The Quest for Identity and Religious Extremism in Postcolonial African Novel
Case Study: Laila Lalami’s Secret Son (2009)

A Dissertation Submitted, in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master in Literature and Civilisation

By: ALLAOUA Hanene

Supervisor: Mr. AAID Salah Eddine

Board of Examiners

Examiner: Ms. ZERROUKI Zina

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Candidate Declaration Form

I, ALLAOUA, Hanene

Candidate of Master at the department of English, Larbi Ben M’Hidi University, do hereby declare that the dissertation entitled “The Quest for Identity and Religious Extremism in Postcolonial Novel Case Study: Laila Lalami’s Secret Son (2009)”, in partial fulfilment of MA Degree in Literature and Civilisation is my own original work, and it has not previously, in its entirety parts, been submitted at any university.
Dedication

This work is dedicated to my future self.
Acknowledgment

First, I would like to thank Allah for granting me ability and patience to complete this work. I would like to express my deepest gratitude and my most sincere thanks to my supervisor Mr. Aaid Salah Eddine for his guidance and support. I would like also to thank Ms. Zerrouki for her precious time reviewing my work.
Abstract

Postcolonial literature is the medium through which the writers of the formerly colonized nations share their experience of resistance and reconstruction. Their writings give voice to the suppressed, unspeakable people in order to determine their identity. The quest for identity is considered as one of the most discussed themes in postcolonial African Literature. Laila Lalami is among the North African writers who threw light on the issue of identity crisis through her works. In this regard, the present dissertation aims at exploring the theme of the quest for identity and the different types of identity loss presented in Laila Lalami’s *Secret Son*. In order to highlight this issue, an analysis of the characters’ tendencies and choices is made to show clearly how each one of them perceive it. Equally important, this study seeks to investigate different aspects that help in forging people’s identity such as language, immigration, social classes, and most importantly, religion. Furthermore, it also attempts to examine the impact of religion on reconstructing identity in which religious extremism can be considered as a type of identity loss. Hence, the main objective of this study is to map the connection between the quest for identity and religion; mainly religious extremism in a postcolonial context in general and explore the deterioration of economy and politics and how it has shaped the Moroccan identity in specific. In order to achieve it, the novel under study is approached from a thematic perspective relying on the interpretation of the postcolonial stance.
Résumé

La littérature postcoloniale est le moyen avec lequel les écrivains qui ont vécu l’expérience de la colonisation partagent les maux de la résistance contre le colonisateur. Les écrits de ces écrivains donnent naissance et une voix aux personnes humiliées pour avoir une identité bien déterminée et propre à eux loin du colon. La quête identitaire est l’une des thématiques centrales autour desquelles s’articulent les productions romanesques de la littérature africaine postcoloniale. Laila Lalami est parmi les écrivains du nord africain qui parlent de la crise identitaire dans ses produits littéraires. Dans cette perspective, cette dissertation développe le thème de la quête identitaire dans la littérature et les différents types de la perte et l’errance identitaire dans le roman de Laila Lalami « Le fils illégitime ». A fin de dévoiler ces problématiques de l’identité une analyse des tendances et des choix des personnages s’est établie ainsi pour montrer comment chacun de ces personnages perçoivent. Egalement, cette étude a pour but de montrer les différents aspects qui aident les personnes à forger leurs identités comme la langue, l’immigration, les classes sociales et le plus important la religion. En plus, cette étude toujours a pour but d’examiner les effets de l’extrémisme religieux dans la reconstruction de l’identité qui est considéré à son tour comme une sorte d’une perte identitaire. Ainsi, l’objectif primordial de cette étude est d’établir une relation entre la quête identitaire et la religion plus précisément l’extrémisme religieux dans le contexte postcolonial généralement et les vices de l’économie et la politique et comment ces derniers construisent l’identité marocaine spécifiquement. Enfin, l’approche thématique a dominé cette étude on s’appuyant sur l’attitude postcoloniale.
الملخص

يعتبر الأدب ما بعد الكولونيالي وسيلة يعبر من خلالها الكتاب الذين ينتمون للمستعمرات سابقا عن تجربتهم في
المقاومة وإعادة البناء. وتنجح كتاباتهم منصة لأصوات الناس المكبوتين الباحثين عن هويتهم. يعتبر البحث عن
الهوية أحد المواضيع الحساسة التي نوقشت في الأدب الإفريقي ما بعد الاستعماري و تعد ليلى العلمي من أحد
الكتاب الأفارقة الذين ألقوا الضوء على أزمة الهوية عبر أعمالها العديدة. وفي هذا السياق، تهدف هذه المذكرة إلى
استكشاف مسألة البحث عن الهوية و مختلف أنواع فقدان الهوية الممثلة في الابن السري للليلى العلمي. من أجل
تسلسل الضوء على هذه المشكلة، تم تحليل اتجاهات الشخصيات وخياراتها لإظهار كيف يمكن إدراك كل واحد منهم
بوضوح. وعلى نفس القدر من الأهمية، تسعى هذه الدراسة إلى التحقيق في الجوانب المختلفة التي تساعدهم في
تشكيل هوية الأشخاص مثل اللغة والهجرة والطبقات الاجتماعية والأهم من ذلك الدين. علامة على ذلك ، تحاول
هذه المذكرة أيضًا دراسة تأثير الدين في تشكيل الهوية حيث يمكن اعتبار التطرف الديني نوعا من فقدان الهوية.
تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى تحديد العلاقة بين البحث عن الهوية والدين و تحديدا التطرف الديني في سياق ما بعد
الاستعمار بشكل عام وخصوصا تدهور الاقتصاد والسياسة وكيف شكّلت الهوية المغربية بشكل خاص. من أجل تحقيق
ذلك، يتم تناول الرواية المذكورة من منظور مواضيعي يعتمد على تفسير الوضع ما بعد الاستعمار.
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Introduction

The quest for identity is one of the foremost discussed subjects in the postcolonial literature. The brutal incident of colonization has not only left its marks on religion, language, and culture of the colonized, but it also has a big impact on his/her identity. This latter is not as fixed as it may seem, but it is constructed by the social, cultural, historical, and political perceptions of societies. And since it is socially and culturally imposed; therefore, the identity of the colonized is completely transformed and shaped according to the colonizer’s norms and attitudes.

The human’s penchant to annex, expand, and conquer other lands is drawn by economic, political, and most importantly cultural motives. Thus, the term postcolonialism appeared to denote the implication of colonization and its aftermath. The term was first coined by historians after the Second World War to refer to the demise of colonization and its effects on the colonized. From a literary perspective, the postcolonial literature emerged from the field of postcolonialism which does not only treat the writings of the formerly colonized writers, but also the writings of the colonial writers. As a result, the postcolonial writers such as Edward Said, Gayatri Spivak, and Chinua Achebe used their pens as a fighting tool against the colonial legacy.

It is common to mention that the African continent and its people have always been misrepresented as savages and barbarians in the western literary canon. Therefore, the Postcolonial African writers used their writings as a weapon to debunk the false perceptions and stereotypes made by the colonial authorities. Another dehumanising aspect which shows clearly the ugly face of colonization is the colonizer’s attempt to destroy the culture of the colonized, and more precisely his/her identity. Moreover, the
identity of the colonized is somehow transformed and distorted due to the violent encounter between the colonized and the colonizer.

After independence, many liberated nations suffer from political upheavals, socio-economic issues, and on top of this all and most importantly, are left with cultural crises. They struggle to redefine their own identity because they are torn between the old traditions and the new imposed one. The loss/crisis of identity are among the main themes discussed in the postcolonial writings in the late decades of the twentieth century. Most postcolonial writers especially Africans dealt with the perception of identity vastly in order to salvage and restore the cultural identity of Africans. The contribution of francophone writers in this field cannot be denied or excluded; they discussed largely the notion of identity using the colonizer’s language such as Rachid Boudjedra, Tahar Ben Jalloun, and Assia Djebar. Furthermore, the North African novel offers a remarkable case for a sort of literature that explores largely the notion of identity.

Significantly, Laila Lalami is among the North African writers who brought light to the issue of identity and the role of religion as a remarkable feature in forging someone’s identity with special reference to the religiosity of youths. Thereupon, this study attempts to investigate the relationship between the quest for identity and religious extremism in the novel Secret Son within a postcolonial context. This dissertation relied on many books and articles in which the focus only will be on two books. The first book by Steve Salaita Modern Arab American Fiction: a Reader’s Guide devotes a section dealing with the work of Laila Lalami Secret Son. It tackled the issue of using religion as authoritative discourse and dealing with the problems that Moroccan society suffered from to recruit youths who struggle with identity cohesion. The second one is by Ngugu WaThiongo’s: Decolonizing the Mind: The Politics of
Language in African Literature. Through his work, he dealt vastly with the theme of the quest for identity within a postcolonial context in order to restore the cultural identity of his African fellows.

Secret Son by the Moroccan-American writer Laila Lalami is in fact a great example for exploring and bringing to light many issues such as migration, Diaspora, and religion in shaping someone’s identity. She also sheds light on the problems that undoubtedly encounters most freed nation such as political turmoil, social injustice, and most importantly left with scattered identities. In addition, she did her country justice when showed the myriad of identities and explored the complex history and politics of Morocco. The writer expressed this cultural richness through the characters by following their journey for searching for their own identity.

The present dissertation seeks to explore the notion of identity and how it is perceived in relation to religion in post-independent Morocco. Additionally, it sheds light on the issues that encounter postcolonial nations. More than this, it also focuses on the corruption in politics and economy in the Moroccan society. In addition, it sheds light on the use of religion as an authoritative discourse.

The importance of this study lays on answering many research questions such as how identity is perceived by the characters through the novel? Again, why do people on their way for searching for identity take refuge in religion and more precisely religious extremism? At the end, to what extent does the novel Secret Son succeed in exploring the dilemma of North African identity in the Moroccan society?.

The method used to conduct this research is descriptive analytical approach to give an overview look on the notion of identity and how it is perceived with relation to
religion through *Secret Son* characters in a postcolonial context. Moreover, this dissertation has been approached from a thematic approach relying on postcolonialism.

The present dissertation is divided into three chapters; the first chapter is entitled The Quest for Identity in Postcolonial African Literature. It gives a general background to the field of postcolonialism as a theory and literary work. First, many pages will be devoted to define the term of postcolonialism from different perspectives. It also gives a brief account of postcolonialism in Africa focusing on the literature produced by African writers. Furthermore, it focuses on the literature of the North African writers dealing with the identity crisis along with other important themes in Morocco as a postcolonial nation.

Concerning the second chapter, it is entitled Religious Extremism and the Loss of Identity. It deals mainly with religious extremism and the reasons behind it. Additionally, it attempts to stress the role and the importance of religion in shaping people’s identities. Finally, it examines the relation between religion and identity with a special reference to the religiosity of youths.

The last chapter entitled Maghrebian Identity “What Was Left Who Was Left?” It offers a striking example of North African novel that deals vastly with the quest for identity along with other interesting themes. The novel is believed to be Lalami’s most brilliant works which gained her an international reputation, and a place in literary arena. She explores through her characters how identity is perceived by each one of them from different perspective, and the relation between the quest for identity and religious extremism.
The field of postcolonial literature is heavily replete with the theme of the quest for identity which is considered as one of the most debatable subjects in the recent decades of the twentieth century. In order to understand this type of literature, one has to know first the ground which paved the way for it to emerge. Concerning this chapter, it will be a theoretical background of postcolonialism. So, the very first element to be tackled is the definition of the term of postcolonialism since it is a hard concept to define whether from historical or literary point of view.

After defining the concept of postcolonialism, this chapter examines the postcolonial literature, and determine the characteristics that make this type of literature postcolonial. Moreover, the notion of identity will be dealt with along with other aspects that forge the identity of the colonized such as language, hybridity, immigration, and religion. Additionally, African literature reflects the genius of a wide range of writers who tackled this notion in order to reconstruct the identity of Africans.

After dealing with the overall core of this field and exploring the concept of identity by African writers, we are going to denote the contribution of the North African writers in this field which is remarkable and cannot be denied concerning dealing with the notion of identity.
Chapter One:

The Quest for Identity in Postcolonial African Literature

Since the beginning of history, man showed a great tendency to explore, expand, territorialize, and conquer other lands not only for economic motives but also for political and cultural reasons. Colonialism has been considered as a significant event in human history since third quarter of the world population has experienced this ugly incident. Colonialism and Postcolonialism are one of the most discussed themes recently. Ashcroft et al in the Empire Writes Back, said that most of today’s world population have experienced colonization and had had their lives shaped by its process or brutally dismantled (1).

Historically speaking, colonialism is when a powerful country dominates and takes over another country using force and imposing authority. According to Loomba,“Colonisation can be defined as the conquest and control of other people’s land and goods, but colonization in this sense is not merely the expansion of various European powers into Asia, Africa or the Americas (21). The European experience of colonization is different from the ancient civilizations, because they focused only on exploiting resources whereas the European worked on different levels such as politics, economy, and most importantly culture. Furthermore, it may seem like there is no difference between imperialism and colonization. In a book entitled Culture and Imperialism, Edward Said made a striking distinction between the term colonialism and imperialism; the former refers to the ideology whereas the latter denotes the consequences of imperialism (Ashcroft el al Key Concept5).
Apart from the ancient definition of colonisation, it holds a different meaning in its modern sense; while the old one is about taking people’s lands, the new one is rather forging a kind of dependence relationship between the colonizer and the colonized at many levels especially economy, culture, and politics (Loomba 22). In other words, the cultural, political and the economic life of the colonized are on the hands of the colonizer. Most ex-colonies are still dependent on the colonizer to be productive. Although, the colonies gained their independence; the colonizer is still deeply involved in their political and economic affairs through pointing or supporting the governments of its ex-colonies in which they basically served as puppets.

On the one side of the coin, the process of decolonization brought nationalist movements to speak up and call for independence and self-determination not only for territories but also to decolonize people’s minds. With that being said, being independent politically is not necessarily being fully independent. The consequences of colonization are still felt nowadays because most independent nations are still dominated and controlled by the colonial force economically and culturally in which neo-colonialism is considered as the new form of colonization as stated by Ashcroft et al:"the forces of neo-colonialism and globalization are clearly part of the contentious problem of whether independence really meant the end of colonial control or merely its mutation" (KeyConcept57).

On the other side of the coin, colonialism is not only about exploiting human beings and resources, but also extends to cover other cultural areas such as literature. On the same line of thought, colonial literature deals with the writings of the colonizer which served as a means for exercising force, imposing authority, and representing the colonized people in a very stereotypic way (Bohmer 76). On top of this all and most importantly, this type of literature deals mainly with the interaction between the
colonizer and the colonized whereas the latter is represented as unequal part (Ashcroft et al 49).

Based on the physical as well as psychological principle that every action has a reaction, postcolonialism is regarded as a reaction against colonization practices and subjugation. The term postcolonialism is hard to define for it is complex and ambiguous. Each scholar has his own definition and perception of the term postcolonialism which some considered purely historical while the others regarded as anti-colonial discourse.

From the old perspective, the term refers to the period following the demise of colonization. This term was coined first by historians to refer to the period that came after the end of the world war two. In his book *The Cambridge Companion to Postcolonial Literary Studies*, Lazarus stated that this term is purely historical which referred mainly to the decolonized territories and has nothing to do with ideological perceptions. However, this term does not only have chronological dimensions, but also extends to other areas such as politics, culture, history, and identity. According to Loomba, “Postcolonialism is not just as a coming literary after colonialism and signifying its demise, but more flexible as the contestation of colonial domination and the legacies of colonialism” (15). Another writer mentioned in her book which is entitled *Postcolonial Theory: A Critical Introduction*, that the alliance of post-structuralism and postmodernism to Marxism paved the way for postcolonialism to emerge, as it is defined clearly by Wikipedia «Post-colonialism (postcolonial theory, post-colonial theory) is a specifically postmodern intellectual discourse that consists of reactions and analysis of, the cultural legacy of colonialism (Gandhi 198).
Literary speaking, this term is used to challenge the colonial legacy through examining the writings and the literature of the colonized countries during and after colonisation, as stated by Ashcroft “Postcolonialism is a collection of theoretical and critical strategies used to examine the culture, literature, politics, and history; of former colonies of European empires and their relations to the rest of the world” (155). Additionally, the field of postcolonialism was believed, to begin with, the landmark publication of Edward Said’s “Orientalism” in 1978 which marked the emergence of the postcolonial studies that developed later to be known as the Colonialist Discourse.

Furthermore, Mullany points out that: “postcolonial literature encompasses that complex and various body of writing produced by individuals, communities, and nations with distinct histories of Colonialism” (3). Each country has experienced colonization differently; the experience of the settler colonies is completely different from those of the third world. As it is stated by Ashcroft, “not every colony will share every aspect of colonialism, nor will share some essential feature, but it was described the language used to enact, enforce, describe or analyse colonialism” (key Concept 91).

Postcolonial literature is generally concerned with the interaction between the colonizer and the colonized and studies the implications of colonization and the effect of decolonization on the colonized psychology, culture, and politics. It is a body of literary writing that reacts to the discourse of colonization; it involves usually writings that deal with the issues of De-colonization or the political and the cultural Independence of people formerly subjugated to colonial rule (Online Encyclopaedia).
It is true to say that the African continent and its people are usually misrepresented and pictured in western literary canon as savages, barbarians, and uncivilized which the colonizer used as an excuse to legitimize their colonization through the mission of civilization. In his novel *Things Fall Apart*, Achebe goes further explaining that the African continent's image has been ruined because of the lies told by the civilization missionary and explorers (165).

After the independence, most liberated African nations suffered from socio-economic issues, political upheavals, and most importantly left with a cultural crisis. Intellectual African writers used their writings as a weapon to express the suffering that they have experienced during colonization in a realistic manner (Olasakinju 2). Cultural colonization is the ugly face of colonization which not only attempts to control people's wealth and lands but also their culture, remarkably referred to their identities. The post-colonial African literature, thus, is replete with the theme of identity for it is a prominent and controversial issue.

The quest for identity is one of the most debatable subjects in postcolonial literature during the last decades of the twentieth century which is the result of colonization. Most postcolonial states struggle to find their own identities. In his book *The United States and imperialism*, Ninkovich stated that:“an identity crisis is a period of disorientation in which values and relationships are once taken for granted are thrown into Questions of self-adjustment that bedevil individuals up in an identity crisis like” who am I?” and “where do I belong(16).

In a postcolonial context, Edward Said defined identity in terms of binary oppositions such as the self/ the other, civilized or uncivilized; In other words, identity is defined by what is not. Such binaries were the actual result of the colonial process.
The binary self/other was first brought up by Edward Said in his magnum opus “Orientalism”. He argues that the term orient is a purely European invention to maintain a cultural control over the east, as he stated: “is a western style of dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient” (3). For Said, the colonizer cannot identify himself only by defining the colonized as the other. Such division claims that the West is the center of knowledge, science, and technology; whereas the east is the periphery which always pictured as the home of backwardness and barbarians.

Said is highly influenced by the Foucauldian discourse which is known as the power of knowledge. In his introduction to “Orientalism”, he started with a dialogue between two British colonialists in Egypt which they claimed that the Egyptians are not capable of running their own country whereas they can because they have knowledge. Furthermore, although the colonizer has left the lands; culturally the damages still felt till our present day. The psychological makeup of the individual under the colonizing mind has constructed a negative self-image which sees oneself as culturally inferior to the colonizer.

Postcolonialism owes much to Edward Said for his contribution to the field, yet before him, Fanon was the pioneer with his landmark works Black Skins, White Masks (1952) and The Wretched of the Earth (1961). His works deal mainly with the construction of the colonized identity and how colonialism affected his/her psychology. For Fanon, being politically and economically independent is not enough. The colonized, therefore, has to liberate his mind from the chains of the cultural colonization which the colonizer has left manifested in education, governments, and institutions.
Identity is the traits, characteristics, and social memberships that define people. It governs people's relations with the others, and most importantly controls their behaviours in society. In her book *Identity and Difference*, Woodward points out that “identity gives us a location into the world and presents the link between us and the society in which we live... it gives us an idea who we are and how we relate to others and to the world in which we live”(1).

Each society or culture has its own perception of identities which they are constructed and reformulated according to it. Besides personal identity, people have a cultural one that is related to religion, ethnicity, and language that helps them to determine to which group they belong. In his essay *Cultural Identity and Diaspora*, Stuart Hall argues that identity is not something static and a complete fact; it is rather a product of an ongoing process (Braziel and Mannur, 2003:234). Accordingly, Hall divided identity into two distinct categories “being” and “becoming”. The first one is considered as a necessary condition, whereas the latter one fits appropriately the postcolonial context.

Identity is not a clear or fixed concept as it may seem, Mercer claims that "identity becomes an issue when it is in crisis when something is assumed to be fixed, coherent and stable is displaced by the experience of doubt and uncertainty" (43). Accordingly, Amartya Sen argues that identity is a multi-dimensional or pluralistic in which an individual can belong to various categories without any contradiction, yet such differences may forge misunderstanding and lead to racial or religious and even civilization crisis (8).

To maintain control over the colonized, the colonizer worked on the cultural and psychological level in which Mahmood Madani claims that colonialism was not
just about the identity of the governors as being whites or European, but it was even more about the institution they created to enable a minority to rule over the majority. Moreover, the aim of the colonizer is to destroy the national identity of the colonized by forging a new one through creating a new class which belongs to the colonized, yet works for the colonizer's interest; Fanon has labelled it as the “élite”.

Although the élite are educated according to the colonialist standards, they feel alienated because neither their people accept them nor the colonizer. For the colonizer, they are just a means to last longer and maintain control over the oppressed people. According to Boehmer “without the precious help of such a group of people, imperialism could never last as long as it did (110). Algeria offers a striking example of the cooperation of élites with the French authority. Ferhat Abbas, an Algerian leader, and politician, was strongly influenced by the French culture. He called for establishing a nation which is based on liberty and equality but under the French rule. Those élites were treated socially and culturally inferior to the colonizer, and they are left on the periphery.

The imperial power sought to create a new identity for the oppressed people which are perceived as an ideologically imposed identity. Because of this process, people underwent a traumatic experience in which they went through a cultural and linguistic transformation. People seek their own identities only when they interact with other groups. Such a harsh interaction made the colonized people feel trapped and cannot define themselves with any group. They feel even alienated and dislocated in their home. As a psychiatrist, Fanon found that the Algerian individual lives in a total state of depersonalization, and there is no way to bring him back to where he belonged (140).
In her brilliant essay *Introduction; Who Am I? Negotiation of Identity in a Postcolonial State*, Heather Scofield argues that the colonized must go back to the past in order to regain his pre-given identity. She goes further claiming that the process of regaining the old identity would be difficult since the imperial power worked deeply to destroy it.

The identification and the affirmation of identity in a postcolonial sense are related to otherness which is considered as an important feature to define the colonized. The colonizer succeeded in implementing the inferiority complex in the minds of the colonized. Fanon believed that colonialism destroyed the essence of identity and in order to achieve a national identity, one must regain his pre-colonial identity. Accordingly, Fanon believed that the colonized is still dominated and controlled because of the imitation of the colonizer identity (Van Stralen223). Identity is not only imposed but sometimes it is chosen and used in particular situations and constraints (225). In his book *The Cultural Impact*, Bhabha claims that “There is no native who does not dream at least once a day of setting himself up in settler’s place”(44). The feel of displacement and dislocation that the colonized endured has led him to absorb the colonizer identity.

Hybridity is an important feature to recognize the postcolonial identity. Since the colonial power worked on the cultural level to colonize the mind of the colonized through its institutions, the hybrid culture has been the most outcome. The colonized people cannot regain their lost identity because they now hold a new hybrid one. In his book *The Location of Culture*, Bhabha argues that the world is changing rapidly, and there is no such original identity only hybrid one. He goes further saying that those people are aware of their in-between position (201-203).
The post-colonial African literature is, in fact, a striking example for a sort of literature that clearly describes the tragic effect of the colonial process on the colonized culture: be it identity, language or religion. Therefore, the national literature has emerged as a fighting tool to defend the African culture and identity in an artistic way, as it is said by Ashcroft et al in *The Empire Writes Back* “this literature rejects what the imperial literature claim” (16).

Identity loss/crisis is one of the foremost discussed themes along with Diaspora, migration, and language in the postcolonial African novels in which writers explore them deeply. The novels debunk the implications of the imperial dominance, and the struggle of the colonized people to regain their lost identity. Furthermore, these novels are considered as a therapy to heal the traumatic impact caused by the colonizer upon the psyche of the colonized (Tsao101).

The colonized have always been pictured struggling to find and re-assert their identities; they are torn between their old identity and the new hybrid one that is imposed by the colonizer. In his book *Imperialism and Culture*, Edward Said claims that “the national re-establishment of society, affirmation of identity, and the appearance of new cultural practices instigated as mobilized force, and then advanced the struggle against western domination in the non-European world (218). Another dehumanizing aspect of colonialism is to destroy the indigenous languages. In his book *Handbook of Language and Ethnic Identity*, Fishman affirmed that “when we take away the language of a culture, we take away its greetings, its curses, its cures, its praises, its laws, its literature, and its wisdom” (448).

It is vital to note that language is a key feature not only in shaping people's identities but also in constructing them. It plays an important role in expressing and
transmitting cultures and its values as Gibson said “language –both code and content- is a complicated dance between internal and external interpretations of our identity (1).

In his book *Decolonizing the Mind*, Ngugu claims that since the language is one of the buildings of culture, any loss of the language can lead to the loss of culture:

“Language as communication and as a culture are the products of each other … Language carries culture, and culture carries, particularly through orator and literature, the entire body of values by which we perceive ourselves and our place in the world … Language is thus inseparable from ourselves as a community of human beings with a specific form and character, a specific history, a specific relationship to the world” (15-16).

Paradoxically, many African writers called for re-assertion of identity; expressed their colonial experience in the language of the colonizer. Most African writings are written whether in English or French, as Ashcroft said in *The Empire Writes Back*: "Appropriation is the process by which the language is made to 'bear the burden' of one’s own cultural experience … Language is adopted as a tool and utilized to express widely differing cultural experiences" (38-39).

Other writers such as Marlon James and Chinua Achebe have a different opinion; they added local terms and idioms to the English language. In his novel *Things Fall Apart*, Achebe invented and added Igbo terms and idioms in order to challenge the colonial legacy, and defend the Igbo culture which was misrepresented by the colonizer. Among the African writers who have chosen the colonizer language to express their experience on the one hand and used it as a fighting tool against both the colonizer and its corrupt governments on the other
hand, the Maghrebian writers such Kateb Yacine, Assia Djabber, Rachid Boudjedra, Tahar Ben Jalloun. In an interview with the Moroccan writer Laila Lalami, she said that she has always wanted to write in her native language Arabic; but unfortunately as most postcolonial writers, she received a semi-colonial education the fact which has already determined her language choice. Similarly, Rachid Boudjedra has also affirmed in his *Algerian Letters* (1995) that: "For me, an Algerian person, I did not choose the French language. It rather chose me. It has imposed itself on me throughout centuries of tears and blood flowing during the painful colonial period" (30).

There are conservative writers who have chosen to write in their native language instead of the colonizer language. Among those writers, Ngugu WaThiong’o who has made a successful career writing in English, turned against it and wrote in his Gikuyu language. He claims that the language of the colonizer seeks to remove the pre-given culture and replaces it by the dominant language, as Ashcroft et al described in *The Empire Writes Back* “Abrogation is a refusal of the categories of the imperial culture, its aesthetic, its illusory standard of normative or 'correct' usage, and its assumption of a traditional and fixed meaning “inscribed” in the words (38).

Migration, place, and Diaspora along with language are the most discussed concepts by postcolonial writers. “Home” plays an important role in forging people’s identity, as it defined by Christina Heckman:”traditionally home and belonging can be defined as the place where our ancestors used to live, the place of our origin. Consequently, this definition is dedicated to the post without regard where one lives right now. As a result, it is a very passive and static concept, and home is a fix placed”(2). Accordingly, the issue of displacement is one of the impacts of
colonization. Migrants do not only feel alienated but also even in their homes they feel dislocated in Bhabha’s words “in-between” (2).

The last decades of the twentieth century and the beginning of the twenty-first century have witnessed a big wave of immigrants from the former colonies to different parts of the world especially to the metropolitan. One of the results of the ugly incident of colonization is the literature of migration. According to Oxford dictionary, Migration is generally defined as “the movement of large numbers of people, animals, or birds from one place to another”. One of the most significant features of postcolonial writings is the emergence of migrant and Diaspora writers. Most migrant writers have produced a different type of literature that treats issues and problems that concern the postcolonial world such as migration, Diaspora, and most importantly the quest for identity. What characterizes this literature as a migrant literature is that most migrant writers share the same experience of migration, exile, and Diaspora. Moreover, the characters are always depicted struggling with their identity, torn between their new and old traditions. In a book entitled Migration and Literature, Soren Frank claimed that “the main protagonist in the twentieth century turned out to be the migrant. No longer to be looked upon as anomalous, migration has actually become the norm and has resulted in a profound renegotiation of the concepts of identity, belonging, and home (2).

There are many aesthetic features that distinguish migrant workers from other fictional work which are stylistic or thematic. Thematically speaking, the life of the writer and the characters share at least one similarity; both of them are struggling with displacement. Additionally, the identity of the migrant is challenged by the issue of displacement and cultural diversity. Another problematic conception to consider, the term “Europeanness” has a dimensional implication on the culture of the migrant
(Frank 19). Besides the thematic features, there are also stylistic ones which are "enunciation", "composition of the narrative form", and "language" (Frank 21). The first characteristic stands for the plurality of perceptions and viewpoints of the characters. Secondly, the composition of narrative form deals with the chronological order of the events in relation to themes whilst the third characteristic is about the use of different languages to denote the cultural differences that are imposed by the process of migration (Frank 21).

There are plenty of writers who dealt with the issue of migration such as Naipaul, Sam Selvon, Selman Rushdie, and Tayeb Salih. One of the most outstanding writers of Diaspora literature is V.S.Naipaul, a well-known Trinidadian author, and figure, who tackled the issue of migration and Diaspora. Through his works, Naipul depicts the suffering of the migrants from alienation and their journey in search for their identity in diasporic context. In addition, Naipul’s *Mimic Men* is a true manifestation of his own life in which the life of the character resembles his own in many ways. The novel follows the story of Ralph Sing who does not only feel lost in Metropolitan London but also in his own island. He tries to relocate himself in his voluntary exile in London in order to find his own identification. Another significant writer, Tayeb Salih, an iconic Sudanese figure, is considered as one of the most important postcolonial writers who dealt with the issue of identity in relation to migration. The publication of his landmark novel *Season of Migration to the North* gained him a worldwide reputation.

The quest for identity in relation to immigration is a contemporary theme in the recent decades in North African literature. Most writers of the Maghreb share their experience of immigration and the reconstruction of identity using the language of the metropolitan center France because they have received a colonial education. The flux
of Maghrebian immigrants after the Second World War has marked the beginning of the francophone literature. Each writer has treated these postcolonial issues from different perceptions and from various angles. Rachid Boudjedra, Tahar Ben Jalloun, Mohamed Dib, Assia Djebar, and Driss Chraibi are among the francophone writers who addressed this issue. Chraibi’s *The Goats* was believed to be the first francophone work that brought light to the suffering of Maghrebian immigrants in France. He criticized the French government harshly for its policy towards immigration. In his novel *The Country*, Ben Jalloun tackled the perception of identity by the second-generation of immigrants “Beur” in contrast to the first generation. The novel follows the story of Mohamed, a Moroccan immigrant, immigrated with his wife to France in order to work. When he got older he wanted to go back to his country. Conversely, his children do not share the same opinion.

Each return was an event in the Bled. Once arrived, he forgot that he hated the combatant baggage. He [...] loved these reunions with the old, with the members of a huge family that watched him with eyes full of envy. The family was the tribe. [...] It is a great family, organized in a very archaic way, and governed by the traditions (30-31).

The second-generation of immigrants take their parents ‘identity for granted and also adopt the French one. They do not perceive it the same way their parents do:

Let us say that our children are more modern than the us, they have discovered the modern life and have loved it, when you bring them to Bled, they find any backlog, they do not like [...] They are tourists in their own countries, but of the tourists who
are not even curious, they are embarrassed and do not understand why we love the bled [...] This is not their country, it is explained, it is your country, you are attached to it, they look at it with the eyes of foreigners, most do not even speak the language (32).

Assia Djebbar is among the francophone writers who brought light to the issue of identity in postcolonial context but from another perspective. She adopted "Assia Djebbar" as her pen name who is considered as a great North African writer and top candidate for Nobel-Prize. Through her novels, Djebbar tried to depict the suffering of women from marginalization during colonialism and after independence. She focused on affirming the lost identity of females which was doubly subjugated by colonialism and by her male counterpart. Her novel Les Nuits de Strasbourg explores the struggling of the African female in general and the Algerian one in particular. She also focused on the situation of women and the issue of sexism in Muslim countries.

Laila Lalami is a Moroccan-American author, novelist, and short story writer. She was born and raised in Rabat, Morocco. She is one of the distinguished North African writers and well-received not only in the Arabic speaking countries but also in the world literary arena. Lalami, unlike most North African writers, writes in the English language to express her thoughts and inner feelings. She received an international reputation after the publication of her collection of short stories Hope and Other Dangerous Pursuit and she was nominated for different literary prizes for her two novels Secret Son and The Moors ‘Account.

Laila Lalami’s Secret Son offers a great example for exploring and bringing to light the issues of migration, Diaspora, and religion in shaping someone’s identity. It is
not an unravelled matter that most freed nations suffer from political turmoil, social injustice, and most importantly are left with scattered and lost identities. *Secret Son* gives a general overlook on the situation of contemporary Morocco after the independence shedding light on the social, political, and even religious problems that its people encounter. Furthermore, the novel follows the characters ‘journey in searching for their identity by showing clearly how they perceive it and examines the relationship between youth and the Islamic faith in which the misunderstanding of its teachings may lead to catastrophic consequences.
As it has been noted before, it is fair to assume that the term postcolonialism has not only a historical dimension which refers to the demise of colonization and its aftermath, but it also extends to other areas such as literature. This sort of literature did not only emerge as a reaction against the writing of the colonizer, but it also sought to denote the impacts of colonialism at the level of society and culture. Different narratives described the attempts of the colonizer to erase the cultural identity of the colonized in order to serve easily his interest.

Along this chapter, the term identity has been defined from different perceptions and conceptualization backed up by the pillars of postcolonialism such as Edward Said, Franz Fanon, and Gayatri Spivak. Most literary works by postcolonial African writers dealt with various aspects that forge the colonized identity such as language, hybridity, and religion. In addition to that, the issue of quest for identity is vastly explored by the North African writers who sought through their works to redefine the identity of the colonized, and examines the relationship between identity and the other different components as religion and other factors which shape it.

In fact, the North African novel provides a striking example of sort of literature that explores deeply and largely the quest for identity by showing clearly the struggle of the colonized in order to fit in the world of power.
Work Cited


Religious extremism can be considered as a type of identity loss since religion is deemed to be as one the most important building of it. In this chapter, there will be a focus on the issue of religious extremism and its relation to identity with special reference to youths since they go through identity formation. So to understand this issue, one has to understand first the term religion since each scholar perceive and define it from different perspective. Furthermore, extremism and its different types in which religious extremism is definitely included will examined through this chapter.

After dealing with the notion of religion and extremism, the colossal effect of religion precisely on the identity of youths will be discussed through this chapter. Remarkably, youths go through a sensitive phase on their way to affirm their identification. In this chapter, there will be a huge focus on the main reasons behind religious extremism and what push youths exclusively to behave in this way. Since Morocco is a postcolonial nation; it suffers from different issues such as political upheavals, socio-economic problems which lead youth to undergone a kind of identity dilemma that eventually lead to catastrophic consequences.

Concerning this chapter, it has been approached par excellence from a thematic stance. More than this, there will be a focus on the use of religious authoritative discourse by religious groups to recruit youths in order to further their cause.
Chapter Two:

Religious Extremism and the Loss of Identity

Religion is considered as a significant feature in forging people’s identities. There is a great connection between religion and the sense of the quest for identity with special reference to the religiosity of youths. The term religion is very hard concept to define for it is complex and controversial; It seems like there is no agreed upon definition by scholars because they attribute it to different points of view and perceptions.

In his Introduction: *Studying Religion in Personality and Social Psychology*, Vasillis Saroglou defines religion as “the co-presence of beliefs, ritualized experiences, norms, and groups that refer to what people perceive to be a transcendent to humans entity” (15). Since there is no agreed upon definition for “religion”, scholars, sociologists such as Emilé Durkheim, philosophers, psychologists gave a myriad of definitions to this term. Karl Marx goes further comparing religion to opium and claiming that religion has the same function and effects on people as this drug has. He believes that “religion” is purely human invention, and people take refuge in religion to surpass their struggles in a materialistic world.

From sociological perspective, Emilé Durkheim claims that the social circumstances paved the ways for religion to emerge. Accordingly, he believes that people express their sense of unity and behaviours toward sacred symbols by performing rituals, ceremonies together (Hammond 20). In the light of Durkheim’s definition, many scholars have rejected it and claimed that people in modern era are no
longer attached to religion like before and express their sense of belonging differently. Equally important, they believed that people’s ethnicity influences their religious orientation, and the importance of religion in their lives. In like manner, some ethnic groups like Jews, Amish, and Mormons where their religious identity equates their ethnicity (Abramson 40). As a result, the linkage between religion and ethnicity is highly powerful in determining and forging people’s identities.

Religion tends to answer many different questions about supernatural, unsolved mysteries and unexplained phenomena. Furthermore, it differentiates between the spiritual experiences that people encounter and their own personal experience. In addition to this fact, it explains the linkage between spirituality and other aspects of life such as culture, language, and most importantly identity. The level of commitment to religion varies from one society to another; some societies adapt secularism as a way of life while other societies are fully committed to religion in which self-centred interpretation and radicalized views may lead to catastrophic consequences.

Radicalization is a phenomenon that is generally used in political, economic, and social context which based on ideology and religious views. It is defined by the European commission as “the phenomenon of people embracing opinions, views, and ideas that lead to terrorism”. Accordingly, the European commission states that radicalization is a socialization of extremism which definitely leads to terrorism (Orav 3). Politically speaking, the term “radicalization” is usually used with extremism that denotes seeking or modifying the situation. Sometimes, any possible change can be sought through violence. Peter Neumann, an expert on terrorism and political violence, defines radicalization as “the process or the processes whereby individuals or groups come to approve and participate in the use of violence for political aims” (Orav 5).
Extremism is defined by Merriam Webster Dictionary as “the quality or the state of being extremism”. The term extremism is recently attributed to political and religious context which is based on ideologies that are believed to be unaccepted according to the norms and the attitudes of given society (Orav 14). Arno Guern, a Swiss-German psychologist, defines extremism with a reference to the loss of identity: “the lack of identity associated with extremists is the result of self-destructive self-hatred that leads to feelings of revenge toward life itself, and a compulsion to kill one's own humanness.” Thus extremism is seen as not a tactic, nor an ideology, but as a pathological illness which feeds on the destruction of life (Coleman, Bartoli 34).

Extremism can be perceived differently and from different perceptions and conceptualizations according to the viewer’s position. Some perceive it as moral and fair as Osama Bin Laden claimed that “They violate our land and they occupy it and steal the Muslims’ possession, and when faced by resistance they call it terrorism” (Svensson 25). Conversely, some perceive it as unfair and unethical as visualized by Robert F. Kennedy “What is objectionable, what is dangerous about extremists is not that they are extreme, but that they are intolerant”. Additionally, some changes require using violence in order to be sought as Martin Luther King stated: “the question is not whether we will be extremists, but what kind of extremists we will be. The nation and the world are in dire need of creative extremists” (Svensson 25).

It is worth noting that extremism is not only associated with religion; There are many different types of it such as political, economic or social one. From political perspective, one of the ugliest consequences of colonization is the loss of the national identity in the North African countries especially Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia. It has led to clashes between The Berbers, the Arabs and government authorities. During colonization, Berbers adopted only one identity forced by the colonial legacy.
Following the independence, the Berbers are still discriminated under the legacy of one national identity in which the term “Arabization” used to denote the cultural identity of the North Africans. As an illustration, the Algerian constitution defines Algeria as an Islamic and Arabic nation; yet the Berbers make up 30 to 40% of its population. In this respect, their existence is deliberately denied by the authorities. They developed a unique system of language and tradition which have been suppressed. Berbers call for a wide national recognition for their culture and language. They created many Berber movements to defend their rights. One of the Berber movements called the Berber Spring organized an event where the Algerian Anthropologist Mouloud Mammari was supposed to give a lecture about Kabyle poetry. However, his lecture is cancelled by the government authorities. This event has led to wide-spread protests and clashes between supporters of the Berber movement and law enforcement agents (Aissati 66). Subsequently, Berbers protested calling for the rights and the recognition of the Berber heritage. As a result, the government reacted heavily against the protesters by launching a military operation killing over than 32 people (Aissati 70).

It is important to mention that, there are different types of extremism and the religious type is certainly included. Religious extremism is not a recent phenomenon, it rather exists since the beginning of the history, and it is not only unique to one specific religion since all societies have experienced it in different times. In our modern era, most societies, regardless of their religious orientation try hard to fight extremism and preserve their own identities. The misunderstanding of faith and misinterpretation of religious teachings and texts can lead to extremism. Moreover, a religious extremist can be viewed as someone who does not accept the difference in the other, believes that only his opinion is worth considering, and tries to impose his values and attitudes on the others. An extremist is usually characterized by being intolerant and bigot which known
as dogmatic. Dogmatism is derived from the Latin word “dogma” that refers to the system of principles which generally applied to strong beliefs that people hold and not willing to rationally discuss it (Damon 87). Religious extremism is not only about fully believing in a doctrine or an idea, but also extends to supporting it and even more fighting for it. Extremists interpret and deal with religious texts and teachings according to their views and they use verbal and even physical violence to impose their doctrine on others.

Recently, the world and especially the Islamic nations have witnessed the emergence of different social groups and religious movements to the surface. Most of these groups are calling for reconciling one another according to its agenda using different methods. There are a lot of factors such as social, political, and economic ones that paved the way for them to emerge especially extremist groups and movements (loumoualldi 11). Surprisingly, those groups are not recent and not unique to one religion since all religions especially Abrahamic ones suffered from religious extremism. Algeria offers a striking example as a country that suffered from extremism. “Another example is the armed conflict between the government of Algeria and the rebel-group GIA (1993-2003). The GIA had a religious dimension in their explicit aspirations, and its leader explicitly rejected democracy, political pluralism, and secular-based legislation (Svenson 55).

It is worth noting that religion plays a vital role in constructing youth’s identity. In a book entitled Social and Personality Development, William Damon states that youths are generally struggling with identity cohesion as they are searching for the sense of self through identifying themselves with the familial, vocational, and societal roles in order to solidify and comprehend their experience of the self (95). Additionally, in a book entitled Youth: Fidelity and Diversity, Erikson claims that religion plays an
important role in youth’s identity formation because it provides the needed platform since it is linked to the socio-historical matrix (87). Erikson claims that religious beliefs are transmitted to a community of believers through religious norms. The deeper religious experience that youth undergone empowers them to understand more and better their selves and place in the world (Erikson 30).

In his book Insight and Responsibility, Erikson states that norms and cultures are influenced by religion where it guides and shapes youths ‘behaviours. There is a great linkage between identity formation and religion where the intense of religiosity determines the achievement of identity (55). There is no shadow of doubt that religion has a strong influence on forging youths’ identity. Another key point, the effect of religion in shaping identity varies from one community to another where people are more bound to religious norms and beliefs. It is important to realize that in the modern era, especially in secular countries, religion has no longer a great influence compared to some societies where religion is the backbone of its centre. Moreover, youth show more attachment and commitment to religion compared to the other different groups of people.

False interpretation, misunderstanding of faith, radical views, political corruption and socio-economic issues are among the causes that lead young people to extremism. Morocco as a postcolonial, third world, nation offers a great instance where its youth undergone many existential crises which pushed them to illegal immigration, crime, and most importantly extremism that leads definitely to terrorism. An unhealthy experience that young people endured because of the socio-political issues, economic problems, and bad system of education can result in a huge identity dilemma as Groth and Pausa claims that in their book Population Dynamics in Muslim Countries: Assembling the Jigsaw:
The next 10 years will be years of great challenge for many Muslim-majority countries. Their working-age populations will continue to grow rapidly, requiring very rapid job creation to prevent unemployment rates from rising. Their education systems will also need to be modernized and fitted for the challenges of the globalized economy, although this endeavour will be assisted somewhat by the slowing growth of the school-age population (41).

In this regard, younger people take refuge in religion to find their own identity since it is the source of values and principles. Consequently, some agencies or parties took advantage and recruit them through brainwashing system with radical views and ideologies:

Religion as a factor in armed conflicts can have two different types of effects. Religious influence can be a positive force for peace building, prevention of escalation, and peaceful management of conflicts, but it can, under other circumstances, also be a more negative, destructive factor that increases the risk for outbreak, intractability, and severity of conflicts (Svensson 420).

Moroccan youth as other third world youth live in a country where their governments fail them every time. They cannot fulfil their essential needs such as jobs and housing. So, they become an easy target for extremist groups which took an advantage from the absence of social justice and equality to help further their cause. Groth and Pauza has clearly explained that “there is nothing more wasteful of the potential for economic growth or more dangerous to political stability than large numbers of unemployed or underemployed young people (particularly young men) with high aspirations that they see little chance of fulfilling” (31).
Another key point is that most young people are not religiously aware enough due to the religious education they received. Ironically, those extremist groups themselves do not have a strong religious background; they give false interpretations of religious texts in which killing becomes fighting for freedom, and suicide becomes martyrdom (Loumoualdi 11). Those groups do not find much difficulty in convincing youth to join them since they do not have a strong religious feedback to discuss or even doubt religious texts. They take advantage from the failure that the Islamic governments had in convincing youth in order to reach their goals. In her brilliant article, Awatef Loumoualdi, Doctor at the University of Al Taref, Religious Extremism and the Cultural Identity, discussed the danger of religious extremism among youth and its implications on the cultural identity of society. She goes further focusing on three main social issues that affect the identity which are isolation, alienation which definitely lead to terrorism. She considers isolation as the first step to terrorism in which the extremist starts doubting his environment and even himself:

The extremist forges opinions and views about his environment based on false interpretations or misunderstanding of religious texts which results in isolation, boycotting, or even worse accusing the society of being heresy in which Sayed Qutub called it the second “Jahilya”. So, as way to revive the religious teaching, extremists see that fighting society and its institutions is the best solution because from their perspective is ignorant and heretic (11).

In the light of this issue, alienation is considered as the second step toward terrorism. Alienation is defined as “the high degree of distance or isolation between individuals, between an individual and a group of people in a community or work environment” (Ankony 120). It is very important to differentiate between alienation as psychological isolation and social in which youth adopt the western values as a
lifestyle. Social injustice, political upheavals, and poverty are among the main reasons that push youth to feel alienated in their home. Moreover, immigrants are also the victims of extremism because they feel themselves alienated in their new communities; they do not know where to fit in this world. Additionally, the feeling of not being accepted in their community, and at the same time not adopting the culture and the values of their parents experienced the loss of identity. As a consequence, they join those groups to find solace and search for their lost identity. In his conclusion of *Western Muslims and the Future of Islam*, Tariq Ramadan sheds light on the lives of Western Muslims as they struggle to identify themselves:

> Muslims in the West bear an enormous responsibility, and it falls to them to commit themselves to building their future. There is no doubt that some will continue to identify themselves over and against the West, as “the other,” and to complain that in these places no one loves Islam or Muslims. They will thus maintain the unhealthy victim mentality, hoping that their salvation will come from scholars and thinkers in the East (237).

There is no shadow of doubt that migration affects the cultural identity of migrants and hence their religious identity. They are torn between their new identity and the tradition and the culture of their parents’ identity. Tariq Ramadan gives many tips for Muslim immigrants to cope with their new situation without losing their own identity by offering a middle space for them to be successfully integrated in the western society without being easily captive of extremism and terrorism.

Terrorism is the consequence of the process of isolation and alienation. The term terrorism which is derived from the Latin word “terrere” stands for “to frighten”. It seems that there are many different definitions given to this term for it is complex and
controversial. Furthermore, Terrorism, in its simple definition, is where extremism transforms from being an ideology to violence. In short, extremism and terrorism are two sides of one coin in which religious extremism provides terrorism with the needed platform.

On Friday night of May 16, 2003, Morocco has witnessed the bloodiest terrorist attack in its history. At least forty-five were killed and more than 100 injured including victims and suicide bombers attacking Western and Jewish targets in Casablanca which are the five-star Hotel Farah, the Jewish community centre, Jewish cemetery, a Jewish owned restaurant and the Belgian consulate. Most of the suicide bombers were between 20 and 23 years old coming from the outskirts of the poorest slums of Casablanca Sidi Moumen (Abdalla 99).

In Morocco, the poor slums are the main target of those extremists since it offers a fertile ground for recruiting young people. Following the attacks of Casablanca, 12 of 14 of the suicide bombers who carried out the bombing attacks were residents of the poorest slums of Casablanca which is the home of over than 250,000 people. Statically speaking, most of well-educated youth are more easily recruited by extremists. According to many studies by the united nation revealed that there is a linkage between poverty, unemployment, low-income jobs and violence. In this regard, those reasons provide those extremists with the needed platform (Abdalla 21). In a newspaper interview with one of the former extremist; he explained the motives that have transformed him to a radicalized person: “I was looking to compensate for my poverty and found solace in some brothers who lived in the same neighbourhood”.

Furthermore, Political corruption and social injustice are also among the reasons where youth are more likely to join those groups due to the highest level of corruption
of governments. Abu Hafs Rafiki, an ex-convicted extremist argued that: “We cannot ignore poverty and deprivation as one of the main factors that push youths to desire the rewards of the afterlife after they believe that they do not have anything in this life, but the lack of education is also an important factor”. The manipulating system of governments only serves few categories of society which are the wealthy. Thus, people of the slums developed a sense of hatred not only towards their governments, but also to those who benefit from the corrupt political system. He added “I was influenced by my friends who convinced me that heaven can only be reached by getting rid of the modern societies that contradict our poor society”. In reality, poor people of the slums are not the only ones who fall in extremism, but also wealthy people because extremism is based on ideologies as well. Rafiki argues that “Social and economic factors such as the spread of slums and poverty are not the only reason for extremism because there are members of wealthy families who have joined extremist groups”. From an ideological perspective, youth goes for extremism as an alternative because they believe that they can live in more democratic society with the best version of government.

Extremist groups use many ways to recruit youth to help further their agenda. The process of recruitment occurs at many levels and places such as schools, universities, mosques, prisons, and through media and more precisely the social media. Internet becomes the most important tool since it provides a fertile ground for spreading ideologies. Social media makes recruiting easier and faster than before for it is efficient and effective as she declares «These channels provide easy access to a wide target audience, terrorist organisations, including Al Qaeda and its affiliates use YouTube, Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and other social media”(Orav 4). Similarly, extremists choose schools and universities to spread their extremist views among students. They also consider mosques as the perfect place for preaching their radicalized views. “I
started praying with them and going to religious lessons in a neighbouring area and I soon found myself believing that the September 11 attacks were carried out by heroes who sacrificed themselves for the sake of Allah” the ex-extremist added. In addition, being a closed and strict environment, prisons are considered as an ideal ground for spreading and preaching. In fact, the more people are integrating and playing their roles efficiently in their societies, the harder for those groups to recruit them.

Extremist groups are committing crimes under the cover and in the name of God which distorts the real teachings and message of all religions, and Islam is no exception. Recently, Islam becomes the target and accused of being the religion of terror and violence because of crimes of those groups. Thus, the cultural identity of the Islamic world has been damaged and lost in which the term “Islamophobia” floated on the surface due to the bad image given to Islam by the media especially in the West. The term Islamophobia refers to the hatred, the prejudices, negative attitudes not only against Islam and Muslims, but also against Arabs and the Arabic culture. In his book Western Muslims and the Future of Islam, Tariq Ramadan, an influencing speaker and thinker, discussed the growing fear toward Islam which clearly reinforced by the mass media. The tragic events in Afghanistan, Algeria, and Morocco’s bombing suicide attacks in 2003 and especially in the United States in 2001 helped in spreading the sentiment of fear toward Islam (94).

Preserving cultural identity while facing religious extremism is not an easy task to do especially dealing with people who do not tolerate diversity and humanism. Religious extremism is not only unique to one religion, gender, specific age, or an institution; but it is rather an ideology held by extremists to achieve political goals. People who are less integrated in their societies find refuge in extremism groups which offer an escape for their social and economic problems. Education is a fighting tool
against radicalization and extremism which guarantees the successful assimilation and integration of youths. Governmental and societal institutions should devote more efforts and time working on the psychological and the educational level by enriching the religious background of youths. The understanding of religion, the right interpretation of religious texts, and transmitting the real teaching and values of religion can help to eradicate the phenomenon of extremism because understanding religion properly leads to self-understanding of someone’s identity, thus preserving the collective and the cultural identity of the society.
To conclude, the concept of religion has been approached and defined by scholars from different viewpoints and perceptions. There are different types of extremism and religious extremism is definitely included. In addition, there is a linkage between identity formation and religion. The commitment to religion varies from one society to another and from one group of people to another. Moreover, youths are generally more attached to religion compared to other group of people. Religion plays a vital role in shaping the identity of youths because it provides the needed platform. Generally, youths struggle with identity cohesion and self-identification. Religion offers youths a spiritual experience to better understand their position.

Religious extremism can be considered as a type of identity loss. Youths are an easy target of religious extremism since they go through identity formation. Furthermore, as a postcolonial nation, Morocco suffers from the deterioration of economy and society and political issues. These circumstances lead youths to crime, illegal immigration, or even worst to extremism. Among the main reasons behind religious extremism is the use of religious discourse in which false interpretation and misunderstanding of faith may lead to fatal consequences.
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This chapter takes as a case study *Secret Son*, as postcolonial work written by the Moroccan-American writer Laila Lalami which deals and portrays the perception of identity in postcolonial literature. It will throw light on how the notion of identity is perceived by the characters through the novel. This chapter discussed the main problems that encounter post-independent Morocco such political turmoil, socio-economic problems. There will be a focus also on different aspects that help in forging the identity such as language, social classes, and religion. Finally, an attempt made to link religious extremism to the quest for identity.
Chapter Three

Maghrebian Identity “What Was Left Who Was Left?”

The unpleasant experience of colonialism that Africa has endured has enormous effect mainly on its culture, language, religion, and most importantly identity. Most postcolonial writers especially Africans tackled this issue in their writings which primarily becomes their main concern. The quest for someone’s own roots is one of the most important aspects in postcolonial literature. The postcolonial literature is the medium through which writers seek to reconstruct the cultural identity of the former colonies. Precisely, Laila Lalami is among the North African writers whose writings brought light to the issue of the quest for identity.

Today, most independent countries suffer from political corruption, socio-economic problems, and most importantly cultural issues. Morocco offers a great example of a postcolonial nation that struggles from the deterioration of economy and politics. Laila Lalami, a Moroccan-American writer, gained an international reputation after the publication of her collection of short stories “Hopes and Other Dangerous Pursuit” in 2005 which depicts the experience of a group of Moroccan youths who immigrated illegally to flee the socio-economic and political issues. Beside Lalami, Anouar Majdi, a Moroccan scholar and a noted postcolonial theorist and author, wrote his first novel Si Youssef in English that deals largely with history and politics in contemporary Morocco tackling many themes such as immigration, cultural conflicts, social class and the quest for identity.

Her debut novel Secret Son follows her characters’ journey in searching for their identity by showing clearly how it is perceived by them. She depicts the experience of Moroccan people whose lives shaped differently by the socio-economic
issues and political circumstances after independence. The novel is a kind of allegory in which the author explores the history and the politics of Morocco through the characters implicitly and explicitly. In a book entitled *Modern Arab American Fiction*, Steven Salaita states that *Si Youssef* resembles *Secret Son* in many ways concerning themes but differs in terms of style and structure (116). Both novels explore the history and the politics of Morocco along with the North African and Islamic ones.

*Secret Son* focused mainly on a single character Youssef El Mekki, a young man from the slums of the outskirts of Casablanca who looks for his uncertain identity and search for “home” through undergoing a traumatic change from being poor to wealthy and back to poverty again which resulted in catastrophic consequences. Youssef lives in hay Al Najjat in the slums of Casablanca with his mother Rachida which seems more discrete about her past. His father Nabil El Mekki was a venerable teacher which was believed to be dead in a tragic accident. Youssef found out that his father Nabil Amrani is still alive when he saw his picture on Casablanca Magazine which his mother kept his existence a secret. The distinctive features of Nabil attracted the attention of Youssef especially his blue sky eyes and hair which resemble his. Nabil’s legitimate daughter “Amal” attends a private college in Los Angeles. She gives up her luxurious life to live with her half-American; half-Brazilian boyfriend. Youssef made his way to his father world and abandoned his mother’s house in order to pursue the luxury promised by his father. Unfortunately, Youssef has been met with rejection and denial by his father when his family knew about him. Returning back to the slums broken and humiliated, he was attracted by the Islamist group “the Party”, a headquarters in Hay Najjat. He is convinced by his leader Si Hatem to participate in the murder of a famous journalist which turned out to be connivance between the corrupt government and the party to get rid of the journalist and at the same time to be tough on terrorism.
Lalami started the second chapter of the novel with a quotation from James Baldwin’s “Giovanni’s Room”: “Perhaps home is not a place but simply an irrevocable condition”. Home is not only a place or house; it is rather an emotional territory. Each one of the characters perceives home differently and looks for a shelter for its uncertain identity from his/her perspective. When Youssef went to the university for the first time, he saw groups of students huddling out together in different cliques such the Mercedes and Marlboro group, the headscarf and the beard faction, the Marx and Lenin group, the Berber alliance, and finally the Sahrawi students. Youssef found difficulty in identifying himself with any group. When Youssef discovered that his found father is a wealthy businessman; he abandoned his mother’s house in order to change his social caliber from the outskirts to the centre of Casablanca. When he knew his father’s last name; he felt safe and home. He wrote his name “Youssef Amrani” in his notebook and read it loud “the first letter of his last name looked like a house in which his first name might finally find a home and the dot on his the last letter had the finality of a judge’s hammer (73). Youssef looks for his own identity through his parental linkage because his biological identity is fixed and stable. Knowing his last name would save him from playing different roles and assure him a place in real world, he added:

He stared at the name for a long while, wondering what kind of a person Youssef Amrani was. His existence until that moment had been nothing more than a role—he had played the part of Youssef El Mekki, lived in his house, eaten his food, slept in his bed, and gone out with his friends, but all along he had been Youssef Amrani. That was who he really was. If he could be Youssef Amrani, he would not have to play any part at all. He could be, at long last, himself(73).

Youssef looks desperately for hints or traces that would probably legitimize his existence and gives him a sense of identity. When his father “Nabil” asked him about
what he wants to be, he answered that he only wanted to be himself (Lalami 60). The loss of identity endured by Youssef is a serious predicament and a true manifestation of the crisis of loss. Returning home is not necessarily achieved through physical transportation, but it is through psychological and mental ways. After being fired from his part-time job from the Grand Hotel and rejected by his found father, Youssef tried going out national borders. He has never felt allegiance to his own country and he always expressed his penchant for immigration. During his English class, the professor asked the students to provide arguments for immigration by setting out two camps; one is for and the other is against. He found himself in the group having to argue against immigration, but he failed to bring any arguments against it”(62). Immigration for Youssef was the last solution for recognizing his own identity. His affinity for crossing the borders has never been daunted by the fact that most illegal immigrants ended up in the heart of the sea or in fishes’ stomachs. After being dumped again to the slums by his father, Youssef spent all his money on the American lottery to a lawyer which turned out to be a deceiver. Youssef’s desire for finding a shelter to his uncertain identity pushed him to fancying another reality through crossing the national straits.

Youssef’s friend Amin shares with him the same desire for crossing the borders longing for finding home in better and different place. He is addicted to chatting online in the hope of finding a virtual love that would change his ups and downs, and lift him out from poverty to luxury. Youssef added “He was ready to go anywhere: somewhere in Europe or America was best, but he did not mind the Gulf or Australia, either. He had created different nicknames for different chatrooms in different countries. For the west, he was ash, in the Middle East, he was Ashhab, and Down Under, he was Heb” (226). Unlike Youssef, Amin switches from one identity to another in order to find a secure home. Amin justified simply his transformation by “playing
Youssef was wondering how his friend could speak with different people performing different identities. Unlike his friend, Youssef could not play roles.

The identity of the immigrants is not as fixed and stable as it may seem, but it is in an ongoing process. They have to fuse two or more cultures. In a book entitled “The Location of Culture”, Bhabha states that most immigrants ended up in an in-between cultural space, and they develop hybrid cultural identities which the act of mimicry is the actual result of it”(172). Moreover, the immigrant endures a psychological and mental predicament during his interaction with different groups “the Cultural and the psychological changes that result from the contact between cultural groups, including the attitudes that are generated” (Berry et.al 3). Additionally, young people who immigrated or born to immigrants face big challenges in building their own identity based on the values of their origins country or the culture of their new society. According to Berry et.al, “the immigrant is unable to resolve the cultural identity issues that they face, they may exhibit identity diffusion”(5). The interaction between immigrants and the other different groups resulted in a hybrid cultural identity. In Bhabha’s words:

The stairwell as a liminal space, in-between the designations of identity, becomes the process of symbolic interaction, the connective tissue that constructs the difference between upper and lower, black and white. The hither and thither of the stairwell, the temporal movement and passage that it allows, prevents identities at either end of it from settling into primordial polarities. This interstitial passage between fixed identifications opens up the possibility of a cultural hybridity that entertains difference without an assumed or imposed hierarchy (1994, 5).
Unlike Youssef, his step-sister Amal has her way in perceiving identity which differs from her brother’s way. She does not depend on her parental bondage to recognize her identity. While Youssef struggles to build his identity through his parental lineage, Amal chose instead looking for her own identity through Diaspora. She gives up all the luxury and comfort she had in order to be with her half-American, half-Brazilian boyfriend which is a hybrid and marginalized character in America. When Amal’s parents paid her a visit in Los Angeles, she held the door open for them which is bad behaviour according to the Moroccan norms. This unsuccessful integration was manifested in many events when the college assistant offers Amal a compliment about her look by saying that her complexion does not resemble Arabs. Moreover, when Amal wanted to sell her car, the car dealer asked her by joking if she got explosives in her tank, or one of the students who struck Bin Laden’s picture on her room’s door. In his book Western Muslim and the Future of Islam, Tariq Ramadan pointed out that Muslims in general and Arabs in particular are the victims of discrimination because of their religious background (90). Muslims immigrants are always recognized in the West by their religion and nationalities. In a book entitled “Britain’s First Muslim”, Fred Halliday pointed out that the newcomers to Britain were recognized first by their nationalities for instance Pakistani, Indian, or middle-easterners, and then their religion (6).

All these events made her feel that she does not belong to her new home. Going back to Casablanca, Amal starts to see her hometown through different lenses, she does not feel the same when she first left it. After many failed attempts by Amal’s mother to convince her to go back to Casablanca by remarking the American social life to the Moroccan one, she said “People in America are not like us, they are different. They live
together without being married, they do not think about what families they are getting into. They are breaking off relationships as easily as they start them. That is not how we are" (266). Amal is neither able to situate an identity in her country nor to relocate herself in the diasporic society, as it defined by Christina Heckman: "traditionally home and belonging can be defined as the place where our ancestors used to live, the place of our origin. Consequently, this definition is dedicated to the post without regard where one lives right now. As a result, it is a very passive and static concept, and home is a fixed place" (2).

Another major character in Secret Son is Youssef’s father Nabil Amrani. His quest for identity is different from his illegitimate son and his daughter. Nabil depends on patriarchy to build his own identity. Patriarchy is no longer stands for the male domination: “So some people believe patriarchy does not refer to a simple binary pattern of male power over women, but power exerted more complexly by age as well as gender, and by older men over women, children, and younger men. Some of these younger men may inherit and therefore have a stake in continuing these conventions. Others may rebel” (Eherenreich 65). Nabil’s desire to set a family and run his family’s business may grant him peace of mind “by the time he was twenty-nine, he had given up. He told himself he was married…. He started working for his father in the family business, like his father before him” (280). He has taken for granted his memories of the past in order to find a shelter for his new identity. He used to spend major of his time running politics rallies, writing articles for journals, and discussing Franz Fanon; He trade his love of politics in order to find home (280). When he found out that his daughter is meeting an American guy, he got mad and wished if his daughter had been a boy (120).
Youssef’s mother Rachida like the other characters aims to build her own identity through reminiscing. She depends on her past and memories to re-assert her lost identity. Rachida gave up her home in order to safeguard her father’s reputation and protect her son. Youssef’s mother Rachida is Tamazight from Sefrou; she was raised by the Franciscan nuns at Bab Ziyyat after the death of her mother. Her father had placed her in the orphanage in the hands of the nuns in Fès so that she can learn and write. As she declares: “He gave me up to the orphanage and told me it was for my own good” (290). All her problems started when the head nun asked her to take care of Amrani’s daughter-in-law Malika. Nabil has deceived Rachida and impregnated her. When Malika’s mother-in-law discovered her son’s affair, she has thrown Rachida out and threatened her. After being dumped by Amrani, she gave up her family and left to Casablanca instead carrying her own baby. Rachida longs for the old days and wondering what her family are doing now, whether her father is dead or still alive. She missed speaking in Tamazight since “Tamazight belonged to a time when she still had a family” (250). She depends on her past and memories in order to recognize her identity through keeping her child because only him could give her home. Each character perceives identity from its perspective. The protagonist Youssef seeks to recognize his identity through his biological trace while his sister Amal aims to build her identity through immigration. On one hand, his mother seeks to build her identity through reminiscing her past and memories. On the other hand, his father finds his identity through patriarchy.

Lalami’s *Secret Son* offered us an insider look into the contemporary Moroccan society. Her novel deals with many interesting themes such as “Political Islam, economic colonization; the roles and the representations of Moroccan women, government corruption; class and social mores; skin tones/physiognomy as a marker of
class mobility; and the power of biological lineage” (Salaita 118). She criticized harshly the Moroccan society, the corrupt government, and focused mainly on to what extent social injustice and anti-governmental sentiment can lead to catastrophic consequences. She also warns against the anti-governmental that eventually will lead to religious politics “She therefore illustrates how social corruption actually conflates anti-government sentiment and religious activism” (Salaita 118).

Most Moroccan people have their lives shaped by the socio-economic and political circumstances. *Secret Son* sheds light on the social differences between the different classes of the Moroccan society based on economic standards. The upper class seems more liberal compared to other classes. Youssef’s mate Alia asked him to come home to revise their lectures; she left him surprised (Lalami 115). Youssef knows that no father in his neighbourhood would allow such behaviours (Lalami 115). Lalami states that each class perceives morals and norms differently whereas the lower class is more traditional and attached to religion compared to the upper class which seems more liberal and in other terms westernized. Moreover, the language is also an important determinant for social classes. The disjunction between the two different classes is very apparent regarding using the language of the colonizer. In Morocco, the use of the language determines social and class structures in which working and lower classes use the standard language whereas the upper class uses a foreign language. Furthermore, upper classes use the language of the colonizer to seem more educated and developed. Using the colonizer’s language is considered as a marker of civilisation and intelligence. In his book *Black Skin White Mask*, Fanon argued that the black people try desperately to be equal the white men and to be more close to them through mastering the language of the colonizer”(10). Amal explained that her parents using only their native language with the servants whereas they use the French language with his family
members and friends. Fanon, through his book, linked the use of language to social classes in which mastering the language of the colonizer offers a remarkable power (15). Nabil was surprised when he heard Youssef speaking eloquent French (Lalami 100). Again, Fanon argued that the colonized learns to master the language of the colonizer because of fear of being judged (20). Concerning religion, the lower class is more likely attached to religion and superstitious things. Youssef’s mother gave him a khamsa to protect him from evil eye (Lalami 100).

One of the ugliest results of colonization is racism where the white skin signifies progress, prestige and privilege. In Morocco, the physical appearances and social class are inseparable. What first captured Nabil’s attention were Youssef’s physical traits that resemble his own. Nabil believed that only people with those traits must be descendent from upper race. The focus on the physical traits as a determinant marker of social structure is one of the leftovers of the French colonization in North Africa where people with European traits are more privileged than those of darker skin. When Nabil found out that his daughter Amal was dating a black guy. Nabil’s sense of superiority seems to be less when went to the United Stated as he declares: “It was bad enough that they fingerprinted me like a common criminal, but then they took me to another room for a full search, and then after that, we still had to wait an hour to answer more questions” (Lalami 181). This latter highlights the transition of values and social status that Steven Salaita has explained in his book Modern Arab American Fiction, as he states that “Lalami showed how notions of civility and privilege differs from one atmosphere to another” (119).

Another significant element that pervades the novel Secret Son is the role of the corrupt government and its relation to religious politics with special reference to youths. People are expecting to live in a more democratic state with the best version of
governments. Moreover, the government’s failure to provide its people with the requisite needs such as jobs, suitable education and houses paves the way for the upswing of political religion which eventually leads to extremism. In Salaita’s words, “Lalami indicates that the rise of political Islam cannot be separated from the Moroccan states’ failure to provide its citizens with an accessible economy and a legitimate democracy” (119). Groth and Pauza claimed that the effects of unemployment on the nation especially unemployed young people are more dangerous than anything (31).

Lalami started her novel with the scene of the flood in Hay Al Najjat; this name was given to the slum by a charitable association. When the neighbourhood of Youssef was drawn, a city councilman has come for a visit to inspect the damages. This left Youssef dumbfounded because he has never seen those councilmen in reality only on television. The councilman has promised the citizens to provide them with the needed help as soon as possible. The citizens of Hay Al Najjat had enough of the government’s fake promises and they seem have no patience on their faces for its lies. Nabil keeps reminding Youssef that his degree is not worth and will not lead him anywhere and only those of higher institutions, medical students, and definitely those who studied abroad that can have a true opportunity. As he put it: “You know as well I do that your university degree alone won’t lead anywhere in this country...Real jobs were for people who went to higher institutions, or engineering schools, or medical schools, or anywhere abroad” (Lalami 99). He always pointed at those universities and called them “Jobless Factories”. The Moroccan government is not capable of providing its people with the essentials of a decent life:

They promised to build schools and hospitals, create jobs for the young, and improve our economy. Of course, they did none of that. The years come and go. Governments follow one another, but our literacy rates stay the same, our hospitals remain ill-equipped, and
our economy still dependent on tourism and agriculture (Lalami 173).

The government’s failure was the centre of criticizing by both the press and the opposition. The Islamic party took advantage of the flood in Hay Al Najjat to impose its ideology and to deliver hate speech against the government. Through the novel, it seems that the location or even the name of the slum is just a metaphor which stands for the street of death since it provides a fertile ground for extremists to recruit youths. His leader Si Hatem offered his help to the citizens and gave his speech at the same time claiming that this flood is a test and warning from God to the believers and those who turn their back to religion. He uses religious slogans for his party “Through God. With God. By God” to convince people to join his party. Additionally, one of the most important characters in Secret Son is Farid Benaboud, a journalist in Casablanca Magazine, who launched an attack against the government and the party. He devoted an entire page in his magazine to talk about the party and his leader in which he accused him of different crimes such as buying stolen cements, receiving foundations from drug dealers. Hatem got mad when he read the articles and attacked harshly the journalist as he puts it:

Here is an ad for vodka, right underneath an article on Hajj. Look at the photos with this article on Agadir—all these women in bikinis. And this—now, this you won’t believe: an interview with the filmmaker Mehdi Mimouni, who talks about being homosexual as if he were talking about something normal. Benaboud has no shame. He calls himself a Muslim. But he is nothing (Lalami 146).

After being dumped by his father, Youssef found himself without job or school; he starts going to the headquarters of the party to spend his time there. Hatem found out the
secret of Youssef and convinced him to assassinate the journalist for the sake of his religion. He succeeded in convincing Youssef through delivering his sermon about returning back to the old traditions and norms in order to cure the loss of ethics that the community endured.

Most political parties that preach Islamic ideologies spread anti-government sentiments. Si Hatem claimed that his party is not like the other Islamic parties in the parliament and his own has a different agenda. Youths feel themselves alienated and isolated in their society which pushed them to join extremist groups in order to find solace. In Ankony’s words: “the high degree of distance or isolation between individuals, between an individual and a group of people in a community or work environment”(120). The leader of the party claimed that his party is at war but another kind of war to purify the community from filth and sins. He interprets religious texts and teaching wrongly especially about Jihad to recruit Youssef and his friends.

Youssef was always wondering what the purpose of his life is and why his mother did not aborted him. It seems that he found an answer to all his questions about his existence. He believed that his task is to bring back balance to his unbalanced country. At the day of the assassination, Lalami reveals that the murder of the journalist turned out to be connivance between the government and the party that aims to access to the power through preaching religious ideologies.

Following the plan of assassination, Youssef went straightforward to the local where the murder will take place wearing women’s cloths. Youssef wanted to rescue the journalist, but unfortunately, he was too late because his friend had attacked the journalist. His cloths make him a perfect suspect and he was arrested. Remarkably, the use of the religious authoritative discourse is very apparent in the novel in which both of the government and the extremist party used it to further their agenda. Youssef was the victim of both the government
and the party leader in which the government pretending to be more tough on terrorism whereas the party benefited from it to be more close to the authorities. Another key point, the writer referred to the work of Fitzgerald *The Great Gatsby*. Youssef resembles Nick in many ways especially on their way of fancying a new identity, but they were both the victim of the false promises.

Youssef seeks only the truth and nothing but the truth. Following his journey to find his own identity, he started to see himself as a Half-Berber, Half-Arab, a full-blooded Moroccan with rich identity and culture of thousands of years. Unfortunately, the ugly truth was as visible and apparent as air. He is just a slum resident, illegitimate son dumped by his found father, a young man with no vision of the future or place in society. So, *What Was Left Who Was Left?* in a space where identity has met its own shade of loss.
To sum up, the perception of identity differs from one character to another. Some perceives it from biological linkage as the protagonist Youssef; some perceives it through Diaspora and immigration like his sister Amal. His mother tries to recognize her identity through reminiscing her past and memories. On the other hand, his father seeks to build his identity from a patriarchal perspective. Language, social differences, religion, class stratification are considered as striking features in recognizing and building one’s identity. Finally, religious extremism could be a fatal result when someone fails to find his/her genuine identity.
Work Cited


Conclusion

To conclude, the present dissertation attempts to investigate the relation between the quest for identity and religious extremism in postcolonial African literature. The field of postcolonialism is immense and controversial because the term itself has been defined differently by scholars. Some scholars have attributed it to a historical dimension in which it refers to the demise of colonization while others claim that postcolonialism also focuses on the socio-cultural change during colonization and until the present day.

The postcolonial literature comes from the broadest term postcolonialism to denote the suffering of the colonized nations. These writings expressed the brutal contact between the colonized and the colonizer; it also focuses on the attempts of the colonizer to destroy and distort the identity of the colonized. Most postcolonial writers deal with the cultural and societal changes that occurred after colonization.

The concept of identity has always been a center of interest for most postcolonial writers. They tackled the issue of the loss of identity through their writings. Thus, the identity of the colonized has been distorted and shaped according to the norms and the attitudes of the colonized. It is, indeed, constructed by the colonial process but it has never been erased. Therefore, the colonized is struggling to find a shelter to his uncertain identity because they are torn between traditions and the new imposed values.

Significantly, postcolonial African writers explore this theme vastly in their works to debunk the false perceptions and stereotypes. They rely on their experience and suffering from the colonial process to produce a sort of literature that clearly
describes the dilemma of the loss of identity of Africans. More precisely, North African literature has genuinely dealt with the quest for identity along with other themes in their writings using specifically the language of the colonizer. They also tackled the different aspects that have a huge impact on forging the identity such as language, Diaspora, hybridity, and definitely religion. Interestingly, the North African novel is considered as a medium through which the writers seek to represent the issues of the African continent. More precisely, it tackled the problems that encounter the subjects of the North African countries. The identity crisis along with other issues such as the deterioration of politics and economy are the main challenges that face North Africans.

Religion is considered as a recognizing feature in forging people’s identities. Generally, youths are more attached to religion compared to mature adults since they go through transitional phase. Therefore, there is a strong linkage between identity formation and religion in which the commitment to religion determines the achievement of identity.

There are different types of loss of identity in which religious extremism can be considered as one of. People seek salvation from the dilemma of identity cohesion. So, they seek refuge in religion to better understand their position in the world. Moreover, there are other aspects that shape the North African identity such as class stratification, social classes, and immigration. One of the main challenges that face North African countries nations is religious extremism. This case is very common to the North African nations is religious extremism which Algeria offers a great example of a country that suffered from the black decades. All the problems mentioned before push people more precisely youths to seek salvation through extremism. The novel depicts genuinely the Moroccan society through throwing light on the political, social, and religious issues that faces its subjects.
Through *Secret Son*, Laila Lalami describes the socio-economic issues and political circumstances that shaped people’s lives. She explored the quest for shelter to the uncertain identities on one hand; and the role of religion as a determinant marker for identity under the present circumstance in post-independent Morocco on the other hand. Certainly, these circumstances pushed people, more precisely, youths to extremism because they experience the feeling of alienation, isolation in their societies which definitely has led them to terrorism.

Finally, Laila Lalami’s *Secret Son* offers an insight into the contemporary Moroccan society by underlying clearly the hardships that its citizens have gone through. The North African identity crisis lies in the fact that most people suffer from alienation and desperation in their societies because of the political/socio-economic issues which are considered as the leftovers of the colonial experience. In order to achieve identity, the characters try desperately to build it seeking different alternatives such as immigration or even worse like religious extremism. Youssef and his sister Amal are two contrasting characters in which Amal seeks to build her identity through immigration whereas her brother Youssef failed to recognize his identity which lead him to extremism.
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