Magical Doors and Digital Gateways: Exploring Global Connectivity and Alienation in Mohsin Hamid's *Exit West*

ALSHAYMAA MOHAMED M. AHMED
Humanities Department
Arab Academy for Science, Technology, and Maritime Transport
Cairo, Egypt
alshaymaa.ahmed@aast.edu

ABSTRACT

This paper analyses the metaphorical importance of magical doors in Mohsin Hamid's Exit West (2017) as a critique of digital technologies and their effects on global connectivity. The research adopts a comprehensive interdisciplinary approach, combining literary analysis with post-digital and globalisation theory, to reinterpret the magical doors as metaphors for digital tools such as social media and video communication platforms. Hamid reinterprets magical realism within a post-digital framework, examining the contradictions of hyperconnectivity. The magical doors offer the allure of immediate mobility and the breakdown of physical barriers, yet simultaneously reveal issues of emotional detachment, cultural disintegration, and instability. This study presents a noteworthy addition to the fields of literary studies and digital criticism, reinterpreting Exit West as an important reflection on the psychological and societal implications of technological globalisation. This research analyses the relationship between migration, identity, and belonging, offering fresh perspectives on the novel's critique of contemporary hyperconnectivity. The examination enhances interpretations of Hamid's work and establishes it as an essential perspective for comprehending the wider human consequences of existing in a connected yet divided world.

Keywords: Magical Realism; Digital Connectivity; Exit West; Displacement; Post-Digital Age

INTRODUCTION

In a world where more than 281 million individuals are international migrants and digital technologies are progressively facilitating human connection, the parameters of location, identity, and belonging are continually being reinvented. Digital technologies such as social media and video conferencing provide the potential to diminish distances and enhance global connectedness. Still, they also disrupt relationships and cultural identities, prompting significant inquiries into the implications of hyperconnectivity. Mohsin Hamid's *Exit West* (2017) explores these dynamics, offering a profound analysis of global migration and the digital revolution. The novel employs the fundamental metaphor of magical doors—portals facilitating instantaneous transit between continents—to illustrate both the liberating promise and the alienating effects of technology mediation in a hyperconnected society. Hamid, a British Pakistani author with origins in Lahore and international experiences in London and New York, is renowned for his astute examinations of globalisation, migration, and identity. His oeuvre, notably *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* (2007), confronts the dislocations and crossings inherent in navigating several cultures. *Exit West* by Mohsin Hamid tells the story of two young people, Nadia and Saeed, who fall in love during a time of crisis in their unnamed, war-torn city. As the violence around them grows, they hear rumours about magical doors that can transport people to safer places. Eventually, they decide to leave through one of these doors, beginning a journey that takes them across different countries and cultures. Along the way, they face the struggles of being refugees—trying to hold on to who

they are while adapting to unfamiliar worlds. The novel blends reality with fantasy to explore themes like love, loss, identity, and the global experience of migration.

In *Exit West,* Hamid intertwines magical realism with a migration tale, chronicling Saeed and Nadia's escape from their war-ravaged country via enchanted doorways. These portals eliminate physical limitations; however, their utilisation incurs a price, reflecting the contradictions of digital connectivity: while offering access and liberation, they frequently intensify emotional disconnection, cultural erosion, and instability. This research frames *Exit West* as both a migration tale and a critical analysis of the digital era. Although current research has elucidated the novel's exploration of displacement and postcolonial identity (Almutairi, 2024; Gheytasi & Salami, 2024; Spear, 2024), there is a paucity of works investigating the metaphorical significance of the magical doors as symbols of digital instruments. This study expands upon Hamid's intricate critique of hyperconnectivity, examining how the magical doorways reflect the advantages and disadvantages of global digital networks. The doors provide instantaneous mobility, highlighting the liberating power of digital tools and emphasising their psychological and societal implications. This analysis repositions *Exit West* as a vital work for understanding the human consequences of globalisation and technological change. Hamid's employment of magical realism provides a compelling framework for examining how literature addresses contemporary concerns of mobility, connectivity, and fragmentation. This research situates the novel within digital theory, offering a unique perspective on how technological globalisation transforms relationships and redefines belonging in a hyperconnected yet fragmented world.

Although previous studies such as Almutairi (2024) and Gheytasi and Salami, (2024) have explored *Exit West* from postcolonial perspectives—particularly in relation to displacement and the breakdown of national boundaries—there is limited attention given to the novel's engagement with digital life. For instance, Almutairi touches on the doors as symbols of privileged movement across global spaces, but this reading stops short of examining how these portals reflect the experience of digital mediation. Likewise, Ahmed (2023) focuses on the magical realism in the novel, seeing it as a tool to challenge colonial histories and migration politics, yet does not consider how Hamid adapts magical realism to speak to new realities shaped by technology. What these readings tend to miss is how the doors are also like digital tools—connecting people instantly while also introducing disconnection, uncertainty, and cultural friction. This research aims to build on such scholarship while shifting the focus to the emotional and social disruptions that accompany digitally mediated life. To approach this angle, the study draws on ideas from digital theory—especially concepts like Luciano Floridi's notion of the "onlife" experience, where online and offline boundaries blur, and Sherry Turkle's work on how constant digital connection can create both closeness and isolation. In *Exit West*, the magical doors act much like digital platforms: they collapse distance and offer instant access, but they also unsettle characters' sense of identity and belonging. Saeed and Nadia's journey, marked by sudden movements across continents, mirrors how people navigate a digital world—always connected, yet often emotionally distant and culturally disoriented. This analysis adds to existing readings of the novel by looking at how Hamid uses the doors not only to represent migration but also to raise questions about how technology is reshaping relationships, memory, and the meaning of home in today's world.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Mohsin Hamid's *Exit West* (2017) has garnered considerable academic interest for its novel exploration of migration, displacement, and identity within a globalised context. This research emphasises the novel's fusion of magical realism and social critique, distinctly positioning it as literature that surpasses conventional migration tales. Almutairi (2024) notes that the magical doors are a narrative mechanism to illustrate the opportunities and challenges associated with global migration, offering a universal framework that transcends cultural and national contexts. A significant issue in the literature is the psychological and emotional effects of relocation. Gheytasi and Salami (2024) argue that Exit West dismantles the dichotomies of "home" and "exile," portraying migration as a transformative process rather than a discrete event. Joodaki, et al., (2024) highlight how Saeed and Nadia's experiences exemplify the psychological and emotional consequences of displacement, particularly in relation to identity reform during global crises, underscoring the emotional burden of uprootedness. The employment of magical realism as a storytelling technique has been thoroughly examined. Faiz, et al., (2023) examine how Hamid used magical realism to challenge linear perceptions of geography and time, rendering the characters' journeys representative of the eternal and universal experience of migration. Erdal (2024) elaborates on this concept, contending that the magical portals are metaphors and structural elements that highlight the fluidity of borders, reflecting the linked yet shattered essence of the contemporary world. Spear (2024) could contextualise *Exit West* within the genre of refugee fiction, examining its capacity to transcend national boundaries while challenging the global mechanisms that sustain exile. By emphasising the universality of the protagonists' experiences, Hamid compels readers to reevaluate their connections to migration and their views on boundaries.

Although many scholars have offered valuable insights into how Exit West explores migration and displacement, most of these readings tend to focus on the physical and emotional aspects of crossing borders, without fully considering the technological dimensions of the story. For example, while Erdal (2024) discusses how Hamid plays with time and space through magical realism, they don't go further to connect these distortions with how digital technologies also collapse distance and blur boundaries. Similarly, Almutairi (2024) and Spear (2024) read the magical doors as symbols of political movement or global migration, but they don't explore how these doors might also represent digital platforms—like social media or video calls—that allow people to connect instantly yet often leave them feeling disconnected or disoriented. As a result, there's still room to look more closely at how the novel reflects life in a hyperconnected world.

This research builds on the existing scholarship but shifts the focus toward the role of technology in shaping how people move, communicate, and relate to one another. Rather than seeing the magical doors only as symbols of migration, this study reads them as metaphors for digital tools that allow people to cross borders with a click—tools that offer freedom but can also cause confusion, isolation, or loss of identity. In Exit West, as the characters travel through these portals, they start to lose their sense of home and connection, which mirrors how digital life can make people feel both everywhere and nowhere at once. By looking at the novel from this angle, the study brings something new to the conversation: it shows how Hamid uses magical realism not just to tell a story about migration, but to ask deeper questions about how technology is changing what it means to belong.

MAGICAL REALISM AND TECHNOLOGY

Magical realism, a narrative technique historically employed to explore cultural and historical themes, is now being scrutinised for its applicability to technological metaphors and contemporary issues. In *Exit West,* the magical doors are metaphors for digital tools such as the internet and social media, which also dissolve spatial and temporal boundaries. Erdal (2024) presents a compelling analysis of how these doors reflect the contradictions inherent in the digital age: they offer the allure of freedom and accessibility while frequently leading to alienation and instability. Kleinhempel (2024) links magical realism to globalisation and technological disruption, observing that its modern forms frequently address themes of hyperconnectivity. The presence of magical doors in *Exit West* underscores the fleeting and precarious aspects of contemporary relationships, illustrating the difficulties introduced by digital technologies. Furthermore, Ismail (2024) examine the critique of technological mediation within magical realism in *Exit West*, highlighting how the immediate movement enabled by the doors reflects the disconnection created by digital tools. This idea connects with how Joodaki et al., (2024) read *Exit West*, seeing the magical doors as more than just fantasy. They suggest that the doors reflect how modern systems and technology shape who gets to move freely and who doesn't, highlighting the gaps and inequalities in our so-called connected world.

DIGITAL CONNECTIVITY AND LITERATURE

The interplay between digital technologies and literature has garnered increasing scholarly interest, especially regarding how literature reflects the social and emotional aspects of hyperconnectivity. The presence of magical doors in *Exit West* facilitates immediate travel, but simultaneously results in characters experiencing emotional disorientation and cultural detachment. Research has investigated the impact of digital connectivity on the notions of identity and belonging. Almutairi (2024) emphasises that *Exit West* illustrates the sense of alienation linked to technological mediation, depicting hyperconnectivity as simultaneously serving as a bridge and a barrier to genuine human connection. Kleinhempel (2024) supports this view, arguing that digital globalisation frequently leads to the homogenisation of cultural experiences, which in turn reduces the richness of individual identities in the pursuit of greater accessibility. Additionally, Gheytasi and Salami (2024) analyse the novel's depiction of digital connectivity as representative of wider global conflicts, suggesting that the erosion of physical and cultural boundaries results in diminished specificity and intimacy. The doors, akin to digital tools, provide a critical examination of this dynamic, illustrating how global networks facilitate both inclusion and exclusion. This is consistent with Faiz et al., (2023), who argue that the novel examines the psychological implications of existing in a hyperconnected but fragmented world. Current academic discourse has highlighted the novel's connection to themes of displacement and globalisation; however, the metaphorical significance of the magical doors as symbols of digital tools has not been thoroughly examined. This research provides a new perspective on the novel's critique of hyperconnectivity by linking Hamid's work to the wider discussion surrounding technological globalisation. *Exit West* presents a compelling exploration of migration narratives intertwined with digital metaphors, serving as an essential text for analysing the human implications of existence in a connected yet precarious world.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

This study synthesises theoretical perspectives from the post-digital age, globalisation theory, digital media studies, and magical realism to analyse Mohsin Hamid's *Exit West*. It provides a detailed examination of how the novel critiques hyperconnectivity and explores the emotional and social ramifications of existing in an interconnected yet fragmented world. The frameworks operate in harmony to reveal Hamid's use of magical doors as a metaphorical connection between technological modernity and the fantastical. This invites readers to reflect on the dual aspects of global mobility in the digital age, highlighting both its liberating potential and its alienating effects.

Although magical realism and post-digital theory come from different areas—literature and digital culture—they can actually work together to deepen our understanding of Exit West. Magical realism allows Hamid to present surreal events, like stepping through a door and ending up in another country, as part of everyday life. These magical doors feel strange at first, but they also seem oddly familiar in a world where people can instantly connect, communicate, or even move across borders through digital means. Post-digital theory helps explain that sense of familiarity by exploring how deeply technology is woven into how we live, think, and relate to others. By combining these two approaches, the novel's magical elements begin to feel less like fantasy and more like metaphors for how life actually works in a hyperconnected age.

Looking at the novel through both lenses also helps make sense of the emotional side of migration in a world shaped by technology. The characters in Exit West travel through magical doors, which remove the physical struggle of crossing borders—but this doesn't mean the journey is easy. As they move, they feel disconnected from their past, from each other, and even from themselves. That sense of disconnection is something people also experience in the digital world, where staying constantly connected doesn't always lead to real closeness. Magical realism captures the feeling of being out of place or ungrounded, while post-digital theory gives us the tools to explain why that happens—especially when technology speeds up movement but leaves people emotionally behind. Together, they help show that the novel is about more than just migration; it's also about the deep personal effects of living in a world that moves too fast.

Bringing magical realism and post-digital theory together in this study opens up new ways of reading Exit West. It allows us to see the doors not just as a literary device or as a symbol of migration, but as a way of thinking about how people move through digital spaces today. The idea that we can instantly appear somewhere else—through a screen, a message, or a video call—has become normal, but it also comes with a cost. Hamid uses the magical elements in his story to highlight what that cost might look like: confusion, loneliness, and a loss of connection. By reading the novel through this combined lens, the study offers a fresh perspective on how *Exit West* captures what it feels like to live in a world where everything is connected, yet nothing feels stable.

The post-digital age features the seamless integration of digital technologies into daily life, rendering them an inseparable aspect of human existence (Cramer, 2015). Hamid's magical doors represent a compelling metaphor for technologies like social media and video calls, which effectively diminish spatial and temporal boundaries, transforming the nature of human connection. The doors enable Saeed and Nadia to travel instantly around the world, representing the potential of digital connectivity. However, this convenience incurs an emotional expense, highlighting the sense of alienation frequently associated with hyperconnectivity. The doors offer the protagonists a measure of physical safety yet simultaneously diminish their sense of place and rootedness. Hamid examines the superficial commitments to technological inclusion and accessibility, highlighting how these systems frequently favour the convenience of movement at

the expense of emotional and cultural richness. The theory of globalisation provides a framework for understanding the movement of individuals, technology, and ideas that define the contemporary phenomenon of hyperconnectivity. Appadurai's (1996) framework of "scapes" is notably applicable in *Exit West,* where the magical doors represent the technoscapes, ethnoscapes, and ideoscapes that characterise globalisation.

The dissolution of physical boundaries facilitates global migration with the same ease as sending a text or participating in a video call. Hamid critiques the superficial nature of globalisation's promises. Saeed and Nadia's passage through the doors effectively extricates them from immediate peril yet simultaneously engenders a state of social and emotional isolation. This scenario underscores the implications of globalisation, which compresses spatial and temporal dimensions (Harvey, 1989) while failing to fulfil the fundamental human requirements for belonging and connection. The migrant camps in Mykonos and London highlight this critique, illustrating a scenario where mobility is attainable, but stability and a sense of belonging are challenging to secure. Magical realism enhances this critique by allowing Hamid to intertwine the fantastical with the real, establishing a narrative framework that explores the existential aspects of migration. Magical realism, commonly linked to Latin American literature, is also essential in African literary traditions. It is a tool for critiquing prevailing power structures and delving into the intricacies of postcolonial identity. Writers such as Ben Okri and Amos Tutuola utilise magical realism to explore the relationship between modernity and tradition, illustrating the cultural hybridity in postcolonial societies.

Okri's *The Famished Road* (1991) employs the spirit world to examine political and social realities, whereas Tutuola's The Palm-Wine Drinkard (1952) utilises Yoruba cosmology to delve into moral inquiries. These works exhibit a connection to *Exit West*, as the magical doors symbolise the dual nature of migration, encompassing both transformative potential and destabilising realities. Hamid employs magical realism to link *Exit West* to a wider tradition, situating the novel among works that utilise the fantastical to examine real-world crises. Critics like Zamora (1995) and Faris (1995) contend that magical realism enables authors to place the extraordinary alongside the mundane, thereby crafting a narrative environment in which the strict limits of reality may be questioned. In *Exit West*, the magical doors interrogate the established boundaries of nation-states, framing migration as a universal and equitable occurrence. Hamid complicates this idealistic vision by revealing the vulnerabilities associated with global mobility. The doors facilitate migration, allowing individuals from various socioeconomic backgrounds to flee danger; however, they simultaneously highlight the ongoing systemic inequalities present in global systems. This dual critique corresponds with the assertion made by Ashcroft et al., (2007) that magical realism frequently is a counter-discourse to colonialist and hegemonic narratives, enabling authors to regain control over their histories and identities. The relationship between magical realism and digital technologies in *Exit West* holds considerable importance. Hamid's narrative reflects the diminishing impact of globalisation and digital mediation, illustrating how cultural specificities frequently become overshadowed by uniform global networks.

Saeed and Nadia's journey illustrate the diminishing of cultural identity and the weakening of personal connections, as global systems increasingly favour accessibility at the expense of emotional richness. Digital media studies enhance this examination by highlighting the contradiction of hyperconnectivity, in which closeness is attained at the cost of authentic intimacy. van Dijck (2013) examines the ephemeral quality of digital relationships, a concept that is profoundly reflected in *Exit West*. The relationship between Saeed and Nadia illustrates a complex paradox; their shared trauma is a unifying force at first, yet it ultimately proves inadequate in

maintaining their emotional connection in the face of ongoing displacement. Hamid critiques the existential dimensions of migration through the lens of magical realism. The doors symbolise the intricate balance between freedom and disunity, reflecting the nuanced challenges posed by digital hyperconnectivity. Saeed's longing for his homeland and his growing dependence on religious rituals illustrate a quest for continuity and stability, whereas Nadia's acceptance of reinvention highlights the psychological impact of adjusting to a hyperconnected world. This duality illustrates the psychological and emotional implications of migration, highlighting the existential challenges encountered by individuals experiencing displacement and uprootedness.

By placing *Exit West* in the context of the African tradition of magical realism, Hamid's critique of hyperconnectivity acquires a broader significance. African magical realists such as Okri and Tutuola have historically employed this mode to enhance the visibility of marginalised voices and critically examine systemic inequities, a practice that Hamid continues to develop in the post-digital era. The magical doors have a dual role, reflecting a critique of global systems while simultaneously reimagining the concept of human mobility, akin to the spirit worlds and fantastical journeys found in African literature. By integrating concepts from the post-digital age, globalisation theory, digital media studies, and magical realism, *Exit West* is a significant commentary on the human costs associated with hyperconnectivity. The narrative structure of the novel critically examines the assurances of contemporary connectivity, revealing its shortcomings. It employs the concept of magical doors to explore the emotional, social, and cultural aspects of migration. By linking the novel to African literary traditions of magical realism, Hamid highlights the ongoing themes of resistance and reimagination in response to systemic oppression, framing *Exit West* as an essential text for analysing the connections between migration, identity, and technology in the 21st century.

NAVIGATING HYPERCONNECTIVITY: IDENTITY, BELONGING, AND DISPLACEMENT IN *EXIT WEST*

IDENTITY AND LOSS OF BELONGING

In *Exit West,* Mohsin Hamid meticulously illustrates how displacement in a hyperconnected society undermines both individual and community identity, especially regarding global mobility. The story examines the conflict between physical mobility and the emotional permanence associated with the concept of home. Utilising Harvey (1989) concept of "time-space compression," Hamid demonstrates how technological progress condenses physical and temporal limits while concurrently unsettling psychological and cultural foundations, resulting in individuals feeling unanchored. The enchanted doors, functioning as both tangible and symbolic mechanisms, enable physical departure while stripping characters of the stability often linked to a secure home.

Hamid juxtaposes the symbolic significance of location with its psychological relevance, especially in the responses of Saeed and Nadia to their evolving surroundings. Saeed's identity is profoundly connected to physical and cultural settings. His longing for his country highlights the conflict between mobility and recollection. Hamid (2017) states, "Saeed felt his chest tighten when he recalled the streets he had traversed as a boy and the rooftops of his city, imbued with history and the legacy of his family" (p. 135). This yearning illustrates Saeed's endeavour to preserve cultural continuity amidst perpetual turmoil. His adherence to prayer functions as a symbolic connection to his ancestry, as Hamid (2017) observes, "Saeed began to pray more regularly, not

out of habit, but as a way of reaching for something to hold on to, something to steady himself" (p. 149). These instances correspond with Bhabha's (1994) notion of "cultural in-betweenness," wherein displaced persons traverse the liminal zone between their history and an ambiguous present.

Nadia exemplifies a flexible and divided identity, taking a pragmatic perspective on relocation that emphasises survival rather than cultural continuity. Her disconnection from the past highlights the psychological pressure of self-redefinition in hyperconnected contexts. Nadia informs Saeed, "We are no longer who we were, and there is no going back" (Hamid, 2017, p. 154). Nadia's flexibility allows her to manage the uncertainties of displacement; nonetheless, Hamid analyses the emotional cost, indicating that this detachment estranges her from profound relationships, especially her relationship with Saeed. This reaction disparity underscores the conflict between freedom and fragmentation in hyperconnected environments, as individuals must balance mobility with the diminishing sense of belonging (Erdal, 2024).

The dissolution of belonging transcends personal identification, affecting the wider social contexts illustrated in the narrative. Migrant camps and refugee enclaves, although seemingly sanctuaries, are shown as ephemeral and demeaning. The camp in Mykonos, characterised as "a labyrinth of improvised shelters, dusty in some areas and muddy in others, populated by expectant faces," illustrates the erosion of uniqueness and cultural distinctiveness prevalent in hyperconnected environments (Hamid, 2017, p. 112). This representation attacks the superficial inclusion of globalisation, when various identities are reduced to impersonal, commercial exchanges. van Dijck (2013) attacks global institutions that emphasise accessibility at the expense of cultural richness and authenticity.

Hamid analyses the way relocation alters interpersonal relationships, notably via the burgeoning connection between Saeed and Nadia. Their link, first forged by mutual pain, deteriorates due to the demands of continual mobility and changing circumstances. Saeed's need for stability clashes with Nadia's pursuit of autonomy, resulting in an emotional estrangement that reflects their physical odyssey. Hamid (2017) clearly conveys this distance: "They moved forward together, yet it felt as though they were on distinct journeys, as if their proximity was merely physical" (p. 175). This depiction corresponds with Harvey's (1989) assertion that globalisation condenses time and space, frequently undermining emotional and relational stability. Hamid attacks the contemporary veneration of hyperconnectivity and mobility through these layered representations, exposing the significant human consequences of dislocation. By dismantling the physical and cultural foundations that define identity, *Exit West* underscores the precariousness of belonging in a society that venerates mobility while disregarding emotional and cultural stability. The story compels readers to contemplate the concealed repercussions of an interconnected global environment, where the allure of limitless mobility frequently obscures the widespread erosion of home, identity, and stability.

THE MAGICAL DOORS AND DISPLACEMENT

The magical doors challenge Saeed and Nadia's understanding of their sense of place and belonging, compelling them to reassess their identities within unfamiliar and frequently disorienting environments. The migrant camp in Mykonos is characterised as "multicultural, but not in a celebratory sense; it was multicultural in the sense of a prison, a holding pen" (Hamid, 2017, p. 112). This description critiques the superficial nature of globalisation's inclusivity, highlighting how diverse identities are relegated to fleeting, impersonal settings devoid of cultural

distinctiveness. van Dijck (2013) evaluates comparable global systems that simplify identities to transactional exchanges, highlighting how hyperconnectivity favours accessibility at the expense of depth and authenticity. Hamid highlights this transactional dynamic by illustrating the camp's overcrowded and dehumanising conditions, where the struggle for survival eclipses cultural richness. The enchanting doors, though imaginative, reflect actual digital technologies that eliminate physical barriers yet do not tackle the emotional and cultural intricacies associated with displacement. Saeed and Nadia's journey through these doors illustrates a clear separation from their former lives, as evidenced by the narrative's minimalistic and precise depictions of their transitions. Saeed's passage through the door is characterised by a state of being "neither in nor out, but in a liminal space, one of uncertainty and change" (Hamid, 2017, p. 104). This state of liminality reflects the challenges encountered by migrants in highly interconnected settings, where mobility is achievable, yet a sense of belonging remains difficult to attain (Kleinhempel, 2024).

CONTRASTING RESPONSES TO HYPERCONNECTIVITY

Hamid examines the differing reactions of Saeed and Nadia to their sense of lost belonging, highlighting the distinct emotional and psychological difficulties associated with displacement. Saeed adheres to his religious rituals, viewing them as a means of maintaining stability and continuity in his life. His prayers, characterised as "a way of reaching for something to hold on to, something to steady himself" (Hamid, 2017, p. 149), underscore his desire for familiarity in a world that is becoming increasingly fragmented. Saeed's yearning for his homeland becomes clear as he contemplates the rituals of his past: "He missed the rituals of his past, the sense of familiarity and the grounding of traditions" (Hamid, 2017, p. 153). These moments correspond with Bhabha's (1994) notion of "cultural in-betweenness," in which displaced individuals manoeuvre through a transitional space that balances the familiarity of their cultural heritage with the challenges posed by an unpredictable future. Nadia adopts a perspective of reinvention, perceiving displacement as a chance for transformation. Her adaptability, while empowering, highlights the loneliness and instability that are intrinsic to hyperconnected environments. Nadia's response to Saeed's desire to connect with his cultural roots is grounded in practicality: "We are here, not there." "It is futile to consider any alternative" (Hamid, 2017, p. 155). Nadia's viewpoint highlights the mental challenges associated with redefining oneself, as she separates from her history to navigate her current reality. Hamid employs these differing responses to underscore the tension between freedom and fragmentation in hyperconnected environments, illustrating the challenges of maintaining cultural identity and emotional connection in the face of perpetual change (Erdal, 2024).

THE PARADOX OF PROXIMITY AND INTIMACY

Hamid examines the broader consequences of hyperconnectivity as it leads to the gradual breakdown of Saeed and Nadia's relationship. Their emotional drift reflects the broader challenges of maintaining meaningful relationships in an increasingly interconnected world. Although they were nearby, their emotional connection deteriorated: "They spoke less as time went by, their conversations increasingly strained" (Hamid, 2017, p. 174). According to van Dijk (2013), the assertion is that digital technologies promote fleeting relationships that frequently lack depth and intimacy. Hamid presents this dynamic as a natural outcome, highlighting the alienation that comes with hyperconnectivity, where increased accessibility creates a sense of proximity but fails to

cultivate genuine emotional intimacy. The magical doors intensify this dynamic by physically moving Saeed and Nadia while failing to consider the emotional impact of their transitions. The narrative employs a minimalist style that underscores the superficiality of their connection, highlighting how their shared experiences do not lead to lasting intimacy. Kleinhempel (2024) notes that Hamid's understated prose reflects the impersonal and transactional characteristics of relationships in a hyperconnected era, where individuals are in constant motion yet seldom grounded.

HOME AND IDENTITY IN A GLOBALISED WORLD

The novel interrogates the notion of home as a fixed and enduring space, illustrating the dynamic nature of identity within a hyperconnected and globalised context. Hamid examines the ephemeral characteristics of migrant camps to analyse the unifying forces of globalisation. The camp in Mykonos is a representation of global mobility, where cultural diversity is reduced to a vague and transient state of being. Hamid articulates, "The camp was not a place to live, only a place to wait" (Hamid, 2017, p. 112). This supports Harvey's (1989) assertion that globalisation condenses time and space, leading to a disconnection of individuals from their cultural and historical contexts. Saeed's longing for his homeland and Nadia's acceptance of transformation highlight the dynamic nature of identity in interconnected environments. Saeed's yearning for the rituals of his past indicates a quest for a sense of stability, whereas Nadia's practical detachment highlights the challenges of preserving emotional and cultural connections in the face of ongoing movement. The differing reactions highlight the significant human impact of global systems that emphasise mobility and access at the expense of stability and a sense of belonging.

HYPERCONNETCIVTY AND HUMAN DISPLACEMENT

Hamid's depiction of identity and belonging in *Exit West* highlights the significant human consequences of hyperconnectivity. Technological and physical mobility present significant opportunities; however, they simultaneously challenge the emotional and cultural foundations that provide individuals with a sense of self and belonging. Through an examination of Saeed and Nadia's differing reactions to displacement, Hamid reveals the intricate psychological dynamics involved in manoeuvring through hyperconnected environments. The novel examines the claims surrounding global mobility, highlighting the necessity for frameworks that value emotional depth and cultural authenticity in addition to accessibility. This is particularly evident when Hamid writes, "Nadia and Saeed, who had not been terribly close in the city of their birth, began to drift apart in the city of their death" (Hamid, 2017, p. 173). The quote underscores how constant movement and external access do not guarantee emotional closeness, illustrating the inner strain that modern mobility can place on human connection. *Exit West* presents a detailed examination of identity and belonging, providing significant insights into the destabilising impacts of hyperconnectivity in the 21st century. Hamid encourages readers to consider the broader implications of technological and global systems, urging them to examine the profound emotional and cultural needs of individuals living in an interconnected world. Through the integration of magical realism and sharp social critique, *Exit West* stands out as a vital work for examining the complex dynamics of identity, belonging, and mobility in a highly interconnected era. This is echoed in the novel when Hamid writes, **"**When we migrate, we murder from our lives those we leave behind" (Hamid, 2017, p. 94). The line encapsulates the emotional rupture that accompanies

global movement, suggesting that even as people are connected by technology and globalisation, the personal costs of migration and dislocation are often deeply painful and permanent.

NARRATIVE TECHNIQUES AS A CRITIQUE OF HYPERCONNECTIVITY AND GLOBAL SYSTEMS IN *EXIT WEST*

Mohsin Hamid's *Exit West* examines the implications of hyperconnectivity and globalisation, highlighting their human costs through a blend of minimalist prose, fragmented storytelling, and elements of magical realism. The doors at the core of the narrative are symbols for digital technologies, highlighting the contradictory aspects of global mobility. The discussion emphasises the dual nature of its impact, showcasing how it can free individuals while simultaneously leading to feelings of isolation. It breaks down physical barriers yet reveals the vulnerability of interpersonal relationships and cultural identities in a globally connected environment. Hamid's narrative techniques engage readers in this paradox, compelling them to examine the more profound implications of hyperconnectivity.

MINIMALIST PROSE: REFLECTING EMOTIONAL FRAGMENTATION

Minimalist prose is a writing style that employs simple, clear language with minimal descriptive details and emotional overstatement. It often relies on short sentences, limited adjectives, and leaves much unsaid, letting readers fill in the gaps. In *Exit West*, Mohsin Hamid employs minimalist prose to convey the emotional numbness and disorientation that accompany war and displacement. The sparse style mirrors the characters' detachment, allowing the unreal (such as magical doors) to blend naturally with the real, making the magical realism feel subtle and believable. Hamid's minimalist prose reflects the impersonal quality inherent in digital interactions. The narrative employs subtle descriptions to illustrate the commonplace nature of the extraordinary, mirroring how digital technologies render significant changes as routine occurrences. For example, when Saeed and Nadia initially enter a magical door, Hamid states, "It was said in those days that the passage was both like dying and being born" (Hamid, 2017, p. 104). This measured approach illustrates the practical characteristics of digital tools, where transcending boundaries is as commonplace as accessing a video call.

Freeman (2017) notes that this narrative economy directs readers' attention to the characters' emotional states, highlighting the alienation resulting from hyperconnectivity.

The simplicity in Saeed and Nadia's relationship becomes evident as it deteriorates with each passing door they traverse. Their interactions diminish, illustrating the emotional disconnection linked to digital communication. Hamid observes, "They spoke less as time went by, their conversations increasingly strained" (Hamid, 2017, p. 175). This disconnection reflects the contradiction of hyperconnectivity, in which the closeness facilitated by technology frequently diminishes emotional depth. Even as they remain physically together, their silences grow louder, filled with unspoken distance. The more they travel and connect globally, the more disconnected they become from each other.

FRAGMENTED STORYTELLING: UNIVERSALISING THE MIGRANT EXPERIENCE

The disjointed framework of *Exit West,* interlaced with snapshots of unidentified migrants, highlights the shared and ephemeral characteristics of the migrant journey. The brief interludes, including a man relocating from Tokyo to San Francisco and a girl departing from Guadalupe for London, illustrate migration as a collective yet fragmented experience. Hamid critiques the superficiality of hyperconnected systems by offering only glimpses into these lives, highlighting how such systems often reduce individuals to fleeting interactions. Ong (1999) posits that globalisation diminishes individuality in favour of transactional relationships, a critique that is evident in the fragmented structure of Hamid's narrative. The vignettes disrupt traditional linear storytelling, reflecting the complex and non-linear nature of digital interactions. Hamid shifts focus across various migrants and locations, thereby universalising the challenges of displacement while simultaneously resisting the homogenisation of migrant narratives. This technique corresponds with Bhabha's (1994) notion of "in-betweenness," wherein fragmented narratives challenge singular viewpoints and illustrate the diverse nature of migrant experiences. Hamid shifts focus across various migrants and locations, thereby universalising the challenges of displacement while simultaneously resisting the homogenisation of migrant narratives. This technique corresponds with Bhabha's (1994) notion of "in betweenness," wherein fragmented narratives challenge singular viewpoints and illustrate the diverse nature of migrant experiences. For instance, he introduces readers to an elderly woman in Palo Alto who notes, "we are all migrants through time" (Hamid, 2017, p. 121) and a crowded refugee camp in Mykonos where "everyone was foreign— and so, in a sense, no one was" (Hamid, 2017, p. 75). These brief yet vivid glimpses reflect how migration reshapes identity in deeply personal and distinct ways. Such moments highlight the novel's refusal to offer a single story of exile and instead present migration as a layered, global condition marked by multiple voices and shifting borders. Hamid's fragmented storytelling highlights the fleeting and often detached relationships fostered by hyperconnectivity, drawing attention to the sense of isolation that can arise from global mobility.

MAGICAL REALISM: EXPLORING THE EXISTENTIAL DIMENSIONS OF MIGRATION

In *Exit West*, magical realism can be a framework for examining the profound existential implications of migration and hyperconnectivity. The concept of magical doors prompts an examination of the rigid confines of nation-states, encouraging readers to reflect on the dynamic nature of identity and belonging within a globalised context. Slemon (1988) observes that magical realism provides a means to address the disjunctures of modernity while staying rooted in lived experience, a perspective that Hamid effectively utilises. The presence of the magical doors is introduced in a straightforward manner, lacking a detailed explanation, which normalises their existence within the narrative. This method encourages readers to concentrate on the implications rather than the mechanics involved. For example, upon arriving in London, Saeed and Nadia find themselves in a disordered migrant settlement: "The house was a city of sorts, teeming with people, its hallways crowded, its stairways jammed" (Hamid, 2017, p. 130). The contrast between the enchanting transformation and the stark reality of their destination is a critique of globalisation, highlighting how the democratisation of movement does not adequately tackle systemic inequalities. Spivak (1993) provides a critical examination of comparable global systems, highlighting how the narrative of mobility is frequently presented as a form of liberation, while concealing more profound inequities. The incorporation of magical realism enhances the novel's

investigation into themes of identity and belonging. Saeed's adherence to religious practices illustrates his quest for stability in a fluctuating world, whereas Nadia's acceptance of transformation highlights the mental strain of adjusting to unfamiliar settings. Hamid examines the limitations of global systems that present a facade of inclusivity, revealing their inadequacy in addressing the fundamental requirements for belonging and stability. Bauman's (2000) concept of "liquid modernity" is relevant in this context, as *Exit West* illustrates a reality in which perpetual mobility erodes the foundations of rootedness and emotional ties.

RECONTEXTUALISING MIGRATION IN THE POST-DIGITAL ERA

Hamid's narrative techniques reshape the understanding of migration in the post-digital era, emphasising the psychological and social consequences of displacement rather than merely the physical challenges involved. Saeed's growing commitment to religious rituals highlights his desire for stability in the face of chaos: "Saeed began to pray more regularly, not out of habit, but as a way of reaching for something to hold on to, something to steady himself" (Hamid, 2017, p. 149). Nadia's approach to reinvention highlights the psychological impact of the necessity for continual adaptation. Their journeys illustrate the complex interplay between freedom and fragmentation, highlighting the dual aspects of hyperconnectivity. This analysis corresponds with wider conversations regarding globalisation and the role of technology in mediation. Although digital tools and global systems offer the potential for enhanced accessibility and mobility, they often overlook the more profound needs for belonging and cultural preservation. van Dijck (2013) examines the ephemeral quality of digital relationships; a concept reflected in the declining connection between Saeed and Nadia. Hamid's portrayal of the magical doors illustrates the dual nature of hyperconnectivity, drawing attention to the psychological implications associated with global mobility. Through minimalist prose, fragmented storytelling, and elements of magical realism*, Exit West* transcends conventional migration narratives, offering a profound exploration of the connections between globalisation, technology, and identity. Hamid examines the promises and pitfalls of modern connectivity, urging readers to reevaluate the frameworks that influence current experiences of migration and displacement. With its thematic complexity and innovative narrative techniques, *Exit West* effectively connects literature, digital studies, and globalisation theory, being an essential text for comprehending the human costs associated with life in a hyperconnected world.

CONCLUSION

This study highlights how Mohsin Hamid's *Exit West* examines hyperconnectivity and its significant effects on migration, identity, and human relationships in the post-digital era. Through the metaphor of magical doors, Hamid reconceptualises migration as an experience that is both psychologically and culturally transformative, redirecting the narrative emphasis from the physical challenges to the emotional and social aspects of displacement. The doors represent the dual nature of digital connectivity, highlighting both its advantages, such as accessibility and instantaneous movement, and its drawbacks, including alienation, dislocation, and emotional fragmentation. By employing magical realism in a novel way, *Exit West* transforms the genre, intertwining fantastical components with examinations of contemporary issues, globalisation, and the influence of digital mediation. The metaphor of the magical doors offers a distinct perspective for analysing the dual

nature of hyperconnectivity. The doors facilitate liberation from physical limitations, yet they also underscore the shortcomings of global systems in meeting more profound psychological and cultural requirements. The journey of Saeed and Nadia, characterised by emotional divergence and differing reactions to displacement, exemplifies the extensive human costs associated with hyperconnectivity. Saeed's adherence to tradition juxtaposed with Nadia's pursuit of reinvention illustrates the impact of hyperconnectivity, which promotes a facade of closeness at the expense of cultural depth and genuine emotional connections. This framing enhances the examination of hyperconnectivity by linking its liberating potential to the alienation it frequently engenders, positioning *Exit West* as a significant text that interrogates the allure of immediate connection. Hamid's use of magical realism enhances this critique by effectively blending the fantastical elements with real-life experiences. The presentation of the magical doors, devoid of explanation, normalises the extraordinary, prompting readers to concentrate on the implications rather than the underlying mechanics. This method connects *Exit West* to more comprehensive literary traditions in which magical realism critiques sociopolitical frameworks, simultaneously exploring themes of cultural hybridity and emotional dislocation. Hamid presents migration as a fantastical and profoundly human experience, connecting personal narratives with systemic global issues of displacement. This approach broadens the understanding of magical realism, enabling a critique of technological mediation and its sociocultural implications.

Hamid's critique of hyperconnectivity is particularly relevant in a context where virtual interactions and persistent migration crises are shaping societal dynamics. The novel depicts how refugees and migrants engage with systems that claim to foster inclusion while simultaneously reinforcing feelings of alienation, highlighting displacement as a dual experience of both physical and emotional separation. The narrative examines globalisation's inclination to standardise cultural identities, emphasising the erosion of uniqueness and a sense of belonging in an increasingly interconnected world. The doors could be instruments for examining the shortcomings of global mobility systems in delivering the emotional stability individuals require, highlighting the deficiencies in accessibility when separated from cultural and psychological considerations.

This study effectively connects literary analysis with digital criticism, illustrating how *Exit West* transcends conventional limits to address broader sociocultural concerns. Interpreting the magical doors as metaphors for digital technologies enables a unique positioning of Hamid's work within technological modernity. This reframing provides a detailed examination of how literature critiques globalisation and the emotional and relational costs associated with life in an interconnected world. The study demonstrates how Hamid's integration of magical realism with post-digital issues situates *Exit West* as an essential work that examines the advantages and disadvantages of hyperconnectivity. This study's implications extend beyond literary scholarship, offering avenues for further investigation. Comparative studies may investigate how other contemporary works, including Ali Smith's Autumn and Colson Whitehead's The Underground Railroad, address analogous themes of connectivity, migration, and magical realism. Furthermore, speculative fiction that incorporates fantastical elements to examine global crises—such as climate change or mass displacement—represents a promising domain for future investigation. A more detailed examination of how hyperconnectivity influences diasporic identities, cultural memory, and mental health may enhance our comprehension of the psychological and sociocultural effects of digital mediation. Hamid's *Exit West* deeply examines the intricate dynamics of migration and connectivity in contemporary society. The critique of hyperconnectivity, based on the lived experiences of its characters, reflects the realities encountered by individuals as they navigate

globalisation and technological modernity. *Exit West* exposes the human costs associated with instant connection, dislocation, and the erosion of cultural rootedness, prompting readers to critically examine the promises and dangers inherent in an interconnected world. This text is essential for comprehending the broader social, cultural, and psychological effects of the digital age, providing insightful commentary on the conflicts between freedom, fragmentation, and belonging.

REFERENCES

Ahmed, R. (2023). Exploring the Thematic Concerns of the Magical Doors in Hamid's Exit West: A Magical Realist Perspective**.** *International Journal of English and Literature*, *14*(2), 55–65. https://doi.org/10.5897/IJEL2023.1542

Almutairi, N. M. K. (2024). Exploring global identities in Mohsin Hamid's *Exit West*. *Theory and Practice in Language Studies, 14*(1), 110–115. https://doi.org/10.17507/tpls.1401.12

Alonso, A., & Oiarzabal, P. J. (2010). *Diasporas in the New Media Age: Identity, Politics, and Community.* University of Nevada Press.

Appadurai, A. (1996). *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalisation.* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Ashcroft, B., Griffiths, G., & Tiffin, H. (2007). *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Postcolonial Literatures* (2nd ed.). Routledge.

Bauman, Z. (2000). *Liquid Modernity.* Polity Press. ISBN 0-7456-2409-X (hardcover); ISBN 0-7456-2410-3 (paperback).

Bhabha, H. K. (1994). *The Location of Culture*. Routledge.

Cramer, F. (2015). What is 'Post-Digital'? In D. M. Berry & M. Dieter (Eds.), *Post-digital aesthetics: Art, computation and design* (pp. 12–26). Palgrave Macmillan. https://doi.org/10.1057/9781137437204_2

Erdal, B. (2024). Existential Anxiety and Spatial Reconstruction in Mohsin Hamid's Exit West. Litera: Journal of Language, Literature and Culture Studies / Litera: Dil, Edebiyat ve Kültür Araştırmaları Dergisi, *34*(1), 77-96. https://doi.org/10.26650/litera2023-1393327

Faiz, R., Gul, N., & Ahmad, A. (2023). Magical doors in *Exit West*: Threshold of transformation of major characters. *Pakistan Languages and Humanities Review, 7*(IV), 201–215. https://doi.org/10.47205/plhr.2023(7-IV)14

Faris, Wendy B**.** (1995). *Scheherazade's children: Magical realism and postmodern fiction*. In Lois Parkinson Zamora & Wendy B. Faris (Eds.), *Magical realism: Theory, history, community* (pp. 163–190). Durham, NC: Duke University Press. ISBN 978-0-8223-1640-4. https://doi.org/10.1515/9780822397212-011

Freeman, Ru. (2017, March 16). *Young Couple, Fleeing Civil Unrest, Find Magic Portals to West and Lessons in Humanity* [Review of the book *Exit West*, by Mohsin Hamid]. The Boston Globe. Retrieved from https://www.bostonglobe.com/arts/books/2017/03/16/young-couple-fleeing-civil-unrest-find-magic-portals-west-and-lessons-humanity/717jojk9CZjJnJ9GKSXSVI/story.html

Gheytasi, S., & Salami, A. (2024). *Transcending boundaries: The role of literature in challenging social norms and redefining perspectives on migration and cultural marginality through the works of Halaby, Lahiri, and Hamid*. *Changing Societies & Personalities, 8*(2), 526–542. https://doi.org/10.15826/csp.2024.8.2.286

Hamid, M. (2017). *Exit West*. New York: Riverhead Books.

Harvey, David. (1989). *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change*. Oxford: Blackwell. ISBN 978 0631162926.

Ismail, K. (2024). *Capturing reality: Navigating photographic realism in Mohsin Hamid's Exit West (2017)*. *Research Journal in Advanced Humanities, 5*(1), 79–91. https://doi.org/10.58256/mxdsk926

Joodaki, A. H., Navidi, M., & Dehpahlavan, T. (2024). The Influence of War on Civil Infrastructures, Immigrants, and Local Residents in Mohsin Hamid's *Exit West*. *3L: Language, Linguistics, Literature, 30*(1), 12–23.http://dx.doi.org/10.17576/3L-2024-3001-02

Kleinhempel, U. R. (2024). The Reception of Bantu Divination in Modern South Africa: African Traditional Worldview in Interaction with European Thought. *Religions, 15*(4), 493. https://doi.org/10.3390/rel15040493

Okri, B. (1991). *The Famished Road*. London: Jonathan Cape.

Okri, B. (1997). *A Way of Being Free*. Phoenix House.

Ong, A. (1999). *Flexible citizenship: The cultural logics of transnationality*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press. ISBN (paperback): 0 8223 2269 2; ISBN (hardcover): 0 8223 2250 1.

Slemon, S. (1988). *Magic realism as post colonial discourse. Canadian Literature, 116*, 9–24.

Spear, C. (2024). Refugee fiction as world-literature: Rethinking registration in the contemporary refugee novel. *Journal of Postcolonial Writing, 60*(1), 1-14. https://doi.org/10.1080/17449855.2023.2294340

Spivak, G. C. (1993). *Outside in the Teaching Machine*. Routledge

Tutuola, A. (1952). *The Palm-Wine Drinkard*. London: Faber & Faber.

van Dijck, J**.** (2013). *The culture of connectivity: A critical history of social media*. Oxford University Press. ISBN 978 0 19 9970780.

Zamora, Lois Parkinson, & Faris, Wendy B. (Eds.). (1995). *Magical realism: Theory, history, community*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.ISBN 978 0 8223 1611 0 (hardcover); ISBN 978 0 8223 1640 4 (paperback).