

## **Memory, Materiality and Imagination in Mohsin Hamid's *Exit West***

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### **Abstract**

This paper aims at recontextualizing Mohsin Hamid's *Exit West*, a novel on refugee and dislocation in the precincts of memory and materiality. The novel set in an unnamed Middle Eastern country is in the cusp of obliteration in the hands of militants. Saeed and Nadia of seemingly the same faith but contrasting personalities flee together to different lands through a magical door to escape violence. When survival remains the only choice, the two characters, instead of mourning the bereavement of their beloved ones, decide to journey their way to the unfamiliar. Cognition and memory dovetailed to neuroscience have assumed new significance, with phenomenological findings situating memory in other disciplines of study. With perception and imagination increasingly relating to enactivism, memory too takes a similar stride through associating with sensory experience. Materiality engagement theory espoused by Malafouris throws light to chronesthesia and relative interactions between people and things. This helps in substantiating memory with reference to embedded and extended cognition. When migrations and refugee narratives concentrate on nostalgia and dislocation, Hamid's novel casts up magical realism on the reader's new realisations on memory and imagination in terms of temporality and space. The novel takes an invigorating turn on relations, place and nostalgia through Saeed and Nadia, two displaced youths that are separated and unified in the course of a perilous journey. This paper takes into cognizance space/nospace, public/personal, memory/perception and imagination, revisiting the traditional reading of *Exit West* as a refugee narrative.

**Keywords:** Extended cognition, embodied cognition, space; metaplasticity, perception