

RACISM, TRAUMA, AND PSYCHOLOGICAL SURVIVAL IN WARSAN SHIRE'S *HOME*

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Abstract

This study examines the representation of psychological trauma, systemic racism, and survival in Warsan Shire's poem *Home*. Using qualitative textual analysis, the study is grounded in psychological literary criticism and trauma theory, with close reading used to identify patterns within the text. The primary data consist of the poem *Home*, while secondary data include relevant academic sources on trauma, racism, and migration. The findings reveal that displacement in the poem is portrayed as a condition driven by survival rather than choice. Shire represents trauma through fragmented imagery and symbolic language, reflecting the psychological instability experienced by refugees. The poem also highlights the loss of identity, where individuals are forced to renegotiate their sense of self in unfamiliar and often hostile environments. In addition, systemic racism is depicted through dehumanizing language and social hostility, which contribute to ongoing psychological distress. The study shows that trauma in *Home* is not only an individual experience but is closely linked to broader socio-political structures. Unlike previous studies that primarily focus on migration and identity, this study emphasizes the intersection between systemic racism and psychological trauma within poetic representations of displacement. Survival is presented as a complex process that involves both endurance and adaptation under conditions of displacement and marginalization. This study contributes to the understanding of literary representations of trauma by demonstrating how poetry can articulate the psychological and structural dimensions of refugee experiences.

Keywords: *migration, psychological survival, racism, trauma, warsan shire.*

1. Introduction

Warsan Shire (b. 1988), a Somali-British poet, is widely recognized for her exploration of trauma, displacement, and identity. This study examines Shire's psychological perspective, focusing on how her poetry portrays psychological trauma and resilience. Through literary techniques such as metaphor, imagery, and fragmentation, Shire constructs a poetic space in which personal and collective suffering can be expressed and examined. This aligns with trauma theory and psychological literary criticism, which emphasize how literature represents fragmented and affective experiences of suffering that often resist direct expression. Despite the growing scholarly attention to migration and identity in Shire's

poetry, the intersection between systemic racism and psychological trauma remains underexplored, particularly in relation to how poetic form articulates these experiences.

This study also relates to contemporary immigration contexts, highlighting the psychological challenges of adaptation and the unspoken struggles of migrants. By situating Shire's work within broader socio-political realities, this research emphasizes how poetry functions as a medium for expressing experiences shaped by systemic racism and structural oppression, which are often silenced in dominant discourse.

Previous studies on Warsan Shire have primarily focused on themes of identity, feminism, exile, and migration. However, relatively limited attention has been given to how psychological trauma and systemic racism intersect within refugee narratives, particularly in her poem *Home*. Therefore, this study seeks to examine the psychological dimensions of racialized displacement and survival as represented in the poem. In recent years, anti-immigrant discourse has increasingly emerged within political, media, and public narratives across various countries. Immigrants and refugees are frequently portrayed as economic burdens, security threats, or sources of social instability, contributing to the normalization of racial hostility and exclusion. In this context, refugee literature has become increasingly relevant as a form of cultural testimony that reveals the human consequences of displacement and systemic discrimination. Through emotional and symbolic representation, literary works such as Warsan Shire's *Home* provide insight into the psychological realities of migration that are often ignored within dominant public discourse.

This study investigates how Warsan Shire's *Home* represents systemic racism, psychological trauma, and survival through poetic language and fragmented imagery. This study contributes to literary psychology by highlighting how *Home* portrays systemic racism as both a psychological burden and a site of resilience. By integrating trauma theory and psychological literary criticism, this research aims to provide a more nuanced understanding of how poetic form represents trauma, survival, and identity within oppressive socio-political contexts.

2. Literature Review

Literary representations of racism and displacement have become central concerns in contemporary literary studies, particularly in relation to marginalized and refugee communities. These representations not only reflect social realities but also function as critical sites for examining the psychological consequences of systemic oppression. In this context, literature, particularly poetry, functions as a vital medium through which individuals articulate experiences of trauma, identity fragmentation, and survival within broader socio-political structures. The convergence of racism, forced migration, and psychological suffering highlights how individuals negotiate complex emotional realities shaped by both personal and structural forces.

2.1 Trauma Theory and Psychological Literary Criticism

Trauma theory provides a crucial framework for understanding the psychological impact of extreme experiences, particularly in contexts of violence, displacement, and systemic oppression. Cathy Caruth (1996) conceptualizes trauma as an "unclaimed experience," referring to an event that cannot be fully processed at the moment it occurs. Instead, trauma re-emerges belatedly through repetitive memories, emotional disturbances,

and fragmented recollections. This notion of belatedness highlights the temporal disruption inherent in traumatic experience.

Furthermore, Caruth emphasizes the unrepresentability of trauma, suggesting that language often fails to adequately capture its full intensity. This limitation positions literature "particularly poetry" as a significant medium for expressing what exceeds conventional discourse. Through figurative language, fragmentation, and symbolism, poetry becomes a space where the unspeakable aspects of trauma can be articulated indirectly, allowing deeply personal and often silenced experiences to emerge in alternative forms.

In addition, Judith Herman (1992) argues that recovery from trauma involves the reconstruction of narrative and the process of bearing witness. According to Herman, articulating traumatic experience is essential for psychological survival, as it enables individuals to reclaim agency and restore coherence to disrupted identities. In literary contexts, this process is reflected in the act of writing itself, which can function as both testimony and resistance, particularly for individuals navigating displacement and marginalization.

Recent studies have further expanded trauma theory by emphasizing the socio-political dimensions of trauma rather than viewing it solely as an individual psychological condition. For example, Furtado and Auchter (2025) critique the traditional understanding of trauma as merely an incomprehensible shock, arguing that trauma must also be understood within broader political and collective contexts. Similarly, Al Azmeh and Baert (2024) examine how "trauma work" operates within political movements, suggesting that trauma is deeply connected to systems of power, memory, and collective identity. These perspectives highlight that trauma is not only experienced internally but is also shaped by external structures that influence how suffering is produced, perceived, and articulated.

Within this framework, psychological literary criticism provides a complementary approach by examining how literary texts represent psychological experiences such as trauma, identity fragmentation, and emotional survival. Rather than treating trauma as solely a clinical condition, this approach focuses on how it is narrated, symbolized, and embodied within literary forms. In this sense, poetry becomes a particularly powerful medium for capturing the fragmented and affective dimensions of traumatic experience, especially in contexts of forced migration and racialized displacement, where conventional modes of expression often prove insufficient.

2.2 Racism and Psychological Trauma

The psychological dimensions of trauma are further intensified when examined in relation to racism. Frantz Fanon (1963) argues that racial oppression produces profound psychic alienation. Individuals subjected to systemic racism often internalize feelings of inferiority, resulting in long-term psychological damage that affects identity, self-perception, and emotional stability.

This internalized oppression contributes to complex forms of trauma that extend beyond singular events, becoming embedded in everyday experience. In literary representations, these psychological wounds are frequently conveyed through fragmented narratives, emotional intensity, and symbolic language. Such stylistic features mirror the disrupted nature of traumatic memory, reinforcing the connection between form and psychological condition.

Contemporary studies increasingly suggest that racial trauma among refugees is shaped not only by forced displacement but also by persistent experiences of exclusion within host societies. Racism frequently intersects with colonial legacies, gender discrimination, and social marginalization, creating layered forms of psychological distress that influence identity formation, emotional resilience, and belonging (Hatoss, 2024; Samnick & Michelis, 2024). These findings indicate that racial trauma should be understood as a multidimensional experience produced by interconnected structural forces rather than isolated acts of discrimination.

Furthermore, recent research on refugee trauma emphasizes that racism and displacement are deeply interconnected, where stigma, discrimination, hostile social environments, and anti-immigrant discourse continuously reproduce psychological distress beyond the initial experience of migration (Salim, 2024; Wypych & Bilewicz, 2024; Samnick & Michelis, 2024). These studies collectively suggest that discriminatory language and racial hostility function not merely as expressions of prejudice but as mechanisms that intensify acculturation stress, reinforce fear and alienation, and contribute to long-term emotional vulnerability among displaced populations.

Recent studies further indicate that misinformation, public misperceptions, and media narratives contribute significantly to the normalization of exclusionary attitudes toward refugees and migrants. Refugees are frequently portrayed as threats to national security, economic stability, or cultural cohesion, reinforcing social prejudice and psychological marginalization within host societies (Komendantova et al., 2023; Thorson & Abdelaaty, 2022). These findings demonstrate that racial trauma is sustained not only through direct discrimination but also through broader discursive environments that legitimize exclusion. However, many of these studies tend to prioritize socio-political analysis over close examination of literary form, leaving the role of poetic structure in representing trauma and racism relatively underexplored.

In this sense, poetry serves as a particularly effective medium for expressing racial trauma, as it allows for non-linear, affective, and fragmented modes of representation that reflect the lived realities of marginalized individuals.

2.3 Discourse, Power, and the Construction of the Other

To understand the structural origins of racial trauma, it is essential to examine the role of discourse and power in shaping social realities. Edward Said, in *Orientalism* (1978), introduces the concept of "the Other" to describe how dominant groups construct marginalized populations through biased and reductive representations. These representations often depict minorities as inferior, exotic, or threatening, thereby legitimizing systems of discrimination and exclusion. In the context of refugee narratives, such discursive constructions contribute to processes of dehumanization that intensify psychological suffering.

Contemporary scholarship increasingly suggests that media, political, institutional, and digital discourses play a crucial role in shaping refugee experiences and public perceptions of migration. Refugees are frequently represented as threats, burdens, or dependent subjects, contributing to identity conflict, psychological distress, and social exclusion within host societies (Harding et al., 2025; Ahmed et al., 2024). Research further demonstrates that these representations are embedded within broader racial and colonial structures that influence who is considered worthy of protection, recognition, and belonging.

(Astolfo & Allsopp, 2025; Stavropoulou, 2024). Collectively, these studies indicate that discourse functions as a powerful mechanism through which racialized exclusion is produced, normalized, and sustained.

Thus, trauma should not be understood solely as an individual psychological response, but also as a condition produced and reinforced by broader socio-political structures embedded in language, representation, and institutional practices.

2.4 Migration, Refugees, and Structural Oppression in Previous Studies

Previous studies on migration and refugee experiences consistently emphasize the role of structural inequalities in shaping both the social and psychological realities of displacement. Immigration policies, institutional systems, and public attitudes often reproduce discriminatory practices that limit belonging, recognition, and access to protection for displaced populations (Laupman et al., 2022; Al Hashmi, 2025; Ruhs, 2022). At the same time, experiences of discrimination and exclusion significantly affect refugees' emotional stability, sense of belonging, and identity formation within host societies (Damen et al., 2024; Knausenberger et al., 2024). Survival in such conditions is increasingly understood as an active process of adaptation, resistance, and agency rather than mere endurance (Ernawati et al., 2025). These findings suggest that displacement involves not only physical relocation but also a continuous negotiation with acceptance, recognition, and the meaning of home. This perspective aligns with literary representations that portray survival not merely as endurance, but as a dynamic and transformative process.

Recent literary and cultural studies further suggest that poetry, narrative expression, and social recognition play important roles in representing refugee experiences and resisting processes of dehumanization. Literary expression provides a space through which displaced individuals can articulate vulnerability, negotiate identity, and reclaim agency under conditions of marginalization (McAllister, 2024; Sharp, 2025). Together with broader studies on discrimination and public perception, these findings demonstrate that refugee experiences are shaped by the interaction of structural oppression, psychological struggle, and acts of resilience. Their findings indicate that these perceptions are deeply influenced by entrenched assumptions that contribute to ongoing marginalization.

Recent studies suggest that discrimination within immigration systems is closely connected to broader public attitudes toward refugees. Racism, social perceptions, and political narratives often influence both migration policies and humanitarian responses, shaping how refugees are received and treated within host societies (Al Hashmi, 2025; Ruhs, 2022). These findings demonstrate that systemic exclusion operates not only through formal institutions but also through societal attitudes that legitimize unequal treatment and marginalization. Collectively, these studies provide empirical support for the themes represented in literary texts, particularly the persistence of systemic racism and its psychological consequences for migrant communities.

2.5 Research Gap

Despite extensive research on trauma, racism, migration, discourse, and refugee experiences, these themes are often examined separately or within predominantly socio-political frameworks. Existing studies have demonstrated how discrimination, exclusionary discourse, public attitudes, and institutional structures contribute to the marginalization of

refugees and migrants. Other studies have explored trauma, belonging, resilience, and recognition as psychological consequences of displacement. However, relatively limited attention has been given to how these dimensions intersect within literary texts, particularly through poetic representations.

Moreover, although several studies acknowledge the importance of narrative and poetry in expressing refugee experiences, limited research has specifically examined how poetic form represents the relationship between systemic racism, psychological trauma, and survival. As a result, the role of literary techniques such as imagery, symbolism, repetition, and fragmentation in articulating racialized trauma remains underexplored.

Therefore, this study seeks to address this gap by examining how systemic racism, psychological trauma, and psychological survival are represented in Warsan Shire's *Home* through the combined perspectives of trauma theory and psychological literary criticism.

3. Research Method

This study employs qualitative textual analysis to examine the representation of psychological trauma, systemic racism, and survival in Warsan Shire's *Home*. The primary data consist of the poem *Home* (2011), while secondary data include scholarly books and journal articles related to trauma theory, psychological literary criticism, racism, and migration studies. Data were collected through close reading of the poem, focusing on words, phrases, imagery, symbolism, and fragmented expressions associated with trauma, displacement, and survival. The analysis is guided by trauma theory and psychological literary criticism to interpret how literary elements construct experiences of racialized displacement, psychological suffering, and resilience. Through an interpretative reading of the text, the study explores the relationship between poetic form and the psychological dimensions of refugee experience.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Thematic Representation of Trauma, Racism, and Psychological Survival in *Home*

This section analyzes how psychological trauma, racism, and survival are represented through thematic patterns in the poem.

4.1.1 Forced Displacement and Survival

Warsan Shire's poem *Home* begins by challenging the assumption that migration is a voluntary act. Instead, the poem frames displacement as a condition of survival, where leaving is driven not by desire but by necessity.

*no one leaves home
unless home is the mouth of a shark*
(Shire, 2011)

The metaphor "mouth of a shark" does not merely represent danger. The image of being swallowed by a predator suggests a process of symbolic consumption in which the nation itself becomes a devouring force. Rather than functioning as a site of protection, home is transformed into a structure that consumes the identities of its own citizens. The shark imagery also evokes embodied fear, positioning survival as a visceral response to predatory violence. In this sense, Shire reconceptualizes nationalism not as belonging but as a form of violent containment from which escape becomes necessary. This reversal

establishes the central tension of the poem: survival requires departure, even when that departure means abandoning familiarity and identity.

*Until blade burnt threats into
your neck
And even then you carried the anthem under
your breath
(Shire, 2011)*

The image of threats being “burnt” into the neck suggests that violence is not temporary but inscribed onto the body. Trauma appears as an embodied condition, transforming the refugee’s body into a living archive of political terror. The neck functions symbolically as the site of voice and identity, implying that oppression seeks not only to wound the body but also to regulate speech, agency, and selfhood. While “carried the anthem” suggests a continued emotional attachment to homeland and identity. Although the speaker is forced to flee, the sense of belonging remains psychologically present. Shire’s poem complicates Caruth’s notion of belated trauma by demonstrating that trauma in *Home* is not just a memory, but an active force disrupting an individual’s safety and stability.

4.1.2 Psychological Trauma and Identity Loss

As the poem progresses, displacement is portrayed not only as physical movement but also as a psychological rupture that reshapes identity.

*only tearing up your passport in an airport toilets
sobbing as each mouthful of paper
made it clear that you wouldn’t be going back
(Shire, 2011)*

The act of tearing the passport functions as a ritual of self-erasure. The passport represents legal identity, national belonging, and historical continuity. It reflects the painful recognition that return is no longer possible. The emotional intensity conveyed through “sobbing” reinforces the psychological impact of this moment, marking a transition from belonging to permanent displacement. By framing trauma as an immediate disruption of safety, Shire’s poem complicates Caruth’s belatedness and instead instantiates Judith Herman’s (1992) argument on the loss of agency. The speaker in *Home* cannot simply process trauma as a past memory; rather, the ongoing survival crisis demands the erasure of both homeland and identity, stripping them of any control over their trajectory.

*I don’t know what I’ve become
but I know that anywhere
is safer than here
(Shire, 2011)*

These lines reveal identity fragmentation caused by prolonged fear and instability. The speaker’s uncertainty about “what I’ve become” reflects the disruption of a coherent sense of self. Trauma, therefore, is not limited to physical suffering, but also affects psychological identity and emotional stability. Safety is no longer understood as a permanent condition, but as a fragile comparison shaped by violence and displacement.

Caruth (1996) notes that trauma splinters self-narrative continuity; similarly, Shire depicts displacement as an existential crisis where identity must be painstakingly reconstructed amid ongoing fear and survival.

4.1.3 Violence and Survival in Conditions of Displacement

Shire further depicts displacement as a condition marked by vulnerability and ongoing violence.

no one chooses refugee camps
(Shire, 2011)

Shire's stark syntax in the line 'no one chooses refugee camps' strips the refugee experience of any romanticized agency. By isolating this absolute declaration through a deliberate line break, the poem visually mirrors the fragmentation of the displaced subject, transforming the geographical isolation of the camp into a formal element of textual rupture. This line suggests that refugee camps, although intended as spaces of protection, are experienced as sites of prolonged hardship. They function as paradoxical environments where safety is limited and uncertainty persists.

than fourteen men between your legs
(Shire, 2011)

This line confronts sexual violence as part of the lived reality of displacement. Rather than presenting it as an isolated incident, Shire situates it within broader conditions of vulnerability shaped by displacement and structural inequality. In this context, survival involves enduring forms of exploitation that reflect unequal power relations. This representation aligns with Judith Herman's (1992) argument that prolonged exposure to violence, particularly in conditions of instability, produces complex trauma characterized by powerlessness and loss of control. Similarly, Cathy Caruth (1996) emphasizes that trauma is not only an individual psychological wound but also a response to overwhelming events that exceed ordinary experience. Through this lens, Shire's portrayal suggests that sexual violence is embedded within the broader traumatic conditions of forced displacement.

4.1.4 Systemic Racism and Dehumanization

The poem culminates in a portrayal of racism and social hostility faced by immigrants.

go home blacks
refugees
dirty immigrants
asylum seekers
sucking our country dry
(Shire, 2011)

These expressions demonstrate how language functions as a mechanism of exclusion and dehumanization. The progression from racial designation ("blacks") to legal classification ("asylum seekers") reveals how racism operates across multiple levels of social power. Identity is reduced to categories that define refugees primarily through difference, dependency, and perceived threat. The final accusation, "sucking our country dry," frames migrants as parasitic figures who consume national resources without belonging to the

nation itself. Through this rhetoric, the poem exposes a discourse of predatory nationalism in which the imagined purity and security of the nation are protected by casting refugees as dangerous outsiders. Racism in *Home* therefore extends beyond interpersonal hostility and emerges as a structural system of representation that legitimizes exclusion while denying refugees full social and human recognition. Systems of racial power construct marginalized individuals as inferior and socially undesirable through symbolic and linguistic violence, while distinctions between “refugees” and “economic migrants” are often politically constructed through exclusionary discourse (Fanon, 1963; Crawley & Skleparis, 2018). In this context, discriminatory language becomes a tool that reinforces exclusion while denying the humanity of immigrants and refugees, shaping public perceptions by portraying immigrants as burdens rather than individuals escaping violence and trauma.

Repeated exposure to racial hostility may also produce internalized oppression, where marginalized individuals gradually accept negative social labels as unavoidable realities (Dumitru, 2023). Media narratives and political discourse frequently reinforce stereotypes that associate immigrants with criminality, danger, or social instability (Thorson & Abdelaaty, 2022; Wypych & Bilewicz, 2024).

Through these representations, Shire’s *Home* functions not only as a testimony of displacement, but also as a critique of systemic racism that intensifies the psychological suffering of refugees and immigrants.

4.2 Discussion

The findings of this study show that displacement in Warsan Shire’s *Home* is not merely a physical movement, but a deeply psychological experience shaped by trauma, systemic racism, and ongoing struggle for survival. The poem illustrates how forced migration disrupts identity, emotional stability, and the sense of belonging, aligning with key perspectives in trauma theory and psychological literary criticism.

While Caruth conceptualizes trauma as an “unclaimed experience” that returns belatedly through fragmented memories, *Home* suggests that trauma is not confined to the aftermath of violence. Instead, trauma persists as an ongoing condition continuously reproduced through displacement, social exclusion, and racial hostility. Shire therefore expands trauma beyond a singular past event and represents it as a continuing social reality. Trauma is not fully processed at the moment it occurs, but instead re-emerges through fragmented expressions and emotional intensity. This is evident in Shire’s use of disjointed imagery and abrupt narrative shifts, which mirror the instability of traumatic memory. The inability to articulate trauma directly is represented through symbolic language, reinforcing the idea that poetry becomes a medium for expressing what cannot be said explicitly.

Although Herman emphasizes narrative reconstruction as an important stage of recovery, *Home* presents a more uncertain process. The poem offers no stable resolution or restored sense of self. Instead, survival appears to depend on the ability to endure fragmentation and instability. Shire thus complicates the assumption that trauma necessarily moves toward coherence or recovery. In *Home*, the refugee figure experiences a loss of identity as displacement forces a separation from homeland, culture, and self-definition. The act of leaving home is not only geographical but also psychological, resulting in fragmentation and uncertainty. Survival, therefore, involves not only physical endurance but also the attempt to reconstruct meaning under conditions of instability.

Beyond thematic content, the poem's formal features play a crucial role in representing trauma. Repetition, fragmentation, enjambment, and second-person narration contribute to a reading experience characterized by instability and urgency. The recurring phrase "no one" functions as a collective testimony that resists dominant narratives about voluntary migration, while fragmented lineation mirrors the disruption of traumatic memory. Through these formal strategies, trauma is not only described but also structurally enacted within the poem.

The analysis also demonstrates that trauma in the poem is inseparable from systemic structures of racism and oppression. This aligns with the perspective that trauma should not be understood solely as an individual psychological condition, but as a socio-political phenomenon shaped by external forces. The dehumanizing language directed at immigrants in the poem reflects broader discursive practices that construct refugees as "the Other," a concept associated with Edward Said. Through such representations, marginalized groups are positioned as inferior or threatening, which legitimizes exclusion and discrimination.

In addition, the psychological effects of racism depicted in the poem are consistent with Frantz Fanon's theory of internalized oppression. However, Shire extends this framework by showing how racialization operates not only through colonial hierarchies but also through contemporary immigration systems, public discourse, and bureaucratic classifications. Categories such as "refugee" and "asylum seeker" become mechanisms through which exclusion is normalized and reproduced. Continuous exposure to racial hostility can lead individuals to internalize negative perceptions imposed by society, resulting in feelings of inferiority, alienation, and psychological distress. In *Home*, this is reflected in the erosion of identity and the normalization of suffering, where discrimination becomes part of everyday experience.

The findings further support contemporary studies that emphasize the intersection between racism, migration, and psychological trauma. As discussed in the literature, displacement often places individuals in environments where they face not only material hardship but also social exclusion and stigma. Biases such as the perception of immigrants as economic threats or security risks contribute to hostile social attitudes, which intensify the psychological burden of displacement. In this context, trauma becomes cumulative, shaped by both past experiences of violence and present conditions of marginalization.

Moreover, the poem illustrates that survival is not a simple or linear process. Instead, it involves navigating conditions of vulnerability, uncertainty, and limited agency. This aligns with recent perspectives that view survival as a form of resistance, where individuals continue to exist and adapt despite structural oppression. In *Home*, survival is portrayed as a complex negotiation between endurance and loss, where individuals must constantly adjust to unstable and often hostile environments.

Ultimately, this study contributes to literary psychology by demonstrating how Shire's poetic representation of displacement connects individual trauma with systemic racism. The poem functions not only as a reflection of lived experience but also as a form of resistance that challenges dominant narratives about migration. By integrating thematic analysis with psychological literary criticism, this study highlights how literature can reveal the emotional and structural dimensions of displacement, offering a deeper understanding of the refugee experience.

5. Conclusion

This study has examined how Warsan Shire's *Home* represents psychological trauma, systemic racism, and survival through poetic language and form. The findings demonstrate that displacement in the poem is not portrayed as a voluntary act of migration but as a necessary response to violence, fear, and insecurity. Through metaphor, symbolism, repetition, fragmentation, and emotionally charged imagery, Shire depicts trauma as a multidimensional experience that affects both psychological identity and social belonging. The poem further reveals how systemic racism intensifies the refugee experience by reducing individuals to racialized and bureaucratic categories that reinforce exclusion and dehumanization.

The study also shows that trauma in *Home* extends beyond individual suffering. While trauma theory often emphasizes the aftermath of overwhelming events, Shire portrays trauma as an ongoing condition continuously reproduced through displacement, social hostility, and racialized exclusion. Survival therefore emerges not as recovery from trauma, but as a continual negotiation with uncertainty, vulnerability, and identity disruption. Through its use of repetition, fragmentation, enjambment, and second-person narration, the poem formally enacts the instability it describes, demonstrating how poetic structure itself becomes a medium for representing traumatic experience.

Academically, these findings contribute to literary trauma studies by illustrating how trauma can be represented not only as a psychological wound but also as a socially and politically sustained condition. The study further contributes to refugee literature by highlighting the relationship between displacement, identity fragmentation, and racialized belonging. In the context of postcolonial studies, the findings reveal how contemporary migration discourse continues to reproduce forms of Othering and exclusion that extend beyond traditional colonial frameworks. Moreover, the study strengthens the field of literary psychology by demonstrating how poetic form can articulate complex emotional experiences that are often difficult to express through conventional language.

Future research may expand this discussion through comparative analyses of refugee poetry across different cultural and geopolitical contexts. Further studies could also investigate intersectional dimensions of refugee experience, particularly the relationship between trauma, gender, race, and postcolonial identity. Additionally, as migration narratives increasingly circulate through digital platforms, future scholarship may explore how digital storytelling and online media reshape the representation of displacement, belonging, and psychological survival.

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