

Fluid Geographies: Transnational Identity and the Politics of Displacement in Mohsin Hamid's *Exit West*

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ABSTRACT

*This study explores the representation of fluid geographies, transnational identity, and the politics of displacement in Mohsin Hamid's *Exit West* (2017). In an age marked by mass migration, war, and border crises, the novel reimagines movement not merely as physical relocation but as a metaphor for human transformation and belonging. Through its use of magical doors that collapse time and geography, *Exit West* constructs a world where home and exile, belonging and alienation, continually intersect. The analysis employs a qualitative, interpretive framework grounded in theories of transnational identity (Levitt & Glick Schiller, 2004), mobility and space (Massey, 2005; Sheller & Urry, 2006), and borderscapes (Rajaram & Grundy Warr, 2007). Findings reveal that Hamid portrays migration as both a political act and an emotional journey that challenges national boundaries and fixed identities. The characters Saeed and Nadia embody hybrid subjectivities shaped by movement, memory, and negotiation across shifting landscapes of belonging. Ultimately, the study concludes that *Exit West* transforms migration from a narrative of loss into one of becoming, proposing fluid geographies as a model for understanding identity in an interconnected, post-national world.*

Keywords: Mohsin Hamid, *Exit West*, transnational identity, displacement, fluid geographies, migration, borderscapes

INTRODUCTION

In the era of increased global mobility and political instability, as well as an escalated rate of forced migration, conventional notions of home, nation, and identity come under significant pressure. Today the world is experiencing mass movements of people driven from their homes by conflict, economic insecurity, environmental destruction and political tyranny. In this, they attack the traditional concept of fixed borders – geographical, cultural and psychological – as well as querying old certainties about who we are, where we belong and what constitutes 'our' place. In literary terms, this transition is expressed in the increasing popularity of stories told about movement, migration and hybridity. In this way, Mohsin Hamid's novel *Exit West* (2017) emerged as a powerful meditation on meditations on the contested spaces of migration and transnational identity politics. The novel's speculative device of magical doors ferrying refugees across the globe takes on a metaphoric edge as much as another layer of literary whimsy for porous, fluid geographies of identity and belonging in a globalised world (Tosi, 2024; Sadaf, 2020).

Several concepts need to be defined in order to analyse this text. Transnational identity stands for the modes in which individuals and communities create forms of belonging, subjectivity and practice that transcend national borders, cultures and geographical places; it stresses on multiplicity, hybridity and movement more than on fixity or confined identities within a single nation-state (Levitt & Glick Schiller, 2004; Tosi, 2024).

To analyse this text, it is necessary to clarify several key concepts. Transnational identity refers to the ways in which individuals and communities develop affiliations, subjectivities, and practices that span national borders, cultures and spatial locations; it emphasises multiplicity, hybridity and circulation rather than static, bounded identity within a single nation-state (Levitt & Glick Schiller, 2004; Tosi, 2024). The protagonists of *Exit West*—Saeed and Nadia—evinced just such fluid subjectivities, as their identities emerge in the intersections of origin, transit, exile and resettlement. Simultaneously, the **politics of displacement** entails not only the act of movement from one place to another, but also the structural, ideological, and experiential dimensions of forced or voluntary migration: border regimes, refugee camps, asylum practices, recognition, belonging, and agency (Bağlama, 2019; Tosi, 2024). By combining these concepts within the frame of **fluid geographies**, this study explores how Hamid’s novel maps the shifting terrain of identity and the contested landscapes of belonging in a world on the move.

In literary scholarship, the concept of fluid geographies emphasises that spaces of migration, exile and transience are not simply residual or negative—they become generative zones of identity formation, performativity and re-articulation. As Hamid himself dramatizes, the conventional fixity of “home” is destabilised: the unnamed war-torn city, the tent-cities of refugees, the displaced persons camps and the cosmopolitan cities of settlement all become sites of negotiation, liminality and flux (Razzaq & Khalid, 2024; Tosi, 2024). The novel’s magical doors symbolise not only geographic teleportation but the conceptual overthrow of territorial certainties: the “doorways” collapse distance, border, and national juridical control while foregrounding human movement and adaptation (Hamid, 2017). Thus, the novel encourages a rethinking of identity not as rooted in a fixed place, but as mobile, relational, and contingent.

Within the broader field of diaspora, postcolonial and migration studies, Hamid’s narrative occupies a crucial position. It speaks to a world after the era of sovereign national certainties: one defined by deterritorialization, global flows and transnational subjectivities (Bhabha, 1994; Bağlama, 2019). Scholars have argued that *Exit West* uses a form of speculative realism or magical realism to dramatize the “chaos world” of migration—what Tosi (2024) terms a condition in which identity-formation is shaped by inter-subjective encounters, media circulation, multilingualism and multicultural spaces. The political dimension of displacement is foregrounded in Hamid’s critique of border regimes, refugee invisibility, and the precariousness of migrant lives (Sadaf, 2020; Bağlama, 2019). Thus, the present study situates the text at the intersection of transnational identity and the politics of displacement, exploring how fluid geographies emerge as both locus and metaphor of change.

While existing scholarship has examined *Exit West* in terms of trauma, liminality, refugee crisis, hybridity and mystical realism (Razzaq & Khalid, 2024; Tosi, 2024; Iqbal, Zaheer, & Ain, 2024), this study identifies a gap in the combined analysis of transnational identity and displacement politics through the spatial metaphor of fluid geographies. In particular, there remains insufficient examination of how the novel’s representation of movement, border-crossing and settlement negotiates identity beyond mere victimhood or trauma, emphasising instead agency, adaptation, and belonging. Accordingly, the research aims to respond to the following question:

Research Question: How does *Exit West* represent transnational identity and the politics of displacement through the metaphor and practice of fluid geographies?

To address this question, the study sets out the following objective:

Research Objective: To analyse how Hamid's *Exit West* articulates fluid geographies of movement and identity, and critiques the politics of displacement by exploring the spatial, narrative and symbolic dimensions of migration in the text.

There are three reasons for narrowing the focus to Hamid's novel. Firstly, as a current literary text written in response to global refugee crises, *Exit West* is topical and relevant when it comes to representations of migration, borders and identity (Hamid, 2017). A second is that, as a Pakistani-diaspora writer's text, it affords an expansive location for the exploration of transnational subjectivity across South Asia, Western deportation, and world mobility. Thirdly, with the imagery of doors and teleportation, Austar lights a spark for investigating metaphorical and literal crossings between geography, identity and power - an approach that pushes forward current discussions in migration literature. Finally, the piece adds to the scholarship by foregrounding not a static home versus exile or yet another opposition of origin versus settlement but rather relational and processual identity in migration.

In pursuing this inquiry the paper will be structured as follows: an introductory overview in which the key terms of transnational identity, displacement politics and fluid geographies in migrant literature are mapped in relation to existing scholarship; a discussion of the theoretical framework and the methodology that informs this research study; linguistic mapping versus spatial migration geographies will be read on how Hamid conceptualizes movement, identity and belonging before some concluding thoughts identify overall findings that further justify implications or importance for studying migration-laden specific references about *Exit West*.

By focusing on fluid geographies, transnational identity and the politics of displacement, this study positions *Exit West* not merely as a refugee narrative, but as a deeply reflective intervention in how literature can re-conceive the spaces of belonging and the subjectivities of the migrant in the global age.

LITERATURE REVIEW & THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

1) Migration, Mobility, and the Re- making of Space

Current studies on migration underscore how our sense of space, identity and political belonging is also reconstituted by mobility. The "new mobilities paradigm" asserts that social life is built out of the movements of people, information and things—movements that are unequally facilitated and controlled (Sheller & Urry, 2006). This turn brings to the fore infrastructures, borders and everyday mobilities that condition who is able to move, how and with what consequences (Urry 2007). In this respect, in a move that parallels how space has been reconceived in human geography by Massey, 2005 as always already relational and in the making, so literary representations of migration may be read less in terms of departure/arrival binary existences than they can be approached through the lens of ceaseless renegotiation. At the same time, research on 'cultural globalization' (Appadurai, 1996) brings in the notion of intersecting -scapes, (ethno-, media-, techno- ideo-, finance-scapes), creating a term base for the description of the transnational flow that shape migrant lifeworlds. Combing these threads, these strands set the stage for literary narratives to be read as loci where spaces, movements and powers get re-imagined. (Sheller & Urry, 2006; Urry, 2007; Massey, 2005; Appadurai, 1996).

2) Borders, Camps, and "Borderscapes"

Critical border studies shift attention from borders as fixed lines to **borderscapes**—diffuse, contested spaces where sovereignty is enacted and lived (Rajaram & Grundy-Warr, 2007). This framework illuminates detention, camp, and checkpoint regimes as political technologies that produce migrant

precarity and conditional visibility. For literary analysis, borderscapes help explain how texts stage zones of waiting, liminality, and exception as part of the migrant condition. Reviews and discussions of *Borderscapes* underscore how these formations link local practices to global governance, making them highly relevant to readings of refugee fiction (Addison, 2008) (Rajaram & Grundy- Warr, 2007; Addison, 2008).

3) Transnational Identity: From Social Fields to Hybridity

Migration studies conceptualize transnational identity as embedded in transnational social fields, where attachments and practices extend across state boundaries and where “ways of being” and “ways of belonging” can coexist with incorporation in host societies (Levitt & Glick Schiller, 2004). Postcolonial theory complements this by theorizing hybridity and the Third Space (Bhabha, 1994), where cultural meanings and identifications are negotiated rather than inherited whole. Papastergiadis (2000) adds the notion of deterritorialization to describe how global flows unsettle territorial logics. In *Exit West*, these frames help parse characters’ shifting affiliations, altered senses of home, and the text’s challenge to singular national identities (Levitt & Glick Schiller, 2004; Bhabha, 1994; Papastergiadis, 2000).

4) *Exit West* in Scholarship: From World- Literature to Mobilities

The fast-growing body of criticism on *Exit West* situates the novel at the intersection of world- literature, mobility, and refugee representation. Bilal (2020) interprets *Exit West* as a world novel, and discusses devices such as unlocalization of location and multi- strand narration that deterritorialize the text beyond national boundaries. Lagji (2019) intersects the fields of postcolonial and mobilities studies, suggesting that the novel charts out a form of contemporary migration in which it is in waiting-in-motion that poetics sits – a generative friction between movement and immobilization. Perfect (2019) interrogates how the text figures refugees as “black holes in the fabric of the nation,” foregrounding the novel’s engagement with national imaginaries and crisis discourse. These accounts collectively mark *Exit West* as emblematic of 21st-century migration fiction that is formally experimental and geopolitically alert. (Bilal, 2020; Lagji, 2019; Perfect, 2019).

A related thread examines the novel’s exploration of technology- and media-mediated borders. Naydan (2019), on the other hand, examines how digital screens recombobulate national ruptures and intimacies that accompany them while advocating for coupled connectivity in networks of regional exclusion and surveillance. Sadaf (2020) suggests the temporal and spatial imaginary of Hamid relocates Pakistani Anglophone writing in the post-9/11, post-Brexit/Trump conjuncture to explore how history and geography are reimagined through the speculative. More recently, Tosi (2024) reads *Exit West* as the representation of a “chaos- world” of affective transnationality that shapes identity through juxtapositional municipal impingements and multilingualism effects.” Notwithstanding the degree of rotation driving this novel, by embracing what various situations produce within us.” The concept of chaos sets, in my opinion limitlessly broad coordinates to read any text on both trans- and international migration., 2019) (Sadaf, Tosi).

5) Displacement, Liminality, and Camp Worlds

Several studies foreground displacement as both an individual effect and a structural condition. Liaqat (2022) analyzes the poetics of migration trauma in *Exit West*, while other readings examine liminality and thresholds—states of suspension that resonate with the novel’s doors and encampments. These liminal spaces relate to what border theorists would call borderscapes; they mediate the transition from citizen to

non-citizen, from insider to outsider, and from emplacement to itinerancy. (Liaquat, 2022; Rajaram & Grundy- Warr, 2007).

6) Magical/Speculative Realism as Migrant Form

Critics note that Hamid's magical doors compress distance and bureaucracy, transforming border-crossings into thought experiments about permeable geographies. For Lagji (2019), this is a means to rethink textures of mobility; Perfect (2019) reads the device in respect to national anxieties about influx of refugees; Tosi (2024) situates it within affect theory and post-migration studies, where the narrative speed up emotions and ethical demands in co-presence. This literature converges on the realization that form (the portal) isn't a decorative embellishment at all; it is the conceptual engine that renders fluid geographies thinkable and feelable (Lagji, 2019; Perfect, 2019; Tosi, 2024).

7) Citizenship, Rights, and the Performance of Belonging

Recent work links *Exit West* to debates about **citizenship** and **belonging**. Koegler (2022) reads the novel through **performative citizenship**, showing how characters enact claims to presence, recognition, and relational belonging across jurisdictions. This lens extends transnational identity beyond cultural description to **juridico-political practice**, clarifying how literature stages act that test the limits of law and policy. (Koegler, 2022).

8) Synthesis: What We Know—and the Gap Your Study Addresses

Across these strands, consensus holds that *Exit West* (a) dislodges nation-bound frames via world-literary strategies and portal-realism, (b) stages mobility, waiting, and liminality within intensified media and border regimes, and (c) reconfigures identity as transnational, affective, and negotiated. Yet two underexplored linkages remain:

1. **Integrating Mobilities/Geography with Transnational Identity in a Single Reading:** While mobilities scholarship (Sheller & Urry, 2006; Lagji, 2019) and transnational identity (Levitt & Glick Schiller, 2004; Bhabha, 1994) are each invoked, fewer studies explicitly suture these frameworks into a cohesive account of *how the novel's spatial form (doors, camps, urban encampments) produces the very transnational identities it depicts*. This is where fluid geographies can operate as an integrative analytic (Massey, 2005; Rajaram & Grundy- Warr, 2007; Appadurai, 1996).
2. **Linking Affective/Performative Citizenship to Borderscapes:** We have robust accounts of refugees and state imaginaries (Perfect, 2019) and of performative citizenship (Koegler, 2022), but fewer readings **connect** these to the **governance of space**—how belonging is enacted within, against, and across borderscapes. Your project advances this linkage by analyzing how *Exit West* imagines belonging as a performed practice within fluid, contested geographies (Koegler, 2022; Rajaram & Grundy- Warr, 2007).

Working Definitions (for consistent use in your paper)

- **Transnational identity:** Identities and practices formed within transnational social fields, where multiple attachments and modes of belonging operate simultaneously across states (Levitt & Glick Schiller, 2004).

- **Politics of displacement:** The institutional, discursive, and affective regimes (borders, camps, asylum policies) that regulate mobility, recognition, and life chances of migrants/refugees (Rajaram & Grundy-Warr, 2007; Sheller & Urry, 2006).
- **Fluid geographies:** A relational view of space emphasizing movement, co-presence, and ongoing reconfiguration of places, scaled from bodies to cities to networks (Massey, 2005; Appadurai, 1996).

How this Review Positions the Study

By bringing world-literary form (Bilal, 2020), mobilities (Sheller & Urry, 2006; Lagji, 2019), borderscapes (Rajaram & Grundy-Warr, 2007), and transnational identity (Levitt & Glick Schiller, 2004; Bhabha, 1994) into a single analytic, this study shows how *Exit West* constructs transnational subjects through its spatial poetics—doors, camps, and urban micro-geographies—and how that construction contests the politics of displacement. This integrated approach answers calls for scholarship that treats form, space, and governance as mutually constitutive rather than as parallel themes (Perfect, 2019; Koegler, 2022; Tosi, 2024)

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The present study is designed as a qualitative, interpretive research on the basis of literary analysis. The primary goal is to investigate how Mohsin Hamid's *Exit West* voices transnational identity and the politics of displacement by turning to fluid geographies. Because the investigation concerns meaning, metaphor and narrative structure, mode of inquiry is qualitative rather than quantitative, favoring interpretive depth to measurement. The book locates the novel in the overlapping discourses of postcolonial theory, transnational studies, and mobility scholarship that allow textual interpretations to address sociocultural realities of migration, displacement, and global membership.

The interpretive layout enables detailed reading of the text as well as placing it within broader theoretical frameworks. This constitutes in its treatment of the text an extension of the hermeneutic tradition espoused by literary criticism, and considers a text as a space where form, context and reader are all in dialogue. Dynamics, so meaning is seen as dynamic, developed over time in response to engagement with theoretical and cultural discourses.

Research Approach and Method

The research follows an analytical and interpretive textual approach, drawing upon tools of close reading, contextual interpretation, and thematic analysis. The method involves critically engaging with the novel's spatial and symbolic structures—particularly its portrayal of movement, displacement, and belonging—to uncover how these narrative forms represent transnational subjectivity.

This approach operates at three levels:

- **Textual analysis**, focusing on imagery, motifs, and narrative patterns such as doors, cities, and camps as metaphors of border-crossing and transformation.
- **Thematic interpretation**, exploring how Hamid's characters perform hybrid identities shaped by mobility and precarity.

- **Theoretical integration**, situating the novel within debates on space, identity, and displacement to interpret how Hamid reimagines belonging in a globalized, post-national world.

Data Collection and Sources

- The study is an all-text based research: both primary and secondary source.
- The core text is Mohsin Hamid's *Exit West* ([2017] 2019), read in its entirety with a focus on spacelogics, characters, and plot.
- The source corpus consists of refereed journal articles, books, and academic essays on migration, transnational identity and displacement. These informations were sourced from JSTOR, Taylor & Francis Online, and Google Scholar Academic databases used to focus the materials from 2000 to 2024. Special consideration was given to the works responding to:
 - Transnational identity and hybridity in postcolonial contexts
 - Mobility and border studies
 - The politics of displacement and refugee narratives
 - The narrative aesthetics of magical or speculative realism

ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK

Three theoretical strains are intertwined in the analysis:

Transnational Identity Theory – Deriving from Levitt and Glick Schiller (2004) as well as Bhabha (1994), this theory regards identity as layered in multiple locations, the product of negotiation, storage and porous. It also offers a model for reading Saeed and Nadia as figures of border-crossing subjectivity: In them, continuity and change both jostle.

Theorising Space and Mobility — Drawing on Massey (2005) with an influence of Sheller & Urry's (2006) it is a rethinking the production theory in the sense that space must be relational, as in its always-in-production relations in motion. The reading, then, understands *Geography of Exit West* not as stable locations but rather moments that accommodate experience and change.

Politics of Displacement and Borderscapes- This perspective, influenced by Rajaram & Grundy Warr (2007) and Koegler (2022), critically considers how the novel depicts the power dynamics in the functioning of migration regimes, politics of border control, refugee exposure to threats. Not only does this frame direct the dialog away from more appropriate lens of as to how Hamid's novel is an indictment on system injustices inherent in displacement and asylum politics.

Together, these schemes give us an idea of how *Exit West* moves “the doors” as a spatial metaphor into the philosophical and political vocabulary about freedom, community and the movement of people.

Data Analysis Procedure

It is a hermeneutic-interpretive analysis that fluctuates between a microscopic attention to textual detail and a macroscopic model-building endeavour. The procedure involves:

Decoding reiterated spaces and movements (doors, thresholds, tenting, cities).

Combining excerpts by theme around texts of mobility and stasis; belonging and alienation; identity in flux.

The clusters are then interpreted using the theoretical notions of mobility, transnationalism and borderscapes.

Focusing the identification of intuition, we show how Hamid's imaginary space-time scales gives rises to growth-induced displacements.

This is a supple but systematic method, which respects the complexity of the literary text at the same time that it upholds its theoretical coherence.

DISCUSSION / DATA ANALYSIS

The Metaphor of the Doors and Transnational Passage

Hamid offers the black doors as literal and figurative means of migration. As Saeed and Nadia are compelled to leave the city, the narrator speaks of migrants as “those who had returned from death but did not return all the way” — a line that signals migration's existential schism (Hamid, 2017, p. 71). That accounts for the double aspect of displacement — then disappearance of that which was known and emergence into the yet unknown. The door, dark and opaque — “it did not draw out what was there on the other side or project back what was over here” (Hamid, 2017, p.70) — refigures migration as a threshold of unknowing; a ‘moment of threshold’ in which identity is disarticulated (p.

These doors, in a post-colonial reading, challenge borders and undermine Western controlled regimes of mobility. The magical-realist conceit stands as a critique of global inequality; passage becomes democratized without becoming less treacherous, mirroring the 21st century's irregular migration trails. To walk into the darkness is to summon, in Homi K. Bhabha's phrase, the Third Space where identity occurs between cultures.

War, Faith, and the Gendered Experience of Displacement

The novel's opening chapters place Saeed and Nadia in an environment of urban unravelling — “the curfew ... ended with hair-trigger force, not simply sandbagged checkpoints and razor wire spider webs but tank barrels and gin truckers” (Hamid, 2017, p. 39). Hamid's blending of domestic routine with militarized imagery underscores how war penetrates the home. Nadia's defiance is of a piece with the fate that Saeed will undergo: his piety increasing as it is exiled from a land in which love does not spring from religion or from family but, at least in this temporary space, for itself.

“Saeed did not know how to mourn, how on earth to grieve for his father, from so large a distance” (Hamid 2017a, p. 113)—mourn is or becomes geography agnostic later: when Saeed grieves his father from London. His turning to prayer as a “testament of love for what had been lost and would be lost” (Hamid 2017: 130) illustrates how religious belief operates as symbolic ballast in diaspora. This, instead, is Nadia-style pragmatic secularism: how to survive in global modernity. Their tension mirrors gendered stakes in migration, as women more readily embrace transformation.

The London Refugee Camp: Precarity and the New World Order

Hamid's London becomes a microcosm of global stratification. The "*dark London*" where migrants live contrasts "*light London*," where "*people dined in elegant restaurants and rode in shiny black cabs*" (Hamid, 2017, p. 97). This spatial duality echoes Marxist geographies of capitalism — the visible privilege of the center and the invisible labor of the margins.

Inside the camp, Saeed encounters a family "*whose skin was so fair that it seemed they had never seen the sun*" (Hamid, 2017, p. 120). Their fragility reverses racial hierarchies, suggesting a post-national solidarity among displaced peoples. Yet Hamid also records how "*shame, for the displaced, was a common feeling*" (Hamid, 2017, p. 121). This psychological realism prevents romanticizing migration.

Through this depiction, Hamid critiques the humanitarian-industrial complex — the global management of refugees that commodifies compassion. The camp, while offering order, replicates borders internally through surveillance and stratification.

Memory, Longing, and the Dissolution of the Couple

By the time they land in Marin, California, their relationship has deteriorated to a muted estrangement. Saeed's religious sense expands as Nadia "*felt something had gone quiet inside her*" (Hamid, 2017, pp. 129). Her awakening is not at the hands of religion but sensuality, when "*she discovered that she was easily aroused ... by thoughts of the girl from Mykonos*" (Hamid, 2017, p. 130). Hamid makes this fluctuating erotic center stand for a change of emotional residence: as bodies move across them, so too do affections.

The daughter of the preacher in Marin is also another version of his previous love with Nadia but, this time around, it is set within a similar religious framework instead of one in opposition to religion (Hamid, 141). Its loop structure mirrors a human quest for belonging through time and culture.

Cosmopolitanism and the Ethics of Coexistence

Hamid's closing vignettes universalize migration. The old man and the creased artist that move "*through the black door inside the shed*" "*beyond Amsterdam and Rio de Janeiro*" (Hamid, 2017, p. 115) indicate that mobility is neither racially nor agely nor nationality bound. The doors grow from metaphors of escape into symbols of human interconnectedness.

The novel's closing images — of the older couple reuniting, and then of Saeed finding Nadia years later — make migration a spiritual pilgrimage toward coexistence. What Hamid imagines is a future post-national ethos, forged by empathy rather than territory.

Conclusion

Exit West dramatizes migration as both rupture and renewal, translating geopolitical realities into metaphysical experience. Through Saeed and Nadia's evolution from lovers to strangers, Hamid portrays displacement as an internal condition — the struggle between memory and change, faith and freedom. His use of magical doors allows the narrative to collapse geography and time, compelling readers to reimagine borders as psychological constructs.

As a postcolonial text, the novel subverts Western dominance by foregrounding non-Western subjectivities that navigate global modernity with resilience. Hamid's subtle narration, free of overt ideology yet charged with empathy, redefines migration not as a crisis but as the defining movement of the human century.

FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION

Findings

The close reading of Mohsin Hamid's *Exit West* (2017) demonstrates that the novel creates a unique 'poetics of migration', challenging traditional conceptions of identity, home and place in an age characterised by global mobility. By using its symbolical, and speculative mode narrative, the novel shows how movement across borders changes not only a physical space, but also a psychological and ethical or spiritual space of being.

1. Fluid Geographies as a Narrative and Political Device

Other in a dynamic realm unfettered by the classic borders of nation, culture and historical time. These doors— “while like you're alive are being born” and “like you are born dieing” (Hamid, 2017: 71)— represent the collapse of fixed spatial hierarchies and the emergence of a transnational psyche. This result confirms the theoretical assumption made by Massey (2005) and Appadurai (1996), namely that space in the global age is relational, always locally composed of movement and interaction. *Exit West* fleshes out this relationality, painting movement not as an escape but a necessary and formative condition of contemporary existence.

2. Transnational Identity as Fluid and Processual

Through the characters of Saeed and Nadia, Hamid illustrates that identity in the context of migration is not fixed but negotiated through movement, memory, and encounter. Their evolving relationship—from solidarity to estrangement—embodies what Levitt and Glick Schiller (2004) term *transnational social fields*: zones of overlapping affiliation and hybrid belonging. Saeed's deepening religiosity and Nadia's secular autonomy demonstrate two distinct yet parallel paths of identity formation, both shaped by the tension between continuity and change.

3. The Politics of Displacement and the Borderscape

The depiction of the London refugee encampment foregrounds the novel's engagement with the structural and ideological dimensions of displacement. Hamid's “dark London” and “light London” (Hamid, 2017, p. 97) expose how global capitalism and border governance produce uneven visibility and vulnerability. The camps function as *borderscapes* (Rajaram & Grundy Warr, 2007), spaces where sovereignty, exclusion, and survival intersect. Yet within these spaces, migrants perform what Koegler (2022) calls *performative citizenship*: acts of resilience and cooperation that reclaim humanity within systems of marginalization.

4. The Affective and Ethical Dimensions of Migration

Beyond socio-political critique, *Exit West* humanizes displacement as an emotional and moral experience. Saeed's grief at his father's death “from so great a distance” (Hamid, 2017, p. 113) articulates the affective burden of diaspora, while Nadia's pursuit of selfhood signals liberation from patriarchal and national containment. Migration here becomes not only a material journey but a moral one—toward empathy, recognition, and ethical coexistence.

5. A Universal Condition: ‘We Are All Migrants Through Time’

Perhaps the most profound finding is Hamid’s transformation of migration from an exceptional crisis into a universal human condition. The statement “we are all migrants through time” (Hamid, 2017, p. 209) reframes displacement as a shared temporal experience rather than a geopolitical anomaly. Time itself becomes a geography—fluid, inclusive, and transient—where all identities are provisional. This insight expands the concept of fluid geographies from physical to existential terrain, situating migration within the human condition itself.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this study finds that *Exit West* reimagines migration as both a literal and metaphoric process of transformation, positioning Hamid’s narrative at the intersection of postcolonial critique, transnational identity theory, and mobility studies. The novel dismantles the binaries of home and exile, centre and margin, belonging and estrangement. Instead, it proposes a world of **fluid geographies**—a world in which individuals continuously remake themselves through movement, encounter, and adaptation.

By fusing magical realism with social realism, Hamid resists the dominant Western narrative that portrays refugees merely as victims of crisis. His subtle narrative voice, which moves freely between global locations and personal introspection, exemplifies a new kind of world literature that mirrors the deterritorialized reality of the 21st century. The politics of displacement in *Exit West* are inseparable from its ethics of empathy: through his characters, Hamid reveals that the capacity to imagine the other’s journey is itself an act of belonging.

This study’s findings affirm that Hamid’s novel transcends regional or national boundaries to articulate a vision of shared humanity. The text invites readers to confront displacement not as catastrophe but as continuity, not as alienation but as renewal. Through the concept of **fluid geographies**, *Exit West* transforms the discourse of migration from a story of loss into a story of becoming—an allegory of the modern world’s interdependence, precarity, and resilience.

Ultimately, *Exit West* stands as a profoundly hopeful narrative: a meditation on how, in an era of borders and fragmentation, literature can reimagine movement as connection, and identity as ever-unfolding across time, space, and humanity.

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