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Exploring Diasporic Escapism and the Ontological Quest for Survival: A Postcolonial Analysis of Exit West

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Abstract

The study focuses on Mohsin Hamid's novel Exit West (2017) in order to develop a deeper understanding of the significant facets of escapism and the quest for survival within post-colonial diasporic contexts. The researcher aims to deploy a comparative methodology utilizing Michel Bruneau's Typology of diaspora and transnationalism (2010) and Edward Said's Orientalism (1993) to present an in-depth comprehension of the complicated mechanisms at stake. Establishing an analysis of the novel's use of escapism, the study reveals how Saeed and Nadia, the main characters, use magic doors to escape their centralized and war-torn homeland. Here, escapism is presented as a means of surviving within the post-colonial diasporic structure, providing foundations for a profound investigation of identity challenges. The objective of the study is to analyze Exit West (2017) from a postcolonial lens, examining the ways in which characters oversee the ontological quest for survival by turning to escapism.

Key Words: Diasporic Escapism, Ontology, Survivalism, Postcolonial Perspective

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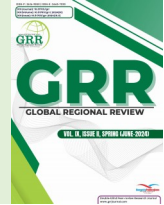
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Title

Exploring Diasporic Escapism and the Ontological Quest for Survival: A Postcolonial Analysis of Exit West

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Abstract

The study focuses on Mohsin Hamid's novel Exit West (2017) in order to develop a deeper understanding of the significant facets of escapism and the quest for survival within post-colonial diasporic contexts. The researcher aims to deploy a comparative methodology utilizing Michel Bruneau's Typology of diaspora and transnationalism (2010) and Edward Said's Orientalism (1993) to present an in-depth comprehension of the complicated mechanisms at stake. Establishing an analysis of the novel's use of escapism, the study reveals how Saeed and Nadia, the main characters, use magic doors to escape their centralized and war-torn homeland. Here, escapism is presented as a means of surviving within the post-colonial diasporic structure, providing foundations for a profound investigation of identity challenges. The objective of the study is to analyze Exit West (2017) from a postcolonial lens, examining the ways in which characters oversee the ontological quest for survival by turning to escapism.

Keywords: [Diasporic Escapism](#), [Ontology](#), [Survivalism](#), [Postcolonial Perspective](#)

Introduction

Migration is unquestionably an avenue for escape. Individuals have been pursuing this for as long as history exists. Tuan (2000) asserts that the strongest impulse that drives us is the reason; we want to leave our immediate surroundings. The person in question takes this line of reasoning to its logical conclusion by claiming that human civilization as a whole can be understood as an attempt to avoid certain things, like the constraints placed on our

bodies, the unpredictable nature of our surroundings, or the discomfort that comes with being human. It has been noted that philosophers occasionally criticize theme parks and malls, deeming them "escapist fantasies better suited for less mature individuals. Even though escapism is sometimes viewed as an inappropriate kind of reading, it has a positive psychological and emotional impact on the peruser.



Robert Heilman (1975) states that there are two different ways that literature can help people escape from reality: one way is to temporarily escape reality, and another way is to reflect more deeply on what it means to be human. The first is "regressive escapism," where readers seek to escape everyday life and reality. The second kind is known as "progressive escapism," when people use literature to explore and make sense of their emotions and experiences. He examines a variety of literary works, from science fiction to Shakespeare, to show the different forms that escape can take in literature. According to the author, escape is an essential part of reading and can help bibliophiles with self-discovery and psychological research.

Escape from the real world, having a break from a challenging situation, or the need to divert one are all examples of escapism. A phenomenon known as "digital escapism" occurs when addicts to the internet start spending more and more time on social media and less time in the real world. They don't know what's going on with their friends, family, or fellow students. The COVID-19 Disaster serves as an illustration of this. The release of "Nintendo Switch" and "Animal Crossing: New Horizons" has provided a platform for entertainment and escapism since lockdown, shutdown, and quarantine during the COVID period have caused anxiety and melancholy (Warren, 2020).

Following the terrible attacks of September 11, 2001, a time of intense unease began with the ramifications. Many people who already feel helpless in the face of globalization have found that they are more susceptible to outside forces that are outside of their sphere of influence. Current events and media portrayals of people or groups that are viewed as distinct or unknown have contributed to a greater degree of anxiety and fear toward these people or groups, as seen from a variety of perspectives across the social, political, economic, and psychological dimensions. In such a volatile setting, those who have successfully navigated the difficult path to obtaining transnational citizenship—regardless of whether they are located in the post-colonial terminology's "center" (West) or "periphery" (East) of their host societies—are often characterized as having a sense of centrality or belonging in multiple places. Ironically, people might also feel as though they don't belong in any one place, as Lyre (2000) puts it. The complex and

multidimensional nature of their identities and connections within the complex global setting is represented by this natural phenomenon.

In the context of post-colonialism, the idea of escapism is crucial. In today's culture, avoiding and running away are not novel concepts. The whole point of escapism is to escape from oneself, one's views, or the frequently disturbing contemporary reality. According to the psychology of escapism, one important component is that the desire to run away may be a premeditated response to emotional survival or it may be a response to a stressor such as danger, stress, or misfortune. In the current context, escapism is defined as the natural tendency or deliberate endeavor made by people or groups living in formerly colonized areas to seek solace or refuge in idealized or fictional realms in order to deal with the difficult realities resulting from the lingering effects of colonialism or current post-colonial challenges. This intricate situation takes on multiple manifestations as people attempt to use literature, art, or their imagination to escape the difficulties and tragedies associated with living in a post-colonial world.

The objective of the present research is to gain an in-depth comprehension of the significant obstacles that individuals face in a society that bears a resemblance to the fictional portrayal found in Mohsin Hamid's *Exit West*. Here, political unrest and violence frequently result in forced migration and the need to go on migrant treks, reflecting the experiences of people like Saeed and Nadia. The primary focus of this research is the fundamental tension that exists between the innate need to escape dangerous and difficult circumstances—just like the main characters in the novel—and the subsequent attempt to forge a strong bond and obtain food in the strange and often stern surroundings of their new locale.

Research Objectives

- To investigate the portrayal of diasporic escapism in Mohsin Hamid's *Exit West*
- To explore the intersection of diasporic experiences and the ontological quest for survival in *Exit West*

Significance of the Study

Exit West is a post-colonial narrative that primarily presents escapism as a means of escape, making this research highly significant as it digs into the core of contemporary worldwide issues. It provides an in-depth awareness of the struggles that refugees suffer, venturing out on journeys of escape and creating identities in the midst of privation. The ongoing study can also have an impact on policy and practice by offering insightful viewpoints that can help shape and enhance the care and support given to refugees, thereby meeting a crucial need in a world where escapism is an integral source in our contemporary culture.

Theoretical Framework

The current study explores the relationship between escapism and identity crises within the postcolonial diasporic context under the lens of Edward Said's "Orientalism" (1978) and Michel Bruneau's typology: diaspora and transnationalism (2010). "Orientalism," by Edward Said critically analyzes how the "Orient" is represented in Western culture. With regard to the post-colonial environment, Bruneau's typology distinguishes between different Diaspora displays. The viewpoints offered in Said's "Orientalism and Bruneau's typology" are analyzed in this study to investigate how escapism and identity crises intersect in *Exit West*.

Literature Review

Post-colonial literature is an anthology of literature produced by writers from previously colonized countries or regions, as well as by individuals whose lineage was profoundly influenced by colonialism. The mid-1900s saw the emergence of this genre, which is still very much alive today. Cultural identity, migration, colonial oppression, and the struggle for independence and self-determination are among the topics it looks at. The process of gaining political independence and regaining sovereignty from colonial powers is known as decolonization for governments or territories that were formerly under colonial rule. The financial, cultural, and psychological structures that colonial rule left behind must be destroyed in order to achieve decolonization, according to Fanon (1963). Colonized people strive for the restoration of their agency and for the right to independence.

Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin (2000) state that this was an important phase in world history when numerous colonies emerged from the shackles of imperialism to establish their own nation-states. The writers respond that the legacy of colonialism is not always eliminated by decolonization. The cultural identities, social structures, and economic disparities of post-colonial nations were all impacted by the long-lasting legacy of colonialism. In the middle of the 20th century, a large number of African and Asian countries started the process of decolonization in order to break free from European colonial powers.

The hybridization of cultures in the context of post-colonialism is the blending and combining of different cultural elements that result from interaction between the colonizers and the colonized. It draws attention to the speed and force with which cultures can shift in response to external pressures. Cultural hybridity, which stresses the flexible and ever-changing nature of cultural identities, puts into question the idea of stable, pure, and homogenous cultures, according to Bhabha (1994). African, European, and indigenous cultures have coexisted in the Caribbean to produce unique and vibrant expressions of art, music, and literature, which is a prime example of cultural hybridity.

Said (1994) asserts that Fanon's (1963) theory of how colonial powers split and subjugated the world—creating two binaries for colonial identities: east and west—is adopted by Orientalism. It was deliberate to spread the knowledge- and dominance-based philosophies of the Western colonial empires. Because of his belief that the forced identity that this authority has imposed on Easterners is neither flexible nor genuine, he sees true identity as emerging from resistance to the colonial framework, which enables one to reject the forced image and revert to the more authentic aspect of Eastern nature. Said (1978) said that the enforcement of European countries' dominance over significant regions of Africa, Asia, the Americas, and the Middle East constituted a global phenomenon known as imperialism. The author claims that colonialism created a worldwide power structure in which the colonizers exploited the labor and resources of the colonized regions to further their own cultural hegemony and economic development.

Exit West serves as an intermittent narrative about migration and mutation, according to Sandhu (2017). Wormholes and tears in reality are present everywhere. An evening talk on corporate identity and product branding brings a man and a woman together. Saeed is an honest person who works for an advertising agency. His dad teaches at a university. Nadia works for an insurance business and enjoys riding a motorcycle, collecting vinyl records, and taking psychedelic mushrooms. She wears all black. She doesn't have a prayer life. A story of a boy and girl falling in love, the attraction between opposites, and atheists rebelling against the limitations of a religious state are all hinted at in this foreshadowing of things to come. Following the logic of a medieval dream trip, Saeed and Nadia embarked on a journey to Mykonos, London, and San Francisco.

Nguan (2018) argues that a person either leases or owns a house. He might live with his family or alone. He takes a drink of tea or coffee as soon as he wakes up. He might take the bus, ride a motorcycle, or operate a car. Before heading out to work, he turns on his computer. He goes on romantic evening dates and flirty ones. He could live in an urban area, a small town, or the country. He has hopes, dreams, and aspirations. He considers your humanity to be a given. He believes in himself as a human even when tragedy befalls him and leaves him destitute. His city, his neighborhood, and his rural area are all in ashes. In the end, he crosses the border with the intention of leaving, but when he does, he finds that those on the other side don't even think of him as a human being.

Warren (2020) discovers escapism is the act of running away from difficult situations, dodging reality, or fighting the want to divert oneself. There's a chance it has something to do with an imaginary or virtual world outside of reality. Those who are addicted to the internet and seek solace in digital media tend to ignore the real world in favor of social media and online gaming. That is the self that is apart from the present sadness and depression. Their friends, family, and they are all in the dark about what is going on. As an example, consider the COVID-19 epidemic.

People of every stage of life love to play online games, and they eventually develop an addiction to it. With the advent of smartphones and laptops, people of all ages may easily access the Internet for a variety of uses, such as entertainment, gaming,

shopping, and chat. Everyone often uses the media platform. The majority of people use the Internet to pass the time, have fun, relax, and escape from the hardships or pain they are currently going through. Whether they realize it or not, addiction is entangling them.

Additionally, organizations are drawing clients by offering a more engaging platform on which they may completely engage. They focus all of their attention on those who are enslaved by addiction and the virtual world. Everyone is connected to and completely dependent on the Internet, whether a child is playing video games, adolescents are sharing or watching movies, or seniors are keeping up with the gossip on Facebook. Addiction, however, affects real lives and ruins relationships between individuals of all ages, but especially among youth. As long as people exercise caution and self-control, escapism can be alluring. However, in many cases of internet addiction or escapism, it is false to reward or monitor conduct (Kemp, 2017).

In the context of post-colonialism, escapism refers to the desire or attempt made by people or groups in formerly colonized areas to find comfort or sanctuary in idealized or fictional worlds to cope with the harsh reality of colonial legacies or post-colonial issues. It can take many forms, such as escaping from the difficulties and tragedies of post-colonial existence by immersing oneself in literature, art, or imagination. Escapism in post-colonial literature frequently reacts to the dislocation and disempowerment experienced by colonized peoples, claim (Ashcroft, Griffiths, & Tiffin, 1989). Escapism can, however, be seen as having two sides. On the one hand, it gives writers a place for their creativity and artistic expression, enabling them to question prevailing narratives and imagine alternate worlds. Conversely, it may depoliticize the fight for social justice and equality by drawing attention away from urgent social and political challenges.

Lahiri (2003) depicts the lives and journeys of a Bengali immigrant family to the United States in her book *The Namesake*. The story is about a Bengali-American youngster trying to balance his family, culture, identity, and traditions. The book explores various topics related to identity, tradition, family, and cultural differences. Lahiri exemplifies the challenges of striking the ideal balance between tradition and modernity and the expectations that accompany it. Gogol's parents, Ashima and Ashoke,

are deeply rooted in their Bengali heritage and still in their values and customs in their children. As they raise their offspring in America, Gogol and his younger sister Sonia get increasingly attuned to Western ideals. The difficulties that arise from the immigrant experience and the second generation's attempts to maintain their heritage while adjusting to their new life are highlighted in the book.

Danticat (2008), a native of Haiti who has lived in the United States for more than 20 years, elaborates in her novel "Brother, I'm Dying" how she struggles to adjust to life in both cultures. Aristide's election in 1990 brought about peace but was subsequently overthrown by the military, and political instability in Haiti drove significant migrations. The author claims that immigrants from Haiti always had a more hostile welcome in the United States than any other group. Following the September 11 attacks, there was a significant crackdown on immigration, which harmed Haitians living in the US. The three main protagonists, Joseph, Mira, and Danticat, always search for a secure place. Joseph opted to seek political asylum upon entering the US, even though he had a valid entry visa. He puked during the interview, but since he was making up a medical ailment, he was not given treatment. Joseph's narrative undeniably illustrates the suffering endured by refugees and immigrants in Haiti and the United States. Danticat demonstrates the ineptness of immigration officers, their abuse of prisoners' human rights, and how immigration laws and procedures discriminate against Haitian immigrants at US borders.

Mehmood (2018) examines the novels *Our Lady of Alice Bhatti* (2011) by Muhammad Hanif and *The Crow Eaters* (1990) by Sidhwa, analyzing them as exemplary literary works that provide insight into the experiences of marginalized and oppressed social groups. Hanif's feminist viewpoint sheds light on the instances of discrimination experienced by Alice Bhatti, a Christian lady in Pakistani society. The novel provides a glimpse into the lives of Christian women in Karachi, shedding light on the obstacles they encounter and the distinctive encounters that arise from being the offspring of a Christian sweeper, as portrayed via the character of Alice. Because of her gender and her Christian religious identification, Alice is a phenomenon of double marginalization. Faiza Khan notes that Alice is a Pakistani woman who faces discriminatory cultural practices similar to those endured by

untouchables. The novel effectively expresses Hanif's critical perspective on women's rights in Pakistan, with a tone similar to Jonathan Swift's writing.

The novel, *Inheritance of Loss* (2006) by Kiran Desai is regarded as a significant addition to the subject of Indian immigrant writing. carried out an in-depth examination of the book. At the heart of the narrative are two major characters, Biju and Sai. The novel explores themes of immigration, living in a state of transition between two different worlds, and the dynamic interplay between the past and present. Biju illustrates the traditional stereotype of an idealistic immigrant who toils hard to realize the misleading American Dream while being of Indian ancestry and living in the nation illegally. Conversely, Sai is set amidst the stunning environs of Darjeeling. Desai (2006) skillfully employs a method of narration that alternates the perspectives of the two protagonists, providing a comprehensive and sophisticated examination of their respective perspectives. Kiran Desai's 2006 creative book *Inheriting of Loss* strikes a deep chord with the subject investigations present in the vast and varied cultural tapestry.

Randa and Marlina (2020) explore the idea that profitable migrating requires a strong commitment to one's identity in order to flourish in a foreign country in their piece *At the Crossroads of Identity* in Mohsin Hamid's Novel *Exit West*. People must continue to explore their new environment and make an effort to fit into the peculiar social order. Individuals who move must love and preserve the cultural legacy they bring from their home country despite simultaneously accepting and assimilating into the rules and customs of the new nation. Immigrants have to be involved in acclimating to the cultural norms and societal expectations of the host community in order to do well in their new surroundings. However because they are unable to communicate and comprehend the nuanced cultural differences of a particular group, some people may turn to imitating. On the other hand, people often only accept parts of culture that they find visually appealing without fully interacting with the larger cultural context.

Javaid (2021) examines the utilization of a fragmentary yet hybrid narrative style by Mohsin Hamid in his novel *Exit West*. The purpose of this narrative style is to critique and mock inflexible

concepts of culture and identity. Hamid achieves this objective by establishing a diasporic environment through the various excursions undertaken by the two primary protagonists. As mentioned earlier, the excursions are characterized by distressing encounters that give rise to crises of identity within a multicultural framework, emphasizing the unattainability of a cohesive sense of belonging in the modern era. The doors depicted in the narrative serve as symbolic representations of boundaries, embodying the focal point of significant migratory movements that capture the diasporic encounters of contemporary persons. Hamid's deliberate placement of Saeed and Nadia between the intersecting realms of migrants and natives emphasizes the significance of creating a third space that allows for the expression and inclusion of individuals from the original population and those from the diaspora. In his novel, Hamid effectively depicts the sense of displacement encountered by migrants while also providing insight into the sense of disorientation experienced by individuals who choose to stay in their original area.

Valle (2022) underpins insights into Hamid's portrayal of migrants, examining their representation of temporal and spatial dimensions. In this context, Hamid adeptly examines the concept of migration, placing it within the contexts of time and space. By employing this strategy, the individual gently employs a post-migrant perspective, bringing forth new aspects of variety and conflict while revealing the arbitrary and insubstantial nature of nationalist symbols. *Exit West* serves as a witness to current migration in our increasingly interconnected global society. Hamid's skillful implementation of the narrative method, which alternates between fable and realism, psychological and political temporalities, persuades readers to adopt alternative viewpoints. Throughout this literary exploration, readers undergo a metamorphosis, assuming the role of migrants not alone in terms of physical displacement but also in the temporal realm, thereby reflecting the parallel experiences of Nadia and Saeed.

Sukheeja, Bhangu's (2023) analysis explores the many layers of the text, wherein a significant number of characters exhibit a continuous state of motion as they navigate between various locations. The text effectively underscores the challenges faced by migrants fleeing the devastating impacts of armed conflict, acts of aggression, and an

atmosphere of unpredictability, while endeavoring to find asylum in Western countries. Paradoxically, the migrant population is frequently relegated to marginalized positions, exposing them to comparable issues. "Exit West" is a notable piece of literature due to its profound examination of migration. Within the story Hamid provides a detailed and comprehensive account of the experiences of migrants, methodically documenting their interactions with alien cultures and communities.

The Moviegoer by Walker Percy is the subject of Paudel's 2009 analysis, which explores the theme of modern man's isolation in America. The novel's protagonist, Binx Bolling, goes through a great deal of self-alienation as a result of his existence collapsing in modern American society. He then shifts his focus to the made-up world of movies. While watching movies, the impersonal visuals on the screen provide him with insight into the purpose and meaning of his existence. For him, viewing movies is equivalent to observing life, and observing life is equivalent to truly experiencing life Percy portrays Bolling as disconnected from society and immersed in the imaginary realm of films to reveal a disturbing reflection of contemporary capitalist values and the fractured identity of the modern American male.

Analysis and Discussion

The novel *Exit West* has remarkable foresight considering the circumstances surrounding the Afghan situation in 2021. The current situation emerged after the Taliban administration re-established its authority in Afghanistan after the withdrawal of United States military forces. In the novel *Exit West*, the two main protagonists, Nadia and Saeed, symbolize a young pair seeking refuge from an unidentified Muslim country afflicted by a devastating internal conflict. The novel immediately highlights the difficulties of refugees as an intrinsic element of our globally interconnected society. "In a city swollen by refugees but still mostly at peace, or at least not openly at war, a young man met a young woman in a classroom" (Hamid, 2017, p. 3). Saeed and Nadia find themselves in a community including persons who are seeking refuge from various conflicts and tragedies. Nevertheless, their narrative trajectory compels them to become members of this collective when they undertake the significant choice to migrate to Western countries

The novel's introductory section predominantly explores the beginnings and progression of Saeed and Nadia's affair within a progressively unsafe setting.

Mohsin Hamid presents the protagonists Saeed and Nadia as a well-educated couple belonging to the middle-class stratum, devoid of inclination towards religious extremism. Saeed is characterized by his meticulously kept facial hair growth, commonly called studiously maintained stubble" (Hamid, 2017, p. 3). Additionally, Saeed holds the belief that prayer is a matter of "personal" significance (Hamid, 2017, p. 5). In contrast, Nadia abstains from engaging in prayer rituals, finds pleasure in Western musical genres, utilizes a motorcycle for transportation, and resides in a dwelling where she assumes the role of a widow for the sake of pretense. Despite her atypical way of living, she consistently dons a complete black robe when appearing in public, employing it to safeguard her nonconformist persona. Saeed and Nadia exhibit a high level of technological proficiency, maintaining connectivity with the worldwide community via social media platforms and the Internet. The individual's choice to depart from their native country is a purposeful endeavor to evade the perils of extremism and violence while actively pursuing the prospect of flourishing in a different location.

The novel's central focus is primarily on the protagonists' experiences as they navigate life as refugees in foreign lands, grappling with the challenges of a dynamic global landscape. In recent years displacement, mobility, and place-making have asserted themselves in human experience, consciousness, and imagination with newly compelling force. The significant influx of migrants, who frequently relocate between various locations, has brought about a transformative shift in public perception and treatment of this population. The extensive utilization of magical doors illuminates numerous refugees' need to seek refuge from their unsafe nations of origin, consequently fostering heightened global consciousness. While there are instances of nativists who engage in violent opposition towards migrants, it is essential to acknowledge that there are also numerous individuals who express empathy towards these travelers. Individuals traversing these entrances evoke volunteers delivering food and medicine aid agencies at work and the government had not

banned them from operating," (Hamid, 2017, p. 137)

The concept of escapism in post-colonial literature pertains to the pursuit of solace or a feeling of emancipation from the intricate and frequently burdensome circumstances prevalent in post-colonial nations. The manifestation of this particular type of escapism can be observed in diverse forms within literary compositions. It strongly correlates with identity, displacement, and cultural hybridity. The thematic concept of escapism holds significant prominence in Mohsin Hamid's novel *Exit West*. Post-colonial literature depicts escapism as a strategy characters employ to navigate the difficulties and upheavals of post-colonial environments. The literary work delves into the examination of how the characters employ diverse methods of escapism in order to confront their struggles with personal identification. This analysis is conducted within the theoretical framework established by Edward Said's seminal work "Orientalism" (1993) and Michel Bruneau's Typology of diaspora and transnationalism (2010). The narrative of *Exit West* explores the concept of escapism through several perspectives.

Both Nadia and Saeed employ their mobile devices to escape the harsh reality they encounter as displaced individuals. Individuals derive comfort from engaging in social media platforms and utilizing online resources. They are "always in possession of their phones" at their initial encounter through these devices, they can be present without a presence in each other's lives. Cellular devices function not only as a means of establishing communication but also as an escape from the adverse circumstances encountered by individuals. Saeed and Nadia utilize the data obtained from their mobile devices as a mechanism for diverting their attention from the current physical environment, providing temporary distraction from the difficulties they face in their lives. As the Interpersonal bond between the individuals gradually weakens and they find themselves confined nearby, their utilization of smartphones emerges as a mechanism for establishing emotional detachment. Despite their close physical proximity, individuals are progressively withdrawing into the screens of their mobile devices resulting in a growing sense of detachment over time. In the event of cellular network unavailability within their city, Nadia and

Saeed "and countless others feel marooned and alone and much more afraid" (Hamid, 27, p. 57).

In the context of her daily life, Nadia used her cellular device as a means of escapism: "It kept her company on long evenings, as it did countless young people in the city...she rode it far out into the world. She watched bombs falling, women cruising, men copulating, clouds gathering, waves tugging at the sand." (Hamid, 2017, p. 41). By doing so, Nadia effectively disengages herself from the unsafe and politically unstable environment in which she now resides, enabling her to freely explore and engage with the global community at her discretion. The magical doors have a comparable impact on the human experience. In the city inhabited by Nadia and Saeed, many individuals experience feelings of isolation and fear, leading them to confine themselves within their residences. This situation is exacerbated by the absence of cellular network coverage, resulting in a lack of interpersonal communication and disconnection from the external environment. Consequently, rumors about the existence of magical doors begin to circulate "that could take you elsewhere, often to places far away, far removed from this death trap of a country" (Hamid, 2017, p. 72).

These illustrations represent the highest and most literal manifestations of escapism on a significantly grander and more consequential magnitude. This consequently amplifies the significant impacts that mobile phones can potentially generate. The excessive use of cell phones can result in individuals experiencing a state of confusion, sometimes called "dazed and sick." This disorientation is comparable to the sensation of being disoriented by physical doors. Additionally, individuals may get excessively fixated on their screens, leading to a mental detachment from others. (Hamid, 2017, p. 40). Greenfield (2019) highlights the pervasive use of cell phones in social settings, emphasizing their ability to simultaneously connect individuals to several locations while isolating them from their immediate physical surroundings. The magical doors create a physical barrier that separates individuals, resulting in a geographic distance between them, as opposed to mere psychological or emotional isolation. One notable illustration of this phenomenon is seen when Saeed departs from his father through a magical door. According to the text, Saeed strongly desires to leave this city while he is "possibly even

more feverishly keen to depart," (Hamid, 2017, p. 94).

In the novel "Exit West," the author employs smartphones as powerful symbols that encapsulate human desires for interpersonal connectivity and personal isolation. In his work, Mohsin Hamid employs the use of cell phones to explore the faceted dynamics of human relationships, highlighting the simultaneous act of inviting others into one's life while erecting barriers. Saeed carefully utilizes the internet on his mobile device, imposing a self-imposed restriction of one hour each day. The smartphone functions as the primary means of escape for the individual until the point at which they embark on their remarkable expedition. During the initial phases of their engagement, Saeed and Nadia heavily relied on their mobile devices as a consistent mode of communication, enabling them to maintain contact despite being geographically apart. The significance of this digital connection is immediately demonstrated when there is a breakdown in the urban communication networks, making it impossible to determine each other's identities.

The concept of existence, as depicted in the *Exit West* encompasses more than just physical existence. The concept covers the preservation of one's personal identity, interpersonal ties, and a feeling of individual purpose. The protagonists are compelled to re-evaluate their priorities and adjust to new societal norms due to the external reality they meet. Nadia and Saeed are confronted with diverse socio-political environments in various locations, necessitating adaptations in their individual and collective understandings of identity and the broader social order. The survival process necessitates continual reinvention and resilience in response to constantly shifting external factors. The novel skilfully weaves the protagonist's shift of their survival and progress-oriented outlook into its story. This evolution is exemplified through various instances within the text.

Conclusion

The current study examines the theme of escape in Mohsin Hamid's book *Exit West*, where the protagonists seek comfort from their close friendships. The novel's setting clearly explores escapism in-depth, as the protagonists actively look for comfort to deal with the various issues in their

lives. The ability to enter a new area quickly, get beyond geopolitical hurdles, and give many migrants hope for a better life are all made possible by the magic doors. Moreover, the research extensively explores the mistreatment and discrimination that migrants and refugees encounter in Western settings, illuminating themes

of escape and the difficult battle for survival. Refugees travel to Western countries because they want a better future and because they want to get away from the difficulties they face back home. Due to these challenges, they frequently have to deal with native populations, which intensifies their struggle for survival.

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