"The ones we love are enemies of the state":

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

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ABSTRACT

This chapter draws on J. Butler's (2009) theorization on the uneven distribution of grievability and A. Mbembe's (2003) notion of necropolitics to explain different forms of subjugation to the power of death and mourning in contexts where citizens are deprived of their rights and transformed into trespassers. Theresa May's policy of stripping terror suspects of their British citizenship is one of such contexts inspiring *Home Fire* (2017), written in a context of Islamophobia and oppressive counter-terror politics. The chapter explores Kamila Shamsie's challenge to utopian discourses on cosmopolitanism and border-crossing through her depiction of characters subjected to legal ambiguity and statelessness. Yet, it proposes that Shamsie's postcolonial rewriting of Sophocles's Antigone be understood in light of Butler's (2016) rethinking of vulnerability and resistance, as it is precisely through the invocation of this rebellious figure that patronizing discourses defining the vulnerable subject (here identified as female, Muslim, and immigrant) can be dismantled. Contesting orientalist and masculinist assumptions, *Home Fire* opens up new configurations of racialized and gendered vulnerabilities defying the dominant hierarchies of corporeal value that this paper examines by focusing on Shamsie's enactment of embodied interventions, transgressive expressions of mourning, and different forms of resistance to institutional violence.

(In)visible women at the border

S. 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. What 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 K. Shamsie's alarming thesis in *Home Fire* (2017) 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 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, S. 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 routine monitoring of British Muslims in a context where Islamophobia, rather than any effective counter-terror logics, operates as the central axis of the UK "war on terror."

The novel opens at one of these borderscapes operating as "sites of pathological regimes of 'in/visibility' in which people are made 'publicly invisible' and excluded from politics at the same time as they are made 'publicly visible' as ethicized or racialized others" (Schimanski and Nyman 2021, 4). Travelling on a British student visa on her way to a PhD program in sociology at Amherst-Massachussets, hijab-wearing Isma (the eldest of the three orphaned Pasha siblings) is detained by London airport immigration officers wanting to know her "thoughts on Shias, homosexuals, the Queen, democracy, The Great British Bake Off, the invasion of Iraq, Israel, suicide bombers, dating websites" (Shamsie 2017a, 5). The unforgiving interrogation exposes a regime of cultural and racial prejudice that, constructing her as "dangerous," curtails her legal status and positions her within the "in/visible" realm of the stranger and the trespasser:

> "Do you consider yourself British?" the man said.
>
> "I am British"
>
> "But do you consider yourself British?"
>
> "I've lived here all my life." She meant there was no other country of which she could feel herself a part, but the words came out sounding evasive. (Shamsie 2017a, 4)

Through her docile attitude and her simple and straightforward answers, Isma is expected to provide a one-dimensional version of herself that facilitates her transit, but the humiliating inspection of her body, mind and material belongings evidences that borders operate palimpsestually signifying different things to different peoples at

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Eliminado: Kamila

Eliminado: .

Eliminado: .

Eliminado: ,

Eliminado: British"

different times, because these sites are constantly produced and reproduced by the policing of transversal subjects (Pickering 2011, 56).[1]

In this chapter –and other episodes Shamsie has likewise experienced as one of such transversal subjects in her position of a Pakistani-born writer journeying globally—she warns her readers about the rhetoric that separates "the British" from "British passport-holders" and that seems to have been brought sharply into focus since the strongly divisive referendum on European Union membership.[2] In fact, she publicly supported the "Remain" campaign admitting that, being a recent migrant made her particularly attuned to shifting attitudes towards migrants in her new nation, fuelled by the social hysteria about their "taking jobs, committing crime and changing the cultural fabric of the UK" (2017b).

Whereas in *Exit West* (2017), Shamsie's fellow countryman M. Hamid eludes the experience of border-crossing by fantasizing with magic doors that allow transit among different parts of the world, she decidedly chooses to focus on the traumas of such experience. Shamsie seems to agree with S. Rushdie that it is in border contexts —checkpoints, airports, immigration offices, detention camps—where citizenship is most explicitly compromised and tested:

> At the frontier we can't avoid the truth; the comforting layers of the quotidian, which insulate us against the world's harsher realities, are stripped away and wide-eyed in the harsh fluorescent light of the frontier's windowless halls, we see things as they are […]. At the frontier our liberty is stripped away —we hope temporarily—and we enter the universe of control. Even the freest of free societies is unfree at the edge, where things and people go out and other people and things come in. Here, at the edge we submit to scrutiny, to inspection, or judgement. These people guarding these lines must tell us who we are. We must

be passive, docile. To be otherwise is suspect, and at the frontier to come under suspicion is the worst of all possible crimes. (2003, 412-413)

The frontier is precisely where this backlash from citizen to pre-citizen takes place, and so it is highly significant that *Home Fire* opens and closes with two British Pakistani women (Isma and Aneeka Pasha) being denied transit from and to UK. To a great extent, such exclusionary scenario evidences the need to revise certain romantic notions of cosmopolitanism and to reconsider the ability to move across borders as an explicitly gendered, classed and racialized experience. In light of this premise, this chapter addresses this matrix of oppressions and privileges that operate intersectionally to unmistakably condition the experiences of global mobility.

Discourses of victimization and criminality have consistently defined contemporary understandings of women engaged in the migratory process of which border crossing is a significant stage. In this regard, Migregroup has often denounced the instrumentalization of migrant women through these stereotyping definitions: "[e]ither 'victims to be rescued'—when it is convenient to describe them as such in order to justify tougher migration control policies—or 'swindling liars' when they have to be given protection" (2018). But these understandings seem to downplay the fact that their vulnerability, Butler argues, is not inherent to these women but is the result of the different geo-political mechanisms of oppression and dispossession in which they are caught (2016, 15-16). One of such mechanisms is their exclusion from legality, which turns them into trespassers and increases their exposure by the denial of their right of access to justice and protection. By encouraging or tolerating predatory practices over women and their bodies, states (and other power-holding entities) have simply furthered their exploitation and disenfranchisement in frontier lands (Armstrong 2007).

The humiliating inspection of Isma's clothes and body –evocative of the surveillance technologies enforced at the border—suggests that she is also being sexually profiled: "the officer took hold of every item of Isma's clothing and run it between thumb and fingers" (Shamsie 2017a, 3). Feminist scholars on migration (Pickering 2011; Basham and Vaughan-Williams 2013; Freedman 2016; Cortés 2018; Cossée, Miranda, Ouali and Djaouida 2012) agree that, although the difficulties and traumas of border crossing are not specific to the experience of women, the reality of the border is significantly different for women who are often polyvictimized and have thus denounced different manifestations of gender-based violence and vulnerabilization of women's bodies as effects of border securitization. But it is precisely in those realms of vulnerability that expressions of resistance are mobilized; the very term, "mobilization", Butler claims, depending "on an operative sense of mobility, itself a right, one that many people cannot take for granted" (2016, 15) and thus needs to be fought for.

Googling while Muslim. Mourning while Trespassing

After this opening scene that sets the story in motion with its border epistemology, the reader gets to know that, despite her efforts to keep a low profile by not "pack[ing] anything that would invite comments or questions —"no Quran, no family pictures, no books on her area of academic interest" (Shamsie 2017a, 3)—, Isma has been aggressively interrogated mainly because of her family background: her father, Adil Pasha, was a jihadi soldier who was captured in Bagram and died while being transported to Guantanamo. The toxic legacy of the father has passed on to his only son, Parvaiz, whom Isma has raised as a surrogate mother. Shortly before she left for the USA, Parvaiz went to Raqqa, Syria, to join the media division of ISIS, which placed the rest of the family under the radar of international security.

While in Amherst, Isma meets Eamonn, the son the British Home Secretary, Karamat Lone, whom she strongly dislikes because, after her father's death, they expected some help from him, being a British Muslim too. But the politician, who has decidedly extricated himself from his Pakistani background, did not provide the family with any information about where her father was buried.[3] This is the first time in the novel Karamat exercises his power of denying the right of mourning and burial to the members of the Pasha family, and is thus connected with the figure of king Creon in Sophocles's *Antigone*, an illuminating intertext Shamsie acknowledges as of pivotal significance in *Home Fire*. In the Greek tragedy, Creon, king of Thebes, forbids that the body of Polynices, considered an enemy of the city, be given a proper burial as a warning to traitors, and he extends his edict threatening anyone who tries to bury the young rebel. Antigone, Oedipus's daughter and Polynices's sister, becomes one of such trespassers when, defying the king's authority, decides to perform funeral rites for her brother and is consequently imprisoned and sentenced to death.

Shamsie brings the conflicts between individual and the State, the divided loyalties to family, religion and law, and the theme of civil disobedience to a contemporary scene informed by the current geopolitical issues between the West and the East, thus contributing to enlarge the transnational dimension of this myth. In his almost encyclopaedic volume about Antigone, G. Steiner explains its far-reaching prominence on the basis of its containing the five primary conflicts defining the human condition—man vs. woman; gods vs. humanity; society vs. the individual; youth vs. age; the living vs. the dead—organized in an equilibrium of fatalities. But his Western bias cannot go unnoticed if we consider that, among the apparently inexhaustible versions he mentions, he addresses just two adaptations contextualized beyond the Western boundaries: one by K. Demirel (1966) set in Turkey and another by A. Fugard, *The Island* (1973) set in

South Africa during the Apartheid regime. Steiner's neglect of the many "Antigones of the South" evidences the Eurocentric canonicity of his reading of the myth. In a more diverse and transnational approach, E. B. Mee and H. P. Foley (2011) provide a pioneer analysis of the reception and adaptation of Sophocles's play in the global world including productions from Argentina, Congo, Finland, Haiti, India, Japan, and other contexts outside the traditional geography of theatre scholarship where Antigone still resonates as a powerful symbol of political resistance. In a similar vein, B. Goff and M. Simpson (2007) argue that the tragedies included in the Theban cycle are particularly apt to represent the postcolonial moment because they problematize the very access to civilisation and culture where taboos around incest, patricide, and exposure to death are powerfully interrogated (19) and they propose to analyse the identities affected by colonialism and imperialism through an Oedipal prism of conflicting desires.

Shamsie takes up this challenge and, if Sophocles's echoes are to be heard through her characterization of Isma after Ismene (the prudent and compliant sister in the Greek play), the radical figure of Antigone becomes more resonant as embodied by Isma's youngest sister, 19-year old Aneeka. After her twin brother, Parvaiz, immersed in a crisis of masculinity and deeply influenced by the memory of their father, is recruited by ISIS, she engages in desperate attempts to bring him back home, a home that is denied by Karamat/Creon in an unyielding pronouncement: "We will not let those who turn against the soil of Britain in their life time sully that very soil in death" (Shamsie 2017a, 193). One of these attempts includes the sentimental manipulation of Karamat's son Eamonn (Sophocles's Haemon), who, in a typically tragic script, falls in love with Aneeka and decides to support her claims against his powerful father's uncompromising decisions, even if this means risking his own life.

Inserted within such classical paradigm, Aneeka's sisterly love for her twin brother acquires an epic dimension —"Castor and Pollux holding hands through the cold, dark night" (Shamsie 2017a, 189); "always stretched both forward and back, womb to tomb, always was only Parvaiz" (191)—that is accentuated when she receives the terrible news that he has been shot dead at Istanbul by his jihadi comrades who would not tolerate renegades of their cause. In a deeply lyrical passage that is reminiscent of Butler's take on the ethical and political powers of mourning, Shamsie describes the inscrutable quality of Aneeka's grief as if, in Butlerian terms, "the very 'I' [were] called into question by its relation to the Other" (2004, 23):

> Grief manifested itself in ways that felt like anything but grief; grief obliterated all feelings but grief; […]; grief needed company, grief craved solitude; grief wanted to remember, wanted to forget; grief raged, grief whimpered; grief made time compress and contract; grief tasted like hunger, felt like numbness, sounded like silence; grief tasted like bile, felt like blades, sounded like all the noise of the world […]. Grief heard its death sentence on the morning you both woke up and one was singing and the other caught the song. (Shamsie 2017a, 188)

This manifestation of loss and bereavement is amplified when, in the final scenes of the novel, Aneeka mourns the unburied corpse of Parvaiz in a park at Karachi, after being denied the right to repatriate him to Britain. As the scene is being broadcasted worldwide reaching global audiences, her grief transcends the horizons of individual experience to acquire a collective affiliation and an unmistakably political dimension.

Drawing on G. Spivak, C. Chambers argues that *Home Fire* confronts its readers with the question "can the oppressor listen?" through which Shamsie appeals to a "politics of listening" that counteracts the novel's exposure of the many failures in familial, political, religious and cultural communication, evidencing "the misalignment between

who should speak and who should listen" in our post-9/11 globalized world (2018, 217). Authoritarian Karamat Lone sees his power diminished as he is forced to "listen" to Aneeka's subaltern plea, clearly perceived as confrontational and subversive in her very vulnerability:

> For a few moments there was only a howling noise, the wind raging through the park, and then a hand plucked away the white cloth and the howl was the girl, a dust mask on her face, her dark hair a cascade of mud, her fingers interlaced over the face of her brother. A howl deeper than a girl, a howl that came out of the earth and through her and into the office of the Home Secretary, who took a step back. As if that were the only thing the entire spectacle had been designed to achieve, the wind dropped as suddenly as buildings collapse in 3-D models, and the girl stopped her noise, unlaced her fingers. The cameras panned, then zoomed. In the whole apocalyptic mess of the park the only thing that remained unburied was the face of the dead boy.
>
> "Impressive," said the Home Secretary. (Shamsie 2017a, 224)

Beyond its evocation of the ancient funeral lamentations, Aneeka's howl reveals that mourning transcends the limits of the visible and sayable and cannot be turned a deaf ear by those in power. In a novel saturated with noise, Chambers claims, Shamsie's soundscapes attest to "the vital importance that voices from below are heard in public discourse" (2018, 216).

Through her controversial statement, "Mourning becomes the Law." following the 2015 terrorist attacks in Paris, Butler (2015) claimed that public grieving can be politically instrumentalized to enforce state securitization, suspend democratic guarantees under a justified "state of exception" and implement repressive policies at home and abroad. Her contentious pronouncement might be reformulated in the analysis of the novel if we

consider that Aneeka's grieving of her twin brother rather "unbecomes" the Law, provided her spectacularized grief challenges the Home Secretary's authority and exposes some of the ruthless aspects of the British immigration policy. Aneeka's mediatized vulnerability —perceived by Karamat as a calculated "iconography of suffering" (Shamsie 2017a, 233)—becomes an act of resistance and disobedience at one of those sites where bodies are explicitly politicized: the border. By virtue of these ever-shifting regulations, the border has become "a transnational purgatory where the state's imposing definitions […] are made and destroyed" (Quintanilla 2020, 67) and where would-be crossers get trapped in a nightmare of ethically questionable bureaucratic technicalities.[4] Karamat makes use of this malleability of the immigration policy to arbitrarily externalize the UK border while wisely concealing his own "personal animus" against the girl:

> There was no need to do anything so dramatic as strip her of her citizenship, a move that could be traced back to personal motivations. She couldn't return to the UK on her Pakistani passport without applying for a visa, which she was certainly welcome to do if she wanted to waste her time and money. As for her British passport, which had been confiscated by the security services when she tried to join her brother in Istanbul, it was neither lost nor stolen nor expired and therefore there were no grounds for her to apply for a new one. Let her continue to be British; but let her be British outside Britain. (Shamsie 2017a, 242-243)

If, Pickering claims, "sovereignty is performative, and the enforcement of borders constitutive of this performance, and if gender is performative" (2011, 118), then we should pay close attention to the scope and impact of the violence that is produced through gender performances at the border. Karamat's hypermasculinized and disproportioned exercise of power is thus unmasked as one of such performances by his

own wife who condemns her husband's arbitrary manipulation of the law while appealing to his humanity:

> A few days ago your greatest rival was a man born with a diamond encrusted spoon in his mouth, a party insider for years. And now it's this orphaned student, who wants for her brother what she never had for her father: a grave beside which she can sit and weep for the awful, pitiable mess of her family life. Look at her, Karamat. (267)

As evidenced through the plea of Karamat's wife (Queen Eurydice in Sophocles's play), Aneeka's vulnerability does not remain invisible nor uncontested but, on the contrary, it is explicitly intensified through this media coverage that mobilizes acts of resistance and protest, and dismantles patronizing attitudes towards vulnerable subjects (Butler 2016). Beyond the orientalist stereotyping of the Muslim woman as a passive victim or a "jihadi bride," Aneeka's challenging mourning at the externalized UK border activates unexpected modes of solidarity, for instance, among the Pakistani audiences, "decided to embrace a woman who has stood up to a powerful government, and not just any powerful government but one that has very bad PR in the matter of Muslims" (Shamsie 2017a, 241).

Butler's take on Antigone (2002) highlights precisely the politically transgressive dimension of public grieving and this counterfigure's capability to represent an ambivalent feminist politics that is fraught with risk because her defiance leads to her own death. However, in her occupying the public sphere from which Aneeka, as a Muslim woman, is excluded, she calls attention not only to herself but to those deemed ungrievable by an authoritarian State. In line with Butler, B. Honig (2013) observed, in her influential discussion of Antigone, that "mourning practices postulate certain forms of collective life and so how we mourn is a deeply political issue" (10). Though

admitting that we are globally affected by a "mortalist humanism" (25). Honig refuses any equalizing claims about death and memorializing based on our shared finitude and vulnerability as human beings because our very concept of humanity is intersectionally shaped along the discriminatory axes of race, gender, class, age, and nationality that make some losses worthier being registered as losses than others. This circumstance has intensified in present-day contexts of migration and diaspora where the management of death has become inextricably linked to questions of citizenship, belonging and human rights.

Analyzed from the necropolitical perspective suggested by A. Mbembe (2003), Parvaiz's corpse is not the mere relic of an unburied pain, an empty and meaningless corporeality, but a stubborn will to signify something. Very much in line with Butler's theorization on the uneven distribution of grievability, Mbembe interrogates the practical conditions through which "the right to kill, to allow to live, or to expose to death is exercised" (2003, 12). As an expansion of M. Foucault's notion of biopower, necropower articulates the different forms of subjugation to death and mourning, the different expressions of sovereignty defining who is *disposable* and who is not, and under its rule, Mbembe concludes, "the lines between resistance and suicide, sacrifice and redemption, martyrdom and freedom are blurred" (2003, 40). These lines are powerfully played off in the final scene of the novel, where Aneeka's world-widely broadcasted claim of her brother's body to ritualize and dignify his memory aligns her with the rebellious figure of Antigone and turns her into an "enemy of the State" (as recorded in the novel's epigraph).

Aneeka's confrontational message to the powerful politician is thus invested with a tone of fatalistic struggle over the meaning and implication of border policing and national securitization while exposing the excesses of Karamat's iron hand rule: "In the stories

of wicked tyrants, men and women are punished with exile, bodies are kept from their families –their heads impaled on spikes, their corpses thrown into unmarked graves. All these things happen according to the law, but not according to justice. I am here to ask for justice. I appeal to the prime minister: let me take my brother home" (Shamsie 2017a, 237). Nevertheless, though admitting the political resonance of Aneeka's gesture, we should not obviate the inescapable trap of visibility. Even if it is usually associated with power, in many cases "it provokes voyeurism, fetishism and the colonialist/imperialist appetite for possession" (Phelan 1996, 6). The public exposure of Aneeka and the impact of her actions going viral in social media are both empowering and repressive, as she becomes simultaneously and paradoxically the subject of subversion and the object of surveillance. Placed under public scrutiny, she is eroticised and stigmatized by virtue of patriarchal and orientalist associations of Muslim women with passivity, precarity, victimhood and submissive piety, as evidenced through some of the insulting Tweets that caricature her as "Aneeka Knickers" (Shamsie 2017a, 214), who "can do things those 72 virgins don't know about" (Shamsie 2017a, 196). This fetishization of her image illustrates how "the binary between the power of visibility and the impotency of invisibility is falsifying" (Phelan 1996, 6) since the patriarchal and colonialist regimes might very likely end up securing the gap between the real and its representation and marking the woman as Other.

Butler articulates her notion of ungrievable lives —those that cannot be mourned because they have never counted as lives at all—by appealing to our "common corporeal vulnerability" (2004, 42). As one of these places where the body is strongly exposed and politicized, Shamsie depicts the border as the site where certain "vulnerable" bodies are suspected, searched and detained within a large paradigm of surveillance. This evokes D. Bigo's notion of the *banopticon*, which comprises a

number of profiling technologies to determine who to place under control and vigilance based on distinctions of race, ethnicity, national background or religion, since "the main focus of the system is to ensure that persons who are or might be considered unwanted by any participating state are not permitted into the territory" (2005, 46). As a post-9/11 follow-up of Foucault's panoptical gaze, Bigo's banopticon contemplates a disciplinary regime of practices where, in the current context of global (in)security, specific groups are blamed and targeted pre-emptively, "simply by categorising them, anticipating profiles of risk from previous trends, and projecting them by generalization upon the potential behavior of each individual pertaining to the risk category" (Bigo 2002, 81).

But, even if Shamsie seems to agree on the centrality of the body in this logics of differential humanity, she identifies other disembodied contexts where these vulnerable lives are further disenfranchised. If, in a story about border crossings and about the tensions between transit and containment of certain minorities in an era of globalized mobility, airports are depicted as sites of surveillance, the internet is identified as another major target of governmental vigilance of those characterized as suspect and thus placed under international security radar. As jihadi terrorists have increased their use of the internet for recruitment, training, funding and propaganda purposes, governmental intelligence has reacted by intensifying scrutiny of ISIS or Al-Qaeda's online presence. Shamsie denounces that, in this context of transnational Islamophobic paranoia, British Muslims are perceived as threatening and get their daily routines scrutinized and criminalized. To this effect, *GWM* (Googling while Muslim), the acronym coined by one of the female protagonists, attests to the concern that Muslims' online activity might be tracked resulting in adverse actions against them like reviewing their immigration status or placing them on no-fly lists. Shamsie explores the chilling effect and other affective consequences that this culture of surveillance has on Muslims

who are forced to adopt an unsuspicious profile. Aneeka's complaint about the British Muslims' exposure to "torture, rendition, detention without trial, airport interrogations, spies in [their] mosques, teachers reporting [their] children to the authorities" (93) reveals this traumatic regime of fear and apprehension.

Viewed this way, *Home Fire* exhibits a sort of cosmopolitan anxiety through which Shamsie deviates from the more positive notions of conviviality and hospitality to address our radical vulnerability while transiting a globalized planet, one where, following Theresa May's sinister pronouncement, the citizen of the world might end up being a citizen of nowhere.[5] Within this framework, Shamsie seems to claim in line with S. Gikandi that the narrative of globalization needs to be considered in counterpoint with the narrative of statelessness (2010, 26). Shamsie laments that, in such oppressive environments, some migrant lives become transparent (as a result of their daily routines being monitored and scrutinized) whereas those of the cosmopolitan elites occlude their own implication in the structures of exclusion that end up producing statelessness. In a controversial essay about the evils of our hyper-connected globalized society, philosopher B.-C. Han (2015) challenges the uncritical understanding of transparency as indicative of honesty, trust and governmental accountability to conclude that in a society of exhibition we get our everyday privacy exposed in a manner that verges on the pornographic.

This tension between transparency and concealment, between precarity and privilege, is illustrated in the novel by the two British Pakistani intertwined families, the Pashas and the Lones, representing respectively the transparent and scrutinized minority and the advantaged elite diaspora entitled to free movement and personal intimacy. Their interaction in the novel symbolizes the complex and often paradoxical experiences of cosmopolitanism that, following S. Gikandi (2010), warn us against simplistic and

celebratory uses of the term that downplay everyday intersectional manifestations of racism and xenophobia. Transnational mobility is definitely an embodied and subjective act that needs to be readdressed not as a right but as a privilege, and, in this light, Gikandi regrets that "a prior language of describing displacement and statelessness as a threat to human rights has all but diminished as our focus has shifted to the redemptive narratives of global trade, transnationalism, and cosmopolitanism" (2010, 28). Echoing Gikandi, Shamsie seems to ask who qualifies for the term cosmopolitan and who does not.

Conclusions: Towards vulnerability in resistance

As the above illustrates, Shamsie's racialized protagonists deconstruct traditional notions of femininity (associated to weakness, dependency, victimhood) and replace them by expressions of agency, thus evidencing, in line with Butler (2016), the need to rethink vulnerability and resistance in non-binary ways. If, in most narratives of migrant mobility, women are forced to find a male "protector" who guarantees a safe journey and border crossing, it is worth noticing that in *Home Fire* it is Aneeka who assumes the leading role in trying to rescue and protect her brother from institutional and local powers at the border. Though her attempts may not be entirely successful, her embodied acts of resistance expose gendered and racialized realms of precarity that mobilize expressions of protest and opposition in contexts where migrant women are rendered simultaneously hypervisible and invisible. In this regard, Butler (2016) claims, "[f]eminism is a crucial part of these networks of solidarity and resistance precisely because feminist critique destabilizes those institutions that depend on the reproduction of inequality and injustice, and it criticizes those institutions and practices that inflict violence on women and gender minorities, and, in fact, all minorities subject to police

power" (20). It is precisely around the axis of the female resistance that the figure of Antigone is invoked to give sense and meaning to these expressions of female rebelliousness that escape paternalistic definitions of womanhood. Additionally, in contesting such patronizing discourses informing the migration and global border politics, Shamsie's heroines expose the institutions and actors supporting them as "vulnerable to a dismantling that would undo its very form of power" (Butler 2016, 23).

Though in most postcolonial narratives mobility is usually identified as a metaphor of the migrant condition, Shamsie addresses all-too-real experiences of the border that discourage figurative or utopian formulations of the term. She seems to agree with S. Greenblatt that "[o]nly when conditions directly related to literal movement are grasped, will it be possible to understand the metaphorical movement" (2010, 205). Notwithstanding Shamsie's reserves about the potential banalization of these terms, her heroines are also characterized as "transiting" from conventional definitions of femininity imposed by their cultural backgrounds to more transgressive and agentic attitudes that contest their racial and sexual categorization. In that respect, their identities *on the move* help explain the position of those subjects who do not comfortably fit within the orthodox models of travelling and offer instead a more progressive and oppositional cultural critique of nationalisms and xenophobia.

My analysis of the novel thus suggests that Shamsie expands the conventional image of Antigone beyond the limits of mourning and familial piety, and, by engaging with some of the political interpretations of the myth (Butler 2002; Honig 2013), she projects the figure's rebellious cast over contemporary borderscapes as both exclusionary and enabling, as sites of arrival and departure, of detention and transit, of vulnerability and resistance.

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NOTES

[1] Recent perspectives within the field of Border Studies seem to contest the notion of the border as fixed and static, to address its performative and socially constructed quality instead. For this shift in focus from linear borders to processual bordering, see Anderson 1996; Newman 2006; Paasi 2003; Van Houtum 2005.

[2] From her own experience of transiting the white world in a non-white body, S. Ahmed recalls her racial profiling at similar interrogations: "For me to explain myself, to explain where I am from, is not only to give account of not being from here (being from Australia as not being from here would not suffice; that I am born here in the United Kingdom would not suffice), it is an account of how I ended up brown. Brownness is registered as foreign; brown as elsewhere" (2017, 111).

[3] Shamsie admits to her having drawn partial inspiration from the figure of Sajid Javid, the first conservative politician of Pakistani background holding high office in Cameron, May and Johnson's cabinets (2017b).

[4] In a similar rhetoric, A. Mbembe refers to the state violence exercised against migrants, asylum-seekers and other disenfranchised subjects as resulting in their being 'kept alive but in a state of injury' (2003, 21).

[5] Pronounced at the Tory party conference in 2016 –"If you believe you are a citizen of the world, you are a citizen of nowhere"—, Theresa May's disturbing disaffiliation from a cosmopolitan ideal was in fact a premonition to the Brexit reactivation of what P. Gilroy calls "post-imperial melancholia"(2006), and was fiercely contested for having rendered half of the UK population stateless.