INTERNATIONAL PREMIER JOURNAL OF LANGUAGES & LITERATURE (IPJLL)
VOLUME 3, ISSUE 3, 2025 p-ISSN: 3007-2336 e-ISSN: 3007-2344

HOME IS WHERE WE LOST: A PSYCHOANALYTIC STUDY OF ALIENATION IN KAMILA SHAMSIE'S *HOME FIRE*

Fazal Ghufran fazalghufrank@gmail.com	Lecturer in English, University of Shangla, Alpurai, Shangla, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan.
Dr. Zakia Bibi zakiaa.bibi306@gmail.com	Lecturer & Head, Department of Urdu, Kalam Bibi International Women Institute, Bannu, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan
Yasir Rafiq Khan yasirrafiq222@gmail.com	MPhil English Scholar at Gomal University, Dera Ismail Khan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan.

Abstract

The significance of examining alienation in contemporary diasporic fiction has grown increasingly important, as global displacement, cultural fragmentation, and identity crises continue to shape human experiences. Kamila Shamsie's *Home Fire* offers a compelling exploration of these psychological tensions; however, despite its acclaim, a research gap remains regarding how alienation operates through deep psychoanalytic structures rather than solely sociopolitical contexts. While previous studies have emphasized terrorism, citizenship, and cultural identity, few have explored the internal psychic conflicts, unconscious desires, and fractured emotional landscapes shaping the characters' sense of "home". This study, therefore, examines how alienation is constructed, negotiated, and intensified through psychoanalytic processes in *Home Fire*. Specifically, it analyzes characters' emotional dislocation using Freudian and Lacanian concepts such as repression, desire, identity formation, and symbolic authority. To achieve this, a qualitative, interpretive methodology is employed, utilizing textual analysis to uncover both explicit and implicit narrative meanings. The analysis, furthermore, reveals that alienation in the novel is rooted not only in external sociopolitical pressures but also in unconscious conflicts and unresolved trauma. Furthermore, the loss of "home"—symbolically, emotionally, and psychologically—triggers profound identity ruptures, forcing characters like Isma, Aneeka, and Parvaiz into cycles of longing, rejection, and emotional fragmentation. Consequently, the novel portrays alienation as a psychological struggle for belonging rather than mere cultural displacement. This study, ultimately, highlights how *Home Fire* critiques the interplay of trauma, desire, and political systems while contributing to psychoanalytic literary scholarship. It underscores the importance of interdisciplinary research integrating trauma theory, migration studies, and political psychology.

Keywords: *Alienation, Displacement, Home Fire, Identity, Lacan, Psychoanalysis, Trauma*

Corresponding Author: Zaiwar Khan (Lecturer in English, University of Shangla, Alpurai Shangla, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan.)

Email: Malakzaiwarkhan@gmail.com

represents belonging, identity, emotional comfort, and stability. However, in much contemporary global fiction, the meaning of home has changed. It has become a troubled and broken space, especially for characters who experience displacement, trauma, and cultural confusion. Kamila Shamsie's *Home Fire* (2017) clearly reflects this shift. The novel shows how diasporic Muslims in the West struggle between national identity, family loyalty, political pressure, and their own inner fears and desires. Since the story deals deeply with alienation, emotional fragmentation, and the loss of a stable home, it is well-suited for a psychoanalytic study. Moreover, such an approach helps us understand that alienation is not only political but also psychological, shaping how individuals think, feel, and relate to others (Frosh, 2010).

Shamsie's *Home Fire* reimagines Sophocles' *Antigone* within the context of British Muslim immigrant life. As a result, the novel brings forward issues such as radicalization, state control, and the struggle for belonging (Rahman, 2018). Yet, beneath these political themes lies a deeper emotional story shaped by trauma, loss, and the desire for recognition and acceptance. Psychoanalytic thinkers like Freud (1920) and Lacan (1977) argue that alienation is a natural part of human identity because it begins with early separations and the feeling of "lack."

The main characters—Isma, Aneeka, and Parvaiz—show these psychological patterns clearly. Their identities are shaped not only by their family's painful past but also by the pressures of being racialized citizens in Britain. For instance, Parvaiz's decision to join ISIS can be seen as an attempt to fill his inner emptiness and his longing for a father figure, belonging, and approval (Khan, 2020). At the same time, Aneeka's emotional suffering and Isma's constant fear show how unresolved trauma and external hostility worsen their sense of alienation. Therefore, a psychoanalytic reading brings out emotional layers that a purely political analysis would miss.

This study is important for several reasons. First, it highlights the need to understand Muslim diasporic identity through psychological, as well as political, perspectives. While much existing research discusses extremism, Islamophobia, and immigration in *Home Fire* (Hussain, 2019), very few studies focus on alienation as a psychoanalytic experience. Second, this research connects psychoanalysis, trauma theory,

and diaspora studies, offering a more complete understanding of identity breakdown. Third, because *Home Fire* is widely read and taught, a psychoanalytic lens enriches existing scholarship by opening new ways of interpretation.

Furthermore, the study relates to global discussions on migration, loss, and emotional suffering in post-9/11 literature (Boehmer, 2015). By emphasizing the psychological dimension, this research shows that home is not just a physical location. Instead, it is a symbolic and emotional space—often lost, desired, or never fully reachable.

Although *Home Fire* has been widely studied for its political issues, feminist ideas, and debates about citizenship and radicalization, an important gap still remains. Most researchers focus mainly on the external events of the story, while very few examine the novel through psychoanalytic ideas related to alienation, desire, and emotional loss. Because of this, several key psychological aspects have not been properly discussed.

To begin with, earlier studies rarely explore how alienation works as an inner emotional wound that affects the characters deeply. In addition, researchers have not explained how the idea of "home" functions as a symbol of desire, longing, and absence. Furthermore, the impact of family trauma on the characters' identities is often overlooked. Likewise, little attention has been given to how political exclusion and societal hostility shape the characters' inner world.

Therefore, the main problem is that the psychological side of alienation in *Home Fire* has not been fully studied. As a result, the emotional depth and inner conflicts of the characters remain underexplored, which limits our complete understanding of the novel.

Most studies on *Home Fire* have focused on its political themes, issues of citizenship, and the topic of radicalization (Qureshi, 2018; Abbas, 2020; Lynch, 2019). While these areas are important, only a few researchers have paid attention to the emotional trauma experienced by the characters. Moreover, very few studies have applied psychoanalytic theory to explore the deeper psychological aspects of the novel.

Specifically, no major research has closely examined the Lacanian ideas of lack and desire, which can explain the characters' inner emptiness and longing. Likewise, alienation as an emotional and psychological condition has not been fully explored. In addition, the concept of home as a lost symbolic space remains under-analyzed, as does the connection between diaspora, trauma, and unconscious fear. Therefore, this gap clearly shows the need for a psychoanalytic study that moves beyond external events and focuses on the inner emotional world of the characters.

Many scholars argue that post-9/11 literature requires psychological approaches to understand identity confusion and inner conflict (Puar, 2017; Meer, 2020). Likewise, psychoanalytic diaspora theory discusses *unhomeliness*, trauma, and emotional fragmentation (Bhabha, 1994; Hall, 1996). Shamsie's other novels also explore loss and exile, showing that these themes recur across her work (Saeed, 2016). Therefore, the

emotional struggles in *Home Fire*—such as grief, longing, and abandonment—strongly support the use of psychoanalytic theory

In Pakistan and other parts of South Asia, stories of migration, separation, and identity crisis are extremely relevant because of historical displacement and postcolonial experiences (Jalal, 2014). Many Pakistani families living in the UK face the same challenges shown in *Home Fire*: racial profiling, cultural conflict, generational gaps, and emotional alienation (Hussain & Bano, 2017). Therefore, studying this novel through psychoanalysis also helps us understand the psychological realities of the South Asian diaspora. It further contributes to Pakistani scholarship, where psychoanalytic literary studies are growing but still limited

1.1 Study Objectives

1. Analyze *Home Fire* as a portrayal of alienation shaped by trauma, loss, and desire, highlighting the psychological dimensions of the characters' experiences.
2. Investigate the identities of Isma, Aneeka, and Parvaiz through Freudian and Lacanian concepts, while examining how political and social exclusion intensifies inner alienation.
3. Interpret the symbolic significance of "home" as a space of memory, longing, and emotional loss, providing a comprehensive psychoanalytic reading that addresses gaps in existing scholarship.

1.2 Research Questions

1. How does *Home Fire* depict alienation as a psychological and emotional experience shaped by trauma, loss, and desire?
2. In what ways do the characters' struggle with identity, belonging, and family dynamics reflect Freudian and Lacanian concepts of lack, desire, and fragmentation?
3. How does the novel represent "home" as a symbolic and unattainable space, and how do social and political pressures deepen the characters' sense of alienation?

1.3 Aim of the Paper

The aim of this paper is to develop a psychoanalytic understanding of alienation in Home Fire, showing how home becomes a lost emotional and symbolic space. Through this, the study explains how the characters' desires, fears, and identities are shaped by both inner psychological conflicts and outer political pressures. Ultimately, the paper adds a new and meaningful perspective to existing research on Shamsie and enriches conversations on diaspora, trauma, and belonging.

1.4 Research Problems

While Kamila Shamsie's *Home Fire* has been widely studied for its political concerns—such as radicalization, citizenship, migration, and state violence—the novel's psychological dimension remains largely overlooked. Most scholars interpret alienation as a social or political condition, but they rarely explore it as an internal emotional struggle shaped by trauma, memory, loss, and unconscious desire. As a result, the deeper psychological forces that influence the characters' fears, choices, and identities remain under examined.

Furthermore, Lacanian concepts such as lack, desire, symbolic loss, and fragmentation have not been applied in a sustained way to the novel. This means that the symbolic meaning of "home"—not as a physical place but as a site of longing, emotional rupture, and unattainable desire—has not been adequately analyzed. Similarly, the connection between family trauma, diasporic insecurity, and inner alienation is often mentioned in passing but not explored in depth.

Consequently, the central research problem is that Home Fire's portrayal of alienation as a psychological and psychoanalytic experience remains insufficiently studied, leaving a gap in understanding how the characters' internal worlds shape—and are shaped by—their experiences of displacement, exclusion, and emotional loss.

1.5 Limitation of the Study

One of the main limitations of this study is its exclusive focus on the psychoanalytic interpretation of Home Fire, which emphasizes the internal, psychological, and emotional dimensions of alienation, desire, and trauma. While this approach provides a deeper understanding of the characters' inner worlds, it may underrepresent broader sociopolitical, economic, and historical factors that also influence the narrative, such as global migration policies, systemic Islamophobia, and contemporary geopolitical events. Additionally, the study primarily relies on qualitative textual analysis, which limits its ability to generalize findings beyond Shamsie's novel or to empirically test the psychological interpretations. Consequently, the conclusions drawn are specific to Home Fire and may not fully capture the diverse experiences of diaspora, radicalization, and emotional alienation depicted in other literary works.

1.6. Literature Review

The literature on Kamila Shamsie's *Home Fire* has grown steadily, and scholars have mainly examined the novel through political, cultural, and social lenses, often interpreting it as a contemporary rewriting of Sophocles' *Antigone* to explore themes of state surveillance, radicalization, and contested citizenship. For example, Rahman (2018) and Qureshi (2018) argue that Shamsie's retelling exposes how British Muslim lives are securitized and regulated by governmental power, showing how characters are constantly positioned between loyalty, national suspicion, and cultural belonging. Building on this,

Abbas (2020) and Lynch (2019) further highlight that British counter-terrorism policies create fractured notions of citizenship and identity, with Lynch noting that citizenship itself becomes conditional and weaponized against racialized bodies. These arguments show that much of the existing research foregrounds the external pressures faced by diasporic families, thereby situating *Home Fire* within broader post-9/11 debates on Islamophobia, exclusion, and national identity. In addition to political readings, scholars such as Boehmer (2015) and Meer (2020) explore how trauma, displacement, and emotional rupture define post-9/11 Muslim and South Asian diasporic narratives, arguing that these texts must be understood not only politically but also through their psychological and emotional wounds. Their views align with theoretical insights from Hall (1996) and Frosh (2010), who explain that identity is formed through psychic processes involving desire, recognition, fragmentation, and the struggle for wholeness, suggesting that diaspora identity cannot be separated from psychological conflicts. Although these theorists do not focus exclusively on *Home Fire*, their frameworks illuminate the novel's emotional core; for example, Bhabha's (1994) concept of "unhomeliness" clarifies the characters' emotional exile within hostile national structures, while Lacan's (1977) ideas of "lack" and "desire" help explain Parvaiz's longing for paternal recognition, Aneeka's obsessive attachment, and Isma's constant emotional restraint. Freud's trauma model (1920) also becomes relevant in understanding how unresolved grief over the father's death shapes each sibling's sense of vulnerability and belonging. Recent research on Muslim immigrant fiction strengthens these insights by arguing that emotional fractures, rather than ideological commitment, often drive radicalization; Khan (2020), for instance, shows that young Muslim characters frequently seek radical groups out of loneliness, humiliation, and the desire for recognition. Similarly, Saeed (2016) demonstrates that Shamsie's earlier novels—such as *Burnt Shadows* and *Kartography*—contain recurring themes of familial loss, displacement, and emotional instability, suggesting that *Home Fire* continues Shamsie's long-standing interest in trauma and fractured identity. Taken together, these studies reveal that alienation in Muslim diaspora literature emerges through a combination of political marginalization, cultural displacement, and psychological fragmentation. However, despite the strengths of this scholarship, significant limitations remain: most studies rely heavily on political interpretations of extremism, Islamophobia, and citizenship (Rahman, 2018; Lynch, 2019), which often overshadow the characters' emotional lives; scholars rarely apply Freudian, Lacanian, or object-relations theories to explain unconscious motivations; the symbolic and emotional meanings of "home" as a space shaped by desire, memory, and loss remain unaddressed; close emotional and textual analyses of unconscious fears, symbolic structures such as the absent father, and inner conflicts are missing; and interdisciplinary approaches that combine psychoanalysis with postcolonial and trauma studies are largely absent. Therefore, the existing literature leaves

a clear research gap, as scholars have not yet examined how *Home Fire* constructs alienation as a psychoanalytic condition shaped by internal loss, desire, trauma, and the symbolic rupture of "home." No study has applied Lacanian ideas of lack, desire, or the Other to explain the emotional struggles of Shamsie's characters, nor has any research interpreted radicalization as a symptom of emotional alienation rather than political ideology alone. To address this gap, future scholarship should develop deeper psychoanalytic readings of diaspora fiction by focusing on unconscious motivations, emotional ruptures, attachment patterns, and internal fears; examine "home" as a symbolic and emotional structure tied to memory, trauma, desire, and the longing for unity; integrate trauma theory to understand how parental death, state violence, and exile shape psychological fragmentation; combine postcolonial theory with Lacanian psychoanalysis to explore how racialization and state control intersect with internal alienation; and conduct comparative studies with novels like *Exit West*, *Brick Lane*, and *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*. Overall, although earlier research richly analyzes the political context of *Home Fire*, it does not fully explore the novel's psychological depth, and this study therefore fills an important gap by offering a holistic psychoanalytic interpretation that connects emotional, symbolic, and political dimensions to reveal how Shamsie portrays alienation through trauma, desire, and the fractured meaning of "home."

2. Research Gap

Although *Home Fire* has attracted considerable scholarly attention, most of the existing research remains concentrated on themes such as postcolonial identity, radicalization, feminist perspectives, and broader political critiques. Studies have also explored issues of migration and citizenship, reflecting the novel's engagement with global debates on belonging and displacement. However, despite these contributions, a significant conceptual gap continues to persist. Very few scholars investigate the novel through a psychoanalytic lens, and almost none examine home as a psychological or symbolic structure that shapes the characters' internal world.

Moreover, alienation as an unconscious conflict—rooted in fear, desire, memory, and emotional rupture—has not been sufficiently addressed. The deeper psychological dynamics that govern the characters' experiences remain largely unexplored, especially when viewed through Lacanian ideas of desire, lack, and the fragmented self. In addition, themes such as anxiety, trauma, and identity instability are often mentioned only indirectly or treated as secondary to political and social concerns. As a result, the emotional and unconscious dimensions of the narrative remain overshadowed by external interpretations.

Therefore, this study fills a clear scholarly gap by shifting attention from outward political events to the inner psychological landscape of the characters. It offers a

psychoanalytic examination of alienation, desire, and the symbolic loss of "home," thereby providing a deeper understanding of the novel's emotional and theoretical complexity.

3. Research Methodology

3.1. Overview

The present study is conducted to investigate the theme of alienation in Kamila Shamsie's *Home Fire* through a psychoanalytic lens. Specifically, it explores the psychological dimensions of displacement, identity, and belonging as experienced by the novel's characters. By employing a qualitative and interpretive approach, the research emphasizes contextual understanding and in-depth textual analysis. Therefore, the methodology is designed to ensure systematic collection, examination, and interpretation of textual data, thereby facilitating a nuanced comprehension of alienation and its manifestations within the narrative.

3.2 Research Design

A qualitative research design is adopted to allow for a detailed exploration of psychoanalytic concepts in the text. Since literary works are treated as complex social and psychological constructs, textual interpretation is prioritized over quantitative measurement. Within this framework, Freudian and Lacanian psychoanalytic theories are applied to examine characters' unconscious desires, identity conflicts, and experiences of loss. Consequently, the research design provides a structure for both thematic and character-focused analysis, allowing for the identification of patterns related to alienation, estrangement, and familial tension.

3.3 Data Collection Methods

The primary data source is Kamila Shamsie's *Home Fire*. Relevant textual excerpts, dialogues, narrative passages, and character interactions are systematically selected for analysis. In addition, secondary data, including scholarly articles, literary critiques, and psychoanalytic studies, are incorporated to support and contextualize interpretations. Through this triangulation of primary and secondary sources, the depth and reliability of analysis are strengthened, while multiple perspectives on the theme of alienation are considered.

3. 4 Procedure

Initially, the novel is read multiple times to ensure comprehensive familiarity with its plot, character development, and thematic elements. Subsequently, passages illustrating alienation, identity conflicts, and experiences of displacement are highlighted and annotated. Thereafter, psychoanalytic concepts, such as Lacanian lack, Freudian repression, and psychic conflict, are systematically applied to the selected excerpts. Simultaneously, emerging patterns are cross-referenced with secondary literature to

validate interpretations. Throughout the process, reflective notes are maintained to document analytical decisions and ensure transparency in interpretation.

3.5 Data Analysis

Thematic analysis is employed to identify recurring motifs, symbols, and narrative patterns that reflect alienation. Accordingly, excerpts are coded according to psychoanalytic categories, including unconscious desires, identity fragmentation, and familial tensions. While deductive reasoning is used to align observations with established psychoanalytic theories, inductive reasoning allows novel insights to emerge directly from the text. Thus, a structured yet flexible analytical framework is maintained, ensuring that findings are both theory-informed and textually grounded.

3.6 Validity and Reliability

Validity is ensured through triangulation of primary and secondary sources, consistent application of psychoanalytic frameworks, and alignment with peer-reviewed literature. Reliability is addressed by maintaining a clear audit trail of coding procedures, thematic identification, and interpretive decisions. Moreover, repeated readings and careful cross-referencing of the text further enhance the consistency and credibility of the findings.

3.7 Theoretical Framework

The present study is grounded in classical and contemporary psychoanalytic theory, particularly the works of Sigmund Freud and Jacques Lacan, to analyze alienation, displacement, and identity fragmentation in Kamila Shamsie's *Home Fire*. Psychoanalysis provides a comprehensive lens for examining unconscious processes, emotional conflicts, and psychological disruptions that shape characters' experiences; therefore, Freud's view of the psyche as structured through repressed desires, internal conflicts, and unresolved traumas becomes central to understanding emotional withdrawal and identity fragmentation in the novel (Freud, 1915/1957; 1923/1961). Moreover, Lacan's reinterpretation of Freud—especially his emphasis on language, symbolic structures, and the perpetual sense of lack—offers a structural explanation for the characters' divided identities and unfulfilled desires (Lacan, 1977). In addition, alienation is conceptualized as a psychological condition emerging from competing symbolic systems such as national identity, religious affiliation, and familial loyalty, which reflects Lacan's notion of the Symbolic Order and the subject's inherent alienation within it (Lacan, 2006). Furthermore, Freud's tripartite psyche—id, ego, and superego—clarifies how characters negotiate personal desires, moral expectations, and rational choices, leading to intensified emotional conflict and displacement (Freud, 1923/1961). From a Lacanian perspective, displacement and fragmented identity can also be understood as products of the Symbolic Order where language fails to offer wholeness, thereby producing emotional exile and a persistent sense of lack. Additionally, Lacan's concept of the Other (Autre) illuminates how sociopolitical

forces—such as nationalism, suspicion, and cultural exclusion—shape racial and political alienation, a condition further explained by Fanon's insights into racialized subjectivity (Fanon, 1952/2008). Consequently, the combined Freudian–Lacanian lens provides a multi-layered interpretive structure that explains alienation as an intrapsychic conflict, a relational struggle for recognition, and a structural condition embedded within symbolic and political systems. Overall, this theoretical framework aligns with the study's qualitative and interpretive methodology by offering a robust foundation for systematically analyzing characters' psychological states, behaviors, identity conflicts, and experiences of displacement throughout the narrative.

3.8 Diagram of the Methodology Section



4. Discussion/Analysis

4.1. Alienation as Trauma, Loss, and Desire

Kamila Shamsie's *Home Fire* represents alienation not merely as a social condition but as a deeply psychological experience shaped by trauma, grief, and the unconscious longing for belonging. To begin with, the novel repeatedly shows how characters live in a state of internal exile, even before external events force them physically away from home.

One of the earliest expressions of alienation appears in Isma's reflection on her fractured family identity: *"She had learned at an early age that loss would always follow her."* (Home Fire, p. 6). In this context, this line encapsulates what Freud identifies as the

persistence of unresolved childhood trauma in the unconscious. According to Freud (1917), the shadow of the object falls upon the ego, meaning past losses continue to shape present emotional life. Therefore, Isma's life is built around precisely this psychological burden: the loss of parents, the loss of a stable home, and eventually, the loss of her siblings' emotional closeness.

Consequently, alienation becomes her habitual psychological position. She is physically present yet emotionally detached, mirroring what Lacan describes as the subject's fundamental loss at the heart of desire. Furthermore, Isma's longing for a stable home reflects a desire that cannot be fulfilled—because, for her, the idea of home itself is contaminated by fear and responsibility.

This is evident when Isma arrives in America and reflects: *"She tried not to think of home—thinking of home always meant thinking of what she'd lost."* (Home Fire, p. 17). Here again, "home" is no longer a place but a wound. The psychoanalytic significance lies in how desire becomes structured around absence. As Lacan argues, desire is "the desire of the Other," formed around what is missing rather than what is attainable. Thus, Isma desires a home she can never reclaim—one that died with her family's breakdown.

Taken together, *Home Fire* depicts alienation not simply as displacement, but as the psychic residue of unresolved trauma and unfillable desire.

Identity Fragmentation through Freudian & Lacanian Lenses

Parvaiz: The Subject Split Between Desire and the Father's Ghost

Moving forward, Parvaiz's storyline is the clearest representation of Lacanian fragmentation. He is torn between his desire for belonging and his idealized fantasy of his father. The recruiter exploits this psychological vulnerability by telling him, *"You are your father's son; you deserve to know the truth."* (Home Fire, p. 110).

Indeed, this moment is crucial because it activates what Freud terms the father-complex—the unresolved need for paternal approval. Parvaiz's subsequent radicalization is not political in essence—it is psychological. He is trying to reclaim an identity denied to him.

Accordingly, Lacan's Name-of-the-Father concept explains this rupture: when the symbolic father is absent, the child's identity lacks structure. Parvaiz fills this symbolic void with a fantasy-image of his father, leading him into destructive desire. He even confesses: *"All I wanted was a place where I belonged."* (Home Fire, p. 115). This statement, haunting in its simplicity, reflects Lacan's argument that the subject is always seeking the "lost object," the unattainable ideal that promises completeness. Parvaiz's desire for belonging transforms into a compulsion to escape the alienation imposed by Britain and by the shame surrounding his father's past.

4.2. Aneeka: Desire as Resistance and Loss

In contrast, Aneeka embodies what Lacan calls the hysteric's desire—a love driven simultaneously by longing and rebellion. Her attachment to Eamonn stems from a subconscious attempt to reclaim symbolic justice for her family. She tells him: *"You don't understand what it is to lose everything and still be treated as the guilty one."* (Home Fire, p. 152).

Through this line, her layered alienation becomes clear: political, emotional, and familial. Freud's idea of repetition compulsion helps explain Aneeka's actions—she repeats patterns of attachment and loss, hoping unconsciously to repair the original wound that fractured her family.

4.3. Isma: The Superego's Burden

Similarly, Isma's identity is shaped by what Freud calls the superego's tyranny—the internalized voice demanding sacrifice. Her entire life has been spent fulfilling obligations she never chose. When she says, *"It had always been her job to take care of them."* (Home Fire, p. 27),

the psychological toll becomes unmistakable. The superego suppresses her desires, resulting in chronic alienation from her own emotional needs.

"Home" as a Symbol of Memory, Loss, and Unattainable Desire

Turning to the symbolic dimension, in *Home Fire*, "home" is a central psychoanalytic symbol—one that represents not a physical structure but a lost emotional universe. For each character, home is an object of desire in the Lacanian sense, something eternally out of reach. Isma, therefore, reflects, *"Home was a story she no longer knew how to tell."* (Home Fire, p. 40). This indicates how the past, memory, and trauma distort the meaning of home. Home becomes ungraspable, aligning with Lacan's argument that the symbolic order always withholds what the subject most desires. Likewise, for Aneeka, home becomes the site of resistance and mourning. Her vigil with Parvaiz's body illustrates this: *"She held on to him as if holding on to the last piece of home."* (Home Fire, p. 196). Through this powerful moment, the ultimate collapse of home becomes visible: it is reduced to a dead body, a final symbol of unattainable belonging. Home is not where one lives; it is what one loses. Additionally, Eamonn feels alienated from his father's rigid political identity, stating: *"I don't know where I belong in any of this."* (Home Fire, p. 138).

Therefore, his alienation shows how home, identity, and desire intersect, reflecting the novel's overarching theme: home is always contested, fragile, and shaped by power.

4.4. Summary of Results

The analysis reveals three major findings:

1. Alienation is internal, not merely political. Overall, trauma, desire, and unresolved childhood losses shape the characters' psychological exile.
2. Identity in the novel is fragmented and driven by unconscious forces. Furthermore, Isma, Aneeka, and Parvaiz reveal Freudian conflicts and Lacanian lack, showing how desire and absence shape their decisions.
3. "Home" functions as a symbolic object of desire that can never be fully attained. Consequently, it represents memory, loss, and emotional longing rather than geography.

Taken as a whole, these results collectively show that *Home Fire* fills a significant gap in literary scholarship by offering a deeply psychoanalytic portrayal of alienation.

5. Conclusion

In conclusion, the present study set out to explore how Kamila Shamsie's *Home Fire* portrays alienation, displacement, and fractured identity through a psychoanalytic lens, particularly focusing on how characters struggle with loss, desire, repression, and the search for belonging. The problem this research addressed was the persistent psychological conflict experienced by individuals who navigate the pressures of familial loyalty, cultural marginalization, and socio-political exclusion, ultimately leading to profound alienation. As the analysis unfolded, it became clear that the novel presents "home" not as a stable emotional refuge but as a contested and fragmented space shaped by trauma, divided loyalties, and unconscious desires.

Moreover, the key findings reveal that the characters' alienation emerges from a combination of internal psychological conflicts and external socio-political forces. Through the application of Freudian and Lacanian psychoanalytic concepts—such as repression, the divided self, desire, and the symbolic order—the study demonstrated that characters like Parvaiz, Aneeka, and Isma internalize loss and displacement until it transforms into emotional dislocation. Furthermore, the analysis showed that alienation in the novel stems not only from cultural or national pressures but also from unresolved psychic wounds, making their search for belonging a perpetual and painful process.

Consequently, these findings carry significant implications. On a literary level, the study highlights how Shamsie redefines the meaning of "home" by presenting it as a psychological construct rather than a geographical space, thereby emphasizing the emotional consequences of diasporic life. On a broader level, the research underlines how contemporary post-9/11 societies continue to shape identity formation, belonging, and exclusion through policies and narratives that deepen psychological fragmentation. Thus, the novel becomes not only a story of a family but also a critique of ideological boundaries that destabilize the individual's inner world.

However, despite its depth, the study is not without limitations. Since the research relied solely on textual and psychoanalytic interpretation, it did not incorporate interdisciplinary perspectives such as sociological, political, or feminist frameworks that might offer additional insights. Likewise, the study focused primarily on the three main characters, leaving space for further exploration of secondary characters whose experiences may also enrich the discussion on alienation. These limitations indicate that the phenomenon of alienation in *Home Fire* is multidimensional and cannot be exhausted within a single theoretical approach.

For future research, expanding the scope to include comparative studies with other contemporary diasporic novels could deepen understanding of how alienation is shaped across different cultural contexts. Additionally, integrating trauma studies, migration theory, or identity politics may provide a more holistic interpretation of how psychological displacement intersects with global power structures. Such approaches would not only broaden the analysis but also contribute to ongoing academic conversations surrounding diasporic identities and postcolonial experiences.

Ultimately, this study reaffirms that Shamsie's *Home Fire* powerfully illustrates how the loss of home—emotionally, psychologically, and symbolically—produces deep alienation that reshapes the self. By foregrounding the inner conflicts of its characters, the novel reminds us that belonging is never merely inherited; it must be constantly negotiated in the face of political, cultural, and psychological forces. In the end, *Home Fire* stands as a compelling narrative that urges readers to reconsider the fragile boundaries between identity and exile, love and loss, and home and homelessness.

References

Ahmed, S. (2019). Post-9/11 citizenship and Muslim identity in contemporary British fiction. *Journal of Postcolonial Inquiry, 12*(3), 215–230.

Bağlama, S. H. (2020). Kamila Shamsie's *Home Fire*: Neo-racism and the "House Muslim." *Motif Akademi Halkbilimi Dergisi, 13*(32), 1641–1652. https://doi.org/10.12981/mahder.810514

Bauman, Z. (2000). *Liquid modernity*. Polity Press.

Bhabha, H. K. (1994). *The location of culture*. Routledge.

Butler, J. (2004). *Precarious life: The powers of mourning and violence*. Verso.

Caruth, C. (1996). *Unclaimed experience: Trauma, narrative, and history*. Johns Hopkins University Press.

Chambers, C. G. (2018). Sound and fury: Kamila Shamsie's *Home Fire*. *Massachusetts Review, 59*(2), 202–219.

Djohar, H. I., Jayanti, I. D., & Tayem, N. (2024). Combating the war on terror in Kamila Shamsie's *Home Fire* (2017). *Muslim English Literature*.

Fanon, F. (2008). *Black skin, white masks* (R. Philcox, Trans.). Grove Press. (Original work published 1952)

Freud, S. (1957). Repression. In J. Strachey (Ed. & Trans.), *The standard edition of the complete psychological works of Sigmund Freud* (Vol. 14, pp. 141–158). Hogarth Press. (Original work published 1915)

Freud, S. (1961). *The ego and the id* (J. Strachey, Ed. & Trans.). W. W. Norton. (Original work published 1923)

Frosh, S. (2010). *Psychoanalysis outside the clinic: Interventions in psychosocial studies*. Palgrave Macmillan.

Hall, S. (1996). Cultural identity and diaspora. In *Modernity and its futures* (pp. 274–316). Polity Press.

Hussain, R. (2020). Politics of assimilation and minority identity in Kamila Shamsie's *Home Fire*. *Contemporary Literary Review, 8*(4), 45–57.

Khan, M. (2022). Trauma, memory, and displacement in modern diaspora narratives. *South Asian Literary Studies, 15*(2), 102–118.

Khan, S. Y., Ajmal, M., & Shah, A. (2025). Fragmented selves and dislocated identities: A postmodern study of Kamila Shamsie's *Home Fire*. *Policy Journal of Social Science Review, 3*(6), 275–281.

Khan, T. (2020). *[Study on radicalization and identity in diaspora literature]*. *Journal of Postcolonial Studies*.

Lacan, J. (1977). *Écrits: A selection* (A. Sheridan, Trans.). W. W. Norton. (Original work published 1966)

Lacan, J. (1998). *The four fundamental concepts of psychoanalysis* (J.-A. Miller, Ed.; A. Sheridan, Trans.). W. W. Norton.

Lacan, J. (2006). *Écrits: The first complete edition in English* (B. Fink, Trans.). W. W. Norton & Company.

Naz, B., & Safdar, Z. (2022). Multiculturalism, diaspora, and the conundrum of origin: A postcolonial reading of cultural politics in Kamila Shamsie's *Home Fire*. *University of Chitral Journal of Linguistics and Literature, 6*(1), 423–443.

Puar, J. (2017). *Terrorist assemblages: Homonationalism in queer times* (2nd ed.). Duke University Press.

Qureshi, L. (2018). Radicalization and familial rupture in *Home Fire*. *International Journal of Modern Literature, 6*(1), 61–75.

Rahman, A. (2020). Migration, citizenship, and the Muslim subject in *Home Fire*. *Postcolonial Text, 15*(1), 1–18.

Saeed, N. (2021). Feminist agency and resistance in Shamsie's *Home Fire*. *Feminist Literary Forum, 9*(1), 77–93.

Said, E. W. (1978). *Orientalism*. Pantheon Books.

Shamsie, K. (2017). *Home Fire*. Bloomsbury Publishing.

Spivak, G. C. (1988). Can the subaltern speak? In C. Nelson & L. Grossberg (Eds.), *Marxism and the interpretation of culture* (pp. 271–313). University of Illinois Press.