



Digital Guillotines : Symbolism and Posthuman Disintegration in Mohsin Hamid's Exit West

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Abstract

This paper examines Mohsin Hamid's *Exit West* through the dual theoretical lens of literary symbolism and posthumanist philosophy. It argues that the novel, beyond its magical realist surface, offers a symbolic critique of how displacement in the digital age fractures human identity and transforms the refugee into a posthuman subject. Through close analysis of five central symbols doors, smartphones, void spaces, the algorithmic gaze, and the refugee body, the study explores how Hamid dramatizes ontological disintegration under conditions of technological mediation and algorithmic control.

Using theories from Rosi Braidotti, N. Katherine Hayles, Simone Browne, and Louise Amoore, the research reveals how these symbols function not just aesthetically, but diagnostically, exposing systems that categorize, surveil, and erase the displaced. The paper introduces the concept of algorithmic haunting to describe the refugee as a ghostly data-form, simultaneously visible and forgotten.

Methodologically grounded in close reading and interdisciplinary theory, the study positions *Exit West* as a foundational text in posthuman migration

literature. It demonstrates how fiction can illuminate the invisible architectures of digital exile, offering new ways to understand identity, embodiment, and survival in an era of surveillance capitalism.

Keywords : Posthumanism, Symbolism, Digital Migration, Surveillance, Refugee Identity.

المقصلة الرقمية :الرمزية وتفكك الذات ما بعد الإنسانية في رواية" مخرج غربي "للكاتب محسن حامد

الملخص

يتناول هذا البحث رواية (مخرج غربي) لمحسن حامد من خلال إطار نظري مزدوج يجمع بين الرمزية الأدبية وفلسفة ما بعد الإنسانية، ليكشف كيف تتجاوز الرواية بنيتها الواقعية السحرية وتقدم نقدًا رمزيًا عميقًا لتفكك الهوية الإنسانية في العصر الرقمي. يركز البحث على خمسة رموز مركزية الأبواب، الهواتف الذكية، الفراغات، النظرة الخوارزمية، والجسد اللاجئ بوصفها تجليات سردية لانهايار الكينونة في ظل الهيمنة التكنولوجية والمراقبة الخوارزمية.

استنادًا إلى نظريات كل من روسي برايدوتي، ون. كاثرين هايلز، وسيمون براون، ولويس أمور، يكشف التحليل عن وظائف تشخيصية لهذه الرموز، حيث تفضح البنى التي تصنف اللاجئين وتراقبهم وتعيد تشكيل وجودهم ككائنات بياناتية غير مرئية. ويقدم البحث مفهوم "التشظي الخوارزمي" لوصف حالة اللاجئ المعاصر الذي يغدو حاضراً وممحواً في آن واحد.

ترتكز الدراسة على تحليل نصي دقيق مدعوم بإطار فلسفي معاصر، وتعيد تموضع الرواية (مخرج غربي) كأحد النصوص التأسيسية في أدب الهجرة ما بعد الإنساني، مسلطة الضوء على قدرة الأدب في تفكيك البنى الرقمية التي تعيد تشكيل معنى الهوية، والوجود، والنجاة في عصر الرأسمالية الرقمية والمراقبة الشاملة.

الكلمات المفتاحية : ما بعد الإنسانية، الرمزية الأدبية، الهجرة الرقمية، المراقبة الخوارزمية، هوية الاجئ



1. Introduction

The Pakistani-British international award winning author Mohsin Hamid of *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* and *How to Get Filthy Rich in Rising Asia* is the leader of the new global fiction. His novel *Exit West* written in 2017 won international acclaim on its melancholic and lyric portrayal of forced migration in an age of growing frontiers. Making magical realism meet the close up of the soul, Hamid creates a story that is both local and global, based on the power of the emotional but with the platform of the geopolitical scale. However, under its easily reachable surface, *Exit West* is filled with a rich symbolic building that addresses more profound fears of selfhood, embodiment, and technological mediation.

This paper will argue that *Exit West* needs to be approached along two simultaneous levels that incorporate symbolism as a literary form and posthumanism as a philosophical theory. Although the story revolves around the journey of two refugees Saeed and Nadia taking magical flights, it uses a set of symbolic motifs which outweigh their role in the story. These are doors, smart phones, space of nothingness, black robes and surveillance gazes. All these functions symbolically to codify a world where the refugee no longer just is in another place, but is disintegrated digitally, is turned into a data-body, and exists in what Rosi Braidotti calls the in-between spaces of subjectivity (Braidotti, 2013, p. 89).

Symbolism, in this case, is not a decorative, but an epistemological: it enables Hamid to transform the conditions of the 21st century exile: disorientation, depersonalization, digitization, etc. into aesthetics. Posthumanism on its part provides a critical discursive tool by which to reconsider these symbols as something other than metaphors. It presents them as diagnostic machines of post-



biometric world, in which the body is fragmented, coded, and made subject to algorithmic infrastructures (Hayles, 1999; Amoore, 2020).

Although past research on *Exit West* has explored its themes in the postcolonial (Tizzoni, 2021), gendered (Chen, 2020), or magical realist (Ball, 2019) perspective, few studies have explored how its symbolic system operates within the posthuman regime of meaning. The paper fills that gap by suggesting that Hamid did not only present symbols of emotional trauma or cultural displacement, but explained a truly ontological change the refugee as a digitally fragmented, hyper-visible and socially invisible figure.

Based on this, the given paper presents the idea of algorithmic haunting to explain how people in *Exit West* who are being displaced are trapped in non-places, the area where data, identity, and flesh lose their definition and transform into the liminal, surveilled form of existence. Through the analysis of five key symbolic structures in the novel using the posthumanist theory, the paper uncovers a story that is not merely about migration, but one of restructuring the concept of movement, of being visible, and surviving.

The paper will follow three large segments. Part Two builds a theoretical scaffolding based on the synthesis of an iconic literary review with concepts of crucial importance in posthumanist criticism. Part 3 discusses how five symbols in the novel intersect with cultural, technological and political discourse by closely reading these symbols. In conclusion, Hamid's contribution to posthuman migration literature is discussed in the ending along with the future directions of the introduction of digital humanities and literary symbolism. This two-fold analysis prism does not only affect how readers perceive Hamid's novel, but also furthers critical reflection on how fiction can address the switching muddiness of the themes of migration, surveillance and digital subjectivity.

2. Theoretical Framework and Methodology

The aim of this study is twofold. The work opens with a discussion similar to that of symbolic literature which follows two traditions. The first one concerns post-humanist analysis. The study shows the interaction of aesthetics and ontological ruptures in *Exit West*. When read together, these frameworks show that literary form is not simply representation nor something that comes into play after the political and epistemological wrangles over identity, embodiment and displacement..

2.1 Symbolism as Analytical Strategy

The use of symbolism in literature is essentially when the writers use such symbols to signify ideas and qualities. Evocation of layered meaning and effect (psychological, cultural, philosophical) through compression and resonance creates depth of reading (Abrams and Harpham 2015). Things like magical doors, black voids, some robes, and a smartphone are not mere things in *Exit West*. These are also metaphorical paths to deeper, alienation, surveillance and fragmentation structures. The current study demonstrates how Hamid artistically encodes displacement not only as geographical displacement but also as ontological loss through the lens of symbolic reading.

These symbols were born in literature but now need support from philosophy. An author should be able to grasp the changing shape of the human subject in an era of mechanical mediation and digital exile..

2.2 Posthumanism and the Disintegration of the Human Subject

Posthumanism, as theorized by Rosi Braidotti (2013), N. Katherine Hayles and Cary Wolfe dismiss the Enlightenment ideal of the autonomous, rational, and

sovereign individual. It believes that a human being is relational, embedded and mediated by technology which is 'becoming' and not being. Braidotti (2013) believes that posthumanism asks us to think not about what the human is, but what it is becoming, especially under conditions of global migration, ecological crisis and digital saturation. Hayles (1999) further illustrates the informatics of embodiment, which shows that identities are produced and governed by flows of data, algorithms, and codes.

In *Exit West*, we see that borders dissolve digitally, the refugee subject coded depersonalized, and the idea of algorithmic haunting introduced, where the refugee is denied a body specifically a data body that exists as a ghostly form across thresholds and non-places. Posthumanist theory provides the concepts and language to describe these phenomena by situating them in broader critiques, such as surveillance capitalism (Amoore, 2020) and the politics of border control (De Genova, 2017).

2.3 Methodological Approach

The approach taken in this study was symbolic textual analysis, where a literary motif is an interpretive lens into the socio cultural and philosophical conditions. Five representative structures selected include the door, smartphone, void, gaze of the algorithm, and the body in transition for being one of the most frequent, metaphorically dense as well as central to the experience of the refugee represented in the novel. Through a posthumanist lens, what each of these symbols refers to is examined in regard to new perception, identity and agency.

This method will subject *Exit West* to analysis through the lens of its symbolic architecture as a diagnostic terrain rather than merely allegorical or realist frames. This diagnostic is the transformation of a human subject into a digital remnant called a refugee. As a result, the methodology is not descriptive, but diagnostic and speculative, grounded in philosophical critique and literary close reading. In this way, the refugee in *Exit West* is not merely a narrative figure,

but a symbolic medium, through which the novel interrogates the philosophical limits of humanity itself.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 Doors as Thresholds of Posthuman Becoming

The repetitive symbolism of doors in *Exit West* serves as the most superficial break of realism in the novel, but it is, at the same time, the most heavily loaded element of the novel. On the one hand, these doors are some magical gateways where the characters can get away to war-torn or oppressive worlds. Nevertheless, in posthumanist terms, the doors symbolize much more than just the movement of people in space; they are places of change where identity is erased, space becomes unstable, subjectivity is redesigning itself using nonhuman systems.

The initial introduction of the door in the novel in the form of a dark rectangle, similar to a door, yet not a door, already upset the epistemological beliefs of realism (Hamid, 2017, p. 71). This visual confusion upsets not only space but ontology. The door is a contradiction: it is closing and closing, entry and deletion. Such a symbol, according to Rosi Braidotti, resonates with the status of the posthuman subject in transit, between the condition of being-in-between that is a process of becoming and which undermines the frontiers of flesh, place, and self (Braidotti, 2013, p. 89).

In this respect, doors are not technological devices, but narrative interfaces which disintegrate the classifications of nation, identity, and continuity. Even the concept of migration is coded as a physical movement into a metaphysical metamorphosis. The use of such portals by Saeed and Nadia involves not only escape but also fragmentation; they reach their new destinations not intact, but modified someone who comes language-lost, culture lost, or emotionally

numbed. Every traversal is symbolic death and algorithmic re-birth resembling the idea of Hayles of virtual embodiment, where the body is no longer central, but distributed in data streams (Hayles, 1999, p. 4).

In addition, the symbolic authority of the doors speaks of social and historical fears. The fantasy of an unproblematic transition is sharply opposed to the hyper-surveilled mobility of the age of biometric border regimes, drone surveillance and algorithmic profiling of refugees. The door is utopian in shape but dystopian in sound. It brings to mind a world of displacement in which there is no permanent displacement but only an illusion of movement that hides the gradual fall of personhood. This corresponds to the theory by Nicholas De Genova of the border as a performance which ends up reinstating exclusion even in cases where it is theoretically crossed (De Genova, 2017).

The door can also be interpreted culturally as the sign of disruption in the classical stories about exile. Compared to the classic narrative of migration, which focuses on persistence and loss and sequential, *Exit West* employs the door to discontinue time and cut off continuity. The migration of the refugee does not need to be mythic anymore rather spectral, disembodied. Hamid puts it in the following way: we kill what we leave behind us when we migrate (Hamid, 2017, p. 94). The door then takes on a symbolic role as a kind of guillotine, cutting memory, relation and being rooted down to the benefit of survival in posthuman exile.

To conclude, the door in *Exit West* is a symbol that exists in a narrative, philosophical, and political level at the same time. It means not only escape, but the destruction of the human subject that comes into contact with a technological abstraction. When we read the door with the prism of posthumanism we realize that it is not a portal of hope but rather a diagnostic image of a world where bodies are mobile, but selves are erased in transit. So when we read door we

realize it is not a portal of hope but is rather a quiet architecture of erasure: where one crosses into safety, by losing that very self that needed to be sheltered.

3.2 Smartphones and the Algorithmic Gaze

Through Exit West, the exits become portals of ontological discontinuity, the smartphone operates more insidiously and is less flexible. Unlike the exits, which are a more mundane commodity, the smartphone reveals the dynamics of surveillance without a word. At a point where the door hits a cinematic shift, the Smartphone deceptively links up its users into an integrated scheme of surveillance. The smartphone may also be perceived through a posthumanist lens, as a telescoping of the self, a technology that is part of the body, which, one may say, is part of the subject, a prosthesis..

It is not because Nadia is distracted, but dependent since she constantly uses her phone even when her life is in real danger. According to Hamid, she kept her phone everywhere to her as a charm (Hamid, 2017, p. 102). This machine transforms into her window to the world, her storehouse of belonging and her ticket to other places. However, it equally exposes her to what this paper describes as the algorithmic gaze, a kind of nonhuman gaze that tracks, filters, and classifies the object using a code. According to Hayles (1999) and Amoore (2020), these digital optics are not just observers, but reform the self into data points that can be controlled, left out, or deleted.

The smartphone therefore works as a two-sided symbol, on the one hand, it is a symbol of connectivity, agency and worldwide awareness. On the other, it represents posthuman loss of privacy, autonomy and corporeality. It dilutes the distinction between the public and the personal, material and virtual. The refugee can be made hyper- visible through the screen, made available to NGOs, state regimes and border technologies, but is also ontologically dismembered, made



up of pixels and metadata. The phone does not simply carry messages but the subject which disseminates identity over networks that are beyond human understanding.

The smartphone is culturally indicative of the modern state of the diasporic life, in the twenty-first century: incessant connectivity, partial presence, digital nostalgia. On the social level, it denotes the placement of the refugee into a system where the survival will be defined not only by food or shelter, but by battery life, Wi-Fi, and GPS location. Braidotti (2013) adds that, posthuman subjects are technologically mediated, embedded in ecological context, as well as ethically responsible (p. 190). In this regard, the smartphone is a symbolic object that compacts these contradictions, it is the object of communication and the process of deletion.

The fact that the characters of *Exit West* depend on their devices highlights their posthuman nature. They are not crossing boundaries any more; they are crossing codes, screens, interfaces. The smartphone, in turn, does not happen to the experience of refugees, it is a part of the same. It is making exile, not a material state, but a digital ontology, where the self is distributed across cloud servers, biometric checkpoints, and algorithmic predictions.

Through a symbolic and philosophical analysis of the smartphone, we find that Hamid is criticizing a world in which the refugee not only has to survive war and displacement, but must also tolerate being viewed, at all times and everywhere, by eyes, which are not really eyes, by systems, which are not really systems. Not visibility, but algorithmic haunting.

Nevertheless, despite all its assurances of connectedness, the smartphone enhances the isolation of the refugee, making intimacy a matter of cell signal strength and life a matter of traceability on the internet.

3.3 Void Spaces and Non-Places of Refuge



The spaces of nothingness, descriptions of darkness, silence, or total spatial emptiness that can cut off the narrative at crucial points are some of the most striking visual and philosophical images in *Exit West*. These are not atmospheric details but rather what Marc Auge (2009) describes as non-places, spaces of transit, disorientation and depersonalization. In the novel, these gaps are the symbolic representation of the loss of identity and the moment of time suspension in which the refugee does not only explore the geographies, but also the states of being.

Among these moments, the moment when Hamid writes: It felt like the blackness of the room had spilled into the blackness of the night beyond and this was all there was now, blackness and silence (Hamid, 2017, p. 115) deserves being mentioned. This suffocating darkness is a sensual void that reflects the breakdown of narrative connection and materiality. Posthumanists would consider such interstitial spaces to be the locations of the human dissolving, not to death, but to what is called radical suspension. According to Braidotti (2013), these states can be called moments of ontological humility and the subject is no longer in the position of mastery and is ready to experience the unknown.

It is also possible to interpret these blank spaces as symbolic manifestations of trauma and derealization. After displacement, the refugee becomes not only homeless but also worldless. Their known systems of signification language, nation, kinship, crumble and in their place come zones of abstraction. The gap therefore turns into an absenteeism of space, a cartography of the location of meaning. This is in line with the theory of trauma proposed by Cathy Caruth where the subject undergoes the temporal discontinuity and discontinuity of psychic being (Caruth, 1996).

This state of affairs is frequently materialized in modern refugee camps, border areas, and detention facilities. According to Peter Nyers (2019), modern migration spaces allocated as waiting areas are purposeful to depersonalize, to reduce the refugee to a bureaucratic net space within an administrative system of postponement decision. This symbolic and physical architecture is seen in the empty spaces in *Exit West*. Saeed and Nadia are not in colorful, assimilated communities, but in marginal areas: rooftops, deserted places, unidentified areas. These are spaces of delayed belonging even the syntax of Hamid is an imitation of these spaces-they are regularly interrupted by silence, pauses, or ellipses that are symptoms of thought and time fragmentation.

The voids can also be the algorithmic blindspots, zones that have not been captured by GPS, are not identified by the facial recognition, are not seen by institutional care. The detachment of the characters to signals or power is a reflection of the grander theme of digital erasure, as the data-body is unable to be temporarily removed or lost in the chain of control. These moments of symbolic vacuums are a criticism of the excessiveness of the refugee in certain scenes, and their complete invisibility in others- a contradiction that contributes to making the position of posthuman existence unstable.

Overall, the empty place in *Exit West* is a symbol, and it performs narrative, as well as ontological, suspension. It scenes out the refugee in the limbo not as a transition, but as a state. It is apparent through the prism of posthumanism and the trauma theory that these voids are not in emptiness but are filled with loss, latency, and the prospect of turning into something that is not human..

3.4 The Algorithmic Gaze and Biometric Surveillance

Exit West's criticisms extend beyond smartphone symbolism and the use of voids. The film is a broader critique of surveillance technologies that mediate

visibility and citizenship in the age of digital governance. Though it does not mention drones or biometric checkpoints, the novel reveals how the logic of biometric surveillance operates. Its character are hyper-visible at certain moments, entirely erased at others. The algorithmic gaze refers to an invisible machine vision that decides who is recognized, who is tracked and who is eliminated from view. This dialectic of appearing and disappearing is what I analyze here.

The algorithmic gaze draws from Foucault's panopticon, but without the need to be watched. It does not work on emulation but on data extraction, prediction, and risk profiling. The transition to what Amoore calls "cloud ethics" signifies a shift from the jurisdictional to the anticipatory. That is, governance is based on algorithmically-derived likely outcomes rather than on juridically-derived facts. In *Exit West*, the gaze is not tied to any one device or state power. It is ambient, ambiently oppressive. When Nadia and Saeed reach a new city, they do not meet a community. They are filtered by a network instead. This network sorts people according to their appearance, documents or digital traces.

This system echoes Zuboff's (2019) notion of "surveillance capitalism" where personal data becomes a resource for profit-making and imposing control. Being marginal politically, the refugee becomes ontologically vulnerable. In other words, he only exists if recognized. This recognition therefore not only validates his presence but is also a validation system. In such a system, the identity of the refugee does not exist but is computed. The identity of the refugee becomes a subject of legibility, to borrow a phrase and it is not lived but merely calculated. It becomes, therefore, a question of algorithms, speaking in probabilities not truths.

In Hamid's story, earlier generations felt people were watching. Often, however, it is not people. It is system that was watching them. Hamid states that "they



thought someone had been in the flat before them, a person who was in on what they were doing” (134). The space is marked not by welcome but preemption.

Biometric surveillance is not limited to identification. It reconstructs identity itself. The body does not act as source of agency; but, a site of capture. According to Braidotti (2013), the posthuman subject is a product of technological mediation, where the organic and machinic are intertwined. In *Exit West*, the collapse of individuals into data bodies happens as characters lose names, families, languages, and effective self-identify. The refugee is plotted, scanned, labelled, and at times denied by digital systems that pretend to understand but never meet the human.

The critic of Frontex and UNHCR for their AI-enabled border policing, predictive deportation algorithms, and biometric registration of refugees. The novel’s silence on these systems does not imply absence but indictment. Hamid universalizes the anxiety by not giving direct references: the refugee is always already in the gaze that comes before arrival and outlives departure.

To sum up, the algorithmic gaze in *Exit West* is not an outside menace, but an ontological condition of modern exile. It replaces traditional nothings of escape and resettlement with preemption, suspicion and control logic. The refugee no longer flees but is pursued by borders (the state). Through a symbolic and theoretical lens, the novel attempts to unveil how one is inscribed within digital architectures by the border.

3.5 The Refugee Body and Digital Ghosting

One of the most haunting images in *Exit West* is the refugee body—not in its physical form, but in its spectral residue. In the novel, Hamid builds a narrative in which displacement does not just affect the migrant’s engagement with nation



or culture but lays waste to their bodily presence and ontological integrity. A refugee is not just someone who lacks a country. A refugee is someone without a form. The term digital ghosting describes the way migrants' electronic records are transformed into a hairline trace the refugee is both present and absent in the electronic documentation..

The term draws on N. Katherine Hayles's (1999) notion of "virtual embodiment," whereby the human subject takes on an experience more of data abstraction than of sensory fullness. In *Exit West*, Saeed and Nadia are portrayed as becoming disconnected from our own desires, memories, and physicality in some moments. As Hamid writes, they had in a way become ghostlike, living in a liminal state, being neither of the place they left nor fully of the place they had entered. The body is in place but emptied and hollowed by transfer, doubt and the digital.

This ghosting is not merely metaphorical. In modern-day refugee systems, biometric registration system reduces people to numbers and profiles, often unhooking them from lived identity. According to Simone Browne (2015), these systems create "a surveillance assemblage," in which the body is always visible but never fully recognizable. Refugees are both recorded more than ever and socially invisible. This paper calls this algorithmic haunting the state of being archived but not counted.

Hamid's characters use abstract language rather than descriptive language. People are not called by any nationalities or families anymore when the bodies of the character dissolve into one another. They are called migrants, people, they and the likes. Only their data is recorded. This digital footprint is unique, but people are anonymized—coded but unseen.

The modern exile experience's contradictory reality of an overexposure and ontological erasure is reflected in this duality.



In cultural terms, digital ghosting is like what displaced people experience in bureaucratic spaces. They have to verify over and over again but not narrate were not exactly the same. With application forms, waiting periods and truncated conversations, their lives are broken into(11 words) As per Braidotti (2013), the posthuman condition is fragmentation and interdependence. But, for the refugee, it is not philosophical, but enforced.

By presenting the refugee body as a symbol of posthuman disintegration, Exit West raises critiques not only of the political machinery involved in their displacement. The novel inquires: What is left of a person who is watched everywhere, classified yet unknown? In this way, it invites us to think again about embodiment, memory, and survival at a time when being human means being half-visible and half erased.

Synthesis of Symbolic Structures and Theoretical Significance

Exit West is designed in such a way that the architecture deals with both philosophical ideas and feelings of the novel. It is not decorative or incidental. The five symbols we examine doors, smartphones, void spaces, algorithmic gaze, and refugee body function on several levels: aesthetic, ontological, political. When you consider the evidence, it tells a tale that displacement is not only being taken from your home but is also your entire being.

The door appears to be the most conceptually generative among these symbols. Not only does it set up the novel's magical realist premise, it also embodies the key themes of rupture, rebirth, and ontological instability. According to Braidotti, the posthuman subject is always “becoming.” The door literalizes this becoming, collapsing distance and dissolving continuity. (Braidotti, 2013) Still, it may be that the refugee body ghosted over digitally holds the most emotional



and theoretical weight as a symbol. It is the moment when becoming posthuman is neither abstract nor theoretical but rather intensely personal in which my datafication becomes dehumanization.

Philosopher like Hayles (1999) and Wolfe (2010) speaks against the idealization of disembodiment because the loss of the body is mostly a loss of agency. Thus mere presence and computerized surveillance become symptomatic of an existential crisis. The more prescient post-human being is seen but not known and traced but not remembered. Browne (2015) recalls that surveillance is not neutral. It is racialized, gendered and asymmetrically applied. In this way, the refugee body is overexposed and underprotected a ghost inscribed in systems that neither feel nor forget.

The symbols' interaction shows how well Hamid creates a literary system that fits today's circumstance of exile. The smartphone with its algorithmic gaze is powerful because it addresses the postmodern infrastructure of control directly. The void spaces and ghosting amplify the reader's feeling of loss affective and narrative. But the door is the novel's primal symbol – literal and metaphorical, material and metaphysical. This refers to the entrance to a posthuman becoming, where one's coordinates, history, and body are remade by invisible sets of movement. I will argue that the symbolic design in Hamid's text is not inessential embellishment, but indeed a radical literary intervention in the politics of being and appearing.

In the end, *Exit West*'s symbolic system is more than illustrative, it's diagnostic. It sends us to a universe where displacement is now an ontological and an algorithmic phenomenon, no longer only a political or a legal one. Scholars of contemporary literature will find a model here of how one might use fiction to think with posthuman theory to question whether the infrastructures that shape (and erase) humanity now and in the future..



4. Conclusion

This research has investigated the novel *Exit West* by Mohsin Hamid, from both literary symbolism and posthumanist philosophy, thus drastically reconfiguring the refugee narrative in the digital age. The study reflects Hamid's imagination of exile not merely as a geographical or political phenomenon, but rather a disintegration of subjectivity mediated through an abstraction by technology and an ontological rupture, through five crucial symbolic structures - door, smartphone, void, algorithmic gaze, and refugee body.

Every sign functions, as a node in a larger web of meanings to reveal the fragility, fluidity, and spectrality of a posthuman identity. For example, the door stands for space-time break down which is entry into a liminal stage of becoming. The mobile phone reveals the contradiction we face today, as we are hyperconnected and radically isolated at the same time. And the voids are the narrative suspension and existential suspension. The algorithmic gaze shows how biometric surveillance dehumanizes humans. The refugee body is fragmented and digitized. It also becomes gendered as they are treated as ghosts.

This new concept, which refers to something that exists digitally despite the actual body's absence, aims to go beyond the visibility premise of contemporary refugee studies that sees refugees only through visibility paradigms. This is not just a reflection of the twenty first century migration but a critique of the frameworks that produce and sustain such displacement.

This study makes contributions in three spheres: it posthumanistically expands and complicates symbolic literary criticism; it connects contemporary fiction to the field of digital humanities; and it facilitates an understanding of how narrative form can illuminate the material realities and ethical crises of our time. Hamid's novel, with its multiple allegories, stands as an effective case study of



how literature can diagnose and resist the spectral violence of our algorithmic world.

This research recognizes the power of literature to sustain traces of humanity even as systems work against it when confronted with these forms of erasure.

Exit West is not a tale of escape; it is a cartography of disintegration. The novel serves as a symbolic and philosophical map of what it is to be human when humanity itself is increasingly outsourced, surveilled, and abstracted. For those studying literature, migration, and digital modernity, the novel requires rigorous thinking as well as careful reading. This is the challenge that this research attempts to meet by combining aesthetic attention with philosophical thinking.



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