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Mohamed Boudiaf University of M'sila  
Department of Letters and English Languages



## Storytelling Tradition in the Algerian Arabic-Language Novel: A Critical Responsive Reading of Mosteghanemi's *The Bridges of Constantine*

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Candidate:

Miss. Yamina KORICHI

Miss. Israa Iness BENBACHIR

Supervised by :

Dr. Mohamed GOUFFI

**Panel of Examiners**

Dr. Youcef BENNAA	University of M'sila	Chairperson
Dr. Mohamed GOUFFI	University of M'sila	Supervisor
Dr. Abla AHMED KADI	University of M'sila	Examiner

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## **DECLARATION**

I hereby declare that the dissertation entitled, “Storytelling Tradition in the Algerian Arabic-Language Novel: A Critical responsive Reading of 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:**

### **Dedication 1 :**

*I wholehearted dedicate this humble work to my parents, who were waiting for my*

*Graduation more than I was.*

*To my father, whose words of support and encouragement are still ringing in my ears.*

*To the source of tenderness... my beloved mother*

*To my brothers ... may Allah protect them.*

*To my best friends who stood by me*

*To all the ones who gave me the hand of help to reach this achievements*

*Thank you for giving me aspiration that lightened my path toward my dreams...*

*I'm so lucky to have you in my life.*

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### **The Abstract:**

The present study investigates of the traditional Arabic storytelling impact on the contemporary Algerian novelist Ahlem Mosteghanemi's seminal work, *The Bridges of Constantine*. Employing a reader-response theoretical framework. This study is significant because many critics have analyzed this novel from different angles, but; as far as we know; none have explored the use of storytelling tradition in the narrative and how affects readers. The study examines the storytelling techniques used by the author such as: the repetitive designation technique; leading word style technique; thematic patterning and formal patterning technique. It analyzes how Mosteghanemi uses traditional Arabic narrative techniques and tropes to cultivate a profoundly immersive and affective reading experience for the modern audience. This study examines how Ahlem conveys emotions and feelings in her novel. It aims to demonstrate the strong impact of emotions that readers experience while reading *The Bridges of Constantine*, engaging their minds and imagination continuously. Additionally, this research highlights how one's background and various group affiliations can influence their interpretation of the novel's trajectories. It concludes that the author's writing style and narrative techniques significantly shape readers' understanding of the text. Finally; Ahlem's skillful use of narrative techniques; has created a novel that is considered a masterpiece, even up to the present days.

**Keywords:** storytelling; *the Bridges of Constantine*; readers; feelings; storytelling tradition; reader response; techniques.

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## **General Introduction**

## **General Introduction:**

Algerian literature has gone through different historical stages, experiencing prosperity in some and decline or stagnation in others, depending on the political, social, and cultural circumstances. This is particularly true because the Arab Maghreb region as a whole has been engulfed in the fires of wars, conflicts, and turmoil. These conditions inevitably influence the transformations and characteristics of Algerian literature. However; the rich and diverse literary tradition has produced many renowned authors over the decades, with the Algerian Arabic-language novel emerging as a particularly significant genre. These works reflect the unique cultural, social, and political experiences of Algeria, offering insights into the nation's history and identity. Many literary works and figures have left a remarkable mark on the Arabic literature in general from Ibn-Khaldun and El-Maqqari to Benhadouga and Ahlem Mosteghanemi...

After 130 years of fighting against the violent French occupation, whose goal was to spread the French language and get rid of the Arabic language. Although; the Algerian authors kept defending their original language which is part of their identity. Many Algerian writers explored themes associated with the postcolonial Algerian reality, such as governmental corruption, women's suffering, oppression, and inferiority, in an innovative effort to contribute to the reconstruction of the newly independent Algeria. Most remarkably,

a few Algerian female writers restored the identity of these oppressed women and defended them using the power of their writing after decades of patriarchy and colonization.

Moving now to the storytelling in Algerian post-colonial literature. Algerian literature has a strong and rich storytelling tradition that is ingrained in the nation's cultural legacy. For many generations, Algerian storytelling, also known as "*hikaya*" or "*riwaya*" and the storyteller called "*hakawati*", has been an essential form of expression and communication. This custom dates back to the ancient age, when moral lessons, cultural values, and historical events were preserved through the generation-to-generation transmission of oral storytelling.

The storytelling legacy in Algerian literature is still strong because authors use these oral histories as sources of inspiration for their compositions. This custom helps writers establish a deep connection with their audience by encapsulating the spirit of Algerian identity and culture. Well-known Algerian authors like Kateb Yacine, Assia Djebar and Ahlam Mosteghanemi used storytelling strategies in their writing.

Ahlem Mosteghanemi was described by Algeria's first President Ahmed Ben Bella as "an Algerian sun illuminating Arabic literature". She had developed her own cultural perspective on the Algerian struggle for freedom, while her father participated in the Algerian revolution against French occupation and was imprisoned after participating in demonstrations, and later on when he got released, Ahlam was born; and as these events also takes place in one of the reasons of her literary work. Her first novel *dhakirat aljasad*, was published from Lebanon, it was well known in the Arab world and to be considered one of the 100 most important Arabic novels, and earned several Arab awards including the Najib Mahfoud Prize for Literature, and the Algerian Medal of Honor as well. It was then translated into English in 2013 and released as *The Bridges of Constantine*.

For ages, storytelling has been an essential component of human society, acting as a source of historical preservation, knowledge transmission, and audience entertainment. The oral storytelling tradition has a lasting impact on modern writing, as writers continue to be inspired by its rich history to craft engrossing and compelling stories. “*The Bridges of Constantine*” by Ahlam Mosteghanemi is a classic example of a work that has been greatly affected by the oral storytelling tradition.

The objective of this dissertation is to investigate how Mosteghanemi’s novel was influenced by the oral storytelling tradition. It will explore how storytelling techniques in the novel helped convey the feelings of the reader and made it easier for them to understand the different scenes and layers of the story. This dissertation will shed light on the importance of the oral tradition in modern literature by examining these issues, particularly in relation to Mosteghanemi’s writings. Additionally, it will enhance the wider comprehension of how narrative techniques, whether conventional or modern, persist in molding and enhancing the literature sector.

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: as the reader moves through the scenes of the novel, how do readers' emotions and aesthetic sensibilities influence their understanding and appreciation of the text?? This study will equally endeavor to deal with the following sub-questions: What techniques and procedures does she use in her narrative to increase the influence of the storytelling on the story? How does the text yield emotional and aesthetic responses among its readers? In what way does the novel represent the reader’s belonging to a specific group that may influence their interpretation of the novel’s trajectories?

Many discussions have occurred about Ahlem's *The Bridges of Constantine* in various areas like feminism, post-colonialism, neocolonialism, readers' understanding of the text, exile trauma, and the interaction between genders. However; none; to my knowledge; have previously delved into the utilization of storytelling tradition as a narrative technique and its impact on readers' comprehension of the text. Bouhassoun and Boufenghour in their article "Studying the Impact of Reading Literature on Reconstructing the Reader's Perspective 'Insights from the Writing of Ahlem Mosteghanemi and Mario Bellatin'"(2022), they focused on exploring the influence of written literary texts in reshaping the reader's emotional rationality. In "Neocolonial Burdens and Unhomely Selves in the Metropole in Mosteghanemi's *the Bridges of Constantine*" (2020) Gouffi and Berrahal focused on "neocolonialism" and "unhomeliness" in Ahlam Mosteghanemi's *the bridges of Constantine*. However; Dr Lamia Youssef explored the depiction of trauma and exile in an Arabic novel and motion picture set the 80s and 90s in Algeria in her article "the Embodiment of Algerian Trauma as Injury in Literature and Film: Two Female Voices from *Memory in the Flesh* and *Rachida*."(2018). Ghazu in "the Relationship between Men and Women: Ahlem Mosteghanemi's Point of View" investigated Ahlem Mosteghanemi's perspective on the relationship between men and women.

However; in "Which Qalam for Algeria? Colonialism, Liberation, and Language in Djebar's *L'Amour, La Fantasia* and Mosteghanemi's *Dhakirat Al-Jasad*" (2009), Tageldin makes a comparative analysis between Mosteghanemi and Djebar'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. 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.

Holding in check all the previously mentioned literary works, one can say that they are partly limited due to the fact that they cover only one aspect of the issues related to the influence of storytelling on readers' understanding and feelings. 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 examines the reading experience evoked by Ahlam Mosteghanemi's novel *The Bridges of Constantine*, and explores the various layers of meaning that the novel provides to readers. It looks at how the novel engages readers and the different interpretations and insights that can be gained from engaging with the text. This dissertation delves into the depth and complexity of the novel, highlighting the multifaceted nature of the reading experience it offers. In addition; it examines how the reading experience evoked by the novel and the various layers of meaning it provides are influenced by readers' own emotional responses and aesthetic sensibilities. The work analyzes how readers' personal backgrounds, perspectives, and sensitivities shape their understanding and appreciation of the text. Moreover, the dissertation also explores how readers' affiliations with particular social, cultural, or political groups impact their interpretations of the novel's thematic trajectories and narrative arcs. For that reason, a reader response theory is going to be applied as a theoretical framework.

Structurally speaking, this research is going to be divided into two main chapters. The first chapter: "Historical and Theoretical Background" is going to be divided into four sections. The first section will be devoted for a historical view of the Arabic-language Algerian literature deals with the origins of the Arabic-language Algerian literature, and the colonial

and postcolonial perspectives of Arabic-language Algerian literature. The second section will be reserved for the Arabic-language Algerian novel deals with evolution of the Arabic-language Algerian novel and themes and influences in contemporary Arabic-language Algerian literature. The third section will delve with the storytelling tradition in Algerian literature. At least of this chapter will be reserved for the theoretical background of reader response theory.

The second chapter “A Reader’s Journey through Storytelling and Meaning” will be an analytical framework. . It will be divided into four sections. The first section delve with the storytelling techniques used in Ahlam Mosteghanemi’s *the Bridges of Constantine*. The second section will deal with the narrative scenes and layers of meaning in *the Bridges of Constantine*. The third section evoke with the text’s impact on reader’s and the understanding of the novel and the impact of storytelling with reader’s feelings. The last section will deal with the influence of reader’s groups’ identity on the interpretation of novel trajectories.

## **Chapter 1: Historical and Theoretical Background**

### **Introduction:**

When discussing Ahlem Mosteghanemi's acclaimed novel *The Bridges of Constantine*, it is valuable to provide an overview of the broader context of Algerian Arabic-language literature. This rich and diverse literary tradition has produced many renowned authors over the decades, with the Algerian Arabic-language novel emerging as a particularly significant genre. These works reflect the unique cultural, social, and political experiences of Algeria, offering insights into the nation's history and identity. Mosteghanemi's *The Bridges of Constantine* is widely regarded as a seminal contribution to this literary canon, and situating the novel within this context can enhance our understanding of its themes, influences, and the important role it plays in Algeria's literary landscape. By exploring the Algerian Arabic-language novel and its place within the country's overall literary tradition, we can gain a deeper appreciation for Mosteghanemi's work and the multifaceted voices that have shaped the written expression of Algeria.

## 1.1 Historical View of the Arabic-Language Algerian Literature

Algerian literature has gone through different historical stages, experiencing prosperity in some and decline or stagnation in others, depending on the political, social, and cultural circumstances. This is particularly true because the Arab Maghreb region as a whole has been engulfed in the fires of wars, conflicts, and turmoil. These conditions inevitably influence the transformations and characteristics of Algerian literature (my translation) (Besso 4).

Centuries before, the Arab conquest of the Maghreb start and Arabians arrived into the Maghreb in large numbers, which led the Arab Muslim conquerors leave a huge impact on the culture of the Maghreb than did the region's conquerors before. However the Arabic language became the language of civilization in that time; in the central Maghreb, Arabic had become the language of civilization two centuries after North Africa had been conquered. Many towns in the region developed as centers of interest and influence for Arabs, Berbers, Arabized peoples, and, starting in the fifteenth century, Andalusians who had been driven into exile by the “Reconquista” in Spain, all of whom associated with one another under the direction of successive dynasties. Thus, Arabicity, Islam, and a sense of belonging in a Mediterranean and African setting were the primary principles of Algerian identity (Bois 103).

### 1.1.1 The Origins of Arabic-Language Algerian Literature

Over the course of the last ten centuries, Algeria has produced a wide range of literature, much of it more erudite than literary: memoirs and chronicles written in verse or prose; portraits of the country's intellectual, political, and social life, journeys and monographs, and didactic, epic (e.g.; *The Epic of Bani Hilal*), satirical, erotic, or religious poetry. Throughout the fifteenth century, paraphrases, commentaries, and compilations of previously published works spread more widely than original works. Al Hafnaoui

published an anthology in 1907, and during this time he identified 320 writers who had contributed to the Sahara, Constantine, Algiers, and Oran, working in around fifty different locations. Three stand out in particular: the Emir Abd-el-Kader (1808–83), Al Maqqari (1579–1632), and Ibn Khaldun (1332-1406) (103).

Among the most contentious intellectuals of the modern Arab world, Ibn Khaldun has inspired hundreds of books and articles. He is also arguably the most frequently discussed topic, even among columnists for Arabic newspapers. This is mostly due to the fact that Ibn Khaldun lived in the 14th and 15th centuries, which are regarded to have been the last stages of the downfall of Arabic philosophy. As a singular exception to this development, Ibn Khaldun has attracted the interest of modern Arab thinkers who are desperately searching for fresh “Saladins” to emerge in politics and new “Ibn Khalduns” in science (Tomar 590).

Ibn Khaldun has achieved success through numerous works, according to Fischel:

The great legacy which Ibn Khaldun has bequeathed to us consists of the seven volumes of his *Ibar* (of which the first volume is his famous *Muqaddimah*), of his *Ta’rif*, or *Autobiography*, and of some other smaller works which have but recently become known such as his *Lubab al-Muhassal Fi Usiul ad-Din* and his *Shifa’ as-Sa’il li-Tahdhib al-Masa’il*. The revival of an interest in this legacy, in the West as well as in the East, has manifested itself recently in new translations of his *Muqaddimah* into English, into Persian, Turkish, and Portuguese, and in the publication of a number of anthologies in various languages, and even in a reprinting of the Builaq edition of his *Ibar* with valuable indices, and a new Critical edition of the text of the *Muqaddimah* in progress. Ibn Khaldun’s contributions to Islamic and general

historiography, made in his *Muqaddimah*, which have been expounded from the very day of his “European discovery”, are again being made to an ever increasing degree the topic of recent research.

(Fischel 1)

Al-Maqqari also was one of the notable historians in the period of (1579-1632). Al Maqqari was an intellectual man with an extensive background in various fields. In addition to his status as a preeminent jurist, he was well known for transmitting prophetic traditions. We are aware that he was well liked and that many people attended his hadith lectures while he was in Damascus (Elger 292). Al Maqqari began gathering information about the history of Islamic Spain while he was still in Tlemcen. He continued this project during his multiple trips to Fes and Marrakesh. He authored the biography of Qadi Iyad *Azhar ar-riyadft akhbar 'Iyad*. The composition of this work, which combines general history with biography, would subsequently serve as a model for Al Maqqari's subsequent writings (292/293).

All along the last centuries and notably during the 16th, 17th and also the 20th centuries, the Algerian cultural heritage has been enhanced by poems in the popular idioms, a blooming of songs about love and war, songs that stream from the source (104). In other words, the Algerian cultural heritage in those centuries was based on poems, which has taken a prominent place in Algerian literature.

According to Bois:

The patriotic theme was inspired by the resistance, by the epic of Abd-el-Kader, and by the insurrections of Bou-Amama in southern Oran and Al Mokrani in the Kabyle. Other recurrent themes in this poetry reflect daily life, the song of the tribe, its customs, and its traditions. These poems were transmitted orally from

one generation to the next, and if many of them remained anonymous, several names have never the less passed on to posterity: Ibn Amsaib, Ben Sahla, and Ben Triki from Tlemcen; Mostefa Ben Brahim and Mohamed Belkheir from southern Oran; Mohammed Ben Guittoun (whose love poem “*Hiziya*” served as the inspiration for a film); Sidi-Khaled from Biskra; and Ben Kerriou from Laghouat. (104)

### **1.1.2 Colonial and Postcolonial Perspectives in Arabic-Language Algerian Literature**

:

Algerian literature in Arabic during the French colonization that started in 1830 and continued until Algeria gained independence in 1962, was characterized by a spirit of resistance and the affirmation of identity. Algerians resisted the French invasion using both weapons and words. In rural areas, traditional poetry was used as a way to resist the French (Goodman,2002).

El Amir Abd-el-Kader (1808–1883) led armed resistance against the French army during the French occupation in several parts of Algeria. He was able to take control of many regions in and around Algeria between 1837 and the time of his prison time in 1847 (Jansen; Bamia 12). Moreover; El Amir Abd-el-Kader was a poet. His poetry was influenced by the works of pre-Islamic poets like Imru’al Qays and Antara. El Amir Abd-el-Kader became a prominent figure in modern Islamic mysticism after he wrote his *Kitab-Al-Mawakif* [The Book of Attitudes] while residing in Damascus (Jansen 9).

The Association of Algerian Muslim Ulama was one of the major publishers of poetry and short stories in Arabic in Algeria. The Association of Algerian Muslim Ulama was founded in 1931 by Abdel Hamid Ben-Badis; Bachir El Ibrahimi and Tayeb El-Okbi (Sharkey 125). Ulama officials controlled lots of established activities, including *Médersa* (schools offering a

variety of courses teaching in Arabic) and Quranic schools. These small, private prototype schools faced challenges like teachers' imprisonment, budgetary troubles, and numerous closures. Still, the quantity grew throughout time, reaching 150 schools in 1958 (Djabri 70). They believed Algeria to be an Arab and Muslim nation and were interested in developing Arabic language and culture. Some Arabophone journals were started by them, including *al Muntaqid* [The Critical] in 1925, *al Chihab* [Meteor] in 1925, which was closed down by the French government after just eighteen issues, and *al Basair* [Clairvoyance] in 1925. (McDougall; Cox 159). The Ulama encouraged the creation of Arabic drama, poetry, and short tales as a political act and a way to raise awareness among people (Cox 159). According to Cox (159) "Ben Badis embraced poetry as a means of projecting an Arab identity in Egypt during *the Nahda* (Renaissance). Theatre was also impacted by Ulama narratives. Mahieddine Bachtarzi presented *darija* (vernacular) performances in Algerian Arabic, his plays such *Fakko* [*They are aware, and you cannot fool them*], had themes that were anti colonial and attacked the traditional Muslim community. The colonial authorities frequently restricted these theatre productions. Additionally, historians of the Arabophones penned new histories in addition to the French ones (Salhi 62).

Following World War II, French literature had an increase in production, while Arabic literature saw a decline. Nevertheless, the first short novel in Arabic was written in 1947 by the dramatist Ahmed Reda Houhou. Houhou worked as a writer, translator, and journalist. His father had sent him to study Islamic studies and law in the Middle East. In The 1947 *Gada umm al qura* (Beautiful Woman of Mecca); was published in Tunisia by El Tlissi publishing company. It consists of forty-four pages. The publication's location also reveals that Algeria lacks an Arabic-language literary scene. The story discusses the oppression and role of women, particularly the forced marriage of young girls to older men (Cox 159).

The poet Mufdi Zakaria wrote many verses from them Zakaria's collection *Al Lahab Al Muqaddas* (The Sacred Flame) includes *anachid* (patriotic songs). His poem “*Qassaman*,” composed in 1955 while jailed at Barberousse prison later became known as the national song of Algeria after being sang by the guerrillas during the liberation war (110).

Algeria became an independent country in July 1962, following 132 years of conflict, lack of food, poverty, injustice, and marginalization. Algeria's 1962 constitution stated that Arabic was the only official language and that Islam was the only national religion (AbuHaidar 154). During and immediately following the final years of the Algerian independence war, a new group of writers emerged who were dedicated to developing short stories. Between 1962 and 1990, more than a hundred collections of short stories were published, alongside those featured in daily newspapers like *Al Chaeab*(the people), *Al Nasr*(the victory), and *Al Djoumhouriya*(the republic), as well as in weekly publications such as *Al Moudjahid*(the mujahid). *Amal (the hope)* journal particularly prioritized the publication of young writers, releasing short stories by over sixty authors since 1969, many of whom were previously unpublished. While the predominant theme in these stories is the liberation war, the narratives often become tiresome due to the authors' tendency towards grandiosity and a certain black-and-white portrayal. For instance, Zhour Ounissi's collection *Eala Alshaati Alakhar* (On the Other Bank, 1967) contains sixteen stories, six of which revolve around the liberation war, with heroes (including six women) embodying exceptional moral and physical qualities such as beauty, bravery, and a sense of duty. Some authors explore a broader range of themes to revitalize the art of storytelling. These writers include Abdelhamid Benhedouga, Aboulaid Doudou, Tahar Ouettar, Djalali Khallas, La'raj Ouassini, Amar Bellahcene, and Merzak Bagtache (105).

Zhour Ounissi, a prolific Algerian author, was born on December 13, 1936. She has written several notable works, including *Min Yawmiyat Mudarisa Hura* (From the Diary of a Female

Teacher) (1979); *Eala Alshaati Alakhar* (on the Other Bank) (1974); *al-rasif al-na'im* (the Sleeping Sidewalk) (1967); and *Lunja waal-ghul* (Lunja and the Ghoul) (1994). In 2015, she published a book about Ibnu Badis titled *L'imam Abdelhamid Benbadis ET la renaissance d'une ouma* (imam abdelhamid benbadis and the renaissance if the nation) (Abdellaoui 50).

### 1.2 Arabic-Language Algerian Novel

Algerian Arabic novel emerged during challenging and difficult era in our country's history, directly influenced by the French occupation which lasted more than 130 years (from 1830 to 1962). The colonial authority aimed to enforce the French language in all domains while simultaneously limiting Arabic language which is the native language of Algerian people through closing schools and prohibiting its use in administrations, resulting emergence of Algerian generation with French cultural background whose expression language was French due to the dictates of the French occupier (khelif 368).

#### 1.2.1 Evolution of the Arabic -Language Algerian Novel (Historical Background)

The Algerian Arabic novel appeared only in 1971, when the work of Abdelhamid Benhedouga *Rih al Ganub* (Wind from the South), was published. It was translated into French and at least ten other languages. The work has been republished several times in Arabic, filmed by Slim Riyadh, many times entered school and university programs in Algeria, Tunisia, and other countries (105). Benhedouga has a lot of other works such *Nihiyatu-l-ams* (the end of yesterday) that explores into whether Algeria should reflect on its past to preserve what is positive while building a harmonious, progressive society. The protagonist, Bachir, travels between villages and schools to rouse people from their passivity. In *Banae as-Soubh* (it's morning) the author explores civil life challenges and depict the dissolution of traditional family structures. The narrative, set in 1976 during the National Charter's enactment, hints at parallels between familial despotism and state authority (108).

During the 1970s, Algerian Arabophone writers, aside from Boudjedra, did not gather much global critical acclaim. When they were noticed, the feedback was often unfavorable. Arar Muhammed Al Ali's work *Ma La Tudharuh Alriyah* (What the Winds cannot face) was released in 1972 by SNED. His second novel *Altumuh* (Ambitious). Faced similar disapproval in 1978. Abdelmalek Murtad's *Nar w Nur* (Fire and Light) was published in Cairo in 1975 and faced harsh criticism from Algerians, who accused the Egyptian publisher of deliberately selecting a weak text to represent Algerian literature (Bentoumi 64).

Tahar Wattar attended Zaytuna University in Tunisia. He previously worked as a censor with the SNED. Wattar was introduced to Arabophone readers after the translation of his writings into French. In 1989, he took on the role of president of the cultural association “*Al-Jahizia*”, and in 2005, he received the Sharjah Prize from UNESCO. A versatile writer, Wattar was known for his short stories, plays, journalism, critiques, and as a member of the FLN. His first novel, *Laz* [The Ace], was presented in 1972 and later published in 1974 by the SNED (80).

Wattar's second novel *Azilzal* (The Earthquake) was first published in Algeria by SNED, then republished in Beirut in 1974 by Dar Ilm Li Malayin. It was later translated into English in 2000 by American scholar and translator William Granara and published by the Lebanese publishing house Dar Al Saqi in London. In the novel Wattar employs satire, monologue, and intertextual references from the Quran to critique Algeria's post-revolutionary socialist regime, focusing on language, identity, agricultural reform, education, and ethnic diversity (El Shakry 121). Wattar's novel *Eurs Albaghl* (The Wedding of a Mule) was initially published in Beirut in 1978, followed by a release in Algeria by ENAL in 1980, and later in Cairo by Dar el Hilal in 1987. The novel delves into the interplay between tradition and modernity, offering a socio-political critique of Algeria. Through various metaphors and allegories, the author

examines the dynamics between the colonizer and the colonized in the context of the newly independent Algeria (Carjuzaa 55).

Fadhma El Farouk started her career as a journalist in Algeria before moving to Lebanon during the civil violence in Algeria. She was supported by many Lebanese intellectuals. In 1997, she published a book of short stories *Lahzat Iikhtilas Alhub* (A moment of stolen love), with Beirut's Dar El Farabi, and in 1999, she was able to publish her novel *Mizaj Murahiqa* (The Mood of a Teenager) again with the Dar El Farabi publishing house (the second edition was issued in 2007). El Farouk had to wait for two years to see her second novel 2003 *Tae-Alkhajal (Feminine Shame)* to be put into print by the prestigious publishing house Riyad El-Rayyes in Beirut. Several publishers had refused to publish it because of its themes based on women's rape and the situation of women's suffering during civil violence (Evans, 2006). Daoudi (2018) argues that this is the first Algerian novel in Arabic that talked about rape.

### **1.2.2 Themes and Influences in Contemporary Arabic-language Algerian Literature**

Novelists entered a new era when they were freed from colonial limitations and given the chance to expand their writing on various topics to freely express their interest in national issues. The Algerian revolution, for instance, offered novelists rich themes to merge aesthetic and historical elements in their narratives (Khelif 372).

Since most narrative events in Algerian narratives took place in towns, towns like Algiers, Oran, and Constantine were a common topic of and characters grew up in towns, the town is recognized as the primary common theme in most novels. Towns were placed first over the countryside in narrative texts; the Sahara was sadly absent, except in a few specific passages, and the countryside was only mentioned in relation to events from the Algerian revolution that took place in the mountains (373).

Benhdedouga's themes (woman, soil, tradition and modernity, authenticity and openness, generational conflict, relationships between urban and rural areas, emigration, the war of liberation, language and education issues), can all be categorized as social and political paternalism or the question of freedom. Political, spiritual, and familial paternalism had hindered dialogue in Algerian society for twenty-five years. It took away individuals' freedom and degraded society to a minor status in legal terms. For instance, in *Wind from the South*, Belkadi decides to force his daughter Nafissa to marry the village mayor against her wishes in hopes of protecting his land from being nationalized. He justifies his decision by stating paternalistically: "J'ai decide de la marier, ma decision est sans appel" (*Wind from the South* 90) [I decided to marry her [to him]; my decision is irrevocable] (Bois 108).

*Rih al-janub* challenges the state's view on unity by highlighting the division between rural and urban areas. It portrays this division as a power dynamic, with the urban sphere in control and the rural world subordinate. The novel emphasizes the importance and validity of the marginalized rural community, similar to early French-language literature that aimed to address the rejection of Algerian culture by the dominant settler discourse. In contrast to the dismissive attitude towards rural society in the state's modernizing discourse and industrial policy, the novel promotes inclusivity. It sees the urban world as a realm of representation and verbal culture, while the rural world represents a tangible and unmediated reality (Cox 139).

*Al-Jaziyah*, in contrast to Benhadouga's previous novels, showcases a more intricate structure. It deviates from the linear format of his earlier works by presenting two alternating 'times' and using oral storytelling as a means of conveying meaning. This heightened complexity allows for a certain level of ambiguity, which is evident in the novel's connection to the discourse of the state. While the novel addresses contemporary issues, its structure and the character of *al-Jaziyah* introduce symbolism that enables it to transcend its specific setting.

The novel primarily delves into the agriculture revolution and the annoying presence of student volunteers in a mountain village (151).

In Banae as-Soubh (it's morning); the religious establishment was criticized through the character of Sheikh 'Alawah. He embodies both the novel's anti-hero and a member of the religious elite. Sheikh 'Alawah is depicted as a hypocrite, fixated on appearances, wealth, and social status, while resisting progressive change... The novel also challenges the prevailing connection between religion and Arabic by using Arabic to discuss everyday matters and the complexity of family life (156).

The literature that was produced during the Boumediene era and in the next few days, when a 'Boumedienist' perspective was still possible, was connected to the political culture of that period not because it was directly the result of a 'command' but rather because the themes and motifs of the literature were given importance to a specific period of political (and economic) development. Algerian literature believed in the progress of society and the power of culture to mobilize and educate. It aimed to shape and impact thoughts within the state and society, using both positive and critical elements. By connecting the creation and reception of literature to its historical context, it challenges the idea that Algeria's Arabic literature's politicization was solely a result of state control or lacked critical influence. A significant focus of Algeria's cultural resistance against colonialism was the longing for (Cox).

Several works typically concentrate on the position of women in traditional society, particularly highlighting the challenges faced by these women. It would be advisable to explore Mosteghanemi's doctoral dissertation from 1985, wherein the majority of the content is dedicated to a thematic analysis. While there is a brief mention of a divergence in feminist ideology, the focus remains on various topics. The initial chapter delves into maternity and the social implications surrounding it, followed by chapters on foreign women and women who

participated in the war effort. Subsequent sections cover themes like liberation, the objectification of women, prostitution, as well as the empowerment of women and the underlying factors contributing to it (Abdellaoui 25).

El Farouk had to wait for two years before her second novel, titled *Tae-Alkhajal* (Feminine Shame); was finally published by the renowned publishing house Riyad El-Rayyes in Beirut. Despite its powerful themes surrounding women's experience of rape and the hardships they faced during times of civil violence, several publishers had rejected the manuscript (Bentoumi 77).

### **1.3 Storytelling Tradition in Algerian Literature:**

Storytelling is a special human activity that allows us to share words and aspects of ourselves, others, and the worlds we live in, real or imagined. This shows that storytelling involves both the storyteller and the listener. It is a traditional method used for many generations to pass on culture, knowledge, and wisdom. This section will explore the historical roots of storytelling tradition in Arabic-language Algerian literature.

#### **1.3.1 Historical Roots of Storytelling Tradition in Algerian Literature:**

The African literature has a rich history that is rooted in the continent's storytelling and oral traditions which dated back to the earlier civilizations. The cultural heritage complexity reflects the diversity of the African literature from various regions (Simon Gikandi12).

African literature has been defined by several dominant threads and accompanying paradoxes. In both its oral and written forms it has a long history rooted in the continent's famous storytelling and performance traditions, and its classical civilizations are as old as that of any other geographic region of the World. The linguistic traditions of Africa are ancient, dating back to the Egypt of the pharaohs, the Carthage of the Romans, the Sudanese

empires, the Eastern Christian traditions of Ethiopia, the kingdoms of the lakes region and southern Africa, and the Islamic heritage of West and Eastern Africa

(Simon Gikandi 12).

The history of storytelling tradition dates back to the earliest human societies, people used to share stories and beliefs with each other because they didn't have a writing system. The ancient societies used art like sculptures and masks to show and pay attention to the importance of individuals or symbols within their communities. They used sculptures and masks to celebrate their gods, ancestors and also animals that have special meaning to them, they believed that these things were important for their well-being and could affect their lives, so they tried to Preserve their identity and keep it alive through this art (Yilmaz Recep, and Cigerci Fatih Mehemet. 1-2). In view of its African and Arab extensions, it is possible to discuss Storytelling development in Algeria in tandem with its evolution in Africa and the Arab world.

The Algerian literature has a great and vibrant history that mirrors the cultural diversity, the complex cultural linguistic and the historical influences. Ethnic groups, languages religions and cultures that have coexisted in Algeria had shaped the Algerian literature. The Algerian storytelling tradition covers a huge amount of themes such as history, religion, legends and daily lives. It's not just for fun but it helped and still helps to keep the cultural heritage alive and preserve the cultural identity (Touati 1).

The Algerian people used oral tradition and other forms of art that had been passed down through generations to communicate, connect, sharing knowledge, helping people express themselves and preserve their cultural heritage. Oral tradition plays a significant role in providing a break from the challenges that women faced from a society dominated by man,

this tradition aided in enhancing communication skills and abilities for being able to deal with all situations effectively (Touati 2).

Most definitions of oral tradition includes the one of the Houston world Affairs Council, it define it as a collection of messages and stories that are conveyed orally from one generation to the next in different ways and manners.

Oral traditions are messages that are transmitted orally from one generation to another. The messages may be passed down through speech or song and may take the form of folktales and fables, epic histories and narrations, proverbs or sayings, and songs. Oral Traditions make it possible for a society to pass knowledge across generations without writing. They help people make sense of the world and are used to teach children and adults about important aspects of their culture

(The Oral Traditions of Africa N.d.: 1).

### **1.3.2 Poetic Narratives: The Art of Storytelling Tradition through Poetry in Algerian Arabic Literature:**

In Africa and the Arab world there has been a strong tradition of oral and classical poetry, however, these types of poetry are not as popular in our days as before, the new generations in Algeria are more interested in modern influences rather than the folk culture of the Arab Islamic heritage, fewer people narrates them and performers called “*maddah*” (The praiser) or “*rawi*” (The storyteller) are no longer popular or old-fashioned and trendy (Bouderssa 256).

Slyomovic Susan mentioned in her book entitled The Merchant of Art and considered the folk poetry as a means to persuade, to mediate, and to praise. The Arab and Muslim cultures still value their popular traditions, both classical and popular poetry were used more than prose for things such as rebellions and entertainment and even in weddings. Oral poetry whether made up on the spot or remembered, it is often used during election campaigns or at receptions

of returning pilgrims “*El haj*”, also it is used by children in their games. This type of poetry is popular in some groups due to its simple language and captivating rhythm, it is used in celebrations especially in the celebration of the Prophet Muhammad’s birth (peace be upon him). The Arabs give a great value to the folk poetry due to its deep connection to their political, social and religious life (Bamia 15).

As it is mentioned in *Modern Man in search Search of the Soul* a book by Carl Gustave Jung a Swiss essayist and psychologist, the psychological aspect relates to how people think and feel including the lessons they learn, their emotional experiences and the challenges they face in life (179). The folk heritage plays a crucial role in traditional Arab societies especially in Algeria, as it acts as an intermediary, a source of amusement, advocates for morals and a tool for conveying cultural heritage and national identity. The Algerian folk poetry explores different aspects of human emotions and the conscious mind, it is considered as a mirror of the Algerian individual personalities, psychologies, experiences and even their mentalities (Bouderssa 257).

Bamia stated in her book entitled *The Graying of the Raven* that Eugene Damas and some other officers of the Bureau Arabs noticed that the Algerian folk poets documented the historical events through poetry due to its historical significance and beauty, noting its importance because of the lack of written sources during the colonial period (21).

Bouderssa Hemza, an Algerian researcher who mentioned in his article entitled *The Algerian Literature (Elite Novel / Folk Poetry) and the Post-Colonial Discourse: Witnessing to an Intellectual Liberation*. Poets act as storytellers who use their words to transmit deep emotions and experiences to their listeners, they let people feel nostalgic to their past, understand their present and build their future. Nostalgia helps people remember and revive their past and keep their identity, especially when colonialism try to remove it, it makes people

feel proud of who they are, they're origins and identity by creating a connection between their memories and actions or by intertwining their past experiences with their present behaviors which established a great and powerful self-meaning (257).

Algeria is famous for its diverse, old and real heritage from different cultures and several civilizations. Discovering the Algerian Folk is very important to understand The Algerian society. Women in Algeria are keen to preserve their cultural heritage through their daily lives, celebrations and artwork and games such as “*Al-buqala*” (Abdullatif Hanni, The game of *buqala*, a women’s ritual in Algerian Folk culture: women asserting themselves through poetry Folk poetry).

Abdullatif Hanni defined “*Al-buqala*” in his article entitled The game of *Buqala*, a women’s ritual in Algerian folk culture: women asserting themselves through poetry, as it comes from the small clay pots which called in Arabic Algerian dialect “*Al buqal*” it is generally used by women to store milk and water. “*buqala*” is still used in traditional homes in most villages and there is no other pots can replace it, it is important to the *buqala* game. The word “*buqala*” also refers to one of the traditional games which are unique for women from the Algerian folk heritage in which women use her skills of imagination in this game; it is played during “*Ramadan*” and provides a great contribution in maintaining the Algerian identity different from the one of the colonizer. This game involves reciting short poems in Algerian-Arabic language dialect; it helps to keep alive the Algerian culture. The Algerian women considered it as an indicator of happy and joyful news are coming besides providing an amusement and having fun. It is not allowed to any man or child to participate in this game because its subjects are uniquely for women; it is a way to present themselves, their nature and expectations.

Another common tradition in north Africa and Algeria in specific “*El- Halqa*” (The circle), is well known as a group of people who gather around a storyteller called a “*El-goual*” ( The storyteller), he tells stories from the past and the present with funny and clever comments, this used to happen outside in a “*suq*” a weekly market. Ordinary people would stop listening after buying their groceries; the storyteller plays all the roles of the story and move between different times and places. The audience would participate by making comments and asking questions, this is not as common nowadays but it has influenced modern Algerian theatre (Jane 4).

### 1.4 Reader Response Theory: Theoretical Background

Six main approaches to literary analysis involve: new criticism, stylistic, critical literacy, language-based, structuralism, and reader-response. New criticism focuses solely on the literary text itself, ignoring external factors, and requires readers to uncover the embedded meaning with complete objectivity (Thomson 1992). The stylistic approach emphasizes teaching literature to highlight its aesthetic value, nurturing learners’ appreciation for literary works, such as unconventional structural elements found in poetry. By delving into language and form, this approach enables a deeper understanding of meaning. Critical literacy, while not directly focused on teaching literature, addresses the oversight of social aspects of language in language education, aiming to uncover the relationship between social power dynamics and language utilization (Pennycook 2001).The language-based approach increases learners’ understanding of language in literary texts, making literature more accessible to language learners by aiding their responses and experiences with literature (Littlewood 1986). Structuralism disregards readers’ personal reactions when analyzing literature, emphasizing complete objectivity when examining literary works similar to new criticism. It shifts the focus from the aesthetic worth of literature to emphasizing structure, which plays a key role in constructing meaning (Culler 1982). The reader-response approach asserts that readers play a

crucial role in interpreting literature by making inferences while reading (Dias & Hayhoe 1988), has been the main focus of literary research in recent years (Beach & Hynds, 1996).

### **1.4.1 Definition of Reader Response Theory:**

Reader-response theory emphasizes that readers, along with the text itself, actively participate in shaping the reading experience (Rosenblatt 1994). The terms and phrases in the text evoke mental images for readers, who then draw upon their own unique experiences. Given the diversity of individual experiences, it is inevitable that there will be varying interpretations of the same text (Zenati 36).

In the 1930s, there was a focus on the process of reading and the reader's role in creating meaning. This was a reaction against a growing tendency in literary criticism during the 1940s and 1950s to reject the importance of the reader. The new critical approach that became dominant during this time period tended to downplay the reader's contribution to interpreting and making meaning from texts (Tyson 170). The idea that readers actively create meaning suggests that different people can interpret the same text in quite different ways. Reader response theorists believe that even the same person reading the same text at two different times may get different meanings from it. This is because many factors can influence how we experience a text. Things like the knowledge we gain between readings, personal experiences that happen in the meantime, changes in our mood, or changes in why we're reading the text all of these can lead us to produce different meanings from the same piece of writing, even if we've read it before. In other words, reading is an active process where the reader plays a big role in constructing the meaning, rather than there being just one fixed meaning in the text itself. Different readers and even the same reader at different times can come away with quite different understandings (170).

### **1.4.2 Reader Response Theories:**

#### **1.4.2.1 Textual Theories:**

According to Fürsich; in his essay Textual Analysis and Communication, he affirms that:

Textual analysis is a type of qualitative analysis that focuses on the underlying ideological and cultural assumptions of a text. In contrast to systematic quantitative content analysis, textual analysis reaches beyond manifest content to understand the prevailing ideologies of a particular historical and cultural moment that make a specific coverage possible. (2018)

Any written text can be understood in various ways. The existence of multiple meanings within a text is known as polysemy. Textual theory aims to explain the range of potential interpretations present in the text, rather than discovering a single definitive meaning. "Textual theorists posit that text conventions are "constitutive" rather than "regulative" (Beach 17). They constitute instead of regulate a form or genre.

A good piece of writing makes the reader, viewer, or listener feel something emotionally and think about it intellectually. This is one of the main ideas behind reader response theory, in my opinion (Robert W. Blake and Brett Elizabeth Blake 219). When someone fully engages with a piece of writing using all of their senses, they get drawn into the story. This allows them to see how the story relates to real life (220).

Phenomenological response theorists like Georges Poulet and Roman Ingarden focus on how the text itself shapes the meaning that readers get from it. They're interested in the relationship between the reader's own consciousness and the text they perceive. They look at how the text seems to intend or direct the way the reader will perceive and engage with it (Beach 19). Although; readers use their knowledge of common storytelling techniques and conventions to help interpret the meaning of a text. The theorist Peter Rabinowitz has

developed a detailed model of how readers' understanding of these narrative conventions works (30). However; rhetorical theory examines the complex relationships between writer, narrator, intended audience, and reader. Kenneth Burke argues that a contemporary "Dramatistic" approach examines how audiences identify with a speaker's role, position, or attitudes, seeking social unity according to a symbolic hierarchy of values (32).

#### **1.4.2.2 Social Theories:**

Social theories are frameworks or paradigms that are utilized to analyze social phenomena. In the article "*Social Theories of Education in Britain*," the author highlights, «a social theory of education is held to be concerned with hypothesizing a «fit» between a model of society and a model of educational system» (Hoyle 7). "The incentive to formulate one's responses is often driven by the social need to share those responses with others." (Beach 105). In other words; the social drive to share our thoughts; opinions; and perspectives with others is a core part of being human.

#### **1.4.2.3 Experiential Theories :**

Experiential theory, as the name suggests, involves learning from experience. Psychologist David Kolb first proposed this theory, drawing influence from the work of other theorists like John Dewey, Jean Piaget. Regarding this view (Cherry 2019). In his essay entitled *The Experiential Learning Theory* of David Kolb argues that according to Kolbe, this category of learning is able to be known as "the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience. Knowledge results from the combinations of grasping and transforming the experience." (Cherry 2019). Experiential theories of reader response focus on describing the process of how readers engage with and become immersed in a text. Theorists in this camp are interested in detailing the specific experiences and mental processes that readers go through as they compose their own "Envisionments" or interpretations of the work (Langer, J.).

### **a. The Processes of the Experiential Response**

On the basis of Rosenblatt's transactional theory, theorists have delineated a number of specific response processes (Purves and Beach; Beach and Marshall):

- Engaging becoming emotionally involved, empathizing or identifying with the text.
- Constructing entering into and creating alternative worlds.
- Conceptualizing characters, events, settings, imaging creating visual images.
- Connecting relating one's autobiographical experience to the current text.
- Evaluating/reflecting judging the quality of one's experience with a text.

(52)

### **Conclusion:**

After the Algerian independence from the French colonization, the Algerian Arabic literature saw a significant transformation and flourishing. Many Algerian writers preferred to use Arabic (their mother tongue) instead of French language. They used their works to address pressing social and political issues such as inequalities, corruption, and challenges faced by the post-independence. Algerian Arabic literature also gained significant international recognition especially with Benhadouga and Ahlem Mosteghanemi as a female voice.

In the next chapter, “Mosteghanemi’s —*The Bridges of Constantine*” is going to be analyzed from reader response perspective. This latter tends to show how readers interact with the novel’s scenes and how the previous background affects the understanding of the novel’s trajectories.

**Chapter two: a Reader's Emotional and Aesthetic  
Journey through Storytelling and Meaning in Ahlem  
Mosteghanrmi's *the Bridges of Constantine***

## **Chapter two: a Reader's Emotional and Aesthetic Journey Through Storytelling and Meaning in Ahlem Mosteghanemi's the Bridges of Constantine**

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### **Introduction :**

Authors aim to evoke reactions from readers through their narratives. Well-known writers create characters deliberately to engage and impact their audience. Ahlem Mosteghanemi, a prominent female author and poet in Arab-speaking and other countries, is recognized for her intricate storytelling. This chapter will examine the storytelling techniques used by Ahlem, in addition to explaining several scenes and layers that have hidden meanings. This chapter examines how Ahlem conveys emotions and feelings in her novel. It aims to demonstrate the strong impact of emotions that readers experience while reading the novel, engaging their minds and imagination continuously. Additionally, highlighting how one's background and various group affiliations can influence their interpretation of the novel's trajectories.

### **2.1 Storytelling Tradition Techniques in the Novel of *the Bridges of Constantine***

Storytelling tradition as it is defined by *the Houston world affairs* as a series of messages and stories that are transmitted from one generation to the other, this tradition utilizes various techniques to spread its influence on the audiences and engage them in the story. We mention some of these techniques as follows: leading word style (leitwortstil), repetitive designation, thematic and formal patterning.

#### **2.1.1 Leading Word Style Technique:**

Leading word style or (leitwortstil) explained by Robert Alter in his work *The art of Biblical textual studies* the meaningful or intentional repetition of words in a piece of literature, it conveys a significant theme or motif in the story, its repetitive appearance reinforces and emphasizes the importance of the theme in the novel for the readers. Leitwortstil was created by Martin Buber and Franz Rosenzweing for studying Biblical texts (pinault18).

Mosteghanemi skillfully used specific leading words that have significance in guiding readers and providing an understanding of the deep layers of the narrative focusing on the principal themes and characters. The story is enriched with layers of meaning, the words were chosen carefully and repeated to give a symbolic and sentimental significance, readers will be able to decode, discover the character's motivation and discover potential themes of the novel. Throughout the leading words mentioned in the novel, readers can better understand the complicated piece of literature created by the author and enjoying a significant reading experience.

In the novel of *The Bridges of Constantine*, Ahlem Mosteghanemi used some leading words which highlighted a sense of creativity by creating a unique narrative style through the novel. The author used leading words such as "longing", "joy", "sadness" and "love". These words are used by the author to highlight the characters experiences and feelings turmoil. Khaled's "longing" to his country refers to the amount of his nostalgia to his homeland, his mother, his friendship past life, also it refers to his feeling loss and being alone in the exile. "Joy" this word captures the rare times when he felt happy or the temporary happiness that he lived with "Hayat". "... Looking at you with the happiness of someone he finally sees his shooting star" (31).

The word "sadness", Khaled's sadness originated from his separation from his family and his homeland Constantine which is the place when he was raised and grew up, the place in which he lived her joyful moments, memories and his past life, living in a country which is totally different to Khaled's one. This separation created senses of loss and sadness and raises the feeling of being disconnected to his origins, he remembering the period of the revolution of liberation, his mates in *Djihad* and what they suffered from colonialism. This constant sadness shows the complexity of being away from home and the struggle to maintain one's

identity in a foreign environment, besides his sadness about the fate that separated him from his love "Hayat". Khaled argues "... His gaze has climbed the floors of my sadness and he seems surprised at how lost I look as I stand there" (2).

"Love" is absolutely the major theme that characterized the novel, it have different dimensions. His love to "Hayat" is depicted as a deep and strong feeling; through Khaled's description to his beloved we can see his profound admiration to her beauty and her personality which shaped the strong desire to gain her. Although being separated from his country Khaled wanted to be connected to his country, he feels attached to his memories and youth in his homeland. This added another emotional layer to the novel. "The destruction that surrounds me today bears witness that I loved you to death, that I desired you until the final pyre" (35).

"longing" used by the author to express the profound emotional state of Khaled towards Hayat and his longing for her, this longing didn't disappear with time or distance, it refers to how Hayat was fixed in his mind and psyche. Besides that, the distance between Hayat and Khaled creates on him a sense of uncomeliness which made her present in his thoughts and even his art. This feeling of missing something shows how dure are Khaled's feelings. "You are the women I wanted to laugh and cry with. That was the most wonderful thing I discovered that day" (34).

The same thing for the words "seeks" or "yarns" highlights Khaled the protagonist's strong desire and longing to his homeland, his family and his beloved "Hayat". The words "wondered" "contemplated" and "pondered" reflects Khaled's thoughts and reflections, providing a deep understanding of the motivation behind his actions.

Additionally, action verbs such as “struggled”, “sought” drive the plot forward a stimulating advancement, sustaining passion and create a sense of suspense in the story, these words portrays Khaled's emotional troubles and his inner conflicts.

### **2.1.2 Repetitive Designation Technique:**

According to David Pinault, repetitive designation is a technique where an important detail or a character appears early in the novel but it reappears later and becomes important and central in the novel (16).

Ahlem Mosteghanemi used this technique in the novel to create a sense of suspense, keeping the reader engaged in the details of story and increasing his curiosity to know the upcoming events which reinforces the potential themes of the story.

The first symbol that highlights the use of this technique is the symbol of “The Bridge”. The bridge appears several times in the novel and had different interpretations in the novel. Initially it is mentioned as a part of the beauty of Constantine city, but later it appears as a central and meaningful symbol that highlights Khaled's connection and relationship with his homeland, every time Khaled paints the bridge reflects his longing to his homeland, his origins and his childhood and memories, he feels yearning to Constantine and struggling from being lonely and far from his country. “I waited till early morning to buy, with little money I had left, the supplies needed to paint two or three pictures. Crazily, I stood and painted Constantine's suspension bridge” (23). This quote highlights the value of Constantine Khaled's homeland for him which the first paint he wanted to be the suspension bridge. Therefore, the repeated act of painting of Khaled to the bridge is linked to his emotional state, each time he painted it he remembers his homeland and his memories there, “the bridges” symbolizes his longing to his country and serves as central indicator for his nostalgia to his past life and helping him being connected to his past life in Constantine.

At the beginning it seems like Khaled is just remembering his past and childhood, however the story goes to clarify the deep meaning that Khaled was missing the sense of security and safety that he didn't find it in his exile in Paris. These memories carried heavy emotions for Khaled despite its simplicity; it comes as a reminder to all what he had left behind him, reflecting the difficulties that he faced in his alienation. These details become a significant symbols of Khaled's feelings and how being away from home impacted him. Which this quote highlights: "I could have screamed when I remembered my childhood bad and the woolen blanket I always had against the Constantine cold" (23).

"The act of painting" is another symbol that may initially appear as a daily repetitive activity or a routine, however as the novel's events developed the vision begin to be clearer, painting for Khaled was a therapy which relieve him his pain of remembering memories and yearning to his past life in his homeland, it heals his wounds, pane and letting him express his feelings when he feels sad and lonely. Thus, painting has a big part of Khaled's life.

### **2.1.3 Thematic Patterning and Formal Patterning:**

Thematic patterning and formal patterning are techniques used in storytelling to draw the audience attention to the significant themes or elements in the narrative in order to make the story more engaging, rich and cohesive.

#### **A-Thematic Patterning:**

The use of this technique in the novel of *the bridges of Constantine* involves the repetition of themes such as memory and nostalgia, Exile and displacement and other themes, the recurrence of these themes provide a deeper understanding of the protagonist's emotional Journey. Throw out the novel these themes appeared in different forms and repeatedly which highlight their importance.

**b- Memory and Nostalgia:**

The theme of memory and nostalgia appears in the novels as Khaled the protagonist reflects on his past in Constantine with his family, his love for Hayat and the period of *Al Djihad* during the war of liberation, and remembering his childhood, family and friends

“I knew our paths had diverged years ago when he entered the corridors of politics. His only goal was to reach the leading ranks. Even so, I couldn’t ignore our being in the same city. He had been part of my childhood and youth, part of my memory” (21).

This quote reflects the sense of nostalgia for past friend “Si Sharif” which they drifted apart their lives took different trajectories and paths and even ambitions when “Si Sharif” was striving to gain some higher political position in the country, even though they pursued different paths the power struggle and competition for political positions made him feel frustrated and deeply desire to leave his homeland., Khaled didn’t forget that Si Sharif was part of his past life and a Comrade in struggle for Algeria’s liberation.

Additionally, Khaled’s remembrance of his past during the colonial period played a crucial role in shaping his memory, in his childhood was a witness of resistance acts against colonialism which shaped his personal trauma from his memories of violence and loss, his family’s struggle during the war of liberation depicted the nation’s pain and suffer from the French colonialism, besides his experience in fighting against the colonial forces. This shows how Algeria’s history of struggling for independence shaped Khaled’s identity and memory. “Today when I remember that experience, which for me lasted only six months, its intensive and shock make it seem longer than it actually was” (12). This quote highlights Khaled’s experience of resistance with The Algerian front of national liberation.

**c- Exile and Displacement:**

Exile and displacement are central themes in the novel, refers to Khaled the protagonist's physical separation from his hometown Constantine, he lives in the city which is totally different to his homeland, distant from his roots and origins which this distance creates a sense of nostalgia and longing for the place that he came from. In addition, the political turmoil in Algeria forced Khaled to leave his country because of the political corruption that happened in Algeria after independence, the betrayal of the revolutionary principles and corruption in Algeria after independence with the power struggle and competition for political positions made him feel disappointed and desired to leave his homeland. "I knew our paths had diverged years ago when he had entered the corridors of politics. His only goal was to reach the leading ranks" (21).

#### **d- Love and Emotions:**

Khaled's love for Hayat is a central theme in the novel. In the whole story we notice his deep emotions of love and longing for her. Khaled's love for Hayat was depicted as a deep and profound connection with her, in which Hayat is always present in his memories and thoughts, and his longing to her was evident and observable even they are together, in addition, his love for her is shown in his description for her beauty, presence and details which refer to his admiration for her. "A small miracle of hope. That was you" (11). This quote highlights his deep love for Hayat as he described it as a miracle of hope. Likewise, Khaled's love for Hayat is properly viewed through symbolic actions throughout the novel; Khaled painted portraits of her captures how much his love for her and admiration. "... This is a woman who can only be painted with realism" (33).

## **2.2 Unveiling the Reading Experience: the Narrative Scenes and Layers of Meaning**

### ***in the Bridges of Constantine:***

#### **2.2.1 Exploring Narrative Scenes and Layers of Meaning in the Novel:**

The critical theories are diverse frameworks that used in analysing and interpreting literary works, they provide the readers with a deeper understanding of meanings and social contexts of a specific work. Reader response theory is a significant theory that emphasizes the reader's role in interpreting a text, this theory recommends that the readers actively creates their own understanding and interpretation of a text according to their thoughts, beliefs, personal experiences and cultural backgrounds (Cagri79).

#### **A. The Opening Scene: Engaging the Reader in Perplexity:**

The novel begins with the protagonist Khaled remembering what the heroine said “what happened to us was love. literature was all that didn't happen” this attractive opening that Mostghanmi began the novel with increases the reader's curiosity and open the doors for their imaginations about what happened and what left unspoken. The author skillfully lets the readers engaged and able to understand the linguistic details and helps to expand their literary perceptions and awareness. In the novel, the protagonist Khaled takes the role of the narrator and start narrating his life's journey renouncing his personal struggles, relationships, interactions with family (Touil14-15).

The quote above hide a deep meaning inside. The love of Khaled and Hayat was unfulfilled each one of them take his way in life, this means that this quote is reversed because all what did happen with them was not love at all, all that did happen was literature that Khaled used to empty his heart from the pain that this love made and to start a life reconciled from all the past feelings including his love for Hayat.

### **Layers of Meaning:**

Khaled's return to Algeria marks a notable moment in search of his personal identity, after years living in the exile Khaled's emotions were mixed and conflicting, he felt both nervous and excited about returning home. This return accured a contrast between his current self and his preceding one. Many memories had brought back in a form of the familiar streets, building and people helping him to link his past experiences with his present life. His journey is deeper than his physical returning it's an internal exploration and a discovery for his true identity shaped by his strong yearning and nostalgia.

### **Reader's Interpretations:**

Readers might interpret Khaled's return to Algeria as a journey of reconnecting and reunioning with his family and friends once again after a long period of separation driven by his nostalgia to the past memories and his quest for his true identity. Some others can understand it as a message about the significance of the one's reconnecting to his culture and national identity. Whhile others could focus on his mixed emotions that reflects his inner struggles, he may feel confused about the changes that occurred on him in his exile and how he will fit back into his past life especially after fitting in a different life changes and spent a time far from his homeland.

### **B. Khaled's Joining of the Liberation front and Meeting with Si Tahar:**

Khaled's first meeting with Si Tahar was when he wanted to join the liberation front, he met Si Tahar who was his leader and became close to each other, they always wear clothes to becoming Martyrs and he was the luckiest because he didn't leave a widow or orphans only his mother's grave, his brother and his father who was busy with his young wife (Touil18).

In 1955 september to be precise, I joined the National Liberation Front, the FLN. My comrades were starting a decisive academic Year. In my twenty-fifth year, I was beginning my other life. I remember that I was surprised at the time by Si Taher's reception. He didn't ask for any details of my life or studies. (Mosteghanemi 13)

This quote mentions the first time Khaled joined the front of liberation and his encounter with Si Tahar. Khaled's recounting his conversations and the period of fight with Si Tahar, which reflect his hope for liberating Algeria and gaining independence. Si Tahar represents the real honored fighter for freedom who sacrificed by himself in order to evict the french colonialism.

#### **Layers of Meaning:**

This scene unveiled the hopes of Si Tahar who's an example of The real fighters of The Algerian war for liberation to liberate the country and gain the independence, while after independence the country was governed by people that have no relationship with loyalty and patriotism, their only aim was gaining higher ranks in the government and prioritizing their private interests over the public good.

#### **The Reader's Interpretations:**

Some readers interpret this scene as it's a tragic irony, where the revolutionary ideals were betrayed by corrupted men who ruled the country after independence and strived to achieve their goals only over the public interests. While others can ascribe this phenomenon to several factors such as the challenging historical situations, the lack of experience in administrations and political proficiency besides the economic and social challenges.

#### **C. Encountering Hayat :**

The protagonist talks about his job as an artist, he decided to go to Paris to overcome the shock of losing his arm during the war of independence and with guidance of his doctor decided to pursue painting instead of writing, Khaled made an exhibition in Paris, and suddenly he met the daughter of his friend and leader Si Tahar after twenty-five years, Hayat was in her mid- twenties while Khaled's age was in the fifties. She got to know her to throw her family name *Abdul Mula*. The protagonist felt in love with Hayat of the first meeting and this feeling make him confused and felt that he had betrayed his leader and best friend Hayat's father Si Taher (Touil 20).

“The day we met was extraordinary. Fate was no extra. Right from the beginning it played the lead. Didn’t it bring us together from different cities, from another memory, for the opening of an art exhibition in paris?”(Mosteghanemi 19). This quote reveals Khaled's feelings when he met Hayat.

### **Layers of Meaning:**

Hayat represents the unfulfilled promises in Algeria after gaining independence she symbolizes freedom and dreams that the Algerian people strived to achieve. However, Khaled's unfulfilled love for Hayat mirrors the state of Algeria gaining independence and how corrupters exploited the country through controlling political and superior ranks and the mismanagement of the country which has led Khaled, a freedom fighter who bears the memory of his struggle on his body, leaving Algeria after all the sacrifices he made with his life and most precious possessions in order to liberate his homeland and live in dignity and honor. Through Hayat Khaled face his personal and national history contemplating the contrast between Algeria's revolutionary hopes, aspirations and the current disappointing reality of the unfulfilled dreams and the constant corruption.

### **The Reader's Interpretations:**

Readers might interpret Khaled's meeting with Hayat as a strong portrayal of the deep emotions that link Khaled to his homeland, they might like how they explore the cultural and the historical identity and showing its importance of their personal identity. Others May focus more on the romantic part of Khaled's love for Hayat showing how people can feel connected to their homelands throughout being closed to those they love.

#### **D. The Bridge :**

Zahir Rawia in her article intitled *The bridges and the memory burdened with pains in the conscience of the creators* said that the bridges still embrace the dreams, to cross our present, embracing our past, from our side to the opposite side carrying the birth of a new hope (Translated).

The bridge is used in the novel as a metaphor to express Khaled's both connection and separation in his life, it reflects his inner struggles and the sense of being divided between his past and present life and between different parts of his identity. The bridge as a physical structure is the symbol of Khaled's emotional and mental challenges, it's a metaphor for his attempts to reconcile his past life with his present and it serves as an aide memoire that reflects his yearning to his country. Furthermore, the bridge reflects his struggle for keeping the cultural traditions and adapting to modern world. In addition, the protagonist was exposed to unfamiliar ideas and the new life in Paris, when he returned to Algeria he crossed these bridges and came with new and strange perspectives. Furthermore, Khaled's personal struggle reflects the wider national struggle in Algeria of maintaining the cultural traditions while following the development and globalization of the world. This is what this quote reffer to:

“On its surface there was only a bridge crossing from one side to the other, suspended from above by cables at both ends like a swing of sadness. Beneath this iron swing was a rocky gorge of great depth that expressed its blunt contradiction with the pure mood of an annoyingly calm and blue sky (Mosteghanemi 47).

### **Layers of Meaning:**

The symbol of the bridge represent both Khaled's and the whole Algerian Society struggle to make a balance in preserving their cultural identity and adapting to the new changes of the world.

### **The Reader's Interpretations:**

The symbol of the bridge might be interpreted in several way according to everyone readers. Some readers might interpret it as a physical connection between different parts of the city or as a part of the city's aesthetics, find others can't see it in a metaphorical way that represents the passage of time and era and considered it as a link between the past and the present. It's might be interpreted as the portrayal to achieve develop and keeping up with modernity.

### **E. Hayat's Wedding:**

A crucial event in the novel occurs when Si Sharif called Khaled, expecting good news about his beloved, but he was shocked when her uncle invited him to her wedding (Touil25). A pivotal event in the story, whose significance will unfold in subsequent events and is crucial for the protagonist, is encapsulated by a call received by “Khaled” from Uncle Hayat, (Si El-Sharif). Khaled thought the call would bring him good news about Hayat. However, the catastrophe was that Uncle (Si El-Sharif) invited him to visit “Constantine” to attend the wedding of his niece and Khaled's beloved, Hayat (25°. The Narrative Dynamics in Ahlam

Mosteghanemi's Trilogy (Memory in the Flesh, Chaos of the Senses, Bed Hopper) – A Study on Techniques and Construction Mechanisms(Translated).

The news of Hayat's marriage was devastating for Khaled and shattered all the dreams he had built with her, especially when he knew the person she will marry who holds a high position in the state and known for his bad reputation. His emotions were mixed between bitterness, jealousy and revulsion her wedding symbolizes a major change in Khaled's life. Her marriage signifies the end of any possibility to connect and encounter and the end of any romantic possibilities. In addition, Hayat's marriage refers to a new beginning for both Hayat and Khaled and represents a chance for Khaled to forget the past and looking for new opportunities and moving forward in his life. "The next day, your wedding rituals would begin and the time we had stolen from fate would come to an end" (Mosteghanemi 109). This quote represents Khaled's sadness and disappointment about her wedding.

### **Layers of Meaning:**

Hayat symbolizes Algeria, despite her father being a freedom fighter who struggled to achieve independence and liberate the country, his daughter is set to marry one of the corrupted men that govern Algeria after independence. Although what the real fighters suffered to liberate their country and ultimately the government ruled by people who didn't have any sense of patriotism and love for the country, enjoying its resources and keep it for their personal gain.

### **The Reader's Interpretations:**

Some readers show it as a tragic and surprised events in the story where Khaled's dreams are shattered by Hayat's marriage. Others might believe that Hayat made a right choice for

her future and wellbeing. While others interpret it as a key event of the story that shifts the story's direction which affect Khaled's actions and decisions and leading to new events.

### **2.3 Dance of the Emotions and Aesthetics in Textual Interpretation:**

The French poet and novelist, Louis Aragon said, "The novel is the key to forbidden rooms in our house" (qtd. in Faqir, *In the House of Silence* 86). Novels allow the reader to explore every part of society. Novels address important topics through the experience of the characters within the context of their surroundings. Through novels, readers can imagine and understand what the characters are going through. Because human beings experience reality in a subjective fashion, the narrative is a powerful tool that enters the reader's consciousness and experience of reality from a subjective point of view (Elhajibrahim 2009). Similarly, it is the case for Ahlem's narrative, which marks a significant moment in the development of Arab women's writing. Mosteghanemi's contains themes that are challenging and intensely emotional (Valassopoulos 111). In this context, Ahlem Mosteghanemi said:

The novelist does not hesitate to open secret doors before you; the novelist dares to invite you to visit the lower floors of the house and the cellars and locked places in which dust and old furniture and memories gather and every corridor of the self where electricity is not yet installed and from where a suspicious stale smell emanates.

(In the House of Silence 86-87)

In other words; the novelists give readers access to the hidden and private parts of the human experience. Novelists could open up secret rooms and take readers down to the basement, the cellar, and other locked places where old furniture, dust, and forgotten memories gather.

### **2.3.1 Khaled as storyteller: Exploring the Text's Impact on the Readers and the Understanding of the Novel**

Mosteghanemi's novel is a powerful piece of literature that takes readers into a detailed varied emotions and deep feelings. With its skilled storytelling, the book creates a strong sense of involvement from readers, motivating them to actively engage and form a profound link with the story. The protagonist, Khaled says "Art is everything that touches us and not necessarily just everything we understand" (30). Indeed, this is what one could experience when reading Ahlem's novel. Her art strongly affects the reader's feelings and makes their mind wonder without rest. The reader feels and sympathizes with the characters of the story before you come to understand their secrets (Elhajibrahim 2009).

Mosteghanemi's novel is narrated from the perspective of Khaled, a wounded veteran of the Algerian War of Independence. Khaled writes his narrative with the intention of, among other things, deeply expressing the impact of his beloved (Valassopoulos 112). At the beginning, Khaled skillfully expresses a mix of anger and deep disappointment as he deals with the betrayal from his beloved Hayat. Shockingly, Hayat married someone else. Khalid's sadness is evident as he says these touching words, filled with the heaviness of broken dreams and lost hope.

I light a nervous cigarette and blow out clouds of the words that have been burning me for years. Words whose fire I have never once extinguished on paper. (2)

These are the words I've been denied; naked, raw and painful, the way I want them. So why is my hand trembling fearfully, unable to write? Maybe it's only just dawned on me that I have exchanged my brushes for a knife. Writing to you is as fatal as loving you. (3)

Khaled's passionate words make readers reflect on the wrongdoings of his once beloved Hayat. The passionate way he wrote these words shows how deeply Hayat affected him. This emotional depiction inviting readers to explore the complexities of their relationship and the significant influence it had on Khaled's emotions. Khaled's words raise a mix of curiosity and disappointment in the minds of readers. There is a sense of interest around their thoughts, as it is interesting to know the truth behind Hayat's actions. At the same time, Khaled's language paints a negative picture of Hayat, portraying her as someone tainted by betrayal. According to Valassopoulos:

Khaled writes of the pain and frustration of his artistic, political and romantic life. Contemplating the esoteric nature of writing, Khaled judges the wisdom of putting his thoughts on paper, of making them visible and of using them as a weapon.

(115)

Khaled's novel is driven by a motivation for revenge, aiming to seek retribution against Hayat by using her own weapon against her "Let me try your weapons" (p. 31). What Khaled meant by "weapon" is writing a novel that tells their story; because Hayat once said "we write novels to kill the people whose existence has become a burden to us. We write to get rid of them" (44). For the same case he wrote in Arabic language taking her words in consideration "I could have written in French, but Arabic is the language of my heart. I can write in nothing else. We write in language we feel" (33), "what matters is the language we speak to ourselves; not the one we use with others" (33). In Khaled's words: "When we love a writer we give her a book. I shall write a novel for you" (283). Unaware of the unhomeliness she causes, Hayat asks Khaled: "Why did you write this book for me, then?" (291) "I'm just borrowing your rituals for killing and that I decided to bury you in a book, that's all," Khaled replies (291). In

the same time; Khaled views the act of writing as a form of spiritual healing. Many academicians have pointed that creative writing can be used as a therapeutic model to help treat various mental disorders and psychological problems (Goffi. Kaïd Berrahal 11). In other words, the act of writing goes beyond any free choice, it somewhat involves “neurological activity that is independent of such choice” (Harper 91).

In her novel, Mosteghanemi takes the reader on a trip through the damage of colonialism and its consequences in Algeria. The complexity of her novel reflects the complexity of the Algerian experience during and after colonization (Elhajibrahim 2009). Khaled shares a story about his pain during the Algerian revolution and how it affected his life from different sides, especially after losing his arm. His narrative emphasizes the importance of remembering the miserable results of the French occupation and the sacrifices made by martyrs and *mujahideen* for independence. Khaled is portrayed as a heroic figure, characterizes selfless sacrifice in the midst of war. Khaled discovered in Algeria his dead mother. His senses of being orphan were replaced by his love for newfound motherland, Algeria. He was full of energy and dreams until two bullets from the colonial army found their way to his left arm.

The Revolution was entering its second year, and I was entering my third month as an orphan. I can no longer remember now exactly when the nation took on maternal features and unexpectedly lavished me with ambiguous tenderness and an extreme sense of belonging (11).

The memory of his mother is not just as a kind of a goodhearted woman, but a woman who has endured great sacrifice and suffering. She gave her body to her children and her husband, who use it only to beat her before he buried her. If the country is like an extended family, then the woman is expected to protect and support it (FathiYahya 2020).

Throughout the novel, Ahlem keeps the reader confused by Khaled's character. Is he proud of his scar or is he embarrassed by it? She presents Khaled with his conflicting feelings about his scar. This makes it difficult for the reader to understand Khaled. Readers deeply empathize with Khaled on various levels. From one side, the heartache left by his beloved Hayat. Meanwhile, the significant loss of his arm during the war, which affected his life. Immediately after his amputation, Khaled describes himself as being neither dead nor alive, only in pain. For Khaled his amputated arm was a clear sign of his achievements as a war hero and the sacrifices he made for freedom. He said, "This was my personal documentation, my identification" (30). Although; sometimes it becomes a source of shamelessness as he describes his feeling as follows: "I am therefore often ashamed of this arm that accompanies me to the Metro, to the restaurant, to the café, to the airplane and every party to which I go (44)."

Khaled was overwhelmed by a strong feeling of shame and guilt again but the reason this time is different, from one side when he realized he was falling in love with his friend's daughter. Khaled said:

Perhaps I was betraying the dearest man I knew, the most valiant and steely, the bravest and most faithful. Perhaps I would betray Si Taher, my leader, comrade and lifelong friend, sully his memory and, steal from him the sole rose of his life. His last testament (36).

Moreover, Khaled felt mixture of emotions when he became deeply attached to a young woman who was the same age as his daughter; "with the one question that was too shameful to articulate: 'How did it happen? 'Who could once have been my daughter, suddenly becoming my beloved a quarter of a century later" (72). Khaled's shame made him creates justification to Hayat when he began to doubt the growing attraction between Hayat and his Palestinian friend; Ziyad, when he said: "How could I sit before you, and then try and

compare myself with a man twelve years younger, more striking and more attractive than me?" (71). His emotions became even heavier when she decided to marry someone else.

Hayat's deep love for her father, whom she has never had the chance to meet, becomes evident through her profound attachment to her grandmother. In their conversations, her grandmother often speaks about him without prompting, igniting Hayat's curiosity and longing to know more about him. Hayat argues:

Do you know why I loved my grandmother more than anyone else? More than my mother, even? She was the only person who found time to talk to me about it all. She would go back to the past unbidden, as if she refused to leave it. She wore the past, ate the past and only enjoyed hearing songs from the past. She dreamed of the past when others dreamed of the future. So she often told me about my father without me having to ask. He was the most beautiful thing about her fading past as a woman. She never tired of speaking about him, as though she brought him back and made him present with words. She did it with the grief of a mother who refuses to forget she's lost her firstborn to eternity.

Similarly, Khaled, who was a close friend of her father and shares numerous memories with her father, she loves talking to him and sharing memories with each other, as she seeks to be close with anyone had connection know her father. Hayat interdependent relationship between Khaled and her grandmother may be viewed as a form of codependency. Khaled said: "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 frequently referred to Hayat as his homeland, "Bashful and confused, homeland sat by me" (53). Hayat was similar to his city Constantine for Khaled, both of them bearing two names and more than one date of birth. Constantine known as Cirta, and Hayat called

Ahlem too which means “dreams”. Ahlem was named Hayat while she was waiting for her father to give her a name and register her. Like Constantine, which was given different birth dates every time it was freed from foreign troops; Hayat had two different birth dates, one reflects the actual date of her birth and the other when she was registered. Both Hayat and Constantine hold the name of Tahir Abd Al Mawlla, Constantine bears it as one of its streets and Hayat as her last name. Hayat on the other hand, saw in Khaled her father who was stolen from her during her first years. Hayat was looking for the past that she lost when her father died (Elhajibrahim 2009). Khaled sees Hayat the ultimate representation of his hometown, Constantine (Goffi. Kaïd Berrahal 6). The critic Hazem Fadel, similarly, expresses: “Khaled’s troubled love relationship with Ahlem stands for a deeper and more complex love story, the love story of the protagonist with the city Constantine” (69). Khaled expresses his feelings about his homeland through Ahlem. He wants to regain his sense of belonging to his motherland and trying to forget the bitterness of being exiled and of his painful memories of colonialism and war for liberation that cost him the loss 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 (Stampfl 134).

Both of us were victims of the war. Destiny had placed us in its pitiless quern, and we emerged, each carrying a different wound. My wound was obvious and yours was hidden deep. They amputated my arm, and they amputated your childhood. They ripped off a limb of my body and snatched a father from your arms. We were the remnants of a war: two broken statues under clothes (64).

Through Hayat’s character, Ahlem affirms that colonialism didn’t only affect the older generations but its influence reached the new generation and left a deep scar. Hayat is caught between memories of heroes from the past and corrupt governments of the present. She is

stuck between the good reputation of the past embodied by her father's name and the wrongdoing of the present day (FathiYahya 2020). She resented her father:

The fact that father left me a big name doesn't mean a thing to me, because I've inherited misery with the weight of that name...I'd have preferred an ordinary childhood and an ordinary life to have had a father and a family like anybody else...(66)

Hayat blamed her father for deciding to be the father of Algeria and forgetting that children are like the land, they need fathers to help them grow and build their identities (FathiYahya 2020).

### **2.3.2 The Impact of Storytelling with Reader's Feelings:**

The art of storytelling is among ancient human race's cultural traditions. In its simple definition, storytelling is “the vivid description of ideas, beliefs, personal experiences, and life lessons through stories or narratives that evoke powerful emotions or insights” (Serrat 1). This art of orality has an important place in the Arabic culture. In fact, Arab culture per se “is an originally oral culture in which the spoken word occupies a central position” (Herzog 627). Tarik Sabry, for instance, explains that “Arab oral *turath shaebi* (popular cultures), including storytelling, poetry and other creative forms [...] constitute an important element of the cultural heritage that made it into the written word” (57)

According to Tabackovà:

Storytelling suggests telling existent stories to the audience while the audience is involved and whenever the audience is involved, there are multiple interpretations involved as well. (116).

In other words; the power of storytelling lies in its ability to draw readers into the narrative, allowing them to engage with the story on a meaningful, personal level. When a skilled storyteller like Khaled weaves a tale, he doesn't just present a series of events, actually he encourages the reader to step into the shoes of the characters and experience the story from their perspectives. In *The Bridges of Constantine*, readers are not just passive observers, but active participants in Khaled and Ahlem's journeys. The magic of storytelling situated in its ability to create meaningful connections between the reader and the characters, the reader and the author, and between the reader and human experience. Irwin and Auster's claim that "stories are fundamental food for the soul" (46).

It views of the fact that "the storytelling technique also informs the overall structure of the novel by means of stories-within-stories." (Naar 112), in Mostghanemi's novel; Khaled related the main events of his life and his relationship with Ahlem, but then he'll pause to share some other relevant memory or piece of information.

Stories have characteristics of artifact (Pahl and Rowsell 2010), which represent potential opportunities, or affordances (Kress and Leeuwen 1996), for meaning-making. When we share personal stories, we frequently include details about like (e.g., books, photographs and personal items) that hold significance for us from a personal and cultural perspective. These details offer an insight into how we interpret our unique perspectives and life experiences, information that might not be accessible through observation or interviews (Rowsell 2011). In this context, artifacts represent "fractures of self" (335) that relate to our everyday lives and cultures. Yet, because the cultural is ordinary (Williams 1961), the significance of these objects is not immediately clear; instead, it is produced in discussions and stories about those objects (Hurdley 2006).

"I am firmly convinced that certain storytellers are allergic to specific stories. In other words, there are stories that are not for you or for me, and personal liking has nothing whatsoever to do about it (Sawyer 151)". In *the Bridges of Constantine* Khaled, the person who wrote his story didn't really care if the readers would like his novel or not. His main reason for sharing his story was to help himself deal with his own memories and his deep love for Ahlem. He just wanted to pour out his heart and emotions onto the page. The response seems to be an excellent or outstanding answer to Bhabha's rhetorical question: "What kind of narrative can house unfree people?" (Twath 142), the reader becomes interested or intrigued by Khaled's statement or declaration about building a home in work of fiction. After Khaled's initial statement, his response then immediately prompts another response to Bhabha's question: "Is the novel also a house where the unhomely can live?" (142) (Goffi. Kaïd Berrahal 12). Goffi and Kaïd Berrahal argue:

"As a creative author, Khaled appears intent on weaving a novel, whose most definitive goal is to combat unhomeliness. Regardless of what views would critics have on his narrative, Khaled opts for a novel that deals thoroughly and imaginatively with the Algerian experience" (12).

## **2.4 The Influence of Reader's Groups Identity on the Interpretation of Novel Trajectories:**

The novel *The Bridges of Constantine* by Algerian author Ahlem Mosteghanemi explores how a reader's own identity and group affiliations can influence how they interpret and understand the story. Different groups of readers, whether based on nationality, ethnicity, political views, or other factors, may focus on and emphasize different aspects of the novel based on their own backgrounds and experiences. This can lead to diverse and sometimes contrasting interpretations of the work's themes and messages. Studying these reader response

patterns can provide insights into how literature interacts with and is shaped by the identities and social contexts of its audience

#### **2.4.1 How female's Voice in a Novel Shapes Readers' Perspectives:**

Mosteghanemi's novel challenged the idea that Algerian literature was dominated by male authors. It proved that Algerian women could write compelling and impactful stories as well. Ahlem Mosteghanemi has established a place for herself in the modern Algerian tradition of Arabic novel writing, even though it has been dominated by male authors. She has used the Arabic language to redefine and reassert Algerian national identity, moving away from the influence of the French language and culture. Unlike some of her Algerian male contemporaries who write in Arabic, such as Abdelhamid Benhadouga and Tahar Ouettar, whose use of the Arabic language is straightforward and practical, Mosteghanemi tries to make the language more feminine and free it from the traditional patriarchal influence. She aims to liberate the Arabic language from the typical “father's law” or male-dominated traditions (Khireddine 2020).

However; in his analysis of *The Bridges of Constantine*, Abdullah Al Ghudami argues that the novel is a remarkable challenge to the male-dominated language. In his book *Al Mara'a wa Allugha* (Woman and Language), Al Ghudami claims that for a long time, men have controlled writing and used language for their own benefit, while women have been trapped within this male-centric language. Similar to the ideas of Kristeva, Al Ghudami believes that language was originally feminine, but lost this feminine quality after men took control of it. As a result, language and the act of writing need to be reclaimed and recovered by women, who are the rightful owners of this feminine mode of expression as asserted by Mosteghanemi (2013): “We write to bring back what we have lost and what has been stolen from us by stealth” (57). According to Al Ghudami, Mosteghanemi's novel is the result of significant

work in the field of feminine writing. The novel breaks into the world of language through its poetic and narrative style of discourse (Khreddine 2020). Mosteghanemi's writing has a strong feminine energy, the way the stories are told makes the reader really connect with the emotions and experiences in the story. According to Cixous, the frequent use of metaphor and poetic language in women's writing helps them depart from the established rules and conventions of traditional, male-dominated writing. Cixous considers this type of writing, where women utilize more metaphorical and poetic modes of expression, to be the best examples of *écriture féminine* (feminine writing) (879).

According to this view, the distinctly female or feminine voice in Mosteghanemi's novel *The Bridges of Constantine* remains somewhat elusive or like a shadowy presence throughout the work. The feminine perspective and mode of expression are only experienced indirectly or vicariously by the reader, rather than being fully realized and centered in the narrative. The way this structure is set up causes Khalid's voice to overshadow Ahlem's, leaving her obscured by various abstract images, metaphors, and symbols. In the novel, Mustaghanami compares this type of portrayal to veils, hiding her identity as an author while also placing her within a specific literary and social context. This approach of using veiled, abstract language and imagery in the novel might have the effect of obscuring or even erasing Mosteghanemi's own persona as the female author. This possibility is highlighted by recent criticisms made against her. In her novel, Mosteghanemi reflects on the nature of the authorial voice as it has evolved over the past five decades, outlining its characteristics and inherent flaws. She does this through her male narrator. Mosteghanemi also contemplates particular images of herself as an Algerian woman, drawing from her own extensive study of contemporary Algerian literature presented in her critical work "*Algérie: femme et écritures*" (Algeria: Woman and Writings, 1985) (McLarney 25). Using a male character as the storyteller allows the reader to understand some important messages. The male storyteller gives the reader insight into the

challenges and experiences of Algerian women, even though the storyteller himself is male. This helps the reader appreciate the difficulties women have in representing their own voices and experiences.

Ellen McLarney correctly observes, *The Bridges of Constantine* is a literary reformulation of many of the observations and ideas that Mosteghanemi presented in her critical work “*Algerie: femme et écritures*” (Algeria: Woman and Writings) (27). As McLarney argues, Mosteghanemi’s first novel reflects a dissatisfaction she expresses in her work *Algerie: femme et écritures* (Algeria: Woman and Writings) with the reductive and limited ways in which Algerian women are represented in the fiction of her male compatriots, whether writing in French or Arabic. I would argue that Mosteghanemi expresses equal displeasure, both in her work *Algerie: femme et écritures* and in her novel *The Bridges of Constantine*, with the reductive representation of Algerian masculinity in the literature produced by Algerian male writers, whether they write in French or Arabic (M.Tageldin 481). According to Baaqeel:

In my own reading of Mosteghanemi, I maintain a stronger feminist emphasis, arguing that this two-way process is also an unequal, gendered relationship. The key point for Mosteghanemi, I argue, is not just to show the difference in the national allegory of men and women, but also to show how one comes to be legitimized as national past, while the other becomes subterranean, unable to participate in the work of national remembrance in a collective spirit (10).

In other words; the representation of man and woman in national allegories is unequal gendered relationship, Baaqeel argues that Mosteghanemi’s work highlights how one gender’s experience (likely man) becomes the dominant, “legitimized” national narrative, while the other gender’s experience (likely woman) becomes marginalized and “subterranean”.

#### **2.4.2 The Effect of a Readers' Understanding of Colonial History on how they**

##### **Interpret the Story :**

Many critics and other authors have noted that in Mosteghanemi's famous novel, Ahlem focused a lot on reviving the memory of the revolution through a lot of scenes, and the political message was also clear in the novel. The author's comments can be read as reflecting on her own writing in the novel. Firstly, by idealizing the martyrs depicted in the novel, Mosteghanemi is valorizing the concept of martyrdom in general. Secondly, since poetry and the nation or homeland is her primary concerns, we can deduce that this novel also carries a direct political message, with the text recreating and critiquing the notion of nation and homeland. Her decision to write in Arabic further underlines the national and political undertones in her creative work. While we should not reduce the novel solely to a political message, since the narrative stands out for its aesthetic merits, the narrative does investigate the broader constructions and representations of homeland (Stampfl 220). Particularly in narratives by women writers from the post-liberation period, like Mosteghanemi's, the privileged narrator is drawn from the fading memories of fighters and militants. These figures are re-drawn and imbued with artistry, as if to atone for a sense of guilt over leaving the men to bear the burden of the war. What may fade from memory and recollection is given flesh and maturation through the art of the narrative (Al-Musawi 2003).

Ahlem's texts explore the years of nationalist struggle (Abu-Deeb 362). Ahlem's novel is intimately tied to a political history, specifically that of Algeria since the Second World War, which the novel explores (39). Ahlem incorporates issues and elements from modern Algerian history into a romantic narrative through her use of passionate, poetic language. This lends a sense of charm to the storytelling and renders the emotions and meanings ambiguous; captivating the reader in the interplay between physical senses and the phantoms or ghosts of a country whose very existence is under threat (Ashour; J. Ghazoul; and Reda-Mekdashi 249).

What is notably postcolonial in the novel is its narrative of the self through a spiraling inner journey that uses embedded narratives and retrieves fading scenes and dialogues. The confessional tone has no aspirations for redemption, as it is caught between a desire for the narratee, Hayat, especially in her embodiment of the nation, and recognition of the postcolonial predicament. Every detail is entangled in other complex ramifications. Even the narrator's personal love for the narratee Hayat. The narrator's love for Hayat cannot survive the turmoil and challenges, simply because his revolutionary rhetoric makes it impossible. Deeply rooted in masculine rhetoric, the post-liberation phase continues to alienate the women who were actual fighters during the struggle. As Miriam Cooke argues, the "women found that their battle for independence had ceased to be theirs. It was their fathers', husbands', brothers' and sons'" (28). Reflecting on the wound that led to the severing of his arm, the character Khalid equates it to the narrator's loss of her father. Khalid states, "My injury was conspicuous, and yours deep and hidden," for "we are the remains of war (102)" (Al-Musawi 2003). This suggests recognition of their shared experience as survivors of the war, even if the wounds they bear –both physical and emotional– are distinct. After his amputation, the character Khalid flirts with writing but ultimately chooses painting when he realizes that he can only write in French, an act that would betray the very struggle for which he sustained his war wounds. Virtually all of Khalid's paintings resurrect Constantine, the eastern Algerian city of his birth, through depictions of its bridges (M. Tageldin 97).

#### **2.4.3 Reader's Reaction to an Author Writing in Language that isn't her Own :**

Ahlem Mosteghanemi, who comes from a French-speaking family, deliberately chose to write in Arabic instead of French (her mother tongue). This is quite telling, as it suggests she wanted to reclaim a legacy and a *turāth* (heritage) that was tainted when the French ruled Algeria. Her choice of language, and the underlying ideology it represents, is articulated in the statement: "Only language and emotions are capable of restoring and rebuilding a new

Algeria" (87). This indicates Mosteghanemi saw writing in Arabic as a way to reconnect with and revitalize Algerian identity and culture after the colonial period, and using the Arabic language allows Ahlem to more authentically and powerfully convey her feelings and perspectives to the readers. Réda Bensmaïa, another Algerian writer and author of *Experimental Nations, Or, The Invention of the Maghreb*, asserts that the act of remaking the Algerian nation, a process he calls "reterritorialization," was to occur through the use of literary Arabic. He argues this should be paired with bilingualism; "French for sciences and technology, while reserving literary Arabic for the 'soul,' identity, and origins" (15). *The Bridges of Constantine* consolidates the thesis developed by Réda Bensmaïa, in that it is both explorative and poetic, experimental disturbing. The narrative conflates individual characters and the nation itself, with the aim of reviving the memories and experiences of a forgotten Algerian people (Stampfl 208).

The significance and implications of Ahlem Mosteghanemi's choice to write in Arabic rather than French are further illuminated in a piece published in Egypt's Al-Ahram Weekly, when Ferial Ghazoul quotes the Egyptian critic "Alī al-Rā'ī" as saying, "Ahlem Mosteghanemi is a writer who has banished the linguistic exile to which French colonialism pushed Algerian intellectuals"(9).Using Arabic language can be seen by readers as an act of rejecting the French language, which was the language of the colonizer. Ahlem's choice of the Arabic language communicates the author's desire to embrace her own cultural identity and move away from the language imposed by the colonial experience, this resonates with readers as a powerful symbolic gesture. In 2002, Algeria's first President Ahmed Ben Bella described Ahlem Mosteghanemi as "an Algerian sun illuminating Arabic literature." He praised her creative production, stating that it has elevated Algerian literature to a stature worthy of the Algerian nation "we take pride in her Arabic pen, our pride as Algerians in our Arabness" (10). Mosteghanemi's decision to write for an Arabic-reading audience is seen as

crystallizing a sense of Algerian national coherence. As Ben Bella's statement suggests, Algeria's history of multilingualism, including the status of French, written Arabic, colloquial Algerian Arabic, as well as regional languages like *Kabyle*, *Tamazight*, and *Touareg*, has been a topic of much national debate (E. M. Holt 126).

Mosteghanemi's insistence that the liberation of Algerian men and women lies in Arabic, not French, is what most clearly separates her from Assia Djebar. For Mosteghanemi, Arabic is not to be abandoned and then "recovered" within the framework of the French language. Rather, it must be recovered its own skin and fleshed out more fully in its own right (M. Tageldin 491).

### **Conclusion:**

In short, Mosteghanemi is an author who has written a powerful and moving work of literature. Her writing is filled with deep emotions and feelings that draw the reader into the story, making them feel like they are experiencing it alongside the characters. Mosteghanemi has a remarkable ability to craft a narrative that resonates strongly with her audience, allowing them to become fully immersed in the world she has created. Her masterful use of language and storytelling techniques creates an impactful and unforgettable reading experience for her audience.

## **General Conclusion**

## General Conclusion

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### General Conclusion:

Ahlem Mosteghanemi is an important Algerian writer and poet. She was the first Algerian woman to publish a novel in Arabic, which was a significant milestone for Algerian literature and world literature more broadly. Ahlem Mosteghanemi is considered a groundbreaking and influential Algerian author whose work has left an important mark on Algerian and global literature. Her novel "*The Bridges of Constantine*" explores Algeria's history, covering the Algerian revolution in the 1940s up through 1988. The story is told through the perspective of the protagonist Khaled, who recounts his love story with a woman named Hayat. Through this narrative, Mosteghanemi examines indirectly the impacts of Algeria's colonial past.

This study investigated how storytelling traditions in the Algerian Arabic novel *The Bridges of Constantine* by Ahlem Mosteghanemi affect readers' emotions. The research focused on storytelling techniques that convey readers' sentiments and help them understand the novel's scenes. Additionally, it examined how background and identity groups influence readers' understanding and interpretation of the novel's trajectories.

The study also suggests that Ahlem Mosteghanemi's novel *The Bridges of Constantine* keeps readers' minds actively engaged and thinking. The novel contains many scenes that can be understood in multiple ways by different readers. At the same time, there are also scenes with more explicit meanings that the author is trying to convey indirectly to the audience. So the novel encourages readers to think deeply and interpret the story in their own ways, while also picking up on the underlying messages the author is communicating. This layered approach to storytelling and meaning-making is another way Mosteghanemi's use of traditional Algerian narrative techniques shapes the reader's experience and connection to the novel.

## General Conclusion

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The author Mosteghanemi used various storytelling techniques in her novel. One technique is the “leading word style”, where repeating certain words helps convey an important theme or idea in the story. Another technique is “repetitive designation”, where a detail or character is mentioned early on, then becomes more central and important later in the novel. The author also used “thematic patterning” and “formal patterning” to draw the reader’s attention to significant themes and elements, making the story more engaging.

In Ahlem’s novel, there are many scenes and layers that have hidden meanings. The readers will understand these meanings later as the story unfolds. In this particular section, the novel mentions the bridge, Khaled joining the liberation front and meeting Si Taher, the encounter with Hayat, and Hayat’s wedding. These events and details seem to have deeper significance that the reader will come to understand as they continue reading the narrative.

Ahlem’s novel takes readers on an emotional journey. The storytelling helps readers engage with the events and experience a range of feelings, like curiosity, anger, and shame. In some cases, readers may have mixed feelings about the characters, like feeling confused about whether to dislike Hayat for leaving Khaled and marrying someone else, or to sympathize with her. The novel uses the power of storytelling to make readers actively involved and experience the characters’ complex emotions. This helps draw the reader into the narrative and make them invested in what happens.

People with diverse backgrounds and identities can interpret Ahlem Mosteghanemi’s novel in various ways. Feminist readers might view the female voice in the novel as a means to challenge the male-dominated Algerian literary scene. Those with a Francophone background may see the novel’s utilization of Arabic, despite the author’s French roots, as an effort to reclaim Algeria’s cultural heritage or reconstruct the nation’s identity, possibly even interpreting it as an act of linguistic exile. Readers approaching the novel from a postcolonial

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standpoint may see it as a commentary on colonialism, possibly idealizing Algerian martyrs and conveying political messages. The novel can thus be perceived through different cultural, political, and personal lenses, leading to varied understandings based on individual perspectives and experiences.

One can conclude; the author's use of various narrative techniques, whether new or traditional, like storytelling, affects the reading experience and the effectiveness of transmitting emotions to the readers. The different narrative approaches employed in the novel influence how readers engage with and interpret the work. The storytelling, for example, can impact the readers' ability to connect with and feel the characters' emotions.

## General Conclusion

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