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PLACES OF MOVEMENT:

A SPATIAL READING OF MOHSIN HAMID'S

EXIT WEST

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We certify that, as the jury, we have read this thesis and that in our opinion it is fully adequate, in scope and in quality, as a thesis for the degree of Master of Science /Master of Arts/ the Doctor of Philosophy/Proficiency in Art.

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ABSTRACT

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Space has returned to literary studies and spatiality studies of the later years of the twentieth century as a result of the "Spatial Turn". Therefore, reading a novel from a spatial perspective can unleash the potentials of the text to new interpretations while expanding and contributing to the theoretical framework of spatiality theories. Whereas most analytical works written on Mohsin Hamid's novel, *Exit West* (2017) are concerned with themes such as refugee crisis and identity formation, the present study explores spatial aspects of the novel and investigates all the spaces, be it landscape, home, urban spaces, desert, island or any other space presented in the novel. The methodology adopted here includes various spatiality theories coupled with textual analysis and close reading of the text, all of which aim at understanding how characters encounter and experience places and the way they are intertwined and interconnected to each other. The main focus, thus, is to bring space to the core of the discussion and address it not just as a setting or backdrop, but rather as a pivotal element in the story which has cultural, sociological, and ecological implications. Through an in-depth textual analysis, this study attempts to inform the reader about the role of places in developing diaspora subjects' identities. Thus, mobility issues, diasporic lives and narrative pattering of spaces in the novel are brought together to identify this novel more as a story about places rather than a story about people.

Key Words: Mohsin Hamid, *Exit West*, Spatiality, Spatial Turn, Rhizome, Diaspora

ÖZ

DEVINIM MEKANLARI: MOHSİN HAMID'İN *EXIT WEST* ROMANININ MEKANSAL OKUMASI

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Mekân, yirminci yüzyılın son yıllarında "Mekânsal Dönüş" sonucunda edebi çalışmalara ve mekânsallık çalışmalarına geri dönmektedir; bu nedenle, bir romanı uzamsal perspektiften okumak, uzamsallık teorilerinin teorik çerçevesini genişletip katkıda bulunurken metnin potansiyelini yeni yorumlara açabilir. Mohsin Hamid'in *Exit West* (2017) romanı üzerine yazılan analitik çalışmaların çoğu mülteci krizi ve kimlik oluşumu gibi temalarla ilgiliyken, bu çalışma romanın mekânsal okumasına odaklanarak, peyzaj, ev, kentsel mekanlar, çöl, ada gibi mekanların yanı sıra romanda geçen diğer mekanları araştırmaktadır. Burada uyarlanan metodoloji, metin analizi ve metnin yakından okumasıyla birleştirilmiş çeşitli uzamsallık teorilerini içerir; bunların tümü, karakterlerin nasıl karşılaştığını ve yerleri nasıl deneyimlediğini ve bunların nasıl iç içe ve birbirleriyle bağlantılı olduğunu keşfetmeyi amaçlar. Bu nedenle ana odak, mekânı tartışmanın özüne taşımak ve onu sadece bir ortam ya da zemin olarak değil, hikâyede kültürel, sosyolojik ve ekolojik etkileri olan önemli bir unsur olarak göstermektir. Derinlemesine bir metin analizi yoluyla, bu çalışma, diaspora öznelerinin kimliklerini geliştirmede mekanların rolü hakkında okuyucuyu bilgilendirmeye çalışmaktadır. Böylelikle, romandaki mobilite sorunları, diasporik yaşamlar ve mekanların anlatı düzenlemeleri bir araya getirilerek bu romanın insanlar hakkında bir hikâyeden çok mekanlar hakkında bir hikâye olarak tanımlanması sağlanmıştır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Mohsin Hamid, *Exit West,* Mekânsallık, Mekânsal Dönüş, Rizom, Diaspora

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Fatemeh Gholami

İzmir, 2022

TEXT OF OATH

I declare and honestly confirm that my study, titled “PLACES OF MOVEMENT: A SPATIAL READING OF MOHSIN HAMID'S *EXIT WEST*” and presented as a Master’s/PhD Thesis, has been written without applying to any assistance inconsistent with scientific ethics and traditions. I declare, to the best of my knowledge and belief, that all content and ideas drawn directly or indirectly from external sources are indicated in the text and listed in the list of references.

Fatemeh Gholami

05.08.2022

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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

"Space is never empty: it always embodies a meaning" (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 154)

The geographer Edward Soja in his *Postmodern Geographies* of 1989 and the literary theorist Fredric Jameson in his 1991 *Postmodernism* launched the term "Spatial Turn" in the context of the postmodern condition, having drawn upon Foucault's notion of heterotopia, Gilles Deleuze's geophilosohpy, and Henri Lefebvre's contributions in his book *The Production of Space* (1974). Since then, special attention has been paid to place in the humanities in fields as diverse as history, geography and literary studies. Indeed, there has been a literary shift from a view of space as a "relatively neglected dimension" and something "neutral, homogenous, insignificant, and meaningless (West-Pavlov, 2009, p. 16) that is "devalued, occluded and depoliticized" (Soja, 1989, p. 4) to one that is esteemed highly as in an "epoch of space" (Foucault, 1986, p. 22). As Russell West-Pavlov declares in his article "Space and Theory" (2019), "with the inroads of twentieth-century physics, space began to be seen as less neutral or homogenous and more active than before (West-Pavlov, 2019, p.18). In line with developments of spatiality studies in the humanities, more and more studies appear with emphasis on the representation of space and what it signifies in diverse narratives.

Spatiality studies generally deals with how places and spaces are represented in literature and any other cultural contexts. Knowing about place and spaces around us, can and should help us maintain and care for the present places and also create new ones, be it imaginary or real. Therefore, addressing spatial condition of existence has been of great interest for literary scholars. It continues to develop in literary studies, to make connections with other critical practices and disciplinary fields, and to impact

the ways that readers and writers engage with the text and its spaces (Talley, 2021)[1].

From among various genres of literature, migration stories and diaspora literature are vastly involved with space representations and movement from one place to another. This particular genre grants space a dynamic existence along with the life of characters. Diaspora novels have a spatiality beyond what we see in the setting of a story. The emplacement in these stories is in fact, displacement and one might wonder what might happen with a place, a land, an imagined space, in a story whose essence is movement. Places appeal to me because besides the fact that they can have a valuable contribution to the general study of the importance of space in fiction, they have an interdisciplinary nature and thus can matter in sociological, ecological, and narratological aspects; that is why I have chosen this field as my primary research interest which will hopefully aid me to investigate and identify different types of spaces and see how the narrative is portraying them.

In addition, by reading through these spaces, I would be raising the question that whether the chosen novel, *Exit West* can be considered a novel about space rather than a novel about character formation and search for an identity, something the previous scholarship on the novel have been focusing on. Through an in-depth textual analysis, this study thereby will offer a spatially attuned reading protocol on the story, and will attempt to inform the reader about the role of place in forming, developing, and even initiating the mobility in the life path of a migrant. The project, although limited to one novel, will extensively and exhaustively entail theoretical framework of spatiality theory along with discussions of mobility issues, diasporic subjects, and narrative patterning of space in diaspora spaces of the novel as a case study. Hence, the angle I am going to take is original in the sense that it will attribute a dynamic agency to places which in turn will be conducive in tracing the role of space in character's decisions and undertakings. Another issue which will be worthy of discovery would be the way characters and the narrative itself treat the spaces they encounter throughout their mobility. This will have great ecological and sociological implications and will be thoroughly discussed in coming chapters. Indeed, owing to the multiplicity of spaces depicted in this novel, we will see how this novel promotes care and literacy about the

[1] Tally, Robert T. Spatial Literary Studies: Interdisciplinary Approaches to Space, Geography, and the Imagination., 2021. "Spatial literary studies enable scholars to reflect upon the representation of space and place, whether in the real world, in imaginary universes, or in those hybrid zones where fiction meets reality" (Talley, 2021, p. 9)

physical world around us regardless of the fact that movement is indispensable in a globalized world.

A plethora of novels particularly in the 21st century have been written on concepts such as diaspora, notions of home, belonging and the hardship the asylum seekers encounter. The word Diaspora can be used as an umbrella term for immigrant authors with differing backgrounds and contexts. As K. Satchidanandan states in her article *"*That Third Space: Interrogating the Diasporic Paradigm" (2002), the diaspora writer can refer to writers who write in English and are themselves a dislocated subject. This is a valid reason why *Exit West* can also be considered a diaspora novel which depicts lives of diasporic and migrant subjects. Mohsin Hamid, himself being a transnational writer who calls himself a "multi-territorialized writer[2]" and lives a nomad life in between different places, Lahore, New York, London, Italy and Greece, believes he is "carrying a sense of belonging to multi-territories". Perhaps that is why he employs quite familiar tropes and themes such as refugee crisis, border issues and identity formation seen in many novels of migration. Indeed, he combines his notion of "we are all immigrants through time" (Hamid, 2017, p. 72) with artistic narrative tools which make his fourth novel, *Exit West*, shortlisted for Man Booker Prize and acclaimed with several international literary prizes, worthy of exhaustive and at times excessively nuanced exploration.

Obviously, space and time are among the key terms in diasporic debates and they involve deterritorialization and reterritorialization of the subjects in between lands. To briefly review where the word diaspora comes from, which is necessary in our understanding of *Exit West* as a diaspora novel, I would refer to the much-quoted roots of the word. Diaspora is originally derived from Greek to mean "disperse, or scatter", and now it generally refers to movement across the world, in particular from one's homeland to hostland (Nair, 2015). It is a process of scattering of people whether compulsorily or out of volition and involving either isolation or assimilation of the diaspora subjects with the host country. Thrivikraman Nair quotes Pradeep Anand in her essay "Politics of In-between Spaces: Diasporic Travails in Jhumpa Lahiri's Fiction" (2015) which would fall into place here as well:

> Diaspora is spreading of the seed when planted in different parts of the

[2] NPR Morning Edition Interview on *Exit West*. http://www.mohsinhamid.com/interviews.html, 30 Oct. 2017. Web. (Para 2)

> world, absorbs unique characteristics from the local soil. Every story about the Diaspora thus becomes a unique context, a coordination of space, time and experience, which someday will collectively tell the whole story of a Diaspora (Nair, 2015, p. 139).

Migration stories as part of the world literature mostly revolve around the idea of displacement from an unpleasant place to a better one, that is to say, these stories attempt to show the hardship of crossing borders and obstacles in order to reach the destination. Familiar images such as children hiding in metro stations, feeding on the leftover food in the rubbish bins, or refugees on the rubber boats, which are left to wander on the sea, all of these cliché pictures reverberate in our minds when we hear the word migration, diaspora, and refugee. Socially speaking, diaspora is characterized by the dispersion of a population originated from one nation-state in several host countries (Yemini and Berthomiere, 2005). So, as Jacob Shai in his book *Diaspora Literature and Stereotypes Concerning Contemporary Art in Africa*, states, Diasporas are "minority communities living in exile" (Shai, 2019, p.13). When speaking of literary diasporas or diasporic literature, "an idea of a homeland, a place from where the displacement occurs and narratives of harsh journeys undertaken on account of economic compulsions" (ibid) (or War in the case of this book) are the focus of attention.

In the sociology and literary discourses, diaspora is regarded as a key term in the contemporary times. It has been established as an academic discipline and contains various and wide-ranging implications in social, cultural and literary spheres. One reason for this could be, according to Nair (2015), "the increased pace of social and geographical mobility effected by the process of globalisation, resulting in the blurring of borders and boundaries", making the "global interactions" a "quotidian reality because of the rapid growth in patterns of international migration" (Nair, 2015, p. 138). Therefore, diaspora as the interaction between two or more cultures, brings into our attention a myriad of ethnical, cultural and religious identities which are all effected by spatial and temporal dislocations.

Insofar as spatial criticism examines literary representations of not just places themselves, but of the experience of place and of displacement, exploring the interrelations between lived experience of migrants and a more abstract or unrepresentable spatial network that delicately or directly shapes it would help

understand the context of a diasporic novel like *Exit West*. Furthermore, this kind of research can open up the possibility of looking into how places are experienced individually, sociologically, politically and ecologically. Therefore, in the light of a spatiality literary theory and rhizomatic theory of Deleuze, Doreen Massey's notions of space, Arjun Appadurai's idea of ethnoscape, Michel de Certeau's quotidian space, the objective of this study is to examine as much space as possible within the narrative and interrelating it to other diasporic concepts and see how vast the space connotations are for such a rather short novel. The reason why spatial understanding of diaspora texts is important is best identified by Michael Wessels' article "The Representation of Place in Three Post-Apartheid South African Novels" (2016). According to him, the relationship of people to place and their experience of it "in a world characterized by constant movement, forced or desired, and the rapid transformation of physical environments is a potent means of exploring themes such as identity, affiliation, memory, loss, and alienation in postcolonial literature" (Wessels, 2016, p.71). These themes are prevalent both in migration stories and diaspora studies and within the academic body of works written on the subject matter. When dealing with diaspora literature, the effort mainly is to link diasporic subjects and their scattered experience across a world whose boundaries are challenged by increasing global communication-networks and to find their engagement with the places they experience. Therefore, this genre seems to have the power to unleash the full potential of depicting and reflecting life, scrutinizing social ideas, reconstructing societies in transition, and enhancing our understanding of the world and can effectively reveal intertwined discursive forms of space and spatiality (Wessels, 2016). Thus, in view of a spatial reading, the purpose of this master's thesis is to see how places are experienced by subjects in movement and the theoretical framework for these spaces will be presented separately in the following chapters accompanied by the close reading of the text. Referring not only to the mentioned spatial thinkers, but also to the works of other critics concerned with the same themes, this study aims to draw attention to the role and agency of spaces in forming a character's outlook towards the land they move to and to see to what extent they care about that land and share a kind of interconnectedness with it, if at all. Some of the theoretical framework of this thesis will be introduced in the literature review section and the general research and certain other concepts will be defined during the textual analysis in the following chapters. All things considered, various categories of space put forward by the above-mentioned scholars of space and the spatial turn in the

humanities and in particular in literary studies and a myriad of contemplations on the concept of space in a diasporic context will be the focus of the current thesis.

Briefly put, the first chapter will explore how places are depicted and treated prior to the characters' move from their land of origin to other lands, then in the second chapter, their movement or as I will call, their rhizomatic growth will begin in an ongoing process of de-rooting and dislocation and the places they experience in between these movements. The third chapter will entail the use of spatial framing and rhizomatic movements of characters. Furthermore, it will be an observation on the narrative patterns of these movements and elaborate on the significance of why this particular narrative style has been chosen and what it demonstrates about the whole tenet of movement both for the characters undertaking the movement journeys and the places they either pass by or settle in. The general hypothesis is to prove that space and places are not merely a setting, backdrop or a container for the plot and they play a pivotal role in the story and in the reality of human being's life journey because the spatial reading, or reading the text spatially, allows one to suggest that spaces are active agencies linking diaspora subjects to one another and evoking in them a sense of responsibility, caring and understanding toward the lands they are settled in, albeit temporarily. Only this way can the narrative challenge the space-character dichotomy, address sociological and ecological concerns regarding one's homeland and native land and issues of host country and gradually can reverse this dichotomy and give more prominence to the physical world around them.

1.1. GENERAL RESEARCH ABOUT *EXIT WEST* IN THE CONTEXT OF DIASPORA STUDIES

Let us take a look at the plot of the novel before moving on to the textual analysis. *Exit West* relates the story of a young couple, Nadia and Saeed who reside in an unnamed city undergoing civil war between the national government and militants. They, like so many others, have to flee the city and reach a safe place. Through some fictitious doors, they are led to various locations around the globe, journeying from one portal to another, from the Greek island of Mykonos, to London, to Marin, California. Throughout their constant movement, their love bond strains and each find new identities and communities to be part of[3]. Most of the analyses of the novel is situated

[3] For a broad compilation of critical responses to *Exit West*, see "*Exit West*, Mohsin Hamid: What the

within the diasporic postcolonial studies framework, with racism, refugees, ethnic differences and political imbrications of the story at the core of the debates, some of which will be reviewed below. Moreover, the novel has been included within the context of contemporary anglophone novel and transnational, globalization fiction along with other novels of the sort (and not individually) in some dissertations and theses[4]. Subsequently, my own take on the novel and textual analysis in regards to space representation will follow.

The novel has been widely accredited for its response to the refugee crisis of its current time. Michael Perfect in his article "Black Holes in the Fabric of the Nation[5]: Refugees in Mohsin Hamid's *Exit West*" (2017) elaborates on this notion thoroughly mentioning that this novel, although attempting to humanize refugees, fails to acknowledge empathy for them in the large scale. The way refugees are presented and treated from the onset of the novel till the end is the main discussion of this article along with how the identities of the main characters are formed as refugees. Perfect believes that everything even violence is "subordinate to the development of characters" and refugees, although seen everywhere, are marginalized and dehumanized (Perfect, 2017, p.191). Although Perfect's article coupled with few more (which will be discussed later), discuss character development in the context of refugee crises, they tend to overlook issues of place and how it determines the characters' attitudes towards their choices. As will be seen, critics seem to have failed to address geographical issues of spatiality and concentrated instead on elements of temporality, history, language, writing (literary style), and gender[6].

Even if discussions of place and/or space are brought about in any critical reading of the novel, identity formation has still been the privileged subject matter. Shazia Sadaf's reading of the novel, "We Are all Migrants through Time: History and Geography in

Reviewers Say." Literary Hub, bookmarks. reviews/reviews/all/exit-west/.

[4]Within the context of anglophone novel and fiction, transnational fiction *Exit West* has been included in thesis and dissertations such as:

1. Living in Other Places: Genre and Globalization in the Contemporary Anglophone Novel.
2. Ordering the Chaos: Family, Nation, and Terror in Post-9/11 Anglophone Fiction.
3. Encountering Community: Nationalism, Race, and Humanity in Twenty First Century Anglophone Literature.
4. Polyphonic Texture: Surveillance in Contemporary Transnational Fiction

[5] A quote from the novel when describing refugees in London.

[6] A whole thesis has been written on the notion of gender in Hamid's novel: Representations of Home and Identity for the Migrant Woman in Mohsin Hamid's *Exit West* (2017).

Mohsin Hamid's *Exit West*"[7](2020), although briefly touching upon the notion of space in the novel, it still sees it as a way to develop the historical sense of the character. Sadaf, attempts to "reimagine the relationship between history and geography aligned with the dimensions of time and space" and identifies the place as geographically fragmented which means "no one is really native to a place" (Sadaf, 2020, p.638). She does not elaborate on this further, and moves to the dichotomy of immigrant-native in the book and believes this relationship to be more important than the journey and the spaces the characters occupy. When discussing two established signs of national identity in a globalized world, "history and geography"; the temporal dimension is more advantaged as it "reflects a continuity with the past" and the spatial dimension which merely "represents the importance of physical locality" seems to be jostled. Sadaf intends to give an identity definition "through history and place" and bases her analysis on globalization theory whose core notion is the dichotomy of time-space, "distanciaton/ compression" (pp. 638-9). However, her main focus remains to be the compression of time through technological advancement which impacts the definition of identity. Her discussions of Doreen Massey's theories also pertain mainly to the notion of time, quoting Massey, "the identity of places is highly influenced by the dominant versions of history associated with them and how these histories are made" (p. 641). Sadaf attempts to change the relationship between history and geography and thus between time and place and she asserts, Hamid does that too. Through the slippery passages and access through black doors, she states that Hamid's way of "giving access to geographical space blurs cartographic boundaries" (p. 642). This analysis thus grants space a shady and vague existence which stands in sharp contrast with my spatial reading of the novel and my claim throughout this study that this novel is a spatial novel and places explicitly indicate clear-cut boundaries. With a very brief discussion, Sadaf moves from geographical fragmentation and "the spatial disruption of our times" (p. 643) and moves on, almost like any other article I have come across, to the discussions of identity and "Geohistorical productions of identity" and character formation while moving from one location to the next location. The concluding remarks of the article is also noteworthy in that time seems to be the dominant discourse in her analysis of the novel: "Time is important in *Exit West*, not

[7] Shazia Sadaf (2020) "We are all migrants through time": History and geography in Mohsin Hamid's ExitWest, Journal of Postcolonial Writing, 56:5, 636-647, DOI: 10.1080/17449855.2020.1820667

in its horizontal linear passages but in its static vertical dimensional quality" (p. 644). Moreover, the novel appeals to researchers from mobilities and migration studies along with literary studies. Most articles are from the humanities in general, using the novel as a case study, to discuss concepts that address human rights, migration and mobilities. One such study by Amanda Lagji, "Waiting in Motion: Mapping Postcolonial Fiction, New Mobilities, and Migration Through Mohsin Hamid's *Exit West*" (2018), presents a thorough discussion about "waiting" in the process of movement not only in the novel but rather in general sense of migrancy discourse. Although she does not focus on spaces as such, she still communicates about new directions for mobilities studies and the treatment with refugees in this discourse. Her assertion, like Perfect's, is that the novel presents a "reductive view of refugees, emptying out refugees distinctive experience of violence, dispossession, and devastating loss of their homes" (Lagji, 2018, p.2). Furthermore, "reworking assumptions and relationship between time and space, mobility and immobility" are debated in the light of mobility paradigm shift and the "Waiting, in betweenness and liminality of the mobile subjects" (Lagji, 2018, p.4), which does have certain overlaps with my study of liminality in chapter 3; however, I will approach the concept from a more literary standpoint than a sociological one. For Lagji, the main issue is the dynamics of waiting, "various landscapes of waiting" as she calls them. In essence, her spatial analysis goes as much as only to consider places of waiting "from more durable material forms such as shelters, benches, platforms, waiting rooms […] to perhaps more feeling or transient forms such as the queue or traffic jam" (p. 6).

Lagji believes these places to be "container spaces", something I would like to defy in my own study later on. I should say that these places are not backdrops and containers but rather quite quintessential in the formation of the narrative. Her critical perspective on mobility seeks to answer questions such as "How is mobility discursively constituted? What narratives have been constructed about mobility? How are mobilities represented?" (p. 7) and she wishes to contemplate the imaginative and literary experiences of refugees who are "at one and the same time, both citizens-in-waiting and deportees-in-waiting – or to put it another way, neither definitively citizens nor deportees" (p. 9). So once again, it is the experience of the migrant which matters and not the spaces they move to. Land and space are treated passively in this reading too as in the original novel.

In another comprehensive article, "From National to Global Identity: Effects of Migration on the Individual in Mohsin Hamid's *Exit West*" (2020), Hanna Van Der Bosch exhaustively and widely discusses yet another perspective on identity formation of the characters, this time, seeing them in light of global identities changing and causing change during the course of this story. The article, although quite lengthy and in-depth, in terms of character analysis, does not address issues of place and displacement as promised in the title; however, it is still a noteworthy read in terms of migration studies and loss of individuality of the refugees in between movements (the typical trope in most articles on this novel).

Regarding space in *Exit West*, one particular study should be mentioned, even though it is still not an utter spatial reading of the novel and as the previous studies, follows a tempo-spatial pattern. Lona Moutafidou in her article "Space "in Time" for Them: Ethnic Geographies under Construction, Refugee Traumas under Healing in Mohsin Hamid's *Exit West*"[8](2019) uses Arjun Appadurai's notion of ethnoscape and Marc Augé's "non-places" to extend her analysis of the magical doors as the novel's major narrative device, without bringing in other spaces. I have also used Arjun Appadurai's seminal text, Disjuncture and Difference in the Global Cultural Economy (1990) in my discussion of space; however, the context of my employment of the term varies drastically with what she puts forward in her article. For her, the characters' "traumatic dislocation interferes with their perception and experience of space" and it is more a study of trauma and "dehumanization in the new host places" than how they experience place during their coerced dislocation (Moutafidou, 2019, p. 319). The writer also assigns the spaces they go in and out to "non-places", which, in a sense makes places void of any existence throughout their movement and clarifies how through these non-spaces, the trauma, migration and spatio-temporal condition of the characters are interrelated:

> For whatever space defeats in an instant and silenced time-travel through doors, time articulates in the universality of a non-spatially-conditioned migratory experience. With its slow passing, time can ostracize people, designating familiar spaces as anonymous, alienating non-places, identifying any person on earth as a potential candidate for isolation and oppression,

[8] https://doi.org/10.26262/exna.v0i3.7461

> rendering forced movement through space as dolorous, as forced stasis through time. Augé notes that all social existence today is composed by some experience of no-place (119) – or no-time, I would add. The migrating Other can, hence, become each world citizen's migrating self, for we are all found in the same traumatic position. (p. 329)

Moutafidou's emphasis on these non-places is even more evident in her concluding remarks:

> *Exit West* advocates a shared, universal traumatic experience of literal and metaphorical departure through space and time, from one's own self and from whatever both comprises and undermines one's cultural and ethnic identity. Collective trauma sets the basis for a meaningful dialogue between the moving and static ethnoscapes that occupy non-places in the catastrophic age of refugee crisis. (p.330)

In general, the above reviewed article shares some notions with my study, albeit with differing interpretations, it still pays attention to places in the novel. I find this study a complementary one to my own research and as it includes a complete metaphoric analysis of the magical doors, I spare the reader from getting much involved with that discussion and refer them to this finely structured article.

Nonetheless, noteworthy is that my research does overlap at certain points with other research conducted about the novel, at times offering similar themes of home, belonging, deterritorialization, and reterritorialization particularly when seen in a diasporic context. For example, the article published in the journal of Literary Endeavour vol. x Special Issue No.1 January 2019 on diaspora literature, "Mapping Diaspora at the Crossroads: Reading Mohsin Hamid's *Exit West*" written by Devyani Agrawal focuses on the idea of identity, nationhood and transnationalism in a diasporic space: "While passing through the doors where in the process of feeling variously relieved, frightened, outraged and threatened, [the characters] plunge more deeply into the questions of identity and nationhood" (Agrawal, 2019, p. 34). Agrawal asserts that the novel prepares the reader for the future integration which is both "attractive and difficult to achieve" (p. 37). In her article, characters are strictly defined to "try to develop their own true selves, [with] external pressures underlin[ing] their different attitudes to sex, to worship, to how they view their homeland" (ibid). She thus assumes

that characters essentially possess transnational identities rather than individual ones, which is “an emerging dimension of diaspora” and can allow them to be free from any sense of belonging to any place (p. 38).

Although briefly, Devyani Agrawal shows the attempts of the narrative to “have an understanding of the new translational space and sensibility”, yet, it is not clear what that sensibility pertains to until the point that it becomes clear that sensibility should be oriented toward issues of “migration, transformations, nativism, and immigrant threats and envisions the world as a transnational space with porous borders” (Agrawal, 2019, p.34). Seemingly, the concept of nationhood and transnationalism are both threatened by nativism depicted in Hamid’s novel, which as the writer opines, should be dealt with more rigorously in the time of the refugee crisis and the rise of nativism.

The way this article reads the irony of migration in Hamid’s novel is nonetheless very thoroughgoing as well. As Agrawal asserts while the novel is an “encouragement to the world to put aside its fears of migrant and to open its arms to the right of unhindered movement of peoples”, migration cannot still “blur the line between home and exile with a frequent visit to home and host countries” (p. 39), which Hamid apparently makes an effort to promote at the end of *Exit West*. He then criticizes Hamid’s efforts to normalize transnational spaces by calling it nothing but a “fancy, viable picture” and “ideal to imagine”, because as he assumes individual identity does matter too in the context of “minorities discourses or tribal issues or marginality discussions” (p. 35). In his words, there is no diasporic sensibility in diasporic narratives:

> Diaspora can be re-imagined in terms of home and identity with the coming advancement of communicative technology, but it has shaken our conventional feeling of nostalgia and belongingness. A kind of superficiality of diasporic sensibility has been emerged as a result of this new virtual world. There is one question on the return diaspora too. Whether the migrants really want to return from their prosperous host lands to the homeland? Probably no. and there 'homing desire' seems mere a leisurely expression to construct a diasporic identity (p.37).

In line with his points about that lack of sensibility in diasporic contexts, I will add passages from the novel later on, which would confirm such an absence of sensibility

to places in this novel. However, as I mentioned above, this article, mainly accentuates the notion of transnational identities, and the element of spatiality and what it attains is missing (which can be another motive for the importance of my study).

A spatial reading of the novel was presented by Maria-Irina Popescu & Asma Jahamah in their article "London is a City Built on the Wreckage of Itself': State Terrorism and Resistance in Chris Cleave's Incendiary and Mohsin Hamid's *Exit West*" (2020). In their comparative study of two novels, the writers give a spatial and political reading of the city of London as representative of state terrorism. They assert the London represented in Exist West represents "reworking themes of migration, displacement, state terrorism and vigilantism as well as evolving forms of sovereignty" with characters "who live imaginatively on the borderlines of the real" (Popescu & Jahamah, 2020, p. 124). Their interesting take on is the way Hamid brings characters from the "periphery of the former British empire" and channels it to "the former imperial metropolis into the near-future of a global city" (p. 125) and reads this city as symbolic and metaphoric as possible, which is in itself a novel way of reading a city throughout history. The way the article focuses only on London is both important and ironic. It is ironic because a city, a metropolis, put strictly, is at the centre stage of a narrative pushing the refugees and "others" to the margin. Simultaneously, it is important precisely because it is a place which questions "the imagined legitimacy of sovereignty" (p. 127). indeed, London is seen as the sole place which invites a plethora of political implications in this novel and this rather long article does not seem to be concerned with other places as much as it is with London. Hamid's London depicts "forms of systematic violence, discourses of Othering, hostility and intimidation, the threat of bodily harm, come at the expense of civil populations displaced from the postcolony that is a legacy of British (and, more recently, American) imperialism. (p. 29)

Therefore, seeing a cityscape through such a vast political lens alludes to two significant time, a "a history of imperial conquest" and a "present permeated by a paranoid fear of foreign invasion and dissolution of identity" (p. 130), thereby making this space, too, a temporal space, one that is defined by its time-oriented aspects. Thus, similar to the previously reviewed articles, the place, the city of London is also given a spatio-temporal existence having more to do with time than the actual space. The city carries with itself a history, a time, from the past and seems to have been void of

any spatial identity.

Seeing places as invariably pertaining to history is the common trope almost in any reading of the novel, which is surprising insofar as the novel independently brings in places with their own identities, their own physical presence and should not be only interpreted through a historical lens. As Popescu and Jahamah admit in the above-mentioned article, the place of London is "relegated to the background of their narratives both in *Exit West* and in the other novel" and instead have focused on the "agency of their protagonists" (p. 132). Hence, the city might be representing the culture of terror and paranoid, this is also pushed aside for the sake of the characters, as though the novel fails to demonstrate how the attributed violence to this particular place is indeed very close to what the post 9/11 world has been experiencing.

Perhaps the most spatial reading of *Exit West*, apart from the one about London, seemed initially to be the article written by Eva Rask Knudsen & Ulla Rahbek, "Radical Hopefulness in Mohsin Hamid's Map of the World: A Reading of *Exit West*" (2021). The article deals with migration as universal human experience, in reference to Hamid's interviews and comments and the much-quoted sentence of the novel, that is, "we are all migrants through time" (Hamid, 2017, p. 109), and concurs with the writer in "calling on the urgent need to imagine a brighter future in currently divisive times" because "by imagining, we create the potential for what might be" (Knudsen & Rahbek, 2021, p. 443). So, for the writers, not only is migration not a crisis but rather a "solution". Hamid's radical hopefulness is embodied in his mapping of a world where migration and prayer are two interconnective gestures that rely on the idea of "what might". The article draws upon Pheng Cheah's exploration of postcolonial literature as "world literature", where he divides a line between globe and world, suggesting that "globe is a bounded object" or "a spatial-geographical category" that can be represented on a map" (p. 445). In contrast, world is defined as "a temporal-normative category" (ibid) and a form of "spiritual intercourse, transaction, and exchange aimed at bringing out universal humanity" (p. 446). World, according to this view, occurs "in the intervals, mediations, passages, and crossings between national borders" (ibid) which is a continuous active "process of becoming" and contains forms of belonging as it brings in universal humanity in the midst of differences. It does not abolish the differences, instead, it values them with openness. There is a kind of "accessibility (to others so that [everyone] can be together" (p. 443). Hence, the

concept of world as such, particularly in literature, seems to be something positive which provokes empathy, solidarity and "with a normative power to intervene in and change the world" (ibid). in this sense, postcolonial and diaspora literature are considered to be an "act of worlding or a world-making activity". So, inasmuch as literature "cognitively maps the world through representation", it increases one's sense of being a part of humanity (p. 445). However, one should bear in mind, that the world they are referring to, is mainly a temporal phenomenon, (building on the dichotomy of time-space), this world is still "our shared space" which stands in a globe as a "spatial and bounded location" (p. 444). And here comes their argument to make the novel a temporal world, which bases its world-making process on the notion a "shared time". They therefore, suggest that the novel "worlds through its imaginative rethinking of migration and prayer" and draws upon "new maps of belonging" (ibid). I opine that in this reading, they reduce the novel to a world whose "place description is dismal and dispiriting" (p. 445), yet again, it still has the potential to be considered as a world reconnecting different parts of the world (through magical doors) and thus undermining any "geopolitical power structures" (p. 446). The world they believe Hamid is depicting is influenced by connectivity and therefore is "visitable" by anyone through imagination. The point of controversy for me, in this reading, is seeing this world, that is, Hamid's storyworld, as quite temporal and not entirely spatial. Knudsen and Rahbek do not concern themselves with spaces as such and instead relegate them to some random places character could visit and pass by. Obviously, place descriptions are somewhat "dismal and dispiriting" in *Exit West*, they are still of great value in the narrative and their portrayal should be taken into consideration and not dismissed for the sake of identity solely[9].

Thus far, there has not been much work done independently on the notion of place in this novel and the potential of the novel in this respect is immense. However, the way other studies have been attempting to bring the issue of space in novels from the peripheries of other elements of stories, namely, character and plot, to the centre stage of literary discussions are impressive. I mentioned studies conducted in terms of the space-time dichotomy and spatio-temporal analyses above. Now what makes my study relatively unique, is the way I am blending various spatiality theories to reach a

[9] The following articles deal with the similar themes of migration, refugee crisis and identity:
1. At the Crossroads of Identity in Mohsin Hamid's Novel *Exit West* (2017)
2. Version of Displaced World in Mohsin Hamid's Exist West (2021).

cohesive spatial reading of this novel[10]. The main questions of the study will therefore be what kind of places are portrayed in a novel of movement? what happens to places when the subject moves out of them? what happens to a place when a whole host of refugees enter to it? What role do the places play in determining the characters' choices and life decisions? Are the places maintained or dismissed from the narrative when subjects move out of it? What happens to a place in memory when one leaves it physically? And eventually what does it mean to call this book a spatial book, a story more about places than about people? And does this help our understanding of a whole host of other diaspora stories which based on movement? Representation of spaces and places of places will be conducive for us to come to a shared understanding of places in more details and give them a more vital role in human life. This way, perhaps we can hope, more care and literacy will be promoted about spaces around us and we will stop using them as a pretext to only follow a character's identity. Places can thereby own a certain character of their own as entities which can evoke responsibility among people and require apprehension and awareness.

My purpose is not to foreground character in expense of place, instead my efforts will be to recognize places and spaces as correlating with characters and going beyond only a setting and see how ecologically, sociologically and politically space is and how important it is to care about them in any sense of it. So, paying particular attention to space as an important element by itself would be the point here.

Having seen what Hamid's reception of the novel has been since its release, I now would like to turn to what a spatial reading is and how this method can be employed to read novels in terms of places and spaces they depict.

[10] For this purpose, certain theses and dissertations have been studied in which space presentation of different novels (not *Exit West*) have been discussed from various spatial perspectives:
1. Space, Movement, and Identity in Contemporary British Asian Fiction. A PhD thesis which investigates issues like the mutually interdependent and transformative relationship between space and identity, the types of movements generated by space, and the influence movements have on space and the sense of place.
2.Intersections of Space, Movement, and Diasporic Subjectivity in Brick Lane, White Teeth, and Maps for Lost Lovers. Master thesis
3.Mobility and the Representation of African Dystopian Spaces in Film and Literatur
4.Hacking the Future: The Space and Place of Earth in Postcolonial Science Fiction
5. Intimate Cartographies: Irish and Diasporic Explorations of Gendered Spaces.
6.Obscuring the Borders: Transnationalism, Hybridity, and Space in Post-9/11 Fiction By: Yasmin Falik.

1.2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND ON SPATIALITY THEORIES AND SPATIAL TURN IN LITERARY STUDIES

> "*After Lukacs and Proust, we have become so accustomed to thinking of the novel's plot and structure as constituted mainly by temporality that we have overlooked the function of space, geography, and location"* (Said, 84)[11].

Spatial perspectives first began to appeal to contemporary critics to propose new approaches and engender debates about the use of space and place in the ongoing discussions in the field of literary studies.

Scholars and spatial thinkers have approached spatiality and place representation in works of literature from a variety of standpoints which is mostly interdisciplinary. The Spatial Turn movement has been quite influential in orienting spatiality studies to the current status in literary studies. Robert Talley quotes in his 2017 book *Routledge Handbook of Literature and Space* quotes Russel West-Pavlov's definition of spatial Turn:

> The so-called spatial turn dislodged a putative nineteenth-century dominance of time in the humanities (whether historical, social scientific or literary) to reintroduce, from the mid-twentieth century onwards, the apparently elided element of space and geography" (West-Pavlov 291, qtd, in Tally, 2017, p. 14).

It was through this new turn space could be recognized as a significant thematic focus in literary studies. The stress on geographies and places and their representations in fiction also increased attraction to the concept of spatiality in the later twentieth century. Space had been "relatively neglected, undertheorized dimension" as West-Pavlov states in his seminal book about postmodern spatial thinkers, *Space in Theory: Kristeva, Foucault, Deleuze* (2009, p. 19), "devalued, occluded and depoliticized" (Soja, 1989, p. 4) before it gained value through one of Foucault's lectures and the era was called an "epoch of space" (Foucault 1986, 22, qtd in Talley 2-17). Lefebvre in

[11] Culture and Imperialism, Edward Said. Said therefore proceeds to take up "a kind of geographical inquiry into historical experience" (Said, 1993, p. 7)

his important book *Production of Space* (1974, translated 1991) began giving space a "more and more active role" in contrast to its "less and less neutral" role (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 411). Gradually, a specific methodological framework was employed to allow social, cultural and political interactions among various cultural products, fiction and novels being one of the main categories. To name some prominent scholars whose work has been critical to the progress of the spatial turn, as Robert Tally mentions, we should name, as mentioned above, first and foremost, Henri Lefebvre with his book *Production of Space* (originally published in 1974) and equally important Edward Soja's *Postmodern Geographies* (1989) have had the most influence on the discourse. Other thinkers like Michel De Certeau, David Harvey, Denis Cosgrove, Doreen Massey, and Derek Gregory also continued to bring space scholarship into attention in the last two decades of the 20th century. My thesis will include some of the notions put forward by not all of these thinkers but selectively from certain figures introduced below; moreover, it will not include only one type of space, for instance, a city space, but rather a mixture of spaces, be it landscape, home, urbane spaces, desert, island or any space presented in the novel.

The current study therefore, aims at acknowledging the contribution of certain scholars to the promotion of spatiality studies and hope to materialize what Henry Lefebvre's words openly states, to see space "not a container, but rather the very fabric of social existence, a medium woven of the relationships between subjects, their actions, and their environment" (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 18). So, the following paragraphs will demonstrate a brief overview of the term Spatial Turn and how it is employed in literary studies and in this novel.

In line with developments of spatiality studies in the humanities, both ecocriticism as the study of the relationship between nature and literature and geocriticism as the field incorporating geographic spaces in literary texts have contributed to the agency of spatial dimensions of narratives in literature. Indeed, numerous concepts are being defined and recognized in order to add to the interdisciplinarity of the turn; for instance, literary cartography (Talley, 2012), cognitive mapping (Jameson, 1998), and ecospatiality which is quite a recent term defined as "a way of comprehending place in simultaneously ecological and geographical terms" (Wyse, 2021, p. 2).

The reason why caring about places has ecocritical implications is the relationship between place and the future of earth as our environment. Timothy Clark in his book

Ecocriticism on the Edge: the Anthropocene as a Threshold Concept (2015), warns about the "passive denial of climate change and other ecological hazards" making "humans as a species" who has developed "a numbness or lack of affectedness"(Clark, 2015, p. 3). Having this imperative in mind, I would claim conducting studies in regards to places and their vital role in human interactions, will help make connections with other critical practices and disciplinary fields and influence the ways that readers and writers engage with the text and its spaces (Talley, 2021) and thus promulgate a certain responsibility towards spaces one inhabits and one moves to. So, ecological, social and cultural role of spaces can invariably be revealed through the ways places are depicted and thus treated in the narrative not only in light of spatial condition of existence in these storyworlds but also in an environmentally conscious manner.

Robert Talley talks about the crisis of imagination and therefore the need for a spatial reading in an interview in 2015[12]; He proposes a theoretical basis for spatiality in relation to literature:

> Why I think that literature and literary criticism, in their fundamental commitment to an educated imagination (as Northrop Frye called it), may be especially well placed to deal with the overwhelming crises of representation and of the imagination in contemporary culture. An empowered imagination is necessary for engaging the spatial and social confusions created and fostered by the conditions of the present world system. All criticism, in a way, partakes of spatially oriented criticism under such circumstances. (p. 37)

In the preface in his book, *Spatiality* (2017), which is one of the main sources to inspire the current study, Robert Tally asserts that "Reflecting upon the representation of space and place, whether in the real world, in imaginary universes, or in those hybrid zones where fiction meets reality, scholars and critics working in spatial literary studies are helping to reorient literary criticism, history, and theory" (Talley, 2017, p. 32). Likewise, *Geocriticism and Spatial Literary Studies*, book series edited by many spatial scholars including but not limited to Talley is a book series presenting new research in this burgeoning field of inquiry.[13]

[12] katiuscia.darici, UNIVERSITÀ DI VERONA, UNIVERSITAT POMPEU FABRA, (2015, p. 27-36)

[13] *Ecocriticism and Geocriticism: Overlapping Territories in Environmental and Spatial Literary Studies.*

Although ecocriticism is not my main concern in this study, but space and places have great ecological significance and as one section of my thesis will elaborate places can be read as environment and thus should be cared for. The book *Ecocriticism and Geocriticism, Overlapping Territories in Environmental and Spatial Literary Studies*, also Edited by Robert T. Tally Jr. and Christine M. Battista has been extremely helpful in my understanding of the relationship between space and its ecological implications, or to be more precise, of the geography's link to ecological literacy. However, I will not be addressing this issue more than what is seen in *Exit West* and since this novel does not concern itself much with such issues, my references will be limited.

Doris Bachmann-Medick in her influential book *Cultural Turns, New Orientations in the Study of Culture* (2016), offers a comprehensive study of how spatial turn emerged and what impacts it had on the humanities and social sciences. Globalization as she asserts brings about "interconnections and cross-linkages" which have made "spatial perspective inevitable" (Bachmann-Medick, 2016, p. 213). Accordingly, "Any careful study of our surroundings indeed reveals a multiplicity of borders, walls, fences, thresholds, signposted areas, security systems and checkpoints, virtual frontiers, specialized zones, protected areas, and areas under control". "Space is returning!" is what she confirms throughout The Spatial Turn chapter (pp. 211-240); this return of space to the globalized world is occurring years after the original spatial turn was launched by Fredrick Jameson and Edward Soja in the 1990s[14].

Ernest W. B. Hess-Lüttich gives a detailed explanation to the origin of the term spatial turn in his article "Spatial Turn: On the Concept of Space in Cultural Geography and Literary Theory" (2012), which dates back the term to Edward W. Soja's book titled *Postmodern Geographies*, published in 1989. Soja attempts to "replace to replace the paradigm of time with one of space" (Hess-Lüttich, 2012, p. 2). Soja's argument is based on the notion that "our environment is not a product of history, but rather – before all else – also a construction of human geography; a social construction of space and the continuous reshaping of geographic landscapes" (qtd in Hess- Lüttich, p. 3).

Hess- Lüttich points out that after Soja, it was the literary critic Fredric Jameson who

[14] For a detail historical background see Robert Tally 2017. Also "origin of Spatial Turn" in this article: meta – carto – semiotics (Vol. 5; 2012). Journal for Theoretical Cartography ISSN 1868-1387. Spatial turn: On the Concept of Space in Cultural Geography and Literary Theory. Ernest W. B. Hess-Lüttich, www.germanistik.unibe.ch/personen/hess/

picked up the thread and, in his book, *Postmodernism* published in 1991, defined the term in a more systematic way. In Jameson's opinion, spatial turn was the new paradigm shift which attempted to "spatialize the temporal"[15] and which "offered one or more productive ways of distinguishing postmodernism from modernism proper[16]" (Hess- Lüttich, 2012, p. 3). Hess then continues to mention Michel Foucault's lecture of 1967 (titled Des Espaces Autres) as the actual origin of the concept. Foucault initiates this paradigm shift on the "Copernican Revolution, from geocentric to heliocentric worldview, and Galilei's discovery of the infinity of the Universe as his example" (qtd in Hess-Lüttich, p. 3). Therefore, as Hess- Lüttich claims, the way Foucault "traces the history of the relationship between conceptions of space and the history of science" originates this shift from temporal significance to a spatial turn. After the original spatial turn after the 70s and then 90s, the view has gained new scholarly attention simultaneous with technological advancements and globalization and international networking. Additionally, advent of cultural geography has given the space a social and cultural role calling it a "cultural construct" and "social product". Hess- Lüttich furthermore questions Bachmann-Medick emphasis on the "expressive, area-specific, and comprehensive application of spatial perspective" and talks about the failure of a "common theoretical background for a system of space-related terminology" and does not see the spatial reading as materialized as it should be (Hess-Lüttich, 2012, p. 8).

Hess- Lüttich asserts that "that is why these cross-references often merely remain metaphors, misunderstandings, and unrecognised claims" and in his opinion, this will continue to be the case as long as "the development of single-minded, scientific concepts of space is not seriously affiliated and the long tradition of the spatial concept within the earth sciences is plainly ignored by literary theory" (p. 9). He critically explains that even though space "is one of the most obvious of things which is mobilised as a term in a thousand different contexts", it seems to have been deprived of a clear explication and needs to be addressed in a more systematic manner. Indeed, space, from the very onset of the spatial turn, has been expansively referenced in various discourses from cognitive science, perception theory, phenomenology, sociology, mathematics and geometry psychology and cultural, literary and

[15] Also see the article Always Geographize! Fredric Jameson and Political Space. By Clint Burnham
[16] (Jameson, 1991, p. 154). Qtd in Hess.

communications studies. In my study, too, mathematical references, ecological perceptions and psychological relations of the subjects with space and some other conceptions and configurations of space have been deployed in order to give an in-depth reading of the novel because space cannot act as a single entity, (like a unified setting for a plot) anymore; its ambivalence calls forth an interdisciplinary approach.

Apart from the spatial turn in humanities, social sciences and the above-mentioned disciplines, literary theory and studies was impacted by the turn in its own rights. Around the same time with the shift in the postmodern era, while reflections on "landscape and space" were introduced in geography, the same trend occurred in literary theory. However, Hess- Lüttich, seems to be still cynical about the movement in literary studies too, believing it to still lack "structural basis" (p. 10). Literary notions of space, namely, all "descriptive tokens and structures" are the main trend followed in spatial readings, which "combines the spatial experience of the reader with the semantic space in the text. Hess- Lüttich defines literary space based on Krah's ideas who maintains that

> Spaces in texts are concrete manifestations [which] form the necessary background in front of which characters act, at the same time constituting – as abstract categories of description – the carrier that permits the accumulation of surplus value. (Krah, 1999, p. 3, qtd in Hess- Lüttich, 2012, p. 5)

The literary space as such therefore seems to have proven open to the interdisciplinarity of the approaches in vis-à-vis spatial turn.

A comprehensive look at different literary spaces is also presented in this study, for instance, symbolic space, which is "primarily language-based" and it integrates with "semantic, pragmatic, as well as historico-cultural dimensions" of spaces in the texts. With symbolic spaces, also arise other spaces, such as geography of literature to "link literature and cartography" (Talley, 2017, p. 17) whose main question as Piatti asserts is "Where does literature take place and why there?" (Piatti, 2008, p. 20). Piatti then explains further the premise of such a study of geographies of literature to find out "the meeting points between fictional and real geography" and a "referential relation between the inner-and extraliteral reality" (p. 25). At this stage, it is noteworthy, however, to remind once again that this premise in my reading of *Exit West* will be only seen in the section where we have actual places and geographical locations,

namely, chapter 4 in which the discussion is about the spaces which exhibit genuine topographically locatable toponyms with the ability of the reader to pin them down on a map. This way, my reading can be a cartographic one because it involves not fictional but real worlds. For a true cartographic reading, there is a need for a topographic mapping which firstly cannot be applied about imaginary zones and cannot be implemented in the scope of this master's thesis. (Although I would be willing to pursue such an undertaking in my PhD studies). I will elaborate on this way of reading spaces briefly in chapter 4 as well. In general, the way I will use spatial turn in my literary analysis can be noted delicately in Hess's categorization quoted below. Spatial turn in literary studies contains "geographical, topological, perceptive, narrative and conceptional aspects" about which Hess- Lüttich's categorization seems revealing enough:

> The different characteristics of the spatial turn or its consequences in literary theory have therefore led to entirely different perspective: (i) the phenomenological perspective traces the modalities of spatial relation, which are manifested in subjective attitudes of narrator and characters, and deduces spaces as product of human perception, which allows for conclusions concerning respective effective social standards and cultural values; (ii) the cartographical perspective proceeds from nameable relations of reference between inner- and outer literary reality and in that misjudges the constructional character of space in literature; (iii) the topographical perspective perceives literary space as imaginary geography, which – similar to cultural geography – refers to the constitutive character of social practice and therefore detects the meaning of spatial relations for the distribution of knowledge, power, prejudices, etc.; (iv) the topological perspective, on the other hand, bridges to the semiotic (and even rhetoric) tradition by exposing the structure of 'quasi-spatial relations' and their meaning for literature and culture. (p. 10)

It is worth mentioning that in a globalized world, these specific categorizations might undergo changes as borders are shifting and abolishing, communication networks are interlinked, and cultures are amalgamated. In addition, with the ecological hazards, places encounter new threats, so concepts of space keep changing and finding new meanings and attributions. Besides the invitation to re/define spaces, for example, in

relation to identity, power, territoriality, in both postcolonial contexts and in general world literature, ecological relations of spaces are gaining prominence. One such redefinition of space can be traced in Lowell Wyse's study *Ecospatiality: A Place-Based Approach to American Literature*, 2021, which first appeared as his PhD dissertation and recently as a book; Wyse's study on ecospatiality, focuses only on the North American literature as his subtitle explicitly indicates, but it is a very novel way of reading places which has helped the current study find the same spatial patterns in the context of diaspora, having in mind that diaspora narratives are entangled with stories of mobility and constant change of place. His method of study is called scale framing, which he defines as

> a term that refers to the attentiveness of people and texts to various spatial, temporal, and thematic frames of reference with which they (purport to) make sense of the world. In the spatial sense, scale framing is the attention to various geographical imaginaries, from the local to the global, with infinite spaces in between. (p. 25)

His scale framing methodology is accompanied by an ecospatial orientation which suggests that "our understanding of a text is incomplete if it fails to account for the complex dynamics of nature, space, and story, with regard both to the text itself and to its cultural milieu: the spatiohistorical setting it registers, represents, and refracts" (p. 10). I have deployed the spatial framing to certain parts of my study having these dynamics in mind and as my study becomes an ecological reading when one such thing is possible, I would like to point out Wyse's premise for his study can also be taken as my premise. In addition, Wyse firmly believes that "all texts are at least potentially environmental" and therefore susceptible to ecocriticism or ecocritically informed reading in the sense that "all texts are literally or imaginatively situated in a place, and in the sense that their authors, consciously or not, inscribe within them a certain relation to their place" (p. 259). My sporadic ecocritical references in text, thus is informed on this approach as well. In other words, when reading places, ecological aspects are there within the narrative and one can pay attention to how the narrative is treating them; and that if they are narrated in a way that absorbs the reader's attention or quite the contrary, they are represented quite inactively as if they are not important. (I will reflect upon this in my textual analysis later in the chapters). His concept of ecospatiality can bring together "the separate but related discourses of nature and

space" (p. 12) and through linking an ecocritical-spatial reading, setting of a narrative, especially when it encompasses real place names, as in the majority of *Exit West*, can indeed operate within a strand of linkages or as he calls it, "a matrix of references that contain all imaginable information related to a place, all the details related to its history, geography, and ecology" (p. 13). This book has been very conducive in my understanding of spatial reading, however, as I mentioned, there are obvious differences with my method and what he does here.

My last reference would be to another book by Robert Talley, *Topophrenia: Place, Narrative, and the Spatial Imagination* (2018), which is an expansion on the notion of Topophrenia put forward in a 2015 article, "Topophrenia, The Place of the Subject". The book is yet another great contribution to the discourse of spatiality in which Talley approaches space in literature in even more details. His core idea of the book, "placemindedness", has been an inspiration throughout my study, because as he argues, topophrenia, is a "sort of visceral and persistent placemindedness" and it is "fundamental to the human condition" (Talley, 2018, p. 30). Further, this term suggests "the degree to which all thinking is, in various ways, thinking about place, which also means thinking about the relations among places, as well as those among subjects and places, in the broadest possible sense" (p. 23). For him, texts are like maps, they "produce geographical orientation through place-names and descriptions, telling readers, "You are here"" (ibid). When Mohsin Hamid names certain places in *Exit West*, and leaves certain others unnamed, there exists a play with the reader about where he is and where he can be, the latter endorsing a kind of universality in the reader while the former pertaining to the individual's imagination of that named place. (This will be fully discussed later in the chapters).

From among the spatial thinkers, the most important figure for my research has been Gill Deleuze because as Robert Tally contends, "Deleuze is arguably the twentieth century's most spatial philosopher" (Talley, 2017, p. 39). Beyond his frequent deployment of spatial terms or his many spatial metaphors, he conceived philosophy as "fundamentally spatial" (ibid). Ian Buchanan and Gregg Lambert in their book *Deleuze and Space* (2005) commence their discussion on Deleuze by stating that

> Space was his very means of doing philosophy. He said everything takes place on a plane of immanence, envisaging a vast desert-like space populated by concepts moving about like nomads. Deleuze made philosophy spatial and

> gave us the concepts of smooth and striated, nomadic and sedentary, deterritorialization and reterritorialization, the fold, as well as many others to enable us to think spatially" (p. 3).

Although his configuration of a spatial thinking cannot be coherently found in one single book, and it is disseminated throughout his writings, there is one book *What Is Philosophy* (1994), written in collaboration with Felix Guattari, in which he introduces the term geophilosohpy only to further his spatially-oriented philosophy. Perhaps quoting them here would be conducive to our understanding of Deleuze and Guattari's spatial thinking:

> Subject and object give a poor approximation of thought. Thinking is neither a line drawn between subject and object nor a revolving of one around another. Rather, thinking takes place in the relationship of territory and the earth. (Qtd in Buchanan and Lambert, 2005, p. 85).

In my spatial analysis, I have relied upon certain spatial terms, like, rhizome, nomad, reterritorialization and deterritorialization (both latter terms being very popular in diaspora studies). These terms can be found in their book *A Thousand plateaus* (1987) which is another collaborative work with Felix Guattari, written before the aforementioned book.

Here, I would mention some of their core ideas on rhizome and then a more nuanced analysis of the text based on spatial theory of Deleuze and Guattari will be presented in chapter 4 when the characters' rhizomatic movement is examined. In *A Thousand Plateaus*, Deleuze and Guattari seem to no longer believe in the tree-like existences and instead approve of the rhizome as it "has no beginning or end, it is always in the middle, between things, interbeing, intermezzo, the tree is filiation, but the rhizome is alliance, uniquely alliance, the tree imposes the verb to be, but the fabric of the rhizome is the conjunction, and… and… and…." (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, p. 25). In their opinion, a rhizome makes perpetual connections with "semiotic chains, organizations of power, and circumstances relative to the arts, sciences, and social struggle"; for the, rhizome can be "connected to anything other at any point and must be". Their notion of rhizome stands against the tree and root which grow only at one point and "fix an order". For rhizome, there is no order, as they emphasize. (p. 27)

In *Exit West*, as will be observed, the in-between-ness of the characters who travel

from one land to another in order to flee that fixed or order in their homeland and submit to a rhizomatic being is seen when the characters move in between lands, growing from almost anywhere, at any point. In essence, although proposed in this study for the first time, the rhizomatic characters can be easily found and traced in diaspora narratives precisely because the movement Deleuze and Guattari see in rhizomatic growth resonates greatly with what diasporic subjects pursue. In their words, "the rhizome is not a transmuting notion that is anti-establishment or even utopian, or revolutionary at all" (Buchanan and Lambert, 2005, p. 90), but rather as, Fredric Jameson puts, "a way of surviving under capitalism, producing fresh desires within the structural limits of the capitalist mode of production as such" (Jameson, qtd in Buchanan and Lambert, 2005, p. 90). This is how the rhizome stands on the edge of an immigrant's life, a way to help him survive, not to revolutionize. In a diasporic space, where characters meet with native people of a land who are affiliated to their land and environment by birth, a kind of multiplicity occurs during which the characters fall apart from their roots and cannot become affiliated with the people in the new land and thus cannot be considered as a unit since according to "the principle of multiplicity, a rhizome cannot be treated as a unit"; it could only be a multiplicity as will be seen in case of the protagonists of *Exit West*, they are never a unit, but form a multiplicity with other immigrants.

Deleuze and Guattari's rhizomatic beings, therefore, are not able to affiliate with any territory; they keep moving and growing in various directions and thus have to produce a map of their own which will constantly change. Using the example of orchid and wasp, Deleuze and Guattari write, "the rhizome pertains to a map that must be produced, constructed, a map that is always detachable, connectable, reversible, modifiable, and has multiple entryways and exits and its own lines of flight". (p. 30). Therefore, all the features of detachability, connectability, modifiability, with multiple entryways and exits can be manifestly seen in this novel where characters move fluidly through doors without any attachment to past roots and change accordingly to the new realms and territories. This is exactly where a rhizomatic growth is at work in *Exit West*.

Ultimately, based on this approach, I explore the relevance of space in Mohsin Hamid's narrative and see how from a spatial point of view, the novel is building a world in which places mean (or should mean for that matter) something more than the

sheer backdrop of a story. Thus, spatiality as an analytical term reflecting a renewed interest in space in the humanities and the social sciences reveals the need to move toward identifying place as a significant theoretical and thematic emphasis in literary studies. Notwithstanding the increasing attraction of the concept of spatiality and in spite of the fact that everything in a sense takes place, is rooted in and conditioned by a “concrete materiality of place and environment” (Talley, 2017, p. 14). It is moreover noteworthy that globalization and postmodern critique plays an important role in producing the concept of space as "a complex network of flows and multilayered temporalities"(Talley, 2017, p. 34). Place and space are a myriad of complex structures and relations, behaviors and practices; thus, in this study, my investigation will be about experiencing old places, creating new spaces and the living experience of the protagonists in between places. On the whole, one novel aspect in my study will be to see how the narrative portrays places and what that portrayal indicates in relation to sociological, political and ecological implications of places.

CHAPTER 2
WHILE THINGS FALL APART[17]

The most celebrated slogan of literature is not once upon a place, but once upon a time and it seems to be all about what happens next[18].

2.1. INTRODUCTION

Hamid takes a shortcut in his story and only depicts what happens before and after migration. For his characters, migration becomes an act of the moment. People do not move through boats and other tools, but through doors, magical doors which can take them in the matter of an instant to a new place, to another place. So, in an unnamed city, militants occupying and refugees coming in, the story begins to trace the lives of two citizens who are considerably different in their attitudes and lifestyles. There are whispers of doors which take people in an instant to another place, to a supposedly better place. Mohsin Hamid tells the survival story of Saeed and Nadia and their struggles to find another land as their territory, and does that craftily through crossing the boundaries of genres and bringing in the magic realism and surrealism techniques to depict the horrors of being a refugee and a nomad. Ironically enough, they seem to be easily passing through the doors and crossing the borders; yet again, the life ahead does not seem that agreeable of a life. The doors open to a mirage in fact, a utopian

[17] In reference to William Butler Yeats' famous poem: Turning and turning in the widening gyre
The falcon cannot hear the falconer;
Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold;
Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world,
The blood-dimmed tide is loosed, and everywhere
The ceremony of innocence is drowned;
The best lack all conviction, while the worst
Are full of passionate intensity.

[18] Moslund, S. (2010). The Presence of Place in Literature – with a Few Examples from Virginia Woolf. Aktuel forskning ved ILKM.
http://static.sdu.dk/mediafiles//F/3/9/%7BF39578E6-7C8B-49BA-B7BE-3244D3CC3884%7DPlaceInLiterature.pdf

image turned into a dystopia, which makes other places no different from where they already have lived in. In the first part of the book, the two characters are shown to be dealing with a militant group governing their hometown and thus leaving them and so many others no choice but to leave and become nomads. The interstitiality of these nomads is the focus of the second part of the book in which Hamid essentially depicts the experience of more than 65 million people who have no country to go back to and no land to settle in. In this chapter, however, spatiality, through focusing attention on the dynamic relations among space, place and other elements of the text and place representation before migration will be explored, disclosed and analyzed to examine the relevance of space and how it is experienced in a country on the verge of destruction. I will offer a close reading of the first part of the novel to trace what becomes of a land and how it can be understood better while time is reduced and absent from the narrative and indeed why do we need to understand place in a world which is constantly moving. As Michael Wessels in his paper "The Representation of Place in Three Post-Apartheid South African Novels" (2016), asserts, the relationship of people to place and their experience of it "in a world characterized by constant movement, forced or desired, and the rapid transformation of physical environments is a potent means of exploring themes such as identity, affiliation, memory, loss, and alienation in postcolonial literature" (p. 71). Likewise, as reviewed in chapter one, Hamid also draws upon such themes, which will be the focus of this part.

2.2. TEMPORALITY OF PLACES WHEN THINGS FALL APART

In this part of the chapter, I will elucidate, through a close reading, how fragile, impermanent, and temporal spaces and places are in this novel, and how the characters gradually begin to detach from the places they once belonged to and leave them behind.

Hamid's protagonists, like many diaspora subjects, are distinguished not by the place they come from, but rather by elements such as language, the color of skin, the religion, and the way they dress. Seemingly, it is the place which encompasses all these traits in itself and is the setting for the first half of the story, but why leave it unnamed? Michael Perfect[19] puts it in a rather straightforward manner:

[19] See Michael Perfect (2019) 'Black holes in the fabric of the nation': refugees in Mohsin Hamid's *Exit West*, Journal for Cultural Research, 23:2, 187-201, DOI: 10.1080/14797585.2019.1665896

> The namelessness [] enables readers to involve themselves in the co-production Hamid espouses in his art. The names of the protagonists' city and their country are left blank, then, in part to encourage readers to insert those of their own […] As much as present-day Aleppo and Mosul (for example) already bear striking resemblances to Saeed and Nadia's city, the novel seems to suggest that a whole host of other cities in the Global South – including, by his own admission, Hamid's birthplace –could come to resemble it in the near future. (Perfect, 2019, p. 188).

Amanda Lagji (2018), also, notes that this namelessness is a 'generalizing gesture [that] encourages readers to see similarities between places that could serve as the novel's setting (Lagji, 2018, p. 223). I would concur with these two opinions as long as the tone of the novel agrees with this universalization which begins with the above points and continues with Hamid's efforts to introduce universal characters so that the global audience could read into them, seeing themselves as part of the events happening not in far-off places, but rather in places nearby. He seeks to familiarize the reader by deleting the borders, putting doors which can be opened and closed easily so that everyone could be an imaginable "citizen of the world[20]" who belongs nowhere and everywhere. The spatiality of the novel thus begins with the namelessness of their city of residence, which although without a name, it still is a place which should be cared for. This reminds me of Lawrence Buell[21]'s famous line "There never was an "Is" without a "Where"", which brings the urgency of place into consideration from the very onset of the novel. In other words, the protagonists "are" somewhere and not giving that "somewhere" a name does not mean it has no independent existence. Place has begun to exist from that very first line of the novel. Now, I would like to turn to the main discussion of this chapter; however, before moving to the main discussion, one should remember that the aim of this close analysis of the text is to see firstly how lands and places are treated in the home country, that is, mostly as being temporary and soon-to-be-abandoned for the sake of somewhere better, a more livable place to be precise. It will also contain arguments on how ecologically concerned the text is (or

[20] "The concept originated in ancient Greece around the fourth century and the Greeks coined the term 'cosmopolitan', which means citizen of the world. Through the ages, a global citizen has evolved to being someone who aligns with being worldly, travelling across the globe, and embracing diversity".
[21] Contemporary American Scholar and known as the pioneer of ecocriticism.

not) with places.

So, the first impression of a place is a city which has no name, yet again the way people dress and mention of prayer reveals to some extent where on a map this city can be located, somewhere in the Middle East. Symbols and emblems replace the actual name of a place which is "at the edge of an abyss" (Hamid, 2017, p. 1). Very early in the novel, the writer recapitulates how he looks at the cities and their transient nature and compares it with life; everything seems to be temporary; yet, "that is the way of things with cities as with life" (p. 1). This transitoriness of the city and places within it establish the placiality/spatiality of the novel, making it submit to a state of temporality and ensuing absence. Places perish the moment characters leave them: "For one moment we are pottering about our errands as usual and the next we are dying, and our eternally impending ending does not put a stop to our transient beginnings and middles until the instant when it does" (p. 8). Thus, the essential time-boundedness of places is compared to the momentary kernel of life itself.

Another way through which this inherent impermanence of places is revealed is to note how constantly places alter. Everything seems to have "*once*" been something and it is something else now. The word "once" with all its temporal connotations, is more like a spatial medium in Hamid's storyworld. It is utilized continuously in reference to various places to depict a world which is incessantly changing. Saeed's parents' home was "in a *once* handsome building, with an ornate though now crumbling facade that dated back to the colonial era, in a *once* upscale, presently crowded and commercial, part of town (p. 11), "*once*" occupied by "others who had *once* called this place home, before gentrification"; Saeed's company is in a place which was "*once* filled with trees, and Hawks were building nest on them, now billboards are being installed"; their house had a view of a "dry fountain that *once* gushed and sparkled in the sunlight" and now that view was undesirable in times of conflict (pp. 9-11) [italics mine]. Everything was "once" a place to live, to shop, to exercise, to entertain, now it is eroded in such a speed which is "accelerating time itself" (p. 11). Here as the places begin to become something in the past, time begins to shrink, and reduce as well. The speed of events accelerates and the time becomes a tool only to describe the disappearance of places. The city becomes "the path of heavy machine-gun and rocket fire as fighters advanced into this part of town", so obviously, the view is not a fountain anymore, but a barrel of a rifle. When the city is targeted by these gun machines, and the real dystopia begins

to take shape, one of the most quoted sentences of the novel appears: “Location, location, location, the realtors say. Geography is destiny, respond the historians (p. 11).

Now that the historians in Hamid’s narrative admit that geography is the destiny, spatiality of the novel begins to unfold, making the novel more about geography (places, locations, locals) than history (time). The axiom of thinking historically seems to have been replaced with imperative to think geographically, because the time, particularly, the past time is gradually vanishing (note the use of the word gentrification in the same page, meaning how the authorities are changing the places and renewing them). In addition, things happen in such a speedy manner that one can be better attuned to the geographical dynamics at work in regards to places and spatial relationships so far in the story rather than be obsessed with time.

Therefore, by virtue of the acceleration of time in the events of the story, the novel begins to unfold as a geographical novel rather than a historical one. Mohsin Hamid has explicitly made this clear in one of his interviews that he had intended to eliminate the element of time by bringing the magical doors into the story. In a world where location seems to matter only from a realtor's perspective, as time speeds up and events occur one after another in a chronological order, places and locations are abolished even more rapidly than before: “War would soon erode the facade of their building as though it had accelerated time itself, a day’s toll outpacing that of a decade” (Hamid, 2017, p. 11). History is there but a kind of accelerated history which is taking places away. Here the true battle of time and space has begun during which time eradicates places in an instant, that is to say, it would take a decade to destroy a place, yet war does it in one day. Even before the war, everything seemed to be shifting and altering and words like “once” and “no longer” had begun to dominate the narrative already through recollections and reflections about past:

> The cinema where Saeed’s parents met was long gone by the time their son met Nadia, as were the bookshops they favored and most of their beloved restaurants and cafés. It was not that cinemas and bookshops, restaurants and cafés had vanished from the city, just that many of those that had been there before were there *no longer*. The cinema they remembered so fondly had been *replaced* by a shopping arcade for computers and electronic peripherals. This building had taken the same name as the cinema that preceded it: both once

had the same owner, and the cinema had been so famous as to have become a byword for that locality. (Hamid, 2017, p. 12) [italics mine]

In confrontation with these changes, Saeed's parents "sometimes remember and smile and sometimes remember and pause", their response is captured only by this short statement. The world they lived their entire life in, is in a dreadful state, yet to them it is as though they are not part of that world already and can easily pass it by. This can be metaphorically interpreted as a typical reaction of people when facing loss of places, but as Hamid asserts earlier, this is the way of life as the way of cities, and the viewer, does nothing, or put strictly, cannot do anything but to sometimes remember and smile, or remember and pause[22]. Locations and places thus become a thing of the past. In an article titled "Place and the Spatial Turn in Geography and in History" (2009), Charles W. J. Withers talks about the end of geography in the context of globalization and loss of places or places becoming so "homogenized" that distinction between places is relatively impossible (Withers, 2009, p. 638). In the above quote, too, places which meant something for Saeed's parents gradually vanish and become history (a thing of the past literally), geography understood as "questions to do with place, and questions to do with where you are in the world" (p. 638) becomes history too in their minds at least. However, as Withers claims throughout his article, there has been much evidence that "in the face of globalisation, questions of locality, sense of place and of identity in place matter now more than ever" (ibid). He then continues to refer to "one of the strong senses" in which place is used, namely, "that of locale, "the local", or localness". Location is defined by him to mean "the absolute location, the grid references we attach to portions of the earth's surface by conventional latitudinal and longitudinal positioning" (p. 639). Since in the pre-migration storyworld of Hamid, locations are only important for realtors and are indeed ruined or altered one after another, the consecutive use of it might pinpoint that these "portions of the earth surface" (ibid) do not matter anymore when things fall apart (like a war breaking out). However, one very important point to note here is the word local and locality which (used 22 times in whole in the novel and in the particular passage above), would demonstrate that although locations might disappear from the earth, the locality will almost always remain intact in the memory of Saeed's parents as the ones who have "conducted their lives, and have "embraced the affective attachment that [they] have

[22]In grander scale, ecological matters are also overlooked this way

to place" (Withers, 2009, p. 640). So, according to Wither's assertion that locale is "the material setting for social relations, the actual morphometry of the environments (domestic, daily, and so on)"(p. 640), whatever is kept in the memory of Saeed's parents in the scene described above is a sense of locale, which in turn indicates the presence of locality (and not just the location of a given social event) and space-mindedness for people regardless of wars and destruction, because as Edward Casey argues to "live as a human is to live locally" (qtd in Wither, 2009, p. 641). So, location can belong to the past, become history, to put it strictly, localities, on the other hand, will be present all along and carried by people to other spaces as well.

The reaction seen above, "sometimes remember and smile and sometimes remember and pause", which is evoked by a change or a crisis "relegate place to a minor issue" in the narrative, to borrow Edward Casey's words (Casey, 2002, p. 4). Casey argues that because literature engages in "narrative rather than description", when description is curtailed, place is typically the first thing to be relegated. In *Exit West*, there are not much lengthy descriptions of places which would contain some ecological issues, so, ecocritically speaking, Casey's argument is valid as long as even if the above quote seems quite extensive in terms of place description (description of an urban scape), the reaction of the beholder and thus the narrative is merely to "to pause and smile". This is generally true in the first half of the novel because for the events that happen during the plotline, *Exit West* is rather too short and perhaps that is why lengthy descriptions are refrained from and reduced. Descriptions which as Casey asserts, are "engaged in spatiality- shaping images of objects", are absent from the narrative at this point, making the chronological order of events seem more central (time is winning the battle of space-time dichotomy). By chronologically reporting the events in an accelerated manner, dealing with actions and succession of events and as the city is still unnamed, Hamid makes use of places to reveal their temporal aspects[23] and sets the tone for the whole part; to put it differently, the question of "where" (the location as stated before) is not something he bothers himself with but rather the "where" is so far only paused and smiled upon, paused and remembered. According to Casey, although narration does contain description, in Hamid's case, (very fleeting and only in passing) still, the

[23] Even Saeed's job at a company speaks of such temporality: "They owned billboards all around the city, rented others, and struck deals for further space with the likes of bus lines, sports stadiums, and proprietors of tall buildings" (9).

descriptions “always spill over the side of narration” (Casey, 2002, p. 169). In Casey's example, landscape, climate, meteorological phenomena are often employed in the service of describing characters’ state of mind” (ibid). Likewise, places so far have been utilized to depict the horrors of a war in Hamid’s narrative; his descriptions of place spill over the side of narration, by only being about a passing image of a physical space which will soon be gone and subsumed in the narrative. There is no visually or sensorily enthralling image which could stand out as spectacles of a unique place, or invokes a particular local place experience. Places are there to be altered, replaced, annihilated for the sake of a narrative which seems to be more about people rather than the places they inhabit (although this is not the main theme of the novel and will soon be defied by claiming that the entire novel is indeed more about places than people). Saeed’s parents sometimes remember and smile and sometimes remember and pause as if it is the natural reaction of everyone when encountering change and disruption.

There is, however, one peculiar place description that I would like to mention and see its spatial relevance. This place is remote from the earth, truly in the space of course, Saeed’s Family owns a telescope[24] through which they stargaze from time to time. This ceremony of watching stars would bring objects “whose light, often, had been emitted before any of these three viewers had been born— light from other centuries, only now reaching Earth” (Hamid, 2017, p. 13). Time and place are far from the earth and “now” they are reaching the earth as if, as Saeed’s Father calls it, it is a time travel but it gives them a spatial dimension of a planet, like the Mars, with concrete tangible spatial presence, “the second-nearest planet, its features indistinct, the color of a sunset after a dust storm” (p. 14). However, through an application on Saeed’s mobile phone, they realize the Mars they are gazing at, was “once” Mars and now it is only “a Mars from another moment, a bygone Mars, a fixed in memory by the application’s creator (p. 14). Therefore, once again, even though there is a place to depict fully, it is so far-fetched and untouchable both in terms of distance and time, that becomes like other local places they pass by, visit and touch, for instance, cafes and cinemas they behold every day and are so transient that they might not be there tomorrow, become quickly like a planet Mars they find in the sky that belongs to yet another time. All these places are absent from the present time, either already “gone” moments, lost in the memory

[24] Being a thing left from the past “given to Saeed’s father by his father, and Saeed’s father had given it in turn to Saeed” (13).

of time or will be so soon, thus provoking no sense of belonging in people in the “now”. It is worth noting that their stargazing ceremony is disrupted by constant bombings which has polluted the sky above the city. So, not only is the space unreachable through time, but also through the pollution man's activities have caused. The narrative's passive treatment of this pollution is therefore another "pause and smile" moment during which this family only nostalgically remembers the way they used to watch outer spaces, but now even those spaces are transitory.

Hamid's (deliberate) refusal to rely upon lengthy place descriptions can be read as a way his characters cope with a war-time city. Spaces are either lost in the memory or physically gone from the sights as the result of a civil war and people in the city or the whole country fail to engage with the physical surroundings. That is why places stop to intertwine with their everyday experience and the result is more detachment and more abandoning by the residents. Bill Ashcraft’s (2007) example about the issue surrounding the concept of place in colonial and postcolonial experience[25], resembles the experience of the characters in Hamid’s war-stricken city; Ashcraft’s assertion that places "enter into and produce cultural consciousness”, begins to be questioned in the narrative due to the disappearance of places as is common in a postcolonial world where places become “the horizon of identity" and do not matter for their own sake (Ashcraft, et all, 2007, p. 109). So, Saeed and Nadia and their fellow citizens, no longer have an intimate experience of physical places. Everywhere they have been and taken step to is gradually vanishing, or becoming unsafe and unavailable at certain times and there seems to be no point in belonging and rooting in there:

> They next faced the problem that confronted all young people in the city who wanted to continue in one another’s company past a certain hour. During the day there were parks, and campuses, and restaurants, cafés. But at night, after dinner, unless one had access to a home where such things were safe and permitted, or had a car, there were few places to be alone. Saeed’s family had a car, but it was being repaired, and so he had come by scooter. And Nadia had a home, but it was tricky, in more ways than one, to have a man over. (Hamid, 2017, p. 18)

Thus, the way places begin to represent an unsafe surrounding for people, making even

[25] *Post-Colonial Studies: The Key Concepts*. Ashcroft, Bill, Griffiths, Gareth, Tiffin, Helen (2007).

one's home a "tricky" place, meanings of the places begin to alter simultaneously, juxtapose with one another and lose their previous referentiality. For instance, frontlines are no more far from the resident places, it is exactly the "the street one took to work, the school one's sister attended, the house of one's aunt's best friend, the shop where one bought cigarette (Hamid, 2017, p. 39). War brings about a situation where place recedes into the background (which is one moment away from bombing and total destruction). The focal point of the story thus is the actions happening upon places. Soon, we will notice that not only do the places begin losing their actual presence in the city, but they are also, distorted in the mental map of the characters. One case in point is when neighborhoods fall to the militants very rapidly, and the shape of the city, the familiar places are all gone, disappeared, or renewed, "Saeed's mother's mental map of the place where she had spent her entire life is now changing too:

> Her mental map of the city now resembles[s] an old quilt, with patches of government land and patches of militant land. The frayed seams between the patches were the deadliest spaces, and to be avoided at all costs. Her butcher and the man who dyed the fabrics from which she had once had made her festive clothes disappeared into such gaps, their places of business shattered and covered in rubble and glass. (p. 40)

After places are lost both in the geographical and mental sense, people are beginning to disappear and abandon their homes. For instance, the owners of Chinese restaurant where Nadia and Saeed meet in the midst of the rifles are told to have migrated to Canada in search of a better life and "the dining area" which had a darkened, opium-den ambience", is being left as are many other places. This is the first time we face a real abandonment of the cities and places. Saeed's comment is important here: "I like it, sort of mysterious, like we could be anywhere, well, not anywhere, but not here". The experience of place changes from "being here" to "being there", *the La-bas*. It is only in relation to leaving and other places that we hear actual names of places: we hear "Canada" in relation to some Chinese people who have *once* been here and now they are in Canada. We hear the word "abroad" in relation to the widow whose house Nadia has rented, the widow whose children has *once* been here and now have gone abroad (Hamid, 2017, p. 19). We hear Chile and Cuba when Saeed and Nadia have a conversation about their dream cities. Their dream cities are also another indicator of their desire to "be there", rather than "here". Nadia's choice of Cuba is because of

“music and beautiful old buildings and the sea”, while Saeed immediately chooses Chile saying: “The Atacama Desert. The air is so dry, so clear, and there’s so few people, almost no lights. And you can lie on your back and look up and see the Milky Way” (p. 17). Milky way being yet another far-flung place lost in time. Their different choice of place is quite telling as long as it determines their radically different attitudes toward the physical world around them, making Saeed as the one always craving for "clear air, less people and a natural life” which will be further seen in his other choices and character development. The spatiality of the novel has so far been an influential factor in setting the tone for the rest of the story.

As places are temporary and soon-to-be-abandoned, the trope of movement and dispersion begins to appear in the novel. With Saeed wishing to be somewhere which is "there" (without really caring for here), the wish to go is further supported when he says "stars are like a splash of milk in the sky”, scattered and uneven entities which move slowly “because the Earth is moving” (p. 17). Indeed, this sentence can reveal how the concept of movement will be of high value as the story unfolds; in Saeed’s words, everyone is in essence “lying on a giant spinning ball in space” (ibid). This is how the narrator foretells (or perhaps justifies the imminent movement of characters from their lands to other lands without truly belonging to a place and feeling responsible for it).

In reference to Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin (2008), words such as space and place can be used to elucidate "an experience of displacement that accompanies colonial conquest, dispossession, and settlement" (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin, 2008, p. 112). Hamid, knowingly or not, brings in the metaphor of space, in the real sense of it, somewhere out of the earth, to promote his notion of movement, because the earth is moving, so should everything and everyone. This will be even more manifest when he gives the reader his most famous line “we are all migrant through time". Space metaphor comes in to accentuate the displacement of millions of people soon in the story.

What Ashcraft, Griffiths and Tiffin (2008), see place to connote in a colonial/postcolonial context fits in here as Hamid begins to move his subjects. “In many cases,” they note, “‘place does not become an issue in a society’s cultural discourse until colonial intervention radically disrupts the primary modes of its representation by separating ‘space’ from ‘place’” (Ashcraft et al, p. 113). In this story,

war and civil conflicts, just like an imperialist power in the colonial times, intervene and make places as vulnerable as possible. In fact, in the story, since places are becoming fragile day by day, Hamid's metaphor of space in its literal sense, separates real places of the city from the spaces, mental maps, and images which has been engraved in people's minds (example above, when the mental map of Saeed's mother is radically distorted by the power of war, or when they cannot enjoy spaces in the sky because it is blurred by pollution). All of this can be interpreted as places becoming as transitory as possible because immediately after we hear Saeed's statement that "earth is moving", we are faced with a city which is transforming into an image of space only.

Understanding how Hamid employs spaces in his narrative to discuss his main trope, namely, movement and mobility would be conducive to the whole study as a spatial reading. Soon after we hear Saeed's often-quoted statement, "the earth is moving", we behold a city and its places transforming and reshaped. In order to see the spatiality presented in this part, drawing a distinction between space and place[26] would be fitting now. This will be based on Doreen Massey's book *For Space* (2005), and act as a summary to the spatiality of places so far presented in the novel. Massey describes three features of space as first, the space which is "the product of interrelations, from the immensity of the global to the intimately tiny" (Massey, 2005, p. 5); such a space in Hamid's novel was shown to be their neighborhood and tiny spaces they dine, walk, exercise to the immense space of Cuba and Chile, and Mars which are all intertwined by the way they are narrated from tiny to immense. Secondly, as Massey posits, is the space which "allows for the existence of multiplicity" (Massey, 2005, p. 6) with dissimilar trajectories co-existing, allowing people to "interpret space differently"; this is seen when the unnamed city is ruined and on whose debris refugees begin to emerge from multiple places and build homes in open spaces, pitching tents in the "greenbelts between roads, erecting lean-tos next to the boundary walls of houses, sleeping rough on sidewalks and in the margins of streets" (Hamid, 2017, p. 18), and it seems that everyone is calling everywhere he sleeps a home, be it the open space in the street or under the tent, therefore, the concept of home as a space is also shifting. In addition, the result of this corresponds with Massey's third feature defined for a space, somewhere which is "in flux, always under construction, always in the process of

[26] Place and space are used interchangeably in this study; where there is a need to distinguish them, specific definitions will be given.

being made, never finished, never closed" (Massey, 2005, p.7). Spaces are being constructed right after and at times simultaneous with disappearance of old familiar places, and it is at the midst of this newly constructed space in a war-stricken place that people make an effort to "recreate the rhythms of a normal life as though it were completely natural to be residing, a family of four, under a sheet of plastic propped up with branches and a few chipped bricks" (Hamid, 2017, p. 43). This is precisely how places shift into spaces for both the settlers and the new comers, which will be discussed further when discussing the life of the protagonist as refugee as well. It is noteworthy, however, to see how Massey's spatial theory in fact is not only about places turning into spaces, but rather she sees place as "spatio-temporal" which "integrates space and time" (Massey, 2005, p. 130); yet again, she sees place as "open, woven together" (p. 131), as Hamid has described places mostly in this way and will do so more later on as well. How can we see this in light of the above-mentioned notion of being here versus being there? As seen above, Saeed and Nadia begin dreaming about being somewhere else, and not here, (here being their place of birth, hometown, so to speak). According to Massey, place and movement are inherently intertwined, the term she uses is "throwntogetherness" which involves mobility in itself. The notion is about people moving together into and from various routes and trajectories sharing same responsibilities and obligations; this way, they constantly "produce encounters through time and space" (Massey, 2005, p. 131). Hamid's Employment of outer spaces, rumors about people leaving through magical doors, other people coming into the country and all the places in between are a kind of "throwntogetherness" which he continues to stick with till the end of the novel as his main trope. With dreams of movement in the first part of the novel and with actual movement in the second part, the place and mobility become part of one another in order for the moving subjects to create new places and abandon the old ones for that matter. The "creation of space", is 'that throwntogetherness [which brings with it] the unavoidable challenge of negotiating a here-and-now [and] the coming together of the previously unrelated spaces" (Massey, 2005, p. 140-1). Thus, Saeed and Nadia, obviously are attempting to negotiate here-and-now with a then-and-there before they actually materialize their dream of moving to far- off places. Soon, they eventually decide to leave the former for the sake of the latter for the reason justified above, places being temporary and soon to be uninhabitable.

2.3. CREATION OF NEW SPACES WHEN THINGS FALL APART

In Hamid's storyworld, as a result of war, physical presence of people in outside world diminishes and in turn electronic communication increasingly dominates people's lives. Hamid uses the word cyberspace when referring to the virtual world protagonists, like many of their fellow citizens, use to communicate with each other. Rebecca Bryant in her article "What Kind of Space is Cyberspace?" (2001) sketches an equivalence between physical space and cyberspace showing that they share the concepts of place, distance, size and route in common (Bryant, 2001, p. 1). Seemingly, Hamid creates the cyberspace with the same framework, right when actual places are disappearing from the sight. We see that, for Hamid, cyberspaces exhibit almost all properties of a real place, albeit with certain novel features. In this part, therefore, we will see how Hamid's creation of a new space, called cyberspace, is indeed creating a new spatial medium in compensation to the loss of a real place, namely, their city.

The more uninhabitable the city becomes for the residents, the more void it becomes of familiar places and thus people become possessed by their phones, because "their phones would take them to places distant and near (Hamid, 2017, p. 25), the magical world these phones would take them is described to be "mesmerizing" and this way, the characters could penetrate into each other's lives without actually being there. The place, the cyberspace, strictly speaking, changes the concept of presence in a particular physicality, thus leaving them present in their absence, as Saeed is described to be always present through penetrating into every aspect of Nadia's life: "he became present without presence" (p. 25). These phones could even transform the city into a "map", a cartographical image of all the places with signs and emblems only which are no longer on the real surface of the city. The city, which was never named, is now unreal too. It has become a map people look into when searching on their phones. Hamid constantly keeps moving his character and creating new spaces for them to which they feel no obligation to belong or care. Cyberspace too becomes another imaginary space for them:

> In their phone were antennas, and these antennas sniffed out an *invisible world*, as if by magic, a world that was all around them, and also nowhere, transporting them to places distant and near, and to places that had never been and would never be (43).

Again, parallel with the storyworld of the novel, are the ubiquitous "little black rectangles", which could be as magical as those doors. This is important because individuals are connecting to each other through these doors and those little black rectangles simultaneously. These two, the doors, and the internet, allow characters' physical and virtual transport respectively and move them from one space to another, be it real places, or virtual ones. In both cases, the protagonists are void of responsibility for the place. I made the comparison between the real world and virtual based on the "metaphoric construct of cyberspace in relation to real spaces" which is the common way of treating cyberspace in academia as Julie E Cohen posits in her comprehensive article "Cyberspace As/And Space" (2007)[27]. So, Hamid's creation of a cyberspace through which characters are intruding into each other's lives is a spatial intrusion, however virtual that is. Hamid's use of cyberspace is a way to take the destruction of the places and predict the same destiny, namely, destruction, for the future of the earth. While everything is normalized in the debris of a city, people are still stranded in their homes, (whatever it is which means home for them, be it the tents or half-destroyed apartments), they watch "bombs falling, women exercising, men copulating" (Hamid, p. 25), right at this moment Hamid moves to a greater scale in which "clouds gathering, waves tugging at the sand like the rasping licks of so many mortals, temporary, vanishing tongues, tongues of a planet that would *one day too be no more*" (Hamid, p. 26) [italics mine]. He moves from places so near as home to places so diffuse and far as the planet Earth and foresees no future for them both. However, what is important here is how actual places lose existence and thus meaning, and in turn virtual spaces gain power through "feast of such opulence that the very fact of their existence boggle[s] the mind", allowing people to move beyond their small universes to greater and more magnificent worlds. In one particular example, ironically, when Saeed and Nadia receive mushroom joints, accessible only thanks to the virtual world, they go beyond their personal wishes and pray for peace and wish to become one with the world. However utterly unable they seem to be to prevent the world from falling apart, the unreal spaces are there to assist them at least in their imagination (or better to say, hallucination), to transcend all distances and become one

[27] For a more detailed analysis of the relationship between space and cyberspace see: Cohen, Julie E., "Cyberspace As/And Space" (2007). Georgetown Law Faculty Publications and Other Works. 807. https://scholarship.law.georgetown.edu/facpub/807

with a better world even though their transcendence might seem a superficial and momentary endeavor of the characters to join the world, thus the passage here has great spatial significance:

> As tall as he was, and rooted in its soil, which was in turn rooted in the clay of the pot, which rested upon the brick of the terrace, which was like the mountaintop of this building, which was growing from the earth itself, and from this earthy mountain the lemon tree was reaching up, up, in a gesture so beautiful that Saeed was filled with love, and reminded of his parents, for whom he suddenly felt such gratitude, and a desire for peace, that peace should come for them all, for everyone, for everything, for we are so fragile, and so beautiful, and surely conflicts could be healed if others had experiences like this, and then he regarded Nadia and saw that she was regarding him and her eyes were like worlds. (Hamid, 2017, p. 29)

The romanticized elaboration of an otherworldly experience and "the worlds" Saeed sees in Nadia's eyes, are all a sentimentalized vision for the future of the world. In a world whose places are being destroyed, how ironic that is to imagine worlds in someone's eyes? This is where the narrative's spatiality is at its best when depicting peaceful worlds of dreams and opulent worlds of virtual reality in sharp contrast with the turmoil of real places. This is the way Hamid initiates the mobility for his protagonists by taking away their current places and promising them better lands beyond the borders (the common trope of almost every migration story).

These worlds, of other spaces, created in their phones is once again brought into attention when Saeed shows her, of course on his phone, images by a French photographer of famous cities at night, lit only by the glow of the stars. When Nadia wonders how one might take photos of cities without all those artificial lights produced by city dwellers, Saeed's response is again spatially significant because as he says, taking such photos from "above the cities" is impossible, and the photographer had to have gone to "deserted places", places with no human beings, which "was just as far north, or south, at the same latitude basically, the same place that the city would be in a few hours, with the Earth's spin, and once he got there he pointed his camera in the same direction" (Hamid 33). The complicated notion of taking photos of places with the same latitude as the city in a different time zone, but still in the same direction is yet another way of attempting to go along with the earth's spin, going with the flow of

movement which is essentially feasible only through movement (Hamid's another attempt to remind us that the earth is moving, and one has to move with it, if he wishes to have other perspectives to things, something he makes his characters do later on in the second half of the book). The creating of these spaces in the virtual world parallel with the real spaces they are living in, makes Nadia wonder about the beauty of such worlds, which happen to have actual names and thus evoke certain images to the mind: "New York, Rio, Shanghai, Paris". These images are described to be "achingly beautiful, these ghostly cities, under their stains of stars, images as though from an epoch before electricity, but with the buildings of today" (Hamid, p. 34). As seen here, the more engaged they are with images from other places in their phones, the less attached they become to their place of living, making them more willing and prepared to leave and become part of the movement flowing in the world and being-there rather than being here. This is when they begin to listen more attentively to "whispers of doors" which would take them to "other places".

2.4. ALTERED MEANINGS OF A HOME WHEN THINGS FALL APART

Although Hamid utilizes space of an unnamed city which was "once" filled with moving subjects as a seemingly passive background to tell his story, he still regards it vital to the core existence of his characters. Evidently, the ruined city becomes the main point of interest for exhibiting social predicaments and perpetual political unrest in a sense that things which make a city an inhabitable place for its residents similarly transform into things with altered meanings, like the concept of home, not as in homeland for a diasporic subject[28] who has left it long ago, but the literal homes people are currently living in with doors, walls and windows as their components. Indeed, not only is the home and the traditional conceptualization of it shattered, but, the meaning of doors and windows, as indispensable parts of a home, or to put metaphorically, as organs of a whole body, are also morphed into something else. As mentioned earlier, due to the ongoing conflicts, Nadia's parents' home, her own home, and so many other homes are smashed, debased and not identifiable any longer. As a result, people's relationship to windows and doors changes in the city as well:

[28] for this refer to "Diaspora and Home: an Interview with Homi Bhabha": 07.12.2017 https://blog.degruyter.com/diaspora-and-home-interview-homi-k-bhabha/

> A window was the border through which death was possibly most likely to come. Windows could not stop even the most flagging round of ammunition: any spot indoors with a view of the outside was a spot potentially in the crossfire. Moreover, the pane of a window could itself become shrapnel so easily, shattered by a nearby blast, and everyone had heard of someone or other who had bled out after being lacerated by shards of flying glass. (Hamid, 2017, p. 41)

Windows turn into messengers of death, while doors become the salvage gateways:

> 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 began to gaze at their own doors a little differently nonetheless. (Ibid)

The doors like an "on/off switches in the flow between two adjacent places", become the "irrational possibility" of rescue, the thick, momentary space through which desires of those "who desire[d] to go far away" are fulfilled. (Hamid, 2017, p. 43)

Another important segment of a home, namely, walls, at this point begin to play a pivotal and active role in the story, particularly in the second half of the book. Therefore, I only mention it here in relation to the way they forecast a future abounding with walls. They are portrayed to be the rich countries countermeasure against "an unprecedented flow of migrants", to "Strengthen their borders" (ibid).

Simply put, notions of home and hometown are fragmented and people do not feel at home in their homes; the city has turned back to being a cave and the people residing in it are the cavemen. This is highlighted when the characters are spending the last days in their now-destroyed-hometown, and in which even their lemon tree do not recover, no matter how regularly they water it. When Saeed states that this primitive way of life feels "cozy" and they even "smell a bit like a caveman and a wood fire" (Hamid, 2017, p. 50), with so perilous and fragile of a situation, their state of being is at stake, and they can only leave with their bodies, as the only thing left for them. Here pointing out to Susan Stanford Friedman's article "Bodies on the Move: A Poetics of Home and Diaspora" (2004), might help understand the above-mentioned point. In her

Article, Friedman gives examples of diaspora writers and how they carry their homes as bodies precisely because their homes do not seem to be aiding them in any sense, so, they take their bodies and leave home "to find themselves", or find "elsewhere-wherever [they] travel and relocate [which] are sites of dislocation" (Friedman, 2004, p. 190). Likewise, when homes are gone in this unnamed city, the protagonist also take their bodies and leave as Friedman quotes a diaspora writer to have said: "I am a turtle, wherever I go I carry "home" on my back" (qtd in Friedman, 2004, p. 191). I would like to make an analogy between Friedman's definition of home and the comment I made earlier when I claimed that Hamid's protagonists are negotiating a *here and now* with a *then and there*. Having seen how their homes are destroyed and unrecognizable for them, the "then and there" seems to win the negotiations due to the fact, that here and now, meaning "home" is fragmented and not referable any longer. In this regard, Friedman's points are illuminating as well. She takes the notion of home as Utopia, "a no place, a nowhere, an imaginary space longed for, always already lost in the very formation of the idea of home" (Friedman, 2004, p. 191) and then interestingly enough, she plays with the word nowhere[29], morphing it into, with a slight shift, a "now here". So, home is "in a real sense nowhere yet everywhere"; the protagonists' experience of here and now thus increasingly loses "its immediate spatiotemporal referents and [becomes] tied to and contingent on actors and actions at a distance" (Friedman, 2004, p. 192), meaning, they are beginning to desire building homes elsewhere, or as put earlier, take their homes elsewhere with them. So, the notion of home, albeit entirely altered in their hometown, begins to be reconstituted through its relation with "elsewhere" (as mentioned above, in dreams, in abroad, in Mars, in Cuba, Chile and Rio, Paris, and New York and all those places they talk about).

Ultimately, re/evaluating the role places play in determining how the characters experience their surrounding world, be it the real, the virtual or the dream world, can now help the reader understand the general motive for the protagonists' decision about taking on a mobile life in the second half of the novel. As militants begin holding territory throughout the city, and although people desperately pray for peace in their Friday prayers[30], places in the city are either "flattened by militants" or "occupied by

[29] She borrows this orthographic homonym from sociologists Roger Friedland and Deirdre Boden, who titled their collection of essays on space, time, and modernity with the single word, NowHere-capital N, capital H. Shift the capitalization of "h" and "w": presto. NowHere becomes NoWhere. (Friedman, 2004, p. 192).

[30] "His father prayed on first Friday after the curfew's commencement, and Saeed prayed for peace

refugees" (Hamid, 2017, p. 31), making places an emblem of power for the dominant group because they are changing the face of the city in a way which would contain their presence now that they are taking over the neighborhoods one by one. So, not only are people's mental maps of the city radically distorted as a result of these changes, but places have begun to act as the tools through which militants are maneuvering their control and authority: "the militants take over the land" and are "content to flatten it and possess it (p. 40). The more the militants attain control of the actual places, the more prominent the cyberspaces and the doors to other spaces become. Cyberspaces act as spaces affiliated with the characters' imagination and doors act as the way, the only way, to actualize and materialize those other spaces. Ultimately, Saeed and Nadia resolutely decide that they have enough reasons to abandon their hometown altogether, their old places are no more there, and the new spaces in other places seem "achingly beautiful", making place not just a container in which the events unfold, but rather the determining factor for the character's displacement journey. Their journey can only be justified when seen in light of their search/desire for new lands, new territories. Furthermore, Hamid's references to parallel existences in virtual worlds can signify his desire for how moving can and should be made accessible for everyone as it is in a cyber space. Therefore, in the same manner, he creates magical doors to objectify that accessibility for his protagonists so that they could easily be permitted to leave actual places as they would the virtual places. Nonetheless, in moving from one place to another, no one seems to feel guilty, or responsible or, to put strictly, concerned with what will become of the places they leave behind. As long as they do not feel any sense of belonging to any place in their hometown, their immediate reaction is to go away from them, as far away as possible, Westward, as much as they can. So, places do matter for Hamid insofar as they induce a kind of meaning, either familial, or work-wise, or as places keeping their loved ones; otherwise, if the meanings, connotations, and memories, are taken away from them, they are distorted and best to be left behind. And when left behind, places which were a "where" full of "is"[31] become void, neutral with no agency anymore and cannot even

and Saeed's father prayed for Saeed and the preacher in his sermon urged all the congregants to pray for the righteous to emerge victorious in the war but carefully refrained from specifying on which side of the conflict he thought the righteous to be".

[31] In reference to Buell's famous line mentioned in the beginning of this chapter "there never was an "is" without a where".

serve as a backdrop for the story. Hamid's narrative treats places with dignity as long as they contain his protagonists, after that, the old places are reduced gradually and diminished to a "no-place". Places which were once reinforced as an active agent, affecting patterns of experience, relationships and feeling of the characters and influential in changing the direction characters take in their lifepath, are ultimately gone. To briefly ponder on the ecocritical reading of this process, one might wonder if this is the typical reaction seen in diaspora narratives or the mobility discourse in general? And if so, what will happen to the land when a migrant leaves it behind? This particular narrative's response so far has been a refusal to narrate this part and move on with the characters' next episode. When individuals leave their hometowns, neither they nor the narrative seem concerned with the fate of the vanished land with all of its ecological, cultural and social aspects. And this will lead us to the concluding remarks of this chapter.

In conclusion, after a long prelude to justify Saeed and Nadia's leave and with the hope that some "achingly beautiful" place is awaiting them, they leave. With their decision, the text also stops any mention of the city, the unnamed city eventually becomes a gone moment in the past too, more like an ephemeral image than a place once holding such beautiful lives in its arms. In Hamid's never-ending efforts to normalize every event in the story by comparing it to the usual course of life[32], lies an indifference towards places in the past. Indeed, as his last sentence of the first half of the book indicates: "but that is the way of things, for when we migrate, we murder from our lives those we leave behind"(54), and "those" can be interpreted not only as "people" but rather places as well.

[32] For more detailed analysis see Michael Perfect (2019) 'Black holes in the fabric of the nation': refugees in Mohsin Hamid's *Exit West*, Journal for Cultural Research, 23:2, 187-201, DOI: 10.1080/14797585.2019.1665896

CHAPTER 3
WHILE CHARACTERS MOVE

> *"Not to run, not to play Roulette*[33] *with yet another departure. To flee forever is beyond the capacity of most, at some point even a hunted animal will stop, exhausted, and awaits its fate, if only for a while".*
> (Hamid, 2017, p. 87)

So far, we presented a spatial interpretation of the first half of the book, which was the characters' pre-movement life and how the destruction of old familiar places led to creation of new spaces and made characters move away from their homeland and by leaving it, metaphorically they murdered it, perhaps by not caring for it and trying to save it from the militants (Hamid, 2017, P. 54), which as we discussed was essentially, an indicator of their total ignorance and apathy toward the place they have been living their entire life in. In this part, they have begun their journey toward West through some magical doors. The focus of this chapter will also be on the places represented and how the characters experience them while they are in constant movement.

3.1. DOORS AND ISLANDS: SPACES OF LIMINALITY

The anthropologists van Gennep and Turner introduced the concept to describe "the transitory stage characteristic of rites of passage in various cultures: "Upon their ritual exclusion from society, champions enter a liminal zone of indistinction from which they are bound to return changed thereafter becoming fully acknowledged members of their respective communities" (quoted in Taylor, 1998, p. 8); the liminal spaces in this part of the novel when characters move from one place to another, does not contain any ritual exclusion, but only the magical passage from doors, which can be taken as

[33] When playing roulette, you reach a point where the more you play, the more you lose.

being on the border, or on the threshold, "dividing distinct spheres, identities or discourses" because as we will see they are strictly kept within these liminal spaces and restricted from entering the other zone, namely, the centre. Therefore, I base my definition of liminal spaces on two theses written on the liminal spaces in literature and then move to see how it is at work in this particular novel. In her dissertation, "Functions of Liminality in Literature"[34] (1998), Malynda Strother Taylor discusses the genealogy of liminality and I am mostly referring to her definitions here:

> In narrative theory, liminality is the in-between moments, the space between an inciting incident in a story and the protagonist's resolution. It is often a period of discomfort, of waiting, and of transformation. The characters' old habits, beliefs, and even personal identity disintegrates. He or she has the chance to become someone completely new. In architecture, liminal spaces are defined as "the physical spaces between one destination and the next." Common examples of such spaces include hallways, airports, and streets. The word liminal derives from Latin limen meaning "threshold", and refers to a "transitory, in-between state or space which is characterized by indeterminacy, ambiguity, hybridity, potential for subversion and change", which constitutes a border zone. (Taylor, 1998, p. 5)

In broader sense, Homi Bhabha also refers to these "disruptive inbetweenness, or hybridity" in reference to postcolonial literature (Bhabha 1994, p. 38). The liminal space in Bhabha's sense can also be called the "third space" which establishes "alien territories which not only becomes productive of new meanings, social relations and identities, but also disrupts and subverts established entities" (p. 56). The liminality in *Exit West* does indeed establish new identities and social relations both for Saeed and Nadia, it will also produce disruption for the authorities, as can be seen in London's rifles and Vienna terrorist attacks Hamid briefly mentions. As far as Bhabha is concerned, "this interstitial passage between fixed identifications opens up the possibility of a cultural hybridity that entertains difference without an assumed or imposed hierarchy" (Bhabha, 1994, p. 5). Obviously, what happens in Hamid's world is an entirely different story in which the hybridity only results in more exclusion, more marginalizing and of course it does impose a certain hierarchy, for instance, in

[34] Another helpful study in this regard is the phd thesis: Between Two Worlds: The Functions of liminal Space in Twentieth Century Literature by Adam J. Engel (2017)

case of Greek island, they are pushed aside by rich tourists, in case of their London residence, by nativists, and in Marine, USA by the people who cannot even be called native American since they have all come there as migrants, but some time earlier, even centuries earlier.

In this novel, the liminal space is more similar to Manuel Aguirre's understanding of the term[35]. He defines the term in relation to gothic novel; however, his categorization can be traced when noting Saeed and Nadia's movement from one space to the next. He associates liminality with terror because the threshold or the liminal space which is constituted between a "domain of rationality and the world of the other" creates a sense of terror (in Gothic novels) (Aguirre, 2007, p. 15). It is this threshold-induced terror that the protagonists in *Exit West* experience in the first liminal zone, namely, the Mykonos Island, as an unhomely space they are caught up in and ultimately attempt to escape.

Based on Aguirre's take on, the liminal space or the threshold, is categorized into three stages: "potential for disorder, symmetry, and instability" (Aguirre, 2007, p. 31). Saeed and Nadia's experience of space in the second half of the book can be therefore called an experience of liminality; they pass through a door, the presence of doors adding to the liminality of these spaces. Their movements are not monitored by actual physical borders, but rather by some guards taking care of them. The doors are not as authoritative in preventing the mixing of people as actual borders and barbed wire walls. So, people seem to be moving from centre to peripheries initially and then always from one periphery to another, with the doors playing an active role in transferring migrant subjects. When they enter an island, their stay in the Greek island is the intersection between their "city of birth", and west; this island is geographically, politically and strategically also in between east and west. However fantastical these doorways may seem, they are still not taking people to a desired place at least not at the beginning of their journeys. As is common in any kind of migration and movement, the initial place, or what we can call the liminal spaces of transition are not perfectly suitable for the characters and according to Aguirre's notions of liminal spaces, they are in a state of "potential disorder" filled with a sense of fear and uncertainty.

[35] Aguirre, Manuel. "Liminal Terror: The Poetics of Gothic Space". The Dynamics of the Threshold: Essays on Liminal Negotiations, Eds. Jesus Benito & Ana M Manzanas. Madrid: The Gateway Press, 2007.

Therefore, doors are magical in the surface and metaphorical level, they take people to apparently better places, like one would hope when passing through a border, but the liminal space they enter initially seems somewhat dismaying and terrorizing (in a gothic sense, as Aguirre would agree). The horror is depicted to be life-like, quite similar to what a migrant would experience when entering (intruding[36]) a new place. When Nadia approaches the door, she is hit by its darkness, "its opacity the way that it did not reveal what was on the other side, and also did not reflect what was on this side, and so felt equally like a beginning and an end" (Hamid, 2017, p. 57). She says it was like dying and being born at the same time. However, Saeed doubts about passing the door for a moment, revealing how unknown and unfamiliar this liminality can possibly feel like. Ironically enough, when they pass the door for the first time, they find themselves, "between two low buildings", in "bathroom of some public place". Their first encounter was the liminal space, the public bathroom which is between two things in the "Greek island of Mykonos, a great draw for tourists in the summer, and, it seemed, a great draw for migrants this winter", the island can also be considered as a liminal space surrounded by dry land and always in between shores and seaside, trapping them inside itself. Hamid's choice of place is deliberately and consciously strategic, particularly in the case of this particular island which as mentioned before is strategically situated in between east and west. It carries a concrete name, Mykonos, evokes certain images to mind with its "exquisite places" for tourists, with "white blocks with blue windows scattered along tawny hills, spilling down to the sea", with "little windmills and rounded churches and the vibrant green of trees that from a distance looked like potted plants" (Hamid, pp. 64-5). However, Saeed and Nadia along with so many other refugees are settled in the "outskirts". They are kept in the margins, not being allowed to go to the centre of town "for it was off-limits to migrants at night, and they were strongly discouraged from going there even by day, except to the outskirts, where they could trade with residents, which is to say those who had been on the island longer than a few months" (Hamid, p. 67). Therefore, even here they are held in between the centre and the outskirts of the city.

In relation to the above point, where the protagonists are kept in between the center and the periphery, pointing out to Doris Bachmann-Medick's analysis of liminality and creation of contact zones would be conducive. What she offers in her

[36] This notion will be discussed in chapter 4.

book *Cultural Turn* (2016) in terms of liminality discussions, is in the chapter “Spatial Turn”, in which she brings about notions of hybridity, liminality and interstitiality, which as she asserts, are main parts of migration studies. She uses the example of ship as being a “hybrid space” of cultural encounters, containing people from various cultures and still at the middle of the sea, in between other zones. All the spaces described in the second half of *Exit West* can be considered hybrid and liminal in this sense as we will see, particularly the island, (but also the mansion in London and the houses up the hill in Marine). These are all contact zones containing the “overlapping and interstitial spaces” (Bachmann-Medick, 2016, p. 229). These contact zones have formed new spaces in this novel as well. The term Bachmann-Medick uses is, the process of “despatialization” (ibid), which can be borrowed to demonstrate what characters go through after passing from the doors. As defined by her, despatialization is “a process that results from migration, virtual mobility and modern media technologies, [and indicates] how people spatially *reorganize* their lives after becoming uprooted” (p. 230).

During the process of despatialization, in which they "transgress the borders” (ibid), and begin to reorganize the spaces around them in order to feel at home, they contribute to the dynamics of new spaces through creating spaces of their own. In other words, immediately after their initial symmetry in the larger space (the island), they seek to build “a home of their own” (Hamid, 2017, p. 68). This process of despatialization and settling in a new place occurs before the conditions become unbearable and a sense of instability prevails the protagonists’ lives.

Hence, during despatialization process, they begin setting up their temporary home for themselves with the very basic materials: “some water, food, a blanket, a larger backpack, a little tent that folded away into a light, easily portable pouch, and electric power and local numbers for their phones”. They find “a patch of land at the edge of the camp, partway up the hill, that wasn’t too windy or too rocky, and set up their temporary home there” (Hamid, 2017, p. 59).

The third state of liminality from Aguirre’s perspective, “the instability”, occurs when there are signs of people appearing from black doors in huge numbers. This is when the island, generates the feeling of instability, thus making characters want to leave this place and look for another door: "to step through and land on a “desirable place” (Hamid, p. 64). Having seen how Saeed and Nadia essentially experience places as

liminal, one should observe that the transitory nature of these places once again promulgates no feeling of belonging and caring towards the physical world surrounding them and eventually leads to yet another displacement. It is noteworthy to mention briefly, what this displacement entails as well in terms of how characters treat the spaces around them. The liminal space here, that is to say, the island they find themselves in, acts only as a means of endurance, for instance, they use the water to fish for hours to find food, the woods for building a shelter and so on. Thus, the liminal space is employed as the place which would help the protagonists survive until they reach the next liminal space and then the next until a permanent stability could be achieved, which is the unfulfilled promise of the story since they are invariably kept in between.

3.2. NO HOUSE, NO LAND

After abandoning their first liminal space, they arrive at London; upon their arrival, the first place they enter seems like a dream house, quite homelike, perhaps giving the illusion that they are finally somewhere like a home. The hotel is described to be "of the sort seen in films and thick, glossy magazines, with pale woods and cream rugs and white walls and the gleam of metal here and there, metal as reflective as a mirror, framing the upholstery of a sofa, the switch plate for the lights" (Hamid, 2017, p. 66).

They initially think they are in a country house, because of the utter silence prevailing everywhere; everything seems unreal and then they realize they are in "in a house of some kind, surely a *palace*, with rooms upon rooms and *marvels* upon marvels, and taps that gushed water that was like *spring water* and was *white* with *bubbles* and felt *soft*, yes *soft*, to the touch" (p. 66). This is one of the rare occasions where Hamid's descriptions entail such glowing and pleasant vocabulary to inculcate the non-reality of the condition. However, this soon will be shattered as well. When through TV, they locate themselves and realize they are in a mansion occupied by many refugees from all over the world, asylum seekers who have taken over this marvelous residence in the city of London.

Once again, the process of despatialization begins for them in their search for a home of their own, "one that is not a tent", and not like the homes in their city of birth where homes with their constituent parts were altered entirely; now they seek a real home with locks and doors:

> "TO HAVE A ROOM to themselves—four walls, a window, a door with a lock, seemed incredibly good fortune, and Nadia was tempted to unpack, but she knew they needed to be ready to leave at any moment, and so she took out of their backpack only items that were absolutely required. (p. 67) [emphasis original]

Still the temporariness of home for them is observed in the above quote (they needed to be ready to leave at any moment), where they know by default that they would have to move if need be. Before moving to the way these individuals see this home and how they treat it, it is worthy to mention another instance of despatialization occurring in the story so that it would be clear what it means when people reorganize the new spaces in order to build a home of their own. There are new arrivals and in one instance Saeed helps a family of refugees to settle in their camp around London, and then when he returns one hour later, when the mother of this family pushed aside the flap that served as their front door,

> Saeed glimpses inside and sees a home with the shelves all full, and neat bundles of belongings on the ground, and a throw on the cot, and also on the cot the daughter her back unsupported but erect, her legs crossed at the shins, so that her thighs rested on her feet, and in her lap a little notebook or diary, in which she was writing furiously until the last moment, until the mother called out her name, and which she then locked, with a key that she wore on a string around her neck, and placed in one of the piles of belongings that must have been hers, thrust the diary into the middle of the pile so that it was hidden. (Hamid, 2017, p. 97)

The word "belonging" and the act of "diary writing", and a key strung around the neck, all give the comfortable feeling of a home where one sits and makes memories and writes about them. So, places are rapidly "already beginning to be theirs" (p. 97). The repetition of the word "home (63 times) and a "a place of their own" in the whole novel in relation to refugees only, can be taken as how issues of home and settlement and belonging matters for a person whose life is bound to movement and how common is the failure of building a house of their own for diaspora subjects such as Saeed and Nadia. This will be elaborated below.

There is a critical moment when Nadia has a long shower, cleaning herself and her

clothes; this is the first time, she hears Saeed shouting: “this isn’t our house”. But Nadia thinks “what she had just done, was for her not about frivolity, it was about the essential, about being human, living as a human being, reminding oneself of what one was, and so it mattered, and if necessary was worth a fight” (Hamid, 2017, p. 68). Ironically, although they have found a home, but the uncertainty behind this concept baffles them. Nadia takes this place immediately as home and attends her basic needs that a home could offer her even with frivolity. At the same time, this frivolity brings discomfort and discontent to Saeed. Their ideas of home begin to differ gradually effecting their entire attitudes towards their journeys throughout the rest of the novel; "this is not our house" becomes the way Saeed sees every place he attends to, as temporary, not home and not his own, while Nadia feels more at home with every place she encounters. The important point to remember is that, their approaches towards the places they experience indeed determines their decisions, their takes on life ahead and their entire life. Hamid's use of the sentence "this is not our house" is a way of saying how places such as home and house can truly impact one's choices in the future. For him, a house, this house in particular is not just another backdrop for his story to develop, it is the catalyst for the characters to decide their future actions, because from now on, each character begins to pursue his/her own way of life. This place has become the determinant, not just a passive entity.

Nadia sees this place and the future places she encounters all in a relishing manner because she comes from a conservative society and now can truly welcome any kind of freedom. She sees people of “all these different colors all these different attires” and she is “relieved”, and the sentence she utters is noteworthy: “better here than there, she thought, and it occurred to her that she had been stifled in the place of her birth for virtually her entire life, that its time for her had passed, and a new time was here, and, fraught or not, she relished this like the wind in her face on a hot day” (Hamid, 2017, p. 84). For her, here could be a home in which she can take long shower and rewind. Nadia gradually gets accustomed to it and realizes how meticulously people of this house, make efforts to keep it safe because they have been living "under the rough sky for so long that this house was their property to take care" and like them, she takes this place to be a home.

In contrast to Nadia's acceptance of London as their residence, Saeed was dubious about London, he was fonder of the island than this city. His skepticism has something

to do with the place. He is concerned that his presence along with other people might be damaging the house, metaphorically perhaps indicating the general concern about movement of people from one place to another and its potential hazards for the host land:

> There were many, and he found it stressful to be packed in so tightly with people who spoke in tongues he did not understand. Unlike Nadia, he felt in part guilty that they and their fellow residents were occupying a home that was not their own, and guilty also at the visible deterioration brought on by their presence, the presence of over fifty inhabitants in a single dwelling. (p. 71)

By virtue of the house metaphor, Hamid cunningly begins to draw the line between Saeed and Nadia and their relationship. With their differences becoming more apparent through time, their relationship begins to fall, and a kind of unkindness "creeps into their words" (p. 72) as they live more like a nomad day by day in a place to which they neither belong nor are welcomed.

3.3. PLACES TURNED INTO ETHNOSCAPES

We can now trace how different Saeed and Nadia begin to behold the world around them which can be aptly considered as an ethnoscape, drawing upon American-Indian anthropologist Arjun Appadurai's Term.

The house they find themselves in, the house which was not their house, as Saeed wants Nadia to realize, is shared with other people coming from other places. In order to investigate and make sense of the space Saeed and Nadia, along with other refugees from around the globe occupy and experience, I would like to turn to the term Appadurai coined along with four other concepts to discuss the globalized spaces in his essay "Disjuncture and Difference in the Global Cultural Economy" (1990). According to his definition, ethnoscape is "the landscape of persons who constitute the shifting world in which we live: tourists, immigrants, refugees, exiles, guest workers, and other moving groups and individuals constitute an essential feature of the world and appear to affect the politics of (and between) nations to a hitherto unprecedented degree" (Appadurai, 1990, p. 3).

The hotel, or the mansion they find themselves in when arriving at London, can be considered as an Ethnoscape in the sense that people from diverse territories are collected here. In an Ethnoscape, according to Appadurai, "the boundaries of nation-

state territoriality dissolves, other territorial links emerge", and the space becomes "both transnational and local" (Appadurai, 1990, p. 3). With the exclusion of the nativists who never intermingle their spaces with the migrants, other refugee groups form a micro-ethnospace in the mansion, to build on Appadurai's "global ethnoscapes". These multilayered spaces "home perhaps to fifty squatters, from infants to the elderly, hailing from as far west as Guatemala and as far east as Indonesia" (Hamid, 2017, p. 69), are shared with so diverse a population that Nadia observes, "everyone is a foreigner here and in a sense he's not" (ibid). This shared space brings them together as a group, they are "penned in together, and being penned in made them into a grouping, a group" (ibid), and as Appadurai identifies, these spaces are "melded" by specific migrant groups; however, the mansion still remains an ethnoscape even after it is mainly occupied by Nigerian immigrants. In Appadurai's words: "The landscapes of group identity – the ethnoscapes – around the world are no longer familiar anthropological objects, insofar as groups are no longer tightly territorialized, spatially bounded, historically unselfconscious, or culturally homogeneous" (Appadurai, 1990, p. 8). These ethnoscapes become multilocal spaces soon to be scattered around the city of London without any spatial preference; Hamid uses this one only as an example to bring to attention what is occurring throughout a world filled with migrants and refugees all clustering in cityscapes and greenbelts of the town: "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" (p. 70).

This kind of grouping and ethnoscape formation is also observed in migrants' street demonstrations against racism promoted by nativists: "other people *gathered* on the street, other dark- and medium- and even light-skinned people, bedraggled, like the people of the camps on Mykonos, and these people *formed a crowd*. They banged cooking pots with spoons and *chanted in various languages*" (p. 68) [italics mine]. Although these penned groups are forming the ethnoscapes, newspapers call these places "the worst of the black holes in the fabric of the nation" (p.70). This definition pinpoints how nationhood and belonging or not belonging to a certain nation impacts one's place in the physical world. Regardless of Saeed and Nadia's movement into other regions, they are still and probably always will be kept in the ethnoscapes and mingle with non-native others, never being counted as part of a nation simply because that is not their place of birth.

The text refers to these places as “empty places” where immigrants seek shelter, which are interestingly enough, located inside the places with real names, “unoccupied mansions in the borough of Kensington and Chelsea […] the great expanses of Hyde Park and Kensington Gardens, filling up with tents and rough shelters, between Westminster and Hammersmith legal residents” (p. 70). The intermingling of refugees within these real places where the native-born people are “vanishingly few” contributes even more to the formation of ethnoscapes, and reducing them to “black holes” cannot deny the inevitability of this happening (the evocative nature of actual place names at work here will be discussed later).

Even though the places in London have openly been divided into two parts, outside and inside: “Outside the house much was random and chaotic, but inside, perhaps, a degree of order could be built”, they are still capable of forming a community which again based on Appadurai, generates “relatively stable communities and networks of kinship, friendship, work, and leisure, as well as of birth, residence, and other filial terms” (Appadurai, 1990, p. 25). Indeed, these somewhat stable conditions are everywhere with “human motion” as more persons and groups deal with the realities of having to move or the fantasies of wanting to move” (ibid). But despite what Appadurai postulates about migrants, that is, “these moving groups can never afford to let their imaginations rest too long, even if they wish to”, Hamid allows his characters to go beyond borders of their imagination and decide to leave at any time they wish to. Still, Hamid's construction of an ethnoscape is remarkable in the sense that he represents in this small storyworld a greater and grander world in which ethnoscapes are formed frequently and the world should come to terms with the idea of moving subjects because as we observed, "the earth is moving" and it will soon be a global ethnoscape with people from every corner of the world intermingling and forming new spaces. But his optimism does not last as ongoing flux and violence unfold in the story, which is intrinsic to ethnoscapes too (Appadurai, 1990, p. 25).

Saeed and Nadia, now personally witnessing a city which abounds in ferocity and hostility, see their hopes and dreams terminated by the prevailing racism, the kind of racism portrayed here is also bound to the place one is born. The place of birth is now doubly significant and one can recall how many times Hamid had repeated the word “city of their birth”. Now one’s city of birth privileges him to provoke any reactionary action against refugees. The motive behind all this racism is mentioned to be “return

Britain to the British", the nativists attempt is to reclaim their lands, and for that any power structure, "the police and the army, those who had once served in the army and the police, and volunteers who had received a weeklong course of training" is employed. Their ultimate goal is to take back "one city at a time, starting in London, to reclaim Britain for Britain" (Hamid, 2017, p. 72).

As nativist extremists are 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", and right at the midst of this post-apocalyptic images of horror and flux, Saeed and Nadia have to make a decision: "whether to stay or to go". Once again, their reaction to annihilation of their home, however temporary that home was, is to leave and Hamid again deliberately relies on dreams to provoke them for further movement, dream of other places. Right before their eventual decision to move from London, there is a dialogue about their dreams:

> That night he asked her what the life of her dreams would look like, whether it would be in a metropolis or in the countryside, and she asked him whether he could see them settling in London and not leaving, and they discussed how houses such as the one they were occupying might be divided into proper apartments, and also how they might start over someplace else, elsewhere in this city, or in a city faraway. (p. 73)

The motif of moving to "a city faraway", as far away as possible, is again de-rooting them, making them go through another deterritorialization process. Indeed, it is their desire to move to "desirable cities in other desirable countries" (Hamid, p. 73) which determines their next move, once again making place not just a setting, but rather an existential element designating and justifying their entire dislocation journey.

3.4. PLACE-AS-ENVIRONMENT

In depicting Saeed and Nadia's mobility, Hamid tries to unfold a more universal experience. He does so by constantly repeating their experience as "like many", and they are "one among many" who run from wars and do not know where to run next. In his storyworld, everyone is "waiting, waiting, like so many others", (Hamid, 2017, p. 74), and in their waiting, they lack a place. Here a famous quotation by David Harvey springs to mind, "to walk is to lack a place" (Harvey, *Poetics of Walking*, qtd in Talley, 2017, p. 13). Indeed, the characters move constantly from one place to the

next, and thus lack place in its actual and physical sense.

This global sense of placelessness through which the characters are just waiting "between the steps of their march to their mortality" (Hamid, 2017, p. 74), there is yet another passive reaction of these diaspora subjects towards the land they are either moving from or moving to: "we are compelled to pause and *not act but be*". This can be a reminder of another sentence quoted earlier, the characters' reaction toward the world which was collapsing around them: "remember, and smile. Or remember, and pause." (p. 12). This again sets the tone for a more general reaction towards the world around them. They can't act, they are just able to "be", which is "in reality the foundation of a human life"(p. 74).

Hamid's storyworld is not very much descriptive in terms of nature and human's relation to it, ecocritically speaking; his characters are in contact with nature only to the extent they could feed themselves and survive, there are occasional encounters with animals, at the beginning of the novel, there was a bird building a nest on a grid, in the last chapter there is a dead bird which has apparently lost his nest due to the constructions and Nadia and Saeed, ironically enough, burry it together and joke about Saeed saying a prayer for it. I would like to point out to another encounter with animals which does have a symbolic connotation. When they are in their London mansion, the scenery described is among the rare occasions through which Hamid depicts a beautiful landscape in length:

> The cherry trees exploded on Palace Gardens Terrace at that time, bursting into white blossoms, the closest thing many of the street's new residents had ever seen to snow, and reminding others of ripe cotton in the fields, waiting to be picked, waiting for labor, for the efforts of dark bodies from the villages, and in these trees there were now dark bodies too, children who climbed and played among the boughs, like little monkeys, not because to be dark is to be monkey-like, though that has been and was being and will long be slurred, but because people are monkeys who have forgotten that they are monkeys, and so have lost respect for what they are born of, for the natural world around them, but not, just then, these children, who were thrilled in nature, playing imaginary games, lost in the clouds of white like balloonists or pilots or phoenixes or dragons, and as bloodshed loomed they made of these trees that were perhaps not intended to be climbed the stuff of a thousand fantasies. (Hamid, 2017, p.

74)

Ecocritically speaking, this can be considered the only time the text deals with what has happened to place and how humans have lost their connection with the natural world around them. So, when immediately after this, they see a fox in the garden, it is as surprising. No one confirms seeing a fox and they are puzzled. This place used to be habitats of foxes before, but now it is unlikely that they could live in this cityscape. The fox being out of place, can refer, subtly, to Saeed and Nadia themselves, being out of place, being somewhere they do not belong to. Foxes have been deterritorialized through time and so are Saeed and Nadia. Let us take a look at how other spaces are portrayed until we reach a point where ecological literacy of the text, or the lack thereof will be addressed in relation to how Hamid orients his narrative.

Since Saeed has been in contact with his own people from his country of birth, he realizes they have formed a community and asks Nadia to move in with them. The dialogue here is indeed quite noteworthy as it shows how Nadia resists returning to her roots and desires to move forward and intermingle with other kinds. Nadia Asks Saeed;

> "Why would we want to move?"
>
> "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." (p. 80)

Saeed is convinced not to leave because as any migrant would at some point admit, deciding "not to run, not to play Roulette with yet another departure. To flee forever is beyond the capacity of most, at some point even a hunted animal will stop, exhausted, and awaits its fate, if only for a while" (p. 87). But their desire to find a better place ultimately encourages them to leave. They are a nomad after all, with all the exhaustion, they would still want to move and find another place and Hamid justifies their decision by reiterating and emphasizing that they are living in a time

when everything is moving: “the whole planet was on the move, much of the *global south* headed to the *global north*, but also *southerners* moving to other *southern* places and *northerners* moving to other *northern* places” (p. 90). One can even take Saeed and Nadia’s name as quite symbolic here and pertaining to the trope of movement. As the only characters who have names in the story, S in Saeed can symbolize South and N in Nadia can stand for the north, since the whole south is moving to north, it can be interpreted that even the names have spatial bearings and convey spatiality and placemindedness of the text.

Their next territory is a construction camp “in the formerly protected greenbelt around London” where a ring of new cities was being built for accommodating more “people again than London itself”, the new place which was called London Halo, is bound to enclose the city of London like a belt, this is an obvious demarcation of the city into periphery and center. They were settled in one of the worker camps and their work was to labor in “clearing terrain and building infrastructure and assembling dwellings” (Hamid, p. 90). Interestingly enough, the migrants were promised “forty meters of land and a pipe, a home on forty square meters of land and a connection to all the utilities of modernity” (p. 91) in exchange to what they do. Hamid could not possibly be more direct in pointing out that all the efforts of migrants is only to seek for a place to call home and eventually to find it even if that ensues destruction of all natural places. Places are built and rebuilt to contribute to the new world Hamid seems to be promoting.

In the world Hamid depicts, these nomads, ironically enough, attempt so hard to gain a place to settle, a place they can call home, their eternal search for a linear land, however small and petty, is still their ultimate goal. Their new place is described to be:

> Bounded by a perimeter fence. Inside this were large pavilions of a grayish fabric that looked like plastic, supported by metal trusses in such a way that each reared up, and was airy within, and was resistant to the wind and rain. The two of them occupied a small curtained-off space in one of these dormitories, the curtains suspended from cables that ran almost as high as Saeed could reach, above which was empty space, as though the lower part of the pavilion was an open-topped maze, or the operating rooms of a huge field hospital. (p. 90)

Their confinement to such a place is so mortifying that they cannot endure and soon enough begin to move again. In their search for a desirable place of their own, they cannot be satisfied fully and even if they are partially safe and stable, they still dream about the previous places, or long for a future place. In one instance, Nadia, in Mykonos dreams about her city of birth; in London, she dreams of Mykonos Island, later as we will see, in Marine, she dreams of London. The present place is just a liminal place for them, there is no true attachment to it, thus no care, nor any affective association. For them good places are associated either with past or future. Not only do they not own a place of their own, they do not seem to have a time of their own as well, a present time they can genuinely live in it. Present places do not count as actual places they should care for, they are only some space they either adjust to it with difficulty or "unexpectedly pleasant" (p. 92).

The way Hamid represents place in the course of their movement has always been like this. It impacts the subjects so immensely that they hardly seem to be able to remain settled either in a place or in their relationship. That is why the constant phenomenon of reterritorialization and deterritorialization is occurring, which in a Deleuzian Sense seems to be a positive and productive happening and Hamid seems to be agreeing with it in the general course of the story. But individually analyzed, as the characters move from one land to the next, they seem to be more lost and shattered and their bond of love is even more strained, being more drawn to their phones which "have the innate power of distancing them from each other and their physical surroundings" (p. 94), rather than to each other. There is no physical intimacy between them, nor a single touch even when they lie in bed. The narrator does not blame the "curtained-off space in the pavilion" which seems "less than entirely private", but rather because "they found themselves changed in each other's eyes in *this new place*" (p. 94). Places change them gradually; They are not just backdrops containing their stories, every new space contributes to their distancing from who they were and alters them in relation to each other and to the world around them. Their "potential loss of their feeling toward each other" has left them, "unmoored, adrift in a world where one could go anywhere but still find nothing" (p. 99). This is when they take on another journey; "one day, out of the blue, under the drone-crossed sky and in the invisible network of surveillance that radiated out from their phones, recording and capturing and logging everything", Nadia suggests that they "abandon this place, and give up their position on the housing

list, and all they had built here, and pass through a nearby door she had heard of, to the new city of Marin, on the Pacific Ocean, close to San Francisco" (pp. 99-100). So, they see in their movement yet another hope, "both of them were filled with hope" (p.100), hope that they would be able to rekindle their relationship, to reconnect with each other with a change of place.

With this in mind, seeing what is happening in between is quite intimidating: "Heavy machinery, giant vehicles that resemble mechanized dinosaurs are lifting vast amounts of earth or roll flat hot strips of paving or churn concrete with the slow serenity of a masticating cow" (94). This undertaking is so immense in scale that Saeed, at one point, wonders that it seems that "they are remodeling the earth itself"(94). Obviously, the earth is changing so drastically around them that the protagonists and the narrator do not seem to be able to do anything but to relocate. Hamid, thus, utilizes spaces upon which he could build his notion of "the earth is moving", one central theme of the story. His storyworld is full of places being built, destroyed, renamed, and not at all ecologically cared for or taken care of. Here it would be fitting if I combine my spatial reading with a place-based ecocriticism and for this, the article "Literary Criticism for Places", written by Eric L. Ball (2006) can be illuminating. Focusing on "literature's potential to sensitize readers to the environmental or ecological aspects of a place" is an important tenet of an ecocritical reading (Ball, 2006, p. 236). In his article, he talks about the kind of literature which "constructs places in a particular way, not just by naming [them], but by dramatizing in the process how they matter". This is precisely what Hamid's narrative successfully does. His dramatization of the loss of places, for birds, for humans, for foxes becoming lost in the city, are all his subtle way of saying that places have environmental significance and they matter. As Bal asserts, being attached to a place can become a "resource in the articulation of environmental unconscious" (Ball, 2006, p. 237). This way of looking at places, or as we mentioned Robert Talley's term, "placemindedness", can not only assist us to "maintain the importance of a sense of place", but it should also raise an awareness toward nature-human relationship which in itself includes human's relationship with the place around them (Ball, 2006, 238). Therefore, by putting forward the notion of "place-as-environment", the ecological imbrication of places become potent and worthy of exploration for the spatiality discourse as well as ecocriticism. Ball's assertion is that place-as-environment and "place-as-subjective-experience are equally interrelated,

inseparable, and interdependent as are organisms and environments themselves" (p. 238). This interrelationship can be seen when Hamid's protagonists experience places without any sense of belonging and therefore care. However, it is not a failure on the part of the narrative, because essentially, Hamid has been articulating the so-called "environmental unconscious" through the loss of places, through the insatiable search of his characters to settle in a place and their failure to do so due to the mass migration prevailing the world, and through certain other images, like the earth being remodeled, the fox being out of place in a cityscape, and birds losing their homes to construction. To put it more precisely, we should emphasize that, places might not matter for Hamid in an ecological sense directly, but in his mention of how the world is changing, how animals are displaced, how birds are losing their home to construction, he attempts to attract the reader's attention to the havoc the earth is going through. Also, Hamid later mentions environmental hazards as the reason why people in this storyworld and probably in the real-world move; they move "from once fertile plains cracking with dryness, from seaside villages gasping beneath tidal surges, from overcrowded cities and murderous battlefields" (p. 107). The passive yet impressive attention he pays to the calamitous and inevitable ecological changes occurring all over the world is a way of the narrative to delicately bring to the fore the problematics and nuanced dynamics of movement and its ecological ramifications. Amidst this upheaval of environment, Saeed and Nadia are "slipping away from each other" and changing too. Putting the environmental catastrophes of the world in parallel with Saeed and Nadia's bonds torn down, is symbolically highlighted in their encounter with a dead hummingbird, which has "crashed into the transparent plastic flap that served as both door and window of their shanty" (p. 106). Their home is the death toll for a bird. Jokingly, they feel obliged to give it a burial. The tone Hamid uses to describe the incident is sarcastic when Nadia asks if Saeed was "planning on offering a prayer for the departed automaton, and he laughed and said maybe he would" (p. 106). The way they bury the bird is also ironic in that it reminds us of how places before have been changed and flattened and became the burial ground for people and other creatures alike: "they dug a small hole right there, in the hilly soil where it had fallen, using a spade, and then covered this grave again, pressed it flat" (p. 106). There is also another explicit mention of the impacts these vast changes are bringing about:

> There were birds out and about, a great many birds, flying or perched upon the

> pavilions and the perimeter fence, and Nadia and Saeed looked at these birds who had lost or would soon *lose their trees to construction* (p. 96). [italics mine]

As a ramification of the changes human activities are imposing on earth, we can see that the earth is truly being "remodeled". More importantly, through depicting a world in movement, he reveals how spaces, mostly natural ones, are exploited only for humans' sake and this again brings into our attention the complications of migration and remodeling of the earth. Therefore, Hamid might be referring to ecological changes subtly and in passing, yet again, his narrative does have the potential to be read ecocritically precisely because all the signs of a world altering so radically can be interpreted as the narrative's awareness toward the ongoing environmental issues around his characters. Thus, spaces are principally a way for Hamid to represent his concerns about the world around him, be it ecological, political or sociological or even personal concerns. Place and environment, place and society, place and self are all interrelated in his novel.

3.5. SHAKY SPACES AND SHANTY HOMES

The protagonists' next destination is also geographically and strategically important. The scenery gets more saliently beautiful and more promising because of "its position on the edge of a continent, overlooking the world's widest ocean, or because of the mix of its people, or its proximity to that realm of giddy technology that stretched down the bay like a bent thumb, ever poised to meet the curved finger of Marin" (Hamid, 2017, p. 101). However, this new place is introduced to be "overwhelmingly poor [...] in comparison to sparkling affluence of San Francisco", which is the central zone (p. 102). Similar to London which was divided into places for nativists and migrants, and Mykonos, which was divided into outskirts and city centers, lines are drawn here too and Periphery/ center dialectic is at work here as well. Words such as "high" and "low", "shanty and migrant ghettos" are constantly repeated as is the common technique Hamid uses exhaustively to pinpoint places. They are again placed in a spot high up a hill "with a view across and through the Golden gate bridge of San Francisco and the bay"; they also witness "a view of scattered islands floating on a sea of clouds, when the fog rolled in" (p.101), still encouraging the same feeling of a nomad's life, floating, rolling in, and repeating that again. During the

course of their relentless movements, no matter how westward they move, they are invariably going through the process of rooting and de-rooting, finding a place to call home, to reorganize the environment around them in order to make a home of their own. But once again, what they found as home resembles nothing like a home, but a shanty. The word shanty begins to appear in the text from now on whenever Hamid wants to mention home: “they assembled a shanty with a corrugated metal roof and discarded packing crate sides”. Starting from page 101 to 106, the word “shanty” is repeated almost twice in every page, making a total of 9, revealing, with only one word, how marginally they have been settled regardless of coming to possibly the most geographically western spot they could, a place once they dreamed of (pp. 101-107). Added to this is the description of this shanty, it is an “earthquake friendly” place which “might fall in a tremor” (p. 101). The trembling and unstable nature of their new home reminds us of their own shaky state of being, always on the verge of a fall, a change, another movement perhaps. This is when Hamid brings in the metaphor of a fog to reinforce the inherent nature of change and mobility in the existence of his characters:

> From their shanty the fog was a living thing: moving, thickening, slipping, thinning out. It revealed the invisible, what was happening in the water and in the air, for suddenly heat and cold and damp could not merely be felt on one’s skin but be seen through their atmospheric effects. It seemed to Nadia and Saeed that somehow, they lived at once on the ocean and among the peaks. (p. 101)

Nonetheless, this place becomes everything but one that can help them rekindle their love bonds. So, their reterritorialization/despatialization in Marine ends with the much quoted “We are all migrants through time” (p. 106) and another movement is undertaken; this time, for the first time, each individual takes on his/her journey alone. They slip away from each other as people are drifting all over the world.

Hamid’s storyworld thus is a place in which environment is degraded, places disappear and birds die because the trees have died beforehand. The interconnectedness of these events and Saeed and Nadia’s movement in between can be thus regarded as the narrative's method to depict his concerns with the way the places around us are shifting, making our existence in those places as shaky as the protagonists’.

CHAPTER 4
NOMADIC RHIZOMES IN MOVEMENT

"A whole history remains to be written of spaces." (Michel Foucault, Of Other Spaces)[37]

4.1. RHIZOMATIC NOMADS IN MOVEMENT

In the previous chapters we have analyzed what kind of places and spaces characters encounter, experience and create before and after migration. In this chapter, we will have a discussion about the dynamics of their movement in between these spaces in light of rhizomatic theory of Deleuze and Guattari because of all spatiality theories, notions of rhizome, nomad, and plateaus seem to be fitting in a story about movement. As will be observed, mobility and rhizomatic growth are intertwined in this novel. For Deleuze and Guattari, space is the way to do philosophy; nevertheless, their contribution to the spatiality theory has also been quite influential particularly in relation to movement and migrancy discourses and has promoted the axiom of thinking spatially. For them, "everything takes place on a plane of immanence, envisaging a vast desert-like space populated by concepts moving about like nomads"; therefore, in their philosophy it is the concepts which move like nomads and grow like rhizome. Rhizome for them, consequently, is defined in contrast to tree-like beings. The latter is "linear, hierarchic, sedentary, and full of segmentation and striation", and its branches keep subdividing into minor and lesser categories; it is "vertical and stiff" (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, p. 23). On the other hand, being rhizomatic means "non-linear, anarchic, and nomadic".

In the same manner, in this story, Saeed and Nadia, despite their somewhat opposite personalities, can still be considered as rhizomatic, because they are full of mobility.

[37] From: Architecture /Mouvement/ Continuité. October, 1984; ("Des Espace Autres," March 1967 Translated from the French by Jay Miskowiec. Of Other Spaces: Utopias and Heterotopias.

What they do corresponds with what a rhizome does. They create “smooth spaces”, “cut across boundaries” which are imposed by vertical lines of “hierarchies and order” (Deleuze and Guattari, p. 24). Like rhizomes, they are multiplicitous, “moving in many directions and connected to many other line” of people who are also coming from different directions. Particularly in their London residence, firstly, they are in connection with people from other places coming from South Africa and East Asia, and they move even inside London, going from one neighborhood to another one (Hamid, 2017, p. 45).

Rhizomatic beings deterritorialize tree-like “striated spaces and ways of being” (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, p. 7). This is what Saeed and Nadia do whenever their condition becomes unbearable and unstable; they take on another movement, thus making their existence as fluid as possible. They move like networks, cut across borders and like Rhizome “build links between pre-existing gaps, between nodes that are separated by categories and order of segmented thinking” (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, p. 7). The characters of the novel constantly reterritorialize and deterritorialize throughout their relentless movements and in between spaces they reside and abandon. When Nadia and Saeed become migrants, like so many others, their nomadism begins by their efforts to survive and fulfill their basic needs in their new territories, things like “food, water, shelter” (Hamid, 2017, p. 55). Being a nomad in Deleuzian sense means one’s world is “full of change, flux and mobility” (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, p. 25). In the case of Saeed and Nadia, they are rhizomatic nomads in the sense that they both share characteristics of a nomadic rhizome: “a rhizome may be broken, shattered at a given spot, but it will start up again on one of its old lines, or on new lines” (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, p. 9). They too always find their ways to new lines of connection, for instance, in London, they are beaten down with horrifying bruises and injuries, but they grow again, establishing new webs and networks. In Mykonos Island, they are robbed off their properties and money, they still manage to continue with another door and another exit. This is clearly seen when we follow their movement from one place to the next; they develop such lines of connections and grow from there to new places and territories. Their movement is not tree-like insofar as they resist rooting in a place and they have also cut their linkages to their homeland, since they cannot connect with the only people left in their city of birth, namely, Saeed’s father (Hamid, p.89). Nothing links them to their roots, and therefore, they

keep moving forward.

Referring to Charles J. Stivale's old but still seminal paper on Deleuze and Guattari's spatial philosophy, “The Literary Element in "Mille Plateaux": The New Cartography of Deleuze and Guattari” (1984), we can see rhizome as a system which produces a multiplicity, and is made of plateaus, and plateau based on Deleuze and Guattari is “always in the middle, not beginning or end” (Stivale, 1984, p. 23). The storyworld Hamid puts his characters in is quite similar to a plateau with multiplicity, always in the middle of East and West, and there is no identifiable beginning. The story even starts at the middle of a conflict, then they enter Greek Island, as the threshold of West. Then in London, they are at the middle of tensions between nativists and migrants; they are almost always positioned within plateaus and grow from one to the next. The system of plateaus Hamid creates is a production, an ongoing and occurring phenomenon, which is not just extended by “adding a further dimension”, but rather it needs “force of moderation” or control, to produce “n minus one” number of plateaus (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, p. 25). Hamid depicts a world in which everyone is moving in some direction, “much of the global south head[s] to the global north, but also southerners moving to other southern places and northerners moving to other northern places” (p. 90), thus producing an infinite number of plateaus. Saeed and Nadia as the main characters are moving from East to West too. So, basically everyone is moving, the whole earth is moving and spinning. (The common tropes frequently reiterated in the narrative). Rhizome has plateaus in itself and wherever they go, they encounter one of these plateaus. One instance of the plateau is when they are in Mykonos and encounter a refugee camp:

> They saw [⋯] a refugee camp, with hundreds of tents and lean-tos and people of many colors and hues but mostly falling within a band of brown that ranged from dark chocolate to milky tea-and these people were [⋯] speaking in a cacophony that was the languages of the world, what one might hear if one were a communications satellite (p. 100)

The reason why I call their mobility a rhizomatic movement is because these plateaus are disseminated throughout the novel, and “rhizome is made of plateaus” (Stivale, 1984, p. 25). Deleuze and Guattari define their use of “plateau” as “every multiplicity connectable with others by superficial underground stems, in such a way as to form and extend a rhizome” (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, p. 22). Saeed and Nadia, although

each in their own way, connect with other communities and extend their networks and try to grow from there. For instance, Saeed attaches himself to people from his country and grows from there while Nadia takes rather opposite direction and goes as far away as to connect with people from Nigeria. Their rhizomatic growth is not bounded by place any longer, they move from one plateau to the next and take new forms and shapes in line with those plateaus and places. Even their attitudes toward their mobility differs as they move on. Nadia is described to feel as if she is "playing house, as she had with her sister as a child"; in contrast, Saeed feels "he is a bad son", burdening himself with a feeling of guilt and shame toward leaving his own land (p. 59).

Their rhizomatic movement had also continued with them creeping from one liminal space to another and even though they are for a short while rested and in a state of temporary symmetry, the world around them is asymmetrical inasmuch as doors open and migrants take "various routes and destinations" (p. 61) and move inside or outside of places. The global movement is at work from the very onset of the novel till the end when the protagonists, in their life-long movement, pay a visit to their city of birth. He continues on the same notion of movement by using words such as "go up, go down, go to the top" repeatedly only in one paragraph: notice how words are repeated signifying the way their rhizomatic existence will be repeated and dispersed all over the world:

> In the late afternoon, Saeed *went to the top* of the hill, and Nadia *went to the top* of the hill, and there they gazed out over the island, and out to sea, and he stood beside where she stood, and she stood beside where he stood, and the wind tugged and pushed at their hair, and they looked around at each other, but they did not see each other, for she *went up* before him, and he *went up* after her, and they were each at the crest of the hill only briefly, and at different times (p. 61) [italics mine]

Also noteworthy is the word "disperse" used at several occasions when everyone is moving toward doors, doors which open to Germany (p. 61), and with the word disperse comes their nomadism. They have truly become diasporic subjects (the word diaspora is derived from disperse). Hamid's use of the word "trekkers" when describing how they "carry their loads in the wilderness and walk along the beaches and up the hills and right to the edges of the cliffs, beholding the beauty of the island from above" (p. 61) is also prominent in giving them a sense of dispersion.

Another point which makes them like nomadic subjects is the way they move forward and even backwards (the Deleuzian sense of nomadism). These liminal spaces contain migrants, "who do not belong, and who live in migrant camps to which anyone might belong, joining and leaving as they saw fit [⋯] 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, p. 62)

As far as Deleuze and Guattari's philosophy is concerned, "all thinking is necessarily tied to space, to territory, and to earth" (Talley, 2012, 134). Therefore, when they talk about "nomad thought" in philosophy, which is mentioned in chapter 15 of the book *A Thousand Plateaus* (1987), they mostly mean the notion of nomadology in the philosophy of thought, however, I would like to assign to it a kind of spatial reading which is "tied to space, to territory, and to earth". Accordingly, a more in-depth discussion of nomad can help us see not only the protagonists of the story but also other minor characters which appear sporadically at the middle of the main narrative.

As Talley observes, Deleuze in his major works "distinguishes between nomads, who are understood as such because of their *border crossings or re-crossings*, but also because of their conceptual *demolition of the boundary lines* themselves" (Talley, 2012, p. 136) [italics mine]. This is in sharp contrast with "sedentary ordering, spatial measurement, the segmenting of the rank and file, and a conceptual gridding that attempts to assign stable places" (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, p. 26).

As we will see how nomad in the sense of border crossings, re-crossings, are obviously at work when Nadia and Saeed along with other characters truly deconstruct boundary lines, occupy spaces constantly and move forward not in the realm of philosophical concepts as the above-mentioned nomad thought would do, but rather in a perceptible physical world. Nomads in this sense continually "map and remap", alter spaces, something very clearly observed from the very beginning of the novel. Talley also mentions these nomads to be "forces of deterritorialization, unsettling to a greater or lesser extent the metric ordering of space that is subject to the power of the state" (p. 137). This is also observed when the characters alter the world around them in order to survive and participate in demonstrations against the authorities' power in London.

For Deleuze and Guattari, nomadic distribution "is a very special kind of distribution, one without division into shares, in a space without borders or enclosure or properties"

(Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, p. 401). Therefore, it involves "distribution among those who distribute themselves in an open space, a space which is unlimited, or at least without precise limits" (ibid). Likewise, in Hamid's storyworld, Saeed and Nadia are distributed, along with so many others, mostly in open spaces (smooth spaces, flat space, even if on top of the hills in Marine, they are still in open space). They constantly attempt to trespass the fences and demarcations and fixed territories and enter other realms even if Hamid gives his characters the magical doors, they need to cross other borders and territories. Thus, as in Deleuze, the places they move to is not static, but rather smooth and tresspassable. However, these crossings and smooth spaces are not "in themselves liberatory" (p. 521), they keep struggling, and displacing and "life reconstitutes its stakes, confronts new obstacles, invents new paces, switches adversaries" (p. 521). This is seen when Saeed and Nadia attempt to reconstruct a home of their own, and invent new places. their life is never struggle-free, but in displacing his characters from one territory to another, Hamid seems to be reiterating Deleuze's famous saying "Never believe that smooth space will suffice to save us" (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, 521).

4.2. REAL-WORLD PLACES

With a detailed discussion on the notion of nomad, now we can move to another layer of the story and see how nomadic and rhizomatic these random characters are living mobile lives. It is noteworthy to see how places have proper real-life names in this second layer of the story and what it pertains to in relation to nomadic experience of millions of people dispersed around the world as displaced subjects. *Exit West* is not limited only to the story of Saeed and Nadia. Hamid's narrative contains another layer. While two main characters are moving from their land into another land in the hope for a better life, there are short episodes situated in between the main plot, which narrate the story of random people moving to and from random places. These short narratives can remind the reader of the recurrent trope of the novel: "the earth is moving" (Hamid, 2107, p. 11).

From a narratological point of view, these parts can be called subnarrative, a narrative making up part of a larger narrative. (Hühn P., Pier J., Schmid W., Schönert J. (eds.) 2014). They are just one among many stories of migration we would hear from around the world; however, as I will discuss later, these subnarratives help the narrator

articulate his storyworld in a more subtle and tangible way; they are not complementary to Saeed and Nadia's movement toward west, but rather, they appear as independent sections containing their own narrative elements and at the same time an extension to Saeed and Nadia's story.

These subnarratives appear systematically almost every ten page right within the main plot's narrative. Clair Chamber properly calls these subnarratives "cut piece scenes", which "evoke a planetary snarl-up of lives and furnish a tempered optimism in this mostly bleak novel about interactions between white, brown, and black people beyond twenty first century imperialism" (Chamber, 2019, p. 236). These interactions which are full of border crossing and re-crossings can also be seen as rhizomatically moving and re/connecting with other places and plateaus; yet, the fluid movement and dispersion of subjects and the vastness of their movement is even greater than that of Saeed and Nadia's. The discussion here will be to identify what kind of spaces Hamid is trying to depict in these fluid worlds.

As far as my spatial reading is concerned, these subnarratives can provide spatial frames through which we can once again, and strongly enough, observe how expansively spatial this novel is. Literary representation of places might not seem lengthy and outstanding in the novel; however, we encounter and experience places not only as a backdrop to the protagonists' stories but as spaces which can pertain to cultural, political and ecological interpretations. This can be true particularly by virtue of bringing in actual geographical names of places which can represent and open discussion for various interpretations. When places involve real-place names, they begin to "operate within a matrix of references that contain all imaginable information related to a place, all the details related to its history, geography, and ecology" (Wyse, 2021, p.14). In this story, the moment characters leave their unnamed city, real-world places begin to appear consecutively.

For the scale of the novel, the narrative contains quite a great deal of proper place names. Mykonos is the first one about which we discussed in previous chapter and mentioned the reason why that place is strategically and politically important and how its liminality works in accordance with both the real world (as the island keeping refugees inside) and with Hamid's imaginary world. A place like London emerges with all its neighborhoods and districts and zones with their actual names (toponyms) such as Chelsea, Kingston, Westminster and Hammersmith. These places delicately and at

times silently call forth “spatial sensations in our minds when we hear them” (Wyse, 2021, p. 23); These names are all “evocative carrying thread of meanings and capable of triggering numerous intensive sense effects” (ibid); Hamid makes use of these real geographical names in order to evoke the particularity of experience for migrants in London as he uses only “city of birth” when referring to universality of the experience Saeed and Nadia go through. This is the first encounter of the reader with places in the second half of the book which is in sharp contrast with the first part, where no place had a cartographic name that could be traced on an actual map (which is a literary device in geocriticism that I will not be dealing with here). Places have names from now on, London, Mykonos, Germany, Vienna, and so many other places some of which will be further examined as spatial frames.

Besides London, instances of actual places are pre-dominant in the subnarratives. Take the first place, if one looks up Surry Hills neighborhood in Sidney, Australia, on the google map, they are directed to a place and they can see how truly the place exists with its ordinary course of life, and how Hamid’s migrant strangers suddenly appear (through the magical black doors) and intrude the ordinary course of life in these places. In these subnarratives which I believe are good instances of rhizomatic movements as well, we do not get to know the people closely, because Hamid has already introduced to us their entire journeys through the literary technique of Microcosm within the Macrocosm, meaning that, he has given us a little world of Saeed and Nadia to represent a whole and bigger world. For this reason, characterization in these subnarratives remains on the surface level and Hamid quite lengthily begins to pay closer attention to places as metonyms of other places on the world map, “which operates in powerfully symbolic ways”, as Julia Faiss states in her article “The Spatial Turn in Literary and Cultural Studies: Space, Place, and The Urban Imagination of Los Angeles” (2018). These places for Hamid are more than raw physical space. What Faiss sees in place as “intricately mediated” by various elements of class, gender, and ethnicity, might not be fully at work here due to the compactness of these subnarratives, yet again, these places produce a “dynamic process that involves various cultural and psychological orientation or mapping” (Faiss, 2018, p. 4). So, as literature has the ability to investigate “the subjective experience of a given location” (ibid), the places in these subnarratives have qualities that are projected by our sense of place, thereby making them as tangible as possible and of course as

mediated by one's individual and social consciousness. How we experience these places is thus through our mediation in imagining them along with Hamid's depiction of them. Put strictly, Hamid employs representation, and then relies upon our imagination in depicting his small subspaces and hopes to get through his message of a universal storyworld whose essence is movement.

When Hamid represents a place, either by naming it, or description (which in the case of this narrative rarely happens), he attempts to indirectly convey feelings and sentiments about those places. This way, he is enabled to recall a place which is not physically present at the time, yet gives the reader a place and a time to be in. This can stimulate the reader's emotions and senses, for instance, Mykonos Island used as a passage way is reminder of a whole host of refugees kept there every year, or London and the native mobs can evoke the same racist strikes actually happening in that city. Mention of people from Nigeria can evoke certain images of civil war in central Africa, mention of Vienna can remind us of the terrorist attacks, and so on, so forth.

Representation of places or creation of literary spaces with real-world names can thus have the power to arouse in us a certain relation with those places and help us follow the ideas of that story. Hamid therefore makes perfect use of toponyms to let us immerse ourselves in those places with all its cultural, social or ecological connotations and share our imagination with the text.

4.3. PARALLEL SPATIAL FRAMES

In this part, I will focus on the spaces in the subnarrative and I would call them as a general term, subspaces (borrowing it from mathematics). In mathematics, I realize this term to be a subset of spaces which have the essential properties of the including space, a kind of space that is completely contained within another space. The subspaces in the subnarratives (the short episodes) are as mentioned above real-world places that can be located on a map and represent the actual topological places such as Tijuana, Dubai, Vienna, California, Sidney, and so on. These subspaces have characteristics of the main spaces in the main narrative, they do not include lengthy descriptions of places, the characters do not feel attached to them and they are treated passively as well. In addition, as Saeed and Nadia intrude to other spaces and cross borders easily, these characters in the subspaces do so too. Similarly, their free flow from one place to the next is rhizomatic too. They continue as rhizome into various

directions, take diverse random trajectories and routes limitlessly. These fluid movements, besides being rhizomatic, are parallel and intrusive as well. Through these subspaces, Hamid has indeed elevated his places to extremely dynamic and active agents in his storyworld. I will be looking into the parallel and intrusive nature of these subspaces briefly in order to explore the agency of places further.

To name these places as parallel universes existing and working on the same level of the places in the main narrative is seeing them in light of the time which introduces each subspace; each incident is introduced by words such as "as, while, LATER THAT DAY, in the evening, Nadia's time, THAT NIGHT" [emphasis original]. These parallel time frames propel one to experience the spatial frames as parallel to the main storyline. To be more precise, not only do these subspaces contain the elements of the parent space, but they are also an extension of the experience in geographically familiar places (mentioned in the main plot), and as ongoing subplots, they obviously establish a spatial relationship with subsequent places. Therefore, I would argue that these subnarratives are even more spatially laden and spatially conceived than the parent narrative, that is to say, they are mostly about places not as the container of the plot, but rather, as the major foundation of these tiny worlds. Hamid's use of spatial description, which at parts, relies upon the reader's imagination, is more at the centre stage of these narratives rather than the characters. It seems that through the parent plot, he has argued enough about the identity formation of characters during their movement, that now he feels like focusing more on the places and how they are affected through people's intrusion. Hamid's use of time frames assists his spatial framing and eventually helps us imagine his storyworld as a world constituted by plateaus or spatial frames which are important and worthy of attention.

To elaborate on the notion of spatial framing, let us see how frame is defined in narratology: "A frame is like a category of open subsets in a space possibly more general than a topological space, a locale" (Hühn and et al, 2014, p. 302). It bears resemblances with the idea of plateau mentioned earlier; in fact, all these spatial frames, are plateaus containing nomads, this time the nomads being indefinable nameless characters emerging rhizomatically from somewhere and moving to the next destination. In a joint article Tygstrup and Simonsen[38] speak of plateaus in modern

[38] Tygstrup, Frederik and Karen-Margrethe Simonsen (2004): "Spatiality and Visuality of the Tableau" in Karen-Margrethe Simonsen, Marianne Ping Huang and Mads Rosendahl Thomsen

literature. These are instances, they say, in which "the setting is emancipated from its subservience to the narrative chain of plot and action, instances where setting, or space or place, come to stand out as an autonomous field of aesthetic composition" (Tygstrup and Simonsen, 2004, p. 204). In the same manner, these subspaces act independently as autonomous compositions with their own implications, with actions shifting and occasionally flowing into other spaces and into the main narrative. Like when the man in Amsterdam and the wrinkled man meet each other and float in each other's locations, the scenes shift (Hamid, 2017, p. 92). Another spatial frame is when the Tamil family go from the interior space of a building and move to the exterior space of a beach and all the incident is framed in security cameras installed everywhere and observed by us the readers (p. 52). Seemingly, the author seeks to create a Mise en abyme, through which images of places are duplicated so that the reader can feel how dominant the places are when people move from one place to the next.

To clarify on the notion of spatial framing, some examples of subspaces can be used. For instance, when Saeed and Nadia are in London, an accountant (preparing to take his life) notices the black door and enters "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" (p. 70). The spatial frames are as temporary as one reads through them, the moment, the story shift to another place, the previous frame vanishes as well. In the above example, it is said that when the subject (the accountant from London) crosses the black door, and is gone, immediately afterwards, "his London is gone too" (p.71). The next space is an orphanage in the hills above Tijuana, a border city in Mexico, just south of California where a mother enters and takes her child away. The detailed description of this place is perhaps Hamid's intentional effort to engrave spatial frames even more rigidly in the mind of the reader:

> The House sat on a ridge at the crest of a hill, fronting a street. Its chainlink-fenced and partly concrete-floored play area was at the back, facing a parched valley, on which the other low dwellings of that street also opened, some of them rising on stilts, as though jutting out to sea, an effect that was incongruous, given the dryness and lack of water all about. But the Pacific Ocean was only a couple hours' walk to the west, and besides, stilts made sense

(eds): Reinventions of the Novel. Histories and Aesthetics of a Protean Genre. Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi, 2004.

given the terrain. (p. 85)

These examples reveal the variety of spatial frames or plateaus; shifting of places from a hill to a desert into a seaside, to an urbane landscape and so on; this can be an emphasis on the fluidity of places on earth. Another case in point is where "an elderly Dutch man from Prinsengracht in the center of Amsterdam" meets with "a wrinkled man from the hilly neighborhood of Santa Teresa, in Rio de Janeiro", there is fluid movement back and forth, which makes this subspace a frame embedded into another frame, like the mirror image we mentioned earlier. Note the description of the place:

> The balcony of his little flat, one of the dozens into which what had been a pair of centuries-old canal houses and former warehouses had been converted, these flats looking out into a courtyard that was as lush with foliage as a tropical jungle, wet with greenness, in this city of water, and moss grew on the wooden edges of his balcony, and ferns also, and tendrils climbed up its sides. (p. 92)

As seen here, the phrase "one of the dozens" works in parallel with "one among many" Hamid had used before to describe Saeed and Nadia's presence in the world, he represents one space in order to create a bigger picture of a dozen other spaces which in one way or another contain movement stories. This way, the places are even more fluid and rhizomatic, until the last two spaces which are seemingly stagnant: The first one: "NOT FAR TO THE SOUTH, in the town of Palo Alto, lived an old woman who had lived in the same house her entire life" (p. 107) [emphasis original]; the second one: "OUTSIDE MARRAKESH, in the hills, overlooking the palatial home" (p. 116) [emphasis original]. People and places seem to be resistant to movement in these places; however, there is still a desire, a hope or even an expectation that one day they will leave their homes. Therefore, lack of movement in these stories are still in line with the central trope of the storyworld, people are either moving or wishing to move: "a house that had fewer servants now than it did in the year before, and fewer then than in the year before that, its retainers having gradually fled, or moved" (p. 117). The reason why I call these fixed places also immensely spatial is when we read the line "she felt she was a small plant in a small patch of soil held between the rocks of a dry and windy place, and she was not wanted by the world, one day she might go, she thought. But not today" (p. 116). Even a character who has never left her place of residence, is on the verge of moving and the soil she feels she belongs to is willing to let her go, giving her and her place a rhizomatic dimension. Consequently, in his

construction of subspace, the narrator intends to construct spatial frames so delicately that one could immerse into and experience them as one would experience his hometown.

Another layer, or image framed within the bigger scales of familiar cities, are the familiar homely places, a balcony, a home, a closet, a bedroom, a street, a bar, a farm, a cityscape, and the like. These spatial frames are not just a fixed container where a story happens, but rather they become the story itself; story of fluid places which are like scattered images of spaces floating everywhere, from one frame into another. As was seen before about characters moving rhizomatically from one land to another, now the places are becoming rhizome as well, floating, growing, extending, rooting and de-rooting constantly. They grow out of their roots, they move within the narrative fluidly with no borders but only through black doors, every place grows into another one only through magical doors and are embedded within the main narrative without any limitation. Thus, places move, they are no more a fixed linear setting and a stable category embracing the whole text, they are fragmented and disseminated throughout the story like plateaus or spatial frames. Hamid, therefore, does not give in to "the general socio-historico-geographical environment in which the action takes place" (Huhn, 2014, p. 5); instead, he presents places as the core element in a movement, he moves places with people, thus inculcating the notion that one cannot leave his land behind and reterritorialize without that place. One carries that land with himself and that makes migrant stories innately space-conscious. In the same direction, these subnarratives, as the exemplary mobility stories openly foreground movement through space, or refer to it in the characters' backstories. The narrative's effort is to turn all these alienating far-flung places into a familiar home space, which are scattered rhizomatically around the world without necessarily constructing any root.

The spatial frames in this particular story are as scattered as possible. There is no unity to it, it is rhizomatic, consisting of selected places parted by voids. Nonetheless, pinning these places down on a map and superimposing them on the real places, can only reinforce the notion of dispersion and scattered-ness. So, what Hamid does in these subnarratives can be read based on the geographer Yi-Fu Tuan's words in his article "Literature and Geography: Implications for Geographical Research" (1978) as attempts to "shift the focus from the conceptual space to the concrete factual places of direct experience" (p. 200), because as he continues, "literature frames concrete

experiences which is made up of innumerable perceptions, acts, and environmental impingements" (p. 201). Hence, Hamid's narrative does successfully frame various places in order for us to experience.

4.4. QUOTIDIAN SPACES INTRUDED

Hamid's emphasis on how Saeed and Nadia are excluded from the native communities in the main narrative is equally observed when he shows how everyday life of people and their territories are being intruded by perfect strangers emerging abruptly. So as to have a more in-depth analysis of these subspaces, let us examine the dynamics of intrusion into quotidian spaces of people in the subnarratives.

As seen above, Hamid has arduously tried to depict a global experience which entails movement and fluidity. At the same time, the way he portrays these subspaces, in one way or another, involves a kind of intrusion. Places are constantly intruded, interfered and interrupted by the sudden emergence of strange people. The intruded spaces are described by Hamid to be everyday quotidian spaces in which people, ordinary people, are living their lives. To elaborate on the notion of quotidian space, referring to Michel De Certeau's book *The Practice of Everyday Life* (1984) could be somewhat illuminating. His idea of everyday spaces expands on the way places are envisaged through "locations, nodes, corners and roads. Destinations. The coffee shop on the corner of Fifth and Broadway in Manhattan is a place, as is London's Caledonian Road" (De Certeau, 1984, p. 23). De Certeau's idea is all about "what happens when dwellers navigate the likes of the above places" (ibid). It is a kind of experience we go through while being there; therefore, as De Certeau's famous sentence affirms, "Space is a practiced place" (De Certeau, 2984, p. 2). Hamid initially creates subspaces and through black doors facilitates the intrusion of the nomad strangers and thus the reader. Only in this way is one allowed to practice the daily life of these places and their inhabitants, albeit briefly and passively. With Fredrick Jameson's notion of "always spatialize" in exchange for his previous statement "always historicize" (Jameson, 1991, p. xiv), I could claim once more that Hamid's spatialization of everyday experiences of people from various places makes us part of these spaces, makes us the intruders, to put strictly. Everyday Places such as a bedroom, balcony, hotel lobby, country house, (making up of a total of ten spaces in general but still containing even smaller spaces within themselves), are described (and are mainly private zones of

people) and immediately after, perfect strangers are shown to emerge, implying how through migration, people essentially enter the private land of another person. The most striking example is the scene in Australia, when a woman is sleeping in her bedroom: While Saeed and Nadia are experiencing their fears and plights about their life in their city of birth, "in Australia, Sydney neighborhood of Surry Hills" (Hamid, 2017, p. 10), a man intrudes inside the bedroom of a woman. It is because of this move to the private spaces of a bedroom, the interior space of a home with all its familiar images "passports, checkbooks, receipts, coins, keys, a pair of handcuffs, and a few paper-wrapped sticks of unchewed chewing gum", that it is considered an intruded space: "With her wedding ring [⋯] Her torso and left leg were covered by a sheet even paler than she was; her right leg and right hip were bare. On her right ankle, perched in the dip of her Achilles tendon, was the blue tattoo of a small mythological bird (p. 10).

The next subspace, the Tokyo district of Shinjuku, is embedded in the exterior space of a bar to which two Filipino girls, whose clothes are not suitable for the environment of Tokyo enter the scene and are instantly seen as intruder, the young man from Tokyo explicitly mentions that "they were in his territory. Not the first time this week" (p. 19). This time Tokyo is the intruded space with people coming and trying to reterritorialize in parallel with Saeed and Nadia who are intruding other places as well. The narrator brings about yet another space within this subspace which adds to the universality of his storyworld; the man is drinking a whisky when witnessing the intrusion of the Filipino girls: "his whisky came from Ireland, a place he had never been to but evinced a mild fondness for, perhaps because Ireland was like the Shikoku of a parallel universe, not dissimilar in shape, and likewise slung on the ocean-ward side of a larger island at one end of the vast Eurasian landmass" (p. 20). The spatial relationship he establishes between Tokyo and Ireland is again another way to rely on our perceptions of these two places and how they can be connected symbolically because the whisky from Ireland found in this district of Tokyo is ironically quite intrusive right at the moment the Japanese man is complaining about the Filipino girls evading his territory. Having identified the mechanism of these subspaces as intruded, one can admit that Hamid's elimination of border does not make the people moving from one place to another less intimidating and less intrusive. The whole experience of moving from one place to another engenders a feeling of dread and interference

with one's normal course of life.

Yet another instance is when "One of these, a mother, father, daughter, son, emerged from the complete blackness of an interior service door. They were deep inside a vast pedestal floor, below a cluster of blond and-glass towers filled with luxury apartments and collectively named, by their developer, Jumeirah Beach Residence" (p. 50). Their intrusion is disrupting the tourist zones and people who are experiencing their private spaces on the beach. Therefore, there is constant intrusion throughout the subnarratives, making it almost an unpleasant experience to move from one space into another. And here lies Hamid's irony. Amidst his encouragement for movement and withholding of walls and borders, he depicts a world in which the movement causes hostility and unpleasant feelings of intrusion. The spatial movement albeit universal and indispensable in the globalized world of the twenty first century seems unreceptive and disturbing in most cases.

An extreme case of intruding to the quotidian place is the Vienna scene where radical militants enter and murder a vast number of people who had been passing a street. This is a lethal penetration indeed, resulting in demise of so many people. The brutality of this intrusion peaks in the train when the character enters a train and sees in Hamid's words "people who have been "pouring" into the city. The woman in this space was waiting to board her train that noticed the crowd at the station. After she finally boarded the train, she encountered men who were "angry" and "furious". The Terror this scene invokes is obvious with Hamid's choice of word:

> 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[…] she made it off, and she stood there after the train had departed, and she was *trembling*. (p. 59) [italics mine]

having seen some instances of intruded places, one can feel that these movements, once promoted by Hamid, are not only frightening but also too adjacent to everyday life, to everyday practices of a place and thus interfere immensely with the normal, usual and common course of life De Certeau talks about (De Certeau, 1984).

Consequently, Hamid associates quotidian spaces with unpleasant and “unsettling” memories and emotions through intruding them and thus makes movement an act of intrusion and places as intruded spaces, which is not after all a welcoming event.

CONCLUSION

Spatiality studies and place-based criticism are burgeoning fields in literary studies which open up the possibility for various interpretations and readings of texts. Therefore, parameters of spatial thinking are immense as the field keeps growing and finds new ways and methods. Mohsin Hamid's *Exit West* has been recipient of so much literary analysis; however, reading this novel from a space-conscious perspective is quite a novel way of understanding its grand themes and motifs. In this study, some spatiality theories were selectively combined with issues of mobility and diaspora. The attempt was to highlight the role of places and spaces in any form and bring it to the core of a literary discussion. All the theoretical framework deployed in the reading contributed to a better understanding of the role of space in human's life whether in imaginary world of fiction or real worlds.

In this thesis, the first chapter contained the theoretical frameworks and how spatial turn can be employed in literary studies. The aim of the chapter was to show that places can have a valuable contribution to the general study of the importance of space in fiction, and that they have an interdisciplinary nature and thus can matter in sociological, ecological, and narratological aspects. Therefore, the introductory chapter entailed theories and discourses which would later on aid the spatially attuned reading of a text and the attempt was to inform the reader about the role of place in forming and developing the mobility in the characters' lives. Attributing a dynamic agency to places as the main aim of spatiality literary theories were discussed thoroughly to bring about an original angle to the novel. The whole chapter thus was an attempt to bring forth care and literacy about the places and the physical world in a world afflicted by constant movement of people from one place to another.

After the introductory chapter, the thesis was divided into three parts, the first part engaged with the places before the main characters begin their dislocation journey. The temporary nature of places and how they were shattered and destroyed due to the conflicts were observed through the relationship between time and space. The time being relegated and accelerated was used to build a spatio-temporal link between

places. Events having been chronologically reported made the disappearance of place even more noticeable which accentuates the tempo-spatial agency of places in Hamid's narrative. Moreover, by discussing how important the role of place description is in foregrounding place, it was observed that Hamid's descriptions of place spilled over the side of narration, by only being about a passing image of a physical space. No visually or sensorial beguiling image which could stand out as spectacles of a unique place, or invoke a particular local place experience was observed which was read as a way his characters engage with a war-time city. Spaces being either lost in the memory or physically gone from the sights as the result of a civil war was seen as the failure of characters to belong to their homeland and therefore resulted in their departure. People in the city or the whole country fail to engage with the physical surroundings. Doreen Massey's notion of space was also discussed in order to scrutinize the interrelations of various places from tiny to global to see how characters intertwine with their everyday existence and the places around them. Along with the real spaces, virtual spaces were also seen as possessing critical value insofar as they began appearing in the novel from the moment real places were annihilated. Rebecca Bryant's article, "What Kind of Space is Cyberspace?" (2002), and Julie E Cohen's comprehensive article "Cyberspace As/And Space" (2007) were quite conducive in understanding what kind of space Hamid is creating through cyberspace. The virtual space then became alive in parallel with the loss of real places, which then again was seen as accentuating how places matter in characters' decisions and lives.

Susan Stanford Friedman's article "Bodies on the Move: A Poetics of Home and Diaspora" (2004), was employed to explore another space in the novel. Her notion of home was quite fitting with what Hamid attempted to show us with his depiction of home both in characters' minds and inside the plotline. So, the chapter was a full discussion of places before migration of the characters through observing place descriptions, homes and cityscapes in memory, in reality and in the virtual world.

Chapter two involved with discussions of place during the characters' movements. Every place they entered was observed through different sociological, political and ecological lenses. The focus of this chapter was also on the places represented and how the characters experience them while they are in constant movement. Liminality of the places they were settled in was of great dominance throughout the study inasmuch as they were constantly put in between places, mostly Islands, which performed as

interstitial spaces and according to Homi Bhabha as a "disruptive inbetweenness or hybridity" (Bhabha 1994: 38). Furthermore, Malynda Strother Taylor's book "Functions of Liminality in Literature" (1998), was conducive in defining the kind of liminality observed in the novel. Manuel Aguirre's understanding of the term liminal space which was closely associated with gothic terror was also observed in the narrative when character do indeed go through the experience of terror in their liminal settings (London residence).

Another spatial term used in this chapter was "despatialization" put forward by Bachmann-Medick, (2016, p. 229), which could be defined as the process of passing from borders and moving to new territories and remaining in contact zones for the characters and how they spatially reorganize their lives after becoming uprooted and after transgressing borders.

Furthermore, the characters' struggles to belong to a place and find a home of their own was discussed in light of their differing attitudes towards places they reside in, which was further identified as ethnoscapes, drawing upon American-Indian anthropologist Arjun Appadurai's term. They were seen as constituting ethnoscapes along with other migrants which was an amalgamation of various cultures and ethnicities coming together and forming a community which would make them pen together in everything they do. So, ethnoscape was the next space they experienced in their mobility with great sociological implications.

My next argument then was to employ place as environment which involved an ecocritical reading. Indeed, I combined my spatial reading with a place-based ecocriticism and for this, the article "Literary Criticism for Places", written by Eric L. Ball (2006) was illuminating. Focusing on "literature's potential to sensitize readers to the environmental or ecological aspects of a place" is an important tenet of an ecocritical reading (Ball, 2006, p. 236). In his article, Ball talks about the kind of literature which constructs places in a particular way, not just by naming, but by dramatizing in the process how they matter. Hamid's dramatization of the loss of places, for birds, for humans, for foxes becoming lost in the city, were considered as his subtle way of saying that places have environmental significance and they matter. Having put forward the notion of "place-as-environment", the interrelation between place and people as the characters experience the former was designated. The lack of care for the surrounding world was discussed, although it was not regarded as a failure

on the part of the narrative, because essentially, it was the lamenting of text for such lack which was observed and analyzed ecocritically. This part encompassed an ecocritical approach towards the spaces depicted in the novel and how delicately the narrative brought to the fore the problematics and nuanced dynamics of movement and its ecological ramifications. The last part in this chapter was about the instable state of places and homes in which characters settle. The spatial reading in this part was mostly involved with new conceptions of home as shanty and not the idealized promised space.

The third analytical chapter of the thesis contained discussions about the dynamics of movement in between spaces in light of rhizomatic theory of Deleuze and Guattari because of all spatiality theories, notions of rhizome, nomad, and plateaus seem to be apt in a story about movement. Deleuze and Guattari's contribution to spatiality literary theory has been quite influential particularly in relation to movement and migrancy discourses and has promoted the axiom of thinking spatially. This revealed the nomadic and rhizomatic nature of their movements both in the main plot and in the short episodes situated in between where random strangers fluidly move from and to random places without ever being able to root.

Additionally, real world places and actual cartographic names particularly in the short subnarratives were interpreted from a spatial point of view which could be considered as the way the narrative was revealing the universal experience of millions of displaced people. Therefore, representation of places or creation of literary spaces with real-world names was observed to have had the power to arouse in us a certain relation with those places and help us follow the ideas of that story and immerse ourselves in those places with all its cultural, social or ecological connotations and allow us to share our imagination with the text.

Structural and narratological analysis of these subnarratives were yet another way to explore places in the third chapter wherein multiple spaces were seen as spatial frames pieced together in parallel with the main plot to form a coherent image of an earth which is moving relentlessly.

To conclude, we should note that the plurality of experiences, contexts, and locations together with the rhizomatic growth of individuals in this novel have contributed to the formation of multiple places and spaces which in turn has shaped the characters'

take on life and mobility. The world Hamid depicts abounds in places, private, global, and communal spaces people are situated in not as the sole players of the narrative; but rather, places in this novel have become main part of the story. Thus, regardless of the inherent nature of movement, places invariably matter and are worthy of exploration through a plethora of theoretical notions, something the current study attempted to carry out.

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