



From Global Mobility to Global Expulsion: Reimagining Exclusion, Displacement and Belonging in Mohsin Hamid's *Exit West*

Narra Jayaprakash Narayana¹, Dr. D Sravana Jyoti²

¹Research Scholar, Department of English, School of Applied Science and Humanities, VFSTR Deemed to be University, Vadlamudi A.P.

²Asst. Professor, Department of English, School of Applied Sciences and Humanities, VFSTR Deemed to be University, Vadlamudi A.P.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.47772/IJRISS.2026.100800446>

Received: 24 August 2026; Accepted: 29 August 2026; Published: 08 September 2026

ABSTRACT

Globalization is frequently associated with mobility, connectivity and the dissolution of geographical boundaries; yet its benefits and freedoms remain unevenly distributed. This paper examines how contemporary globalization produces new configurations of exclusion through displacement, unequal mobility, economic insecurity, border regimes and cultural dislocation, with particular reference to Mohsin Hamid's *Exit West*. The study employs Saskia Sassen's concept of "expulsions" and Zygmunt Bauman's theorization of globalization and unequal mobility as complementary theoretical perspectives for interpreting the novel. Sassen's framework enables the analysis of how individuals and communities are progressively pushed beyond economic, social and political spaces of participation, while Bauman's distinction between privileged mobility and involuntary movement illuminates the unequal human consequences of a supposedly borderless world. Through the experiences of Nadia and Saeed, the paper investigates how migration transforms geographical movement into a complex negotiation of identity, security, belonging and cultural memory. The magical doors in the novel are interpreted not merely as a narrative device but as a metaphor for the contradictory possibilities of globalization: they facilitate unprecedented movement while simultaneously exposing migrants to surveillance, hostility, exclusion and precarious belonging. The study further considers how borders persist despite technological and economic interconnectedness and how displaced subjects negotiate new social spaces without entirely recovering their previous sense of home. By bringing Sassen and Bauman into dialogue with Hamid's literary representation, the paper argues that *Exit West* challenges celebratory accounts of globalization and reveals mobility itself as an unequally distributed resource. The study thus contributes to understanding literary representations of globalization as critical examinations of emerging structures of exclusion.

Keywords: Belonging, Expulsion, Globalization; Migration, Unequal Mobility.

INTRODUCTION

Globalization has often been represented through the language of movement: the movement of capital, commodities, information, technology, ideas and people across geographical boundaries. The emergence of digital communication and increasingly interconnected economic systems has reinforced the perception that national borders are becoming less significant in contemporary life. Yet the promise of a globally connected world has not resulted in equal access to mobility, security or opportunity. On the contrary, globalization has produced contradictory conditions in which some individuals experience unprecedented freedom of movement while others encounter intensified restrictions, displacement and exclusion. Zygmunt Bauman observes that globalization creates unequal consequences because mobility itself has become a form of power. In this sense, globalization does not simply connect the world; it differentiates those who can move freely from those whose movements are compelled, controlled or prevented. Bauman's *Globalization: The Human Consequences* therefore provides an important conceptual basis for examining the unequal human consequences of global interconnectedness.

Saskia Sassen's concept of "expulsion" provides a further theoretical dimension to this understanding. In *Expulsions: Brutality and Complexity in the Global Economy*, Sassen argues that contemporary global capitalism produces forms of displacement that cannot adequately be explained through conventional concepts such as poverty or inequality. She identifies a broader process through which people, enterprises and communities are pushed outside the central economic and social systems of contemporary society. Sassen consequently asks scholars to examine not merely who possesses wealth but also who is progressively removed from access to livelihoods, land, social protection and meaningful participation. Her formulation is particularly relevant to contemporary migration because displacement is frequently the consequence of interconnected political, economic, social and environmental pressures rather than a single isolated event. Sassen's argument thus shifts the analytical question from inequality to expulsion, enabling a more precise examination of how globalization creates populations who are physically present yet socially, economically or politically excluded.

Mohsin Hamid's *Exit West* offers a compelling literary space in which these theoretical questions can be explored. Published in 2017, the novel follows Nadia and Saeed, two young people whose relationship develops against the background of political violence in an unnamed city. As militant violence intensifies, everyday life becomes increasingly precarious, and the possibility of remaining in one's homeland becomes progressively difficult. The novel's speculative element—the mysterious doors that suddenly enable people to travel between distant geographical locations—transforms migration into a powerful metaphor for globalization. Instead of requiring conventional journeys across deserts, seas and national borders, Hamid's migrants can cross continents by passing through a door. Yet the apparent simplicity of this movement exposes the paradox at the centre of globalization: technological and imaginative possibilities may erase physical distance, while political and ideological structures continue to produce exclusion.

The significance of the doors becomes clear when the narrator describes the reaction of wealthy nations to the sudden movement of displaced populations. Hamid writes:

"an unprecedented flow of migrants was hitting the rich countries, who were building walls and fences and strengthening their borders, but seemingly to unsatisfactory effect" (71).

This passage provides an important textual foundation for the present study. The juxtaposition of "flow" and "walls" establishes two competing forces within globalization. On one side is accelerated movement; on the other is the attempt to restrict that movement. The doors therefore do not simply eliminate borders. Instead, they reveal the political desire to preserve borders even when technological and social transformations have made them increasingly difficult to maintain. Recent scholarship similarly identifies the novel's doors as a device through which Hamid interrogates time, space, migration and the global backlash against mobility.

The relationship between mobility and exclusion is particularly significant in relation to Bauman's theoretical framework. If globalization celebrates movement, the crucial question becomes who possesses the freedom to move and who is forced to move. Nadia and Saeed initially desire mobility, but their movement eventually becomes inseparable from violence, insecurity and the loss of home. Their migration is therefore not equivalent to the privileged mobility associated with international tourism, professional travel or transnational capital. They move because the social and political structures surrounding them have ceased to provide security. In this respect, their experience corresponds to Bauman's understanding of globalization as a process whose benefits are distributed unevenly. Columbia University Press describes Bauman's central concern as the contradiction between globalization's promise of increased mobility and the unequal consequences produced by rapidly shifting boundaries, institutions and loyalties.

Hamid's representation of visas further reinforces this unequal distribution of mobility. Before the appearance of the magical doors, movement remains dependent upon economic privilege and political permission. The novel notes that visas have long been difficult to obtain and become particularly inaccessible to people without wealth (Hamid 50). The magical doors consequently perform an important ideological function: they remove the economic and bureaucratic mechanisms that ordinarily regulate migration. By making movement instantaneous, Hamid asks readers to imagine what would happen if the barriers to human mobility disappeared. The response of wealthy countries—walls, fences, border controls and nationalist resistance—suggests that exclusion is not

simply a technological problem but a political choice. Scholarship on the novel has likewise emphasized the relationship between global inequality and the unequal freedom of movement represented through the doors.

The concept of expulsion becomes particularly productive when Nadia and Saeed's changing relationship with their homeland is considered. They do not simply choose to leave one geographical location for another; rather, the conditions surrounding them progressively remove the possibility of continuing their former lives. Saeed loses his mother, the city becomes militarized, employment becomes unstable, and ordinary social relationships are disrupted. Their eventual departure can therefore be interpreted as a form of displacement produced by a wider structure of insecurity. In Sassen's terms, the issue is not merely that migrants become poor or marginalized; they are progressively separated from the social and spatial systems that previously gave their lives stability. Sassen's argument that contemporary capitalism generates expulsions from livelihood, living space and even the ecological conditions necessary for life provides a wider framework through which the novel's displaced populations can be examined.

At the same time, *Exit West* does not portray migrants exclusively as passive victims. The novel also examines their capacity to construct new forms of community. When Nadia and Saeed arrive in Mykonos and later London, they encounter other displaced populations and must negotiate unfamiliar cultural, linguistic and social environments. The London sections are particularly important because they demonstrate how migration destabilizes the distinction between "native" and "foreigner." The formation of migrant communities creates spaces in which difference becomes ordinary rather than exceptional. Nadia's increasing ability to communicate across cultural boundaries demonstrates the possibility of belonging beyond conventional national identity. The novel thus moves from the problem of exclusion toward the possibility of reconfigured belonging.

This transformation reaches its conceptual culmination near the conclusion of the novel, when an elderly woman reflects upon the changes taking place around her:

“everyone migrates, even if we stay in the same houses our whole lives,
because we can't help it. We are all migrants through time” (Hamid 209).

The statement expands migration beyond geographical displacement. Migration becomes a metaphor for human existence itself: identities, communities, cities and cultures continually change. This perspective complicates the distinction between migrant and non-migrant and challenges the assumption that belonging is permanently secured by geographical location. Scholarly discussions of the novel have similarly emphasized this formulation as a movement from spatial migration toward temporal and existential mobility.

The present paper therefore proposes that *Exit West* should be read not merely as a novel about refugees but as a literary investigation of the contradictory structure of globalization. Through Sassen's theory of expulsion, the paper examines how individuals become separated from economic, political and social spaces that once provided security. Through Bauman's theory of globalization, it investigates the unequal distribution of mobility and the distinction between voluntary movement and compelled displacement. Hamid's magical doors provide the literary mechanism through which these contradictions become visible: they make borders technologically irrelevant while simultaneously demonstrating their continuing ideological and political power.

Accordingly, the study addresses three central questions:

1. How does *Exit West* represent globalization as a process that simultaneously enables mobility and produces exclusion?
2. How can Sassen's concept of expulsion and Bauman's theory of unequal mobility illuminate the experiences of Nadia and Saeed?
3. How does Hamid's representation of migration challenge conventional understandings of borders, identity and belonging?

The forthcoming discussion will therefore examine the novel through four interconnected dimensions: the politics of mobility, the production of expulsion and displacement, the border as an instrument of exclusion, and the possibility of post-national belonging. The paper argues that *Exit West* ultimately unsettles the celebratory

narrative of a borderless global world by revealing that globalization does not eliminate exclusion; rather, it reorganizes exclusion through new structures of mobility, security, wealth and belonging.

Analysis

Mohsin Hamid's *Exit West* presents globalization not as a simple process of increasing connectivity but as a contradictory condition in which mobility, immobility, displacement and exclusion operate simultaneously. The novel's central conceit—the mysterious doors through which individuals can instantaneously move from one geographical location to another—appears initially to abolish the physical barriers separating nations. Yet, as the narrative progresses, these doors expose rather than eliminate the political, economic and cultural mechanisms through which mobility is controlled. Hamid consequently transforms migration into a literary language for examining the unequal consequences of globalization. Read through Saskia Sassen's theory of expulsion and Zygmunt Bauman's account of unequal mobility, *Exit West* reveals that the contemporary global order does not simply divide those who have and those who do not have resources; it increasingly distinguishes between those who can move with freedom and those whose movement is compelled, regulated or resisted. The novel therefore moves from the politics of mobility to the production of displacement, from border enforcement to the possibility of post-national belonging.

The Politics of Mobility: Movement as Privilege and Necessity

The first significant dimension of *Exit West* is its representation of mobility as an unevenly distributed resource. Contemporary globalization is commonly associated with the rapid circulation of capital, commodities, information and people. Yet the freedom to move is not equally available to everyone. Bauman's *Globalization: The Human Consequences* is useful here because it emphasizes that globalization produces radically different experiences for people according to their capacity to move. Mobility becomes a form of privilege: some travel voluntarily, while others move because remaining where they are has become impossible.

Hamid establishes this inequality before the magical doors become central to the narrative. Nadia and Saeed live in a technologically connected urban environment, but their access to international mobility remains restricted by economic and political structures. The narrator observes:

“visas had long been near-impossible to secure for people

from poor countries” (Hamid 50).

The textual detail is important because it establishes that the world is not genuinely “borderless.” Physical distance may have been reduced by technology, communication and transportation, but political borders continue to determine who can cross from one territory to another. More significantly, Hamid connects mobility with wealth:

“when the need was greatest, visas became truly impossible

for non-wealthy people to secure” (50).

The parenthetical evidence i.e. wealth → visa access → mobility, demonstrates that movement is structured by economic privilege. A wealthy individual can experience globalization as freedom, whereas a poor individual may encounter it as restriction. This distinction becomes more striking when the magical doors appear. Hamid writes:

“A normal door, they said, could become a special door” (69).

The ordinary door becomes a symbol of extraordinary mobility. Its transformation collapses geographical distance and challenges the conventional architecture of the nation-state. However, the political response demonstrates that the elimination of physical distance does not automatically produce equality. Once migrants begin appearing in richer countries, those countries respond by constructing new barriers:

“an unprecedented flow of migrants [...] was hitting the rich countries,

who were building walls and fences and strengthening their borders” (71).

The contrast between “flow” and “walls and fences” constitutes one of the central paradoxes of the novel. Globalization facilitates movement, but states simultaneously attempt to control the direction and composition of that movement. Steve Almquist similarly argues that *Exit West* compresses geographical distance through its magical doors while exposing the persistence of global inequalities and political resistance to migration.

The doors therefore function not simply as magical devices but as a metaphor for the contradiction within globalization itself: technological connectivity → increased mobility → mass migration → political anxiety → border reinforcement. The significance of the doors lies precisely in their ability to reveal how much contemporary mobility depends upon structures of permission.

From Inequality to Expulsion: Sassen's Theoretical Perspective

Saskia Sassen's concept of **expulsion** enables the argument to move beyond the conventional understanding of inequality. Sassen argues that contemporary global political economy has produced “new logics of expulsion,” through which people, enterprises and places are pushed outside the central social and economic orders of contemporary society. The concept is particularly valuable for interpreting *Exit West* because Nadia and Saeed do not initially leave their city simply because they desire a different lifestyle. They are progressively expelled from the conditions that make ordinary life possible.

The city initially offers employment, family, education and social relationships. Saeed has a professional life, Nadia works, and both possess aspirations associated with contemporary urban existence. However, militant violence gradually transforms the city. Employment disappears, movement becomes dangerous, communications are disrupted, and Saeed's mother is killed. As Bellin notes, the novel depicts the escalation of violence through bombs, air strikes, drones and militant restrictions, eventually making Nadia and Saeed's continued existence increasingly precarious.



The important distinction is therefore:

The novel's refugee crisis can consequently be read through Sassen's framework as a process in which individuals are progressively separated from home, livelihood, security and social continuity.

This interpretation also complicates the conventional distinction between refugee and migrant. Nadia and Saeed become migrants because the conditions of their original location have been transformed. Their departure is therefore simultaneously a geographical movement and a consequence of social disintegration.

The magical doors intensify this condition. They provide an escape route, but they do not restore what has been lost. The passage through a door does not return Nadia and Saeed to a stable social world; instead, it transfers them into another uncertain condition. Their movement from the unnamed city to Mykonos and subsequently to London therefore becomes a movement from one form of insecurity into another. The mobilities scholarship on *Exit West* identifies precisely this relationship between mobility and immobility: even after geographical movement, migrants remain psychologically, socially and politically suspended.

The Border as an Instrument of Exclusion

The third dimension of the argument concerns the transformation of the border. In conventional geographical terms, a border separates one country from another. In *Exit West*, however, borders become instruments for determining who belongs, who may enter, and who must remain outside. This becomes especially clear when Nadia and Saeed reach Mykonos. The narrator observes:

“the doors out, which is to say the doors to richer destinations,
were heavily guarded, but the doors in, the doors from poorer places,
were mostly left unsecured” (Hamid 101).

This is one of the most significant passages for a globalization-based interpretation of the novel. The phrase “richer destinations” establishes an economic geography of mobility. The direction of movement matters. Migration from poorer regions toward richer regions produces anxiety and restriction, whereas the movement of people and resources from rich centres into poorer spaces is not represented as an equivalent crisis. The novel consequently exposes an asymmetry at the heart of globalization. Capital can cross borders rapidly, but human beings encounter increasingly sophisticated systems of surveillance and restriction.

This is where Bauman and Sassen complement each other. Bauman explains unequal mobility, while Sassen explains the structural process through which people become expelled. Together they illuminate why the migrants in *Exit West* experience movement not as uncomplicated freedom but as a condition imposed upon them. Hamid further complicates the politics of exclusion through the reaction of the inhabitants of London. The migrant population becomes associated with threat, insecurity and cultural disruption. The emergence of “dark London” and “light London” spatializes exclusion within the city itself. Bellin notes that the novel depicts nativist backlash, military confrontation and the division between migrant and native populations.

Thus, the border no longer exists only at the geographical edge of a nation. It is reproduced inside the city, inside communities and even inside social relationships. The border becomes:

Geographical → Political → Economic → Cultural → Psychological

This expansion of the meaning of the border is central to Hamid's critique of globalization.

From National Belonging to Post-National Possibility

Despite its sustained representation of exclusion, *Exit West* does not end in despair. The fourth dimension of the novel is therefore the possibility of reconstructing belonging beyond conventional national identity.

When Nadia and Saeed arrive in London, they initially seek security through familiar national and cultural identities. Saeed wishes to live among people from their country, revealing the persistence of national belonging even after migration. Nadia challenges this impulse:

“What makes them our kind?” (Hamid 149).



Saeed responds that they are from the same country, but Nadia reminds him:

“We’ve left that place” (149).

This dialogue is significant because it reveals that migration destabilizes previously fixed categories of identity. The question “What makes them our kind?” moves the discussion from geographical belonging to ethical and relational belonging.

The novel does not suggest that national identity disappears immediately. Saeed remains emotionally attached to his homeland, religion and family memory, while Nadia increasingly develops a more flexible understanding of identity. Their divergent responses demonstrate that migration produces different forms of cultural negotiation.

The London migrant community consequently becomes a space where new identities can emerge. Hamid describes a world in which:

“everyone was foreign, and so, in a sense, no one was” (Hamid 104).

This paradox is crucial. If everyone is foreign, then foreignness ceases to function as a meaningful basis for exclusion. The migrant camp can therefore become an embryonic post-national community.

The novel ultimately extends this argument beyond Nadia and Saeed. Near the end, Hamid introduces an elderly woman who has lived in the same house throughout her life. Although she has never physically migrated, the world around her has changed so radically that she experiences herself as having migrated through time:

“everyone migrates, even if we stay in the same houses our whole lives, because we can't help it. We are all migrants through time” (209).

The statement transforms migration from a condition associated exclusively with refugees into a universal condition of human existence. At the same time, this universalizing gesture should be treated critically. Scholars have noted that the formulation can risk obscuring the specific political and material experiences of refugees. Bellin, for example, points out that the novel's universal language of migration exists alongside significant differences of race, class and political power.

Nevertheless, the statement provides the foundation for Hamid's post-national imagination. If migration is part of the human condition, then rigid distinctions between citizen/foreigner, native/migrant, and insider/outsider become historically unstable. The novel therefore moves from:

border → displacement → exclusion → encounter → coexistence → transformed belonging

This movement is not an uncomplicated utopian solution. Rather, Hamid suggests that coexistence requires societies to abandon the assumption that national identity must be protected through exclusion.

Conclusion: Globalization Reimagined

Taken together, the four dimensions demonstrate that *Exit West* does not simply tell a refugee story. It interrogates the structures through which contemporary globalization distributes mobility, security and belonging unequally. Bauman's theory helps explain why mobility functions simultaneously as privilege and compulsion, while Sassen's concept of expulsion reveals how individuals can be progressively removed from the economic and social systems necessary for stable existence.

Hamid's magical doors expose the contradiction between a world in which geographical distance can apparently disappear and a political order determined to preserve exclusion. The novel's most significant insight is therefore that globalization does not make borders disappear; it changes where and how borders operate. The borders of *Exit West* exist at airports, camps and national territories, but they also appear through wealth, citizenship, race,

cultural identity and fear. At the same time, the novel imagines the possibility of overcoming these divisions through new forms of coexistence. The elderly woman's assertion that "we are all migrants through time" (209) ultimately challenges the permanence of national belonging and invites the reader to imagine identity as movement rather than fixed territorial possession.

Exit West unsettles the celebratory narrative of a borderless global world by demonstrating that globalization simultaneously accelerates mobility and intensifies exclusion; however, through the transformation of migrant identities and the emergence of shared spaces of coexistence, the novel also imagines belonging beyond the rigid boundaries of the nation-state. In this sense, Hamid's novel does not simply ask who is allowed to enter. It asks a more fundamental question: why should movement determine belonging in the first place? It is this shift—from the politics of admission to the ethics of coexistence—that makes *Exit West* a significant literary intervention into contemporary debates on globalization and exclusion.

CONCLUSION

Mohsin Hamid's *Exit West* ultimately demonstrates that globalization cannot be adequately understood through the celebratory vocabulary of connectivity, openness and borderlessness. Beneath the apparent expansion of global mobility lies a more complicated structure in which movement is unequally distributed, displacement is structurally produced, borders are continuously reconstructed, and belonging becomes increasingly negotiable. By bringing Saskia Sassen's concept of expulsion and Zygmunt Bauman's understanding of unequal mobility into dialogue with Hamid's literary representation of migration, this study has argued that exclusion in the global age has acquired forms that are simultaneously economic, political, spatial, technological and cultural.

The first dimension of the analysis, the politics of mobility, establishes that globalization has not made mobility universally accessible. The experiences of Nadia and Saeed reveal that the ability to cross geographical boundaries remains conditioned by wealth, citizenship and political power. The magical doors initially appear to abolish these inequalities by making instantaneous movement possible. Yet the political reaction to migration demonstrates that the disappearance of physical distance does not result in the disappearance of exclusion. As Hamid's migrants move towards economically privileged regions, walls, fences, camps and surveillance systems emerge in response. Mobility therefore becomes a contested resource rather than an uncomplicated expression of freedom.

Sassen's concept of expulsion deepens this interpretation. Nadia and Saeed do not simply decide to migrate in search of better opportunities; the gradual destruction of their social environment progressively removes the possibility of remaining where they are. Violence, insecurity, the death of Saeed's mother, the disruption of employment and the breakdown of ordinary social relations collectively transform their homeland from a space of belonging into a space from which they must depart. Their migration consequently represents more than geographical movement. It is the outcome of a process through which individuals are separated from the economic, political and emotional structures that previously sustained their lives. The novel thus shifts the focus from asking why migrants leave to asking what forces make staying impossible.

Bauman's theoretical perspective complements Sassen by revealing the unequal value assigned to different forms of movement. The global tourist and the displaced migrant may both cross borders, but their experiences of mobility are fundamentally different. One moves through choice, resources and institutional permission; the other moves through necessity, insecurity and displacement. *Exit West* exposes this distinction by placing migrants within spaces where their movement is regarded as a threat even though global capital, technology and commodities routinely cross the same borders with comparatively little resistance. The novel consequently challenges the ideological contradiction whereby the movement of capital is celebrated as globalization while the movement of vulnerable people is frequently represented as a crisis.

The third dimension, the border as an instrument of exclusion, further demonstrates that borders have not disappeared under globalization. They have changed their form. Hamid's novel relocates the border from the geographical margins of the nation into camps, cities, neighbourhoods and interpersonal relationships. The distinction between "richer destinations" and poorer places reveals that borders are also expressions of global economic inequality. The border determines not only who may enter a territory but also whose presence is

considered legitimate. Through this representation, *Exit West* exposes the political construction of the categories of “native,” “migrant,” “refugee” and “foreigner.” Exclusion therefore operates not simply through physical barriers but through narratives of fear, cultural difference, security and economic competition.

At the same time, Hamid refuses to portray migrants exclusively as powerless victims. The novel's movement from Mykonos to London and eventually to the later stages of Nadia and Saeed's lives demonstrates that displaced individuals possess the capacity to construct new forms of community and identity. This produces the fourth dimension of the argument: the possibility of post-national belonging. The novel gradually destabilizes the assumption that belonging must remain permanently attached to a particular territory. Nadia and Saeed's changing relationship to their homeland demonstrates that migration can transform rather than simply destroy identity. Their eventual separation also suggests that shared displacement does not automatically produce permanent solidarity; belonging remains dynamic, negotiated and deeply personal.

The elderly woman's observation that “we are all migrants through time” (Hamid 209) provides the philosophical culmination of the novel. Migration is transformed from an exceptional condition associated with refugees into a broader metaphor for human existence. People change, communities transform, cities evolve and identities are continually reconstructed. The statement does not erase the material differences between voluntary and forced migration; rather, it challenges the assumption that those who remain within national borders possess a permanent and unquestionable claim to belonging. In this sense, Hamid's conclusion invites a movement from territorial belonging towards relational belonging.

The most significant outcome of this study, therefore, is the proposition that globalization does not eliminate exclusion; it reorganizes it. Exclusion is no longer produced exclusively through traditional categories of race, class, nationality or geography. It increasingly emerges through access to mobility, economic security, citizenship, technology, ecological resources and social recognition. Sassen helps identify the structural process through which individuals and communities are expelled from systems of participation, while Bauman explains why mobility itself has become an indicator of privilege. Hamid translates these theoretical processes into a literary narrative in which doors can erase distance but cannot, by themselves, erase inequality.

The study consequently proposes a conceptual movement:

Globalization → Unequal Mobility → Expulsion → Border Reinforcement → Displacement → Negotiated Belonging

This sequence demonstrates that contemporary exclusion is not a single event but a continuum of structural processes. A person may first experience economic insecurity, then political vulnerability, followed by displacement, restricted mobility and cultural alienation. Conversely, the same process can generate opportunities for resistance, solidarity and the creation of alternative communities. *Exit West* is significant precisely because it captures both sides of this process: the violence of exclusion and the human capacity to reconstruct belonging.

The novel therefore offers a critical alternative to the dominant narrative of a borderless world. Its magical doors represent the technological imagination of globalization, while the walls and fences represent the political determination to preserve unequal access to mobility. The tension between these two images constitutes the central metaphor of the novel: distance can be technologically abolished without inequality being socially abolished. Ultimately, *Exit West* suggests that the central question of globalization should no longer be simply “Who can move?” but “Who is allowed to belong?” The answer cannot be determined solely by nationality, territory or citizenship. A more humane global order would require belonging to be understood through participation, dignity, security and mutual recognition. The novel thus moves beyond a critique of migration policies towards a broader ethical challenge to the structures that produce exclusion in the first place.

The original contribution of this study lies in bringing Sassen's structural theory of expulsion, Bauman's theory of unequal mobility and Hamid's literary imagination of migration into a single interpretive framework. Such a framework demonstrates that literary texts can provide more than representations of globalization; they can reveal its hidden contradictions and expose the human consequences of apparently abstract economic and

political processes. *Exit West* ultimately transforms the migrant from an “outsider” at the border into a figure through whom the stability of the border itself is questioned.

Thus, the novel's deepest proposition is not that globalization has created a world without borders, but that it has created a world in which borders are continually being redrawn around mobility, wealth, security and belonging. Hamid challenges readers to imagine a different possibility: a world in which movement does not automatically produce exclusion and in which belonging is not treated as a privilege reserved for those who happen to be born on the correct side of a border. In that sense, *Exit West* becomes not merely a narrative of migration but a powerful literary critique of the unequal human geography of globalization—and an invitation to rethink what it means to share a world.

Works Cited

1. Almquist, Steve. “The Doors of Compression: Time, Space, and Global Backlash to Migration in Mohsin Hamid’s *Exit West*.” *Journal of Global Postcolonial Studies*, vol. 8, no. 2, 2020, pp. 137–153.
2. Appadurai, Arjun. *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization*. University of Minnesota Press, 1996.
3. Bauman, Zygmunt. *Globalization: The Human Consequences*. Columbia University Press, 1998.
4. Bellin, Joshua. “Disorienting Empathy: Reimagining the Global Border Regime through Mohsin Hamid’s *Exit West*.” *Literature Compass*, vol. 19, no. 12, 2022, e12694.
5. Bilal, Mushtaq. “Reading Mohsin Hamid’s *Exit West* as a World Novel.” *Journal of World Literature*, vol. 5, no. 3, 2020, pp. 410–427.
6. Bhabha, Homi K. *The Location of Culture*. Routledge, 1994.
7. Castells, Manuel. *The Rise of the Network Society*. 2nd ed., Wiley-Blackwell, 2010.
8. Hamid, Mohsin. *Exit West*. Riverhead Books, 2017.
9. Lagji, Amanda. “Waiting in Motion: Mapping Postcolonial Fiction, New Mobilities, and Migration through Mohsin Hamid’s *Exit West*.” *Mobilities*, vol. 14, no. 2, 2019, pp. 218–232.
10. Nandi, Arindam, Avishek Parui, and Nadia Butt. “‘Doors That Could Take You Anywhere’: Interstitiality, Immunopolitical Governmentality, and Sustainable Nomadic Communities in Mohsin Hamid’s *Exit West*.” *Mobilities*, 2026.
11. Popescu, Maria-Irina, and Asma Jaham. “‘London Is a City Built on the Wreckage of Itself’: State Terrorism and Resistance in Chris Cleave’s *Incendiary* and Mohsin Hamid’s *Exit West*.” *The London Journal*, vol. 45, no. 1, 2020, pp. 123–145.
12. Sadaf, Shazia. “‘We Are All Migrants through Time’: History and Geography in Mohsin Hamid’s *Exit West*.” *Journal of Postcolonial Writing*, vol. 56, no. 5, 2020, pp. 636–647.
13. Sassen, Saskia. *Expulsions: Brutality and Complexity in the Global Economy*. Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2014.