

# The Lives of Immigrants Saeed and Nadia's Represented in The Novel Exit West by Mohsin Hamid

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# **The Lives of Immigrants Saeed and Nadia's Represented in The Novel *Exit West* by Mohsin Hamid**

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## **ABSTRACT**

This study aims to describe the lives of immigrants as reflected in the novel *Exit West* by Mohsin Hamid. The subject of this research is the novel *Exit West* by Mohsin Hamid which was written in 2017. The object of this research is the representation of the depiction of immigrants. The researchers use representation and migration theory as the theory to conduct the research. This study used descriptive qualitative method. Data collection was carried out using literature study techniques and note-taking methods, then to analyze the data using content analysis techniques. Then the approach used is the sociology of literature approach. The results of this study indicate that this novel represents the lives of illegal and legal immigrants in Mykonos, London and Marin. With various obstacles faced, the immigrants in the novel are described as still struggling to get a decent life by mingling with the local residents.

**Keywords:** *Representation, Migration, immigrant life*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Artwork reflects people's lives. This is because works of art (including music, visual arts, drama, theater, novels, romances, poetry, films) are created by someone as a member of society. Art creators present various kinds of problems that exist in society, such as social crime, poverty, gender equality, social inequality, human slavery, pedophilia, including population movement through the themes of these works.

Novels are prose essays that are longer than short stories and tell a person's life in more depth using everyday language and discuss many aspects of human life. According to Abrams, novels and short stories are two shapes of scholarly works which are also called fiction. Indeed in its afterward improvement, the novel was considered synonymous with fiction. In this way, the idea of fiction as expressed over too applies to novels. The term novel in English and this can be what afterward entered Indonesia comes from the Italian novella (which in German: novelle). Actually novella implies "a small new item" and is at that point deciphered as "a brief story in prose" (in Nurgiyantoro, 1995: 9). Currently, the terms novella and novel have almost the same meaning as novelet in Indonesian, which means a work of prose fiction that has a length of words,

but not too long, but not too short.

In a broad sense, the novel is a story in the form of prose in a broad size. A broader measure here can mean stories with complex plots, many characters, complex themes, diverse story settings, and diverse story settings. However, the "wide size" here is also not absolute, perhaps only one element of the fiction is broad, for example, only one theme, character, setting, etc.

Mohsin Hamid's *Exit West* novel, which will be the subject of this research, is one of the novels that is significant to study since it depicts people's lives. The term "immigration" is derived from the Latin word "migration," which focuses on the movement of people from one region or country to another. In Latin, it focuses on the movement of people from one country to another. An emigration event occurs when a person relocates to another country; meanwhile, an immigration event occurs when a person travels to another country. Immigrants are people who travel around a lot (Santosa, 2004: 14). In the novel *Exit West*, the main characters Saeed and Nadia relocate from the Middle East to Greece, namely the island of Mykonos, London, and Marin.

Mohsin Hamid's novel *Exit West* is about the lives of immigrants. These immigrants fight to leave their nation, spend a lot of money, and even break the law, and

there are a variety of reasons for this. Furthermore, because immigrants want to fit in with the natives, the entrance of immigrants has an indirect impact on the lives of the people living.

The novel *Exit West* depicts immigrant life via the story of a couple named Saeed and Nadia who reside in a Middle Eastern city and travel to another country. Saeed and Nadia exited the city through a secret entrance that no one knew about. They both chose to flee their homeland since it was at war and on the edge of extinction. Nadia felt as though she was dying and being reborn after going through a hidden door that could carry a person to the farthest places. As she entered the darkness, Nadia felt a sense of fading and the difficulties of striving to get out. Nadia and Saeed's life as immigrants began there.

The topic of immigrant life in the novel *Exit West* was chosen as the subject of research based on the preceding description because the novel represented the immigrant population.

The following study is based on a previous study by Ambar Andayani and Endang Purbowati that is "*Representasi Multikulturalisme Dalam Novel Moby Dick Karya Helman Melville*" from the faculty of Cultural Sciences, Universitas 17 Agustus 1945 Surabaya. This study expresses reflection of Herman Melville's

point of view about multiculturalism in his novel, *Moby Dick* (1851).

The similarities between the research of Ambar Andayani, Endang Purbowati and I are that they both discuss representation. What distinguishes this study from other researchers is that in this study the authors focus on describing the representation life of immigrants and the problems faced when Saeed and Nadia immigrated. Then the research subjects, data sources and scope of research taken by researchers with other studies were also different. The data for this study was collected from *Mohsin Hamid's novel Exit West*. The data unit is made up of Nadia and Saeed's main characters' words, phrases, sentences, and paragraphs. While the previous study was collected from *novel Moby Dick* (1851).

## RESEARCH METHOD

The theory of this study will use the theory representation by Stuart Hall and migration by Evert Lee. Qualitative method is the method used in this research. Qualitative research is a set of phases used for scientific activity to resolve problems from researchers' point of view and approach (Aminudin, 1990: 1).

Data were objectively analyzed and then described in line with the study's objectives. In this way, Saeed's and Nadia's choice of migration through a sociological review of literature is given a clear picture

of immigrant lives.

Operationally this research uses a sociology of literature approach. The sociology of literature approach, according to Wiyatami (2006: 97), is a progression of the mimetic approach, which examines literary works in relation to social reality and elements. This demonstrates that literary sociology is inextricably linked to the social reality that exists in society. To apply sociology of literature, it must first master the social concepts and facts that sociology studies. In essence, sociology is the study of humans in society, with a process of comprehension stretching from society to individuals, or the existence of a vital tie between literature and society.

There are other books that can be analyzed utilizing sociology of literature; however, the writer chose *Mohsin Hamid's Exit West* as the subject of this study since the tale is engaging and offers a variety of societal issues and difficulties. *Exit West* follows two young individuals named Saeed and Nadia as they travel through a strange land into an unknown future, striving to hold on to each other and their past while seeking for their true identities. An unwelcomed newcomer Based on the story's content, this novel is a good candidate for literary sociological research.

The method used in this research is literature study method and note-taking

technique method. The data for this study was collected from *Mohsin Hamid's novel Exit West*. The data unit is made up of Nadia and Saeed's main characters' words, phrases, sentences, and paragraphs.

Analysis in this study using content analysis techniques. The steps in data analysis were carried out as follows:

1. Reading the novel *Exit West* by Mohsin Hamid to understand the contents of the novel repeatedly and carefully.
2. Determining the data related to the factors that encourage Saeed and Nadia to immigrate and the representation of immigrant life in the novel *Exit West* by Mohsin Hamid.
3. Collecting data related to the factors that prompted Saeed and Nadia to immigrate and the representation of immigrant life in *Mohsin Hamid's novel Exit West*.
4. Analyzing the elements that describe the driving factors for Saeed and Nadia to immigrate in *Mohsin Hamid's novel Exit West*.
5. Analyzing the representation of immigrant life in the novel *Exit West* by Mohsin Hamid.
6. Concluding the results of the analysis.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Figures of immigrants who influence the story in the novel *Exit West* are Saeed and Nadia, young man and young woman who meet in war. These two young people want to leave their country to make a better life, so Saeed and Nadia are illegal

immigrants in this novel.

It tells the life of immigrants in the destination country from the novel *Exit West*, which contains 231 pages. They struggle for a better life. Immigrants who are certainly part of the minority must be able to adapt for their survival to the indigenous population. Mohsin Hamid wants to show immigrants' harsh lives, particularly in the State of London. This is contrary to the Greek State, which receives immigrants well, the islands of Mykonos and Marin. Thus, the life of migrants is the topic of the novel.

## MIGRATION

In the novel *Exit West*, the author describes that when one immigrates to another country is to find possibilities which often take different forms, with small figures showing the freedom to immigrate immediately through portals. The people who go through the doors early in the novel, in search of security, follow the classic story of the refugees at risk. Living in the city alone, with no family, no freedom, no privacy, or the opportunity to earn proper finances, was impossible, as we see with Saeed and Nadia. This account, however, turns in Chapter 7 to the British counselor who, by passing through the London gate to Namibia, saves his own life. The accountant finds freedom and adventure that he has not experienced in London through a changing scenery.

<sup>2</sup>  
*"And 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." (Hamid, 2017:130)*

Hamid also shows the figure of the brash Brazilian man traveling between Brazil and Amsterdam in Chapter 9 until his relationship with someone from the Netherlands turns into romance. He did that to find love and then he decided to migrate.

<sup>8</sup>  
*"On a day that was noticeably younger and warmer than the day he had left Amsterdam," (Hamid, 2017:176)*

Finally, in Chapter 11, the Moroccan girl chooses not to emigrate, because she assumes that she can't accept her anywhere in the world and there's no way out there. Despite all the things that drive someone to migrate, the characters in *Exit West* are basically all looking for a new country or life that has a sense of security, has the opportunity to earn an income, or is just looking for a child.

*"...and she was not wanted by the world, and here she was at least known, and she was tolerated, and that was a blessing." (Hamid, 2017:224)*

The magical doors to new places are represent breakdown of borders and thereby the freedom, hope and fear. The doors are a hope for a new life for those who are fleeing

from poor and war-torn countries. In addition, as with the British chapter 7 up because she wanted to start a new accountant, the doors even provide an adventure. From this explanation we can escape from lives that otherwise appear unlivable, even for people from stable countries. Due to their convenience in home country in the repression of his traveling, these doors constitute the childhood.

breakup

of borders which keep people inside and outside of national states and thus question what constitutes a nation. The nationalists of Great Britain and Vienna therefore view the doors as threats, since they question themselves as part of stable, readily-defined countries in their worldview. for the same reason, a group of militants from the country of Nadia and Saeed, they are trying to control the doors that can take someone out of their country. A group of militants already has a decision that only worthy people can enter their country. A border that has the meaning of the safety of these people and the exclusive ability to define their nation state.

#### **NATIONALISME**

We will not go into further detail about Mohsin Hamid questioning what it means to belong to someone and how to show that one's country of birth plays such a small role in a rapidly globalizing world. Nadia is a woman who has a friendly and sociable nature so in traveling she will have no trouble about it. One fact that must be known is that it was Nadia who never felt at home in the country of her birth. Nadia always

While Saeed, who from the beginning immigrated, had determined that he only wanted to hang out with people from his own country, until finally Saeed found people who were spiritually similar to him, found the Black Mosque in Marin, and Saeed began to study with him. a way to broaden his understanding of his own religion. In this novel the characters have a nature that often turns violent when they cling to the idea of purity or nationalism. Apart from the pure nativists and activists obsessed in Nadia and Saeed's home country, fear and strife arose in part among the immigrant groups who settled in London as they formed several groups based on their respective countries. When Saeed wants to get to know Nigerians, Saeed suddenly feels scared at London House, but Saeed uses his citizenship as a weapon. On the other hand, Nadia earns respect and friendship as she strives to connect with her council neighbors.

While the black dress of Nadia originally is her safety, it represents Saeed's alienation. Because she understands her symbolic power to keep people away, Nadia

wears her black robe. In her country, the people take the robe to mean that she is a conservative woman and thus no harassment is worthwhile. Since Nadia values her liberty and autonomy, the robe keeps people away. She understands. However, Saeed links the robe to Nadia's loving religion and culture. He's angry with Nadia wearing the dress, as she symbolizes her hypocrisy — that while she disdains her culture, she uses her culture superficially. The robe thus becomes a symbol of the greatest conflict in its relation, underlining its different values and philosophies.

#### **MORTALITY**

The theme of the communality of life is, in general, showing and treating death as a sign both of humanity's commonalities and of the preciousness of life despite the level of violence contained in the novel. The narrator always mentions, in the beginning chapters, when a character will die in coming violence, stressing the fragility and unpredictability of life. Death is also at times of silence. Saeed came to his senses as he did the thing called praying. Saeed sensed that he could connect with all of humanity. This reminds Saeed of death, that death is unavoidable and will befall all mankind. This novel illustrates that death is a painful and very common thing. Saeed's father decided not to go on immigration as he was waiting for

his own death. Saeed's father believed he would be a burden for Saeed to grow and develop, therefore he did not pursue a future for himself.

*"That Saeed's father would say, "You two must go, but I will not come." (Hamid, 2017:91)*

While circumstances cause Saeed's father, at a younger age, to accept his own death, his decision still feels like a recognition of his circle. Hence, at the end of the novel Mohsin Hamid shows that immigration is also the cause of the end of Saeed and Nadia's relationship. It is described by Mohsin Hamid that they both experienced a death.

#### **CONCLUSION**

*Exit West* is a novel that tells the story of a person who travels across countries and the various experiences they face and his story is unique to refugees in different places through the magically constructed doors. The novelist conjectures about an age when the whole human race is refugees. We have glimpses of an apocalypse of migration in which everyone appears to be moving. There is no way to rule out wars and drastic climate changes in the future. All of these things also tell that the *Exit West* novel belongs to the science fiction genre. The suffering that starts from physical to mental that refugees face in various countries is also amazingly illustrated when they have to get involved

with the unavoidable problem of mass migration. Mohsin Hamid wants to change our perspective on nationality and borders. In portraying a very different point of view on world geography and artificial boundaries, Mohsin Hamid tries to do so by approaching the problems faced by mass migrations. Mohsin Hamid's novel reminds us that our belief in the world we live in and our future is a must.

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