

Challenging Anthropocentrism in Mohsin Hamid's *Exit West*: Human Migration, Borders, and Posthuman Possibilities

Anup Kumar Mitra

Abstract

Contemporary migration and displacement crises have exposed the inadequacy of anthropocentric frameworks that prioritize human agency and fixed borders. As highlighted by Pattanayak and Tiwari (2023), existing migration narratives often overlook the roles of technology, environment, and other non-human forces, limiting our understanding of migration's complexities. This study examines Mohsin Hamid's *Exit West* to address how anthropocentrism narrows migration discourse, aiming to demonstrate the significance of posthumanist approaches for educators, theorists, and policymakers. Employing posthumanist theory, particularly Rosi Braidotti's nomadic subject and Donna Haraway's cyborg, as well as Segel and Heer's (2010) narrative visualization, the paper reframes *Exit West* as a speculative critique of human-centered migration paradigms. Through qualitative textual analysis, findings reveal that the novel envisions migration not as a process exclusively driven by humans but as a dynamic interplay of human and non-human agents, symbolized by the magical doors and ever-shifting borders. This posthuman vision challenges the fixity of territory and national identity, suggesting that future migration studies and policies should adopt more inclusive, adaptive models. Building on literature that explores hybridity and cosmopolitanism but remains anthropocentric, this research pushes the field towards more expansive, interconnected frameworks.

Keywords: Anthropocentrism; Hybridity; Migration; Posthumanism; Transhumanism

Migration and displacement in the world are today undergoing an unprecedented crisis due to armed conflict, climate change, economic inequity, and political instability. Nothing has ever exhibited such a mass of moving people in such a short time across any border with such consequences for long-held assumptions of human exceptionalism, national borders, and moral frameworks governing migration. Migration has often been portrayed in traditional narratives as a problem that requires human-centric solutions, and which envisions human beings as the main agents driving the needs and desires for how migration policies and practices are shaped. Yet, these anthropocentric frameworks eventually become more and more irrelevant in the context of today's migration, as the global environment becomes more connected, and the demarcations between the human, the technological, and the nonhuman increasingly overlap.

Postgraduate, Department of English, Gopalganj Science and Technology University,
Bangladesh

In this way, the novel *Exit West* by Mohsin Hamid serves as an excellent story that provokes these anthropocentric perspectives. The couple, a pair named Nadia and Saeed, escape a crime-infested city and travel through a series of magical doors across several global borders. It is a world without rigid frontiers and human-made barriers that separate nations, people, or territories, but where the freedom and mobility of change are determined by its administrators. Through this speculative scenario, I argue that ideas of national borders and of human beings as the prime agents of change in the future of migration encapsulate normative beliefs that do not allow for an alternative to exist; then I suggest that this alternative space of human migration should be conceived.

This paper seeks to explore the ways that *Exit West* can move beyond the anthropocentric stories that have been used to address the problems of migration, borders, and human exceptionalism. This research aims to demonstrate how the novel unsettles the humanist framework of migration studies, and how it presents an alternative orientation to migration that includes consideration of the fluidity of borders, the contribution of non-human agents, and the technologizing of human experience. The thesis of this paper is that the so-called 'posthumanism', as articulated by theorists such as Rosi Braidotti and Donna Haraway, offers a critical perspective that breaks down the divisions between human and non-human, and supports a more inclusive understanding of agency, one that includes technology, animals, the environment, and other non-human actors.

This paper will discuss how *Exit West* presents a vision of migration and borders untied by anthropocentrism, as revealed through this qualitative study. This thesis will contend that Hamid's novel describes a future where humans are not the only one who decides about their migration patterns; borders are understood as not something fixed and unchangeable, but as something changeable, flexible paths, and challenge traditional ideas of territoriality and national sovereignty. These findings intend to nudge educators, policymakers, and migration theorists away from humanist positions and toward posthuman perspectives of migration, which recognize all actors – human and nonhuman – in relation to generating the future of migration.

Through analytical frameworks of posthumanism and narrative visualization, this research goes on to illuminate how *Exit West* reopens and redefines the boundaries of the discourse around migration to suggest a possible future without human-centered narratives, for a broader understanding of migration in which the past, present, and future are all forward-looking.

Literature Review

Exit West describes the refugee life by combining the elements of realistic description of displacement and the fantastical ones, especially the magic doors, which allow people to travel across the world in a second. The novel switches between the personal experience of Saeed and Nadia and the briefs of other refugees, which has developed a universal story of instability and frailty (Pérez Zapata, 2021). The current literature mainly uses the concepts of postcolonial, diasporic, and magic realism to interpret how the novel addresses the modern-day problems of refugees. As an example, Pattanayak and Tiwari (2023) discuss the specific issues that refugees have to deal with in practice, i.e., language barrier, racism, and economic issues, and some of them rely on the theories of hybridity developed by Homi K. Bhabha to analyze the process of identity formation in the cultural crossroads (Almutairi, 2024).

Another prevalent prism is magical realism, and such researchers as ElHalawani (2024) consider how the magical doors disrupt the traditional narrative format by getting rid of the physical sufferings of border crossings and instead shifting the center of attention to psychological and social problems. In the same way, Cuthbertson (2023) emphasizes that this narrative strategy helps to emphasize the fact that the threat that refugees have faced does not cease when their journey is over. These methods are quite useful in shedding light on the socio-political commentary of the novel, but they tend to remain anthropocentric in their orientation to the experiences of humans, neglecting the possibility of posthumanist reading to push the anthropocentrism of worldviews even further.

Theoretical Framework and Application of Posthumanism

The critical framework of posthumanism challenges the anthropocentric point of view by redefining the relations between humans, technology, animals, and environments (Moldovan, 2024). It breaks binaries (human/animal, nature/technology, mind/body) of Western thinking (Wallace, 2010). Some of the most influential theorists, such as Donna Haraway, introduce a cyborg as a defiance against the human-technology differences (Yurttas, 2024). N. Katherine Hayles is an author who examines how the human body is applied to technological applications (Wallace, 2010), and is among the theorists of this idea, offering the means of the analysis of Exit West. The posthumanist literary criticism is based on the distributed and connected nature of agency in human and non-human beings (Straight, 2024). This is specifically applicable to magical doors and borderless transitions that are especially typical of the novel.

Posthumanist concerns of the novel Exit West are manifested by the decentering of human experience and focus on interconnectedness. According to

Chambers (2019), magical doors represent a posthuman sensory perception with the help of which the characters can cross the physical and political borders. Mohanty (2025) also believes that the posthumanist undertones of the novel undermine human-centered worldviews, pointing to the interaction of human and non-human beings. This is supported by the analysis of transnational identities of refugees by Tosi (2024), who says that the doors symbolize the fluidity of identity in the globalized world. These works are in line with posthumanist ideologies but do not directly position their work within the posthumanist theory, which identifies a gap in research.

Migration and Border Studies

Migration and border studies can provide important details on the *Exit West* redefinition of borders, belonging, and citizenship. The use of magical doors by Hamid breaks the traditional geopolitical frameworks, which Hassan (2023) relates to technological developments, although, in the short term, he attributes them to artificial intelligence. By condensing the act of crossing the border into one action, Cuthbertson (2023) notes that Hamid diverts attention from the problems of arrival and integration and outlines the continued plight of refugees. Knudsen and Rahbek (2021) understand the absence of settings and common vulnerabilities in the novel as creating the spirit of radical hopefulness based on empathy and solidarity, which are unrelated to national belonging.

The analysis of *Exit West* in terms of the five scapes of the world presented by Arjun Appadurai (ethnoscape, technoscape, financescape, mediascape, and ideoscape) shows that the novel criticizes the inequalities of globalization, but also demonstrates the use of technology to make movement possible (Yalçın, 2024). The liminal spaces that the novel depicts when characters are in a state of transition also resist the idea of identity and belonging (Zainab & Rind, 2024). As Elbowety (2024) puts forth, these spaces represent a decolonial cosmopolitanism that is the opposite of Western elitist models, which encourage global interconnectedness. The discussion of the concept of disorienting empathy by Bellin (2022) in the novel highlights its condemnation of the border regimes at the global level, with the author recommending that people should unite.

Technology and Non-Human Agency

Technology is the main focus of the *Exit West* challenge to anthropocentrism, especially in the magic doors, the magical doors that are not human, and which alter human mobility. The author presents the notion of technological panopticism based on Foucault, which is used to refer to the situation in which migrants are under surveillance but are exploiting technology to evade control (Olumofin, 2025). This is complemented by an analysis of photographic realism in the novel ("*Capturing reality,*" n.d.), which points to the fact that

technology determines the way migrants view reality. The posthumanist analysis of the doors is not very deep, as the isolated study of Hassan (2023) assumes that the doors are symbols of technological change.

The doors put the anthropocentric understanding of borders as the creation of humans into question because Wilde and Iv (2024) observe that they undermine the humanist conception of the human being. This is in line with posthumanist theories that put much emphasis on non-human agency, but contemporary scholarship underestimates this aspect. A posthumanist reading might also explore the mediation of human relations to space, time, and one another that the doors establish, recreating human possibilities that extend the limits of tradition.

The Posthuman Condition and Identity

The theme of identity in the novel is related to the concepts of posthumanism because it focuses on fluidity and discontinuity. According to Kostenko (2023), the changes that Saeed and Nadia undergo due to migration are the ones that question the idea of a fixed self that is defined by the influence of technology and cultural interactions. This is supported by the analysis of global identities by Almutairi (2024), who emphasized the role of displacement that contributes to the development of hybrid identities. The uncanny liminality of South Asian migrant fiction by Zainab and Rind (2024) also contributes to the fact that the novel depicts refugees as liminal beings, who occupy transitional states that do not conform to the constructs of identity.

Decoloniality and Cosmopolitanism

Exit West is a decolonial understanding of cosmopolitanism that criticizes Western paradigms based on wealth. According to Elbowety (2024), nomadic cosmopolitanism focuses on solidarity between migrants, as it opposes the colonial structure of authority. This corresponds to the notion of disorienting empathy by Bellin (2022), who recreates the global border regimes with the help of the inclusive narratives. These views bring out the message of equitable global interconnectedness in the novel, which concurs with the posthumanist focus on interconnectedness between human and non-human beings.

Hospitality and Solidarity

Hospitality is advocated in the novel as a solution to the international refugee crisis, as Vlagopoulos (2022) suggests, and it is a moral and practical need. According to the analysis of fantasy and science fiction components in Exit West provided by Jiménez (2020), the novel redefines the concept of home as a dynamic phenomenon that is culturally and identity-specific and disputes the rigid ideas of belonging. These themes are reminiscent of posthumanist concepts of fluid identity

and connectedness, which promote compassion that is transnational.

Research Gaps

Exit West, however, has not been explored explicitly in the posthumanist perspective, despite all its potential. Although the works by scholars such as Chambers (2019), Mohanty (2025), and Tosi (2024) touch upon the posthumanist themes, none of them uses the posthumanist frameworks to examine the magical doors in the novel, non-human agency, and migration as a human-non-human phenomenon. This is the gap that curtails the knowledge on how *Exit West* is a challenge to anthropocentric worldviews.

Exit West is an anthropocentric challenge to dissenting human experience, focusing on interrelationship and redefining migration, boundaries, and identity with posthumanist, decolonial, and magical realist perspectives. The fluidity of identity and the agency of non-human beings are pointed out by the magical doors, technological panopticism, and liminal spaces. This review reminds us of the radical redefinition of the movement of people and their agency in the novel by combining postcolonial, diasporic, and emerging posthumanist literature. The gap in posthumanist readings can be addressed to provide the chance to understand the contribution of *Exit West* to the modern literary and theoretical discourses better.

Methodology

This study will utilize a qualitative textual analysis of the novel *Exit West* by Mohsin Hamid by using the posthumanist theory to understand how the novel questions anthropocentrism, migration, and border politics. The paper brings together human migration, borders, and posthuman possibilities by examining the ways in which the novel envisions the issue of migration using non-human agents.

Textual Analysis

The themes, narratives, and linguistic constructs are analyzed using textual analysis as the basis in *Exit West*. The most important passages that depict how the novel addresses the issues of border and migration and the contribution of non-human agents (technology and the environment) will be examined closely. The speculative metaphor of the doors as the portals will be given particular attention as it depicts the identities that are fluid and dynamic, and, therefore, the challenge of traditional and human-oriented interpretations of migration.

Theoretical Framework: Posthumanism

The work is based on the posthumanist thinking that criticizes human exceptionalism and focuses on the interconnection between humans, technology,

and the environment. The analysis is guided by key concepts presented by Rosi Braidotti, especially the concept of the nomadic subject and the cyborg theory of Donna Haraway. These paradigms assist in unraveling the way that *Exit West* depicts the borders as permeable and movement as a practice of human and non-human agency, specifically the transformative aspect of technology.

Narrative Visualization

The idea of narrative visualization by Segel and Heer (2010) is used to discuss the ways in which the novel stimulates the readers to visualize migration across textual and geographical boundaries. The image of doors is interpreted as a visual and conceptual device of redefining the borders as flexible and posthuman.

Analytical Process

The analysis follows these steps:

1. Identifying central themes: migration, borders, human exceptionalism, and non-human agency.
2. Close reading of passages that challenge anthropocentrism, with a focus on speculative elements.
3. Applying posthumanist theories to examine the decentering of the human subject.
4. Using narrative visualization to interpret how the novel invites broader, non-linear conceptions of migration.
5. Synthesizing findings to show how *Exit West* offers a posthuman critique of traditional migration and border theories.

This approach allows for a nuanced examination of *Exit West* as a posthuman text, illustrating how migration can be re-envisioned in contemporary discourse through the agency of nonhuman actors and mutable borders.

Analysis

This section will look to analyze how Mohsin Hamid's *Exit West* breaks conventions regarding anthropocentric graspings of migration and borders as it speculatively handles these issues. The analysis will use the posthumanist frameworks of Rosi Braidotti and Donna Haraway to examine how the novel rewrites the part humans, technology, and non-human agents play in the migration process by challenging the notion that the shaping of migrations and territoriality could only be done by humans. Moreover, in this same section, fluid, dynamic, and in no way limited to human-made constructs like borders will be demonstrated in the *Exit West* on borders, and it shows how it can be rendered with a broader, posthuman understanding of migration.

The Fluidity of Borders: Reimagining Spatial Boundaries in *Exit West*

The passing over of fixed human-made borders was the central theme of *Exit West*. Borders are traditionally seen as immanent, national borders that stop human movement and create identity. Hamid does the opposite: people live in a world where the borders are not solid, but they are moving, and changing depending on the context, represented by the magic doors, where you are able to go everywhere. They represent a future where borders are not fixed by the things we call governments or nation-states, but are malleable, open, and always changing.

Exit West is metaphorical for fluidity in migration, as migration is not restricted by geography or political division. Throughout their escape via the doors out of their war-torn city and into another part of the world, Nadia and Saeed have shown that migration is not a progressive process of crossing borders from one said territory to another. These doors provide a new type of space that is neither constrained by the bounds of the nation-state nor by other human control. Hamid shows migration as a non-linear process, not depicting it as a fixed entity, forcing the reader to rethink what the migrant and territoriality mean.

Exit West turns this representation on its head, challenging the anthropocentrism of human beings as the only entities who can make and unmake borders, and migrate or not. Instead, it offers a speculative future here in which the physical and metaphorical divisions between people and countries are subverted by non-human forces, like the dancing, magic technology of the doors.

Without borders nations appeared to be becoming somewhat illusory, and people were questioning what role they had to play. Many were arguing that smaller units made more sense, but others argued that smaller units could not defend themselves. (Hamid, 2017, p.89).

In this quote, Hamid criticizes the anthropocentric idea of fixed human-made borders, showing how national boundaries are unstable in and about the magical doors. Here, it is appropriate when referring to the way the novel proposes a visionary future with ever-changing, but porous, borders. It makes the case that borders are not immutable, but necessary constructs.

Migration as an Entangled Process: Interplay between Human and Non-Human Forces

Migration has become a topic of intense popular and political debate in Western societies of late, prompting cries for both open borders and fortress borders. Yet in these heated discussions and passionate polemics, the human migration becomes obscured, its nature (or at least its multiple natures) lost.

In terms of traditional migration discourse, the human subject is usually the only agent, and the border is conceived as something to which one crosses or must get over. However, in *Exit West*, we have a process of migration that is not limited only to human agency. Nadia and Saeed, meanwhile, are the protagonists in the story, and while their ability to pass through the doors is dependent on an external, nonhuman agent—the doors themselves—the doors take the lead role. These findings suggest that man is not the only driver of migration, but that it is also subject to such nonhuman drivers as technology, the environment, and celestial forces.

In *Exit West*, however, the doors are not just a means of physically crossing borders: they are active in the migration process. They exist as a challenge to the humanistic notion that migration is only about human choices and human desires. They are a form of liberation, with limitations to human agency in constraining migration. The emphasis of the novel on the role of technology (represented by the doors) hints at the fact that human migration is not only human-willed movement, but rather the product of contingent interactions between humans and non-humans.

Consequently, posthumanist theory claims that human beings are not the only agents in the world and that non-human entities such as technology, the environment, and animals also contribute significantly to differentiating human experiences. *Exit West* positions the doors as an entity that induces and formats migration, while in turn challenging the long-held anthropocentric claims that govern the discussion of migration, borders, and human exceptionalism.

IT WAS SAID in those days that the passage was both like dying and like being born, and indeed Nadia experienced a kind of extinguishing as she entered the blackness and a gasping struggle as she fought to exit it, (Hamid, 2017, p. 61)

If you are talking about how migration in this *Exit West* is a human-driven event, not just, you can insert this quote here. The effect of the participants crossing through the doors speaks to the alienating experience of transcending through doors, accentuating the migratory experience as something not in human control but that of an external (non-human) force. The metaphor of “dying and being born” suggests the profound impact of migration, where both human agency and non-human forces intertwine.

Non-Human Agency: Technology, Environment, and the Migration Narrative

But other nonhuman agents pop up beyond the doors in *Exit West*, which disrupt the anthropocentric story of migration. The environment is one of the most important non-human agents. The realities of war, displacement, and political

instability have moved with the protagonists from city to city. These settings are not just passive backdrops for the human story but exert their own force on the characters' experience and decisions. For example, the destruction and collapse of cities due to war is not a human-created tragedy, but actually larger, non-human factors such as political systems, climate change, and global economic pressures that frame the conditions of human life and migration pathways.

In addition to the environment, technology is also very important for the migration process. The doors themselves, a form of magical technology, move beyond human control, further testament to the part played by non-human forces in migration. The doors are not only a means of migration; they are a technological system that extends beyond national borders and, regardless of will, human-made divides. In this image of technology as an active player in moving, it joins Donna Haraway's cyborg—a hybrid of human and machine that troubles the distinction between the living and technological. Technology does not serve its purpose under the auspices of humans in *Exit West*, but is a force that affects and changes the migrants' experiences of the migration more than humans can cope with.

Exit West features non-human agents; these agents are incorporated into the narrative, and they provide a posthuman perspective on the migration that debunks the human-centered focus that characterizes traditional migration theories. The novel shows how the migration process is dependent on non-human forces: technology, environment, and the larger systems of power, and that to understand the complexities of human movement, its galvanizers cannot be ignored.

She had always had carp in a mossy pond in the back of her house, carp that her granddaughter called goldfish, and she had known the names of almost everyone on her street, and most had been there a long time, they were old California, from families that were California families, but over the years they had changed more and more rapidly... and when she went out it seemed to her that she too had migrated, that 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, 2017, p. 116).

Migration is a profoundly complex phenomenon, and some quotes are good to discuss migration working as a dynamic process between human and non-human forces. It illustrates the challenge that the migration narrative poses to the human-centered one, where it shows that migration is not merely physical, but it is a process that happens over time, in a specific environment, and involves technological effects. And it implies humans cannot be confined by global borders or asserted control over; migration is integral to human beinghood.

Envisioning Posthuman Borders: Speculative Futures in Exit West

Exit West also seeks to show a future of borders that are not colored by territorial lines but rather are permeable, transient, and possible through doors. The current global political system, which is often characterized by rigid, exclusionary borders and promotes national identity and sovereignty, is challenged by this vision. Borders are no longer static obstacles in Hamid's imagined future; they are flexible entry points that can – and are – crossed at will. The rethinking of borders in this way is a posthumanist critique of human-centered systems, which, in order to define human identity and belonging, must be based in territory and in fixed boundaries.

Migration, like everywhere else in this speculative world, is an act of movement not only between places but also between states of being – between identity, culture, and geography. In Exit West, the characters have demised from their nationality and cultural backgrounds but were cast as global citizens not bound by movement, but by doors' possibilities. This vision offers the idea that in the future, migration will not be less about conquering borders and more about moving through a world that is no longer defined by human-created boundaries.

Lastly, Exit West radically breaks away from conventional migration and border stories because it challenges the anthropocentric underpinnings that define these discourses. The portrayal of fluid borders, non-human agencies, and the speculative use of technology creates a vision of migration that is dynamic, inclusive, and post-human. Hamid's writings offer a provocative critique of human exceptionalism, including the purpose of human borders, while allowing readers to reimagine the future of migration and borders and to rethink their assumptions about migration, identity, and the very idea of borders in an increasingly dynamic world.

Discussion

In the light of posthumanist theory, Exit West is analyzed to show how it undermines and even rejects anthropocentric views about migration, borders, and human exception. Exit West paints a speculative world in which borders are unstable, migration is steered by non-human agents, and human agency does not determine movement. This vision moves away from a human-centered worldview and moves towards an inclusive world frame that looks at how technology, the environment, and other non-humans help in shaping human migration. We will go on explaining in this section how these findings bear implications for migration theory, policy, and broader social discourse, and the importance of embracing posthuman perspectives in contemporary migration studies.

Reimagining Migration: Posthumanism and the Challenge to Anthropocentric Borders

This research finds that *Exit West* contributes crucially to migration theory by problematizing the anthropocentric lens with which migration has conventionally been understood. By rendering the movement of people via magical doors that easily overcome borders, the novel suggests that imaginative ways of rethinking our understanding of borders are needed to replace the rigid, territorial, and 'one-dimensional' approach to border demarcation that has been traditionally applied to the definition of migration policies. *Exit West* adopts a posthumanism wherein migration is no longer only a human choice of desire but instead is a process formed by human decisions as well as those of non-human entities: technology and the environment.

This is an alternative to the dominant migratory narratives, which only see migration as a problem to be solved through human intervention. In *Exit West*, for example, posthuman migration theory is concerned with understanding migration beyond the metaphor of borders in a specifically ecological and technological sense. Consequently, it looks at the doors, the environment, and technological innovations as potential non-human agents of migration in this shift of perspective. This way, *Exit West* forces migration theorists to move beyond human exceptionalism and reassess how non-human forces are involved in influencing migration pathways.

Policy Implications: Rethinking Borders and Migration Governance in a Posthuman Age

Exit West gives policymakers an occasion to rethink what borders and migration policies mean. Rather, traditional border control systems based on a notion of fixed human-made territorial divisions are rapidly proving less adequate in responding to the complexities of modern migration. These imperatives should make politicians eager to transcend our territorially defined notions of sovereignty and redraw the future lines of responsibility around migration away from borders, and toward greater flexibility and adaptation.

The idea of fluid entry points, instead of static barriers, that the novel conveys, could provide insights of relevance to future policy approaches that seek to maximize human mobility and access rather than restriction. *Exit West* urges policymakers in the EU and in the UK to learn from it in shaping migration policies that reflect the fluidity of our crossing of borders, and our demand for more flexibility in the response to the global movement of people. It should mean reform of visa systems, with asylum policies and refugee protection frameworks reflective of the realities of global migration in the 21st century.

Exit West provides a compelling metaphor for reading migration, which migration theorists can turn into a critical and expansive theory of migration. By embracing posthumanist theory in its theory of migration, theorists can work with perspectives that embrace the roles of non-human agents in the formation of migration. It also creates new avenues of inquiry around the role of environmental change, technological change, and the global system of power in shaping migration patterns. The posthuman lens promotes a less anthropocentric migration perspective that extends beyond a purely human narrative by bringing down barriers created by artificial choices of what is 'human' and 'non-human', allowing for the perception of migration in its totality – infused with all actors, human and non-human, involved in the migration.

Broadening the Lens: Integrating Posthuman Perspectives into Migration Discourse

This paper uses Exit West as a focal point to discuss the necessity of employing posthuman perspectives to migration discourse. Exit West questions the human subject as the key element in migration and acknowledges the agency of nonhuman forces, bringing a more inclusive understanding of migration in that era, in our world today. The posthuman shift of this view of migration urges a broader vision that is not bound to issues of territories and national identity, considering human movement as fluid and dynamic.

In view of the present global crisis of migratory movements, which is accentuated by the influence of climate change, conflict, and disparity in wealth, this change of perspective is particularly pertinent. In response to the growing displacement and the breakdown of traditional migration systems, posthuman approaches present fresh opportunities to address the root causes of migration and to build more welcoming, more sustainable responses. Finally, by acknowledging the place of technology, the environment, and non-human agents, policymakers and migration theorists can design migration frameworks that respond to the complexities of migrants' lives as lived today.

Additionally, posthuman perspectives, which promote critical reflection on notions of human exceptionalism in migration discourse, are proposed. Traditional migration theories tend to assume that human beings are the only agents that concretely model migration patterns, and fail to recognize how migration is a product of larger global systems and non-human forces. However, the humanist assumption is disputed in posthumanism because it is realized that human migration is very dependent on environmental, technological, and geopolitical factors beyond human control. If we accept this all-encompassing, more inclusive view, then migration discourse can break free of narrow, anthropocentric frameworks and be viewed in a wider, interconnected globalized world.

Beyond Human Agency: Critiquing Anthropocentrism in Global Migration Narratives

Exit West is a powerful critique of human-centered narrative because it makes clear that migration is not a process confined to human agency. In the novel, the speculative elements—the doors in particular—lead readers to imagine a world without borders that are not human constructs, limiting the idea of national identity to a transnational space of mobility and cross appeal. More than a critical picture of the current political order, this speculative vision invites a reconsideration of migration as always, a necessarily fluid, multi-faceted, irreducible practice, an ongoing process with which we are never entirely in control.

Thus, Exit West reconfigures the human subject of migration narrative. The novel does not place humans as the underlying cause of migration but, instead, seeks to show the humans' interconnectedness with non-human agents — technology, the environment, and larger geopolitical forces — that contribute to migration. Both these reframings of the human subject resist humanistic conceptions of being that assume human exceptionalism and encourage a more posthuman take on migration that acknowledges how non-humans constitute and inscribe themselves on human migration.

Future Research Directions

These insights then suggest a number of possible directions for future research in migration studies and posthumanism. Environmental factors in migratory behavior, including those with respect to climate change, are also one area that needs more exploration. Therefore, climate migration theories that factor in environmental and nonhuman agents in discussions of migration are necessary because the amount of climate-related displacement is increasing. Technology might also be another area for further research in the field because of the role that technology plays in migration with digital migration tools and virtual migration. Technology will continue to play an ever more central role in human movement, and it will be imperative that we explore how technology will continue to alter the migration process such that it upends traditional human-centered models.

The second expands on this discussion by considering how, or if, posthumanist perspectives can inform the development of migration policy, by proposing more inclusive and adaptive frameworks of migration governance. Posthuman perspectives continue to provide a key thought tool for rethinking the role of borders, identity, agency, and resilience in the dynamics of ongoing migration processes in light of the evolving role of migration as a response to global challenges.

Exit West is an intriguing vision of the migration process and the function of the border that fully and accurately antagonizes traditional, anthropocentric discourses and prompts the reader to reconsider the forces of the actor outside the human in the construction of borders and migration. By adopting posthumanism and embracing it, the novel transforms the concept of migration to become fluid, dynamic, and influenced by technology, the environment, and other greater systems. The shifted lenses signify the aspects of migration theory, policy, and discourse, new approaches to thinking about migration in a world that is inseparably connected. Embracing posthuman perspectives enables scholars, policymakers, and migration theorists to take on productive approaches to migration that can be both inclusive and adaptive to the complex interplay between human and nonhuman forces that drive migration-related movements across borders.

Conclusion

Exit West, by Mohsin Hamid, reimagines migration and borders from a posthumanist perspective, a world where borders, both human-made and flexible, migrants push themselves, and migrants are pushed by non-human forces. In this paper, I explore how the novel engages with traditional anthropocentric narratives by imagining a speculative future in which human mobility is shaped by technology, environment, and other agents that are not human. Using magical doors, Hamid unsettles fixed boundaries normally implied in discussions of migration, suggesting a world beyond where movement can reject national boundaries and divest itself from human control.

The analysis and discussion illustrate that Exit West marks a transformative moment in migration theory through delivering a fundamentally different migration premise in upending human exceptionalism and rigid territoriality of the way migration policies are designed. By introducing a posthumanist approach to the novel, it asks us to rethink the manner in which we conceptualize migration, borders, and humanity in the borderline world of our rapidly evolving world. That leads to the need to expand the migration theories beyond the human-related ones and acknowledge that processes like technology, environment, and the systems of world power also make a contribution to migration.

This research has implications beyond literary analysis for migration theory and policy. With the world becoming more and more filled with displacement from climate change, conflict, and economic instability, Exit West adds its critique to the gridlock of border systems in place today and presents the case for a permeable, borderless model of migration. If policymakers and migration theorists begin to see migration as a product of the interplay of a spectrum of forces, many humans and

some not, we can begin to create the adaptive and sustainable solutions we need to the migrant crises the world increasingly faces.

In the end, that is the vision of migration *Exit West* offers: speculative and transformative. The novel is based on the rejection of anthropocentrism, and by so doing presents a world where human movement is the product of larger and more interconnected forces, all in an effort to invite the reader to rethink the very roots of migration theory and policy. The move toward posthuman perspectives allows us to think more broadly about migration in a world that, increasingly, has become both more global and more populated by both human and non-human agents.

References

- Adejumobi, M., & Coetzee, C. (Eds.). (2019). *Routledge handbook of african literature* (1st ed.). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315229546>
- Almutairi, N. M. K. (2024). Exploring global identities in mohsin hamid's exit west. *Theory and Practice in Language Studies*, 14(1), 110–115. <https://doi.org/10.17507/tpls.1401.12>
- Bellin, S. (2022). Disorienting empathy: Reimagining the global border regime through Mohsin Hamid's *Exit West*. *Literature Compass*, 19(12), e12694. <https://doi.org/10.1111/lic3.12694>
- Braidotti, R. (2011). *Nomadic subjects: Embodiment and sexual difference in contemporary feminist theory* (2nd ed.). Columbia University Press.
- Capturing reality: Navigating photographic realism in mohsin hamid's exit west (2017) | research journal in advanced humanities. (n.d.). Retrieved April 5, 2026, from <https://www.royalliteglobal.com/advanced-humanities/article/view/1455>
- Caruso, C. (2018). The Syrian diaspora in London through the transnational lens: A distinctive contribution to contemporary public space and citizenship. *BORDER CROSSING*, 8(2), 409–432. <https://doi.org/10.33182/bc.v8i2.604>
- Chambers, C. (2019). *The doors of posthuman sensory perception in mohsin hamid's exit west*. In C. Chambers, *Making Sense of Contemporary British Muslim Novels* (pp. 213–252). Palgrave Macmillan UK. https://doi.org/10.1057/978-1-137-52089-0_6
- Chouliaraki, L., & Georgiou, M. (2017). Hospitality: The communicative architecture of humanitarian securitization at europe's borders: hospitality. *Journal of Communication*, 67(2), 159–180. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jcom.12291>
- Coco, D. L. (2021). EU migration policy and migrant human rights: The protection and negation of life at EU borders. *The Age of Human Rights Journal*, (16), 54–80. <https://doi.org/10.17561/tahrj.v16.6277>

- Cuthbertson, G. (2023). Mohsin hamid's new paradigm of travel via doorway. *Curiosity: Interdisciplinary Journal of Research and Innovation*. <https://doi.org/10.36898/001c.73170>
- Dadusc, D., & Mudu, P. (2022). Care without control: The humanitarian industrial complex and the criminalisation of solidarity. *Geopolitics*, 27(4), 1205–1230. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14650045.2020.1749839>
- Draşovean, F., Schier, W., Bayliss, A., Gaydarska, B., & Whittle, A. (2017). The lives of houses: Duration, context, and history at neolithic uivar, romania. *European Journal of Archaeology*, 20(4), 636–662. <https://doi.org/10.1017/ea.2017.37>
- Droz, L. (2022). Anthropocentrism as the scapegoat of the environmental crisis: A review. *Ethics in Science and Environmental Politics*, 22, 25–49. <https://doi.org/10.3354/ese00200>
- Elbowety, R. M. (2024). Decoloniality and nomadic cosmopolitanism in mohsin hamid's exit west. *Cairo Studies in English*, 0(0), 0–0. <https://doi.org/10.21608/cse.2024.321872.1192>
- ElHalawani, A. T. (2024). *Uncanny journeys: Magical realism in mohsin hamid's exit west and omar el-akkad's what strange paradise*. *مبادآلآ يف يم لعلالآ حبلالآ ةلجم*, 25(7), 1–18. <https://doi.org/10.21608/jssa.2024.275851.1618>
- Hamid, M. (2017). *Exit west*. Riverhead Books.
- Haraway, D. (1985). A manifesto for cyborgs: Science, technology, and socialist feminism in the 1980s. *Socialist Review*, 80, 65–108.
- Hashmi, J. (2024). Exploring thematic concerns of the magical doors in hamid's exit west: A magical realist perspective. *Global Regional Review*, IX(I), 185–194. [https://doi.org/10.31703/gr.2024\(IX-I\).16](https://doi.org/10.31703/gr.2024(IX-I).16)
- Hassan, N. (2023). Ai and the symbolic portrayal of magical doors: An exploration of technology and transition in mohsin hamid's novel 'exit west.' *Pakistan Journal of International Affairs*, 6(3). <https://doi.org/10.52337/pjia.v6i3.893>
- Jiménez, M. (2020). Partly familiar, partly novel too: Fantasy and science fiction in mohsin hamid's exit west. *Nuevas Poligrafías. Revista de Teoría Literaria y Literatura Comparada*, (1), 123–145. <https://doi.org/10.22201/ffyl.nuevaspoligrafias.2020.1.1111>
- Karami, R. (2024). Hierarchy of value orientation and beliefs in climate change influencing the farmers' extractive or non-extractive behavior on the farm. *Environment, Development and Sustainability*, 26(6), 14743–14762. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10668-023-03215-y>
- Karkulehto, S., Koistinen, A.-K., & Varis, E. (Eds.). (2019). *Reconfiguring human, nonhuman and posthuman in literature and culture* (1st ed.). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429243042>
- Knudsen, E. R., & Rahbek, U. (2021). Radical hopefulness in Mohsin Hamid's map of the world: A reading of *Exit West* (2017). *Journal of Postcolonial Writing*, 57(4), 442–454. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17449855.2021.1889641>

- Kostenko, N. (2023). Identities in the “posthuman” condition: Locality of war and global world. *Sociology: Theory, Methods, Marketing*, (4), 5. <https://doi.org/10.15407/sociology2023.04.005>
- Kouri-Towe, N., & Mahrouse, G. (2023). Critical feminist approaches to migration and mobility justice in Canada: Guest editors' introduction. *ACME*, 22(4), 1141–1150. <https://doi.org/10.7202/1106678ar>
- Ledesma, J. R. C. M., & Pascual, C. J. (2023). Ecological biosemiosis: A biosemiotic reading of culture and nature relationships in the selected poems from a native clearing and man of earth. *International Journal of Humanity Studies (IJHS)*, 7(1), 127–146. <https://doi.org/10.24071/ijhs.v7i1.6293>
- Little, A., & Vaughan-Williams, N. (2017). Stopping boats, saving lives, securing subjects: Humanitarian borders in Europe and Australia. *European Journal of International Relations*, 23(3), 533–556. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1354066116661227>
- Meyer, S. R., Robinson, W. C., Branchini, C., Abshir, N., Mar, A. A., & Decker, M. R. (2019). Gender differences in violence and other human rights abuses among migrant workers on the Thailand-Myanmar border. *Violence Against Women*, 25(8), 945–967. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1077801218805587>
- Missbach, A., & McNevin, A. (2018). Luxury limbo: Temporal techniques of border control and the humanitarianisation of waiting. *International Journal of Migration and Border Studies*, 4(1/2), 12. <https://doi.org/10.1504/IJMBS.2018.10012229>
- Mohanty, Dr. S. (2025). Transcending humanity: The transformative impact of posthumanism in literature. In S. Shashidhar, *DIGITAL LITERATURES: READING AND WRITING IN THE AGE OF TECHNOLOGY* (pp. 26–36). *Royal Book Publishing*. <https://doi.org/10.26524/224.3>
- Moldovan, C.-M. (2024). Karkulehto s. A. , koistinen, k. , & varis, (Eds.)e.(2019). . Reconfiguring human, nonhuman and posthuman in literature and culture. Routledge. *Journal of Posthumanism*, 4(1), 47–49. <https://doi.org/10.33182/joph.v4i1.3167>
- Molnar, P. (2022). *Territorial and digital borders and migrant vulnerability under a pandemic crisis*. In A. Triandafyllidou (Ed.), *Migration and Pandemics: Spaces of Solidarity and Spaces of Exception* (pp. 45–64). Springer International Publishing. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-81210-2_3
- Mosanya, M., & Kwiatkowska, A. (2023). New Ecological Paradigm and third culture kids: Multicultural identity configurations, global mindset and values as predictors of environmental worldviews. *International Journal of Psychology*, 58(2), 103–115. <https://doi.org/10.1002/ijop.12887>
- Mountz, A., & Mohan, S. S. (2022). Human migration in a new era of mobility: Intersectional and transnational approaches. *Global Social Challenges Journal*, 1(1), 59–75. <https://doi.org/10.1332/RFXW5601>

- Nunzio, P. D. (2023). The crisis of the common european asylum system: Rethinking solidarity in light of human rights. *UNIO – EU Law Journal*, 8(2), 40–50. <https://doi.org/10.21814/unio.8.2.4760>
- Olumofin, O. (2025). Rewriting the nation: Mobility, technological panopticism, and identity in Mohsin Hamid's Exit West. *Journal of Postcolonial Writing*, 61(3), 386–399. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17449855.2024.2435972>
- Pattanayak, M., & Tiwari, M. (2023). Tracing the predicament of refugees in mohsin hamid's exit west. *International Journal of English Literature and Social Sciences*, 8(3), 106–109. <https://ijels.com/detail/tracing-the-predicament-of-refugees-in-mohsin-hamid-s-exit-west/>
- Pérez Zapata, B. (2021). Transience and waiting in mohsin hamid's exit west. *The European Legacy*, 26(7–8), 764–774. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10848770.2021.1969717>
- Sakr, R. (2018). The more-than-human refugee journey: Hassan Blasim's short stories. *Journal of Postcolonial Writing*, 54(6), 766–780. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17449855.2018.1551269>
- Segel, E., & Heer, J. (2010). Narrative visualization: Telling stories with data. *IEEE Transactions on Visualization and Computer Graphics*, 16(6), 1139–1148. <https://doi.org/10.1109/TVCG.2010.179>
- Slattery, M., Ramsay, S., Pryor, A., Gallagher, H., Norton, C. L., Nikkel, L., Smith, A., Knowles, B., & McAuliffe, D. (2023). Nature-based interventions in social work practice and education: Insights from six nations. *International Social Work*, 66(6), 1686–1700. <https://doi.org/10.1177/00208728221123160>
- Sörmus, M. (2014). The human and the nonhuman, beyond anthropocentrism, beyond boundaries: A material ecocritical view on monique roffey's and andrus kivirähk's work. *Interlitteraria*, 19(1), 177–192. <https://doi.org/10.12697/IL.2014.19.1.13>
- Straight, R. (2024). Decentering the human: A posthuman approach to cybersecurity education. *2024 Cyber Awareness and Research Symposium (CARS)*, 1–6. <https://doi.org/10.1109/CARS61786.2024.10778862>
- Tosi, V. (2024). Inhabiting a chaos-world: Refugee transnational identities in mohsin hamid's exit west(2017). *Il Tolomeo*, (1), JournalArticle_19364. <https://doi.org/10.30687/Tol/2499-5975/2024/01/004>
- Vlagopoulos, P. (2022). "A world full of doors": Postapocalyptic hospitality in mohsin hamid's exit west. *MFS Modern Fiction Studies*, 68(3), 407–433. <https://doi.org/10.1353/mfs.2022.0039>
- Wallace, J. (2010). Literature and posthumanism. *Literature Compass*, 7(8), 692–701. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1741-4113.2010.00723.x>
- Washington, H., Piccolo, J., Gomez-Baggethun, E., Kopnina, H., & Alberro, H. (2021). The trouble with anthropocentric hubris, with examples from conservation. *Conservation*, 1(4), 285–298. <https://doi.org/10.3390/conservation1040022>

- Wilde, P., & Iv, J. J. S. (2024). Introduction: Posthumanism and media studies. *Journal of Posthumanism*, 4(3), 169–176. <https://doi.org/10.33182/joph.v4i3.3451>
- Yalçın, E. G. (2024). Navigating global migration: An analysis of exit west through appadurai's five scapes. *Cankaya University Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences*, 18(2), 383–398. <https://doi.org/10.47777/cankujhss.1554566>
- Yasmeen, T. (2022). Deconstructing the image of third world woman in mohsin hamid's exit west: A postcolonial feminist perspective. *Pakistan Languages and Humanities Review*, 6(4), 493–499. [https://doi.org/10.47205/plhr.2022\(6-IV\)44](https://doi.org/10.47205/plhr.2022(6-IV)44)
- Yeoh, B. S. A., & Ramdas, K. (2014). Gender, migration, mobility and transnationalism. *Gender, Place & Culture*, 21(10), 1197–1213. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0966369X.2014.969686>
- Yurttas, M. K. (2024). Posthuman body: A post-dualistic entity in bio(Technological)-art. *Yıldız Journal of Art and Design*, 10(2), 95–103. <https://doi.org/10.47481/yjad.1366314>
- Zainab, A., & Rind, U. K. (2024). The unsettling journeys: Exploring uncanny liminality in selected south asian migrant fiction. *Pakistan Languages and Humanities Review*, 8(3), 147–166. [https://doi.org/10.47205/plhr.2024\(8-III\)14](https://doi.org/10.47205/plhr.2024(8-III)14)