

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

Shahbaz Khalid<sup>1</sup>, Dr Mumtaz Ahmad<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>PhD Scholar, Department of English Language and Literature, The University of Faisalabad, Faisalabad, Punjab, Pakistan.

<sup>2</sup>Associate Professor, Department of English Language and Literature, The University of Faisalabad, Faisalabad, Punjab, Pakistan.

<sup>1</sup>[shahbazkhalid004@gmail.com](mailto:shahbazkhalid004@gmail.com), <sup>2</sup>[mumtazahmad@gmail.com](mailto:mumtazahmad@gmail.com)

Corresponding Author: \* Shahbaz Khalid

Received: 11 January, 2024    Revised: January 28, 2024    Accepted: February 17, 2024    Published: February 25, 2024

### 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 Dignolo's decolonial theory as the analytical framework. Dignolo's concepts of the coloniality 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. In order to find out the etymology of the word and its meaning, it is necessary to break down the elements of the word. The term Decolonial, which was inspired by the act of decolonization, initially referred to the withdrawal of a state out of a colony, therefore, granting independence to the region. The concept was created based on the Latin word, i.e. *colonia*, which only made sense in the Roman Empire when new lands were being developed and governed by the settlers of the capital (Oxford English Dictionary, 2023). During the twentieth century, the term

decolonization acquired notoriety in the post-Second World War period, and it included the disentangling of colonial empires and states in terms of political ties and the economy, as well as the human psychological and social castration of colonial rule and influence (Fanon, 1963).

The term cultural in the phrase Decolonial Cultural Ethos is something to do with traditions, arts, social structures, and accomplishments that create a particular nation, people or even social class. It has its origin in the Latin word, *cultura* meaning the nurture or civilisation of the mind, tastes and methods. The term was over several centuries transformed to reflect the characteristic patterns of way of life, values, and

artifacts created by peoples and by the nineteenth and twentieth centuries it had developed a broader meaning (Williams, 1983).

Greek word *ethos*, which means custom or habit to start with. In its Rhetoric, Aristotle used the word to refer to the person in speech and its persuasive result (Lutzke and Henggeler, 2009). In modern-day context, an *ethos* may be understood as the nature of spirit, beliefs and moral values behind a community, a period in time or an ideological system (Oxford English Dictionary, 2023).

When all of these are combined, the Decolonial Cultural Ethos is a synthesis or a stance that is a re-evaluation and redefinition of culture that has been shaped or governed by colonialism historically. This ideology attempts to heroise native, local or marginalized cultural practices and knowledges as equals with hegemonic discourses and acknowledging them as vital elements in the world cultural tapestry (Mignolo, 2007). This kind of approach rebels against the established hegemony of the colonial or Western-centric views and advocates a more engaging, equal and varied perception of culture and history.

Decolonial reasoning is thus more than simply eliminating the legacies of colonialism but it actively reconstructs and reinvents the culture and knowledge production to work beyond the traces of colonial subjugation (Stokes, 2023). It recognises the immeasurable impact of colonialism in politics and the economy but also in the determination of cultural identities, knowledge system and social orders. Thus, decolonial culture ethos requires an intense historical attention, understanding the injustices of the past, and a desire to create a more equal and fair future by putting into the focus the voices and the positions that have been previously marginalised or suppressed (Quijano, 2007).

The Decolonial Cultural Ethos, therefore, is a progressive and healing new paradigm of interpreting and reconstructions of the cultural discourses. It is a dynamic process that is constantly undergoing to redress knowledge, power, and representation imbalances and encouraging a world where multiple cultural expressions and histories are included and valued.

Kamila Shamsie is a modern British-Pakistani writer who has made a significant contribution to the modern literature by providing thought provoking narratives in a subtle and sophisticated way. Shamsie

was born in 1973 in Karachi, Pakistan, in a literary background, where she was brought up in a literary world because her mother, Muneeza Shamsie, was a renowned literary critic and editor. She went on to gain tertiary education in Hamilton College in the United States and later in the University of Massachusetts Amherst where she nurtured her creative writing abilities. The personal and the political often converge in the work of Shamsie, which addresses the issue of identity, cultural antagonism, and the vagaries of diaspora.

Among the best-critiqued pieces of Shamsie's novel *Home Fire* (2017) that skillfully rewrites the ancient Greek tragedy *Antigone* by Sophocles into the modern context. The novel explores the life of a British Muslim family, which questions the theme of love, loyalty, and influences of the state and the individual ethics. Against the background of the political turmoil and the emergence of Islamic radicalisation, *Home Fire* is a bitter commentary on the struggle of identity and belongingness to the people who found themselves in between the world of differences of cultures and ideologies.

The story *Home Fire* is presented in the form of five parts with the narration of a different character, which creates a multi-dimensional view of the events that occur. The story revolves around a family of Pasha, which includes powerless Isma, Aneeka and Parvaiz and their struggle with the challenges of their identities during the post-9/11 era. This skillful narration of Shamsie is a masterful act in anticipating the personal impact of political choice, and, especially, the impact of anti-terrorism laws on innocent lives. The novel is an emotional reflection of the struggles Muslims are going through living in the West where they feel between their family and outside implications and discrimination.

The novel has garnered numerous critical achievements due to its simple but lovely prose, complicated characterization, and its capacity to explore relevant sensitive matters in a sympathetic and understanding way. *Home Fire* won the 2018 Women's Prize to Fiction, and was also long-listed in the 2017 Booker Prize, making it clear that Shamsie is a voice in contemporary literature. Kamila Shamsie provides a deep insight into the notion of home, family, and sacrifices in the name of love and justice through this piece of work, and this makes it a

relevant and compelling addition to the modern world environment.

### 1.2 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?

### 1.3 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.

### 1.4 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.

### 1.5 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

The theoretical framework of Walter Mignolo of Decolonial Cultural Ethos revolves around two main notions including coloniality and border thinking. These concepts are central to the understanding of the power dispersion, knowledge creation, and subjectivity formation that have taken place in the post-colonial times and have greatly been influenced by colonialism remnants.

**Coloniality:** Mignolo extends the concept of colonialism to the one of coloniality, a term that he uses to describe the complex past forms of domination that emerged as a result of European colonial projects as well as to the ever-present forms of domination that shape the relations of power and influence in the world today. Mignolo asserts that coloniality does not end when the colonial rule is over; it is the logic behind racial, political, economic, social, epistemological, and linguistic endocrinzation that was instigated during colonialism. It underscores the fact that decolonizing not only involves the elimination of colonial regimes or the achievement of political sovereignty, but it also involves destroying the power structures and knowledge systems established by colonialism and still perpetuate themselves today (Mignolo, 2012).

**Border Thinking:** Mignolo presents the notion of border thinking, which is, according to the author, a cognitive and knowing style that takes its origins with the people that live on the edges of Western dominance: the marginalized, the oppressed, and the colonized. Border thinking is a challenge to the Eurocentric epistemology; it is the epistemic reaction of exteriority of the modern/colonial world system. It demands the identification and appreciation of the expertise and opinions of persons who are positioned on the fringes of dominant discourse. The decolonial project can not do without such thinking as it provides a base that challenges critically and attempts to alter the colonial structure of power (Mignolo, 2012).

**Delinking:** This is a crucial component of Mignolo construct the term delinking is used to describe the uncoupling of the colonial power structure and the epistemic assumptions incorporated into its framework. Delinking constitutes the shift of Eurocentric perspective to pluralistic perspective that recognizes diverse modes of knowledge, being and understanding. It requires a conscious attempt at

finding back and reappreciating the knowledge, histories and cultures that had been marginalized or gone invisible with the onset of colonial rule. It is not only concerned with the process of rejecting the Western knowledge; it is the transformation of the rules of dialogue to establish a more accommodative, plural epistemic space (Mignolo, 2007).

The decolonial option theory of Walter Mignolo promotes the necessity to be decolonized in terms of colonial power structures and adhering to the plurality of epistemologies. It encourages reverence of knowledge, histories and practices that have long been suppressed or silenced by Western-centric modernity. In an effort to challenge the power of universality of Western thought, Mignolo advocates a pluriversal world in which there are many modalities of epistemology, and in which people understand the world in a more inclusive and equitable way (Mignolo and Walsh, 2018).

The framework offered by Mignolo is a critical prism through which one can look at the further impact that power structures of colonialism have on societies and ways in which such structures can be challenged and reformed. Informed by the theories of Mignolo, the Decolonial Cultural Ethos is interested in identifying and dealing with the latent impacts of colonialism in culture, production of knowledge and social organization as well as in actively seeking a more equitable, inclusive, and plural world understanding.

### **Analysis**

Home Fire (2017) by Kamila Shamsie is an in-depth examination of what defines identity, belonging, and the conflicts that emerge in the process of pursuing such notions in the postcolonial environment. The plot and characterization of the story are complex descriptions of the decolonial cultural atmosphere, which is in accordance with the theories about decoloniality and border thinking by Walter Mignolo. By delinking and thinking at the border, Mignolo is emphasizing the significance of understanding and expressing a decolonial point of view through the detachment at the colonial matrix of power (Mignolo, 2011). The given quotation will be analyzed in the light of the theory developed by Mignolo, which will help understand the ways in which the text by Shamsie reflects such decolonial values.

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

This dialogue triggers a conversation surrounding identity that is beyond mere affirmation. The reply of the main character, I am British, is in itself a factual assertion meaning that he or she has been acknowledged by the law or is a casualty of the country. Nevertheless, the decolonial theory by Mignolo would be leading to a further questioning of the implicit connotations of such a statement (Mignolo, 2011). It implies an experience with the colonial web of power, which constructs identities within a strict, and usually Eurocentric, framework. The character claims to be British, therefore she is walking a fine line of identity in a country that still struggles to reconcile its colonial history and cultural diversity.

But do you consider yourself British? (Shamsie, 2017) By repeating the query with the added weight of the word consider, the subjective sense of identity, it carries much further into the question as to whether Britishness is internalised beyond the scope of legal or superficial labels. Here, in the eyes of Mignolo, this question confronts the main character to think about the borders: to think about her identity as it juxtaposes those borders that represented colonial histories as well as the current borders of the nation states (Mignolo, 2010). It points at the contrast between the formal identification as British and the real feeling of belonging or acceptance in this identity, the existence of the dislocation between the identities constructed by the state and how people actually experience belonging.

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

This sentence puts the conversation about legalistic or normative statements into focus on the personal level of attachment to place. It resonates with the ideas of Mignolo on locating oneself as a decolonial move where sense of identity is based on lived experience and not external aptitudes that are imposed (Mignolo, 2011). The statement by the protagonist that she her whole life has inhabited Britain is a statement of a decolonial notion of identity made up of the mundane spatialities, as opposed to an abstract sense of belonging.

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

This quote brings out the complicated nature of the relation of Eamonn between his identity that cuts across personal, family, and political aspects. As soon

as Eamonn mentions his father, Karamat Lone, he is necessarily placed in a particular context of socio-political framework involving implications and assumptions. The idea of the colonial difference introduced by Mignolo is relevant in this case as it explains the hierarchical difference which colonial legacies bring about and which define relationships and identities (Mignolo, 2012). His father also holds a high status politically, so one sees that the identity of Eamonn is shaped in the context of his relationship with the dominant politics and locating him in a dynamic of privilege and criticism, thus as an example of how the colonial mechanisms on personal and political identity persist.

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

This response depicts this struggle and discomfort navigating the conversations that bring about multifaceted identities and legacies. This case in a decolonial sense may be interpreted as an example of so-called border thinking (Mignolo, 2011), when people who find themselves at the border of two different worlds (cultural, political or social) are involved in a labour of identity formation. Sipping coffee, a banal practice, can be used to offset a moment of decolonized struggles filled with the burden of its history and own self, highlighting just how decolonized struggles are relatively banal.

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).

Eamonn presents an expressive postcolonial issue: the fight to become an individual not reduced to the simple judgments on the background or family surname. This is in line with Mignolo writing about epistemic disobedience (Mignolo, 2011), or how a colonial matrix of power creates a type of dominant reading and coercion of discourse. The observation made by Eamonn indicates that he wishes to grow beyond the naive recipes that form identity to the postcolonial viewpoint and call out to a complex perception of selfhood that does not fit into colonial labels.

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

As an evasion, this statement is a preview of the challenges of identity negotiations in postcolonial contexts. It highlights a tactical game of moving about

identity that Mignolo would classify as being a part of the border thinking where the maneuver of walking around the colonial past is the play continuous balancing act of several aspects of an identity of a person (Mignolo, 2011). This evasion is more than an evasion of truth, but a more profound decolonial act of negotiating identity in a world which aims to classify and categorize people in ways that distinguish subjects by colonial legacies and simplifications.

The problem of identity crisis as portrayed by Eamonn in the chosen quotation is a microcosm of the general postcolonial state. This is a condition marked by the persistent need to establish a sense of self outside of the parameters set by colonial based dictates and or the monolithic markers of identity that the modern nation-state imposes. Shamsie manages to give the feeling of living in the border, as Mignolo describes it—living between and outside mainstream cultural and political discourses (Mignolo, 2012).

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 quote identifies the performative element of moving through identity in a postcolonial state. The fact that Aneeka is preparing to be interrogated is a decolonial method of survival and negotiation in the space of the colonial legacies. The notion of border thinking, suggested by Walter Mignolo (Mignolo, 2012), is relevant in this case, given that it refers to an epistemic position that is gained by the members of the societies that reside on the frontiers of Western modernity and colonialism. The performance of Aneeka is border thinking in which he is involved in playing with dominant discourses but retains his own critical view.

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 excerpt depicts the precision of interaction with divergent opinions under a postcolonial setting, which is a decolonial praxis of dialogue and negotiation. It recalls the idea of Mignolo that it is possible to be epistemological disobedient without being anti-epistemological (Mignolo, 2011). The way Aneeka is engaging, without alienation, is a subtle understanding of power relations, in which an explicit resistance may cost long-lasting communication.

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).

In this case, the given statement by Aneeka challenges the monolithic definition of the Muslim identities and criticizes the political imbalances, which cause the sectarian divide. This position fits into the arguments of Mignolo on global coloniality whereby he emphasizes on the decolonisation of knowledge and being (Mignolo, 2011). Aneeka represents a decolonial ethos, which dismisses the colonial categorization and divisions made on those colonised by insisting on the fact that she refuses to divide Muslims into sects.

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

The comment made by Aneeka on occupation is a form of critical response to geopolitical issues in the present day and in comparing the different situations to relate universality against colonial and imperial practices. This view echoes the pluriversal approach to the world outlined by Mignolo that acknowledges the interrelatedness of diverse struggles of different resistance to colonialism (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).

Aneeka presents in this statement a moral position that goes beyond political explanations of violence and which has a universal disapproval of civilian deaths. This indicates a decolonial ethical stance on issues that opposes the dichotomies usually introduced in discussions on terrorism and state violence, and instead, offers a humanity-focused view on the interpretation of conflict.

The involvement of politically sensitive discourse by Aneeka is an example of a decolonial approach, which is balanced between resistance and assimilation. In this strategy, Mignolo demonstrates his concept of the so-called colonial difference when colonialism forms specific loci of enunciation of the colonized people in the past (Mignolo, 2012). The way she cautiously steps through such arguments depicts a high level of keen awareness of the colonial distinction and a bid to express herself in a position that accepts and challenges at the same time, the rankings it creates.

The fact that Aneeka does not differentiate that Muslims be they different sects is a critical move opposing the divide and rule tactic of the colonialists. This stance in the postcolonial and colonial inclination to generalize and generalize complex identities into a series of dichotomous identities. Her practice realises the appeal of Mignolo to have a decolonial option, which aims to unravel the colonial matrix of power based on its categories and divisions (Mignolo, 2011). By so doing, Aneeka promotes the decolonial project of creating a space where more subtle and pluriversal identities are encouraged.

The notion that violence can never be justified in the face of civilians, regardless of the means used, and that such an action is universally detested reflects a decolonial moral position that cuts across all the justifications that are often used to justify the use of violence. This stand argues against moral binarism that has frequently characterized the contrast between state and non-state violence and the idea of decolonialism of the indivisibility of human dignity and rights. The pronouncement of aneeka is in line with dehumanisation brought by Mignolo as the main focus of the decolonial agenda where the ethical order is built that colonisation logic dehumanises.

The dialogues exchanged by Aneeka show that she is more invested in decolonial theory, presupposing dialogues and negotiation as the means of challenging and restructuring the postcolonial identities and power arrangements. This strategy reminds of when Mignolo suggests that people should engage in epistemic disobedience and border thinking as ways of challenging and going beyond the epistemological restrictions that colonialism engages. Aneeka through interactions is a good example of how decolonial thought may be put into practice through everyday talk and this could serve as the guide to approaching a complex political issue both critically and constructively.

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

The choice of the name Eamonn with its orthography that reflects an Irish context adds the theme of negotiating identity into the world of a multicultural and postcolonial environment as soon as the name Eamonn is mentioned. The process of changing Ayman to Eamonn may be explained by the notion of border thinking suggested by Mignolo (Mignolo, 2012) according to which people on the cultural and

colonial edges are actually practicing their complex struggles against identity, power, and resistance. The renaming is a decolonial practice used as a way of going through the socio-political world that is consequently guided by colonial pasts and new forms of global coloniality.

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

The response to the situation in Wembley highlights the conflict between personal identity strategy and group identity perceptions and integrated experiences. This situation indicates the argument by Mignolo regarding the so-called colonial difference, that is, the signs of colonialism give rise to a hierarchical world system, which shapes the perception of identity (Mignolo, 2013). The laughter represents a shared recognition of the struggles to fit in to prevailing cultural standards, thus illustrating the ambiguities of living in a society that is still struggling with its colonial history and its multiethnic society.

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

The change of Ayman to Eamonn, which is supposed to be a symbol of integration, can be considered a mouthpiece of epistemic disobedience as put forward by Mignolo (Mignolo, 2011) though in a subtle manner. On the surface, it can be said to adhere to the conditions of assimilation; however, it also defies and bargains with the prevailing conditions of identity and integration in a postcolonial society. It is an act of renaming that is a strategic move in the colonial manoeuvring of power, which seeks to gain a foothold in the world of society without necessarily giving up the identity and tradition.

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 fact that Eamonn mother has been seen as an indicator of the so called integrationist posing also complicated the processes of identity and integration. This impression highlights why bridging the issues of postcolonial identity continues to be a challenge in a context where so often relations and life choices are assessed through dichotomous logic of colonizer/colonized and integrated/not integrated. It can be equated to the stance of Mignolo on global

coloniality that identifies and evaluates individual choices in opposing ideological polarities (Mignolo, 2011).

Renaming and its collective treatment in Home Fire are not only based on personal or family decisions; it also echoes other societal norms and the pressure to assimilate. The name Eamonn, which belongs to the effort of his father, to storytell himself in a new world, is a good example of the complicated process of cultural identity and the manifestation of cultural expectations of the majority. The tension reflects the idea of Mignola which is code named to live in the border (Mignolo, 2012) which further implies that people have to struggle to negotiate their identities in the spaces that are both inclusive and exclusive at the same time.

Names have histories, identities and power relations. The fact that the name Ayman is changed to Eamonn demonstrates awareness of the colonialist nature of practices of the name, in which European or Western names are often viewed as more digestible or acceptable. It is a foregrounding of the coloniality of power (Mignolo, 2011) in that specific cultures and identities prevail over others and the assimilation process represents an acceptance route available. This is to say that Eamonn is both a place of conforming and opposing, moving through the fine margins of integration and cultural erosion.

The way the community responded to this and the way the mother of Eamonn was regarded as belonging to an integrationist posing sheds more light on the performative dimension of an integrationist. Such a perception undermines the reality of the multicultural identities in that integration can be considered rather simple and cannot embrace the complexity of personal and group experiences. This concept of epistemic disobedience (Mignolo, 2011) is relevant in this case since the concept of interrogation of the knowledge system which has supported such perceptions, as well as his recommendation of the more subtle sense of identity beyond the binary concepts of integration and separation, are required.

Eamons identity crisis and the strategic options involved by his family can be used as an example of a wider decolonisation process to establish personal space in a postcolonial world that is still haunted by colonial legacies. In the story of Eamonn, the novel also addresses the decolonial state of establishing individuality, as opposed to and despite colonial

demands through the suggestion that more than one identity can exist simultaneously and without the necessity to understand oneself as belonging to an exclusive idea of identity. This battle is the essence of the decolonial project of Mignolo that seeks to destroy the colonial order of power and to create the world where different identities and knowledges will be given equal importance.

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).

It is also an expression of internal consciousness of scrutinizing gaze that postcolonial subjects, especially the representatives of the Muslim background, face in Western surroundings. This self-censorship is a strategic measure of survival within the colonial matrix of power, one of the crucial notions in Mignolo decolonial theory, which defines the still extant role of colonialism on social, political, and economic facts (Mignolo, 2012).

The fact that her luggage does not carry the inclusion of personal and religious objects may be viewed as a direct expression of the coloniality of power which can be delineated by Mignolo as the hidden forms of power that go beyond formal colonialism to form the standards and expectations of the modern society (Mignolo, 2012). The way Isma was prepared is one example of how postcolonial identities are constantly negotiated and maneuvered in the spaces that are informed by colonial power, as well as perpetuate it. Through her actions, we are able to see how any kind of surveillance and suspicion can permeate the lives of people of a particular background and this further supports the idea that such a person is necessarily politicized and is thus liable to questioning identities. The plans that Isma takes beforehand can also be seen as reflecting the idea of border thinking that Mignolo has introduced (Mignolo, 2012). The border thinking occurs at the crossroad between the cultures that is where the knowledge and identity of the colonized comes into contact with the colonizer world view, and in most cases they collide. These overlapping realities led Isma to border thinking in her careful consideration of what to carry; she tries to contain the colonial gaze with the expectation of the questions and verdicts her identity may attract with the help of her belongings. This episode of the negotiations reflects the complexity of living in the world where the

postcolonial subjects have to live in constant tension between personal identities and perceived or perceived perceptions imposed by others.

The use of actions by Isma can be also discussed in the terms of the decolonial option, the ways of delinking on the colonial matrix of power, and imagining the alternative modes of existence (Mignolo, 2011). Although the decision by Isma not to include in the list of the items that would reveal much about her identity can be seen as compliance, it can be viewed as a sign of resistance as well. It is a conscious decision to operate within the orders of operation and impose agency upon a restrictive system. This subtle idea of addressing the postcolonial truth of living underlies the view that decoloniality is not just the act of confrontation but rather the tactical action in dealing with the dominant forces.

The way's Isma chooses to pack her journey serves as the direct response to the coloniality of power since it shows how much a legacy of colonialism is deeply rooted in a particular life of a person. Not just has the coloniality of power conditioned the structures of the world (Mignolo, 2012), but also personal and intimate choices made with respect to what aspects of identity are considered safe to express in transnational spaces. Isma is performing the actions that show the overwhelming role of colonial formations on postcolonial subjects, and the nature of power relations that control people and make them a subject in a framework which constantly exposes them to judgment and suspicion.

The anticipatory self-censorship of Isma represents the border thinking (Mignolo, 2012) in which she knows how to develop in the zone of a border between her own culture and the demands of the Western world into which she has entered. This bargaining represents a transitional place of protest, in which Isma tries to exercise her power over the subjugating formations imposed by the coloniality of power. Her fascination with border thinking reveals the multitudes of living along the boundaries between the plural worlds, where identities are not absolute but which are constantly negotiated as a result of constantly changing power relationships.

By choosing what she would expose or hide about herself, Isma is using the decolonial option (Mignolo, 2011) and is making a statement as a form of resistance to the colonial matrix of power. This tactical play with the demands she has to work under

is an example of epistemic disobedience (Mignolo, 2011), and it confronts the dominant discourse and pressures placed on her as a Muslim woman. The behavior of Isma proves that the decolonial option is not only the direct denial, or opposition to the colonial heritage; it is also the negotiating, opposing, and redefining the conditions of involvement on personal conditions.

The way in which Isma is ready to be interrogated is a micro-level of the decolonial war in a larger spectrum described in *Home Fire*. The interaction of the coloniality of power, border thinking and the decolonial option in her narrative is how the intricate manner in which the characters manoeuvre around their postcolonial identities against a history and the relations between power in the context of colonial legacies. The story by Shamsie does not only shed light on the difficulties of having such negotiations, but also presents the independence of her characters in their efforts to establish their identities despite those difficulties.

*Home Fire* brings these decolonial ideas together through the lives of Isma, and provides a complete examination of the nature of multi-facetedness of existing in a postcolonial world where people are forced to formulate their identities through multiple discussions of space that is influenced by colonial pasts. Thus, the novel not only indicates but also strengthens the necessity to approach and redefine the postcolonial identities and power relations with a decolonial point of view. It challenges the readers to think of ways that the colonial past continues to influence individual liberty and explore how they fight, adapt, and assert control to such limitations, thus fitting into the larger discussion on decoloniality and postcolonial identity.

In this regard, *Home Fire* serves as a substantial commentary on the decolonial culture ethos, tracing the intersection of personal identity, international politics, and the long history of colonialism. The novel characterises, through its characters and their lives, the ideas of decolonialism postulated by Mignolo, as such it can also be seen to give an insight into the ongoing battle of identity, belonging, and agency as a world continues to be rampantly defined by the dynamics of colonial hierarchies.

## Conclusion

When analysing Kamila Shamsie's *Home Fire* in terms of the decolonial paradigm developed by Walter D. Mignolo, one can identify a complex story that successfully strikes the chord of the decolonial cultural ethos and explains the complexity of postcolonial identities and power structures that permeate the work. Through examining the particular instances of these narratives, including the moment when Isma is preparing to be interrogated and renaming Eamonn as a strategically chosen activity, the novel would appear to be a powerful commentary on the negotiations and resistances that are such subtle features of the life of people at a crossroad of global politics today and colonialist pasts. This in-depth investigation reveals the ways of how Shamsie characters manifest and put into practice the politics of border thinking, coloniality of power, and the decolonial option as a means of creating a rich paradigm through which to comprehend decolonial struggle.

The strategic self-censorship that is practiced by Isma in *Home Fire* as well as the cultural navigation and identity manipulation that is present in Eamonn is a microcosm of the bountiful decolonial issues that face postcolonial subjects. The experiences of these characters suggest a thorough encounter with the theoretical propositions of Mignolo; as well as how people dwell in the shadows of colonialism and take up agency, challenge dominant discourse, and remodel identities out of the pressures colonial legacies place on them. In Shamsie, the narrative approach, which seems to be concerned with the personal moments and thru the framework of world political conflict, underscores how the colonial history continues to resonate in the present-day experience of belonging, sensibility, and struggle.

The discussion of *Home Fire* indicates how the novel can challenge, as well as support, post colonial identities and power relations. The piece operates within the decolonial ethos through its use of character driven storyline in challenge to the binary of us versus them, insider versus outsider, coloniser versus colonised.

The characters in Shamsie's novel in the web of these binaries find their way out of their identities in the intricate network of social, political and personal forces that continue to influence their lives like an echo of colonialism. Their behavior is both banal and momentous, as it depicts the everyday life of border

thinking—that is operating in the in-betweenness of cultures and identities, and of power. This subtle picture offers the reader to explore the issues of decoloniality and contemplate the aspects of the inert deep-rooted views and gain a better insight into the multi-faceted nature of postcolonial identity.

Moreover, by bridging theory with life experience, the story *Home Fire* helps to advance the decolonial argument by bringing the theoretical ideas of Mignolo to the tangible experiences of his characters. The novel is turned into a location in which the decolonial struggle is not only hypothesised but also experienced, lived, fought, and providing insights into the negotiations of identity, belonging and resistance in a world still largely dominated by colonial forces of power. By dealing with the hybridization of the issue of personal identity and global politics, *Home Fire* serves as an indication of the necessity to rethink the nature of postcolonial identity and power relations in such a way that it would take into consideration the complexity and contradictions their mechanisms imply.

*Home Fire* by Kamila Shamsie is one of the most prominent contributions to the new-day literature drawing on the issue of decolonisation, constructing a story that is simultaneously the reflection on and a comment on the postcolonial state of affairs. Putting the personal in line with the political and placing its characters on the border of decolonial issues, the novel presents an interesting investigation of identities, belonging and resistance in the global colonial system. It does not only portray the decolonial cultural ethos but also provokes a critical review of the narratives and frameworks through which we still perceive the postcolonial world, thus offering a strong case of the need of decolonial thought and action that can guide us in dealing with the multiplicity of the contemporary global society.

## REFERENCES

Andreotti, V. D. O. (2011). (Towards) decoloniality and diversity in global citizenship education. *Globalisation, Societies and Education*, 9(3-4), 381-397.

Fanon, F. (1963). *The Wretched of the Earth* (New York: Grover, 2004), 62.

Lutzke, J., & Henggeler, M. F. (2009). The rhetorical triangle: Understanding and using logos, ethos, and pathos. School of Liberal Arts, Indiana University. Retrieved from [https://www.lsu.edu/hss/english/files/university\\_writing\\_files/item35402.pdf](https://www.lsu.edu/hss/english/files/university_writing_files/item35402.pdf).

Mignolo, W. (2010). The communal and the decolonial. *The Communal and the Decolonial*, 245-261.

Mignolo, W. (2011). The darker side of western modernity: Global futures, decolonial options. Duke University Press. Oxford English Dictionary. (2023). "Colony," "Culture," "Ethos".

Mignolo, W. (2012). *Local histories/global designs: Coloniality, subaltern knowledges, and border thinking*. Princeton University Press.

Mignolo, W. D. (2007). Delinking: The rhetoric of modernity, the logic of coloniality and the grammar of de-coloniality. *Cultural studies*, 21(2-3), 449-514.

Mignolo, W. D. (2013). Introduction: Coloniality of power and de-colonial thinking. *Globalization and the decolonial option*, 1-21.

Mignolo, W. D., & Walsh, C. E. (2018). *On decoloniality: Concepts, analytics, praxis*. Duke University Press.

Quijano, A. (2007). Coloniality and modernity/rationality. *Cultural studies*, 21(2-3), 168-178.

Shamsie, K. (2017). *Home Fire*. Riverhead Books.

Stokes, D. (2023). *Against Decolonisation: Campus Culture Wars and the Decline of the West*. John Wiley & Sons.

Williams, R. (2014). *Keywords: A vocabulary of culture and society*. Oxford University Press.