

Ancient Tragedy as Modern Margins: Rewriting of a Classic as Resistance in Kamila Shamsie's Home Fire

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that

1. The thesis titled “Ancient Tragedy, as Modern Margins: Rewriting of a Classic as Resistance in Kamila Shamsie’s *Home Fire*” is my own original work while completing my postgraduate degree at BRAC University.
2. The thesis does not contain material previously published or written by a third party, except where this is appropriately cited through full and accurate referencing.
3. The thesis does not contain material which has been accepted or submitted for any other degree or diploma at a university or other institution.
4. I have acknowledged all main sources of help.

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Approval

This thesis, titled “Ancient Tragedy, as Modern Margins: Rewriting of a Classic as Resistance in Kamila Shamsie’s *Home Fire*” submitted by Noor Jahan Sinha (24163017) of Fall 2025, has been accepted as satisfactory in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Master’s of Arts in English on January 7, 2026.

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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines, how Kamila Shamsie's novel *Home Fire* functions as an act of political and cultural resistance by rewriting Sophocles' ancient Greek tragedy *Antigone* in the context of contemporary British Muslim experience. After September 11, 2001 terrorist attack, British Muslims have faced investigation, restricted citizenship, and marginalization through counter-terrorism policies. Shamsie responds to this crisis by adapting one of Western literature's most celebrated texts. Using adaptation theory, postcolonial theory, intersectional feminism, and political philosophy, this research provides the first comprehensive analysis of *Home Fire* as an adaptation of a classic text. This thesis argues that Shamsie's rewriting works as resistance on multiple levels. It exposes Creon's ancient tyranny, and humanizes characters in media representation. Through detailed comparative analysis, the thesis examines three dimensions of the adaptation. First, it analyzes how both texts use the unburied body to explore citizenship, statelessness, and sovereign power. Second, it investigates how gender shapes resistance, focusing on the sisters who fight for their brothers and the politics of public mourning. Third, it explores how Shamsie transforms tragic from itself from a Greek play to a contemporary novel. This research connects classical reception studies, postcolonial literature, and British Muslim writing – fields that rarely engage with each other. By showing how *Home Fire* works both as literary achievement and political intervention, this thesis illuminates the power of classical rewriting as a tool for resistance against contemporary injustice.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

After the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks, British Muslims faced challenges in their own country. The British government introduced strict counter-terrorism laws that subjected Muslim communities to constant surveillance. Young Muslims were viewed as constant suspicion. The government claimed to strip the power of British citizenship from the people who were considered dangerous, even though they were born and brought up in Britain. This created a terrible situation for British Muslims where they were treated as permanent outsiders in their own country and always have to prove their loyalty for the country.

When young British Muslims made terrible mistakes, like traveling to Syria to join ISIS, the media and public showed no sympathy. These young people were labeled as “terrorists” and “jihadis”. Their families were blamed and no one asked why they left or whether they had been manipulated. When some of them realized their mistake and wanted to come home, the government refused. Even after their death, the bodies were not allowed to return to British soil.

This thesis examines how Shamsie’s rewriting of *Antigone* functions as political resistance. Through detailed analysis, it explores how the novel uses the unburied body to question citizenship and belonging, how gender shapes resistance for Muslim women, and how Shamsie transforms Greek tragic form into a contemporary tool for political critique. By calming this celebrated Western text, Shamsie demonstrates that classical literature can become a powerful weapon against contemporary injustice.

1.1 Statement of Problem

Shamsie has addressed a contemporary problem in her novel *Home fire*. However, she tells this present-day story by rewriting an ancient Greek play, which surprised individuals. The play is Sophocles' *Antigone*, written nearly 2500 years ago in ancient Athens. *Antigone* tells story of a young woman who rebels against her king's order. Her brother has been killed while attacking their city. The king Creon, declares that the brother's body must be left unburied as punishment. *Antigone* refuses to accept this as she believes her brother deserves a proper burial, no matter what he did. When she buries him anyway, Creon punish her with death.

Shamsie saw a powerful parallel between this ancient story and the modern situation of British Muslims. In *Home Fire*, a young Muslim boy named Parvaiz is deceived by extremists and travels to Syria to join ISIS. He realizes his mistake and tries to escape but he is killed. His body ends up in Pakistan. The British Home Secretary, a powerful government minister who himself of Pakistani heritage refuses to allow Parvaiz's body to return to Britain. Parvaiz's sister, Aneeka travels to Pakistan and sits with her brother's corpse in public and refuse to leave without him. Like *Antigone*, she confronts the government order and insisted that her bother deserves dignity, live and proper burial despite what he did.

This brings us to the central problem this thesis explores: How can literature challenge injustice when marginalized people have no political power? More specifically, why would a Pakistani British Muslim writer turn to an ancient Greek play to tell a story about contemporary British Muslims?

Ancient Greek culture was pagan, not Islamic. Ancient Athens was very different from modern London. *Antigone* is a part of western literary canon, the collection of greats book that has

traditionally excluded or marginalized non-western voices. Some might argue that using a Greek play reinforces the dominance of western culture. Others might question whether an ancient text can truly speak to today's specific problems of islamophobia, terrorism and citizenship.

Yet Shamsie makes this choice deliberately. By rewriting "*Antigone*", she does several things at once. First, she claims the right for British Muslims to be part of the Western literary tradition. Second, she suggests that the British government's treatment of Muslim citizens is not new or necessary-it is an ancient form of domination that civilizations have been fighting against for thousands of years. Third, she forces readers to see British Muslims not as a headline or political problems, but as a human beings experiencing universal emotions, such as love, grief, loyalty and the desire to belong.

This thesis examines how Shamsie's adaptation of "*Antigone*" works as a form of resistance. It examines, how does rewriting a classical text allow a marginalized writer to speak truth to power? What makes this strategy effective? And what does *Home Fire* reveal about citizenship, belonging, and justice in Britain today?

These questions matter because they are about more than one novel. It portrays how people without political power can use literature to challenge those in power and shows individuals who gets to tell stories, whose voices are heard, and whose lives are considered important enough to become the subject of great literature. In short, they are about the power of storytelling itself.

1.2 Rationale

Firstly, this research matters because this thesis fills an academic gap that a few individuals talk about. Although *Home Fire* won major literary prizes and received significant attention when it was published in 2017, most reviews and article mention the connection to "*Antigone*" only

briefly. They acknowledge that Shamsie based her novel on Greek play, but they do not examine in detail how the adaptation actually works. This thesis provides the first comprehensive analysis of *Home Fire* as a classical adaptation, looking carefully at what Shamsie keeps, what she changes and why those changes matter.

Secondly, this thesis bridges different academic fields that rarely talk to each other. Classical studies Scholars (people who study ancient Greek and Roman literature) have their own conversations about how classical texts get adapted. Postcolonial literature scholars (people who study writing from formerly colonized countries) have their own conversation about how writers challenge western dominance. British Muslim literature scholars have their own conversations about representation and identity. This thesis brings all three conversations together showing how they illuminate each other. By doing this, the thesis demonstrates that we understand texts better when we use it in multiple perspectives.

Thirdly, this thesis contributes to growing interest in how Muslim writers engage with western literary tradition. Mostly Muslim writers focus on how they represent Islam, identity or politics and less attention has been paid to how Muslim writers position themselves in relation to the Western world. By analyzing how Shamsie claims and transforms a Greek text, this thesis helps us understand the complex relationship between Muslim writers and Western literary tradition.

This research shows us how adaptation works as a creative and political tool. When writers adapt classic stories, they are not just retelling old tales, they are making arguments about the present by connecting it to the past. They are also showing that old stories can speak to new situations in influential ways.

Home Fire is an excellent example of how adaptation can do political work. By connecting the contemporary British Muslim experience to ancient Greek Tragedy, Shamsie elevates her characters and their struggles. This shows, these are not just current events or social problems, these are timeless human conflicts that deserve serious literary attention. Understanding how this works helps us appreciate adaptation as an art form and as a form of activism.

The issues in *Home Fire* are not just historical and happened in the past. In 2015, a British teenager named Shamima Begum had her citizenship revoked after she traveled to Syria to join ISIS as a 15-year-old. Her case sparked enormous debate in Britain about citizenship, belonging, and justice. The exact issues Shamsie explores in *Home Fire* continue to affect real people's lives.

British Muslims still face these problems in this real world. The government still has the power to strip citizenship from people who are considered as threats. Islamophobia remains a serious problem in British society. Young Muslims are still struggle with questions of identity and belonging. By analyzing how *Home Fire* addresses these issues through literature, this thesis contributes to public understanding of these urgent political questions. Literature can help us see injustice more clearly, feel empathy for people different from ourselves, and imagine different possibilities for how society could work.

1.3 Background of the study

A. Sophocles' "*Antigone*" (441 BC)

Antigone is one of the most famous plays that was performed in Athens as part of religious festival, and it had been read, studied and performed ever since. The story is straightforward but powerful. The city of Thebes has survived a civil war. Two brothers, Eteocles and Polynices, fought each other for control of the city. Both brothers died in battle. The new king, Creon, makes

a harsh decision. He orders that Eteocles, who defended the city, should receive hero's buried with full honors. But Polynices, who attacked the city, must be left unburied, his body will rot in the sun, eaten by dogs and vultures and anyone who tries to bury him will be executed.

This creates a terrible dilemma for *Antigone*. According to ancient Greek religious beliefs, every person deserves a proper burial so their soul can rest in peace. Leaving body unburied is horrifying offense against both gods and the family. For this reason, *Antigone* chooses to bury her brother. She covers his body with dust and performs the burial rituals. When she is caught, she does not apologize or beg for mercy. Instead, she proudly defends her action. She tells Creon that his law is wrong, that the god's law is higher than any human king's commands. She would rather die than abandon her brother.

Creon is furious. He sees her defiance as a threat to his authority and to social order. So, he orders her to sealed inside a cave to die. His son Haemon, who loves *Antigone*, begs him to change his mind, but Creon refuses. By the time Creon realized his mistake, it is too late. *Antigone* killed herself and Haemon kills himself in grief. Hearing the news of her son's death, Creon's wife also kill herself. Creon is left alive but completely destroyed.

By this play, many questions arise in reader's mind, such as when the government makes an unjust law, should we obey it or resist it? Is the individual conscience more important than social order? Who decides what is right and wrong? These questions have made *Antigone* relevant across centuries and cultures.

B. Kamila Shamsie's *Home Fire* (2017)

Critics praised *Home Fire* as a powerful and timely story that speaks to contemporary political debates while drawing on ancient literary traditions. The novel tells the story of Pasha

family, three British siblings of Pakistani heritage living in London. Isma, the oldest, raised the twins Parvaiz and Aneeka after their mother died. The father Adil Pasha, left the family years earlier to fight jihad and died when the children were young. This history makes the siblings suspicious in the eye of British authorities.

For this reason, Isma being interrogated at the airport when she leaves for America, treated as a potential terrorist treated simply because of her family history. Parvaiz, deceived by an ISIS recruiter who promise him purpose and belonging. Realizing his terrible mistake, he dies while escape. Aneeka, who fall in love with Eamonn Lone, the son of Briyain's Home Secretary, the man who has the power to bring Parvaiz's body home. However, the tragic ends with Aneeka's public protest and Eamonn's attempt to help her and both died in the end.

Throughout the novel, Shamsie tries to raise questions like, what does it mean to belong? Who deserves citizenship? How we judge people who make terrible mistakes? And how far should love and loyalty extend?

C. Post-9/11 British context (2001)

The novel is set in a specific historical moment and understanding that moment is crucial to understanding the story. On September 11, 2001, terrorists attacked the United States, killing nearly 3000 people. The attackers were affiliated with Al-Qaeda, an extremist Islamic group. In response, the U.S. and its allies including Britain, launched what they called the "War on Terror". American and British forces invaded Afghanistan in 2001 and Iraq in 2003.

But the War on Terror did not just happen overseas. In Britain, the government passed new counter terrorism law and the "prevent" strategy, which require citizens to report anyone showing signs of "radicalization". These policies disproportionately affected Muslim communities.

Mosques were infiltrated by informants. Many British Muslims felt they were treated as “suspect communities”, guilty until they proven their innocence, perpetually required to condemn terrorism and prove their loyalty to Britain.

By connecting this contemporary crisis to an ancient Greek play, Shamsie makes a bold claim which is the British government’s actions are not new. They are age-old abuses of power that have been recognized as wrong for thousands of years.

1.4 Theoretical Framework

This thesis uses several theoretical approaches to analyze how *Home Fire* works as an adaptation and as a form of resistance. Each theory provides a different lens for understanding the novel. Together, they help us see how Shamsie transforms *Antigone* into a critique of contemporary British politics and how this transformation empowers marginalized voices.

A. Adaptation Theory

This theory helps us understand how stories change when they move from one form or context to another. When Shamsie rewrites *Antigone* as a contemporary novel, she is not simply copying the ancient play. She is creating something new that both honors and transform the original.

Linda Hutcheon, in her influential book, “A Theory of Adaptation”, explains that adaptations are “repetition with variation.” This means adaptations keep the core elements of the original story. Such as the plot, the characters, and the central conflicts but change them to fit new circumstances. Hutcheon argues that adaptations are not inferior copies of origins. Instead, they are creative works in their own right can reveal new meanings in familiar stories.

Hutcheon identifies, in three ways a story can be told. Such as, through words (like novel), through performance (like plays or films), through interaction (like videos or games). When *Antigone* makes from ancient Greek play to contemporary British novel, it shifts from performance to words. Play shows us character from the outside, we see what they do and hear what they say. But novels can take us inside the characters' minds, we can experience their thoughts and feeling directly. This change in form creates different effects and possibilities.

Julie Sanders, in "Adaptation and Appropriation", makes an important distinction. Adaptation stays close to the original, while appropriation takes greater liberties. Appropriation can be more radical as it claims the right to completely reimagine a story. Sanders argues that when marginalized writer's appropriate canonical texts, they are making a political statement. They try to portray they the stories belongs to them too and they can remake them in their own imagination.

Hutcheon's concept helps me identify what Shamsie keep and what she changes in the story. Sanders's shows me that Shamsie is not just updating an old story, she is claiming the right to completely reimagine it for political purpose. This theory assists to learn how the rewriting works and why these changes matter.

B. Postcolonial Theory

This theory examines how powerful countries controlled other countries and continues to shape the world even after colonies gained their independence. It questions about power, representation, and whose voices get heard in this society.

Edward Said's "Orientalism" is the foundation of postcolonial theory. Said argues that western countries such as Europe and America create a distorted image of the Orient (the Middle East, Asia, and other non Western regions). In this image, the Orient are described as exotic,

backwards, dangerous, and they are in need of Western control. This image justified colonialism which depicts that if “they” are uncivilized, then “we” must civilize them. But this image was never true as it is a fantasy of colonizers to justify their domination. Said works helps us to understand how Muslim are represented in Western media and politics today’s world. After 9/11, Muslims were often portrayed as violent, extremist, and fundamentally different from Western people. Shamsie’s novel pushes back against these stereotypes by showing British Muslim characters as complex, fully human individual.

In *The Empire Writes Back* by Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin argue that writers from formally colonized countries write back to the colonial power. They take stories and literary forms from Western tradition and remake from colonized perspectives. For example, *Wide Sargasso Sea* retells Charlotte Bronte’s *Jane Eyre* from the perspective of the mad woman in the attic, revealing the racism and violence hidden in the original. This term is known as counter-discourse, where writer uses writing to challenge the dominant narrative.

Other than that, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak’s famous essay “Can the Subaltern Speak?” portray that the true meaning of giving voice to the oppressed can be a way of silencing them by filtering their words through more powerful interpreters.

This theory helps me understand how Muslims are stereotyped in western media as violent and backwards, which explains why Shamsie’s sympathetic portrayal of her characters in politically radical and challenges those harmful stereotypes.

C. Intersectionality and Muslim Feminism

Intersectionality is a concept developed by Kimberle Crenshaw, where she argues that we cannot understand oppression by looking at only one category, class, race or religion at a time.

Instant, these categories intersect and overlap. A Black woman experiences discrimination differently than a white woman or Black man because she faces both racism and sexism at the same time, and these systems interact in complex ways.

For understanding *Home Fire*, intersectionality is crucial aspect. Aneeka Pasha is not just a British, Muslim, woman, working class, or Pakistani heritage, instant she is all of these at once. Her experiences are shaped by how these identities intersect. She faces Islamophobia because she is a Muslim. She faces gendered expectations about how a Muslim woman should behave. She faces citizenship precocity because of her family background and religion. For this reason, we cannot understand her situation just by looking at only one of these factors.

Muslim feminist scholars like Leila Ahmed and Saba Mahmood challenges western feminist assumptions. Western feminism has often portrayed Muslim woman as a passive victim who need to be saves from Islam. This view repeats orientalist stereotypes and ignores Muslim women's own voices and agency. Even, a few Muslim feminists argue that Muslim woman can be both religious and empowered, and wearing hijab can be a choice rather them oppression and that agency looks different in different cultural context.

This theory prevents me from making simplistic arguments. Instead of analyzing gender separately from religion separately from citizenship, intersectionality shows mw how those systems overlap and compound each other. It helps me avoid Western feminist assumptions that Muslim woman wearing hijab are automatically oppressed. This theory helps me portray Aneeka as a complex person making real choices within real constraints, not as either a helpless victim or a perfect hero.

D. State power and Exclusion

Giorgio Agamben, an Italian professor, writes about power and life. In his books “Homo Sacer” and “State of Expectation”, he explores how government control population. Agamben introduces the concept of “bare life”, the explore human existence stripped of political and legal rights. Some people are included in the society as full citizens with rights and protections. Others are reduced to bare life. They are alive but their lives do not count politically. They can be killed, detained, or expelled without the protections that citizens enjoy.

Agamben also discusses *homo sacer*, a figure from ancient Roman law, a person who could be killed by anyone but could not be sacrificed in religious rituals. This person was outside both human law and divine law, completely unprotected. Agamben argues that modern states create similar figures, like refugees, detainees, people stripped of citizenship. These people exist in a state of exception where normal laws do not apply.

This theory helps us understand Parvaiz’s situation. when the British government refuses to let his body return home, he becomes a kind of *homo sacer*, neither fully citizen nor fully foreign, suspended in indeterminate state even in death. Which shows that ultimate power of state where they decide who belong to them and who does not, and whose death matters and whose does not.

Judith Butler, in “Precious Life”, questions whose lives are aggrieved. After 9/11, Butler notice that some deaths were mourned publicly and treated as tragedies, primarily American and Western death. On the other hand, other deaths, like Iraqi, Afghan and Muslims death are not mourned. These shows whose lives are considering valuable and whose are not.

Mourning, for Butler is political. When we publicly grieve someone, we acknowledge their life mattered. When Aneeka publicly mourns Parvaiz, refusing to hide his grief or accept his exclusion, she is making a political claim that her brother’s life was valuable, his death is loss, and

he deserves to be grieved. She challenges the state's determination that his life was not fit for grieving.

This theory gives me the concept of how people stripped of legal rights and reduced to bodies that state can control or kill, which describes both Polynices and Parvaiz. Theories help me show that what Britain does to Muslim today is not new- it is an ancient tyranny using modern security language. This makes my argument that Shamsie's adaptation exposes contemporary injustice by connecting it to oppression we already recognized as wrong.

1.5 Objectives

A. General Objective:

The main goal of this thesis is to examine how Shamsie uses the ancient Greek play *Antigone* as a tool for resistance against the unfair treatment of British Muslims after 9/11. This thesis will show how Shamsie transforms an ancient tale into a modern story that challenges contemporary British politics. By analyzing this adaptation in detail, the thesis will demonstrate that rewriting classical texts can be a powerful way for marginalized writers to speak truth to power, claim their place in literary tradition, and humanize people who are often stereotyped or ignored.

a. Specific Objective:

To achieve this main goal, this thesis has five specific objectives:

Objective 1: Analyse the connections between *Antigone* and *Home Fire*

This thesis will compare the two texts carefully, identifying which elements Shamsie keeps from the original play and which elements she changes. It will examine character parallels, plot

similarities and differences, and thematic connections. Most importantly, it will explain why Shamsie makes specific changes and how those changes serve her contemporary political message.

Objective 2: Investigate how *Home Fire* represents citizenship, statelessness, and belonging

This thesis will examine how the novel portrays the unstable and uncertain position of British Muslims in relation to citizenship. It will analyze the parallel between Polynice's unburied body in ancient Thebes and Parvaiz's unreturned body in modern story. It will explore what these unburied /unreturned bodies reveal about who is considered to belong to the nation and who is excluded. It will also examine how British counter-terrorism policies create conditions where some British citizens are treated as less British than others.

Objective 3: Examine gender, agency, and resistance through the female characters

This thesis will analyze how Aneeka and Isma navigate their positions as British Muslim women. It will explore how the novel challenges stereotypes about Muslim woman being oppressed or passive. It will examine Aneeka's public mourning as a form of political resistance and compare it to *Antigone*'s defiance in ancient play. It will also analyze Isma's different approach of cooperation and survival and what this reveals about the impossible choices marginalized people face. Therefore, this thesis will use intersectional analysis, recognizing that these woman's experiences are shaped by the intersection of gender, religion, race, and class all at once.

1.6 Research Questions

This thesis is guided by one primary research question and several secondary questions that explore different aspect of adaptation.

Primary Research question:

1. How does Kamila Shamsie's rewriting of Sophocles' *Antigone* in *Home Fire* function as an act of political and cultural resistance against the post-9/11 marginalization of British Muslims?

Secondary research Questions:

1. What specific elements of *Antigone* does Shamsie keep and what does she transform?
2. What does the denial of burial in *Antigone* and the denial of return in *Home Fire* signify about belonging, exclusion, and who counts as a citizen?
3. How does the novel reveal the different strategies woman use to survive and resist?
4. What is the political significance of the novel's ambiguous ending, and how does it differ from *Antigone*'s clear tragic closure?
5. What does it mean to write tragedy in 21st century, when the causes of suffering are political rather than fated by the god?

1.7 Research Methodology

This section explains how this research will be conducted. The methodology combines close reading with contextual analysis to understand how those sources are needed and what analytical approaches will be followed.

A. Primary Texts:

- Kamila Shamsie's *Home Fire* (2017) – This is the central objective of the study. This thesis will read this novel carefully, paying attention to character development, plot structure, themes, language, imagery, and narrative techniques.

- Sophocles' *Antigone* (441 BC) – This is source text that Shamsie adapts. A commonly used translation by Anne Carson. This thesis will specify which translation is being used and acknowledged that reading in translation means some nuances of the original Greek are lost.

B. Secondary Texts:

My secondary resources are various in types. Rehana Ahmed's *Culture, Diaspora, and Modernity in Muslim Writing* (2012) provides context on British Muslim literature. Claire Chambers' *British Muslim fictions: Interviews with contemporary Writers* (2011) provides background on British Muslim literary tradition. I read and reviewed various scholarly articles on *Home Fire*. Edith Hall's various works on Greek Tragedy and its reception helps understand Greek tragedy's cultural role. George Steiner's *Antigones* (1984) is a comprehensive study of *Antigone* adaptations across history. Linda Hutcheon's *A Theory of Adaptation* (2006) provides the main framework for understanding adaptation as repetition with Variation. Julie Sanders' *Adaptation and Appropriation* (2006) distinguishes adaptation from appropriation and examines the political dimension of adaptation. Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin provides the postcolonial counter-discourse in *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literatures* (1989). Edward Said explains Western construction of the Orient and helps analyse representations of Muslims in *Orientalism* (1978). Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak in her essay "Can the Subaltern Speak?" (1988) questions of voice, agency, and representation for marginalized subjects. Leila Ahmed in *Woman and Gender in Islam: Historical Roots of a Modern Debate* (1992) challenges orientalist feminism. Kimberle Crenshaw in her essay "Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Woman of Color" (1989) provides intersectional framework for analysing multiple, overlapping oppression. Saba Mahmood in

Politics of Piety: The Islamic Revival and the Feminist Subject (2005) examines Muslim women's agency within religious frameworks. Giorgio Agamben provides concepts of bare life, *homo sacer*, and sovereign power in *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life* (1988). Judith Butler examines whose lives can be taken up as subjects of public mourning as political recognition in *Precarious Life: The Power of Mourning and Violence* (2004).

In the Literature Review chapter I have tried to give an overview of these literatures.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

A literature review is like a map of existing knowledge. Before starting new research, we need to know what other scholars have already discovered, what questions they have asked, and what answer they have found. This will help us understand where our own research fits in. It shows us what gaps exist, questions that have not been answered yet. So, we know what new contribution this thesis can make.

This literature review examines three main areas of scholarship that are essential for understanding *Home Fire* as an adaptation and as an act of resistance. The first section looks at academic works about how ancient Greek and Roman texts are received, read, and adapted in later periods. It examines studies of *Antigone* specifically, why this play has been rewritten so many times across different cultures and historical moments. Scholars have shown that *Antigone* is repeatedly adapted during times of political oppression because it speaks to conflicts between individual conscience and state power. Understanding this pattern helps us see where *Home Fire* fits within a large tradition. The second section will show how writers from formerly colonized countries engage with western literary tradition. When post-colonial writers rewrite canonical texts, they are not just retelling stories- they are challenging who owns these stories and who has the right to remake them. The third section will portray the development of British Muslim literature as a field, and the political context of the post-9/11 “War on Terror.” It examines how British counter terrorism policies have affected Muslim communities and how Muslim writers have been responding to these conditions. Lastly, it will also review existing academic works specifically on Kamila Shamsie and *Home Fire*. This helps us understand the specific historical and political situation the novel addresses.

2.1 Classical Reception Studies

Classical reception is the study of how ancient Greek and Roman texts are read, understood, performed, translated, and adapted in later historical periods. The key idea is that the ancient texts is that it does not have one fixed or eternal meaning. Instead, each new generation and culture creates new meaning by reading these texts through their own experiences and concerns.

Charles Martindale, a leading scholar in this field, argues that we should think about reception rather than Influence. Influence suggests that the ancient texts have power that flows in one direction from past to present. It treats the ancient texts as the active force and later readers as passive readers. On the other hand, reception emphasizes that readers and adapters are active creators of meaning. When we read Homer or Sophocles today, we do not just absorb what they meant thousands of years ago. We create new meaning based on our own questions, values, and contexts. This shift in thinking is crucial. It means that Shamsie's *Home Fire* is not a lesser copy of Sophocles' *Antigone*. It is a new creation that uses the ancient text as a raw material to address contemporary concerns. Both texts are equally valid and different from one another.

Lorna Hardwick, in her book *Reception Studies* (2003), provides practical methods for studying how classical texts are received. She identifies several categories in her text. Such as, translation texts from ancient languages (Greek, Latin) into modern languages. In case of adaptation, she changes the form of play to novel and setting from ancient to modern. She describes about the performance of staging ancient play in new ways. For this reason, she takes elements from ancient texts and used them for entirely new purposes. Hardwick's text highlights that reception is always shaped by the receiving culture's needs and concerns.

This reception framework tells us that Shamsie is not misusing or destroying *Antigone* by placing it in contemporary London with Muslim characters. She is doing what every generation does which is making the ancient texts speak to present concerns. Her adaptation is legitimate and creative, not derivative or secondary.

George Steiner, in his comprehensive book *Antigones* (1984) traces the history of *Antigone* adaptations from ancient times of modern era. His book analyzes how this single play has been rewritten, reinterpreted, and reimagining across those years. Steiner's central arguments is that *Antigone* addresses fundamental human conflicts that every society faces. Such as, individual vs state, moral law vs human law, family loyalty vs civic duty, and men vs women. These conflicts are not unique to ancient Greece. Every society wrestles with them and this is why *Antigone* travels so well across cultures and historical periods.

Seamus Heaney's *The Brutal at Thebes* (2004) was commissioned after the Iraq War began. Heaney, an Irish poet, saw parallels between Creon's army and British military actions in the Middle East. His adaptation criticizes political leaders who claim to act for security while creating more violence.

Scholars notice that *Antigone* is repeatedly adapted during times of political crisis and oppression. When people feel their governments are acting unjustly, when dissent is dangerous, when individuals must decide whether to obey or resist, that's when *Antigone* becomes relevant again. The play offers a framework for thinking about resistance. It asks whether there are limits to what governments can rightfully demand. These questions never go away; they just take different forms in different eras.

More recently, scholars have paid attention to how writers from formerly colonized countries engage with Greek tragedy. Scholars like Emily Greenwood, Edith Hall, and Barbara Goff have explored how African, Caribbean, and other non-Western writers use Greek texts. Their research reveals an interesting paradox. On one hand, Greek and Roman classics were tools of colonialism. European colonizers claimed that classical civilization proved European superiority. They taught Greek and Latin in colonial schools to impose European culture. The classics were weapons of cultural domination. On the other hand, many postcolonial writers have claimed these same texts and remade them. They argue that these stories do not belong to only Europe. They are part of human heritage. They have as much right to Homer and Sophocles as anyone.

Barbara Goff and Michael Simpson, in *Crossroads in the Black Aegean* (2007), explain how African and African diaspora writers engage with Greek tragedy. They show how these writers transform the texts to address slavery, colonialism, and racism. However, these issues the original Greek plays didn't concern themselves with.

Some scholars worry that using Greek texts might reinforce European cultural dominance. If a Pakistani-British writer feels she needs an ancient Greek play to legitimize her story, it does not suggest that Greek culture is still central and superior. Other scholars argue the opposite. When postcolonial writers claim and transform classical texts, they're decentering Europe. They are saying they will take what they want from the tradition and remake it for their own purpose. This debate is important for understanding *Home Fire*. When Shamsie based her novel on *Antigone*, is she submitting to western cultural authority, or is she claiming that authority for herself? This thesis will argue that she is doing the latter— but with awareness of the complexity involved.

There is a few academic research that specifically about Muslim writers adapting *Antigone* or other Greek tragedies. This is a significant gap. We have studies of African adaptations,

Caribbean adaptations, and Indigenous adaptations. But Muslim writers' engagement with classical texts have received less attention from scholars. This absence is puzzling because *Antigone* seems particularly relevant to Muslims contexts.

In *Antigone* the conflict is between Creon's political declaration and divine laws requiring burial. This parallels ongoing debates in Muslim majority countries and Muslim diaspora communities about the relationship between religious law and Secular state law. Islamic tradition, like ancient Greek tradition places great importance on proper burial. The Quran and Hadith emphasize that the deceased should be buried quickly and respectfully. Denying proper burial is serious offense. This makes the parallel between Polynices' unburied body and Parvaiz's unreturned body particularly resonant Muslim leaders.

Other than that, *Antigone* challenges stereotypes about ancient women being passive and silent. Similarly, Aneeka challenges stereotypes about Muslim woman being oppressed and voiceless. The comparison allows Shamsie to show Muslim women's agency while drawing on a respected western literary source. Similarly, using a canonical Western text helps Muslim writers reach Western audiences who might not otherwise engage with stories about Muslim. In this way, if readers know *Antigone*, they have familiar framework for understanding *Home Fire*.

So it can be said that with the help of classical reception, we learn that ancient texts do not have fixed meaning and each new context creates new interpretations by the urge of people. *Antigone* has been adapted repeatedly across different cultures because it addresses the main issue of this society which is fundamental conflict between individual and state. Because of this reason, this play is especially popular during all ages or times of political oppression. By working with *Antigone*'s core theme, postcolonial writers have claimed Greek tragedy as a part of their own heritage. It shows that using texts can be an act of cultural resistance, not submissions.

Despite all this valuable research, there is a limited sustained analysis of *Home Fire* as a classic adaptation. Most reviews and articles about *Home Fire* mention the *Antigone* connection in every paragraph. They do not examine in detail how adaptation works structurally, thematically, and politically. They do not compare the two texts to see what Shamsie keeps and what she changes. They do not theorize what it means for a British Muslim writer to claim this Greek text.

This thesis fills that gap. It provides the first compressive analysis of *Home Fire* as a classical reception, situating it within the tradition of political *Antigone* adaptations while also examining what's distinctive about its Muslim, postcolonial, and contemporary British context. But to fully understand what Shamsie is doing, we also need to explore post-colonial theories of adaptation and writing back.

2.2 Postcolonial Literature and Theories of Adaptation

This section examines how writers from formerly colonized countries engage with Western literary traditions. It explores the political act of taking ancient texts, which are the books that Western education systems have long treated as “the greatest literature ever” and remaking them from colonized perspectives. This practice is often called “writing back” to empire.

In 1989, three scholars –Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin published an influential book called *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literature*. The title itself is a clever play on words, referring to the *Star Wars: The Empire strikes Back* movie. But instead of a space empire, they are talking about colonial empire. Such as, Britain, France, Spain, and other European powers that conquered and ruled much of the world. Their argument is that writers from colonized places are not just creating their own stories. They are actively responding to, challenging, and rewriting the stories that colonizers told about them. When British

colonizers wrote about India, Africa, and Caribbean, they create distorted images that justified their rule. Similarly, postcolonial writers are correcting those distortions, taking about back, asserting their own perspectives.

To perceive their goal, Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin uses two key strategies. Which is Abrogation and Appropriation. Abrogation means rejecting or refusing the authority of colonial language and literature. As a writer might refuse to use proper English, instant mixing in local language, dialects, or non-standards grammar. On the other hand, Appropriation means taking something from colonial culture and using it for your one purposes. A writer might take a famous English novel and rewrite it from a different character's perspective, or transplant it to a different setting. Which portray that we will use your cultural materials, but we'll make them serve our purpose, not yours.

Helen Tiffin, in her essay, "Post-colonial Literature and Counter-Discourse" (1987), develops this idea further. She argues that postcolonial literature creates colonial discourse by writing the ways how colonizers talked and wrote about colonized people. It does not just ignore colonial texts, it engages with them directly, showing their lies and limitation. It is like a courtroom where colonizers have been telling one story for centuries, and now colorized people finally get to testify and present their version of events. Shamsie is doing something similar. She is taking a beloved western classic and rewriting it from the perspective of people who are marginalized (Muslim) in contemporary British society. Here, she tries to portray that your culture's most celebrated stories about individual resistance can speak to our struggle too but we'll reshape them to address our specific oppression.

This rewriting is particularly interesting because classical texts predate modern colonialism. Greece and Roman had their own empires, but they were not the 19th century

European colonial empires that conquered Asia, Africa, and Americas. So they do postcolonial writers engage with Homer, Sophocles, and Virgil?

Derek Walcott, wrote an epic poem *Omeros* (1990) that reimagines Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey* in the Caribbean. His characters in the poems are Caribbean fisherman, not Greek warrior, but they are Homeric heroes. Walcott's arguments are bold. He thinks Epic poetry does not belong only to ancient Greece or to Europe. Caribbean people have their own epic experiences, such as slavery, colonization, survival resistance. By using Homeric Structure and allusion, Walcott claims that Caribbean history is as important as Greek mythology.

Critics debated his approach. Some praise him for elevating Caribbean experience to classical status. Others worried that he was suggesting Caribbean literature needs Greek legitimacy, as if it's not valuable on its own. Even, Walcott himself addressed this in the interviews. He argued that the classics are "World Literature," not European property. Caribbean writers have as much as right to Homer as a British and American writer does.

In 2005, Margaret Atwood, the famous Canadian writer retells Homer's *Odyssey* from Penelope's perspective. In the original epic, Penelope is Odysseus's faithful wife who waits twenty years for his return. She is praised for her loyalty but has almost no voice in the story. Atwood gives Penelope that voice in *The Penelopiad*. Where we hear her thoughts, frustrations, and her version of events which differs from Odysseus's version. The novel also focuses on Penelope's twelve maids, who are hanged at the end of the *Odyssey* for supposedly sleeping with Penelope's suitors. In Homer, this mass execution is mentioned causally in a few lines. Atwood makes us see these women as human beings with their own stories, not just some disposable servants. While Atwood is not from a colonized country, her feminist rewriting shares strategies with postcolonial

writing centers marginalized voices, questions dominant narratives, and showing the violence hidden in celebrated texts.

Toni Morrison, the African American Nobel prize winner, did not directly adapt specific Greek plays, but her novels especially *Beloved* use tragic structure and Greek chorus like elements. Scholars have analyzed how she brings African American experiences of slavery into dialogue with classical tragic forms. Other than that, Morrison once said she wanted to create literature that was distinctly African American but also engage seriously with the Western literary tradition. she refused to be excluded from the tradition but also refused to let it define her completely.

Postcolonial and marginalized writers who engage with classics share several motivations. They assert that supposedly “universal” themes in Greek tragedy (justice, family, gate, and resistance) are actually relevant to their own community’s experiences. They refuse the idea that Western classics belong to only Western people. These texts are human heritage. By retelling from marginalized perspectives, they reveal the exclusion and violence in the origins. Their perspective is like whether we like it or not, classical texts carry cultural prestige. Using them can make audiences take stories about marginalized people more seriously. They show that ancient texts can speak to contemporary struggles, but only if we read them critically and transform them.

The theme of postcolonial adaptation is important because when Shamsie changes elements of *Antigone* –making it a novel instead of a play, setting it in London instead of Thebes, making characters Muslim instead of Ancient Greek, here she is not being unfaithful. She is creating new meanings relevant to contemporary British Muslim Experience. As we know *Antigone* is a showing text which means it is performed in the stage. *Home Fire* is a Telling text which is read by the audiences. This shift changes everything about how we experience the story. In the novel, we are inside character’s heads, understanding their movements and fears in ways theater cannot

provide. By doing this hybrid approach strategically, Shamsie wants readers to recognize the connection but also to see how different the contemporary situation is.

This part of this thesis shows us how postcolonial writers engage with Western literary traditions. Classical texts like *Antigone* offer postcolonial writers both opportunities and challenges. The opportunities include cultural authority, recognizable, frameworks, and ability to show and speak about the marginalized experiences. The challenges include the risk of seeming to validate Western cultural superiority. Understanding these postcolonial strategies helps us see *Home Fire* not just as a retelling of an old story, but as a politic intervention.

2.3 British Muslim Literature and Post-9/11 Contexts

This section examines the development of British Muslim Literature as a field that explore how post-9/11 shaped the position of Muslims, and analyzes the specific political conditions in Britain that form the background of *Home Fire*. Understanding this context is essential because Shamsie is not writing in a void, she is responding to real policies, violence, and debates about Muslim belonging in Britain. Muslims have lived in Britain for centuries, but “British Muslim Literature” as a named field is relatively recent. The 1980s and especially the 1990s saw an explosion of writing by British Muslims that gained mainstream attention.

In 1988, Salman Rushdie, a British-Indian Muslim background writer published *The Satanic Verse*. The novel included depictions of the Prophet Muhammad that many Muslims found deeply offensive. Protests erupted in Britain and globally. Iran’s Ayatollah Khomeini issued a fatwa calling for Rushdie’s death. Rushdie went into hiding for years under British police protection. This affair forced British Society to confront questions like who are British Muslims? What do they believe? How do they fit into British multicultural society? Unfortunately, much of

the resulting attention was negative because Muslims were portrayed as angry, intolerant, and threatening to free speech. But the controversy also created space for British Muslim writers. Publishers become interested in Muslim voices. Readers wanted to learn and understand Muslim communities. This opened doors, through often for wrong reasons, such as curiosity mixed with fear rather than genuine respect.

Hanif Kureishi wrote *The Buddha of Suburbia* (1990), a comic novel about a British-Pakistani teenager in 1970s London navigating identity, sexuality, and racism. Through Kureishi does not identify as religious Muslim, his work explores South Asian immigrant experiences in Britain. Monica Ali who wrote *Brick Lane* (2003), about a Bangladeshi woman's life in East London. The novel explores arranged marriage, domestic life, immigration, and slowly developing independence. It was praised but also criticized by some Bangladeshi British readers who felt it has been using exaggerating stereotypes. Lastly, Nadeem Aslam, who writes *Maps of Lost Lovers* (2004), set in a Pakistani community in Northern England. The novel deals with honor killing, religious conservatism, and clash between traditional values and British Society. It's beautifully written about portrays intense cultural conflict. The common themes across these writers are Identity which deals with the question of what does it mean to be both British and Muslim? Generational Conflict where parents who immigrated vs children born in Britain, Racism and Discrimination which presents the daily experiences of prejudice, Cultural tension navigating between different cultural expectations, and Integration vs. Tradition asked how much should immigrants adapt to British culture?

Claire Chambers, in her book *British Muslim Fictions* (2011), surveys on leading writers on that topic and argues that British Muslim literature is diverse and there are no single Muslim experiences these writers respect. Some writers are religious, and others are secular. Some focus on

faith, other barely mention religion. Some portrays Muslim communities positively, other offer harsh critiques. Throughout the text it is presented that what united those writers is not the beliefs they shared but the experiences of being marked as Muslim in British society, whether they are religious or not.

September 11, 2001 changed everything for Muslim writers. After Al-Qaeda's attacks on United States, Muslims worldwide faces increased suspicion, surveillance and hostility. In literature, a new genre emerges as the "9/11 or War of Terror novel." There are two categories of 9/11 novels.

The first one is about the American or Western Perspective on 9/11. Where writer mostly talk about American trauma and loss. Such as Jonathan Safran Foer's *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* (2005) follows a young boy whose father died in the Twin Towers. Don DeLillo's *Falling Man* (2007) explores survivor's psychological aftermath. And Ian McEwan's *Saturday* (2005) portrays a London neurosurgeon's anxieties about terrorism. These novels center Western victims and western fear. Muslims, when they appeared, are often shadowy threats in the background.

On the other hand, there are Muslim writers' responses. The writers faced a different situation. publishers wanted books about terrorism, and Muslims, but for troubling reasons. They do not understand Muslims as complex humans, but to satisfy curiosity about the enemy. For this reason, Muslim writers had to decide, whether they should write books on this topic or can they really use this opportunity to humanize Muslim characters. In 2007, Mohsin Hamid write *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*, a powerful novel about Changez who is a Pakistani man succeeds in America as a financial analyst but becomes disillusioned after 9/11. The novel is structures as a monologue addressed to an American listener in Lahore. The novel's brilliance is its ambiguity:

who is the threat? And who is the fundamentalist? In this text Humid challenges, the “good Muslim/Bad Muslim” binary. Changez is neither simply good or bad, he’s complex and shaped by both personal experiences and political forces.

Laila Lalami’s *The Moor’s Account* (2014) does not directly write about 9/11, but her historical novel has clear contemporary resonances. Set in the 16th century, it tells the story of Estebanico, a Muslim Moroccan slave who explores what is now the American Southwest with Spanish conquistadors. The novel challenges whose stories get told and whose get erased from history. By going back centuries, Lalami reminds readers that Muslims have always been a part of American history, it is not a recent threat but long-standing presences that dominant narratives have written out.

In Amy Waldman’s *The Submission* (2011), depicts the controversy when a Muslim American architect wins a competition to design the 9/11 memorial in New York. The novel explores Islamophobia, American values, and whether Muslim can be fully accepted as Americans.

The common themes in post-9/11 Muslim fiction is surveillance and suspicion where Muslims are living under the constant watch. Radicalization presenting why young people join extremist groups? Most novels resist simple answers, showing economic desperation, identity crises, manipulation, and political grievances. Those novels also show humanizing Terrorist, showing that people who commit violence are still human beings shaped by circumstances, not monsters. Lastly, citizenship and belonging where the writer’s questions, can Muslims be truly British, American, European? Or are they perpetual outsiders?

Peter Morey and Amina Yaqin, in *Farming Muslim* (2011), analyze how media and literature represent Muslims post-9/11. They document pervasive stereotypes: Muslim men as

violent terrorists or oppressive patriarchs, Muslim woman as silent victims needing rescue. They argue that even well-meaning representation often reinforce these frames. Muslim writers must navigate these stereotypes challenge them without being preachy, create complex characters without seeming to excuse violence, and tell human stories without feeding prejudice.

To understand *Home Fire*, we need to understand specific British policies that shape the novel's world. They arrest and detain people suspected of terrorism connections without traditional evidences. They stop and search people without cause at airports and transport hubs. They ban organizations deemed terrorist groups. These powers were used disproportionately against Muslim communities, creating a climate of suspicion.

For this reason, they also started to use prevent strategy. It is a government program that aimed at preventing radicalization. It requires teachers, doctors, social workers and other public employees to report people showing the signs of extremism. Critics argue prevent create a massive surveillance network targeting Muslims. The program assumes Muslims are inherently suspect and threats normal religious practice or political dissents as potential extremism. Arun Kundnani, in *The Muslims Are Coming!* (2014), provides devastating critique of prevent and similar American program. He shows how counter terrorism policy is based on flawed theories and radicalization that assume religious ideology cause terrorism, ignoring political grievances like Western military interventions in Muslim-majority countries.

As mentioned earlier, British law allows the Home Secretary is strip citizenship from dual nations is seemed threats to nation security. Nisha Kapoor, in *Deport, Deprive, Extradite* (2018), documents how this power has been used increasingly against British Muslims. Since 2010, over 150 people have had their citizenship revoked and nearly all are Muslims. This creates conditional citizenship between them. For example, if you are white and Christian, your British citizenship is

secure. If you are Muslim with family connections to Pakistan or Somalia, your citizenship can be taken away. This message makes it clear that some British people are more British than others. The same real cases that echo in *Home Fire* is that several young British people traveled to Syria to join ISIS and realizing their mistake when they want to return, some were captured, died, barred by the government, and their pleaded for help get ignored.

Islamophobia is a prejudice against Muslims which increased dramatically after 9/11 attack and it is still continued rising. The statistic shows that after terrorist attack, British people hatred against Muslims reaches to its peak. Muslims face employment discrimination. Muslim women wearing hijab experiences verbal and physical harassment. Mosques are destroyed and politicians like Boris Johnson describes that Muslim woman in burka are compared to bank robbers. Edward Said's "Covering Islam" (1997) documented how Western media covers Islam and Muslims. Said showed that coverage focuses overwhelmingly on violence, terrorism, and creating the impression that Islam is inherently violent and Muslims are threats. News coverage rarely shows about ordinary Muslims living an ordinary life. When Muslims appear in media, it is usually in connection with terrorism. Similarly, *Home Fire* navigates this by giving us access to Parvaiz's interior life. We see how he is manipulated, how he regrets his choice, and how he tries to escape.

This section has portrayed that British Muslim writers work in specific and difficult contexts. This is a literary field that emerged partly from controversy (the Rushdie Affair). It describes the post-9/11 climate of heightened suspicion and surveillance. It shows how Government policies treat Muslims as restricted citizens and pressure to represent their communities as an Islamophobia in media. Shamsie's *Home Fire* is a writing for multiple audiences. British Muslim who see their experiences reflect, non-Muslim British readers who need to understand these experiences, and a global relationship interested in questions of terrorism,

citizenship, and belonging. Understanding this context helps us see why Shamsie makes specific choices in adapting *Antigone*. She is not just rewriting an ancient story, she is intervening in urgent contemporary debates about who belongs to Britain and what justice looks like.

2.4 Existing Research on Kamila Shamsie and *Home Fire*

This part examines what scholars, critics, and reviewers have already said about Kamila Shamsie as a writer and about *Home Fire* specifically. It shows what we already know and, more importantly, what questions remain unanswered and gapes this thesis will fill.

Kamila Shamsie was born in 1973 in Pakistan. Growing up surrounded by books and writers, Shamsie was exposed to both Pakistani/Urdu literature and English-literature from an early age. She has lived in both Pakistan and Britain, giving her what scholars call a “transnational” perspective. She sees the world from multiple national viewpoints rather than being rooted in just one place.

In the City by the Sea (1998), Shamsie’s debut novel was set in Karachi during political violence in the 1980s. It follows a young boy discovering family secrets against the backdrop of ethnic conflict. The novel explores how political violence invades private life. In 2002, Shamsie’s another novel *Cartography* is also set in Karachi, this novel focus on two friends navigating love and identity against the backdrop of the city’s ethnic divisions. Maps become a metaphor for how we understand and divide space, people, and belonging. Her *Broken Verses* (2005) is a mystery involving poetry. It shows political disappearances during Pakistani military dictatorship, and woman searching for truth about her mother’s past lover who was a famous dissident poet. *Burnt Shadow* (2009), Shamsie’s breakthrough international success. This ambitious novel spans from the atomic bombing of Nagasaki in 1945 through to post-9/11 America. It follows Hiroko, a

Japanese woman whose life intersects with effects of empire, war, and migration across decades and continents. Critics praised its scope and its connection between historical violence and contemporary politics. Even, in *A God in Every Stone* (2014) is set during World War I and the independence movement in British India. This novel explores colonialism, war, and competing claims to history.

Throughout the texts, we can feel the presence of history and memory. It shows how past shapes the presents, especially violent regarding historical events like partitions, wars and dictatorships. We can also see the transnational connection in all of Shamsie's works. There are characters whose lives span multiple countries and describes how the empire, war, and immigration makes connection between distant places. Political valance entering private life is also a common theme in those texts. It depicts how large political forces affects ordinary people's families, friendships, and loves. Belonging and exile is also a staple theme that we cannot deny in those works. Which questions readers what does it mean to be caught between nations? What is home and where people truly belong? And lastly these works describe about strong female characters who boldly navigates patriarchy, tradition, and modernity.

Researchers note that Shamsie consistently explores how geopolitics affects intimate relationships. Her novels move between the personal and political life. She refuses to separate these spheres. In her fiction, the political is always personal, and the personal is always political. Her work is often categorized as postcolonial literature because it examines legacies of British colonialism and contemporary forms of Western interference in South Asia and Middle East.

Nearly every review emphasized how timely and urgently *Home Fire* feels. Reviewers noted that Shamsie takes real issues like British Muslim joining ISIS, how the government's response on it, and how this matter is exploring with nuance and empathy rather than simplistic

judgments. Many reviewers praised Shamsie for making readers care about characters who might otherwise be dismissed as terrorist. They noted that the novel creates moral complexity without excusing violence. They also highlighted the novel's ability to move the readers. The scenes of Aneeka sitting with Parvaiz's body in Pakistan particularly affect critics. Many mentioned that they are moved to tears. For this reason, it can be said that this novel succeeds not just intellectually but emotionally. Critics also praised Shamsie's portrayal of the Pasha siblings, especially Aneeka. They feel that each characters feels fully realized with understandable motivations, even when those motivations conflict. The five chapters of the novels, gives each major characters their own sections and was frequently praised for crating empathy. Some reviewers simply noted that this novel is based on *Antigone* without farther analysis. Others explored the parallel between Creon and Karamat, noting on how both claim to act for the state's good while causing tragedy. Even, a few discussed how the novel updates ancient questions about state power and individual conscience.

Several reviewers felt that Eamonn Lone was less fully developed than the other characters. Some found him somewhat naïve or passive, a character with whom things happen rather than an he as an active agent. They also said that Eamonn sometimes feels like a plot device to connect the Pasha family to the Home Secretary. Critics were divided on the novel's ending. Some found it powerful and appropriately tragic. Others felt it was too abrupt or melodramatic. The sudden violence that kills both Aneeka and Eamonn felt like it has come from outside the novel's logic rather than emerging predictably from characters and situation. A few reviewers are also worried that the novel's political message overwhelms the story at times- that Shamsie is so focused on making arguments about citizenship and Islamophobia that characters occasionally feel like puppets rather than fully self-sufficient people. Despite minor criticisms, the overall response was

positive. Reviewers agreed that *Home Fire* is an important novel that successfully bridges classical tragedy with contemporary relevance. Because of this reason, it was seen as one of the most significant British novels of 2017 and was nominated for the Booker Prize longlist and won the 2018 Women's Prize for Fiction, strengthening its critical success. Other than that, what is notable about the reviews are that they were written by literary critics for general audiences and not for the academic scholars. They mostly focus on the novel's emotional impact, its characters and its political themes. The *Antigone* connection was acknowledged but rarely analyzed in depth. This suggests an opening for academic research to go further than journalism could.

Academic analysis of *Home Fire* is still developing, since the novel was published in 2017. In case of adaptation a few articles have examined *Home Fire* as an *Antigone* adaptation. Articles in journals like *Ariel* have placed *Home Fire* in the context of postcolonial classical responses. Some comprehensive literature studies mention *Home Fire* alongside other contemporary *Antigone* adaptations. But there is no book length study yet, and no comprehensive article that goes deeply into how the adaptation work structurally, thematically, and politically. On citizenship and belonging several scholars have analyzed this novel. A few articles examine how the novel critiques British counter-terrorism policy, denial of Parvaiz's return, and discuss how borders operate not just at physical boundaries but in every life through observation and suspicion. On gender some feminist scholars have discussed Aneeka as a British Muslim woman characters. They are amazed by how she challenges the labels of oppressed Muslim woman by talking about her choices and the politics of the hijab that happened in the novel. On radicalization some articles examine how the novel portrays Parvaiz's journey to ISIS. It is shown as a counter-narrative to media representations of "jihadis." Where the media does not want to know whether joining ISIS

was his free choice or he was manipulated. Rather than the matter of saving a life, belonging and making young people feel vulnerable is what media choose to portray.

Kamila Shamsie has given several interviews where she discusses writing *Home Fire*. These provide useful context; through we must remember that authors do not control what their texts mean as the readers and critics interpret the text independently. In multiple interviews, Shamsie explained that she first read *Antigone* as a teenage in Pakistan and was struck by how contemporary it felt. The conflict between individual conscience and the state power resonated with her experiences growing up during Pakistani military dictatorship. Years later, following news stories about young British Muslims joining ISIS and the government's harsh response, she saw clear parallels. Such as the state refusing to allow bodies to return home, families grieving for sons and brothers who made terrible mistakes, and political leaders using these cases to demonstrate toughness.

Shamsie describe that she wanted readers to sympathize with all characters, even those who make vicious choices. She said in one interview that if readers can feel sympathy for Creon in *Antigone*, a man who cause immersive suffering through stubbornness then readers should be able to feel sympathy for a confused nineteen-years-old boy who is manipulated into joining ISIS. Shamsie has been clear that *Home Fire* is a political novel. She wanted to change how British Muslims, especially young Muslim men are represented in media and political discourse. She wanted to show their humanity without erasing the real harm that groups like ISIS cause. When she was asked about the ending, Shamsie noted that tragedy feels appropriate for the situation.

2.5 Gaps in Existing Research and This Thesis' Contribution

This section of the literature review brings everything together. It explicitly identifies what is missing in current research and explains exactly how this thesis will fill those gaps.

I. Identifying the Gaps: What's Missing

Gap 1: Lack of Comprehensive Adaptation Analysis

Most existing work on *Home Fire* mentions the *Antigone*'s connection but does not examine it systematically. We need detail analysis of:

- Which specific elements Shamsie keeps from Sophocles
- Which elements she transforms, and how it is transformed.
- Why those transformations matter politically
- How the two texts compare scene by scene and character by character
- What is the adaptation strategy accomplished that a wholly original novel wouldn't?

Gap 2: Missing Links Between Academic Fields

Classic reception scholars, postcolonial scholars, and British Muslim literature scholars rarely talk to each other. Their conversations happen in separate journals, conferences, and books. But *Hone Fire* sits at the intersection of all three fields. So we need research that:

- Brings these conversations together
- Shows how insights from one field illuminate the others

Gap 3: Limited Intersectional Analysis

Existing analysis focuses on one aspect at a time:

- Some articles discuss citizenship without deeply examining Gender.
- Some discuss gender without fully addressing religion and race.
- Some discuss Islamophobia without analyzing tragic form

Gap 4. Insufficient Attention to Form

Most research focuses on Home Fire's content like themes, characters, politics without deeply analyzing its form like structure, genre, narrative technique. But forms carries meaning. We need to understand:

- Why Shamsie uses five-part structure with different narratives
- How the novel form changes the story's effects?
- What the ambiguous ending accomplished politically
- How individual's choices themselves become political statements.

Gap 5. Theorizing Adaptation as Resistance

While scholars acknowledge that Home Fire is politically engaged, there is limited theoretical work on how adaptation itself functions as resistance. We need to articulate:

- What makes classic rewriting effective for marginalized writers
- How claiming ancient texts challenges power structures
- What risks and rewards came with this strategy?
- Whether using Western classic reinforces or challenges Western dominance

II. This Thesis's Contribution: Filling the Gaps

1. Providing the first comprehensive adaptation analysis.

This thesis systematically compares *Antigone* and *Home Fire* throughout the entire novel. It will map characters' messages, plots, counterparts and departures, thematic connections, and structural transformations. Chapter 3 dedicates extensive analysis to showing exactly how adaptation works in detail.

2. Bridging academic fields

This thesis deliberately brings together classical reception studies, Postcolonial studies, and British Muslim literature studies. The theoretical framework draws on all three fields. The literature review shows how they inform each other. The analysis will insights from all three simultaneously. This interdisciplinary approach is the thesis's methodological innovation.

3. Offering intersectional analysis

Throughout the analysis, this thesis examines how citizenship, gender, religion, race, and class intersect. It refuses to treat these as separate issues. Section 3.2 will specifically use intersectionality as a framework for understanding Aneeka's and Isma's different strategies for survival and resistance. This thesis shows that you cannot understand one dimension without others.

4. Analyzing form of politics

Section 3.3 dedicates significant attention to how Shamsie adapts tragic from itself, not just the plot but the structure, conventions, and genre expectations of Greek tragedy. it examines

the five-part structure, the absence of chorus, the questions of catharsis, and the ambiguous ending. It argues that these formal choices carry political meaning.

5. Theorizing adaptation as resistance

This thesis's central argument is that classical rewriting for marginalized writers. Chapter 4 conclusion synthesizes the analysis to articulate how adaptation empowers postcolonial voices, what strategies make it effective, and what it reveals about the politics of literary tradition. This contributes to border theoretical understanding, not just to interpretation of one novel.

By the end, readers will understand not only what *Home Fire* does and how it does it, but also what this reveals about the power of literature to challenge injustice and the strategies marginalized writers use to claim cultural authority while transforming traditions.

CHAPTER 3

DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS

This chapter is the hearth of this thesis where everything comes together. After establishing the theoretical framework in Chapter 1 and surveying existing research in Chapter 2, now this thesis turns to the textual information. This chapter provides detailed and close analysis of *Home Fire* in direct comparison with *Antigone*, examining how Shamsie transforms the ancient Greek play into a contemporary novel about British Muslim experiences. It will focus on the statelessness because of not having a root, sister's resistance towards government, and the tragic from of the contemporary crisis. The answer of this thesis unfolds across the following pages through detailed examinations of these topics. At end of this chapter, we'll see exactly how adaptation functions as resistance. This is not just an academic exercise in comparing two texts, it seeks justices for the marginalized people. By understanding how the novels works, we will understand how literature can challenge justice, create empathy, and imagine alternative possibilities to seek his goal.

3.1 "Bury Me Here": Citizenship, Statelessness, and The Politics of Belonging

At the center of both *Antigone* and *Home Fire* lies a body that cannot properly buried or return home. This body becomes the staple point of conflicts about power, justice, belonging, and what the state can rightfully demand from its citizens. In Sophocles' *Antigone*, that body belongs to Polynices, who attacked his own city of Thebes and died in battle. King Creon announce that Polynices corpse must remain unburied outside the city walls, exposed to birds and wild animals. Anyone who tries to bury him will be executed. *Antigone* believes her brother deserve burial according to religious law and family duty, while Creon insists that state security requires making an example of traitors. In Kamila Shamsie's *Home Fire*, that body belongs to Parvaiz Pasha, a

nineteen-years-old British Muslim who traveled to Syria to join ISIS. Realizing his mistake when he tries to escape, he was killed. His body was sent to Pakistan as it was where his family originally from. The British Home Secretary, Karamat Lone refuses to allow Parvaiz's body return to Britain for burial. Like Creon, Karamat claims this decision is necessary for national security and to send a message that joining terrorist organization has consequences.

The parallel is striking and deliberate. In both cases, a dead body becomes a political tool. The state declares are powerful not just over living citizens but over the dead, determining who deserve the dignity of proper burial and who deserve to be abandoned, excluded, and erased. The body becomes the boundary maker between citizens and non-citizens. It also shows who belongs to the political community and those who has been cast out.

This section examines how both texts use unburied body to explore questions of citizenship, sovereignty, and belonging. It asks what does it mean when a state decides that someone even after his death, cannot come home? What kind of power is being exercised when government control not just the living bodies but dead ones? And how do both texts critique this exercise of power as tyrannical, even when it claims to serve the common good?

This section proceeds in four parts. First, we'll examine Creon's edict and Karamat's Britain as parallel exercises of sovereign power. Second, we'll compare how Polynices and Parvaiz are constructed as traitors whose humanity is denied. Third, we'll analyze what burial and return symbolize about belonging. Finally, we'll explore how both texts reveal the violence of exclusion and the impossibility of truly belonging for these the state has marked as outsiders. Throughout the sections, we'll see that Shamsie's adaptation makes ancient story instantly contemporary while also using the ancient story to explain modern politics, making visible forms of state violence that might otherwise seem normal or necessary.

A. Creon's Thebes and Karamat's Britain: Sovereign Power and the State of Exception

Both *Antigone* and *Home Fire* begin with a ruler making a decision that will determine everything that follows. That decision concerns what to do with someone who has attacked their own community and died in the process. In both cases, the ruler decides that normal rules do not apply to this person. They will be made an exception and become an example as a warning to others. Creon's announcement in *Antigone* established the terms of exclusion from the beginning. After the battle for Thebes, where the brothers kill each other, Creon takes power as the new king. His first act is to draw a sharp line between loyal citizen and traitor. Eteocles, who defended the city will receive full military honors with a hero's burial with public mourning and ceremony. But Polynices, who attacked the city with foreign army will receive nothing. His body will lie unburied where it fell, he will be the food for vultures, and a rooting spectacle of what happens to enemies of the state.

Creon's speech announcing this decree reveals his logic. For him city comes first. He tells the Theban elders that the city's safety depends on absolute loyalty. These who serve the state deserve honor and those who betray it deserve only shame and punishments even after their death. He thinks unity requires drawing clear lines between friend and enemy, insider and outsider, and citizen and traitor. What makes Creon's order so troubling is not that it punishes Polynices for attacking Thebes except that punishment already came when he died in battle. It denies Polynices even the basic dignity that ancient Greek religion and custom required for all death people. Proper burial was not just about honoring the deceased; it was also about maintaining cosmic order. An unburied body polluted the land and prevented the soul from finding rest. By leaving Polynices

unburied, Creon violates religious law and traditional customs that governed Greek life for centuries.

Antigone immediately recognizes what her uncle is doing. When she tries to understand the situation, she frames it as a choice between two kinds of law. Which is human law made by king's verses divine law establishing by the god. She asked herself which law should she obey. Creon has the power to make decrees and execute those who disobey him, but does that power override everything else? Does political authority extend even to controlling the god's laws about death and burial?

This play shows us that Creon's power comes not from divine right or moral legitimacy but from his position as king. He can enforce his will through violence and the threat of punishment. This is what the Italian philosopher Giorgio Agamben calls "sovereign power". This power decides who included in the political community and who is excluded, who is protected by law and who is abandoned by it. Usually, religious customs are respected. But Creon declares that for Polynices, he makes an exception for her and that reveals the arbitrary nature of all political authority.

Karamat Lone's Britain operates according to strikingly similar logic, though the context is entirely different. Karamat is not a king but a democratically elected government minister. Yet he wields comparable power over who belongs and who does not, who deserves state protection and who deserves abandonment. Shamsie introduces Karamat through the eyes of his son Eamonn, who both admires and resents his father's success. Karamat came from a humble origin, where his parents were Pakistani immigrants who worked hard to give their children opportunities. Karamat succeeded brilliantly, becoming a prominent politician and eventually Home Secretary. He represents the ultimate model minority success story. But Karamat's political success has come at

a cost. He has built his career partly by distancing himself from other Muslims. He speaks about the need for Muslims to integrate, to embrace British values, to make laws for their own community against extremism. He supports harsh counter-terrorism measures, citizenship revocation for the returnees from ISIS, and the prevent surveillance program that treats Muslim communities as suspect. When Parvaiz joins ISIS and later dies trying to escape, Karamat sees an opportunity. He can demonstrate his toughness on terrorism by refusing to allow Parvaiz's body to return to Britain. He never thought that Parvaiz is a British citizen and his family wants to bury him according to Islamic customs which require quick burial. His decision is like traitors do not come home, not even as corpse.

The novel gives us access to Karamat's reasoning through the final section narrated from his perspective. He thinks of himself as making difficult but necessary choices. He thinks he is not being cruel; he is being responsible. If Britain allows returnees from ISIS to come back without consequences, what message does that send? Would not it encourage others to think they can join terrorist groups and then just come home when things got difficult? So, security requires drawing lines and enforcing them.

This reasoning mirrors Creon's almost exactly. Both men genuinely believe they are serving their communities' interest. They frame their decisions in terms of security and sending messages to potential enemies. They see themselves as making hard choices that weaker leaders would avoid but neither of them recognizes that what they are doing is tyrannical. The parallel that Shamsie creates between Creon and Karamat is devastating because it reveals something crucial about contemporary British counter-terrorism policy. When the government revokes citizenship, refuses to allow bodies to return, and treats British Muslims as conditionally British rather than

fully British, those are not new or unprecedented actions. They are ancient forms of tyranny dressed in modern language of security and necessity.

What makes Karamat's position even more complex is his own background. Unlike Creon, who was born into the Theban ruling family, Karamat is himself from an immigrant Muslim family. He has succeeded in British policies partly by proving he is not like those other Muslims. He is the good Muslim, integrated Muslim, and a Muslim who puts Britain first. But his success depends on continuously separating himself from Muslims like Pasha family who remain visibly Muslim, working class, and Vulnerable. He accepted the logic that some British citizens are more British than others, as citizenship is something that can be revoked if you make the wrong choices or hold the wrong associations. He's accepted, in other words, that he himself is conditionally British and his own security depends on demonstrating his loyalty by excluding others. This is the particular cruelty of the Post-9/11 security state that Shamsie exposes. It does not just exclude British Muslims from full citizenship, it also offers some British Muslims the possibility of conditional inclusion if they are willing to exclude other Muslims. It creates hierarchies within marginalized communities, rewarding those who collaborate with the investigation and punishment of their own people.

When we place Creon and Karamat side by side, we see that Shamsie is making a powerful argument about what Britain is doing to its Muslim citizens is not a new response. The language has changed, but the underlying logic of dominant power remains the same. Both texts ask us to see these decisions as tyrannical, not out of necessity. It invited us to question whether states should have this kind of power at all. And both texts suggest that when rulers claim security requires abandoning citizens or treating them as enemies, we should be profoundly doubtful of those claims.

B. He Was Not a Terrorist: Narratives of Radicalization and Humanity

One of the most significant differences between *Antigone* and *Home Fire* lies in how the texts treat the figure of the dead brother. In Sophocles' play, Polynices never appears as a character. He is already dead when the play begins, and we only hear about him through characters' descriptions. He exists more as a symbol than a person as he was a traitor, an enemy, and a person who attacked his own city. Shamsie makes radically different choices. She gave Parvaiz an entire section of the novel. Shamsie describes his personality so vividly that we can even have his thoughts inside his head. We can experience why he is vulnerable to manipulation, what he experiences in Syria, and how he tries to escape. By the time he dies, we know him as a fully realized human being, not as a symbol or a news headline.

This choice is crucial to understanding how *Home Fire* functions as a counter-narrative to dominant representation of the young Muslims who join extremist groups. To understand why this matters, we need to look first at how Polynices functions in *Antigone*, then at how Parvaiz is constructed in *Home Fire*, and finally at what this difference accomplishes.

In *Antigone*, Polynices is defined entirely by his betrayal. The backstory, familiar to ancient Greek audiences, explains that after their father Oedipus was exiled from Thebes, Polynices and his brother Eteocles agreed to share power by ruling alternate years. But when Eteocles takes over the power, he refused to give up the throne. Polynices, feeling cheated of what was rightfully his, raised an army and attacked Thebes. As a result, both brothers kill each other in the battle. From Creon's perspective, Polynices fighting for his rights, does not matter. Whatever grievances he had, whatever justification he claimed, the fact remains the same that he brought a foreign army to destroy his own city. He was willing to kill his fellow Thebans, burn their home, enslave their families, and destroy everything to regain power. This is treason, pure and simple.

This play does not entirely approve Creon's view, but it does not reject it either. Sophocles creates ambiguity, as the play does not tell us whether Polynices was justified in fighting for his rightful claim to the throne? Or was his ambition so great that he would destroy everything to satisfy it? What it does tell us that *Antigone* loves his brother regardless of what he did, family bonds transcend political judgements, and even traitors are still human beings who deserve basic dignity in death. As Polynices never appears in the play, his character however remains abstract.

Shamsie refuses this distance, as a result she titled an entire section of the novel on Parvize, which gives us intimate access to this young man's inner life. We meet him not as a terrorist or even as someone who joins ISIS, but as a teenager who was feeling stuck and aimless while his twin sister Aneeka studies law and his older sister Isma wants to pursue graduate from America. He feels left behind by his ambitious sister and has no clear path forward. In that situation Farooq came into his life and he takes genuine interest in Parvaiz's life. They become friends and by their conversation Shamsie let us know exactly how really manipulating works. Farooq does not immediately talk about jihad or ISIS. First he built trust and friendship. He helps Parvaiz with his projects. He introduces him to other young men in similar situations. He makes Parvaiz feel seen and valued in ways he has not felt since his older sister left for America.

Later, Farooq introduce political and religious content to Parvaiz. He talks about how Muslims are suffering in Syria, how West's wars have destroyed Muslim countries, and how Muslims in Britain are treated as second class citizens under surveillance. He told him about joining the Islamic State not as terrorism but as helping built a true Islamic society, as defending oppressed Muslims and doing something meaningful with his life instead of stacking vegetables in a shop. Crucially, Farooq exploits Parvaiz's relationship with his father. Adil Pasha left the family when Parvaiz was a child to fight jihad in varies conflicts. He died when Parvaiz was young.

He has always wanted to know about his father. He wanted to understand him and want to feel connected with him. Knowing Parvaiz's feeling, Farooq praise him in such a great length for having the honor of Adil Pasha's legacy. As a result, Parvaiz convince to join ISIS.

This is manipulation, but Shamsie shows us that it's sophisticated manipulation targeting specific vulnerabilities. Parvaiz is not a person who believes in ISIS's brutal ideology. He is a lost young man desperate for purpose, belonging, and finding connection to his dead father. When Parvaiz arrives to Raqqa, he hears stories of executions, sees evidence of torture, witnesses the gap between ISIS's rhetoric of justice and its actual cruelty. Parvaiz realizes he's made a big mistake. He's trapped and if he tries to leave and got caught then he'll be killed as a traitor. But staying means complicity in ISIS's violence. This shows us Parvaiz's growing horror and desperation. He eventually tries to escape by reaching out to British intelligence through the British Consulate. However, his attempt fails and he's shot by another ISIS member. His body ends up in Pakistan as this is where his family is from. By giving us all the detail, Shamsie crates something that dominant media narrative never understand. It shows that no one never wants to know what can be the reason that a young person can be led down a terrible path.

The novel forces readers to see Parvaiz as human. he made choices, but those choices were shaped by circumstances, his grief for his father, economic problem, feeling of being unwelcome in British society made him take the wrong decision. In British media, young people who join ISIS are always portrayed as evil ideologues who hate Western value or as a naïve fool who deserve no sympathy. Politicians like Karamat uses those people as an example to justify harsh policies. Shamsie's novel refuses this erasure. When Aneeka insist "he is not a terrorist", here she is not claiming Parvaiz did not do terrible things or make terrible choices, she is saying that the complexity of his situation made him do that.

C. The Right to Return: Burial as Belonging

The previous section examined the brothers who cannot come home, this section focuses on the sisters who fight to bring them home. Both *Antigone* and Aneeka insist that their brothers deserve proper burial, and both are willing to defy the government and face severe consequences to make that happen.

In *Antigone*, the question of burial connects directly to ancient Greek religious beliefs and practices. For the ancient Greeks, death was not simply a biological fact but a religious transition. The soul of the deceased needed to cross the river to reach their destination. But only properly buried souls could make the crossing. An unburied corpse meant a soul trapped between worlds, unable to rest, and to find peace. Burial rites were therefore not optional gestures but essential religious duties. The living owed the dead these rites, and if they failed to perform this then it will be seen as a serious offense against both the deceased and the god who governed death. This ritual did not have to be elaborate, even a handful of dust sprinkled over the body counted as symbolic burial but something had to be done for this rite. Therefore, Creon's order prohibiting Polynices' burial strikes at the heart of the Greek religious practice. He is not just denying him the basic religious observance that every human being deserves, he is saying that political authority can overrule even the god's laws.

Being caught after burying her brother, *Antigone* frames her action explicitly in religious terms. In her famous speech to Creon, she declares that Creon's announcement is not meaningful sense because it contradicts the eternal and unwritten by the gods. Creon's power is temporary and limited whereas god's laws are eternal and universal. Therefore, no king has the right to avoid what the gods have established and *Antigone's* act of burial will consider as a religious duty. This play shows us her burial attempt twice. The first time, she manages to perform the ritual before

being discovered. As Guards wipe away the dust returning the body to its unburied state, *Antigone* returns and buries him again and get caught in the act. The repetition emphasizes her determination and willingness to persist despite knowing the consequences. She insists that her brother still belongs to Thebes and his betrayal does not erase his fundamental membership in Theban society and his family.

In *Home Fire*, the question of return and burial operates in a similar way but with crucial differences shaped by contemporary contexts. Islamic burial customs, like ancient Greek ones require quick burial and specific rituals. The deceased should be buried as soon as possible after death. The body should be washed, wrapped in a shroud, prayer should be said, and burial should occur in consecrated ground. As we know, Pakistan is a Muslim-majority country, so Islamic burial would be straightforward there, but for the Pasha family, Pakistan is not their home. They are British and live his entire life there so Parvaiz should be buried there. His grave should be somewhere his family can visit, where he can rest among his own community in Britain.

Karamat's refusal to allow the body's return has multiple dimensions of cruelty. First, it denies the family to perform the burial rites in their home country according to their customs. Second, it sends a message that Parvaiz was never really British and his citizenship was always conditional and has now been revoked even in death. Third, it forces the family to choose to bury him in Pakistan among the strangers or fight to bring him home. Therefore, Aneeka chooses to fight. She flies to Pakistan and to get her brother's body back. The scene is one of the most powerful and disturbing moments. Shamsie describes Aneeka bringing Parvaiz's body to the park and sit beside the body in the heat. She wants British government to relent and forces public pressure to mount. The image of a young woman in hijab who is sitting in public beside her brother's corpse, portrays a heartbreaking situation made by the political people. Her presence

beside Parvaiz's body insists on his humanity and on her love for him despite what he did. When photographers and journalist arrive, the images are framed in different ways in different media decision. Some sympathetic coverage focus on Aneeka's devotion and the government's cruelty. Some hostile covers framing her as a terrorist's sister staging propaganda stunt.

The novel is actually aware of how Aneeka's protest operates as spectacle. She's deliberately staging a visual scene that forces people to look, witness, and confront what government is doing. She's using her own body and her brother's body as a political tool. This is where *Home Fire* diverges most significantly from *Antigone*. In ancient play, *Antigone* was sealed in a cave away from public view. Her resistances are defiant but not spectacular in modern media sense. There was no camera, viral images, and global audiences watching in the real world. Shamsie adapts *Antigone*'s act of burial in an age of smartphones, social media, and twenty-four-hours live news cycles.

What burial means in *Home Fire* is to have the right to belong even after making terrible mistakes. It is claimed that home is where you're from not where the government decides you're allowed to be. Both *Antigone* and *Home Fire* argue that states should not have the power to determine who counts as human, deserves dignity in death, and be abandoned outside the boundaries of community. Both texts position burial and return as fundamental rights that exceed state authority. And both texts show woman insisting on these rights against powerful men who claim security and social order require abandoning certain bodies.

This section examines how both texts show rulers exercising sovereign power by deciding who belongs to the political community and who get exuded. Both show these rulers framing their decision in term of security, social order, and sending messages to potential enemies. It invited people to see how people uses power as tyrannical rather than necessary. It seen as if they use

violence as a fundamental right rather than reasonable security measures. Like, they are ancient forms of tyranny operating under modern language. Karamat and Creon are not identical but the parallel sometimes seems crucial. The differences between the texts are equally important. Shamsie gives us access to Parvaiz's humanity in ways Sophocles never gives us access to Polynices. We know why Parvaiz's was vulnerable to recruitment, how he was manipulated, what he experienced in Syria, and how he tried to escape. This humanization is political because it challenges the dehumanizing narratives that dominate media coverage of young Muslim who joins extremist groups. Aneeka's protesting creates new possibilities for resistance.

By connecting these stories across time, Shamsie makes the contemporary situation both more legible and troubling. More legible because the ancient story provides a framework for understanding what's happening in Britain today and more troubling because if this is the same logic that ancient audiences recognized as tyrannical then why does it seem normal or necessary to so many people.

3.2 Sisters' Resistance: Gender, Agency, and The Politics of Mourning

The previous section examined the unburied bodies at the center of both texts and the sovereign power that refuses them burial or return. This section shifts focus from the dead brothers to the living sisters who fight for them. While in the texts Polynices and Parvaiz are used objects, *Antigone* and Aneeka are seen as subjects who act, resist, and shape the stories direction. But their resistance is complicated by gender as what society wants from a woman is totally different from what they want to do. These questions even more complex when we consider how Muslim women are represented in Western world. Since the nineteenth century, Western society have portrayed Muslim women as oppressed, silent, and passive victims who need saving from their own culture

and religion. However, some scholars suspect that Muslim women might also be threats, potential extremist, or sympathizers with terrorism.

When Shamsie adapts *Antigone* for a contemporary British Muslim woman, she started working against these layers' stereotypes. She wants Aneeka recognizable as a character in the tradition of *Antigone* who is courageous, rebellious, and willing to challenge authority while also being a young British Muslim woman navigating the oppression she faces. She cannot simply be *Antigone* transplanted in London, so she must be someone whose agency is shaped by the intersection of gender, religion, race, class and Citizenship status.

This section examines resistance and agency through four interconnected explorations. First, we'll compare *Antigone* and Aneeka as a rebellious woman. Second, we'll examine Ismene and Isma as alternative of defiance woman. Third, we'll explore the politics of visibility. And finally, we'll analyze how mourning can be a political act. The goal of this section is to show how gender is not separate from the other political questions the novel raises but deeply intertwined with them. Citizenship, statelessness, and belongings are experienced differently by Muslim women than by non-Muslim women. Aneeka's resistance must be understood through this intersectional lens, seeing how multiple system of power shape her position and her possibilities.

A. *Antigone* and Aneeka as a Rebellious Women

When we think of *Antigone*, we often remember the image of a young woman standing before a king refusing to back down despite his threats. She already buried her brother once, and caught while burring him for the second time and faces execution for that. Instead of begging for mercy she defends her choice. She tells Creon that his laws are wrong and she was right to disobey it and she can do it again.

During 441 BC, Athenian women had almost no political or legal rights. They could not vote, could not own property independently, could not speak in public assemblies, and were expected to stay within the household. A woman publicly defying male authority would have seemed shocking and dangerous to traditional social order. Yet Sophocles makes this defiant woman the moral center of the play. *Antigone* is not punished by the narrative for her defiance rather because of hers vindicated. Creon who seemed so confident in his authority, ends the play completely destroyed by losing his son, wife and any moral legitimacy. The play asks its audience to admire *Antigone's* courage to question whether any ruler should have the power to dominate divine law, family duty, and basic human dignity.

When *Antigone* confronts Creon after being arrested, the exchange crackles with tension. Creon asked if she knew about his edict prohibiting the burial. In response, she replied of course she knew as everyone in the Thebes knew. He asked how she dared to disobey. Her response is direct and uncompromising and she tells him that his announcement was not legitimate law because it contradicts the eternal laws of gods. The gods require that the dead be buried, so no mortal ruler has the authority to deny his law no matter how powerful political power he holds. Creon is furious because her defiance threatens his authority, but also specifically because the statements come from a woman. He sees *Antigone's* action as not just political rebellion but as an overturning of gender hierarchy. If women can disobey men with impunity, what's next? The entire social order seems to him to be at stake.

The gender dimension of the conflict is crucial. Creon frames the issue as whether a woman will rule him or whether he will rule her. He cannot separate the political question from the gender question. For him, *Antigone's* threatens both state power and patriarchal power simultaneously.

On the other hand, *Antigone* shows no fear of Creon's threats. When she sentences her to be sealed alive to die slowly of starvation, she accepts his fate. She never wavers in her conviction that she was right to bury Polynices. Her family duty outweighed her duty to obey the king. The play also gives us *Antigone*'s final speech before she's led away to her death. She addresses the city of Thebes, the gods, and her family's tomb. She says she's being punished for piety, for honouring the god's law. She also expresses some bitterness, where she says if the gods think Creon is right, then she'll accept her suffering, but if she's right, she hopes Creon will suffer as much as he is making her suffer. It's a powerful moment of a woman asserting her moral authority even as she's being executed.

What makes *Antigone* such an enduring figure is this combination of vulnerability and strength. She's a young woman without political power yet courageous enough to facing a king who can kill her. Somehow, that's enough to expose Creon's tyranny and justify her choice, at least in the eyes of the play's audience if not in her own lifetime.

When Shamsie creates Aneeka as a contemporary parallel to *Antigone*, she faces both opportunities and challenges. The opportunity is that Western readers already know and admire *Antigone*. By connecting Aneeka to this classic figure, Shamsie can transfer some of the admiration to a British Muslim woman who are always seen as negative character in the eyes of British media and public discourse. If readers can see Aneeka as a modern *Antigone*, they might grant her the same moral authority and sympathetic understanding. The challenge is that Aneeka's contexts is entirely different. She is not just a woman defying male authority in a patriarchal society, she is a British Muslim woman navigating multiple system of oppression. Like, Islamophobia, surveillance of Muslim communities, economic marginalization, and also patriarchy.

Shamsie introduces Aneek as a bold, beautiful, and confident young woman who wears hijab, had high ambitions, and never afraid to pursue what she wants. The novel is careful to establish that Aneeka's religious practice is her choice, not something imposed on her. She prays, fasts, and dresses modestly because these practices are important to her sense of identity, and connected to her faith. This detail matters because it pushes back against Orientalist assumption the hijab-wearing Muslim women are oppressed or controlled by men. When Parvaiz her twin brother leaves for Syria, Aneeka gets shocked. She tries to contact him to convince him to come home, but he's out of reach. When the news comes that her brother was killed while escaping, her grief overwhelmed. But her sorrow does not remain private. When she learns that British government under Karamat's authority refuses to allow Parvaiz's body to return to Britain, her grief becomes political. The state is telling her that her brother does not deserve to come home. He lost his right to be buried in the British soil and his family must either leave him in Pakistan or accept that he's no longer British.

Aneeka refuses to accept this. So, she withdraws from university and flies to Pakistan. She reclaims his brother's body and sits in a park near the British Deputy High Commission. This is Aneeka's act of rebelliousness, parallel to *Antigone's* burial of Polynices. Like *Antigone*, she is willing to risk her safety, reputation, and future to honor her brother. She is challenging state authority that claims the right to determine who deserves dignity in death. And like *Antigone*, she is a woman acting without institutional power, relying only on her conviction, and her willingness to endure suffering. But the form her revolution takes is different from *Antigone's*. *Antigone* could sneak out at night and bury her brother herself by performing the religious rituals required but Aneeka cannot simply bury her brother's body as the body is being held by authority's, requires government permission to transportation, and she has no power to force compliance. So, she

creates a public stunt to get sympathy from the media. Photographs of Aneeka sitting beside Parvaiz's body get viral on worldwide. Some feel sympathetic towards her but some feel disguised to see her generate sympathy for a person who joined ISIS. Aneeka knows the images will be interpreted in multiple ways yet she uses visibility in public as it's her only weapon against government.

The novel never fully resolves whether Aneeka's strategy is wise or effective, does her protest create meaningful pressure on the government? This ambiguity is important because it reflects the real acts of resistance. When marginalized people resist publicly, the outcomes are unpredictable. Sometimes creates change and sometimes it just makes you target. What's clear is that Aneeka, like *Antigone* refuses to let the state have the final word. Both say through their actions that some things matter more than laws, political consequences, and their own life. And both pay a terrible price for this assistance.

By adapting *Antigone*'s characters as Aneeka's Shamsie tries to portray that Muslim woman can be heroes in the classical tradition. It can be said that a hijab-wearing British Pakistani women's love for her brother is as novel as an ancient Greek princess's love for her brother. So, when we admire *Antigone*'s courage, we should also admire Aneeka's. by doing it, Shamsie challenges readers to examine why they might be more willing to grant moral authority to an ancient fictional character than to a contemporary Muslim woman.

B. Ismene and Isma: Complicity, Survival, and the "Good Muslim"

Not every woman in these stories chooses open rebellion. Both *Antigone* and *Home Fire* include sister who make different choices. There are sisters who value survival over resistance, who cooperate with authority rather than challenge, and who must live with the consequences of

those choices. By examining these characters' side by side, we can see different strategies women use to navigate oppressive system, and we can ask difficult questions about complicity, survival, and the impossible choices marginalized people face.

The play *Antigone* opens with a conversation between the two sisters, *Antigone* and Ismene, just before dawn. *Antigone* has learned about Creon's edict prohibiting Polynices burial, and she's asking Ismene to help her bury him despite the law. The scene establishes their different personalities and different approaches to the situation they face. *Antigone* is ready to act immediately. She sees the injustice clearly, she knows what's right, and willing to face any consequences. She asks Ismene to join her to share both the action and risk. Ismene's response reveals her character. She reminds *Antigone* of everything they have lost. Their father Oedipus died in exile and disgrace, their mother Jocasta killed herself when she discovered she'd married her own son, and now both their brothers have killed each other. The family has suffered tragedy after tragedy. So, Aneeka should not really bring more disaster by defying Creon. Ismene also reminds *Antigone* of their position as women. She says that they are woman and cannot fight against men. They are weaker without power and rights. She also says that when men make laws, women must obey them even if these laws are unjust. This is the reality Ismene argues and they should better accept it than to die uselessly.

Her reasoning is pragmatic not cowardly. She is not saying she does not love Polynices or does not think he deserve burial. She is saying that she and *Antigone* are powerless to change anything and throwing their lives away in futile resistance would not help anyone. So, it's better to survive, and accept that some battles cannot be won. *Antigone* is disappointed of his response. She tells Ismene she can make whatever excuses she wants, but she will bury their brother alone. The contempt continues throughout the play whenever *Antigone* speaks to Ismene. To *Antigone*,

Ismene's choice to not act is cowardice and betrayal. But the play itself is more nuanced than *Antigone's* judgement. Later, after *Antigone* has been caught and sentenced to death, Ismene comes forward and tries to claim that she helped with the burial. She is willing to die alongside her sister. But *Antigone* rejects this offer coldly. She tells Ismene that she chose life while *Antigone* chose death, and now *Antigone* will die alone. Ismene cannot claim shared heroism when she refused to share the risk.

Creon, observing this conversation spares Ismene's life. She does not deny the king's decision, and she is useful as an example. Ismene is a woman who knows her place, who understands that survival requires obedience. Ismene lives, but she must live with having lost both her brothers and her sister, and with knowing that she chose safety over solidarity. The play asks us to feel the tragedy of both choices. *Antigone's* defiance is heroic but leads to her death and accomplishes nothing material. Such as, Polynices remains unburied until Creon really surrenders and by which time *Antigone* is already dead. Ismene's accommodation is practical but leaves her alone, guilty, and compromised. So, neither choices are clearly right or clearly wrong.

When Shamsie creates Isma as the eldest of their siblings, she significantly expands the role that Ismene plays in *Antigone*. While Ismene appears in only a few scenes, Isma gets an entire section of the novel. We see the world through her eyes, understanding her choices from inside, and follow her journey. At the age of twenty-one Isma's mother passed away and she had to become the guardian of her twin siblings. Sacrificing her own education, she needed to raise her siblings. She deferred her university studies, worked low-wage jobs, navigated the bureaucracy of being a young Muslim woman raising two children alone.

The novel opens with Isma at airport, trying to board her flight to America. Before she can leave, she is held for questioning. For hours, security officers interrogate her about her family,

beliefs, and associations. They asked invasive questions about her religion, opinions on terrorism, and what she thinks about British foreign policy. Isma answers carefully and corporately. She knows that this is the price she must pay to be allowed to leave. As a British Muslim woman from a family with a complicated history, she's automatically suspect. So, she does not protest the questions. She does not assert her right or demand to speak to a lawyer. She just answers and tries to satisfy them by proving that she is not a threat. This opening scene explains Isma's strategy for navigating British society as a Muslim Woman. She accommodates, cooperates, and tries to be "Good Muslim" who does not make trouble and understands that Muslims are under suspicion and accepts the extra inspection as expected.

When Parvaiz leaves for Syria, despite Isma's attempts to interfere, she feels guilt and failure. Aneeka wants Isma to come home to fight to bring Parvaiz back, but Isma does not return. She stays in America, pursuing her studies, maintaining physical and emotional distance from the situation. She argues that she's already sacrificed years of her life for her siblings and deserves to focus on her own life. She also added that Parvaiz made his own choice, so he must face the consequences. These arguments are rational, but they feel hollow. The novel shows us, through conversation between Isma and her family neighbors we can sense that Isma is abandoning her sister in a time of desperate need. What particularly painful is that Isma cannot protect herself from that situation. when the news about Parvaiz becomes public, Isma's name appeared in articles identifying her as the sister who reported Parvaiz to authorities. She's attacked online by people who see her as a traitor to her family and community, on the other hand, also attacked by people who think her entire family are terrorists.

She tried to be good Muslim, but in the end none of that matters. She still seen as suspect because her family, religion, and background. The surveillance state does not protect those who

cooperate with it, it just uses them and discards them when convenient. This novel asks us to understand Isma's choices without endorsing them. She is exhausted from years of caretaking. She is traumatized by her difficult childhood and the burden of responsibility she carried so young. She deserves to pursue her own dreams. But she also abandons her sister in a moment of crisis, and that abandonment has consequences.

The parallel between Ismene and Isma illuminates a pattern which is when oppressive system forces impossible choices, there are no good options. Ismene could have joined *Antigone* in burying, but they both would have died and accomplishes nothing. Similarly, Isma could have returned from London to support Aneek, but what could she actually have done at that situation. At least, by staying in America, she preserved her chance at education and a future, even if the future is haunted by questions about whether she did enough.

Both texts reveals how oppressive system target relationship between women. Creon's edict does not just forbid Polynices burial; it also creates a wedge between *Antigone* and Ismene, turning sisters against each other. The British counter-terrorism does not just surveil Muslim communities, it makes Muslims to report on each other, turning family members into informers and destroy their trust. This is how power operates, not just through direct violence but through dividing those who might resist together. If Ismene and *Antigone* had act together, they would have been more powerful? If Aneeka and Isma had remained united, could they have fought more effectively? We'll never know, because the systems they face worked to isolate them from each other.

C. Veiling, Visibility, and the Muslim Women's Body

The question of How Muslim women's bodies are seen, interpreted, and controlled runs throughout *Home Fire*. This question has no equivalent in *Antigone*. Ancient Greek women's

bodies were certainly controlled and surveilled by patriarchal systems, but there is no direct parallel to the contemporary Western obsession with Muslim women's veiling and the political meaning attached to how Muslim women dress and present themselves in public.

Understanding Aneeka's resistance requires understanding the ways Muslim women's bodies become sites of political controversy in contemporary Britain and the broader West. The hijab carries enormous symbolic weight, and Muslim women who wear hijab must navigate these competing interpretations constantly. Since the nineteenth century, when European colonial power controlled much of the Muslim world, Western commentators have fixated on Muslim women's veiling as the symbol of something maybe wrong in Islam. The veil was portrayed as proof that Islam oppressed women. They think that Muslim societies were backwards, and Western involvement was needed to free Muslim women from their religion and culture.

The colonial obsession with veiling Muslim women has continued into the present, through the rhetoric has shifted. After September 11, 2001, the hijab becomes not just a symbol of oppression but also a potential symbol of extremism. Muslim women in hijab become hyper visible makers of Muslim Identity, subject to harassment, violence, and discrimination while simultaneously being portrayed in media and political discourse as silent victims without agency.

Muslim women themselves have complicated relationship with hijab. For some, it's deeply meaningful religious practice and a form of modesty and devotion that connects them to god and to Muslim community. For others, it's a cultural expectation they might prefer not to follow but do so because of family or community pressure. The point is that there is no single meaning to the hijab, and the Muslim women's own perspective on it is vary widely. But Western discourse often flatter this complexity by reducing the hijab to either a symbol of oppression or a symbol of authentic religious devotion. Shamsie navigates this complex territory carefully in constructing

Aneeka as a character. For our first introduction to her is that she is very bold, dresses modestly and wear hijab.

The novel established that Aneeka' hijab is her choice. Her religious practice seems genuine and personally meaningful to her. She prays not because anyone makes her but because it's important to her. This details matter because it pushed back against the assumption that all hijab wearing woman are forced to cover by oppressive male relatives. The novel complicates any simple reading of Aneeka as it includes her romantic and sexual relationship with Eamonn. When Aneek and Eamonn become involved, their relationship is physical as well as emotional.

This portrayal challenges stereotypes that position hijab-wearing Muslim women as sexually repressed or controlled. Aneeka wears hijab and had sexual relationship without getting married. She is religiously observant and also makes choices that many conservative Muslim would consider sinful. This novel refuse to present these as contradictions that need resolution. Instant, it shows Aneeka as a complex person who choose his own path through religious practices, cultural expectations, and personal desire. However, the novel also introduces ambiguity about Aneeka's motivation in pursuing Eamonn (Karamat's son). And the timeline of their relationship suggests possible manipulation. As Aneeka begin showing interest in Eamonn around the time Parvaiz is in Syria, it seems like Eamonn can be a way to save Parvaiz. This hesitation is uncomfortable but important. It refuses to present Aneeka as simply virtuous or simply manipulative, as she might be both. She might genuinely care for Eamonn while also recognizing that their relationship could be strategically useful. She might have started the relationship for one reason and continued it for another. The novel does not resolve this issue and this unresolvedness mirrors the complexity of real human motives.

When Aneeka travels to Karachi and stages her public stunt beside Pervaiz's body, her hijab becomes even more politically charged. She knows that the image that globally shows a young woman in hijab sitting beside a corpse in the heat creates a powerful appearance that's impossible to ignore. This image means different things for different people. For Western viewers, the hijab confirms their existing narrative about oppressed Muslim women. They see a victim of her culture and religion and she is unable to escape this extremism and violence. For some Muslim viewers, the hijab makes Aneeka as a virtuous Muslim woman devoted to her family and her faith. For others, the hijab is less important than Aneeka's challenging state power, demanding justice, and refusing to abandon her brother. This novel shows Aneeka is aware of these interpretations yet she strategically does the public show to gain individual's support. It portrayed that she is not just privately mourning; she is publicly protesting. She wants to show the world that what kind of injustice British government do to British Muslims.

All these gazes strip away Aneeka's agency in different ways. Aneeka is no longer a person with complex motivations but a figure that others interpret according to their own agendas. The novel shows this process while also trying to preserve Aneeka's humanity, giving us access to her grief and exhaustion and stubbornness that the public image cannot convey. By centering a hijab-wearing British Muslim woman as her contemporary *Antigone*, Shamsie makes a powerful statement about who gets to be a hero, whose resistance counts as novel, and whose sufferings deserve recognition. Of western readers can admire Antigone's courage, they should also admire Aneeka's. The hijab should not disqualify her from heroism because it is simply part of who she is.

D. Mourning as Political Act

Both *Antigone* and *Home Fire* position mourning as the public expression of grief for the dead which is a fundamentally political act of gaining audience. This might seem strange at first

as we often think of mourning as a private, personal, and emotional feeling rather than political performance. Both texts show that grief becomes political when the state tries to control who can be mourned, whose deaths count as wounded, and whose lives are considered as worth grieving. Similarly, it is noticed that after 9/11, nearly 3000 people died in the attacks on the United States were mourned extensively. Their names were read aloud, their photographs get displayed, memorials were built and their lives are celebrated and remembered. The country and much of the world grieved publicly for these victims. Their deaths were recognized as profound losses. But at the same time, the United States and its allies were waging wars in Afghanistan and Iraq that killed hundreds of thousands of people. Most of these dead were never named, photographed, or memorized. These deaths did not consider as losses in the same way.

This grief is distributed unevenly based on nationality, race, religion, class, and other factors. In *Antigone*, Creon's edict denying Polynices burial is about declaring Polynices is not to be grieved. Creon is saying that Polynices' death is not a loss but a good thing. He was an enemy and enemies' deaths should not be celebrated or not mourned. *Antigone's* insisting on burying was a political act which portrays that regardless of his betrayal, his body should be treated with respects. By the end of the play justifies *Antigone's* position. Creon recognizes that he was wrong to deny the burial. The gods get angry and because of the divine punishment, his own family get destroyed. In *Home Fire*, the question of grieving is even more explicit and contemporary. When British citizens join ISIS, they are immediately considered as guilty by the British media and government. They become jihadi, and terrorists. And their deaths are presented as deserved consequences of their choices, not as victims to be mourned.

Parvaiz becomes one of these figures. There is no one interested in his story, humanity, and factors that led to his joining ISIS, or his attempts to escape. What the news cover is that he is

a British Muslim ISIS member. He is like another terrorist whose death makes Britain safer. Aneeka's public expression of love and sorrow challenges the government's attempt to erase Parvaiz for British consciousness. She makes it impossible to ignore him to a terrorist because he has a family who loves him. Viewers see his sister's grief and are forced to recognize that he was someone's brother who was loved and missed. Even viewers who judge Parvaiz's actions might feel sympathy for Aneeka's loss. This mourning creates a crack in the official narrative. This is the reason; why public mourning is dangerous to those in power.

This section has examined how gender shapes resistance in both texts. Both *Antigone* and *Home Fire* show that this resistance through mourning comes at huge cost. *Antigone* is executed for insisting on her right to mourn her brother. Aneeka exposes herself to violence and eventually death by publicly mourning Parvaiz. Neither woman wins in any conventional sense as both are destroyed by the system they challenge. Aneeka and *Antigone* face the challenges of being women in patriarchal societies when female agency is constrained and female bodies are controlled and closely monitored. But Aneeka's situation is complicated by additional layers of oppression that *Antigone* does not face.

3.3 Tragic Form and Contemporary Crisis: Adaptation, Structure, and The Limits of tragedy

This section focuses on how Shamsie transforms the form of the story. Greek tragedy and the contemporary novels are different kinds of texts, and understanding these differences helps us see what's gained and lost in the adaptation, and how the character's choices themselves carry political meaning.

Antigone is a play written to be performed on stage in front of live audiences in ancient Athens. The play was performed during religious festivals as a part of entertainment and watched by thousands of people gathered in an outdoor theater. *Home Fire* is a novel meant to be read privately by individual readers in twenty-first century. It provides access to the character's inner thoughts and feeling that theater cannot express. The differences are not just technical or incidental. We will see how formal choices becomes a political choice. How the decision to give Parvaiz his own narrative section rather than leaving him offstage like Polynices is a political decision about whose humanity gets represented. The choice to the end ambiguously rather than with clear tragic closure is a political decision about whether to offer comfort or to leave readers unsettled.

A. Mapping the Adaptation: Character and Plot Correspondences

The most straightforward connection between both texts are the central figures. *Antigone* becomes Aneeka Pasha maintaining the sound of the name with the prominent "A" at the beginning. Both are young women who defy state authority to honor their dead brothers. They are willing to face several consequences for their family member that surpasses political consideration. Polynices becomes Parvaiz Pasha, again keeping the similar sound of "P" at the beginning. Both brothers betray their own countries and killed in the process. They are denied proper burial by the governments and become the symbol of betrayal that rulers use to demonstrate their authority. Ismene becomes Isma Pasha, the older sister who refuses to help bury their brother. They choose survival yet live with guilt and isolation. In the play Ismene is a minor character but Isma gets an entire section on the novel. Creon becomes Karamat Lone, the figure of the authority who decided that the traitor cannot be buried. They are the rulers who claim to act for the state's security and lose their sons as the consequences of their decision. Haemon becomes Eamonn Lone, the son of

the ruler who falls in love with the Traitor's sister. They try to stop their father and at the end they die tragically.

Where the adaptation becomes more complex is in the absence of certain figures. *Antigone* has Tiresias, the blind prophet who warns Creon that he is angering the gods and will face divine punishment for her deeds. There is no similar figure like this in *Home Fire* who comes to tell Karamat that he's wrong and need to stop. This absence is significant. In the Greek play, Tiresias represent divine law. His prophecies come true, and his warning always proves correct. The play confirms that there are higher powers than human rules. But *Home Fire* is set in a contemporary world, so there are no gods, prophets, and divine punishment waiting for those who abuses their power. For this reason, Karamat only face human consequences, political pressure, media criticism, and personal loss.

The plot messages between the texts are clear but significantly in detail. *Antigone* begins after Polynices is already death and roughly cover a day to bury her and *Antigone* get arrest and sentences to death. But *Home Fire* is much more expansive. It begins before Parvaiz leaves for ISIS, follows his recruitment in Raqqa, shows his death, and moves through the aftermath. The novel spans months to year, moves between different location along with its backstories, and character development that the play does not have. Most importantly, *Home Fire* gives us Parvaiz's perspective directly so we know Parvaiz as person in a way we never know Polynices. Because of the absence of Polynices, in the play different characters describe him differently and we never get to know his true perspective to attacked Thebes or whether he regretted it before he dies. The similarity between the texts are clear enough that readers familiar with *Antigone* will recognise the parallels immediately. But the differences are also equally important. Shamsie keeps the skeleton of the Greek tragedy but builds an entirely different body around it which is shaped by

contemporary forms, politics, and understanding of how stories work and what they can accomplished.

B. Narrative Structure: From Chorus to Polyphony

One of the most significant transformations in adapting *Antigone* to *Home Fire* involves the unified dramatic structure to polyphonic novel form which talks about a narrative style with multiple, independent, and equally valid voices and consciousness's, rather than a single authorial perspective dominating. Understanding this shift requires examining how Greek tragedy works and then seeing what Shamsie does differently.

Greek tragedies follow a standard structure that audiences in ancient Athens would have recognized immediately. The play begins with a prologue, where key characters established the situation and conflict. Then the Chorus enters with a song they take their place in the orchestra. The main action unfolds through episodes and scenes where characters interact and chorus comments on what's happening, providing background information, or its reflects on themes. Social media in the novel functions like chorus as we here about twitter debates, viral images, and online arguments about Pasha family.

In the play everything happens in one place, over a compressed timeframe, and focused on a single action. There is no relief, no change of scene, and nor stepping away from the central conflict. The audiences watch as the trap closes around the characters with terrible predictability. *Home Fire* abandons almost all of these structural elements. Instead of unity of place, time, and action, Shamsie gives us five distinct sections where each part is named as the character who dominates perspective is presented. The five-part structure does several things that Greek tragic structure cannot do. First, its distributes sympathy across multiple perspectives. In *Antigone*, we

primarily see through *Antigone*'s eyes. But in *Home Fire*, we spend with the major characters, understand their motive, and know their inner thoughts.

When we're with Isma in the first section, we understand her exhaustion from years of caretaking, her guilt about leaving her siblings, her fear of surveillance state, and her desperate desire to pursue her own dream. When we're with Parvaiz in the second section, we feel his loneliness, his desperation to know about his father, his growing horror as he realizes what he's gotten into. With Aneeka in the third section, we experience her grief and determination for giving justice to her brother. Eamonn in the fourth section, let us see his privilege and his genuine feeling for Aneek alongside his blindness to political realities. When we're with Karamat in the fifth section, we understand his calculation and his belief that he is making hard decisions for necessary choices.

This multiple perspective approach creates empathy for characters who might be easy to judge. This distribution of perspective is particularly important for the novel's political work. Shamsie is not trying to argue that one character is completely right and others are completely wrong. Instead, she shows how each person's choices make sense for their own position and it is their choices that create their own tragedy.

C. What is Gained and What is Lost?

Every adaptation involves improvement and defeat. Understanding these gains and losses helps us appreciate both texts more carefully and makes us realize what adaptation can and cannot do.

The most prominent gain in the novel is that we can go through the character's inner thoughts. Greek play shows us what characters say and do, but we can only assume what they think

and feel. The novel form allows for much more detail and specificity than drama permits. The contemporary setting makes the political critique immediate and urgent. While *Antigone* speaks to timeless conflicts between individual and state, *Home Fire* speaks directly to policies and debates happening right now. So, readers can connect the novel to real news stories, government action, and how people affected by the policies. The contemporary relevance gives the novel political force that an ancient text cannot quite match.

The polyphonic structure creates space for complexity and multiple perspective. In the novel, the strict choices reflect the novel's political commitment to showing how reasonable-seeing choices by multiple people can create tragedy, and how different people's legitimate needs and fears can collide in ways that destroy everyone.

The significant loss in the communal experience that theater provides. Greek play was watched by thousands gathered together, shearing their emotional journey, and participating in public and religious ritual. Reading a novel is about solitary, private, and individuals various thinking. Here we lost the sense of collective witnessing and shared corrections that makes theater so powerful.

The mythic and universal quality of the Greek play is somewhat diminished by the novel's contemporary specificity. *Antigone* feels like it could be about any conflict between individual conscience and state power anywhere anytime. This abstraction gives us the scenario that each new adaptation can find new meaning.

The sense of divine justice is gone. In *Antigone*, the gods care about what happens and will punish those who violate divine law. On the other hand, *Home Fire* is worldly. There is no guarantee that justice or suffering has importance beyond the human level. Greek tragedy promises

emotional release through witnessing suffering and appreciation. *Home Fire* refuses this release and leaves readers unsettled. This serves political purpose but means readers do not get the satisfaction that traditional tragedy provides.

So, it can be said that, neither texts are superior to the other. They portray different purposes for different contexts. *Antigone* remains powerful after 2500 years because its tragic structure and mythic quality allow it to speak across centuries and cultures. *Home Fire* is powerful because it brings that ancient story into contemporary politics by using novelistic techniques to create empathy and challenge dominant narratives about Muslims. The transformation is not just about setting the story in modern London, it is rethinking about what tragedy means, what it can do, and what purpose it should serve in a world which is very different from ancient Thebes.

CHAPTER 4

CONCLUSION

The thesis began with a question: How does Kamila Shamsie's rewriting of *Antigone* in *Home Fire* function as an act of political and cultural resistance against the marginalization of British Muslim after September 11, 2001? After detailed analysis across three chapters, we can now answer the question clearly while also understanding the complexity involved.

The answer is not simple, and it should not be. *Home Fire* works as resistance on multiple levels through what it says, how it says, and the fact that a Pakistani-British Muslim writer is claiming to write one of the most celebrated texts in Western literary traditions. Chapter 1 established the research problem by explaining why this study is important and laid out the theoretical tool it used. Chapter 2 surveyed existing research which shows what scholars have already discovered about classical reception, postcolonial adaptation, and Muslim British literature, while also identifying gaps that the thesis would fill. Chapter 3 provides detailed analysis of *Home Fire* in comparison of *Antigone* by examining citizenship, gender, and tragic form. Through these sections, *Home Fire* demonstrates that classical rewriting can be a powerful tool for marginalized writers. By connecting contemporary British Muslim experience to an ancient Greek tragedy that Western readers already know and admire, Shamsie makes her characters and their struggles legible and urgent in a way that might not be possible with a wholly original story. And this is how adaptation works as resistance. Not by rejecting Western traditions but by reclaiming it, transforming it, and making it serve new purposes that the original creators never imagined.

4.1 Implication

Now that we have reviewed the specific arguments about *Home Fire*, we need to ask a bigger question, like what does this case study teach us about how literature can challenge power? More specifically, what does it reveal about the strategy of taking canonical Western texts and rewriting them for marginalized perspectives?

It's not just an academic question. It has real implications for how we think about literature, cultural authority, representation, and social justice. When writers like Kamila Shamsie claims texts like *Antigone*, they are making moves that matter politically and culturally.

This study has shown that *Home Fire* as adaptation of *Antigone* operates as resistance on at least four interconnected levels. First, adaptation authorizes marginalized voices. Ancient Western texts carry huge cultural respect. When Shamsie founds her novel in *Antigone*, she's exploiting that prestige. She is saying that British Muslim experiences deserve the same literary attention that ancient Greek tragedy receives. This is particularly important for reaching audiences who might not like a novel about British Muslim but who respect Greek tragedy as everlasting art. Second, adaptation creates critical space. By connecting Karamat to Creon, Shamsie makes contemporary British policies visible as tyranny rather than necessary security measures. The ancient story disguises the present, making what seemed normal look arbitrary and unjust. Third, adaptation generates empathy towards familiar frameworks. Many Western readers sympathize with *Antigone*. By connecting Aneeka to their beloved character, Shamsie transfers some of the sympathy to a hijab wearing Muslim women. The unfamiliar content (British Muslim experience) becomes more accessible and emotionally engaging. Forth, adaptation challenges ownership of cultural heritage. For centuries, European colonizers claim that Western classical tradition belonged to them. When a Pakistani-British Muslim writer claims *Antigone*, she is rejecting this

exclusive ownership. She is portraying that all have right to engage, interpret, and transform these texts as it is a human heritage not European property.

Literature cannot directly change law or policies. Reading novels would not end Islamophobia or reform counter-terrorism programs. But literature can do something equally important which is it can change people thinking. The novel makes reader see British Muslims differently. It shows that Muslim women can be heroes in the classical tradition. So their lives and struggles matter and their grief deserves recognition. People need to see injustice before they will fight against it. Literature contributes to this process of making injustice visible and making humanity recognized across difference places.

4.2 Limitations

Every research method has limitations, and it's important to acknowledge them:

- **Translation Issues or Language Barrier:** Since this thesis reads *Antigone* in English Translation rather than ancient Greek, some nuances of the original language are lost. Different translations make different choices and these choices affects interpretation.
- **Interpretive Nature:** Literary analysis is not a scientific but interpretive. Different readers may interpret the same passage differently. This thesis presents one well-supported interpretation, but it does not claim to be the only possible reading.
- **Focus on text not reception:** this thesis analyzed the texts themselves, not how actual readers respond to them. It does not include the survey or interviews with readers about their experiences of Home Fire. This means the thesis can say what the text does but not how every reader will understand it.

- **Theoretical Limitations:** Every researcher brings their own perspective, background, and biases to their work. So, if the researcher is not British Muslim, they cannot claim inside knowledge of the community's experiences. For this reason, I think, the researchers own identity, education, and position shapes how they read and interprets texts.
- **Scope Constraints:** with a word limitation, this thesis cannot address every aspect of both texts. Some elements will receive less attention than others based on their relevance to the research questions.

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