REPRESENTATION OF BRITISH MUSLIM IDENTITIES IN LEILA ABOULELA'S *MINARET* AND NADEEM ASLAM'S *MAPS FOR LOST LOVERS*

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ABSTRACT

REPRESENTATION OF BRITISH MUSLIM IDENTITIES IN LEILA ABOULELA'S *MINARET* AND NADEEM ASLAM'S *MAPS FOR LOST LOVERS*

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Representation of British Muslim identities in Contemporary British fiction is a thriving field of research. With the aim of contributing to this field, this study brings together two contemporary novels, *Minaret* (2005) by Leila Aboulela, where the novel presents a very monolithic and closed understanding of religion, and *Maps for Lost Lovers* by Nadeem Aslam, which is critical of religious fundementalism. Reading them aganist the background of significant events such as The Rushdie Affair, and "*halal* fiction", the thesis emphazises the diversity British Muslim fiction writers are promising. Even though liberal, secular authors seem to be dominating the literary scene and thus determing the representation of British Muslim identities, reading *Minaret* and *Maps* in dialogue with each other, shows how British Muslim identities are in fact nuanced, complex and fluid.

Keywords: British Muslim Fiction, Leila Aboulela, *Minaret*, Nadeem Aslam, *Maps for Lost Lovers*

ÖZ

LEİLA ABOULELA'NIN *MİNARE* VE NADEEM ASLAM'IN *KAYBOLAN SEVGİLİLERE YOLLAR* ROMANLARINDA İNGİLİZ MÜSLÜMAN KİMLİKLERİNİN TEMSİLİ

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Çağdaş İngiliz Edebiyatında İngiliz Müslüm kimliğinin temsilleri, son dönemde oldukça ilgi gören bir araştırma alanıdır. Bu alana katkıda bulunmak amacıyla, bu çalışma kapalı ve tekel bir İslam anlayışının sunulduğu Leila Aboulela'nın *Minare* romanı ile tutuculuğun eleştirildiği Nadeem Aslam'ın Kaybolan Sevgililere *Yollar* romanını biraraya getirmektedir. İki romanı, Salman Rushdie olayı, "helal roman" trendi gibi faktörleri ve popüler edebiyattaki İngiliz Müslüman temsillerini değerlendirerek okuyan bu çalışma İngiliz Müslüman yazarların eserlerinde karşımıza çıkan çeşitliliğe vurgu yapmaktadır. *Minare* ve *Kaybolan Sevgililere Yollar* romanlarının İngiliz Müslüman Edebiyatının farklı örneklerini de göz önünde bulundurarak birarada okunmasının gösterdiği üzere tek bir İngiliz Müslüman kimliğinden söz etmek mümkün değildir. Bilakis, bu kimlikler karmaşık ve değişkendir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: İngiliz Müslüman Romanı, Leila Aboulela, *Minare*, Nadeem Aslam, *Kaybolan Sevgililere Yollar*

To Oğuzalp, the cutest little thing on Earth

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Aim of the Study

In "Recent Literary Representations of British Muslims," (2011) Claire Chambers argues that reflections of terrorist attacks of 9/11 in literature marks a turning point in contemporary British fiction since British writers began to examine formerly neglected issues of representation of Islam in contemporary British Literature in a more complex and nuanced way (176). Throughout her academic writing, Chambers has been emphasizing the need to chart this emerging British Muslim fiction, which, in her view, has been until recently ignored, and/or perceived as a background to gender, class, sexuality and race. Departing from this point, this thesis aims to analyse two novels, *Minaret* (2005) by Leila Aboulela and *Maps for Lost Lovers* (2004) by Nadeem Aslam, as examples of British Muslim fiction, in the spirit aspired by Chambers. *Minaret* and *Maps for Lost Lovers* are chosen as examples of the fiction specifically dealing with issues of Islam and contemporary life, which are further complicated by the experience of migration, while at the same time exploring the issues of negotiation of British Muslim identities in a nuanced way. *Minaret* is a first person account of life in Britain, and emphasizes the role of faith as a power that can overcome all the difficulties and provide an alternative space for belonging for the individual in exile. *Maps*, on the other hand, portrays a community whose strong, almost fanatical adherence to false religious ideals complicates its relation to the host country, and leads to Muslim alienation, as a result of which the Pakistani community leads parallel lives, without actually interacting with the mainstream British culture. Thus, even though both novels portray a "Muslim England" and comment on how Muslim identities are claimed and negotiated in a setting that is predominantly Christian, secular or completely indifferent to religion, reading these two novels together shows us that British Muslim identities cannot be thought as a uniform category. Rather, as reflected in

these two novels and many other examples of British Muslim fiction, there are as many British Muslim identity positions as the number of the British Muslims living in UK; and perceptions and negotiations of these identity markers change from one individual to the other.

1.2 Studying *Minaret* and *Maps for Lost Lovers*: Sources and Review of Literature

Research on British Muslim identities has gained significance especially in the aftermath of 9/11. Scholarly works have been produced in the fields of sociology, international relations and political science in significant numbers followed by the publication of novels that are specifically dealing with the tensions of 9/11 world. However, only some of these novels have achieved worldwide recognition, and thus have been studied extensively by the literary critics and scholars and eventually made their ways into teaching canons of postcolonial literature courses.

I was introduced to *Minaret* and *Maps* through the courses I took as a part of my undergraduate Erasmus Exchange stay at Kingston University, London in 2010. Reading *Minaret* in "Critical Introduction to World Writing in English" and *Maps for Lost Lovers* in "Contemporary Novels" courses has made me aware of both the problematic usage of labels and categories while at the same broadening the view of the window from which I was looking at postcolonial studies. Until then, my understanding of Contemporary British Fiction was limited with more popular authors such as Salman Rushdie, Hanif Kureishi, Zadie Smith, Monica Ali, Ian McEwan, Arundhati Roy, Kazuo Ishiguro whereas there are lots of other writers writing from various perspectives. Only to name a few, I became aware of the work of writers such as Kamila Shamsie, Robin Yassin-Kassab, Nadeem Aslam, Leila Aboulela, Abdulrazak Gurnah, who can be linked to British Muslim Fiction writers this study focuses on. These writers along with their contemporaries also explore the difficulties of identity negotiations, integration processes in their works and produce quality works that are widely read through UK; but unfortunately not each one of them can make their way to canons and English Literature classrooms.

Both *Minaret* and *Maps* have succeeded in attracting wide attention from literary critics; however there are not many works dealing with both of the novels and reading them as examples of British Muslim Fiction. While limited in number,

thanks to their scope and insight the works have greatly contributed to the formation of this study. To begin with, the definition of British Muslim Fiction this study uses is borrowed from Claire Chambers' *British Muslim Fictions: Interviews with Contemporary Authors* (2011), where Chambers interviews thirteen authors. Her interviews bring together authors ranging from atheist to devout Muslims, coming from different cultural backgrounds, and through manifesting how this identity marker is experienced and negotiated differently by each author, Chambers displays the diversity the category of British Muslim Fiction writers, whom she refers to as a "loosely connected discordant family" promises.

Chambers has written extensively on the issue, and her other works such as "Recent Literary Representations of British Muslims," appearing in *Mediating Faiths: Religion and Socio- Cultural Change in the 21st Century*, which analyses *Minaret* and *Maps for Lost Lovers* has made me more conscious of this diversity. Another article by Chambers, "Multi-Culti Nancy Mitfords and Halal Novelists: The Politics of Marketing Muslim Writers In the UK" (2010), where Chambers scrutinizes the marketing strategies used to advertise, promote and sell contemporary novels has helped me better understand the reasons behind formations of contemporary literary canons, and how some works were making their way into publicity while others were failing. Tracing the development of British Muslim Fiction separately from the more general term of "Black Writing," Chambers analyses two growing trends which she terms as "multicultural" versus "*halal* novelist," and exposes how while novels by writers like Zadie Smith, Monica Ali, Hanif Kureishi, Kamila Shamsie are being promoted by references to their characters' multiculturalism, there is another group of writers like Leila Aboulela, whose novels are presented as speaking to religious audiences, who feature hijab wearing women and marketed with a specific emphasis on the position of the authors as "insiders" and "authentic agents" of the culture and the community represented in their works.

Related with the category of *halal* fiction Sadia Abbas' article "Leila Aboulela, Religion, and the Challenge of the Novel", which mainly focuses on Aboulela's first novel, *The Translator* (1999) and briefly mentions *Maps for Lost Lovers*, has deeply informed the section on Aboulela's faith-driven fiction. Abbas begins with exploring religious narratives and then scrutinizes how Aboulela

continues this ideological pursuit both in *The Translator* and *Minaret.* According to Abbas, Leila Aboulela's novels can be referred to as religious novels as they not only engage with religious people but also convert novelistic modes to convey the mindset and inner world of a devout believer. For instance, in many cases, Allah is included in the narrative, in very personified forms, as if watching the people and guiding them and often intervening in worldly affairs. Abbas' engagement with Leila Aboulela's faith-driven fiction, along with Wail S. Hassan's "Leila Aboulela and the Ideology of Muslim Immigrant Fiction" (2008), where Hassan explores the ideology surfacing in Aboulela's fiction, through linking Aboulela to her predecessors such as Tayeb Salih, has helped me to situate Aboulela's works within British Muslim Fiction while at the same time inducing me to consider more critically how *Minaret* and *Maps* differ in terms of their representation of British Muslim identities. While Aboulela's is a faith-driven fiction, and Aboulela writes with the specific aim of asserting her own positionality as the immigrant Muslim woman, and accordingly focuses on the individual, Aslam is more interested in the intersections of gender, diaspora and religion, and views diasporic experience as a gendered one, where religion becomes one of the means through which communities continue to live under pressure. David Waterman's article "Memory and Cultural Identity: Negotiating Modernity in Nadeem Aslam's *Maps for Lost Lovers*" (2011), explores the pressures that the closed diasporic community of *Maps* find themselves struggling with. As they are negotiating tradition and modernity, they are forced to redefine their subjectivities within the British context; however their fear of contamination by the white becomes a hindrance to the realization of the desired interaction between communities, as a result of which immigrant communities find themselves leading parallel lives, living "inside" the colonial centre, yet remaining "outside" it.

Nadia Butt is another literary scholar who has written on the conflict between modernity and tradition as reflected in *Maps for Lost Lovers.* In her article"Between Orthodoxy and Modernity: Mapping the Transcultural Predicaments of Pakistani Immigrants in Multi-Ethnic Britain in Nadeem Aslam's *Maps for Lost Lovers*", she exposes how the immigrant community in *Maps* chooses to remain within the closed circuit of the diaspora, rendering the key terms characterizing the modern world such as fusion and hybridity irrelevant. Based on Butt's argument, in my study I tried to

emphasize how as reflected both in *Minaret* and *Maps,* contrary to common belief, for some people hybridity did not have any signifying power. In this respect, I aimed to underline how Najwa's choosing *ummah,* global Islamic community, over national identification is a negation of nation as an identity marker, marks a significant shift from nationally-oriented narratives to ones informed by religion. Similarly, in *Maps* the reader witnesses the reluctance the immigrant community shows for integration, which is hardly ever a problem for the members as they are struggling with many other problems such as religious abuse, racism and class divisions. Cordula Lemke's "Racism in the Disapora: Nadeem Aslam's *Maps for Lost Lovers*"appearingin *Multi-Ethnic Britian 2000+: New Perspectives in Literature, Film and the Arts* (2008) has made me aware of some other problems immigrant communities were experiencing inside the diaspora. While racism by whites is a serious threat, *Maps* also portrays cases of "othering the other," where one of the main characters Kaukab, feels unpleasant about talking to some group of Pakistani people because they are not from "her part of Pakistan".

Two doctoral theses, Firouzeh Ameri's "Veiled Experiences: Re-writing Women's Identities and Experiences in Contemporary Muslim Fiction in English" (Murdoch University, 2012), where she analyzes *The Translator* (1999) and *Minaret* (2005) by Leila Aboulela, *Does My Head Look Big in This?* (2005) by Randa Abdel-Fattah, *Sweetness in the Belly* (2005) by Camilla Gibb and *The Girl in the Tangerine Scarf* (2006) by Mohja Kahf, and Hasan Majed's"Islam and Muslim Identities in Four Contemporary British Novels" (University of Sunderland, 2012), where he studies Hanif Kureishi's *The Black Album*, Monica Ali's *Brick Lane,* Fadia Faqir's *My Name isSalma*, and Leila Aboulela's *Minaret*, have also enriched my reading of the novels and informed the sections particularly on Najwa's emergence as a self-confident woman wearing her Muslim identity in the colonial centre. These works have made their greatest contribution by creating a feeling of fellowship through which I felt there were other people researching similar issues, and diversity of British Muslim Fiction was being critically acknowledged.

Sara Upstone, who was teaching parts of the above mentioned courses on contemporary fiction, was the person through whose lectures I was introduced to *Minaret.* Afterwards, I began to follow her critical work, and both her articles along with her book *British Asian Fiction: Twenty- First- Century Voices* have contributed

to this study tremendously. Through Upstone's work, I could better understand Aslam's place among other British-Asian writers such as Monica Ali, Hanif Kureishi, Hari Kunzru while also developing a more critical stance towards the different narrative tools such as lyricism, magic realism and fantasy used by the authors.

Finally, as exploring British Muslim Fiction inevitably resulted in dealing with ideological challenges, often I had to consult to author's interviews to better convey what was propelling the authors into writing their own side of the stories. If it was not for the many interviews I have used all over this thesis, significant points such as Leila Aboulela's asserting her own positionality as a devout Muslim writer, Nadeem Aslam's real life experience of growing up in a diasporic community, with a family with striking similarities to the one he presents in *Maps,* could have escaped my attention and leave this study somewhat incomplete. I feel the presence of authorial voices strengthens the arguments I am making with regard to their novels.

1.3 Methodology and the Frame of the Study: Colonial and Postcolonial Literatures

Ashcroft et al contend in their seminal work *The Empire Writes Back* (2002) that "more than three- quarters of the people living in the world today have had their lives shaped by the experience of colonialism" (1). This life shaping experience was conducted not only through a physical practice, but also through a "textual exercise" of the empire (Boehmer 14). For this reason, the literature produced both in colonial and postcolonial eras is highly informed with the knowledge and the experience of living in and after an empire,understanding of which as argued by Suman Gupta in *Contemporary Literature: The Basics* (2012) can facilitate the perception of the world we live in and reflections of it in contemporary British literature.

British Empire as Elleke Boehmer puts forward in *Colonial & Postcolonial Literatures* was also a textual practice, expressing colonial settlement, metaphor of travelling, politics of possession textually through diaries, administrative records, memoirs, reports, letters and of course literature (14). Both colonial and colonialist literature, though the former might seem more innocent compared to the latter which is "written by and for colonizing Europeans about non-European lands dominated by them" (Boehmer 3) resulted not only in empire's expansion and self justification

politically, but also contributed to creation of a world that is divided into two, as East and West; the West being the superior, rational, protective, civilizing party, overwhelmed by "The White Man's Burden". Ashcroft et al also assert that during the imperial period, literature in the language of the colonizer was produced by the literary elite who identified themselves with the colonizing power; hence produced texts that were representative of colonial power (5). That is to say, even though such works were about a native community and narrated the experiences of the colonized peoples, they still privileged the centre, "emphasizing the 'home' over the 'native', the 'metropolitan' over the 'provincial' or 'colonial', and so forth", mainly to "hide imperial discourse within which they are produced" (*ibid*). Given these noteworthy aspects, defining the postcolonial literature only as this literature which is produced after the collapse of the empire is to undermine its extent and scope. Boehmer defines postcoloniality as "that condition in which colonized peoples seek to take their place, forcibly or otherwise, as historical agents in an increasingly globalized world"(3), and separates it from the hyphenated word post-colonial, which implies temporality and refers particularly to the period beginning with the 1950s, as former British colonies began to gain independence. Based on Boehmer's definition, this study takes postcoloniality as a condition seriously affecting the lives of displaced immigrants as reflected both in *Minaret* and *Maps for Lost Lovers*, through characters who are coming from ex-colonies, Sudan and Pakistan, and now trying to define an identity position for themselves as exilic subjects located in the colonial centre. Accordingly, the following part presents a very brief outline of development of postcolonial theory and literatures with the aim of providing a contextual and theoretical framework for this study.

1.3.1 Postcolonialism and Postcolonial Theory

Postcolonialism is a contested term; the difficulty of defining which arises from the problematic and challenging issue of defining difference without undermining diversity and the potential for solidarity. Moore- Gilbert et al's definition of the term reiterates this idea while at the same time warning against the essentialist approaches and attitudes. Postcolonialism, Moore- Gilbert et al assert, is "not a question of choosing, but of negotiation and transgression" (2), and thus what it promises is "a

way of deconstructing, or negotiation of the difference between consent and descent" (6).

Ashcroft et al identify four critical models that have shaped postcolonial literatures: First one is the 'national' or regional models which underline distinct qualities about a certain culture. Second is the race-based models that identify shared characteristics of different national literatures, an example of which is black writing. Third one is comparative models, which look for particular linguistic, historical, cultural features in two or more postcolonial literatures. Fourth are the more comprehensive models that seek for characteristics such as hybridity, which is a prevalent theme in the postcolonial works produced today. As these four different models have evolved over time, postcolonial theory, too, underwent gradual transformations.From the 1980s onwards, postcolonial criticism has taken a more interdisciplinary shape, as it made use of other theories such as post-structuralism, feminism, diaspora criticism, new historicism and eco-criticism both thematically and methodologically. For instance, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, bell hooks and Homi K. Bhabha are the cases in point. Spivak's renowned essay "Can the Subaltern Speak?", where she extends the term subaltern which she borrows from Gramsci, to include the "Third World," particularly the female subaltern who is doubly in shadow, is a significant intervention, as it criticizes not only the discourses that create the subaltern, but the postcolonial critics themselves who think it their right to speak for the subaltern, without questioning their own positionality. Consequently, from the 1980s to the present day, postcolonial literature has changed "from national bonding to international wanderings, from rootedness to peregrination" as "many writers' geographic and cultural affiliations became more divided, displaced, and uncertain" (Boehmer 225). Elleke Boehmer sums up this condition as follows:

> In the 2000s the generic postcolonial writer is more likely to be a cultural traveller, or an 'extra-territorial', than a national. Ex-colonial by birth, 'Third World' in cultural interest, cosmopolitan in almost every other way, she or he works within the precincts of the Western metropolis while at the same time retaining thematic and/or political connections with a national, ethnic, or regional background. (227)

As Boehmer further articulates, literature produced by such writers is a literature that is "*necessarily* transplanted, displaced, multilingual, and, simultaneously, conversant with the cultural codes of the West: it is within Europe/America though not fully *of*

Europe/America" (original emphasis 230). Both *Minaret* and *Maps for Lost Lovers* narrate the painful state of displacement through foregrounding the binary opposition between the East and the West, to expose how postcolonial subjects longing for belonging negotiate British Muslim identity positions. While postcolonial condition as defined by Boehmer is a feature that profoundly characterizes *Minaret* and *Maps for Lost Lovers*, there are some other issues emerging from the novels, in dealing with which postcolonial literary theory might remain inadequate. In the first place, as argued by many critics such as Wail S. Hassan, Amin Malak, Gayatri Spivak and Kenan Malik, and partially expressed by Boehmer in the above extract, postcolonial theory is intrinsically Eurocentric. Secondly, more related to the purpose of this study, as Amin Malak argues, it is highly secular. Malak believes postcolonial literary theory involves a "marginalization of religion as a force or factor with its own complex dynamics [that] reflects privileging a secular, Europe-American stance that seems to shape the parameters of postcolonial discourses" (17). Even though, as Firouzeh Ameri draws attention to, the world might be "effortlessly secular" (qtd in Ameri 10), in Fredrick Jameson's view, religion still holds an important place in the lives of many people, shaping their experiences of immigration, even becoming the most solid identity marker with which immigrants identify as portrayed in *Minaret* and *Maps.* In view of this fact, this study incorporates postcolonial discussions around identity negotiation, hybridity, diaspora and migration and the works on British Muslim identities published especially in the aftermath of 9/11, with the aim of presenting a broader picture of the factors that shape the representation of British Muslim identities in *Minaret* and *Maps for Lost Lovers.*

1.4 Exploring Identity in the 21st Century

Identities in Stuart Hall's view are "points of temporary attachment to the subject positions which discursive practices construct for us" (Hall 6). Being always in a flux, identities are made and remade and constantly negotiated in accordance with the changing circumstances of a certain era. A brief look into human history reveals how every era had its own concerns and concepts on the identity formation issue, which eventually produced a discourse that functioned as a reference point in relation to which identities are formulated. For instance, referring to beginnings of

the twentieth century, Du Bois argues that "THE PROBLEM of the twentieth century is the problem of the colorline,—the relation of the darker to the lighter races of men in Asia and Africa, in America and the islands of the sea" (original emphasis 16). While this sense of "being a problem" (Du Bois 7) due to one's colour is still very much relevant in many aspects, the grounds on which the experience of being referred to as a problem, "peculiar even for one who has never been anything else" (Du Bois 8) has changed significantly towards the end of the century as a result of "margins coming into representation- in art, in painting, in film, in music, in literature, in the modern arts everywhere, in politics, and in social life generally" (Hall 183). The colour line of the twenty first century is not only a signifier of race, any more. That is to say, in the twenty first century, Du Bois' color line has been transformed into a concept that has more to with representation, namely "the presence and circulation of a representation" (de Certau xiii). Being represented as the more recent debates embodied in Spivak's famous question "Can the Subaltern Speak?" manifest, is not the solution, as how and by whom one is represented inevitably determines the representation to the extent that a misrepresentation might become the currency, since "identities are … constituted within, not outside representation" (Hall 4). Considering the importance of the interdependent relation between identity and representation, it can be argued that representation determines not only the way a certain group of people are represented and perceived by a certain audience, but also influences the mechanisms that shape an individual's perception of self and the other.

Du Bois' double consciousness explains this situation as the "sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity" (9), as a result of which "one ever feels his twoness,—an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder" (*ibid*). This double vision or hyphenated identities, carries the history of this conflict, "this longing to attain self-conscious manhood, to merge his double self into a better and truer self" (*ibid*). Du Bois further expresses this hyphenated identity as follows:

> In this merging he [hyphenated American] wishes neither of the older selves to be lost. He would not Africanize America, for America has

> too much to teach the world and Africa. He would not bleach his Negro soul in a flood of white Americanism, for he knows that Negro blood has a message for the world. He simply wishes to make it possible for a man to be both a Negro and an American, without being cursed and spit upon by his fellows, without having the doors of Opportunity closed roughly in his face. (*ibid*)

Du Bois' call for an equal loyalty to both sides of the hyphen is in fact repeated in many other works. For instance, for Bhabha this double consciousness, if thought as double vision can be nurturing as "the truest eye may now belong to the migrant's double vision" (5), as being insiders and outsiders, the immigrants such as British Muslims, inhabit multiple spaces simultaneously.

Muslims have been present in UK for quiet a long time. Philip Lewis points to 1950 as the date when significant Muslim migration to England began. Many of these immigrants migrated to England to work in industrial cities of London and textile towns of Yorkshire and Lancashire (16). According to Lewis, it is possible to identify a four phase Muslim migration to Britain: "first, the pioneers; then 'chain migration' of generally unskilled male workers from a number of villages; followed by the migration of wives and children; and finally, the emergence of a generation of Muslims born and educated in Britain" (16). According to Pew Report "Mapping the Global Muslim Population" issued in 2009, the number of Muslim population in Europe was 38.112.000, corresponding to %5.2 of the whole population, and 2.4% of world Muslim population (6). 1.647.000 of Muslim population across Europe is located in UK, consisting 2.7% of total population and equaling to 0.1% of world Muslim population (22). With the increasing number of immigrants and need to regulate immigration issues, Britain introduced three different acts: 1968 Commonwealth Immigrants Act, 1971 Immigration Act and finally 1976 Race Relations Act, which made discrimination on the basis of race, colour and nationality illegal. Until a series of events starting with Rushdie affair in 1989[1], British Muslims were usually referred to simply as Asians, a label to which Ziauddin Sardar strongly opposes. He says: "Calling Muslims 'Asians' is ridiculous because Muslims consciously reject all racial and geographical categories- as a Universalist worldview, Islam seeks global, Universalist notions of identity… Even in Asia,

[1] For an analysis of the Rushdie affair, see the next chapter British Muslim Fiction and the Rushdie Affair.

where more than half of the world population lives, no one calls him or herself 'Asian'. … So, at best, the label 'Asian' is meaningless" (qtd in Upstone *British Asian* 3). As Sardar underlines, Muslim is not a subcategory of race, colour or nationality; and it has its own intrinsic qualities shaping the lives of millions of Muslims scattered all round the globe.

In his influential book *Multicultural Politics* (2007), Tariq Modood underlines that it takes much more than racial framework to understand current issues and debates in Britain, since in Modood's view, discussion and legislation around racism are concentrated on white vs black binary opposition, which excludes the categories of Asian and Muslim, as a result of which these people suffer both from "colour racism" and "cultural racism" (7), as this tendency to group all Muslims into one group and treat them as if they were a race or ethnicity, overlooks the diversity and complex bonds an individual might have with his/her Muslim heritage. In reality, as Moghissi and Ghorashi point out "in addition to Sunni and Shii divisions, we may have different schools and sub-sects within the faith. Besides, Muslims, like other people, include in their ranks orthodox, practicing individuals, non-practicing skeptics, secular and laic members" (1), which is often ignored by the Islamophobia discourse, due to, for instance, extreme media coverage of more radicalized Islamists militants portrayed as the one and only form of Islam that exists. The most striking example of this is the increase in the percentage of stop and search incidents in the aftermath of 9/11, explained to people by the airport police bluntly as "We're doing checks on Muslims" (qtd in Kabir 96). Kabir notes that "From 2002/3 to 2003/4, counter-terrorism 'stop and search' incidents increased by approximately 40 per cent almost to 30,000" and "statistics showed that between 2001/2 and 2002/3 the number of white people stopped and searched under the Terrorism Act increased by 118 per cent, but for Asians the increase was 312 per cent" (97), which shows in many cases the host countries had one single story in circulation about Muslims.

In order to get a better sense of how British Muslim identities are negotiated, it would be useful to review how Britishness has been defined over the centuries. According to Parekh's definition, "being British basically means three things: commitment to Britain and its people, loyalty to its legal and political institutions, and respect for the values and norms that are central to its way of life" (qtd in Kabir 11). Validity of Parekh's definition would change from one individual to the other,

but considered within the context of multicultural politics of the 1980s, it is possible to say that Britishness was, or at least aspired to be, a cultural category anyone who had respect for the above mentioned values could participate. However, in reality the process that looks as a smooth path is complicated as most of the time acquiring a lawful citizenship is not enough as "a certain level of habitual citizenship practices will be necessary to support the imagination of a shared political community and to empower individuals through the system of legal rights" (qtd in Gresch et al 58). This habitual citizenship practices might include daily practices ranging from clothing to dietary habits, the factors that make the differences between the "born and bred British" and the "rest," including all minority groups, more "visible". In view of this, Williams and Vashi assert that those who "encountered the greatest discrimination have been those with the most visibly different religious practices" (271). These minor differences from the mainstream British lifestyle; however, when faced with escalating Islamophobia beginning with the Rushdie affair in 1989, continuing with the Gulf War, 9/11 and 7/7 London bombings initiated a chain of "failure to integrate" discourse, and creating a "non- integration frame" (Ataç et al 87), according to which an individual's Britishness could be measured. Ataç et al's observation with regard to the headscarf debates in various countries across Europe is quite significant in this respect. They observe that across Europe, Muslims living in European countries were referred to as immigrants rather than citizens and these immigrants were also grouped into a certain Other, which is presented "not only as different, but also as being alien, backward or anti-modern" (85), with no wish to integrate.

Tony Blair, in his momentous speech "The Duty to Integrate", on 8 December 2006 at Downing Street, indicates with reference to 7/7 London bombers that integration is more about the values and accuses Muslims for failing to integrate. He refers to bombers as being "integrated at one level in terms of lifestyle and work", but failing to integrate at "the point of shared, common unifying British values", which are not "what defines us as people, but as citizens, the rights and duties that go with being a member of our society" (n.p). He states that:

> Christians, Jews, Muslims, Hindus, Sikhs and other faiths have a perfect right to their own identity and religion, to practice their faith and to conform to their culture. This is what multicultural, multi-faith

> Britain is about. That is what is legitimately distinctive. But when it comes to our essential values - belief in democracy, the rule of law, tolerance, equal treatment for all, respect for this country and its shared heritage - then that is where we come together, it is what we hold in common; it is what gives us the right to call ourselves British. At that point no distinctive culture or religion supersedes our duty to be part of an integrated United Kingdom. *(ibid)*

This extract from Blair's speech lays bare how Britishness as an identity marker requires complete loyalty from its participants. The UK, as Gresch et al point out, "has an established state religion that enjoys significant privileges", which "serve as a standard against which other religious communities can fight on the basis of fairness- claim equality" (63). Blair's speech and non-integration frame implies that in this search for equality, the roles of the subject, "I as an individual human being" and "I as a citizen" are not allowed to interact. For Blair, there seems to be no problem in negotiating these different positions, because in his view, any identity marker is subordinated to totalizing Britishness. This change in the discourse from multiculturalism to "duty" to integrate, is in itself indicative of this. Two novels this thesis will discuss are chosen from two opposite ends of this spectrum. While both authors deal with issues of religion in a multicultural society, their stance on the issue is very different. While Nadeem Aslam's *Maps for Lost Lovers* depicts a community that refrains from interaction, and is an example of "failure to integrate" discourse, Leila Aboulela's *Minaret* portrays how faith can be used as a power that eases the trauma of migration, and in fact provide the individual with the sense of belonging and rootedness in the host country, and hence facilitating integration.

CHAPTER II

BRITISH MUSLIM FICTION

In the aftermath of 9/11, the interest in Muslims across Europe and the United States has increased. In addition to massive media coverage of terrorist attacks and manifestations of radicalized Islam, a significant amount of scholarly work has been carried out with a genuine interest in Muslim communities and what was causing radicalization especially among younger Muslims, who were formerly regarded as fully integrated citizens, but now labelled as "the other" or "the enemy within". Philip Lewis' *Young, British, Muslim* (2008), Tariq Modood's *Multicultural Politics: Racism, Ethnicity and Muslims in Britain* (2007), Haideh Moghissi's and Halle Ghorashi's *Muslim Diaspora in the West* (2010), *Understanding Muslim Identity: Rethinking Fundamentalism* (2009) by Gabriele Marranci, *Muslim Women in the United Kingdom and Beyond: Experiences and Images* (2003) by Haifaa Jawad and T.Benn, *Young British Muslims* (2010) by Nahid Afrose Kabir are only some of the noteworthy books that deal with British Muslims and their everyday concerns as they are negotiating multiple identity positions. Reading above mentioned studies on British Muslim identity makes us aware of the questions Homi Bhabha asks in "Locations of Culture: the Post-colonial and the Postmodern". In this study, Bhabha urges us to consider "how subjects [are] formed 'in-between', or in excess of, the sum of the 'parts' of difference (usually intoned as race/class/gender, etc)" (137).

British Muslim subjects are formed "in between" the parts of difference in Bhabha's terms, and in comparison to their parents who did not regard themselves as British, fostered the hope of an eventual return to their home countries, the second generation is "a new generation of Muslims that are searching for expressions of Islam which can connect with their lived experience as British-Muslims whose first language is English" (Lewis xvii). For this reason, the second generation feels the weight of the hyphen more profoundly compared to their parents' generation for whom there was not an urgent need to divide loyalties between various identity positions as they strictly adhered to the national and religious identifications they had before the experience of immigration and exile. The new generations of British

Muslims; however, refer to England as home, and they actively participate in the nation's cultural output by publicly expressing themselves through means such as politics, art, music and literature.

The controversial term of British Muslim Fiction very broadly refers to fiction produced by above mentioned groups of British Muslims. This study adopts this term from Claire Chambers, in the manner aspired in *British Muslim Fictions: Interviews with Contemporary Writers* (2011). According to her, when we think of the similarities represented in the fiction produced by British Muslim writers, "we can usefully speak of them as a loosely connected and often discordant family" (Chambers *British Muslim Fictions* 272), whose members reflect in their works, the tensions this identity marker- whether willingly adopted or forcefully imposed on the authors- carries along with it. Most of the time, writers linked to British Muslim fiction as Chambers articulates, find themselves in positions in which they are forced to negotiate "a secular multiculturalism and a devotional world of prescribed and proscribed practices" ("Multi-Culti" 398). In this respect, the category of British Muslim Fiction becomes a useful tool in understanding the tensions this group of writers are struggling with. These writers, regardless of whether they are devout people or non-believers, are perceived to be representatives of the culture they are coming from. They are forced to step into the dangerous zone of the burden of representation, on the grounds of which for instance Rushdie's book was burned by the audiences who were not pleased about Rushdie's representations of Islam and eventually even a *fatwa* on Salman Rushdie was issued after the publication of *The Satanic Verses*(1988).

Similarly, Monica Ali's *Brick Lane* has been regarded as a representative text of a certain diasporic community and thus been exposed to public controversies. The novel was harshly criticized by London's Bangladeshi population intensely populating the East End, for its representations of British Asian and Muslim characters. Monica Ali can be thought to have taken the game of representation a step further by naming the book, *Brick Lane*, an actual place; thus claiming to represent a specific community. According to Ruth Maxey the book's success can be attributed in part to Ali's representing the East End, an area until then represented very little, allowing especially white critics to assume that they gained insight into the real community (220). However, on the other hand, in part *Brick Lane* articulates

a cliché of migrant texts where female protagonist is liberated through sexual awakening, in the protagonist Nazneen's case through an extramarital relationship with Karim. Still more problematic is the book's ending, portraying Nazneen skating in sari and Razia saying to everything is possible in England, which is only a very naive assumption, ignoring the everyday tensions many British Muslims going out into the public space face. Maxey further documents a list of critics who have claimed for the representative status of the novel, in words such as the following: "a text that captures the cultural and political textures of Muslim Britain", "a tremendous celebration of multicultural Britain", "I feel more informed about the people who are my next-door neighbours" (qtd in Maxey 227). As highlighted in these little blurbs, the text's representativeness is a very problematic issue. The novel, in contrast to the dogmatism of religion ideally should be a site where "different languages, values and narratives quarrel" (Rushdie 420) and exist alongside each other. The diversity postcolonial literature is aspiring can be achieved only by ascribing the fiction this privileged position. However, the way of doing this is not promoting the texts that tell a single story while completely ignoring or criticizing the other possible ways of being. The problem with *Brick Lane* and similar novels is not what they portray, but rather how through marketing strategies and publishing mania, these novels come to dominate the public view and thus begin to be perceived as one and only representative texts of the culture they are depicting. By valorising the characters who value sexual liberation, hybridity, fluidity while condemning or laughing at those who do not comply with them, the texts ascribed the status of "authentic", cause a very dangerous hegemony over the way British Muslim narratives are produced, marketed and consumed. Aiming to underline these divisions and emphasize the diversity of British Muslim fiction, this study brings together *Minaret* and *Maps for Lost Lovers,* not as representative, "authentic" British Muslim texts, but rather as texts where a difference in perspectives on British Muslim identities manifest itself, thus showing how the same identity marker is negotiated differently by each author; and hence highlighting the ever changing and fluid nature of British Muslim identities as represented in contemporary British fiction.

2.1 The Rushdie Affair

Salman Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses*, the target of the alleged blasphemy, was published in 1988. A year after its publication, Iranian Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, accusing Rushdie of blasphemy and open insult to God, the Prophet Mohammed and all Muslims, issued a fatwa on him along with all those who contributed in its publication and who knew of its content. Khomeini's call for murdering of Rushdie started book burnings and violent protests in areas such as Bradford and eventually forced Salman Rushdie into hiding for about five years, causing the death of several of the book's translators including Hitoshi Igarashi, the Japanese translator of novel, and Italian Ettore Capriolo, who wasbeaten up and stabbed in his Milan apartment. William Nygaard, the Norwegian publisher was shot dead, and several bookshops in America were firebombed for selling the novel (Malik "Shadow of Fatwa" 114). Soon, the event became a cause for expression of Muslim identity versus freedom of speech. According to Rushdie, it was a case where many people had simply forgotten that "at the centre of the storm stands a novel, a work of fiction, one that aspires to the condition of literature" (393). For Rushdie, "*The Satanic Verses* is, in part, a secular man'sreckoning with the religious spirit. It is by no means alwayshostile to faith" (396), and the debate surrounding the book was more political rather than critical, laying bare how unfortunately literary productions cannot escape the never ending fights for power. As Rushdie reminds, various political bodies including Pakistan, India and Britain have benefited immensely from this row over the book:

> In Britain, where secular and religious leaders had beenvying for power in the community for over a decade, andwhere, for a long time, largely secular organizations such asthe Indian Workers Association (IWA) had been in theascendant, the 'affair' swung the balance of power backtowards the mosques. Small wonder, then, that the variouscouncils of mosques are reluctant to bring the protest to anend, even though many Muslims up and down the countryfind it embarrassing, even shameful, to be associated withsuch illiberalism and violence. (410- 411)

As a result of this polarization, as Kenan Malik argues, "the burningbook became an icon of Islamic rage, and a portentof a new kind of conflict" ("Marketplace", 40), thus causing Islamism to be regarded as authentic voice of British Muslims, while it is certainly not (41). Malik expresses this through the following analysis :

> The United Kingdom Action Committee on Islamic Affairs, the principal anti-Rushdie campaign, was largely made up of organisations linked to Jamaat-e-Islami. These groups would form the core of the Muslim Council of Britain, which was set up in 1997 and quickly became accepted by policymakers and journalists as the voice of British Islam. And though polls have consistently found that only around 5 per cent of Muslims think that the MCB represents them, the official support given to such organizations in the post-Rushdie era has distorted perceptions of Muslims in this country and, to a certain extent, Muslim self-perceptions, too. (*ibid*)

As this shift in perception proves, many people who had no sense of religion before, suddenly found themselves identified as Muslims, thus becoming more and more conscious of their Muslim identities. At the other end, there were a group of people who strongly opposed Islam and everything to do with it. While this polarization led to book burnings, street fights, and immensely contributed to radical Islamism, it also paved the way for the emergence and development of *halal* fiction, as a counter response to the works by so-called "blasphemous" authors such as Salman Rushdie.

2.2 Leila Aboulela and Her Work

Born in 1964 Cairo, Egypt, Aboulela grew up in Khartoum, Sudan. She first graduated from Khartoum University in 1985 with a degree in Economics, and then from London School of Economics with a master's degree. For many years, she lived between Aberdeen and Abu Dhabi, and it was the experience of immigration to Scotland, which encouraged her to start writing. Both *Minaret* (2005) and her debut novel *The Translator* (1999) were shortlisted for the Orange Prize, and "The Museum" in her short story collection *Coloured Lights* won the Caine Prize for African Writing in 2000. Her most recent novel, *Lyrics Alley* (2011) was short-listed for the Commonwealth Writers Prize- Europe and South East Asia, and it is the fiction winner of the Scottish Book Awards.

As Vettath highlights, born to an Egyptian mother and a Sudanese father, Aboulela was taken to various countries, and throughout her life she negotiated multiple identity positions. In a lengthy interview, Aboulela expresses to Musiitwa that it was travelling which made her a writer:

> I started to write in 1992 after I had left Sudan and was living in Scotland. I was very homesick for Khartoum. People around me did

> not know much about Sudan or about Islam, the two things that made up my identity. This increased my feeling of alienation. The late eighties were the start of the anti-Islam sentiments in the Western media and my presence in Britain made me defensive. Suddenly I needed to express that life in Khartoum was good, that the people were good, that it was circumstances that had made us all leave rather than choice. I was in a culture and place which asserted every minute that 'West is Best', Africa is a mess, Islam oppresses women and that I should be grateful that I had escaped. Youth and pride made me resist this description. And this, I believe is what triggered my writing. I found my voice in fiction. (n.p)

Aboulela's desire to "write herself into Britain" originates from the experience of migration as a result of which she finds herself in a position where she struggles with the discourse that privileges the West as the best, while subordinating the East. It is not like Aboulela was not aware of this dichotomy, but in leaving Sudan, she becomes more and more exposed to the ways through which Orientalism works. While in Sudan, she was in a privileged position, thus avoided intriguing remarks about her identity; whereas while in the West, she finds herself in the position of the Orient, just because she is wearing the hijab. The centre freezes Aboulela's identity as the oppressed Oriental female; her westernized upbringing, university education in London hardly ever becomes visible to western eyes.

Aboulela's writing has often been defined under such titles, as African writing- her short story collection was published by Heinemann African Writers Series- Muslim writer, and *halal* fiction. According to Sadia Abbas, this is a formal puzzle because Aboulela's *halal* novels do not really deal with religion. Divine representation, Abbas argues, is absent from them (445). While Abbas' point of view is partially true, it is mostly incomplete. Aboulela deals not with God, heaven, theological questions on a metaphysical level because she prefers, perhaps the easier, yet more relevant way, and writes about how religious faith is experienced by common people in their everyday lives. Therefore, as Ferial J. Ghazoul expresses "what makes her writing 'Islamic' is not religious correctness or didacticism. Rather, it is a certain narrative logic where faith and rituals become moving modes of living" (n.p). Islam in Aboulela's novels, in Abbas' words functions a "socio-psyhic tranquilizer" (453) that makes it possible for the person in exile to overcome the trauma of migration and other losses. Islam provides meaning and order in a world that is otherwise governed by chaos. While the motto of the day is chaos and fusion,

Aboulela's characters reject the promises of chaos for an orderly life. Life regulated around faith and rituals faciliates the process of integration into Britain, but significantly not through positioning the subject as a British citizen but through negating the signifying power of any national identity marker. Aboulela's characters reach out for the global *ummah* that connects all Muslims to each other as the citizens of the world, thus making it possible for all Muslims to feel at home anywhere on earth since "home is where the faith is" (Ameri 114).

In the interview Aboulela gives to Vettath, she repeats that what she regarded as the misrepresentation of Islam in the western media fuelled her desire to write works of fiction with a Muslim vision, and adds: "My ambition is to put practising Muslims in English literary fiction, to write novels that are infused with Muslim aesthetics in the same way that many of the western classics were formed by a Christian ethos" (n.p). That is to say, in Aboulela's fiction, religion and faith are the central governing identity markers around which other identity markers such as race, gender, and ethnicity are negotiated. It is this part of the faith that Aboulela aspires to present to British fiction. Aboulela's faith-driven fiction while introducing the practising Muslims into British literary scene, also situates her in a significant place among other Sudanese authors according to Wail S. Hassan. Her fiction Hassan articulates:

> completes the project of [Tayeb] Salih's. Whereas his are narratives of failure (of the national project, of the colonial bourgeoisie, of postcolonial intellectuals, of secular Arab ideologies of modernity), hers are narratives of redemption and fulfillment through Islam. While Salih's work reflects the disappointments of the 1960s and 70s, Aboulela's materializes the slogan of the Islamist movement that emerged in the mid-1970s: "Islam is the solution". (300)

Hasan Majed also finds Aboulela's image of Islam unique in British fiction, since he believes she writes from a "more authentic Muslim voice" (2). While matter of authenticity is a dangerous zone to step into and it is by no means within the scope of this study to single out some texts as more authentic, thus more representative than others, one nevertheless has to agree with Mike Philips' thoughts that Aboulela is one of the authors that write with a different aim than satirizing Islam. In Philips' view, writers like Aboulela "avoid the cute and ingratiating tone that has come to characterise popular narratives about identity and the clash of cultures in Britain",

and these authors "write from inside the experience of growing up and living with a network of customs and beliefs, which have themselves been subject to dramatic and far-reaching changes in the 20th century" (Philips n.p). Wail S. Hassan refers to this writing as a "new kind of literature [that] explains to non-Muslims aspects of Muslim lives, especially those of minorities in Europe and North America, while at the same time exposing prejudice, racism, and Islamophobia" (Hassan 317).

2.2.1 Halal Fiction

In "Multi-Culti Nancy Mitfords and Halal Novelists: The Politics of Marketing Muslim Writers in the UK" (2010), Chambers draws attention to the fact that Muslims in Britain were defined under the category "Black" until the 1980s. In the 1990s, "Asian" was employed to refer the Muslim population across UK, yet since 9/11 of 2001 and 7/7 of 2005 London bombings, the adjective has been shifted to more specific "Muslim" or "British Muslim" (390). In parallel with this, new definitions emerged in the literary market, too. "Muslim writing," "*halal* novels," and "*halal* novelist" are some of these labels which the authors find themselves identified with. *Halal* fiction refers to worldwide Islamic fiction in general written by Muslims and primarily for Muslims. Within the British context, *halal* fiction can be thought as a response to fiction produced both by the white English, and also by writers of Muslim heritage, such as Salman Rushdie, whose novel *The Satanic Verses*, led to a crisis among some of the Muslim circles, as the book was regarded as an insult to the Prophet Mohammed and Islam. Such titles as *halal* novelists can also be read as a literary response to a literature which in Chambers' words, is produced by "eye-catching, secular, on-trend and often Oxbridge-educated writers such as Hanif Kureishi in the 1990s, and Zadie Smith and Monica Ali in the early 2000s, [who] focus in their fiction on the sensationalist image of the fundamentalist or Islamist at the expense of other, arguably more pressing issues relating to Muslims, such as poverty, social exclusion and Islamophobia" ("Multi-Culti" 395).Until the emergence of these new titles, given the data Claire Chambers and Claire Squires provide, it is possible to observe that writing by writers of Muslim heritage had been largely ignored as many literary scholars did not consider it their

right to discuss religious affiliations of a given author and categorize literature under such a heading (Chambers 389, Squires 179).

Leila Aboulela's name is listed under Islamic Fiction writers along with others such as Irving Karchmar, Jamilah Kolocotronis, Samina Ali and Pamela Taylor ("Islamic Fiction Authors"). Aboulela's first novel *The Translator* (1999) was deemed by *The Muslim News* to be "the first *halal* novel written in English". When asked by Claire Chambers about this *halal* novelist label, Aboulela says:

> In Sudan, writers and intellectuals are usually very liberal and left wing and so on, and people want me to be like that, they want me to be the liberated woman, so they are appalled at this *halal* writer thing. But when this was written in *The Muslim News*, it was written meaning that "she's authentic, she's one of us"; it was meant in a nice way, so I take it as a compliment. (Chambers, "Multi-Culti" 400-1)

As this extract reveals, titles like *halal* fiction, *halal* novelist have become a signifier of authenticity, used and/or abused by writers, publishers and readers. For instance, Chambers also mentions how many works by female Muslim authors who choose to wear the hijab, including Aboulela, are marketed accordingly. Almost always, they feature hijab wearing portraits on their covers even if the theme is not directly related to it. While a young woman in pink hijab might be a suitable cover for Aboulela's second novel *Minaret,* given the importance of hijab as a part of the protagonist Najwa's identity, there could be thousands of other images than the hijab wearing young woman to be used in her first novel *The Translator*, and her last novel *Lyrics Alley.* Thus, the tag of *halal* novelist is both an empowering title, granting the author the right to authenticity and also a useful tool in the marketing of literature to certain groups of readers.

2.3 Nadeem Aslam and His Work

Born in Gujranwala, Pakistan in 1966, Nadeem Aslam is the author of four novels, *Season of the Rainbirds* (1993)*Maps for Lost Lovers* (2004), *The Wasted Vigil* (2008), *The Blind Man's Garden* (2013) and a novella *Leila in the Wilderness* (2010). Aslam grew up in Pakistan, and moved to Huddersfield at the age of 14. In a similar way to the artist Charag in *Maps*, who leaves his chemistry degree to pursue a career as a painter, Aslam quit his degree in biochemistry at the University of

Manchester in his third year, because as he tells Chambers he felt having this safety net would have dragged him into worldly affairs and prevented him from following his dream to become a writer (134). Aslam also confesses to Chambers that at the time, he studied sciences only because he felt his English was not initially good enough to pursue a degree in literature, and as soon as he believed his English was developing, he simply quit sciences to realize his life long dream to be an author.

Aslam spent the years he was writing his first novels in poverty. He was paid £1000 for publication of his first novel. Afterwards, he received some more for the prizes the novel won, but eventually all the money ran out and to support himself, Aslam took various jobs such as working at construction sites, in bars and cinemas during the day and continued writing at night time (Halmshaw, n,p). Over the years, it has become a routine for Aslam to write at night. Aslam says he finds the silence of night nourishing, and he associates darkness with the novelist while the material product that is going into the world, the novel is associated with daylight:

> I usually sleep during the day and write at night. I get up at eleven o'clock at night. I'm at my desk by midnight. I work until seven or eight in the morning. There is a wonderful, rich silence. I always think of the silence and darkness of a plant's roots inside the earth. And that's me, drawing nourishment. And you send everything into the world above, where the plant is—the fruit, the flowers, and the leaves. That is the novel—the visible part. But the hidden part is me. The writer should remain in the darkness and the silence as much as possible. (Halmshaw n.p)

Unlike Aboulela, who openly says she is a devout Muslim, and writes from that perspective with the specific aim of offering a counter account of hijab wearing woman as oppressed, in accordance with the above mentioned desire to remain in darkness as the novelist, Aslam's relation to religion remains ambiguous in his narrative. In other places, he says he is not a believer, yet, he depicts Muslim characters, with subtlety in accordance with his belief that the novel is a democracy, where:

> if it is about two characters, then you cannot have character A be fully developed and character B poorly developed. The reader would feel the lack -- I have been told what A's childhood was but why have I not been told what B's childhood? There might be very good artistic reasons why the author has withheld that information, but it can't be

> because character B happens to be an American and the novelist doesn't like Americans. (Hong, n.p)

However, as a consequence of "the burden of representation", the critical stance Aslam is taking is often ignored by the readers despite all his attempts. In the interview with Hong, he refers to various reactions he has been getting from the readers all over the world. For instance, when he was giving readings from *The Wasted Vigil*, someone in New York accused Aslam of being a pro-jihadi, while in Lahore, upon reading the same passage, he was accused of being an American agent, and in New Delhi he got the reaction that he was a conservatist (Hong, n.p). The disturbance Aslam feels as a result of the reactions he gets from the audiences signifies the tension he as a writer is forced to deal with while writing. The audiences accusing Aslam for his representations function in a discourse, which as a consequence of limited engagement with narrative, blurs the distinctions between characters, author and implied author, and in the strife Aslam faces the criticism that are in fact targeted at his characters or the implied author.

Aslam's first novel *Season of the Rainbirds* is set in a small village in Pakistan, in 1980s. The community in the novel is tried by murder of a well-known judge and reappearance of some letters that had gone missing 19 years ago. As visitors come and go by, the tensions this small community is struggling with comes to surface. It is a community experiencing religious and political oppression under Zia's regime while at the same time negotiating tradition and modernity. *Maps for Lost Lovers,* again deals with a small community, but this time the setting is in England. Aslam's depiction of a Pakistani immigrant community in an unnamed town in the northern part of England brought him widespread fame and critical acclaim. In addition to winning the Encore and Kiriyama awards, *Maps* was also short listed for the Dublin Impac prize and long listed for the Man Booker prize. Aslam's third novel, *The Wasted Vigil*, is the novel with which Aslam's serious and overt exploration of "war on terror" begins. *Vigil* brings five seemingly unrelated characters together through a story taking place in Afghanistan. Casa, is a young Afghani, Marcus the English expatriate, was married to an Afghan woman, who was victimized by Taliban's politics on women, David is an American spy, Lara is the Russian character searching for her brother who has left Russian army and James is American Special Forces soldier. Through intersecting these five people, Aslam

shows the destructive effects of the Afghan wars that have been going on for decades. His fourth novel, *The Blind Man's Garden* continues Aslam's engagement with "war on terror". The novel is set in Pakistan and Afghanistan, a few months after the events of 9/11. Joe and Mikal are best friends. When Joe decides to go to Afghanistan and help the wounded, Mikal immediately joins him. However, soon into their journey, they are tricked by the driver who was supposed to be taking them to their planned destination and find themselves amidst the war, sold to a warlord as "terrorists". As wars continue, Aslam exposes the impacts of the war on the individual; war is a cruel phenomena and not only men who either willingly or forcefully join the war, but also women who are left behind suffer the consequences.

In Sara Upstone's view, Aslam is an author who represents complexities of British Asian authorship (*British Asian* 101), and *Maps for Lost Lovers*, "is a profound intervention that more than any other marks the shift from the 'Asian cool' of the 1990s to post-9/11 concerns with British Muslim alienation" (*ibid*). The novel itself does not overtly deal with 9/11. When the attacks took place Aslam was years into writing it; in fact he was so much taken by writing that he did not hear about 9/11 for about a fortnight because he did not leave the house or talk to anyone. However, upon hearing it, his response was "that's *Maps for Lost Lovers* – that's the book I'm writing" (Jaggi n.p) as he regarded the events as an expression of the Muslim alienation that is leading to violence, radicalization and terror. In *Maps*, Aslam portrays how multicultural policies fail to grasp the reality of the diasporic communities. The calls for interaction and mingling often go unnoticed, as for closed diasporic communities, interaction with whites may not always be an essential part of an immigrant's life. Taken by fear of contamination that threatens their imaginary identification with purity, the immigrants consciously refrain from interaction, as a result of which they lead parallel lives, living in England and still remaining outside it. In other words, the English chronotope does not correspond to the time and space they are living in. Even if they live "inside" the imperial centre, they assert their difference and refuse to be a part of the English nation.

Foregrounding the closed community in *Maps*, to which all there seems to exist is violence done through oppression of women, forced marriages, honour killings, and Aslam's treatment of religious characters, Upstone accuses Aslam of Orientalism, and failing to portray Muslim characters who are progressive and

religious (107). In doing so, Upstone is unfortunately falling into the trap of "representation game" she had been criticizing earlier. It is true that in *Maps* Aslam paints a very dark picture of a British Muslim community, but he does not assert fundamentalist Muslim identity as the only form of being a Muslim.He tells Chambers people like Kaukab exist everywhere and he would not refrain from portraying them on the grounds that he would be accused of portraying Pakistan in a negative light (141) because he says he does not have the aim of promoting or denouncing Islam. According to Upstone, Aslam avoided the criticism writers like Salman Rushdie, Monica Ali were facing, mainly through his refusal to identify with one community over the other. Unlike Monica Ali, who uses a real setting- Brick Lane- for her novel, Aslam sets *Maps* in unnamed English town for instance. Upstone also refers to the magical realist quality of the novel as an obscuring element that pushes the violence to the background, (110), but if magic realism did really obscure violence and prevented authors from being subjected to harsh criticism for their representations of certain communities, Salman Rushdie, who often employs magic realism in his novels would have avoided harsh criticism that even led to issuing of a *fatwa*. The function of Aslam's lush imagery is to expose the reader to violence more sharply. To exemplify in *Maps* he is depicting people, who are very naively placing pots of scented geraniums in their downstairs rooms hoping the perfume of the flowers would warn the owners of the houses if white racists break in, but these same people who from their naivity emerge as innocent figures, often cold bloodedly resort to violence.

Aslam's language, even when depicting very violent scenes, is very flamboyant in a manner similar to Rushdie's magic realism. However, again very much like Rushdie, Aslam refuses the magic tag if it is understood as creating non-existing communities and concerns: Aslam states "Nothing in that novel was made up", adding "I lived in that community and my family still does" (Jaggi n.p). Aslam himself has a large family, growing up with which has significantly influenced Aslam's emergence as a writer. He describes his father's side as bohemian, consisting of artists whereas his mother's side is described as strictly religious. Aslam's father, Miam Mohammed Aslam, who wrote poetry under the pseudonym of Wamaq Saleem, who appears in *Season of the Rainbirds* ,*Maps for Lost Lovers* and *The Wasted Vigil*, had to flee the country as a result of Zia's oppressive regime.

Aslam's own uncle was arrested and tortured. Aslam's mother's side; however, was quite strict in terms of religion. Aslam recalls how one uncle of his once broke his toys on the grounds Islam forbade idolatry (Jaggi, n.p).Aslam's career as a writer, as Chambers underlines can also be linked to the parental desire to project the parents' failures onto children, wishing them to succeed where they failed. Aslam's father had to quit writing poems once they migrated to England and he found himself overwhelmed with the obligations to his family and Aslam was to succeed his father's love of literature. His parents even named him after a Pakistani short story writer and poet Ahmad Nadeem Qasimi, thus "linking Aslam to Urdu literature from the birth" (135). Urdu literature, which Aslam mentions as the first point of reference because his mother tongue is Urdu has great influence on his writing. Referring to *Maps*, Aslam expresses this influence as follows: "The book in many ways is about the classic theme of Islamic literature: the quest for the beloved. The book wouldn't be what it is without 1001 Nights, the Koran, Bihzad" (qtd in Upstone 103). Moreover, Urdu literature was not the only influence on Aslam's writing, as he says he has been really influenced by modernist writers such as Proust, Joyce, Camus, Faulkner (150), through reading whose works Aslam improved his language skills. With an attempt to educate himself he recalls how he would simply ask one person "Who is a great writer?" and then read all the books by that author. Afterwards, Aslam began to copy many novels by hand, some of which are *Moby Dick, As I Lay Dying*, *Beloved*, *The Autumn of the Patriarch*, to see how they were constructed, how the images were brought together and how the thought was conveyed. In re-constructing the novels, he deconstructed the meanings behind them, played around with the word forms and eventually developed himself as a skilled writer (Hong, n.p).

Aslam often draws attention to the gains of being a multilingual writer. First of all, the visuality with which Aslam's novels are credited with, owes a great deal to the Urdu heritage. Aslam tells he has learned from texts like Koran to create very visual imagery. He tells Hong, when he is writing, he wants to present language as an active participant in the process of telling the story just like a film maker would shake the camera to convey the velocity of a battle scene, Aslam explores possibilities with language. Secondly, being multilingual, Aslam tells, taught him to attend to the differences in narratives. Through his knowledge of Urdu and English,

he has access to two set of grand narratives, which not necessarily match in fact, quite the contrary often contradict each other (Hong, n.p). In this respect Aslam, among his other novels, refers to *Maps* as a linguistic project, in which he wanted to bring many images together in the form of a Persian miniature, as well as making the distinctions between home and abroad clear. Aslam explains this as follows: "The characters are from Pakistan, living in England, and they belong to a previous generation. They constantly compare this new place to their old home. They don't say it is cold today; they say it's cold 'here' today. My mother still does that after living in England for 30 years. If this is 'here', where is 'there'? 'There' is Pakistan for them" (Hong, n,p). The younger generation, however, experiences immigration in a different way compared to their parents. Even though they may not fully belong in England, they feel they can relate more to it, rather than Pakistan, with which their only connection is maintained through their parents. Besides, the way Britishness is experienced differs from one generation to the other. While the first generation of immigrants are more conscious about their race, with the second and the third generations of immigrants, the concerns either shift or new ones added to already existing problems. For instance, Aslam tells Chambers that he as a person who has been living in England for a while, feels more conscious of his class rather than race or religion (151). In *Maps* he underlines the impact of class differences in dividing people. Dasht-e-Tanhaii, is a neighbourhood populated by working class people; people immediately leave once they can afford it. Mah- Jabin tells her mother about a rich Pakistani woman she met at one of the local shops. This woman, Mah- Jabin tells, was accusing poor immigrants, whom she describes as "sister-murdering, nose-blowing, mosque-going, cousin-marrying, veil-wearing, inbred imbeciles" (*Maps* 312), for the white racism she is facing. Apparently, the woman was insulted by a white man, whom she describes to be "filthy and stinking" (*ibid*), only because she was a Pakistani in spite of the fact that the woman lived in a mansion house, spoke better English than this working class man as she was educated at Cambridge. This class problem is exposed to the reader by Kaukab in the following words:

> Kaukab shakes her hand in disappointment. 'We are driven out of our countries because of people like her, the rich and the powerful. We leave because we never have any food or dignity because of their selfish behaviour. And now they resent our being *here* too. Where are we supposed to go? The poor and the unprivileged, in their desire to

> keep living, are being disrespectful towards the rich and the privileged: is that it?' (italics in the original 312)

Here, Kaukab is voicing out a very basic human need for survival. What caused them to come to England was lack of money in Pakistan, and despite the fact that they knew they were going to face racism, they had no chance, and came to England, hoping they could at least make a decent living for their families. However, they cannot escape the stigmatization by the rich. When Mah- Jabin says this woman was not a person who became rich recently and trying to show it off, Kaukab disapproves asking what difference it made: " 'What's all this talk about old money and new money? If it's new money it's tainted with the blood and sweat of the poor people who are being used and abused in the present, and if it's old money it's tainted with the blood and sweat of the poor people who were used and abused in the past. The legs of rich people's thrones have always rested on the heads of poor people' "(312). Kaukab, through these remarks she makes to Mah- Jabin, underlines the role of the class in people's lives. Class or financial status as a dividing factor is ever present in people's lives compared to racism and religious discrimination one may avoid if s/he never comes into contact with the colonial other.

On the whole, Aslam is writing about how grand narratives, capitalist systems, fight for money and war influences people as individuals. Aslam tells Halmshaw that for him, it is impossible to leave politics out of his books while they are playing such strong roles on the individual's lives. Aslam also says for him literature has been a public act (Kramatschek n.p) one cannot help but be involved in it, especially if one is coming from countries like Pakistan in comparison to England for instance, where one could stay away from politics if s/he wished, but in Pakistan it is impossible with radicalization and stigmatization by the Western media has so profound effects on the formation of Pakistani identity. Aslam chooses to speak through his novels, which deal with various aspects of British Muslim identities through engaging with various characters ranging from terrorist militants supporting Taliban to self-made artists.

CHAPTER III

REPRESENTATION BRITISH MUSLIM IDENTITIES OF IN *MINARET*

Minaret (2005) is a novel that sets of with the specific aim of presenting a challenging portrait of a Muslim migrant woman. Compared to widely read examples of what have come to be referred to as "traditional migrant novels," which sometimes portray the Muslim characters as oppressed people in need of liberation through "Western values" or present Muslim characters as funny, completely different, inapprehensible bodies and Islam as a radical religion that hates Western idea of freedom as foregrounded in *Saturday* (2005) by Ian Mc Ewan, *Minaret* offers a challenging perspective through offering counter narratives to these "traditional accounts;" and thus reversing the binary oppositions between the West and the East, centre and margin through reverse migrant stories, characters who feel neither confined nor oppressed, but liberated through hijab and a love story that has faith in Allah at its centre. Thus, situating novels like *Minaret* within the broad space of British Muslim fiction and reading examples of it alongside each other leads to a more complex and nuanced reading of British Muslim identities.

The plot story told in *Minaret* is Najwa's transformation from a privileged secular elite girl in Khartoum as the daughter of a high post government official to a modest house maid working in the houses of rich Sudanese people based in London. The narrator portraits how his deterioration in status goes hand in hand with Najwa's spiritual transformation from a young girl who used to fast in Ramadan to lose some weight to a more mature, modest and dignified woman who finds peace and solace in Islam. Starting with a prologue titled "Bism Allahi, Ar- rahman, Ar- raheem", a praise to Allah, which might be translated as with the name of Allah almighty, the first part of *Minaret* is set in Khartoum in the years 1984-5, and depicts Najwa's life before the 1985 coup that will irreversibly change everything in Najwa's and her family's life. Before the coup, Najwa, her twin brother Omar, who later in London becomes a drug addict and is imprisoned for stabbing someone in a drug related business affair, and their parents live a "westernized life," spiced up by frequent holidays in London, gatherings and parties among the youth at Khartoum American

club. At that stage, religion surfaces as a quite powerful phenomenon in the society, but Najwa and her family participates in it only to a certain extent. They do charity work, fast in Ramadan and enjoy the atmosphere, but none of them prays regularly nor wears the hijab. However, the flashbacks narrator Najwa presents to the reader lay bare how her experience with her surroundings at Khartoum University reveals the anxieties she was having about her position as a secular female elite girl while most of the students were practicing Islam, through their dresses, veils and praying habits. Ebbs and flows of Najwa's consciousness and the in-betweenness she was feeling reflect how she was uncomfortable with the identity position she was inhabiting. Trying to feel at home in the identity position offered to her as the daughter of a westernized, secular, high post government official, Najwa felt more and more alienated from her own people and religion. While she wore mini-skirts because everyone around her did so, referring to this "misspent past," she says she felt really uneasy wearing them. She often refers to how she felt there was something bothering her when she saw the servants of the house waking up early to pray in the morning while Najwa and her family were not praying even when they were already awake returning from a night out. All of a sudden, Najwa and her family find themselves exposed to the military coup that changes Najwa's life devastatingly. Najwa's father is imprisoned for embezzling government money, and the rest of the family is put on the next plane before the airports are closed and sent to London where they live in exile for some time.

The second part of the novel takes the reader through the fall Najwa describes in the first page of the novel. No longer rich, alone in London, Najwa is now forced to work as a servant. Following Najwa's journey in London in the year 2003, the reader witnesses how much her life has changed. This change becomes more evident through the figure of her employer, Lamya, a PhD student with a mixed heritage of Sudanese and Egyptian and young mother with a daughter, who lives the life Najwa once enjoyed in Khartoum. However, things take a different turn as there develops a love interest between Najwa and Lamya's young brother Tamer. This is an interesting relationship because what attracts them to each other is their mutual dedication to Islam. Tamer admires in Najwa what he perceives as modesty and sophisticated insight into life, while Najwa admires Tamer's youth and dedication to Islam, succeeding where Najwa feels herself to have failed. Islamic teachings play a

significant role not only in the beginning of the relationship, but also in the end, when the relationship has to be ceased mainly because Tamer's parents do not approve of Tamer's marrying Najwa, who is old enough to be his mother, thus, hardly a suitable social or economic match, and it is sinful in Islam to defy one's parents and marry against their wishes.

Part three goes back to 1989, to Najwa's time in London with Anwar, doing things they would have never done in Khartoum (123). Left alone in London after her mother's death, one day Nawja receives a letter from Anwar who offers his condolences and asks if they could meet. Najwa immediately accepts the offer and thus their relationship begins again. Even though Anwar's accusations towards Najwa's father continue all along and break Najwa's heart, Najwa continues the relationship. As the relationship takes a more sexual shape, the reader witnesses the differences between Anwar and Najwa. After their first sexual intercourse, Najwa feels guilty and dreams how it should have been different, for instance, not in Anwar's room which he shares with Ameen and Kamal, but instead it should have been in "a room in the best hotel in Khartoum, [with] wedding dress hanging in the cupboard, the sheets white and crisp" (173). From her words, it is clear that she has always imagined her first sexual experience as consummation of marriage. Besides, the nostalgia she feels for her past bourgeois life is easily felt from her wishing to be in the best hotel in Khartoum as she believes she deserves it. Anwar, who has apparently never thought about such things, on the other hand, immediately delivers Najwa a lecture on how hypocritical Arab society is. He tells Najwa that the guilt is pointless because "Like every other Arab girl, you [Najwa] have been brainwashed about the importance of virginity" (175). Indulged in his anti-bourgeoisie perspective on sexuality, Anwar does not even notice Najwa's dreams about what she imagines as a better, richer life. These differences between Anwar and Najwa show how from Najwa's focalization, Anwar emerges as an outsider to the culture Najwa was brought up with. Through the characters of Najwa and Anwar, Aboulela comments on how nuanced and fluid identities can be. Even though Najwa and Anwar are both Sudanese, and hold university degrees, identity markers such as gender and class play a significant role in deciding who they are and what the values they hold dear are. While Najwa who has Western education chooses to side with conservative values, Anwar protests against all the hegemonic powers around him.

Part Four, opening with the Eid Party in the mosque, takes the reader to the years 2003-4. In this part, Najwa is seen as a self-confident woman with the Muslim identity she has forged. The conversations between her and Tamer become longer and more intimate. While they lose track of physical time and reality, they believe that spiritually they never get lost because they can see "the minaret of the mosque and head home towards it" (208). Yet, this happy dream, reminiscent of early Islamic period with striking similarities to Prophet Mohammad's[2] own life, suddenly comes to an end, as Lamya seeing Tamer kissing Najwa erupts with anger; and slaps Najwa, as a result of which Najwa leaves both her job and her lover behind.

Part five is again about Najwa and Anwar relationship as well as the important events of the time such as the Gulf War. The turning point in Najwa's life is the realization that as she was drawn in an abusive relationship with Anwar, she has not noticed it was the month of Ramadan. This horrific awakening added to the Anwar's losing interest in her, leave her in a vulnerable position. As her feeling of guilt increases, she seeks for an escape from the male dominated world around her. Thus, the female world she is introduced to in Regents Park Mosque, activities such as daily readings of the Qur'an, daily prayers, first of all help Najwa retrieve the lost bonds with Khartoum while at the same time provide her with the sense of belonging she had been longing for as a lonely immigrant woman in London.

Final section part six, year 2004, depicts Najwa's coming afresh as a devout Muslim, more reassured about her religion and faith in Allah. She is negotiating her love for Tamer and her faith in Allah. At the end of the novel, Najwa agrees to break up with Tamer and accepts the money Tamer's mother Doctora Zeinab offers to her in return for Najwa's leaving Tamer. As the novel closes, Nawja is seen in a state of fever, sick with love, yet hopeful everything will be all right as Allah is looking after her, and she will go to hajj with the money she received.

3.1 Inserting Muslims into British Fiction: Aboulela's Islamically Informed Narrative in *Minaret*

2005 Bloomsbury edition of *Minaret* features an authoritative blurb by Rachel Cusk, describing the novel as "the modern female voice…young, fresh, diverse,

[2] Prophet Mohammed's first wife, Hatice was 15 years older than him. While arguing with his family, Tamer uses this as a reference point and tries to justify their relationship.

challenging, inhibited." Deriving from this proposition, this section will explore what makes Aboulela's writing challenging and to what extent she can be relied on as the modern female voice, through an analysis of how Muslim subjects are inserted into British narratives.

The interest in Islam both in daily life and literary domain, occurred as a result of the processes which Nilüfer Göle describes as decentring of Europe appearing co-terminus with re-centering of Islam ("Decentering" 665). According to Göle, postcolonial and post bloc forces are having significant transforming effects on Europe. Through masses of Muslims practising Islam in secular European spaces in visible ways, public performance of Islam comes under scrutiny. That is to say, today, Islam cannot be marginalized and exempted from the public space, and its presence causes Europe to question its own positionality. With regard to presence of Muslim actors in secular European spaces, Göle further maintains:

> That newcomers and foreign-born individuals enter the same physical spaces (schools, cities, and so on) without sharing the same values and narratives can antagonize native-born Europeans who lay claim to anterior status and hegemony over a time-space matrix. This matrix, as it governs European public life, is not a neutral, value-free structure that is open to all, but is rather restrained by the disciplinary powers of secular modernity. The confrontation with Islam brings forth and exposes these tacit rules and regulations and thus opens up the *doxa* of European ways of being-in-public to debate. (669)

As the debates around issues such veiling, gender discrimination and freedom of expression show, even if the aim might be to contain the visibility of Islam, there is still emerging a zone of contact in which Europe is stepping out of its hegemonic apprehension in an effort to understand Islam and Muslims, who are now inhabiting European spaces. In other words, with the re-centering of Islam in public debates, Europe is becoming decentred, as a result of which it will be possible to think "beyond" Europe (679), and thus challenge the binaries through a reversal.

Before 9/11, on the other hand, Islam's position in the public sphere and its appropriation by Muslim individuals in Europe and USA was quite similar to the comment made by Rae, the professor of Islamic Studies, from Aboulela's first novel *The Translator* (1999). Rae says:

> No one writing in the fifties and sixties predicted that Islam would play such a significant part in the politics of the area. Even Fanon,

> who I have always admired, had no insight into the religious feelings of the North Africans he wrote about. He never made the link between Islam and anti-colonialism. When the Iranian revolution broke out, it took everyone here by surprise. Who were these people? What was making them tick? Then there was a rush of writing, most of it misinformed. (*Translator* 109)

Professor Rae, is the figure of the Orientalist the readers often encounter in Aboulela's works, particularly in the short stories. Orientalism as Said underlines "can be discussed and analyzed as the corporate institution fordealing with the Orient – dealing with it by making statements about it, authorizing views of it, describing it, by teaching it, settling it, ruling over it: in short, Orientalism as a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient" (Said 3). While, in Smyth's view Rae can be regarded as a "redeemed"Orientalist (170), who believes he is at least trying to be objective, detached and go beyond what he calls as "misinformed writings," in *Minaret* the reader encounters westernized Orientals orientalizing the culture they are living in, while at the same time inflicting on themselves a "civilizing mission" of liberating women in headscarves. Anwar, Randa and Omar who are westernized and perceive and interpret Sudan and Islam within the familiar dichotomies of Orientalist discourse as the West upright, rational party while the East is irrational, weak side. Unlike Rae, whose detachment from the culture he is researching helps him to maintain his objectivity, Randa, Omar, Lamya, Anwar and his friends are insiders of the culture they are criticizing, yet they regard themselves as above it, and thus see it as their duty to elevate Western values on socialism, sexuality and liberalism and to view common people especially hijab wearing women as backward. However, Aboulela and her protagonist Najwa differ from Randa, Omar and Anwar in understanding Islam. Aboulela, through her protagonist Najwa offers a narrative which embodies the logic "Islam is the solution," a slogan often used by Islamist groups. Since "Islam is a monotheistic religion that provides moral, juridical, and political guidance in different spheres of life" (668) as Göle states, in the place of the above mentioned western values such as socialism, equality and liberation, Aboulela offers Islam as the organizing principle which through the rituals it requires organizes social life while at the same time guiding the individual through the chaos. Aboulela's and Najwa's alternative is a vision where faith not only governs, but also subordinates other markers of identity

such as gender, race, and class, and becomes the dominant tenet of identity that renders the others irrelevant.

Aboulela's desire to write an alternative story as voiced in the interview she gave to African Book Club affirms Stuart Hall's definition of identities as constructed within representations. According to Hall, identities are "formed and transformed continuously in relation to the ways we are represented or addressed in the cultural systems which surround us" (qtd in Ameri 40). Leaving Sudan brings Aboulela into contact with the colonial other, forcing the subaltern immigrant to reconfigure her identity in accordance with how the host culture perceives and represents her. In *Minaret,* Najwa becomes the embodiment of all that Aboulela is defending. For this purpose, in an age that promotes liberalism, and challenges all sorts of labels and insists on the fluid nature of identities, Aboulela chooses to attach herself to a fixed identity marker. She writes with an overt emphasis on her identity as a Muslim woman and positions herself as a Muslim author. In her writing, she extensively deals with key postcolonial concepts like identity problems, migrancy, alienation, displacement, politics and national feelings. Still, her writing does not advocate nationalism, as religion is more important to Aboulela than nation. Furthermore, even though her works promote cultural interaction, the characters in most of them do not emerge as "hybrid" in Homi K. Bhabha's sense, as they choose Islam and refuse to adhere to other identity markers most of the time, thus opening up the idealization of hybridity into question. In addition, as Aboulela's characters are generally expatriates living alone in London, they do not have a certain diasporic community to which they are attached, and "home" is always a problematic issue for them. Consequently, like many other postcolonial authors, Aboulela addresses the central theme of identity quest, yet with a significant difference. While writers like Salman Rushdie, Hanif Kureishi, Monica Ali and many others write from a secular - at times anti Islamist-vision, and the identity their protagonists claim are found through work, education, or a kind of sexual liberation, in Aboulela's fiction this identity is always found through faith, which is reflected through narrative and themes of the novel as shall be analyzed below.

Minaret is a first person narration, employing the protagonist Najwa as narrator- focalizer. According to Gérard Genette, there are five different functions of a narrator (225-6). First one is *the narrative function*, narrating what happened; the

second one is t*he directing function*, where the narrator directs the reader through comments on the characters and the text. Third one is *the communication function*, where the narrator directly addresses the narratee. Fourth one is *thetestimonial function*, where the narrator talks about his/her feelings about the story, expresses his views, comments on the reliability of the story. Finally, fifth one is *the ideological function*, where the narrator offers instructive information. As the narrator, Najwa's main function is the narrating function through which she narrates the story of what happened. She only partially fulfils other functions in Genette's definition because as the narrative of *Minaret* is a closed one and not self-reflexive, while there are comments on other characters that lead the reader to think in a certain way about a certain character, there are not any cases where the narrator talks about the textuality of the narrative. Still, the narrator's ideological function lays itself bare from the very beginning. Just after opening the book and reading the first sentence, "Bism Allahi, Ar-rahman, Ar- Raheem", God is Almighthy, the reader knows *Minaret* is an Islamically informed narrative asserting Muslim consciousness with which it is written.

The ideological function is the function where the narrator and the implied author may come very close to each other as it is almost inevitable that there will be cases where the narrator will also function as the mouth piece for the implied author. This happens in *Minaret* too, as for instance Najwa challenges the perception of all Muslim women as oppressed people just because they are wearing the hijab, a viewpoint which Aboulela voices quite often. On the whole, Aboulela's writing has the echoes of the critical question Lila Abu-Lughod poses: "Do Muslim Women Need Saving?: Anthropological Reflections on Cultural Relativism and Its Others" (2002), mainly with regard to wars in Afghanistan done under the name of "War on Terrorism," which justifies itself on the obsolete mentality of the civilizing mission. Lughod criticizes Western feminist circles for essentializing the discursively produced identity of the Muslim woman, through constant references to an imagined community of "women of cover". She gives examples from an invitation she has received for a TV program on women and war in Afghanistan, where she was posed very general questions such as "Do Muslim women believe that, practice this, etc", which had nothing to do with war she was supposed to be talking about. Lughod carefully exposes the logic behind such questions. She argues that the people who

pose these questions believe knowing about "culture" of the region will help them understand what is causing terrorization, women's covering and wars. In Lughod's view however, this mentality is of no use, as reifying the culture rather than understanding socio-political conditions that are leading to current problems, for instance Taliban's empowerment in Afghanistan, does not solve a thing. Quite the contrary, by essentializing the culture of Afghan women, these so-called experts are advocating separateness of cultures, thus eliminating the grounds on which interaction and understanding can flourish. Muslim women, who are claimed to have been saved and liberated by people such as Lord Cromer in Egypt, French ladies in Algeria, and Laura Bush, who are coming to their countries with military troops behind them (784) become entangled in a discourse that blames their Muslimness and submission to hijab for their supposed oppression, whereas in reality, hijab may not always be an oppressing dress, and might simply be a form of cultural dress people have been wearing for ages and regard as a part of their identities. Just like colonialism justified itself on the civilizing mission, today many Muslim women are becoming reified and even victimized by attempts of western men, feminist circles, policy makers and international organizations to "save" them. Lughod underlining the hard work of recognizing and respecting differences without essentializing identities, calls for a shift in paradigms, through which Muslim women are being defined and contained. She states: "We may want justice for women, but can we accept that there might be different ideas about justice and that different women might want, or choose, different futures from what we envision as best (see Ong 1988)? We must consider that they might be called to personhood, so to speak, in a different language" (788). Aboulela is employing this different language, Lughod is referring to. Najwa is a Muslim woman who contrary to stereotypical perception was not oppressed, and she voluntarily desired the hijab in London, in a secular setting where she had no one towards whom she would feel responsible.

Overall, while Aboulela's position as a challenging voice might count as a valid argument given her purpose to integrate Muslim voice in British fiction and write overtly Muslim narratives; the reader has to be wary of over praising the book itself and thus falling into the trap of essentializing Nawja's experience as a Muslim woman and applying it to all British Muslim women who are struggling with the same tensions. Even though *Minaret* tells a different migrant story, and thus a

significant contribution to the variety of British Muslim voices, in itself, it tells a single story, too. Compared to *Maps for Lost Lovers*' polyphonic narrative, *Minaret* offers the single voice. All the characters and incidents are reflected to the reader through Najwa's eyes, who views secular and non-Muslim characters not in very positive ways, and whose reliability as a narrator is highly dubious. Ironically what makes Najwa's narrative dubious is her most boasted attribute of having strong faith and self assertiveness. While Najwa is able to scrutinize her past with a critical eye, the so-called critical eye she adopts is that of religion; a dogmatic set of teachings which leave no room for alterations or negotiations. Her past, the new set of beliefs she adopts tell her, is sinful and she should regret it and that is how she accepts it. She regards her past experience with Anwar as shameful past, her youth at university as misspent, the time she spent enjoying herself as the "age of ignorance". Here and there in the narrative, there are implications that Najwa misses and feels nostalgic for her past self. However, this longing for is for Najwa, who was young and beautiful, with money and means, not for secular Najwa she used to be. There are times she confesses to the reader that a shift makes her remember the past. For example, after describing her feelings about her fall, she thinks: "Routine is ruffled and a new start makes me suddenly conscious of what I've become" (1). The routine religion requires is well suited to Najwa, who, as a result of the fragmentation caused by the trauma of migration, being unable to maintain self order, relies on religion for doing it. With its monolithic, closed, orderly structure, religion calms Najwa, who always prefers the routine, clarity and order over chaos, and accordingly the narrative of *Minaret*, with Najwa as the narrator-focalizer fashions more realistic novelistic modes rather than the more popular modes of magical realism, self- reflexivity and intertextuality, which characterize most of the contemporary fiction.

Realist fashion Aboulela employs in *Minaret* functions at multiple levels. In the first place, it makes it easier for Najwa to assert her reliability. Compared to other characters- all of whom are represented to the reader through Najwa's focalization- Najwa seems more critical, just and prudent. For instance, while she carefully studying the clues, sees the possibility that her father might have really embezzled government money and thus deserved the consequences, her twin brother Omar, does not accept the fact that their father might be a corrupt official. Anwar, on the other hand, believes in Najwa's father's corruptness wholeheartedly, and does not see no

matter what he had done, this man was still Nawja's father; and therefore meant a lot to her. Still, in most of other cases, the reader becomes aware of Najwa's limited knowledge of other characters and given that the book is Najwa's account of what is happening reinterpreted through a Muslim rationale, the reliability of Najwa's narration is unconvincing.

There are quite a number of instances many of which are referred to above on Najwa's failure to be a reliable narrator. However, although the reader should always be suspicious of the reliability of Najwa's first person narrative, there are some very striking, to the point observations she makes. First of all, her occupation as the servant of the house is a big advantage because as she says, she has the knowledge of other characters "in intimate ways while Najwa is 'invisible' to them" (83). For that reason, there is certainly truth in what she says about Lamya "She will always see my hijab, my dependence on the salary she gives me, my skin colour, which is a shade darker than hers. She will see these things and these things only; she will not look beyond them" (116). As Najwa realizes, in a way, Lamya's and Najwa's social status and class differences become hindrances more important than their being migrant Muslim women in the colonial centre, the experience of which could bring them together. It is true that Lamya never looks beyond Najwa's hijab and occupation. Lamya never realizes Najwa once used to enjoy the life Lamya is living now. Seeing nothing beyond Najwa's hijab and her occupation as the maid of the house, Lamya never notices Najwa is in fact an educated woman, who used to have lots of servants serving to her family. What she sees is an oppressed, ignorant woman who tries to better herself of by seducing her younger brother Tamer. Through such stereotypes held by Lamya and also Doctora Zeinab, Aboulela emphasizes how it is not only western audiences who stereotype Islam and Muslims, as claimed by some to be, but such people exist everywhere, and it is not uncommon that divisions exist inside Muslim communities, as exemplified through the image of secular, elite, educated Lamya, who in a house party she organized invites a belly dancer who comes in full hijab and begins to strip her clothes one by one, hopes to entertain her western friends by making fun of hijab wearing women and separates herself from them through presenting a self-image as a liberated woman for whom oppressing connotations of hijab has no value (223).

Aboulela's engagement with this double sidedness of stereotyping is praiseworthy in itself, but it should not escape the reader that in contrast to *Maps for Lost Lovers*, which is narrated by an omniscient narrator, and the mindset of all characters is exposed to the reader, many of the characters in *Minaret* are not actually fully developed. This failure is partly due to the first person narration, as Najwa can only have a limited view of other characters around her; yet there is another reason which Ameri draws attention to. According to her, the narrator in *Minaret* can be accused of "Islamization of goodness and a Westernization of wickedness" (124), which is a serious narrative problem with regard to reliability of the narrator given all the functions a narrator assumes. In *Minaret* almost without exception devout Muslims like Shahinaz, Um Waleed, Wafaa and her husband Ali are good, caring people whereas non-believers or non-practicing Muslims such as Anwar and Omar are portrayed in a very negative light by the narrator-focalizer Najwa. These people who follow Western liberal values in Najwa's view are not protective with their women, and being dragged further away from religion, they commit sins and make big mistakes. Even though Aboulela says her characters are common people with common mistakes, how common they are is a difficult question to answer as the reader only sees one side of them. Moreover, Muslim space created in the novel interestingly excludes the British or rather the non-Muslim British. Even though London is there with its full glamour, Najwa lives within a Muslim circle. "Multicultural" for Najwa probably equals her circle of Muslim friends from different parts of the world she acquires in Regent's Park's Mosque. Her close friend Shahinaz is from Pakistan, the Qur'an teacher Um Waleed is from Syria. Lamya, Tamer and their mother Doctora Zeinab come from Sudan and lived in Egypt for quite some time. This lack of white, non-Muslim British perspective in the novel is probably the result of Aboulela's perception of faith as an individual matter that has to be negotiated on a personal level. Therefore, differing from "typical migrant novels," in which either the female character is liberated through sexuality or meets some westernized characters who help her see what is wrong with her culture, in accordance with the ideology Aboulela is conveying, her characters do not need to meet some English people who will teach them Western liberal values, and thus make them feel at home in the host country. As Ameri concludes, "Aboulela's characters do not feel the need to assimilate because, given their spiritual identity,

home is where the faith is" (114), and faith is found and forged not in happy multicultural London streets, but in the Muslim circles and spaces such as Regent's Park Mosque.

Najwa's experience with London and Islam, brings the discussion to the question of whether Najwa ever claims Britishness. The answer is mostly no as Najwa does not lay any claim to any national identity. Within the course of the narrative, first the reader sees Najwa enjoying the freedom offered to her in London, and later as she grows tired of this kind of freedom, Najwa is seen wishing people would see beyond her hijab and religion, but there are not any attempts on her part to mix with other people who identify themselves as British. In the mosque, while talking about hijab fashion, how to tie headscarves, etc, a young girl sitting next to Najwa surprises her. With regard to her, Najwa says:

> Usually the young Muslim girls who have been born and brought up in Britain puzzle me though I admire them. I always find myself trying to understand them. They strike me as being very British, very much at home in London. Some of them wear hijab, some don't. They have individuality and an outspokenness I didn't have when I was their age, but they lack the preciousness and glamour we girls in Khartoum had. (77)

Najwa makes it clear to the reader that she is different from them. For her being British means having one's own views and the courage to voice them, however as she tells two pages later, she does not have this trait: "I never know which point of view I support. I find myself agreeing with whoever is speaking or with the one I like best" (79).Najwa's main attachment is to her religion, and she feels herself closer to the Muslim *ummah,* the members of which are scattered all around the world, rather than the British surrounding her in and around multicultural city of London. She tells Tamer: "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 [Tamer], I just think of myself as a Muslim" (*Minaret* 110). What Najwa is offering through this manifestation of her identity only as Muslim, is a negation of national identity markers and their related connotations. Not only being British, but also being Sudanese does not have any significance for Najwa, as both have failed to provide her with the love, support and sense of belonging she had been longing for. National identity markers remain insufficient in dealing with the identity problems Najwa is

having, whereas religion is curing the psychical, psychological and social problems Najwa is having in exile.

Overall, Aboulela's realism is more psychic than social (Abbas 454), as social sphere is pushed to the background. The narrator makes only brief references to what is happening in the world, such as The Gulf War breaking out, but on the whole, the novel is focused on Najwa, and Najwa is so much focused on herself that she often says she does not want to deal with "big things". She says she is tired of Anwar's urging her to consider the problems in Sudan, what she wants is self-expression: "I did not want to look at these big things because they overwhelmed me. I wanted me, my feelings and dreams, my fear of illness, old age and ugliness, my guilt" (241).From this exposition of the self as very fragile and in need of recognition, Najwa, within the context of her relationship with men, emerges as the figure of the "helpless female," familiar from Jean Rhys' novels, whose influence on her fiction Aboulela often mentions. Aboulela explains to Chambers that romance fiction was what she read as a child and teenager, and she felt comfortable writing in that form. She mentions that Jean Rhys' *Voyage in the Dark* was an influence on *Minaret* while *Jane Eyre* had a great impact on *The Translator,* and she even saw *The Translator* as being a Muslim *Jane Eyre* (*British Muslim Fictions* 111), with the protagonist Sammar, working as an assistant for Rae, who eventually marries him, after the Islamic obstacle of Rae's Christianity is overcome with his conversion.*Minaret,* on the other hand, avoids the dark atmosphere that pervades *Voyage in the Dark.* Despite the past about which Najwa feels guilty and full of remorse, Najwa feels happier as a self-confident woman, who can make her own choices. Najwa's symbolic "voyage in the dark" from ignorance to redemption ends in an ambiguous optimistic note, with Najwa, although sick with fever, believes she will be better the next day because Allah is protecting her.

Najwa's image of the ideal man is based on the imagined unity she believes she shares with her twin brother Omar. Heartbroken over Anwar's criticism of her father, Najwa encounters Omar, who immediately notices her sorrow; and wonders: "How did he know? Once long ago we were asleep inside Mama's stomach together, facing each other, twisting and kicking. I would like to go back to that time" (38). According to Jarret, twins manifest a desire to re-establish twinness with other objects and people (196). Whenever Najwa feels helpless and fragile, she longs for

this primordial existence with the protection of the womb. In the later parts of the narrative, in Najwa's relationships with the men around her, it becomes clear that she projects this desire for primordial existence onto them, dreaming the male in desire would give her the protection she always wanted. Disillusioned with Anwar, Najwa hopes Tamer would be different as the following extract reveals: "There was a time when I craved pity, needed it but never got it. And there are nights when I want nothing else but someone to stroke my hair and feel sorry for me. Looking at him now, his nose swollen with flu, I think he could pity me, one day, at the right time, in the right place, he could give me the pity I've always wanted" (117-8).

Realist narrative of *Minaret* also helps Aboulela deal with the God in a manner that serves best to Aboulela's purpose of narrowing down the notion of religion to a very worldly entity that organizes the chaos, the traumatized person is finding hard to live with. Aboulela does not present theological questions with regard to presence or absence of God. She makes very basic and direct comments on the individual's relation with the God as it is experienced daily, out of which Allah emerges as the provider of the protection Najwa needs while she is struggling with life. For example, once Najwa's employer Lamya loses a necklace, and accuses Najwa of stealing it, only to see a few minutes later her own daughter playing with the necklace in question. As Najwa reckons what could happen if Mai had not appeared with the necklace, she utters the following words, replenishing her faith in Allah. "What if Mai hadn't appeared with the necklace? My stomach heaves. I can lose this job easily. Rely on Allah, I tell myself. He is looking after you in this job or in another job" (114). Najwa's turning to Allah for protection against a false accusation, is thus, an example of how Aboulela employs religion as a source of relief in everyday struggles individuals are having. It is this aspect of religion as a comforting presence, which Najwa longs for, as a dislocated female in exile.

Wail S. Hassan believes that the narrative logic of Aboulela's fiction expresses "religious worldview that does not normally inform modern literature" (310). Accordingly, the narrative techniques employed by the author also contribute to this agenda of writing an Islamically informed novel in which as Aboulela mentioned in an interview, she creates "fictional worlds where cause and effect are governed by Muslim rather than non-Muslim rationale" (qtd in Ameri 103). This is a rationale where God is almighty and determines everything, and intervenes in strange

ways when necessary. For instance, Najwa often reasons that if their family had not diverged from the path of religion, they would not be suffering these calamities. While visiting her brother Omar in prison, she advises him to read the Qur'an (94) and makes it known to Omar that she regrets their non-religious lives in Khartoum:

> 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.
>
> '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'
>
> 'That's naïve…'
>
> '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.' (95)

In addition to voicing these thoughts, Najwa not surprisingly wishes Omar was punished according to *sharia law* when he was first caught using drugs so that he would have stopped it. Such punishment, according to her, would be lighter and act as a precaution. Another striking example of this kind of rationalization is the instance when Najwa thinks the money offered to her by Tamer's mother Doctora Zeinab, in return for Najwa's leaving her son, is a compensation for the money she has lost to Anwar years ago. Below is her narration of this strange coincidence:

> I walk across the park towards Baker Street. In the bank I deposit the cheque Doctora Zeinab had written out for me. As I fill in the payment slip, I realize that the amount is exactly the same as the sum I lent Anwar, years ago, to do his PhD. He had never paid me back, not even part of it. Over time I had accepted this loss as a penalty, the fine I had to pay to extract myself. Now, in this strange way, I am getting my money back. (268)

This strange event is narrated by Najwa in a very calm manner as if it is the most natural thing on earth while in reality her depiction of Allah is almost like a *deus ex machina*, who would appear in unexpected moments and save the characters from agony. Despite the fact that miracles do happen, to the modern reader such a strange coincidence would just look very naïve and too good to be true; however, as Wail S. Hassan underlines "in Aboulela's episteme of faith, there is neither room nor use for irony" (311), so the reader is expected to accept everything as a twist of faith which makes Najwa comfortable because Allah is looking after her in strange ways (*Minaret* 114).

Sadia Abbas suggests that Aboulela's novels "are not just about religious people, not just in touch with older, religious forms of narrative; they also convert specifically novelistic narrative modes to religious ends" (442). In her fiction, secular tropes of contemporary novels such as the motif of migration, modernity and globalization as Abbas further argues are subjected to Muslim conversion (443). For instance, she offers a "vision that takes traditions of domestic multicultural romance and filters them through contemporary right-wing Islamism," (Abbas 445) presenting the figure of the liberal leftist as a useless scam while praising the young men devoted to Islam.

In *Minaret,* criticism of the leftist thought is done through a couple of characters such as Omar, Randa, Uncle Samar, but mostly through the character of Anwar. Anwar is Najwa's love interest, with whom she had an affair. In the first part of the novel where Najwa goes back to years 1984-5 and narrates her time at university, she describes Anwar as a student activist who wrote for one of the students newspapers (34). From her account, Anwar emerges as an atheist, Marxist, who smokes and drinks, never fasts or prays, attacks the bourgeoisie, including Najwa's father, even if Najwa and he are dating. Najwa ceases the relationship after openly hearing his attacks on her surname, but then the couple unites again in London. In London, their relationship becomes more intimate in terms of sexuality, but the discord between them becomes more evident as well. Anwar continues to assert his political views on Najwa, while Najwa, working as a help to Aunty Eva, spends her days hoping Anwar could change. Disappointed by his reaction towards the mentioning of a speculated match between Anwar and his cousin, Najwa hopes he could just comfort her instead of talking about politics or oppression of Eastern women: "I folded the letter. Now, if he could come over and put his arms around me, say 'You mustn't feel insecure, you mustn't worry.' But he wouldn't do that, as if there was a law: Anwar must not feel sorry for Najwa" (228). While Najwa feels depressed by his attitude, Anwar's mind is focused on the article he is writing and asks Najwa to proof read it, as her English is better than Anwar's. The couple has this relationship where Anwar almost always asserts his political views on Najwa. Najwa is disturbed by it, particularly with his saying "When are you going to learn?" (231). Later on, when she meets Ali, Wafaa's husband, a blonde English man who has converted to Islam, she cannot stop comparing him with Anwar. She thinks

Anwar, hating the very idea of religion and regarding it as the source of the all the evil in Sudan, would condemn men like Ali. However, Najwa envies Ali's treatment of his wife Wafaa. Men like Ali are tender and protective, according to Najwa, and she longs for this tenderness and protection (242). Once she tells Anwar that Kamal was sexually harassing her only to hear the answer, "You're sophisticated enough to deal with this, Najwa. Don't make a big thing out of it. Be flexible with him, the poor guy has lots of hang ups" (*ibid).* Such maltreatment and lack of interest in the problems Najwa is having leads to Najwa's disappointment with Anwar. While Anwar says he is egalitarian and believes in freedom, the only instance he talks about liberation is when he has his way with Najwa, to put it very boldly. In his eyes, Najwa becomes fully westernized only after she has sex with him. Only praise Najwa ever hears from him are the following words, "I know you're Westernized, I know you're modern'... that's what I like about you- your independence" (176), which are uttered after their first time together. Anwar keeps delivering long lectures on how hypocritical Arab society is with its different standards for women and men and gives the men visiting brothels as an example of this contradiction. However, in between the lines, Anwar gives himself up, when he confesses he also frequented the brothels where women are being forced to prostitute. So, Anwar, even though Najwa has her first experience with him, is the opposite of what Najwa desires in a lover. With regard to Anwar, she says the following:

> I knew Anwar well enough to guess what his reaction would be to what I was hearing and seeing around me. His views on religion were definite and he hated fundamentalists [...] Look at what happened in Sudan, look at human rights, look at freedom of speech and look at terrorism. But that was exactly where I got lost. I did not want to look at these big things because they overwhelmed me […] It wasn't fundamentalists who killed my father, it wasn't fundamentalists who gave my brother drugs. But I could never stand up to Anwar. I did not have the words, the education or the courage. I had given in to him but he had been wrong, the guilt never ever went away. Now I wanted a wash, a purge, a restoration of innocence. I yearned to go back to being safe with God. I yearned to see my parents again, be with them again like in my dreams. (241-2)

Najwa's relationship with Anwar destroys Najwa's self-confidence and individuality. She functions as a fool to Anwar, amusing and constantly assuring him of his superiority. Even though Anwar is a Westernized person with liberal views on life, he fails to offer the protection and tenderness Najwa is longing for. Nothing he says

comforts Najwa, causing her to complain that "[h]e knew facts and history but nothing he said gave me comfort or hope. The more he talked, the more confused I felt, groping for something simple, but he said nothing was simple, everything was complicated, everything was connected to history and economics" (165). Najwa's relationship with Anwar is a failure of the liberal ideal, Najwa's hope that they could be happy in London, leaving Sudan behind (168). Najwa and Anwar can never leave it behind, as Sudan with its history, politics and economics erupts into the present.

Tamer, on the other hand, is different from Anwar. When Lamya accuses Najwa of stealing her necklace, he follows Najwa after she leaves, only because he feels worried about him. Saying Lamya is wrong, he expresses his disapproval of his sister Lamya: "I don't approve of her. She hardly prays. She doesn't wear the hijab. It's wrong. She has such bad friends. They go and see rude films together. They smoke and drink wine- it's disgusting […] It's all to do with pride, the way she talked to you just now. She shouldn't…" (115). Disapproving Lamya in such manner, he is conveying to Najwa that she is doing the right things, while Lamya is in the wrong path. Tamer, being younger than Najwa, admires what he regards as her strong faith, her attention to detail, such as going all the way to a *halal* butcher, whereas his mother and sister shop at Tesco, and the support she gives to Tamer's plan to leave his current studies of Economics and study Islamic History. Tamer voices this admiration of her whenever he has the chance. When he asks for her advice and Najwa replies she is in no position to advise him, he answers she is being ruthless towards herself: " 'It annoys me when you put yourself down like this. You're better than a lot of people; you've just had bad luck. I bet so many men wanted to marry you!'" (201). Through contrasting Anwar and Tamer, Aboulela reinterprets the type of Romantic hero. While Anwar with his courage, idealism and rejection of conventions seems perfect for the character of the Romantic hero, he fails to comply with it and loses to young Muslim Tamer, who is tender and protective.

Using and abusing Victorian romances such as *Jane Eyre*, with the heroine falling in love with her boss, as Nash reminds (30), Aboulela presents a love story where Allah is also included as a party. Stotesbury refers to this inclusion of God in the love affairs as "a complex three-wayaccommodation that involves woman, man, and God" (qtd in Smyth 176), with the God as the omnipresent entity that determines

the format, condition and limits of the relationships. Moreover, with the aim of conveying this Muslim rationale through romance, Aboulela replaces Christian dilemmas with Muslim ones. For instance, she reads the impediments to marriage of Jane and Mr. Rochester as Christian dilemmas since Mr. Rochester cannot be married to both Bertha and Jane mainly because Christianity forbids polygamy, whereas it is possible in Islam. Following this rationale, Aboulela presents an Islamic obstacle for Najwa and Tamer. They cannot get married because it is not approved by the elders, whose consent is important in Islam, whereas this would not be a problem for Christian or secular people. Referring to Tamer's mother, Doctora Zeinab, Najwa thinks, his mother is a test for Tamer's spiritual growth, and decides that no matter whatever price they might have to pay, she will not let Tamer fail this test and upset his mother and be condemned by Allah. Eventually, the fear of sinning overcomes the desire Najwa and Tamer have for each other, and they break up.

In sum, while *Minaret* is a challenging novel and a significant contribution to how British Muslim identities are represented, the reader has to be wary of its shortcomings and should view the narrator and protagonist Najwa critically. It is true that Aboulela is a young, fresh, challenging voice as Rachel Cusk describes her to be, but while she may be an example of one of the modern female voices, she cannot be THE "modern female voice," as she lacks the multiplicity and prudence she would need to convey the feelings and experiences of other women negotiating identity positions.

3.2 Making up for the Loss: Filling the 'Empty Space Called Freedom'

Minaret is a novel about loss, as the protagonist Najwa remarks in the very first page of the novel and repeats all through the narrative. It is the story of a woman whose status has deteriorated: " 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 am used to it. Most of the time I'm good. I accept my sentence and not brood or look back. But sometimes a shift makes me remember" (1). Najwa mourns the loss of her past, but she is not exactly a melancholic because she does not blame herself. As Sigmund Freud outlines in "Mourning and Melancholia," "mourning is regularly the reaction to the loss of a loved person, or to the loss of some abstraction which had taken the place of one, such as one's country, liberty, an ideal, and so on" (243).

Najwa's depression is more of a mourning for her father, for Khartoum, for Anwar she had been idealizing than melancholia, since as Freud distinguishes "in mourning it is the world which has become poor and empty; in melancholia it is the ego itself" (246). No matter how depressed she feels, it is not herself but the world and the "empty space which was called freedom" that Najwa blames for her misery (*Minaret* 174-5). As Santesso reminds, as a result of her interpretation of past occurrences she is mourning for, Najwa begins to associate power with evil (100), and fearing power might haul her into evil as well, she does not desire it. Najwa's problems mostly come to surface when she is in London, but the flashbacks in the narrative reveal, she had her own identity problems even while she was living in Sudan. She finds it difficult to negotiate between two different worlds. Secular, westernized Sudan, ruling elite like Najwa's parents inhabit, and Muslim Sudan inhabited by common people are in juxtaposition with each other. Thus, having access to both of these worlds, Najwa finds herself in a situation where she has to negotiate hyphenated identities, as a result of which, she, as Tindognan suggests, inhabits "liminal psychic spaces" (79). As she will confess years later, Najwa does not have the individuality and openness her peers had. Reflecting back on her life in Khartoum, she says the following with regard to her time at university: "I was in university to kill time until I got married and had children. I thought that was why all the girls were there too but they surprised me by caring about their education, forging ahead with jobs and careers. I surprised myself by never getting married"(102). Najwa never has aspirations to be a strong woman with a fulfilling career as before her father's death she thinks her future has already been planned in the best possible way. She never takes on any responsibility with her own life. As a natural consequence of this, she does not have any ideas of her own, and cannot quite locate where she should stand in a debate. In Khartoum, she finds herself estranged from her own people as a result of the Western education she has been receiving and the posh life she is living. Najwa's problems become more clear and acute when the family escapes to London after the death of Baba. While Najwa cannot deal with her problems in a culture she was born into, in London, to the worse, she finds herself in a situation where she has to negotiate between two different worlds again, but this time with a difference. Unlike before, this time she has the full responsibility of her own life. At first, Najwa does not feel disturbed about ignoring the religion in London, as Islam is not a

dominant everyday reality. However as she loses all her family one after another, she once again finds herself in a hollow space as expressed in the following quotation:

> Who would care if I became pregnant, who would be scandalized? Aunty Eva, Anwar's flatmates. Omar would never know unless I wrote to him. Uncle Saleh was across the world. A few years back, getting pregnant would have shocked Khartoum society, given my father a heart attack, dealt a blow to my mother's marriage, and mild, modern Omar, instead of beating me, would have called me a slut. And now nothing, no one. This empty space was called freedom. (*Minaret* 174-5)

The way the concept of freedom is treated in the novel signals a different understanding of freedom where the sign is evacuated from its glamour. Freedom in *Minaret* is not at all glorified or sublimated. Furthermore, it is not something to be gained; quite the contrary, in Najwa's case freedom is almost a punishment, an additional burden one has to endure after having already paid too dear a price such as losing one's family, nation and religion. Moreover, in her love affairs, Najwa desires not freedom, but the position of the subaltern, the helpless female to be rescued by the Romantic hero. For instance, while chatting with Shahinaz, Najwa imagines how happy she would be to be a concubine to Tamer's family, and complains about the bitter reality that she should settle for freedom in this modern times (215). Following from this logic, whenever Najwa refers to freedom, it is always imbued with feeling of loss and alienation, and regarded a self- inflicted modern disease. Aboulela herself also often refers to this limited understanding of freedom. In this respect, Najwa's attachment to faith should not be regarded as a return to "roots". Interestingly, as Leila Aboulela mentions in an interview, choosing one way of living is just choosing one of the possible "*routes*" (Hall 4) among many. Inquired by Anita Sethi whether she thinks there is more freedom for Muslim women to be religious in Britain, Aboulela replies : "'Oh, definitely. But then you have to decide what you are going to do with all this freedom. You can do what you like, so being religious is one of the things I chose' " (n.p). This statement upholds Aboulela's perception of freedom as embodied in Najwa's characterization. Saying one can use freedom to be religious sheds light on the prevalent discourse that defines religion, especially Islam as oppressive. Here, Aboulela refers to the consensual tendency in contemporary discourse that defines and represents Islam and women's relation to it as if it existed as a sealed, fixed concept entrapped within these two edges. Aboulela here refers not

only to the presumptions that Muslims are oppressed in non-western parts of the world, but also indicates the fact that due to social structures and stereotypes, there are certain expectations from certain people. This is presented as another case where the centre defines the periphery, freezing its meaning, eliminating any chance for negotiations. For instance, Aboulela says she has been received by many as an oppressed woman only because she is wearing the hijab whereas in reality, like her protagonist Najwa, Aboulela herself had a quite secular upbringing and found it very hard to wear the hijab among secular circles while in Khartoum, where most of the population is Muslim, and adopted the hijab while living in UK. Aboulela's own experience which is reflected through the character of Najwa presents an alternative vision where freedom and oppression shift meanings, as hijab regarded as the sign of female oppression by the western discourse, is seen to be desired by a secular, elite female. This alternative vision highlights the fact that British Muslims are a diverse community including devouts, atheists, seculars and many others in their ranks, and wearing the hijab and embracing Islam was both Aboulela's and Najwa's way of dealing with the trauma of migration, hence filling "the empty space called freedom" (174).

Loss of family disrupts Najwa's sense of self irreversibly because family, as theorized by Murray Bowen, both as an emotional and social unit is one of the most important systems as individuals cannot be understood as independent, isolated beings. As Raymond Williams instructs, "family theory suggests that individuals gain a senseof self in symbiotic relation with a wide assortment of people and places: the source ofidentity is not the individual or a single event, but rather a reciprocal matrix consisting offamily, home, and events" (13). Najwa's account is an example of how in the absence of a real family, both nurturing parents and her nation as a family, Islam replaces the role of family in providing love, support and sense of belonging, while at the same time rendering Western signifiers of liberation irrelevant.

Ron Geaves, in the article "Negotiating British Citizenship and Muslim Identity", (2005) argues that while citizenship in the sense of belonging is not a very difficult issue for white British subjects, for British Muslims it is a complicated matter as Muslims have to "discover how to be a Muslim in a secular society and to develop the appropriate strategies for living as a minority in a non- Muslim society"

(66).This negotiation starts at the moment of migration and continues all the way through the time spent in Britain. The most traumatic part of the process is the first encounter with the host society as the immigrant often experiences some kind of culture shock. In *Minaret*; however, Najwa does not experience the culture shock that is a recurring motif in many of the migrant narratives. As the daughter of a rich family, Najwa visits London almost every summer, so London is like a second home to her. Therefore, her trauma is caused more by the feeling of alienation and loneliness originating from her exile than the culture shock any immigrant might experience. Nevertheless, she refers to herself as an exile, and given that her family had to flee the country and cannot return to Sudan, this is politically true; however for the above mentioned reason, Najwa's exile has a unique character in that she becomes traumatized only after a certain stage and there are other emotional and psychological factors in play, as well as the trauma caused by displacement. During her time in London, at first she is hopeful that her family will unite and they will go back. Then her mother becomes ill and she spends her time nursing her. After her mother dies, Anwar comes back and she is happy to be with him. Only after she loses all these love objects one by one, and realizes there is no possibility of a return, she begins to question her life. Years later, she describes those days after their arrival in London as follows: "Our first weeks in London were OK. We didn't even notice that we were falling. Once we got over the shock of suddenly having to fly out the day after Baba was arrested, Omar and I could not help but enjoy London" (56). They even take a childish delight in doing things such as "grocery shopping, pushing the Hoover around, cooking frozen food" (*ibid*), things that were previously taken care of by the large group of servants they had in the house. Najwa's conscience is troubled only when Omar and their cousin Samir want to go to a disco. She is fine with eating at Pizza Hut, enjoying the city, but dancing at a disco when their father is on trial for his life is too much for Najwa because she is concerned about what people would say (60). She tells Omar that they would not be dancing if they were in Khartoum. It is noteworthy that Najwa does not reject the proposal to go to a disco on the grounds that she in no mood to dance, but only because she does not want to risk being seen by someone familiar from Khartoum who would gossip about how spoiled and corrupt these children are, as they are entertaining themselves while their father is being tried. This reasoning by Najwa again hints at how much family

matters to her. She defines her own identity in relation to her family and other family systems. She is an important man's daughter, and her distant family- the society- has certain expectations from her. In their first weeks in London, being Baba's daughter, is the identity she chooses to adhere to, and attachment to this identity position comforts her. Only after Baba is hanged they become aware of the bitter reality. Najwa describes how this reality strikes them as follows:

> 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 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. (61)

The identity Najwa has forged for herself as the daughter of Baba is disrupted by his death. Apart from losing her beloved father, Najwa also suffers from a sense of hollowness as her father's death not only means losing all the wealth, the social position acquired by Baba's privileged position, but also losing the very tenet of identity Najwa has built her selfhood upon.

National identifications are among the most visible and clinging identity markers people either willingly or forcefully identify with. However, nation itself is "an imagined community" as Benedict Anderson puts it (6); and therefore the identification with a particular nation is possible only as long as this imagination is sustained. The sense of unity established with the imaginary community –the nation- is disrupted by the experience of migration; as happens to almost any immigrant who finds himself/herself in a position where s/he has to divide loyalties between "the country of origin" and "the host country". In *Minaret* these moments of unease occur in the aftermath of the changes that disrupt Najwa's orderly life. For instance, as Najwa tries to locate her first sexual experience with Anwar, she realizes she is dislocated in a variety of contexts. Firstly, while pondering over her sexual experience she reveals her anxieties about different treatments of sexuality in Sudanese and British cultures. While such an event would have shocked Khartoum society and give her parents heart attacks, in London nobody cares. Secondly, she realizes she is alone in London. The fact that nobody cares about what happens to her

means she has no family to account for. On that particular day, walking in the street and reflecting back on her relationship with Anwar and her life in London, Najwa reckons: "I walked down Gloucester Road and thought that whatever happened to me, whatever happens in the World, London remained the same, constant; continuous underground trains, the newsagents selling Cadbury's chocolates, the hurried footsteps of people leaving work. That was why we were here: governments fell and coups were staged and that was why we were here" (174). For the first time in her life, she says, she feels conscious of her "shitty-coloured skin" and envies the English because they are "unperturbed and grounded, never displaced, never confused" (*ibid*). Najwa thinks the instability in her life is indeed a reflection of political instability in the continent she is coming from, and hopes western imperial centre, London, could offer her the stability she is longing for. Even so, she becomes more and more unwilling to identify herself as British, and eventually asks herself: "What was wrong with us Africans? […] In Queensway, in High Street Kensington, we [Anwar and Najwa] would watch the English, the Gulf Arabs, the Spanish, Japanese, Malaysians, Americans and wonder how it would feel to have, like them, a stable country" (165). After some time, as she realizes her abusive relationship is tiring her, she tries to fill up for loss of a lover, a family and a nation. Realizing her religion, Islam, the only solid identity she can simply take everywhere with her, is still there, she becomes much more attached to it. As she finds herself in situations where she has to defend her religious identity, she becomes more and more disturbed by the perception of religion as fundamentalism by people like Anwar and his circle of friends. Even though she cannot openly voice it, she often thinks to herself fundamentalism had no relation with the calamities her family faced. Moreover, for Najwa what causes calamities such as her father's execution and her brother Omar's being imprisoned is the lack of attention to religion. Often she reckons if they were religious people they would stay away from such temptations towards the evil and consequently Omar's imprisonment and their father's hanging could have been prevented.

After Najwa begins to visit the local mosque to join readings of Qur'an with a group of females, she feels more secure and located in London. Religion provides Najwa with the order and stability she had been longing for. While, London, the Western imperial centre, is stable in itself, it is still an imagined community in which

Najwa cannot find her own imagination. Thus, forced to rewrite a new identity for herself, she turns to Islam, where she feels at home. When Anwar comes to apologize, Najwa tells her she is going to the mosque, adding she feels like in Khartoum again when she is in the mosque (244), to which Anwar replies there is more to Sudan than Islam. Anwar makes a very valid point, which Najwa chooses to ignore. In her mind, she associates Sudan and Islam in such a way that Sudan as a national identification loses its significance. Najwa's longing for Khartoum is not at all a longing for her nation. She feels nostalgic not for Sudan as a nation, but as a culture, which when her family was together, provided her with protection, and sense of rootedness she now seeks for as an exile in London. Now, she does not claim even the Sudanese identity, and expresses her only identification with Islam. This embrace as Tancke deduces is an example of how "Najwa's new-found faith enables her to cope with the painful extent to which her life has been uprooted and her sense of self jeopardised" (8).

Minaret also offers a strong commentary on the relation between religion and space, as it moves from an understanding of religion as a location-bound issue to a more global *ummah*, as a result of which Muslims feel connected to each other and Islamic teaching regardless of where they might be situated on earth. There is a striking example about religion and location in the novel, and this example is the turning point in Najwa's narrative of redemption. When Najwa, to her horror, realizes it was the month of Ramadan, and she was not aware of it, she has the following discussion with Anwar and his friends.

> 'Breakfast at five!' I laughed and so did Kamal. I looked at Anwar. He smiled but his eyes were on the cards. Ameen was laying his hand on the table; six of hearts to the Jack with a Joker in the middle.
> Ameen tossed his remaining card in the middle, took a draw of his cigarette, collected his winnings. He smiled 'It's Ramadan breakfast, you heathens!' I caught my breath. 'Oh no!' They laughed at my reaction. Kamal said he knew it had started but had forgotten about it. Why would anyone in his right mind fast in London? 'Or anywhere else?' said Anwar. 'The thirst people endured in the heat of Sudan was not healthy at all.' (230)

Najwa is dispelled by the realization she had missed Ramadan. She continues:

> It jolted me that Ramadan could happen, could come round and I would not know about it. I looked at Anwar and he was calm, normal as if nothing unnatural had happened. 'Why didn't you tell me?'
> 'Why should I? said Anwar. For some reason that made Kamal laugh.

> ‘What do you mean why? It’s important. It’s Ramadan. I should know about it. It shouldn’t happen without me knowing. If we were in Khartoum we would have known, our daily routine would have changed.’ (230)

As these exchanges among Najwa, Ameen, Kamal and Anwar expose, religion is usually perceived as a location-bound issue. When they are in Sudan, they do not need to be reminded that it is Ramadan as it is a part of everyday reality. However, in Britain, where Muslims are only a minority and Islam is not an everyday reality, the flow of daily routine is disrupted by the absence of religious elements in daily life. Therefore, those people who wish to continue with their regular worship, have to make special arrangements to stay in the realm of religion in a secular or Christian setting like London. After the above mentioned incident takes place between Anwar and Najwa, the couple is dragged apart. Then Wafaa, the woman who has washed Najwa’s mother’s corpse before it was buried, calls Najwa again, to invite her to the mosque. Wafaa had been calling Najwa occasionally, but she had always ignored her calls. The last call by Wafaa makes Najwa laugh, because she thinks she could not be any further away from religion, but significantly, it is this call Najwa remembers as her despair becomes unbearable and she looks for an escape. She remembers how Wafaa would make “praying sound easy and possible… getting Allah’s blessing sound like something within reach, accessible” (161), and decides to visit the local mosque. She narrates her first time in the mosque as follows:

> I was wearing what I believed to be my most modest dress. It had long sleeves and fell to below my knees. When I bent down to pray, my calves and the backs of my knees were bare. Someone came up from behind me and threw a coat over my back […] The coat slipped when I straightened up. […] I sat hunched on the floor, knowing I wasn’t good, knowing I was far away and just taking the first step in coming here still wasn’t enough. (237-8)

Najwa’s first time in the mosque is a failure and total disappointment with herself. However, as she begins to perform Islamic rituals, she finds herself situated in a community with whom she can identify with. In other words, the feminized space within The Regents Park Mosque comforts her. Referring to her female companions at the mosque, Najwa rejoices:

> I did like them. I liked the informality of sitting on the floor and the absence of men. The absence of the sparks they brought with them, the absence of the frisson and ambiguity. Without them the

> atmosphere was cool and gentle, girly and innocent with children all around us, chubby little girls sitting close to their mothers, baby boys who crawled until they reached the wall, pulled themselves up to stand proud and unsteady. (242)

After describing how this female only space comforts her, she goes on to describe what she finds in the religious talks in the mosque:

> I liked the talks at these gatherings because they were serious and simple, vigorous but never clever, never witty. What I was hearing, I would never hear outside, I would never hear on TV or read in a magazine. It found an echo in me; I understood it. *No matter how much you love someone they will die. No matter how much health you have or money, there is no guarantee that one day you will not lose it. We all have an end we can't escape.* I thought such talk would make me gloomy, would bring me down, but I would leave the mosque refreshed, wide awake and calm, almost happy. (italics in the original 242)

These religious talks offer her a sense of rootedness she had been longing for. Saying what she hears finds an echo in her, she is referring to how she is comprehending the relation between Allah and a devout person on a very personal, individualized manner. According to her, these talks are freed from the burdens of modern life. No one is trying to make witty remarks, there is no competition, and through the references to life after death, they remind her the transitory nature of the world. While such words would probably depress some people, Najwa feels refreshed after hearing them because she finally finds the spiritual bliss she had been searching for:

> 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. 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. (242-3)

Minaret on the whole, Upstone proscribes, offers not chaos but structure as a solution to migrant alienation (*Spatial* 108). Najwa's longing for belonging as Steiner points out, "seeks an actualisation of home in Islam, and is thus caught in the absolute as it dissolves ambivalence in favour of the discourse of faith" (Steiner 15). Subordination of ambivalence to faith, as Santesso argues dismisses hybridity as a Western concept that has almost no signifying power for a Muslim woman (86).This

is mainly because as Najwa tells Tamer, after finding a solid identity in religion, she does not ascribe to any national identity. Becoming a good Muslim becomes the sole aim in her life, an aim which renders the promises of fusion irrelevant. Accordingly, Najwa's perception of the multicultural city and its inhabitants is coloured by this perspective. She envies the British for being settled, aspires to be one of them; but she never imagines herself as a "typical" British. Moreover, in London, she leads a very isolated life. Even her perception of the city is affected by this isolation. For example, she loves London not when it is crowded, busy and lively, but when it is at its quietist season: "London is at its most beautiful in autumn. In summer, it is seedy and swollen, in winter it is overwhelmed by Christmas lights and in spring, the season of birth, there is always disappointment. Now it is at its best, now it is poised like a mature woman whose beauty is no longer fresh but still surprisingly potent" (1). Her disappointment with London in summer, winter and spring, three seasons that are regarded as seasons of birth, promising hope for the future, implies the self-inflicted alienation she is suffering from. Fearing someone from Sudan might recognize her and know about her past, she avoids Sudanese people. She does not have any British friends, either. She occasionally visits her brother Omar in prison. That is to say she exists in a "topograpghy of withdrawal" (qtd in Santesso 88), to borrow Spivak's term. This withdrawal is both a physical and psychological one. She does not talk to many people, she does not bother to express her opinion on any issue. Apart from her circle of friends in the mosque, Najwa does not see anyone. That is the only community available to her. Her companions in the mosque are the people she chats with, when she goes there, but the relationships are quite superficial and shallow. Shahinaz is the only exception because she and Najwa share quite a lot, but still how close they are or to what extent Shahinaz understands Najwa's alienation is a matter of debate. First of all, Shahinaz does not know Najwa's past, so her knowledge of Najwa's character is quite limited anyway. Najwa and Shahinaz, and other women in the mosque talk about how to tie their scarves, what kinds of hijab dresses are in fashion, etc; but these exchanges between them conceal more with regard to their true selves than they expose through spoken words, as Najwa confirms saying "it is as if the hijab is a uniform, the official, outdoor version of us. Without it, our nature is exposed" (186). The nature, Najwa is referring to is a part of her self, which she prefers would stay unnoticed. Hijab situates her among a

community whose members are satisfied with the look and performance a hijab wearing woman conveys. Nobody in the mosque asks Najwa questions about the past, they accept her for what she seems to be: A woman in hijab reaching out for spiritual fulfillment. However, the portrait Najwa paints of herself differs in significant ways from how the female circle in the mosque perceive her. For instance below is her narration of the first time she puts on a scarf: "I stood in front of the mirror and put the scarf over my hair. My curls resisted; the material squashed them down. They escaped, springing around my forehead, above my ears. I pushed them back, turned my head sideways to look at the back and it was an angular hump, a bush barely covered with cloth […]" (245). Hijab, as Najwa's account implies pacifies Najwa; just like the cloth squashes her curls, similarly hijab hides what Najwa tries to push to background: her shameful past, the disillusionment with her current status as "upper class without money," (252), the fact that she is getting old and her beauty is fading. In *Minaret* Aboulela uses hijab in such a way that it becomes the "mobile home" as Lila Abu-Lughod calls it. Lughod, referring to the anthropologist Hanna Papanek's description of the *burqa* as "portable seclusion" comes to regard robes as "mobile homes," which can function as liberating tools that allow women to move out of the segregated spaces while expressing belonging to a particular community and particular moral set of beliefs (785).

In sum, the spiritual pleasure Najwa has found, her new identity built on Islam, nurture her all through the novel. In Najwa's view, "strong faith," can make the burdens "lighter" (199), and this motivation comforts her even at the end of the novel when she is lying lovesick in bed after Tamer and she had to separate. She accepts the cheque offered by Tamer's mother, and even though she is not well on that particular day, she is full of hope for the new day and makes plans about organizing her journey for the Hajj. Religion, as she concludes is her "base and goal; everything else is variable" (275).

3.3 (In)visible in Hijab: Agency of Hijab in *Minaret*

In "Islam In Public: New Visibilities And New Imaginaries," Nilüfer Göle underlines how the visibility of Islamic signs in public indicates the presence of many Muslims in European countries. Muslims, as Göle suggests, "with their

multiple attachments – to languages, ethnic groups, religion and the ummah – disrupt the national definition of citizenship and arouse suspicion of their loyalty" (388), and even though these attachments are mostly personal, they are still regarded as a threat to public as a result of which Muslims in European countries are radicalized as Tindognan underlines, "to the point of being perceived as contrary to democratic values" (83).

Minaret with its architectural structure, according to Göle "together with the dome has become a 'structural metonym' of Muslimidentity" (386), and as minarets foreground the Muslim actors, the veil, reveals the Muslim actor "as pious, as feminine- in public life" (388). Thus, among other Islamic signs, the veil deserves special emphasis because while in itself it is a mute symbol, it has an agency that functions both in personal and cultural domains while at the same time as Göle argues brings the personal under public attention (390). Göle further discusses in *The Forbidden Modern: Civilization and Veiling*, the veiled female body reflects the gender problems; thus "no other symbol than the veil reconstructs with such force the 'otherness' of Islam to the West" (1), and "visible" signs of this attachment, such as hijab, become benchmarks on which European and/or British and Muslim identities are negotiated.

To begin with, hijab has a wide range of connotations. For Fatima Mernissi, Göle writes, veiling has three layers: "The first dimension is visual, and its function is to conceal 'oneself from the look'. The second dimension is related to space; its purpose is to set boundaries between the sexes; and thus separate them. The third dimension, however, refers to a moral principle concerning 'the forbidden act': veiling points out the forbidden sphere" (*Forbidden* 94). Thus, hijab marks the distinction between public and private while at the same time reinforcing the community feeling among women who wear it. Being "mobile homes" as Lughod defines them, for Göle, "the veil conceals the departure of Muslim women to the outside World, for, although, the veiled women are in the outside World, they still remain in the 'inside,' and the veil constantly reminds them that they belong to the *mahrem* sphere" (*Forbidden* 130). Najwa's first experience with hijab carries all these meanings/ tensions. Najwa desires anonymity and invisibility; and on a personal level hijab provides her this *mahrem* space; but when she goes out into

European public sphere, she becomes "hypervisible" as her hijab marks her as a Muslim woman.

Minaret is very conscious of how hijab has this agency, and how its meaning shifts from one culture to the other. For instance, while hijab might be perceived as oppressing by the West, *Minaret* portrays an opposite understanding where the veiled body might feel liberated through veil. White British perspective is absent is the novel, the westernized youths in the narrative such as Randa and Anwar have very negative views of hijab. For them, there is no possibility of social development and economic progress unless women abandon Islamic dresses. For Randa and Anwar, women wearing black chadors are reminders of the threat posed by uncivilized, bigoted, puritan sides. Randa looking at magazine covers featuring Muslim women in black chadors, asks Najwa: "How can a woman work dressed like that?" (29). Elsewhere, Anwar, echoing Randa's words condemns those veiled women saying "We have to go forward not back" (34). Thus, as this attitude by two characters lay bare, veiling is regarded as an obstacle to progress, through a discourse in which "veiling is received as a force of 'obscurantism' and is often identified with women's subservience; […] as an affront to contemporary notions of 'gender emancipation' and 'universal progress'" (*Forbidden* 4).

In Europe, as Andreassen et all comment "veiling is persistently framed as being a threat to universal values and principles of gender equality, autonomy, emancipation, secularism and tolerance" (17), since it is perceived as a "visible indicator of difference" (Tarlo 131), as a result of which:

> women thus become physical markers between the two cultures, which are constructed as each other's opposite in a hierarchical manner, hence making it impossible to be an integrated part of both simultaneously. This integration into European national societies is therefore not simply a question of shared values and norms; it is also a physical integration. Muslim women become, with their bodies, physical symbols of the success or failure of that integration. (Andressen et all 28)

As an anticipated result of this attitude, as also argued by Jawad and Benn, "liberating Muslim women as part of the civilizing mission" (12) was a very common theme in literature produced from an Orientalist viewpoint. This viewpoint, represented in *Minaret* through characters such as Randa and Anwar, who cannot even bear the sight of veiled women, as they associate veiling with backwardness, is

strongly criticized in the novel where negative view of the hijab is deconstructed. Even from the very beginning, despite the fact that Najwa cannot openly say it, she makes it known to the reader that she does not agree with Randa's comments on hijab wearing women. She avoids Randa's intriguing questions with a simple "I don't know" (29). Then, in the following parts of the narrative, here and there the reader encounters Najwa's confessions of how she envies hijab wearing girls at the university for something she cannot quite name. Unlike Randa, who finds the sight of hijab wearing students at Edinburgh University unbearable, their sight never irritates Najwa:

> 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'an. I envied them something I didn't have but I didn't know what it was. I didn't have a name for it. Whenever I heard the azan in Khartoum, whenever I heard the Qur'an recited I would feel a bleakness in me and a depth and space would open up, hollow and numb. (134)

Quite the contrary, the sight of hijab wearing girls, hearing the Qur'an recited, students praying at university give Najwa peace which she is trying to attain.

When Najwa decides to wear the hijab, she tries on a scarf. Putting the cloth on her hair, she looks at her image in the mirror and wonders whether this image was herself: "I didn't look like myself. Something was removed, streamlined, restrained; something was deflated. And was this real me?" (245). On the next page, Najwa is trying one of her mother's old tobes and describes wearing it as follows: "I tied my hair back with an elastic band, patted the curls down with pins. I wrapped the tobe around me covered my hair. In the full- length mirror I was another version of myself, regal like my mother, almost mysterious. Perhaps this was attractive in itself, the skill of concealing rather than emphasizing, to restrain rather than to offer" (246). Again, the undertone that hijab gives dignity is there, and in the second quotation, Najwa's determination to adopt the hijab becomes more clear. Once she decides she wants to "restrain," "to be invisible," she suppresses her past self, and as scarves conceal her hair, hijab as a way of life hides Najwa's past self.

A page later, the reader witnesses, the pleasure Najwa derives from the sense of being visible and invisible at the same time. To this-self satisfaction, is added to

the inner peace Najwa feels: “When I went home, I walked smiling, self-conscious of the new material around my face. I passed the window of a shop, winced at my reflection, but then thought ‘not bad, not so bad’. Around me was a new gentleness. The builders who had leered down at me from scaffoldings couldn’t see me anymore” (247).Through this account, in the place of the discourse that frames the act of veiling as women’s oppression because supposedly hijab makes them invisible as individual subjects, Aboulela offers a case where hijab is desired by the female character and the very same invisibility attacked by the counter discourses becomes the very tenet of identity on which Najwa builds her selfhood. The following extract depicts how she rejoices upon realizing the builders cannot see her: “I was invisible and they were quiet. All the frissons, all the sparks died away. Everything went soft and I thought, ‘Oh, so this is what is was all about; how I looked, just how I looked, nothing else, nothing non-visual.’ ”(247). The problem Najwa had with Britain, it turns out, was with how she looked. Before adopting the hijab, she wore what she referred to as short skirts and tight blouses, with which she says she felt uncomfortable with. The male gaze she attracts with her looks disturbs her and she wants to avoid it. While covering her body, she thinks hijab also gives her the dignity she has lost.

As Emma Tarlo discusses in “Hijab in London: Metamorphosis, Resonance and Effects,” usually in Western context hijab is associated with invisibility as it is regarded as a sign of a woman’s oppression by the discourses that try to confine her body into a certain shape and thus her mind as well, yet while the Islamic dress may be hiding women’s bodies, it, at the same time makes her more visible as a Muslim woman (132). Göle further explains that “[t]he clothing rules of Islam, principally established upon segregation and differentiation of the sexes, rest on the reinforcement of the symbols of femininity and masculinity. While veiling represents hidden femininity, the beard represents a man’s masculinity” (93), and these dressing codes by various cultures are “visible indicator[s] of difference in multicultural London” (Tarlo 131). For Tarlo, London is “the trans-cultural city as a space which exposes people to alternative ways of being and in so doing, offers them the possibility of personal metamorphosis” (132). Similarly for Najwa, given that there is a very organized Muslim presence in London, compared to other European capitals, as Tarlo argues it is easier to wear the hijab in London (142). Regents Park Mosque

in *Minaret* is such a place where hijab brings Muslim females together. In those meetings, Najwa feels that hijab is like a uniform which has the function of "marking their collective recognition of belonging to a global Islamic community or *ummah*, and contributing towards the creation of such a community in the process" (Tarlo 142). However, while through what Tarlo terms as "the hijab effect" (135), hijab gains agency and helps the formation of group solidarity, its agency might also work as to arouse feelings of hostility as can be observed in Ian McEvan's *Saturday,* where "irritation is too narrow a word" (123) to describe the protagonist Hector Perowne's feelings about the veil.As a consequence of these tensions, many Muslims as Philip Lewis argues find themselves in a "non-Muslim society, either indifferent to Islam or, since 9/11 and 7/7 [London bombings], increasingly suspicious about Muslim intentions" (6), forcing them to negotiate identity positions.

Minaret exemplifies cases where Muslims may be subjected to abuse due to carrying such visible signs of their religious identity, as the veil and the beard. For example, once Najwa is attacked on the bus she takes home. Three young men throw a can of soft drink to Najwa spilling it over her head, calling her a "Muslim scum" (81). It is significant that the assailants do not use one of the derogatory words associated with colour racism such as *darkie, black, nigger, Paki etc.* "Muslim", here is a religious identity marker, which has become politicized and used against a woman only because she is expressing her religious affiliation through her Islamic dress. At another instance, Najwa tells the following sentences in relation to Tamer, again reflecting the fear of Islam in British society: "His voice is a little loud and, as we walk towards St John's Wood, I sense the slight unease he inspires in the people around us. I turn and look at him through their eyes. Tall, young, Arab-looking, dark eyes and the beard, just like a terrorist" (100). Najwa, like most of the immigrants as argued by Du Bois has the double consciousness. She always sees herself and the people around her not only through her own eyes, but also through the eyes of the others as well. Only ten pages later, she repeats the same idea that their visibility disturbs some people: "Tamer looks up at the sky. He seems more relaxed than the other day when we met in the Street. He might not know it but it is safe for us in playgrounds, safe among children. There are other places in London that aren't safe, where our presence irks people. Maybe his university is such a place and that is why he is lonely" (111). Saying there are unsafe places for Muslims in London, and

speculating even Tamer's university, a place which ought to be liberal might be one of these dangerous places, Najwa depicts how in contemporary Britain, Islamophobia is as prevalent as, perhaps even more than colour racism, and how in multicultural, multi-faith London, Muslims experience hostility, and how they are forced to negotiate between their Muslim and British identities as attachment to the former is regarded as a barrier to the total loyalty to the latter.

CHAPTER IV

REPRESENTATION OF BRITISH MUSLIM IDENTITIES IN *MAPS FOR LOST LOVERS*

4.1 Navigating Through "The Wilderness of Solitude": Negotiating Hyphenated Identities

The cover for *Maps for Lost Lovers* by Faber& Faber, 2005 edition, features Aslam's name printed in silver grey and below that squeezed between the author and the book name is a remarkable sentence by Colm Tóibín, an Irish novelist. In the piece Tóibín wrote for the *Guardian*, he says *Maps for Lost Lovers* is "A superb achievement… A tender, nuanced and wonderfully imagined account of a Pakistani family in contemporary England." Deriving from this testimonial, this section will explore how Aslam achieves presenting a nuanced account of hyphenated identities within the context of the umbrella term of British Muslim fiction as well as scrutinizing how novelistic modes and narrative tools are used by Aslam in such a way that they not only enhance the literary quality of the novel, but also directly contribute to conveying the themes and issues the novel raises such as multiplicity of the immigrant experience, intergenerational conflicts, trauma of migration, fear of contamination and gendered experience of diaspora.

Maps for Lost Lovers (2004), which took Aslam eleven years to complete, is the story of working-class Pakistani immigrants living in an unnamed town in the north of England.The town they are living in is renamed by the inhabitants as Dasht-e-Tanhaii, The Wilderness of Solitude or The Desert of Loneliness; in an act of mimicry through which colonized subjects imitate the colonizer's process of renaming. However, differing from the colonizer's desire to possess, the immigrants' act of renaming is an indicator of their desire to cure their displacement and create symbolic spaces to which they feel they can belong. The narrator of *Maps* narrates this subversive attempt at renaming as follows: "As in Lahore, a road in this town is named after Goethe, a Malabar Hill as in Bombay, and a Naag Tolla Hill as in Dhaka. Because it was difficult to pronounce the English names, the men who arrived in this town in the 1950s had re-christened everything they saw before them"

(28-9). While immigrants' excuse that they cannot pronounce the English names might sound arrogant, and the act itself is a parody of colonial process of renaming and colonizing; given the fact that the immigrants go to England surely not for the purposes of colonizing, the naming process then can only be interpreted as an attempt to make up for the loss caused by migration and create imaginary identifications. Over the years the names attributed to streets and landmarks around Dasht-e-Tanhaii change as more and more nationalities arrive from the Subcontinent and each tries to create a space of existence for itself, but the name of the town is the one issue they all agree on because all immigrants can connect with the solitude that the town's notorious name signifies. This "Wilderness of Solitude"where "[s]hame, guilt, honour and fear are like padlocks hanging from mouths. No one makes a sound in case it draws attention. No one speaks. No one breathes" (45),is the setting against the background of which the events of the novel unfold. The town is populated by people who think they are left behind, a group consisting of "Pakistanis, the Bangladeshis, and a few Indians, all of whom work in restaurants, drive taxis and buses, or are unemployed" (46). Violence, burglaries and bullying are so common in this town that a woman "unplugs the video-recorder that had cost two year's savings and brings it up to bed every night" (*ibid*). It is hardly a preferable place to live, but the idealist Shamas, feeling responsible for the community, insists on remaining there against his wife's wish to move to a better area.

The central event of the story is Chanda's and Jugnu's disappearance, who are two of the lovers referred to in the title of the novel. Chanda is the daughter of the owner of the local foodstore, and she was divorced twice before she met Jugnu. Jugnu, who is a lepidopterist, is Shamas' brother and lives in the nextdoor to Kaukab's and Shamas' house. In the eyes of the local community, Chanda's and Jugnu's affair is sinful because Chanda is still married to her last husband even if he disappeared soon after the marriage, once he got the British citizenship, for which he had married Chanda. Chanda and Jugnu left with no chance for a "proper" affair, decide to co-habit despite all the reactions they are going to face, which results in their being murdered by Chanda's brothers. When the narrative opens, the reader learns that five months have already passed since their disappearance, and Chanda's brothers are arrested with the charge of "honour killing". The rest of the book depict what happens in the next twelve months; and while the trial for Chanda's

brothersproceeds, the reader witnesses how closely knit community of Dasht-e-Tanhaii, is being tried by racism, religious fanaticism, intergenerational conflicts and the tension between tradition and modernity.

Maps for Lost Lovers is narrated mostly through an omniscient narrator. The focalization often changes as *Maps* is populated by characters who, despite the fact that they are sharing the landscape of Dasht-e-Tanhaii and are forced to participate in the collective identity the group creates for itself, are nevertheless, expressing their identities in their own ways. For instance Shamas, Jugnu's elder brother and one of the main characters in the novel, is a social worker, who is helping the immigrants to "negotiate the white world" (15), and a liberal Communist, distanced from orthodox Islam that pervades the neighbourhood. His wife Kaukab, on the other hand, is a person who can go to extremes about her religion such as refraining from breastfeeding her youngest son Ujala during Ramadan on the grounds that he is an exalted infant and therefore he should fast. Kaukab can be so much taken by her faith in Allah and by the self- made belief that she is doing the right thing that she can easily ignore the negative effects of her repulsive practice. Ujala, only one month or so old at the time, cannot accomplish the task his mother in his devotion assigned to him, and his health begins to deteriorate. Blinded by the excitement of having an exalted child, Kaukab does exactly the opposite of what she has been intending as she performs irreligious acts in the name of religion. Islamic practices permit breastfeeding women themselves to skip Ramadan, which normally all Muslims are conditioned to observe, so making babies fast is out of question, but Kaukab imposes a self-made code of religion on her children.

Another significant female character is Suraya, with whom Shamas becomes lovers for some time, cheating on his wife Kaukab. Suraya is an interesting character because she epitomizes all sorts of oppression women are being exposed to. Contrary to the common belief, the fact that she was educated in England does not protect her. Indeed, quite the opposite, her self-esteem, reminiscent of her upbringing in England, becomes the very reason of her maltreatment by her husband, whom she married through an arranged marriage. In addition to receiving beatings from her drunken husband, she has to go through an extremely harsh ordeal. Her husband divorces her in a state of drunken fury and Islamic laws, *Maps* tells, state that a woman needs to marry somebody else before she can remarry her ex-husband. Left with no chance

and forced to go to England because her husband could not stand seeing Suraya married to someone in Pakistan, she goes in search of a suitable candidate who would marry her for a brief period and then divorce, so that she could go back to her ex-husband and thus unite with her son. She seduces Shamas but when he learns of her motives, Shamas finds the idea abhorrent and refuses to take part in it, as he thinks it will only continue Suraya's oppression. Suraya is left alone, pregnant with Shamas' child, and she is eventually heard to be married to someone else through an arranged marriage, which the matchmaker of the town organizes.

Lastly, there are three westernized children of Shamas and Kaukab; Charag, Mah-Jabin, Ujala, who each in his/her own way expresses his/her dissatisfaction with their parents and their country's traditions which are oppressing them. All three flee home for reasons of their own. Charag wants to become a painter in spite of the parental pressure on him to pursue a career as a doctor. Mah-Jabin was put through an arranged marriage with a cousin, but, delicately chosen husband turned out to be an abusive one. Mah-Jabin had no chance but to endure, but eventually she managed to flee her oppressive marriage, and now she is studying at a university in London, and preparing to go to America. Ujala, the youngest child, had a problematic relationship with his parents from the very beginning. He dropped out of school at an early age, eventually fled home, and Kaukab and Shamas hardly ever hear from him.

Aslam's obsession with the characterization partly explains why *Maps for Lost Lovers* took Aslam eleven years to write. Two years into writing, he just stopped and spent the next four years writing a hundred page biographies for each character so that he fully understood what this family was like, he said (Bookbrowse.com). The result of this meticulous study shows itself in his narrative with fully developed characters, with both good and bad sides to them, their cruelty and humanity coming to surface alongside each other. For instance, although there are times in the novel when Shamas seems to be the ideal immigrant subject who is commuting freely between both cultures, he has his own weaknesses and mistakes. Egalitarian, communist Shamas, after all, is a man who cheats on his wife Kaukab, and whose idealism prevents him from seeing what is going on in the lives of his children. Similarly, in spite of her fundamentalism, Kaukab is depicted as an alienated woman, to whom, no one actually pays attention to, as her reaction towards her sons Ujala and Charag lays bare: "What I don't understand is why when you all

spend your time talking about women's rights, don't you ever think about *me*. What about *my* rights, *my* feelings? Am I not a woman, am I a eunuch?" (italics in the original 322). Here, Aslam is openly criticizing the perception of womanhood as a fixed category. The children's failure to understand their parents' motives and remaining indifferent especially to Kaukab is closely linked to this faulty understanding. Despite their much boasted liberalism and open mindedness, they fail to perceive identities as flexible, contingent and in flux. In their minds, the children have only one picture of their mother Kaukab. For instance, looking at Kaukab, even Shamas wonders which one- the merciless religious fanatic, or compassionate mother- is the real Kaukab (316), while to her children Kaukab is no more than a cruel, oppressing woman. Similary According to Mah-Jabin, her mother is "trapped within the cage of permitted thinking;" (110) and she is the most dangerous animal Mah-Jabin will ever confront (111).

Lack of understanding between the individuals is a severe problem Aslam is engaging with. Dasht-e- Tanhaii is a loveless place, where let alone establishing relations with the whites, children within the community are estranged from their families. The children's indifference to Kaukab lays bare the degree of this estrangement. While Kaukab's orthodoxy is incontestable, -she was born as the daughter of a cleric, and had been brought up in a mosque after all- and there are reasons for her fanatical religious behaviour; this orthodoxy is overemphasised by her children, as a result of which Kaukab's humanity is overshadowed. However, even the westernized children, who boast about their liberal values and open mindedness, do not let the thought that Kaukab is whole-heartedly feeling the loss of Chanda and Jugnu, cross their minds. The children, as they are trying to negotiate their British Muslim identities, find themselves battered under the weight of the hyphen; and unfortunately, most of the time parents and children fail to see what is happening in each other's social and emotional worlds.

A child as Lacan asserts, is formed in language, and many of the second generation of immigrants in the novel are formed in the English language, a language, which parents have either none or very little knowledge of. As a result of this linguistic gap, parents and children feel estranged from each other. Mah-Jabin accuses her mother Kaukab of dragging the so-called traditions into Britain like shit on her shoes (*Maps* 114), while Kaukab puts the blame on Britain for stealing her

children: “This accursed land has taken my children away from me. My Charag, my Mah- Jabin, my Ujala. Each time they went out they returned with a new layer of stranger-ness on them until finally I didn’t recognize them any more” (*Maps* 146). Having lost many other things as a consequence of the exile, the immigrants find themselves in a helpless situation as their children are fleeing from their homes in search of new freedoms that the parents fail to provide.

Loss characterizes the migrant experience in *Maps*, a fact the children of the immigrant families unfortunately fail to acknowledge. In the first pages of the novel, Shamas, walking on the first snow of the year, remembers how once a Pakistani immigrant back from England told about his astonishment about the prosperity in England. The visitor remarks “it was almost as though the Queen disguised herself every night and went out into the streets of her country to find out personally what her subjects most needed and desired in life, so she could arrange for their wishes to come true next day”(5). However, in the following paragraph, this utopian image is juxtaposed with the realist image, which is imbued with loss. This image depicts how as Edward Said proposes, “a life of exile moves according to a different calendar, and is less seasonal and settled than life at home” (qtd in Weingarten 8). Walking in the snow, Shamas reckons “[a]mong the innumerable other losses, to come to England was to lose a season, because in the part of Pakistan that he is from, there are five seasons in a year, not four, the schoolchildren learning their names and sequence through classroom chants: Mausam-e- Sarma, Bahar, Mausam-e-Garma, Barsat, Khizan. Winter, Spring, Summer, Monsoon, Autumn” (*Maps* 5). The loss of a season leaves the immigrant whose lived experience does not correspond to the present s/he had anticipated in a fragmented state, with the diasporic subject being traumatized with countless losses. While imagining a return, Kaukab and other women in the neighbourhood, do know that return is impossible.

> Kaukab, a picture of loneliness, waiting for Shamas to come home, remembers how the tannoy announcement at the bus station always makes her think she’s in Pakistan and a Friday sermon is being conveyed over a mosque loudspeaker, and the other women tell her that it’s happened to them too. One woman tries to hold back her tears because she’s beginning to realize that she would never be able to go back to live in her own country. (45)

Trauma as Tancke lays bare is a threat to identity as it “undoes the self by breaking the ongoing narrative, severing the connections among remembered past,

lived present, and anticipated future" (qtd in Tancke 2), and eventually "refuses integration into a coherent narrative" (11). Individuals develop various strategies to survive the exilic trauma, and in *Maps* for instance, Shamas' family at the first stage, tries to overcome the traumatic experience of cultural displacement by making a replica of their Pakistani home by painting the interior of the house exactly in the same colours, thus creating a mock home where they would feel "at home". With the transference of the essential unit, they believe, they will be able to protect their essence. However, "the home" is only partially present and this partial presence fails to meet the expectations. Besides, migration is an experience that is forcing the individual to go outside the home and negotiate the world, for which reason, transference of home is often a useless endeavor, as one cannot continue to remain inside. Nevertheless, the physical home or the values attributed great importance in a way similar to the one given to home space helps immigrant communities to create a sense of identity, which is forged on their difference from the rest. For immigrants of Dasht-e- Tanhaii, this tenet of identity emphasizing their difference is Islam, through which the community is founded and sustained.

The role of the traumatic experience of exile is a significant factor in understanding why immigrants are still pursuing or even becoming more defensive about their religious identities. According to Edward Said this urge for self-defense of difference and hatred of the other mainly stems from the nature of exile. He states:

> At bottom, exile is a jealous state. With very little to possess, you hold on to what you have with aggressive defensiveness. What you achieve in exile is precisely what you have no wish to share, and it is in the drawing of lines around you and your compatriots that the least attractive aspects of being an exile emerge: an exaggerated sense of group solidarity as well as a passionate hostility towards outsiders, even those who may in fact be in the same predicament as you. (qtd in Weingarten 7)

Edward Said's articulation of the correlation between exile and increased group solidarity is repeated in *Maps.* In Dasht-e- Tantaii, immigrants from various South Asian countries live together, but this living together only refers to a territorial co-existence. Let alone interacting with the white English, many of the novel's characters do not even bother to talk to their neighbours who are of a different religion. Kaukab, unwilling to go to a bordering street because white people's houses are located there, thinks to herself, even Pakistanis living there are not from her part

of Pakistan (42), so she had better not to go there. Thus the problems, which might be termed as, "othering the other", are seen to be quiet commonplace among these groups, and those few individuals who try to establish bonds of love and affection are discouraged from doing so as a result of each community's preventing intra-community marriages, often in very violent ways. For instance, once a Muslim girl is beaten to death to separate her from her Hindu lover, and there is an honour killing at the centre of the novel. In addition to aggressive defensiveness habit along with a "burden of representation", this community is engaged in self-silencing acts, thus creating a "claustrophobic" (Weingarten 5) space for themselves. The community leaders create a fiction of purity around Pakistan and Islam, and accordingly the community members feel the pressure to comply with it even though they are clearly being harmed by it. The town's Muslim population refuses to turn in the mosque official who molests young children, thinking it would give Islam and Pakistan a bad name. Other clerics in the mosque simply get away with the crime, offering the excuse thatwhen the mosque is closed there would be no one "to teach their sons to stay away from the whore-like white girls, and that their own daughters would run away from home and wouldn't want to marry their cousins back from home, that the Hindus and the Jews and the Christians would rejoice at seeing Islam being dragged through the mud" (*Maps* 235). As this self-silencing act straightforwardly portraits, diasporic communities founded around fictions of purity, working on exaltation of their difference, thus can be oppressive entities, especially when there is a test of the community pride.

Overwhelmed by the burden of representation immigrants feel as always being observed by the other, and this fear of humiliation directly contributes to what out of self-defense, emerges in the public domain as the fear of contamination. Immigrants always have a consciousness of themselves and of how they are seen by the other, a dual perspective Du Bois is referring to as "double consciousness". Kaukab, for example, deeply feels the gaze. For instance, when Shamas blurts out to the white doctor he was not aware of the fact that it happened to be Kaukab's birthday, Kaukab is "hot with shame at what the white doctor would now think of Pakistanis, of Muslims – they are like animals, not even remembering or celebrating birthdays. Dumb cattle" (65). Kaukab is very self-conscious in the presence of white people, and despite her contempt of them, her internalization of the belief that the

West is superior to the East becomes evident in her meetings with white people: "Kaukab unknots the thread, remembering the first time she had made a knot in something in Stella's presence: she had suddenly gone numb, wondering if there was a *Western* way of tying a knot – more sophisticated, *better.* Perhaps the way she tied was an *ignorant* way of tying a knot?" (italics in the original 318). The internalization of inferiority manifests itself through Kaukab's choice of the very terms the West constructs the East as inferior to itself. She refers to her way of things as the "ignorant" way, whereas the western alternative in her eyes would probably be more "intellectual" and always "better". Kaukab's unease over the trivial act of tying a knot proves to what extent the immigrants are affected by the image of themselves in the eyes of the Western people. The ever presence of the gaze, the racism they are facing is deeply felt by the community as they regard themselves as being stranded in a country where no one liked them (278).

Maps articulates the identity problems the second generation of British Muslims are facing mainly through the conflicts Kaukab and her children have, to most of which Shamas remains ignorant. Given Kaukab's faith-driven character, all conflicts inevitably take the form of dissents where people are forced to negotiate British Muslim identity positions as the dogmatic nature of the latter is perceived as a direct threat to the liberality the former one is offering. While the older generation is mourning for their homelands, the young generation, on the other hand, adapts to their conditions as British Muslims, and consults to the British liberal valuesin navigating through the difficulties they are facing, which are totally denounced by Kaukab in words "My religion is not the British legal system, it's Islam" (115).

As the reader soon discovers, Kaukab's is in fact a broken family as the fact that Kaukab has not heard from Ujala for seven years and a month, Mah- Jabin calls once a month or so, Charag visited last summer and hasn't telephoned since then (30), reveals. All of them hate their parents, especially their mother Kaukab, but the youngest one Ujala is the one who voices his hatred for his parents bluntly. When they reunite at the house years later; shattering Kaukab's hopes of making a happy homecoming for her children, Ujala makes sinister comments about Kaukab's religiosity, and eventually erupts with anger, disclosing what he thinks of his parents. He says:

> ‘There couldn’t have been a more dangerous union than you two: you were busy longing for the world and the time your grandparents came from, they and their sayings and principles; and he was too busy daydreaming about the world and the time his grandchildren were to inherit. What about your responsibilities to the people who were around you here in the present? Those around her were less important to her than those that lay buried below her feet, and for him the important ones were the ones that hovered above his head those yet to be born.’ (324)

Ujala’s confessions while revealing the tensions the children are having with their parents also hints at the alienation young British Muslims are struggling with. What this conflict reveals is the fact that as observed by Waterman, “the parents’ memories do not correspond at all to their children’s lived experience” (30). In the first place, even their interpretation of home and abroad differs. While home is Bangladesh, Pakistan or India for the first generation of immigrants, home for the second generation is England, and their parents’ homelands are referred to as abroad (*Maps* 46) Many of the novels’ minor characters come from similar backgrounds to Ujala. Their mothers are often very similar to Kaukab, their fathers even though probably very different from the liberal Shamas and quite strict in religious matters, all of them still remain ignorant to their children’s problems or fail to get involved as they cannot satisfy children’s psychological and emotional needs in regard to their alienation. Consequently, many of the young British Muslims find themselves in isolation as they are living with parents who fail to understand their children’s expectations. Unable to rely on the cultural memory of the “imaginary homeland” Pakistan, with which they do not have any connection, and failing to fully integrate into British society as a result of various factors such as racism, prejudices, lack of means to education and their parents’ forbidding acts, the young generation experiences this trauma more deeply compared to their parents, who at least like inhabitants of Dasht-e-Tanhaii do, rely on the good memories of the homeland and dream about an eventual return to there. The nostalgia keeping the immigrants happy in the present and hopeful about the future and soothing promise of an eventual return, are empty signifiers for the young generation because despite all the limitations they are facing, they are being exposed the western culture and its values, and can, although to a very limited extent, identify themselves as British, whereas British identity is completely denounced by their Muslim parents.

Aslam himself, coming from a quite similar background, handles British Muslim alienation and self–inflicted victimization through a nuanced and polyphonic narrative compared to Leila Aboulela's limited vision surfacing in *Minaret*. According to Claire Chambers, "given his late arrival in the UK, he [Aslam] is neither a diasporic 'British Pakistani writer', nor a Pakistani writer, but is situated in an in-between position, complicating conceptual boundaries between East and West" (*British Muslim Fictions* 134). In the same interview, Aslam explains growing up in a family consisting of religious people, liberal ones and artists helped him to view identities as flexible and always developing; and as a result he was aware of different ways in which people can be Muslim (*ibid* 153); a point which he conveys all through *Maps* both through characterization and narration. Furthermore, in addition to different identity positions Muslims define for themselves, Aslam is also aware of the changing trends in people's approach to religion. Both the perception and the practice of the religion has inevitably been influenced by the modern and post-modern conditions. In the context of these changes, *Maps* can also be read as a migration story that depicts the move "from a rural to urban religiosity" (Lewis 8), caused by the very act of immigration from the colonized lands to the Western imperial city centers, where the immigrants among many other things negotiate tradition and modernity imposed by the imperial centre. Amidst this chaos, for most of the immigrants, religion becomes the most solid tenet of their identity that cures the pains of dislocation, fragmentation and alienation.

As a general feature of Aslam's style the narrative works through similes and conceits through which Aslam problematizes the matter of representation by bringing the archaic antagonism between appearance and reality forward. The narrator in a very ironic way, portrays how the setting is at once in England, and not in England. It is England, the snow tells the reader, but the street names, people in the streets nod towards a different existence. England in *Maps for Lost Lovers* is, as if it is "Orientalized" or rather "Pakistanized". Additionally, magic realism is another tool Aslam employs for the purposes of presenting the sacred and profane side by side, while also facilitating the representation of fanaticized religiosity. According to Salman Rushdie:

> If one is to attempt honestly to describe reality as it is experienced by religious people, for whom God is no symbol but an everyday fact, then the conventions of what is called realism are quite inadequate.

> The rationalism of that form comes to seem like a judgment upon, an invalidation of, the religious faith of the characters being described. A form must be created which allows the miraculous and the mundane to co- exist at the same level. (376)

Accordingly, Aslam employs magic realism when dealing with the world as religious people experience it. The novel is like a Persian miniature, with great attention to detail; it is full of colour and vivacity; but these colours and joy conceal dark realities. Among the sensual images spread throughout the novel, a stark social realism strikes the reader in most unexpected moments. For instance, just after depicting Shamas walking in the snow in a very poetic language, the narrator suddenly intervenes and begins to explain the atmosphere in the 1970s:

> It was a time in England when the white attitude towards dark-skinned foreigners was just beginning to go from *I don't want to see them or work next to them* to *I don't mind working next to them if I'm forced to, as long as I don't have to speak to them,* an attitude that would change in another ten years to *I don't mind them socializing in the same place as me if they must, as long as I don't have to live next to them*. (original italics 11)

This social realism, Abbas argues, paves the way for a theological challenge, as well. She further notes: "Paradoxically, Aslam's progressive, but also sympathetic and immanent, critique of religion presents religion as the very antithesis of an opiate: instead, it emerges as a genuine cause for psychic and conceptual struggle. Faith requires hard, uncomfortable work, work that Aboulela chooses not to represent" (Abbas 454). The difference in depiction of faith between the two authors, as Abbas draws attention to is noteworthy. However, this difference should not be interpreted as an inability on the part of the author to fully portray it. Rather, the attention should be focused on the requirements of faith each author is depicting. While Aboulela's is a moderate faith negotiated on individual level, Aslam deals with not only faith, but also with organized religion under the name of which people are being oppressed. Thus, the hard, uncomfortable work Abbas is referring to is the work of characters such as Kaukab, who sense that Islam cannot possibly be permitting such revolting acts as honour killings, forced marriages and child molestation, and feels sorry for the victims, but still out of blind devotion, cannot openly accept that such malpractices have nothing to do with God's law. Quite the opposite, in moments of

fear and doubt, Kaukab begins to engage more with religion lest she might fall into doubt and her faith be damaged as indicated bellows:

> Kaukab knows her dissatisfaction with England is a slight to Allah because He is the creator and ruler of the entire earth-as the stone carving on Islamabad airport reminds and reassures the heartbroken people who are having to leave Pakistan- but she cannot contain her homesickness and constantly asks for courage to face this lonely ordeal that He has chosen for her in His wisdom. (31)

Amidst the hard work of negotiating tradition, religiosity and modernity, *Maps* portrays such cases where characters consult to religion when they fail to solve the new problems they are having. Globalization, while in essence being a threat to their sense of self, in some ways, as shall be exposed below, through its modern tools such as communication technologies and aviation, help the immigrants to protect their identities even in exile. For instance, "The cleric at this mosque could receive a telephone call from, say, Norway, from a person who was from the same village as him in Pakistan, asking him whether it was permitted for him to take an occasional small glass of whisky or vodka to keep his blood warm, given that Norway was an extremely cold country" (9). In some other cases, people not only consult to religious authorities, but also ask for their direct intervention : "A telephone call could also come in the middle of the night from Australia, a despondent father asking the cleric to fly immediately to Sydney all-expenses-paid and exorcise the djinns that had taken possession of his daughter soon after an end was put to her love for a white schoolmate and she was married to a cousin brought hurriedly over from Pakistan" (9-10).*Maps* presents many other incidents similar to above mentioned Muslim girl who is being exorcised from her djinns by going through extreme beatings as a result of which she dies. As this example lays bare, religion is a very powerful force in the lives of immigrant communities, a set of instructions, consulted to define and contain the new phenomena the immigrants encounter. As the contact with the other- in this case, with the white English- is a new problem for many of the immigrants in the novel who have never left their small villages in Pakistan before, religion comes to their help as the only epistemological set of values that guides the lost individual into peace and solace through salvation. According to this logic, a Muslim girl's falling in love with a white person can only be expressed by the intervention of djinns that possess her body and thus haul her into sin; to which the only solution immigrants

can find is exorcism. Therefore it is no surprise that national, racial and ethnic signifiers of identity are losing their significance over that of religion as they remain insufficient in dealing with the problems immigrants are experiencing in host countries.

Aslam carefully observes what makes people turn to religion as a cure for the trauma the immigrants are going through; and he exposes how turning to religion is closely linked to immigrants' dislocation and alienation as delicately portrayed in the following extract:

> Pakistan is a poor country, a harsh and disastrously unjust land […] life is a trail if not a punishment for most of the people born there: millions of its sons and daughters have managed to find footholds all around the globe in their search for livelihood and a semblance of dignity. Roaming the planet looking for solace, they've settled in small towns that make them smaller still, and in cities that have tall buildings and even taller loneliness. (9)

As many immigrants struggling with the harsh conditions in Pakistan realize upon arriving in England that this industrial, modern centre of civilization is not going to cure their loneliness, turn to religion, creating a third space as an alternative to dichotomy between the East and West, where longing for belonging is fulfilled through religious and spiritual means. These lonely immigrants united through their religion gather around this identity, creating a clustered world for themselves, as a result of which integration into Britain is deliberately delayed and resisted as many immigrant communities choose to remain within the closed circuit of diaspora, avoiding contact with the Other.

Pakistani community's dislike of the white English is clearly evident in the novel. Still, it should also be noted that Aslam's emphasis in this novel is not on the white/ black binary or racism. There are very striking examples of racism done by whites to immigrants, and immigrants' fear of contact with the white is presented as a very strong form of racism; but Aslam is more interested in what is happening inside a diasporic community, "small scale 9/11s" in his own words, the connotations of which are commented by O' Connor as follows: "There are no terrorist bombs, nor Al-Qaeda links in Aslam's novel. Nothing as sensational,but rather a mosaic of violence on a smaller, local level, of intimidation, and murder. ThePakistani community in the novel lives in a nameless, shapeless place, at once in England and yet not there. [...] There is nointegration in the novel, England, as it were, is

absent"(1). Aslam corrects O' Connor's reference to England's absence, saying it is only white England that is absent from the novel; thus showing how two different worlds located side by side might exist in completely different temporal and spatial planes, as Pakistani community in *Maps* refuses to participate in the mainstream British culture and thus emerges a situation where two communities live side by side leading parallel lives, without any interaction with each other. According to Rumy Hasan, as conveyed through his *Multiculturalism: Some Inconvenient Truths*, this dangerous practice is becoming more and more common among British Muslims. With regard to this unwillingness for interaction, Hasan states: "whereas in the days of the British Empire, it was the White colonialists who ensured they did not socially mix with those of a darker hue, the situation in Britain, in regard to many settlers from the 'East', seems to have been reversed: it is *they* who appear now to be largely responsible for not mixing with those of a lighter hue" (italics in the original 229). The inhabitants of Dasht-e-Tanhaii, show the symptoms of this diasporic unwillingness to mix. Obsessed with their group identity and fiction of purity, they refrain from interaction with the host country, and chose to remain locked inside the diaspora.

Aslam describes *Maps* as an "overview of race in Britain over the past 50 years" (qtd in Upstone 103), and one of the points he draws attention to is the fact that "there are people, living in England, who can count on the fingers of one hand the number of White people they have spoken to" (Chambers- 149-50). Kaukab is one of such people as the following example demonstrates: "The 'thank you' she murmurs to the flower- deliveryman is her third exchange with a white person this year; there were five last year; none the year before, if she remembers correctly; three the year before that" (*Maps* 69). As David Waterman underlines, "throughout the novel there are indications that Britain is considered a hostile environment and residence in the UK" (20), and it is not desired by the immigrants. This impression naturally leads especially the first generation of immigrants to avoid the white world, as a result of which young girls are sent to Pakistan to marry cousins so as to prevent miscegenation between races.

Fear of contamination by the white world is a very acute threat, that is physically affecting the Pakistani community that many women like Shamas' wife

Kaukab, who is a very devout, at times extremist Muslim, possesses clothes to wear outside in case they might be polluted by the unclean white people:

> England is a dirty country, an unsacred country full of people filthy with disgusting habits and practices, where, for all one knew, unclean dogs and cats, or unwashed people, or people who have not bathed after sexual congress, or drunks and people with invisible dried drops of alcohol on their shirts and trousers, or menstruating women, could very possibly have come into contact with the bus seat a good Muslim has chosen to sit on, or touched an item in the shop that he or she has just picked up- and so most Muslim men and women of the neighbourhood have a few sets of clothing reserved solely for outdoors, taking them off the moment they get home to put on the ones they know to be clean. (267)

Like England, the English are perceived to be dirty and this diseased logic is projected onto whomever the white person may be. When Kaukab meets Stella, Charag's wife, Kaukab's daughter- in- law, she cannot help thinking "Who was this white woman? How clean was she, for instance: did she know that a person must bathe after sexual intercourse, or remain polluted, contaminating everything she came into contact with?" (*Maps* 39).Kaukab is repulsed by the English society and Western civilization: "For once she would like to go from her house to, say, the post office without being confronted by the decay of Western culture" (269), "this immoral and decadent civilization was intent on spoiling everything that was pure and transcendental about human existence!" (293). Unfortunatelythis fear of contamination is fed into the minds of younger generations, too. Young children in the neighbourhood are disciplined on very racist values. Often they hear rules such as if they do not obey, they will be given to whites. Once a young girl is threatened to be "given away to a white person who'll make her eat pork and drink alcohol and not *wash* her bottom after going to the toilet – forcing her to use *only* toilet paper" (italics in the original220). The equitation of whiteness with Christianity, finally leads the characters to declare England to be the "nest of devilry from where God has been exiled" (*Maps* 30). In this "godless country", Kaukab often worries about the future and worrying what will become of her children, accuses her husband Shamas for bringing them to England.

The fear of contamination consuming the community is nourished by what Vijay Mishra terms as "the diasporic imaginary". Referring to Lacanian connotations of the imaginary, Vijay Mishra uses the term "the diasporic imaginary" to refer to

"any ethnic enclave in a nation-state that defines itself, consciously, unconsciously or because of the political self-interest of a racialized nation-state, as a group that lives in displacement" (423). The dispersed people wounded by displacement and loss come together and try to cure their pain through indulging in this imaginary identification. According to Mishra "[t]o be able to preserve that loss, diasporas very often construct racist fictions of purity as a kind of jouissance, a joy, a pleasure around which anti-miscegenation narratives of homelands are constructed against the reality of the homelands themselves" (423), which are also referred to as "imaginary homelands" by Salman Rushdie. Once outlived, the past can only be partially brought to the present; a fact which diasporic subject indulging in nostalgia simply fails to acknowledge. When Mah-Jabin is in Pakistan, Kaukab thinks to herself she feels closer to Mah-Jabin rather than Charag who is only a train journey away because Mah-Jabin is in somewhere Kaukab knows about in opposition to Charag who is living amidst the unknown white culture (129). However, Kaukab only imagines Pakistan as she lived, and as a typical feature of nostalgia, she only remembers the good things in exile, whereas in reality Pakistan is a country where women are abused, oppressed and killed, where feuds still continue and where despite all the talk of purity and divinity people continue irreligious practices. Thus, nostalgia habit accompanied by fictions of purity becomes even more dangerous in the case of Pakistan because even the country's name – Pakistan- literally means The Land of the Pure in Urdu, so obsession with purity is deeply embedded one; and therefore Pakistan's political standing and the way immigrants identify with this in the individual level are important factors as well. As Waterman reminds, for Pakistanis, Islam is one of the most significant identity markers, as "Islam was the basis for the foundation of Pakistan as a separate country from India" (25), and the tensions between different religious communities and interfaith strifes are sustained in the host country, because their difference as Muslims is the main tenet of identity they forged in exile.

Kaukab, overwhelmed by the duty to maintain this ideal of purity and transfer it to her children, tries to prevent any Western influence that has the potential to 'harm' her children. Chatting with the matchmaker woman, she contemplates:

> If her children were still living at home, or if Shamas was back from work, Kaukabwould have asked the matchmaker to lower her voice to a whisper, not wishing herchildren to hear anything bad about

> Pakistan or the Pakistanis, not wishing toprovide Shamas with the opportunity to make a disrespectful comment about Islam, or hint through his expression that he harboured contrary views on Allah's inherent greatness; but she is alone in the house, so she lets the woman talk. (42)

Kaukab's desire to govern the knowledge that is entering into the house surface in a few other occasions. For instance, once she spots alcohol in one of the photographs Jugnu sends them, and she immediately hides the photos from children lest they might see and be affected by it. She does not let Shamas know a drunken man was on the phone, because that would mean acknowledging people consumed alcohol in Pakistan. When Jugnu contracts a sexually transmitted disease from his white lover at the time, Kaukab is appalled to hear she contracted the disease in Tunisia where she went for a holiday. In self- defense, she immediately blames the white woman of lying: " 'She is lying', she said firmly. 'Tunisia is a Muslim country. She must have gone on holiday somewhere else, a country populated by the whites or non-Muslims. She's trying to malign our faith'" (44). In Kaukab's view, the West and the East are two incontestable set of values, and the East, contrary to the decay of the West is, so pure and clean in essence and sensitive that the West is trying to pollute it through all means. She even regards Charag's vasectomy as a "Christian conspiracy to stop the number of Muslims from increasing" (59); whereas for Charag himself it is a deeply contemplated decision partly stemming from his own inefficacious relation with his own parents. Charag regards himself as an unsuccessful parent and decides he does not want to raise any more children, thus avoiding from parenting new generations which might be victimized by traditions that are oppressing Charag.

Change seems impossible for the older generation within the course of the narrative. Kaukab when she realizes how she harmed her children does not know how to handle this realization:

> The sun rounds the corner and begins to sail at the front of the house. She sits there, wondering if that's who she is, if that's what her image looks like in the mirror: a mother who feeds poisons to her son, and a mother who jumps to conclusions and holds her daughter responsible for the fact that her marriage ended disastrously? The realizations are still new and she is not sure what effect they will have on her soul after she has lived with them for an hour, a day, a month. (308)

As Kaukab eventually realizes, the parents' solution to the threat of miscegenation to keep their children "pure" is useless, as it does not respond to young people's lived

experiences as British Muslims.In fact, as Nadia Butt underlines, concentration on these "ideals of purity" creates a social crisis because "in a world of movement and mobility, not 'purity' but 'impurity' in the cultural sphere is the order of the day" (156). As Butt, referring to Edward Said reminds, "No one today is purely *one* thing. Labels like Indian, or woman, or Muslim, or American are not more than starting-points, which if followed into actual experience for only a moment are quickly left behind" (qtd in Butt, italics in the original 156). That is to say, in the age of impurity, individuals are more hyphenated than ever, and need to welcome miscegenation and hybridity in Homi Bhabba's sense. However, as the next section "Intersections of Gender and Diaspora in *Maps for Lost Lovers*" explores, closed community of The Desert of Loneliness, choose to "stay hidden in a ghetto in order to follow the Islamic Laws (the Shariah) at the cost of dismissing cultural plurality even though plurality characterises the era of modernity" (Butt 157).

4.2 Intersections of Gender and Diaspora in *Maps for Lost Lovers*

Aslam's audacious representations of how Muslim communities are refraining from interaction and how closed nature of diaspora is contributing to reinforcing oppression, have been subject of much debate, exposing Aslam to harsh criticisms. For instance, Sara Upstone accuses Aslam of Orientalism, and contributing to Islamophobia, on the grounds that he is depicting the immigrant community with an outsiders' view and narrating only the extreme cases of abuse on religious basis. Another possible reading of the novel considers *Maps* as a novel of "clash of civilizations" in Samuel Huntington would have put it as proposed by Waterman (18). However, what Aslam is trying to convey by *Maps* is a lot more than simple Orientalism or presenting a case of clash of civilizations where the immigrants would go through a culture shock. Aslam offers a very nuanced picture of what is going inside a diasporic community as he is aware of the problems Rumy Hasan is voicing out in his *Multiculturalism: Some Inconvenient Truths*. Hasan scrutinizes why multicultural policies fail and what is wrong with multiculturalism's transformation info multifaithism. According to him, giving each culture its due respect is fine, but there arises significant problems as demanding separate rights might cause the continuation of derogatory and inhumane practices such as female

circumcision, honour killings, forced marriages, most of which are almost always contested through victimization of the diasporic subject, especially that of women.

The closed circuit structure of diasporas play a significant role in continuation of the problems Rumy Hasan is enlisting. James Clifford's definition of the main features of diasporas as: "a history of dispersal, myths/memories of the homeland, alienation in the host (bad host?) country, desire for eventual return, ongoing support of the homeland, and a collective identity importantly defined by this relationship" (305), is in this respect useful in understanding what is causing diasporas to exist as closed entities. From Clifford's definition also emerges an understanding of diasporic unwillingness to integrate into the host country. The same unwillingness characterizes the immigrant experience in Dasht-e-Tanhaii. The community's consciousness and solidarity are sustained by the ever presence of Islam not only as a spiritual force, but also as a governing principle which through rules and rituals organizes the chaotic life the immigrant subject finds himself/ herself struggling with. Clifford further asserts that "diaspora discourse articulates, or bends together, both roots and routes to construct what Gilroy describes as alternate public spheres (1987), forms of community consciousness and solidarity that maintain identifications outside the national time/space in order to live inside, with a difference" (308). Accordingly, the Pakistani community in *Maps*, in the moments of fear and despair return to roots, and use Islam a guiding force instead of complying with the norms of the present society they are living in. As a result, religion becomes both the pillar around which community consciousness is built and also the sign of difference from the rest of the community including Hindus, Sikhs and the white English population.

Dasht-e-Tanhaii, while on the surface promotes solidarity, is in reality, home to a divided community. The division is felt not only between the Asians and whites, but also among the Asians themselves, as they are differentiated by race, ethnicity and religion. Furthermore, as Clifford asserts, diasporic experiences are always gendered, yet as a consequence of the tendency to "talk of travel and displacement in unmarked ways, thus normalizing male experiences"(313), experiences of women who "are caught between patriarchies, ambiguous pasts, and futures", and whose experiences "involve painful difficulty in mediating discrepant worlds" (*ibid*) are often neglected. As an anticipated result of this, "community can be a site both of

support and oppression" (314), especially for women who are doubly othered.As Frontier points out, "the naturalization of women's role as carers and custodians of culture is tied up with the naturalization of ethnicity" (4); hence causing women's bodies to be used as battleground for cultural configuration via foregrounding women's position as a "test of 'civilization'" (Marranci 131). Both *Minaret* and *Maps* portray intrinsically Eurocentric pictures of this test of civilization, where women's liberation is understood only in sexual terms, the first sign of which is rejecting the hijab. Especially in *Minaret*, hijab's negative meaning is deconstructed through a reverse migration story in which the before westernized, secular Najwa dons the hijab when she comes to London, as it is seen as an empowering tool. Thus, contrary to the widely held belief in regard to hijab's lack of agency, the protagonist Najwa builds her selfhood through hijab and reconciles the trauma of migration, as her newly discovered identity as a middle aged Muslim woman facilitates her attempts of overcoming the exilic trauma. Overall, *Minaret* positions the decision to wear the hijab as one of the choices a Muslim woman can make using her free will; and hence hijab does not always mean oppression. Compared to *Minaret*'s narrative forged around hijab, *Maps*' is a limited engagement because neither the narrator of *Maps* nor the implied author does not advocate the agency of hijab as a liberating force. Just the opposite, at many occasions Aslam points to hijab's lack of agency as a device that is used to contain women's bodies and thus render them invisible. For instance, Chanda, who as a twice divorced woman, is a "wanton whore in most people's eyes" (*Maps* 15) was asked by her brothers, who eventually kill her, "to consider wearing the all-enveloping *burka*. The men said they felt awkward and ashamed when they were with their friends on a street corner and she went by... if she wore a *burka* no one would know it was her as she went by" (342). This hegemonic male desire to contain Chanda's womanhood feels disturbed by her sight and wishes just like her inner self which is invisible to the people around her, her body, too, would be invisible and thus would be erased from the public domain, which belongs to men. With the aim of completely containing her, they change the name of the shop to begin with: "The shop was named after her – Chanda Food & Convenience Store – but the sign was over after she came back trailing the stink of failed marriages. The old name, it was felt, would needlessly remind people of the girl, their next thought probably being, 'Chanda- the twice-divorced girl'. *I feel I am*

being erased, Chanda wrote in her diary angrily" (italics in the original 342). What Chanda is feeling to be happening is exactly what is taking place. First, her name is erased from the sign of the shop and then her body is erased from the world as she and Jugnu are murdered by Chanda's brothers.

The male desire to contain womanhood manifests itself in many other occasions. Dash-e-Tanhaii is populated with patriarchs who decide on everything for their women folk, and even the decision of migration is given by the male heads of the houses and most of the time women have no say in it. In *Muslim Women in the United Kingdom and Beyond* (2003), Jawad and Benn draw attention to this fact, stating that it is quite uncommon for Muslim women to migrate alone; so "migration of Muslim women, therefore, is linked organically with the migration of their male kin" (xxiii), eventually forming a pattern of chain migration which is repeated in *Maps*. Shamas, the idealist, perhaps the utopian, brings his family to England hoping that they will have a better life in Europe, founded on the ideals of liberalism, freedom and democracy. Thus, mostly a forced migration on the part of women, when combined with other difficulties women face such as lack of language, poor access to education, forced marriages with distant cousins, result in alienation which becomes apparent in various forms in each character's life.

Alienation of women is experienced differently by the first generation of the immigrant women and their daughters, the second generation. This alienation and victimization of the first generation, according to Nadia Butt is mostly a self-inflicted one (159), affecting not only those women themselves, but also younger generation, such as Mah-Jabin and Chanda, who despite being determined to follow secular paths, are still oppressed by irrational religious laws. Kaukab is an emblem for the first generation of immigrant women in the neighbourhood. Through the occasional visits the women of the neigbourhood pay to her house, the reader learns that they are all very similar to each other. First of all, they deeply feel the features of living in a diaspora, which Clifford had underlined. Indulging in a dangerous nostalgia, they believe in an eventual return to the homeland, and refer to Pakistan as home, and are appalled when their children are referring to England as home, and Pakistan as abroad. While fostering the hope of an eventual return, they would reject the idea if a chance had occurred because their children would not be accompanying them; thus their obligation as mothers holds them back. Kaukab replies to Shamas' inquiry

about visiting Pakistan as follows: "'We'll go for a visit of course, but I refuse to settle there permanently even though there is nothing I would like better. There is nothing on this planet that I loathe more than this country, but I won't go to live in Pakistan as long as my children are here.' " (146). Kaukab's hatred of England is really intense, and she finds nothing there that would appeal to her, where even things spoke a different language: "In England the heart said *boom boom* instead of *dhak dhak*; a gun said *bang!*instead of *thah!*; things fell with a 'thud' not a *dharam*; small bells said 'jingle' instead of *chaan-chaan*; the trains said 'choo choo' instead of *chuk chuk*"(italic is the original 35-6). England, where even things speak a different language, does not correspond to lived experiences of immigrants. It is a melting pot functioning as a mirror in which inhabitants of Dasht-e Tantaii, particularly women, cannot find their own reflections. It is a space where they cannot actualize themselves. For instance, Chanda's mother reveals to her husband when they are reflecting on their prison visit to their sons who are arrested with the charge of killing Chanda, says she cannot express her true self in English: " 'I wanted to ask so many things today but my English isn't very good. That prison guard kept telling me not to talk to them in "Paki language" each time I felt like saying what I truly feel. "Speak English or shut up," he said' " (174). The prison visit, in itself allusion to the Panopticon, reflects what is happening when an immigrant goes out into the white world. In the public domain, s/he finds himself/herself under surveillance, always being watched and eventually rejected because s/he is coming from a discourse that cannot be contained. According to this logic, while fluency in English is regarded as a sign of submission and civilization, broken English as Amer draws attention to is recognized as belonging to that of drunkards and Tarzan; thus linking it to savagery (256). Seeing Tarzan on television, Charag's son rejoices he is speaking like grandmother Kaukab (310), Mah- Jabin remembers how drunken Ujala would speak like Kaukab who once said 'Make noise silently!" (300). In the immigrant's process of integration, linguistic competence and "speaking the language of the West" is regarded as a prerequisite to civilization; those who fail to speak "properly" the language of the civilized party are regarded as savages and thus they are forced into subalternity.

Ujala and Mah-Jabin go through a similar discussion with regard to their mother's position. Mah-Jabin expresses to Ujala that part of the blame for their

mother's character can be put on her lack of language. While blaming Kaukab for feeding him with bromide which Kaukab thought as holy salt that would treat Ujala's disobedience, Mah-Jabin defends her mother saying: "If Mother is uneducated there are reasons. She has little English and she feels nervous stepping out of the house because she is not sure whether she can count on a friendly response-' " (323). Ujala interrups Mah-Jabin and inviting her to "drop the pretence" asks what would be different if she was in Pakistan where she spoke the language (*ibid*). Mah- Jabin still insists that Kaukab is the way she is because of the way she was brought up in Pakistan, to which Kaukab in self-defense replies " 'There is nothing wrong with the status of women in Pakistan' " (*ibid*). Kaukab's self-defense clearly displays the problems women have as also accounted by Rumy Hasan. Setting off from Freud's analysis of a child's internalisation of certain things, a step to his/her personal development, Hasan points to the fact that many of the women in diasporic communities similarly think it is the most righteous thing to be oppressed by religion and cultural norms. In doing this, women "*internalise their oppression*, whereby they come to fully agree to conforming to their group's beliefs and customs, no matter how oppressive" (italics in the original 78). In other words, the oppression they are enduring becomes the measure of how obedient and chaste they are, the so-called virtues with which they boast. Many of the women are so brainwashed about the rightness of the malpractices done in the name of religion and thus accept oppression as a just punishment that majority of them are happy to live with it as long as they can continue to perform their duties as mothers- a duty which provides them with the dignity, respect and authority which is otherwise denied to them. Ujala's argument is hence partly correct, because women's lives are not different at all in Pakistan where they knew "the language," but the experience of migration makes them twofold subalterns.As Amer observes, this strife between siblings with regard to Kaukab's ability or access to speech, is brimming with references to her subalternity; Kaukab is a "twofold subaltern" (257) because she is a woman first of all, and then she cannot speak English therefore she does not have access to the Western imperial centre even though she lives within it. Moreover, Kaukab's experience with her children shows how a subaltern's ability is best measured not by speech but by being heard. Kaukab expresses herself better in her native tongue Urdu, with which she speaks to her children, but she is hardly heard by her addressees. She speaks from a

position that is representing a discourse that is alien to her westernized children, and thus she is condemned to the position of a subaltern who should have no right to speak.

Like many diasporic women, Kaukab projects her desires onto her children and hopes her children will be successful at where their parents failed. Charag, because of the parental pressure, tries hard to get a place in one of the medicine schools, but he studies chemistry at the end, and eventually quits it. Kaukab is disappointed when Charag drops out of his chemistry degree. She protests saying "A painter is not a secure job. When we came to this country we lived in broken- down homes and hoped our children wouldn't have to" (128). Part of this protest stems from a very naïve mother desire to protect her children and secure their futures; but in her ignorance, Kaukab indulges in presumptuous acts as a result of which her children are literally repulsed by her. In their eyes, Kaukab is a cruel mother, who feeds her children with bromide, marries them to oppression, and protest their careers. They, especially Ujala and Charag, hold her responsible even for Chanda's and Jugnu's murder whereas in reality Kaukab, despite the fact that she criticized the couple's co-habitation out of wedlock, is really sad about their disappearance and being one of the few people who could see the pressures on Chanda's family and guess its results, Kaukab even talked to Chanda and tried to convince the couple to find a way of marriage which would then have prevented all the disasters.

The problem causing the conflicts between Kaukab and her children is the fact that Kaukab does not "know". Lack of communication between the children and her has reached to such a degree that neither party makes any effort to understand the other. Kaukab tries to make meaning of the world with the language she speaks. The Eastern ideology, from which she speaks is the only source of information that is accessible to her; and she refuses to go beyond it. Her children, on the other hand, despite all the possible limitations, have been exposed to the Western culture, and choose it over their native culture, which they know only as an oppressing force. The Pakistani culture as experienced by Kaukab is of course quite different from how her children are experiencing it. For Kaukab, Pakistan is an imaginary homeland, where she had happy memories as well as sad ones. As a woman in exile, she eliminates the sad memories, and holds on to good ones, and remembers Pakistan as if it was a happy country, land of milk and honey, where women's oppression is out of

question, all people are good devout Muslims; whereas in reality, it is a country with terribly harsh conditions for everyone and wife beatings, honour killings, forced marriages are not very uncommon. Children's experience of Pakistan, on the other hand, is shaped by what they are experiencing inside the diaspora, which is mainly oppression. Western culture is represented to them by their parents as a potential threat, as the source of all enemy whereas Pakistan and Islam are exalted. As children grow up to find a very different picture of Pakistan from the image they had been brought up to believe in, their despair soars. Whereas England is the "nest of devilry from where God has been exiled" (30) for their parents, for the second generation of immigrants it is vice versa. An aggrieved mother narrates the words of her disobedient daughter who refuses to visit Pakistan because females and males are segregated there, says: " 'Everything is divided into His and Hers as if anyone needed a reminder of what a great big toilet that country really is, Mother, no wonder you get the shits the moment you land.' " (45). At another instance, Mah- Jabin remembers what she felt as a teenage: "She and he [the boy Mah-Jabin was in love] were born in England and had grown up witnessing people taking pleasure in freedom, but that freedom although within reach was of no use to them as a lamp with a genie was of no use to a person whose tongue had been cut off, who could not form words to ask for three wishes" (117-8). Many of the second generation of immigrants find themselves feeling very similar to that genie who cannot even wish freedom; for long years, they only watch it from a distance. However, when they find themselves liberated, they break the glass jar in which they were confined, and run to freedom the result of which is exclusion from the community.

Overall, Kaukab blames the Western culture and civilization for all the evil in the world. As her resistance to accept for instance the fact that people consume alcohol in Pakistan, a person can contact sexually transmitted disease in Tunisia, a tourist might be kidnapped and murdered in Turkey proves, her problem is her resistance to change. In her isolation, she becomes more and more obsessed with religion as she finds religion is the only thing that will not criticize and eventually desert her. Her children are disobedient, England is a dirty country, white people are to be avoided, and what remains is religion. She would be lost without it as she contemplates:

> Here, Kaukab is away from her children, away from her customs and country, alone and lonely, and yet He tells her to have faith in His compassion. And that is what she should do uncomplainingly, reminding herself that she is not lost, that He is with her in this strange place. And yet she doesn't know what to do about the fact that she feels utterly empty almost all the time, as though she has outlived herself, as if she stayed on the train one stop past her destination. (270)

Kaukab's alienation manifests itself in her commitment to religion. Regarding Allah as the one and only company that protects her regardless of where she is, what she is doing, she holds onto her religious identity. Fearing contamination by the Western world, she hardly ever goes out like many other women of the neighbourhood. She has dedicated all her life to her husband and her children because that was the only identity position she was brought up to keep up, but they are one by one are estranged from her. Kaukab's attempted suicide is the most overt example of how deeply hurt she is. It is one of the greatest sins in Islam to commit suicide and suicides are considered as non-believers on the day of judgment. Therefore for Kaukab, whom her faith in Allah is everything to her, to commit suicide would require much thought, and she would not do something like that if she did not feel so desperate.

The discussions between Kaukab and Mah-Jabin reveal how they both feel oppressed, but while Kaukab even though she claims she did not have the freedom to free Mah-Jabin, is willing to pursue the rules that oppress women; while Mah-Jabin chooses to walk away. Kaukab could have a very different life, because Shamas, being an atheist, does not care about religion at all, but she uses and abuses the-Name-of-the- Father; and disciplines her children accordingly: "Oh your father will be angry, oh your father will be upset: Mah-Jabin had grown up hearing these sentences, Kaukab trying to obtain legitimacy for her own decisions by invoking his name. She *wanted* him to be angry, she *needed* him to be angry" (italics in the original 111). She needs to be justified by Shamas, even though Shamas does not really care.

Maps, on the whole, subverts some general claims with regard to gender issues. As Amer underlines, despite their subaltern situations, if one were to make a list, Kaukab is the one most liberated compared to her daughter Mah-Jabin and Shamas' love affair Suraya (260). While the remaining two are abused by their husbands,

Kaukab was exposed to domestic violence by Shamas only once, when Shamas discovered Kaukab, by avoiding from breastfeeding Ujala, was making their baby son fast. Kaukab tells Mah-Jabin that she has not talked to him for a month and then the incident made them remain separate for three years (116). Mah-Jabin, though born and grown up in Britain was abused by her husband and she remained silent about it for about two years whereas her mother Kaukab whom her children perceive as a silenced figure, openly resisted it. Suraya experiences the worst case of woman's oppression. Her husband beats and divorces her, but she has no choice but to remarry him if she wishes to see her son, but in order to do that she has to be married to someone else first. She seduces Shamas, and the two start an affair, but Shamas does not ever consider marrying her, and when he learns about the situation, he still treats the idea as abhorrent and rejects it as he also believes, returning to such an abusive husband would only harm Suraya further. By the end of the novel, Suraya is pregnant with Shamas' child, and the matchmaker reveals to the neighbourhood woman she has just made a successful match for a beautiful woman called Suraya. Mah-Jabin's and Suraya's experiences show how getting Western education, living in England does not necessarily mean a woman can use her free will. Luckily for her, Mah-Jabin has managed to say no to a marriage that was tormenting her, but Suraya despite the moments of doubt is in essence a believer, and she justifies all the harm that is being done to her, through religion, offering the excuse that Allah knows better and if she is going through this suffering, there must surely be some divine reasons behind it, which are inconceivable to human mind.

Suraya is a woman who had been sent to Pakistan to marry a man whom she had not met before. During the first weeks of their marriage, her husband and her in-laws feel astonished by the fact that she is from England, and Suraya takes the advantage of coming from England and acts in what she calls as in a "spirited manner" (157). However, one day she learns of the grievances one of the girls in the neighboring household, with whom Suraya's in laws are feuding, go through. The girl was being raped by her uncle for months, and her family learned about the fact only when her pregnancy began to show. Terrorized by the uncle, the girl refuses to name the perpetrator and she is about to be punished for bringing shame upon the family. "The confidence of her English life still clinging to her", (157) as the narrator notes, Suraya decides to go there and reveal the truth hoping they would be merciful to the

young girl. However, she realizes how big a mistake that decision was as soon as she walks in their courtyard. The men of the house spot her and bar her way, and she pretends she entered the house by mistake; however, although the men leave her, they tell her that they will tell everyone they had raped her because they would be dishonoured if people thought they let a woman of the enemy to pass by without taking advantage of the opportunity. Suraya's husband and in- laws believe her, but that does not change a thing because what people think to have happened is as important, sometimes even more important than what one herself/himself knows to have taken place. Taking advantage of the situation of being exposed to people's biting words and sneering looks, Suraya's husband comes home drunk, beats her, and eventually divorces her, saying the word *talaaq*- I divorce thee, three times. He regrets his action immediately after, but there is no going back.

Suraya's real torment begins after that. According to Islamic law, she should be married to someone else first before she can remarry her ex-husband. Trying to make an appropriate match, she embarks on a mission of finding a suitable person who would temporarily marry and then divorce her, after which she could go back to her ex-husband and unite with his son. She chooses Shamas, and while contemplating on how much of this she should reveal to him; how she will convince him to divorce her at the end, she cries :

> *Dear Allah, why can't I understand the reasons behind your laws?* It's the *man* who deserves to be punished if he has uttered the word divorce as idle threat, in anger or while intoxicated, and, yes, the punishment for him is that he has to see his wife briefly become another man's property, being *used* by him. But why must the divorced wife be punished? Nothing is more abhorrent to a Muslim woman than the thought of being touched by a man other than her husband. She hides her body like a treasure. But if she wants her husband back she has to let another man touch her. This is her punishment: a punishment she deserves, perhaps because she did not know how to teach her husband to be a good man, how to teach him to control his anger and be a good Muslim, stay away from alcohol? (italics in the original 166).

The logic Suraya follows proves how she internalizes the oppression that is being done to her in the name of religion, through a systematic accusation of herself. She knows no woman on earth deserve such maltreatments, but she convinces herself that there must be a good reason for it, if it is what Allah has dictated. *Maps* displays how many of the women in the neighbourhood follow the same logic. They internalize

their oppression because it gives them honour both in this world and in the after world. Intoxicated by religion, they believe the more they are oppressed, the more they will be rewarded in Heaven, as this world is only a test, and successful ones will enjoy the reward in the after world. Still, the thought that " *It's as though Allah forgot there were women in the World when he made some of his laws, thinking only of men*" (italics in the original 150) crosses Suraya's mind, but she immediately banishes the thought as "all good Muslims must" (*ibid*).

Mah-Jabin's oppression also explicates the difficulties of becoming a woman in a diasporic society trapped between a useless past and hopeless future. In this society, the role cast to women is that of the "angel in the house". When mosque officials are discovered to be molesting young children, women are prevented from having a say in the issue, they are laughed by the man and advised to "go away and get the dinner ready for their husbands" (235). Some other men "were even more contemptuous and told them to stop cackling like hens in the place of worship, adding that a woman should be a creature of the home and the night, and had no place outside in the world of men" (*ibid*). Mah-Jabin is brought up by the same logic that justifies women's oppression. Despite the liberality of her father Shamas, Kaukab was the one dealing with children, and it was Kaukab who literally jumped at the opportunity when Mah-Jabin, after a failed love interest, asked their parents to arrange a marriage for her in Pakistan, which Mah-Jabin at the time regarded as the only way of healing a broken heart. Finally fleeing her abusive husband, and looking back into the past, she now accuses her parents, particularly Kaukab, of delivering her into oppression and asks Kaukab why she did not prevent it, to which Kaukab replies she herself did not have the freedom to free Mah-Jabin (115). Mah-Jabin takes Kaukab's words literally when she says she could not free her. Believing Kaukab could have easily prevented that marriage from taking place if she wanted, Mah-Jabin continues her accusations of her mother without really understanding the logic behind her actions. Mah-Jabin regards Kaukab's reaction as a lie and adds she knows perfectly well that Kaukab still wishes Mah-Jabin would return to her husband because even though the two have been divorced under the British law, they are still married in Allah's eyes. Upon this discussion Kaukab thinks to herself, how one's children can make so false assumptions about their parents. Kaukab is a firm believer, and there are not grey areas for her in life; things are either black or white.

In a discourse which puts women's honour above everything else, she feels obliged to protect her daughter and her reputation, as a woman's reputation is all there is to a woman. For this reason, Kaukab is devastated when Shamas' father discovers himself to be a Hindu after all the time he spent as a Muslim, as a result of memory loss. The news are abhorrent to Kaukab as she thinks no good Muslim would want to marry the granddaughter of a Hindu. Kaukab often accuses Shamas of not thinking about the children's future, and finally when Shamas realizes Kaukab is preparing to commit suicide by drinking the water in which she boiled a handful of coins, he drags her, and Kaukab finally erupting with anger tells she is holding him responsible for the fact that her children hate her:

> ' Yes, I hold you responsible. Have you read what that beast nephew of yours did to my daughter, my better- than- flowers daughter?' [...] 'I want you to know that Mah-Jabin's chances in life were ruined by you, her father. You didn't want to move to a better neighbourhood, and no decent family was *ever* going to come to ask for the hand of the girl living in this third-class neighbourhood of people who are mill labourers or work at The Jewel in the Crown and The Star Punjab. You have to think of these things when you have daughters. I asked you to put aside your principles when there was talk of an O.B.E., just for the girl's sake, just so there would be at least *something* attractive about her to other people, your photograph in Urdu newspaper for all to see, but you said no, said you neither seek honour among men nor kingship over them. I swear on the Koran I didn't want any of these things for myself but for the children. I wanted Charag to become a doctor so people would say Mah-Jabin is a doctor's sister, but that dream of mine failed too. And how am I going to find another man for her *now*, now that her brother's picture *is* in the newspapers but for disgusting immoral wicked reasons. (italics in the original 328-9)

Kaukab, knowing what a woman's life is like inside in diaspora, tries to protect her only daughter. The world is cruel particularly towards women, and one cannot simply turn his/her back to the all the convention and troubles in the world. Chanda and Jugnu, who have in Shamas' words have "tried to turn their back on the world, on the world's trouble, and found themselves stabbed in the back" (280), tried it but failed and paid an extremely harsh price. Thus, being the product of a discourse that dictates a woman has no other option but to marry, Kaukab, is trying to ensure her daughter will at least be married to a decent one, not that wife beating type; but the person whom they married Mah-Jabin is exactly the opposite of what Kaukab had imagined. Mah-Jabin's husband had been abusing her, which her parents had no

knowledge of until Kaukab finds the letter Mah-Jabin hid in the bathroom in the evening of their reunion. Not having any hint of Mah-Jabin's oppression, Kaukab blames her daughter for leaving her husband and living in sin in the name of studying, through a stigmatization of whiteness and Western culture.

> How your tongue has lengthened in the past few years. Is this what they taught you at university, to talk like this, your precious university far away in London that you had to attend because you wanted education? If education was what you wanted you would have gone to a university within commuting distance and lived at home like decent girls all over these streets. Freedom is what you wanted, not education; the freedom to do obscene things with white boys and lead a sin-smeared life. (111)

Kaukab does not change nor tries to react positively to Mah-Jabin's living as an emancipated woman getting a university education. The only image of the liberated woman Kaukab fosters is that of a white woman, who belongs to a "diseased, vice-ridden and lecherous race!'" (44).

Finally, it should also be noted that the diasporic experience also produces a discourse in which immigrant's femininity is negotiated in relation to that of a white woman. Compared to the white woman with loose morals, diasporic women are chaste, loyal, devout and obedient. This distinction between the white woman and diasporic women is a difference often underlined by the members of the diaspora. In the novel, the contact with the other is mainly realized through the relationships between the male members of the community and the so-called "white women". White woman is seen as an empowered party, who even enables men to speak boldly. For instance, Kaukab referring to Jugnu's affair with a white woman, reckons how she would like to ask Jugnu " 'What else have you learnt from her and her people', she wanted to ask him, 'what else do you plan to pass on to my children?'" (40). Years later, when she remembers that evening, she justifies herself by thinking of a divine intervention: "it had been a sign from Allah for the electricity to have failed the moment the white woman had stepped in, the house plunging into darkness" (47).

In the community of Dasht-e-Tanhaii's view, "the white woman" is promiscuous, lacks in virtue, so men can do whatever they like with them. For instance Kiran contemplates how the town's prostitute would be driven out of the town immediately if she had not been white. The act of prostitution itself seems to

disturb none of the members of the community as long as their women remain intact. As a case in point, Shamas faces some harsh comments, after he is seen with Suraya. Chanda's father comments to his wife: " 'They can do what they like with white women – we all know the morals they have – but at least leave our own women alone. You would think it was their [Shamas and Jugnu's] mission to corrupt every Pakistani woman they come across'" (177). The white woman's presumed lack of morals is often referred, and the white woman is even hold responsible for unmanning the male members of the community.Devastated by the news of Charag's vasectomy, Kaukab realizes she has to desert the hope of remarrying Charag as no one would want him and eventually blames Stella for this. Since Charag says he does not want to raise any children, Kaukab blames Stella for failing to fulfill the duties of a proper wife, as an nurturing mother and dutiful wife. She thinks, "If that white girl had done what a woman was supposed to do her son would still be a man" (58), once more proving how the white woman is stereotyped as only a sexual being.

4.3 Use of Art and the Function of the Artist in *Maps for Lost Lovers*

On the whole, *Maps for Lost Lovers*, is a novel of love, of people who in their isolation in one form or other, are desperately seeking love. Shamas, imagines a communist world where everyone would be equal while Kaukab dreams about a world governed with religion, hoping to be rewarded in the other world, and wishes her beloved children would love her back. Their three children, none satisfied with the parents' version of filial love provided in the house, ran away with the hope of being loved but all come back empty handed.

In the narrative level, Aslam handles the theme of search for love through the motif of moth to flame relationship and complicates earthly and divine love. In a loveless universe attraction to the impossible other is similar to a moth's attraction to the flame. Once moth and flame unite there is no chance but death as happens with Chanda and Jugnu, the Muslim girl and her Hindu lover. Human love in the novel is impossible, and almost in a Shakespearian manner, Aslam underlines transcendental nature of beauty and love, and exalts art as an imperishable production, exalting the narrative almost to a "sacred" status in Rushdie's terms.

In his essay "Is Nothing Sacred?" Salman Rushdie points to art, and literature in particular, as the only sacred thing, because "literature is the one place in any society where, within the secrecy of our own heads, we can hear voices talking about everything in every possible way" (original italics 429). The neighbourhood in *Maps* renamed by the inhabitants as Dasht-e-Tanhaii, The Desert of Loneliness, with its bringing together migrants from different backgrounds such as Hindu and Muslim, with the conflict between the first and the second generation of immigrants, is such a space where one can hear "voices talking about everything in every possible way". Even though, very often these voices are perceived as a threat to community's sense of self and thus almost always silenced, these voices manage to be heard through Aslam's narrative.

Early in the novel, visiting Kiran, an old acquaintance, Shamas remembers how Kiran and her father had introduced him and all the other workers with whom they were sharing the house to jazz music. Below is Shamas' remembrance of these peaceful moments and realizing the power of music in overcoming the difference:

> The record would begin and soon the listeners would be engrossed by those musicians who seemed to know how to blend together all that life contains, the real truth, the undeniable last word, the innermost core of all that is unbearably painful within a heart and all that is joyful, all that is loved and all that is worthy of love but remains unloved, lied to and lied about, the unimaginable depths of the soul where no other can withstand the longings and which few have the conviction to plumb, the sorrows and the indisputable rage – so engrossed would the listeners become that, by the end of the piece, the space between them would have contracted, heads leaning together as though they were sharing a mirror. All great artists know that part of their task is to light up the distance between two human beings. (13)

The transcendence of art as a tool endorsed with the potential to break the walls that are separating people, is linked by Rushdie to use of art in overcoming difference. Rushdie whole-heartedly believes art can be "the third principle that mediates between the material and spiritual worlds … by 'swallowing' both worlds, offer us something new- something that might even be called a secular definition of transcendence?" (420). In defense of this idea, Rushdie refers to Carlos Fuentes who has called the novel "a privileged arena," which is "born from the very fact that we do not understand one another, because unitary, orthodox language has broken

down" (420). Aslam sets of from the very same premise, and writes with the aim of showing how art can be the first step to "happy multicultural land" because "nature, beauty, and art belong to everyone and are without nationality" (Chambers *British Muslim Fictions* 153). Like jazz music contracting the distance between two human beings, great art, in all its forms can make people aware of their humanity.

Aslam's belief in the potential of art is really powerful, and he gives utmost importance to paying tribute to all the masters who have influenced him. Aslam reveals to Chambers the reasons beyond dedicating the novel to two artists, Faiz Ahmed Faiz and Abdur Rahman Chugtai, who have in their own ways taught Aslam about the importance of love and art (146). Chugtai is an important influence because he showed Aslam art can be created by common people, which at the time helped Aslam overcome the difficulties he was having as an immigrant. Aslam tells how he thinks he is against idealizing or over-romanticizing the immigrant experience because while intermingling of the cultures is a positive thing, it does come with its difficulties; therefore essentializing or romanticizing migrant experience does not at all help the immigrants.

What else these masters have also taught Aslam is the interconnectedness of art forms. In an interview with M. O'Connor, Aslam mentions how as a child he always wanted to be a painter. Along with Urdu literature, visual arts and painting has a strong influence in his work. Aslam further expresses:

> I wanted every chapter of *Maps for Lost Lovers* to be like a Persian miniature. In these miniatures, a small piece of paper – no bigger than a sheet of A4 – holds an immense wealth of beauty, colour and detail. Trees have leaves each perfectly rendered. Flowers are moments old and the tilework of the palaces and mosques is lovingly detailed. That was the aim in *Maps for Lost Lovers*. (O'Connor 2)

Through showing an immensely detailed picture of all that is to an immigrant's life, Aslam successfully avoids falling into the trap of essentializing the migrant experience, which he himself is critical of. His insistence on art, implies, only through art, one can achieve this end and portray humanity whether it is an immigrant community or local people, in its totality, without essentializing it.

Along with Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan, Aslam's father Miam Mohammad Aslam, who has written poetry under the pseudonym Wamaq Saleem, appear in the novel as figures who through their art are able to bring people together. Shamas, is a poet, too,

but he stops writing poems when his obligation to the society, as he puts it, takes most of his time. Art while contracting the distance between human beings, also has the function of creating spaces where people fall in love, with a romantic side to it. Shamas writes poems to Kaukab, sending them written on the margins of the newspaper Kaukab's family borrows from Shamas', in invisible ink which becomes visible only when ironed. Suraya and Shamas, come close after an event where Wamaq Saleem's poetry is recited, and Khan's religious songs pave the way for the beginning of the sexual affair between Shamas and Suraya.

Kaukab and Shamas' elder son Charag, also a mouthpiece for the author, chooses to be an artist, too. His mother Kaukab always dreamt he would enter a medical school, but not being able to get the required grades, Charag had to settle for a degree in chemistry. Some time later, he just quitted it and decided to pursue a career as a painter, which is harshly criticized by Kaukab on the grounds that painter is not a secure job and they had different expectations of their children as they are hoping they would be making most of the west with successful careers and reasonable income. Kaukab even accuses Charag's teacher of directing immigrant children to art, and regards the art teacher's letters as "an attempt to prevent the Pakistanis from getting ahead in life, encouraging them to waste time on childish things instead of working towards a position of influence" (*Maps* 123).

The power of art in all its form is underlined in the novel, but special attention is given to music through the figure of Nusrat Fatih Ali Khan, who "through the use of his music, effectively combats the puritan voices which have wished to eliminate all aesthetic and recreational elements from Muslim life" (qtd in Lewis 4). Khan is a world famous singer, who has taken on his family's *qawwali* tradition and introduced it to international audiences, becoming popular across the world. *Qawwalis* are devotional religious songs associated with Sufi tradition of Pakistan, but despite their local nature, through Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan, this local music crosses the boundaries and is listened by people all over the world. Nusrat's songs merge human and the divine; in his songs "a lover looking for the beloved represents the human soul looking for salvation" (*Maps* 188). Kaukab understands Allah's relation to his creatures in a similar way, according to her, Allah is "in love with his own creations" (*Maps* 64). Khan, through his art, appeals to everyone as the comments made by the novel's three major characters upon hearing about Khan's

death lay bare: Shamas asks "Who will sing about the poor, now?", Suraya whispers " And about the women", and Kaukab adds "And in praise of Allah and Muhammad, peace be upon him?" (*Maps* 238). Nadeem Aslam portrays how Khan has eventually become a "citizen of the world" through his music: "Nusrat's growing fame in the world has meant that he is in England in this month, performing a number of concerts before flying to Los Angeles to record the soundtrack of a Hollywood movie. Immediately before that he was in Japan" (*Maps* 184). He is travelling freely between cultures. Through Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan, Aslam both shows the variety of Muslim voices as well as affirming the commonly held belief that music speaks through a universal language, appealing to all humanity. In the narrator's view, Khan, is thus a good artist who is fulfilling his responsibilities by making the society the topic and inspiration for his art.

Through the figure of Charag as a lonely and alienated artist facing criticism from his surroundings, Aslam is giving an insight into a self- made artist's life. Like Charag, he comes from a working class family, and while writing the novel, he was staying in his friends' flats and he hardly ever went out as he had no money. In view of this, Kaukab's objection to Charag's career brings forward the question of who can produce art. For Kaukab, it is only a pass time activity the wealthy can engage if they wished, whereas for Charag and Aslam, art is certainly for everyone.

Aslam also discusses the timeless question of whether art is art art's sake or people's sake again through Charag. The narrator believing the artist has a duty to the society implies the mixture of the two would be the best alternative, and Charag's art is evolving from individual to social. Charag's paintings are appreciated for their success in dealing with the society. His latest painting, The Uncut Self-Portrait, where he depicts himself naked and uncircumcised is in Charag's terms a rebellion against the violence that is done to his body in the name of religion. Charag knows Kaukab will be criticizing, yet even though he feels touched to have upset Kaukab, he still cries: "I can't paint with handcuffs on" (*Maps* 321) because he believes it is within the artist's responsibility to produce art freely without bending to any pressure. In painting himself naked, Charag exposes his body to the audiences as that of a man oppressed by norms and religion, and even though he cannot retrieve the past, by painting himself uncircumcised, he is reaching for a totality, which had been denied to him, through this act done to his body in the name of religion.

Later on, Charag discloses the family members the news about the photographs of the immigrants he bought from the town's studio, with the aim of using them in his paintings, thus, in Waterman's words "making the link between art and "real" people" (Waterman 31). Charag's discovery of the photographs is a reference, as Aslam reveals to Chambers, to "Tony Walker's Belle Vue portrait studio in Bradford, which from 1926-75 was known for taking archaically formal photographs and the city's immigrant workers and their families" (153). Today, these photographs are exhibited in the town's gallery and also published online. Viewing these photographs one can sense the uneasiness, hope, and alienation the immigrants who were having their photos taken, most of the time in their best looks, as the photos were often intended to be sent to relatives in Pakistan, for which, they needed to make the impression that the immigrant families were succeeding in England. The photos Charag discovers probably convey the same emotions. Shamas is rejoiced when Charag acquires the photos because they are historical documents as well as art pieces, carrying the immigrants' journey of making up a living in England. Shamas confesses that in the past he did not know how to handle Charag's art, he thought of them as too personal, but now that Charag is becoming interested in the society, Shamas argues, Charag is maturing as an artist because while his earlier paintings were mostly individual, now he is turning to the community. For Shamas, a real artist is the one who not only produces art, but also honours the society s/he is coming from as expressed by the following thought crossing Shamas' mind:

> *Which to hold dearer: my love for you, or the sorrows of others*
> *in the world?*
> *They say the intoxication is greater when the two kinds of wine are mixed.*
> (original formatting 319)

In sum, through the character of Charag, who has now learned that "society is worth representing" (320) Aslam challenges the absolutes, opening the contested space of Islam to what Nadia Butt refers to as "multiplicity of cultural encounters" (166). Art, particularly literature as Rushdie concludes, can help facilitating the problems with regard to lack of understanding, stereotyping, stigmatizing and othering because "literature is made at the frontier between the self and the world, and in the act of creation that frontier softens, becomes permeable, allows the world to flow into the artist and the artist to flow into world" (427).

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

In today's world identities exist in a flux, as ever changing entities. However, despite their contingency, identities are also subjected to discourses which are discursively produced. The postcolonial condition, as communicated by Elleke Boehmer, is one of these discourses that have had life-shaping effects on millions of individuals all over the world. This study focuses on a specific group of these postcolonial subjects, "British Muslims," and how they are represented in contemporary British fiction through two examples of British Muslim Fiction: *Minaret* by Leila Aboulela and *Maps for Lost Lovers* by Nadeem Aslam.

The first chapter of this study, "Introduction" begins by clarifying the aim of the study, and then introduces the theoretical framework and methodology of the study along with a review of the sources that have contributed to the readings of *Minaret* and *Maps for Lost Lovers*. In these sections, the thesis establishes the link between postcolonial condition as defined by Elleke Boehmer and the displacement immigrants experience as represented in *Minaret* and *Maps for Lovers*. While discussing the effects of 9/11 on British Muslim communities through texts that emphasize the shift from racial discrimination to religious othering, namely Islamophobia, this chapter argues that national and ethnic markers of identity are losing their importance as they are being subordinated to religious identity markers as exemplified in the cases of British Muslim communities *Minaret* and *Maps for Lost Lovers* are depicting.

The second chapter gives an insight into "British Muslim Fiction" through defining the term by referring to Claire Chambers' works such as *British Muslim Fiction: Interviews with Contemporary Authors*. British Muslim Fiction, as defined by Chambers, is a diverse category; not limiting at all if the label is used as a springboard or a starting point, instead of being a confining frame. In view of this, this thesis accentuates this diversity, and reads *Minaret* and *Maps for Lost Lovers* alongside each other, by emphasizing both their similarities and differences with an

aim of underlining the multiplicity of British Muslim identity positions. Even though both *Minaret* and *Maps* were published soon after 9/11 (*Minaret* 2005, *Maps* 2004), their stance on British Muslim identities significantly differs from each other. While Aboulela asserts her positionality as a female Muslim writer and foregrounds religion as a remedy for the trauma caused by immigration, Aslam offers a critique of religion by portraying how the immigrants' attachment to irrational religious laws and organizing principles prevents the immigrants' integration into British society.

The third chapter analysesrepresentations of British Muslim identities in *Minaret.Minaret* is Najwa's journey into faith, which in exile becomes the identity Najwa holds onto. *Minaret* also exemplifies cases of reverse migrant stories, where the protagonist Najwa, who was secular in Sudan, decides to be more attentive to religion, when she is in London. In *Minaret*, Aboulela is engaging with what makes people turn to religion as a remedy for the trauma of migration, and eventually she is offering religion as an alternative way of achieving belonging in exile. Accordingly the protagonist Najwa challenges the binary opposition of the East as oppressed and the West as the liberal, civilized party, through a reversal of these concepts, as manifested in her reverse migrant story, where she lays bare how people in Sudan vary in their religiosity. Contrary to the common belief, being a woman from the East did not make her an oppressed one as she was coming from an elite, secular family. She experienced oppression only in the form of discrimination when she entered the British public space, which made her aware of her skin colour. In an attempt to be "invisible" in public space, she adopts hijab as a uniform that will conceal her; but Najwa, through her hijab, which marks her as a Muslim woman becomes "hyper-visible," and eventually she identifies with this image of the pious Muslim woman who can achieve selfhood through hijab. By the end of the novel, Najwa claims neither British nor Sudanese identity, as she is satisfied with her position as a Muslim, connected to all other Muslims throughout the world. With the rise of the *ummah* as a supporting entity, national identifications are negated and Islam with its monolithic formation, symbolized through the phallic image of the minaret becomes the one and only organizing principle, which organizes the chaos Najwa as an exilic subject finds herself in. In *Minaret*,the reader meets Najwa, as a woman who, contrary to the hijab's connotations as oppressive, desires it and

becomes a self-confident woman only after wearing the hijab and expressing her Muslimness in the British public spaces.

In the fourth chapter an analysis of the representation of British Muslim identities in *Maps for Lost Lovers* has been provided. Compared to *Minaret*, as implied by the plural suffix, *Maps*, is more polyphonic as it is populated with more characters and present intergenerational conflicts, offering "maps" of being and living as Muslim; thus disclosing how the perception of the religious identity marker changes from the first generation of the immigrants to their children, who are being exposed to Western culture and its liberal values, in contrast to their parents who prefer to remain locked in the sexist, racist and exclusionary discourse of the diaspora. In this chapter, representation of British Muslim identity in the novel is approached from three different angles to convey Aslam's nuanced attitude which sees religion as affecting all realms of life. The first section explores how immigrant community of Dasht-e-Tanhaii negotiate their identity positions as British Muslims by a specific emphasis on the intergenerational conflicts. While the second generation of the immigrants are more open and receptive to interaction and change, the first generation of immigrants are consumed by the self-inflicted disease of fear of contamination. Most of them never leave their houses, and withdraw from the English public domain, hardly laying claims to British identity. In *Maps,* we do not see the negation and total denouncement of national identity markers as is the case in *Minaret*, many of the first generation of immigrants express their identifications as Pakistanis, yet, being Pakistani is equated with being Muslim, as a result of which being Muslim functions as the identity that provides the sense of locatedness and belonging the immigrants need in exile, and accordingly Islam, as a set of rules and values informs the way British Muslim identities are lived. *Maps* is also attentive to intersections of gender and diaspora and how Islam is being abused by patriarchal discourses to justify women's oppression as Allah's law, which are explored in the second section where the intersections of gender and diaspora are discussed in detail. *Maps* portrays diaspora as a site of oppression for all its members. Still, women are more oppressed as they are doubly othered as female subalterns and given no chance of speech. Kaukab, Mah- Jabin, Chanda, Suraya and many other women are all oppressed by religious dogmas, and diasporic community in its reaching out for the ideal of purity, contributes to these oppressions and sustains them. Amidst all these

violence and terror, as explored in the last section, Aslam manages to offer an optimistic portrayal of the future, through the figure of the artist, who through art can overcome the differences among human beings as art has the potential to demolish the walls separating people. Nusrat Ali Khan, with his worldwide fame becomes the symbol through which Aslam expresses how art and beauty are universal concepts. The success of Khan's *qawwalis*, which despite their local origins, have been appreciated by the audiences all around the world, is emphasized to convey the role of the art in overcoming difference as well as underlining the diversity among Muslims. British Muslims in *Maps* include not only fundamentalist like Kaukab but also liberal people like Shamas, and Charag, who in maturing as an artist, realizes the fact that society is worth representing.

Overall, this study highlighted flourishing British Muslim fiction as consisting of a diverse group of writers. Within the limited space of this study two novels, *Minaret* by Leila Aboulela and *Maps for Lost Lovers* by Nadeem Aslam have been scrutinized for their representations of British Muslim identities. *Minaret* is an individual female's account of adopting to life in Britain, and religious identity is presented as an upholstery button that organizes the chaos of exile, whereas *Maps for Lost Lovers* brings a critical attitude to Islam and the violence that is being done in the name of religion. In a similar way to Salman Rushdie who is ascribing the literature a sacred status for its potential to compromise conflicting opinions without essentializing any subject positions, Nadeem Aslam foregrounds art and artists as agents of change. Thus, reading the two novels together with a consciousness of many other narratives in circulation about British Muslim identity, lays bare the diversity British Muslim fiction writers are representing in their writings.

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APPENDICES

A. TURKISH SUMMARY

21. yüzyılın beraberinde getirdiği globalleşme ile günümüzde birçok insan için coğrafi sınırlar önemini yitirmektedir. Pek çok insan daha rahat seyahat edebilmekte, hatta başka bir ülkeye göç ederek orada yaşamayı seçebilmektedir; ancak geride bıraktığımız yüzyılın gösterdiği üzere göçmenlerin yarattığı hareketlilik özellikle yoğun göç alan Avrupa başkentlerin bir anda kozmopolit merkezler olduğu anlamını taşımaz. Göç, çoğu zaman ötekileştirme, ırkçılık, kimlik problemleri gibi zor tecrübelerden oluşan bir süreçtir.

Bu çalışmada, Claire Chambers'ın *British Muslim Fictions: Interviews with Contemporary Authors* (2011), adlı kitabında İngiliz Müslüman yazarlar ile gerçekleştirdiği röportajlar üzerinden anlattığı İngiliz Müslüman romanının çeşitliliği esas alınarak Leila Aboulela'nın *Minare* (2005)ve Nadeem Aslam'ın *Kaybolan Sevgililere Yollar* (2004) adlı romanları incelenmektedir. Chambers'ın da sıkça belirttiği gibi, İngiliz Müslüman yazarlar ifadesi, aralarında ateistten bağnaza çok farklı kimliklerin barındığı bir kategoridir ve bu çalışmada da sınırlayıcı bir çerçeve çizmek amacıyla değil; tam aksine, yazarların ortak Müslüman geçmişlerine işaret ederek, bu kimliğin her bir yazar tarafından nasıl farklı anlaşıldığını ve yaşandığını göstermek üzere kullanılmıştır.

"Recent Literary Representations of British Muslims" adlı makalesinde Chambers 9 Eylül'ün İngiliz Müslüman Edebiyatı bağlamında da bir dönüm noktası olduğunun altını çizmektedir. Chambers'a göre, bu noktadan sonra İngiliz yazarlar İngiliz Edebiyatındaki İslam temsilleri ile daha yakından ilgilenir olmuşlar, eserlerinde İslamofobi, ayrımcılık, terörizm gibi konulara değinmişlerdir. Bu çalışmanın konusu olan *Minare* ve *Kaybolan Sevgililere Yollar*, 9 Eylül 2001 sonrasında yazılmış, arka planlarında İslamofobi, ötekileştirme, gibi sorunları esas alarak Müslüman öznelerin kendilerini İngiliz olarak tanımlarını gerektiren göç süreci ile karşılaşmaları ile yaşadıklarını anlatmaktadırlar.

Minare'de olaylar birinci tekil kişi, ana karakter Najwa'ın bakış açısından sunulmakta ve onun tarafından anlatılmaktadır. Hikaye, Najwa'yı Londra'da zengin

Sudanlı ailelerin evinde çalışan bir hizmetçi olarak gösterdikten ve Najwa'nın yaşadığı kayıplardan bahseden birkaç sayfalık açılış kısmından sonra, 1984-5 yıllarında başlamakta, bu bölümde Najwa üniversite öğrencisi bir genç kız olarak görülmektedir. Seküler ve elit bir aileden gelen Najwa, üniversitede karşılaştığı başörtülü öğrencilerine içten içe özenmekte ancak bunu dile getirmek şöyle dursun; çoğu zaman kendine bile itiraf edememektir. Romanın bütünü geriye dönük anlatı üzerinden ilerlemektedir ve Najwa üniversite hayatını anlatırken bu dönemdeki yaşam şekline eleştiri getirmektedir. Sık sık başörtülü arkadaşlarının yanında kendisinin giydiği mini eteklerden, vücudunu saran bluzlardan nasıl rahatsızlık duyduğunu aktarmakta, kendileri gece kulübündeki bir eğlenceden dönerken evin hizmetçilerinin sabah namazını kılmak için hazırlandıklarını gördüğünde vicdanın nasıl da rahatsız olduğunu aktarmaktadır. Najwa hükümette önemli bir pozisyonda bulunan babasının görevi ve annesinin ailesinin zenginliği sayesinde kendisine tanımlanmış olan "önemli bir ailenin modern kızı" rolünde pek de mutlu olmadığını satır aralarında dile getirmektedir. Hem ikizi Omar'a erkek olması sebebiyle sunulan özgürlüklerin kendisine sunulmamasına tavır almakta, hem de ironik bir biçimde üniversiteye giderken kendi arabasını sürmekten rahatsız olmakta, Omar'ın arabayı kullanmasını istemektedir. Najwa'nın bu basit istediği aslında romanın ilerleyen kısımlarında göreceğimiz travma, kimlik bunalımı gibi pek çok şeyin arkasında yatan sebeplerin yansımasıdır. Najwa çoğu çağdaş göçmen hikayesinde karşımıza çıkan liberal, modern kadın karakterden farklı olarak, geleneksel olarak ifade edilebilecek bir yaşamı arzulamaktadır. Çoğu göçmen hikayesinde Batı'nın özgürlükleri ile karşılaşan kadın karakter çoğu zaman geleneksel yaşamı ve onun temsilcileri olan başörtüsü gibi geleneksel ve politik kıyafetleri reddetmektedir. *Minare*'nin yazarı Aboulela, çağdaş edebiyat eserlerinde yerleşik hale gelen bu tavra karşı çıkmakta ve Najwa üzerinden "tersine bir göç hikayesi" sunmaktadır. Najwa'nın hikayesi, Doğu'dan Batı'ya göç ederek, cinsel ve siyasi anlamda özgürleştiği var sayılan kadın kahraman hikayesi değil, anavatanı Sudan'da Batı'nın "özgür" olarak tanımladığı hayatı yaşarken, babasının askeri bir darbe sonucunda tutuklanarak idam edilmesinin ardından Londra'da sürgün hayatı yaşayan Najwa'nın birer birer sahip olduğu her şeyi kaybetmesi sonucunda dini kimliğine tutunmasının hikayesidir. Najwa babasının idamı, annesinin ölümü, ikiz kardeşi Omar'ın hapse girmesi gibi olayların ardından maddi ve manevi olarak statü kaybetmiştir. Ulusal kimliği bu noktada Najwa için

hiçbir anlam ifade etmez hale gelmiştir; Sudanlı olmak kolonyal başkent Londra'da Najwa için Batılılar tarafından Doğu'dan gelen bir kadın olarak baskı altında olduğu imajı çizen bir kimlik tanımından öteye geçemez. Oysa Najwa'nın hikayesi tam da bu noktaya vurgu yapmakta, Doğulu olmanın bir kadını otomatik olarak ezilmiş yapmadığının altını çizmektedir. Najwa Sudan'da son derece rahat ve lüks bir hayat sürmektedir ve ailesinin ayrıcalıklı konumu sayesinde birçok insanın mücadele ettiği fakirlik, zülüm gibi faktörlerden etkilenmemiştir. Tam aksine, Hartum'da son derece rahat bir hayat süren Najwa, farklı farklı özgürlüklerin vaad edildiği Londra'da kendini yalnız ve çaresiz hissetmektedir. Aile bireylerini birer birer kaybetmiş, üniversite yıllarında kısa bir birliktelik yaşadığı Anwar ile Londra'da tekrar başladıkları ilişkileri son bulmuş, Najwa Londra'da tek başına kalmıştır. Yalnızlık hissi Najwa'yı öylesine sarıp sarmalar ki, Najwa birkaç kez Londralıları ve tüm Batılıları sırf bu yüzden kıskandığını söyler; çünkü İngilizler eski koloni ülkelerinden gelen göçmenlerin aksine yerinden edilme durumunu hiç yaşamamışlardır (174).

Najwa'nın hikayesinde ülkenin politik ve ekonomik istikrarsızlığının bireysel düzeye indirgenişinin de örneğidir aynı zamanda. İngilizleri kıskandığını söyleyen Najwa, Anwar ile birlikte Queensway, High Street Kensington'da yoldan geçenleri izlerken sorunun nerede olduğunu merak etmekte ve bunu şu şekilde dile getirmektedir. "Biz Afrikalıların problemi neydi? […] Queensway, High Street Kensington'da Anwar ile İngilizleri, Arapları, İspanyolları, Japonları, Malezyalıları, Amerikalıları izler ve onlar gibi istikrarlı bir ülkeye sahip olmanın nasıl bir şey olduğunu merak ederdik" (165). Kendisini farklı ülke vatandaşları ile kıyaslayan Najwa, kendi yalnızlığını bu kez, "Bana ne olursa olsun, Londra, kesintisiz metrolarıyla, Cadbury çikolatası satan gazete büfeleriyle, işten çıkan insanların aceleci adımlarıyla aynı ve sabit kalacaktı" (174) sözleriyle ifade etmektedir.

Londra Najwa'nın kendi yansımasını bulamadığı bir metropoldür. Najwa göçün ve kimsesizlik hissinin yarattığı travmayı ancak Müslüman kimliğinin sunduğu birleştirici ideal sayesinde aşabilir. Anwar ile olan ilişkisinin kendisine verdiği zararı fark eden Najwa, Anwar ve arkadaşları ile evde kart oynayarak geçirdikleri bir gecede arkadaşları Amin'in gece yarısı kahvaltıya gidecek olmasına gülerlerken, Amin'in bunun "Ramazan kahvaltısı", sahur yemeği, olduğunu söylemesi ile adeta yıkılır. Ramazan'ın başladığından haberinin olmaması Najwa'yı çok derinden etkiler ve Sudan'da Ramazan'ın nasıl yaşandığını düşünürken

Londra'da yaşadığı hayattan duyduğu rahatsızlık tahammül edemeyeceği boyutlara ulaşır. Anwar'ın Najwa'nın tepkisine gülerek cevap vermesi ikili arasındaki iplerin iyice gerilmesine ve nihayetinde kopmasına sebep olur. Sevgilisini de kaybeden Najwa, çaresiz hissettiği bir anda annesinin cenazesini yıkayan Wafaa'nın kendisini sık sık arayarak camiye davet ettiğini hatırlar ve evde bulduğu kıyafetler arasından en uygun olduğunu düşündüğü giysileri giyerek teravih namazına gider. Secdeye eğildiğinde diz altı eteğinin bacaklarını açık bıraktığını hissetmesiyle kendisinin dini olandan çok fazla uzaklaştığını ve geri dönüşünün imkansız olduğunu düşünerek umutsuzluğa kapılsa da Regents Park camisindeki kadın grubu destekleyici tavrı ile Najwa'yı hemen kabul eder. Bu grupta tanıştığı arkadaşları, özellikle de Shahinaz, Najwa'nın özgüvenli bir kadın olarak hayatını yeniden kurmasına katkıda bulunurlar. Sık sık Kuran okumalarına katılan Najwa, bir gün camiye uygun bir aday aramak üzere gelen Lamya ile tanışır ve onun hizmetçisi olarak işe başlar. Görevi ev işleri ile ilgilenmek ve Lamya'nın kızı Mai'ye bakmaktır. Lamya ile Najwa arasında farklılıklar ve benzerlikler üzerinden Aboulela Müslüman kadın karakter algısına da eleştirel bir bakış getirmektedir. Najwa'yı sadece yaptığı iş üzerinden tanımlayan Lamya, Najwa'nın da bir zamanlar kendisi gibi zengin olduğunu, üniversitede okuduğunu, evinde kendisine hizmet eden birçok insan olduğunu asla fark etmez; Najwa'nın işi ve başörtüsü, Lamya için Najwa'nın geri kalmışlığının göstergeleridir bu sebeple ikisi arasında sınıf ve statü farklılıkları, kolonyal şehir merkezinde göçmen kadınlar olma durumunun önüne geçmektedir. Lamya'nın Najwa'ya karşı sergilediği tutum ön yargıların sadece batılıların doğululara karşı beslediği duygular olmadığının en güzel kanıtıdır. Özellikle Najwa ve Lamya'nın kardeşi Tamer arasında filizlenmeye başlayan ilişki aile bireyleri için son derece rahatsız edicidir. Lamya bir gün evinde kendisi gibi doktora öğrencisi arkadaşlarına verdiği bir parti sırasında başörtülü bir dansçıya striptiz yaptırır. Durumdan duyduğu rahatsızlığı Tamer ile paylaşmak üzere odasına giden Najwa ile Tamer'i birlikte gören Lamya, Najwa'yı tokatlar ve evinden kovar. Lamya'nın annesi Doctora Zeinab da aynı tutum içindedir zira oğullarından yaşça büyük olan, sosyal statüsü belirsiz, hizmetçi olarak çalışan Najwa, kati suretle Tamer'e uygun bir eş olamaz. Bu ilişkinin arkasındaki tek sebebin Najwa'nın para sızdırmak istemesi olduğunu düşünen Doctora Zeinab, Najwa Lamya'nın evinden kovulduktan sonra, Najwa'yı ziyaret eder ve Najwa'ya yüklü miktarda bir çek yazar. İlginç bir şekilde, daha önceki kısımlarda Tamer ve

Najwa arasındaki ilişkinin para ile hiçbir ilgisi olmadığının açıkça anlaşılmasına rağmen, Najwa bu çeki kabul eder. Sebebini de kendi kendisine, Doctora Zeinab'ın yazdığı miktarın yıllar önce Anwar'a doktora yapabilmesi için borç verdiği ve hiçbir şekilde geri alamadığı para ile aynı miktarda olmasının Allah'ın bir işareti olduğunu belirtmesiyle açıklar ve bu para ile hacca gideceğini söyler.

Minare Sadia Abbas ve Wail S. Hassan da özellikle vurguladıkları üzere İslami düşüncenin edebi anlatıya sadece yansıması değil, edebi anlatım biçimlerinin ve romanın olay örgüsünün bizzat İslami düşünce tarafından şekillenmesinin de örneğidir aynı zamanda. Doctora Zeinab'dan aldığı çekte Anwar'a borç verdiği ve geri alamadığı miktarın olması Najwa için bir işarettir. Olayları İslami mantık çerçevesinde yorumlama Najwa için sıradan mantık yürütme şeklidir. Najwa'nın yeniden kurguladığı dünyasında aksi bir görüşe yer yoktur.

Başörtüsü Najwa için görünmezlik sağlayan bir kalkandır. İlginç bir şekilde, Najwa bedenini kapatarak kendisine görünmezlik sağlayan başörtüsü ile "Najwa" olarak görünmese de, nüfusun çoğunluğunun Müslüman olmadığı bir şehir merkezinde başörtüsü ile adeta "süper görünür" olmuştur. Başörtüsü, tıpkı erkeklerde sakal, takke, cellabi üzerinden gündeme getirildiği gibi, kadın bedenini başörtüsü üzerinden Müslüman olarak tanımlamakta ve de özellikle 9 Eylül sonrasında kadın erkek fark etmeksizin, Müslümanlar terörist olarak yaftalanmakta, giysileri dolayısıyla "geri kalmış" damgası yemektedirler. Najwa bir keresinde gece işten dönerken bindiği otobüste ırkçıların saldırısına uğrar; genç bir çocuk Najwa'nın kafasına bir içecek kutusu fırlatır. Najwa, Tamer ile birlikte parkta Mai'yi gezdirdikleri zamanlarda sık sık kendi kendine, yabancılar tarafından nasıl algılandıklarını düşünür. Du Bois'in de "çift-bilinçlilik" olarak ifade ettiği gibi, göçmenler hem kendi geldikleri kültürün hem de göç ettikleri kültürün özelliklerini taşıdıkları için aslında iki kültüre de aittirler; fakat göç edilen ülkedeki söylem tarafından aşağılandıkları ve hor görüldükleri, hatta "barbar" olarak tanımlandıkları için kendilerini gerçekleştiremezler ve kendi kimlik ve benlik tanımlarını da aynı söylem üzerinden tanımlarlar. Diğer bir deyişle, bir göçmen, sürekli olarak karşı tarafın kendisine nasıl baktığının farkındadır ve ötekinin bakışını daima üzerinde hissetmektedir.

Kaybolan Sevgililere Yollar, Pakistan asıllı İngiliz yazar Nadeem Aslam'ın onbir yılda yazdığı bir romandır. Aslam romanın yazımının bu kadar uzun

sürmesinin sebebini yazmaya başladıktan dört yıl sonra romana ara verip her karakteri daha da iyi anlamak için durup yüzer sayfalık biyografiler yazmaya başlaması ile açıklar. Böylesi bir titizlikle yazılmasının sonucu olarak, *Kaybolan Sevgililere Yollar*'daki karakterler *Minare*'dekilere kıyasla daha derinliklidir. Romanın üçüncü tekil kişi tarafından anlatılıyor olmasının da karakterlerin gelişimine ve romanın *Minare*'ye kıyasla daha objektif bir bakış açısı sunuyor olmasına önemli katkısı vardır. *Minare* İngiliz Müslüman kimliği üzerine tek bir bakış açısı sunarken, *Kaybolan Sevgililere Yollar*'da ateisten, tutucuya çok farklı karakterler vardır ve ima edilen yazarın dine ilişkin tutumu *Minare*'deki kadar net değildir.

Kaybolan Sevgililere Yollar, İngiltere'nin kuzeyinde Dasht-e-Tanhaii olarak isimlendirilmiş, hayali bir taşra kentinde yaşayan Pakistanlı göçmenlerin hayatını anlatmaktadır. Roman başladığında Chanda ve sevgilisi Jugnu'nun aniden ortadan kaybolmalarının üzerinden beş ay geçmiş, Chanda'nın iki erkek kardeşi Chanda ve Jugnu'yu öldürerek namus cinayeti işledikleri gerekçesiyle tutuklanmışlardır. Tutuklanmayı izleyen oniki aylık süreci aktaran romanın geri kalanında Pakistanlı diasporanın yaşadığı çatışmalar, din, milliyet ve kimlik bunalımları özellikle birinci ve ikinci nesil göçmenler arasındaki çatışmalar üzerinden anlatılmaktadır.

Jugnu, romanın ana karakterleri Kaukab'ın eşi Shamas'ın kardeşidir. Shamas ve Kaukab'ın üçü de evi terk etmiş, Charag, Mah-Jabin ve Ujala isimli üç çocukları bulunmaktadır. Shamas ve Kaukab aslında birbirinden son derece farklı iki kişidir; Shamas neredeyse ateisttir, Shamas'ın iç dünyasında İslam sadece kültürel bir olgu olarak varlığını sürdürür; fakat tüm bunlara rağmen Müslüman bir topluluğun içinde yaşayan Shamas İslam'ın radikal biçimleri ile de mücadele etmek durumundadır. Shamas göçmenlerin durumu ile ilgilenen yerel komitenin başkanıdır ve İngilizce bilen nadir insanlardan biri olduğu için çoğu zaman diğer göçmenlere işlerini halletmede yardım etmektedir. Kaukab ise bir imamın kızıdır ve hayatının büyük bir bölümünü camide geçirmiştir. Kaukab'ın İslamı yorumlaması ise neredeyse radikaldir. En küçük oğlu Ujala doğduğunda, bebeğinin Allah tarafından seçilmiş yüce bir bebek olduğuna inanan Kaukab Ramazan ayında sadece bir aylık olan Ujala'ya oruç tutturur. Bebeği sadece geceleri emzirir ve gündüzleri emzirmeyi reddeder. Shamas bu durumun farkına vardığında Kaukab ile tartışırlar ve olay

Shamas'ın Kaukab'a attığı tokadın ardından çiftin arasının açılması ve toplamda üç yıl kadar bir süre ayrı kalmaları ile son bulur.

Kaukab çoğu zaman acımasız ve bağnaz denilebilecek kadar tutucu bir kadın olarak görünse de roman sık sık Kaukab'ın yaşadığı çaresizlik ve yalnızlığa da yer vermektedir. Kaukab da çoğu kadın gibi sadece çocuklarının iyiliğini isteyen bir annedir; sorun "iyilik hali" tanımının kendisi ve çocukları tarafından çok farklı biçimlerde yapılıyor olmasıdır. Birinci nesil göçmenlerden olan Kaukab Doğu ve İslam formasyonuna sahiptir ve içinde yaşadığı yeni kültürü de bu formasyon üzerinden tanımlamaya çalışmaktadır. Oysa ikinci nesil göçmenler olarak nitelenen çocuklar dünyaya çok farklı açılardan bakmakta ve bu bakış açısı ailelerininkiyle çatışmaktadır. Onlar İngiltere'de eğitim görmüşler, ailelerinin tüm tutucu ve baskıcı tutumlarına rağmen liberal Batı düşüncesine maruz kalmışlardır ve değişim onlar için kaçınılmazdır. Her biri kendi yolunu çizer, farklı tecrübeler yaşar; ama hepsinde aileden uzaklaşma en temel arzudur.

Ailenin en büyük oğlu Charag yıllarca annesini memnun etmek amacıyla tıp eğitimi almak için çabalar ama sınavlarda başarılı olamayınca Kimya okumaya razı olur. Göçmen çocuklarının İngiltere'de başarının işareti olarak tıp eğitimi almaya zorlanmaları sıkça rastlanılan bir klişedir; ve Aslam romanında bu klişeyi kullanarak bu durumun ikinci nesil göçmenler üzerinde yarattığı baskıya dikkat çeker. Sevmediği bir bölümü okumak istemeyen Charag bir süre sonra Kimya eğitimini bırakıp Resim bölümüne başlar ve hayatının geri kalanını ressam olarak sürdürür. Okuyucu Mah-Jabin ile ilk kez karşılaştığında Mah-Jabin'in Londra'da bir üniversitede okuduğunu öğrenir. Sonrasında geriye dönük anlatılardan Mah-Jabin'in ergenlik döneminde yaşadığı bir buhran sonucunda başına gelenleri de öğrenir. O dönemde mahallelerindeki bir erkeğe aşık olan Mah-Jabin, aşkının cevapsız kalması ve nihayetinde aşık olduğu delikanlının başka biriyle evlenmesinin ardından ailesinden bir an önce kendisini başka biriyle evlendirmelerini ister. Pakistanlı diaspora içerisinde genç kızların evliliği zaten çoğu zaman görücü usulü gerçekleşmekte, genç kızlar ya da erkekler Pakistan'daki bir kuzenleriyle evlendirilmektedir. Mah-Jabin için de durum farklı değildir; alelacele Pakistan'daki bir kuzeni ile evlendirilir ve Pakistan'a gider. Ailesinin itina ile seçmiş olduğu koca adayı maalesef ki karısına şiddet uygulayan bir adamdır ve Mah-Jabin iki yıl boyunca bu duruma dayanmak zorunda kalır. Yaşadığı durumu ailesine hiçbir şekilde

bildirmeyen Mah-Jabin sonunda İngiltere'ye döner ve kocasından boşanır. Kaukab yıllar sonra bu durumu öğrendiğinde çok derinden etkilenir. Çocuklarının gözünde acımasız bir anne olsa da Kaukab aslında diasporanın kapalı devre sisteminde hayatın nasıl ilerlediğinin son derece farkında bir kadındır ve kendi doğruları çerçevesinde çocuklarının hayatını iyileştirmeye çalışmaktadır. Onun bildiği ve yaşadığı dünyada evlilik bir kadın için zaruridir ve eğer evlilik kaçınılmazsa yapılabilecek en iyi şey "düzgün" bir eş adayı bulmaktır. Romanın sonuna doğru Shamas'a bağırırken Kaukab Charag'ın doktor olmasını bile sırf Mah-Jabin için istediğini söyler (328); ancak bu sayede bir doktorun kardeşi olarak iyi bir eş adayı bulacağına inanan Kaukab'ın davranışlarının arkasında yatan nedenler böylelikle daha iyi anlaşılır. Ujala da ailesinin özellikle annesi Kaukab'ın davranışlarından rahatsız olarak evi terk etmiştir ve yıllar sonra tüm ailenin tekrar bir araya geldiği gecede annesine ve babasına olan öfkesini Shamas ve Kaukab'tan daha tehlikeli bir çift olamayacağını çünkü Kaukab'ın yüzyıllar öncesinin prensipleri ve gerçekleri ile yaşadığını, yerin altındakilerle, çürümüş doğrularla, üstündekilerden daha fazla ilgilendiğini, idealist Shamas'ın ise çocuklarına ve torunlarına miras bırakacağı dünya ile uğraşırken gerçekleri görmediğini söyler ve peki şu anda, burada yaşayan insanlara olan sorumluluklarınızı ne zaman yerine getireceksiniz diye sorar (324).

Romanın genelinde çocuklarının yaşadıkları problemlerin çoğu İslam doktorini tarafından yaratılıyormuş algısı hakimdir. Aileleri baskıcıdır, çünkü İslam öyle söyler, kadınlar şiddete maruz kalır; çünkü İslam'da bu gibi davranışlar yaygındır şeklinde mantık yürütmeler ikinci nesil İngiliz Müslümanların İslam algısını şekillendirir. *Kaybolan Sevgililere Yollar* oldukça uç noktalarda vahşet örnekleri sunar. Kayıp sevgililer Chanda ve Jugnu namus cinayetine kurban gitmişlerdir, mahalledeki bir genç kız Hindu bir erkeğe aşık olduğu için dövülerek öldürülür. Genç kızın ailesine göre namuslu bir Müslüman kadının bir Hindu'ya aşık olması mümkün değildir; olsa olsa cinler kızın bedenini ele geçirmişlerdir ve ona istemediği şeyler yaptırmaktadırlar. *Minare*'de görülen İslam çerçevesinde mantık yürütme *Kaybolan Sevgililere Yollar*'da da görülmektedir. Muhtemelen daha önce Pakistan'da yaşadıkları köylerinin, kasabalarının dışına çıkmamış göçmenler, İngiltere'de ilk defa karşılaştıkları durumları İslamı kaynak alarak yorumlamaya ve çözmeye çalışmaktadırlar. Örneğin öteki ile karşılaşma yeni bir tecrübedir ve İslami kaynaklar, onların uygulayıcısı din adamları gerekli durumlarda yardıma çağrılılar.

Kaybolan Sevgililere Yollar'da sık sık Pakistan'dan din adamların telefonla aranarak fikirlerine danışıldığına, yukarıda bahsi geçen olaydaki gibi durumlarda cin çıkarmak üzere tüm masrafları karşılanarak İngiltere'ye çağrıldıklarına şahit oluruz.

Kaybolan Sevgililere Yollar, İslamı, göçe rağmen göçmenlerin hayatını Avrupa'da dahi derinden etkileyen bir unsur olarak sunmaktadır. Milli kimlikler önemini yitirmeye başlasa da, dini kimlik sunduğu aidiyet hissi ile bir adım öne çıkmakta ve göçmenlerin Müslüman kimliklerine tutunarak İngiltere'ye adaptasyonu etkilemektedir. Uyum süreci çoğunlukla sancılıdır ve özellikle birinci nesil için İngiltere'ye uyumdan ve gündelik hayata katılımdan bahsetmek neredeyse mümkün değildir. Dasht-e-Tanhaii'deki Müslüman karakterler "Beyaz" ile "Hristiyan" kelimelerini eş anlamlı olarak kullanmaktadırlar ve beyaz ırkın tamamının dinsiz, ahlaksız ve namussuz olduğunu düşünmektedirler.

*Kaybolan Sevgililere Yollar*diasporanın baskıcı politikalarını kadın bedeni üzerinden tanımlamalarına ve uygulamalarına da eleştiri getirir. Eril söylem, kadını hem arzu nesnesi hem de bir meta olarak tanımlamakta, kadının görünüşünden davranışına her şeyinin eril söylemin belirlediği kalıplara uyması beklenmektedir. Diasporanın kurallarına uygun davranmayanlar hemen dışlanmakta, Müslüman diaspora İngiliz çoğunluğunun nezdindeki itibarını korumak için kendi içinde işlenen suçlara sessiz kalmaktadır. Camideki din adamlarından birinin erkek çocukları taciz ettiği ortaya çıktığında diasporanın erkekleri vaizi polise şikayet etmeyi redderler. Kadınların ısrarları her zamanki gibi sonuçsuz kalır; caminin ileri gelenleri kadınların annelik kimliklerini hedef alarak karşı çıkamayacakları gerekçeler öne sürerler. Eğer Dasht-e-Tanhaii sakinleri, din adamlarını birer birer polise şikayet ederlerse çocuklarına iyiyi kötüyü, orospu gibi beyaz kızlardan uzak durmayı kim öğrecektir, beyaz kızlar dururken hangi genç Pakistan'dan getirilen kuzeni ile evlenmek isteyecektir? (235). *Kaybolan Sevgililere Yollar* bu noktada, utanç, namus kavramlarının nasıl kurgulandığına ve topluma mal edildiğine dikkat çeker. Namus diasporanın tamamını ilgilendirin bir kavramdır. Ailesinden herhangibir kadının namussuzluk yapması durumunda erkek namusunu temizlemek zorundadır. Chanda ve Jugnu'nun öldürülmesinin arkasındaki sebep Chanda'nın erkek kardeşlerine uygulanan mahalle baskısı yüzündendir. Eril söyleme göre, kadın bedeni belli kalıplara sığdırılmalı ve orada hapsedilmelidir. Başörtüsü ile özgürleştiğini söyleyen Najwa'nın aksine, *Kaybolan Sevgililere Yollar*'da tesettürün kadın bedenini

görünmez kılması eleştirilir. Chanda'nın kardeşleri bir arkadaşlarına Chanda en azından çarşaf giyse bir nebze de olsa utançlarının azalacağından bahsederler. Chanda Jugnu ile evlilik dışı bir ilişki yaşamaktadır ve çarşafa hapsedilmemiş bedeni ile sokağa, erkeklere ait olan alana adım attığında cinsellik ve şehvet timsali olarak algılanmaktadır; Chanda birçok insanın gözünde yalnızca bir fahişedir.

Kaybolan Sevgililere Yollar'ın kadınlara ilişkin tutumunda dikkat çekici olan bir nokta da kadınların yaşadığı zülümde diğer kadınların oynadığı role ve şiddetin içselleştirmesine yaptığı vurgudur. Eril söyleme alet edilen İslam, diasporanın erkekleri tarafından kadınların ezilmesini haklı çıkarmak için kullanılır. Kadınlar da kendilerine biçilen ezilen rolünü, yaşadıkları zülümün öbür dünyada cennet ile ödüllendireceğini düşündükleri için bilerek ve isteyerek kabul ederler. Örneğin, Kaukab'ın kocası Shamas son derece liberal bir insandır ve çocuklarına dini sebeplerle baskı uygulamayı aklının ucundan bile geçirmez; fakat Kaukab eril söylemi referans göstererek ve Shamas'ın adını kullanarak çocuklarını istediği biçimde davranmaya zorlamaktadır. Kaukab'a benzer bir karakter de Suraya'dır. Suraya İngiltere'de yetişmiş, daha sonra görücü usulü bir evlilik yaparak Pakistan'a dönmüştür. İngiltere'de yaşadığı günlerin etkisiyle Suraya Batı'dan gelen medeni bir kadın olarak çevresini değiştirmeye kararlıdır. Bir gün, eşinin ailesi ile aralarında kan davası olan komşu ailedeki bir kızın amcası tarafından tecavüze uğradığını ve hamile kaldığını öğrenen Suraya, ailesinden korkan ve amcası tehdit ettiği için suçluyu ele vermekten çekinen kıza destek olmak amacıyla komşu eve gider. Evin avlusundan içeri girdiği anda yaptığı hatanın farkına varsa da artık çok geçtir. Evin erkekleri onu hemen fark ederler ve gitmesine izin verseler de herkese Suraya'ya tecavüz ettiklerini anlatacaklarını söylerler; çünkü etraftaki diğer erkekler kan davalı oldukları ailenin kadınlarından birine zarar verme fırsatını ele geçirdikleri halde fırsattan istifade etmediklerini duyarlarsa erkeklerin onurları zedelenecektir. Suraya nihayetinde toplumda bir kadının ne yaşadığının değil, başkalarının ne düşündüğünün önemli olduğunu acı bir şekilde öğrenir. Eşi her akşam eve sarhoş gelmeye başlamıştır ve sonunda yine sarhoş olduğu bir gecede üç kere "Boş ol" diyerek Suraya'yı boşar. Yaptığından pişmanlık duysa da geri dönüşü yoktur; tekrar evlenebilmeleri için tek çare Suraya'nın önce başkası ile evlenmesidir. Kocası Suraya'yı başka bir erkekle görmeye dayanamayacağını söyler ve bu işi gerçekleştirmek üzere İngiltere'ye gitmesini ister. Zavallı Suraya da İngiltere'de

kendisiyle evlenip kısa bir süre içinde boşanacak bir eş adayı aramaya başlar. Suraya sık sık bu durumun ilahi adaletle alakası olamayacağını aklından geçirerek Allah kanunlarını koyarken dünyada kadınların da olduğunu unutmuş sözleriyle isyan etse de, her iyi Müslüman gibi bu düşünceleri hemen zihninden kovar.

Suraya'nın bulduğu uygun aday Shamas'tır. İkili arasında ilk görüşte aşk olarak tabir edilebilecek bir ilişki başlar; ancak Shamas Suraya'nın evlilik talebine şiddetle karşı çıkar. Shamas için Kaukab'ı aldatıyor olsa da başka biriyle evlenmesi mümkün değildir ve de Suraya'nın böylesi kötü bir eşe geri dönmesini istemez. Shamas bu düşüncesini dile getirmesinin ardından Suraya'yı uzun bir süre görmez. Saldırıya uğrayan ve aldığı ağır yaralar sebebiyle bir süre yatağa mahkum olmasının ardından iyileştiğinde Suraya'nın muhtemelen kendisinden hamile olduğunu ve başkasıyla evlendiğini öğrenir.

Kaybolan Sevgililere Yollar geneli itibariyle İngiliz Müslüman kimliklerini çok değişken olarak sunmaktadır. Birinci ve ikinci nesil İngiliz Müslümanlar arasında bu kimliğinin tanımlanma ve tecrübe edilme şekli büyük farklılıklar göstermektedir. Birinci nesil göçmenler daha çok İngiliz kimliğini redderek Müslüman kimlikleriyle kendilerini tanımlamaktayken, ikinci nesil İngiliz Müslümanlar bu iki farklı kimliği bünyelerinde taşımaktadır ve tek kültürlü anne babalarına kıyasla onlar, hibrid, çok dilli ve çok kültürlüdürler. Romanın bütününde Aslam belli bir görüşü savunmaktan kaçınır; ancak onun için var olan ihmal edilemez tek bir doğru vardır: Sanatın gücü. Aslam şair olan babasının da etkisiyle çocukluğunu ve gençliğini sanatla iç içe geçirmiştir ve sanatın iki insan arasındaki duvarları yıkabilecek tek unsur olduğuna inanır. Romanda kavvalileri ile bilinen Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan'ın şahsından sanatın gücüne bir kez daha vurgu yapar. Dini şarkılar olarak bilinmelerine rağmen Khan'ın icrasıyla kavvaliler uluslararası topluluklara din, dil, ırk ayrımı gözetmeksizin hitap eder hale gelmiştir. Aslam sanatın her türünün bu güce sahip olduğuna inanır.

Sonuç olarak, bu çalışmada Leila Aboulela'nın *Minare* ve Nadeem Aslam'ın *Kaybolan Sevgililere Yollar* romanları incelenerek iki romanın İngiliz Müslüman romanının çeşitliğine nasıl katkı sağladığı analiz edilmiştir. Her iki yazar da millliyet üzerinden ifade edilen aidiyetlerden ziyade dini kimliğin, göç ve yerinden olmanın yarattığı travmanın üstesinden gelmekte başvurulan bir çare olarak öne çıkmasına dikkat çeker. *Minare*'de Leila Aboulela tersine bir göç hikayesi anlatarak, tesettürü

arzulayan bir kadın karakteri tasvir eder ve Doğu-Batı, özgür-barbar gibi tanımlamalara meydan okur. Nadeem Aslam ise *Kaybolan Sevgililere Yollar*'da farklı farklı karakterler üzerinden din adına işlenen töre cinayetleri, kadınlara yönelik şiddet, görücü usulü evlilik gibi uygulamarı eleştirirken İngiliz Müslüman kimliklerinin tek bir biçimde düşünülemeyeceğine dikkat çeker. Tutucu Kaukab da, ateist Shamas da, dini baskıdan kaçan üç çocukları da nihayetinde İngiliz Müslüman kimlikleriyle yaşarlar; ancak her birinin bu kimliği tanımlama ve yaşama biçimi kendine hastır. İki romanı İngiliz Müslüman romanının önemli yazarlarından Hanif Kureishi, Zadie Smith, Monica Ali, Salman Rushdie gibi kişilerin romanlarını da değerlendirerek beraber okumanın katkısı, bu kategorinin zenginliğinin farkına varmamızı sağlamasıdır. İngiliz Müslüman tanımlaması, içlerinde tutucudan sekülere, bağnazdan ateiste çok çeşitli kimlik barındıran şemsiye terimdir.

B. TEZ FOTOKOPİSİ İZİN FORMU

ENSTİTÜ

Fen Bilimleri Enstitüsü	
Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü	X
Uygulamalı Matematik Enstitüsü	
Enformatik Enstitüsü	
Deniz Bilimleri Enstitüsü	

YAZARIN

Soyadı : KOÇ
Adı : Nesrin
Bölümü: İngiliz Edebiyatı

TEZİN ADI : REPRESENTATION OF BRITISH MUSLIM IDENTITIES IN LEILA ABOULELA'S *MINARET* AND NADEEM ASLAM'S *MAPS FOR LOST LOVERS*

TEZİN TÜRÜ : Yüksek Lisans [X] Doktora [ ]

1.	Tezimin tamamından kaynak gösterilmek şartıyla fotokopi alınabilir.	X
2.	Tezimin içindekiler sayfası, özet, indeks sayfalarından ve/veya bir bölümünden kaynak gösterilmek şartıyla fotokopi alınabilir.	
3.	Tezimden bir bir (1) yıl süreyle fotokopi alınamaz.	

TEZİN KÜTÜPHANEYE TESLİM TARİHİ: