



COGNITIVE STYLISTIC STUDY OF ALIA MAMDOUH'S "ALTANKI"

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Abstract

Using Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT), this study investigates the metaphoric mappings in Alia Mamdouh's *The Altanki*, as well as the linguistic and cognitive constructions of emotions in the text. It will seek to reveal the cognitive processes involved in Mamdouh's figurative mode of expression and how this contributes to a broader understanding of intricate emotional and cultural concepts. The study uses a qualitative methodology, finding and classifying conceptual metaphors, including *LONGING IS A FATAL ILLNESS* and *LOSS OF SELF IS DISAPPEARANCE*¹ through an in-depth textual analysis. Findings demonstrate how Mamdouh's metaphors interconnect abstract emotions with tangible realities, unfolding their embodied and transformative character. She conducted a study emphasizing her idiosyncratic synthesis of cultural and psychological dimensions in emotional metaphors, as they are both universal yet specific. The results contribute to interdisciplinary discussions of metaphor, emotion, and literature, and set the stage for cross-cultural and multimodal applications of CMT that are conducive to future research.

Keywords: Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT), Metaphoric Mappings, Emotional Metaphors, Alia Mamdouh, Cultural Dimensions, Textual Analysis.

دراسة أسلوبية معرفية لرواية "التانكي" لعالية ممدوح

المخلص

باستخدام نظرية الاستعارة المفاهيمية (CMT)، تحقق هذه الدراسة في الخرائط الاستعارية في رواية "التانكي" لعالية ممدوح، بالإضافة إلى البناءات اللغوية والإدراكية للعواطف في النص. تهدف الدراسة إلى الكشف عن العمليات الإدراكية المعنية في أسلوب التعبير المجازي لدى ممدوح وكيف يساهم ذلك في فهم أوسع للمفاهيم العاطفية والثقافية المعقدة. تستخدم الدراسة منهجية نوعية، حيث يتم العثور على الاستعارات المفاهيمية وتصنيفها، بما في ذلك "الاشتياق هو مرض قاتل" و"فقدان الذات هو الاختفاء" من خلال تحليل نصي عميق. تظهر النتائج كيف ترتبط استعارات ممدوح بالعواطف المجردة مع الحقائق الملموسة، كاشفة عن طابعها المجسد والتحويلي. قامت ممدوح بإجراء دراسة تبرز تركيبها الفريد للأبعاد الثقافية والنفسية في الاستعارات العاطفية، إذ أنها عالمية وفي ذات الوقت محددة. تساهم النتائج في النقاشات متعددة التخصصات حول الاستعارة والعاطفة والأدب، وتضع الأساس للتطبيقات العابرة للثقافات والمتعددة الأنماط لنظرية الاستعارة المفاهيمية التي تساهم في البحث المستقبلي.

¹ In the context of Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT), conceptual metaphors are denoted in **CAPITAL LETTERS** to distinguish them from linguistic metaphors. These conceptual metaphors represent systematic mappings between abstract and concrete domains within the mind, serving as cognitive structures that shape thought and experience. Linguistic metaphors, on the other hand, are the verbal expressions or manifestations of these underlying conceptual frameworks. For instance, the conceptual metaphor **EMOTIONS ARE SUBSTANCES** underpins a variety of linguistic metaphors, such as "She was filled with joy" or "He drained his anger." This distinction is central to CMT, as it highlights the cognitive foundations of metaphorical thinking beyond mere language.



الكلمات المفتاحية: نظرية الاستعارة المفاهيمية (CMT)، الخرائط الاستعارية، الاستعارات العاطفية، عالية ممدوح، الأبعاد الثقافية، التحليل النصي.

Introduction

Scholars have been interested in the intricate link between emotional language and emotion for many years, in literature as well as elsewhere. Some writers use subtle linguistic devices to express complex human experiences. Since the dynamic interplay between language and emotion plays such an important role in Mamdouh's work she has been able to paint an unforgettably emotional landscape for readers: that of many cultures, psychologies and existential realities. Her novel *The Altanki* is a case in point: Teeming with painful emotional scenes, conflicts in identity, and the chaos of relationships. Thus, it has become a subject that invites further study. Despite the wealth of critical work centering around Mamdouh, attention has not been paid to her metaphor build-up or its part in leading readers emotionally through her narratives.

Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) is undertaken by Lakoff and Johnson (1980) to provide a new method for understanding how abstract concepts, such as emotions, are live in a fully physical way. The application of this theoretical approach has given a fresh perspective to how metaphor should work, seeing as it is embedded within the body itself. However, its use in readings of Mamdouh with its emotional scenes still remains untied. Recent studies have tended to look at the socio-political and feminist dimensions of her work, overlooking how her metaphors are operating as mental aids that join up our personal experiences with those of the entire culture.

It adopts Conceptual Metaphor theory, showing that in *The Altanki*, Alia Mamdouh uses symbolic metaphors and cognitive strategies so that abstract feelings can be tangible understood and related to. This chapter examines Mamdouh's narrative techniques and her use of key metaphors such as *LONGING IS A FATAL DISEASE* and *EMOTIONS, CONNECTIONS ARE ENTRAPMENTS*. It shows how these not only express individual emotional experiences but also resonate with broad cultural or psychological structures of meaning. To guide our exploration, the research poses a number of questions: How does Alia Mamoud use conceptual metaphors to represent the emotional experiences of *The Altanki*? In what respect do Mamdud's metaphors conform with cross-cultural cognitive frameworks cognitive frameworks for emotion as discussed in Conceptual Metaphor theory, and what points might they differ from it? What roles do these metaphors play in interweaving personal and communal aspects of emotional expression into Mamoud's narrative so as to relieve some tension from that dyadic relationship and speak equally for both parties? How do our conclusions on the linguistic and psychological handling of metaphor relate to western cognitive science's approach to this issue itself?

In response to these questions, we have dug deep into the poetic skill of Mamdouh, making a contribution to CMT and literary research over all. Such an interdisciplinary approach also strikes a chord in global conversations on how



emotion is expressed literature, drawing out both the cultural value and intrinsic universality of such emotional metaphor.

Literature Review

Even though metaphor is but a cornerstone of cognitive poetics, the study of it gives insight into the interaction between language and thought and culture. What Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) has done is to render obsolete Lakoff and Johnson's notion from *Metaphors We Live By* (1980) that metaphor is nothing more than a figure of speech. Instead, they showed metaphors are so incorporated into human thought that they systematically relate abstract concepts (e.g., emotions and morals) with concrete experiences. This theoretical foundation has been the cornerstone for studying how anyone conceives themselves through CMT is essential to literature. Lakoff and Johnson's conclusion is that metaphor itself shapes thought, determining how people perceive and handle complex ideas. For instance, the very widespread use of concrete experiences to understand abstract feelings can be seen in the metaphors (LOVE IS A JOURNEY and ANGER IS HEAT). This cognitive underpinning has been affirmed in subsequent research: cultural, psychological, and embodied experiences all influence the structuring of metaphorical systems (Gibbs, 1994; Kövecses, 2010) Gibbs 1994 Kövecses 2010 Specifically, Kövecses built on Lakoff and Johnson's work to show how cultural variation gives rise to metaphors in different societies. In this way, he gives examples of shared and specific metaphorical constructions across cultures.

Broadening the scope of Literary Application of CMT is a recent trend In these applications, the framework can be employed to investigate narrative structures, character development and the emotional landscapes in literature. What Freeman (2002) and Stockwell (2009) are pointing to, through a study of metaphor technology, cannot simply be summarized in the proposition that "metaphor creates coherence and resonates with the emotion." Such research represents an intellectual journey towards an understanding of how hardware operates metaphorically--it's used as a carrier signal on which to send cultural visions both timeless and timely. In the meantime, traditional allegiances of meaning tally with new formations in this realm. Life can change our perceptions of lexicographic meaning: proverbs such as those given before (and others) very different in manner today, thanks largely to these studies which illustrate how conceptual metaphors serve not only as cognitive equipment for readers dealing with narratives happening latently in the mind but equally importantly form a shocking mechanism for writers to pack human truths off into such tiny fragments as they nearly break with compression. Intercepting At present, the emergence of interdisciplinary approaches has given new vitality to CMT in literary analysis. For instance, neuroscientific research shows that to activate the motor cortex, which registers bodily experiences of movement, one needs a certain type of language—metaphorical even down to its basic units (Gallese & Lakoff 2005). Such findings serve to authenticate the cognitive infrastructure of



metaphor but also extend its application in literature by linking up linguistic analysis with human experience. More and more, cognitive poetics has worked from these insights to show how metaphors can evoke kinesthetic and emotional responses as well as be dilemmatically thought-provoking.

More specifically, from the perspective of literary or cultural studies, putting together TM can clarify the myriad of interwoven threads that make richly emotive texts. If yet again clinically, research into Literature of Trauma may show how such metaphors as TRAUMA IS A WOUND or MEMORY IS A CONTAINER reflect both breaking up and encapsulation in traumatic experiences docutor-2017 Like-wise, metaphors in diaspora literature, when we call IDENTITY IS A JOURNEY, describes personal overview and self concept in full mutation contexts. Despite these achievements, the application of the CMT to the works of writers such as Alia Mamdouh is as yet largely untouched- especially in regard to her multilevel presentations of feelings and cultural identity. Most of the current research looks at her narratives from the perspective of aesthetics and feminist There is next to no attention paid, however, by scholars toward uncovering the cognitive levels at work behind her metaphors. This study thus fills that gap by applying (CMT) to Mamdouh's novel The Altanki and questioning how her conceptual metaphor systems capture the complexity of attitudes and value systems specific to both time.

This study improves but also disputes existing research by showing that Mamdouh's metaphors work at the intersection of cultural and psychological dimensions. In the process, authors keep insights behind traditional literary analysis. While previous literary applications of CMT have mostly stressed the cognitive grounding of metaphor, the present study underscores socially and culturally profound aspects Mamdouh's metaphors include, LONGING IS A FATAL ILLNESS or EMOTIONS OR ATMOSPHERE ARE STEAM AND SCENTS At a deeper level these metaphors thus demonstrate emotions are not just individual experiences but also collective events shaped by cultural narratives, living conditions and historical destiny.

The research takes off from a position where it needs to break new ground, namely by showing how Mamdouh's metaphors intersect with both socio-cultural conditions and psychology. As a result, the findings reported herein go beyond traditional forms of literary practice. Although earlier scholars practicing CMT in literature have frequently downplayed the cultural anchorage of metaphor, Mamdouh's metaphors resonate with profound social and human values. As for example in her view LONGING IS A FATAL ILLNESS or EMOTIONS OR ATMOSPHERE ARE STEAM AND SCENTS, these metaphors reveal that feelings are not only an individual's personal experience but also force group phenomena molded by collective narratives and habituated interaction. The paper will also extend the analysis of trauma studies and identity politics, which have recently made headway in scholarship of this sort, into shared metaphors like (LOSS OF SELF IS DISAPPEARANCE) and



(VIOLENCE OR GUILT IS BLOOD). These two instances encapsulate at once the psychological and existential weight faced by those who fight with their feelings. And so, this study goes against the grain of common thinking about metaphor. Rather than just a stylistic vehicle, it reads metaphor as something dynamic--a way to describe complex areas or trends in how one feels. By addition, this study situates Mamdouh's work within wider discussions of metaphor as universal vs. specific, giving readers a more subtle understanding of how literature reflects and effects cultural life.

Methodology

This paper is using an analytic framework through a lens of Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) to analyze the use of metaphorical structures in Alia Mamdouh's *The Altanki* for articulating dynamic affective terrains. It focuses on the identification, categorization, and analysis of conceptual metaphors in the text, with an emphasis on their cognitive, cultural, and psychological aspects. Such study not only allows for a close reading of Mamdouh's metaphorical language but also puts her work in dialogue with wider discussions of embodied cognition and cultural poetics.

Selection Criteria for Literary Texts and Excerpts:

The original text chosen for the purpose of this analysis is Alia Mamdouh's *The Altanki*, a novel for its lush and metaphorical language as well as its nuanced emotional depth. *The Altanki* is chosen for this study because of its thematic concern with identity, longing, and relational dynamics, which is closely related to the aim of this study to investigate the intersection between emotion and metaphor. Text excerpts were chosen specifically for their overt or subtle dependence on metaphorical structures to communicate abstract ideas, especially ideas related to emotion, identity, and culture. Passages that use Mamdouh's emotive language that feature visual imagery or symbolic allusion that can be interpreted cognitively through the lens of metaphor were prioritized.

Methods for Identifying Conceptual Metaphors:

The process of identifying conceptual metaphors in *The Altanki* involved a multi-step, iterative approach to ensure both accuracy and depth:

A Deep Dive for Metaphorical Relations in Linguistic Form: I searched the text closely for metaphors or words throughout that indicated relations in metaphorical form. Examples include metaphorical expressions, symbolic visuals, and thematic continuities relating to feelings and romantic or primal bonds. Examples such as "longing is a fatal illness" and "she carves into the strands of her hair" were highlighted as starting points for further analysis.

Mapping Linguistic Metaphors to Conceptual Metaphors: Using the framework set by Lakoff and Johnson (1980), linguistic metaphors were systematically mapped onto their corresponding conceptual metaphors. For example, "longing is a fatal illness" is consistent with the conceptual metaphor EMOTIONS ARE



ILLNESSES, in which states of emotion are viewed as a type of physical ailment.

Categorization and Thematic Clustering: Upon Identification, conceptual metaphors were categorized according to their source and target domains PHYSICAL, OBJECTS, SPACES, or ACTIONS, and thematically clustered according to patterns that emerged throughout the text. This clustering helped to find high-level metaphors like EMOTIONS OR ATMOSPHERE ARE STEAM AND SCENTS or LOSS OF SELF IS DISAPPEARANCE.

Analytical Framework: The study employs a dual lens of qualitative analysis and theoretical synthesis to interpret the identified metaphors:

Qualitative Analysis: Each metaphor is also considered within the context of its narrative and cultural framing to examine its potential to convey aspects of emotional states, relational dynamics, or cultural identity. The analysis deals with the ways that Mamdouh's metaphors influence the reader's cognitive and emotional interaction with the text.

Integrating Culture and Cognition: The metaphors are further analyzed in terms of their cultural specificity versus universality, using previous findings about metaphor across cultures (e.g., Kövecses, 2005). This enables a more complex reading of Mamdouh's metaphors as both Iraqi tropes and those common to the human experience.

This study applies a methodological framework rooted in Cognitive Metaphor Theory (CMT) to examine the underlying cognitive mechanisms at work in Mamdouh's metaphorical language and aims to contribute towards a further understanding of her literary artistry, as well as an enrichment of the CMT approach to literary analysis. The metaphors are not only identified, but placed in a wider cultural, psychological and cognitive context.

Linguistic and its conceptual metaphors about "EMOTIONS" in The Altanki:

This section presents selected quotations from the novel and demonstrates how conceptual metaphors are employed to map abstract emotions and experiences onto concrete, embodied imagery. Each passage is analyzed with attention to cultural context, narrative function, and the broader theoretical underpinnings of Conceptual Metaphor Theory (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980; Kövecses, 2005). By showing how intangible states—such as longing, guilt, and vulnerability—are rendered in tangible form, the novel emphasizes the deep connection between cognitive processes and linguistic expression.

"And your doctor does not bother himself... longing—yes, it is not recorded in the lexicon of diseases..."
Metaphor: Longing Is a Fatal Illness This excerpt recasts longing as a medical pathology, highlighting its paradoxical traits: it can be debilitating (a "fatal illness") while also offering a vital spark ("our only remaining chance"). Such framing critiques the tendency of scientific or societal discourses to overlook psychological and existential afflictions, treating them as illegitimate because they lack formal "diagnosis." Cognitive Linguistics underscores how illness metaphors can intensify emotions (Lakoff & Johnson,



1980), with “longing” here suggesting an ongoing, unresolved desire that simultaneously energizes and threatens the self. Culturally, this metaphor resonates with themes of unacknowledged suffering and suppressed emotional states, emphasizing that the subjective realities of yearning can feel more potent than recognized physical conditions. By linking longing to a disease, the passage foregrounds the embodied, invasive nature of such emotional turmoil—one that demands both acknowledgement and empathy.

“The cube had begun to turn into a real tumor in my mind...” Metaphor: Emotional Burdens Are Physical Diseases Equating abstract psychological burdens with a “tumor” underscores their invasive, consuming character. In Cognitive Metaphor Theory, mapping intangible anxieties onto concrete pathology highlights the disruptive effects of unresolved stress (Kövecses, 2005). The “tumor” image conveys both stealth and growth, implying that inner distress, left unchecked, can metastasize throughout one’s mental landscape. The cultural specificity of referring to inner burdens as a “tumor” also speaks to broader Middle Eastern literary traditions, wherein emotional suffering is often depicted through vivid bodily metaphors. This portrayal underscores the inseparable link between the psychological and physical realms, signaling that repressed emotions demand careful understanding and intervention.

“This will be a place resembling a black box... With copious blood, or without spilling a single drop...” Metaphor: Violence or Guilt Is Blood Here, blood serves as a metonym for culpability, harm, or moral stain—whether overt or hidden. The “black box” setting accentuates themes of secrecy, containment, and the lingering traces of wrongdoing. From a cognitive standpoint, blood stands in for visceral evidence of harm, implying that guilt can manifest palpably, even in silence (“without spilling a single drop”). The interplay between presence and absence of blood stresses the tension between visible and invisible forms of violence—overt physical harm versus psychological or systemic violence. This duality broadens the metaphor beyond personal guilt, hinting at collective or social complicity that remains concealed yet potent.

“Do you want someone to correct your emotions for you?” Metaphor: Emotions Are Objects or Processes That Can Be Controlled By depicting emotions as entities subject to “correction,” this passage reveals a mechanistic attitude toward inner life. Emotions are reified—treated as discrete, adjustable objects—reflecting both cultural and psychological pressures for individuals to align their feelings with external norms (Lakoff & Johnson, 1999). The rhetorical form—“Do you want someone...?”—questions the legitimacy of external regulation, implying that genuine emotional experiences cannot (and perhaps should not) be wholly subjugated to external authority. This tension is characteristic of many Middle Eastern narratives, which often dramatize the struggle between personal authenticity and communal expectations.



“She exerted all her effort to empty her voice of its angry charge.” Metaphor: Emotions Are Substances That Can Be Removed Anger is portrayed as a substance “lodged” in the voice, suggesting the embodied, physical dimension of strong emotions. The act of “emptying” underscores the conscious labor required to suppress or transform anger, aligning with theories of emotion regulation (Gross, 1998). Contextually, this metaphor highlights the social impetus to modulate expressions of anger, especially for women, reflecting a broader cultural commentary on the acceptability (or lack thereof) of overtly displaying strong emotion. The “angry charge” conveys not just hostility but also suppressed energy, drawing attention to the psychological cost of masking powerful feelings. “In the midst of his night, drowned in moans...” Metaphor: Suffering Is Drowning Casting emotional turmoil as drowning amplifies its suffocating and inescapable nature. Drowning suggests a desperate, life-threatening state, underscoring how overwhelming grief or despair can immobilize the sufferer (Forceville, 2018). From a cultural perspective, the setting “in the midst of his night” may symbolize isolation, darkness, or existential crisis. The moans further embody the unvoiced pain of the protagonist, emphasizing the all-encompassing power of suffering that resists easy resolution. “Are there diseases that lie in wait for us...?” Metaphor: Vulnerability Is Falling Into a Trap Vulnerability here becomes an external force—like a snare waiting to ensnare its victim. Disease personification underlines the lack of control individuals may feel in the face of unforeseen threats. This metaphor resonates with cultural discourses where fate or destiny is seen as a lurking force, shaping life outcomes unpredictably (Steen & Colston, 2010). By linking diseases to traps, the quote suggests that susceptibility—physical, emotional, or social—can suddenly shift one’s reality. It illuminates the fragility of human agency, emphasizing how easily individuals can be overtaken by events beyond their immediate control.

“The ugliness set the sky ablaze.” Metaphor: Ugliness Is Fire/Destruction Here, ugliness ignites the sky, framing it as a destructive, expansive force. The cosmic dimension (“the sky ablaze”) heightens the metaphor’s intensity, implying that moral or aesthetic discord can penetrate every layer of experience. This aligns with embodied cognition, where fire is typically mapped onto uncontrollable, consuming energies. Cultural readings might interpret “ugliness” as more than aesthetic deformity—encompassing societal or moral corruption that threatens to destabilize established structures.

“He set fire to his skull.” Metaphor: Mental or Emotional Struggle Is Fire Localizing this metaphor within the “skull” underscores the internal, self-contained nature of the turmoil. Like uncontrolled flames, thoughts and emotions can escalate, burn away stability, and risk self-destruction. The passage’s emphasis on self-infliction—“He set fire...” —points to the personal agency (or despair) involved in igniting one’s mental anguish. It speaks to existential or psychological crises where introspection morphs into self-



destructive intensity, highlighting how private suffering can become both unstoppable and isolating.

“Do you erase your desires?” Metaphor: Desires Are Objects That Can Be Eradicated

Erasing desires equates them with marks on a surface—visible but removable. This metaphor underscores how cultural or personal imperatives might push individuals to repress or obliterate their own yearnings (Charteris-Black, 2004). The rhetorical question invites reflection on authenticity and self-denial. It challenges whether desires can ever be truly “erased” or merely suppressed, hinting that such impulses remain etched beneath the surface, awaiting acknowledgment.

“They raise their voices with singing and shouting... If it were up to me to see my voice...” Metaphor: Emotions or Voice Are Objects That Can Be Pulled From the Body Conceptualizing the voice as a physical entity underscores the powerful, embodied nature of self-expression (Lakoff & Johnson, 1999). The speaker imagines “seeing” and extracting the voice, depicting emotional release as a viscerally physical process that demands agency and effort. This conveys the tension between socially guided self-restraint and the innate drive to express raw emotion. The variant forms—shouting or singing—highlight how emotional intensity can manifest in a range of expressions, from harmonious to chaotic.

“She was able to carry her voice and her gaze, and placed them in his hands.” Metaphor: Expressions Are Objects That Can Be Carried The speaker’s voice and gaze become tangible offerings, symbolizing trust and vulnerability. By handing these expressions over, she relinquishes part of her emotional autonomy and invests a profound measure of faith in the receiver’s care. In many literary contexts, “carrying” another’s expressions highlights the responsibility the recipient assumes. This passage thus reflects both interpersonal intimacy and the delicate power dynamics at play when one entrusts personal identity markers (voice, gaze) to another.

“...both choking on their stifled laughter,” and “He let out a resounding laugh.” Metaphors: Laughter as Obstruction and Laughter as Force

Laughter as Obstruction: Suppressed laughter becomes a physical blockage, symbolizing the tension between social decorum and inner levity. The imagery of “choking” underscores both the social pressure to maintain composure and the strain this suppression imposes.

Laughter as Force: Conversely, a “resounding laugh” bursts forth as an energetic release, illustrating how unrestrained humor can transform the emotional atmosphere. In cognitive terms, laughter’s explosive nature aligns with conceptualizations of sudden emotional liberation. These dual metaphors highlight the cultural and psychological complexities surrounding humor—where it can serve as both a suppressed impulse and a communal bonding mechanism.



“Your mother would smile... watching the pots release their steam and scents...”

Metaphor: Emotions or Atmosphere Are Steam and Scents Emotional warmth is likened to the rising steam and fragrances in a nurturing domestic space. This sensory metaphor emphasizes how intangible feelings permeate physical surroundings, suggesting that familial love, care, or comfort are not static abstractions but tangible influences shaping the environment (Fairclough, 1995). The mother’s smile ties emotional experience to everyday acts (cooking, sharing space), reinforcing the narrative’s theme of connectedness. Steam visually and olfactorily embodies nurturing atmospheres that envelop characters, uniting them through shared domestic rituals.

“We are replicating the ugliness.”

Metaphor: Negative Traits Are Objects That Can Be Replicated Here, “ugliness” is portrayed as something transmissible—akin to a pattern or virus that can spread. This metaphor underscores the cyclical nature of harmful behaviors or ideologies that are often perpetuated through imitation or complacency. It aligns with social learning theories, suggesting that destructive traits (prejudice, intolerance, cruelty) are reproduced through communal acceptance or unexamined routines. The quote alerts readers to collective responsibility, challenging them to recognize and interrupt these negative cycles.

“...I would have gone blind and disappeared!”

Metaphors: Emotional Numbness Is Blindness / Loss of Self Is Disappearance Emotional detachment is cast as blindness, emphasizing how numbed perception prevents one from “seeing” or experiencing life fully. The subsequent “disappearance” reveals the existential risk of such disconnection: losing not only sight but also one’s very presence. The combined metaphors dramatize the cost of remaining in an oppressive setting, hinting that the narrator’s choice to depart is necessary for survival. This resonates with broader themes in Middle Eastern literature around exile, identity, and the necessity of renewal elsewhere.

“...I could hear a moaning rising from the fabric of the garments...”

Metaphor: Loss Is a Shared Lament By personifying clothes as moaning, this passage frames loss as a communal or environmental wail that transcends individual grief. The environment itself—wardrobes, garments—bears witness to the pain, demonstrating how memory and sorrow embed themselves in seemingly mundane objects (Ricoeur, 1991). This universalizes grief, bridging the private mourning of the individual with a broader, almost animate world that resonates with collective loss. The metaphor blurs boundaries between human and inanimate, suggesting that no aspect of life remains untouched by sorrow.

“She carves into the strands of her hair.” Metaphor: Emotions or Thoughts Are Physical Actions That Can Carve Carving signifies intensity and permanence, depicting how internal turmoil or profound reflection can literally shape one’s outward identity. Hair—often symbolic of femininity, individuality, or cultural



identity—becomes the canvas for inscribing personal struggles. The deliberate nature of carving underscores the emotional labor and creative agency in transforming trauma into a visible statement. It aligns with theories of embodiment wherein internal states manifest through physical modifications, highlighting the tangible impact of psychological processes.

“She wanders in our minds, and no one can catch her.” Metaphor: Presence Is Imagery. This statement attributes to a person the quality of elusive mental imagery, pointing to the powerful, lingering nature of certain encounters or personalities. Despite the intensity of her impact, she remains indefinable and uncontrolled, illustrating how some presences defy resolution or containment. This resonates with the concept of “image schemas” (Lakoff, 1993), suggesting that vivid mental pictures—especially those tied to emotive figures—can dominate thought processes. The tension between fascination and frustration reflects the complexity of grappling with memory and perception.

“I began to entangle my vocal cords in you.” Metaphor: Connections Are Entanglements Emotional bonding is shown as an intricate, inescapable intertwining of self-expression with another person’s influence. Vocal cords, central to speech and identity, symbolize a deeper merging that complicates autonomy and highlights mutual vulnerability. This mapping underscores how relationships can reshape identity. Entanglement implies both intimacy and a potential loss of independence, reflecting a central motif in many relational narratives: the interplay between the desire for closeness and the fear of being subsumed.

“A man licked her lips and unlocked her defenses.” Metaphor: Intimacy Is a Tactile Action Physical touch becomes a key to emotional barriers, suggesting that intimacy involves crossing delicate thresholds of trust. “Licking her lips” melds the sensual and symbolic, indicating a deliberate act that catalyzes vulnerability and closeness. The metaphor emphasizes tactile immediacy: unlocking defenses through physical contact reflects broader cultural notions of how trust and exposure often arise from embodied interactions. It also hints at power dynamics, where the agent’s touch exerts control or persuasion, underscoring intimacy’s potential ambiguity.

Collectively, these metaphors illustrate how the novel intertwines physical and emotional worlds to convey complex states of longing, suffering, and transformation. By mapping intangible experiences onto sensory, embodied domains, the text aligns with Conceptual Metaphor Theory’s core premise: that our conceptual system is profoundly shaped by bodily interactions (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). The result is a narrative deeply immersed in cultural and psychological nuance, wherein characters’ inner lives reverberate through tangible symbols—fire, blood, tumors, or the simple act of cooking. Through these metaphors, readers witness how embodied cognition both structures and intensifies key themes, linking individual psyche to collective realities. The novel thus foregrounds the power of figurative language to reveal hidden



emotional depths, question social norms, and illustrate the universal resonance of personal experience within a specific cultural milieu.

Embodied Emotion and Transformation: Conceptual Metaphors in Alia Mamdouh's Narrative:

In Alia Mamdouh's narrative, emotions are consistently conceptualized as tangible, embodied phenomena, revealing a profound intertwining of affective states with physicality and vulnerability. The metaphor **LONGING IS A FATAL ILLNESS** portrays yearning as a life-threatening force, emphasizing the destructive psychological toll of unfulfilled desire. This metaphor resonates with the concept of allostatic load, which refers to the cumulative physiological wear and tear on the body caused by chronic stress and emotional strain (McEwen, 1998). Studies have shown that prolonged emotional distress, such as unfulfilled longing, can lead to significant health repercussions, including cardiovascular issues and immune system dysregulation (Juster, McEwen, & Lupien, 2010). This supports Mamdouh's depiction of longing as a force that not only consumes the psyche but also undermines physical well-being.

Similarly, the metaphor **EMOTIONAL BURDENS ARE PHYSICAL DISEASES** likens affective strain to physiological ailments, framing emotions as weights that impair health and function. This aligns with research demonstrating how emotional stress manifests physically, such as through somatic symptoms and chronic pain syndromes (Barsky, Goodson, Lane, & Cleary, 1988). The physiological embodiment of emotional strain, as illustrated in Mamdouh's work, reflects the somatization process, where psychological distress is expressed through physical symptoms, a phenomenon widely documented in psychoneuroimmunology (Kemeny, 2003). These metaphors vividly ground emotions within corporeal experiences, bridging the gap between literary expression and empirical evidence of the interplay between emotional and physical domains. Adding to this, the metaphor **VIOLENCE OR GUILT IS BLOOD** introduces a stark visual representation of emotional and moral stains, portraying guilt as an indelible mark upon the self. This aligns with cultural and psychological understandings of guilt as a persistent and corrosive emotional state, often accompanied by physical sensations of discomfort and heaviness (Tangney, Stuewig, & Mashek, 2007). The visceral imagery of blood suggests that guilt, much like a physical wound, leaves traces that are difficult to erase, symbolizing a lingering emotional burden. Similarly, the metaphor **SUFFERING OR EMOTIONAL TURMOIL IS DROWNING** underscores the overwhelming and engulfing nature of distress, resonating with the concept of emotional inundation. LeDoux's (2000) research into the neuroscience of emotions highlights how extreme stress and suffering activate the brain's threat response, creating a sense of being overwhelmed, akin to drowning. These mappings emphasize how emotions transcend abstract cognition, assuming visceral, often destructive forms that demand acknowledgment and management.



Control emerges as a recurring theme in Mamdouh's work, particularly through the conceptual metaphors EMOTIONS ARE OBJECTS OR PROCESSES THAT CAN BE CONTROLLED and EMOTIONS ARE SUBSTANCES THAT CAN BE REMOVED OR DRAINED. These metaphors convey a duality in emotional regulation, where a sense of agency is tempered by the recognition of the effort required to manage emotions effectively. Gross's (2015) process model of emotion regulation underscores the complexity of this balance, illustrating that while individuals may strive for mastery over their emotional experiences, emotions often resist such control, reasserting their presence in unpredictable ways. Similarly, Rogers (1951) highlights the tension between emotional expression and regulation, framing emotional control as both necessary and inherently challenging. Mamdouh's metaphors reflect this precarious interplay, emphasizing the painstaking labor involved in regulating emotions while acknowledging their persistent, unmanageable nature.

Mamdouh's use of environmental and tactile metaphors further deepens this exploration. The metaphor EMOTIONS OR ATMOSPHERE ARE STEAM AND SCENTS portrays internal states as permeating outward, affecting the physical environment and creating an almost tangible presence in shared spaces. This aligns with studies on emotional contagion, which suggest that emotions are not confined to individuals but spread to influence others within their social context (Hatfield, Cacioppo, & Rapson, 1993). Similarly, the metaphor NEGATIVE TRAITS ARE OBJECTS THAT CAN BE REPLICATED highlights the social propagation of undesirable attributes, suggesting that traits such as anger or bitterness can be perpetuated and magnified through interactions and shared experiences. These metaphors illustrate how emotions, far from being isolated, are inherently relational, shaping interpersonal dynamics and the collective emotional atmosphere of communities. By grounding emotions in physical and environmental imagery, Mamdouh emphasizes their pervasive and impactful nature, further highlighting the interconnectedness of individual experiences and broader social contexts.

Additionally, metaphors such as EMOTIONS OR THOUGHTS ARE PHYSICAL ACTIONS THAT CAN CARVE illustrate the permanence of emotional and cognitive experiences. Here, emotions leave indelible marks akin to grooves etched into the mind, reflecting both their intensity and durability. This aligns with psychological studies that demonstrate how emotionally charged events are deeply encoded in memory, leaving lasting traces that shape future behavior and perception (McEwen & Gianaros, 2010). Similarly, the metaphor LOSS OF SELF IS DISAPPEARANCE underscores the existential erosion associated with extreme distress, portraying a catastrophic disconnection from identity and selfhood. Research in trauma studies supports this depiction, with Lanius et al. (2011) noting that severe emotional distress often leads to dissociation and fragmentation of the self, mirroring the metaphorical disappearance Mamdouh describes.



Finally, Mamdouh's portrayal of relational dynamics employs tactile metaphors such as INTIMACY IS A TACTILE ACTION and EMOTIONS OR CONNECTIONS ARE ENTANGLEMENTS, emphasizing the physical grounding of closeness and the intricate, often inextricable nature of human bonds. These metaphors highlight the embodied nature of emotional connection, wherein touch and physicality are central to understanding intimacy and relational depth. Field (2010) supports this perspective, noting that touch plays a crucial role in fostering emotional closeness, trust, and attachment, which are key components of intimate relationships. Mamdouh's metaphors vividly encapsulate the complexities of relational dynamics, portraying them as both physically rooted and emotionally profound, emphasizing the transformative potential and challenges inherent in human connections.

Mamdouh's narrative employs a rich tapestry of metaphors to explore the multifaceted nature of emotions, blending cultural, psychological, and literary dimensions. Her work demonstrates how emotions function as both destructive forces and catalysts for healing and connection, requiring a nuanced engagement with their embodied and social complexities. By applying Conceptual Metaphor Theory, these emotional landscapes are rendered accessible, allowing for a deeper appreciation of Mamdouh's exploration of affective life. Through this lens, her metaphors reveal the universality of emotional experience while offering profound insights into the interplay between the individual and their environment, emotions, and relationships.

Conclusion:

This study has explored the intricate use of conceptual metaphors in Alia Mamdouh's *The Altanki*, demonstrating how emotions are vividly conceptualized as tangible, embodied phenomena. Key findings reveal that metaphors such as LONGING IS A FATAL ILLNESS and EMOTIONS OR CONNECTIONS ARE ENTANGLEMENTS serve as cognitive tools for bridging abstract emotional experiences with concrete physical and social realities. These metaphors highlight the profound interplay between emotions, cultural identity, and relational dynamics, offering a unique lens through which to understand the narrative's affective depth. Moreover, Mamdouh's use of metaphors like LOSS OF SELF IS DISAPPEARANCE and VIOLENCE OR GUILT IS BLOOD underscores the existential weight of emotional distress, further enriching the narrative's exploration of identity and trauma. By applying Conceptual Metaphor Theory, this analysis has illuminated the cultural specificity and universal resonance of Mamdouh's metaphors, contributing to the broader discourse on the embodiment of emotion in literature.

Despite its contributions, the study is not without limitations. The analysis focuses exclusively on *The Altanki* and does not extend to Mamdouh's broader oeuvre, potentially narrowing the scope of its insights. Furthermore, while the study integrates cultural, psychological, and cognitive dimensions, it does not exhaustively address the historical and linguistic factors that may influence



metaphorical constructions in the text. Future research could expand upon these findings by exploring Mamdouh's use of metaphor in other works, incorporating comparative analyses with similar narratives from the Arabic literary tradition. Additionally, interdisciplinary approaches combining historical linguistics and cultural studies could further deepen the understanding of Mamdouh's metaphorical language.

Future research could also extend the application of Conceptual Metaphor Theory beyond the literary domain. Comparative studies across genres or languages would provide valuable insights into the universality and variability of metaphorical structures in different cultural contexts. For instance, analyzing how metaphors of emotion manifest in Arabic poetry, Western novels, or East Asian narratives could reveal cross-cultural parallels and divergences in emotional conceptualization. Another promising avenue is applying CMT to multimodal texts, such as films, graphic novels, or digital storytelling platforms, where metaphor operates not only through language but also through visuals, sound, and other sensory modalities. This would broaden the theoretical framework of CMT, offering new perspectives on how metaphors are constructed and interpreted in diverse media forms.

Ultimately, this study reaffirms the power of metaphor as both a literary device and a cognitive mechanism, emphasizing its centrality to understanding human emotion and experience. Alia Mamdouh's *The Altanki* exemplifies how literature serves as a medium for articulating complex affective realities, bridging the personal, cultural, and universal dimensions of emotional life. By integrating literary, cognitive, and cultural perspectives, this research paves the way for more expansive investigations into the interplay between metaphor, emotion, and meaning across languages, genres, and media.

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