

EXAMINING THE DECOLONIAL CULTURAL ETHOS IN KAMILA SHAMSIE'S HOME FIRE (2017)

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the depiction of the decolonial cultural ethos in Kamila Shamsie's "Home Fire" (2017), focusing on its narrative structure and character development to understand how the novel navigates postcolonial identities and power dynamics. The research problem centers on exploring the nuanced ways in which Shamsie's narrative challenges or reinforces the constructs of postcolonial identity within the context of contemporary global tensions. The objective is to elucidate the strategies employed by the characters to negotiate their identities in a world marked by colonial legacies, employing Walter Mignolo's decolonial theory as the analytical framework. Mignolo's concepts of the colonality of power, border thinking, and the decolonial option provide the methodological lens through which the narrative and characters' actions are interpreted. The study concludes that "Home Fire" intricately weaves a decolonial cultural ethos through its portrayal of characters that embody and challenge postcolonial identities and dynamics, thereby contributing to the discourse on decoloniality and offering insights into the complexities of living in a postcolonial world.

Keywords: Decolonial cultural ethos, challenge, reinforce, postcolonial identities, power dynamics, Kamila Shamsie, Home Fire

INTRODUCTION

The term "Decolonial Cultural Ethos" embodies a complex and multifaceted concept rooted in historical, philosophical, and sociocultural discourses. To unravel its etymology and significance, it is pivotal to deconstruct each component of the term. "Decolonial," as a concept, emerges from the word "decolonization," which originally referred to the process of a state withdrawing from a colony, leaving it independent. The term "colony" stems from the Latin "colonia," which signifies a farm or settlement. This was especially pertinent during the Roman Empire when new territories were cultivated and managed by settlers from the mother city (Oxford English Dictionary, 2023). In the 20th century, however, "decolonization" gained prominence in the context of

the end of European colonial empires following World War II. It encapsulated not only the political and economic withdrawal of colonial powers but also the broader processes of liberating societies from colonial rule and influence (Fanon, 1963).

The "cultural" aspect of "Decolonial Cultural Ethos" refers to the customs, arts, social institutions, and achievements of a particular nation, people, or other social groups. The word "culture" has its roots in the Latin "cultura," which means cultivation or refinement of the mind, tastes, and manners. This term evolved over centuries, and by the 19th and 20th centuries, it had taken on the meaning of the distinctive patterns of lifestyle, values, and artifacts produced by societies (Williams, 1983).

"Ethos," derived from the Greek "ēthos," originally meant "custom" or "habit." Aristotle used "ethos" in his "Rhetoric" to refer to the character or credibility of the speaker and how this influences persuasion (Lutzke, & Henggeler, 2009). In modern usage, ethos has come to signify the characteristic spirit, beliefs, and moral values of a community, period, or ideology (Oxford English Dictionary, 2023).

Combining these elements, "Decolonial Cultural Ethos" refers to a framework or mindset that seeks to critically reassess and reconstruct cultural narratives, practices, and values that have been shaped or overshadowed by colonialism. This ethos aims to valorize indigenous, local, or marginalized cultural expressions and epistemologies, viewing them as equally valid and integral to the global cultural mosaic. It challenges the long-standing hegemony of colonial or Western-centric perspectives and promotes a more inclusive, equitable, and diverse understanding of culture and history (Mignolo, 2007).

Decolonial thought does not merely seek to remove the remnants of colonial structures but also to reimagine and reinvent culture and knowledge production free from the vestiges of colonial domination. (Stokes, 2023). It recognizes the profound impact of colonialism not just in political and economic terms but also in the shaping of cultural identities, knowledge systems, and social hierarchies. Thus, a decolonial cultural ethos involves a deep engagement with history, an acknowledgement of past injustices, and a commitment to creating a more just and equitable future by centring voices and perspectives that have historically been marginalized or silenced (Quijano, 2007).

The Decolonial Cultural Ethos represents a transformative and restorative approach to understanding and reshaping cultural narratives. It is an ongoing, dynamic process that seeks to redress imbalances in knowledge, power, and representation, fostering a world where diverse cultural expressions and histories are acknowledged and celebrated.

Kamila Shamsie, a contemporary British-Pakistani author, has made significant contributions to the world of modern literature with her nuanced and thought-provoking narratives. Born in 1973 in Karachi, Pakistan, Shamsie grew up in a literary environment, with her mother, Muneeza Shamsie,

being a well-known literary critic and editor. She pursued her higher education at Hamilton College in the United States and later at the University of Massachusetts Amherst, where she honed her skills in creative writing. Shamsie's writing often interweaves the personal with the political, exploring themes of identity, cultural conflict, and the complexities of diasporic experiences.

One of Shamsie's most acclaimed works is "Home Fire" (2017), a novel that deftly reimagines Sophocles' ancient Greek tragedy, "Antigone," within the context of contemporary issues. The novel delves into the lives of a British Muslim family, exploring themes of love, loyalty, and the clash between state and individual ethics. Set against the backdrop of political turmoil and the rise of Islamic radicalization, "Home Fire" presents a powerful commentary on the struggles of identity and belonging faced by individuals caught between different cultural and ideological worlds.

"Home Fire" is structured into five sections, each narrated by a different character, providing a multi-dimensional perspective on the unfolding events. The story revolves around the Pasha siblings - Isma, Aneeka, and Parvaiz - who are left to navigate the complexities of their identities in a post-9/11 world. Shamsie's masterful storytelling brings to the fore the personal impacts of political decisions, particularly the effects of anti-terrorism laws on innocent lives. The novel poignantly captures the conflicts faced by Muslims living in the West, torn between their familial bonds and the pressures of societal expectations and prejudices.

The Novel has been widely praised for its eloquent prose, intricate character development, and its ability to address pertinent and sensitive issues with empathy and insight. "Home Fire" not only won the Women's Prize for Fiction in 2018 but also was longlisted for the 2017 Booker Prize, affirming Shamsie's status as a significant voice in contemporary literature. Through this novel, Kamila Shamsie offers a profound exploration of the meaning of home, family, and the sacrifices one makes in the name of love and justice, making it a relevant and resonant work in today's global context.

Research Questions

How does Kamila Shamsie's "Home Fire" (2017) depict the decolonial cultural ethos within its narrative structure and character development?

In what ways does "Home Fire" challenge or reinforce postcolonial identities and power dynamics?

Objectives of the study

To explore the representation of decolonial cultural ethos in Kamila Shamsie's "Home Fire" through its narrative structure and character development.

To examine the ways in which "Home Fire" addresses postcolonial identities and power dynamics, identifying both challenges and reinforcements.

Significance of the Study

The significance of studying "Home Fire" by Kamila Shamsie lies in its nuanced portrayal of the decolonial cultural ethos, which illuminates the complexities of postcolonial identities and power dynamics. By weaving a narrative that intricately examines the lives of its characters within a contemporary political and social context, Shamsie's novel offers a profound critique of the enduring impacts of colonial legacies. It challenges readers to reconsider notions of belonging, citizenship, and the binary oppositions of us versus them, thereby contributing to a deeper understanding of the decolonial struggle in literature and its implications for real-world social and political discourses.

Delimitation of the Study

The study is delimited to analyzing the narrative structure and character development in Kamila Shamsie's "Home Fire" (2017) to understand its portrayal of decolonial cultural ethos, specifically within the context of postcolonial identities and power dynamics. It employs Walter Mignolo's decolonial theory, focusing on the coloniality of power, border thinking, and the decolonial option as analytical tools. The research does not explore reader reception, broader literary contexts, or the author's personal background and intentions.

Theoretical Framework

Walter Mignolo's theoretical framework on the Decolonial Cultural Ethos is primarily centered

around two key concepts: "coloniality" and "border thinking." These concepts are instrumental in understanding the dynamics of power, knowledge, and being that have emerged in the post-colonial world, heavily influenced by the residues of colonialism.

Coloniality: Mignolo extends the concept of colonialism to "coloniality," a term he uses to describe the lasting patterns of power that emerged as a result of European colonialism and that continue to shape global power dynamics. According to Mignolo, coloniality survives colonialism. It is the underlying logic that perpetuates racial, political, economic, social, epistemological, and linguistic hierarchies established during colonial times. This framework emphasizes that decolonizing is not just a matter of removing colonial administrations or gaining political independence; rather, it involves dismantling the deeper-seated power structures and knowledge systems that colonialism instituted and that continue to dominate global thinking (Mignolo, 2012).

Border Thinking: Mignolo introduces the concept of "border thinking," which he defines as a form of thinking and knowing that emerges from the experiences of those who inhabit the "borders" of the Western world - the marginalized, the oppressed, the colonized. Border thinking is a challenge to the Eurocentric epistemology; it is the epistemic response from the exteriority of the modern/colonial world system. It involves recognizing and valuing the knowledge and perspective of those who exist at the margins of dominant narratives. This kind of thinking is essential for the decolonial project because it provides a standpoint that critically questions and seeks to transform the colonial matrix of power (Mignolo, 2012).

Delinking: A crucial part of Mignolo's framework is the concept of "delinking," which refers to the process of disengaging from the colonial matrix of power and its epistemic assumptions. Delinking is about creating a shift from a Eurocentric perspective to a pluralistic perspective that recognizes other forms of knowledge, being, and understanding. It involves a conscious effort to rediscover and revalue the knowledge, histories, and cultures that were marginalized or rendered invisible by colonial rule. This process is not just about rejecting Western knowledge but about changing the terms of the

conversation and creating a more inclusive, plural epistemic space (Mignolo, 2007).

Walter D. Mignolo's theory of the decolonial option argues for delinking from colonial matrices of power and embracing epistemic diversity. It champions the revalorization of knowledge, narratives, and practices that have been marginalized or silenced by Western-centric modernity. Mignolo advocates for a pluriversal world where multiple forms of knowing coexist, challenging the universalism of Western thought and promoting a more inclusive, equitable global understanding (Mignolo, & Walsh, 2018).

Mignolo's framework provides a critical lens for examining how colonial structures of power and knowledge continue to impact societies and for exploring ways to challenge and transform these structures. The Decolonial Cultural Ethos, as informed by Mignolo's theories, is about recognizing and addressing the deep-seated effects of colonialism in culture, knowledge production, and social organization, and actively working towards a more just, inclusive, and diverse global understanding.

ANALYSIS

Kamila Shamsie's "Home Fire" (2017) is a profound exploration of identity, belonging, and the tensions that arise from navigating these concepts within a postcolonial framework. The narrative and its character development intricately depict the decolonial cultural ethos, aligning with Walter D. Mignolo's theories on decoloniality and border thinking. Mignolo's work emphasizes the importance of delinking from the colonial matrix of power and engaging in border thinking as a means to understand and articulate a decolonial perspective (Mignolo, 2011). This analysis will dissect the given quotation through the lens of Mignolo's theory, highlighting how Shamsie's text embodies these decolonial principles.

"Do you consider yourself British?" the man said. "I am British." (Shamsie, 2017)

This exchange initiates a dialogue on identity that transcends simple affirmation. The protagonist's response, "I am British," is a statement of fact, reflecting a legal or superficial belonging to the nation. However, Mignolo's decolonial theory would prompt us to look beyond this affirmation to understand the deeper implications of such a statement (Mignolo, 2011). It suggests a

confrontation with the colonial matrix of power that defines identities within rigid, often Eurocentric, parameters. By claiming her Britishness, the character navigates the complex terrain of identity within a nation still grappling with its colonial past and multicultural present.

"But do you consider yourself British?" (Shamsie, 2017)

The repetition of the question, with emphasis on "consider," probes deeper into the subjective sense of identity, questioning the internalization of Britishness beyond legal or superficial labels. From Mignolo's perspective, this question challenges the protagonist to engage in border thinking—to reflect on her identity at the margins of colonial legacies and modern nation-state boundaries (Mignolo, 2010). It underscores the tension between being officially recognized as British and feeling a sense of belonging or acceptance within that identity, highlighting the disjuncture between state-imposed identities and personal experiences of belonging.

"I've lived here all my life." (Shamsie, 2017)

This statement shifts the conversation from legalistic or normative claims to personal experience and attachment to place. It echoes Mignolo's idea of "locating oneself" as a decolonial act, where one's sense of identity is grounded in lived experiences rather than imposed categories (Mignolo, 2011). The protagonist's assertion of having lived in Britain all her life speaks to a decolonial understanding of identity as something formed through the day-to-day realities of inhabiting a space, rather than through abstract affiliations.

"She meant there was no other country of which she could feel herself a part, but the words came out sounding evasive." (Shamsie, 2017)

The internal reflection reveals a deeper existential dilemma, resonating with Mignolo's notion of the "colonial difference"—where the colonized subject's identity is caught between worlds, not fully embraced by any (Mignolo, 2011). This sentiment encapsulates the decolonial struggle of finding a place of belonging within a world still structured by colonial hierarchies and ideologies. The protagonist's inability to articulate her full sense of identity reflects the ongoing impact of colonialism on personal and collective identities, underscoring the decolonial challenge of redefining oneself outside the binaries of colonizer and colonized.

Shamsie's characters are emblematic of the decolonial challenge of identity formation. Their experiences reflect Mignolo's concept of the "wounded attachment" (Mignolo, 2012), where the colonial wound continues to affect how individuals relate to their identities and the world around them. The protagonist's struggle to articulate her sense of belonging encapsulates this wound, as it highlights the difficulty of forming a cohesive identity in a space where one is perpetually seen as the other.

"Home Fire" not only questions the notion of British identity but also critically examines the lingering effects of colonialism in contemporary Britain. Through its characters, the novel portrays the racial, cultural, and religious tensions that pervade British society—a direct aftermath of its colonial past. This aligns with Mignolo's assertion that the colonial matrix of power continues to influence present-day societies (Mignolo, 2011). The protagonist's interaction and her sense of belonging—or lack thereof—underscore the persistent divide between the colonial center and its margins.

Shamsie's narrative strategy itself can be seen as a form of decolonial action. By centering the story around characters that live in the interstices of fixed identities and cultural narratives, "Home Fire" embodies Mignolo's idea of "border thinking" (Mignolo, 2011). The novel invites readers to engage with perspectives that are often marginalized, thus challenging dominant narratives and encouraging a decolonial reading of history and identity.

Ultimately, "Home Fire" poses critical questions about the possibility of a decolonial future. Through its portrayal of characters who strive to define themselves beyond colonial impositions, the novel suggests the potential for creating new forms of identity and belonging that transcend colonial legacies. This echoes Mignolo's vision of decoloniality as a project aimed at delinking from the colonial matrix of power and imagining global futures beyond it (Mignolo, 2011).

The novel "Home Fire" by Kamila Shamsie intricately explores decolonial cultural ethos and interrogates postcolonial identities and power dynamics, particularly through its characters' development and their navigation of identity within a British context. Analyzing Eamonn's identity crisis through Walter Mignolo's theory offers rich insights into how the novel engages with these themes.

Mignolo's decolonial theory, especially his concepts of "border thinking," "the colonial difference," and "epistemic disobedience," provide a framework for understanding the complexities Shamsie navigates in the narrative (Mignolo, 2011).

"My father's just been appointed the new home secretary. Karamat Lone. You know who he is, right?" (Shamsie, 2017)

This statement introduces Eamonn's complex relationship with his identity, intersecting personal, familial, and political dimensions. Eamonn's reference to his father, Karamat Lone, immediately situates him within a specific socio-political context that is laden with expectations and assumptions. Mignolo's concept of "the colonial difference" is relevant here, as it speaks to the hierarchical distinctions imposed by colonial legacies that continue to define relationships and identities (Mignolo, 2012). Eamonn's identity is marked by his father's prominent political role, which positions him within a power dynamic that is both privileged and scrutinized, reflecting the ongoing influence of colonial structures in shaping personal and political identities.

"She nodded, took a sip of coffee for something to do". (Shamsie, 2017)

This reaction reflects the tension and discomfort in navigating conversations that invoke complex identities and legacies. From a decolonial perspective, this moment can be seen as an embodiment of "border thinking" (Mignolo, 2011), where individuals at the borders of different worlds—be it cultural, political, or social—engage in the labor of negotiating these identities. The act of taking a sip of coffee, a mundane action, serves as a buffer in a moment charged with the weight of historical and personal legacies, highlighting the everyday nature of decolonial struggles.

"I guess you're one of the people who doesn't see my face, hear the surname, and put two and two together." (Shamsie, 2017)

Here, Eamonn articulates a common postcolonial dilemma: the struggle to be seen as an individual beyond the reductive assumptions tied to one's background or family name. This reflects Mignolo's discussion on "epistemic disobedience" (Mignolo, 2011), challenging the dominant narratives and categories imposed by a colonial matrix of power. Eamonn's observation points to a desire to transcend

the simplistic equations that define identity in a postcolonial context, advocating for a more nuanced understanding of self that resists colonial categorizations.

"It's not an uncommon Pakistani surname." An evasion rather than a lie, she told herself. (Shamsie, 2017)

This statement, marked as an evasion, highlights the complexities of identity negotiations within postcolonial contexts. It underscores a strategic maneuvering around identity, which Mignolo might categorize under "border thinking," where navigating the colonial legacy involves a constant balancing act between different facets of one's identity (Mignolo, 2011). This evasion is not merely about avoiding truth but reflects a deeper, decolonial practice of negotiating identity in a space that seeks to categorize and define individuals based on colonial legacies and simplifications.

Eamonn's identity crisis, as depicted in the selected quotation, serves as a microcosm of the broader postcolonial condition. This condition is characterized by the ongoing struggle to define oneself outside the confines of colonial impositions and the modern nation-state's monolithic identity markers. Through Eamonn, Shamsie captures the essence of what Mignolo refers to as living in the border - existing in a space that is at once within and outside the dominant cultural and political narratives (Mignolo, 2012).

Shamsie's narrative strategy, by focusing on characters like Eamonn and their personal dilemmas, highlights the decolonial ethos of navigating identities that are not easily categorized within the binary oppositions inherited from colonialism. The novel, therefore, does not merely challenge or reinforce postcolonial identities and power dynamics; it complexifies them, presenting a nuanced tapestry of what it means to live in a world where colonial legacies continue to shape perceptions, relationships, and self-understanding.

The evasion in acknowledging Eamonn's lineage and the complexities of his identity underscores a decolonial challenge: the negotiation of identity in a world where the colonial past and present intersect in multifaceted ways. This negotiation requires a constant reevaluation of one's place within the social fabric, challenging both the colonial legacies that

seek to define identity in reductive terms and the contemporary forces that perpetuate these legacies.

By weaving together personal stories of identity negotiation, like Eamonn's, with the broader political and social realities of contemporary Britain, "Home Fire" emerges as a decolonial narrative. It not only questions but also seeks to transcend the colonial categories and binaries that have historically defined identity and belonging. In doing so, the novel aligns with Mignolo's call for "epistemic disobedience" and "border thinking" as essential for decoloniality (Mignolo, 2011). "Home Fire" invites readers to engage with the complexities of identity in a postcolonial world, encouraging a critical examination of the narratives that shape our understanding of self and others.

"After that early slip regarding her Britishness, she settled into the manner that she'd practiced with Aneeka playing the role of the interrogating officer..." (Shamsie, 2017)

This part of the quotation highlights the performative aspect of navigating identity within a postcolonial state. Aneeka's preparation for potential interrogation reflects a decolonial strategy of survival and negotiation within spaces dominated by colonial legacies. Walter Mignolo's concept of "border thinking" (Mignolo, 2012) is pertinent here, as it refers to the epistemic stance from the perspective of those who inhabit the borders of Western modernity and colonial legacies. Aneeka's performance is a form of border thinking, engaging with the dominant narratives while maintaining her own critical perspective.

"responding to her sister as though she were a customer of dubious political opinions whose business Isma didn't want to lose..." (Shamsie, 2017)

This segment illustrates the delicate balance of engaging with differing views within a postcolonial context, embodying a decolonial praxis of dialogue and negotiation. It echoes Mignolo's idea of "epistemic disobedience" (Mignolo, 2011), challenging the dominant epistemologies without outright confrontation. Aneeka's strategy of engagement without alienation reflects a nuanced understanding of power dynamics, where outright opposition might lead to loss of dialogue.

"When people talk about the enmity between Shias and Sunnis, it usually centers on some political imbalance of power, such as in Iraq or Syria—as a

Brit, I don't distinguish between one Muslim and another." (Shamsie, 2017)

Here, Aneeka's statement challenges the monolithic perceptions of Muslim identities, critiquing the political imbalances that fuel sectarian divisions. This stance aligns with Mignolo's critique of global coloniality, where he argues for decolonizing knowledge and being (Mignolo, 2011). By asserting her refusal to distinguish between Muslims based on sectarian lines, Aneeka embodies a decolonial ethos that rejects the colonial categorizations and divisions imposed upon the colonized.

"Occupying other people's territory generally causes more problems than it solves"—this served for both Iraq and Israel. (Shamsie, 2017)

Aneeka's comment on occupation reflects a critical engagement with contemporary geopolitical issues, drawing parallels between different contexts to highlight the universality of colonial and imperial practices. This perspective resonates with Mignolo's call for a pluriversal approach to understanding the world, which acknowledges the interconnectedness of various struggles against coloniality (Mignolo, 2011).

"Killing civilians is sinful—that's equally true whether the manner of killing is a suicide bombing or aerial bombardments or drone strikes." (Shamsie, 2017)

In this statement, Aneeka articulates a moral stance that transcends the political justifications for violence, asserting a universal condemnation of civilian casualties. This reflects a decolonial ethical position that challenges the dichotomies often presented in discourses on terrorism and state violence, advocating for a humanity-centered approach to understanding conflict.

Aneeka's method of engaging in politically sensitive discussions mirrors a decolonial strategy that navigates the thin line between opposition and assimilation. This strategy is indicative of Mignolo's concept of the "colonial difference," where the histories and legacies of colonialism create distinct spaces of enunciation for colonized subjects (Mignolo, 2012). Aneeka's careful maneuvering through these discussions reflects an awareness of the "colonial difference" and an attempt to articulate a position that both acknowledges and resists the hierarchies it imposes.

Aneeka's refusal to distinguish between Muslims based on sectarian lines is a critical stance against the colonial practice of divide and rule. This perspective dismantles the colonial and postcolonial tendency to categorize and simplify complex identities into monolithic and oppositional entities. Her approach is a practical embodiment of Mignolo's call for a "decolonial option," which seeks to dismantle the colonial matrix of power by challenging its foundational categories and divisions (Mignolo, 2011). By doing so, Aneeka contributes to the decolonial project of creating a space for more nuanced and pluriversal identities.

The universal condemnation of violence against civilians, regardless of the method, represents a decolonial ethical stance that transcends the justifications often used to legitimize violence. This position challenges the moral binaries that are frequently employed to distinguish between state and non-state violence, highlighting the decolonial principle of the indivisibility of human dignity and rights. Aneeka's statement aligns with Mignolo's emphasis on the restoration of humanity as central to the decolonial project, advocating for an ethics that rejects the dehumanization inherent in colonial logic. Aneeka's dialogues reflect a deeper engagement with decolonial thought, emphasizing dialogue and negotiation as tools for challenging and reshaping postcolonial identities and power dynamics. This approach is reminiscent of Mignolo's advocacy for "epistemic disobedience" and "border thinking" as methods for questioning and moving beyond the epistemological boundaries set by colonialism. Through her interactions, Aneeka exemplifies how decolonial thinking can be practiced in everyday conversations, serving as a model for engaging with complex political issues in a manner that is both critical and constructive.

"Eamonn, that was his name". (Shamsie, 2017)

The choice of Eamonn's name, with its Irish spelling, immediately introduces the theme of identity negotiation within a multicultural and postcolonial context. The alteration of "Ayman" to "Eamonn" can be interpreted through Mignolo's concept of "border thinking" (Mignolo, 2012), which suggests that individuals at the cultural and colonial borders engage in practices that reflect their complex negotiations with identity, power, and resistance. This act of renaming is a decolonial strategy, aiming

to navigate the socio-political landscape shaped by colonial legacies and contemporary global coloniality.

“How they’d laughed in Wembley when the newspaper article accompanying the family picture revealed this detail”. (Shamsie, 2017)

The community's reaction in Wembley highlights the tension between individual identity strategies and collective perceptions of identity and integration. This scenario reflects Mignolo's discussion on the "colonial difference," where the legacies of colonialism create a hierarchical world system that influences identity perceptions (Mignolo, 2013). The laughter signifies a communal recognition of the efforts to conform to the dominant cultural norms, underlining the complexities of living within a society still grappling with its colonial past and multicultural present.

“An Irish spelling to disguise a Muslim name—“Ayman” become “Eamonn” so that people would know the father had integrated”. (Shamsie, 2017)

This transformation of Ayman to Eamonn, intended as a sign of integration, can be seen as an embodiment of Mignolo's "epistemic disobedience" (Mignolo, 2011), albeit in a nuanced form. While on the surface, it appears to conform to the pressures of assimilation, it also subtly challenges and negotiates the dominant narratives of identity and integration in a postcolonial society. This act of renaming is a tactical maneuver within the colonial matrix of power, aiming to secure a place within the societal fabric without fully relinquishing one's own identity and heritage.

“His Irish-American wife was seen as another indicator of this integrationist posing rather than an explanation for the son’s name”(Shamsie, 2017).

The perception of Eamonn's mother as an indicator of "integrationist posing" further complicates the dynamics of identity and integration. This perception underscores the ongoing challenges of navigating postcolonial identities within a framework that often views relationships and personal choices as markers of cultural or political alignment. This situation aligns with Mignolo's critique of the global coloniality that categorizes and evaluates personal decisions within the binary logics of colonizer/colonized, integrated/not integrated (Mignolo, 2011).

The act of renaming and its communal reception in "Home Fire" does not just speak to personal or familial choices but also to broader societal expectations and the pressures of assimilation. Eamonn's name, a marker of his father's attempt at integration, symbolizes the complex dance between maintaining one's cultural identity and navigating the expectations of the majority culture. This tension is emblematic of Mignolo's concept of "living in the border" (Mignolo, 2012), where individuals must constantly negotiate their identities in spaces that are simultaneously inclusive and exclusive.

Names carry with them histories, identities, and power dynamics. The decision to change "Ayman" to "Eamonn" reflects an awareness of the colonial legacy embedded within naming practices, where European or Western names are often perceived as more palatable or acceptable. This practice highlights the coloniality of power (Mignolo, 2011), where certain cultures and identities are privileged over others, and assimilation is seen as a path to acceptance. Eamonn's name becomes a site of both conformity and resistance, navigating the fine line between integration and the loss of cultural identity.

The community's reaction and the perception of Eamonn's mother as part of an "integrationist posing" underscore the performative aspects of integration. This perception challenges the authenticity of multicultural identities, suggesting that integration is often viewed through a simplistic lens that fails to capture the complexities of individual and collective experiences. Mignolo's notion of "epistemic disobedience" (Mignolo, 2011) is relevant here, as it calls for a questioning of the knowledge systems that underpin such perceptions, advocating for a more nuanced understanding of identity that transcends binary notions of integration and separation.

Eamonn's identity crisis and the strategic choices made by his family reflect the broader decolonial struggle to carve out a space for oneself within a postcolonial world still dominated by colonial legacies. The novel, through Eamonn's story, engages with the decolonial challenge of defining one's identity against and beyond the colonial impositions, advocating for a space where multiple identities can coexist without the pressure to conform to a singular notion of belonging. This struggle is at the heart of Mignolo's decolonial project, which seeks to dismantle the colonial matrix of power and

create a world where diverse identities and knowledges are valued equally.

"She'd made sure not to pack anything that would invite comment or questions—no Quran, no family pictures, no books on her area of academic interest." (Shamsie, 2017)

This sentence encapsulates the strategic self-censorship Isma employs in anticipation of crossing borders, both literal and metaphorical. It reflects a profound awareness of the scrutinizing gaze that postcolonial subjects, especially those from Muslim backgrounds, face in Western contexts. This self-censorship is a survival strategy within the colonial matrix of power—a concept central to Mignolo's decolonial theory—which describes the ongoing impact of colonialism in shaping social, political, and economic realities (Mignolo, 2012).

The act of omitting personal and religious items from her luggage is a direct response to the coloniality of power, which Mignolo describes as the underlying structures of control that extend beyond formal colonialism into present-day societal norms and expectations (Mignolo, 2012). Isma's preparation highlights how postcolonial identities are continuously navigated and negotiated within spaces that are informed by, and perpetuate, colonial power dynamics. Her actions speak to the pervasive surveillance and suspicion that individuals from certain backgrounds face, reinforcing the notion that their identities are inherently politicized and subject to interrogation.

Isma's anticipatory measures also embody Mignolo's concept of border thinking (Mignolo, 2012). Border thinking arises at the intersection of cultures, where the knowledge and identity of the colonized come into contact (and conflict) with the colonizer's worldview. Isma, in her careful consideration of what to bring, engages in border thinking by navigating these intersecting realities. She attempts to mitigate the colonial gaze, anticipating the questions and judgments that her identity—conveyed through her possessions—might provoke. This act of negotiation underscores the complex reality of living in a world where postcolonial subjects must constantly balance between their own identities and the perceptions (or misperceptions) imposed upon them.

Isma's actions can also be interpreted through the lens of the decolonial option, which Mignolo

proposes as a pathway toward delinking from the colonial matrix of power and imagining alternative ways of being (Mignolo, 2011). While Isma's choice to leave behind items that might reveal too much about her identity might seem like compliance, it can also be seen as a form of resistance. It represents a conscious decision to navigate the power structures at play, asserting agency within a constrained system. This nuanced approach to dealing with the realities of postcolonial identity challenges reinforces the idea that decoloniality is not only about confrontation but also about strategic engagement with existing power dynamics.

Isma's careful selection of what to pack for her journey is a direct response to the coloniality of power, illustrating how deeply colonial legacies permeate individual lives. The coloniality of power (Mignolo, 2012) not only shapes global structures but also influences personal and intimate decisions, such as what aspects of one's identity are safe to reveal in transnational spaces. Isma's actions underscore the pervasive impact of colonial structures on postcolonial subjects, revealing how these power dynamics force individuals to navigate their identities within a constrained framework that continuously subjects them to scrutiny and suspicion.

Isma's anticipatory self-censorship embodies border thinking (Mignolo, 2012), where she consciously navigates the "border" between her own cultural identity and the expectations of the Western context she is entering. This act of negotiation reflects a space of liminality and resistance, where Isma attempts to assert her agency within the oppressive structures dictated by the coloniality of power. Her engagement in border thinking reveals the complexities of living at the intersections of multiple worlds, where identities are not fixed but are constantly being negotiated in relation to shifting power dynamics.

By choosing what parts of her identity to reveal or conceal, Isma exercises the decolonial option (Mignolo, 2011), asserting a form of resistance against the colonial matrix of power. This strategic engagement with the constraints she faces is a form of "epistemic disobedience" (Mignolo, 2011), challenging the dominant narratives and expectations placed upon her as a Muslim woman. Isma's actions demonstrate that the decolonial option is not merely about rejecting or confronting the colonial legacy

outright but also involves navigating, resisting, and redefining the terms of engagement on one's own terms.

Isma's preparation for her interrogation is a microcosm of the broader decolonial struggle depicted in "Home Fire." The interplay between the coloniality of power, border thinking, and the decolonial option in her story illustrates the nuanced ways in which characters navigate their postcolonial identities against a backdrop of enduring colonial legacies and power dynamics. Shamsie's narrative not only highlights the challenges of these negotiations but also showcases the agency of her characters in asserting their identities amidst these challenges.

Through Isma's experience, "Home Fire" synthesizes these decolonial concepts, offering a rich exploration of the complexities of living in a postcolonial world where individuals must continuously negotiate their identities within spaces shaped by colonial histories. The novel, therefore, not only challenges but also reinforces the necessity of engaging with and reimagining postcolonial identities and power dynamics through a decolonial lens. It invites readers to consider the ongoing impact of colonial legacies on personal freedoms and the ways in which individuals resist, adapt, and assert their agency within these constraints, contributing to the broader discourse on decoloniality and postcolonial identity.

In this way, "Home Fire" serves as a profound commentary on the decolonial cultural ethos, exploring the intersections of personal identity, global politics, and the enduring legacy of colonialism. Through its characters and their experiences, the novel synthesizes Mignolo's decolonial concepts, offering insights into the ongoing struggle for identity, belonging, and agency in a world still deeply influenced by colonial power dynamics.

Conclusion

The exploration of Kamila Shamsie's "Home Fire" through the prism of Walter D. Mignolo's decolonial theory reveals a multifaceted narrative that intricately navigates the decolonial cultural ethos, highlighting the complexities of postcolonial identities and power dynamics within its structure and character development. Through the analysis of

specific instances within the narrative, such as Isma's preparation for interrogation and the strategic renaming of Eamonn, the novel emerges as a profound commentary on the nuanced negotiations and resistances embedded in the lives of individuals at the intersections of contemporary global politics and the enduring legacies of colonialism. This comprehensive exploration underscores the ways in which Shamsie's characters embody and enact the principles of border thinking, the coloniality of power, and the decolonial option, thereby providing a rich canvas to understand the decolonial struggle.

In "Home Fire," the strategic self-censorship of Isma, alongside the cultural navigation and identity manipulation seen through Eamonn, serves as a microcosm for the broader decolonial challenges faced by postcolonial subjects. These characters' experiences reflect a deep engagement with Mignolo's concepts, illustrating not just the survival strategies employed by those living under the shadow of coloniality but also the active ways in which they seek to assert their agency, challenge dominant narratives, and reimagine their identities beyond the confines imposed by colonial legacies. Shamsie's narrative strategy, focusing on personal stories set against the backdrop of global political tensions, highlights the ongoing relevance of colonial history in shaping contemporary experiences of belonging, identity, and resistance.

The analysis of "Home Fire" demonstrates the novel's capacity to both challenge and reinforce postcolonial identities and power dynamics. Through its character-driven narrative, the novel articulates a decolonial ethos that interrogates the binaries of us and them, insider and outsider, colonizer and colonized. Shamsie's characters, caught in the web of these binaries, navigate their identities through a complex matrix of social, political, and personal pressures that reflect the enduring impact of colonialism. Their actions, from the mundane to the pivotal, illustrate the everyday realities of border thinking—living in the interstices of cultures, identities, and power structures. This nuanced portrayal invites readers to engage with the complexities of decoloniality, challenging entrenched perceptions and fostering a deeper understanding of the multifaceted nature of postcolonial identity.

Furthermore, "Home Fire" contributes to the discourse on decoloniality by synthesizing the theoretical with the personal, grounding Mignolo's abstract concepts in the lived experiences of its characters. The novel becomes a space where the decolonial struggle is not only theorized but also felt, lived, and contested, offering insights into the processes of negotiating identity, belonging, and resistance in a world still deeply influenced by colonial power dynamics. Through its exploration of the intersections of personal identity and global politics, "Home Fire" underscores the importance of reimagining postcolonial identities and power relations in a manner that acknowledges the complexities and contradictions inherent in these processes.

Kamila Shamsie's "Home Fire" stands as a significant contribution to contemporary literature's engagement with decolonial themes, weaving a narrative that is both a reflection on and a critique of the postcolonial condition. By aligning the personal with the political and situating its characters at the crossroads of decolonial challenges, the novel offers a compelling exploration of identity, belonging, and resistance within the global colonial matrix. It not only depicts the decolonial cultural ethos but also prompts a critical reevaluation of the narratives and structures that continue to shape our understanding of the postcolonial world, making a compelling case for the necessity of decolonial thought and action in navigating the complexities of contemporary global society.

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