

GENDERED BODIES, GENDERED EARTH: AN ECOFEMINIST ANALYSIS OF POWER IN KAMILA SHAMSIE'S *HOME FIRE*

Hassan Raza*

Dr. Zareena Qasim**

Abstract

Kamila Shamsie's *Home Fire* has been widely read as a novel about citizenship, Muslim identity, radicalisation, gender, grief and state surveillance. The connection between its regulated bodies and its material language of soil, burial, territory and bodily exposure, however, have not been the focus of sustained ecofeminist analysis. This article tries to fill that gap by engaging in close reading that is informed by Maria Mies and Vandana Shiva's description of linked systems of domination. It asks how political and patriarchal power regulates bodies and access to place, and how care, grief and burial contest that power. Through this analysis, it can be seen that the interrogation in the airport is a form of mobility that is stateful, as the interrogation of the body is always a prerequisite condition and self-presentation is in a controlled manner. Karamat Lone has described Parvaiz as a contaminant of British soil, making the very ground of the nation an exclusive property, thus bringing the punishment beyond death. Aneeka's effort to recover, touch and bury her brother challenges the official division of body, family, and home. Her Karachi vigil also affords insight into the way her grieving body becomes a public space up for grabs in the media, religious commentary, security measures, heat and dust turn her grieving body into a contested public object. Read together, these scenes locate the novel's ecofeminist significance in borders, burial, material belonging and in the politics of return. This article extends ecofeminist criticism into the urban and diasporic politics of citizenship and identifies care as a counter-ethic that reveals the human cost of exclusionary law.

Keywords: ecofeminism, *Home Fire*, gendered embodiment, burial, citizenship

Introduction

Ecofeminism examines how social systems organise women, land, labour and nonhuman life through related practices of possession, use, classification and exclusion. Maria Mies and Vandana Shiva (1993) link the exploitation of women and the natural world to the patriarchal, capitalist and colonial forms and focus on the ways in which unequal authority renders bodies and environments subject to management. Greta Gaard (1993) expands on this narrative by placing race, class, culture and other differences that influence vulnerability into the forefront. In literary studies, they shed light on historically particular configurations of embodied experiences and material space. They also shift attention away from symbolic association towards the institutions that determine whose labour, bodies, and environments are protected, disciplined or rendered expendable.

Shamsie's (2017) *Home Fire* is a modern retelling of the Sophoclean *Antigone*, reworked in the context of British citizenship, Muslim belonging, and burial. The novel is about the British Pakistani siblings Isma, Aneeka, and Parvaiz Pasha. Isma is left caring for the twins when she is still quite young, after her mother and grandmother pass away. Later, Parvaiz joins the Islamic State group, goes to Syria, learns the hard truths, and is shot dead outside the British Consulate in Istanbul as he tries to make his way back home. The British Home Secretary, Karamat Lone, has revoked his citizenship and ordered that his body be returned to Pakistan instead of Britain. The novel's main conflict between family duty and government power is the attempt made by Aneeka to recover and bury her twin.

The novel has attracted substantial critical attention. It is examined by Chambers (2018) as part of the afterlife of *Antigone* and as an issue of family and state. Tekin (2021) also interprets it as a contemporary family tragedy that is informed by surveillance and limiting conceptions of Britishness. Ahmed (2021) examines the ethics of reading Muslim difference and Banerjee's (2020) reflections focus on the limited options afforded to British Muslim citizens following 9/11. The themes of necropolitics, national identity and trauma are emphasized by Brigida and Pinho (2019) and Yaqin (2021). Rutkowska (2022) connects this debate on citizenship in the novel with the use of deprivation and statelessness today. Gender-based studies focus

on the role of women's agency, inter-personal role and women's linguistic representation (Akbar & Qasim, 2022; Hanif et al., 2022). Most immediately, Pishotti (2022) demonstrates that the materiality of the mourning undermines the abjection of Muslim lives and the restoration of human dignity. These debates have been further expanded by recent scholarship on the political erasure of British Muslim women and the nationalist language of belonging (Safdar & Sarwar, 2025; Williamson, 2025).

Within the existing scholarship, the novel's explorations of citizenship and surveillance, gender and public representation, grief and state control over life and death are quite evident. These strands, however, are usually examined separately. *Home Fire* remakes and refines "regulated" bodies, repeatedly subjecting them to "controlled" ground: Parvaiz' corpse can be denied access to British soil, Aneeka's mourning can be lived out physically, on a controlled, open landscape, and Isma's crossing of the border is subject to the inspection and disciplined presentation of her body. Citizenship in this way controls where bodies can go, come back, stay and eventually be buried. Place is thus not only the site of political struggle, but also a way belonging is given or taken away. The interconnections of gendered embodiment, grief and territorial authority are at the heart of the problem in this study.

The space which is discussed here is the relationship between corpse, ground and territorial possession. Necropolitical readings shed light on the state's power over death, gendered studies reveal the regulation of and agency for women, and Pishotti's (2022) account sets the material force of mourning. The state's use of a corpse as proof of its ownership of land has received less attention, as has the potential of a woman's body to contest both kinds of ownership, in her own grieving. This question is important because it is one of the most critical questions in relation to Karamat's policy, which is also described in terms of contamination, purity, soil, home, return, etc. The novel exposes the political violence necessary to preserve national territory and makes it seem natural.

"Earth" in *Home Fire* refers to physical ground; soil, land, burial grounds, territory and belonging. "Relational ethics" is the term used to indicate obligations that are established through caring, kinship, and interdependence, and "legal power"

is the term used to refer to the authority that is used through citizenship rules, immigration control, surveillance, official decision making, and managing burial. All these terms come together in the novel when there is contact with the body, the weather, the graves and contested territory. Their convergence is most visible in the controversy surrounding the body of Parvaiz, where legal status determines both the route of the body and the place in which it may rest. Thus, the material politics of movement, exclusion and return, become the ecofeminist themes in the novel.

The study poses two questions: (1) How does *Home Fire* relate citizenship, territory and burial to the regulation of gendered bodies? (2) What is the relationship between care, grief, and ritual obligation and how does this pose a challenge to that control? The article contends that Shamsie creates political sites out of the living body, the corpse and the soil, through close textual analysis. The state determines belonging through determining which bodies can traverse the boundaries and have access to national space. Aneeka's resistance asserts that bodily dignity and burial cannot be reduced to privileges granted by political authority, while Isma's quieter survival shows how care continues under conditions of suspicion. Their experiences together bring ecofeminist criticism from the rural or pastoral context to the airports, urban parks, media screens and transnational routes that are being securitised.

Literature Review

The basic theoretical background of the study is the *Ecofeminism* of Mies and Shiva (1993). Their work revolves around the notion that patriarchal and capitalist systems depend on systems of hierarchical relationships that make women's labour and the natural world subject to appropriation. The importance of this argument for literary criticism is that it focuses on common tactics of domination. Bodies and environments are categorized, quantified, regulated, put to work and dispossessed when they are no longer needed for the interest of power. Care, subsistence and interdependence are devalued as they do not lend themselves to the language of ownership and abstract exchange. *Home Fire* brings together these concepts when it comes to the inspection of Isma's body, Parvaiz's loss of

citizenship, and the denial of burial and the political system of conditional belonging in which Aneeka's grief is managed.

In Gaard's (1993) edited volume, difference, embodiment and intersecting hierarchies are at the heart of ecofeminist thinking. Her intervention helps to protect against essentialist representations of women and nature, and she is particularly pertinent to this novel in which gender is inextricable from race, religion, nationality and class. Isma and Aneeka's connection to the ground is born out of particular histories of migration, Islamophobia, family loss, British laws, Pakistani kinship, and the War on Terror. Ecological significance and meaning are given to their care by the organisation of bodies, places, and institutions of the novel. In recent years, ecofeminist literary criticism has also highlighted care and interdependence, against the backdrop of a critique of the nature-culture binary oppositions (Kostecka, 2026).

Home Fire finds its material politics at the airport, in houses, consulates, the streets, burial plots and a park in Karachi. These are the urban and administrative spaces which regulate the presence of bodies on material spaces and the duration of their stay. Burial is not only a religious ritual, but it is also a family obligation, a legal issue and the physical act of putting the remains back in the ground. The state's disruption of burial adds to a fractured materiality between corpse, kin, and place, in addition to the political exclusion. Urban space thus has an ecological aspect in terms of regulating movement, exposure, proximity and return for the body.

Scholarship on the novel can be grouped into four overlapping conversations. The first relates to the adaptation and tragedy. Chambers (2018) calls *Home Fire* a post-9/11 *Antigone* and discusses the shift in sound, violence, assimilation, and justice in the classic conflict. Tekin (2021) also explores the novel as a family tragedy, where notions of Britishness and surveillance render Muslim family members enemies of the State. These studies help to explain the significance of burial and family affiliation in terms of structure. They also show that Shamsie's rewriting moves the burial dispute from the authority of a single ruler into a system of citizenship law, party politics, media circulation, and international diplomacy.

The second discussion is about citizenship and the power of the State. Banerjee (2020) argues that post-9/11 political discourse offers British Muslims limited and conditional forms of citizenship. This conditionality revolves around the first question that Isma faces, namely, does she have a British passport? Is she British? Rutkowska (2022) investigates the anticipation of politicization of citizenship deprivation in the novel, as well as the unmasking of statelessness as a weapon. Brigida and Pinho (2019) have read the novel in the light of necropolitics and national identity and Yaqin (2021) has explored the trauma of political violence in Shamsie's fiction. These accounts explain why Parvaiz, even after his death, does not cease to be under the control of the State. His body remains governed by the laws of a state of which he is no longer a citizen. But Williamson (2025) also investigates the reactionary political discourses of Karamat and the novel's ambivalent spatial landscape of national belonging.

The third conversation is about the representation and the ethics of seeing Muslim subjects. Ahmed (2021) contends that *Home Fire* acknowledges the risks of reading Muslims through a suspicious visual and anthropological framework. Throughout the novel, these types of frames are frequently set: the airport officials scrutinize Isma's attire and online history, TV cameras scrutinize Aneeka's dress, feet, gestures, and tears, and tabloids portray her as seductress, extremist, or victim. Hanif et al. (2022) demonstrate the role of gendered language in constructing female characters and Akbar and Qasim (2022) focus on the social production of gender roles and agency. Such studies are particularly relevant to the ecofeminist reading as territorial control in the novel is performed through visibility and regulation of bodies. Building on this discussion, Safdar and Sarwar (2025) argue that Isma and Aneeka are doubly erased, as politically and as Muslim, and yet defiant and resistant.

The fourth conversation relates to Grief, Embodiment and Grievability. Pishotti (2022) gives the closest examination of material mourning, showing how it reclaims loss from the Islamophobic politics. This is not an abstract discussion of family and state dichotomy but rather demonstrates that grieving manifests itself through embodiment of body, object, space and acts of caring. Pishotti's work makes it clear that *Home Fire*'s grief is already resistant in terms of materiality and politics. In

this regard, the present study asks how this materiality is organised around soil and territorial possession and takes the discussion beyond the bodily visibility and grievability, to the state's purportedly legitimate exercise of authority over the ground that a body might occupy when resting.

The extension accentuates the material motifs of the novel. Karamat has transformed the ground to soil that is apparently in danger from an expelled body; the officials are moving that body between Britain, Turkey and Pakistan; and the Karachi park is a battleground where Aneeka is attempting to keep body and home together. Exposure, decay and the physical challenge of continuing the protest are exacerbated by dust and heat.

Ecofeminism here is a relational approach that traces the ways that bodies are cut off from places through passports, citizenship deprivation, surveillance and repatriation decision-making. It also uncovers how Aneeka is sexualized by the patriarchy and media, how Isma's caring is devalued and how suffering is produced as a spectacle. There is an overlap between state power, patriarchal power and media power, and each is institutionally distinct.

These studies, taken together, lay the groundwork for the novel's tragedy, citizenship politics, necropolitical violence, representation of Muslim identity, gendered agency, and material grief. What has yet to be well developed is the ecofeminist relationship between regulated body, excluded corpse and possessed soil, as the logic that connects these concerns. In this article, the author examines *Home Fire* through close readings of the themes of mobility, burial, touch, public ground, and care, and demonstrates how *Home Fire* mobilises territory to make it intimate. The nation gets to the subject through the suitcase that is searched, the passport that is confiscated, the grave that is not allowed, the exposed body of grieving woman, and the soil that is under the nation's name.

Research Methodology and Theoretical Framework

The study uses a qualitative close textual approach to analyse *Home Fire* by Shamsie (2017) in its 2017 Bloomsbury edition. It is a literary investigation that deals with the language, shape, and narrative structure of the novel. Passages were chosen

from turning points in the plot where body, movement, soil, burial, territory, care, surveillance, heat, dust, or public visibility are present. This selection focuses on scenes in which there is a combined interplay of material detail and political authority.

The analysis is done in three steps. First, it determines the material and institutional aspects of each scene. These include the search of clothes, the search of digital devices, the wording of the citizenship questions, the routing of Parvaiz's corpse, the Home Secretary's reference to British soil, the venue where Karachi protests were held and Aneeka's physical contact with the coffin and the body. Second, it creates an analytical framework for considering the perspective, imagery, repetition, contrast, and interplay of the private and the public in the presentation of narratives. Third, it reads these details in a more focused ecofeminist context, based primarily on Mies and Shiva (1993) and tests and qualifies the reading with the help of relevant *Home Fire* scholarship.

The interpretation is based on three concepts. The novel's governance of bodies and territory involves related practices of classification, possession and exclusion, called here linked domination. Relational ethics is the name given to responsibility as it is rooted in concrete relations of care and kinship. Material belonging is the physical use, transit and coming home to place. These concepts, collectively, focus on historically specific gender, power and ground relationships.

The analysis focuses on weather, water, vegetation and soil if these are related to the vulnerability of the body, location, burial, or political control as the surrounding scene suggests. Karachi's heat enhances the exposure and decomposition of the body, while the shell-and-ocean image expresses origin and continuing relation. The banyan trees and the dust storm become meaningful due to its close association with the coffin, the security compound, and the camera that is recording Aneeka's vigil. In each instance the material motif is given significance through the narrative context and its connection to embodied experience. This criterion maintains the difference between symbolic, spatial and material use of environmental language.

The argument is presented as an interpretive study where the coherence of the textual evidence, accuracy of the quotations, and the explanatory value of the theoretical connection are the

bases for the presentation. Secondary scholarship is employed in the process of locating and situating the readings and not for the purpose of supplanting reading the novel's language. The analysis shifts from regulated mobility, to the language of the state with regards to soil, to the corpse and burial as material relationships, to the visibility of Aneeka's public grieving, in a gendered sense. Finally, this subsection is a place where these strands converge by means of the differential care and resistance exercised by the two sisters.

Analysis and Discussion

Home Fire features a series of material decisions as its central conflict. What are the criteria for crossing a border? Which passport counts? Where may a dead body be transported? On which ground can it be delivered? Who may touch, wash, mourn, and remain beside it? Shamsie makes the questions legal and political but first she makes them bodily. The novel starts with the inspection of a living woman and ends with the exposure of a corpse and the woman who refuses to leave it. Those scenes are analysed below to demonstrate gendered embodiment linking with territorial authority.

Gendered Citizenship and the Scrutiny of the Mobile Body

The airport interrogation establishes the terms on which Isma can move. She arrives three hours early to her flight, and has packed everything carefully so it looks innocuous, but officials still have to check everything in her suitcase. The female officer handles her clothes, assesses the condition of her coat and leaves her fingerprints on her underwear. A second official seizes her passport, laptop, and phone, and then asks, "Do you consider yourself British?" Isma responds, "I am British." He immediately follows with, "But do you consider yourself British?" (Shamsie, 2017, p. 9). The exchange is about disconnecting legal citizenship from an internal attitude which the state has the right to test.

The scene illustrates that citizenship is not just a thing to have, but a thing one is to do with the body. Isma does not show any signs of discomfort, is not sarcastic, controls her tone and provides responses prepared in consultation with Aneeka. The officials' extended silences force her to say more, and the search through her browsing records delves into her private interests

and activities. Her mobility is not based on any evidence of wrongdoing, only on successful presentation of moderation. This is Banerjee's (2020) conceptualization of conditional British Muslim identity at the micro level. The border turns into a space where the state determines if a citizen's body, clothes, words and private behaviors fit the category named on her passport.

This regulation is gendered and discriminates against women. The hijab, underwear, hair products, and clothing of Isma are considered evidence. But the presence of the female official doesn't take away the humiliation; it allows for a closer look under the guise of procedural correctness. The novel's concern with the visual framing of Muslim difference, as mentioned by Ahmed (2021), is given a tactile dimension here. Isma is not only observed but also treated. Her body turns into a surface, from which loyalty is inferred.

The scene also reveals the cost of compliance. Aneeka tells her to show "at least a tiny bit of contempt" (Shamsie, 2017, p. 10) but Isma knows what perhaps her younger sister does not yet see: Aneeka knows "nothing about the fragility of her place in the world" (Shamsie, 2017, p. 10). She is not a proponent of obeying the law in lieu of justice. She makes use of it as a means of survival. Her apparent passivity is therefore better understood as disciplined self-protection under unequal conditions. The state has the authority to stall her, cause her to miss the flight and to determine whether or not her future in America will start.

The ecofeminist link is with a similar technique of rule. Isma's body, possessions, and digital history and speech are all inspected by border officials before movement is granted; later on, officials determine if Parvaiz's body can cross into British territory. Both scenes involve inspection/exclusion as a precondition of belonging. The living citizen must prove their acceptability; the dead citizen is incompatible with the national soil. Territorial authority, then, is made flesh: in the presentation of the racialised female citizen, and the movement of the corpse under regulation.

Soil, Burial, and the State's Possessive Language

In the Home Secretary's televised address to the death of Parvaiz, the novel moves from the body being under scrutiny, to being under the political control of a corpse. When he is asked if

the body will be buried in Britain, he responds, “We will not let those who turn against the soil of Britain in their lifetime sully that very soil in death” (Shamsie, 2017, p. 113). The sentence is short, but it does several things. It takes Parvaiz out of the British citizen class, turns British soil into an ethically pure soil, and shows the Home Secretary as its guardian.

The repetition of soil is crucial. Karamat could only talk of law, security and citizenship. Rather, he grounds political membership in earth, naturalising it. Britain becomes a body that can be dirtied, the actual dead body becomes a contaminant. This flip is a cover up of the state’s violence. The passive corpse cannot do anything, but because of Karamat’s grammar it looks as though it can contaminate the nation. It becomes the government’s proactive move to not include it, due to pollution.

Here, Mies and Shiva’s (1993) critique is helpful as it asks, how authority transforms land into property and presents control as protection. Karamat views soil as a national resource and the purity of it is determined by the state. His words also extend punishment beyond death. Parvaiz can no longer be imprisoned or prosecuted, but his body can be denied burial in Britain and sent to Pakistan as his administratively designated home country (Shamsie, 2017, p. 113). Rutkowska (2022) discussion reveals the legal dimension of citizenship deprivation, while the ecofeminist reading shows how the policy is made persuasive through a possessive language of earth.

The designation of Pakistan as Parvaiz’s homeland is also not stable. Parvaiz was born and raised in Britain. Pakistan is his place of residence that he has been given on an administrative basis and not owing to his lived attachments. The body is sent to a second country, in order to avoid Britain’s responsibilities of the first country. The ruling makes dual citizenship a tool for expulsion. It also reveals how postcolonial mobility is asymmetrical. Britain can claim authority over Parvaiz during his lifetime, revoke his citizenship and, after his death, require Pakistan to bear the material consequences of its action.

Media dissemination enhances the power of Karamat’s language. The phrase becomes the hashtag “#DONTSUALLYOURSOIL” (Shamsie, 2017, p. 114). Political rhetoric is boiled down into a call to action that can be repeated

and for which the public can be enlisted to help secure the “pure” image of the country. Soil is no longer the substance of a ground. It becomes an emblem which can be shared and liked and repeated with the exclusion. The hashtag eradicates the past of the corpse, and the circumstances of Parvaiz’s attempted return, and the family’s sorrow. It leaves a pure territory, and a polluting body. By studying Karamat’s nationalist rhetoric, Williamson (2025) shows how compressed language renders exclusion an apparently ordinary defence of national belonging.

The novel is an antidote to this abstraction, in the person of Gladys, Parvaiz’s neighbour from infancy. Her appeal for the return of Parvaiz is rather straightforward: “Give us our boy to bury, give his mother the company of her son in the grave” (Shamsie, 2017, p. 115). Against Karamat’s abstract national soil, she calls upon a particular grave next to a particular mother. Her language recuperates family ties, recollections, and neighborhood. “Our boy” is no justification for Parvaiz’s decisions. It refuses to accept those decisions that erase the connections that made him. The imagined grave places his body within the history of the family.

This contrast illustrates *Home Fire*’s representation of the state’s transformation of land into an exclusive space. Karamat summons an abstract national ground while Gladys summons a concrete burial place, which is formed by family memory. The political claim has the right to determine who can enter the land of the dead, and the family’s claim has the right of burial, which responds to requirements after citizenship is withdrawn.

The Corpse, Kinship, and the Material Claim of Home

Aneeka’s response further elaborates on the relational claim, by expanding it via the materiality of the corpse. Isma says that the body is only a shell; Aneeka responds, “Hold a shell up to your ear and you can still hear the ocean it came from” (Shamsie, 2017, p. 119). The image does not deny death. It rejects the notion that death voids the body of relation. The shell is cut off from the sea and yet its shape does still bear the imprint of the sea. Similarly, when the person is no longer there, Parvaiz’s body is still linked to family and home.

The exchange also marks an ethical difference between sisters. Isma looks to the soul, for the body is seemingly irreparable. Aneeka insists on the body because it is the final body relation that she can have. Neither position is purely religious or secular. Both are ways of coping with loss. But it is Aneeka's position, where she is directly facing the state, a position that is one of re-returning the object that has been classified and displaced by policy.

As Pishotti (2022) indicate, the corporeality of grief serves as a possible safeguard against the possibility of its being reduced to evidence or symbolism. Grief is a process carried out through organization of bodies, objects, and space. The family cannot perform burial without the body. Aneeka can't distinguish between the right to grieve and the right to take Parvaiz home. That is why she refuses to bury him hastily in Karachi, where his Pakistani cousin wants to do so. Pakistan is not an interchangeable Muslim ground. The burial she seeks is next to their mother in London, where the siblings' family history was lived.

The novel frequently reveals the bureaucratic language that is used in order to eliminate this distinction. Repatriation, transportation, mortuaries, citizenship, passports, hygiene and municipal responsibility are the words which are used by the officials. Administratively reasonable, each term, but collectively, a logistical issue: the dead person becomes a logistical issue. Karamat later clarifies that he "had never made a decision about a corpse – his decision had been about a living 'enemy of Britain'" (Shamsie, 2017, p. 143). The difference enables him to wash his hands of the material effects of his policy. The novel is opposed to such a separation, since citizenship denial will dictate where the body can be moved and buried.

This relation is evident in the location Aneeka has chosen for her protest in Karachi. She is sitting in a park with Parvaiz in the vicinity of a well-guarded British Deputy High Commission. Barbed wire, dust-filled guns, and politicians who can't compute for long periods of time surround the compound and the park is lined with banyan trees, whose roots are described as more enduring than rusting wire, guns filled with dust or the short calculations of politicians (Shamsie, 2017, p. 131). "Here she

would sit with her brother until the world changed or both of them crumbled into the soil around them” (Shamsie, 2017, p. 131). The sentence is a materialization of Aneeka’s protest. She does more than request a policy change. She puts her own body next to his corpse and imagines both returning to the earth.

The banyan roots set up an opposition of time. Security infrastructure seems like it will last forever, but it rusts, jams and serves changing governments. The tree’s bare roots create continuity by occupying and altering the ground space. They are long enough for the officials and media bodies around the park to do more than the mere calculations that they can make now. Aneeka’s vigil also defies the time frame of news cycles and diplomatic process and has held onto her claim until the state acknowledges the relationship it has severed.

The scene brings together the body as the material space and place where citizenship, kinship, ritual and territory converge. Aneeka’s refusal to give up the body to the state and her insistence that the body be sent home challenge the state’s conception of place that renders it administratively interchangeable along with the conception of the dead treated as a movable object, without relational claims.

Public Mourning, Dust, and the Politics of Visibility

Thus, in the Karachi vigil, in order to make such a claim a woman’s body must be put on display for public interpretation. Television and tabloids, politicians and religious voices frame Aneeka’s mourning clothes, and the hijab, bare feet, gestures, and proximity to the corpse over and over. The battle is thus not just about the body of Parvaiz. It’s also about who gets to define Aneeka’s grief.

Prior to the arrival of the coffin, the park is mapped as a security issue. Television coverage turns railings, trees, surrounding buildings and gathered people become potential targets of an attack. The same ground means something different to each observer. For Aneeka, it’s a temporary housing unit, where her brother is being detained until she calls for his return. It’s a scene to be surveyed, modelled and contained for the state and media. Both are held in place by her body. She is the grieving sister, but has also been cast as potentially an extremist, a manipulator, a seductress and a threat.

This struggle is heightened with the coming of the coffin. Aneeka takes down the fragile wooden walls with her bare hands and sits beside Parvaiz, touches his forehead, discovers the stitches on his temple and puts her two fingers on his wrist (Shamsie, 2017, pp. 138–139). Her touch is both intimate and evidentiary. It corroborates what the screens and the official statements have been hiding: The body they declared as terrorist, foreign national and unwanted corpse is still her twin's body. Though she knows he is dead, she checks for a pulse, illustrating the difference between knowing and feeling.

In this scene, the moral is derived from what Aneeka does, not from some moral category. She touches the dead where the state handles the body through documents and routes. She remains where officials move it. She attends to wounds where political speech dehumanizes the person, making him an enemy. Her contact doesn't acquit Parvaiz or deny his responsibility, either. It rejects the assertion that all duties of the body are null and void if one is found guilty of misconduct.

This is a tactile scene that is unsettled by the dust storm. The leaves of the banyan trees are torn by the wind, mud is splattered on the rose petals, the white sheet is turned over and the cameras are obscured. The broadcast goes out of vision for a few moments. On the return of the image, Aneeka hides her brother's face behind interlaced fingers and her scream is described as "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" (Shamsie, 2017, p. 139). The image brings the suffering of Aneeka's body and transfers it through earth and weather to the political office which has sought to keep suffering at bay. Private grief and public power are united in one sound gesture.

Karamat is also the witness to the material effects of his language. He has said that soil is something that Parvaiz will dirty. Now, dust gets into his world of the senses, through the broadcast and afterwards through his imagination. He speaks to the Pakistani High Commissioner and rubs his hand on his mouth and tastes dust (Shamsie, 2017, p. 142). It is a little detail that is important. The territory he supposed to be national, and abstract comes back as material which cannot be expelled from the body.

Clean political language and dirty consequences of the material start to break down.

Aneeka's public statement comes to the fore as it is a direct expression of the ethical conflict. She also mentions cases where tyrants will exile individuals, keep their bodies from their own families, and dispose of the body, and states "All these things happen according to the law, but not according to justice" (Shamsie, 2017, p. 139). What's legally allowable is not necessarily ethically adequate, according to her formulation. Here relational ethics demands that law be held accountable for human relations which it harms. Karamat's decision may be legal in the world of the novel, but legal is not enough for the obligations that are engendered by death, kinship and burial.

The reaction to Aneeka is an example of the ways in which a woman's ethical appeal is quickly turned to her body. A tabloid has questioned if her face is evil and reiterates sexualised and dehumanising insults. Some religious and political commentators comment on her dress and connection with Eamonn and whether or not she is behaving appropriately. The state does not need to imprison her to restrict her mobility. Karamat understands that she may not be able to go back to Britain as her passport is still held hostage; she is still a British citizen. His own "inner dictum" is chillingly pithy: "Let her continue to be British, but let her be British outside Britain" (Shamsie, 2017, p.142). Citizenship becomes a status which is separated from access to national space.

This punishment is determined by gender. Aneeka is presented as sexual when her body is displayed, excessive when she is open about her grief, descriptive when she loves Eamonn, and dangerous when she refuses to leave the corpse. The same political culture that insists on integration of Muslim women, turns their feelings into evidence of alienness. Ahmed's (2021) description of visual frame is thus complemented with a spatial frame. Aneeka is not only misunderstood; she is not allowed to enter the territory to which her citizenship allegedly pertains. This pattern also applies to Safdar and Sarwar's (2025) description of the political erasure of the sisters, i.e., formal citizenship and social and territorial exclusion.

Heat further sharpens the material cost of visibility. Karachi is introduced through a "white-hot sky" (Shamsie, 2017,

p. 129). The ice coffin has to be constantly rebuilt to stop it melting and those that come into contact with the ice slabs suffer from “the burn of cold against the burn of heat” (Shamsie, 2017, p. 142). The double exposure and the double preservation of the paired burns erode any distinction between the two: the ice that slows decay also hurts the hands that carry it. Heat acts at a local and material level by melting the coffin, exacerbating the odour of decay, tiring out the mourners and making it more painful for Aneeka to remain present. Her protest is reliant on her body’s ability to endure amidst deteriorating conditions.

The vigil thus serves public mourning as a battle over the interpretation of bodies and spaces. Aneeka holds corpse and ground together through presence, touch, speech and endurance. Media and state power respond by sexualizing, securitizing and immobilizing her. Dust and heat increase the intensity of the image as they show the materiality which the official language aims to control at a distance.

Care, Relational Ethics, and Unequal Modes of Resistance

Isma and Aneeka’s resistances are not the same. It is their differences that are integral to the novel’s exploration of care. Isma has spent her youth keeping the family afloat after the passing of their grandmother and mother. Her labour is paid work, domestic organisation, emotional support and risk management. She delays her education because the twins’ survival depends upon her. This history explains her caution and later guilt. The state encounters her as an individual traveller, but she arrives at the airport carrying years of responsibility for other bodies.

Mies and Shiva’s (1993) focus on the devaluation of care has identified the political significance of this labour. Isma’s caregiving arises through bereavement, family structure and economic need. Her work is essential, but out of sight. Even someone like Aneeka who relies on Isma’s body and physical shelter can feel that she is emotionally cold or that she is betraying her. Over the years, Isma’s caution, fear of institutional retaliation and preference for strategies that maintain legal security have developed. Ecofeminist analysis highlights the ways in which this labour is necessary for life and is not represented by the public conception of political action.

Isma's response to Parvaiz is ethically questionable but understandable. She reports his departure, and then helps to issue a public declaration separating the family from him. She feels that these are measures to keep Aneeka safe and keep what they still have of their legal security. She is a rational woman who thinks in survivalist terms regarding the police. She is aware that the state is ready to render kinship legible as complicity and attempts to do just that. The cost is that, for a time, she admits the categories through which Parvaiz is discarded.

Aneeka refuses this strategy because it places political safety above the obligations of kinship. Her resistance is visible, tactile and confronting nature. Isma's is quieter. She continues her education, maintains contact, and finally goes to Karamat's house to ask for permission to travel to Karachi. At that meeting, Karamat notices "the way she was holding in her body," realising that she knows she is in the presence of a man who has the power to act against her (Shamsie, 2017, p. 145). The sentence comes back to the bodily discipline of the opening interrogation. Isma is in control of posture, tone and desire as a direct defiant challenge could put the person that she is trying to reach in danger.

But she is not so easily cowed. She questions Karamat's notion of Eamonn, refuses his attempt to treat Aneeka as a pawn and asks to be permitted to go with her sister. She doesn't want to have a rhetorical victory in the burial issue. Her purpose is to reject Aneeka's solitude. Here, caring is manifested in the form of accompaniment. Isma can't change the state's decision, but she can decide that her sister will not suffer its consequences alone.

Opposition to care is also complicated in the novel, as is the case with Karamat. In public, he speaks of burying in a way that is more of a political concession, one that would make the nation weaker. His private recollections of his own reveal that in private he knows the obligation that Aneeka speaks of. While in attendance at the vigil, he recalls staying up with his mother's body and reading the Quran, which was "the last thing he could do for her as a son" (Shamsie, 2017, p. 157). The memory doesn't absolve him. It brings to light the contradiction between his public policy and his intimate knowledge. He knows the importance of vigil in his family but not amongst the Pashas.

Terry's command can be summarized in the most basic of terms: "Be human. Fix it" (Shamsie, 2017, p. 157). Throughout the novel, there are many examples of elaborate systems of classification and the actual responsibilities. Isma will have to travel to her sister. Aneeka has to stay with her brother. A dead son should not be used to chastise a family. These assertions don't answer all the questions of security and responsibility, but they do give insight into what official rhetoric leaves out.

The novel also points to the political significance of care, its coercive nature, its unequal distribution and the hazards it poses to punishment. Isma gives up years of her life for family obligations; Aneeka is subjected to abuse and potential death for being a carer others; Terry is placed at odds with her husband when she cares for Eamonn; and Gladys is open to having her public plea dismissed for her care of the Pasha children. Much of this labour is done by women because the family and political system force them to do it and then label it as private feelings and not public duty. Political ambition, however, can be suppressed and men know and owe such things as well, as can be seen in the memory of his mother that Karamat has. The historically located account of relational responsibility is supported by Kostecka's (2026) focus on care, empathy and a critique of rigid binaries.

The contrast of the sisters gives a result of the analytical synthesis. Isma represents strategic survival, a mode in which a racialized woman manages speech, posture and movement to save a life in a state of suspicion. Aneeka represents refusal: a grieving body occupies public land and refuse to be separated by the state from the corpse. There are no moral opposites in these modes. Both react towards various risk calculations. As a whole, they reveal that resistance in *Home Fire* involves confronting, enduring, accompanying and holding on to relation.

Across these scenes, citizenship is performed through the inspection of bodies, the nationalist discourse transforms earth to property, burying puts the corpse, kinship and earth together, public grief puts Aneeka in front of the media and security checkpoints and care offers an ethical counter discourse where women are overburdened. These claims, as a whole, articulate

the novel's ecofeminist meaning in a more precise manner than to simply say that women and nature are both oppressed.

Conclusion

This study examined the relationship *Home Fire* establishes between the regulation of gendered bodies, citizenship, territory and burial, and how care, grief and ritual obligation disrupt that regulation. Through the close reading, it is clear that the body-earth relation of the novel is focused on mobility, soil, the corpse, public ground and the politics of return. Isma's airport interrogation reveals that legal citizenship doesn't guarantee unexamined movement for Muslim women of colour. Her body, her possessions, her speech and her feelings must be inspected and disciplined before she can cross the border. Thus, the first scene sets out to make territorial power an embodied experience.

Karamat Lone's notion that Parvaiz would dirty "British soil" is illogical. It turns the ground into purified national property and the body into a pollutant. The deprivation of citizenship is then more than the loss of a legal status. It determines where the body may be sent and laid to rest. The novel exposes the difference between state-appropriated national territory and a place made meaningful through family relation and lived attachment beside Parvaiz's mother's grave.

That difference manifests itself in Aneeka's resistance. Her shell-and-ocean image suggests that the body is not erased by death but instead carries traces of its origin and connection. In Karachi she places her own body beside Parvaiz's until the broken relation between body and home is officially accepted. Touch, dust, heat, decay, and the repeated rebuilding of the ice coffin prevent the dispute from remaining an abstract question of policy. They bring to light the price for Karamat's choice and the work needed to oppose it.

This research also provides an explanation of the gendered nature of this work. Aneeka's body is sexualized, securitized and faces the threat of spatial exclusion. Isma's quiet survival depends on strategic compliance, and years of care that went unrecognized. Their various decisions demonstrate a variety of means of resistance: public rejection, a controlled expression, patience, accompanying, or maintaining family

relationships under surveillance. These practices are manifested as part of the sisters' particular histories and differential access to state power. The contrast between them opens out the novel's inventory of political action to more than one model of the visible political confrontation.

The major strength of the article is that it seeks the ecofeminist dimension of *Home Fire* in burial, borders, territoriality, weather, contact and materialities of death. The suitcase, the passport, the grave, the park, the corpse and the position of the woman, trying to pass through the national space, are all intimately related to political power.

The study is limited to one novel and one theoretical orientation. It reads soil, water, heat, dust and vegetation in the relation to embodied experience and territorial politics in the narrative. The analysis is still literary and interpretive; it focuses on the cultural and political significance of environment and place. In this context, *Home Fire* employs the body-to-ground dynamic as a metaphor for citizenship and the representation of burial as a contestation of kinship and territory. Future comparative studies may explore the ways in which burial, national territory and women's mourning are depicted in other *Antigone* adaptations from the present day, in novels written since 9/11 or in any South Asian diasporic novel.

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