



CROSSING BORDERS, SHAPING IDENTITIES: MIGRATION AND BORDER POLITICS IN MOHSIN HAMID'S *EXIT WEST*

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Abstract

This study examines the representation of migration and border politics in Mohsin Hamid's Exit West (2017), focusing on how contemporary mobility reshapes identity, belonging, and citizenship. Drawing upon Homi K. Bhabha's theory of hybridity and Étienne Balibar's concept of border politics, the research investigates the novel's critique of exclusionary border regimes and its portrayal of transnational identity formation. Employing a qualitative textual analysis, the study closely analyzes the experiences of Nadia and Saeed as they navigate displacement through Hamid's symbolic magical doors. The findings reveal that the novel challenges conventional notions of national boundaries by exposing borders as socially and politically constructed mechanisms of control. Furthermore, migration is presented as a transformative process that generates fluid, hybrid, and transnational identities rather than fixed forms of belonging. The study concludes that Exit West offers a powerful critique of contemporary border politics while advocating a more inclusive understanding of human mobility, coexistence, and global interconnectedness.

Keywords: Migration; Border Politics; Transnational Identity; Hybridity; Displacement; Belonging; Exit West (2017).

Introduction

Migration is one of the key social, political, and cultural phenomena of the twenty-first century. Today's unprecedented levels of human mobility between countries have arisen due to increasing globalization, armed conflicts, economic inequalities, environmental crises, and political instability. In light of the latest studies on migration, it is no longer seen only as a transition from one geographical space to another, but as a process of identity negotiation, cultural transformation, and adaptation to new social spaces. Migration has been changing societies around the world, and issues of borders, citizenship, national identity, and belonging have become central themes in political and academic debates. Hence, increasing attention has been paid to how states control mobility through border regimes that enable the privileged movement of some while excluding others from specific social and political spaces (Balibar, 2002).

In the present time, where migration has gained greater significance, literary works have also emerged that address the themes of migration, displacement, exile, refugee experiences, and transnational identity formation. Literary texts serve as an important medium that helps us understand the human consequences of migration beyond statistical and political representations. Storytelling and literature bring to life the personal stories of migrants, shedding light on the emotional, psychological, and cultural aspects of displacement. Consequently, migrant fiction of the contemporary period has evolved as a major area of study in postcolonial and cultural studies,



as it deals with the problems faced by migrants who move across geographical and cultural boundaries while carrying multiple identities (Bhabha, 1994).

Mohsin Hamid is one of the most important contemporary literary voices exploring the themes of globalization, migration, and identity in the modern world. His novels examine the effects of transnational mobility and the fluidity of belonging in an increasingly globalized world. *Exit West* (2017), published in 2017, is considered one of Hamid's most significant works in contemporary migrant literature. The novel tells the story of two young lovers, Nadia and Saeed, who flee their unnamed war-torn homeland through a series of magical doors that transport them to different parts of the world, including Greece, England, and the United States (Hamid, 2017). By using this imaginative narrative device, Hamid moves beyond typical migration narratives focused on the physical journey to emphasize the social, political, and emotional dimensions of migration.

The magical doors in *Exit West* (2017) serve as a powerful metaphor for contemporary migration. Hamid eliminates physical obstacles to movement and instead focuses on the implications of that movement. The novel challenges traditional notions of national boundaries and territorial sovereignty. Anderson (1983) claims that nations are "imagined communities" that are socially constructed and maintained by shared cultural narratives and collective identities. Hamid's depiction of instantaneous transitions across borders undermines these notions, highlighting how arbitrary and constructed these borders are. In doing so, *Exit West* (2017) compels readers to reconsider the meaning of borders in an increasingly globalized world.

Additionally, the novel offers a critical analysis of contemporary border politics. While globalization has facilitated the free movement of information, technology, and capital across international borders, it continues to impose tight controls on the mobility of people. Migrants and refugees are frequently subjected to restrictive immigration policies and practices that deepen the divide between citizens and non-citizens. Modern-day frontiers are not merely geographic lines of the nation-state but also structure social and political institutions in ways that determine inclusion and exclusion (Balibar, 2002). Hamid brings these realities to life through the experiences of Nadia and Saeed, who, despite crossing geographical borders, continue to face suspicion, discrimination, and hostility. The novel demonstrates that migration is not merely about physical movement but also an ongoing contestation of acceptance and belonging in host societies.

The novel also makes an important contribution to the debate on refugeehood and forced displacement. According to Perfect (2019), *Exit West* (2017) represents a new alternative genre of the refugee story that challenges the traditional portrayal of refugees as passive victims. Instead, Hamid presents migrants as complex individuals with lives beyond their refugee status. The novel depicts refugee experiences in a deeply humanizing way, focusing on their daily lives, desires, and transformations. Similarly, Bellin (2022) argues that Hamid's story elicits what she calls "*disorienting empathy*," thereby challenging prevailing notions about migration, borders, and national belonging. Through this empathetic framework, *Exit West* (2017) critiques exclusionary border regimes and encourages more constructive thinking about global mobility.

Another significant aspect of the novel is the construction of identity in transnational spaces. Migration tends to challenge established ideas of selfhood and forces a redefinition of cultural affiliations and social identities. The concept of "hybridity" proposed by Bhabha (1994)



is particularly useful in understanding these processes. Bhabha argues that cultural identities are not static but are continually generated in intercultural contact zones and “third spaces.” This hybridity is embodied in Nadia and Saeed as they adapt to new worlds while retaining connections to their past. Their experiences illustrate the transformation of notions of home, culture, and belonging in the context of migration, resulting in fluid and evolving identities.

Recent studies have also highlighted how transnational mobility contributes to identity formation in *Exit West* (2017). Abbas et al. (2025) contend that Hamid portrays identity as a transnational and dynamic process rather than a fixed national category. They interpret the protagonists’ journeys as evidence of how migration enables individuals to become polycultural, transnational, and multinational. This perspective resonates with broader theories of transnationalism, which examine how people build social and cultural networks that transcend nation-state boundaries. *Exit West* (2017) thus emerges as a significant text on transnational identity formation that questions essentialist notions of culture and nationality.

Furthermore, the symbolic use of doors and transitional spaces offers deeper insights into themes of migration and identity. Abbas et al. (2025) argue that Hamid’s fiction employs spatial thresholds to represent change, uncertainty, and self-discovery. Although their analysis focuses primarily on Windows and Doors, their observations are equally relevant to *Exit West* (2017), where the magical doors function as symbolic gateways between identities, cultures, and social realities. These thresholds represent the migrants’ liminal state—existing in-between spaces while constantly negotiating their sense of belonging.

With the growing importance of migration and border politics in contemporary society, *Exit West* (2017) serves as a powerful literary lens through which to examine these issues. In addition to critiquing exclusionary border regimes, the novel explores possibilities of coexistence, cultural hybridity, and transnational belonging. Through the effective use of magical realism combined with sharp social and political critique, Hamid crafts a narrative that challenges dominant discourses on migration and invites readers to rethink concepts of borders, citizenship, and identity.

Thus, the current study examines how migration and the politics of borders are portrayed in Mohsin Hamid’s *Exit West* (2017). Drawing upon postcolonial theory, border studies, and migration studies, this research seeks to understand the novel’s critique of contemporary border regimes and its depiction of transnational identity formation. This analysis aims to contribute to ongoing scholarly debates on migration, globalization, displacement, and belonging in contemporary literature.

Research Questions

1. In what ways does Mohsin Hamid’s *Exit West* (2017) critique contemporary border politics and systems of exclusion?
2. How does migration contribute to the formation of transnational identities in *Exit West* (2017)?

Research Objectives

- To examine the portrayal of migration and border politics in Mohsin Hamid’s *Exit West* (2017).
- To explore the novel’s themes of migration, identity formation, and belonging.



Significance of the Study

The present study is significant because it explores one of the most pressing issues of the contemporary world—migration—through the lens of literature. As migration continues to rise globally, it is increasingly important to understand its social, political, and cultural implications. This research engages with existing scholarship on migration literature and demonstrates how literary works can illuminate the human dimension of displacement and mobility, as exemplified in *Exit West* (2017).

Furthermore, the study contributes to the understanding of border politics by examining the role of national borders as instruments of power, exclusion, and identity construction. It also makes a valuable contribution to postcolonial studies by focusing on how migrants negotiate transnational identities in multicultural contexts. Finally, this research offers useful insights for future scholars working in the fields of migration studies, refugee narratives, globalization, and contemporary postcolonial fiction.

Literature Review

The innovative depiction of migration, displacement and border crossing in the contemporary world in *Exit West* (2017) has garnered considerable academic attention to Mohsin Hamid's novel. Researchers have explored the novel in a variety of fields like refugee studies, migration studies, transnational studies, postcolonial identity and border politics since its publication in 2017. The enhanced understanding of the novel's significance to the current debates on mobility, citizenship and belonging in the context of increasing global migration is a growing body of scholarship.

Perfect's (2019) study is the most influential work representing the novel *Exit West* (2017). The way Hamid portrays refugees as active actors and human beings, instead of passive victims, challenges dominant narratives, Perfect argues. The study claims that *Exit West* (2017) challenges fixed boundaries between citizen and refugee and challenges the nation-states' ideology. Perfect further argues that Hamid “suggests that migration is a common human experience, that it isn't a crisis, that it is not unique to anyone.”

In continuation of the theme of migration and displacement, Bellin (2022) discusses how the novel deals with global border regimes. Bellin uses the term “disorienting empathy” to describe how Hamid leads readers into a realm of empathy that they feel for migrants and refugees. The magical doors in *Exit West* (2017), the study claims, problematize common sense notions of migration by erasing the obstacles of migration and focusing on the political apparatus which regulates mobility. This storytelling method helps Hamid unmask the oppressions and brutality underpinning the present-day border regimes, and to ask readers to reconsider notions of national sovereignty and border policing.

The novel has become the subject of recent scholarship that has focused on the formation of transnational identities within the novel. *Exit West* (2017) is explored with regards to its portrayal of identity as a fluid and dynamic process, such as through migration and intercultural encounters, by Abbas et al. (2025). According to their research, Nadia and Saeed form transnational identities which go beyond a sense of national belonging. In his work, Hamid gives identity a fluid and mobile character, one that is being continually negotiated, constructed and deconstructed in the midst of moving and engaging with different cultural settings. It is the authors'



suggestion that the novel is a major contribution to the contemporary debate on transnationalism and global citizenship because it shows how migrants navigate several different affiliations at a time.

Recent works on the psychological impacts of displacement also have investigated the connection between migration and identity. In the novel *Exit West (2017)* (2024), migration is presented not as a mere change of place, but as a process of transformation that alters the personal identity and sense of belongingness of people involved in such migration processes. The researchers argue that Hamid's notion of displacement is one that involves a process of constant re-negotiation of social and cultural identity. They draw attention to the novel's consideration of identity as a fluid and changeable concept, not a fixed type.

Likewise, Hussain (2024) examines *Exit West (2017)*'s social and psychological aspects of migration. Thematic analysis is used to explore the emotional impact of displacement, such as feelings of isolation, uncertainty, loss and adaptation. Hussain believes Hamid's novel confronts xenophobic stereotypes and brings to the fore the emotional aspects of migrant experiences. The study illustrates the psychological effects of migration as experienced by Nadia and Saeed, and how their lives show the adaptability and resilience of humankind. This is one of the aspects that helps to understand the humanistic depiction of displacement in the novel.

Another major field of recent research involves the political and economic frameworks that are related to migration. Shah (2025) discusses how *Exit West (2017)* is a critique of neoliberal capitalism and the politics of exclusion. Hamid's journey demonstrates how economic disparities, war and systemic marginalization drive people to migrate from the Global South, and how they trigger hostility toward migrants in the Global North, the study says. Shah suggests that the book's focus on the dualities of globalization, in which capital and information travel freely and people are restricted, is the novel's main theme. Migration is analysed in the context of the unequal world balance of power.

The notion of transnational belonging has also been the subject of much scholarship. Refugee transnational identities are explored in a 2024 study on *Exit West (2017)* from a social geographical and post migration studies perspective as well as through affect theory. This study contends that Hamid's deployment of magic realism telescopes all the complicated migratory experiences into a form of narration that foregrounds intercultural encounter and emotional metamorphosis. The researchers argue that the novel depicts migration itself as a state of being that engenders alternative loyalties and attachments which transcend conventional notions of national boundaries. This focus underscores the idea of *Exit West (2017)* as a text which questions and challenges the notions of identity and community.

Recent work has also focussed on the connection between migration and security issues in the present day. Ali (2025) discusses how migration and terrorism are linked in *Exit West (2017)* as Hamid presents forced migration as a result of the violence and insecurity of the world. The study argues that the novel illuminates the nature of the changes in people's sense of belonging, surviving and identity brought on by the terrorism. Ali puts migration in its geopolitical context which helps to bring out the interconnections of violence, displacement, and border politics in Hamid's narrative.

In another recent study *Exit West (2017)* is read as a 'post national' image of society. Hamid challenges traditional notions of borders and national identity with the use of the magical doors in



a symbolic way, the researchers argue. The study suggests that the novel's message is one that preaches a vision of co-existence that is not based on boundaries but on human interconnectedness. In this reading, *Exit West* (2017) is a critique of the nationalism at play in an ever-more-mobile world and an imaginative exploration of alternative senses of belonging.

While refugee experiences, transnational identities, psychological displacement, neoliberal exclusion, 'terrorism' and post national belonging are studied by previous scholars in *Exit West* (2017), there is a gap in the literature. The majority of the studies deal with one or the other of migration, identity, and refugee experiences as individual themes. Likewise, in addressing border politics, many studies tend to focus on issues of the human, but fail to fully explore how border regimes also have an active role in the construction of identity formation and belonging. Therefore, little research has been done on exploring the interrelatedness of migration and border politics in the novel. The present study aims to fill this gap by studying Hamid's simultaneous critique of the current border regimes, and the delineation of migration as a transformative process that remodels identity, citizenship and belonging. This research seeks to combine migration research and border politics in order to gain a broader understanding of *Exit West* (2017) and its significance in the present discourses on mobility and displacement.

Research Methodology

Research Method

This research adopts the qualitative method of research with Textual Analysis. In this study, the main object is to analyse how migration is portrayed through literary works, and the nature of border politics in Mohsin Hamid's *Exit West* (2017), so, it is best to use the qualitative approach. This study will be designed in an interpretive and analytical mode with the purpose of examining the images of migration, displacement, identity formation, and border politics in the novel.

Data Collection

This study's main data is from the novel *Exit West* (2017) by Mohsin Hamid. Close reading and analysis of passages of text, dialogues, narrative descriptions and symbolic representations relevant to the subject of migration, borders, displacement and identity. The secondary data is gathered from various scholarly books, peer-reviewed journal articles, research papers and critical studies on migration studies, border politics, transnationalism and postcolonial theory.

Data Analysis

The qualitative textual analysis and close reading are used to analyse the data collected. The novel's symbolism of magical doors, portrayals of migration and the representation of border regimes, are explored, as well as the experiences of Nadia and Saeed. This analysis examines the ways in which Hamid addresses exclusion within the current context, and how migration can be a transformative process that changes identity, belonging. Themes of the text are understood within the chosen theoretical context.

Theoretical Framework

Homi K. Bhabha's (1994) theory of hybridity and the theory of border politics (Balibar, 2002) are the main sources for this study. The concept of hybridity, as theorised by Bhabha, is adopted to explore the process of the construction of transnational identities and the negotiation of cultural belonging that migrants in *Exit West* (2017) engage in. Balibar's theory of borders is a useful tool in the attempt to grasp the role of borders as processes of inclusion, exclusion and



political control. These theoretical perspectives can then be used appropriately to understand the political nature of migration and the changing identities that can be found in trans-cultural mobility. This framework enables us to engage in a thorough discussion of Hamid's challenge to nationhood, citizenship and a sense of belonging in an increasingly globalized world.

Data Analysis

Migration and Border Politics in Mohsin Hamid's *Exit West* (2017)

Exit West (2017) by Mohsin Hamid is a book that addresses migration as a central fact of the world today, as well as examining the political systems of the modern world that control the flow of people. Hamid's themes of displacement, border, identity and belonging are showcased through the experiences of Nadia and Saeed. The novel is a work that questions the definition of migration as a process not only of geographical travelling but also of personal and social transformation. This analysis can be done through the lens of Balibar's theory of border politics and Bhabha's theory of hybridity, which can be used to analyse how *Exit West* (2017) critiques exclusionary border regimes and represents the formation of transnational identities.

Migration as a Universal Human Experience

Migration is a predominant theme of the modern era, and Hamid sets it as a theme for the novel from early on in the book. In the book, Hamid, the narrator, calls the city of the protagonists a "city swollen by refugees" (p. 1). As the term "swollen" suggests, it is not just about expansion, but also about pressure: migration has become a part of the social fabric of the city. Refugees are not portrayed as strangers looking for refuge, they are part of the mundane urban fabric. Hamid's opening description of the novel normalizes and depicts migration as a worldwide phenomenon that impacts societies all over the globe.

Proceeding to migration is a process that is transformed from a "choice" to a "necessity" as violence escalates. How "the familiar was sometimes overlaid by the strange" (Hamid 2017, p.21). The statement is a representation of the instability of people living in conflict areas. Life becomes more and more unpredictable and people begin to question their sense of place and homeland. Migration becomes a necessity of survival and not a choice! Hamid calls into question the assumptions about migrants as opportunists who want to make a quick buck through Nadia and Saeed's experiences. Instead, the novel shows that migration is many times something that is out of an individual's control.

The feeling of insecurity is even stronger when the narrator notices the death suddenly became a part of life (Hamid, 2017, p. 56). This normalisation of violence shows how conflict becomes normalised, with people living in a state of constant uncertainty. Thus, the migration is the only way to save their lives and to ensure their future. Hamid thus portrays migration as a human reaction to crisis as opposed to a threat to national security.

Exit West (2017)'s most unique element is Hamid's magical doors which can take someone from one country to the next in an instant. The first description of these doors says:

"The middle of the closest doorway was black and when a man or woman was brought near to it, it appeared to be more black" (Hamid, 2017, p. 72).

The dark doorway represents migrants' uncertainty, fear and an unknown future. The doors also, however, remove the traditional physical obstacles to migration, too. Hamid takes away the dangerous journeys, the border crossings, and concentrates on the social and political implications of migration.

The symbolic importance of the doors is related to challenging the notions of the boundaries between nations. Borders are less real and more artificial when people can cross them instantaneously. The doors reveal the arbitrary nature of geographical divisions and its dubiousness of the systems which limit human mobility. This representation is helpful in understanding Balibar's (2002) call that borders are more political mechanisms of control instead of just geographical markers.

Nadia and Saeed manage to cross borders but they are still faced with situations of exclusion and marginalisation. Moving to the magical doors does not mean they will be accepted in host societies. Rather, Hamid shows that the borders' real reach goes beyond their physical boundaries, and that they function via social attitudes, political institutions and cultural practices. *Exit West* (2017) thus shows that borders continue to impact migrants' lives even after they have been transgressed.

Border Politics and the Dynamics of Social Exclusion

The novel offers a strong critique on current border politics, by portraying the migrants' experiences in the host societies. When Nadia and Saeed reach Mykonos they meet up with crowded camps for refugees from various parts of the world. Hamid writes:

"Many people had no shelter and people slept where they could" (Hamid, 2017, p. 109).

This passage emphasizes the precarious situation that migrants who flee the violence find themselves in. Just because you cross a border, doesn't mean you've crossed a line of security or belonging. Rather, migrants are often stuck in areas which are marked by uncertainty and exclusion.

Inclusion politics even more evident in London. With growing numbers of migrants tensions arise between native population and migrants. Hamid talks about a fearful, suspicious society. The narrator notes:

"Some people desired that the migrants leave" (Hamid, 2017, p. 146).

This statement is a reflection of the sentiments of many societies towards immigrants in the modern times. Often migrants are depicted as a threat to social cohesion, economic stability, and a nation's identity. These fears are irrational and Hamid reminds the reader of the humanity of migrants, of their need for safety and dignity.

In London, there is a growing nationalist hostility which, as Balibar states, is effected by the process of borders, which include and exclude. Migrants come to the country physically, but they don't belong to the society. They are tolerated and always under threat from political discourses that label them as 'other'. In this way Hamid shows how border politics still functions in society even after the geographical borders have been transgressed.

Nadia and the Formation of Hybrid Identity

Migration in *Exit West* (2017) is not just about moving, as much as it is about changing. Nadia's character is a good illustration of hybridity as described by Bhabha. At the beginning of the novel she tells you why she wears her black robe:

"So men don't fuck with me" (Hamid, 2017, p. 18).

This proclamation puts into question the notions of religious identity and cultural tradition. However, Nadia's robe is not a symbol of religious conservatism, rather she uses it as a handy way of moving around in public. So her identity is not imposed on her by society, but is created by herself.



During this migration however, Nadia's feeling for different experiences and new relations grows, the more countries she migrates through. She does not cling to a certain understanding of her nation, but rather to change and adaptation. Her work with various communities helps her to develop a hybrid identity that breaks from cultural boundaries.

According to Bhabha (1994), hybridity comes about through a cultural interaction and negotiation, in what he calls the "Third Space. Nadia represents this process, as she is continually busy redefining herself, adapting to new situations. Her identity is not solely categorical and based on her country of origin, and not necessarily categorical and based on host cultures. Rather, it lives in the midst of several cultural influences, a transnational reality of today's migration.

Saeed, Memory, and Cultural Belonging

Unlike Nadia, Saeed is more clinging to his homeland and his cultures in the beginning. After his mother dies, he turns to his own well-known pastimes and experiences for solace. Hamid writes:

"He prayed more regularly now" (Hamid, 2017, p. 95).

This is a sign of Saeed's wish to maintain continuity amidst displacement. Faith becomes a place of comfort and the emotional tie to the life he has lost. Saeed is not like Nadia who embraces transformation, but tries to hold onto his cultural roots first.

But, little by little, Saeed is transformed by migration too. His sense of belonging changes as he visits new cultures and communities, soaking up different experiences. While he never gives up on the issue of belonging to his country, he gradually becomes aware that identity cannot stay unaltered in the midst of displacement. His experiences are an example of the very complex process of negotiation that can occur between cultural preservation and adapting to a new environment that many migrants may encounter.

In Saeed's journey, Hamid shows transnational identity to be not a denial of cultural heritage. Rather, identity is a process whereby individuals negotiate between past and present.

The lives of those who leave and those who stay behind. Life on the move and 'life elsewhere'.

One thing that seems to be a constant theme in *Exit West* (2017) is the changed notion of home. Traditionally, home is associated with a specific geographical location and cultural community. But migration shatters this knowledge, as people move away from familiar surroundings. Hamid proposes that a person's home does not need to be bound to land, it can be the product of relations and experiences.

This is clear when Nadia and Saeed are continually forced to create a new life in new places. Although they lost their homeland, they seek to belong and to connect. The novel thus challenges the nationalist notions of identity and home as being tied to place.

Later when they separate, it reinforces that theme as well. Nadia and Saeed are brought together by migration but go in separate ways as a result of their experiences. The evolving relationship reflects the ways in which migration can affect personal identity. At the conclusion of the novel, each character sees himself differently and has decided on a different future.

Conclusion of Analysis

Exit West (2017) is about migration as a political and personal journey, through the experiences of Nadia and Saeed. Hamid challenges the current border regimes, revealing their exclusionary practices of the regulation of mobility and belonging. The magical doors defy notions



of national boundaries and expose the artificiality of territorial boundaries. Meanwhile, the novel examines the dynamic of migration and its effect on the identities, relationships and perceptions of home. Nadia and Saeed's journeys highlight that identity is not a given but can be negotiated all the time in relation to movement and cultural interaction. *Exit West* (2017) is therefore a strong statement on border politics and a call to action for a more inclusive notion of belonging in our increasingly interconnected world.

Findings

The results of this research directly respond to the research questions and research objective regarding migration, border politics and identity formation in the transnational context in Mohsin Hamid's *Exit West* (2017). The analysis shows that Hamid's migration is a political and personal experience which can change individuals and reveal the limits of the current border regimes.

The initial research question aimed to investigate how *Exit West* (2017) challenges the existing border politics and the systems of exclusion. The analysis shows that Hamid is challenging the traditional conceptualization of borders, as natural geographical divisions, but as socially and politically-constructed mechanisms. This criticism is clear from the first few pages of the novel when the unnamed city is referred to as a "*city swollen by refugees*" (Hamid, 2017, p. 1). The global nature of migration is what the phrase suggests: it is a phenomenon that impacts communities everywhere. Moreover, the magical doors represent the border's arbitrariness, enabling instantaneously crossing between states. In this way, Hamid makes salient the connection of boundaries and separates the focus from the geography to the social and political apparatus that control belonging.

The analysis also shows that migrants faced exclusion after they have crossed borders. Hamid, for instance, describes how 'people slept where they could' (Hamid, 2017, p. 109) when he talks about the displacement of people and the difficult conditions they had to endure. This shows that moving physically doesn't always lead to acceptance or security. Likewise, the idea that "*there were those who wanted the migrants gone*" (Hamid, 2017, p. 146) is indicative of the anti-immigrant rhetoric and nationalist fears that permeate today's border discourse. These examples illustrate that borders do not just exist at geographical boundaries but also in social attitudes, institutional practices and political ideologies. The novel, therefore, rejects models of exclusion which exclude migrants from full participation in the host societies.

The second research question was on the role of migration in creating transnational identities. The results show that migration is a process of transformation that involves a constant negotiation and re-construction of identity. Nadia's response, "*I wear my black robe so men don't fuck with me*" (Hamid, 2017, p. 18) shows that Nadia refuses to abide by fixed cultural expectations and that she is able to redefine traditional symbols based on her own needs. Nadia learns to adjust to her surroundings and adjust her self-image throughout the novel. From these experiences she learned that identity does not have to be decided by country or culture of origin but rather is developed through interaction with a variety of social contexts.

Likewise, Saeed's journey highlights the complexities of negotiating identity in such a context as displacement. After losing his mother and homeland, he finds solace in cultural traditions and religious practices. Hamid notes, "*Now, he prays more regularly*" (Hamid, 2017, p. 95), indicating his wish to have continuity in the midst of the uncertainty. But, as Saeed visits other communities and other cultures, his understanding of belonging slowly evolves. His



metamorphosis illustrates the process whereby migration can change personal identity, while not necessarily destroying cultural heritage. This is indicative of the hybridity idea, the idea that migrants create identities that are a combination of multiple cultural influences.

The first goal of this research was to analyse the representation of migration and border politics in *Exit West* (2017). This goal has been met by analysing textual evidence that migration is represented as a reaction to violence, insecurity and social instability, and the border politics are represented as systems of regulation and exclusion. The second goal was to explore how migration affected identity formation and sense of belonging. The results show how migration is a process that changes notions of home, community and selfhood and how transnational identities are formed that goes beyond the boundaries of the nation states.

Overall the study argues that Hamid's use of migration is a way of challenging dominant conceptions of citizenship, nationhood and belonging. *Exit West* (2017) is a call to arms for a new and more embracing vision of the human being and the questioning of exclusionary border regimes, which shows readers how today's societies are interconnected.

Conclusion

This study aimed at exploring how migration and the issue of border politics is depicted in Mohsin Hamid's novella: *Exit West* (2017), from the lenses of border politics (Etienne Balibar) and hybridity (Homi K. Bhabha). It shows that Hamid views migration as a multidimensional process which goes beyond a mere spatial change to social, cultural, and psychological change. The novel's symbolisation of magic doors is a way of questioning traditional perceptions of national boundaries and revealing the constructedness of the modern border regime.

The findings portray that Hamid challenges exclusionary systems of regulation of human mobility that demarcate who can belong to certain political communities. While migrants have made it over physical frontiers, the discrimination, marginalisation and social exclusion continue. This shows how borders function as means of power, as well as space, and of how they affect social relations and access to opportunities.

In addition, the study suggests that migration has a profound impact in shaping transnational and hybrid identities. Hamid reveals that identity is dynamic, fluid and constructed through intercultural encounters and displacement in the case of Nadia and Saeed. The novel thus challenges the notions of fixed nationality and belonging, foregrounding adaptation, migration, cultural interaction.

Overall, *Exit West* (2017) is a thought-provoking depiction of the present day's border politics and a celebration of the humanity that crosses borders and boundaries. In highlighting the commonality of migrants' and refugees' experiences, Hamid challenges prevailing notions of citizenship, migration, and identity in a more globalized world.

Recommendations

Future studies should be undertaken on *Exit West* (2017) using other conceptualizations like cosmopolitanism, mobility studies, globalization theory, refugee studies or posthumanism. These methods might help to generate more general thinking about how the novel treats the subject of migration and the issues of today.

Comparative studies of *Exit West* (2017) and other contemporary migrant narratives can also be undertaken to explore other aspects of the representation of displacement, border politics and identity formation. Comparative analysis can be done with other authors like Kamila Shamsie,



Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie or Viet Thanh Nguyen that can yield interesting insights into migration literature.

Furthermore, further research into the function of magical realism to influence reader's perceptions of migration and border politics should be pursued. Hamid uses magical doors as a major theme in the novel, and more study can be done about the interaction between fantasy and realism in the novel, as it is through such interaction that social and political issues are conveyed.

Lastly, interdisciplinary research is recommended, based on the combination of literary studies with sociological, political and migration studies as well as human rights studies. These would help to develop a better understanding of the interconnection between literature, migration, borders and identity in such a contemporary world and also help in further clarifying the importance of *Exit West* (2017) in the current global discourse on the issues of displacement and human mobility.

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