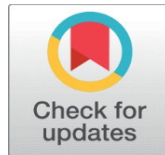
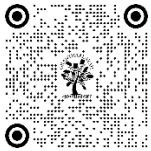


CONTEMPORISING ANTIGONE

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DOI

[10.29121/shodhkosh.v4.i2.2023.1913](https://doi.org/10.29121/shodhkosh.v4.i2.2023.1913)

Funding: This research received no specific grant from any funding agency in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

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ABSTRACT

Retelling and contemporising a mythological character of a classic work of literature into a modern literary work with the same vigour and significance needs careful scrutiny and creativity. This article analyses Home Fire by Kamila Shamsie that retells Sophocles' Antigone. Antigone and other characters are shifted into a contemporary setting without disturbing the framework of the canon that has been presented by Sophocles, the Greek tragedian.

Keywords: Retelling, Greek Mythology

1. INTRODUCTION

Bridging the gulf between the ancient age, the middle age and the modern age, the dynamicity of human life can be explicitly limned by tracing the notable advancements throughout centuries. From wooden boxes to the slim screens of the television, from trunk calls to the smart touches, from bullock-carts to luxury cars and from baby-sitting to baby surveillance, the world is moving at a high pace, replacing the ancient with modernised equipment. Such advancements are recognisable in all spheres of life, literature being an important one among them. Certain characters of ancient literary canon have been treasured throughout centuries and remain timeless, such that, the usage of these names in the contemporary era occur at the drop of a hat.

A common notion exists that nothing in the world that is modern can beat the excellence and supremacy of the ancient ones. Hence, the much popular proverb 'old is gold,' is commonly used by the older generation in denoting the unbeatable

transcendence of the ancient beliefs, laws, technologies, literature, music and art to name a few. However, throughout ages it has been proved that, authors gifted with innate writing abilities can produce works equally good as the ancient ones. And when it comes to the retelling of literary classics, there are various authors who have signed their works by beautifully incorporating the original framework into a modern scenario which involves shifting of the characters into a contemporary setting.

Albeit being a work written in and around 442 BC, Antigone, even today in the 21st century, happens to be a text that leaves a profound mark on the readers through the unfolding of the tragic events. The Greek mythology has been presented in a sublime fashion that ensures due credits to its author Sophocles, who has perfectly timed the events of romance, tragedy and betrayal which add to the intensity of the plot. "It's a family story on one level, but mostly it is about the king's hubris in pitting in his own law against the law of the Gods, who demand that Polynices be buried" (Grady). The recognition and the acceptance of the Greek tragic drama Antigone, by readers across the world has proved that the work has stood the test of time. The adamant nature of Antigone is limned in the lines "I'll still bury him. It will be fine to die doing that" (Sophocles 9). Antigone is one such drama that has been reworked on by various writers who have made an attempt to place the characters in an entirely modern era giving due respect to the plot and framework of the original text. One remarkable retelling of Antigone is Home Fire penned by Kamila Shamsie, an out of the ordinary novel.

Contemporising Antigone refers to the shifting of Antigone and other characters into an era without disturbing the framework of the canon that has been presented by Sophocles. Home Fire in all possible ways has done justice to the ancient Greek drama by best matching it to the world's present scenario. The principle *weltanschauung* underlying within both the texts relates to the fact that even centuries apart a literary work can hold significance and relevance to the period it is rewritten in. Home Fire an out of the ordinary novel penned by Kamila Shamsie sets the protagonist in circumstances that people encounter every day in the 21st century.

Similarities within dissimilarities in the names of characters create the curiosity within readers to trace how each character within the novel is portrayed under different conditions that are still identical. It is a journey from 442 BC era to the 2017 scenario wherein Antigone becomes Aneeka, Ismene is converted to Isma, Polyneices is identified as Parvaiz Pasha, Haemon becomes Eamon and Creon changes to Karamat Lone. Analysing the novel that is divided into four different parts, each part narrated by the four major characters in the novel; Isma, Aneeka, Eamon and Creon, the novel provide an account into the life of the four through the perspective of each of them. The use of chorus and the narrative pattern which highlights the features of Greek mythology are completely withdrawn in the retelling of the text.

The word traitor or the word betrayal can be a one word representation for the entire plot of Antigone. Modernisation of the text has involved innovation of these key words into the contemporary setting. How the word traitor has been redefined in Home Fire is what marks it as a retelling of the canon in the 21st century. Having had Polyneices in Antigone as the traitor who leads an army against his own brother, who was the king of the city of Thebes, is what led to the fatal destiny of the two brothers. In Home Fire the word traitor is attributed a modern distinction. The newspapers today give the readers a glimpse on the issues faced by the younger generation, out of which terrorism takes its position on the top rung of the ladder.

Kamila Shamsie has beautifully shaped the character of Parvaiz Pasha who has fallen prey in the trap of the ISIS, which again is an act of betraying one's own country. The siren call of the terrorist group has lured the young man into its trap that ultimately leads to his own death which marks the element of tragedy in an up to date fashion. "He didn't know how to break out of these currents of history, how to shake free of the demons he had attached to his own heels" (Shamsie 171).

The title *Home Fire* in itself reveals the tragic flaw of events in the novel similar to that of the drama. The title can be apprehended in two different ways that reveal the inner meaning within the title that makes it highly suitable for the novel. The term fire can depict a state of emergency or even a sense of danger that emerges within the house. "The *Home Fire* could refer to the home being in flames... or the country being in danger, owing to terrible decisions" (Palat). The terrible decision is the core aspect of the novel which refers to the illogical fleeing of Parvaiz Pasha to provide service to the media wing of the ISIS abandoning the whole family just as their father did years ago setting the home on fire. "However, Fire also refers to the warmth of a fireplace, which means a comfortable home" (Palat). The context reveals the warmth or the comfort received within the house which can be related to Parvaiz's desire to reach back home and escape from the terrorist group he was inclined to.

Kamila Shamsie has rightly shifted the entire plot from 442 century Greece to 2017 London and Karachi. Dual nationality was an additional makeover that has intensified the beauty of the text. Both *Antigone* and *Home Fire* depict a sister's plight to ensure proper burial rites to her brother who was labelled a traitor to the country. In *Home Fire* the body of Parvaiz is restricted from being brought to Britain instead it is withheld at Karachi their home town. Half the plot deals with the incidents at Britain and the rest at Pakistan.

Antigone being an ancient text has represented the king's rule over the kingdom or the empire in which the male heir takes over the throne after their father's reign. Kamila Shamsie's text being a contemporised version has introduced the government rule which gives a glimpse of the constitutional monarchy in the United Kingdom. The role of the king Creon is transformed to Karamat Lone who is the Home secretary of Britain. *Home Fire* has brought about a dynamic change by updating the characters as belonging to the Muslim community, which attempts to emblemize the question of being a Muslim in the 21st century. The use of modern gadgets, the concept of the terrorist group ISIS, the use of media firestorm, the term 'googling while muslim,' recurring images of love and sacrifice and the depiction of a massive bomb explosion towards the end justify the work to be a modernised replica of the text *Antigone*.

Antigone and *Home Fire* sculpts the character of an adamant woman who goes out of her way to serve her brother with proper burial rites. This proves that Kamila Shamsie is an avant garde composer of the canon. Sophocles illustrates *Antigone* as a woman who is daring and full of courage. In the present scenario, women have become even more adamant and protest for the rights they deserve. It would be injustice to mention that *Antigone* has been reworked on by authors, poets and writers alone because the constant reworking on *Antigone* is also a proof to the fact that every woman in her own way is an *Antigone* of her own time. Thus *Antigone* happens to be a tale contemporised not twice or thrice, but every time a woman is born.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

None.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

None.

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