

**T.C.
ISTANBUL AYDIN UNIVERSITY
INSTITUTE OF GRADUATE STUDIES**



**ORIENTALIST INTERNAL BORDERS IN
MOHSIN HAMID's *EXIT WEST*: A STUDY INTO REFUGEE FICTION**

MASTER'S THESIS

Maher Al Kasem

**Department of English Language and Literature
English Language and Literature Program**

AUGUST, 2022

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**Department of English Language and Literature
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AUGUST, 2022

ONAY FORMU

DECLARATION

I hereby declare with respect that the study “Orientalist Internal Borders in Mohsin Hamid’s *Exit West: A Study into Refugee Fiction*”, which I submitted as a Master thesis, is written without any assistance in violation of scientific ethics and traditions in all the processes from the project phase to the conclusion of the thesis and that the works I have benefited are from those shown in the Bibliography.
(04/08/2022)

Maher Al Kasem

FOREWORD

It has been written to fulfill the graduation requirements of the Master in English Language and Literature at Istanbul Aydin University. I would like to thank my supervisor Dr. Oz Oktem for her exceptional support and great enthusiasm regarding her assistance to complete this research. I would love to express deep respect for the head of the department Dr. Gamze Sabanci Uzun for her assistance and kindness. Special thanks for Dr. Oz Oktem for being a perfect supporter and being a splendid source of hope for me at Istanbul Aydin University. I also thank my great teacher Dr. Rida Anis who was a great model and torch of light and kindness for me in my BA degree at Aleppo University. In addition, I would love to thank all of my friends who supported and motivated me to achieve this dream.

August 2022

Maher Al Kasem

**ORIENTALIST INTERNAL BORDERS IN MOHSIN HAMID'S *EXIT WEST*:
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ABSTRACT

This thesis provides an in-depth criticism on how Orientalism tarnishes and shapes migration and refuge through racist and biased approaches. The researcher takes Mohsin Hamid's *Exit West* as a case study to substantiate and prove the argument that man-made (external) and mental (internal) borders are by-products of the West to push away the Middle East, North Africa, and Asian countries, all built on an Orientalist mindset that shapes how the Syrian refugee crisis is looked at and dealt with. The researcher also seeks to prove his argument that the world cannot survive in silos in that once a crisis breaks out somewhere, other countries will be relatively impacted by the ripple effect. Edward Said's theory of Orientalism and Homi Bhabha's theory of Hybridity of Identity are used as a theoretical bedrock of the thesis. The researcher focuses on magical doors used by the writer to prove that mobility across the world countries is possible, which demythologizes and debunks the mendacity drummed up for by the West for centuries and centuries. To provide a better understanding, the researcher has zoomed in on the treacherous journeys of refugees before, while and after they trudge through the many traitorous borders.

The findings reveal that the West – fuelled by Islamophobia, racism and hate against Middle Eastern, African, and Asian people – adopts a double-standard policy, deeply informed by an Orientalist mindset, with the world refugees: refugees of blue eyes and blond hair are welcome, while dark or brown skinned people are pushed away, and the recent Ukrainian refugee crisis is a case in point. The findings also reveal that refugees suffer disintegration, exclusion, othering, ethnic and racial discrimination, apartheid, and ill practices in the host countries because of their Oriental identities. This finding also shows that most if not all refugees are victimized into hybridity of identity and ambivalence that bring about their loss of belonging. Yet, this loss sometimes has positive sides in the sense that those

refugees, who manage to survive, become agents of change and act as a bridge between the Orient and the Occident, and Nadia can be a case in point. *Exit West* thus provides a critique of how the Syrian refugee crisis is looked at from an Orientalist mindset that divides the world still into binaries of white and black, good, and bad, and one and other.

Drawing on the Syrian refugee crisis as a case study, the findings also reveal that thousands of asylum seekers and internally displaced persons – women and children in particular – have been trapped for years at the European borders and many were pushed away by armed soldiers. In contrast, several Europeans rushed into the borders to welcome Ukrainians just hours after the Russian forces invaded Ukraine. The findings also reveal that although refugees have survived the treacherous journeys, they are segregated in poor areas and are disintegrated into society. The way in which Saeed and Nadia are treated, along with other similar refugees, in the novel shows that the legacy of Orientalism is still shaping the views and perceptions of Western governments when responding to the influx of poor refugees coming from the East or the Orient.

The researcher strongly believes that the host countries need to revisit their refugee policies to mitigate the destructive impacts of Orientalism on refugees. This helps to defuse the tensions of the refugee crises as they are more dehumanized and politicized. As such, the researcher concludes that the EU countries and USA have moral and legal obligations to the Syrian diaspora of refugees governed by (1) the Kantian understanding of cosmopolitan hospitality, (2) the 1951 Refugee Convention, and (3) the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The researcher calls on the humanitarian organizations to take stronger actions to mitigate the agonies suffered by refugee and migrant communities. The researcher also encourages the host countries to be more welcoming to such people coming from war-torn countries in that the world is more like a little village that has more in common than not. A viable suggestion is that hybrid identities for refugees can be part of the solution to better live in the West. Refugees should show more adaptability to the social fabrics of the host countries. Again, the origin countries of refugees should introduce reforms to improve safety and security measures, which help to discourage citizens from becoming refugees. Again, the countries of origin of refugees should introduce several reforms to discourage potential refugees from leaving their home countries.

When measures of improving security and livelihoods come into play, many refugees feel attracted to return home. This is not to blame Western countries for conflicts in the refugees' countries, but we should not forget that the governments in those refugees' countries are regimes that came after the colonial stage; Syria is a case in point where France, which colonized Syria for about 30 years, paved the way for the Assad regime that controlled Syria for decades. Hamid seems to communicate a message of inclusion and humanity in his novel; he would like to criticise how still the West looks at the refugee crises from the perspective of an Orientalist legacy that is worn-out and decaying. Using magical doors, he proves that mobility across the borders is easy, and actually magical doors enable him to show and describe the internal borders that are unseen and more difficult to cross. The doors, thus, have a thematic and aesthetic function in the novel. The book therefore communicates a message that current migration crises cannot be dealt with unless this Orientalist perspective is destroyed to allow for the human side of the crises emerge, so they are properly addresses and responded to.

Keywords: Orientalism, refugees, magical realism, hybridity, Edward Said, Homi Bhabha.

MOHSİN HAMD'İN EXIT WEST ADLI ESERİNDEKİ ORYANTALİST İÇ SINIRLARI: MÜLTECİ KURGUSU ÜZERİNE BİR ARAŞTIRMA

ÖZET

Bu çalışmada, oryantalizmin ırkçı ve ön yargılı yaklaşımları ile göç ve mülteci konularını nasıl lekelediği ve biçimlendirdiği üzerinde derinlemesine bir eleştiri yapılmaktadır. Bu bağlamda, Mohsin Hamid'in Exit West adlı eseri çalışma Konusu olarak seçilmiş olup, eserin insan kaynaklı (harici) ve mental (dahili, iç) sınırları Batı dünyasının yan ürünleri olarak Orta Doğu, Kuzey Afrika ve Asya ülkelerini uzaklaştırmak için nasıl kullandığını ortaya koyuşu ele alınmıştır. Oryantalist düşünce yapısı, Suriyeli mültecilere nasıl bakıldığını ve anlaşıldığını şekillendirmektedir. Araştırmacı, dünyanın kendisini sorunlardan izole ederek yaşamayacağını, bir bölgede ortaya çıkan meselelerin diğer coğrafları da etkilediğini gerçeğinden yola çıkarak Oryantalist düşünce yapısına dayandırdığı argümanını kanıtlayacak soruların yanıtlarını aramaktadır. Bu Tezin teorik çerçevesini Edward Said'in Oryantalizm Teorisi ve Homi Bhabha'nın Hibrit Kimlik teorisi oluşturmaktadır. Tez, yazarın kullandığı ve dünya ülkeleri arasındaki göç hareketlilikleri yüzyıllardır Batı dünyasının riyasını çürütecek ve miti yıkacak şekilde sihirli kapılara odaklanmaktadır. Bu sebeplei Yazar, okuyucunun konuyu daha iyi kavraması için, mültecilerin öncesi, göç süreci ve sonrasının ağır ortamına odaklanmaktadır.

Elde edilen bulguları, Batı dünyasının Orta Doğu, Kuzey Afrika ve Asyalı insanlara karşı İslamofobi, ayrımcılık ve nefret kaynaklı çifte standart içeren politikalar uyguladığını; mavi gözlü ve sarışın mültecilere karşı toleranslı davranırken, esmer veya kahverengi derili kişileri ise uzaklaştırdığını ortaya koymuştur. Son Ukrayna krizinde Ukraynalı mültecilere karşı Batı dünyasının yaklaşımı Tezin ileri sürdüğü iddialarını doğrular niteliktedir. Bulgular ayrıca mültecilerin konuk oldukları ülkelerde bütünleşememe, dışlanma, başkalaştırma, etnik ve kökene bağlı ayrımcılık, cezalandırma ve yetersiz sağlık hizmetlerinden

şikayetçi olduklarını göstermiştir. İlaveten, göçmenlerin ekseriyetinin hibrit kimlik ellerindeki varlıkları da kaybetmelerine yol açan kararsızlıkla suçlandıklarını belgelemektedir. Yinede, bu gibi kayıpların bazen pozitif sonuçları olduğu da görülmektedir. Doğru ve Batı dünyaları arasında bir köprü vazifesi gören ve yaşamlarını sürdürmeye çalışan mültecilere en iyi örneklerden birisi Nadia karakteri ile örtüşmektedir. Exit West bu sebeple Suriyeli mülteci krizine Oryantalist açıdan bakılan bir kritik sunmaktadır. Bu durum dünyayı beyaz, siyah, iyi, kötü ve diğer sıfatları kullanarak bölen bir algıya cevap niteliği taşımaktadır.

Benzer şekilde, çalışmamız, Suriye mülteci kızını vaka konusu olarak ele almış, binlerce ilticacı ve yer değiştirmiş insanın, özellikle kadınlar ve çocuklar, yıllardır Avrupa sınırlarında bekletildiklerine ve silahlı güçlerce uzak tutulduklarına dikkat çekmektedir. Tersî şekilde, Rusya Ukrayna'yı işgal ettikten sonra, Avrupa sınırları Ukraynalı mültecilere sonuna kadar açılmıştır. Bulgularımız, her ne kadar mülteciler zorlu yolculuklarda hayatta kalmaya çalışmak ile birlikte, barındırdıkları yerler düşük gelir grubu olan bölgeler olup, toplumdaki dışlanmaktadır. Saeed ve Nadia durumunda olduğu gibi, roman, Oryantalist bakışın Batılı hükümetlerin bakışları ve görüşlerini biçimlendirildiğini, bu sayede Batı dünyasının zayıf göçmen politikalarının temelini oluşturduğuna işaret etmektedir.

Yazar, misafir ülkelerin mülteci politikalarını yeniden gözden geçirmelerinin gerekliliğine güçlü biçimde inanmaktadır. Bu inanın temelinde Oryantalist düşüncenin göçmenler üzerindeki yıkıcı politikaları ile mücadele yatmaktadır. Yazar sonuç olarak AB ülkeleri ve ABD'nin Suriyeli mültecilere karşı manevi ve yasal kısıtlamaları; (1) Kant'ın kozmopolitan misafirperverlik anlayışı, (2) 1951 yılı Göçmen Konvansiyonu ve (3) İnsan hakları Evrensel Beyannamesi ile düzenlemektedirler. Araştırmacı, insani örgütleri mülteciler ve göçmenlerin şikayetçi oldukları olumsuz durumlar ile mücadele için daha güçlü tedbirler almaya çağırmakta; ve de konuk ülkeleri bu gibi kişilere karşı daha sıcak ve pozitif tutum takınmaya davet etmektedir. Dikkate değer bir önerimiz ise, hibrit göçmen kimliklerinin Batıda daha iyi yaşayabilmek için bir çözüm önerisi sunabilme olasılığıdır. Mültecilerin yaşadıkları yeni toplumların Sosyal dokusuna daha hızlı uyum sağlamaları gerekmektedir. Yine, göçmenlerin geldikleri ülkelerin güvenlik ve sürdürülebilirlik konularında politikalar üretmeleri ve mevcut olumsuz durumları gözden geçirmeleri, vatandaşlarının ülkeden ayrılmalarına karşı reformlar yapmaları önemlidir. Güvenlik

ve yaşama koşullarını iyileştirecek tedbirler hayata geçirildiğinde, çoğu mülteci ülkesine yeniden dönmek isteyecektir. Göçmen veren ülkelerin en büyük özelliği sömürge dönemini yaşamış olmalarıdır. Bu durum günümüz mülteci sorununda Batı dünyasının kusur olmamakla birlikte, göçmen veren ülkelerin bir ayıbı olarak dikkate alınmalıdır. Örneğin, Suriye, tarihinin bir döneminde Fransız sömürgesi olarak yaşamıştır. Yaklaşık 30 yıl Fransız idaresi altında kalan ülke daha sonra onlarca yıl Esad ve Baas rejimi ile yönetilmiştir. Hamid, eserinde bu konuya işaret ederek, Batının hala mültecilere nasıl baktığını eleştirmektedir.

Sihirli kapıları kullanarak sınırlar Arasındaki insan göçlerini kolaylıkla açıklamak mümkündür. Gerçekte, sihirli kapılar onlara görünmeyen ve geçilmesi çok daha zor olan iç sınırları tarif etmekte ve göstermekte yardımcı olmaktadır. Kapılar bu nedenle romanda tematik ve estetik işlevi olan objeler olarak anlatılmaktadır. Kitap bu nedenle bir mesaj vermekte ve mesajında mevcut göç krizlerinin Oryantalist perspektif bırakılmadıkça çözümlenemeyeceğine işaret etmektedir.

Anahtar kelimeler: Oryantalizm, mülteciler, sihirli realizm, hibrit, Edward Said, Homi Bhabba

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I. INTRODUCTION

Exit West (2017) by Mohsin Hamid is a novel set in the limelight to provide a microscopic description of the refugee experience in the 21st century. Reality tells that migration has caused the floodgates to open wide into several voluntarily host countries organized by the UN agencies while socio-political hegemony claims that migration has opened Pandora's box for the West. Seen as a rich transcontinental issue that has triggered heated debate across the West, migration has now enriched refugee literature powerfully, thus documenting telling literary examples of how migration and politics are always in a tug-of-war, albeit yoked together. *Exit West* sets the tone of the dynamics of migration alongside the subtle nuances of the heartrending stories of refugees partially left untold, providing the reader with an in-depth description of how a refugee observes the world and how the world forms a mental image about the flow of refugees as represented by the two main characters: Saeed and Nadia throughout *Exit West*.

The reason why *Exit West* was selected as the focus of this research study or thesis is more related to its historical relevance to the Syrian refugee crisis. The novel was written in 2017, two years after the greatest influx of the Syrian refugees into the West or Europe. This influx caused a turning point in the way the West started to react to the Syrian refugee crisis, with this reaction being marked with more tightening measures to limit the number of immigrants who could make it into Europe. In addition, the EU decided to increase funding to the Syrian refugee crisis in Turkey to keep those refugees in Turkey in return for increased funding for Turkey's response to the crisis and other benefits. According to www.rescue.org, 'the EU-Turkey deal' was signed in March 2016 stressing that Turkey would increase its efforts to limit the number of refugees crossing from Turkey to the Greek islands. "In exchange, Turkey would receive €6 billion to improve the humanitarian situation faced by refugees in the country, and Turkish nationals would be granted visa-free travel to Europe." Against these developments in the way the West reacted to the Syrian refugee crisis, Hamid wrote this novel in 2017, and thus the text acquires a

specific critical significance that highlights an inhuman way in which the West reacted to the crisis, which I argue to be deeply informed by an Orientalist mindset. Hence, the book or novel provides an interesting example to analyse and look at. In addition, Hamid writes about migration and refugeeism from first-hand experience, himself being a migrant with a hybrid identity, and thus his novel written in 2017 acquires a further interesting dimension given its critical and historical relevance.

Moreover, what makes *Exit West* different from other novels that talk about migration and refugees, apart from reasons mentioned above, is its timeliness and universality given that it applies to every refugee crisis. That is why critics disagreed whether the novel was written on the Syrian refugee crisis or not. It does not name specifically the country plagued by war, which means that it is any country in the Middle East: Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan, or other countries. This makes the novel, not a historical narrative, but a universal one that can apply to any country like Syria. The historical moment in which the novel was written coincides with one of the most complex refugee crises in the modern era represented in the Syrian refugee crisis. Moreover, the use of magical doors imparts the novel with a fictitious element that makes it different from any historical narration of events with the literary element enhanced using the magical doors. As detailed, the function of the doors within the Orientalist framework of the thesis makes it an enhanced critique of the internal borders, which are the focus of the study. Finally, Hamid writes his novel in English from first-hand experience to his Western audience, who are responsible for this Orientalist approach in dealing with such crises. All these reasons make *Exit West* different from other novels written on the refugees in the 21st century. Such other novels include *The Girl Who Smiled Beads* by Clemantine Wamariya and Elizabeth Weil (2018), *Sea Prayer* by Khaled Hosseini (2018), *The Amazing Adventures of Kavalier & Clay* by Michael Chabon (2000), *Call Me American* by Abdi Nor Iftin (2018), *Sweetness in the Belly* by Camilla Gibb (2005), and *A Land of Permanent Goodbyes* by Atia Abawi (2018). The key difference is the way in which Hamid delivers a strong critique of the internal borders and how they are deeply informed by Orientalism.

Mohsin Hamid is a British-Pakistani novelist, born in Lahore, Pakistan (1971). Hamid lives in the US and the UK. He seems to be well placed to write prescient novels given his preternatural strength to make his novels unputdownable.

His novels summon up the spirits of readers and arouse the social, political, moral troubled and guilty conscience of many in the countries that trigger waves of refugees to flow into the borders of the host countries or internally displaced persons. His writerly proleptic abilities and meticulously minute detail of narration make his novels, par excellence, a candid camera that zooms in and out to best reflect reality as is and not as patched up or papered over. In 1993, Hamid graduated summa cum laude with a Bachelor of Arts from Princeton University. Hamid also studied law at Harvard Law School and graduated in 1997. His notable literary works include *Moth Smoke* (2000), *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* (2007), *London* (2014), and *Exit West* (2017), which is his chef d'oeuvre to date. Hamid received over 30 prestigiously notable awards and honours from international renown bodies for his literary contributions, beyond compare (Hashmi, 2015; Henly *et al.*, 2019).

In his *Exit West*, Hamid runs the whole gamut of refugee onerous marathon journey of the two leading protagonists – Saeed and Nadia – who live somewhere in a fictional Middle Eastern country, plagued by a full-scale civil war, with an implicit reference made to Syria. Relevant and telling descriptions of the refugees make the novel more engaging yet more heartrending. Through magical doors, Saeed and Nadia flee to Greece then to London, with spasmodic waves of other refugees trickling in there. The refugees flowing into London are greeted with downright and implacable hostility by unruly native nationals, taking to the streets. Using magical doors, Saeed and Nadia manage to sneak into the USA, where fewer refugees live. Somehow unwittingly, the deeply rooted and love-bond relationship between Saeed and Nadia comes to an end as they grow more estranged, taxed by their newly gained uprooted and hybrid identities granted by the new world.

Refugeeism or migration is not a socio-political issue limited to the 21st century as literature reveals. Although countries and cultures have much in common, they still have markedly stark differences, and migration and refugeeism can be set as gauges to measure how much the West and the East can come closer or fall apart. Having said this, we should maintain that migration and refugeeism are not confined to our present time; history tells us how many people in ancient times flowed into foreign territories. Over the course of time, they became part of the social fabric. However, migration and refugeeism are now more politicized with discriminatory flavours and tones added to play up the aftermath of the influx of refugees.

Seeking refuge for people plagued with troubled times in their home countries is a historically well-known human phenomenon dating back to prehistory, and *The Iliad* is a case in point according to the Greek mythology. Parker (2021) explains how *The Iliad* tells of a series of saddening stories about a war-torn nation, plagued by ten-year unsettlement and siege. Similar scenarios but in different contexts were narrated across the entire globe about refuge and migration. For example, Syria and Lebanon offered refuge and protection for Palestinian refugees back in the 1940s and 1950s (Al-Hardan, 2016; Gabiam, 2016). Equally important, thousands of Syrian refugees are given protection, asylum and refuge by Turkey, Jordan, and Lebanon as of 2011 when war broke out in Syria (Hovannisian, 2004; Mencütek, 2018; Verme *et al.*, 2015; Beaujouan and Rasheed, 2020). In a similar vein, an influx of about 4 million Iraqi refugees were forced to leave their country following the US-led invasion of Iraq in the Gulf War of 1991 (Sassoon, 2008). When the memory of history flashes back, more than 1.2 million Iraqi refugees sought protection and asylum in the wake of the Iraq-Iran war (1980-1988), which still has its repercussions (Sassoon, 2008). The Syrian and Yemeni refugees were also offered residence in the Gulf countries in relatively different situations (Guidero and Hallward, 2018).

With more complicated ramifications, migration has become more politicized, hence refugees are more blatantly patronized. *Exit West* breathes new life into the whole gamut of the issue to be seen from the eyes and hearts of the refugees. Although refugee prolific literature retells many graphic and despicable events that refugees always sustain, the novel under discussion revisits migration and refugee literature with a new flavour – magical realism – that walks the reader through the different countries, covering at least three continents that make up the northern hemisphere of the entire globe. This further helps to unlock migration and the mysteries couched in internal borders experienced by refugees, who are most often left metaphorically gagged and muffled, hence helpless to voice any complaints out of fear of being ostracized. Refugeeism or migration is a socio-political issue of high sensitivity engulfed by Orientalism.

Given the unique theme tackled in this research study, *Exit West* stands out, inter alia, for the approach it singles out to address how onerously the two refugee protagonists face internal borders throughout their treacherous journey. Equally

important, *Exit West* draws on the enduring legacy of Orientalism bequeathed down to generations, albeit categorically refuted. Against a backdrop of telling instances, *Exit West* displays how Orientalism yoked together with contributory factors always sustains an anti-refugee inclusion approach, which is to accept refugees to socially integrate with society. With Orientalism biasedly shaping public opinion and national policies, lifelong negative effects are hammered into vulnerable refugees, bringing about much ambivalence, which is best manifested in *Exit West*. Over the course of the detailed description of the story, Hamid showcases that migration, which is supposed to serve as a solution to refugees, becomes a new stage for a more serious long-term phenomenon riddled and flawed with psychosocial, sociocultural, and socio-political discomfort.

With the camera of *Exit West* panning across the internal borders, many infamies, including distrust, Islamophobia, racism, rejection, and othering have come into play, triggering a crisis in identity of refugees. *Exit West* cites a telling example of how such narrative trenchant criticism is used to justify inhumane practices followed in the West based on prejudiced discourse driven by Orientalism. Taken together, *Exit West* seeks to provide a descriptive and critical analysis of how internal borders become a breeding ground unfairly conducive to appalling hardships and heart-breaking challenges, not survived by all refugees in their ill-fated destinations. I argue how such biased practices are fuelled by an Orientalist discourse of refugees being uncivilized and different “others” from native nationals in the West, posing a dire threat – as they claim – that gnaws or whittles away at their prestigious lifestyle. Regardless of the geographical, physical, and man-made borders across the several countries, which Saeed and Nadia miraculously slip over through magical doors, it is the socio-political and psychosocial borders that have already cordoned off Saeed and Nadia even before they step in, making it even a chimera for them to arrive in their ultimate destination. Ironically enough, it is by virtue of the magical doors that Saeed and Nadia escape over the barbed-wired fence, so to speak, which can be sometimes vulnerably porous. However, it is the differently internal and invisible borders deeply entrenched and ingrained by their being refugees or ‘others’ that imprison the key refugee protagonists, where Saeed and Nadia get repeatedly disappointed in a world that pretends to adopt civility and suavity but frowns upon refugees with longstanding grudge and grimace, unwelcomingly due to an Orientalist

legacy. Orientalism seems to be a placebo that widens the existing gap between the West and the East; in other words, Orientalism is the *raison d'être* of othering.

I argue that the global refugee crisis is the product of Orientalism, which has been seeding and fuelling for years as a result of exclusion, hatred, othering, and xenophobic practices. Such claims will be proved through the discussion and presentation supported by in-depth analyses of theories articulated by Edward Said and Homi Bhabha. These claims will be further supported by analyses of several textual segments cited from *Exit West*. This will help investigate how the researcher's arguments are translated into everyday reality, both physically and mentally.

In this thesis, I argue that Orientalism seems to have set the stage for the East and the West to be locked into a vicious circle of relational identity continuing forever. I also argue how insidiously Orientalism injects discourse drummed up for by far-right politicians, who provide unfounded fear of why refugees should be denied access to the West. Fed on by Orientalism, inclusion and exclusion are instrumentalized as socio-political weapons to reshape national identity by invisible socio-political borders, which are questioned by Hamid's *Exit West*. Fuelled by far-right xenophobic groups, for instance, the army flooded the street of London in the story in the wake of the influx of refugees, trickling into Hamid's London. This action is considered as a battlefield where refugees are seen as a menace by natives even though such refugees trudge through run-down and impoverished neighbourhoods. Hamid describes this in detail: "between Westminster and Hammersmith legal residents were in a minority, and native-born ones vanishingly few, with local newspapers referring to the area as the worst of the black holes in the fabric of the nation" (Hamid, 2017: 71). In the locality where refugees are boxed in, gas and electricity are poorly installed and often cut off: "for there was no grid electricity in their part of the city anymore, and no piped gas or water, municipal services having entirely broken down, and Saeed said, *IT FEELS NATURAL TO HAVE YOU HERE*" (Hamid, 2017: 46). Sacrifices by refugees are always to be made. In this context, it is the mental losses sustained by refugees vis-à-vis their relative material gains.

Worn-out Orientalist and racist prejudices against the other reshape national and relational identity in the book, creating internally invisible borders to treat

refugees as waifs and strays. Akin to Hamid's approach to criticize how the West feeds on racism and discrimination and looks down at refugees is Edward Said's seminal work *Orientalism* (2003) and Bhabha's *The Location of Culture* (2012). Both books provide in-depth analyses of how the West draws on prejudiced and bigoted preconceptions of refugees coming from the East, brushing aside any reasoning, inclusion, tolerance, or acceptance. *Exit West* revisits Orientalism almost in every sentence; migrant-and-refugee experience is reimagined and universalized in an Orientalist mind-set milieu. Hamid provides realistic snapshots of how life boils and causes victimization of the two leading protagonists. Given the socio-political, socioeconomic, and psychosocial interpellation of the refugee crisis and how it limps along the West, depoliticization of the refugee crisis always seems to make almost no progress, reducing many refugees helpless internalizing the hegemony of the West. In principle and in practice, Orientalist mind-set reengineers and stokes a system of binary paradigms, driving a wedge between the West and the East, while perpetuating haughty hegemony, which is almost spoon-fed to refugees before acquiring a legitimate status. This ideology is translated into actions manifested in *Exit West*.

The story indeed shows how unruly riots, triggered by Orientalist mind-set, against refugees flowing in the would-be host country turned the streets into horrendous massacres: "Militants from Saeed and Nadia's country had crossed over to Vienna the previous week, and the city had witnessed massacres in the streets, the militants shooting unarmed people and then disappearing, an afternoon of carnage unlike anything Vienna had ever seen" (Hamid, 2017: 60). Grudge grows even between native nationals in that far-right ideologues act aggressively against native nationals that welcome refugees peacefully. A telling instance is when a lady from Vienna wearing her peace badge and migrant compassion badge was furiously glared at by anti-refugee unruly riotous native nationals:

The young woman had learned of a mob that was intending to attack the migrants gathered near the zoo, [...] and she planned to join a human cordon to separate the two sides, or rather to shield the migrants from the anti-migrants, and she was wearing a peace badge on her overcoat, and a rainbow pride badge, and a migrant compassion badge, [...] the crowd at the station was not the normal crowd, [...] and found

herself surrounded by men who looked like her brother and her cousins and her father and her uncles, except that they were angry, they were furious, and they were staring at her and at her badges with undisguised hostility, and the rancor of perceived betrayal, and they started to shout at her, and push her, that she felt fear, a basic, animal fear, terror. (Hamid, 2017: 60)

This gives a strong indicator that native nationals bear grudge against refugees as ‘threatening others’ that should be flushed out. Such a dichotomy is widened by Orientalism that highlights the centrality of the West while dwarfing the East. Refugees are never settled. They act very much like pendulums that swing back and forth. This uneasy internal conflict produces a hybridized life, in which refugees are the only victimized beings.

The concept developed by Homi Bhabha back in the 1990s termed as ‘hybridity’ has now come into play across *Exit West*. Following the humiliating debacle tolerated by colonial powers in World War II, postcolonial criticism took form. The European colonial countries spearheaded by Britain, France, Italy, Portugal, and Spain sneaked into the less developed countries to shore up their economies. To this effect, such colonial powers first sneaked into the mindset of the colonized countries and insidiously injected westernized ideologies loaded with the assumed superiority and hegemony of the West into the target colonized countries. Through politicized underestimation clandestinely orchestrated, the target identity, language, and culture of the colonized were purposefully silhouetted, dwarfed, and ridiculously miniaturized vis-à-vis the colonial hubris – the world was reduced to subjugating colonizer and subjugated colonized peoples (Tyson, 2006). Against a backdrop of clash of cultures, identities, and values, colonized peoples were unwittingly trapped into life-threatening ambivalence uneasy to unravel or demystify back then. The newly introduced colonial culture and the existing culture gave birth to premature hybrid and merged identity, which was critically challenging to strike a balance between and weigh them up.

When refugees and asylum seekers are forced to experience a hegemonic culture, identity, and language that are inculcated and indoctrinated forcibly, ambivalent hybridity becomes the unseen power that creates a ripple effect that sweeps through almost everyone and everything: “Hybridity represents that

ambivalent turn of the discriminated subject into the terrifying, exorbitant object of paranoid classification – a disturbing questioning of the images and presences of authority” (Bhabha, 2012: 162). In *Exit West*, Saeed, and Nadia – although survived to slip through magical doors into the West – become hybridized in their values and practices. The work pressure in the West makes the love relationship that has grown in their home country between Saeed and Nadia another sacrifice. Bhabha (2012) further explains that hybridity is another manifestation of the colonizers that once left the colonized countries from the front door yet surreptitiously slipped through the backdoor again into the target colonized people in disguise. This time, ambivalent hybridity can hatch and breed either in the source country or in the target country, feeding on the same end product and end user:

Hybridity is the sign of the productivity of colonial power, its shifting forces, and fixities; it is the name for the strategic reversal of the process of domination through disavowal; that is, the production of discriminatory identities that secure the ‘pure’ and original identity of authority. Hybridity is the revaluation of the assumption of colonial identity through the repetition of discriminatory identity effects. It displays the necessary deformation and displacement of all sites of discrimination and domination. (Bhabha, 2012: 159)

This well-established fact is highlighted by Alter (2017), who researches into how refugees fall victim to hybrid identity and get caught by uneasy ambivalence: either dilute and vitiate their original identity or assume a newly hybridized and merged identity that is uneasy to dovetail with their culture. In this context, a telling instance is that although both Saeed and Nadia survived their treacherous refuge journey and arrived in the West and started working, they became physically separated and hardly able to see each other. Their love affair becomes a past legacy, and they cannot be married due to the newly adopted western lifestyle. In other words, they bring their love to the West but cannot make it successful, hence becomes more like rejected and their lives become more like estranged. However, hybridity is not always negative; it can be positive in countries where people need to adapt to the new milieu, or else they will be much overshadowed. Hybridity is inevitable, and it is part of our ever-changing life. We cannot ignore that human beings develop through their identities that keep evolving, most often for better.

Hybrid identity also helps refugees integrate into the host countries. Pilarska et al. (2016) spells out that “being a migrant's descendant often means possessing a bicultural or transcultural identity – a hybrid identity” (Pilarska et al., 2016: 177). Hamid actually is not entirely pessimistic about the loss of identity that Saeed and Nadia suffer from; this loss, though temporal, is the way to a new birth that is sometimes more meaningful. Nadia, for example, adopts a new culture and identity and is able to lead a new style of life. Those refugees, like Nadia, who manage to survive this battle over the loss of identity, could be agents of change for their nations, acting as a bridge between the West and the East in this book.

Said's *Orientalism* (2003) in tandem with Bhabha's *The Location of Culture* (2012) act as the bedrock of the current thesis. In his seminal and thought-provoking work, Bhabha cracks the code for the conceptual imperative and political consistency of the post-colonial intellectual project. With scrutinizing eyes and based on informed and meticulous examination, Bhabha critically rethinks questions of identity, culture, social agency, and national affiliation. Drawing on several factors that are contributory to cultural hybridity, Bhabha develops a theory of socio-political premises that further explains the intricacy of how social differences push and pull refugees. With Bhabha's theory coming into play, an in-depth explanation is provided to further demystify the ever-opposing polarities of Self and Other, hence, between the contours of East and West. Accordingly, Bhabha provides a theoretical deconstruction that lays bare and dismantles, so to speak, such a binary dichotomy that exists between West and East, represented by Self and Other. Bhabha spells out that hybridity snowballs into the lives of refugees as a by-product brought about by colonialism, regardless of being such a positive feature. Cultural hybridity comprises a liminal condition that involves amorphous identification: “What is displayed in this displacement and repetition of terms is the nation as the measure of the liminality of cultural modernity” (Bhabha, 2012: 201). The Orientalism-triggered ambivalence reads: “the very practice of domination the language of the master becomes hybrid – neither the one thing nor the other” (Bhabha, 2012: 49). As a springboard, I will use his compelling argument therefore to deconstruct the legacy of the discourse on refugees as ‘others’ given that hybridity is a characteristic of the postcolonial Europe in specific.

Bhabha builds on Said's theories developed in his classic book, *Orientalism*, which will be equally relevant to this thesis. Such binaries and stereotypes create and enforce hierarchical systems of power, which Said explicitly describes in *Orientalism*. The thesis statement made for this research study is that the West adopts an entirely racist approach against refugees and migrants coming from MENA and Asian countries through physical and mental borders. Said's *Orientalism* (2003) in tandem with Bhabha's *The Location of Culture* (2012) will be the two working theories for the current research. Using all these theories on discourse, hybridity and Orientalism, the thesis will analyse and research into *Exit West* and the critique it delivers on the refugee crisis within an interdisciplinary approach on migration.

Key to the core themes investigated in the current thesis is the Syrian refugee crisis as staked out in refugee literature. The World Vision Organization is among the international humanitarian organizations that closely monitor and support the Syrian civil uprising that broke out and sparked off an internecine war tearing the social fabric apart and setting back the living standards. The 2021 reports by the World Vision Organization reveal that the Syrian refugee crisis takes its toll on the internal and external stability of Syria over an eleven-year crisis lifespan. It also emphasizes that the Syrian refugee crisis remains regrettably the largest refugee, migration, and displacement crisis currently across the entire globe. When replaying the human memory back to 15 March of 2011, many Syrian families have been grievously suffering despicable agonies, brutalities, and savageries, causing the whole gamut of grievances, bereavements, killings, kidnappings, destruction along with unlimited manifestations of war scourge (Beaujouan and Rasheed, 2020). Equally important, the statistics produced by the World Vision Organization also reveal that out of the total population of Syria, about 6.8 million Syrians are reduced to refugees and asylum-seekers, while 6.7 million people are internally displaced persons in Syria. In a rough calculation, about 13.5 million Syrians are forced to become refugees, making up more than 50% of the total population of Syria (Rabil, 2016; Freedman *et al.*, 2017; Yavuz, 2020). Again, about 11.1 million people of the total population of Syria scattered across the Syrian cities and villages are in dire need of humanitarian assistance. Taken together, half of the existing population of the country along with the future generations of their descendants will suffer ambivalence of hybrid identity and culture after they trudge through a long loss of

culture and identity, fighting off the dichotomy of Self and Other and the West and the East (Ferris and Kirisci, 2016; Panlilio, 2017). Torn apart by war, the existing and future Syrian generations, particularly children, do and will suffer loss of national identity and ambivalence:

A recent UNICEF report finds that one third of all Syrian children were born during the conflict, with 300.000 of these 3.7 million Syrian children born as refugees (UNICEF, 2016). These demographic patterns raise concerns about the prospects of a generation of Syrian children and youth living through conflict and displacement. (Devarajan and Mottaghi, 2016: 17)

It should be noted that the response to the Syrian refugee crisis is not the same across the host countries. This means that hybridity of cultural identity is not impacted at the same degree. Ostrand (2015) reveals that the UK, Germany, and Sweden provide different levels of permanent protection and resettlement to Syrian refugees, while the USA provides them temporary protection. Ostrand (2015) also argues that the world community has provided insufficient support to Syrian refugees. This means that the existing Syrian refugees in the West (Sweden, Germany, Austria, Belgium, Switzerland, Norway, Denmark, Canada, USA, etc.) are more vulnerable and susceptible to hybridity of national identity and culture. They will feel not overnight but over the course of time heavily ambivalent. Refugees can be sometimes big winners yet can be also big losers; migration *per se* may be a euphemism for uprootedness when migrants are forced to flee their countries and live abroad. However, hybridity can be sometimes as it creates or builds a bridge between the West and East given that those hybrid refugees become agents of change or connectors between the West and the East.

The short-term return of migration, refuge, and asylum is good for security reasons in times of war along with financial considerations for poor countries. However, regardless of the reasons, the long-term impact on refugees varies. The loss of sense of belonging to their home countries is mostly passed down to future generations. Sobecki *et al.*, (2019) investigates how migration is as labile change can trap people in a tug-of-war in which the legacy of the past of one's homeland and present lives do not survive together. Equally important, Sobecki *et al.*, (2019) highlights traumatic problems that crop up now and then, such as disintegration and

intolerance. Yet, it can never be denied that those refugees, if they manage to survive, will be agents of change and peace between the majority and the minority. In other words, those of hybrid identities bridge the gap between the minority and the majority (the Orient and the Occident in this novel) despite the loss of belonging that they suffer from in their movement from the first identity associated with their old country into their new identity associated with their new host country. Hamid presents the example of Nadia who manages at the end to assimilate into the new culture while Saeed seems to have failed. Hamid is not thus entirely pessimistic about hybridity as he maintains some sort of optimism, exemplified in the case of Nadia.

In his thought-provoking and seminal work, *Globalization: The Human Consequences*, Bauman makes a well-turned statement that reads: “Green light for the tourists, red light for the vagabonds” (Bauman, 2013: 93). Bauman also draws attention to the dichotomy of migration and the liminal changes that sneak into the everyday lives of the present and future refugees in the 20th century all the way long to the 21st century. Although migration is inherently characteristic of the human nature, migration has snowballed and ballooned into refuge for humanitarian reasons. It stands to reason that wave of large-scale migration *per se* can be seasonal, but when triggered by war, climatic change (volcanoes, earthquakes, droughts, fires, etc.), persecution, ethnic cleansing and the like, migration takes different patterns (Sobecki *et al.*, 2019). When migrants move to host countries, attachment to their home countries remains persistent. Over the course of time, however, they often start losing their identities and ambivalence prevails in their diaspora.

Be it for man-made or natural crises, migration starts and ends in dualism that develops into a multi-layered status driven by a spate of factors contributory to forming internal communities easily marked and demarcated. Statistically, the World Economic Forum (2020) estimates that the international migrants are about 272 million people, accounting for about 3.5% of the world’s population. Regrettably enough, uncontrolled waves of migration are on the increase. In a similar vein, heartrending reports by UNICEF (2018) reveal that more 25 million children are either internally displaced or moving across international borders impacted by man-made factors, such as civil war, deprivation, discrimination, persecution, violence, ethnic cleansing, sedition, armed conflict, or natural disasters, such as climatic

change along with globalization-impacted transformation. Of great note, migration in unison with refugeeism makes up liminal and labile framework that constructs one's identity, hence, causing formidable challenges in adaptation and resilience. The tug-of-war for refugees is a stage of protracted and behind-the-scene negotiations that they are forced to enter but not guaranteed to always pay off (Markowska-Manista, 2016; Sobiecki *et al.*, 2019).

The present thesis provides an-in-depth and interdisciplinary analysis and discussion of internal invisible borders encountered by refugees, who first feel comfortable and easy but later feel unable to adapt, bringing a lump to their throats while warding off racism, exclusion, Islamophobia, etc. Hamid's *Exit West* makes a resonating success in the cogent examples cited to level and voice such a scathing yet valid criticism against the Orientalist discourse. When bringing the limp Orientalist mindset to the limelight, I can logically and methodologically debunk and lay bare the perniciously unfounded myths and flimsy fallacies perpetuated by the West about the influx of refugees, trickling from the East. Equally important, I also aim to provide a relevant and contemporary commentary and analysis in literary terms on migration as a hot topic in today's globalized world, thereby contribute to shaping public understanding and opinion on migration as a global issue.

To best help the readership to understand how refugees are decoyed and victimized in the West, Hamid uses a literary technique in his *Exit West*, known as magical realism, best manifested in the magical doors. In *Exit West*, magical doors make it possible for IDPs to become refugees in the West. This literary device demythologizes the mental and man-made borders. It also means that the entire world is a small village; people cannot live in silos when problems crop up anywhere. Warnes and Sasser (2020) explain that magical realism is a new yet widely recognized literary genre of the twenty-first century novels. It brings together probable and improbable elements we once conceived impossible to take place. Against a backdrop of a mix of reality and fantasy, magical realism infuses dimensions into such a creative energy that helps readers understand how chimeras can be dreams to be realized. The suffering of migration and refugeeism driven by several factors are voiced through magical realism across the Middle East, North Africa, Latin America, Africa, Asia and even beyond. Among leading novelists and writers who best use Magical Realism are Gabriel Isabel Allende, García Márquez,

Ben Okri, Mohsin Hamid, Salman Rushdie, Alejo Carpentier (Warnes and Sasser; 2020; Can, 2014). Magical Realism in literature seeks to reconceptualize space, time, interdisciplinary ideas.

Magical doors for Saeed and Nadia in Hamid's *Exit West* – hence for refugees – become more like a compass that guides them to their diasporic cytosure. It enables Hamid to focus his criticism on the internal doors created and built by Orientalism. Magical realism was first initiated by painters across Europe. Over the course of time, magical realism has been utilized to represent the postcolonial shift in literature and the concomitant diaspora of the Third World countries, which are trapped into the hybrid cultural and national loss of identity in 1980s up to date (Can, 2014). In addition to Hamid's *Exit West*, other novels that draw on magical realism include Ben Okri's *The Famished Road* (1991), Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* (1981), Shashi Tharoor's *The Great Indian Novel* (1989), Syl Cheney-Coker's *The Last Harmattan of Alusine Dunbar* (1990) and several others (Sandín and Perez, 2012; Can, 2014). In magical realism, everything is possible and against the laws of logic. It was first aimed to amuse and entertain children: “magical realism provides a perfect means for children to explore the world through their imaginations without losing a connection to what they recognize as the real world” (Bowers, 2004: 100). Over the course of time, magical realism has become a literary vehicle in literature to express imaginary solutions for refugees as fictionalized and dramatized in several diasporic stories that have been so far left untold. Magical realism and fantasy are different. According to Evans, magical realism is rooted in our reality, while fantasy is able to break free from it (Evans, 2008).

The world remains ground in reality but develops into more fantasy, which blends magic and reality to produce liminal and labile sense that override laws of logic. Etymologically, magical realism is a literary genre first derived from German by Franz Roh circa (1925) and was later developed into English by Angel Flores (1955), by which he meant that uncanny elements may come into play in the real world when we well observe a minute detailed series of actions that cascade out of one thing. Technically, magical realism is: “The one thing that the majority of critical works about the related terms magical realism, magical realism and marvellous realism agree upon is that these terms are notoriously difficult to define” (Bowers, 2004: 1). The characters in Hamid's *Exit West* cannot crack the code of the magical

doors although some successfully use them to be transported elsewhere. The difference between magical realism and fantastic literature, though sometimes difficult to discern, is important to mention here. According to Jon Evans, fantasy is very different from magical realism where the latter places readers in a realistic world, while the former (fantasy) creates an unreal world with unreal characters. Fantasy fiction creates worlds where different creatures and places exist that are not found in our own world. Magical realism is rooted in our reality, while fantasy is able to break free from it (Evans, 2008).

Novels drawing on magical realism in how and why it is manifested have something in common. The events in novels drawing on magical realism take place in realistic places, which readers are aware of (Jensen, 2011; Aldea, 2011). In *Exit West*, widespread rumours circulate refugees that some magical doors can possibly lead to places, such as Dubai, London, Germany, and other long-awaited destinations. Again, the authors of novels featuring magical realism build up suspense by providing limited information and leaving many elements unexplained, which is meant to get the readers mentally engaged (Jensen, 2011; Aldea, 2011). In *Exit West*, we read of magical doors, but we know little about how they operate, so do the refugees: they are left at their wits' ends, undergoing fits of optimism and pessimism, which play the impact of domino effect on the trajectory of their onerous journeys.

Interestingly, these magical doors have different functions depending on the country they are in or based on the users. For people like Saeed and Nadia, and in countries plagued by civil wars, magical doors have the function of providing war-affected refugees with a passage into safety and dignity to cities that are peaceful such as London, Dubai, or Marin. However, when these doors are placed in the West for example or used by Westerners, they function as a means of exploring other countries in the world or enjoying time. This stark contrast in the function of magical doors depending on the users or the poles (West or East) is a strong message by the writer on the way in which Orientalism has divided the world between those who run from death across the borders and those who travel to enjoy time across the borders. The below quotation shows one example of how the magical doors have different functions based on the users of these doors.

Later his daughter and his best friend would receive via their phones a photo of him, on a seaside that seemed to have no trees, a desert seaside, or a seaside that was in any case dry, with towering dunes, a seaside in Namibia, and a message that said he would not be returning, but not to worry, he felt something, he felt something for a change, and they might join him, he would be glad if they did, and if they chose to, a door could be found in his flat. With that he was gone, and his London was gone, and how long he remained in Namibia it was hard for anyone who formerly knew him to say. (Hamid, 2017: 72)

In the above citation from the novel, we know of an English accountant who found a magical door in his room. We know that he has been contemplating suicide because he got bored at life in London. At first, he armed himself with a hockey stick and thought of calling the police, but then he decided that it was okay to have a magical door in his house. The door reminded him of children's books, so he decided to go through it. He later sent a message to his daughter and best friend telling them that he is in Namibia and will not be returning as he seems to be enjoying his time much better than when he was in London. This quotation shows us that this accountant uses the door to travel to an African country to enjoy time on the beach. It shows how the function of the magical doors is not one and the same. While it is used by refugees from the East to protect their lives from death, it is used by Westerners to explore other countries, enjoy time, and run away from their monotonous lives. The function of the magical doors as such highlights an already existing gap between the West and the East.

Critics view the use of magical realism in novels not just as a literary genre; it is seen as a critique and an aesthetic element of necessity. Issifou (2012) argues that magical realism displays a literary modality that breaks away from the conventional modalities, brought about by many postcolonial writers in Africa. Drawing on such literary departure, postcolonial writers can better express multi-dimensional realities they are trapped in. Such a functional juxtaposition – reality vis-à-vis magic – can better contrast their everyday lives and their cherished ambitions, translating their dissatisfaction into valid paradoxical events, hence highlighting their postcolonial multi-faceted crises (Issifou, 2012). Simply put, magical realism offers not just a literary criticism; rather, it provides a literary satirical criticism about the multi-

dimensional realities that have become unbearable. In our case, the use of magical realism helps the writer comment on the more provoking nature of the Orientalist internal borders, and how they are harsher and more difficult to cross than the visible and physical ones. For Gee (2021), magical realism revels in the vital intensity of liminal and labile present moment. It lies somewhere between the assumed facticity of realism and the often-perceived irrational possibility of magical events to come into play (Gee, 2021). In principle and in practice, magical realism is utilized by several writers to express their dissatisfaction with and critique of uneasy realities that refugees fall victim to. In *Exit West*, refugees are either denied access to several countries or remain forcibly trapped in their home countries amidst the unbearable scourge of civil war. Hamid makes available some magical doors but not accessible to all refugees; only to few, including Saeed and Nadia. This is purposefully intended to show the readership how realities would be much improved once refugees are given access to their destination(s). However, Hamid again shows gradually how Saeed and Nadia are taxed unduly when they reach their chimera – the loss of cultural identity is the unavoidable compromise they sustain. The microscopic description and inner psychosocial feelings of refugees can only be put into a narrative piece of literature by a true genius like Mohsin Hamid, who has vicarious and first-hand experience in migration and refugeeism. Yet, Hamid, as mentioned before, is not entirely pessimistic about this loss of identity; those of hybrid identities, when they survive, like Nadia, enrich the new community they melt into. While Saeed seems to oscillate and never succeeds, thus resulting in a dichotomy he never gets out from, Nadia manages to acquire a new identity. Both yet experience loss at some stage in their refugee journey, which Hamid dramatizes powerfully.

Hamid's *Exit West* develops a constructive contemporary commentary on the migrant and refugee crisis, criticizing far-right discourse of politicians, who feed and capitalize on the bigoted discourse and legacy of Orientalism, which constructs refugees as OTHER vis-à-vis native nationals as SELF. Such distrust, enmity, animosity, and rancour remain relentlessly implacable as the sequential events of the novel unfold. Hamid's fictional abilities in *Exit West* show proleptic leaps into the future to shape what may come (Hamid, 2017). Hamid's *Exit West* will be the case study to lay bare and expose the discourse that feeds on Orientalism, which also fuels racism, distrust, othering, and hate against refugees.

It would be helpful to outline the organizational structure of the current thesis and provide a logical flow into the subsequent sections and the synthesis of the whole body of the text. The current thesis falls into four parts: Chapter One which serves as an introduction, Chapter Two and Chapter Three, which argue and defend the thesis statement, and finally Chapter Four which serves as a conclusion. Chapter One provides an overview of *Exit West*, Mohsin Hamid, magical realism, Orientalism, refugeeism, migration, Bhabha's theory of hybridity and other relevant issues seminal to the core discussion of the overarching themes. Chapter Two conducts a defence of the thesis and arguments put up and formulated about refugees and the deeply ingrained discourse triggered by Orientalism. It also develops cogent and telling arguments in defence of Hamid's *Exit West* and how Orientalism is used in the West to fuel the refugee crisis with telling instances cited from Hamid's *Exit West*. Chapter Two provides an in-depth analysis of the incidents of the whole chronological trajectory of the marathon onerous journey with comparative references to be made to other literary relevant works, eliciting information grounded in the theories, such as (Said's Orientalism and Bhabha's hybridity). Chapter Two also generates multi-dimensional interpellation of the refugee crisis, citing microscopic description of their despicable suffering throughout their labile and liminal stages of lives. Chapter Three provides a deeper analysis of the argument constructed and the reality of defensive evidence cited from *Exit West*. The discussion in this chapter will help synthesize the interpellation of how Orientalism is used in the West to reflect on the refugee crisis. It also shows how the novel discusses relevant issues with a literary and critical approach and the consequences revealed by the author's proleptic and preternatural abilities that help shape how the future may be. In Chapter Four, I provide a fitting conclusion that summarizes the interdisciplinary and in-depth analysis alongside the findings revealed to highlight the constructive and compelling defence put up of the thesis. I put forward the limitations I have encountered and possible future research topics that can be potentially conducted by researchers who evince a special interest in refugeeism to further enhance the existing literature on refugees.

This thesis, in effect, attempts to analyse *Exit West* as a novel on refugees, and the complex issues it raises in this regard. In specific, I argue that the internal borders that the two refugee protagonists face in this novel, among other refugees,

build on the old legacy of Orientalism, despite being refuted. Based on my argument, I show how an Orientalist discourse is used to sustain an anti-refugee inclusion approach i.e., this approach argues that refugees coming from parts of the world like those of Said and Nadia should not be welcomed. The argument-driven discussion reveals how Orientalism continues to shape public opinion and national policies and continues to bring material negative effects on vulnerable refugees from the “other” part of the world that is not Western. The recent war or conflict in Ukraine supports and validates my thesis argument powerfully where we have seen in Western media many racist remarks by politicians and European leaders about why Ukrainian refugees should be welcomed (because they are white essentially or like “us”) while those like Syrians and Africans should not (because they are looked at as “others” or “aliens” thus making them different). As such, the key thesis argument has benefited from the Russian-Ukrainian conflict in the sense that it validates the thesis argument about how Orientalism, which is deeply rooted in the mentality of the West, still controls how the West looks at refugees coming from different parts of the world: those coming from the East are “others” while those coming from Ukraine are “us” and thus can be welcomed in the West.

It should be noted that the origin countries of refugees should shoulder the blame for the stampede and exodus of refugees given the poor conditions of livelihoods, tyrannical governments and brutal torture methods exercised in prisons (Le Caisne, 2018; Padnos, 2021). The influx of millions of Syrian refugees to the West is caused by the brutal warring parties and the despotic Syrian regime (Baban, *et al.*, 2021), who should equally bear the total responsibility for diaspora.

II. ORIENTALISIM REVISITED IN *EXIT WEST*

Exit West is a multi-dimensional outcry against racism, hatred, and exclusion triggered almost ubiquitously by unfounded and risible allegations. It is steeped in evidence-based criticism for the flip side of the discourse of the West that feeds on Orientalism against the refugee crisis that echoes down for ages. As the incidents of *Exit West* unfold chronologically, I will defend my argument that it is Orientalism that makes man-made and mental borders push away refugees from the West. I will cite telling instances that prove how Orientalism yoked together with the discourse of the West buries the cultural identity of refugees, who slip into ambivalence of dichotomy and the awkward hybridity posited and theorized by Bhabha. The thorough analysis will cover the two protagonists, their actions and reactions, explicit and implicit agonies.

Hamid's *Exit West* serves as a multi-faceted material seminal to the argument made by the thesis as a premise to be proved, drawing on contextual evidence cited from the novel. The writer who migrated from Pakistan to the United States of America and the United Kingdom provides a first-hand and vicarious experience about the treacherous journey of migration (Kanwal, 2015). The diasporic elements sneak early into the first chapters couched in loss of identity albeit in one's homeland, loss of identity while en route or at different camp locations, and seemingly regain of identity in the host countries. These life-or-death stages are punctuated with verbal or behavioural reactions impassioned with Orientalism-triggered discourse that is deeply rooted and steeped in Otherness. Said and Nadia seem to be partially engulfed and devoured by a nuanced loss of identity while at the camp; over the course of their progress, they slipped uneasily and comfortably into a hybridized identity which does not fit, but they should adopt a hybridized identity or else they will be ostracized.

The author foreshadows a lot from the title *Exit West*, which connotes a paradoxical witticism. Thanks to metalinguistic interpretation, *Exit* may connote that the influx of refugees flooding into the West will need to be edged out or else need to

be engulfed by the westernized identity against their silhouetted identity, if any. *Exit* can also be interpreted as a positive connotation; it is an indirect call for the refugees to leave their countries that have been impacted by oppression and suppression and head for the West as it is the long-awaited paradise, hence be melted into the westernized identity. If either interpretation is valid, refugees will always be caught and trapped by the ambush of either Orientalism that creates stark differences of US versus THEM or the ambush of foggy hybridity of identity, which is in fact a total loss of identity for the interest of the host countries. The more refugees move away from their home country, the more they depart physically and emotionally albeit reunited occasionally. This reflects also interpersonal loss of identity other than the loss of national identity. As the novel unfolds, Hamid provides ample telling examples of how immigrants are doomed to sustain a spate of losses.

Equally important, the next two chapters will explain how migration in *Exit West* takes different nuanced manifestations triggered by various factors. However, immigrants driven by wars trudge physically and mentally through hardships and become inured to recurrent disappointments with flickers of hope that breath a fresh air to the immigrants' perilous journeys all the way long. The threats of nationalism yoked together with Orientalism seem to be like a slam in the face to refugees. Of course, the blame is not to be put solely on the West. The internal conditions of the home countries of refugees also account for their victimization: "With hundreds of people seeking to escape civil war and tyrannical regimes in Middle Eastern countries, human traffickers have a new stream of refugees to victimize. Syrian refugees are especially vulnerable, as they flee a country mired in a civil war" (Cengiz and Roth, 2019: 111). Refugees forcibly driven out by tyrannical regimes will never get back to their home countries (Simcox, 2021). Whether the blame to be equally placed on the host countries or home countries, a global observation made by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), which reveals that "it is tragic that refugees and asylum seekers in the twenty-first century have not been received hospitably in some host countries and cities" (Chan, 2017: 178). Again, the blame is not to be placed on the Western host countries in that many refugees managed to find a way out only in one of the neighbouring countries that are economically less fortunate than their home countries: "most refugees are hosted in neighbouring countries that do not necessarily enjoy better economic conditions

and often may be struggling with pre-existing food insecurity” (Shenggen *et al.*, 2014: 45). This means that the blame is not solely placed on the Western host countries given the fact that the 21st-century context of refugees is markedly complicated.

Again, some of them are motivated by their personal aspirations to travel abroad. This fuels deeply seated feelings of being uneasy to voice at home and live comfortably as embodied by Nadia, who can easily adapt to new realities abroad, while Saeed is much attached to his own homeland. Again, one’s country of origin impacts an immigrant’s life in the West, which is cherished covertly and overtly by Orientalism. Refugees from the Middle East flooding into the Western countries are not equally treated vis-à-vis refugees trickling from, say, Asia or Latin America into the European countries. When Russia invaded Ukraine, Ukrainian refugees were warmly welcome by Polish, German, Spanish, Hungarian, Romanian people. On www.aa.com.tr, Santiago Abascal, Spanish congressman, and leader of the right-wing Vox Party, flagrantly voiced his racist Orientalism against Muslim refugees and asylum seekers: “Ukrainian refugees are welcome, Muslim refugees are not”. Surveillance is another product put into action by Orientalism; refugees are under surveillance by drones and manned patrols even at the border and after they feel they are settled. *Exit West* well explains that the borderlines enhanced by barbed wires and barricades are man-made and imaginary in reality. Through magical doors, *Exit West* proves that refugees move from one country to another with no restrictions; such limitations are products of the otherness fuelled by Orientalism and when refugees manage to coexist with the western society comfortably, the loss of identity is couched or mitigated by hybridity of identity.

In the wake of the 9/11 Attacks of 2001, the West – the US and the European Union (EU) in particular – adopted a more restrictive set of immigration and refugeeism policies (Ciment and Radzilowski, 2015). Following the newly adopted rigid policies back then, the Bush Administration declared war on terrorism, targeting Muslim countries and countries of Muslim majorities, which include national security measures, such as vetting refugees coming from certain blacklisted countries. More so, the Trump Administration also introduced into force travel ban on selected Muslim countries in January of 2017 (Starr-Deelen, 2017; Koh, 2018). Ironically enough, the East is looked down on by the West although the East is still

decoyed by the West. For the Eastern people, the West is a mythic representation of utopia, idolized as hope and salvation from all evils of life, such as poverty, unemployment, equity, equality, injustice, oppression, persecution, and subservience to mention but a few. Yet, this utopia is demythologized, laid bare, exposed, and debunked in *Exit West* (Bercovich, 1993). The East showcased by refugees' unbridled desires to head for the West is locked into a continued loop of segregation; refugees flooding from the East into the West degrade their home countries and deify any host countries. This causes a loss of identity and makes the West more arrogantly hegemonic and imperiously overbearing, feeding on a biased discourse stoked by Orientalism.

Like a tug-of-war, tension between the Orient and Occident flared up politically, socially, culturally, ethnically, or otherwise expressed. With hate, Islamophobia, racism, discrimination, bigotry, hubris, and hegemony coming into play, uneasiness snowballed into the mindset of people: "Orientalism is a style of thought based upon an ontological and epistemological distinction made between the Orient and the Occident" (Said, 2003: 2).

Debates today about Frenchness and Englishness in France and Britain respectively, or about Islam in countries such as Egypt and Pakistan, are part of that same interpretive process which involves the identities of different others, whether they be outsiders and refugees, or apostates and infidels. It should be obvious in all cases that these processes are not mental exercises but urgent social contests involving such concrete political issues as immigration laws, the legislation of personal conduct, the constitution of orthodoxy, the legitimization of violence or insurrection, the character and content of education, and the direction of foreign policy, which very often has to do with the designation of official enemies. In short, the construction of identity is bound up with the disposition of power and powerlessness in each society. (Said, 2003: 332)

Orientalism is a mode of representation rooted in the legacy of the Orient represented in the books of the Occident in specific stereotypical ways, focusing on pre-ideas of how the East is represented in the eyes of the West. Hamid does not focus on representations per se; rather, he tries to analyse and critique how these

representations inherited from Shakespeare and other Western writers continue to cause material harm in our current century represented in the refugee crises that the world is seeing. Saeed and Nadia are examples of Oriental people who suffer because of these representations inherited from the past. They suffer neglect, rejection, othering, and racism because of these representations that still inform how Western governments look at those people even when those people are poor and helpless. While Shakespeare and other writers presented the Orient as an exotic place that has to be controlled and colonized lest it poses a real danger on the West, Hamid presents those people as helpless refugees that are rejected and treated as less than humans when they are in need. As such, Hamid is not concerned essentially with representations of the Orient but with how these worn-out representations now cause real harm for those helpless refugees coming from the Orient. Said analysed powerfully the representations of the Orient in Western thought to highlight an adopted way of looking collectively at the East. As such, it is now a must that the way in which the Middle East is represented in the West should change; it should free itself from the shackling legacy of Orientalism to allow for the human side of the dilemma of those people to emerge, so the West can address these refugee crises which are still governed and responded to from an Orientalism perspective. Taken together, Said means that all these exercises are merely wool-gathering, engineered over time by Orientalist mind-set to construct man-made identity rather than seemingly natural identity as many people misbelieve over the past years and many years yet to come:

What makes all these fluid and extraordinarily rich actualities difficult to accept is that most people resist the underlying notion: that human identity is not only not natural and stable, but constructed, and occasionally even invented outright. Part of the resistance and hostility to books like *Orientalism*, or after it *The Invention of Tradition*, and *Black Athena*, stems from the fact that they seem to undermine the naive belief in the certain positivity and unchanging historicity of a culture, a self, a national identity. (Said, 2003: 332)

The idea about the true nature of one's identity posited by Said (2003) is implicitly and explicitly translated into reality and is well echoed and emphasized by Bhabha (2012), who believes that identity is an outcome of hybridity. One's own

identity changes over the course of time and assumes different flavours based on the milieu one lives in:

In keeping with the spirit of the ‘right to narrate’ as a means to achieving our own national or communal identity in a global world, demands that we revise our sense of symbolic citizenship, our myths of belonging, by identifying ourselves with the ‘starting- points’ of other national and international histories and geographies. (Bhabha, 2012: XX)

For Bhabha, refugees, whether wittingly or unwittingly, are trapped into hybridized identity, which they assume because of the shift to another world, which partially reproduces them afresh with a mix of their old identity fused into their new identity:

[...] in the fin de siècle, we find ourselves in the moment of transit where space and time cross to produce complex figures of difference and identity, past and present, inside, and outside, inclusion and exclusion. For there is a sense of disorientation, a disturbance of direction. (Bhabha, 2012: 2)

This macroscopic description is best reflected in Saeed and Nadia of Hamid’s *Exit West*. The transformation induced to identity is partially the raison d’être of Orientalism and partially due to corollary of multi-dimensional differences that are inevitable to bury or compromise. Hamid well displays how Saeed and Nadia, among others, experience many exercises and practices of latent Orientalism or manifest Orientalism shown by natives, which will be provided with much detailed and telling quotations from *Exit West*.

In Hamid’s *Exit West*, we feel the gradual shift of their behavioural, emotional, and mental development that their identities undergo from their home cities up to their diasporic host country. In a city that sustained shelling and carpet bombing with many poorly provided services cut off, Saeed and Nadia loved each other and lived relatively happily. When they managed to slip into another country in the West through a magical door, their identities – hence their relationship – was on the wane both physically and emotionally: “spoilage had begun to manifest itself in their relationship, and each recognized it would be better to part now, ere worse came”. (Hamid, 2017: 114)

As the title of the novel connotes, *Exit West*, the Occident ostensibly is a panacea for the Orient, while in fact, it is a placebo riddled with mind-set couched in ruthless Orientalism. Before the narrator walks the readers through the chapters, they are given the impression that unlike the Orient, the Occident has a unique sky that is always illuminated by lights; a bird's eye view tells much about the different skies. Such conceptualization has been built and hammered into the people's mindset whether they are in the East or the West. The socio-political tone was set for such a dichotomy conceptually or physically in such a manner that people flooding into the West are pre-equipped with the seemingly paradise-like western countries. Orientalism in *Exit West* is multi-faceted experience, be it visual, auditory, olfactory, gustatory, and tactile. People hear and know of London; however, when London is inhabited by refugees, Orientalism comes into play, and London is partitioned into Light London and Dark London. This is a strong message drummed up for by Orientalism and its regularly repeated dichotomies: US and THEM fuelled by Otherness:

Mykonos had not been well lit, but electricity had reached everywhere there were wires. In their own fled city, when the electricity had gone, it had gone for all. But in London there were parts as bright as ever, brighter than anyplace Saeed or Nadia had seen before, glowing up into the sky and reflecting down again from the clouds, and in contrast the city's dark swaths seemed darker, more significant, the way that blackness in the ocean suggests not less light from above, but a sudden drop-off in the depths below. (Hamid, 2017: 79)

This is a visual discrimination against refugees. When some refugees trudged through Europe and headed for London, the areas inhabited by foreigners are poorly equipped with facilities and utilities; electricity and water were cut off frequently in the poor areas. This is a stark racism and blatant discrimination fuelled by Orientalism with no valid justifications against the refugees coming from the East. Back in the country of origin where many refugees come from, such services are provided equally for all with a zero-degree of discrimination.

More so, Orientalism creeps over refugees and impacts their auditory senses. Sadly enough, refugees are grouped into pens cordoned off far from the hustle and bustle of normal life. They are treated like herds of animals or terrorists being

monitored deafening and buzzing drones for espionage and surveillance, reducing privacy and comfort down to zero:

At night, in the darkness, as drones and helicopters and surveillance balloons prowled intermittently overhead, fights would sometimes break out, and there were murders and rapes and assaults as well. Some in dark London blamed these incidents on nativist provocateurs. (Hamid, 2017: 79)

With such horrendous crimes committed inside the refugee camps, Orientalism seeks to build an impression that refugees are unruly and ill-mannered. Nationals would not allow refugees to integrate and socialize with the host society, preferring prejudicially to ostracize them. Of note, fights, rapes, and murders are uncommon in the everyday lives of refugees back in their home countries, but they are induced in the host countries by provocateurs and ideologues of hate and racism.

In the West, Orientalism terrorizes refugees through auditory and olfactory triggers as if to shove them off into the middle of nowhere. In other words, in the poor areas where refugees were boxed and penned, they were terrorized by the rumble of low-flying and hovering helicopters scrambled to scare them off and vacate the area for no good reason. To add insult to injury, pungent and foul smell drifted through their windows:

They heard helicopters and more shooting and announcements to peacefully vacate the area made over speakers so powerful that they shook the floor, and they saw through the gap between mattress and window thousands of leaflets dropping from the sky, and after a while they saw smoke and smelled burning, and then it was quiet, but the smoke and the smell lasted a long time, particularly the smell, lingering even when the wind direction changed. (Hamid, 2017: 87)

Of the telling examples of how Orientalism causes tactile discrimination that refugees feel deep is when the pasture and vegetation is worn out and eroded because of their feet as the area is too crowded to a fault. The police vehicles running across the camp area also contributed to degrading the soil where it now feels more like a sign that is unwelcome:

But she stayed anyway, next to Saeed on the naked earth that had been stripped of plants by hundreds of thousands of footsteps and rutted by the tires of ponderously heavy vehicles, feeling for the first time unwelcome. Or perhaps unengaged. Or perhaps both. (Hamid, 2017: 94)

The greenery and beauty of London and the West are off-limits comfort to the refugees; they are dumped into such poorly gravelled with no green spaces to feast their eyes on after their treacherous journeys from their impacted home countries. This is strong sign of manifest Orientalism that Said (2003) emphasizes, and it will be further discussed and exemplified.

Orientalism also feeds on the stark discrimination between refugees and the native population in terms of the neighbourhood and houses they live in. Refugees are bulldozed to live in low-ceiling, tiny, cramped, stuffy, windowless, shabby, smelly, and darkened tent-like rooms, all packed into an area cordoned off to be easily controlled by helicopters or by crowd management police units. This causes lack of social integration and socialization into the host society, which by time may cause undesirable problems, such as crimes, rapes, robberies, assaults, vandalisms, arsons, to mention but a few due to the deprivation refugees are forced into. As Hamid's descriptive camera pans across the camp, it provides a severe yet legitimate criticism about the miserable conditions of the poor refugees boxed like chicken unaware of their ill-fated destiny:

All over London houses and parks and disused lots were being peopled in this way, some said by a million migrants, some said by twice that. It seemed the more empty a space in the city the more it attracted squatters, with unoccupied mansions in the borough of Kensington and Chelsea particularly hard-hit, their absentee owners often discovering the bad news too late to intervene, and similarly the great expanses of Hyde Park and Kensington Gardens, filling up with tents and rough shelters, such that it was now said that between Westminster and Hammersmith legal residents were in a minority, and native-born ones vanishingly few, with local newspapers referring to the area as the worst of the black holes in the fabric of the nation. (Hamid, 2017: 71)

In London, for instance, refugees are unfairly looked down at by natives as black holes and the worst fabric of the British nation. This feeling has ballooned into hate and racism over the course of time fuelled by Orientalism that defines the West and the East with broad lines. These assumptions made up by the Occident against the Orient have become materials of interest for more heated debates, producing refugee literature to revisit the misconceptions that have snowballed into everyday life realities:

The result for Orientalism has been a sort of consensus: certain things, certain types of statement, certain types of work have seemed for the Orientalist correct. He has built his work and research upon them, and they in turn have pressed hard upon new writers and scholars. Orientalism can thus be regarded as a manner of regularized (or Orientalized) writing, vision, and study, dominated by imperatives, perspectives, and ideological biases ostensibly suited to the Orient. The Orient is taught, researched, administered, and pronounced upon in certain discrete ways. (Said, 2003: 202)

Reflecting on the quotation cited about the miserable conditions of refugee camps in the West and Said's profiling of Orientalism, it can be argued that the West compartmentalizes certain nationalities and countries into boxes that cannot be otherwise esteemed, respected, reassessed, or objectively and neutrally treated. Such misconceptions sealed and signed by Orientalism about the East reflect the deeply ingrained hate and the various manifestations of discrimination steeped in US and THEM. This has produced for past generations and many generations to come a deeply seated prototyping and overgeneralization of how the East is in the eyes of the West. However, Hamid's *Exit West* has a humanitarian message to convey; not all the West considers the refugees flooding their countries the same way. Saeed and Nadia along with other refugees were treated well by some natives while in the camp, working on a construction site location and elsewhere in London, where many other natives were too aggressive, savage, and ruthless:

And yet while all this occurred there were volunteers delivering food and medicine to the area, and aid agencies at work, and the government had not banned them from operating, as some of the governments the migrants were fleeing from had, and in this there was

hope. Saeed in particular was touched by a native boy, just out of school, or perhaps in his final year, who came to their house and administered polio drops, to the children but also to the adults, and while many were suspicious of vaccinations, and many more, including Saeed and Nadia, had already been vaccinated, there was such earnestness in the boy, such empathy and good intent, that though some argued, none had the heart to refuse him. (Hamid, 2017: 75)

Such humanitarian compassion and philanthropy are portrayed by Hamid's *Exit West* throughout the snapshots in the diasporic scenes. Again, this is a strong message that Hamid conveys: humanity has more in common to share than not. When not spoiled, tampered, or politicized, human nature can outdo all powers. However, it is Orientalism that drums up for racism, hate and nationality-triggered compartmentalization of people. When natives are not blindly driven by ill-intentioned provocateurs and ideologues, they act naturally as kind-hearted, magnanimous, merciful, compassionate, and benevolent people do. The Orient is misrepresented by Orientalists to the West in such a fashion as to produce grassroots hate, aggravated by superiority, supremacy, and racism. This fact is re-established and re-emphasized: "The Orient that appears in Orientalism, then, is a system of representations framed by a whole set of forces that brought the Orient into Western learning, Western consciousness, and later, Western empire". (Said, 2003: 202 & 203)

The quotation cited above explains the unspoiled nature of humanity and the healthy relationship between the West and the East is when Orientalism does not come into play. It is the man-made mindset that politicizes people and drives them emotively into behaving implicitly or explicitly against the OTHER. In a similar vein, the nostalgia in societies was politicized during the Cold War between Taiwan and the USA given the socio-political changes introduced to the milieu at the time (Wang, 2013). Again, the diasporic generations that fled to Spain were much impacted by the Spanish hegemony and Cubans were almost engulfed by the Spanish discriminatory practices displayed explicitly and implicitly (Berg, 2011), which go in line with Said's latent Orientalism and manifest Orientalism (2003).

Said (2003) reveals two types of Orientalism: Manifest Orientalism and Latent Orientalism, which are rampant in Hamid's *Exit West* and other refugee

literature. The mindset that assumes the East and Eastern people are backward, superstitious, etc. is latent while the physical precautions like the conditions in refugee camps and statements by politicians etc. are manifest. Simply put, Latent Orientalism makes up the unconscious ideologies used to define the Orient by the Occident, which over the course of time permeated the Western literature, history, sociology, psychology, anthropology, language, culture and so forth (Said, 2003: 206). Latent Orientalism describes the Orient as being flawed with superstitions, barbarism, and underdevelopment (Karl-Heinz, 2012).

The idea of hybridized identity posited by Bhabha (2012) shall be further fleshed out later. It is the West that re-manufactures refugees into new identities implicitly by Latent Orientalism. Simply put, Latent Orientalism is displayed in academia by literati and literary production; hence it becomes another layer of societal dichotomy. For Güven (2019), Latent Orientalism – as described by Orientalists – means that the Orient is within a general unconscious certainty. This explanation is based on Said's distinction between Latent Orientalism and Manifest Orientalism (Said, 2003: 354 - 355). Said further spells out that Latent Orientalism refers to untouchable and unconscious considerations; while Manifest Orientalism refers to views staked out about Oriental community, including behavioural attitudes, languages, literatures, history, sociology, and so forth.

Closely related to Latent Orientalism, Manifest Orientalism is displayed through the actions adopted by the West (Europeans and Americans) about the East when the West and the East are engaged in direct contact (Said, 2003). When public politics, economics, policies, business and commerce between the West and the East are mutinously examined, Manifest Orientalism comes into play. To make Manifest Orientalism more powerful in the Orient, the West – spearheaded by the French and the British Governments in the 19th century at the time and now by the American Government – use experts in mythology, linguistics, archaeology, and other relevant disciplines to give a fresh breath to their empires that once prevailed and flourished across the Middle East (Said, 2003; Karl-Heinz, 2012). This was meant to inject more visible and invisible hegemony over the East. Of great note, the West always feeds on the instrumentalization of science and knowledge to make the imperialism yoked with passive superiority of the West snowball into the East, which has ballooned into post-colonialism. Supported by their government, the natives squeeze

the refugees into enclosures as if they were animals penned up for export abroad:

From dark London, Saeed and Nadia wondered what life must be like in light London, where they imagined people dined in elegant restaurants and rode in shiny black cabs, or at least went to work in offices and shops and were free to journey about as they pleased. In dark London, rubbish accrued, uncollected, and underground stations were sealed. The trains kept running, skipping stops near Saeed and Nadia but felt as a rumble beneath their feet and heard at a low, powerful frequency, almost subsonic, like thunder or the detonation of a massive, distant bomb. (Hamid, 2017: 79)

Beyond a shadow of doubt, such discriminatory practices are telling signs of unwelcome to the influx of refugees flooding the West no matter how their situation is heartrending and sad back in their home countries and the full-scale war that has claimed thousands of lives ruthlessly. It is self-evident that the mindset of the natives is engineered based on what Orientalism has produced the East into i.e., allegedly unchanged prototypes. This makes the natives in the West blind to the reality of refugees and the human side according to which they need to act. The human memory is still fresh to recall how the West was caught in trouble in the two world wars and the poor conditions they went through in the Middle Ages (Singh, 2010; Perry, 2012; Gemie *et al.*, 2014; Zabecki, 2015; Böhler, 2019). As such, the Light London and the Dark London can be a telling example of Manifest Orientalism. The Light London frowns upon refugees who are unwelcome, while the Dark London represents the miserably poor conditions of refugees, who have no other options. Manifest Orientalism crops up again and again in Hamid's *Exit West* to deliver messages covered with deeply seated hate against refugees.

[...] the fox was unpredictable, it might come, and it might not, but often it did, and when it did, they were relieved, for it meant the fox had not disappeared and had not been killed and had not found another part of town to make home. One night the fox encountered a soiled diaper, pulled it out of the trash and sniffed at it, as if wondering what it was, and then dragged it around the garden, fouling the grass, changing course again and again, like a pet dog with a toy, or a bear with an unfortunate hunter in its maw, in any case moving with both design and

unpredictable wildness, and when it was done the diaper lay in shreds.
(Hamid, 2017: 77)

It is such critical moments that one can prove how human he or she is; rather than politicize migration and refugeeism and dehumanize any suffering. Civilizations destroy their core values when they believe that [One man's meat is another man's poison]. In other words, well-established and prosperous civilizations do not feed on the failure or vulnerability of the other.

The memory of history easily recalls how thousands of Europeans starved in the West when famine struck their countries because of the civil wars that broke out across several European countries. Guzman (2015) highlights that World War II claimed the lives of millions of people, destroying many cities and roads. More so, many Europeans and Asians were starving and homeless when famine struck the West mercilessly. Now the West is causing many refugees to suffer the same dearth of food supplies:

All the food in the house was very quickly consumed. Some residents had money to buy more, but most had to spend their time foraging, which involved going to the depots and stalls where various groups were giving out rations or serving free soup and bread. The daily supplies at each of these were exhausted within hours, sometimes within minutes, and the only option then was to barter with one's neighbors or kin or acquaintances, and since most people had little to barter with, they usually bartered with a promise of something to eat tomorrow or the next day in exchange for something to eat today, a bartering not so much of different goods, exactly, but of time. (Hamid, 2017: 73)

When carefully analysed, the quotation cited above describes the refugees as if they were in their home countries, suffering the same famine, insecurity, homelessness, and loss of direction. Manifest Orientalism is sure to stigmatize and ostracize them no matter what. Hamid brilliantly provides telling instances that narrate the unwelcoming signs displayed by the natives where refugees manage through magical doors. Starvation, which is one miserable hardship weaponized and instrumentalized by Orientalism, is aided by police attack and military intimidation worsened by the grassroots mobs. Refugees – albeit poor and helpless – are scared

off to keep trudging through the wild from one area to another until death or melted in the identity of the West:

In London, Saeed and Nadia heard that military and paramilitary formations had fully mobilized and deployed in the city from all over the country. They imagined British regiments with ancient names and modern kit standing ready to cut through any resistance that might be encountered. A great massacre, it seemed, was in the offing. Both of them knew that the battle of London would be hopelessly one-sided, and like many others they no longer ventured far from their home. (Hamid, 2017: 87)

With such a scene dramatized yet suspended, not much difference is observed for the influx of refugees who flooded the West, coming from their countries, where tough wars are ruthlessly raging. Metaphorically, refugees are victimised and are left nowhere. They seem to be rolling like a ball and each team attempts to kick them to the other side of the world with no break time to gather power, rest, or re-think of their situations. In the West, many natives express their racist hate against refugees; they want to bulldoze the refugees and push them away from their countries. This is a big message of US and THEM, which Manifest Orientalism breathes into their natives against the East. However, people who brush aside discriminatory practices are still kind-hearted and behave out of humanity with zero prejudice against non-natives:

[...] a young woman was leaving the contemporary art gallery she worked at in Vienna. Militants from Saeed and Nadia's country had crossed over to Vienna the previous week, and the city had witnessed massacres in the streets, the militants shooting unarmed people and then disappearing, an afternoon of carnage unlike anything Vienna had ever seen, well, unlike anything it had seen since the fighting of the previous century, and of the centuries before that, which were of an entirely different and greater magnitude, Vienna being no stranger, in the annals of history, to war, and the militants had perhaps hoped to provoke a reaction against migrants from their own part of the world, who had been pouring into Vienna, and if that had been their hope then they had succeeded, for the young woman had learned of a mob that was intending

to attack the migrants gathered near the zoo, everyone was talking and messaging about it, and she planned to join a human cordon to separate the two sides, or rather to shield the migrants from the anti-migrants, and she was wearing a peace badge on her overcoat, and a rainbow pride badge, and a migrant compassion badge, the black door within a red heart, and she could see as she waited to board her train that the crowd at the station was not the normal crowd [...] the coming riots being common knowledge, and so it was likely that people were staying away, but it wasn't until she boarded the train and found herself surrounded by men who looked like her brother and her cousins and her father and her uncles, except that they were angry, they were furious, and they were staring at her and at her badges with undisguised hostility, and the rancor of perceived betrayal, and they started to shout at her, and push her, that she felt fear, a basic, animal fear, terror, and thought that anything could happen, and then the next station came and she shoved through and off the train, and she worried they might seize her, and stop her, and hurt her. (Hamid, 2017: 60)

This scene is also repeated in London, where natives scare off refugees to drive them outside London and even outside the UK. The natives in Vienna frown at those who support refugees and show glaringly hate against both unbiased and merciful natives and refugees alike. This also means that although Orientalist discourse impacts the majority of the West, there are still people who are not driven by racism, hostility, discrimination and other inhuman practices. This is emphasized through evidence from the face-to-face interviews that researchers have conducted with randomly selected refugees in the West, where Orientalism mushrooms widely: “Moreover, experiences of racism and discrimination among large parts of the interviewed refugees is a major concern and negatively impacts on their feelings of safety” (Jacobson and Simpson, 2020: 29). Researchers and subject-matter experts still need to know how much inherent identity is still implicitly and explicitly packed with refugees in their diasporic lives? It stands to reason that the first generation of refugees is not the same as future generations in terms of the legacy they once inherited back in their home countries (Berg, 2011). Most refugees survive diaspora with their original identities diluted, silhouetted, or compromised, or else they are

ostracized and edged out of the host country. Bhabha (2012) spells out that most refugees start to develop a new identity known as hybridity of identity; a socio-political tug-of-war starts to pull apart refugees either way. The Chinese in diaspora in Australia, the Palestinians in the West, and the Cubans in Spain all negotiate their identities in diaspora (Schulz, 2005; Herrera, 2007; Ngan and Kwok-Bun, 2012; Suleiman, 2016). This is true for many diasporic communities abroad. Cohen and Fischer (2019) emphasize that most refugees are not amicably integrated into the host countries. This creates rancour, hate, hostility and repulsion between the natives and refugees in one society:

This has been true for Shia and Persian communities in the United Arab Emirates, Palestinians in Lebanon and Jordan, as well as Syrian refugees in contemporary Lebanon. In all these cases, migrants and refugees have neither been supposed to assimilate into the receiving societies, nor perceived as losing their distinctive features as communities. (Cohen and Fischer, 2019: 137)

The unending conflict between the originally acquired identity and the newly assumed identity will be further spelled out and exemplified by telling quotations extracted from Hamid's *Exit West*. However, as Bhabha argues, identity evolves and changes even when refugees live abroad within the Eastern countries. Chan (2015: 15) explains that "changes of position bring about changes of identity, and with more identities one may have greater control over one's circumstances. The spirit is: Why does one bother attaching to one single home when one can have multiple homes?" Therefore, anywhere refugees live, they create a doubling dimension that adds a new spatialization. Bhabha (2012: 71) argues that "we are faced with a dimension of doubling; a spatialization of the subject, which is occluded in the illusory perspective of what I have called the third dimension". For example, Syrians who have been living in the Gulf Cooperative Countries (Qatar, Bahrain, Kuwait, United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, and Oman), have developed identities relatively different from their original ones. The development of their new identities among such Middle Eastern countries have been positive. Bhabha explains that "the kind of hybridity that I have attempted to identify is being acknowledged as a historical necessity" (Bhabha, 2012: 41). Hybridity is not always an evil we need to stave off; it is a natural development of human interaction with their new environments.

Bhabha's theory known as Hybridity of Identity explains the changes introduced to the world communities following the post-colonial era; the world has produced a third space reconstructed out of multi-dimensional drivers for peoples to communicate through their hybridized identities or else they will be ill-fated to remain lagging behind. Bhabha explains that we find ourselves in the moment of transit where space and time cross to produce complex figures of difference and identity, past and present, inside, and outside, inclusion and exclusion" (Bhabha, 2012: 2). In other words, Bhabha argues that the liminal space and time that people go through create possibilities for their identities to evolve: "This interstitial passage between fixed identifications opens up the possibility of a cultural hybridity that entertains difference without an assumed or imposed hierarchy" (Bhabha, 2012: 5). When two unequal communities encounter each other, one identity will outlive and displace the other, or the two will be melted into a hybridised identity. Therefore, a third space is conducive for such people (often refugees, migrants, asylum seekers and the like) of newly hybridized identities to communicate, coexist and live or else worse days yet to come. It is critically important to shed fresh light on hybrid identity, which means people are caught in a place or time where or when they need either to live with the stream and adopt fully or partially at least the identity of the host country or they will be cordoned off, scared off, dropped off the public:

In postcolonial theory, hybrid identity (also known as double consciousness) refers to individuals who belong to a racial minority group and adopt the language and culture of the dominant group. Consequently, they embody contradictory components of cultural identities, the encounter between the Western and non-Western cultural codes. Double consciousness refers to their ability to be in two places at the same time and have contradictory perspectives on reality (Ben-Zion, 2014: 44).

This is best displayed by the Africans living in the USA; they are now referred to as Afro-Americans, who have two identities melted into one hybridized identity. Latino-Americans living in the USA have also constructed over the course of time their hybridized identity. Simply put, the hegemonic culture of the host country overshadowed, so to speak, the poor, submissive and passive identity, and a third space with hybridized identity constructed for and by the diasporic generations

(Ikas and Wagner, 2008). However, when the two communities are equal, and not much difference is observed in multi-dimensional aspects, hybridized identity is less likely to be constructed. The Palestinians living in Syria, Jordan and Lebanon are a good example where hybridized identity is not an aftermath corollary of the civil protracted war: “Because Palestinians could not reasonably expect to unite with Syrians, a Syrian identity eventually lost its hold on Palestinians” (Gelvin, 2021: 103).

Balibar (2013) argues that being different among other communities does not mean that an original group identity should be restored. It also does not require equality to be neutralized among other differences as universal rights. In certain cultural and political contexts, human rights are subject to ideological and institutional considerations. For Bhabha (2012), identity for refugees does not work in silos; identities are not stand-alone islands detached from the surroundings – new or old identity; it is a hybrid identity that is constructed over time and space as well as the people around. As such, the identity of most refugees kaleidoscopically either melts down, assimilates or becomes hybridized into the host countries whether passively or negatively. In Hamid’s *Exit West*, we see Saeed is still more attached to his home country identity while in a refugee camp in the West; while Nadia seems to have almost forgotten her home country and has established her hybrid identity. This little yet telling dialogue between Saeed and Nadia tells much of an obstinate identity that is too much attached to a refugee’s home country vis-à-vis a refugee’s hybrid identity that is re-established itself in diaspora:

When Saeed told Nadia this good news, she did not act like it was good news at all.

Why would we want to move? She said.

To be among our own kind, Saeed answered.

What makes them our kind?

They’re from our country.

From the country we used to be from.

Yes. Saeed tried not to sound annoyed.

We’ve left that place.

That doesn't mean we have no connection.

They're not like me.

You haven't met them. (Hamid, 2017: 82 & 83)

With glaringly shown readiness and preparedness, Nadia represents the community of refugees who have established and constructed their identity that is more hybrid into the new host country, while Saeed is still attached to his old memories back home. This is foreshadowed in the early stages of *Exit West* when Nadia lives in a single apartment independently of her parents as a woman, which is very uncommon based on her seemingly Middle Eastern culture. When in his home country, Saeed lives with his mother and father and not insentiently as it might be. This reflects that Saeed represents the community of refugees who cannot assume a fully hybridized identity no matter how long they remain in diaspora. Gorman highlights that refugees cannot be like tree logs chopped off and thrown away:

Thus, even for refugees who have experienced violent displacement, culture and identity can be reclaimed in exile, refugees have not lost their connection with their culture and identity but can continue to remain connected and to foster these links in exile. It is precisely this characterization of refugees that illuminates actions they can take to maintain links to their homeland. (Gorman, 2015: 277)

This is true for Saeed who represents the undying connection with his home country. Unlike Nadia, Saeed was overjoyed when he heard, saw, felt, and communicated with people of his kind. He spent much of his camp time with them. His past memory takes him back to his home country although the war has destroyed his country. When he was informed of his father's death, he felt torn into two, which is one of many effects of hybridized identity, but still he is emotionally – at least – connected to his home country:

This cousin told Saeed that Saeed's father had passed away from pneumonia, [...] Saeed did not know how to mourn, how to express his remorse, from so great a distance. So, he redoubled his work, and took on extra shifts even when he barely had the strength. (Hamid, 2017: 93)

In Hamid's *Exit West*, we read much of Saeed's retrospective memory that takes him back to his father, mother, friends, relatives, neighbourhood, and the entire

country. In contrast, we hardly read of Nadia's memories. Nadia and Saeed represent two types of hybridized identity: one that is fully hybridized (Nadia) and one that struggles to remain attached to original identity albeit relatively resilient (Saeed). Nadia, for example, does not want to mix with their townspeople, while Saeed does. Nadia seems to have rushed into assuming her hybridized identity she has constructed overnight.

In a similar vein, Freud cites a telling example that shows how refugees can construct their own identity and void passively melting into the host country. With such a strong sociocultural attachment to their home country, Germans did not compromise their national identity albeit agonizing for long generations:

Soviet Germans developed their sense of Germanness in isolation from the cultural and social realities of the nation-state of Germany. Hence, during the years between the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917 and their emigration after the Second World War, they created their sense of being Germans as a diasporic identity. (Freud, 2012: 212)

Identity, however, may balloon into becoming too rigid to a fault as is the case with the religiously cleansed Myanmar, where Muslims as a minority – known as Rohingyas – face despicable crimes and heart-breaking discriminatory practices (Wade, 2017). By the same token, Bhabha (2012) believes that Serbian nationalism sparks hate and racism against any foreigners:

The hideous extremity of Serbian nationalism proves that the very idea of a pure, ethnically cleansed national identity can only be achieved through the death, literal and figurative, of the complex inter-weavings of history, and the culturally contingent borderlines of modern nationhood (Bhabha, 2012: 7).

Given the triggers contributory to hybridized identity, such as globalization, refugeeism, migration, colonialization, acculturation, neo-colonialism, and other drivers, Bhabha believes that refugees will most likely survive when they consider having a hybridized identity or else, they will suffer unbearably from clash of cultural identities, which get involved in a tug-of-war and each community seeks to prove its supremacy and hegemony. If this comes into play, then some identities will survive while others will fade away. To avoid such potential threat, Bhabha explains

that “many member states proposed an amendment that immigrants, for instance, should not be considered minorities. It was held that ‘the very existence of unassimilated minorities would be a threat to national unity’”. (Bhabha, 2012: xxiii)

One of key message of Hamid’s *Exit West*, among several others, is that the prejudiced discourse of Orientalism has constructed two types of borders: mental borders and physical borders (barbed wire borders, fences, visa tough requirement, travel ban, border patrols, and so forth). However, many refugees manage to travel to the West through magical doors. This little-known fact is re-established strongly by Hamid’s *Exit West* through Saeed and Nadia to tell all the readers in the East and the West, policymakers, politicians, human rights organizations, refugee societies and the entities concerned that such mental and physical borders are illusory and baseless; they are porous because they are artificially man-made. The entire world is one humanity united by the common valid values. What brings people together is their common human understanding. This is true as we have seen several natives come closer to the refugees to support, help, humanize, and console on having left their beloved ones back home:

This woman worked nearby as a supervisor in one of the food preparation units, and she would come to Nadia’s work site on her lunch break when her husband was there, which was not always, because he dug trenches for multiple pipe-laying crews, and then the woman and her husband would unwrap sandwiches and unscrew thermoses and eat and chat and laugh. (Hamid, 2017: 98 & 99)

Such a little narrative snapshot is what Hamid seeks to communicate: humanity is borderless, and the world communities have more in common to share than not. If man-made barbed-wire borders brought by colonialism and enhanced by Orientalism cordon peoples and countries of each other, it is then through magical realism that they can reach out to the entire world when impacted by crises and the Syrian refugee crisis is a case in point. Magical Realism per se is one way to demythologize the physical and mental barriers allegedly introduced by a hate-driven discourse and mindset that feeds on Orientalism as shall be substantiated through Hamid’s *Exit West*.

Exit West applies magical realism to demythologize the misconceptions about compartmentalization of different countries by the man-made barbed-wire borders:

The effect doors had on people altered as well. Rumors had begun to circulate of doors that could take you elsewhere, often to places far away, well removed from this death trap of a country. Some people claimed to know people who knew people who had been through such doors. A normal door, they said, could become a special door, and it could happen without warning, to any door at all. Most people thought these rumors to be nonsense, the superstitions of the feebleminded. But most people began to gaze at their own doors a little differently, nonetheless. (Hamid, 2017: 41 & 42)

People first would not readily believe such magical doors because of the supernatural powers they can do. However, given the unbearable suffering prolonged and endured by refugees, people need to make sure that such doors can really do magic or not although rumours go around that such magical doors are not real. Even Nadia and Saeed – representative voices of contemporary refugees of the entire world and the Syrian refugee crisis – first dismiss such a rumour, but later start to cherish and toy with this idea:

But every morning, when she woke, Nadia looked over at her front door, and at the doors to her bathroom, her closet, her terrace. Every morning, in his room, Saeed did much the same. All their doors remained simple doors, on-off switches in the flow between two adjacent places, binarily either open or closed, but each of their doors, regarded thus with a twinge of irrational possibility, became partially animate as well, an object with a subtle power to mock, to mock the desires of those who desired to go far away, whispering silently from its door frame that such dreams were the dreams of fools. (Hamid, 2017: 42)

Such brief and initial hesitation by Saeed and Nadia soon develop into intense curiosity that grows widely and encourages them more to get one. Such lingering uncertainty represents the mental and physical situation of many if not all refugees across the world when they leave their home countries, waiting for any way out to be secure and safe. Again, refugees most often do not want to feel extremely desperate;

they cherish high hopes that they will find helpful ways to get out of the vicious circle they are caught up in. Magical doors are more like a code to crack and get released of the post-colonial shackles or handcuffs that cut into refugees. However, human traffickers instrumentalize and feed on and even weaponize such magical doors as they do in reality across the national borders. Whether magical doors come true or not, refugees always fall victim to loss of mental and physical direction:

Saeed asked where the door was and where it led to, and the agent replied that the doors were everywhere but finding one the militants had not yet found, a door not yet guarded, that was the trick, and might take a while. The agent demanded their money and Saeed gave it to him, uncertain whether they were making a down payment or being robbed. (Hamid, 2017: 50)

The magical doors in Hamid's *Exit West* act as the dénouement, which provides solutions to refugees. Simply put, Magical Realism extends beyond its initial application; the term refers "to any fictitious juxtaposition of the natural and the supernatural" (Aldea, 2011: 12).

In Hamid's *Exit West*, magical doors represent human corridors for refugees and migrants that countries should create to facilitate the diasporic influx of people rather than block the borders. Hamid criticizes the West for their discriminatory practices displayed against the helpless and poor refugees who are left homeless with their identity almost eroded, replaced or hybridized whether knowingly or unknowingly. Given the postcolonial pressures on many countries in the Middle East, Africa, Asia and Latin America, diasporic influx of refugees flooded the transnational borders, seeking desperately to look for a way out.

By using magical doors, Hamid possibly suggests or seeks to prove that viable solutions are possible for refugees and the allegations fuelled by racism and biased discourse and mindset of Orientalism are unfounded. More importantly, Hamid dramatizes that when refugees and migrants manage to get to the West through magical doors, they suffer unbearably in their treacherous journeys. This is a trenchant criticism against the negligence of the international community that is still twiddling its thumbs, taking no action albeit not helpless:

Saeed was emerging and Nadia crawled forward to give him space, and as she did so she noticed the sinks and mirrors for the first time, the tiles of the floor, the stalls behind her, all the doors of which save one were normal doors, all but the one through which she had come, and through which Saeed was now coming, which was black, and she understood that she was in the bathroom of some public place, and she listened intently but it was silent, the only noises emanating from her, from her breathing, and from Saeed. (Hamid, 2017: 57)

Managing to funnel along the magical doors to any destination is always taxed unduly with losses and efforts imposed by Orientalism. Like Saeed and Nadia, other refugees need to bypass the guards heavily placed next the magical doors that lead to richer destinations. This reflects reality for diasporic journeys. What makes all refugees similar is their fate, goal, feeling, motive, and agony; they have no borders against each other, and their humanity stands stronger than the barbed-wire borders steeled with vehicles and patrols. However, it is Orientalism that makes refugees as different based on the biased standards of US and THEM – the otherness. Theoretically, Streicher defines magical realism as “what happens when a highly detailed, realistic setting is invaded by something too strange to believe” (Streicher, 1999: 267). Using this technique, Hamid fictionalizes *Exit West* to highlight that even if refugees magically cross the harsh and dangerous borders, they still face different kind of borders that condition their existence and being. Once they arrive, they still experience new borders that are much more difficult to cross and overcome – given that these borders are unseen:

In this group, everyone was foreign, and so, in a sense, no one was. Nadia and Saeed quickly located a cluster of fellow countrywomen and countrymen [...] and learned that they were on the Greek island [...], a great draw for tourists in the summer, and, it seemed, a great draw for migrants this winter, and that 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, perhaps in the hope that people would go back to where they came from— although almost no one ever did—or perhaps because there were simply too many doors from too many poorer places to guard them all. (Hamid, 2017: 58)

The quotation cited above is much telling of observable facts and naked truths about refugeeism and migration. It may be suggested that poor countries where no refugees are expected to go to have porous borders and very few guards, if any. Such guards are almost always inattentive to any refugees attempting to sneak through poorly constructed borders. Paradoxically, beautiful destinations that attract tourists in summer do so for refugees in winter unwelcomingly (Ferris and Kirişci, 2016; Øverlid, 2016; Pisani, 2018; Carrera *et al.*, 2019). As revealed by telling instances of the transitional diaspora, the Syrian refugees take days, months, years or more to secure themselves tents in harsh winters:

The UN reports that thousands of families have had to share their tents with new-comers, and 3,500 families did not have a tent of their own. [...] in addition, these tents were set up in places lacking infrastructure, which suggests that the Syrians had to suffer a lot for the past two winters and still are in these winter months. [...] According to the UN records, only 40% of the Syrians officially registered in the region (including Turkey, Lebanon, Iraq, and Jordan) live in camps, while the remaining 60% are trying to survive in rented apartments, in the home of relatives or in shelters housing 100 to 150 people. (Güçer *et al.*, 2013: 14)

In principle, magical doors – albeit fantasy – suggest that practical solutions can be worked out to mitigate the unbearable suffering inflicted on refugees; clamping down on refugees ruthlessly will not pay off both in the political arena as well as the humanitarian corridors. More so, magical doors represent the steel will of refugees and the fragility of the West that claims it is invincible with borders that can never be porous. As portrayed in Hamid's *Exit West*, refugees are never pessimistic as they are inured to hardships. Empowered by their emotional, psychological, and mental willpower, refugees challenge fragile Orientalism that seeks to nail them down at the borderlines or else get back to their home countries. Magical doors, thus, can be looked at as a Utopian solution to the refugee crises all over the world, knowing that magical doors in reality do not exist, and refugees will continue, regardless of what Hamid tries to say and communicate, to suffer the physical borders before other internal borders that the thesis highlights and analyses. Nevertheless, refugees are always caught between the devil and the deep blue sea;

either live in diaspora and be taxed with a loss of identity or be devoured by the war machine or be buried alive:

They better understood the desperation they saw in the camps, the fear in people's eyes that they would be trapped here forever, or until hunger forced them back through one of the doors that led to undesirable places, the doors that were left unguarded, what people in the camps referred to as mousetraps, but which, in resignation, some people were nonetheless trying, especially those who had exhausted their resources, venturing through them to the same place from which they had come, or to another unknown place when they thought anything would be better than where they had been. (Hamid, 2017: 63)

Both symbolically and metaphorically, magical doors in Hamid's *Exit West* represent shattering the handcuffs or shackles into which the minds rather than the hands of refugees are ruthlessly locked. Pithily, imagination is sometimes more powerful than reality. With this in mind, magical doors allow access to new places with man-made territorial borders broken down. This means hope, freedom, and mobility for refugees:

The Syrian refugee crisis, fictionalized in Mohsin Hamid's *Exit West* (2017), was partly responsible for the xenophobic responses to immigration in the media. [...] However, the sudden appearance of magical doors in the novel, allowing free access across territorial borders, allows *Exit West* to retain hopeful sentiment that new forms of cosmopolitan connectivity in the twenty-first century will overcome the current securitization and surveillance measures of Western nation-states. (O'Gorman and Eaglestone, 2019: 43)

Paradoxically, magical doors represent hope and salvation for refugees coming from war-torn and impoverished countries, while such magical doors represent hidden, imminent, and ever-present threats to the West. Ironically yet truthfully, magical doors for people living in safe and secure countries in the West, such as Britain, represent a way out of their boring unliveable conditions. Like millions of other people, a British accountant who is seen by refugees as someone who lives comfortably and snugly seeks an escape through such magical doors. For

refugees, this seems unbelievable albeit true. This also means that man-made borders are another manifestation of fragile act of mendacity fabricated by postcolonial governments to always control people and keep them as docile as herds of meek sheep. Again, magical doors also convey a message to the West that even their natives need to escape through such doors given the fact that many natives in the West suffer from boredom, ennui, and tedium, which is the opposite of the countries, where refugees come from. This also means that no one single country is a stand-alone island; all the world countries complete and need each other and they are at best when united:

As the accountant thought this, he thought he might step through the door, just once, to see what was on the other side, and so he did. Later his daughter and his best friend would receive via their phones a photo of him, on a seaside that seemed to have no trees, a desert seaside, or a seaside that was in any case dry, with towering dunes, a seaside in Namibia, and a message that said he would not be returning, but not to worry, he felt something, he felt something for a change, and they might join him, he would be glad if they did, and if they chose to, a door could be found in his flat. With that he was gone, and his London was gone, and how long he remained in Namibia it was hard for anyone who formerly knew him to say. (Hamid, 2017: 72)

Seen as an insidious threat to their easily defined, stable and idyllic nations, the nationalists in the West view magical doors as evil doors through which refugees sneak and mix with their supremacy they boastfully claim. As such, the West weaponizes and instrumentalizes borders as a method to maintain the Western nationalities and countries away from the East and cordon strangers off; while the East considers borders as security scarecrows to scare off people. However, identities cannot be fully preserved when immigration and refugeeism impact comes into play. Bhabha (2012) further explains that identity develops, evolves, and changes over the course of time in a space between the designations of identity and interstitial passage. Kalua (2009) calls this transition dynamic spaces to celebrate; it is a cultural change marked with shifting identities. With this in mind, Bhabha (2012) argues that hybridity is not always negative; it can produce much matured identities for the present and future lives of refugees. With their hybridized identities, Saeed and

Nadia can now have better lives abroad than at home.

Akin to magical doors that allow refugees access to other countries, cell phones and connectivity serve refugees as a communication window that provides social and emotional connectivity no matter where, when, and who. This means that postcolonial man-made borders cannot prevent people from reaching out to their beloved ones, relatives, acquaintances and townspeople across the West and the East. Saeed and Nadia keep almost always in touch in their short-lived emotional relationship through their cell phones; Saeed knows of his father's death through messaging his cousin. When both Saeed and Nadia move to the West, however, they hardly communicate and each one seems to have started a new world that is more westernized – hence less socializing:

Neither much enjoyed catching unexpected glimpses of their former lover's new existence online, and so they distanced themselves from each other on social networks, and while they wished to look out for each other, and to keep tabs on each other, staying in touch took a toll on them, serving as an unsettling reminder of a life not lived, and also they grew less worried each for the other, less worried that the other would need them to be happy, and eventually a month went by without any contact, and then a year, and then a lifetime. (Hamid, 2017: 119)

Unlike before, Saeed and Nadia have now grown into a new Saeed and a new Nadia; they no longer communicate with each other as before in their home countries. This represents a loss of interpersonal identity as well as national identity. This is a heavy tax they need to pay as a painful compromise as they sneak through magical doors into the West. With the prevailing myth of the allegedly impregnable social and psychological borders steeled and cemented by the security forces now debunked and dispelled, the legacy of Orientalism is now reduced too disincentive to the West and is reduced illusory.

To conclude, Hamid's *Exit West* serves as an acid test for the legacy of Orientalism and the mindset it drums up for implicitly and explicitly. With the man-made physical, ideological, psychological, and social borders crossed, removed, broken down, downplayed, or otherwise expressed, the long-lived myth of the West is now debunked and laid bare. It should be admitted, however, that the refugees

crossing the borders through magical doors also sustain a partial or total loss of national identity, assuming knowingly or unknowingly a hybridized identity, which is a postcolonial aftermath that the East still suffers from. Among the key messages conveyed in Hamid's *Exit West* is that borders for the West act as a weaponized formidable checkpoint that cordons off the influx of the refugees of the East flooding the West. Borders are instrumentalized by the West to make their alleged supremacy stand out vis-à-vis the impoverished and war-torn countries of the East. However, borders for the East act as security scarecrows to keep their peoples penned inside as helpless herds of sheep, unable even to jump over low-lying borders and escape. In Hamid's *Exit West*, the refugees who manage to sneak through magical doors into new destinations suffer a sociocultural shock, spearheaded by unwelcoming frowns, grimaces and public outcries by natives who take to the street to bulldoze many refugees even outside the poorly constructed camps. As such, refugees need either to assume their new hybridized identity to cope up with the new people, new country, new values, new lifestyle, and new future, or else they will be *personae non gratae* implicitly or explicitly. The refugees, however, are not easy to go with and take to the natives in the West; they are harassed, attacked, assaulted, mocked, or otherwise expressed. Such discriminatory practices are manifested at two levels either Latent Orientalism or Manifest Orientalism. Hamid's *Exit West* is a muffled voice vented by the Syrian refugees, among millions of other nationalities in diaspora. Chapter Two will take Hamid's *Exit West* into a microscopic level to further scrutinize the detailed analyses and in-depth description of the Syrian refugee crisis as a case study and expose how the international community – almost cross-handed or even treading water – is remiss of any humanitarian responses that can mitigate and cushion down the unbearable suffering inflicted on them. The research study will also shed fresh light on the Syrian refugees trapped at the transnational borders with the despicable agonies yet left untold and the scourge of war that catapulted many refugees across the man-made borders into their diasporic destinations. This will explain how refugees in general and the Syrian refugee crisis in particular are not fairly treated in contrast with others.

Of great note, to ensure the argument on refugees is not biased, it should be noted that many Syrian refugees contributed to changing the positive attitudes of the host communities as in Turkey: there are notes by Turkish people that the Syrian

refugees outnumber the natives in Turkey; few Syrians were involved in crime; there was speech on how the money is spent on the Syrian refugees; it is known that Syrian refugees in Turkey accept to be paid lower than the Turkish natives (Erdogan, 2014; UTKU and SIRKECI, 2017; Doğan and Gönüllü, 2018; Aslan, 2020). Refugees in the host countries are offered free scholarship, financial aids, citizenship rights, healthcare, and housing services. Refugees do not enjoy such social and educational services in their home countries. Such generous treatment encourages more refugees to flood the West. Many refugees have become a source of uneasiness to several host countries given the protracted wars and the poor reforms thought of to be introduced by the origin governments, which remain indifferent and unresponsive to the needs of refugees and IDPs (Yom, 2021; Temkin, 2022).

III. SYRIAN REFUEE CRISIS AS A CASE STUDY

The Syrian refugee crisis, among other diasporic voices left unheard in the throes, is fictionalized, and silhouetted against the many microscopic and detailed descriptions that Hamid's *Exit West* best manifests. Prior to the Syrian refugee crisis, other countries have been plagued with internecine civil, regional, or even global wars. However, the Syrian refugee crisis, as a case study, represents a contemporary socio-political disruption to the entire world – given the fact that Syrian refugees have dolorously left no stone unturned to look for a real refuge. It stands to reason that one refugee crisis begets a ripple effect or a domino effect. Once triggered, diaspora will impact the neighbouring countries within the immediate vicinity and beyond. Syrian refugees flooding into Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey seem to have caused multi-dimensional effects on the host countries. With the domestic situation in Syria flaring up unbearably, the Syrian refugee crisis has also been bulldozed to be more politicized and dehumanized by Orientalism. Simply put, the West believes that Muslim refugees coming from the Middle East, such as Syria, Iraq, Yemen, and some others, can hardly integrate and assimilate into the host dominant American and European societies if they are granted refugee status (Adida *et al.*, 2016; Alba and Foner, 2017). To cordon refugees off the European and American societies mentally and physically, Orientalism seeks to validate the positions it stakes out against refugees. Orientalism still fuels a discourse that presents these refugees as a lurking danger that has to be curtailed and properly controlled. That is why national migration policies in the West seem to be driven by such an Orientalist mindset.

Taken together, the Syrian Refugee Crisis, as we shall examine the issue from different dimensions, has been unfortunately more politicized than being humanized by Orientalism. In simple terms, Orientalism claims that Syrian refugees pose a threat to national security of the Western countries and being unwelcome is part of the social and emotional behaviours of the West to stave off refugees and keep them away from their countries (Goździak, 2021). Such allegations and claims are diametrically rejected by International Law of UNHCR, which will further be

discussed later in the subsequent sections. The ill practices of Orientalism against refugees make International Law and UNHCR a dead letter.

[...] even if a convicted refugee poses a clear risk to the host community, there is no need to strip him of his refugee status; rather it is sufficient, as Art. 33(2) provides, to authorize the host government to divest itself or its particularized protective responsibilities. The individual in question remains a refugee and is therefore entitled both to UNHCR institutional assistance and to the protection of any other state party the safety and security of which is not infringed by the refugee's presence within its territory. (Hathaway, 2021: 402)

The West uses the straw-man-effect to impact the mindset of the natives of the Western host countries through media outlet. Orientalism claims that granting refugees asylum status to Muslims coming from the MENA region would undermine national security. They also claim that Muslims cannot show signs of assimilation (McPherson, 2015). It should be noted that hybridisation and assimilation for refugees are two different considerations. Smith and Leavy (2008) explain such issues and the Africans who immigrated to the USA can be a telling example: "As cultural hybrids, migrants lived and shared the cultural life and traditions of two distinct peoples" (Smith and Leavy, 2008: 103). In a similar vein, ÇOMAK *et al.* (2021) argues that when hybridity and assimilation collide, a tug-of-war tension starts to creep in gradually. (ÇOMAK *et al.*, 2021: 215)

In this chapter my key focus will be on the Syrian Refugee Crisis as a case study and how Orientalism impacts the whole trajectory all the way up to the present day and into the future, as examined by the novel under discussion. To spell out the associated issues, I will examine multi-dimensional consequences brought about by the hybrid identity awkwardly hammered into Syrian refugees scattered in diaspora. I will cite examples from Hamid's *Exit West* to better substantiate the hypothesis and research questions posited in the General Introduction. To further facilitate the flow of the research study, I will chronologically discuss the situation of the Orientalist internal borders in Hamid's *Exit West*. This requires investigating the multi-dimensional consequences of refugees in the three key stages of refuge and migration: before, while and after they leave their home countries with a special

emphasis on the Syrian refugees as reflected and discussed in the novel. Simply put, Hamid's *Exit West* provides telling examples and meticulously subtle detail of how refugees suffer from the Orientalist internal borders before heading for the far-fetched target host countries; the arduous and treacherous journey they are destined to survive or die half way through their destinations and the heart-breaking stories told and untold all the way long; how they are metaphorically bound, gagged and muffled, so to speak, while they flood host countries hurtling into their destiny in the middle of nowhere.

Syrian refugees do face a spate of unbearable challenges, including, unemployment, poverty, homelessness, vagrancy, exploitation, grievances, poor healthcare and education, safety, insecurity, loss of identity, child abuse, and the like (UNHCR, 2021). Although the Turkish government provides substantial support to Syrian refugees, including free scholarships, food provisions at different refugee camp locations, free medical support and healthcare, many Syrian refugees still suffer heartrending challenges. One reason why many Syrian refugees have difficulty seeking and applying for asylum is that they cannot easily obtain identity, travel, and education documents. As such, most of them seem very much like homeless, stateless, and thus helpless. This can explain why many Syrian refugees make desperate yet determined attempts to cross the national borders and sneak into any host countries.

Hamid's *Exit West* is a narrative spokesman that reveals much about the critically life-threatening stages of the Syrian refugee crisis and the associated repercussions, excruciating agonies and dolorous sagas left untold. Cornered between the devil and the deep blue sea, Syrian refugees, and tent-dwellers are desperately looking for shelters to stave off bitter cold and severe weather conditions, solicit humanitarian aid and medical help and some food provisions to tide themselves over till dawn or dusk. Hamid's *Exit West* is not an exaggeration nor is it a mere imagination; the novel provides a raft of realistic snapshots of how the socio-political fabric of Syria's population is torn apart. Really appalling figures spell out concealed realities. Can (2020) reveals that 1.5 million IDPs – about half of the Syrian refugees – are hosted, cornered, cordoned off or penned up across the Turkish-Syrian, Jordanian Syrian borderlands, following the outbreak of the Syrian continued civil war. It is a true reality in which a drowning man will clutch at a straw.

Unlike traditional practices the West used to capitalize on against the East, ideational weaponization is now used to sow hate against refugees while they are still in their home countries. Such ill practices of Orientalism enhance the readiness and preparedness to show more discrimination against refugees. Simply put, the natives of the West are preoccupied with widespread misconceptions held unfairly against the East. This is best described by Young *et al.* when Orientalism and Occidentalism view each other from a biased perspective:

By Orientalism's other, I mean the reversion of Orientalism's cross-cultural egotism at the continental or hemispherical level. Where Orientalism looks at the West from the East and views it as inferior. The reverse perspective can be best described, after Xiaomei Chen, as Occidentalism. (Young et al., 1998: 63)

Hamid's *Exit West* explains how refugees are locked mentally inside illusionary internal borders as if geography and warfare were yoked together to conspire against the refugees coming from the East, seeking asylum in the West:

It was the sort of view that might command a slight premium during gentler, more prosperous times, but would be most undesirable in times of conflict, when it would be squarely in the path of heavy machine-gun and rocket fire as fighters advanced into this part of town: a view like staring down the barrel of a rifle. Location, location, location, the realtors say. Geography is destiny, respond the historians. (Hamid, 2017: 11)

The key word is historians; history is tailored and customized to please agendas and burnish the public image of a given entity or policy. The power of weaponry was a past legacy of colonialism and post-colonialism. It is the power of words that Orientalism weaponizes, instrumentalizes and capitalizes on. Profoundly juggling conceptions and misconceptions to inculcate and indoctrinate ideational setup, Orientalism sets the tone for the present and the future through drumming up for what it aspires to and not what really exists. Geographical and locational limitations collide with online connectivity provided across the city albeit at war; Saeed and Nadia are now connected via mobile phones but seemingly in vain.

Perhaps the internal borders placed by geography are smartly crossed by

online connectivity as Saeed and Nadia use their mobile phones albeit uneasily. It is purposefully meant by Orientalism to suggest that although online connectivity is provided almost free and easily accessible, the calls that refugees make are almost futile because they are locked inside their internal borders. Saeed and Nadia fumble for the signal to make a call or keep themselves updated and barely obtain weak signals.

For many decades after independence a telephone line in their city had remained a rare thing, the waiting list for a connection long, the teams that installed the copper wires and delivered the heavy handsets greeted and revered and bribed like heroes. (Hamid, 2017: 25)

Although mobile phones are made available at a low price almost for everyone, it seems an internal border is fixed albeit illusory. Saeed and Nadia along with other people have mobile phones but they cannot connect with others to relieve them at hardships; they are described as being internally locked. The bigger message that Orientalism seeks to communicate is those potential refugees are and must be cordoned off and locked in their home countries to avoid spreading their threats to the West; although their mobile phone technology is empowered, it is still futile. The use of mobile phones is described as silly, useless, playful as if to idle and fritter away time.

Connectivity is not always made available for Syrian refugees in the host countries. It has become a financial burden and a legal restriction. Unlike Saeed and Nadia, not all Syrian refugees can have registered mobile phones because they do not have legal residence permit. Connectivity is very important for refugees: “For people displaced by war and persecution, for migrants, information and ICTs are vital lifelines to the past, present, and future” (Maitland, 2018: 100). Connectivity is supposed to bring the West and East closer for better understanding, rather than being poles apart, widening the existing and any potential gaps between the several communities. According to Vernon *et al.* (2016), most IDPs and refugees trudge through poorly connected areas with 2G and 3G mobile coverage as reported by UNHCR. Still, about 20% of IDPs and refugees live across areas with no connectivity whatsoever; many IDPs and refugees complain that it is very expensive to have a 24-hour connectivity and mobile coverage; it takes up about 30% of the disposable income of IDPs and refugees (Vernon *et al.*, 2016). When we look into

the issue globally, however, it is totally different: “Globally, refugees are 50% less likely than the general population to have an Internet-enabled phone, and 29% of refugee households have no phone at all” (Maitland, 2018: 100). This creates another internal border that locks refugees inside their troubled countries.

Another internal border that separates parts of the city itself and parts of the entire country is the sandbagged checkpoints and barbed wire fences set by armed soldiers stationed at different exits and entrances to many neighbourhoods. Such a miniature image looks very much like the entire world that is controlled by illusory borders to keep peoples and nations enclosed and penned up like animals. Such a myth will be shattered later by the magical doors that mythologize and debunk the unfounded allegations made by Orientalism. Hamid explains how the legacy and ill practices of colonialism and postcolonialism are passed down to the home countries of potential and existing refugees. It is the home countries that adopt such practices of forcing people to be penned up inside the internal borders controlled and ruled with an iron fist. Curfew is imposed locally on the citizens and travel ban and restrictions are imposed globally through Orientalism against people to travel from one country to another for humanitarian purposes. Taken together, potential, and existing refugees are caught up between the devil and the deep blue sea.

When it comes to religious convictions and beliefs embraced by many potential and existing refugees, Orientalism sits cross-handed as if the West were twiddling its thumbs. When war broke out in Syria, people were cagy about possible theories, causes and solutions. Following the precarious situation of refuge and migration, people started to voice their suffering and give vent to suppressed talk. They needed to crack the code and think outside the box and leave their country; risible attempts to shore up and paper over the situation encouraged many potential and existing refugees to desperately look for a way out of the socio-political quagmire.

Forced into a short-term and long-term loss, potential and existing refugees start to voice their opinions and construct their mooted theories about what is going on across their home countries. Orientalism introduces Conspiracy Theories for potential and existing refugees to chew while away when still locked inside their internal borders. Although Orientalism started in Britain and France and was passed down to America, the Syrian Refugee Crisis is downplayed, diluted, and vitiated by

Trump's baseless claims; Syrian existing migrants, refugees, asylum seekers and IDPs are ISIS agents. Such spurious allegations are meant to reject Syrian refugees no matter what:

Authorities can believe in and act on conspiracy theories; they can also conspire to do harm. Unsystematic actors, including conspiracy theorists, can be targeted by authorities' conspiracy theories and be the victim of their conspiracies. Conspiracy theories can bend people's in deleterious ways and become self-fulfilling prophecies [...] Among his many conspiracy theories were claims that Syrian refugees were ISIS operatives. (Uscinski, 2020: 111)

Such deeply ingrained unfounded allegations and wild guesses made up by the West most often crop up in various socio-political arenas. This is purposefully meant to dehumanize all refugee crises in general and the Syrian Refugee Crisis in particular. The former USA President Donald Trump and several other Western administrations would instrumentalize and weaponize refugee crises, politicizing the suffering of refugees instead of humanizing their crying needs. According to Lucas *et al.* (2017), Trump capitalizes on the Syrian Refugee Crisis for his own political interests at the election time and to satisfy his far-right mindset. This proactive and pre-emptive step serves as a prelude to the USA rejection of any Syrian refugees, migrants, asylum seekers or otherwise expressed. To justify his baseless allegations, Trump portrays and downplays the whole Syrian Refugee Crisis as being ISIS operatives.

With the people growing more uneasy and uncertain in the refugee communities, among the old and young generations both males and females, conspiracy theories start to come into play. People also start to secure visas to safe destinations:

Conversations focused mainly on conspiracy theories, the status of the fighting, and how to get out of the country—and since visas, which had long been near-impossible, were now truly impossible for non-wealthy people to secure, and journeys on passenger planes and ships were therefore out of the question, the relative merits, or rather risks, of the various overland routes were guessed at, and picked apart, again and

again. (Hamid, 2017: 32)

The reference to securing visas to other safe destinations for refugees to seek and apply for asylum is made here as the first attempt – albeit still in its infancy – to break the illusory man-made internal borders fixed by Orientalism. Hamid makes it clear-cut that poor visa applicants cannot be granted visas. Ridiculously enough, visa is only secured to rich people, while many refugees are denied access. As such, many resort to sneaking into host countries illegally through treacherous journeys. Many migrants were denied access to European countries and were not granted visas or asylum. Therefore, they sneaked into the host countries illegally through human trafficking networks (Pace and Sen, 2018; Mahmud, 2022). One should not be surprised why thousands of refugees live in tumbledown tents, waiting for the go-ahead to be granted asylum in one of the host countries to receive humanitarian aid and protection.

To pre-equip the mindset of the natives in the host countries, potential refugees are portrayed either as rich people who do not need to be granted asylum, religiously extremist who cannot assimilate, integrate, and socialize with the host communities, or former fighters who may form sleeper cells inside the West to snowball into bigger terrorist organizations that will highly likely wreak havoc:

But there were also many who quit voluntarily and returned to civilian life and their prewar professions. Rich former fighters opened small shops and restaurants, while the educated returned to their previous occupations inside of Syria, in Turkey, and even in Europe and the United States. (Mironova, 2019: 63)

Echoing Trump about the Syrian Refugee Crisis as ISIS operatives, Orientalists capitalize on the idea that refugee camps are volatile zones whether in the troubled countries or host countries. Exponents of such a claim argue that refugee camps are weaponized by sleeper and active cells, lurking around to refuel instability and destabilize and sneak into the sensitive areas. Drumming up for such ideational inculcation helps Orientalists to discourage the natives of the host countries to attack, frown upon and bulldoze any refugees and asylum seekers to exit, or else much headache and unending discomfort will ensue. The idea of building up a refugee

camp for existing and potential refugees is discouraged by the West in preparation to declare that such waves of homeless population are ticking bombs that cause a veiled and dire threat to national security.

As we shall see in the following subsequent sections, the telling and cogent reason why the researcher is making such a well-quoted reference here is that waves of refugees will be frowned upon as *personae non gratae* when they arrive in the host countries. Orientalism enervates the humanitarian power and logic of refugees forced out of their home countries because of internecine and protracted wars, grievances, persecution, suppression, oppression or otherwise expressed. Polman (2010) cites some horrendous events from the memory of the past about how refugee camps snowballed into flashpoints for terrorist attacks:

From refugee camps in eastern Sudan in the 1980s, Eritrean and Ugandan warriors took up arms against their respective fatherlands. From camps in Ethiopia the Sudanese rebels of the SPLA fought the Sudanese government. The rebels referred to the refugees as aid bait, used to lure humanitarian aid. (Polman, 2010: 107)

Ironically enough, many natives of the USA and the EU countries claim that refugees can hardly assimilate, integrate, and socialize with the host communities. This is true because refugees are penned up and cordoned off in peripheral zones far from the locals as we shall see throughout *Exit West*:

The situation is further complicated by the high concentration of immigrants in some neighborhoods due to a lack of redistribution policies. This is particularly true for Belgium, France, and Sweden, where distribution of immigrants is unequal, discouraging integration with the host community and fueling tensions and criminality. (Khen, *et al.*, 2020: 230)

Internal borders can be also psychosocial that undermine the social fabric. We have seen how Saeed and Nadia partially and occasionally live on their own, with Saeed more attached relatively to his family than Nadia is. Such psychosocial separation begets a more dangerous segregation between the present and future generations of one country. Saeed and Nadia live almost together albeit unmarried, getting away step by step from their parents. Hamid displays that the man-made,

illusory, and internal borders are weaponized by the West to further destroy the social bonds be it at home or abroad:

Saeed's mother thought she saw a former student of hers firing with much determination and focus a machine gun mounted on the back of a pickup truck. She looked at him and he looked at her and he did not turn and shoot her, and so she suspected it was him, although Saeed's father said it meant nothing more than that she had seen a man who wished to fire in another direction. She remembered the boy as shy, with a stutter and a quick mind for mathematics, a good boy, but she could not remember his name. (Hamid, 2017: 40)

In *Exit West*, Hamid shares the readership some but not all the reasons why waves of refugees need to flee their home cities. Ironically enough, the same IDPs, migrants, refugees and asylum seekers will sustain different manifestations: forcible marginalization, displacement, homelessness, statelessness and above all disintegration in the host communities. The situation of the refugees looks very much like out of the frying pan into the fire or adding insult to injury:

When she visited again it was gone, unrecognizable, the building crushed by the force of a bomb that weighed as much as a compact automobile. Nadia would never be able to determine what had become of them, but she always hoped they had found a way to depart unharmed, abandoning the city to the predations of warriors on both sides who seemed content to flatten it in order to possess it. [...] Saeed's boss had tears in his eyes as he told his employees that he had to shutter his business, apologizing for letting them down, and promising that there would be jobs for them all when things improved, and the agency was able to reopen. [...] At Nadia's office the payroll department stopped giving out paychecks and within days everyone stopped coming. (Hamid, 2017: 40)

With the refugee situation in the war-torn countries portrayed as such, potential refugees are now at sixes and sevens as if they were experiencing a doomsday scenario, which augurs ill for their arrival in the host countries. Hamid portrays not just the physical destruction but also reveals some psychosocial

breakdown of many refugees, desperately looking for a way out of their war-torn country. When some refugees are granted asylum and access by the host countries, they will remain separated and penned up. As such, the illusory and man-made borders – whether internal or external – will remain the most undesirable products of Orientalism in the twenty-first century humanitarian policies and refugee protection laws.

Sadly enough, not all Syrian IDPs have survived the brutality perpetrated inside the country. However, surviving refugees will be subject to another acid test both at the borders and abroad. It is ethnic, racial, religious, and socio-political discrimination and apartheid. In his *Exit West*, Hamid seeks to repeatedly demythologize the Westernized Supremacy and biased ideation instilled by Orientalism into the mindset of the world that the West and East are poles apart and the borders are established to prevent any coexistence. Through the desperate yet successful attempts made by refugees, Hamid seeks to prove that such national borders are merely illusory and not physical. Due to the unbearably mental and physical agonies Syrian IDPs have been sustaining, the supernatural salvation through magical doors springs, which become viral among all trapped Syrian IDPs. The more they are pressurized and agonized over their destiny, the more Syrian IDPs become highly likely willing to believe any solutions that become handy. Psychologically, their gullibility is telling; badly impacted IDPs in general and Syrians in particular have survived despicable life-threatening conditions. Therefore, they are readily credulous to swallow the concept of magical doors, turning it into reality although the idea for IDPs to be catapulted and propelled into the host countries in the blink of an eye sounds first imprudent, laughable, preposterous, puerile, and hare-brained. Hamid seeks to dispel and shatter the socio-political dichotomy made by Orientalism between the West and the East:

The effect doors had on people altered as well. Rumors had begun to circulate of doors that could take you elsewhere, often to places far away, well removed from this death trap of a country. Some people claimed to know people who knew people who had been through such doors. A normal door, they said, could become a special door, and it could happen without warning, to any door at all. (Hamid, 2017: 41)

Akin to Hamid's *Exit West*, the Syrian Refugee Crisis has boiled over, forcing

a multitude of Syrian IDPs to seek help through humanitarian organizations for migration, refuge, and asylum purposes. When such desperate attempts failed, they forcibly resorted to human trafficking agents to cross the man-made borders illegally; they were forced to buy their survival by hook or by crook (Baird, 2017; Gebrewold *et al.*, 2018; United Nations, 2020). Due to the iron grip placed on the closed national borders, the increasingly growing number of refuge and asylum applications marked with lengthy processes and the treacherous migration routes, Syrian refugees strongly believe that human trafficking agents are the real panacea to their agonies. As such, human trafficking has remarkably flourished at the borders (Mandić, 2017). One reason that explains why human trafficking is growing among the Syrian refugees is the restrictive immigration and refugee policies adopted by rich countries (Castles, 2003). The Syrian borders are swarming with diasporic waves as millions of Syrian IDPs are fidgeting about desperately to be refugees. The more reluctant and unwilling the host countries are to receive more refugees, the more lucrative the business of human trafficking is for illegal covert actors at the borders: “Meanwhile, many Syrian forced migrants are denied non-smuggler mechanisms for obtaining asylum-seeker and refugee status” (Mandić, 2017: 29). The proverbial saying ‘a drowning man will clutch at a straw’ explains why IDPs need to believe and hope that a popular superstition will be a reality they live. The rumour of ‘Magical Doors’ – albeit yet unconfirmed – seems to have gained a rapid and warm welcome.

UNHCR (2021) reveals that many refugees fall victim to human traffickers and end up being deceived, forcibly blackmailed or abducted. In his article, featuring *Fleeing Home: Refugees and Human Trafficking* (2019) posted at www.cfr.org, Alexandra Bro remarks that refugees are extremely vulnerable, disadvantaged, exploited, and underprivileged because they are always at risk of human rights violations. Regrettably enough, although the magical doors provide a flicker of hope to trapped IDPs, they receive socio-political punches, so to speak. Sadly enough, refugees are declared ‘*personae non grate*’ before and after arrival in the host countries. More so, many borders are closed to stave off the influx of refugees, who are deemed by the natives of the host countries as malice and threat to national security. Hamid showcases how the Syrian Refugee Crisis is being more dehumanized, politicized, instrumentalized, and weaponized.

Mandić (2017) explains how Syrian refugees face onerous and mentally excruciating challenges in their diasporic epics while trudging through human trafficking trails and the inhumane procedures taken by potential host countries:

From mid-2014 onward, and especially since March 2016, Balkan Route countries have implemented border militarization unprecedented since World War II. At sea, Coast and Border Guards are coupled with Greek, Turkish and international military. On land, massive fences and walls, surveillance cameras, and interrogation facilities supplement police and military units deploying rubber bullets, batons, watch dogs and teargas. Most of these policies—ill-advisedly, I have suggested—do not differentiate between persecution of smugglers and traffickers. (Mandić (2017: 35)

Such strict migration and refugee policies scare off and intimidate any Syrian IDPs, who may toy with the idea of treading the pathways to any host countries. With the international borders closed in the face of Syrian refugees, survival has become unattainable for many. Moreover, in Syria, those entombed are lucky enough to have a decent funeral. Hamid mirrors exactly what has been going on in Syria as of 2011; Syrian IDPs and refugees do struggle to bury their loved ones in graveyards due to the fierce fighting going on with heavy artillery, bombardment, and indiscriminate shooting:

Funerals were smaller and more rushed affairs in those days, because of the fighting. Some families had no choice but to bury their dead in a courtyard or at the sheltered margin of a road, it being impossible to reach a proper graveyard, and so impromptu burial grounds grew up, [...]. It was customary for a home that had suffered a bereavement to be filled with relatives and well-wishers for many days. (Hamid, 2017: 45)

Syrian IDPs and refugee families feel sad twice when bereaved: once because their beloved ones have passed away, and once because they cannot bury them in a graveyard as reported by www.theguardian.com, www.aljazeera.com, www.france24.com, www.bbc.co.uk, and several other reliable news and press outlets. UNHCR also fosters the awareness of the increasingly growing threats

imposed by the late, remiss, and inadequate response to the refugee cries. When the international community cooperates in tandem, the future stability of the region will be much better. In his much telling masterpiece, par excellence, Hamid makes *Exit West* a narrative miniature to reveal what is going inside Syria, which is trapped between two types of agony: psychological and physical suffering inflicted by the warring factions and Bashar Al-Assad Regime on the one side and the closed borders ruled by an iron fist by the potential host countries. Yet, with all the horrendous atrocities perpetrated inside Syria, the international community remains helpless, inactive, indifferent, turning a blind eye to the socio-political inferno going on inside Syria:

The night the militants came they were looking for people of a particular sect, and demanded to see ID cards, to check what sort of names everyone had, [...] The neighbors upstairs were not so lucky: the husband was held down while his throat was cut, the wife and daughter were hauled out and away. The dead neighbor bled through a crack in the floor, his blood appearing as a stain in the high corner of Saeed's sitting room, and Saeed and Nadia, who had heard the family's screams, went up to collect and bury him, as soon as they dared, but his body was gone, presumably taken by his executioners, and his blood was already fairly dry. (Hamid, 2017: 48)

Such heartrending ongoing sagas act as triggers for IDPs to seek out a way by hook or by crook to flee the country no matter what, how, where, and when. Reflecting reality, the magical doors with low prices lead refugees to low-income countries, where life for refugees will almost be the same as is in their home countries. However, heavily guarded magical doors lead to high-income potential host countries, where refugees can have better welfare. However, the existence of magical doors has exacerbated and exasperated the migration and police control authorities of any possible host countries. It has also prompted the warring parties inside Syria to clamp down on any attempts by refugees to cross the national borders. However, this makes the situation more favourable for human trafficking agencies. Brutal actions against refugees include physical and psychological offences, making many humanitarian organizations much worried about the despicable situation of refugees cornered in inhospitable areas: "Human rights organizations are concerned

that illegal push-back actions could be camouflaged as humanitarian rescue missions” (Palidda, 2016: 173).

Brutal governments unwittingly believe that the stronger its iron grip is over citizens, the better it controls the entire country. However, it is entirely untrue; the more savage a government is, the more encouraged its citizens feel to flee the country. Hamid provides the readership with panoramic snapshots of how Syrian refugees hold onto any news that can verify that magical doors are true. Hamid seeks to lay bare and debunk the myth premised on the propaganda that the West is not and must not be reachable by any refugees:

Saeed and Nadia meanwhile had dedicated themselves single-mindedly to finding a way out of the city, and as the overland routes were widely deemed too perilous to attempt, this meant investigating the possibility of securing passage through the doors, in which most people seemed now to believe, especially since any attempt to use one or keep one secret had been proclaimed by the militants to be punishable, as usual and somewhat unimaginatively, by death, and also because those with shortwave radios claimed that even the most reputable international broadcasters had acknowledged the doors existed. (Hamid, 2017: 49)

Ironically enough, the magical doors made available impose a formidable threat to world leaders on the pretext of destabilizing their national security, while such magical doors are there to give succour to trapped refugees. This does not mean ‘one man's meat is another man's poison’ because it is not a compromise nor is it a win-win situation; it is simply reaching out to the underprivileged, the needy, the poor, and the vulnerable with due respect to all host communities who coexist with refugees in perfect amity. Akin to magical doors, the secret trafficking corridors used in reality by agents to smuggle persons from Syria outward into Europe mostly are revealed by Hamid's *Exit West*. Although human trafficking is a punishable crime, Mandić (2017) reveals that many of the Syrian refugees interviewed confirmed that they had trusted human trafficking agents. When weighing up the tyranny, brutality, and oppression exercised by Bashar Al-Assad Regime vis-à-vis the treacherous journeys on the migration pathways mapped by human trafficking agents, many of the Syrian refugees interviewed have showed considerable satisfaction with the criminal services provided by human trafficking agents albeit highly priced.

Like millions of Syrian IDPs in war-torn cities, both Saeed and Nadia are now looking desperately for a way to survive the inferno; they think they would flee it temporarily, but they will fall unknowingly victim to migration shackles and never come back to their home country. They also have a foreshadowing strong feeling that they will be left to the ruthlessness and racism of the West: “she was haunted by worries too, revolving around dependence, worries that in going abroad and leaving their country she and Saeed and Saeed’s father might be at the mercy of strangers, subsistent on handouts, caged in pens like vermin” (Hamid, 2017: 52). Migration to destinations where one does not belong is another way of killing oneself and murdering the beloved ones: “for when we migrate, we murder from our lives those we leave behind” (Hamid, 2017: 54). For refugees, life back in home country becomes nostalgic and treasured memories because refugee life in the West is very much like a refurbished building; it is neither brand new nor is it genuinely antient to be a place of pride: a photograph of his parents to keep hidden inside his clothing, along with a memory stick containing his family album” (Hamid, 2017: 56). As we shall see, refugee life becomes photographic nostalgia with risible attempts to shore up the awkward present and blurred future overburdened by disintegration in the West.

In the wake of the 9/11 Attacks of 2001 alongside the devastating consequences that ensued, Global America has come into play, heralding dreams of capitalism, imperialism, and post-colonialism to flourish with good conscience, yet bringing about a fatal and drastic world. The pretensions of the West of being caretaker of migration, refuge, liberty, humanity, and egalitarianism are demythologized and exposed:

By stigmatizing the Other—the un-American, the un-European, the un-Christian—as “unassimilable” and a serious threat to its well-being and security, this new imperialism as created internal and external frontier warfare in and outside its confines, ranging from militarized borders to “hostile environments,” from wars of aggression to violent civil uprisings, from mass shootings to the war on terror. All of these have taken a heavy toll, resulting in an increasingly insecure, unstable, and fragile world where mass migration and displacement have reached the highest levels since the Second World War. For millions of people

forcibly or internally removed from their homelands—refugees, asylum seekers, undocumente migrants—the “West,” all the same, continues to function as the frontier of freedom and liberty; however, in reality, it has become a closed door, a gated community that rigorously tries to regulate free movement and restrict refugees’ “right to flight” from poverty, war, or dictatorial regimes. (Korpez, 2020: 162)

Hamid’s *Exit West* provides panoramic snapshots of how the refugee camps are swarming with an influx of refugees trapped, penned up, and herded with glaringly limited and poor services, if any. Syrian refugees become only the other in the West, dehumanized yet politicized by the hubris fuelled by xenophobia. The concerns of refugees bring them together, removing the ethnic, national, and cultural differences; they huddle together not just for warmth to stave off biting cold, but also to nestle between each other to feel more protected. Hamid provides the readership with telling snippets of how much of the suffering of the Syrian refugees are left untold:

[...] they saw what looked like a refugee camp, with hundreds of tents and lean-tos and people of many colors and hues—many colors and hues but mostly falling within a band of [...] these people were gathered around fires that burned inside upright oil drums and speaking in a cacophony that was the languages of the world. (Hamid, 2017: 58)

Simply put, the UNHCR (2021) sends a crystal-clear message to the host countries of refugees: “Refugees are not the crisis. It’s the narratives we tell about them”. This is true because many host communities act towards refugees based on the narratives being indoctrinated and inculcated into the local mindset. Refugees start to feel that they are hemmed in by xenophobic locals, so it would be better for refugees to stay crammed and overcrowded in camps: “Decent people vastly outnumbered dangerous ones, but it was probably best to be in the camp, near other people, after nightfall” (Hamid, 2017: 59). In Austria, for instance, the welcoming signs waved by the locals to flowing refugees changed into frowning signs over time (Miller, 2017). Again, Hungary, among several EU countries, made a flagrant anti-refugee statement: “Hungary was among the first EU states to close its borders, and one of the most outspoken about refusing to accept any refugees, despite EU plans requiring it to do so” (Miller, 2017: 92). The iron grip of the EU borders caused mass

deaths among refugees at sea and land routes. In 2015, for instance, William Spinder (2015), a senior journalist at the UNHCR, documented appalling figures of Syrian refugee deaths. More than (700) people drowned in the Mediterranean Sea off the Libyan coast (April 20, 2015); in the Austrian-Hungarian borders, (71) refugee bodies were frozen to death in a truck (August, 28, 2015); a four-year-old Syrian was washed away, dead in a heartrending image that stirred the global outcry to humanize the refugee crisis (September 4, 2015) and more sagas are left untold (Miller, 2017: 87 & 88).

Psychosocial challenges worsen the stamina of refugees in the host communities; it is the disconnection between the refugee generation and the old non-refugee generation. Such multi-dimensional gaps drive wedges into the refugees' identity, causing more losses than gains, albeit no gains made – all multi-layered losses:

When they woke Saeed tried to call his father, but an automated message informed him that his call could not be completed, and Nadia tried to connect with people via chat applications and social media, and an acquaintance who had made it to Auckland and another who had reached Madrid replied right away. (Hamid, 2017: 59)

The xenophobic attitudes against refugees have become officialised, politicized, and dehumanized. The inferno which the Syrian refugees have fled seems to have reborn in the host countries. Refugees are not now crammed, overcrowded, trapped, herded, and cordoned off between national borders; rather, they are cornered in socio-political, racial, and nationalistic borders by locals negatively inculcated by the anti-refugee policies:

Militants from Saeed and Nadia's country had crossed over to Vienna the previous week, and the city had witnessed massacres in the streets, the militants shooting unarmed people and then disappearing, an afternoon of carnage unlike anything Vienna had ever seen [...] the militants had perhaps hoped to provoke a reaction against migrants from their own part of the world, [...], and if that had been their hope then they had succeeded. (Hamid, 2017: 60)

More aggressively, locals are weaponized against refugees and against

anyone showing sympathy for them. It is the US-AND-THEM approach; either be on our side or else you side with refugees. Such humanitarian attitudes have become punishable yet extrajudicial crimes, and the mass deaths of 49 victims in the Christchurch Mosque, New Zealand, is an appallingly telling example of Islamophobia and racism (Alimamy and Boztas, 2021; Nahavandi, 2021; Mortimer, 2021). In *Exit West*, when a good-hearted old lady attempts to show humanitarian sympathy to the helpless refugees, the angry anti-refugee advocates frown upon her; she feels as if not belonging to her townspeople:

[...] for the young woman had learned of a mob that was intending to attack the migrants gathered near the zoo, [...] and she planned to join a human cordon to separate the two sides, or rather to shield the migrants from the anti-migrants, and she was wearing a peace badge on her overcoat, and a rainbow pride badge, and a migrant compassion badge [...] they were furious, and they were staring at her and at her badges with undisguised hostility, and the rancor of perceived betrayal, and they started to shout at her, and push her. (Hamid, 2017: 60)

Ironically enough, some EU countries instrumentalize terrorism as a pretext to refuse to give any asylum, refuge, or migration status to refugees. This unfounded allegation dances to the tune of Trump's claim that Syrian refugees are merely ISIS operatives seeking refugee status in disguise. Well, in fact it is terrorism yoked together with tyranny alongside the dire consequences that forcibly bulldozed millions of Syrian refugees outside Syria into the no-man's territory, borderlines and several host countries: "It has a very outspoken leader, Viktor Orban, who insists that admitting refugees also means importing terrorism, criminalism, anti-Semitism and homophobia" (Miller, 2017: 92). This is not to downplay the Hungarians' humanitarian efforts shown to Syrian refugees at the borderlines. Such xenophobic practices have increased xenophobic sentiments targeting Muslims among the Danish people. With more antirefugee policies being on the increase, many Danes who adopt humanitarian-minded approaches have become helpless and speechless.

Ironically enough, another inhumane practice that caused a despicable shock to refugees was that instead of being protected and escorted by the police against any anti-refugee minded citizens, soldiers and policemen bulldozed refugees even out of

such inhospitable camps:

Soon there was a vanload more of them, in full riot gear, and then a car with two more who wore white shirts and black vests and were armed with what appeared to be submachine guns, and on their black vests was the word police in white letters but these two looked to Saeed and Nadia like soldiers [...] When the police called over their bullhorns for everyone to exit the house. (Hamid, 2017: 70)

Against such an unsettled refugee everyday life, the loss of identity gets worse more and more. Refugees feel two heavy losses of identity at the national level; the first loss of identity is a multi-dimensional loss of identity; the second loss of identity is the interpersonal relationships that holds between nuclear and extended family members, friends, and acquaintances. Refugees unknowingly develop a sense of estrangement from their beloved ones. Instead of the host countries bringing refugees closer and helping them realize family reunion, the twenty-first century diaspora causes and widens the gaps as is the case with Saeed and Nadia:

[...] he had been shocked by her tone, and while he acquiesced, he wondered if this new way of speaking to one another, this unkindness that was now creeping into their words from time to time, was a sign of where they were headed. Nadia too noticed a friction between them. She was uncertain what to do to disarm the cycles of annoyance they seemed to be entering into with one another, since once begun such cycles are difficult to break. (Hamid, 2017: 73)

According to Beck's *Critical Theory* and the ground-breaking theory of *World Risk Society* (1998) in his article, featuring *The Cosmopolitan Society and Its Enemies* (2002) and *Cosmopolitan Vision* (2006) the entire world has become a small village, where everyone is a neighbour and not a foreigner: "the migration apocalypse" can function as a harbinger of a new mode of consciousness built not on the essentialist and imperial standpoint of the West, but on a pluralistic narrative open to dialogue, difference, and diversity" (Korpez, 2020: 163). It is true that the deeply seated hate and deeply ingrained unjustifiable xenophobia must be entirely buried. Ironically, when comparing the pre-migration situation and post-migration situation of refugees, one feels it is all the same in terms of the security, safety,

welfare, humanity yet to be provided for such poor, homeless, stateless, underprivileged, and disadvantaged population both in their home countries and host countries – it is all unjustifiable:

After the riots, the talk on the television was of a major operation, one city at a time, starting in London, to reclaim Britain for Britain, and it was reported that the army was being deployed, and the police as well, and those who had once served in the army and the police, and volunteers who had received a weeklong course of training. Saeed and Nadia heard it said that nativist extremists were forming their own legions, with a wink and a nod from the authorities, and the social media chatter was of a coming night of shattered glass. (Hamid, 2017: 74)

For Beck's redefinition of the right of hospitality, refugees oppressed by tyrannies shall have the basic right to enjoy hospitality. This is humanity; this is coherence. Refugees make up part of the global community; refusing to integrate them means failure in humanity and failure bridging the existing gaps: "People in need can claim the right to hospitality. The difference resides already in the fact that, in the global space of responsibility of global risks, nobody can be excluded from hospitality" (Beck, 2009: 190).

Refugees are fed up with this façade of democracy, freedom, humanity, and welfare claimed by the West. The global dream to redesign the world into an American "ideal" of sublime values has now metastasized into global hegemony socially, politically, ideologically, economically, ethnically, and militarily. Unless otherwise the natives are left without negatively charged with anti-refugee hate speech and without being inculcated into acting aggressively against refugees, they would display much philanthropy, humanity, benevolence, magnanimity, and lenience towards refugees: "And yet while all this occurred there were volunteers delivering food and medicine to the area, and aid agencies at work, and the government had not banned them from operating" (Hamid, 2017: 75). This reflects that the human nature of people tends to be kind, loving, and compassionate when not instrumentalized or weaponized against the other. Fear never subdues among refugees where the host community is unwelcoming because refugees remain the number-one target for the natives to scare off and ostracize:

Saeed and Nadia knew what the buildup to conflict felt like, [...] and they faced it not with bravery, [...] with tension ebbing and flowing, and when the tension receded there was calm, the calm that is called the calm before the storm. (Hamid, 2017: 75)

Ironically, Saeed and Nadia were amazed to a fox on the prowl because it would not find a welcoming environment to live in. Like the fox, refugees will not survive in the West: Hamid's telling quotation "how such a creature could survive in London" explains the miserable situation that many refugees suffer from. In Beck's cosmopolitan world, responsibility toward the other is much emphasized for a better future of humanity. The universal message couched in Hamid's *Exit West* is that the world should accommodate for all cultures, ethnicities, and communities:

Hamid challenges the reader to envision a world where everyone, irrespective of class, color, or religion, internalizes something of the quality of being a foreigner, an immigrant, a refugee. In a global migration crisis where diversity and plurality have become the norm rather than the deviation, the reader thus is invited to conceive a world largely divorced from borders and political imaginaries. (Korpez, 2020: 165)

It is an egalitarian and humanitarian world, where electricity, water, internet coverage, healthcare, education, and other everyday life services are not cut off based on racial discrimination. However, the hollow slogans chanted by the West are now exposed. Back in their home countries, such services are either cut off or supplied across the whole area with no discrimination:

That night the electricity went out, cut off by the authorities, and Kensington and Chelsea descended into darkness. A sharp fear descended also, [...]. In their own fled city, when the electricity had gone, it had gone for all. But in London there were parts as bright as ever. (Hamid, 2017: 77 & 79)

Racial dichotomy exists in the seemingly most developed and civilized cities; London becomes Light London and Dark London, based on who lives here or there. London is like white and black worlds with no humanitarian tolerance, no egalitarianism, no inclusion, integration, and no minimum mercifulness displayed

towards refugees. This symbolism of 'Light London and Dark London' in *Exit West* echoes the US-and-THEM dichotomy enforced by Orientalism on the mindset of the locals.

The more aggressive the natives are towards the refugees; the more tension is triggered. Many refugees in their home countries have never thought of taking up arms neither to attack nor to defend. That is why refugees prefer to flee their war-torn countries. However, it seems that the unending war that is deeply ingrained in racial hate is in the host countries: "many of the migrants in dark London had taken to carrying knives and other weapons, being as they were in a state of siege, and liable to be attacked by government forces at any time" (Hamid, 2017: 81). Most refugees have developed or will develop an ambivalence of a lost identity and a hybrid identity. Refugees who assimilate and integrate into the host communities need to compromise their sociocultural legacy and heritage, or else the host communities will vomit them up into diaspora again. The survival-oriented tug-of-war between Saeed and Nadia best represents the identity-driven conflict that many Syrian refugees slip into. They seem to be now at critically sensitive crossroads. Refugees along with their legacy and heritage are frowned at. As such, their hybrid identities will be reproduced to best suit the host communities while theirs will be much silhouetted.

Only now will we hear of a new Saeed and a new Nadia given the postcolonial influence on their real identity and the unwittingly formed hybrid identity they breathe in and out. Simply put, refugees become swallowed by the twenty-first century machine of hegemony. Like Saeed and Nadia, millions of refugees in general and Syrian refugees in particular suffer from the continued waves of Orientalism that dismantle their identity, culture, legacy, heritage, history, sociology and coherence. Between the following quoted dialogue lies a harbinger of Orientalism:

"Why would we want to move?" She said.

"To be among our own kind," Saeed answered.

"What makes them our kind?"

"They're from our country."

"From the country we used to be from."

“We’ve left that place.”

“That doesn’t mean we have no connection.”

“They’re not like me.”

“You haven’t met them.”

“I don’t need to”. (Hamid, 2017: 82 & 83)

It should be repeated again that hybridity or loss of identity to get a new one is and should not be looked at negatively. Those refugees, who manage to survive with a new hybrid identity, are agents of change and connectors between the two poles, the West, and the East here. Yet, this loss of identity comes with pain. In fact, among the first bedrock values that Orientalism destroys is the originality of refugee identity. With their identity frowned at and excluded in the host communities, many refugees survive physically, while most of them live an internal fight in their memories. Simply put, Orientalism yoked together with refugeeism and migration charges refugees an illogically high price, which is their ever-torturing ambivalence of two lives:

“Accordingly, merged-identity is the result of hybridity and ambivalence when the person is oscillating between two different worlds. It can be argued that sometimes this phenomenon goes further and leads to a lost identity”. (Zohdi, 2018: 149)

By a metaphorical analogy, the lives of the first two generations or so is perhaps very much like an isthmus, where refugees experience a lengthy transitional fight internally not to survive physically but mentally. In *Exit West*, Hamid warns the world that unless otherwise we understand the melting pot of one indivisible globe regardless of the flow of refugees and illusory borders, the ripple effect of precariousness will mercilessly sweep through the war-torn and host countries, reducing them down to rubble. *Exit West* communicates a message that the world is at best when it goes through its self-generating equilibrium without the ever-increasing ethnicity-based compartmentalization fuelled by Orientalism, both physically and mentally. Hamid’s snappy and laconic catchphrase “We are all migrants through time” echoes much of the speech delivered by former UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan’s remarks, published and streamed live at www.un.org (September 25 of 2002), while addressing attendees at the UNA-USA

Dinner held in New York:

Real borders are not between nations, but between powerful and powerless, free and fettered, privileged and humiliated. Today, no walls can separate humanitarian or human rights crises in one part of the world from national security crises in another. We can love what we are, without hating what—and who—we are not.

No one single country in the West has been of one pure line of descent; people come into peace when they coexist in one melting pot and become anchored in time and space to global ethics unimpacted by Orientalism or any other ills and evils:

Even Britain was not immune from this phenomenon, in fact some said Britain had already split, like a man whose head had been chopped off and yet still stood, and others said Britain was an island, and islands endure, even if the people who come to them change. (Hamid, 2017: 85)

Expelling, patronizing, condescending to or shoving refugees around will backfire on the host communities as it fuels hate-minded natives; anti-refugee policies developed to maintain national security and stability unwittingly boomerang on the locals and refugees alike. Fighting humanity means waging unjustifiable wars that gnaw away at the global social fabric. Therefore, refugeeism has the potential to bridge the gap between the poles that are widened by Orientalism. Refugees are positive agents of change that undermine the argument of Orientalism which is built on bigotry, hatred, and xenophobia.

At the time of the writing stage of the thesis, the Russian forces have brutally invaded Ukraine, causing convoys of IDPs and refugees to flood into Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Hungary, and Moldova. On 1 March 2022, Chris Melzer's makes a news headline at www.unhcr.org to boastfully show off people across Poland evince solidarity and empathy with refugees, flooding from Ukraine. With overflowing donation centres placed at the border points, Polish people have rushed to offer free-of-charge transport and accommodation across Poland only for Ukrainians. Ironically enough, the same border gates now widely open to welcome the Ukrainians since the first minute have been and will be always locked in the face

of Arabs, Muslims, and any refugees, IDPs and asylum seekers forced to flee their war-torn countries. The West's spurious claims of being humane are merely paper tigers and dead letters.

Hamid's *Exit West* has never come out of vacuum; it was written after the great influx of Syrian refugees into Europe in 2015 and 2016. On www.aa.com.tr, Santiago Abascal, Spanish congressman, and leader of the right-wing Vox Party, flagrantly voiced his racist Orientalism against Muslim refugees and asylum seekers: "Ukrainian refugees are welcome, Muslim refugees are not." In humanitarian crises, all refugees should be welcome regardless of their religion, geography, nationality, culture, identity, or ethnicity. The principle of reciprocity is not adopted in humanitarian crises. Thousands of Armenian refugees were welcome into Syria and started their business, enjoying all rights with zero discrimination (Wiener, 2019). Again, when war broke out in Lebanon and Palestine, Syrians welcome all refugees regardless of any religious, political, social, or ethnic considerations no matter what. The same was true when Iraqis flooded Syria back in the Gulf war in the 1990s when invaded by the US forces. Simply put, religion, geography, nationality, culture, identity, or ethnicity cannot be passwords to gaining access to host countries for refugees and asylum seekers; it is the humanitarian needs that matter.

In this regard, The Arab and Middle Eastern Journalists Association (AMEJA) spelled out how the West blatantly adopts and acts in a double-standard fashion with immigrants and refugees at www.alaraby.co.uk. Telling examples are cited to expose the mendacity of the so-called humanity policies. The AMEJA calls out the Ukraine news coverage flagrantly Orientalist and racist of a double-standard mindset that glorifies the Ukrainian crisis while dehumanizes the crises that have plagued many Middle Eastern countries, such as Syria, Libya, and Yemen. More so, Charlie D'Agata, who is CBS correspondent among many others, was quoted on www.alaraby.co.uk, [02 March 2022], as saying that Ukrainians showcase Europeanness and civility, while Iraqi and Afghani war survivors, refugees, and asylum seekers are used to living in war-torn countries. The CBS correspondent's deeply seated insidious prejudiced words were repeated on US TV, communicating and emphasizing a key message couched in Orientalism: unlike Iraq and Afghanistan that have been plagued by internecine wars for decades, Ukraine is a European

civilized country, where one would not expect to see any trails of warfare. Although CBS correspondent murmured a half-hearted apology for his biased words, the message is there whether implicit or explicit. In the same vein, Philippe Corbe, journalist of BFM TV on France 24, made a dehumanizing statement on www.alaraby.co.uk, as saying that Ukrainians are not like Syrians, fleeing bombardment; the issue here is about Europeans. By this racist statement, Philippe Corbe takes the world back to pre-history. Humanity for such Orientalists is painted like rainbow; each geography is encoded with a different weight at the humanity scale but vanishes fast, so does the rainbow. This implies that the world for the West is coded by one's culture, religion, identity, geography, ethnicity BUT not by one's humanity. The stark reality once fictionalized in Hamid's *Exit West*, among several others, becomes afresh the language of journalism, which is supposed to neutrally depict what is going on. The AMEJA stakes out that the CBS correspondent's pervasive commentary is much common among the Western journalists who dare to normalize and dehumanize tragedies in MENA, Africa, Asia, and Latin America.

Again, while writing the current thesis, more European racist statements were voiced against refugees and asylum seekers coming from MENA in general and Muslims in particular. Although war broke out and has been still sweeping through Syria for more than 11 years, Polish people flagrantly show racist Orientalism against non-European refugees, while embracing all Ukrainian refugees. Lorenzo Tondo on www.theguardian.com, dated March 9 of 2022, spelled out that [embraced or pushed back: on the Polish border, sadly, not all refugees are welcome]. It is Poland that refused the EU quotas for accepting Muslim refugees, not it is readily taking in Ukrainians as staked out on www.headtopics.com and several other news websites. Many Polish people drive their private cars to the border areas to offer lifts to the Ukrainian refugees trickling into Poland. They offer them second-hand clothes, blankets, toys, accommodation, food, shelter, and several other free-of-charge supplies.

IV. CONCLUSION

With scrutinizing eyes and the wisdom of hindsight carefully yet neutrally set into the depths of covert and overt labyrinths of refugeeism and migration, the international community should have come to well understand the traitorous illusory borders and treacherous journeys that refugees trudge through. Beyond a shadow of doubt, Orientalism has deceptively instilled a vicious mindset deeply ingrained in US-AND-THEM dichotomy. The man-made borders established between the powerful and powerless countries are not to maintain national security and stability; they are fixed to cordon off the world into compartmentalized zones, thus scaring off refugees who attempt to escape over or drive across any national borders. The use of barbed wire and electrified borders constructed and installed apparently against the influx of refugees is not new to the policies adopted by the West:

The political histories of barbed wire or fence in the West show us fast development of use of this very simple but efficient technology that has been used during the making of political borders around the world. Fencing through barbed wire and use of electrified barbed wire was widely seen for securing prisons, concentration camps, and army bases. Besides, it has been used for controlling and confining illegal border crossings, prevention of unwanted immigrants and refugees. (Aras, 2020: 74)

The actions displayed by Orientalism cause a whole host of despicable massacres of refugees to be perpetrated in the home countries, en route, and the host countries directly and indirectly. Simply put, xenophobic practices are all accomplices, accessories, and culprits triggered by Orientalism. The use of barbed wire and electrified borders date back to the creation of the American prairie, which caused horrendous ethnocide of native Americans (Razac, 2003). Scaring off the other can be traced back to the trenches dug at World War I, which caused mass losses, genocides, and deaths of both Jewish and Gypsy communities (Razac, 2003; Aras, 2020). A telling example of the vicious use of barbed wire and electrified

borders was by Italian colonial occupation aimed at curbing and clamping down on resistance in Libya (Razac, 2003; Aras, 2020). The use of barbed wire and electrified borders became more politicized and dehumanized of brutally totalitarian violence. Such physically established borders are meant to be mental to deeply instil a hate-fuelled mindset of the West against the East. The anti-refugee policies and inhumane border closure are glaringly telling examples of how Orientalism has created the dichotomy and divide between the Orient and the Occident at home and abroad. When Hamid manages to prove that these physical borders are overcome yet comes another harder type of borders; they are internal and cannot be seen physically but felt; they are legacies that Orientalism bequeathed to later generations as of the pre-colonial and post-colonial eras. All the Orientalist thought, and critique developed in that era is now manifest in the refugee crisis, which Hamid critiques to debunk those torn mythologies created by the West about the Occident. Shakespeare's and other writers' Orientalist ideas are now born in the West and best exemplified in the refugee crisis as Hamid seems to be saying.

Although the illusory man-made borders are physically established, the mental borders travel with the refugees into the host countries. Refugees are trapped inside their home countries by man-made borders while they are still cordoned off and penned up by mental borders in the host countries. It is two-wedge anti-refugee policies adopted by the West against the other albeit granted asylum and refugee status. With ethno-racial and anti-refugee policies fuelled by xenophobia and Orientalism, ambivalence of hybrid identity and loss of identity cause many refugees to split and fall apart unwittingly. Hamid makes clear that even the first generation of refugees has slipped into the shackles of the West, thus being re-produced by Orientalism to abandon one's nostalgic identity: "Nadia was slipping away from Saeed, and Saeed from Nadia [...] spoilage had begun to manifest itself in their relationship, and each recognized it would be better to part now, ere worse came". (Hamid, 2017: 114)

The key message Hamid seeks to communicate in *Exit West* is that the world is no longer habitable if we still view it as compartmentalized zones, dehumanized, and politicized for ethno-racial whims and agendas. The magical doors give a glimmer of hope for the refugees yet trapped in their home countries to cross over the borders safely into more welcoming host communities. It is true that all the world

population is always in a state of migratory influx across the countries. It stands to reason that the world is always developing into a changing yet small village:

We are all migrants, refugees, and IDPs “in time and space and yet anchored to a moral position to accept responsibility for our actions and hold ourselves accountable for them. For the real global threat is not the world of open doors, but a world of closed ones that remains blind to the global risk of mass migration, poverty, and human displacement. (Korpez, 2017: 172)

Without the man-made, illusory and mental borders at home and abroad, the world can be at best. It is the melting pot that makes natives and refugees live in perfect harmony. Loss of identity cannot be compensated for by hybrid identity. Multi-dimensional ambivalence backfires on both communities. Man-made crises are more destructive than natural disasters; anti-refugee otherness begets hate and hate begets division, which in turn fuels grudge that drags on for many generations to come.

The host countries of the West should revisit their refugee policies, which should be scrupulously fair and more welcoming. Xenophobic hate speech and action should be defused to make diasporic influx of refugees smoother and problem-free. Borders should not be socio-political scarecrows to intimidate refugees while being trapped, crossing over the borders or while en route. Rather, borders should be relieving points that provide comfort, ease, and alleviation of diasporic trauma of refugees. Again, the host countries seemingly receiving the waves of refugees should not be a breeding ground for more life-threatening problems; they should be destinations that provide much mitigation for many traumatized refugees. Taken together, such well-intentioned actions help to promote friendly integration into the host countries, which further pave the way for smoother resettlement of refugees back into their home countries, thus establishing friendly and unneighbourly relationships with the world countries. As such, the EU countries and USA have moral and legal obligations to the Syrian diaspora of refugees governed by (1) the Kantian understanding of cosmopolitan hospitality, (2) the 1951 Refugee Convention, and (3) the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Based on the results revealed by the in-depth discussion, the researcher would suggest seminal research topics to be examined in refugee literature. It would be

helpful to investigate some ill practices reported by the host countries against refugees and the actions yet to be taken to alleviate and mitigate the trauma of refugees. Again, it would be of great importance to study the best practices adopted by certain host countries for better refugee settlement. Possible research can be the study of the refugee behaviours and effects in the host countries.

The findings of the thesis reveal and re-emphasize a whole host of established facts about refuge and migration crises as best manifested in Hamid's *Exit West*. Fuelled by othering, the West adopts a double-standard policy when addressing the refugee and migrant crises. The double-standard policy against refugees exists long time ago to date, and the Ukrainian refugee crisis is a case in point: refugees of blue eyes and blond hair are welcome, while dark or brown skinned people are pushed away. Such physical and cultural similarities they share make Ukrainians widely welcome into Europe. Such double-standard policies are adopted before refugees reach any host countries, while they are on their treacherous journeys and after they reach their destinations, and the Light London and Dark London is a case in point. The findings also show that because refugees are disintegrated into the host countries, they suffer from hybridity of identity. The West, heavily indoctrinated by Orientalism, develops a discriminatory and anti-refugee propaganda, particularly for refugees coming from the MENA and Asia countries. This is purposefully meant to dehumanise and politicise the refugee crises at the time war-torn countries are helpless to accommodate their natives. The findings also reveal that refugees suffer from xenophobic practices and ill practices in the host countries because of their identities. This finding also shows that most if not all refugees are victimised into hybridity of identity and ambivalence that bring about their loss of belonging.

Given its timeliness, relevance and call for an inclusive, anti-discriminatory and humanist outlook on the refugee crisis, the thesis concludes that the world countries need to reconsider their refuge and migration policies and give it a breath of fresh air. Drawing on Hamid's *Exit West*, the researcher also shows that the world cannot live in silos. The world is very much like a little village, and any discomfort – be it social, political, economic, military, environmental, or otherwise expressed, will impact the entire world due to the ripple effect. One more interesting finding reached at by the researcher is that refugees should be provided with comfort in the host countries rather than victimisation, exclusion, and discrimination.

Considering the differences in culture between the West and the East, I would suggest for refugees that hybrid identities can be part of the solution to live in the West (Ilunga, 2020; ÇOMAK *et al.*, 2021). African migrants and refugees living in the West with hybrid identities is a case in point. By the same token, the Syrian refugees can adopt a hybridized identity approach to better live in the host countries. Refugees should show more adaptability to the cultures of the host countries. Refugee behavioural and cognitive adaptability to the West cannot be realized with zero compromise of either culture. The native governments of refugees should introduce serious reform measures (security and livelihoods) to discourage citizens from leaving their home countries and attract uneasy refugees to return to their home countries.

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