criticism that expels and marginalizes the Algerian females' literary works. Many critics claim that Mosteghanemi is ensnared in patriarchy, arguing that they cannot recognize an independent subject called Ahlam, the main female protagonist in *TBC*, due to the over-

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repeated carnation of Ahlam to her father's revolutionary histories (Shaden 484). For instance, McLarney claims that when Mosteghanemi chooses a male voice to narrate *TBC*, she encloses herself in the edges of the narrative. Some other critics have even stated that this novel is not hers, rather, it must be written by a male author where they see it impossible for a female author to write with such creativity. Yet, Mosteghanemi exclaims this idea arguing that female authors were devoid of this tradition since a long time. She adds that it is only the female voice that a woman can hide behind (Falah 169).

In fact, what Mosteghanemi tends to do by taking the male protagonist Khaled as the hero and the narrator of her novel is to make her voice heard between the male audiences, and/or to make them read their own selves within her writings. She also tries to write back to the patriarchal perspectives and tries to prove her clever level of creativity. Hence, what confirms this latter and reinforces Mosteghanemi's voice is the fact that some of the male elites (writers) were thought to be the real authors of this novel, while some others admitted her creativity in writing. (168) For instance, the Lebanese poet Nizar Qabani is astonished by Mosteghanemi's *The Bridges of Constantine*. He comments on it saying that Mosteghanemi's novel has drowned him due to the total similarity between his literary style and writings and hers. He admits that this novel combines all the creativity that is used to be linked only to a male writer. (Ghitri 10) He adds that "If I am ever asked to sign my name on this extremely unique and poetically written novel, I will never hesitate doing that. Was Ahlam Mosteghanemi writing me in her novel? " (Trans. Mine, Alqabani)⁵

⁵ This testimony has been written on the Mosteghanemi's *The Bridges of Constantine's* book cover, second edition, London 20.08.1995.

"ولو أن أحداً طلب مني أن أوقع اسمي تحت هذه الرواية الإستثنائية المغتسلة بأمطار الشعر.. لما ترددت لحظة واحدة (...هل كانت أحلام مستغانمي في روايتها (تكتبني)؟" (القباني)

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Accordingly, a testimony from such a poet as Nizar Qabbani is certainly of a great value to the Algerian feminist writing, and it reassures the ability of the female to express the man's voice much better than the male himself. Moreover, he, in his turn, supports Mosteghanemi's standpoint and disclaims all the other comments that humiliate the creativity of the Algerian female writer. Similarly, this latter asserts that the Algerian author is a tough opponent to her male peer and her imagination transcends her male compatriots (Falah 165).

Male testimony on Mosteghanemi's creativity in writing does not end at Qabbani's only. Several other male critics and elites such as the Dr. Sheribat Ahmed Sheribat who declares in his study "Nun El-Niswa in The Algerian Literature" that despite the fact that the female writings in Algeria have been given little interest throughout the Algerian literary history, Mosteghanemi and some other Algerian writers are certainly excluded from this category due to the creative presence that they have proven, each in a very unique way (Foghali 53-54).

Moreover, the character of Ziyad has represented, at some level in the novel, the Arab intellectual man that stands against the feminist literature in general (Falah 166). In this sense, when Khaled proposes to introduce him to Ahlam, Ziyad says: "I hate women when they try to have literature instead of having something else. I do hope your friend isn't a spinster, or menopausal. I have no patience for such types!" (Mosteghanemi 69).

However, Mosteghanemi attempts to replay on these judgments through the character Ahlam. Thus, when Khaled tries to find some suspicious narrative in Hayat's novel, she replays: "You said, don't look too hard, there's nothing between the lines. A woman writer is beyond suspicion because she is open by nature. Writing cleanses all that has stuck to us since birth. Look for dirt somewhere other than literature!" (117). Mosteghanemi, through Hayat, is arguing that women's writings are totally free of all

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suspicious linked to them, indicating that these latter can be explained in no way other than the inability of men to understand or to reach to the level of her creativity. From this standpoint, one can say that Mosteghanemi's creativity of writing together with the biographical context on which this literary work is basically built, allow her to hold successfully the burden of representing the oppressed and marginalized subaltern woman in a new independent and authentic way through giving her a literary voice.

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Conclusion

In short, Mosteghanmi creates events that expose the suffering of the marginalized and oppressed subaltern Algerian women in facing the troubles of the colonial/neo-colonial hegemonies as well as their social and cultural patriarchy.

Through Gayatri Spivak's Postcolonial Feminism, which is supported by the biographical critical perspectives, the colonial/postcolonial Algerian women can be said to be doubly colonized, violated, marginalized, silenced and suffer from an identity crisis. Thus, Ahlam Mosteghanemi could free the postcolonial Algerian women from their subalternity through deconstructing the idealized image associated with them, and could give them a voice that represented them at an international scale. Hence, their identity is equally restored.

Furthermore, Mosteghanemi's life experience, which is clearly illustrated in this Semi-autobiographical literary text, played an important role in boosting her creativity. Thus, this latter enabled Mosteghanemi to hold responsibility and represent the Algerian woman in a very successful manner.

GENERAL CONCLUSION

General Conclusion

Ahlam Mosteghanemi is one of the writers who take the pen as their literary weapon to explore the evils of the societies that they live in order to bring about change. Therefore, her words' power enables her to uncover the suffering of the Algerian women during the French colonialism and after the Algerian independence in 1962.

. This study, "The Algerian Woman, Culture, and the Burden of Representation in Ahlam Mosteghanemi's *The Bridges of Constantine*", has explored the author's novel by scrutinizing it from different angles so that the knowledge of all the circumstances that led to the production of this masterpiece are revealed, similarly, the events and the characters in this novel are analyzed. The study regularly revealed the dilemma of the Postcolonial Algerian women and uncovered the relationship between the status of the Algerian women regarding the colonial, national, and, patriarchal ideologies, and stated the reasons behind Mosteghanemi's deconstruction and voicing of the Postcolonial Algerian women. It also revealed the motive behind Mostaghenanemi's choice to hide behind the masculine voice. In doing so, it unveiled the relationship between Ahlam the author and Ahlam the protagonist. In addition, it examined the factors that aroused the author's sense of burden of representation. Finally, the voice that Literature gave back to the Algerian women revealed to be fertile.

Likewise, one can conclude that Mosteghanemi, in her novel, creates an environment that mingles between an era of colonialism to an era of independence, to an era of civil wars which altogether make it very similar to the Algerian status quo during colonialism and after the independence. She uses the voice of Khaled, as a representative to the Algerian masculine voice, to tell the whole narrative. Thus, she uses the character Ahlam as a sample and subjects it to the situation of the Algerian women in regards to their cultural burdens and ignorance before independence and their post-independence struggles

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like the issues of women's emancipation, and their struggles against inferiority and injustice that were mainly due to the colonial, national, and patriarchal ideologies of that time periods.

Taking the previous elements into account, the researcher could apply the appropriate theory that helps in endowing with interpretations to the events of the novel, the behaviours of the characters, and the way they deal with their troubles and hard times. Therefore, this study adopted Gayatri Spivak's Postcolonial Feminism Theory to dig deeper in the novel in order to scrutinize the main characters in regards to the events and all the other circumstances.

First, through the lens of Gayatri Spivak's Postcolonial feminism, it has been revealed that the third world woman is doubly subalterned: first as an object to the colonizers and their literary discourses, and as a subject to her patriarchal societies and the national discourses. Hence, she declares that this subaltern woman can never speak up her own voice, as she answers negatively to the question that entitled her essay "Can the Subaltern Speak?" In addition, she believes that the only way that enables her to deconstruct/reconstruct and to liberate herself from all outsider forces, which aim to mutilating her voice, is through the realization of a literary voice that is capable of representing her at an international level.

When analysing *The Bridges of Constantine* from a Gayatri Spivak's Postcolonial perspectives, it is revealed that Mosteghanemi, on one hand, uses the character khaled as a narrative voice to uncover all the overgeneralisations that essentialized the Algerian woman and put her under one idealized image; the caring mother who gives without asking for something in return. Hence, another misrepresentation is uncovered; through the use of character Hayat as a sample again, she reflects the Algerian women who are regarded as

General Conclusion

betrayers to the local culture as they choose to adapt a westernized life style. Anyhow, Mosteghanemi's focus on depicting the utopian image associated with the Algerian woman is, in fact, intended to be deconstructed at last. Moreover, Mosteghanemi emphasises on the authenticity that the character Ahlam Always likes to be illustrated with in Khaled paintings instead of the abstraction that she has never understood.

What is more, Mosteghanemi focuses on depicting the aspects of the Algerian patriarchal society in the novel. Thus, Hayat, the female protagonist's voice has never been heard, and she has lifelong been incarnated in patriarchy; from her registration under the name of Ahlam until her marriage to Si X, a wealthy and corrupted man. In fact, Hayat was forced to get married to him, and she could not raise her voice and say 'no' to her uncle who would benefit most from this implicit bargain. In addition, Khaled successively links Hayat to the nationalist and revolutionary memory. Always relating to the character Hayat as a sample, Mosteghanemi casts light on the mutilated voice of the Algerian woman. Thus, a researcher finds Hayat's voice deeply shadowed and, as Spivak believes, she cannot speak. Thus, Mosteghanemi, through this literary text, fictionalized the Algerian women's cause as being doubly subalternised.

Despite the fact that Mosteghanemi has been criticised due to her use of a male narrative voice yet, her intentions behind using it are obvious. In fact, she utilises the male protagonist narrative voice to confront the patriarchal dominancy and to explore her own deviations. Thus, it freed her from the social and cultural boundaries that restrict the female intellectual from voicing herself or voicing Algeria. Therefore, this narrative voice enables her to break the silence of all the postcolonial Algerian females and makes them heard at an international scale.

General Conclusion

As An Arabic Algerian female writer, Mosteghanemi, following an autobiographical writing style, finds an escape from all the historical, cultural, and social barriers that stand against her and against proving her existence. Thus, what makes her writings really significant is the literary authenticity and honesty that is sensed in her fictional literary works. Hence, Mosteghanemi wrote her novel in a form of a memoir of both: her own past, and her nation's history. In doing so, she tends to hold the responsibility of representing the Algerian woman especially, and the Algerian identity in general after having been lost within the shrouds of postcolonial ideologies. She therefore, tries to authenticate the situation of the Algerian woman by giving her her literary voice. Thus, the reason that pushed Mosteghanemi to hold this responsibility is revealed through the biographical criticism between the author Ahlam and her main female character Ahlam. For instance, their names hold a similar meaning related to the Algerian women's shared pain and shared dreams. Moreover, both of them were born in exile, and grow and continue their studies in their homeland, Algeria, where they are both exposed to an Algerian Arabic culture. Thus, they both move to another exile again, France, where they both learn about the western culture. In fact, it is there in France where Mosteghanemi continues her doctoral studies and becomes able to scrutinise the situation of the Algerian postcolonial woman. Thus, Mosteghanemi's creativity of writing helped her in representing the Algerian woman and liberating her from all the burdens associated with her.

In one word, the dilemma of the Algerian (postcolonial) women who had been doubly colonised, silenced, and subalternized by the different postcolonial ideologies have been revealed through the application of Spivak's Postcolonial Feminism on Mosteghanemi's literary work. In addition, this dilemma is successfully represented by Mosteghanemi through her creative literary voice and her authenticity of writing.

General Conclusion

Therefore, the voice that Literature gave back to the third world Algerian women revealed to be fertile so long as it is heard from a third world female writer.

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ملخص

تستقصي هذه الدراسة إشكالية العبء الثقافي والذي تحمّلته النساء الجزائريات بعد الاستعمار كما هو موضّح في رواية جسور قسنطينة لأحلام مستغانمي، وذلك على ضوء الإيديولوجيات الاستعمارية، الوطنية والبطيركية من خلال كشف احساس مستغانمي بالعبء في تجسيدها. تمّ استعمال النظرية النسوية ما بعد الاستعمارية لسببائك من أجل تحليل هذا النصّ الأدبي. تكمن أهمية هذه الدراسة في تعمقها في المشاكل المتعدّدة التي تعانيها الشخصيات الأنثوية في الفترتين الاستعمارية وما بعد الاستعمارية. بالإضافة إلى ذلك توسّع الدّراسة تحليل ردّة فعل مستغانمي على الصورة المثقّلة والمجازية والمثالية للمرأة الجزائرية فاقدة الصوت. تنتهي هذه الدّراسة إلى قابلية تطبيق نظرية سببائك النسوية ما بعد الاستعمارية على رواية مستغانمي، وبأنّ معضلة النساء الجزائريات في فترة ما بعد الاستعمار قد تمّ كشفها وتمثيلها بنجاح عبر صوت مستغانمي الأدبي الابداعي وأصالة كتابته.