

# From Khartoum to London: The Metaphoric Correspondences between the Homeland and the Host Land in Leila Aboulela's *Minaret*

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Received: July 17, 2024

Accepted: November 5, 2024

Online Published: December 30, 2024

doi:10.5430/wjel.v15n3p132

URL: <https://doi.org/10.5430/wjel.v15n3p132>

## Abstract

Leila Aboulela's *Minaret* is an account of the protagonist Najwa's diasporic life in London. There, she works as a housemaid in contrast to her homeland in Khartoum, where she used to live in a multistoried house with servants. The article conducts a metaphor analysis of Najwa's tragic tale of immigrants' life in the host land, London, and the material conditions that force her to work as a housemaid. The analysis explores the structural metaphors, a type of conceptual metaphor, in the novel to demonstrate how the experiences in Khartoum inform the perceptions, feelings, and understanding of the situations in London. The article argues that Najwa calls diasporic life an imprisonment and immigration to London as a fall to metaphorically describe her guilt-ridden, poverty-stricken life as a servant in London. The analysis concludes with how Najwa overcomes her guilt and attains absolution by coming to terms with her life in the host land.

**Keywords:** Identity, Muslim, Diaspora, Homeland, Metaphor

## 1. Introduction

The homeland is the place of origin with an emotional dimension that transcends the mark of a territory (Connor, 1986, p. 16). Besides the spatial identity, the homeland instills in the natives a sense of exclusiveness that symbolically coalesces the territorial bounding and the perceptual binding (Kaiser, 2003, 2017). When natives leave their homeland, they cannot untie the emotional bond and perceptual binding with the homeland. Hence, in the host land, the diaspora always conceives a virtual or imaginative return (Vardanyan, 2016, p. 76). In this cerebral exercise of virtual return, the homeland gets reduced to an abstract conceptual perception. This is because space and place are the perceptual experiences of existence (Tuan, 1979). Therefore, when a native enters the host land and becomes a diaspora, the concerned individual distinguishes the homeland and the host land with the experiences of geographic and cultural differences (Bouwers & Whelehan, 2017, p. 150). These differences create in the diaspora "a dynamic tension between living here and remembering there, between memories of places of origin [homeland] and entanglements with places [host land] of residence, between the metaphorical [homeland] and the physical [host land] home" (Agnew, 2005, p. 4). The homeland becomes metaphorical because, in the discourse of or concerning migrants, the cultural interactions become flexible and dynamic and take place through the migrant or diaspora speaker's use of metaphor (Golden & Lanza, 2013). The culture of the homeland manifests in the objects or tokens of memory through their correspondences to the physical objects or situations in the host land. These correspondences are metaphoric because they are perceived in duals or pairs based on differences or comparisons (Lakoff, 1993).

Leila Aboulela's novel *Minaret* (2005) is set in two different cultural and geographical spaces: Khartoum (homeland in Sudan) and London (host land in England). The plot of the narrative moves between Khartoum and London through retrospection and nostalgia. The story deals with Najwa's life in Khartoum till 1985, when her father, a politician, is tried for corruption during a coup and in London from 1989 till the end of the narrative in 2004. The novel's ending indicates that Najwa may never return to Khartoum for her brother Omar, imprisoned in London: "Going back is not an option for me. I can't leave my brother" (*Minaret* 192). The fact that she is not returning to Khartoum physically makes the story retrospective and anaphoric to the events and situations in Khartoum. Khartoum is referred to frequently in the text as a scale of comparison with the situations in London. Notably, the situation in London is miserable. That is because the protagonist, Najwa, is reduced from luxury in Khartoum as the daughter of a rich and powerful politician to poverty in London as a housemaid. Besides, Khartoum and London present two different identities, characters, value systems and worldviews of Najwa. These social, cultural, political, economic, ideological, and geographical differences indicate a fundamental comparison between Khartoum and London. This comparison is based on the two seemingly unlikely places of residence, homeland, and host land. In London, Najwa undergoes events and situations in life that are contrary to those in Khartoum. The description of her life in London is interspersed with the metaphoric references to life in Khartoum. She conceptualizes the surrounding physical space as a diaspora in relation to the imaginative space. Najwa states, "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 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" (*Minaret* p. 7). Najwa's world is that of London. It is where she begins the narration. However, Najwa locates

the world downward as she has slid. The act of sliding defines her fall. In this world, the physical space is restrictive as it is “low” and does not have “much room.” She perceives the restrictive surroundings with low height and narrow width as a prison. She considers her situation as imprisonment and her life in this world [host land] a “sentence.” Her perception of the place is imaginative, as the physical space “makes me [her] remember.” The cognitive act of remembering is a part of her imaginative perception of the physical space. It refers to Najwa’s way of life as a diaspora affected by a strong “sense of in-betweenness” (Salma & Fatima, 2020, p. 23).

## 2. Literature Review

Najwa’s imaginative comparison between Khartoum and London informs her “way of thinking, or of representing the world,” like a diaspora that mingles the material and imaginative perceptions of the spaces (Procter, 2007, p. 151). Her sense of in-betweenness emanates from the diasporic or migrant experiences of cultural alienation and the disintegration of the self (Salma & Fatima, 2020, pp. 23-24). Najwa undergoes a crisis in her cultural identity, like a diaspora suffering from psychological conflict with a sense of unhomeliness in the host land (Farahbakhsh & Ranjbar, 2016). London, being a land of the colonizer, calls her to re-evaluate the sense of cultural superiority among the Sudanese elites (Al-Asmakh, 2009, pp. 6-7). She succumbs to confusion in her identity because national identity in a Postcolonial state remains dynamic (Dizayi, 2015). Consequently, she undertakes “individual, emotional and spiritual journeys while attempting to find a stable sense of identity in England or Sudan” (Al-Karawi & Bahar, 2014, p. 261). She gains stability in her sense of identity by a sense of detachment both in London and Khartoum (Salma & Fatima, 2020, p. 26). She develops a neutral cultural position that helps her view both the cultures of her homeland and host land from a psychological distance. Eventually, she re-constructs her native identity as an upper-class Sudanese girl and grows into an Arab Muslim migrant working woman. Her identity that emerges in the novel owes to her experiences of triple colonization: migration, patriarchy, and Islamophobia (Hasan, 2015). She clings to Islam (Idris, 2019). Her religion substantiates her hybrid identity “that is modern in Western terms, but firmly Muslim through the wearing of the veil” (Al-Karawi & Bahar, 2014, p. 255). According to Hasan (2015, p. 12), religion cuts across all other identities of Najwa and connects Khartoum and London nostalgically. She reconnects with her homeland through nostalgia that shapes her experiences in the host land (El Mouti, 2019). Her thoughts and perceptions of the host land tend to be nostalgic because she begins to work as a housemaid and babysitter for an Egyptian family (Cariello, 2009, p. 344-345). The work of a housemaid as well as a babysitter involuntarily substitutes the other woman’s child and home and inscribes the past into the present and the faraway into the nearby (Curti, 2019, pp. 193-94). Conversely, Najwa’s workplace, Lamya’s home, does not only substitute but also contextualize her nostalgic home in Khartoum by the associations of common phenomena:

I enjoy being in a home rather than cleaning offices and hotels. I like being part of a family, touching their things, knowing what they ate, what they threw in the bin. I know them in intimate ways while they hardly know me, as if I am invisible. It still takes me by surprise how natural I am in this servant role. On my very first day as a maid (not when I worked for Aunty Eva – I didn’t feel like a maid with her – but later when I started working for her friend) memories rushed back at me. All the ingratiating manners, the downcast eyes, the sideway movements of the servants I grew up with. I used to take them for granted. I didn’t know a lot about them – our succession of Ethiopian maids, houseboys, our gardener – but I must have been close to them, absorbing their ways, so that now, years later and in another continent, I am one of them (*Minaret* p. 65).

In addition to her workplace, the objects, people, and surroundings in the host land also create a sharp conceptual difference from that in the homeland:

We did things we would never have done in Khartoum. Three weeks after Mama’s funeral, Uncle Saleh and I had lunch in the Spaghetti House off Bond Street. If we had been in Khartoum, mourners would still be visiting, the television switched off as a mark of respect. Uncle Saleh sipped his tomato soup; I pushed my fork through smooth, buttery avocado. I had put on weight since we came from Khartoum; most of my clothes didn’t fit me anymore. (92)

For Najwa, the physical space of London manifests in her perception as a conceptual domain of experience different from that in Khartoum. The memories of Khartoum constitute the abstract domain and modify her perception of the physical domain, London. The process of her understanding of the diasporic life in the host land is, therefore, metaphoric.

## 3. Methodology

To gain insight into Najwa’s life across her dual experiences in Khartoum and London, this study employs a metaphor analysis of her thoughts, perceptions, emotions, and experiences as expressed within the novel. Metaphor analysis allows a deeper understanding of the cognitive and emotional dimensions in migrant narratives, with previous research highlighting its efficacy in exploring migrant perspectives and identities (Ammar, 2023; Begum, 2018; Catalano & Musolff, 2019; Cunningham-Parmeter, 2011; Golden & Lanza, 2013; Hack-Polay, 2021; Hodalska & Ghita, 2018; Martin, 2021; McGuire & Canales, 2010; Musolff, 2023; Taylor, 2020). This study adopts Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) as articulated by scholars such as Gibbs (1994), Kovecses (2010), and Lakoff & Johnson (1999, 2008).

### Theoretical Framework: Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT)

Conceptual Metaphor Theory provides a “cognitive linguistic view of metaphor” (Lakoff & Johnson, 2008), moving beyond traditional views that treat metaphor as a stylistic device or rhetorical embellishment. Rather than being a decorative language feature, metaphor in CMT functions as an essential framework of human cognition, shaping thought, reasoning, and perception. Lakoff and Johnson (2008)

suggest that metaphors allow people to structure their experiences in concrete terms—by interpreting abstract concepts through more familiar, tangible domains. This enables individuals to categorize, refer to, and make sense of their experiences, providing a window into their cognitive and emotional landscape.

CMT distinguishes between two main conceptual domains: the **source domain** and the **target domain**. In metaphor, ideas from a familiar source domain (such as a homeland) are mapped onto a target domain (such as a new or unfamiliar environment). In the context of Najwa's experiences, her life in Khartoum serves as the source domain, which provides a conceptual foundation for interpreting her experiences in London, the target domain. According to Kovecses (2010), these mappings, or conceptual correspondences, help to reveal underlying thoughts, emotions, and assumptions about both environments.

Within CMT, **structural metaphors** (Kovecses, 2010) play a crucial role in articulating these connections, as they allow the structure of one domain to inform the understanding of another. This study examines the structural metaphors present in Najwa's narrative to uncover how her past experiences in Khartoum shape her perception and adaptation in London. By analyzing these metaphorical correspondences, the study aims to illustrate how Najwa's sense of identity, belonging, and perspective on displacement are influenced by her dual sense of place and memory.

This methodological approach situates Najwa's migratory experience within a cognitive framework, revealing how deeply entrenched mental schemas from her homeland influence her view of life in a foreign land.

#### 4. Data Analysis & Discussion

##### Source Domain: The Life in Khartoum

*Minaret* (2005) begins with the following lines:

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 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. (7)

Here, Najwa, as a narrator, metaphorically presents her life in London as restrictive and punishing. The metaphors of space 'low ceiling' and 'not much room' substantiate her perception and experiences of restriction and punishment. The ideas of restriction and punishment also refer to the concepts of sin, corruption and deviance committed before coming to London. Moreover, the metaphoric expressions 'coming down' and 'sliding' suggest the downfall or downward movement as a consequence of punishment.

Hence, chapter one is set in Khartoum as a prologue to her life in London. Part one of the novel, ranging from chapters one to eight, presents Najwa in Khartoum during 1984-5 when she is prosecuted for imprisonment, that is, the diasporic life in London. These eight chapters chronicle the events leading to her migration to London. Chapter one opens with a description of regular daily life on an unspecified Wednesday of Najwa:

"Omar, are you awake?" I shook his arm that lay across his face, covering his eyes.

'Hmm.'

'Get up.'" (11)

The description includes Omar [brother], Baba [father], Mama [mother], and other people in her life, including friends, relatives, and servants in the house. Besides people, she pays meticulous attention to the objects in the surroundings: "I walked to the far end of his room, past his cupboard and the poster of Michael Jackson" (11). These objects, in turn, cast a definite impact on her perception and feeling in the room: "His room was wonderfully cool because he had the best air conditioner in the house" (11). The objects like the air-conditioner, shower, bedrooms with attached bathrooms for each sibling, motorcycle, and car indicate the lavish lifestyle of Najwa and her family. "In Khartoum only a minority of women drove cars and in university less than thirty per cent of students were girls – that should make me feel good about myself" (13). The wealth of her family cuts across the minority status of a girl in Sudanese society and, in fact, compliments Najwa's identities of class and gender. The linguistic expression "only a minority of women drove cars and in university less than thirty per cent of students were girls [another minority]" implies the idea of class as social stratification. It reiterates the structural metaphor in Najwa's father's life story of class mobility as an upward movement from poverty below to a position of a wealthy politician at the top of the Sudanese society: "His life story was of how he moved from a humble background to become manager of the President's office via marriage into an old wealthy family" (11). From the top position of society, Najwa is careful in dealing with poor people: "I drove slowly and was careful to indicate and careful not to knock down anyone on a bicycle. At the Gamhouriya Street traffic light a little girl knocked on my window, begging with tilted head and unfocused eyes. Because I was alone I gave her a note" (13). But such careful driving and stopping the car to give alms to a beggar delayed her arrival at the class. She feels guilty, and her hands get "sweaty" out of anxiety for punishment, i.e., prohibition to enter the class:

My hands were sweaty when I knocked on the door of lecture room 101. I was fifteen minutes late. I could hear Dr Basheer inside delivering another chapter on Accounting, my least favourite subject, but my father wanted Omar to study Business and, after years in a girls' school, I wanted to be with Omar. I knocked again louder and gathered courage to turn the knob. It was locked. So Dr Basheer had been true to his announcement that no latecomers would be allowed in his lectures. I turned and walked to the cafeteria. (13)

Here, Najwa's late arrival owes to her driving the car. Though she feels "good about myself" for belonging to the minority of "emancipated young woman driving her own car to university," she prefers "Omar...driving" (13). Her preference indicates her agreement to the custom of Sudanese girls traveling with a male guardian. Driving alone is a deviance from that custom, and such deviance is induced by her father's wealth. Conversely, Najwa's late arrival is a consequence of the deviant act of driving alone. Besides driving, Najwa commits other deviant acts like wearing tight and short dresses, looking stealthily into others' personal items, staying home late at night, and partying all the time. Her life in Khartoum did not include hardship because of her father's wealth earned by corruption. Her friend Anwar remarks, "He's [Najwa's father] embezzling money. This life you're living – your new car, your new house. Your family's getting richer by the day . . . Can't you see, it's corrupt?" (14).

The wealth that her father gained by corruption is also responsible for Najwa and Omar's corruption. The metaphor of the father's wealth being a corruptive agent informs Baba's statement: "...the three of you are spoilt" (11). Omar has deviated from the career-oriented aspirational Sudanese youth like Baba, who at Omar's age did "working day and night" (11). Like Najwa, he parties all the time. To heighten sensory pleasure, he takes drugs. When he is caught with drugs by Najwa, he blackmails her relation to Anwar, a communist member of the opposition party. He threatens that Baba will punish Anwar unlawfully to end Najwa's relationship with a communist: "...do you know what Baba will do to him? Send him some thugs to beat him up. Make sure when he graduates, no one gives him a decent job" (40). The unlawful act of beating and destroying Anwar aligns with Baba's ignorance of the evident signs of Najwa's deviant acts of partying and staying out late at night: "He smelled of grilled meat and supposedly banned whisky. I moved away from him.... They didn't ask about the party and continued the conversation they'd been having in the car" (41). It is because both of the acts are motivated by Baba's corrupt mentality. Baba does not restrict Najwa and Omar from deviant acts because he indulges in the same: "He preferred meetings with business friends, useful contacts, to day-long picnics spent playing cards and eating non-stop" (42). He fails to see his children's moral dissipation as he scales the ethical values of modesty and honesty with wealth. It is because wealth assured him of success and security: "Leaning back on his deckchair, he looked up as a small plane flew past, spraying pesticide. 'One day,' he said, 'I'm going to have my own private jet. Three more years at the maximum – I've got it all planned!'" (42).

#### **Target Domain: The Life in London**

Part one ends abruptly after a few weeks of Najwa's arrival in London. Part two skips the intermediary years from 1985 to 2002 and takes the readers to 2003, one year before the present narrative timeframe of 2004, when the novel ends. Part three begins in 1989, four years after her arrival in London, and chronologically accounts for her life in London. It begins with Najwa's observation that "We did things we would never have done in Khartoum" (92). The statement indicates that Najwa's life in London is not a distinct existential experience unrelated to life in Khartoum. In fact, Najwa perceives the events in London through a perspective of associative comparison that informs the structural metaphoric correspondence with life in Khartoum.

The metaphors of punishment and fall as its consequence connect the end of part one [chapter Eight] and the beginning of part three [chapter Seventeen]. At the end of chapter eight, Najwa reflects,

There are all kinds of pain, degrees of falling. In our first weeks in London we sensed the ground tremble beneath us. When Baba was found guilty we broke down, the flat filling with people, Mama crying, Omar banging the door, staying out all night. When Baba was hanged, the earth we were standing on split open and we tumbled down and that tumbling had no end, it seemed to have no end, as if we would fall and fall for eternity without ever landing. As if this was our punishment, a bottomless pit, the roar of each other's screams. We became unfamiliar to each other simply because we had not seen each other fall before. (47-48)

Here, Najwa perceives the situation [Baba's persecution, Mama's sorrow, and Omar's revelry in the disco] as a fall from their previous social and moral positions in Khartoum. Socially, they have become insignificant both by wealth and power as Baba and his assets in Sudan are seized for the trial and being kinsmen of a political convict, they are on the run from their native land where they once belonged to the class of rulers. Morally, Najwa and her parents are broken, while Omar is ruined. The downfall from the social position as a result of punishment continues in chapter Seventeen as it is "fall for eternity without ever landing": Mama has died, Omar is imprisoned for fifteen years, and Najwa is reduced to poverty to such an extent that she is to "save money by taking the underground instead of a taxi" (92-96).

To survive financially in London, Najwa starts working as a maid. Nevertheless, the downward mobility from the class of an employer to one of the employees undergoes a massive spiritual transformation that defines the bottom of her fall and subsequent adjustment to her fallen state. She realizes that "The skidding and plunging was coming to an end. Slowly, surely I was settling at the bottom. It felt oddly comfortable, painless. It felt like the worst was over. And there, buried below, was the truth" (174). Her realization takes place the moment she becomes a maid and does not find her job to be any longer punishing. Instead, she explores the opportunity of establishing an authentic spiritual connection and cultivating spiritual pleasure:

In the mosque no one knew my past and I didn't speak of it. What they could see of me was not impressive: my lack of religious upbringing, no degree, no husband, no money. Many warmed to me because of that, they would talk about themselves and include me as someone who lived on benefit or came from a disadvantaged home. (174)

Her experience of spiritual connection coupled with spiritual pleasure corresponds with her feelings of spiritual corruption in Khartoum. In Khartoum, she flouted Islamic principles for women under the impression of modernism: She did not wear a headscarf, robe, or

full-sleeve clothes; she did not pray even in Ramadan; her fasts were fashionable, such as doing exercise before the meal; she skipped half of the month on the pretext of the period; she drank alcohol; and she met men for fun (22-28). She contrasts her situation as a daughter of a modern liberal unorthodox father, who never forced her to follow the religious practice of timely prayer with the servants:

The servants stirred and, from the back of the house, I heard the sound of gushing water, someone spitting, a sneeze, the shuffle of slippers on the cement floor of their quarters. A light bulb came on. They were getting ready to pray. They had dragged themselves from sleep in order to pray. I was wide awake and I didn't. (28)

While the servants 'stirred' into physical activity from spiritual tranquility in the form of deep sleep, she stays 'wide awake.' It is because she is restless with thoughts of having committed sinful violations of the practices in the month of Ramadan. She returned home after "watching videos of Dallas" all night (28) and was physically too exhausted when she was supposed to wake up and perform the prayers mindfully. The call for religious obsequity moves her conscience to such an extent that "my feet went to sleep" while her spirit 'was wide awake.' She feels the material impact of 'azan' on her unorthodox mind: "Still I could hear the azan. It went on and on and now, from far away, I could hear another mosque echoing the words, tapping at the sluggishness in me, nudging at a hidden numbness" (28). Since her mind was insensitive or 'numb' to the spiritual benefits of following the religious practices of Islam, she kept committing the sins of flouting the Islamic principles for women.

On the other hand, when she enters the mosque in London, she explores the reality of spiritual fulfillment that cuts across her superficial modern values based on happiness and success. She feels attracted to "a girl sitting by herself, an open Qur'an on her lap, reciting Surat Ar-rahman" (173). Her attraction to the girl surpasses her 'envy' for the qualities of a modern lavish, fashionable lifestyle. She "wished I [she] were like her, good like her" because the girl excelled in the pursuit of God, which made her superior to all other women in the mosque (173). Conversely, she notices such detachment by dint of dedication to duty among the servants: "silent figures moving in the background, reassuring, always getting the work done" (160). Like God, the servants are invisible agents who complete a work. In fact, it is the invisibility that gives the servants material security. Hence, Najwa longs to be invisible in the household of her new employer, Lamya, in London: "The first day is crucial, the first hours. I will be watched and tested, but once I win her trust, she will forget me, take me for granted. This is my aim, to become the background to her life" (51). Besides material security, invisibility also offers socio-cultural isolation necessary for cultivating angelic detachment, a quality that she finds more attractive than modern fashionable life. Incidentally, it is only in London, after experiencing the values of spiritual fulfillment in the mosque, she realizes the magnificent life of her servants in Khartoum:

I reached out for spiritual pleasure and realized that this was what I had envied in the students who lined up to pray on the grass of Khartoum University. This was what I had envied in our gardener reciting the Qur'an, our servants who woke up at dawn. Now when I heard the Qur'an recited, there wasn't a bleakness in me or a numbness, instead I listened and I was alert. (177)

The dutiful life of the servants inspires them to be dedicated to the faith in God that compensates for their material discomfort and cultivates the values of meekness and humility.

In fact, the servant's job trains Najwa to develop a disciplined lifestyle appropriate for pursuing Islam. Chapters nine and ten, in Part Two, lay down her first day of service in Lamya's house: she arrives at Lamya's house in the morning to work throughout the day till evening when she goes to the mosque for "Qur'an Tajweed class" and, then, returns home by bus (51-63). The activities on that day, including only the work and prayer, effectively restrict her from following the deviant, undisciplined life in Khartoum. Such a restrictive routine focusing only on going to the employer's house except the mosque allows her to achieve absolution from the guilt of not praying to God that led to her downfall:

'If Baba and Mama had prayed,' I say, 'if you and I had prayed, all of this wouldn't have happened to us. We would have stayed a normal family.'.... 'Allah would have protected us, if we had wanted Him to, if we had asked Him to but we didn't. So we were punished.' (73)

Therefore, it is not coincidental that her realization of stability as a maid in London could take place in the mosque. It is because her pursuit in life is not material but spiritual, not success and happiness in the Western modern life but the truth and identity of a religious woman. The happiness derived from spiritual fulfillment also contrasts with the same she felt in Khartoum: "Maybe I was happy because I was praying again – not like when I was young when it was just to boost my grades or to complement my fast in Ramadan – but with the intention of never giving it up. I reached out for something new" (176-177). The values of persistence and integrity in the pledge for regular prayer remove the superficiality and add truth to her existence. These values finally halt the fall by helping her grow religious. She willingly becomes a servant: "She employed me as a maid and I became one. I was a servant like the servants my parents had employed" (174). It is because she lately realizes that it's only the servants in the house in Khartoum who were religious in the true sense:

'The servants,' he says, 'I remember them praying. Musa, the driver, and the others – they would be praying in the garden.'

Our house was a house where only the servants prayed. Where a night-watchman would open the gate for our car arriving late after a night out, then sit reciting the Qur'an until it was time for the dawn prayer. I remember him sitting cross-legged in the garden, dark as a tree. (73)

She achieves spiritual tranquility in her role as maid:

I enjoy being in a home rather than cleaning offices and hotels. I like being part of a family, touching their things, knowing what

they ate, what they threw in the bin. I know them in intimate ways while they hardly know me, as if I am invisible. (65)

It is her religious principles of sincerity and veracity that motivate her to refuse the chance of moving upward to the class of her employer by marrying Tamer, her employer's brother. Instead, she takes "compensation" from Lamya's mother to appropriate her class of a maid and plans to do Hajj, the religious pilgrimage to the holy city of Mecca (191-198). Her refusal marks her spiritual purification, a state in which she attained the angelic detachment from the material pain of living at the bottom of society as a maid. In this state, the material concrete life in London becomes surreal and the pain in remembering the past gets removed. *Minaret* ends with Najwa's dream in fever:

I am not well. I have a fever and I need my parents' room. I need their bed; its clean sheets, the privilege. I climb dark steep stairs to their room and there is the bed I have been fretting for. My mother's voice, her cool hand on my forehead. She gives me a spoonful of medicine, delicious cough syrup that burns my throat. Omar is sulking. He is jealous because I am ill and important. He wants something from me and Mama says, 'Leave her alone, can't you see she's burning.' I look up into my father's anxious face, his warm hand on my cheeks. I smell his cologne. He shouts at my mother, 'Put her on a course of antibiotics, you can't leave her like this!' I roll over, luxurious, sure that they love me. Around us, beyond the bed, the room is dark and cluttered, all the possessions that distinguish us in ruins. I am not surprised. It is a natural decay and I accept it. Carpets threadbare and curtains torn. Valuables squashed and stamped with filth. Things that must not be seen, shameful things, are exposed. The ceiling has caved in, the floor is gutted and the crumbling walls are smeared with guilt. (200)

In the surreal state of the dream, Najwa does not anguish at her present physical state of life in London. Instead, she 'accepts' her current position at the bottom, "a place where the ceiling is low and there isn't much room to move" (7). She could accept it because she could return imaginatively to Khartoum in her dreams without fear and pain owing to her spiritual attainment of angelic detachment by means of prayer in the mosque and working as a maid.

## 5. Conclusion

The data analysis of the metaphorical correspondences between Najwa's lives in Khartoum and London reveals that her perception, feelings, and experiences are split between the imaginary homeland and the material concrete host land. Her in-between state of existence is artistically expressed through the structural metaphors of punishment and fall. These conceptual metaphors inform why Najwa considers her life in a diaspora as a punishment and her immigration to London as a fall. The metaphor analysis of the novel has found that the unexpected loss of family with the Baba's persecution, Mama's death, and Omar's jail has generated in Najwa feelings of guilt. She describes her gradual descent into poverty as a result of spending the meager savings over the course of six years as the incessant fall. She metaphorically describes the acceptance of the job of housemaid as the bottom of that fall. The material conditions in which she began to work as a maid in someone's house metaphorically signify a downward movement from the top. She finally settles down with the servants' role, lifestyle, and attitude. Her realization of the settlement is expressed again metaphorically through the concept of absolution, which she accomplished after entering the mosque for the first time in London. In the mosque, she discovers the state of angelic detachment in a girl reading the Quran. The informal atmosphere of the mosque also helps her to accept the position of a servant. She realizes the magnificence in the life of servants, which cultivates the principles of devotion to God and detachment from the material world. She understands how the strict, disciplined life of the servants at her home in Khartoum made them religious and true to life, which saved them from any fall like hers. Since she considers that the unorthodox, lavish, corrupt, superficial life in Khartoum constituted her fall, she devotes her life to cultivating religiosity. She goes to work regularly and prays in the mosque. Her persistence in the acts of praying to God and serving others as a maid bestows her with spiritual bliss and tranquility. She even rejects the marriage with Tamar to stick to her true identity as a devout Muslim working woman. These findings correspond with the previous researches on *Minaret*: Najwa's in-between existence (Salma & Fatima, 2020), the real identity of Arab diaspora women as Muslims (Hasan, 2015), immigration as a constituent of diaspora identity (El Mouti, 2019), the themes of movement and space as aspects of diaspora life (Cariello, 2009), and religiosity as marks of sincerity and identity (Al-Karawi & Bahar, 2014). The present study contributes to the existing studies by exploring how the concepts of guilt, identity, religion, and class mobility inform the metaphoric correspondences between Najwa's life in Khartoum and London.

## Acknowledgments

The authors would like to extend their heartfelt gratitude to Al-Baha University for its continuous support and encouragement in conducting this research. Special thanks go to the Head of the Foreign Languages Department for their invaluable guidance and feedback throughout the process. The support of our families and friends has also been instrumental, and we appreciate their unwavering encouragement.

## Authors' contributions

Dr. Kholoud Alghamdi was responsible for the conceptualization and design of the study, as well as the development of the research methodology. She conducted the primary analysis and interpretation of data and played a key role in drafting and revising the manuscript for intellectual content. Dr. Alghamdi also provided critical feedback throughout the study, ensuring the integrity and quality of the final work.

## Funding

Not applicable."

**Competing interests**

The author declares that they have no competing interests regarding the publication of this paper.

Obtained.

**Ethics approval**

The Publication Ethics Committee of the Sciedu Press.

The journal's policies adhere to the Core Practices established by the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE).

**Provenance and peer review**

Not commissioned; externally double-blind peer reviewed.

**Data availability statement**

The data that support the findings of this study are available on request from the corresponding author. The data are not publicly available due to privacy or ethical restrictions.

**Data sharing statement**

No additional data are available.

**Open access**

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