

## Identity and Belonging in Kamila Shamsie's *Home Fire*

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### Abstract:

This article examines Kamila Shamsie's *Home Fire* through the lens of psychoanalysis theory, focusing on the characters' struggles with identity and belonging. Employing Freudian concepts, the study analyzes Isma, Aneeka, Parvaiz, and Eamonn to uncover how their unconscious desires, defense mechanisms, and familial dynamics influence their actions. The study demonstrates how the internal conflicts of each character—Isma, Aneeka, Parvaiz, and Eamonn—represent a constant and tragic struggle between the Id, Ego, and Superego, shaping their actions and identities. Additionally, the analysis reveals how the characters navigate complex cultural identities as British Muslims, grappling with assimilation, tradition, and societal judgment. This study enriches the understanding of *Home Fire* and contributes to broader discussions of identity and belonging in diasporic literature.

**Keywords:** psychoanalysis; identity; belonging; diaspora

### Abstrak:

Artikel ini menganalisis novel *Home Fire* karya Kamila Shamsie melalui lensa teori psikoanalisis, dengan fokus pada perjuangan karakter-karakternya dalam hal identitas dan rasa memiliki. Dengan menggunakan konsep Freud, penelitian ini menganalisis Isma, Aneeka, Parvaiz, dan Eamonn untuk mengungkap bagaimana keinginan tak sadar, mekanisme pertahanan, dan dinamika keluarga mereka memengaruhi tindakan mereka. Penelitian ini menunjukkan bagaimana konflik internal setiap karakter—Isma, Aneeka, Parvaiz, dan Eamonn—mewakili perjuangan yang konstan dan tragis antara Id, Ego, dan Superego, yang membentuk tindakan dan identitas mereka. Selain itu, analisis ini mengungkapkan bagaimana karakter-karakter tersebut menavigasi identitas budaya yang kompleks sebagai Muslim Inggris, berjuang dengan asimilasi, tradisi, dan penilaian sosial. Studi ini memperkaya pemahaman tentang *Home Fire* dan berkontribusi pada diskusi yang lebih luas tentang identitas dan rasa memiliki dalam sastra diaspora.

**Kata kunci:** psikoanalisis; identitas; keterikatan; diaspora

## INTRODUCTION

The themes of identity and belonging are central to literature and reflect the complexity of human experiences. Hall (1996) famously stated that identity is production of human experiences that never complete and always in process. This process is deeply connected to belonging, which Anthias (2018) claims belonging enables a greater engagement with place and location and the structural and contextual facets of social life.



In diasporic contexts, these concepts become particularly fraught, as stated by Bhabha (1994) describes as a “third space” of hybrid identity, existing between their cultural heritage and their adopted homeland. Identity and belonging are intertwined concepts that influence how individuals perceive themselves and their place in the world. Freud (1923) strongly stated Identity refers to the qualities, beliefs, and expressions that make people distinct, while belonging pertains to the sense of being part of a community. This negotiation frequently forces a confrontation between innate human desires and the restrictive rules of society, a core tension that Sigmund Freud, in *Civilization and Its Discontents* (1961), identified as the essential conflict between the individual and civilization itself.

In literary works by Kamila Shamsie *Home Fire* explore these themes in the context of a British Muslim family grappling with personal and societal challenges. Modood (2014) said these challenges stem from the specific socio-political perspective of British Muslims, whose sense of belonging is often questioned in the national narrative. The novel portrays the experiences of Isma, Aneeka, and Parvaiz as they navigate their cultural identities and their sense of belonging within their family and broader society.

This article aims to fill the gap by looking closely at how the characters identities and sense of belongings are shaped by their unconscious desires and internal conflicts. This research is important because it offers a new way to understand *Home Fire*. It not only provides insights into the characters' psychological dimensions but also highlights broader issues of identity and belonging in today's society, especially for diasporic communities. This analysis will enrich the discussion about identity in literature and contribute to a deeper understanding of the complexities faced by individuals in diasporic contexts.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

This article employs psychoanalysis theory for analyze literary work by Kamila Shamsie *Home Fire*. Psychoanalysis theory is used as literary tool to operates the premise that literary text are expressions of the unconscious mind that can be interpreted to reveal hidden meanings and motivation (Barry, 2009). It allows for an exploration of the internal conflicts that shape the actions of characters, viewing them as representations of complex psychological subjects.

## **Psychoanalysis Theory**

Developed by Sigmund Freud, psychoanalytic theory offers a framework for understanding the human psyche. It aims to bring unconscious conflicts to consciousness, allowing for insight into deep-seated psychological issues (Freud, 1923). For literary analysis, it provides a vocabulary and a method for dissecting character motivation that are not immediately obvious, linking their actions to hidden desires, fears, and traumas (Barry, 2009).

### ***The Id***

The id is part that representing innate, instinctual desires and impulses, such as passion, hunger, and aggression. It operates on the pleasure principle, seeking immediate gratification without regard for reality or morality (Freud, 1923). In literary framework, Id appears as uncontrollable emotions or actions, often defying social conventions.

### ***The Ego***

The ego develops to mediate between the unrealistic demands of the id and the external world. It operates on the reality principle to try satisfy the id's desires in ways that are acceptable and realistic (Freud, 1923). The ego represents the struggle of decision-making that also considers reason and consciousness between internal wants and external constraints.

### ***The Superego***

The superego represents the moral standards and ideals of a society that strives for perfection, judges itself, and produces feelings of pride or guilt (Freud, 1923). The superego is the voice of duty, social pressure, and moral law, which often conflicts with the desires of the id.

## **Identity and Belonging**

Building on Freud's theories, Jacques Lacan emphasized the role of language and the symbolic order in the formation of identity. Lacan's concepts are instrumental in understanding how characters' psychological dimensions and their sense of belonging are constructed and challenged by societal norms and language (Lacan, 1997).

## **Previous Study**

Critical research on *Home Fire* has explored the intersection between personal and political aspects in the novel, although often without a primary focus on psychoanalysis. Most of studies analyze this novel as a modern adaptation of Sophocles' *Antigone*. These



studies explore how Shamsie identifies the classic conflict between family loyalty and state law in contemporary context of combating terrorism and citizenship revocation (Khan et al., 2021; Usman et al., 2023). Within this framework, Aneeka's resistance is seen as direct parallel to Antigone's tragic heroism.

Other scholars have focused on the novel's critique of state power and the fragile sense of belonging for British Muslims in the 9/11 era. These studies examine how state policies and surveillance, impact personal relationships and challenge the character's sense of identity and citizenship (Dr. Taimur et al., 2023).

## RESEARCH METHODS

This article uses qualitative methods through analysis of Kamila Shamsie's novel *Home Fire*. Qualitative research is considered method for exploring themes and subjective interpretations in literary texts, with a focus on identity and belonging through the perspective of psychoanalysis theory. The primary source of data for this study is the text of Kamila Shamsie's novel *Home Fire*. Secondary sources include academic books, verified journal articles, and credible online resources that provide relevant theoretical frameworks and contextual information.

The primary instrument for data collection is structured reading guide developed by the researcher. This guide included specific criteria for identifying relevant passages and character interaction that portrayed themes of identity and belonging. It also provided instructions for applying psychoanalysis concepts to selected passages.

Data was collected through careful reading and textual analysis of *Home Fire*. Researchers systematically identified and highlighted passages that described themes of identity and belonging. Secondary sources were reviewed to provide theoretical context and support for the analysis. Data analysis was conducted by combining thematic analysis and psychoanalysis literary criticism.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The analysis of the character's psychological landscapes reveals a deep-seated between internal desires and external pressures, which shapes their identities and sense belonging. Each of the Pasha sibling's, along with Eamonn, representing aspects given by Sigmund Freud's psychology, and their interactions show the tragic consequences of unresolved internal conflicts.

## Isma

**The Id:** Even though Isma had sacrifice a lot, deep down in her heart, she really to have her own life. She wanted to pursue knowledge and experience love. This is most evident in her attraction to Eamonn. Although Isma tried to hold it back, her hidden desire was very strong. Her decision to finally tell him her story is not a calculated (Ego) move but an Id-driven impulse, “By the time the first light appeared in the sky she felt herself transformed by the desire to be known, completely” (Shamsie, 2017). This hidden desire to be close to others is actually the sad side behind her always obedient attitude.

**The Ego:** Isma's ego is the realistic side of her, which has learned how to survive in a cruel world. This can be seen from her attitude, which is always obedient, as if she has been trained to be that way. It was this realistic side (Ego) that ultimately made her heart's desire (Id) for a new life come true, after her obligations (Superego) to the twins were fulfilled.

**The Superego:** On another occasion Isma superego is most profoundly tested by her brother radicalization. Isma's decision to inform the authorities about Parfaiz's involvement with extremist is a defining moment, reflecting her superego's dominance. When confronted by a heartbroken Aneeka, Isma justifies her betrayal Isma justified his betrayal not as a choice, but as a necessity imposed by their fragile position in society and also as a sign of protection for Aneeka “We're in no position to let the state question our loyalties. Don't you understand that? If you cooperate, it makes a difference. I wasn't going to let him make you suffer for the choices he'd made” (Shamsie, 2017). Here, his superego justifies the act of reporting his brother as a protective measure, prioritizing cooperation with state authorities over his id's instincts driven by family loyalty.

## Parvaiz

**The Id:** Parvaiz's tragic journey was fundamentally influenced by unresolved father issues rooted in a longing for the jihadist father who was absent from his life, ultimately creating a deep void in his identity. This psychological vulnerability was expertly exploited by Farooq, a recruiter who offered Parvaiz the fatherly recognition he craved. Farooq constructed a heroic narrative around Adil Pasha, telling Parvaiz that his father had specifically chosen his jihadist name in his honor.

“When he entered the fight for justice he called himself Father of Parvaiz. That was his way of keeping you close. So anytime someone said his name— his enemies, with fear; his brothers, with love; his comrades, with honor —they were saying your name too” (Shamsie, 2017).

This statement directly triggers Parvaiz's longing, transforms complexity for his father into an act of love, and ties Parvaiz's identity to his father's extremist legacy.

**The Ego:** Farooq manipulated Parvaiz by portraying joining the caliphate as the ultimate fulfillment of his obligations as a son. Indirectly, this was Parvaiz's desire to overcome his father complex by becoming the man he believed his father wanted him to be. Farooq reinforced this manipulation with a direct challenge. "So the question for you is this: Will you protect the new revolution? Will you do the work your father would have done if he'd lived?" (Shamsie, 2017). Parvaiz's decision to follow Farooq was not a shift into religious extremism, but rather a desperate attempt to find his identity through his father's legacy.

**The Superego:** Parvaiz's Ego is weak and easily manipulated. At first, his Ego tried to find a middle ground. He made up a lie—a trip to Pakistan—to comply with Farooq's wishes in a way that seemed "reasonable." When the reality of Raqqa becomes unbearable, his Ego re-emerges, formulating a desperate plan to escape. His call to Aneeka, "I can't stay here. ... I just want to come home" (Shamsie, 2017). His Ego finally attempting to save him from the catastrophic consequences of his Id's decision.

### **Aneeka**

**The Id:** Aneeka's character is dominated by her id, with her actions driven by strong emotions, raw desires, and uncontrollable passions that are not constrained by social norms or consequences. Her all-consuming love for her twin, Parvaiz, becomes the main reason in her life. When the British government refuses to repatriate his body, she does not turn to legal or political processes, but instead stages an emotional public protest, driven purely by her id in its rejection. Her worldwide appeal is not a planned political statement, but for a pure love and justice. "All these things happen according to the law, but not according to justice. I am here to ask for justice. I appeal to the prime minister: Let me take my brother home" (Shamsie, 2017).

**The Ego:** While her *motive* is pure Id (love for Parvaiz), her *method* is pure Ego. Aneeka's Ego is calculating and strategic. It seizes on the "opportunity" of Eamonn, the Home Secretary's son, and formulates a plan to save her brother. While this relationship becomes a tool in her quest to save her brother, its foundation is in this passionate, instinctual, and defiant energy. Aneeka's Ego operates as a powerful force of nature against the cold, repressive machinery of the state, making her actions both deeply personal and profoundly political.

**The Superego:** Superego Aneeka is not based on the moral rules of the country, but on her own very strong moral rules centered on absolute family loyalty. When Isma confesses to reporting Parvaiz, Aneeka's Superego passes its final, damning judgment.

“Parvaiz is not our father. He's my twin. He's me. But you, you're not our sister anymore.” “Aneeka . . .” “I mean it. You betrayed us, both of us. And then you tried to hide it from me. Don't call, don't text, don't send me pictures, don't fly across the ocean and expect me to ever agree to see your face again. We have no sister” (Shamsie, 2017)

### **Eamonn**

**The Id:** Eamonn's Id is awakened by Aneeka. His passion for her is total great replace for his old life. He becomes obsessed, describing his life with Aneeka.

“every moment filled with the possibility that she might appear, so there was no time when he was away from home that he didn't want to return there, and no moment at home when he didn't race to the front door at every imagined footstep, every pressed buzzer” (Shamsie, 2017).

His final, fatal decision to fly to Karachi is a pure, Id-driven act of love, rebelling against his father's logic.

**The Ego:** Eamonn's identity is a site of constant conflict upon the struggle to mediate between competing demands. His Ego emerged due to the strong influence of his father, Karamat Lone, and the id-driven desires awakened by Aneeka. His ego attempts to reconcile his privileged background and his loyalty to his father with his growing love for Aneeka and his personal sense of morality. This is clear when he defends his father to Isma, justifying his controversial past.

“But everything he did, even the wrong choices, were because he had a sense of purpose. Public service, national good, British values. He deeply believes in these things. All the wrong choices he made, they were necessary to get him to the right place, the place he is now” (Shamsie, 2017)

This is Eamonn's ego working to maintain a coherent, positive image of his father, a cornerstone of his own identity.

**The Superego:** However, this mediating function ultimately fails. His attraction to Anneka is a rebellion to against his father world, but he cannot completely escape it. His inner struggle is perfectly captured in his reflections on the father and son dynamic. “We want to be like them; we want to be better than them. We want to be the only people in the world who are allowed to be better than them” (Shamsie, 2017). Eamonn's tragedy is his ego's failure to successfully navigate this conflict. He cannot fully embrace Aneeka's

world or fully adapt to his father world, and this uncertainty leads directly to the novel's devastating climax, where his attempt to finally choose sides ends in his destruction.

## CONCLUSION(S)

Psychoanalysis in Kamila Shamsie's *Home Fire* provides a deep and understanding of the characters' struggles with identity and belonging. By exploring their unconscious desires, internal conflicts, and psychological dimensions, this study highlights the complex interaction between personal and cultural identity. The characters' experiences reflect broader issues faced by diaspora communities, navigating the tension between assimilation and tradition, as well as the enduring impact of family dynamics and social pressures.

From a psychoanalysis theory perspective, this article reveals how the characters' unconscious motivations drive their actions and shape their identities. The influence of family loyalty, and cultural identity challenges are all important to understanding their psychological landscape. This analysis not only informs the interpretation of *Home Fire* but also contributes to the broader discourse of identity in literature landscape.

Future research could build on these findings by integrating psychoanalysis theory with other frameworks, such as postcolonial theory and intersectionality, to offer more comprehensive analysis of identity and belonging. Furthermore, expanding this study to include diverse narratives from various cultural backgrounds could further clarify the complexity of identity in contemporary literature. This approach will continue to deepen our understanding of the complicated relationship between individuals of their sociocultural environments.

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