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**Hybrid Identities and Muslim Faith in Leila
Aboulela's Novels: *Minaret* and *The Translator***

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Dedication

For my friends, my loving parents Fatima and Moussa, my sister Amina, and all my siblings. I am lucky for being part of this family.

ASMA

Dedication

To my parents, my lovely sisters and brothers, to my friends Asma, Hadjer, and Seuhir.

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation explores how Hybrid Identities are constructed in relation to Muslim Faith through Leila Aboulela's selected works, *The Translator* (1999), and *Minaret* (2005). The two novels depict Muslims' quest for identity in western Diaspora, the construction of hybrid identities in the framework of Islamic religion and the role of faith in this process. This study offers another perspective of identity construction; it discusses hybrid identity formation with the interference of a significant religious element: Muslim faith. It also stresses the influential relationship between religion, faith and identity. The selected novels are studied thematically; the study makes recourse to the theory of hybridity in postcolonial studies by Homie Bhabha and in cultural studies by Stuart Hall. The first chapter consists of a reference to the novels' historical and social contexts, as well as theoretical background. The second chapter discusses themes of Islamic faith, hybrid identity, and religious conversion, as well as the role of elements of this type in self-identification and relation with the other. Additionally, the chapter provides a thorough analysis of characters' development in the selected novels with special emphasis on characters that experiences identity hybridization. The findings of this study show that Aboulela integrates religious faith in portraying the configuration of Muslim identity, and the construction of hybrid identities.

Key words: Hybrid Identities, Muslim Faith, Religious Conversion, Hybridity.

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GENERAL INTRODUCTION

The beginning of the twentieth century marked a revolutionary shift of interest in literary production. Thanks to the movements of migration, globalization and cultural exchange, literature of minorities has gained a more adequate position. Its significance does not lie only in representing, depicting and shaping realities, but also in defending groups that are voiceless, oppressed or under cultural hegemony.

Contemporary British fiction has started showing concern about themes of multicultural relations, identity formation and Diaspora. Additionally, the rise of movement of migration has paved the way to the intrusion of new ethnicities, religions and races into the British society. Muslim British writings have emerged as a rising star in the British literary scene. In the light of this, British fiction witnessed a rise of concerns about creating a new understanding of the Muslim presence and agency in the western periphery.

However, studies have shown that writers interested in these themes have overlapping perspectives, for instance, Hanif Kureishi and Salman Rushdie through their works have advocated liberal principles and western values, and their works were considered controversial and prejudicial to the sanctity of Islam. On the other hand, British Muslim Writers among which Leila Aboulela, Fadia Faqir, Suheir Hammad, are the type of writers whose works discussed Muslims' agency, identity and image in the West. They have contributed in portraying Muslims as both influencers on-and influenced by- the culture they are exposed to instead of intruders.

Moreover, they have sought to correct the negative stereotypical representation of Muslims, reconcile between the secular and religious life, as well as to highlight the misinterpretations of Islamic teachings, especially after the 9/11 events that have led to the

association of terrorism with Muslims, and eventually destabilized the Muslim immigrant's identity, their sense of belonging, and relationship with the other.

Leila Aboulela novels *Minaret* and *The Translator* are two major literary works which depict Muslims' diasporic journey and immigrants' experiences in the western world, and specifically in Britain. In 1999, Aboulela published her first novel *The Translator*, five years later her second novel *Minaret* was released. This period in particular has been a critical phase in the history of evolution of Islam relations with the rest of the world; Muslim image has been subject to deformation and misrepresentation, which has motivated the spread of negative stereotype affecting therefore the lives of thousands of Muslims living in the West.

In the two novels, female protagonists carry the burden of confronting the West; they both attempt to reach compatibility with the western community, and seek to co-exist within the opposing environment avoiding prejudice to both their Islamic identity, and to the identity of the other. In this context, the characters are involved in the process of making up a consensual identity, one that is basically hybrid.

Identity construction and reconstruction has long been a debatable field of research in literary criticism. However, studies that have been conducted cover a large number of issues within identity, including its nature as well as the conditions and factors that contribute in shaping this identity. Interestingly, Aboulela novels' have been subject to debate because they have covered themes and issues that have an eminent influence on the making of principles underlying societies that know the emergence of minorities and complex individual's identities.

Generally, researchers specialized in this domain have concluded that elements which make someone's identity, serve also to connect one's own culture with the other in, or out of his/ her periphery. They focused chiefly on identity construction in relation to cultural aspects including ethnicity, race and religion. One of the key concepts current studies has formulated is Hybridity, the term has emerged in contemporary postcolonial studies mostly in the works

of Homie Bhabha, and later in cultural studies with Stuart Hall. Although developed in postcolonial studies, the concept of hybridity is equally used in discourse about identity and multiculturalism.

Hybrid identity is one of the most significant topics of the twentieth century. The concept was triggered by globalization and immigration movements. Studies about this subject helped deepening the understanding of identity-related issues in Diaspora. These issues have been reflected in many British literary works, especially identity construction in relation to religious belief. Scholars have investigated the ways in which British contemporary writings have treated identity and challenges that Muslims face in the western world. Among the most important questions that has been raised which option to choose in relation to the new western culture? Is it transition or tradition, assimilation or regression? And what shapes the identity in Diaspora? These questions have paved the way to a crucial problem: the construction of Hybrid identities in relation to Muslim faith.

In his book *The Location of Culture*, Homie Bhabha, a pioneer of post-colonial studies, has discussed the culture of minorities, and introduced the notion of cultural Hybridity. He asserts that what make an identity are the cultural differences, "*we find ourselves in the moment of transit; where space and time cross to produce complex figures of Difference and identity, past and present, inside and outside, inclusion and exclusion*"¹. According to him, cultural Hybridities 'emerge in moment of historical transformation' the moment in which the aspects of one's own culture merge with the ones of the 'Host culture' in a 'Luminal space, "*In the case of cultural identities, hybridity refers to the fact that cultures are not discrete phenomena; instead, they are always in contact with one another, and this contact leads to culturalmixed-ness*"²

Moreover, In *Questions of Cultural Identity*, Stuart Hall goes for the same idea discussed by Bhabha. Identity construction is a complex and an ongoing process. He confirms

¹Homi K Bhabha,*The Location of Culture*.London:Routledge,1994.p. 1.

²Ibid, p. 19.

the cultural multidimensionality of identity when he says, “*identities are never unified and, in late modern times, increasingly fragmented and fractured; never singular but multiply constructed across different, often intersecting and antagonistic, discourses, practices and positions*”³. He further confirms that identity is subject to constant transformation and development in the light of globalization and immigration.

In this context, culture, religion and identity overlap, and help producing this hybridization. This idea has motivated scholars to explore how British fiction has dealt with subject of this type. Hasan Majed, in his doctorate thesis *Islam and Muslim Identities in Four Contemporary British Novels*, explores how Muslim identities are constructed in four representative works of contemporary British fiction and questions the image of Muslims and its relation to the writer’s religious commitment as well as the position of Islam in relation to postcolonial criticism and multiculturalism. The fourth chapter in his work has been devoted to the discussion of the writer’s challenge of the stereotypical image of Muslims, and the struggle to define a stable identity in *Minaret*, he states, “*In her fiction, Aboulela tries to bridge the gap between Islam and the West by explaining the role of Islam in Muslims lives and voicing the fears of its followers.*”⁴

Furthermore, he points out to the role of Islamic religion in constructing a stable identity “*In Minaret therefore we see an attempt to represent the hidden side of the picture of Islam by its focus on Islam’s capacity to effect self-realization and spiritual consciousness in an individual*”⁵

Many articles have tackled the debate concerning religious faith and identity. For instance In “The Muslim ‘Who Has Faith’ in Leila Aboulela Novels *Minaret* (2005) And *Lyrics Alley* (2009)”, E. Hanter has mentioned that “*Aboulela says she is interested in writing*

³Stuart Hall, Paul du Gay, eds, *Questions of Cultural Identity* (London, Thousand Oaks, New Delhi: SAGE Publications, 1996) p.4.

⁴Majed Hasan, “Islam and Muslim Identities in Four Contemporary British Novels”(PhD Dissertation, University of Sunderland, June 2012) p.202.

⁵ Ibid, p.214.

about Islam 'not as an identity but going deeper'. Distinguishing between Islam 'as an identity' and the 'deeper' interior world that is shaped by 'faith'”⁶

Similarly, in a recent article entitled “Strategic Nostalgia, Islam and Cultural Translation in Leila Aboulela’s *The Translator and Coloured Lights*”. Tina Steiner highlights the idea that faith is a tool for both facing Western cultural hegemony and creating a sense of belonging, as well as providing one with guidance, spiritual development, and maturity. She further explains “*Aboulela presents narratives of complex negotiations of identity which turn to Islam for affirmation in order to free up a space for her female characters in which Western stereotypes have no signifying power.*”⁷

The Master thesis entitled “Representations of British Muslim Identities in Leila Aboulela’s *Minaret* And Nadeem Aslam’s *Maps for Lost Lovers*”, is another significant work that provides a critical analysis of Muslim representations in British fiction. In this work, Nesrin Koc concludes that religion can be the best alternative to face Western hegemonic social and cultural values, for one main reason: “*it organizes social life while at the same time guiding the individual through the chaos*”, and “*subordinates other markers of identity such as gender, race, and class, and becomes the dominant tenet of identity that renders the others irrelevant*”⁸

Despite the efficiency of the works mentioned above, in highlighting problems of identity, hybridity, religion, and immigration, they have failed at revealing the nature of the identity that results from religious and social factors overlap, specifically Islamic faith, the

⁶Eva Hunter, “The Muslim “Who Has Faith” in Leila Aboulela’s Novels *Minaret* (2005) And *Lyrics Alley* (2009)”. Vol. 25, No. 1, (2013):pp 88–99;p.90. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/1013929X.2013.795761>

⁷Tina Steiner, “Strategic nostalgia, Islam and cultural translation in Leila Aboulela’s *the translator and coloured lights*”. *Current Writing: Text and Reception in Southern Africa*, Vol.20:N.2, (2008):pp7-25;p.8. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/1013929X.2008.9678298>

⁸NESRİN,KOÇ, “Representation Of British Muslim Identities In Leila Aboulela’s *Minaret* and Nadeem Aslam’s *Maps For Lost Lovers*”. (Master Dissertation, Middle East Technical University, December 2014):pp.36,37.

experience of migration and confrontation with the West, as well as the possibility of co-existence with the new culture.

This dissertation is significant because it attempts to explore how Hybrid Identities are constructed in relation to Muslim Faith. Leila Aboulela's works: *Minaret* and *The translator* best exemplify the issue. The two novels depict Muslim's quest for identity in western Diaspora, construction of hybrid identities in the framework of Islamic religion and the role of faith in this process. Thus, this study provides another perspective of identity construction, it discusses hybrid identity formulation with the interference of a specific religious aspect (Muslim faith), and it equally attempts to identify the influential relationship between religion, faith and identity.

Therefore, this study will remedy the gap in the literature by examining the role of Islamic faith in the hybrid identity construction process, in the two selected novels, particularly focusing on characters who have experienced issues within their identity, and how the author intervened in stabilizing this identity by introducing faith as a solution through a close and fine analysis of the character's cultural background, and providing an understanding of Islamic religion and practices.

The study is based on a thematic analysis of the selected novels; it equally borrows from postcolonial studies the concept of hybridity interpreted in the theory of hybrid identities, it explores themes of 'Islamic faith' and 'hybrid identities, and discusses ways in which they are interrelated. Thus, this study takes hybridization as a condition that has infiltrated by faith as reflected in *Minaret and The translator*. Accordingly, the work represents a brief outline of the development of the concept of hybridity in relation to identity, and the negotiation of Muslim identity and faith in multicultural world.

The objectives behind this study is primarily, to highlight the author's use of faith as a medium of interference in identity reconstruction, and a way of overtaking the cultural

differences as far as Islamic religion is concerned. Secondly, to analyze the way in which this relation has created the possibility of coexistence between the secular and religious life.

This study aims to answer several questions including: how does faith interfere in the construction of hybrid identities? How is hybridization process constructed in term of cultural differences? And what message does the author want to communicate by integrating faith in the making of a characters' identity?

The work is divided into two main chapters, the first chapter, consists of two parts, the first part provides a theoretical framework to the study, including the development of the concept of hybridity, definition and use in different areas; including postcolonial discourse and cultural studies. The second part has been devoted to the socio-historical background relevant of the selected works, including the Sudanese Civil War, Islam image in the West, immigration movement and Diaspora.

The second chapter consists of the analytical part of the study in which the two novels are subject to thematic analysis. It emphasizes the development of character's faith, and the process of hybrid identity formation they undergo throughout the stories.

CHAPTER ONE: THEORETICAL BACKGROUND/SOCIO-HISTORICAL CONTEXT

1. PART ONE. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND: EMERGENCE OF THE CONCEPT OF HYBRIDITY IN RELATION TO IDENTITY

Globalization and immigration have both played a major role in constructing and shaping cosmopolitan societies, which encouraged the creation of a literature that encompasses various themes including migration, Diaspora and race. However, In the atmosphere of intercultural exchange that has shaped the postmodern world; the notion of hybridity has adopted a multitude of uses, and have been employed to express different meaning in different fields of study ,starting with linguistics ,racial theory, postcolonial theory and finally cultural studies .

Accordingly, this chapter will display ways in which different fields of research have addressed the notion of hybridity and its relation to identity. Additionally, the chapter highlights the socio-historical context of the two novels.

Hybridity has emerged as one of the most debatable topics among researchers the term originated in hard sciences and botany, and then transcended the biological framework to social and cultural frameworks. Although the term has been conceptualized in postcolonial and cultural studies, it remains a complex task when it is linked to identity.

In Merriam Webster dictionary the term hybrid has been defined as an offspring of two animals or plants of different races , breeds, varieties, species, or genera(a hybrid of two roses), that is to say something heterogeneous in origin or composition. The term Hybrid refers also to a person whose background is a blend of two diverse cultures or traditions⁹.

⁹Merriam Webster dictionary, S.V. "hybridity," accessed February 12, 2019. <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/hybridity>

1.1. Hybridity in Postcolonial Discourse

Postcolonial criticism -although the broad sense it held- is specifically concerned with works produced by colonial power and its colonized subject during or after colonization, many researchers have attempted to reveal the nature of the colonial act and its legacy in term of colonized-colonizer identity.

However, the discourse about identity started long before concerns about hybridity rise. Frantz Fanon for instance has suggested in his analysis of colonialism, a psychoanalytical perspective, denouncing the destructive effects of colonialism on the colonized identity; he asserts that the native “*never ceases to dream of putting himself in the place of the settler-not of becoming the settler but of substituting himself for the settler.*”¹⁰ Hence Fanon questions the self-identification of the colonial subject who according to him suffers the burden of “*the contradiction between what society takes him to be and his own conception of what his personal identity is*”¹¹.

While Fanon insists on the ‘settler-native relationship’ and its role in the destabilization of the native’s identity; Edward Said, on the other hand, elaborates in his postcolonial criticism, the relation between the Orient and the Occident or The ‘West’ and defines the self-identification dilemma by drawing on questions about the ‘whatness’ of one’s own identity in relation to the other as well as the literary representations of the Orient in contrast to the West. Thus, Said was able to “*unmask the discriminatory image that western writings offered of the Orient*”¹² This view has reinforced the debate on representation of identity based on the discourse of difference.

¹⁰Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched Of The Earth*, New York: Grove Press, 1963. p.53

¹¹Charif Quellel, “ Africa Today”, Indiana University Press Vol. 17, No. 1 (Jan. - Feb., 1970), pp.(8-11) p.10.
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/4185057>

¹²Simon Sherry, and Paul St-Pierre. *Changing the Terms: Translating in the Postcolonial*, Era. Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 2000. p134

However, Homi Bhabha's work proved to be significant at all levels of postcolonial criticism for it has drawn the analysis of postcolonial identities basing on concepts of hybridity, mimicry, difference, ambivalence and the third space. These concepts "*describe ways in which colonized peoples have resisted the power of the colonizer, a power that is never as secure as it seems to be*"¹³. Therefore, hybridity is addressed as the process of cultural mixing and the effects of this mixing on the colonial subject as well as the colonial power.

Bhabha's concepts of mimicry, ambivalence and hybridity intersect, the colonized first mimic the colonizer despite his contradictory attitude towards him creating therefore a new space which embodies the fusion of two distinctively heterogeneous cultural systems, the cultural hybrid identity is therefore formed as an offspring of this fusion. In *Changing The Term: Translating In Postcolonial Era*, Simon Sherry, and Paul St-Pierre has declared: "*In a colonial context, cultural hybridity is produced at the moment of the colonial encounter, when self and other are inseparable from mutual contamination by each other*"¹⁴ It further assert that even the colonizer is not immune to the risk of cultural influence.

The colonial hybrid is the articulation of the ambivalent space where the rite of power is enacted on the site of desire, making its objects at once disciplinary and disseminatory-or, in my mixed met-aphor, a negative transparency. If discriminatory effects enable the au-thorities to keep an eye on them¹⁵

Bhabha explains that the term could be referred to as the product of colonial imperialism, enforcement, and a notion that refers to the oppositional antagonistic relationship existing between the colonized and colonizer, that is to say the power the colonizer elaborates

¹³ David Huddart, *Homi K Bhabha*, London and New York: Routledge Critical Thinkers, 2006. p.1

<http://gen.lib.rus.ec/book/index.php?md5=A41CB4D83C356E694DA606336D96F2C1>

¹⁴ Sherry, and St-Pierre, *Changing the Terms*, p134

¹⁵ Homi K. Bhabha, "Signs Taken for Wonders: Questions of Ambivalence and Authority under a Tree outside Delhi", *Critical Inquiry*, Vol. 12, No. 1, "Race," Writing, and Difference (Autumn, 1985), pp. 144-165 .(p.154) . University of Chicago Press .Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1343466>

in order to impose his cultural identity on its subject. In his work *The Location of Culture*, he states:

Hybridity is the sign of the productivity of colonial power, its shifting forces and fixities; it is the name for the strategic reversal of the process of domination through disavowal (that is, the production of discriminatory identities that secure the 'pure' and original identity of authority). Hybridity is the revaluation of the assumption of colonial identity through the repetition of discriminatory identity effects¹⁶

Hybridity implies the modification which occurs at the level of both the colonized and the colonizer's subjectivities; as a result the colonizer's identity is a tool to prevent the colonized emerging identity that may threaten the pure identity of the former. However, the interference of the colonized indigenous identity in the colonial rule represent a threat to the presence of the colonizer's complete identity because *"the hybrid object retains the actual semblance of the authoritative symbol but revalues its presence by resisting it"*¹⁷, which exposes the identity of the colonizer to deformation.

Departing from the fact that ethnicity, religion, beliefs and languages have always been part of one's cultural identity, David Huddart an assistant professor of English literature at the Chinese University of Hong Kong ,analyzes in his book *Homi K.Bhabha*, Bhabha's key concepts of stereotype ,mimicry ,the nation ,cultural rights and others among which Hybridity. Huddart claims that the works of this latter has focus mainly on Hybridity of cultures, their mixed-ness and their impurity, neglecting the fact that no culture is truly pure.

He further notes that when it comes to cultural identity, hybridity refers to the fact that cultures are not separate entities, they rather interact to create a mixed-ness, that's why most

¹⁶HomieK.Bhabha. *The Location of Culture* ,London and New York: Routledge Critical Thinkers,1994;p.112

¹⁷Bhabha, *The Location*,p.114-115

of writers, anthropologist and sociologist insist less on the authenticity of cultural identity¹⁸.

Huddart, in his attempt to explain Bhabha's idea of in-betweenness states:

Bhabha directs our attention to what happens on the borderlines of cultures, to see what happens in-between cultures. He thinks about this through what he calls the *liminal*, meaning that which is on the border or the threshold. The term stresses the idea that what is in-between settled cultural forms or identities—identities like self and other—is central to the creation of new cultural meaning.”¹⁹

He emphasizes the fact that “*the liminal is often found in particular (post-colonial) social spaces, but also marks the constant process of creating new identities (their open-endedness or their ‘becoming’)*”²⁰ Bhabha has confirmed that it is necessary to comprehend that cultural schemes are formulated in paradoxical and equivocal zone of enunciation²¹ However, The in-between space has also been referred to as the third space, or the space of enunciation, where difference is embraced and new identities are constructed, creating thus the possibility of a collaborative act of coexistence between what was viewed as antagonistic entities.

Thanks to this zone and the hybridization process the possibility of coexistence in a multicultural world became a tangible idea .However, Robert Young in his book *Colonial Desire: Hybridity in Theory Culture and Race*, offers another description of the colonial subject's identity hybridization, he illustrates his claim by drawing our attention to authors of colonial novels and describes their state as unconsciously longing for the culture of the other which make of them hybrid beings who sprang -up out of the East-West fusion, he states:

“The many colonial novels in English betray themselves as driven by desire for the cultural other....or with the state of being what

¹⁸Huddart,*Homi K Bhabha*,p.4

¹⁹Ibid,p.4

²⁰ Ibid,p.5

²¹Bhabha,*The Location*,p.37

Hanif Kureishi calls ‘an in-between’, or Kipling ‘the monstrous hybridism of East and West’²²

In the case of cultural interaction the identity of authors of colonial novels is subject to modification. However, they can still find balance between their local culture and the western one.

Bhabha’s theory of hybridity has received both critiques and appreciation; Antony Easthope in his article, “hybridity and identity” has opposed Bhabha’s view of Hybridity by stating that the term’s description of is contradictory, he declares:

The desire for Bhabha's writing, then, consists of a fantasy of mastery, the mastery of a subject supposed to know, who can remain sure of themselves even when confronted with the appearance of hybridity on all sides — in culture, in texts, in their own subjectivity.²³

On the other hand, Marwan M. Kraidy in “Hybridity in Cultural Globalization”, acknowledged the consistency of Bhabha’s conceptualization of hybridity, he states:

“Bhabha (1994) displaces hybridity from its racialized connotation to the semiotic field of culture. He explores hybridity in the context of the postcolonial novel, celebrating it as the resilience of the subaltern and as the contamination of imperial ideology, aesthetics, and identity, by natives who are striking back at imperial domination.”²⁴

Hybridity in Bhabha’s perspective has helped integrating the theory of hybridity in literary criticism, particularly, in postcolonial works.

²²Robert J.C. Young ,*Colonial Desire :Hybridity in Theory Culture and Race*,London and New York: Routledge ,1995.pp,4.3. <https://www.docdroid.net/6hUbOjn/247326600-robert-j-young-colonial-desire-hybridity-in-theory-culture-and-race-1994-1-pdf.pdf>

²³Antony Easthope “Bhabha, hybridity and identity”, *Textual Practice*, Vol. 12,Issue. 2, (June2008)pp(341-348) p.347 . DOI: [10.1080/09502369808582312](https://doi.org/10.1080/09502369808582312)

²⁴ Marwan M. Kraidy, “Hybridity in Cultural Globalization”,*Communication Theory*, vol. 12, issue3 (August2002)316–339;p.319. <http://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2885.2002.tb00272.x>

1.2. Hybridity in Cultural Studies

Despite scholars' constant efforts to provide an adequate definition for the concept, Hybridity is still largely debatable due to its dynamic nature. In cultural studies, Hybridity is rather celebrated, and the notion has exceeded the postcolonial framework and has started to be more elaborated in cultural discourse of the postmodern era. According to researchers in this field, large-scale migration and globalization are among the main context-based factors by which the term Hybridity acquired its new significance.

In an attempt to describe the complexity of the term Stuart Hall and Paul Du Gay in *Questions of Cultural Hybridity*, confirm that defining identity itself is a complex task, because it has been at the origins of a significant debate between essentialist and non-essentialists regarding the purity of identities. However, they see that "*Identity is always a temporary and unstable effect of relations which define identities by marking differences thus the emphasis here is on the multiplicity of identities and differences*"²⁵.

Additionally, defining hybridity can also be a challenging task, and suggest that the notion can be used to describe several figures, it refers to three states of being in borders: a subaltern identity which exist between two rival identities, an images of third space where the subaltern as a third term refers to the in-between space occupied by the subaltern, finally it describes images of liminality which destroys the third space geography.²⁶

Moreover, Keri .E,Iyall Smith, and Patricia Leavy *In Hybrid Identities Examinations Theoretical and Empirical Examination*, have discussed the impurity of cultures as well as their relation to identity construction, they declare that *the "Notions of purity cannot be as*

²⁵Stuart Hall , Paul du Gay. eds, *Questions of Cultural Identity* (London, Thousand Oaks, New Delhi :SAGE Publications,1996):p.89.

²⁶ibid,p.91.

easily linked to cultural identities, which consist of constructed and imagined elements”²⁷they suggest that Identities “*are not assimilated or altered independently, but instead elements of cultures are incorporated to create a new hybrid culture*”²⁸.Furthermore, the creation of a hybrid identity including both ‘local and global form’ is among the probable solutions to having a dual identity, noting that in today’s globalized world identities became more complex, therefore being a hybrid is an advantage, because this quality allows the person to have a global and local awareness²⁹.

They also suggest that there are a multiple types of hybrid identities “*identities that exist across borders, duality, gender (a false dichotomy), new identities, the Diaspora (borderless), and the internal colony hybrid (formed within boundaries)...hybrid identities form when multiple categories exist within borders and fuse to create a new form of identity*”³⁰, and this is one kind of hybrid identity which emerges when “*cultural boundaries meet and blur*”³¹Thus, most of time instead of occupying two forms, this identity occupies another one.

1.3.The Diasporized Hybridity

Hybridity in a diasporic framework became the key feature to establish a stable identity, it is viewed as a strength position rather than a weakness, and that is the idea Nikos Papastergiadis has expressed in his book *The Turbulence of Migration: Globalization, Deterritorialization and hybridity*, where he states:

The positive feature of hybridity is that it invariably acknowledges that identity is constructed through a negotiation of difference...the

²⁷Keri E. Iyall Smith and Patricia Leavy .eds, *Hybrid Identities Theoretical and Empirical Examinations*.(Leiden Boston:Brill, 2008) pp.4.5

<http://booksdescr.org/item/index.php?md5=47AC5A5ACEA2CD9F8447B12E71E3117B>

²⁸Iyall Smith and Leavy .eds,*Hybrid Identities*,3

²⁹Ibid,p.4.

³⁰Ibid,p.6.

³¹Ibid,p.8.

concept also stresses that identity is not the combination, accumulation, fusion or syntheses of various components, but an energy field of different forces³²

Members of Diaspora adopt a hybrid identity in order to justify their belonging to the host community; they simultaneously try to keep their root, in this contradictory position they do not assimilate, nor reject the elements of difference, they rather find the balance, he concludes by asserting that *“hybrid identity is thus not formed in an accretive way in which the essence of one identity is combined with another and hybridity is simply a process of accumulation”*³³ In other words it is the addition of a new constituent to the actual other components of identity.

Virinder Karla, Raminder K. Kalhori and John Hutynek have discussed in their book *Diaspora and Hybridity*, how these two concepts relate to social changes, and study their interference in the identity modification process. They declare that *“In its most recent descriptive and realist usage, hybridity appears as a convenient category at ‘the edge’ or contact point of Diaspora, describing cultural mixture where the diasporized meets the host in the scene of migration”*³⁴ Diaspora knows high rates of cultural exchange, this is when the cultures of immigrants and the local people meet, producing cultural mixture and hybrid identities.

In another context, Rashad Al Areqi, an associate professor in English Literature in All Baha University, has suggested a definition of Hybridity or hybridization from an Islamic perspective relying on Holy Quran and Sunnah, he states that: *“such words are mentioned in the Holy Quran and Hadith of Prophet Mohammed in different occasions to show the mixing*

³²Nikos, Papastergiadis, *the Turbulance of Migration :Globalization, Deterritorialization and hybridity* ,polit press ,UK ,2000. p.170. <https://booksdescr.com/item/detail/id/646412?id=646412>

³³ Nikos, Papastergiadis, *the Turbulance of Migration*.194

³⁴Virinder Karla, Raminder K kalhori , John Hutynek, *Diaspora and hybridity*, (SAGE Publications ,London,Thousand Oaks ,New Delhi,2005).p.70
<http://booksdescr.org/item/index.php?md5=F599B5176D43BED5DF0A89D9643C7604>

between two things or a combination between two behaviours or two beliefs”³⁵ He further explains that the sense of these words held special meanings when explained linguistically “*in other Surahts and Ayats if you behave in a way and act like another , you be under the category of hypocrisy category...the one who manifests Islam before Muslims and hides his/her disbelief, hate and hatred against Islam*”³⁶.

In the rest of his article, he exposes the reader to a set of Quranic verses and Ayats from Sunnah which conveys Islamic-based definition of Hybridity and mixing. Moreover, this type of definition is different comparing to previous definitions because the Quranic verses do not only convey a certain meaning, but also claim that hybridization is a sin which may be followed by harsh consequences.

Thus, hybridity in its evolution has been through different stages, and its meaning has been subject to modification at different occasions. The term proves to be dynamic in term of usage, in post-colonialism the term was used to explore the complex identities and influential relation between the colonized and colonizer. However, with the emergence of issues within migration, race, and ethnicity in parallel with the rise of questions about modernity and traditions, as well as religion and multiculturalism. Hybridity became strongly associated with identity, in this regard, investigations attempt to explain the changes this latter undergo within a diversity of circumstances.

³⁵Rashad Al Areqi, “Hybridity/Hybridization from Postcolonial and Islamic Perspectives”, *Research Journal of English Language and Literature (RJELAL)*.Vol.5.Issue 1. (Jan-Mar2017).p.57.pp (35-61)

³⁶Ibid, p. 57.

2. PART TWO: SOCIO-HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF THE NOVELS

One of the ugliest truths of humanity is that there are always wars and tensions somewhere in the world, ferocious conflicts going on at large range, and huge number of people suffering from injustice, oppression, and enslavement in their own countries. Eventually, these people find themselves obliged to escape their homelands in search for peace, security, and new beginnings. Far away from home. Millions around the world are considered as migrants, refugees, exiles or Diasporas. Nevertheless, they struggle to find a stable identity and beliefs, and to accept changes as a set of opportunities rather than failure and loss. On the other hand start to build new relations with new people from different cultures, discover new sources of strength that they might have never discovered, have they been still living in their homelands.

Interesting is the fact that so many writers have experienced exile and Diaspora, and took upon themselves the burden of writing and describing their journey, which was basically characterized by sufferings all types of otherisation and alienation. Being involved in composing pieces of fictional and non-fictional works was a manner to compensate for the loss of some parts of their identity, to create a world far from their tragic trip, and to manipulate their disorientation.

Leila Aboulela (born 1964), a celebrated Sudanese writer, and popular English novelist, inspired by a set of historical events and experiences, has accomplished lot of famous works which got awarded several prizes, in an interview with Claire Chambers, Aboulela has justified the fact that writing a historical novel was challenging, because she had to rely on real status, events and stories, she explains:

I had to do a lot of research, although most of the novel is based on things my father has told me, and his friends and generation .it's easy to get side tracked with the research - I have to pull myself back and

realize I mustn't put too much research into the novel, and I have to keep the story going, rather than retaining every historical detail .So the work's been slower.³⁷

Interestingly, *The Translator* (1999), and *Minaret* (2005) are two public fictional novels by Leila Aboulela, in which she exposes several historical events that she has witnessed, lived or at least been told. She wrote about the recent Sudanese history, civil war, and facts about exiles and immigrants in the western periphery, as well as on social changes that occurred in that phase in variety of settings including Britain, Scotland, Egypt and Sudan.

However, As one of the Muslim diasporic women, Aboulela's fiction does not only reflect historical events, but also discusses Muslim identity and religious faith, bringing a new perspective about Muslims and Islam representations in western countries, especially after 9/11 events. All this proves that Aboulela succeeded at depicting reality behind the stereotypes of Muslim immigrants' identity and beliefs.

2.1. Sudanese Civil War

After gaining its independence from Britain, Sudan's history has centred around a set of conflicts, these conflicts were referred to as the 'Sudanese Civil war' which indicates mainly a series of separate conflicts, including the first and the second civil war and the south Sudanese civil war.

Sudan was the largest African country characterised by different religions, cultures and political priorities, this diversity created a kind of enmity between several regions of the one country. Edger O'ballance in his book *Sudan, civil war and Terrorism, 1956-99* ,provided a description of the country situation immediately after independence:

³⁷Claire Gail Chambers, "An Interview with Leila Aboulela", *Contemporary Women's Writing*, June, 2009, p86-102. P.86.

Sudan, now the largest independent state in Africa ...70 percent of people were ' Arabised northerners' and other 30 percent were primitive tribal southerners. There were 572 different tribes and 114 different languages, of which about 50 percent were 572 spoken in the south.³⁸

In 1956, Sudan gained independence and the rule was transferred to Arab Muslim elite in Khartoum. Fighting was dispersed in the south. Politicians in their region lost the federal constitution which was expected to be right securing. Following the overthrow in 1958 more propaganda were elaborated to reinforce the spread of Islam and Arabic usage, the thing that tightened the –mostly Christian Southern elite position. By the end of 1960 armed struggle turned into a civil war³⁹

Historically, the beginning of the civil war in Sudan dated back to pre-independence from Britain, Historians attribute the reasons for this war to the British colonial policies or the so-called law of closed areas. According to this law, the British prohibited any form of communication between North and South Sudan, Which helped widening the gap between the sons of one country especially with the Islamic-based government in the north, and the south under the Christians. However, it was only when the southerner demands for autonomy within a federal state were rejected by the central government in the north, that the conflict began to worsen.

Rogaia Mustafa Abusharaf noted that Christianity has been used as a colonial weapon to prevent Islam from spreading in Southern areas. However, it failed due to successful reinforcement of Islam. He further explains that British colonialism is responsible for the shattered patriotism, and acquitted those who were responsible for both the violation of

³⁸Edger O'ballance, *Sudan, Civil War and Terrorism, 1956-99*(Great Britain: Palgrave Macmillan, 2000),p. 2.

³⁹Hilde F.Johnson, *South Sudan: The Untold Story from Independence to Civil War*(London, New York: I.B.TAURIS,2016), p.3.

religion and ethno linguistic rights of minorities as well as the policies which led to the civil war.⁴⁰

In another context, the same idea has expressed that the war have cropped about two million civilians lives, others were obliged to escape famine and violence. Both government and the rebels were involved in violence and human rights violation, and by 1990s, the struggle intensified and none of the sides were able to impose power on the other. The struggle ended by a peace agreement, and in 2005 the conflict was over⁴¹

The north - south ethnic war or what is called the second civil war, was a turning point in Sudan's history, it lasted more than two decades, starting from 1983 till 2005 the conflict have had tremendous effects on Sudanese government and people:

In 1983, Numeiry introduced Sharia law, which included punishment by amputation. That year the second war began in the south, this time fought by the Sudan people's Liberation Army (SPLA).the war is still progress and has probably resulted in some 150 000 deaths ,but again no one knows exactly how many.⁴²

The result of the Sudanese civil war were numerous, most importantly the division of Sudan. The Comprehensive Peace Agreement in 2011 has ended the armed conflict. However, The whole country was affected negatively at different levels, the constant conflict has exhausted Sudan's economy, leading to the disruption of development over half a century. On the other hand, it has led to the unification of national identity; the country has also faced critical living standards and huge movement of migration due to harsh conditions.

⁴⁰Rogaia Mustafa Abusharaf, *Transforming Displaced WomanInSudan:Policies and the Body in a Squatter Settlement* (Chicago ,London: The university of Chicago press,2009)pp.35-36

⁴¹LaVerleBerry,ed., *Sudan:A country study*(Washington: Federal Research Division,Library of Congress,2015), p.317.

⁴²O'ballance, *Sudan*, viii.

It has been mentioned in an article on *Worldmark Encyclopedia of Nations* that the government fighting against people in Sudan, didn't only lead to the flee of Sudanese to Kenya and Uganda, as well as Ethiopia and central Africa -where they have settled as refugees- but also encouraged the migration movement of highly trained and qualified people outside of Sudan.⁴³

In addition, the war has left Sudan tottering between political instability and a traumatized economy. There have been several attempts to establish an effective government, but they all failed, the effects extended until the early twenty-first century.⁴⁴As a result millions of Sudanese *"had been displaced by a decade of conflict and insecurity, driven into camp or exile"*.⁴⁵

Thus, Sudan civil war is seen as one of the longest civil wars in Africa. The Sudanese government continuous attacks and pressure pushed Sudanese people to leave their homelands. Therefore, Migration and displacement were two significant phenomena that characterised Sudan on the aftermath of the war, millions have become refugees in different places around the world, others have been exiled towards European states .However, all of them shared one purpose; the search for security, peace, better living standards and life opportunities.

2.2. Immigration Movement and Cross Border

The twentieth century has known a dense movement of migration; the movement emerged in parallel with globalization and is in continuous expansion. Under a set of several reasons and circumstances, people are moving towards other countries, leaving behind their homelands. It has been stated in the United Nations Population Fund Agency report “state of

⁴³ Thomson Gale, *Worldmark Encyclopedia of Nations* ,S.V. “Sudan” ,2007.

<http://www.encyclopedia.com/history/encyclopedia-almanacs-transcripts-and-maps/sudan-0>

⁴⁴LaVerle Berry, “Sudan”, 3.

⁴⁵Ibid,xliv.xlv.

world population 2006” that “Toady, number of people living outside their country of birth is larger than at any other time in history. International migrants would now constitute the world's fifth most populous country if they all lived in the same place”.⁴⁶

After the Second World War, the world marked a large movement of immigration chiefly toward European countries, millions of people settle there as migrants ,refugees or exiles. In *Toward a Theory of Immigration*, Peter C. Meilaender presents other reasons behind migration, including poverty, starvation, entertainment, social status, security as well as escaping political persecution.⁴⁷

In particular, the second half of the twentieth century has witnessed a large-scale international migration movement as a result of unprecedented development and social transitions. Especially Africans, whose movement has known high rates, due to individuals' involvement in a quest for opportunities, safety, asylum, and material prosperity.

Most African migrants with overseas destinations live in Europe...The major reasons for this unequal distribution are the comparative advantages with relation to transfer cost, and the established cultural and socio-economic links of African Diasporas to the former colonial powers, England, France, Portugal, Spain, Germany and Italy⁴⁸

On the other hand, European countries have changed their policies toward immigrants. After the Second World War, Britain has experienced a radical transition from a predominantly white to a multiracial society; these changes were at the basis of the country's new migration policies.

⁴⁶ UNFPA state of world population(2006), “A passage to Hope ,Women and International Migration”.p6 <https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&source=web&rct=j&url=https://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/sowp06-en.pdf&ved=2ahUKEwiQ9JGH64riAhURCxoKHYzjDJEQFjAKegQIBBAG&usg=AOvVaw0wlbBurrPBSWG UcgjCFoIt&cshid=1557283273748>

⁴⁷ Peter C.Meilaender,*Toward a Theory of Immigration*(New York:Palgrave,2001)pp,9,10,11.

⁴⁸Dirk Kohnert, “African Migration to Europe: Obscured Responsibilities and Common Misconceptions”, GIGA Research Programme: Transformation in the Process of Globalisation, working papers ,no.49. p.7. <http://www.giga-hamburg.de/workingpapers>

Within a generation, between the late 1950s and the late 1980s major Asian and black communities established themselves in most major cities of United Kingdom....a reconsideration of the chronology of making of multi-racial Britain would place the commonwealth Immigrants acts of 1962 closer to the beginning of the process than to its end .It role in that process was a crucial one. Multi -racial Britain is a very recent phenomenon.⁴⁹

In Britain, immigration has not been triggered by globalization and internal struggles rising in the migrants' homeland only; but also because of the fact that British expanded empire and colonial rule has left Britain connected to previously colonised countries, leading therefore to the flow of immigrants from countries who have known political and social distress, and Britain's ex-colonised states.

2.3. Islam Image in the West, 9/11 Aftermath and Islamophobia

Religion represents an essential part of people's culture as well as identity .Along with their physical appearance and external image; immigrants in their movement to a new country tend to carry their beliefs, ethnicities and religions:

Islam as a religion, and as an ideology of change and societal living, is akin to the two other main revealed religions: Christianity and Judaism. It came into existence in the early 7th century to complete rather than contradict those religions. It shares much in common with Christianity and for that matter Judaism in terms of both beliefs and values.⁵⁰

Islam as one of the most widespread religions has not always had a stable relation with the other religions and the rest of the world. However, the dispute between Islam (as religion, ideology and civilisation) and the West is not new. Historically, it dated back to hundreds of

⁴⁹Ian R. G. Spencer, *British immigration policy since 1939: The making of multi-racial Britain*, (London, New York: Routledge ,1997)p.152.

⁵⁰ShahramAkbarzadeh, FethiMansouri ,eds. ,*Islam And Political Violence: Muslim diaspora and radicalism in the west* (London, New York: Tauris Academic Studies ,2007),p.14.

years ago, the Crusades campaigns against Muslims is the best example to describe the extent to which hostility towards Islam and Muslims was severe.

In *The Clash of civilisation and the Remaking of World Order*, Samuel Huntington have highlighted the conflict between the Western world and the Islamic civilisation, he anticipated the rise of conflict of civilizations rather than a political or armed war in the future a clash in which Islamic civilisation would play the major role especially with the spread and reinforcement of Islamic resurgence, he states:

Muslims in massive numbers were simultaneously turning toward Islam as a source of identity, meaning , stability, legitimacy, development, power ,and hope...This Islamic Resurgence in its extent and profundity is the latest phase in the adjustment of Islamic civilization to the west ,an effort to find the "solution" not in Western ideologies but in Islam.⁵¹

precisely after the 9/11 attacks, the image of Islam has changed, and Muslims were greatly affected by these events, especially those living in western countries, on the aftermath of the events, many of them suffered discrimination, racism, violence as well as stereotype. Islam became associated with terrorism and Muslims were treated like extremists and criminals.

Moreover, Western media have promoted the idealization of the western values of democracy, on the other hand portrayed Islam as the religion of violence, sexism, and described it as hostile and unreasonable, and accused Muslims of terrorism. This has proved in a way the relative credibility of the clash of civilisation thesis for it stands as an excuse to

⁵¹Samuel Huntington, *The Clash of civilizations and the Remaking of World Power*,(New York, Simon and Schuster,1996),p. 135.

the media' Islamophobia accusations. Thus, immigration of Muslims is viewed as a threat to the hosting society⁵²

In Britain, Muslims' situation has radically changed, their relations with British people were hostile, the tensions increased considerably. British people believed that Islam is promoting violence and crimes, this stereotype has led to the spread of Islamophobia, a term referred to as the "irrational fear of, aversion to, or discrimination against Islam or people who practice Islam"⁵³ The term has become a debatable ideology that characterized the image of Islam in the last two centuries.

However, the term first appeared in the report "Islamophobia: A challenge for us all" offering a different view of the irrational hostility toward Muslims and Islam, the report states that the term was coined in order to refer briefly to non justified hostility toward Muslims and Islamic religion, and the consequences of this hatred, it is also a notion that reflects the distinction between valid and illegitimate criticism.⁵⁴

Basically, the idea of Islamic terrorism was evoked by mean of binary opposition discourse, the West versus Islam. The West has pictured Islam as a violent religion that is contrasted to Western values of secularism and democracy, and one that represents a threat to peace in western countries⁵⁵. In addition, for westerners, unlike secularism; faith and religion are of no benefits because they do not play a role in the well being of their communities anymore.⁵⁶

⁵²George Morgan, Scott Poynting,ed., *Global Islamophobia : Muslims and moral panic in the west*, (England: ASHGATE, 2012),p. 29.

⁵³Merriam-Webster Dictionary,s.v "Islamophobia", accessed March 22,2019 <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/Islamophobia>

⁵⁴Leonie B. Jackson, *IslamophobiaIn Britain: The Making of a Muslim Enemy* (UK: University of Huddersfield, palgrave Macmillan, 2018), p.3.

⁵⁵JocelyneCesari ,ed., *Muslims in the west after 9/11: Religion, politics and law* (London and New York ,Routledge,Taylor and Francis groups, 2010), pp.2, 3.

⁵⁶Ibid, p.17.

On the other hand, Muslims responses to the attacks have taken different perspectives, some of them have preferred isolation and retreated from cultural life, others felt offended, and others sought an Islam-West consensus⁵⁷. In his book *The Sum of All Heresies :The Image of Islam in Western thought*, Frederick Quinn concludes: "violence and reciprocity, have come to characterize the dominant image of Islam in the West in recent times... image of Islam is now the subject of constant modification on the basis of sustained, complex, almost instantaneous global contact".⁵⁸

The image of Islam has always been distorted in the West. However, terrorist attacks that have been adopted by extremists claiming to be Muslims, as well as the attacks of September, have worsened the issue, millions of Muslims have considered the events a turning point in their lives, especially immigrants living in Western countries, these latter took advantage of the opportunity to justify aggressive actions against Muslim individuals.

2.4. Diasporas, Africans and Muslims in the West:

By 1945, the West's interest shifted to minorities' affairs and by 1970-80 the terms nation and citizenship efficiency and validity were under question due to the rise of debates about the immigrants' rights and assimilation laws. Thanks to markets' fast globalisation and communications, as well as the spread of human rights standards over boundaries, geographical and cultural vivacity have witnessed a significant appraisal.⁵⁹

In fact, the notion of Diaspora attracted many researchers in contemporary studies about immigration, globalization and intercultural relations. However, the term dates back to the ancient Greeks:

⁵⁷Ibid, p.45.

⁵⁸ Frederick Quinn, *The Sum of All Heresies :The Image of Islam in Western thought* (New York: Oxford university press, 2008),p.166.

⁵⁹HaideMoghissi, ed,*Muslim Diaspora: Gender,culture and identity*, (London,New York: Routledge,2006),pp. 8,9.

Diaspora (in Ancient Greek, διασπορά -"a scattering or sowing of seeds ")refer to any people or ethnic population forced or induced to leave its traditional homeland, as well as the dispersal of such people and the ensuing developments in their culture. It is especially used to with reference to the Jews, who have lived most of their historical existence as a diasporan people.⁶⁰

In his book *Global Diaspora: an Introduction*, Robin Cohen states that the term originates from translation of the bible, specifically the verb *dia* and *speire* which signifies to spread and to disperse, the meaning of Diaspora was also associated with the Jew migrants ⁶¹

The classical view of Diaspora is not only associated with exile, loss and some sort of suffering only, but also relates to certain groups and their connection to the other people and other places. Nevertheless during the last decades Diaspora is used to refer to communities formed as a result of immigration and ethnic minorities' assemblages in foreign countries. This form of Diaspora“ *relates to forced movement, exile and a consequent sense of loss derived from an inability... in 1960s that the term' Diaspora' comes into academic use and this specifically in relation to the Jewish and African experiences*”⁶²

Diaspora became related to immigration and ethnicity, the term replaced the use of the word immigrants because the latter came to cover several meanings, instead of referring to immigration as the movement from one place to another, it refers to the question of belonging to a certain place. Politically the usage of the word was a mean to alienate minorities⁶³

On the other hand, Exiles are representatives of their own culture in the new settings, this explains the fact that “*the successes and failures of members of the Diaspora are likely to*

⁶⁰New World Encyclopaedia contributors, “ Diaspora”, *New World Encyclopedia* ,<http://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/p/index.php?Title=Diaspora&oldid=1019639> ,(accessed April 10.2019).

⁶¹Robin Cohen ,*Global Diaspora: an Introduction* (London, New York : Routledge ,Taylor and Francis Group, 2008), pp.21,22.

⁶²Virinder Karla, Raminder K kalhon , John Hutynuk . *Diaspora and Hybridity*, p.10.

⁶³Ibid,p. 14.

be read as providing evidence for how well a representative from one specific culture can do in a different context”⁶⁴

Africa has once been a battleground for wars and conflicts; it is viewed as one of the poorest and the most undeveloped continent in the world. It has witnessed mass movement of both internal and external migration. A critical set of conditions and factors have paved the way for the eventual expansion of African diasporic communities in western countries.

In *African Diaspora Identities: Negotiating Culture in Transnational Migration*, John A. Arthur explains that the major purpose of African immigrants was to make part of an economically prosperous world, as well as to succeed at establishing intercultural relation and integrate in western societies.⁶⁵ He also notes that African immigrants identities in the west are heterogeneous, characterized by diversity which is the result of differences in economic status, norms, beliefs, and culture as well as political system and attitudes toward citizenship and nationalism, in addition to the way host societies treat immigrants.⁶⁶

Despite the west-Islam oppositional relationship, Muslim Diaspora represents

a significant part of the Western world. Muslims have started their journey of immigration towards foreign countries as a result of social, economic, and political factors. Like African immigrants, Muslim immigration movement was justified by the lack of work opportunities, economic welfare, and the rise of conflicts or wars in the state of origination.

Muslims’ position in the west differs from one state of residence to another, based on history of the community within the state they occupy, in France Muslims attempt at imposing their identity and practice pressure on the government to gain equal rights. However, in Britain Muslims suffer from discrimination and racism. Contrary to Canada,

⁶⁴Kilduff, Martin and Corley G, Kevin. ”The Diaspora Effect :The Influence of Exiles on Their Cultures of Origin”(2010) p.3.

⁶⁵John A. Arthur, *African Diaspora Identities:negotiating culture in transnational migration* (United kingdom .Lanham.Boulder.New York.Toronto. Plymouth. UK: Lexington Books, A decision of Rowman and Littlefield publishing, Inc , 2010), pp.3,4.

⁶⁶Ibid,p. 275.

these regions know the rising of hostile confrontational relations between Muslim minorities and the government.⁶⁷

As their numbers grow and the host societies fail to integrate them, an increasing number of the migrants and refugees become more and more marginalized and alienated. The events of 11 September 2001 worsened this situation, as it subjected Muslims and peoples from the Middle East and Islamic countries to intensified racism and Islamophobia.⁶⁸

To sum up, Islam's role remains crucial in term of defining Muslims self-image and the image of the West. This oppositional relationship has reinforced the analogy of 'Muslim Diaspora versus westerns countries'. Although they have been successful at forming effective communities and organisations; Muslim minorities are obliged to confront the war on civilisation that the West-driven by values of imperialism, secularism, and democracy-triggers against the Islamic world.

⁶⁷Haideh Moghissi, *Muslim Diaspora*, 34.

⁶⁸Cohen ,*Global Diaspora*, 23.

CHAPTER TWO. STUDY AND ANALYSIS OF THE NOVELS

Every work of literature is a mirror that reflects the social and psychological state and personal experience of certain individuals or communities, so is the work of Leila Aboulela. In her novels, she has succeeded at providing an «*exploration of identity, migration and Islamic spirituality. Highlighting the challenges facing Muslims in Europe and telling the stories of flawed complex characters who struggle to make choices using Muslim logic*»⁶⁹ Aboulela's works, have celebrated ethnic and cultural mixing they have also promoted Islamic practices and advocated Muslim immigrants religious freedom in the West. As a result most of the main characters in her stories are Hybrid.

After highlighting the different stages of Hybridity development in relation to identity, this chapter attempts at highlighting the process of Hybridity through scrutinising characters' development in Leila Aboulela's selected novels; their diasporic experience, identity and religious faith, it is divided into two parts.

The first part, aim at exploring the hybridization process of the characters' identity, how and when it occurs in view of Islamic-Western relationship. The second part of this chapter, discusses the interference of Islamic faith and its relationship with the hybridization process. Besides, it deals with the emergence of intercultural relationship and religious conversion.

⁶⁹<http://www.leila-aboulela.com/about/>

1. PART ONE.IDENTITY HYBRIDIZATION PROCESS BETWEEN HOME AND DIASPORA

Exploring hybridity in characters necessarily involves discussing identity figuration and the state of religious faith before and after the character move to the new settings, as well as the factors that contribute in shaping the character's hybrid identity.

1.1. Westernisation, a Malignant or Benign Tumour?

Colonialism has left a deep wound on people's identity. Not only it erased their beliefs, values and culture, but also implanted in their hearts a sense of shame and disgrace of who and what they are.

They lent each other videos of Top of the Pops and they all intended to go to Britain one day. Omar believed we had been better off under the British and it was a shame that they left. I made sure that he didn't write these ideas in any of his History or Economics essays. He would surely fail because all the books and lecturers said that colonialism was the cause of our underdevelopment.⁷⁰

In the article "Westernization and Muslims' Spiritual Apathy", Omer Spahic argues that not only have they inclined from the real message of Islam, but Muslims have also drifted away from the guidance of reason, with the rise of western imperialist values of secularism, agnosticism and liberalism, Muslims have grown eventually weaker and took part in reclaiming a collective identity.

Omer further explains that due to the contradiction between being a Muslim and Islam as a religion, young Muslims are torn between "*gloomy reality and fancy dreams, ambiguous rhetoric and concrete action, and between blind imitation and formalism, and pursuing the authentic meaning and substance of life*" .thus adopting western life style will eventually lead

⁷⁰ Leila Aboulela ,*Minaret*. Bloomsbury,(London 2005)pp.11,12.

to the loss of religiosity”⁷¹. This directly affects identity, for identity is also constituted of religious beliefs.

In *Minaret*, Najwa represents the aristocratic Sudanese adolescent who spends her life copying western women lifestyle, she did not wear a veil, and had the total freedom to attend night clubs and wear revealing clothes, in her description, the protagonist states : “*The party at the American club was in full swing when Omar and I arrived . We walked into the tease of red and blue discount lights and the Gap Bandages 'Say Oops Upside Your Head...' My trousers are too tight.' An awkward twisting around to see my hips in the mirror.*”⁷²

It is worth noting that, behaviours of this type are forbidden in Islamic religion, because Islamic rules constitutes of a set of prohibitions and permission, these permissions do not include women’s attending night clubs, imitation of the west clothing style, and unethical behaviours.

Despite living in a Muslim community, Najwa and her twin Omar have never adopted the typical Muslim life style; they grow up copying western pop star hairstyles and clothing, dreaming of studying abroad. In Khartoum Najwa and Omar self-identification have developed in a state of acculturation; a process by which a human being acquires the culture of a particular society from infancy⁷³

You drive,' he said and I didn't like that. I drove home and he didn't put Bob Marley in the tape recorder like he usually did. He just sat next to me, quiet and distant, but he wasn't asleep. I smelt him and guessed what the smell was. But I didn't want to believe it. Hashish?

⁷¹Omer Spahic, “Westernization and Muslims’ Spiritual Apathy”, Islamicity, Jan10, 2018. <https://www.islamicity.org/13984/westernization-and-muslims-spiritual-apathy/> Accessed 17/04/2019

⁷²Leila Aboulela , *Minaret*, p.23.

⁷³Merriam Webster Dictionary, S.V “ Acculturation”, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/acculturation> Accessed 30/04/2019.

Marijuana. We heard the dawn azan as we turned into our house.⁷⁴

Najwa and her brother were subject to western culture influence, they have been taught that a man has to be accorded total freedom and independence. However, adopting western values and principles has created fragile ties with their religion.

After moving to Britain, Najwa has witnessed the death of both her parents and watched her brother being jailed for Drug affairs. Consequently, she start becoming Self-conscious of what is happening around her, and nostalgic about her previous life in Sudan, she start retrieving memories about her beloved Anwar, someone who-like her old self- was influenced by western thoughts and political values, in the story "*he smoked every day but drank occasionally. He smoked only cigarettes and didn't pray. He never fasted in Ramadan; he did not see the point of it*"⁷⁵. Thus, the character of Anwar and his behavior is another example of a Muslim drifting away from his religion.

She has also referred to her impression on clothing style of girls in Khartoum, veiled, devoted, and committed to prayers and Quran recitation:

I remembered the girls in Khartoum University wearing hijab and those who covered their hair with white tobes. They never irritated me, did they? I tried to think back and I saw the rows of students praying, the boys in front and the girls at the back. At sunset I would sit and watch them praying. They held me still with their slow movements, the recitation of the Qur'an⁷⁶

Through this memory, Najwa contemplates ways in which Muslim girls used to behave. This description points out the differences between her and these Muslim girls, and this is Aboulela's way to explain the contradiction in her character's personality.

⁷⁴Minaret,p.31.

⁷⁵ Ibid,p.36.

⁷⁶ Ibid,p.134.

In London, under different circumstances, Najwa becomes self-critical, she restarts her relationship with Anwar, spends the share of money she has inherited from her father on shopping, and on Anwar needs'. She has also expressed pride for being westernized:

He talked about the West, about the magazines I read - Cosmo and Marie Claire. ' Tell me', ' how many twenty five year old girls in London are virgins? That was when I laughed and felt a little better. It became a game for us, every time we were out , looking at girls. ' Is she? Isn't she? He was right, I was in the majority now, I was a true Londoner now. I could take a quiz in a magazine: ' How Hot is your love life?' or rate him as a lover!' I could circle the answer based on experience not on imagination.' I know you're Westernized , I know you are modern, ' he said , ' that's what I like about you - your independence.'⁷⁷

Najwa's impulsive and inappropriate behaviour's have intensified after the traumatic events of displacement, loss and disorientation; consequently, she commits one of the greatest sins prohibited in Islamic religion, and became more distanced from religious life, which exposed her identity to a greater western influence.

However, the more she experiences degradation and deviation from her actual traditions and religious beliefs, the more aware she become of who she was and who she is, “ *He was teasing me now as he shuffled the cards, Kamal an appreciative audience. They often joked about how Westernized I was, detached from Sudanese traditions*”⁷⁸ Soon, she realizes that her relation with Anwar was a mistake, and notices her detachment from traditions of her homeland.

Unlike Acculturation, the process of hybridization is an experience where the configuration of identity occurs in the new space, after the culture shock characters encounter

⁷⁷Ibid, p. 176.

⁷⁸Ibid, p. 230.

when they first meet the new culture, they become self-conscious of their diasporic transformation, and are involved in several attempts to integrate in the host society.

Adapting or adjusting to the other culture is not an option for Muslim immigrants. In “The rope of god: Muslim minorities in the West and Britain”, Clive John Christie explains that Islam *"cannot be treated as a mere ethnic badge, but must be treated on its own terms, if we are to understand properly the dilemmas facing Muslim minorities in a non-Muslim world."*⁷⁹This idea has been reflected in the two stories; almost every time a problem rises it has a relation with character's religious identity and faith. Therefore, the main challenge that Muslim immigrants face in western countries is their religion.

1.2. Najwa and Sammar, the Recovery of Shattered Identities

Western values, principles and power represent the stimulus to the Islamic nation and Muslim individual's identity figuration. Nevertheless, the relation between Muslim and the West is among the major factors which control the establishment of identity in Diaspora.

In her PhD Thesis "Negotiating British-Muslim Identity: Hybridity, Exclusion and Resistance", Fatima Khan has highlighted an important factor which interfere in making the character's hybrid identity, she states that the relationship between Muslims and the west is based on the western imperialist interventionist policy and attacks on Muslims' residence of origin as well as Ummah (nation),this has created the sense of offensiveness which prevents Muslim individuals from exhibiting allegiance to the host country⁸⁰

⁷⁹Clive John Christie, “The rope of God: Muslim minorities in the West and Britain”, *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, Vol. 17, Issue. 3, p.457. DOI: [10.1080/1369183X.1991.9976259](https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.1991.9976259) .(457- 466)

⁸⁰*Fatima Khan* “Negotiating British-Muslim Identity: Hybridity, Exclusion and Resistance” (Thesis submitted in accordance with the requirements of the University of Liverpool for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, Aug 2015)

As far as hybrid identities are concerned “*hybridity might be understood to mean an individual 'having access to two or more ethnic identities'*”⁸¹. In *Minaret*, the identity of the main character has marked by acculturation. However, once the geographical borders are transcended; the ethnic identity is awakened and Najwa finds herself torn between her old identity and the new conditions in Diaspora.

Under these circumstances Najwa encounters an identity crisis, in Britain, she starts working as a house keeper and a babysitter to make a living, but she constantly tries to keep her identity hidden; her family, her origins, and who she actually is: “*My heart starts to pound as it always does when there is the threat that someone will know who I am, who I was, what I've become .How many times have I lied and said I am Eritrean or Somali?*”⁸²

Najwa of Khartoum was different from Najwa of Britain .in Khartoum she was non-religious, she has never prayed, nor was she veiled:

“What do we know? We don't even pray.” Sometimes I was struck with guilt.

“I do sometimes,” said Randa.

“Yeah, when?”

“In exam time . . . A lot of good it did me.” She laughed.

“When I fast in Ramadan, I pray. A girl in school told me that fasting doesn't count unless you pray.”⁸³

Although she has been self-conscious of her behavior, and lacked knowledge about her own religion, Najwa has not turned to a practicing Muslim only after being exiled and exposed to traumatic events. In “Cosmopolitanism, Hybrid identities, and religion”, Robert Schreier insisted on the relation between migrants' religion and their position in Diaspora, he states:

⁸¹Antony Easthope (1998) Bhabha, *hybridity and identity*, Textual Practice, 12:2, 341-348, DOI: [10.1080/09502369808582312](https://doi.org/10.1080/09502369808582312)

⁸²*Minaret*,p. 71.

⁸³*Ibid*,p. 29.

Migrant religion will tend to take on the form of religion salient in the host country. Those hybrid social spaces so created become sites for the internal dynamics of those communities and, if sufficiently self-confident, away of negotiating with the surrounding social world. Thus the mosque and masjid becomes more than a place to gather for prayers.⁸⁴

In the new location, Muslims lose concrete connection with their religion. In Diaspora they are likely to establish a spiritual link by mean of other alternatives, for example attending Mosques or eating at Halal restaurants. The existences of sites of this type encourage Muslim individuals to adjust to the host community.

This idea has been portrayed in Minaret when Najwa “*The glamorous westernized elite girl Najwa who used to spend her life entertaining herself in Khartoum has faded with the coup that got her father hanged. She turns to hijab wearing and Mosque gatherings after her family’s dismay in their London exile*”⁸⁵ she gradually finds solace in her religion, specifically Islamic practices, she explains:

The Tajweed class is my favourite. I learn how to pronounce the letters correctly, when to blur two letters together, when to pronounce the n in a nasal way, for how many heats to prolong a certain letter. This concentration on technique soothes me; it makes me forget everything around me.⁸⁶

Through the translator, Leila Aboulela has represented Diaspora as a place where one can have a new understanding of his or her religion, and a place where the negotiation of identity is inevitable. She has described-Sammar-the protagonist ability to live in harmony

⁸⁴Robert Schreier, “cosmopolitanism, hybrid identities, and religion”, Exchange journal, Vol. 40, Issue. 1 (jan2011)19-34, Doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/157254311X550713> pp,32.33

⁸⁵Karine Ancellin, “Hybrid Identities of Characters in Muslim women fiction post 9-11”, TRANS-Revue de littérature générale et comparée (08 July 2009)1-17, URL : <http://www.journals.openedition.org/trans/344> p.9

⁸⁶Minaret, pp. 78.79.

with the new conditions: “*Here in Scotland she was learning more about her own religion, the world was one cohesive place*”⁸⁷

In the new setting protagonists of both novels are involved in a struggle to adjust to the western cultural norms. However, they have only succeeded when they made recourse to Islamic practices and sharriaa. In that space between home and the new country, Sammar has managed to reach stability when her beloved has converted to Islam, meanwhile Najwa turn to a practicing Muslim as a sign of self-redefinition.

1.3. Belonging, Religion and Identity

Although, traumatizing, losing the sense of belonging has been the way to finding the third space. Belonging represents a key factor to establishing the hybrid identity; it could also be described as essential phase in the process of hybridization.

Hybridity, identity, and religion are among the major components that contribute in shaping identities of characters in Leila Aboulela’ stories; self-definition is likely to be achieved through religion. It is by relying on religious faith that characters identify who they are, once separated from the major constituents of their identity including the geographical zone of origin, they start reconstructing their selves upon a religious principle which his (faith),for faith is a thing they can carry anywhere they go, and doing so in a diasporic periphery, means establishing a hybrid identity.

This idea is clearly expressed in the character of Najwa, in Britain and after becoming a devote Muslim, wearing veil and praying in mosque, she is able to create a sense of belonging through the revival of her Islamic faith. In a vivid description of London the protagonist announces:

I’ve come down in the world. I’ve slid to a place where the ceiling is low and there isn’t much room to move. Most of the time I’m used to

⁸⁷Leila Aboulela, *The Translator*, New York: Black Cat, 1999, p.108.

it. Most of the time I'm good. I accept my sentence and do not brood or look back. But sometimes a shift makes me remember. Routine is ruffled and a new start makes me suddenly conscious of what I've become, standing in a street covered with autumn leaves. The trees in the park across the road are scrubbed silver and brass. I look up and see the minaret of Regent's Park mosque visible above the trees. I have never seen it so early in the morning in this vulnerable light. London is at its most beautiful in autumn.⁸⁸

The expression 'what I have become' confirms that a new self has been constructed, this self consist of accepting both Najwa's new setting and the Muslim part of her identity. Mentioning the view of the minaret of Regent's Park mosque is another sign of making peace with the new setting, "*This is why the geographical significance of each local culture doesn't outweigh the 'Muslim' part of the character in search of her/his identity*"⁸⁹

The author further demonstrates the idea by inserting Najwa and Tamer in a conversation where they explicitly discuss their origins and identities:

He shrugs. "My mother is Egyptian. I've lived everywhere except Sudan: in Oman, Cairo, here. My education is Western and that makes me feel that I am Western. My English is stronger than my Arabic. So I guess, no, I don't feel very Sudanese; though I would like to be . I guess being a Muslim is my identity. What about you?" I talk slowly. "I feel that I am Sudanese but things changed for me when I left Khartoum. Then even while living here in London, I've changed. And now, like you, I just think of myself as a Muslim."⁹⁰

Due to broken links with their heritage, life style and tradition of origins as well as their home lands, the only way for Najwa and Tamer to recognize who they are is by relaying on Islam at the first place. The dialogue indicates also that their national identity has decreased, the characters do not have a problem of belonging as long as their faith is providing them with the missing part of their identities, and that is to say being Muslim has become more important than being Sudanese.

⁸⁸*Minaret*, p. 1.

⁸⁹Karine Ancellin, "Hybrid Identities of Characters in Muslim women fiction post 9-11", p.3.

⁹⁰*Minaret*, p. 110.

2. PART TWO: INTEGRATING FAITH IN THE THIRD SPACE

Implementing faith in Diaspora is the main feature that has characterised Muslim hybrid identities. In the two stories the characters have been subject to religion influence. The role of Islam has been defined here as a mean of sustaining, strengthening identity, as well as bridging new cultural relations.

2.1. Muslim's Faith in Diaspora

Faith has become a fundamental theme in literature of Diaspora and Muslim immigrants. For Muslims, faith is the pillar of religion; it is a conviction that determines and develops a Muslim's way of life. Faith in Islam is an essential feature of an individual's identity; it is the medium by which one can build a pure and spiritual relationship with God. In sum, it is the belief and trust in and loyalty to God.

Interestingly, in *Minaret* Aboulela has demonstrated the theme of Islamic faith from the beginning of the story, she inaugurates the novel with Basmala in Najwa's words 'BismAllahi, Ar-rahman, Ar-raheem'. Basmala is a verse of Quran and also the opening of all other Surah. The use of expressions of this type indicates the writer's desire to pass a specific message and to evoke something in the reader's mind.

For Muslims, Basmala is said to be the source of blessings to all actions. It consists of an introduction and description of god 'Allah', it also serves at reminding Muslims of the presence of God's mercy, and to prevent them from sins⁹¹

Aboulela has sought to remind her Muslim and non Muslim readers that religious belief, behaviour, and practices are an integral part of Muslims' identity and daily life. Throughout the story, the readers will realize how she managed to save some of the characters

⁹¹Sadullah Khan, "Significance of Bismillah" ,Islamicity.august30,2009.
<http://www.Islamicity.org/3631/significance-of-bismillah/> accessed 19/04/2019

from falling into disillusionment by resurrecting faith for subaltern characters and creating it for characters who represent the dominant or other culture.

Aboulela has emphasized in her works the importance of devotion in granting the person a spiritual refuge in the absence of the homeland. Dr. Eiman Abbas Hassan El-Nour declares in his article "Faith as Refuge: Female migration in Leila Aboulela's Novels" that Aboulela *"presents nostalgia and faith in her fiction as important ingredients to provide the characters with a solid frame of reference. In exile, religion becomes a home from home, and an anchor for a troubled and tortured identity."*⁹² Therefore, religious faith is crucial for the orientation of Muslims' way of life, because it prompts development of the self, and represent an anchoring motive for living in Diaspora.

In "Locating The Female Subject in British Muslim Fiction: A Reading of Leila Aboulela's 'Minaret'", Sheeba Anjum argues that *"Minaret is a challenging novel which portrays how religious faith can be used as a power that eases the trauma of migration. It makes a significant contribution to how British Muslim identities are represented and how religion acts as an alternative way of achieving belonging in exile"*⁹³

Aboulela has embodied this idea in the character of Najwa. In Khartoum, the young women almost completely neglected her religion. During Ramadan she has fasted for the wrong reasons, and her faith was weak; for it is a necessary when practicing faith to be committed to the four pillars of Islam. Besides the profession of faith, Alms-Giving and pilgrimage, fasting and praying are a must. Yet, through her description of her routine in

⁹²Eiman Abbas Hassan El-Nour, "Faith as Refuge: Female migration in Leila Aboulela's Novels", *GCNU Journal* .Vol.8, Issue29.2017.p337

URL:https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&source=web&rct=j&url=http://neelain.edu.sd/mmacpanel/includes/magazines/pdf/3_29_14.pdf&ved=2ahUKEwi1voKp1qbiAhUS1hoKHZtxA3AOFjAAegOICRAC&usg=AOvVaw3huS9vDxfio-POMQb-J1CO

⁹³Sheeba Anjum . "locating The Female Subject in British Muslim Fiction: A Reading of Leila Aboulela's 'Minaret'" *Skit Research Journal* .:2018. Volume8; Issue 1: 2018.pP.80

URL:<https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&source=web&rct=j&url=http://ijskit.org/images/vol8iss1/Paper16.pdf&ved=2ahUKEwjbmvgG2qbiAhVNCxoKHWynD10QFjAAegQIBRAB&usg=AOvVaw1QFq5XG1AT1iT9PJ0raZVa>

Ramadan Najwa states: *"I had prayed during Ramadan, during which I fasted mostly in order to lose weight and because it was fun."*⁹⁴ By this act she has proved that she is not a qualified Muslim.

However, in exile Najwa turns to a religious woman, it was a mean to acquire Allah protection and forgiveness for her sins. Her faith started growing gradually, she prayed for god to fulfil her dearest wishes, she has also prayed god when she felt threatened. In London precisely, Najwa was returning home by bus, and on her way she has encountered harassment and has been bullied for being a Muslim; asking help from God was the only mean to self-defence *"I start to recite say: I seek refuge in the Lord of Daybreak. I recite it again and again... I tell myself that Allah will protect me so that even if they hurt me I won't feel it too badly; it will be a blunted blow, a numbed blow."*⁹⁵

The use of religious expressions abundantly is another sign of the author's integration of Muslim faith; this has been reflected in several lines in both novels. Even in casual speech and way of speaking with other, Najwa has become accustomed to mentioning God *"When someone picks up the entry-phone, I say, my voice edgy with hope, 'Salaamualleikum, it's me, Najwa. . . .' She is expecting me, alhamdullilah."*⁹⁶

Tamer, Najwa's new beloved and her employer's brother; represents the young pious Muslim. This young man has given Najwa the image of the ideal Muslim, this has been reflected in her description of Tamer *"Her brother,' I say, 'is only nineteen and is so devout and good. No cigarettes, no girlfriend, no clubbing, no drinking. He has a beard and goes to the mosque every day."*⁹⁷ Again the author has pointed out to the two contrasting images of Muslims and non-Muslim lifestyle. Najwa made this statement drawing on the previous

⁹⁴Minaret,p. 160.

⁹⁵Ibid,p. 80.

⁹⁶Ibid,p.2.

⁹⁷Ibid,p. 93.

image she has in her mind about a Muslim man, which is represented in Anwar and her brother Omar.

Um Waleed, a religious woman and a Quran teacher in the mosque Najwa used to attend. This woman's faith has been a source of admiration to Najwa, she has expressed her admiration for her teacher *"It is only faith that makes her a Qur'an teacher with hardly any pay, pleading with us to learn, to change"*⁹⁸

In Diaspora, despite the fact that Muslim image is disfigured, Muslims and specially women, are involved in presenting and implementing Islamic faith in their daily lives. Jocelyne Cesari in "Religion and Diaspora: challenges of the emigration countries" explains that: "Muslim immigrants are more religious on the three accounts (prayer, religious attendance, and self-declaration) than other immigrants"⁹⁹ Muslims have proved to be considerably active at the level of religious practices, for them religion and faith are substantial elements that has always been relevant to spiritual, personal, and social life.

2.2. The Role of Religion in Strengthening Identity

Religion is likely to be considered an essential factor that interferes in forming identity, it influences people's way of life, beliefs and view of god and the universe; it is seen as a spiritual tool which plays a fundamental role in sustaining and strengthening identity.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, Islam is among the widest spread beliefs in the world. Majority of Muslims tend to introduce themselves by referring to their religious affiliation when confronted with another culture.

⁹⁸Minaret,p.185.

⁹⁹JocelyneCesari,*Religionand Diaspora: challenges of the emigration countries*,(USA,INTERACT research report:2013) . p.1
doi:<http://www.academia.edu/download/32306073/INTERACT-RR-2013-01.pdf>

Leila Aboulela has insisted on this idea in both her works, she sought to highlight the importance of religion in Muslims' life, and in constructing and sustaining balance of their identity. She has also demonstrated this through the protagonist of her second novel in *the translator* "Sammar, :Only Allah is eternal, only Allah is eternal. Photo- graphs, books, towels, sheets. Strip and dump into a black bag. Temporary, this life is temporary, fleeting. Why is this lesson so hard to learn?"¹⁰⁰ Unlike Najwa, Sammar has always had a strong religious faith; her connection to religion has always been strong, and her faith always present in time of distress.

She has also depicted the role of religious practices in bringing peace and stability in everyday life, and in critical times. Sammar, have endured harsh times in which the only way to feel relieved was by adhering to the rope of God:

The whirlpool of grief sucking time. Hours flitting away like minutes. Days in which the only thing she could rouse herself to do was pray the five prayers...without them she would have fallen, lost awareness of the shift of day into night.¹⁰¹

Not only has it provided the individual Muslim with a source of hope, religion has also armed him with protection from committing sins, and from self harm. For Aboulela, religion is the key to finding peace and obtaining strength to face obstacles of all kind:

Once there was a time when she could do nothing. When she was held down by something heavy. Clogged up, dragging herself to pray, even her faith sluggish. Yet Allah had rewarded her even for these imperfect prayers. She had been protected from all the extremes. Pills, break-down, attempts at suicide. A barrier was put between her and things like that.¹⁰²

¹⁰⁰*The Translator*, p. 9.

¹⁰¹*Ibid*, p. 16.

¹⁰²*Ibid*, p. 118.

Despite the significant role religion plays in maintaining a stable life, and forming one's identity, it remains a sensible issue when it comes to establishing relationships with people from different religious affiliation or different cultural systems. The outcome of relations of this type differs; it can lead to a compromise, but also to a clash.

2.3. Cross Cultural Relationship and the Challenge of Conversion

Multicultural societies are marked by the production of intercultural relationship including interracial marriage, marriage between people from different religions, different ethnicities, or different countries. Leila Aboulela's fiction has depicted this phenomenon in many ways; chiefly by portraying Muslims and non-Muslims relationship and the role of religion and faith in maintaining a balanced relation.

The term conversion refers to the process of changing from one form to another, conversion *"is understood differently in different religious and social contexts. What Christians call conversion or metanoia, Muslims would probably call 'submission' and Buddhists would speak of 'Going for Refuge'"*¹⁰³

However, for Muslims specifically there is whole range of practices one need to follow in order to complete his conversion *"Islam requires the act of submission to Allah to be made in the presence of witnesses, but clearly more than a recitation of the sbahada - There is no God but God and Mohammed is His Messenger - is envisaged. A convert is also expected to say yes to the full tradition of Qur'anic teaching, hadiths and shari'a"*¹⁰⁴

In *Minaret*, Leila Aboulela has evoked the issue of conversion by elaborating questions about westerners 'conversion to Islam through the main character's query:

¹⁰³ Christopher Lamb , M. DarrolBryant.eds .*Religious Conversion:contemporary practices and controversises*,Cassell,(London and New York.1999)p.6.

¹⁰⁴Christopher Lamb , M. DarrolBryant.eds .*Religious Conversion*.P.8.

I said to Anwar, 'It's interesting about converts isn't it? What would make a Westerner become a Muslim?'

He made a face. 'I think they're brave.'

You say that because as Muslims our self-esteem is so low that we're desperate for approval. And what greater stamp of approval can there be than a white man's?'¹⁰⁵

Aboulela has suggested that Muslim self-esteem plays a major role in his understanding of westerner's conversion to Islam. However, the view of this action differs from one person to another basing on the strength of their religiosity. She has also noted that it is typical for someone like Anwar to think this way, because Anwar "*had fixed ideas about religion. The Islamist government in Khartoum was his enemy*"¹⁰⁶ Readiness and the extent of openness toward other cultures are key elements that help facilitating the understanding of other's religious choices.

It is worth noting that in *The Translator*, Leila Aboulela has provided an answer for the question she raises previously in *Minaret* about westerner's conversion. This can be clarified through a close reading of Sammar's relationship with the other. The lady is a Sudanese widow who has moved from Sudan to Aberdeen living behind her child, in an attempt to detach herself from the tragic events she has endured when she has lost husband.

In Scotland, she is Sammar, a translator in the department of Rae; an expert in Islamic studies and orientalism. Sammar eventually fall in love with him. However she is aware of being prohibited by Shariaa to marry a man unless he converts to Islam. Sammar has expressed interest about the possibility of Rae's conversion to Islam; in a talk with Yasmin- both her friend and Rae's secretary- she asks:

¹⁰⁵ Minaret, p. 159.

¹⁰⁶Ibid,pp. 159.160.

'Do you think he could one day convert!' Mirages shimmered on the asphalt... 'Are you hoping he would convert so you could marry him?! 'Don't be silly, I was just wondering.' She breathed in and out as if it was an effort. Her eyes ached, her nose ached. 'I was just wondering because he knows so much about Islam . . . '

'This annoys him.'

'What annoys him?'

'That Muslims expect him to convert just because he knows so much about Islam.'¹⁰⁷

Aboulela has pointed out to another type of Muslims' understanding of westerners' conversion. Unlike Anwar's perspective, this category believes that a non-Muslim would convert when he had acquired sufficient knowledge about Islam.

However, the justification is only asserted by the person who is subject to conversion. Sammar has remained hopeful about the idea of seeing Rae converted to Islam so she can marry him. Yet, she could not be patient, and has confessed about her wishes. Rae's reaction has been unexpected; he has expressed his uncertainty, and justified his objection by saying that what he want "*...was to be objective, detached. In the middle of all the prejudice and hypocrisy, wanted to be one of the few who was saying what was reasonable and right.*"¹⁰⁸. Sammar has tried to persuade him to utter only Alshahada, but he answers: "*I have to be sure. I would despise myself if I wasn't sure.*"¹⁰⁹

The conversation ends up with a quarrel and a long period of separation that is for Rae, a period of prolonged thinking to take the right decision. When he has finally decided to convert to Islam, he met Sammar and justified his conversion: "*I found out at the end, that it didn't have anything to do with how much I've read or how many facts I've learned about*

¹⁰⁷ The Translator, pp. 20.21

¹⁰⁸Ibid.,p. 126

¹⁰⁹Ibid.,p. 128

*Islam. Knowledge is necessary, that's true. But faith, it comes direct. from Allah.'"*¹¹⁰even though she has evoked the discourse of the white man's conversion, Aboulela has succeeded in applying the rule of Muslim faith.

Rae's conversion is Aboulela way to demonstrate the interference of faith in constructing identity and the effect of intercultural relations in shaping beliefs of individuals. For Rae, no other options were available; he had to convert in order to marry Sammar. However, he has not converted until he found enough reasons, he did not convert for the sake of marrying her only, nor because he is expert and has a wide knowledge of Islam neither because people expect him to, but for one major reason; faith, as clearly stated through his words in the novel.

2.4. Hybrid Characters

Humans define who they are by relying on things they have learned at early stages of childhood, they define who they are by mean of geographical location, through surrounding, and through the basic values they have been raised upon, it include: education, race, and religion, place of birth, language, tradition and so on. All of these elements interfere in identifying who the person is and what characterizes him.

After scrutinizing different factors that interfere in identity reconstruction in Diaspora, one can confirm papastergiadis perspective on hybridity, it is the same hybridity that has been portrayed by Leila Aboulela in both her novels; the accumulation of different things, the idea that several and various elements of culture contribute to the construction of identity, these elements have melt into each other and have created a mixed culture which reflects the hybridity of the character's identity.

¹¹⁰Ibid,p. 198.

The first example of a hybrid identity is portrayed in the character of Raein *The Translator*, A Scottish Christian, who meets Sammar a Muslim Sudanese women with whom he fall in love. At the first glance one may notice the wide difference between the two characters at the level of origins and religion:

Sammar felt separate from him, exiled while he was in his homeland, fasting while he was eating turkey and drinking wine. They lived in worlds divided by simple facts -religion, Country of origin, race - data that fills forms. But he doesn't drink anymore, she reminded herself He had told her that and it had been another thing which made him less threatening ¹¹¹

In the story, Sammar suffers homesickness, which is destabilizing her identity, yet she maintains a strong religious faith. On the other hand, Rae does not encounter any problem of self-identification until he is confronted with the fact that he has to convert to Islam in order to marry Sammar.

At this level, the change on Rae's identity occurs, making Islam his major belief, therefore a part of his identity. This proves once more the eligibility of Papastergiadis definition of hybridity. Rae's hybridity is the one which consist of the accumulation of his knowledge about Islam, his relation with a Muslim woman, and finally his faith in God.

Drawing from the first chapter, Hybrid identity is also the new form of identity derived from the mixture of two different or contradictory cultures, in *Minaret*, Aboulela has depicted this type of hybridity in the characters of Tamer and Anwar. Anwar as described in the story is a Muslim Sudanese, but not a typical Muslim, he strongly supports communist thoughts and principles, his way of life was rather westernized although he disliked westerns:

This was exactly the sort of thing he despised; Western music, Western ways. I had not told Randa about him. She would not

¹¹¹Ibid,43

understand. Yes, she would agree that he was handsome, but he was not one of us, not like us ... And a member of the Democratic Front.¹¹²

The character of Anwar portrays a clear ambivalence, which makes his identity hybrid in nature. Even after moving and settling in Britain Anwar has not disregard being Muslim, because it was the only way others have chosen to make the distinction between him and themselves.

On the other hand, Tamer the young Muslim of Sudanese origins represents the practicing and devout Muslim. In the story he has been described by his mother “...*he's always been strict. He will only eat halal meat. I don't know where he got his religiousness from, none of us is as observant as him.*”¹¹³, Tamer was brought to Britain for the purpose of continuing his studies .However, he has always been aware of the inevitability of the Western influence, he admits:

‘I've lived everywhere except Sudan: in Oman, Cairo, here. My education is Western and that makes me feel that I am Western. My English is stronger than my Arabic. So I guess, no, I don't feel very Sudanese though I would like to be. I guess being a Muslim is my identity’¹¹⁴

Tamer is another model of hybrid identity, and a symbol of ambivalence, that is clearly portrayed in the mixedness of his emotions, he first asserts feeling western then confirms being a Muslim. Through this significant depiction Aboulela wants to transmit an important message: it is possible for an individual to be a Western Muslim, and that is the result of hybridity.

Drawing on the definitions of hybridity mentioned in the first section of the research, it can be said that there are degrees and types of hybridity, a hybrid can be an individual living in Diaspora sharing both national culture of the host society and his local culture, he can be the

¹¹²*Minaret*,pp. 25.26.

¹¹³ *Ibid*,p.85.

¹¹⁴*Ibid*,p.110.

colonised as he can be the colonizer. Hybridity lies also within ambivalence, duality and doubling; in modern world hybridity it is simply the celebration of multiculturalism.

GENERAL CONCLUSION

The discussion of hybrid identities and Muslim faith in Leila Aboulela's *Minaret* and *The Translator* represent a complex issue. These two phenomena have characterised contemporary societies in modern era, especially with the rise of immigration movement and the formation of minorities. Nowadays, people tend to redefine themselves and search for a stable identity by mean of several cultural elements. Religion represents one of the basic tenets upon which the construction of identity depends.

In Diaspora Muslims prefer to identify themselves by their Islamic faith considering Islam as an important foundation of their spiritual as well as daily life. In the international literary scene, Anglophone fiction has highlighted issues of this type, many novelist have become concerned with reflecting in their works social issues of Diaspora, migration and ethnic minorities. The state of diasporic Muslims in the western world is one of the most intensively explored topics of the twentieth century literature, chiefly in British fiction.

Leila Aboulela's selected novels has helped the reader explore hybrid identities rising in paradoxical spaces within western locations, the emergence of this kind of identities is deeply connected to the individual religious faith. This drives the readers to meditate in the narrative representations of Muslims in Diaspora. However, this research aim at highlighting the details the author has elaborated in order to depict the formation of hybrid identities in relation to religion, and faith sustaining in intercultural atmosphere; this study offers a different perspective of identity construction in diasporic framework.

Consequently, the first chapter has consisted of an overview of the notion that represents the first element of our topic 'hybridity, it has discussed different ways in which the term has been addressed and has developed to hybrid identities. This section has equally highlighted a set of social and historical events underlying the selected works, including the Sudanese civil war, immigration and Diaspora, as well as the conditions of Muslim living in

the west. Different uses and definitions of hybrid identities that have been addressed in the first chapter are elaborated in the analysis of the novels in the second chapter.

After a thorough analysis of the two novels basing on theoretical data presented in the first chapter. One can conclude that Leila Aboulela has succeeded at establishing an innovative image of identity construction in Diaspora, by accentuating the construction of hybrid identities; the author has also focused on life events of certain characters, their diasporic journey and life experiences, in order to reflect the changes in their identity.

The shift in character's personalities has been referred to in the first section of chapter two, characters of Najwa and Sammar are the epitome of a Muslim individual exiled and exposed to displacement. Nostalgia has persisted, leading to split in the characters identity; the two women constantly tatter between a lost sense of belonging, a western life, and different religious affiliations and cultures.

In order to rescue her characters, Aboulela has inserted Islamic faith as medium of interference in identity reformation, and a way of overtaking cultural differences. Integrating faith into the third space is a fundamental theme in the two stories especially in the characters struggle to define who they are, consequently, whenever they encounters an issue they make recourse to faith.

Aboulela has offered Muslim religious faith as a more valuable alternative. Throughout the story faith's intervention is positive which helps stabilising characters' identities, Islamic faith represents the solution for the creation of a space of coexistence between secular and religious life. The character of Rae in *The translator* has personified the specific role of religious belief in sustaining and strengthening identity of the western man, for he also was not immune to influence. This proves that the idea expressed by Bhabha is still shaping postcolonial world, and if during colonialism both colonized and colonizer have endured mutual contamination; today the mutual contamination still exists, and is interpreted in the relation between two antithetical worlds the West and the Orient.

The idea has been expressed in Rae's conversion to Islam, leading therefore to the creation of a consensual identity, one that is hybrid. Thus, the two novels have offered the reader the opportunity to know more about hybrid identities, and explore the interference of religious faith in constructing and sustaining these identities. The writer has attempted to give readers insight to realities about multicultural societies including the subaltern man, as well as the white man who represents the dominant culture. It also portrays how religious faith supports the redefinition of identities in distress.

In conclusion, taking into account the study and analysis conducted in this dissertation, it can be affirmed that Leila Aboulela's selected novels; *The Translator* and *Minaret*, have provided a detailed exploration of hybrid identities, and the role of Islamic faith in shaping these 'mixed entities'. Aboulela has portrayed Faith as an integral part of a person's identity, in the case of Muslims, religious faith is more than a mere tool of identity representation, it is a lifestyle, an ideology and a law.

Like any other research, this study has some limitations. It is necessary to mention first; difficulties in accessing data relevant to the literature review, and the lack of primary resources in libraries, this involves purchasing the necessary material by means of libraries from outside the country, which was time consuming and expensive.

In terms of theory underlying the research, Hybridity in this study is only referred to as an early stage of mixed identities development. Thus, the amount of information about the theory of hybridity is limited; and relevant only to the relation stated in the research, between the dependent and independent variables, that is to say hybrid identity and Muslim faith.

It is recommended that the study should be extended to other cultural elements other than religion and faith, in order to have a clearer vision and a more accurate description of identity construction in Diaspora and other different contexts. It is also recommended to rely on qualitative approaches to calculate and determine the number of Muslim immigrants who recognize the influence of religion in affecting their identity in a given community.

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تدرس هذه الأطروحة الهويات المهجنة و علاقتها بدور الإيمان في إعادة بناء وتعزيز الهوية المسلمة في المهجر، وهذا من خلال الإنتاج الأدبي لليلى أبو العلا، المترجمة (١٩٩٩)، منذنة في ريجنت بارك (٢٠٠٥) ، الروايتان المختارتان تعتبران من أبرز الأعمال في الساحة الأدبية المعاصرة، وتمنحان القارئ فرصة تعميق فهم نشأة الهوية المهجنة كما تصور رحلة المسلمين في المهجر وكيف لإيمانهم الديني أن يتدخل في تشكيل هوية ثقافية جديدة، الروايتان تظهران العديد من الحقائق الواقعية عن جماعات المسلمين المهاجرين في الغرب من نهاية القرن العشرين إلى غاية بداية القرن الواحد والعشرين التي تميزت بانهايار الانتماءات العرقية و بروز شتات الأقليات، الروائية تهدف إلى وصف حالة الأقليات المسلمة المهاجرة وعلاقتها بالغربيين الذي أنتج بدوره عالم غربي متعدد الثقافات، من هنا، بالإضافة إلى أن الروايتان تعطيان وصف صادق للتوسع الحالي للإسلام و الإيمان الإسلامي، الروايتان المختارتان لآبو العلا درستتا بشكل موضوعي، و تعدان من أفضل الوسائط لتوسيع فهمنا للهوية المهجنة وإعادة بناء الهوية مع كشف الدور الأساسي للمعتقد الديني. ونظرا أن الأعمال الأدبية لا تقدر بشكل كامل من بدون قاعدة نظرية ، وسياق اجتماعي تاريخي مؤطر لها. فالفصل الأول لهذه الأطروحة خصص للخلفيات النظرية، الاجتماعية التاريخية، هذا الفصل يعرض التهجين كنظرية ثم يقدم حقائق وأحداث تاريخية ذات صلة بالروايتين. إلى ذلك، فالدراسة الموضوعية تقدم في الفصل الثاني لهذه الأطروحة، و هي تنقسم إلى قسمين أولها يستكشف الهويات المهجنة والعوامل المؤثرة في تشكيلها من الموطن إلى المهجر ، أما الجزء الثاني فهو يصور لنا تضمين المعتقد الديني في الفضاء الثالث و الامتزاج الثقافي.