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**MUSLIM DIASPORIC IDENTITIES
IN KAMILA SHAMSIE'S *HOME FIRE* (2017)**

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ABSTRACT

Beside accepted with surprise across the world, the winning of Brexit referendum also brings up the tangled web into the United Kingdom's political and cultural realms. Recent studies mention there is correlation between the voting behavior and issues of identity, immigration, and Islamophobia. Kamila Shamsie alludes these issues in her latest novel, *Home Fire* (2017). By focusing on three main protagonists, this close-textual analysis examines how Pakistani diasporic community construct their identities within the novel. To support the analysis, this article draws upon Hall's identity theory (1990) and Bhabha's *Unhomely* (1992). Research findings show how Shamsie's novel represents heterogeneity within Pakistani Muslims diasporic identities, rather than frame them within single collective identity. Therefore, the novel criticizes Eurocentric biases point of view by portraying Muslim female protagonists' fluid identities while defending their Muslimness by using veil and praying to God. On the other hand, the novel maintains established stereotype by drawing Muslim male protagonist's affiliation with Daesh as representation of radical group to problematize the notion of radicalism.

KEYWORDS: Diaspora, Identity, Muslim, Anglophone Literature

INTRODUCTION

In British context, glaring presentations of prejudice is lessened in the course of recent fifty years, but still exist alongside more subtle form and may touch upon perception on cultural differences and anxiety upon national identities (Goodwin and Heath, 2016). These issues in interrelated with the winning of Brexit (British exit) referendum on 2016, because, as mentioned

in the surveys by Ghosh (2018: 92-95), number of anti-immigrant sentiment in several European countries is concurrently raised with after vote of Brexit. Indeed, studies above underscores interrelationship between voting behavior and identity and immigration issues. In the channel of cultural realms, these issues are creatively fictionalized by numerous writers of South Asians descents, such as Kamila Shamsie. In her latest novel, *Home Fire* (2017), she narrates 21st century radicalism and its allusion into the aftermath of Brexit referendum winning and its impact on contemporary England.

Recent studies on *Home Fire* by Kamila Shamsie focus on male characters (Chambers, 2018) and ideologies representations (Shaheen et al., 2018). At the same context, previous studies upon Muslim diaspora after 9/11 focus into multidimensionality of Muslim political views and problematize historical contextualization in viewing global disparities (John dan Smith, 2010, Morey, 2011, Azeem, 2016, Morrison, 2017, and Sadaf, 2018). Meanwhile, recent studies which focus on issue of identity toward Muslim diaspora do not considered spatial issues and complexities of religion discourses (Landis, 2016, Shirazi, 2018, and Kanwal, 2015).

For further discussions, the writer underscores the role of space in the process of identity construction toward Muslims diasporic community in Kamila Shamsie's latest novel, *Home Fire* (2017). In addition, he considers the interlinking between religion, ethnicities, and citizenship discourses within the analysis. By doing so, this article contributes to the formation of alternative narrative of Islam and Muslim which challenges stereotypical dominant discourse on partial Islamophobic Western societies. To support the analysis, he elaborates Hall's (1990) theory of identity and Bhabha's *Unhomely* (1992). The main argument of this study is: in accordance to draw multifarious affiliations of Muslim, Shamsie views identity as protean and fluid to challenge monolithic dimension of Muslim and Islam as seen on dominant discourse of the partial Islamophobic Western society.

REPRESENTING MUSLIMS HETEROGENOUS IDENTITIES

Home Fire (2017) narrates story of orphaned Pasha family of Pakistani descents in England. The main conflict of the novel starts when the youngest member of the family leave for joining Daesh (ISIS). The case causes conflict between his sisters; Isma, the oldest sister, choose to report Parvaiz's case to the police while Aneeka prefers to map out strategy for Parvaiz's return by exploiting Eamonn's status as the son of England Home Secretary. However, Aneeka's plan is in vain because her twin, Parvaiz, is injured to dead in front of British consulate in Syria when he tried to escape from Farroq. The analysis below explains how Shamsie constructs and problematizes representation of her Muslim protagonists of Pasha family; Isma, Aneeka, and Parvaiz.

Firstly, to offer alternative Muslim women narrative, Shamsie criticizes stereotype of Muslim as group that is incapable to adapt with modernity (Said, 1978: 263) by justifying attributes which symbolize traditional and modern values on Isma's characterization. Shamsie explains Isma as woman who proud of her Muslimness. In public space, she feels comfort to use turban to cover her head (Shamsie, 2017: 21). In this sense, turban is fashion attribute which associates her identity as Pakistani Muslim. However, she prefers to use modern hair treatment product in taking care of her hair in the private space, as explained below:

Isma looked at her reflection in the mirror, hair 'texturised' into 'beachy waves' as Mona of Persepolis Hair in Wembley had promised when she recommended a product that could counter frizzy, flyaway hair without attaining the miracle of straightening it. Her hair said 'playful' and 'surprising' (Shamsie, 2017: 45)

The quotation above informs that Isma changes her hairstyle from “*texturized/frizzy*” into “*beachy waves*”. The model named “*beachy waves*” itself refers to Western modern woman hairstyle. Moreover, the text underscores Isma’s self-confidence through personification of: “*Her hair said 'playful' and 'surprising'*”. Through the justification between two contrast attributes above, Shamsie blurs barriers between becoming modern woman who consider treatment of her hair and maintain traditional value at the same time.

Beside attribute, the use of English in Isma’s family daily practices manifests hybrid form of Muslim Pakistani descents’ identities. Both in public and domestic space, Isma and her brother and sister fluently use English for conversation, but they maintain their Pakistan-ness component as performed through their use of Urdu to express their inner experience of untranslatable expression, such as the use of term “*bay-takalufi*” (Shamsie, 2017: 29) by Isma to express informal intimacy to Eamonn.

At certain degree, the writer argues that Isma presents her hybridity performatively to position herself as Muslim who completely integrated with the host society. The evidence of this performative act is portrayed in the act of Isma’s interrogation in Heathrow airport when she is about to depart to America. During the interrogation, Isma should answer questions about “*Shias, homosexual, the Queen, democracy, The Great British Bake Off, the invasion of Iraq, Israel, suicide bombers, dating websites*” while her high-priced jacket (Shamsie, 2017: 3-5) is prejudiced as thievery. Before the interrogation, Isma is planned strategy to do not bring any attributes which invite suspicion: “*no Quran, no family pictures, no books on her areas of academic interest*” (Shamsie, 2017: 3). According to the writer’s view, she has specific reasons in selecting the watched-out attributes. Firstly, she does not bring her holy book to impress that she was Muslim who prioritize rationalization than Quran verses. On the other side, she decides to avoid her family photos to get around negative reputation which is associated with her father’s legacy. The head of Pasha family was a jihadi who was died when he is about to be jailed in Guantanamo. The last, her interest is sociology and she was the fan of Karl Marx (2017: 237), therefore she avoids to being labeled as communist comrade by sorting out her books. Nevertheless, her strategies are in vein because she is being positioned as suspect by airport’s interrogator. This portrayal exemplifies that when an individual position his or herself, he or she was being positioned by other people around him or her at the same time (Hall, 1990). Isma’s strategy indicates that she does not show identity conversion or loyalty toward state policy, but performative coping strategy.

Instead of represents Isma as the most ideal Muslim figure, Shamsie presents irony within Isma’s characterization. In contrast to her brother and sister, Isma’s priority is the problem of economy/class. Depending on this believe, her motivation to study on America can be interpreted as her effort to climb up to the higher-class hierarchy and build the better ‘home’ in England. The traumatic memory and destructive legacy of her father have already burdened her and necessitate her to perform double roles; to nurture and to earn family living since the died of Zainab Pasha, her mother, just after her bachelor graduation. Therefore, she prefers to show her loyalty to save

her remaining family in England: “*We’re in no position to let the state question our loyalties*” (Shamsie, 2017: 42), when responding Parvaiz’s case. On the one side, Isma’s quality function as foil¹ for the continuity of the entire conflict in the novel, because the clash between she and Aneeka results Aneeka’s plan of Parvaiz’s return. At the same time, her cooperation with state apparatus stressed that she maintains her position in the middle of the dominant group.

Despite represent London as Islamophobic space, as mentioned before, Shamsie avoids total antagonistic narrative in portraying the West. The evidence toward this argument is the appearance of Eamonn’s mother, Terry Lone, as representation of upper class white Irish-American descent who has open-minded view toward Muslim. The text narrates this representation on a chapter which telling memory of Terry on her visit to London on April 29, 1978. On her vacation, Terry coincidentally gathered into the *Rock Against Racism* demonstration that about to watch *The Clash* concert. On that moment, she meets a boy with badges of *Racist Are Bad In Bed* on his leather jacket. She regards the boy as Spanish descent, but actually he was a Pakistani, as detailed in the quotation below:

They’d been marching a while by the same time she discovered his parents were actually from Pakistan, a country she’d never heard of. Considerably later that day, [...] she burst into tears at the thought of saying goodbye to someone so thrilling he vowed to marry her one day. (Shamsie, 2017: 102)

Through third-person point of view, the explanation above is nuanced with nostalgia which is constructed through Terry’s point of view (focalization). The explanation of this scene implies that Terry’s memory of the Pakistani boy is significant and contributed toward her view of outsider as stressed through the polysemy of: “*she burst into tears at the thought of saying goodbye*”. Although Terry does not marry him, because he broke the promise, in the later day she chooses to marry Karamat Lone who is also a Pakistani descent. Terry’s marriage with Karamat can be interpreted as allegory of Terry’s willing to learn and understand people who has different background with her, in this sense, Pakistani Muslim.

In contrast to Isma, Aneeka is also believe and praying to God, but sexually active and has stubborn character. Although she was a middle-class Muslim migrant who gain scholarship to study law, she has skeptic view toward Western people as portrayed in the scene when Aneeka gives his sister suggestion to answer the question about the Queen if she was interrogated:

‘For instance, if they ask you about the Queen, just say, “As an Asian, I have to admire her colour palette”, It’s important to show at least a tiny bit of contempt for the whole process.’ Instead, Isma had responded, ‘I greatly admire Her Majesty’s commitment to her role.’ (Shamsie, 2017: 6).

Surface impression on Aneeka’s statement: “*As an Asian, I have to admire her colour palette*”, underscores salute and admire, but she intentionally states sarcasm. In this sense, the Queen is

¹ The term foil refers to contrast between characters based on various aspect, such as characterization, appearance, etc.

metaphorically imagined as “*the colour palette*”, which indirectly imply that the Queen is just a myth. Nevertheless, Isma does not take Aneeka’s suggestion for granted which means that she knows what her sister means. The evidence above highlights that security strategy, such as *Muslim Profiling*, is not effective filter to prevent threat, because loyalty itself can be mean a mere performative act.

Through Aneeka, Shamsie also criticizes prejudice toward hijab as inferior and backwardness. For Aneeka, hijab become political instrument, especially for her body experience: “*I get to choose which parts of me I want strangers to look at*” (Shamsie, 2017: 72). In this sense, using hijab does not symbolize that she is trapped under her ancestor legacy, but she courage her authority toward her own body. Moreover, in opposite with Isma’s performative loyalty, she is braver to protest Home Secretary decision to revoke Parvaiz’s citizenship.

Although Aneeka is solid on her sceptic view toward Westerners, the writer interprets her relationship with Eamonn as allegory of Aneeka’s learning of Western values. The evidence of this argument appears on the scene when Aneeka reads London space through domestic landscape of Eamonn private flat in Notting Hill:

She unpinned the hijab, folded it carefully and placed it between the two of them on the kitchen counter, and then pulled of the tight-fitting cap beneath it. She shook her head slightly and her hair, long and dark, fell about her shoulders like something out of a shampoo advertisement. (Shamsie, 2017: 68)

The scene above draws Aneeka’s earlier stage to manipulate Eamonn for her own purpose. The manipulation above means Aneeka’s sexual tryst toward Eamonn for the purpose of take control over him. However, the act of veil remover above symbolically means as Aneeka’s readiness to read her surroundings. Unlike Isma who performs experimentation of her hairstyle, Aneeka’s long and dark hair symbolize more genuine self-representation of Muslim Pakistani descent who grew up among diasporic community. However, by representing Aneeka’s manipulation, Shamsie does not mean to legitimize Muslim woman as swindler because at the middle of her way, Aneeka confess the truth toward Eamonn: [Aneeka talks to Eamonn] *I’m so tired of it [Parvaiz’s gone]. I want to be here, completely. With you* (Shamsie, 2017: 100).

Allegory of Aneeka’s appropriation of Western values is symbolically represented through culinary metaphor. In this sense, Aneeka gustatorily read Eamonn’s domestic space as seen on the scene when: “*she [Aneeka] ate slices of lemon with salt, which she did with her morning tea*” (Shamsie, 2017: 74). Lemon slices and morning tea, representation of British values, is unhomely moment for Aneeka. Indeed, her face “*transformed into a cartoon*” when she tastes the dining. For her, the common dining is Naseem’s samosa and masala omelet of her own in Preston. Then, the writer concludes that Aneeka’s skepticism toward Westerners does not mean she maintain rigid conservative view in constructing her identity, because her process to appropriate Western value is continuous learning process.

In contrast to his both sisters, Shamsie constructs Parvaiz as inferior and weaker teenager. He does not have capabilities to prove his eminence as a person beside his obsession of music and video games. According to Chambers (2018: 207-213), Parvaiz’s fascination of visual and auditory objects cause his sensitivity of sound and motivates his desire to have a listener. Nevertheless, his

sensitivity and obsession also mean that Parvaiz inclines to read spatial object and adventurous desire to finish the quest for achievements' sake. Therefore, the writer argues beside sound sensitivity, Parvaiz also has obsession to explore and taking for risk, or in other word he was introverted sensing person. Jung mentions (in Feist and Feist, 2008: 119), the typical personality is impulsive because his biggest motivation comes from subjective experience or interpretation toward stimuli of senses without objection. In Parvaiz's case, this sensing liability influences the process of adoptable values classification as his source of identity.

The writer argues Parvaiz experiences twice alienations, so that he prefers to choose alternative sources as his adopted identity component from the figure of Farooq. Parvaiz's alienation from his sisters begins in the phase of rising conflict between Parsha family because of Isma's decision to rent Preston house while she is pursuing her degree in America. The alienation itself is not caused by the displacement, but Aneeka's disagreement with Parvaiz when both of them debate their older sister as mentioned below:

In a few years, when she [Isma] had her PhD and Aneeka was a lawyer, they'd be able to move back in [...] But, just then Aneeka shrugged in response, and he [Parvaiz] experienced one of those terrifying moments in which a person you thought you knew reveals a new aspect of their character. (Shamsie, 2017: 120)

As mentioned by Bhabha (1992), to experience unhomeliness does not mean homelessness but feel alienated from something that was familiar before. In this context, the most familiar figure of family for Parvaiz is his twin, but Aneeka's ignorance cause unhomeliness, as explained above. At this point the writer agrees with Chambers (2018: 217) who notes failure massage reception in the dialog between Aneeka and Parvaiz which cause Parvaiz's alienation. Indeed, Aneeka has purpose to channel the rent earning of Preston house for Parvaiz's education (Shamsie, 2017: 132). This evidence strengthens the writer's previous argument about Parvaiz's introverted sensing personality which cause inclination of his decision-making based on reception of his stimuli rather than objective interpretation.

For Parvaiz, the figure of mother becomes foundational in preserving his psychological stability, as implied in the aftermath of his mother funeral:

The first weekend after their mother died, Parvaiz had stopped eating [...] rejecting every item of food Aunty Naseem and her daughters and Aneeka offered to him, and even Aneeka was at a loss to understand it. It was Isma, who disliked cooking above all other domestic chores, who had come into his room with a masala omelette such as their mother used to make for breakfast every Saturday (Shamsie, 2017: 151).

In this context, the figure of mother is symbol of homeland which represent moral barriers as well as mother representation in Indian culture. This assumption is constructed based on information in the text which highlights Gujranwala, the origin place of Parvaiz's mother (Shamsie, 2017: 105), a city in the border between Pakistan and India. In this sense, the cross-cultural interaction between Islamic (Pakistan) culture and Hindu (India) culture is possible. This evidence also explains why Shamsie uses the symbolism which allude into Indian culture. Therefore, the died of mother means

the loss of Parvaiz's main foundation which cause his turn into state of confusion. This confusion is signified by Parvaiz's favorite: "*masala omelette*". The dining is part of Indian typical culinary tradition which is composed from mixed ingredients. The mixing of diverse flavors of the omelet symbolize Parvaiz's confusion of himself.

The climax of his existential experience is occurred when he asks of about his self-ness: *Who am I? Parvaiz wanted to ask, but he knew the answer already. He was Aneeka's brother. When older boys, the kind of you would die to be friends with, paid attention to him, it was because he was Aneeka's brother* (Shamsie, 2017: 124). Awareness toward the position is operated on Parvaiz's consciousness. He realizes that he was nothing if his beautiful and attractive sister is absent. On the public space, he is known as the shadow of Aneeka as stressed on linguistic order of "*Aneeka's brother*". This existential experience cause crises toward his identity and his effort to looking for roots and his true-ness of self and to be being as a person.

Similar to quest conquering in the video games, Parvaiz look for clues which direct him to the main prize, the genuine of identity. Beside his job as green-grocer assistant, he also active in activism of local library campaign.

A few days later there was a fundraiser for the library campaign. Parvaiz had been involved with the campaign through his adolescence, ever since the council had announced that the local library, to which his mother had taken him and Aneeka after school at least once week, would have to close. (Shamsie, 2018: 143)

According to Chambers (2018: 209), library symbolize good morality. However, the writer argues the library as symbol of mother. In this sense, the historicity of library itself is not separated beside its primary function as source of knowledge. For Parvaiz, stand against library closure means preserving memory of his mother, who continuously engage him and his sister to learn and read. Therefore, the closure of library by London council means his failure to adopt Britishness as part of his identity.

For the second-generation Pakistan diasporic community, the ancestor homeland often means become the shadow of their imagination. However, although he has imagination of Pakistan land, he is unable to adopt Pakistan-ness as genuine part of his identity. The ancestor land is not part of his desire of home. The memory and experience which Parvaiz has about Pakistan cause alienation upon himself as seen on the text which explains Parvaiz's memory of his cousin who said: "*I'm a Pakistani and you're a Paki*" (Shamsie, 2017: 150) to him. The evidence above means that when he connects himself to his ancestor land, he is also being positioned as subject where ethnicity discourse is performed and examined. The segregation between insider versus outsider the use of term "*Paki*" includes into derogating act, or in Brah's term (1996: 11): "*inferioris[ing] collective subject*". This evidence underscore that the positioning is not only happened between Asians and Brits, but also between 'the origin' Asians and 'the other' Asians.

At this stage, Farooq intervenes Parvaiz's live by bringing hidden narratives of Adil Pasha. As mentioned in the text, Farooq use surname "*Abu Parvaiz*" (Shamsie, 2017: 124) to represent Parvaiz's father. On the one side, Parvaiz never know his father, even his appearance, dan both Aneeka and Isma hate the figure of Adil, then the conversation about the father is missing. On the other side, in front of Farooq, Parvaiz gets his position and fulfil his existential need from the

positioning which is implied from the Adil's surname², that exemplifies proud of male breed in the family system. Therefore, Parvaiz chooses to put himself around Farooq to uncover the rupture narrative of his mysterious father.

Parvaiz once explore the mystery of his father by asking question toward Aneeka, but unfortunately, as mentioned by Chambers (2018), both fail in sending and receiving message as detailed on the quotation:

'What has Adil Pasha ever had to do with our lives? ' He [Parvaiz] turned away from her, his face pressed against the sofa cushions. 'You're just a girl. You don't understand.' (Shamsie, 2017: 142).

The dialogue above underscores repressive desire of Parvaiz to know more about his father. As mentioned above, he rejects to express the truth toward Aneeka: "*he turned away from her*", which means that Parvaiz *un*-speaks his interest to his twin. The scene can be interpreted as the first stage of Parvaiz's reconstruction of father's figure meaning. Bhabha (1992: 146) explains: "*To "un"-speak is both to release from erasure and repression, and to reconstruct*". In this context, beside repression, other important keyword is revoking question (*un*-speak). In contrast to being silent, revoking speech is condition when someone reconstruct the meaning of business for himself. Moreover, gender-based discriminative speech act from the statement: "*You're just a girl*" illustrates transition of Parvaiz characterization, who later turn into radicalism.

By reconstructing the meaning of father for himself, Parvaiz exemplifies what Hall (1990: 226) mentions as inner expropriation to release himself from crises. As mentioned by Hall, when someone experience this tension, his or her identity will follow or transform its shape. Then, this tension motivates Parvaiz to reveal rupture narrative of his father. However, as mentioned on the previous paragraph, he does not find clues to solve the puzzle among his family, instead of around Farooq. On the other side, he also increases his quality to gain equal position among his sisters and do not being regarded as Aneeka's shadow anymore.

According to Chambers (2018) and Shaheen et al. (2018), the main motivation of Parvaiz homoeroticism³ relationship with Farooq is masculinity because from Farooq he learns "*how to be a man*" (Shamsie, 2017: 129). The argument is appropriate, but the writer adds another significant factor: religion and adventurous desire. Shamsie uses irony within Parvaiz's occupation and selection of identity sources because he prefers Farooq as his alternative source. Even though, both his sisters are also a Muslim and perform their obligation of faith, such as:

[...] went to the mosque for Eid prayers, and put aside 2.5 per cent of his income for zakat, which he [Parvaiz] split between Islamic Relief and the library campaign, but beyond that, religion had, since early childhood, been a space he'd vacated rather than lived in, in the shadow of Isma's superiority. But in Farooq's company he came to see there was such a

² Abu prefix alludes to Arabic culture which signifies genealogical relationship in a family, sometime it also used for surname.

³ Homoeroticism is people sexual interest of their own sex which is contrast into homosexual that presupposed permanent sexual orientation (Younger, 2005: 80).

thing as ‘an emasculated version of Islam’. (Shamsie, 2017: 130-131)

The evidence above draws contrast between Islamic values of Pasha family and Farooq’s radical view. In the middle of his family, Parvaiz focalize that religion is meaningless entity, because all the faith related business is managed under the power of Isma. From Farooq, he re-reads such act of religious practice as emasculated Islam, which means that there is a problem of power relation in the religious practice, as seen on the case, is dominated by women’s power. Parvaiz counters this practice because he, as he knows from Farooq, the religious practice must be under male management (phallocentrism⁴). The stressing of (‘...’) in the text explains specific meaning, because as Parvaiz have known from video games, the malpractice and deviation is a mission calling which is valuable to be solved. Therefore, the writer concludes that beside a mere Islamic value, Farooq offers Parvaiz to be being as a person and triggering his adventurous desire.

CONCLUSION

The analysis above explains how Shamsie offers her readers alternative narrative of Islamic world. She does not encourage piety, kindness, and genuine self of Muslim to preserve such narrative, instead of demystifying negative stereotypical images of Muslims. As detailed above, each protagonists of *Home Fire* (2017) construct diverse identities. Isma maintains her position in the dominant group (Westerners) while Aneeka constructs her in-betweenness since she builds relationship with Eamonn, and then Parvaiz affiliates himself into radical group. In short, Shamsie explains multiple affiliation of her protagonists to criticize monolithic dimension of Islam and Muslim on Islamophobic point of view.

Nevertheless, by articulating established stereotype of Muslims as group who has affiliation with radicalism as represented from the explanation above, Shamsie further problematize the simplification in understanding the notion of radicalism. In mainstream psychological point of view, radicalism is often associated with death-drive desire and mental illness (Sageman, 2004: 101). However, the analysis above proves complexity, include gender, alienations, inequality, and existential dimensions, which influence Parvaiz decision to take his route to Raqqa.

Finally, study upon the complexity of Muslim narrative becomes continuous dialogue between which open the way for diasporic community and the host society to reconciliation. However, this limited study leaves number of gaps since its focus is three main protagonists of the novel. Furthermore, there are involved text components that able to further explain complex dimensions of Muslims from various perspective, such as psychological, feminism, and economy perspectives.

⁴ On feminism study phallocentrism is correlated with Jacques Lacan’s conceptualization of phallogocentricism. The term means the tension to use male’s point of view in defining the world (Budianta, 2002).

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