

Routledge Studies in Contemporary Literature

REPRESENTING VULNERABILITIES IN CONTEMPORARY LITERATURE

Edited by
Miriam Fernández-Santiago
and Cristina M. Gámez-Fernández



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6 “The Ones We Love Are Enemies of the State”

Mourners and Trespassers in Kamila Shamsie’s *Home Fire* (2017)

Carolina Sánchez-Palencia

(In)visible Women at the Border

Sam Durrant (2019) claims that

cosmopolitanism has often been posited as a way of rendering the nation state more open both to internal and external difference [...]. But what if its posture of openness turned out to hide internal exclusions that render certain lives and deaths ungrievable?

(605)

He proceeds to argue that “statelessness is an ever-present threat or potentiality, a loss of status and rights that is always happening to someone and that some day, any day, may happen to us” (605) and concludes by affirming that “[w]hat is traumatic here is the vulnerability not of the stateless but of the citizens, the possibility of their own potential ejection from the realm of privilege” (605–606). This is precisely Kamila Shamsie’s alarming thesis in *Home Fire* (2017a), where she addresses pre-Brexit political conflicts that she had to go through when applying for British citizenship some years prior to the publication of her book. She admits, after six years of legal residence in the UK, she “wasn’t prepared for the mutable nature of immigration laws, and their ability to make migrants feel perpetually insecure, particularly as the rhetoric around migration mounted” (Shamsie 2014).

Theresa May’s (British Home Secretary in 2014) policy of revoking the citizenship of naturalized terror suspects, or even simply individuals with dual nationality, is one example of such mutability by which, Sharon Pickering argues, the territorial sovereign state continually reproduces itself by changing performances of border security that fuel constant negotiation and struggle between those involved in the political performance of policing and those impacted by it (2011, 13). This climate of threat and insecurity produced by such malleability of borders and by the shifting immigration politics, that in some circumstances would end up rendering people stateless, presides over Shamsie’s novel as it exposes the

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