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EXPLORING ESCAPISM AND STRUGGLE FOR EXISTENCE IN EXIT WEST BY MOHSIN HAMID: A POSTCOLONIAL PERSPECTIVE

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ABSTRACT

The current study seeks to acquire a deeper understanding of the significant elements of escapism and identity crises within post-colonial diasporic contexts, explicitly focusing on the novel *Exit West* by Mohsin Hamid. The researcher endeavours to employ a comparative methodology utilizing the influential work of Edward Said's Orientalism (1993) and Michel Bruneau's Typology of diaspora and transnationalism (2010) to offer an in-depth analysis of the intricate dynamics involved. The study begins by analysing the function of escapism in the novel, illustrating how the protagonists, Saeed and Nadia, utilize enchanted portals to evade their war-ravaged and oppressive native land. The portrayal of escapism in this context is depicted as a means of survival within the post-colonial diasporic framework, establishing a foundation for a more profound look at identity issues. Examining intimate relationships in the novel delves into the concept of using them as escapism and their importance in navigating periods of identity crisis. The study places significant emphasis on these partnerships symbolic and emotional dimensions, surpassing simply physical interactions. Escapism, in the context of post-colonial diasporic contexts, can be seen as a coping mechanism employed by individuals experiencing identity crises. The Novel *Exit West* by Mohsin Hamid explores cultural and societal dynamics.

Key words: Escapism, post-colonial, Magic doors, Identity, Struggle.

INTRODUCTION

Migration is undeniably a form of escape. Throughout history, humans have engaged in this activity since ancient times. Tuan (2000) states that the impulse that motivates us the most is the primary driving force behind our desire to escape our immediate surroundings. The individual in question extends this line of thinking to its rational endpoint, asserting that the entirety of human civilization may be seen as an endeavour to evade various aspects, such as the limitations imposed by our physical bodies, the unpredictability of our natural environment, or the unease that accompany our human condition. It has been observed that intellectuals sometimes critique theme parks and shopping malls, judging them as "escapist fantasies more appropriate for individuals lacking maturity. Although escapism is sometimes perceived as a wrong kind of reading, it serves significant psychological and emotional benefits for the reader.

Heilman (1975) claims that literature has two kinds of escapism. The first is "regressive escapism," in which readers want to escape reality and their everyday concerns. The second type is "progressive escapism," in which individuals utilize books to investigate and comprehend their feelings and experiences. He studies various literary works, ranging from Shakespeare to science fiction, to highlight the various shapes that escapism may take in writing. The author contends that escapism is a vital component of the reading experience and may be used to facilitate self-discovery and emotional inquiry for bibliophiles.

Escapism is receiving respite from an uncomfortable circumstance, escaping from reality, or the desire to be distractedDigital escapism is a phenomenon in which individuals with internet addiction increasingly divert their attention from the real world to social media. They have no idea what is

going on with them, their loved ones, or their peers. This is exemplified by the COVID-19 Disaster. Since lockdown and shutdown, as well as quarantine during the COVID period, have caused tension and sadness, the release of the video games "Nintendo Switch" and "Animal Crossing: New Horizons" has offered a platform for amusement and escapism (Warren, 2020).

The consequences that followed the horrific occurrences of September 11, 2001, marked the beginning of a profoundly unsettling period. Numerous individuals already experiencing a sense of powerlessness in the face of globalization have encountered heightened vulnerability to external influences beyond their sphere of influence. From multiple viewpoints, including social, political, economic, and psychological domains, current events and depictions in media have contributed to an increased level of unease and fear towards individuals or groups perceived as different or unfamiliar. Within the context of this ever-changing environment, individuals who have effectively traversed the challenging path towards attaining transnational citizenship, whether situated in what is referred to as the periphery (East) or the centre (West) of host societies according to post-colonial terminology, are frequently identified as individuals who possess a sense of belonging or centrality in multiple locations. Paradoxically, individuals also experience a sense of not belonging to any specific geographical location, as described by (lyre, 2000).This phenomenon captures the intricate and multifaceted character of their identities and connections within the intricate global context.

The concept of escapism is extremely important in the context of post-colonialism. Avoiding and escaping are not new ideas in modern culture. Escape from one's self, one's beliefs, or the current reality—which is often unsettling—is the essence of escapism. The psychology of escapism holds that one crucial element is that the want to flee might be a planned reaction to emotional survival, or it can be a reaction to a stressor like danger, stress, or adversity. In the present context, escapism refers to the inherent inclination or intentional pursuit undertaken by individuals or groups residing in previously colonized areas to find comfort or sanctuary within idealized or fictional realms to address the challenging realities arising from the lasting impact of colonialism or contemporary post-colonial challenges. This complex phenomenon presents itself in diverse manifestations as individuals endeavour to escape the challenges and tragedies linked to post-colonial existence through engagement with literature, art, or imagination.

The objective of the study is to gain a more profound comprehension of the substantial challenges that people encounter in a society that has similarities to the fictitious depiction in Exit West by Mohsin Hamid. In this context, political instability and violence often lead to forced displacement and necessitate the initiation of migrant journeys, mirroring the experiences of individuals such as Saeed and Nadia. The central focus of this study pertains to the fundamental conflict between the inherent desire to flee from precarious and challenging situations, similar to the main characters in the literary work, and the subsequent endeavour to establish a deep sense of affiliation and secure sustenance in the unfamiliar and frequently harsh environment of their newfound residence.

Research Objectives

- To investigate how the male and female protagonists in Exit West find solace through escapism.
- To explore how the external reality in Exist West does transform protagonist's vision to survive and progress.

Significance of the Study

This research holds paramount significance as it it explores the core of current global issues, mainly through the lens of escapism portrayed in the post-colonial narrative of *Exit West*. It offers a profound understanding of the refugees' face as they embark on journeys of escape and constructing their identities amid adversity. Furthermore, the potential impact of this study extends to the realm of policy and practice, contributing valuable perspectives that can inform and improve the provision of care and assistance for refugees, thus addressing a critical need in our contemporary world shaped by the dynamics of escapism.

Theoretical Framework

The current study explores the relationship between escapism and identity crises within postcolonial diasporic context under the lens of Edward Said's "Orientalism" (1978) and Michel Bruneau's typology: diaspora and transnationalism

(2010). Edward Said's "Orientalism," holds a significant position within the field of post-colonial studies as it offers a critical examination of the Western portrayal of the "Orient". Bruneau's typology differentiates various manifestations of Diasporas in post-colonial context. This study combines the perspectives, presented in Said's "Orientalism and Bruneau's typology to examine the intersection of escapism and identity crises in the novel *Exit West.*

Literature Review

Migration is a recurring pattern throughout human history. The causes of people's decisions to migrate can come from a wide range of situations and events. In addition to family reunions, better career possibilities, and a better way of life, some include war, persecution, and prejudice as the most severe examplesColonialism and imperialism are related to the cultural and social impacts that the conquerors had on the conquered lands and people as well as their soldiers. This effect lingers even after the forces of the invaders have departed. Along with its economic and military aspects, this effect also has an impact on the cultural and social life of the colonial nation. Every part of the identity of the colonized nation is infused with the ideas, way of life, social behavior, ethics, language, and political theories of the colonizer after he departs. The heritage left by colonizers is known as post-colonial heritage.

Post-colonial literature is a collection of works created by authors from formerly colonized nations or areas or by people whose ancestry was significantly impacted by colonialism. This genre first appeared in the middle of the 20th century and is still thriving. It examines issues such as colonial oppression, cultural identity, migration, and the fight for independence and self-determination. Decolonization is the process through which formerly colonized states or territories obtain political independence and restore their sovereignty from colonial powers. According to Fanon (1963) decolonization requires tearing down the socioeconomic, cultural, and psychological institutions left behind by colonial control. The fight of colonized people is for self-determination and the recovery of agency.

Ashcroft, Griffiths, & Tiffin (2000) noted that this period was a turning moment in world history when various colonies broke free from imperialism's chains to form their nation-states. The authors counter that Decolonization does not necessarily wipe out colonialism's legacy. Colonialism's effects lasted in many ways, impacting post-colonial nation's cultural identities, social structures, and economic inequities. Many African and Asian nations undertook Decolonization in the middle of the 20th century to free themselves from European colonial powers.

In the context of post-colonialism, cultural hybridity refers to the mixing and fusing of various cultural components that occur from contact between the colonizers and the colonized. It highlights how quickly and dramatically cultures may change as they adapt to and absorb outside influences. Bhabha (1994) found that the concept of stable, pure, and homogenous cultures is challenged by cultural hybridity, which emphasizes the fluid and constantly changing character of cultural identities. Cultural hybridity is prominently displayed in the Caribbean, where African, European, and indigenous cultures have coexisted to create distinctive and colourful manifestations of art, music, and literature.

Said (1993) asserts that Orientalism adopts Fanon's (1963) idea of the way colonial powers divided and conquered the world, creating two binaries for colonial identities: east and west. The ideologies of Western colonial empires regarding knowledge and dominance were purposefully transmitted. He believes that the forced identity imposed by this authority on Eastern people is neither genuine nor flexible, as a result, he views true identity as being formed via resistance to the colonial framework, which would allow one to reject the forced image and return to the original truth of Eastern character. According to Said (1978) imperialism was a worldwide phenomenon, with European countries enforcing their rule over substantial swaths of land in Africa, Asia, the Americas, and the Middle East. The author contends that colonialism established a system of global authority in which the colonizers used the labour and resources of the colonized areas to further their own economic development and cultural hegemony.

According to Sandhu (2017), Exit West is mostly non-continuous novel about migration and mutation. There are rips in reality and wormholes everywhere. During a corporate identity and product branding lecture at night, a man and a woman cross paths. Saeed is a trustworthy individual who works for an advertising company. His father is a university professor. Nadia, an insurance company employee

dressed all in black, likes vinyl records, rides a motorcycle, and uses psychedelic mushrooms. Her prayer life is nonexistent. It foreshadows the events that would follow: a story of a boy and girl falling in love, the attraction between opposites, and atheists fighting against the restrictions of a religious state. Saeed and Nadia set off on a voyage to Mykonos, London, and San Francisco while following the logic of a dream adventure from the middle Ages.

Nguan (2018) argues that someone owns or rents a home. He may live alone or with his family. When he awakens in the morning, he sips coffee or tea. He may ride a motorbike, drive a vehicle or take the bus. He switches on his computer before leaving for work. He goes on dates and flirtatious dates at night. He may reside in the countryside, a small town, or a large city. He has aspirations, goals, and anticipations. He takes for granted your humanity. Even after the calamity strikes and he became homeless, he continues believing being a human. His neighbourhood, city, or rural area is in ruins. He makes an effort to reach the border when he finally crosses the border, intending to depart, he realizes that people on the opposite side don't even consider him to be human.

Warren (2020) finds out that escapism is escaping from dire circumstances, avoiding reality, or resisting the urge to get distracted. It may be connected to a virtual or fantastic world that is not a part of everyday life. Internet junkies who use digital escapism spend more time on social media and online games and pay less attention to the outside world. It is the self away from the current sorrows and melancholy. They have no idea what is going on with them, their friends, or their family. The COVID-19 pandemic is one instance of this.

Online gaming is popular among people of all ages, and they become progressively addicted. People of all ages may readily access the Internet for various purposes in the present era of smartphones and computers, including shopping, gaming, chatting, and entertainment. All people utilize the media platform often. Most individuals use the Internet for amusement, relaxation, passing the time, and escaping from the difficulties or suffering they are now experiencing. Addiction is entrapping them, whether they are aware of it or not.

At the same time, companies are luring customers by providing a more intriguing platform where they can fully appear. They give the virtual world and addiction enslaved people their whole attention. Whether a toddler is playing video games, teenagers are sharing or viewing movies, or seniors are keeping up with Facebook friends' gossip, everyone is connected to and utterly dependent on the Internet. However, addiction impacts actual lives and causes problems in relationships between people of all ages, particularly young people. Escapism is tempting as long as individuals stay safe and in control; however, rewarding or regulating behaviour is a fallacy in many instances of internet addiction or escapism (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, analysing 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. The phenomenon of Alice experiencing double marginalization, stemming from her gender and religious identity as a Christian, is apparent, as highlighted by Faiza Khan, who characterizes her as a Pakistanı individual subject to cultural prejudices akin to those faced by untouchables. The novel effectively portrays Hanif's critical perspective on women's rights in Pakistan, employing a satirical style reminiscent of the works of Jonathan Swift. In contrast, Bapsi Sidhwa's novel "The Crow Eaters" (1990) comprehensively examines the Parsi community, encompassing its cultural aspects and manner of existence. The narrative primarily focuses on the Parsi culture, although it also serves as a vehicle to illustrate the temporal progression and character development across 61 years. This allows for portraying a subsequent generation that effectively adjusts to evolving environments. The Parsis, being a minority group, are faced with navigating their contacts with those who reside outside of their own community, contributing a greater level of complexity to the overall tale.

Hemalatha (2019) conducted a comprehensive analysis of Kiran Desai's novel *Inheritance of Loss (2006)* which is considered a significant contribution to the field of Indian immigrant literature. The novel explores the thematic elements of migration, the transitional state of existence between two separate realms, and the dynamic relationship between the past and the present, the focal point of the narrative centres on two primary protagonists, namely Biju and Sai. Biju embodies the archetypal portrayal of an ambitious immigrant diligently pursuing the collusive American Dream despite residing in the United States as an undocumented individual of Indian origin. In contrast, Sai is situated in the aesthetically pleasing environment of Darjeeling. Desai (2006) skilfully employs a narrative technique that alternates the two protagonists' perspectives, providing a comprehensive and nuanced examination of their respective experiences. The rich and diverse cultural fabric evokes a profound resonance, echoing the thematic explorations in Kiran Desai's literary work. *Inheritance of Loss (2006).*

Randa and Marlina (2020) in their study titled "At the Crossroads of Identity in Mohsin Hamid's Novel *Exit West* examines the notion that successful migration necessitates a steadfast dedication to one's identity to flourish in a foreign territory It is imperative for individuals to consistently engage in the process of exploring their novel surroundings and endeavour to integrate themselves into the unfamiliar social fabric. It is imperative for individuals who migrate to adopt and assimilate into their host country's cultural norms and practices while also valuing and preserving their cultural heritage originating from their country of origin. In order to flourish within their novel environment, migrants must engage in assimilating to the host community's cultural practices and societal expectations. Nevertheless, specific individuals may turn to mimicry due to their inability to effectively engage with and comprehend the cultural nuances of a given society. Conversely, individuals tend to selectively embrace cultural

aspects primarily for their aesthetic appeal without fully engaging with the underlying 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 skilful 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 the temporal realm, thereby reflecting the parallel experiences of Nadia and Saeed.

Sukheeja, Bhangu (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 endeavouring 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.

Paudel's (2009) study of Walker Percy's The Moviegoer examines the theme of modern man's isolation in America. The protagonist, Binx Bolling, experiences intense self-alienation due to the breakdown of his existence in contemporary American society, as shown in the novel. He then turns to the imaginary realm of films. 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*, 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 pretence. 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 endeavour 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 year's 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 towards 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 travellers. 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 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 are present without 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 smart phones emerges as a mechanism or 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 is 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, rumours 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 smart phones 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 smart phone 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 importance of this digital connection becomes readily apparent when the urban communication systems experience a malfunction, resulting in the inability to establish mutual whereabouts.

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 study explores the concept of escapism in the novel *Exit West* by Mohsin Hamid, which undergoes a significant transformation as the characters seek relief through intimate relationships. Within the context of the novel, an in-depth analysis of escapism is evident as the characters traverse the complexities of their existence, actively seeking consolation to cope with the various obstacles that

confront them. The magic doors function as a means of instantaneous movement, felicitating access to an alternative territory, surpassing geopolitical boundaries, and presenting numerous refugees with the opportunity to pursue an enhanced existence. Moreover, the study extensively explores the exploitation experienced by migrants and the victimization endured by refugees inside Western settings, illuminating the themes of escapism and the brutal struggle for survival. The motivation behind refugee's migration to Western countries is driven by their aspiration for a more promising future, which serves as a means of escaping the difficulties they face in their countries of origin. These challenges frequently urge them to confront indigenous communities, intensifying their struggle for existence.

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