

Race and identity: An Analysis of Lacanian Lack Approaches to *Burnt Shadows*

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Abstract

*This study employs Lacanian psychoanalysis—especially the constitutive notion of lack—to examine how Kamila Shamsie's *Burnt Shadows* unsettles racial identity across imperial and post-9/11 geographies. By foregrounding the psychic mechanics of racialization, the study bridges psychoanalysis and postcolonial race critique. Scholarship on Shamsie emphasises trauma and transnationalism, but offers no sustained Lacanian account of racial subjectivity. (1) how racist ideology functions in the novel's social and intimate scenes; (2) how lack and desire mediate racial identity formation. Close readings of pivotal episodes (Nagasaki's aftermath; Delhi and Karachi displacements; Cold War Berlin; post-9/11 New York) paired with Lacanian concepts—symbolic order, objet petit a, fantasy, enjoyment—track patterns of interpellation and misrecognition. Recurrent misreading of bodies, name changes, accent shifts, and border encounters form a pattern in which subjects seek the Other's approval while disavowing constitutive lack; textual evidence shows fantasy suturing racial incoherence yet repeatedly failing to do so. Racist ideology operates through enjoyment and prohibition to fix subjects in racial positions, but Shamsie's narrative exposes their contingency, rendering race fluid, relational, and historically wounded. The study reframes racial identity as a negotiated psychic formation shaped by history and law, offering a portable analytic for postcolonial fiction. The abstract narrows the scope to racial subjectivity, clarifies the theoretical lexicon, and specifies scenes as evidentiary anchors to strengthen coherence and replicability.*

Keywords: Racial Identity; Lacanian Psychoanalysis; Postcolonial Literature; *Burnt Shadows*.

Introduction

Race and identity remain at the heart of global conversations about power, belonging, and resistance, and literature offers a compelling site for exploring these contested constructs. Far from being abstract categories, race and identity directly shape the lived experiences of migrants and minorities across diverse contexts, often determining who is included and who is excluded from belonging.

Historically, race was misrepresented as a biological fact (Blumenbach, 1775). Yet, modern scholarship has dismantled this view, demonstrating that race is a social and political construct

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(Bamshad et al., 2004) and a mechanism of power (Žižek, 1992). Postcolonial literature has long challenged such fixed racial categories by showing how colonial and postcolonial histories destabilise essentialist notions of identity (Bhabha, 1994). At the same time, psychoanalysis—particularly Jacques Lacan's concept of "lack"—provides another perspective for understanding identity as perpetually incomplete, shaped not from within but through desire and the gaze of the Other (Lacan, 1977). Taken together, these approaches suggest that identity is never fixed but always unstable, produced through power and mediated by perception.

Despite the centrality of race in postcolonial scholarship, psychoanalysis has not been fully applied to racial subjectivity. Many interpretations of postcolonial fiction focus on themes of trauma, displacement, and exile. Still, they often overlook the psychic fractures of racialization—how individuals are destabilised when they are marked as racially Other. This gap is especially evident in Kamila Shamsie's *Burnt Shadows* (2009). While critics have richly examined the novel's portrayals of war, trauma, and migration (Khan, 2015; Anjum, 2020), minimal scholarship addresses how Lacanian psychoanalysis might illuminate its representation of race and identity.

The novel itself makes this gap all the more pressing. At its centre is Hiroko Tanaka, a survivor of Nagasaki whose life is continually reshaped by global violence. Over time, Hiroko becomes racialised in multiple contexts—most notably in post-9/11 America, where she shifts from being perceived as a "Japanese survivor" to being labelled a "terror suspect." Her story demonstrates how racial identity is not self-determined but imposed through the Other's gaze (Lacan, 1957). Although critics have acknowledged Hiroko's alienation and exile, they have generally stopped at social or historical explanations, leaving underexplored the more profound psychic instability that Lacan's concept of lack brings into focus.

This question of racialization is not abstract for South Asia. After 9/11, South Asians, Muslims, and Pakistanis in particular were globally constructed as racialised "others," often reduced to security threats. Scholars such as Abbas (2005) and Rana (2011) have shown how Muslims in Britain and America were surveilled, profiled, and excluded under the logic of the "war on terror." These dynamics reverberated locally as well, with Pakistanis facing stigmatisation abroad and within Pakistan itself, where global discourses of terrorism reinforced divisions of belonging and suspicion. Reading *Burnt Shadows* through this lens not only situates the novel in a worldwide post-9/11 reality but also reveals how literature reflects and resists these processes of racialization. Against this backdrop, the present study pursues three interrelated objectives: first, to analyse how *Burnt Shadows* depicts race as a manifestation of Lacanian "lack"; second, to examine Hiroko's identity struggles through the framework of the symbolic Other, including state powers and post-9/11 racism; and third, to demonstrate how Shamsie's narrative destabilizes fixed racial categories by staging a psychoanalytic critique of identity. Ultimately, this paper argues that *Burnt Shadows* exposes race as a construct of desire and power rather than essence. By bringing Lacanian psychoanalysis into dialogue with postcolonial and critical race theory, the study contributes to interdisciplinary conversations on race and identity while showing how literature illuminates the psychic fractures underlying racialization in the contemporary world.

Research Problem

Although postcolonial literature has deeply engaged with the cultural and political legacies of colonialism, it has paid relatively little attention to the emerging realities of digital colonisation. In that technology, algorithms, and data surveillance reproduce old hierarchies in new forms. With the rise of digital empires that control information flows, shape identities, and extract data from marginalised populations, the question of how power operates in the digital age has become

increasingly urgent. However, there is still a noticeable gap in research on how contemporary postcolonial writers respond to these transformations, particularly in their critiques of surveillance capitalism, algorithmic bias, and data-driven exploitation. Addressing this gap is crucial, as it allows us to see how literature not only reflects but also resists the extension of colonial power into the digital sphere, offering critical insights into the evolving face of empire in the twenty-first century.

Research Objectives

This study aims to:

1. To analyse how *Burnt Shadows* depicts race as a Lacanian "lack."
2. To examine Hiroko's identity struggles through the symbolic other (e.g., state powers, post-9/11 racism).
3. To demonstrate how Shamsie's narrative subverts fixed racial categories and offers a psychoanalytic critique of identity.

Research Questions

The following research inquiries will be looked into in this study.

1. In what ways is race, as a Lacanian "lack", depicted in the novel *Burnt Shadows*?
2. How does the character of Hiroko in *Burnt Shadows* undergo the struggle of identity?
3. In what ways do Lacanian concepts of lack and desire shape the characters' experience of race in *Burnt Shadows*?

Literature Review

The concept of race, once treated as a fixed biological category based on physical or genetic traits, has been re-examined in critical theory and psychoanalysis as a socio-symbolic construction with far-reaching political implications (Hall, 1996; Fanon, 2008; Goldberg, 1993). In L'Étourdit, Lacan (1972) argues that "[a race] is constituted according to the mode in which symbolic places are transmitted by the order of a discourse," thereby positioning race as a discursive formation embedded in language and symbolic power rather than an immutable essence. This reorientation resonates with poststructuralist and postcolonial thought, particularly Bhabha's (1994) rejection of essentialist identity categories and his emphasis on hybridity, ambivalence, and cultural negotiation. Consequently, race has increasingly been understood as a contingent, shifting construct tied to structures of power and discourse.

Although Lacanian psychoanalysis has not historically focused on race, scholars have gradually begun to adapt its central concepts—such as the Other, the mirror stage, and lack—to interrogate racial subjectivity (Frosh, 2010; Hook, 2001). For example, Winnubst's (2004) *Is the Mirror Racist?* connects Lacan's theory of ego formation and embodiment to racial hierarchies, thereby uncovering the psychic underpinnings of structural racism. Similarly, Vitus (2015) combines Lacanian insights with cultural theory to examine racial embodiment in youth cinema, highlighting affective states such as disgust, shame, and enjoyment that reproduce racial prejudice. These contributions build upon Fanon's (1952/2008) pioneering analysis of colonial alienation, extending it by illustrating how Lacanian thought illuminates the unconscious dynamics of racialization.

In addition, more recent interventions have deepened this line of inquiry. George (2014), for instance, reframes race through Lacan's notion of object petit a, thereby revealing how fantasies of race are sustained by desire and lack. Likewise, Reynoso (2021) integrates reflective practice into psychoanalytic accounts of race, although his analysis remains primarily clinical and detached

from narrative and cultural representation. Collectively, these perspectives demonstrate that Lacanian psychoanalysis can shed light on the symbolic and unconscious dimensions of racial identity. However, it is equally evident that applying these insights to literary texts—particularly postcolonial narratives—remains limited (Spivak, 1999; Gilroy, 2004).

Despite valuable progress, gaps persist. On the one hand, psychoanalytic studies of race often remain overly abstract (Žižek, 1992; Homer, 2004), detaching theory from lived realities. On the other hand, clinical approaches (e.g., Reynoso, 2021) rarely connect psychoanalysis to cultural and historical contexts. Consequently, much existing scholarship explains displacement, trauma, and racialization in social or historical terms, but neglects the psychic fractures that underpin racial subjectivity. This oversight is evident in studies of Kamila Shamsie's *Burnt Shadows*. While critics have illuminated the novel's themes of trauma and displacement (Khan, 2015; Anjum, 2020), race and racialization often remain treated as secondary concerns. However, the narrative—through Hiroko Tanaka's shifting identities across Japan, Pakistan, and post-9/11 America—offers a compelling dramatisation of how race is imposed through the Other's gaze and fractured by historical trauma (Upstone, 2010; Parashar, 2016).

Therefore, there is a pressing need for further research that bridges psychoanalysis and postcolonial literary studies. Future work should examine how Lacanian concepts such as the mirror stage, lack, and the symbolic Other illuminate racial subjectivity in *Burnt Shadows*. Moreover, postcolonial narratives like Shamsie's can extend psychoanalysis beyond its Eurocentric roots, thereby contributing to more global understandings of race, trauma, and identity. This approach would not only fill a theoretical gap but also foreground the role of literature in dramatising the lived, embodied experience of racialization, offering insights into how identity is fractured, negotiated, and sometimes resisted in contexts of war, migration, and surveillance.

Theoretical Framework

The researchers will use Lacanian concepts as a theoretical framework to analyse data extracted from the text. Lacanian ideas of race and identity use the subaltern voice to draw attention to and highlight the writer's voice.

The present study positions *Burnt Shadows* as a crucial text for rethinking racial subjectivity through a Lacanian lens. In doing so, it aligns with the study's objectives: to analyse how race functions as a Lacanian lack, to examine Hiroko's identity struggles through the symbolic Other, and to demonstrate how Shamsie's narrative resists fixed racial categories by staging a psychoanalytic critique of identity. Ultimately, this synthesis of psychoanalysis and postcolonial literature highlights how race emerges not as a biological essence, but as a construct of power, desire, and discourse—thereby enriching interdisciplinary dialogue between psychoanalysis, postcolonial studies, and critical race theory.

From the above review, it is evident that scholars have made meaningful progress in using Lacanian psychoanalysis to interrogate race, identity, and subjectivity. However, much of this work either leans toward abstraction—where psychoanalysis is detached from lived, cultural realities—or remains confined within clinical or Eurocentric contexts. While Fanon, Frosh, and Winnubst have successfully highlighted the psychic dimensions of racialization, their insights often stop short of being applied to literary narratives that dramatise these fractures in concrete, lived forms.

Furthermore, studies of Kamila Shamsie's *Burnt Shadows* have primarily emphasised themes of trauma, displacement, and history, while race and racialization often remain secondary concerns. This leaves a gap at the intersection of psychoanalysis and postcolonial literature: how can Lacan's

notions of "lack," the symbolic Other, and the mirror stage illuminate Hiroko Tanaka's shifting identities across Japan, Pakistan, and post-9/11 America? Addressing this question is crucial because it not only situates racial identity within broader structures of discourse and power but also reveals the psychic fractures that social and historical readings alone cannot capture.

Research Methodology

Research techniques describe a researcher's approach to problem-solving. It is applied to the methods of conducting research in the social sciences. Our aims, interests, and assumptions are shaped by methodology (Taylor et al, 2016). Knowledge and information are the cornerstones of all development in today's "information societies". Finding information on any unknown concept, phenomenon, or process is not difficult, but searching an unlimited pool of knowledge for scientifically sound information is much more difficult. It is more crucial to preserve scientifically sound knowledge. Consequently, research techniques are methods for acquiring scientific knowledge (Boncz, 2015).

Data Collection

Shamsie's novel will provide the primary data, while the researcher will also consult secondary data from other books, articles, and journals.

Research Methods

The investigator's application of qualitative research methods is based on their ability to reveal deep insights. Qualitative methods are recognised for their capacity to examine the complexities of a subject, revealing layers of meaning that might otherwise remain obscure. Although the methods do not necessarily aim to draw generalisations, they do shed light on the specifics of a given topic, providing readers with a thorough understanding (Merriam and Tisdell, 2015).

A systematic approach to understanding the complexities of social processes, human behaviour, and experiences can be observed in qualitative research. The above method uses a broad range of non-numerical sources, such as observations, interviews, and textual analysis, rather than numerical data and statistical studies (Lewis, 2015). These techniques align with the study's primary goals: elucidating the psychological and experiential aspects of *Burnt Shadows*' marginalised characters.

Fundamentally, qualitative research is not limited to cursory investigation. Instead, its fundamental goal is to explore the profound, producing theories and discoveries that advance our understanding of the inner dynamics of social and cultural domains (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). Within the framework of this study, qualitative approaches provide a means of gaining access to the latent meanings underlying the experiences of marginalised individuals, allowing the investigator to distil the core of their psychological environments.

This study looks at how the characters behave, interact with one another, and express their unique journeys. The data were analysed using Lacan's concepts of racism, identity, and absence to deepen understanding of the characters. The focus of the analysis was on how race and identity intersect as a theme and the backdrop of lack, to illuminate the true nature of this intersection and demonstrate how the characters in the story skillfully directed the exact dynamics of racial difficulties and identity experiences, all the while actively resisting the oppressive frameworks they came across. Using a critical analytical approach, the data were evaluated qualitatively rather than quantitatively, and the textual evidence was subjected to systematic theoretical interpretive approaches to derive meaningful insights.

Findings

The findings revealed an apparent inclination toward Tanaka when applying the Lacanian theory of race, particularly in the context of the Lacanian lack. The results are as follows:

- To highlight the elements of race, it affected cross-cultural identities that originated in Japan. Her migration exposed her to various cross-cultural differences, which ultimately shaped her perception of race.
- Racial differences led her to experience Lacanian lack—a sense of longing for something she desired but could never achieve. This sense of lack, which she is unable to fulfil throughout the novel, deepens the gap and drives her toward racial difference.
- Because of her sense of lack, she sought to fill this gap, leading to a desire that Lacan suggests can never be fully satisfied. This creates a tension between desire and race—the desire to bridge the racial gap remains unfulfilled, as Lacan describes.

The findings reveal a strong inclination to understand Tanaka's experience through the Lacanian theory of race, particularly the concept of Lacanian lack. To begin with, the analysis indicates that Tanaka's racial identity becomes most visible in her cross-cultural interactions. Her migration from Japan exposes her to unfamiliar cultural norms and racial hierarchies, and as a result, her sense of self becomes destabilised. In addition, the shifting cultural environment forces her to continually negotiate how she is perceived racially, aligning with Lacan's argument that the subject's identity is formed through the gaze of the Other, highlighting the dependence of selfhood on external recognition.

Furthermore, the study shows that Tanaka's exposure to racial difference creates a profound sense of Lacanian lack—a perpetual longing for an unattainable wholeness. This relates directly to Lacan's claim that the subject is constitutionally incomplete and constantly yearning for an imagined state of fullness that never truly existed. Similarly, Tanaka's desire to overcome racial difference mirrors this structural lack. She longs for belonging and racial acceptance; however, this desire remains outside her reach because, as Lacan suggests, desire is structured around what is forever missing and thus can never be fulfilled.

Moreover, this lack propels Tanaka into a cycle of desire that Lacan describes as fundamentally unsatisfiable. She attempts to bridge the racial gap by seeking recognition from the symbolic order dominated by the Other. This resonates with Lacan's idea that the symbolic order defines subject positions and that racial identity is mediated through symbolic structures of power and difference. Nevertheless, every attempt to fill this void only reinforces the impossibility of achieving complete identity. Her desire becomes entangled with race; therefore, the racial difference becomes both the object she wishes to overcome and the barrier that continually reminds her of her incompleteness. This parallels Lacan's theory that desire is always directed toward the *objet petit a*—the unattainable object that drives desire but can never be possessed. Consequently, the findings underscore that Tanaka's racial experience is inseparable from Lacanian desire. Her attempts to fill the lack demonstrate how racial difference becomes internalised not merely as an external social category but as an intrinsic psychological condition. Thus, the tension between desire and race becomes the central force shaping her emotional struggle, reaffirming Lacan's assertion that the subject is perpetually divided, and that this division is intensified when identity is mediated through the racialised Other.

Analysis and Discussion

Hiroko's relationship with Sajjad Ashraf, an Indian Muslim, is one of the most significant ways the novel explores the intersection of race and identity. Their love defies racial and cultural

boundaries, yet it also highlights the challenges of crossing these divides. In India, their relationship is viewed with suspicion due to the tense political climate and cultural differences. In Pakistan, they must navigate a new set of racial and religious dynamics, especially as Pakistan and India become separate nations. *Burnt Shadows* by Shamsie is written in a limited omniscient third-person narrator. The story is told from a perspective where the narrator knows a lot but not everything, and it switches between different main characters. The book searches deeply into how the characters feel inside because of what happens to them. As the characters move across borders, the novel explores the concept of diaspora and its impact on identity. Raza, Hiroko and Sajjad's son, embodies a complex mix of identities—Japanese, Indian, Pakistani, and later, American. His struggle to find a sense of belonging in a world that often forces him to choose between different parts of his heritage illustrates the challenges of maintaining a cohesive identity amid multiple, sometimes conflicting, racial and cultural influences. *At a certain point, it started to seem inevitable that he would die in the hold. All he could think of was his mother* (Shamsie, 2009, p. 343). *She would never know he had died*" (Shamsie, 2009, p. 343). In the story, everything happens in the correct order, from Nagasaki in the 1940s to New York City in the late 1900s. However, in some chapters, the timeline jumps around a bit. The dialogue *No one will give their daughter to you in marriage unless they are desperate, Raza. You could be deformed* reflects the harsh reality faced by individuals in a society where physical appearance and perceived deformity hold significant social consequences. This statement not only highlights the pressure to conform to societal norms but also suggests a broader lack within the social structure – a lack of empathy, understanding, or acceptance for those who do not fit the conventional standards of beauty or normalcy.

The Imaginary and the Formation of Identity

Following Lacan, the Imaginary order is where the self is constituted through images and identifications. Hiroko's movement from Japan to India, and later to Pakistan and the United States, involves a constant reshaping of her identity. Each new environment offers a different mirror, reflecting different versions of herself. As Salma argues, *no one will give their daughter to you in marriage unless they are desperate, Raza. You could be deformed* (Shamsie, 2009, p. 189). Here, the deformation shows and conveys a complex interplay of societal expectations. Race is connected to marriage and physical appearance. Her tattoos on her back reflect the realities of racial and societal experience. In addition, it discusses how cultural, racial, and gender norms should shape arranged marriages and society's expectations of people. From a Lacanian perspective, race plays a role in shaping people's minds, which are based on societal views. This idea shows how society views individuals, judging them based on race and physical traits. The possibility of deformities caused by the Nagasaki bombing is an example of how physical realities can change the usual ways of understanding the body and identity. The fear of *deformity*, called Lacanian lack, is the feeling of not having a "normal" physical appearance, highlighting the idea of lack. This "lack" becomes the centre where society's expectations and personal identity come together. However, these reflections are never stable, haunted by the lost object of her desire—her life in Nagasaki and her love for Konrad. The Imaginary thus traps Hiroko in a cycle of endless identification and disidentification, never allowing her to fully reconcile her past with her present. In other words, in Lacanian theory, the Symbolic order is the domain of language, law, and social structures. Hiroko's journey through different countries exposes her to various Symbolic orders, each with its own set of rules and expectations. Her struggle to navigate these social structures reflects the difficulty of finding a stable place within the Symbolic order. Her mixed heritage,

relationships, and experiences position her as an outsider, constantly negotiating her place within the dominant social narratives. This reflects Lacan's idea that the subject is always divided and incomplete within the Symbolic order, as it is mediated by language and social codes that never fully capture the essence of the self. "Konrad, you can't simply pick up urchins off the street and bring them home" (Shamsie, 2009, p. 36)

Race is important in this situation because it involves people from different racial backgrounds. Bringing these "urchins" home can be seen as an effort to recognise and address racial inequalities in society. However, the statement suggests that this act is not as simple as it seems, highlighting the difficulties in overcoming racial differences. The quote touches on the ideas of race, desire, and social order within Lacanian theory. It shows the tension between breaking down racial barriers, seeking fulfilment through connection, and realising that such efforts come with challenges and contradictions.

The aforementioned quote reflects a Lacanian view of race in society. This action challenges social boundaries and represents a desire to fill a Lacanian "lack." The "urchins" symbolise marginalised and vulnerable people. Including them represents a desire to address racial inequalities. The difficulty of overcoming racial barriers is recognised here, capturing the interaction of race, desire, and social norms in Lacanian theory. "Everything here was awful and –she glanced at Elizabeth– sad. And yet here way she would have to do something-something! To step out of the sense of temporariness that accompanied each moment..." (Shamsie, 2009, p.69).

In the context of race and identity, this passage can be seen as illustrating the struggles of individuals to find a stable sense of self within a world that imposes shifting and often oppressive identities based on race and culture. The "awful" and "sad" feelings reflect the character's awareness of how these external forces limit and define her, creating a sense of alienation and impermanence.

The desire to "step out" of this temporality is a desire to transcend the limitations imposed by race and societal expectations. However, as Lacan suggests, this desire is complicated by the fact that the identities offered by the Symbolic order are inherently lacking—they can never fully satisfy the individual's need for a coherent and stable self. On the other hand, Hiroko is surrounded by luxury, care, and attention, yet she feels strongly out of place, as if everything is temporary. She is deeply unsettled by this feeling and is desperate to find a way to escape it. As Said (1991) also mentioned, this sense of not belonging leads her to question her own identity. She does not feel like she belongs with either the ruling English or the wealthy Indian 'Oxbridge' class. As Orwell (1945) puts it, *some are more equal than others*, meaning that even when people are supposed to be treated equally, some still end up with more privileges or power than others.

Race as a Construction, as Lacan mentioned earlier, and the phenomena of the Gaze, and as called Gaze Race in terms of Lacan. However, according to Lacan, race is not biological but a construct within the Symbolic order. It is a way in which individuals are categorised and defined by the social system. The glance at Elizabeth in the passage suggests a moment of recognition—a confrontation with the way societal structures (including racial and cultural identities) shape their experiences.

The excerpt's *sense of temporality* can be linked to the Lacanian concept of lack. Lack is the feeling of incompleteness or dissatisfaction that drives human desire. It is an inherent part of being within the Symbolic order because the identities and roles imposed by society never fully satisfy the individual's desire for wholeness. In this moment, the character feels the weight of this lack—the temporality of her situation reflects a more profound, existential sense of incompleteness.

Conclusion

This paper explores how Kamila Shamsie's *Burnt Shadows* engages with race, identity, and diaspora through Lacanian psychoanalysis. The study showed that the characters' struggles are not just personal stories but reflections of broader issues of belonging, trauma, and the constant search for stability in a world shaped by social and cultural pressures.

To begin with, Hiroko's journey—from Japan to India, then to Pakistan, and later to the United States—shows that identity is never fixed but constantly changing with time, place, and history. Her scars, her displacement, and her relationships bring to life Lacan's ideas of *lack*, the *Imaginary*, and the *Symbolic order*, where identity is always incomplete and shaped by others. In the same way, her son Raza carries the weight of many identities—Japanese, Indian, Pakistani, and American—yet he feels entirely at home in none of them. These struggles highlight how race is not biological but socially constructed, often reinforced through appearance, cultural background, and the Gaze of society.

At the same time, the novel reminds us that identity, though fragile and fractured, is also about resilience. Even when the characters feel torn apart, they keep searching for a sense of belonging and meaning. In this way, *Burnt Shadows* shows that identity in a postcolonial world is not permanent but must constantly be renegotiated.

However, this study also has its limits. It mainly focused on Lacanian psychoanalysis and did not incorporate other perspectives—such as feminist or historical approaches—that might offer a fuller picture of Shamsie's work. It also concentrated on the psychological and symbolic side of identity, which may not capture all the political realities that shape the novel.

Looking ahead, future research could compare *Burnt Shadows* with other postcolonial works that address race and migration across different regions. It could also connect Shamsie's ideas to current debates on diaspora, exile, and belonging in today's globalised world.

In the end, the conclusion is that *Burnt Shadows* is not just about individuals caught in history, but about the bigger truth that race and identity are never complete, never final, and constantly shaped by lack, desire, and social codes. However, it also shows the human drive to find connection and meaning—even when wholeness is out of reach.

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