

FROM LOCAL ROOTS TO GLOBAL ROUTES: A STUDY OF GLOBALIZED WORLD IN HAMID'S *EXIT WEST* THROUGH HELD AND MCGREW'S LENS

Amara Rasheed

M.Phil. Scholar, Department of English Literature, The Islamia University, Bahawalpur.

Email: amarabaloch552@gmail.com

Dr. Sadia Rahim

Lecturer Department of English Literature, The Islamia University, Bahawalpur.

Email: sadiarahim87@gmail.com

Abstract

The purpose of the present research article is to look at the issue of globalization and migration in Mohsin Hamid's Exit West, examining the relationship between global interconnectedness and local realities. The study incorporates David Held and Antony McGrew's globalization theory, which includes concepts such as global interconnectedness, global governance and transformational perspectives. The findings suggest that Exit West is a fascinating story that challenges traditional notions of borders, migration and identity through the unique usage of magical doors that transport characters across continents. The findings further reveal how magical realism, albeit fantastical, works as a metaphor for the real-world phenomenon of global migration. This global mobility mechanism stands in contrast to the cumbersome and frequently hazardous methods that people use to relocate. The findings encourage readers to reevaluate the inflexibility of national borders and the capriciousness of geopolitical divisions by examining the fluidity of borders in the era of globalization. This research could be further advanced through the integration of insights from additional postmodern theorists.

Keywords: Migration, global interconnectedness, local realities, transformational perspectives

1. Introduction

In the context of accelerating globalization, contemporary literature has increasingly engaged with themes of transnational mobility, displacement and the reconfiguration of identity and space. Mohsin Hamid's *Exit West* offers a rich exploration of the themes of migration, interconnectedness and identity in the context of globalization. Through the story of Nadia and Saeed, Hamid illustrates the emotional, psychological and social complexities of migration in a world where borders are increasingly porous, yet identities remain deeply entrenched in geography and culture. The novel highlights the transformative power of migration, not only as a physical journey but as a deeply emotional and psychological experience that challenges the notion of fixed identities and belonging. It also underscores the importance of recognizing our shared humanity in addressing the challenges posed by globalization, calling for more compassionate and cooperative solutions to the issues of migration and displacement. In this way, *Exit West* serves as both a reflection on the contemporary global condition and a meditation on the possibilities for a more interconnected, empathetic world. The aim of this research is to investigate how *Exit West* engages with the dynamics of globalization and migration, using the theoretical framework developed by David Held and Anthony McGrew (2003). Their model of globalization emphasizes key concepts such as global interconnectedness, global governance, and transformational perspectives, all of which are instrumental in analyzing the socio-political undercurrents of Hamid's narrative. By applying these theoretical constructs, the study explores how the novel reconfigures understandings of migration and reflects broader global transformations.

1.2 Thesis Statement

In *Exit West*, Mohsin Hamid portrays globalization as a transformative yet destabilizing force, using magical doors and the migratory journey of Nadia and Saeed to explore how interconnectedness,

displacement and cultural hybridity reshape identities and challenge traditional notions of borders, belonging and nationhood.

1.3 Research objectives

The objectives of this research are

1. To explore how the novel critiques traditional concepts of nationhood, borders and belonging in a rapidly globalizing world.
2. To unmask the differences in global governance policies and attitudes toward migrants.
3. To incorporate David Held and Antony McGraw's globalization theory.

1.4 Research questions

The overarching questions of the present research are

1. How does the depiction of global interconnectedness in *Exit West* question traditional notions of belonging and community in the context of migration?
2. How the transformational perspective is portrayed in the novel *Exit West*?
3. How does *Exit West* explore the intersections of migration, identity and global citizenship within the framework of global governance?

1.5 Significance of the study

This study of Mohsin Hamid's *Exit West* through the lens of David Held and Antony McGraw's globalization theory can be valuable in comprehending the contemporary problems of migration and globalization. This research can be a great contribution to both literary criticism and migration theory, offering valuable insights into the implications of globalization in our world today. It encourages a broader discussion about the role of migration in shaping societies and highlights the urgency of developing equitable policies that reflect the realities of a globalized world.

1.6 Delimitations

1. This research article is delimited to *Exit West* by Mohsin Hamid and does not extend to Hamid's other works or to other literary texts.
2. The study primarily employs the globalization theory of David Held and Anthony McGraw, particularly their concepts of global interconnectedness, global governance, and transformational perspectives. Other relevant postmodern or migration theorists are not extensively explored, though they are acknowledged as potential avenues for further research.

Literature Review

Mohsin Hamid's *Exit West* has been the subject of considerable academic interest, particularly for its treatment of globalization, migration, and identity. Scholars have examined Hamid's use of magical realism, especially through the novel's magical doors, as a metaphor for the dislocation and mobility associated with modern migration.

Moutafidou (2019) offers a compelling analysis of the novel, arguing that *Exit West* presents a postnational vision of the world where mobility and human connection transcend conventional geopolitical boundaries. According to Moutafidou, Hamid reimagines migration not just as a physical journey, but as a transformative process that reshapes both identity and the very concept of belonging. The magical doors in the novel serve as more than just plot devices; they function as narrative shortcuts that highlight the emotional and psychological effects of migration, while bypassing the often traumatic and bureaucratic realities of displacement.

Hussain et al. (2020) extend this analysis by exploring the broader societal impacts of migration depicted in the novel. They note that Nadia and Saeed frequently face resistance and prejudice from host

communities, which view refugees as burdens or threats. This hostility reflects deeper social anxieties and economic tensions, which exacerbate refugees' marginalization. The novel also portrays the gradual collapse of the protagonists' home city under violence and chaos, symbolizing the destabilizing effects of conflict on both local and global scales.

Farooq et al. (2022) emphasize the setting of the novel in an unnamed metropolis to stress the universal nature of its themes. They argue that Hamid portrays migration as an inherent aspect of the human condition, positioning all humans as migrants over time. This perspective challenges conventional, location-specific narratives and invites a broader understanding of migration as a fundamental part of life.

While existing scholarship on *Exit West* effectively highlights the exploration of migration, globalization and identity. There remains a lack of focused analysis on how the depiction of local host community responses interacts with broader global governance and policy frameworks. Addressing this gap would deepen understanding of the complex interplay between personal migrant experiences and structural forces in the era of globalization.

Research Methodology

This study employs a qualitative research approach to explore the themes of globalization and migration in Mohsin Hamid's *Exit West*. The research primarily involves textual analysis of the novel. The theoretical framework guiding the analysis is grounded in the globalization theory of David Held and Anthony McGrew, which encompasses concepts such as global interconnectedness, global governance and transformational perspectives. This framework aligns with the purpose of research and provides a lens to interpret the depiction of the fluidity of borders and the complexities of global mobility.

David Held and Anthony McGrew are key figures in globalization theory. Held, a British political theorist is known for his work on global governance and the effects of globalization on political systems, particularly in his co-authored book *Global Transformations*. He argues that globalization reshapes state sovereignty and social structures, especially through migration. McGrew, a British scholar, has also contributed to understanding globalization, emphasizing its multidimensional nature, including the role of technological advancements and economic networks in shaping global dynamics. Both theorists highlight the importance of migration in globalization, which connects societies across borders.

David Held and Antoni McGrew's concept of globalization emphasizes the profound shift in how global interconnections transcend traditional territorial boundaries, offering new opportunities for cooperation and at the same time, presenting challenges of inequality and power imbalances (Held & McGrew, 2007). According to Held, globalization is not simply the economic integration of nations but also the reconfiguration of social, political and cultural processes that shape people's lives on a planetary scale. This transformational perspective is fundamental to understanding how global forces influence local realities, especially in the context of migration. Migration, as a global phenomenon, has gained increased attention as millions of individuals and families are displaced due to conflict, environmental changes and economic hardship.

Furthermore, Held and McGrew's theory of global governance sheds light on how institutions and governments shape the conditions for migration. Globalization, they argue, implies new forms of governance that cross national borders, since the interconnection of governments and society compels collective action on global challenges such as migration, human rights and environmental sustainability (Held & McGrew, 2007).

Taking a transformational approach enables us to see globalization as a significant change that rewrites power relationships and social structures worldwide, rather than as an economic event (Held and McGrew, 2007). This viewpoint emphasizes how cooperative solutions may be developed from our global interconnectedness to create a more just and sustainable future. Globalization theory ultimately has to take these factors into account to answer the complexities of contemporary global interactions properly. According to Held & McGrew (2007), the connection between migration and globalization is especially noticeable in metropolitan areas, where cosmopolitan cities are created as a result of the migration of individuals from various socioeconomic, cultural and geographic origins. With populations that represent a tapestry of races, languages and cultural practices, these cities, once thought to be monolithic or national, have evolved into microcosms of global connection. Both the host communities and the migrants' cultural identities have changed as a result of this change, giving rise to new kinds of identity creation, social integration and cultural hybridity. The effect of migration on cultural identity is one of the main topics of study.

In addition to being a physical relocation, migration is a psychological and cultural process in which people must balance their traditional identities with the expectations and customs of a new culture. Migrants must negotiate the difficulties of maintaining their cultural heritage while assimilating into the host society when they enter other countries. As a result of trying to adjust to new social, political and economic contexts, migrants may deconstruct elements of their cultural identities. One of the most important parts of the acculturation process is the cultural adaption process. The experiences of migrants who arrive in new nations with distinct cultural and societal norms demonstrate the results of acculturation. The language, values and habits of the host society may be adopted by migrants who decide to assimilate, frequently at the expense of their cultural heritage. However, migrants who opt out of integration into the larger community may isolate themselves inside ethnic communities, preserving their local language and customs. A compromise is provided via integration, in which immigrants embrace elements of the host culture while preserving their cultural history. The most challenging result, however, is marginalization, in which immigrants experience a sense of dislocation and identity loss as a result of feeling cut off from both their own and the host society (Held & McGrew, 2007).

The experiences of migrants are significantly shaped by the global context in which migration occurs. The difficulties of migration are becoming more complicated as globalization keeps changing the political, cultural and economic landscapes. Migration has become more feasible as a result of globalization, especially in terms of access to improved living conditions and economic mobility. But it has also given rise to new kinds of exploitation, marginalization and inequality. Due to inadequate working conditions, low pay and a lack of legal protection, migrants, especially those from marginalized groups, are frequently at risk of exploitation in the global labor market.

4 Discussion and Analysis

Exit West addresses the complexities of migration and displacement in the modern world. It is a novel that follows the journey of two refugees, Nadia and Saeed, who fall in love amidst the chaos of a war-torn unnamed city. As violence escalates, they discover magical doors that allow them to escape the war and travel to various locations worldwide, such as Mykonos, London and San Francisco.

4.1 Exploration of Migration and Interconnectedness in *Exit West*

In today's globalized world, theories of migration and globalization are interdependent; a reflection of how global processes increasingly condition people, events and places. In Mohsin Hamid's *Exit West* (2017), migration and the concept of interconnectedness are examined through the lives of Saeed and Nadia, two young individuals caught in the violence of a city on the brink of war. Theirs is a strong example of how global migration reorders individual lives and relationships but also suggests the larger forces of global

interconnectedness. While integrating David Held and Antony McGrew Globalization Theory (2007) the study reveals that *Exit West* is a reflection of the complex dynamics of a world where borders are open but closed, where migration is a journey not only through space but through the complex web of global connections.

The opening of *Exit West* sets the scene by explaining a city filled with refugees and on the verge of war but still maintaining the facade of normalcy. Saeed and Nadia encounter each other in a classroom in this fragile peace, one that is an interesting commentary in itself on the general global order under which local wars and migrations coexist with the continuation of normal life. "In a city swollen by refugees, but still mostly at peace, or at least not yet openly at the way a young man met a young woman in a classroom and did not speak to her" (Hamid, 2017, p. 3). Such a scene has the paradoxical nature of contemporary migration cities that are gradually becoming places in which migratory flows intersect with the routine of everyday life and where the boundaries that demarcate normalcy from disruption are eroded. The classroom is a place of potential convergence, but the silence of Saeed and Nadia is symbolic of the disconnection that usually clings to the migration experience. It is the rhetoric of disconnection that is central to the analysis of how global tensions and migration create new possibilities and barriers for people. As the narrative progresses, the bond between Saeed and Nadia slowly reveals itself as an expression of movement from solitude to a tenuous form of interdependence. Both of them realize the greater crisis happening in the world outside, but through the shootings and bombings that sporadically shake the city, they live their lives with the ebbs and flows of the city and its relation to the world outside. Reflected to Saeed concerning his condition towards Nadia as he watched a hawk construct a nest on the roof of the agency. "Saeed found himself unable to stop thinking of Nadia he thought of Nadia and watched the hawk" (Hamid, 2017, p. 10). The flight of the hawk in the air is an expression of the vulnerability of their world; both are suspended between a sense of place and the eventual need for departure as the outside world intrudes into their life. Their increasing consciousness of each other is the beginning of a further comprehension of how their fates are intertwined with the greater forces that are shaping their city.

The Bearded Man is portrayed as a long-time resident of the mansion, embodying both stability and a sense of alienation in an unfamiliar land. He stands out as one of the few characters who truly grasp the complexities of the migrant experience. By sharing his own stories, he provides Nadia and Saeed with valuable advice, urging them to see beyond their immediate struggles. A pivotal moment in the novel occurs when he contrasts the migrant experience in London with the realities of their homeland. While he acknowledges the loneliness that often accompanies migration, he emphasizes the necessity of building connections, even in a new and foreign setting. His insights resonate with the overarching theme of the novel that amidst displacement and loss, human relationships remain essential.

The Bearded Man's existence in London illustrates that migration impacts not only those who leave but also the communities they join. His sense of belonging within the mansion is tenuous, constantly reminding him of his status as a displaced individual. The mansion, despite its grandeur, symbolizes the fleeting nature of his life in this new environment. Although he is far from his homeland, the Bearded Man serves as a testament to the interconnectedness of people, both migrants and those who stay behind. As they navigate new cultures, migrants forge new relationships while carrying the weight of their pasts. The Preacher, whom Saeed encounters in Marin, California, further enriches the theme of interconnectedness. This African-American preacher aids Saeed in discovering a sense of community in his new surroundings. Struggling to adjust to the changes that migration has brought, Saeed finds comfort in the Preacher's support and wisdom. The Preacher's role is crucial, as he, like the Bearded Man, provides a form of connection and guidance. The Preacher's role is significant because, like the Bearded Man, he offers a form of connection in an otherwise disorienting world.

When Saeed encounters the Preacher, he is struck by the parallels in their experiences despite their differing backgrounds. The Preacher, a man of faith, views migration as a common journey that unites people across national, racial and religious divides. His faith gives him a sense of purpose and a connection to others who are grappling with the hardships of displacement.

In the novel, Saeed reflects on his discussions with the Preacher and the sense of belonging that arises from their exchanges: “The preacher spoke about the importance of community, about how migration could be a way of forging new connections, not just with others from one’s background, but with all human beings” (Hamid, 2017). This quote highlights the Preacher’s conviction in the universality of the human experience and the notion that migration, while often fraught with pain, can also pave the way for new relationships and a deeper understanding of others. The Preacher helps Saeed understand that migration is not merely an escape from the past but also a chance to create a future that is more intertwined with others. The Preacher’s insights align with the broader themes of the novel, which posits that migration is not only a physical journey but also a spiritual and emotional one. His role emphasizes how individuals, even from diverse cultural backgrounds, can discover common ground through shared experiences and faith. The Preacher’s message is one of hope and resilience, suggesting that interconnectedness is achievable even amid adversity.

The novel conveys that migration is a phenomenon that blurs the boundaries between various cultures and societies, forming new networks of individuals united by the common experience of seeking safety, belonging and identity. As the characters navigate through the magical doors, they are not only physically transported to different corners of the world but are also symbolically drawn closer to one another. Their encounters with strangers in each new place reflect the growing interconnectedness of the world, where borders and nationalities no longer define one’s sense of belonging.

In a particularly poignant moment, Nadia contemplates the nature of their world: “The world, as it was, had become a place where one’s past was not necessarily tied to one’s present and yet that past was always there, present in the stories one told” (Hamid, 2017). This line captures the exploration of interconnectedness, how the past, present and future are intertwined through shared experiences and how migration, while disruptive, also deepens connections between people across time and space.

In *Exit West*, Mohsin Hamid employs characters like the Bearded Man and the Preacher to delve into the theme of interconnectedness within the context of migration. Their interactions with Nadia and Saeed illustrate that migration is not merely a physical journey but also an emotional and spiritual one that connects individuals across borders and cultures. Through these characters, the novel highlights that, despite their differences, human beings are united by the shared experience of displacement and the longing for connection. As Saeed and Nadia’s journey unfolds, the narrative suggests that even in a world fraught with division and uncertainty, there remains the potential for new relationships and a sense of belonging.

Ultimately, *Exit West* encapsulates the essence of interconnectedness in migration, showing how global networks influence individual lives while simultaneously presenting new opportunities and challenges. Through the lens of Held and McGrew’s theory, we understand that migration in a globalized world transcends mere border crossing; it involves navigating the intricate, often contradictory relationships between local realities and global systems. Saeed and Nadia’s passage through the doors serves as a metaphor for the fluidity of the modern world, where connections and disconnections, movement and stasis merge into a dynamic, sometimes tumultuous experience of belonging.

4.2 Depiction of Global Governance in *Exit West*

In *Exit West* by Mohsin Hamid, the story delves into themes of migration, displacement and the intricate nature of global governance through the journeys of the main characters, Saeed and Nadia. As they

traverse different cities via the magical doors, they confront the fragmented and often insufficient systems of global governance that fail to meet the needs of displaced individuals. The novel critiques the frameworks that oversee migration, shedding light on the personal, emotional and political challenges faced by refugees. This can be further understood through the lens of global governance as articulated by David Held and Antony McGrew. Their theories regarding migration, borders and international institutions provide valuable insights into the social, political and economic structures that shape the experiences of the characters in *Exit West*.

The beginning of *Exit West* quickly sets the global stage for the protagonists' migration. The city, "swollen by refugees" (Hamid, 2017, p. 3), acts as a microcosm of global migration trends. The overwhelming influx of refugees mirrors the forces of conflict, political instability and economic hardship that drive mass migration, all of which are affected by the global governance systems or the lack thereof that control borders and movement. As Saeed and Nadia seek to flee the violence and uncertainty of their war-torn city, they encounter not only physical barriers but also the shortcomings of global institutions in providing genuine protection.

Saeed's city is depicted as "mostly at peace, or at least not yet openly at war" (Hamid, 2017, p. 3), highlighting the fragility of their circumstances and the subtle nature of global political instability that often goes unnoticed until it escalates.

This aligns with Held and McGrew's (2007) argument that global governance frequently overlooks the root causes of conflict and inequality that drive displacement, reactively treating the refugee crisis instead of a proactive one. The idea of "magical doors" in *Exit West* represents a break from conventional migration methods governed by national borders and immigration regulations. Saeed and Nadia's passage through these doors, which allows them to sidestep the intricate bureaucracy of migration, highlights the shortcomings of the current global framework in handling the movement of displaced individuals. These doors serve as a metaphor for the unregulated and unpredictable aspects of migration, where people often have no option but to use unsafe or informal routes to flee danger. As the novel illustrates, "the doors allowed the characters to pass through walls, separating them from the world they had known and into new places where the rules and systems of the world they had left behind no longer applied" (Hamid, 2017, p. 100). This evasion of borders and regulations echoes Held and McGrew's critique of the disjointed nature of global governance. Their analysis suggests that global migration is often dictated by the interests of individual states, which fail to collaborate effectively to tackle issues like forced migration (Held & McGrew, 2007, p. 17). Saeed and Nadia's dependence on these doors highlights the lack of coherent and coordinated global strategies for managing refugee movements.

Saeed and Nadia's migration also illustrates how economic and political inequalities, deeply rooted in the global system, shape the migration experience. As they journey through different cities, they confront stark disparities in living conditions, often facing social exclusion and marginalization. In London, they find themselves in "a dilapidated house in a neighborhood that had been left to decay" (Hamid, 2017, p. 156). Their temporary stay in this impoverished area reflects the broader challenges faced by displaced individuals.

This disparity aligns with Held and McGrew's argument that globalization has exacerbated economic inequalities, with some regions and people benefiting from globalization while others remain trapped in poverty (Held & McGrew, 2007, p. 33). The experiences of Saeed and Nadia in London illustrate how migrants are often relegated to the margins of society, forced to live in substandard conditions despite having crossed multiple borders in search of safety and opportunity.

As Saeed and Nadia's journey progresses, the emotional and psychological toll of migration becomes more evident. Saeed, in particular, is haunted by his memories of home, often holding onto the remnants

of his past life in an attempt to preserve his identity amidst the chaos of displacement. In one poignant moment, he reflects on the fact that his father is dying and despite the global forces that have displaced him, he feels helpless in honoring his father's wishes. He is torn between his desire for safety and the duty he feels to his family: "Saeed thought of his father and felt his chest tighten. The man was dying and Saeed was not there for him. He wished he were there to care for him, to see him one last time, but he was not" (Hamid, 2017, p. 13). This personal grief illustrates the human cost of migration, which Held and McGrew (2007) suggest is often overlooked in global governance frameworks. They argue that global migration is not just a political or economic issue but also a deeply personal one, affecting the emotional and psychological well-being of individuals (Held & McGrew, 2007, p. 24).

The concept of global governance is closely linked to the function of international institutions in handling migration and conflict. Although Saeed and Nadia's journey is significantly influenced by the lack of formal institutions, their experiences reveal the shortcomings of the global system in addressing migration crises. The magical doors that Saeed and Nadia utilize, which allow them to circumvent conventional governance structures, illustrate the ineffectiveness of organizations like the United Nations or the European Union in offering practical and safe solutions for those who are displaced. Held and McGrew stress the necessity of international collaboration and institutional frameworks to tackle transnational challenges such as migration (Held & McGrew, 2007, p. 18). Nevertheless, *Exit West* critiques the global governance framework as fragmented and inconsistent, with nations frequently prioritizing their interests over global cooperation to resolve migration issues. The novel emphasizes that, despite the presence of international organizations, their ability to protect or support refugees is often limited.

Set against the backdrop of a world that is becoming more interconnected, the story illustrates how borders are increasingly blurred through the use of magical doors that allow people to travel across the globe. Through characters like the Bearded Man and the Preacher, along with the main protagonists, Nadia and Saeed, Hamid critiques the existing global governance system, shedding light on problems such as migration management, inequality and the international community's response to crises. One of the key ways Hamid explores global governance is through the theme of migration. The journey of Nadia and Saeed across various countries via the magical doors presents a situation where traditional governance systems, including national borders, immigration laws and international relations, appear inadequate in managing the significant influx of displaced individuals. The novel highlights the vulnerability of these systems. The novel reveals the fragility of these systems, especially in the context of escalating global crises, such as war, climate change and economic inequality.

The magical doors in the novel represent a way to escape the rigid national borders and immigration systems. When the couple first steps through the door, they leave behind the violence of their unnamed city, highlighting the failures of both state and global systems in preventing and resolving conflict. Saeed and Nadia's ability to move freely across borders sharply contrasts with the real-life challenges faced by migrants, who often encounter detention, deportation, or hostile environments due to a lack of supportive international governance. The novel raises questions about how global governance structures respond or fail to respond to the needs of migrants, refugees and asylum seekers. Through the character of the Bearded Man, who has endured a long journey of displacement, Hamid critiques the global governance system's perspective on migrants. The Bearded Man's experience in London illustrates the struggles migrants face when trying to integrate into new societies. Although the mansion where he lives provides some stability, he remains haunted by his status as a displaced person. His advice to Nadia and Saeed highlights the loneliness and alienation many migrants experience due to the absence of a global governance system that truly supports them. His life in the mansion, while comfortable, emphasizes how the global system has failed to foster a sense of belonging for individuals like him.

The character of the Preacher further critiques the state of global governance. When Saeed meets him in Marin, California, he finds solace in the Preacher's message of unity and belonging despite the dislocation caused by migration. The Preacher's role suggests that while governments and international organizations often fail to provide adequate support, communities formed by people who share similar experiences can offer an alternative form of governance. The Preacher speaks of the importance of faith and human connection, creating a sense of community that transcends political boundaries. His message, though deeply personal and spiritual, speaks to the lack of global governance structures that can offer this kind of solidarity and security to displaced populations.

Saeed's interaction with the Preacher also sheds light on how global governance often leaves individuals to navigate their survival without providing the necessary infrastructure or resources. The Preacher's small but impactful role exemplifies a broader need for global systems that address the human dimension of migration, offering refugees not just physical safety but also emotional and communal support. In contrast to the ineffective and fragmented response of global governance, the Preacher's informal yet powerful role underscores the need for governance systems that prioritize human connection and empathy.

Hamid's portrayal of global governance also critiques the political and economic systems that underpin the struggles of migrants. The novel shows how the concentration of wealth and resources in certain parts of the world exacerbates the displacement crisis. Saeed and Nadia's journey through different countries highlights the stark contrasts between wealthier, more stable nations and those ravaged by conflict. When the characters enter places like Mykonos or Marin, they find that the global systems of governance prioritize the welfare of their citizens over the needs of migrants. These experiences reveal how inequality between nations is maintained and how political interests often overshadow humanitarian concerns.

Moreover, *Exit West* critiques how global governance structures like international organizations and powerful nation-states tend to view migration as a crisis to be managed rather than an ongoing human reality that needs long-term solutions. The characters in the novel experience how migration is often perceived through the lens of national security or economic competition instead of human rights and justice. Through the experiences of characters such as the Bearded Man and the Preacher, Mohsin Hamid highlights the shortcomings of global governance in addressing migration and displacement. The novel underscores how the international community frequently fails to provide adequate support to migrants and refugees, revealing that traditional governance systems are ill-equipped to tackle the human realities of migration. At the same time, Hamid's depiction of community-building through figures like the Preacher suggests that, in the absence of effective global governance, individuals must rely on one another for support and solidarity. Ultimately, *Exit West* advocates for a more compassionate and human-centered approach to global governance, one that acknowledges the interconnectedness of people across borders and the necessity for systems that prioritize the welfare of all individuals, especially those who are displaced and vulnerable.

Exit West offers a vivid and nuanced portrayal of migration in a globalized world characterized by both opportunities and significant challenges. Through the experiences of Saeed and Nadia, the novel critiques the global political system and the shortcomings of international institutions in effectively managing the movement of displaced people. The concept of magical doors, which allow for escape from national borders and immigration systems, emphasizes the inadequacies of global governance in handling migration. The fragmented and often ineffective nature of global institutions in addressing migration aligns with the critiques presented by David Held and Antony McGrew. Saeed and Nadia's journey reflects these themes, illustrating the complexities of migration in today's world. Saeed and Nadia's journey, filled with both hope and hardship, underscores the importance of creating more comprehensive and humane global governance mechanisms that can address the complex realities of migration.

4.3 Transformational Perspectives in *Exit West*

In Mohsin Hamid's *Exit West*, the theme of transformational perspectives is intricately woven into the journeys of its characters, Nadia and Saeed, as they navigate the tumultuous landscapes of migration, displacement and shifting identities. These changes, both personal and global, are driven by the forces of conflict, technological progress and the growing interconnectedness among people across borders. The magical doors featured in the novel serve as a metaphor for the fluidity of geographic and cultural boundaries in our globalized world, representing both opportunity and alienation as individuals grapple with the complexities of a transforming environment. In *Exit West*, these doors enable Nadia and Saeed to travel between countries in an instant, circumventing the traditional, often grueling, migration processes. The exploration of these doors is not merely a narrative device but also illustrates how globalization has reshaped the migration experience.

Held and McGrew highlight the interconnectedness of people, ideas and cultures, noting that technological advancements facilitate quicker and more accessible migration (Held & McGrew, 2007, p. 66). In *Exit West*, the doors symbolize this rapid movement of individuals and the significant changes that accompany it, allowing characters to traverse geographical boundaries as effortlessly as they transition through different stages of their lives. The theme of transformation, both outward and inward, permeates the narrative, showcasing how globalization disrupts established identities and fosters new ways of existing in the world. The protagonists, Nadia and Saeed, undergo their transformations as they utilize the doors to journey from their war-torn home city to Greece, England and the United States.

Their migration is not just a location change but a process of re-imagining who they are in the face of new surroundings and shifting cultural contexts. Nadia's embrace of change contrasts with Saeed's attachment to his past and their differing responses to migration highlight how individuals' identities are not static but fluid, shaped by the interplay of internal desires and external pressures. As the novel notes, "Saeed's attachment to his city was profound, but he could not remain. It was clear to him, as clear as anything had ever been that the only way to survive was to leave" (Hamid, 2017, p. 12). This statement underscores how the forces of war and conflict make it necessary for Saeed to abandon his past, even though he is reluctant to do so. For Saeed, the act of migration represents a personal transformation that he cannot escape, no matter how much he clings to the familiar. Nadia, on the other hand, is more willing to embrace change. Her openness to new experiences, as seen in her readiness to enter the doors without hesitation, contrasts sharply with Saeed's more conservative approach to the unknown.

She is described as "someone who had grown up in a country where doors were always open to strangers" (Hamid, 2017, p. 26), symbolizing her flexible attitude toward migration and the personal transformation it entails. Nadia's transformation is marked by her ability to detach herself from the constraints of her past, allowing her to forge a new identity in each new place she encounters. As Held and McGrew argue, individuals in the globalized world are not passive recipients of change; instead, they actively shape their responses to the forces of migration and technological innovation (Held & McGrew, 2007, p. 67). Nadia's ability to adapt to new environments and form new connections reflects how migration offers individuals the opportunity to reinvent themselves, even as it challenges the stability of their previous identities.

However, the process of transformation is not entirely freeing. The rapid changes that Nadia and Saeed experience through their use of the doors often lead to feelings of alienation and loss. As they travel from one country to another, they face various social and cultural expectations that make it hard for them to truly feel at home anywhere. In Greece, for instance, they are told they cannot stay and are "deported" to England. Saeed, who has grown increasingly nostalgic for the life he left behind, finds it difficult to adapt to this new reality, while Nadia's ability to let go of the past enables her to seize the opportunities that the doors offer. "Nadia did not feel the loss as Saeed did; her heart was more fluid, more capable of moving

with the world” (Hamid, 2017, p. 108). This highlights how Nadia’s adaptable and independent mindset allows her to welcome change, whereas Saeed’s attachment to his past limits his ability to fully adjust to his new surroundings. Their relationship, once close and bonded by shared experiences, starts to unravel as their transformations take different paths, reflecting the tensions that emerge when people undergo varying processes of change.

Held and McGrew discuss how globalization and technological advances have reshaped the way people experience time and space, facilitating new forms of mobility but also creating new forms of dislocation and inequality (Held & McGrew, 2007, p. 108). The doors in *Exit West* are a direct reflection of this idea, offering rapid mobility but also emphasizing the sense of fragmentation that comes with such rapid transitions. While the doors provide opportunities for escape, they also expose the characters to the emotional toll of leaving behind their old identities and homes. Saeed’s nostalgia for his previous life and Nadia’s more detached approach both highlight the personal costs of globalization and migration. The loss of cultural continuity, relationships and a sense of belonging underscores the emotional complexity of global movement.

The role of technology in this transformation is significant in *Exit West*, as it shapes the way Nadia and Saeed experience their migration. The doors, which allow them to cross borders with ease, represent the rapid advances in technology that enable people to traverse the world. However, as Hamid writes, the use of the doors is not without consequences: “The exits made a new geography, a new history, but they also made a world of displacement, of loneliness and yearning” (Hamid, 2017, p. 158). This quote reveals the duality of technological progress in the novel while the doors offer a way out of conflict and violence; they also create a world where people are disconnected from their pasts and one another.

The transformation facilitated by technology is thus not purely positive; it comes with the costs of alienation and identity loss. Held and McGrew’s perspective on the transformative nature of globalization helps frame *Exit West* as portrayal of migration and identity. They argue that globalization involves processes of change that are often uneven, producing both opportunities and challenges. As people move across borders, they are exposed to new ways of life but are also forced to confront the disintegration of their old ways of being. This dual process of transformation is evident in Nadia and Saeed’s experiences, where the doors both offer a means of escape and challenge their sense of who they are. Saeed reflects near the end of the novel, “Saeed knew that he would never stop carrying with him the place from which he had come” (Hamid, 2017, p. 226). This statement captures the essence of migration as having transformative impact, suggesting that while individuals may physically move to new locations, the memories, experiences and identities of their past continue to shape their present selves.

In *Exit West* by Mohsin Hamid, the theme of transformation is explored not only through the primary characters of Nadia and Saeed but also through various minor characters who, though not central to the plot, help illuminate the broader shifts in identity, culture and perspective that occur in the context of migration. These minor characters offer a range of responses to change, providing insight into the exploration of how individuals are affected by the forces of globalization. In particular, Hamid uses the character of Nadia’s mother, as well as other secondary figures, to reflect different facets of resistance and acceptance of transformation, highlighting the tensions between the familiar and the unknown and between personal and collective identities in an increasingly interconnected world.

Nadia’s mother is one of the key characters in the novel who embodies a more traditional, static perspective grounded in her attachment to place, culture and familiar practices. Her brief presence in the novel serves as a counterpoint to Nadia’s more adaptive approach to life. While Nadia is willing to embrace change, even if it means crossing through mysterious doors that take her to new and unknown places, her mother remains tied to the old ways. She does not see migration as an opportunity for

transformation but as a daunting and undesirable escape. Nadia's reflection on her mother's perspective sheds light on this contrast: "My mother would never have gone through the door, she would have stayed home and prayed and maybe tried to persuade us to stay, too, to find a way of enduring" (Hamid, 2017, p. 161). This statement highlights the generational and ideological divide between Nadia and her mother. For Nadia's mother, endurance and steadfastness are central values and she views migration as a disruption to these values. Her reluctance to embrace the possibility of a transformative journey through the doors reflects a deeper hesitation to engage with the forces of change that globalization represents.

Her attitude aligns with the arguments presented in David Held and Antony McGrew's where they describe globalization as a process that intensifies interconnectedness and transforms local experiences by introducing external influences (Held & McGrew, 2007). From this perspective, Nadia's mother's refusal to move through the door can be seen as a resistance to the disruptive and often disorienting nature of globalization. She is attached to her local context, her religion, and her community, all of which provide a sense of security in the face of conflict and uncertainty. This adherence to tradition is indicative of a broader societal response to globalization, where people often feel threatened by the loss of control over their environment and identity. In *Exit West*, Hamid contrasts Nadia's mother's resistance to transformation with Nadia's willingness to explore the potential for personal growth and adaptation that migration offers. Another character who plays a significant role in the theme of transformation is the man who rents Nadia and Saeed a house in Mykonos. While this character appears briefly, his interactions with Nadia and Saeed underscore the nuanced ways in which migration impacts both the migrants and the societies they enter. The man provides a temporary home for the couple as they try to settle into a new environment. His brief conversation with them reveals his mixed feelings about the changing dynamics of his community: "It's happening all over. People like you, people like me. We get along, for a time. But after a while, things start to... rot" (Hamid, 2017, p. 179).

These words reflect a resigned acceptance of the inevitable changes brought on by migration. He acknowledges that migration is a natural part of the evolving world, but he also speaks to the challenges and tensions that emerge over time. His view suggests that while people can initially coexist and adapt to new arrivals, there is an underlying sense of discomfort and degradation as the integration process unfolds. This perspective mirrors what Held and McGrew (2007) describe as the complexities and contradictions of globalization. While globalization brings opportunities for new connections and cultural exchange, it also introduces challenges of displacement, loss of identity and socio-political tensions. The man in Mykonos represents this disillusionment, acknowledging both the necessity and the discomfort of migration in the context of a globalized world. The transformation theme is further explored through the young couple that Nadia and Saeed encounter in London. Unlike Nadia and Saeed, who struggle with the emotional and cultural challenges of displacement, the young couple have already adapted to their new environment. They have embraced their life in London, participating actively in cultural and social life. Their ease of integration into their new surroundings contrasts sharply with Nadia and Saeed's ongoing difficulties, highlighting the diverse ways individuals and couples experience transformation through migration. The young couple represents those who are more flexible and willing to adapt to change, contrasting with Saeed's initial reluctance to embrace a life outside his homeland.

In the novel, particularly Nadia's mother and the man in Mykonos serve as representations of different responses to the forces of transformation brought about by migration. Nadia's mother's resistance to change illustrates the tension between tradition and the pressures of a globalized world, while the man in Mykonos exemplifies the ambivalence that many experience when migration becomes a widespread reality. Together, these characters highlight the central theme of the novel i.e. migration. Migration is a transformative process, one that shapes not only the migrants but also the societies they enter, revealing

the complexities of globalization. Hamid explores the personal and collective aspects of transformation in a world increasingly shaped by migration and globalization. As David Held and Antony McGrew (2007) argue, globalization is not just an economic or political phenomenon; it is a deeply social and cultural process that reshapes identities, experiences and relationships. The novel experiences of migration, whether they resist or embrace change, reflect the broader dynamics of a globalized world. The novel suggests that while transformation is often inevitable, it is also fraught with challenges. The diverse responses of the characters to migration demonstrate the complex nature of global interconnectedness and the way it forces individuals and communities to confront new realities, ultimately reshaping their identities in the process.

The novel provides valuable insights into the theme of transformation, particularly in the context of migration and globalization. Nadia's mother, the man in Mykonos and the young couple in London all offer different perspectives on how individuals navigate the challenges and opportunities of a rapidly changing world. Through these characters, Hamid emphasizes the transformative power of migration while also exploring the resistance and disillusionment that often accompany it. By examining these minor characters, the novel reflects the complex and multifaceted nature of globalization, showing how migration affects not only the lives of those who move but also the communities they join.

So, the novel explores transformational perspectives through the personal and collective experiences of its characters, which are forced to confront the changing nature of their identities in a world increasingly shaped by migration and globalization. The novel uses the metaphor of the magical doors to reflect the rapid mobility of people in the globalized world while also illustrating the emotional costs of such movements. The transformations that Nadia and Saeed undergo are not simply about adapting to new environments but about rethinking who they are and how they relate to the world around them. Through their journeys, *Exit West* offers a profound commentary on how globalization reshapes individual identities, relationships and senses of belonging in the contemporary world.

Conclusion

In conclusion, Hamid's *Exit West* presents a sophisticated examination of transformation through the lens of migration. Mohsin Hamid, through the journeys of Nadia and Saeed, conveys how the experience of displacement while often fraught with hardship can also prompt significant personal and relational change. Their evolving identities and shifting interpersonal dynamics reflect the broader complexities of the migrant condition, which encompasses not only physical movement but also emotional and psychological reorientation. Viewed in relation to Held and McGrew's theory of globalization, the novel captures the transformative potential of global interconnectedness. It demonstrates that in a world increasingly shaped by transnational flows, traditional notions of identity, belonging and community are not fixed but are constantly renegotiated in response to changing contexts.

Future Implications

This study can be further extended in incorporating postmodern theorists such as Jean Baudrillard, Homi Bhabha, or Fredric Jameson which could deepen our understanding of identity fragmentation, simulacra and hybridity in transnational contexts. Moreover, comparative studies with other contemporary global novels could reveal whether the motifs found in *Exit West* reflect a broader literary response to globalization.

References

- Farooq, A., Khan, M. A., & Hussain, S. (2022). The Universal City: Migration and the Human Condition in Mohsin Hamid's *Exit West*. *Journal of Postcolonial Writing*, 58(1), 45–58. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17449855.2021.1994780>.
- Hamid, M. (2017). *Exit West: A Novel*. Riverhead Books.
- Held, D. & McGrew, A. (2000). *Globalization*. Polity Press.
- Held, D. & McGrew, A. (2007). *Globalization and the Nation-State*. Polity Press.
- Held, D. & McGrew, A. (Eds.). (2000). *The Global Transformations Reader*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Hussain, Z. Ahsan, M. & Akram, U. (2020). Discontents of Globalization and Post-Traumatic Stress in Hamid's *Exit West*. *Research Journal of Social Sciences and Economics Review*, 1(4), 329-336.
- Moutafidou, L. (2019). Space „in Time for Them: Ethnic Geographies Under Construction, Refugee Traumas under Healing in Mohsin Hamid's *Exit West*. Ex-centric Narratives. *Journal of Anglophone Literature, Culture, and Media*, (3), 317-330.