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***Exploring Identity and Political Exile in Ngugi Wa Thiong'o's
Wizard of the Crow (2006) and Mohsin Hamid's Exit West
(2017)***

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To my parents

Mohammed Nadji

&

Tassadit Mani

Melissa Nadji

To my parents

Rezki Nedjar

&

Aicha Bentayeb

Yasmine Nedjar

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Abstract

*This comparative research explores possible affinities between Kenyan novelist Ngugi Wa Thiong'O's **Wizard of the Crow** (2006), and Pakistani novelist Mohsin Hamid's **Exit West** (2017). The objective of this work is to illustrate the impact of British rule on individuals' lives post-independence, highlighting the ensuing instability that leads to forced exile and the evolving nature of identity among Black African and Muslim Pakistani societies in both literary works. To achieve this, we rely on Homi K. Bhabha's concepts of 'Hybridity' and 'Mimicry'. In the first chapter, we examine the political oppression in **Wizard of the Crow**, analysing the portrayal of The Ruler and his ministers as neocolonial figures. We also explore the characters' interior exile as a form of resistance. Then, we discuss **Exit West**, investigating physical exile and the struggles of the characters as they explore cultural origins and cross-cultural adaptation. While in the second chapter, we investigate the convergencies and the divergencies of the representations of identity and political exile in **Wizard of the Crow** and **Exit West**. The chapter explores themes of oppression, resistance through displacement and exile, and the reshaping of identity in both novels. It also investigates the concept of the "Other" in both works and how postcolonial identities are constructed and deconstructed. After analysing the two chosen works, we conclude that, despite the similarities in themes such as exile and the transformations of identity, Ngugi Wa Thiong'O and Mohsin Hamid differ in their perspectives and the distinct contexts of their work.*

Key words: Postcolonialism, Hybridity, Mimicry, Imperial domination, Identity Crisis, Black African, Muslim Pakistani, Exile.

Table of contents

Dedications.....	i
Acknowledgement.....	ii
Abstract.....	iii
Table of contents.....	v
I. Introduction	1
a) Review of Literature	2
b) Issue and Working Hypothesis	4
c) Methodological Outline	5
II. Methods and Materials	6
a)Methods	6
-Homi K. Bhabha’s ‘Hybridity’ and ‘Mimicry’ in <i>The location of culture</i> (1994).....	6
b)Materials	8
1-Ngugi Wa Thiong’O’s Biography.....	8
2-Mohsin Hamid’s Biography	9
3-Synopsis of <i>Wizard of the Crow</i> (2006) and <i>Exit West</i> (2017).....	10
4- An overview of postcolonial Africa and south Asia.....	12
III. Results.....	14
IV. Discussion.....	17
Chapter one: Identity and Political Exile in Ngugi’s <i>Wizard of the Crow</i> (2006) and Hamid’s <i>Exit West</i> (2017)	17
a-The Ruling Powers: A Representation of the Neocolonial Oppression in Ngugi’s <i>Wizard of the Crow</i> (2006)	17
1-The Ruler as a Neocolonial Figure.....	17
2-The Ministers as Postcolonial Agents	21
b-Characters’ Interior Exile as Form of Resistance in Ngugi’s <i>Wizard of the Crow</i>	24
1-Nyawira’s Identity Exile through the Role of <i>Wizard of the Crow</i>	24
2-Kamiti's Shifts between his hidden Identity and his Role as a Powerful <i>Wizard</i>	26

c- Political Exile and the Challenges Faced by Refugees in Mohsin Hamid’s <i>Exit West</i> (2017)	28
1- Saeed Struggling between Cultural Origins and Cross-cultural Adaptation.....	30
2- Nadia embracing change and cultural identity	34
d-Navigating New Identities in Mohsin Hamid’s <i>Exit West</i>	36
Chapter two: Compare and Contrast Identity and Political Exile in Ngugi Wa Thiong’O’s <i>Wizard of the Crow</i> (2006) and Mohsin Hamid’s <i>Exit West</i> (2017)	40
a- Oppression in <i>Wizard of the Crow</i> and <i>Exit West</i>	40
b- Displacement and Exile as Forms of Resistance in Ngugi’s <i>Wizard of the Crow</i> and Hamid’s <i>Exit West</i>	45
c- Reshaping of Identity in Ngugi’s <i>Wizard of the Crow</i> and Mohsin Hamid’s <i>Exit West</i> ...	48
d- The Concept of the “Other” in Ngugi’s <i>Wizard of the Crow</i> and Hamid’s <i>Exit West</i>	52
e- Postcolonial Identities in Ngugi Wa Thiong’O’s <i>Wizard of the Crow</i> (2006) and Mohsin Hamid’s <i>Exit West</i> (2017)	54
V. Conclusion	57
VI. Bibliography	59

I. Introduction

This piece of research explores the themes of identity and exile in Kenyan novelist Ngugi Wa Thiong'O's *Wizard of the Crow* (2006) and Pakistani novelist Mohsin Hamid's *Exit West* (2017). It seeks to discuss the internal conflicts stemming from postindependence corruption, which led to a profound identity crisis in both countries. While Kenya and Pakistan are no longer colonies, the research paper attempts to display that the colonial legacies are still present in their societies, influencing their governance, and cultural identity.

Postcolonialism describes the period following independence by former colonies, it marks their liberation from European colonial rule. This term represents the aftermath of World War II to explore the enduring impacts of colonialism on indigenous cultures and societies. It includes the question of identity that stands as a central and continuous issue, because it affected all the newly freed countries. They face identity crises in the sense that, after independence, they struggle to figure out who they were.

Postcolonial literature is written by authors from former colonies, often in the colonizer's language after the independence of the country. It explores the life during or after colonization, dealing with the themes of the ongoing influence of former colonial powers on governance, society, culture, and economics. This literature shows the disappointment that follows independence, when the hopes for freedom and self-rule turned into problems like political instability, corruption and economic issues. For instance, in Kenyan and Pakistani contexts, post-independence literature explores the legacies of postindependence unrest and corruption. It examines how these former colonies continue to face crises of identity, leadership, and political exile. Ngugi Wa Thiong'O's *Wizard of the Crow* (2006) and Mohsin Hamid's *Exit West* (2017) are one of the postindependence literature. Ngugi critiques not only the colonial

past but also the new ruling elites who have taken over after independence, while Hamid focuses on the experience of the refugees who left their homeland due to the problems of leadership.

a) Review of Literature

Ngugi Wa Thiong'O's *Wizard of the Crow* (2006) and Mohsin Hamid's *Exit West* (2017) are two works that have received substantial criticism and scholarly scrutiny since their release. Critics have approached these works from various angles, exploring their intricate themes and relevance to contemporary societal issues.

Njogu Waita, a professor of literature in Chuka university, in his critique entitled *Identity, Politics and Gender Dimensions in Ngugi Wa Thiong'O's, Wizard of the Crow* (2013), discusses the depiction of the African society in Ngugi's *Wizard of the Crow* from a political perspective. Waita deals in his article with three main issues presented in the novel: identity, politics and Gender role. First, he explores the complexities of African identity and how it has been shaped by the impact of slavery, colonialism, neo-colonialism and globalization. Waita argues: "*The continuum of subjugation of the African people through slavery, colonialism, neo-colonialism and now globalization has led to the creation of a postcolonial personality who is trapped in a contradictory Western civilization*" (Waita,2013, p.46). The depth of this impact results in a conflicted identity, reflecting the ongoing struggles of Africans as depicted through the protagonist Kamiti's experiences in *Wizard of the Crow*.

Examining the ways of resistance, Amitayu Chakraborty, a writer and an assistant professor of English at Durgapur women's college, asserts in his article entitled *Modes of Resistance in Ngugi Wa Thiong'O's Wizard of the Crow* (2012) that the two characters of the novel, Nyawira and Kamiti, resist the hegemony of the nation-state of Aburiria. He states

The only counterpoint to this narrative of abject subjugation and predicament is the Movement for the Voice of the People. To this dialectical struggle, Ngugi ingeniously introduces, Kamiti and Nyawira, whose tricky, carnivalesque and grotesque activities

ranging from assuming beggarly appearances, to mock wizardry, to vulgar dance performances, challenge the authoritative measures taken by the Ruler and his men. (Chakraborty,2012, p.180)

Bakhtin's concept of Carnavalesque describes the tactics employed by the two main characters, while leading the movement for the voice of the people; as being tricky, carnivalesque, and grotesque. These tactics are characterized by taking beggarly appearances, engaging in wizardry as if they are mocking the authority and vulgar dance performances which are very bizarre plans that contrast social norms. Thus, they are carnivalesque and grotesque performances that challenge the Ruler and his authority.

Mohsin Hamid's writings also have been a subject of several critical analysis which have sparked numerous investigations into the experience of refugees, prompting extensive discourse on the subject. In *Global Refugee Crisis: A Study of Mohsin Hamid's Novel Exit West* (2018), Manzoor Ahmad Mir a philosopher, teacher and a head of department of Bioresources at university of Kashmir, provides an analysis of Mohsin Hamid's novel from a socio-political perspective. He delves into the themes of migration, refugees and the use of magical realism. He highlights the novel's relevance to contemporary global issues such as the refugee crisis and the impact of conflicts on societies (Mir,2018, p.15). Ahmad Mir reviews the two main characters in the novel, Saeed and Nadia; arguing that their journey reflects the universal aspects of the refugee experience, such as the loss of home, identity and belonging (p.15). In this regard he says that '*The two protagonists, [...], stand for every refugee in the modern world*' (Mir,2018, p.15). He believes that the two protagonists stand for every migrant in the modern world because their experiences mirror the struggles and challenges faced by refugees globally in search for a better life amidst a rapidly changing world.

Another critique, titled *Mohsin Hamid's Exit West Imagines a New Way for Refugees* (2017), by Mushtaq Bilal, a writer and a postdoctoral researcher at the university of Southern Denmark, commends Hamid's innovative use of magical realism to confront the pressing

ethical and moral dilemmas surrounding displacement. Bilal introduces the concept of mysterious Black Doors that serve as portals, allowing people to escape from war-torn areas to safer locations (Mushtaq,2017, pp2-3). He argues that the world currently faces a significant refugee crisis with large numbers of people displaced from their homes (p.2). He says that *'in a world swarming with refugees, a world of travel bans that transport defenceless refugees from war-torn cities to the safety of San Francisco and London'* (Mushtaq,2017, p.2) as he mentions 'travel bans' to suggest that there are barriers that prevent migrants from seeking safety in certain countries. In addition, his reference to transporting those who flee to cities like London and San Francisco implies that these cities are seen as havens of safety and refuge. Furthermore, M. Bilal discusses Hamid's portrayal of everyday life amidst chaos noting how the characters continue to engage in everyday activities despite the looming threat of violence (p.4).

b) Issue and Working Hypothesis

In examining the extensive critiques of both Ngugi Wa Thiong'O's *Wizard of the Crow* (2006) and Mohsin Hamid's *Exit West* (2017), it becomes evident that while each work has been subject to considerable analysis, there remains a lack of direct comparison between the two. Thus, this research paper endeavours to address this gap, investigating the portrayal of identity and political exile in two different cultural spaces.

Ngugi's *Wizard of the Crow* and Hamid's *Exit West* are two different literary works that deal with political issues and war, faced by the protagonists while seeking refuge. The two writers describe the realities of their societies, exploring the effects of postcolonial politics and the impact of the conflicts on the refugee crisis. We will explore how the characters' journeys reveal the intricate relationship between individual identity construction and the socio-political landscape of postcolonial societies. Within a comparative analysis of the protagonists' journeys,

this study seeks to uncover the ways in which political upheaval shapes and reshapes notions of selfhood, belonging, and agency, ultimately contributing to a deeper understanding of the complexities of exile and its enduring influence on identity formation. In other words, our goal is to highlight the affinities and divergencies between the two novels, focusing on the authors' political perspective in dealing with oppression, the intricacies of identity and exile.

c) Methodological Outline

Our paper adopts the conventional IMRAD framework commonly used in academic research. The introduction sets the stage by outlining the central theme, progressing from general to specific, and sets the aim of our study. We then conduct a thorough examination of prior literature, presenting our main issue and working hypotheses. Moving on to the Methods section, where we first briefly delve into the concepts of 'Hybridity' and 'Mimicry' as developed by Homi K. Bhabha in his book *The Location of Culture* (1994), and then we provide the biographies. The next section deals with the results, including our main findings. Our discussion is divided into two chapters. The first chapter discusses the representation of oppression, identity and political exile. Whereas, the second chapter gathers the important points of comparison and contrast of Ngugi Wa Thiong'O's *Wizard of the Crow* (2006) and Mohsin Hamid's *Exit West* (2017). Finishing with a general conclusion that restates the most relevant points and information.

II. Methods and Materials

a) Methods

In this part of our research, our objective is to present the theoretical framework we consider relevant to our analysis of the two works Ngugi Wa Thiong'O's *Wizard of The Crow* (2006) and Mohsin Hamid's *Exit West* (2017). We will explain the postcolonial theory to establish a consistent basis, relying on the aspects of 'Hybridity' and 'Mimicry' as coined by Homi K. Bhabha.

Homi K. Bhabha is an Indian critical theorist who has contributed to postcolonial studies by developing several concepts which influenced this field and helped to understand the complexities of colonialism and postcolonial cultures (Arab, 2023, p735). We will proceed by adopting two of Bhabha's concepts of 'Hybridity' and 'Mimicry' from his work *The Location of Culture* (1994). First, it is essential to start with an explanation of these two concepts.

1) Hybridity

For Bhabha, the concept of 'Hybridity' is not just a matter of reconciling or merging two distinct identities; rather, it involves the mixture of both Eastern and Western cultures, ultimately creating at the end a new one that incorporates characteristics from both. This concept also addresses how the colonized people are represented by the colonial powers and challenges the authority of the colonial discourse by allowing indigenous perspectives and voices, to participate in dominant discourse, which is primarily conducted in the language and culture imposed by the colonizers. He noted,

Colonial hybridity is not a problem of genealogy or identity between two different cultures which can then be resolved as an issue of cultural relativism. Hybridity is problematic of colonial representation and individuation that reverses the effect of the colonialist disavowal, so that other 'denied' knowledge inter open a dominant discourse and estrange the basis of its authority-its rulers of recognition. (Bhabha,1994, p.114)

Bhabha's idea of 'Hybridity' includes blending in different elements of cultures and identity so as to question traditional norms and expectations. He represents 'Hybridity' as "camouflage" (Bhabha,1994, p.193) which means a disguise, where the colonized masks the differences between the Other and the colonizer by adapting various cultures to adjust in a new environment. Through this act, the "Other" which is the representation of the Black, the Brown and all the people who do not belong to the white or the dominant powers, seeks to challenge and conceal the power of the Westerners.

In addition, Homi K. Bhabha (1994) also views 'Hybridity' as "Heresy" (p.226), which is a representation of rebellion and contradiction against the norms. It exposes the role of 'Hybridity' starting with contradicting the ideologies, culture, language and religion enforced upon them by the colonial authority, leading unconsciously to a certain limit of acceptance. In short, it is a form of resistance that develops from blending cultures, aiming for a possibility to form a new identity.

2) *Mimicry*

Homi Bhabha, in his book *The Location of Culture* (1994), explains a complex process known as 'Mimicry' where the colonized imitate or adopt the colonizer's cultural habits, institutions and values. They pretend to be like them to challenge the power and authority of the colonial discourse. It is a way for the colonized to copy those in power, resulting first in the suppression of their own culture and identity then in an ambivalent and confused state. The latter refers to the colonized people's loss of identity, trying to imitate the colonizer, while feeling alienated from the colonizer's culture. Bhabha (1994) argues that "[...] *the discourse of mimicry is constructed around an ambivalence*" (p.86). Mimicry describes the ambivalent relationship between the colonizer and the colonized which developed the feeling of anxiety within the colonized people. Ambivalence is a psychological state where the colonized

individuals are stuck between a contradicting situation, in which they want to be accepted by the colonizer while hating the colonial power at the same time. While mimicking the colonizers' speech, dress and lifestyle, the colonized seek equality and acceptance in their environment. However, at the same time, the imitators hate the colonial authority because of their way of treating and viewing the "Other" as primitives and savages (p.86)

According to Bhabha (1994), "*Mimicry is the desire for a reformed, recognizable Other, as a subject of a difference that is almost the same, but not quite.*" (p.86) "*almost the same, but not white*" (89). He suggests that the colonizers aim to make the colonized imitate them and look like them, but never one of them because they are different, in other words, similar to them yet distinct and unaccepted. The key point here is that the mimicry is never a perfect copy; it always retains elements of difference, creating a "Blurred Copy", a blurry version of the real colonizer. He claims that when the colonized people imitate the culture, behaviour, and values of the colonizers, it often carries an element of mockery (p.89). This mockery can threaten the identity of the colonizers, as it undermines and challenges their authority and power, and it also damage their image, "*Mimicry does not merely destroy narcissistic authority through the repetitious slippage of difference and desire [...] therefore necessarily raises the question of the authorization of colonial representations*" (Bhabha,1994, p90). Mimicry does not only weaken the authority of the colonizers by imitating the differences and the desires the colonizers want the colonized to mimic, it also questions the legitimacy of the colonizer to decide how to represent the colonized people (p.90).

b) Materials

1-Ngugi Wa Thiong'O's Biography

Ngugi Wa Thiong'O was born in 1938 in Limuru, Kenya. He is known as a writer, a storyteller, a director, and political and social activist who fought against the Kenya's regime.

In the thesis entitled *Ngugi Wa Thiong'O's Fight Against Colonialism and Neocolonialism: An Exploration of The Theme of Betrayal*, it is stated that even though Ngugi did not witness the era of colonialism and the revolutionary movement, he still experienced the impact of the division it created within his own family. Over time, he began a resistance towards colonial established rule, due to the sentiment of betrayal from the Kenyan government towards its people. (Robson,1987, p.1)

He began to write in his mother tongue, Kikuyu, since he believed that writing in indigenous language was essential to preserve and promote African cultures. *Ngaahika Ndeenda*, translated as *I will marry when I want* (1977) is the first play Ngugi Wa Thiong'O and Ngugi Wa Mirii wrote in Kikuyu, and it was the main cause of Ngugi's detention in the same year of its publication date. Being written in the native language seen as a threat to the ruling class and it represents the revolutionary movement and the struggles of the Kenyan people in the colonial period (Robson, 1987, p.12)

Ngugi Wa Thiong'O's plays were banned, later on the centre and the theatre where they were performed for a short period were destructed by the police. After this event, Ngugi returned to London and settled a short period in exile and published his work entitled *Wizard of the Crow* (2006) which is an English translation of the Kikuyu language novel and one of the most translated works. It represents the postcolonial struggles of the African societies and the ongoing impact of colonialism, dealing with the themes of political corruption, resistance, and the complexities of identity.

2-Mohsin Hamid's Biography

Mohsin Hamid, recognized for his contributions as a Pakistani British writer and novelist, was born on July 23, 1971, in Lahore, Pakistan, to a family of Punjabi and Kashmiri descent. His early years were enriched by cultural diversity, and his formative years saw him

traversing between nations. His extensive travels and experiences in different countries have greatly impacted his writing. He spent part of his childhood in California and later returned to America to attend Princeton University and Harvard Law School. Subsequently, he worked in New York and London as a management consultant before moving back to Lahore to dedicate himself fully to writing.

Hamid's experiences as a Pakistani residing in the United States and the United Kingdom have immersed him in diverse cultures and societies, enabling him to explore themes of identity, exile, and migration in his literary works. He frequently examines the conflicts that arise from different cultural backgrounds and the difficulties of managing various identities. The turmoil and violence that have plagued numerous cities in Southwest Asia, including Kabul, Baghdad, Damascus, and Aleppo, have profoundly impacted him, evident in several of his literary pieces.

Hamid's debut novel, *Moth Smoke* (2000), received widespread praise and set the stage for his exploration of complex social themes. Following this success, he published his second novel, *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* (2007), which achieved immense popularity and continued to delve into issues of identity and cultural conflict. In 2017, he released his fourth novel, *Exit West*, which reflects on the lives of migrants and refugees, emphasizing the intricate nature of their identity and sense of belonging when confronted with being forced to leave their homeland.

3-Synopsis of Wizard of the Crow (2006)

Ngugi Wa Thiong'O's *Wizard of the Crow* (2006) tells the story of a corrupt governor named The Ruler in the fictional African nation of Aburiria. The novel follows Kamiti, a poor man who becomes a symbol of resistance against The Ruler's oppressive regime. The story begins with widespread rumors about The Ruler's mysterious illness, which creates five

assumptions among the citizens. Nyawira, initially a woman working for Tajirika whose one of the regime's associates, grows disappointed with the political system. She creates a revolutionary group called the Movement for the Voice of the People, determined to overthrow The Ruler and his corrupt government.

Kamiti and Nyawira join forces in the struggle against The Ruler's tyranny, employing strategies to disrupt the regime. One of their tactics is Kamiti's role as the wizard of the crowd, a mystical figure who claims to possess magical powers. Through this persona, they expose the corruption, hypocrisy, and deceit within the government, revealing The Ruler's methods of maintaining control. As the people of Aburiria begin to be aware of their exploitation, The Ruler's fall marks the beginning of hope for a brighter future. Kamiti and Nyawira firmly continue their mission to ensure fairness and freedom for the Aburirians.

4-Synopsis of Exit West (2017)

Exit West is a novel written by Mohsin Hamid, published by Hamish Hamilton in 2017, in America. The story takes place in an unnamed city on the brink of war between the militants and the government, Saeed and Nadia handle their relationship amidst the constraints of society and the escalating violence surrounding them. They meet, date, and struggle to see each other regularly due to societal rules and government crackdowns. In order to visit Nadia's flat; Saeed disguises himself as a woman. However, when the government cuts off Wi-Fi and other services, they are forced to be apart. Tragedy strikes when Saeed's mother is killed by stray gunfire. He prompts Nadia to move in with him and his father. As rumors circulate about magical doors that offer escape, they become determined to find one and flee to find a better life. Often, the doors appear in office buildings or in apartments which become a portal to another place. They eventually find a real door and end up in a refugee camp in Greece. Running

out of money, they seek another door and end up in a luxurious abandoned apartment with refugees from all over the world.

Finally, they decide to relocate to Marin, California where the number of refugees is higher than that of the native population; however, their relationship begins to deteriorate soon they find new romantic partners, Saeed grows closer to the preacher's daughter and Nadia starts dating with a woman who cooks at the Co-op. In a bittersweet turn of events, they reunite in their old city which is partially reconstructed. Throughout the events and due to migration, the two protagonists experience a kind of internal conflict in adopting the different cultures.

5- An overview of postcolonial Africa and south Asia

a- Post-independence Kenya

Postcolonial Kenya faced political and economic dynamics, including corruption, economic inequality, suppression of freedom and violence caused by the fight for power. After World War II, a political conflict appeared between the white settlers and the Black people, where Kenya struggled to gain its independence in 1960. Kenya attained its self-governance in 1963 with the president Jomo Kenyatta and become an independent African state as a result of the Mau Mau's political and economic pressures.

Despite gaining independence, Kenya faced internal conflicts between political leaders who wanted to control the government, and this caused instability in the country. Kenya has also struggled with economic issues like poverty, inequality and unemployment, which influenced the country's growth. The Ruling elite, such as Jomo Kenyatta and Daniel Arap Moi, were obsessed maintaining their power. This obsession leads them to use tactics similar to those of the colonizers such as, manipulating African communities and suppressing the ability to oppose authority through surveillance, imprisonment and forced exile. These actions pose

significant challenges for postcolonial authors. As a result, an ongoing political instability, corruption and economic inequality still shape Kenya's postcolonial period.

b- Post-independence Pakistan

Before the movement of rebellion of India which was the main event for its independence, Indians suffered 89 years of British occupation known as the British Raj. The latter, also called direct rule in India, is the rule of the British crown or royalty on Indian subcontinent which lasted from 1858 to 1947. This period began when the British exploited the East India Company to possess its assets and control over the country.

Following the division of British India, both India and Pakistan attained independence in 1947, however, unlike India, Pakistan could not establish strong democratic institutions. The nation endured years of military dictatorship due to its strong political force, which allows it to interfere in politics for the purpose of maintaining law, order and fighting corruption. The impact of colonialism on Pakistan's bureaucratic systems was profound, including the Indian civil service's role in postcolonial states' governance.

Pakistan struggled to achieve unity and stability while facing difficulties of building a new country, even though the political groups like the Congress and the Muslim League controlled the political landscape of the country. Lahore in Pakistan, is a city rich in history and culture, making it a key place for political activity since Pakistan's independence. Its historical significance and cultural heritage have made it an important center for political events, movement, and decisions. Because of this, many political activities and important government decisions have taken place in Lahore, highlighting its importance in the country's political landscape.

III. Results

This section presents our findings from analysing Ngugi Wa Thiong’O’s *Wizard of the Crow* (2006) and Mohsin Hamid’s *Exit West* (2017). Our analysis has shown that both works address the issue of identity and political exile through divergent purposes, thus, we have relied on the theoretical concepts of ‘Hybridity’ and ‘Mimicry’ developed by Homi K. Bhabha in his book *The Location of Culture* (1994).

Our research on the issue under study has resulted in interesting findings. One of our major results is that both novels deal with the theme of postcolonial oppression. The latter is addressed through different perspectives and the distinct contexts of postcolonial Africa portrayed as the fictional setting Aburiria, and a war-torn “unnamed city” representing Lahore, Pakistan. In Ngugi’s *Wizard of the Crow*, oppression is represented through Aburiria’s neocolonial regime where leaders mimic colonial tactics to exploit and control citizens. The ruler’s autocratic methods mirror colonial surveillance, education manipulation, and resource exploitation. In Hamid’s *Exit West*, oppression is depicted in a war-torn city where the government’s inability to provide security leads to chaos. Rather than direct exploitation, the neglect of basic protections forces citizens to become refugees in different countries.

The second major finding that resulted from our research is the theme of exile as a form of resistance. Both novels deal with this theme in a divergent way. In *Wizard of the Crow*, exile is more of a psychological and emotional separation from one’s true character or environment where the protagonists built an alternative identity to mask their true self. Kamiti and Nyawira embody resistance through their internal exile, using the character of the Wizard of the Crow to challenge and undermine authoritarian power structures. Whereas, in *Exit West*, for the main characters Saeed and Nadia, exile is physical tactic to survive in peace rather than direct resistance. Their physical exile through doors signifies fleeing political conflicts in search of

security rather than direct defiance against authority, resulting in the difficulties faced by refugees such as identity crisis.

The reshaping of identity is another of our main results. Indeed, both *Wizard of the Crow* and *Exit West* explore how external forces shape identity, but in dissimilar ways. In *Wizard of the Crow*, Ngugi focuses on identity shaped by power and resistance through Kamiti's shifting identities as the wizard of the crow. It allows him to navigate a corrupt society, gaining power, respect from both the ruling elite and society while confronting the oppressor. Hence, reflecting the postcolonial African struggle with identity and politics. In contrast, identity in *Exit West* is shaped by migration. Saeed tries to preserve his origins by clinging to his culture and tradition, while Nadia embraces cultural changes, emphasising on her adaptation to the different countries, cultures and traditions. Through the characters experiences, Hamid highlights identity tensions between adaptation and preservation.

Another key observation is that, though the concept of the “Other” plays a significant role in both novels, it reflects differently in each of them. In *Wizard of the Crow*, the “Other” is the oppressed populace, dehumanized by the regime for political gain, reflecting neocolonial exploitation. Furthermore, the protagonists’ “Othering” is not only by the authority as citizens, but also by the Aburirians themselves, marking them as outsiders who resists the oppression. However, *Exit West* “Othering” emerges as Saeed and Nadia are characterised as outsiders in foreign lands, depicting refugees’ struggles with acceptance and rejection in new societies.

Our final finding concerns postcolonial identities. both novels explore postcolonial identities shaped by the tension between traditional values and new influences. In *Wizard of the Crow*, Kamiti and Nyawira navigate identities within a society where colonial customs persist through a neocolonial elite, forcing them to adapt for survival causing their alienation. Similarly, in *Exit West* Saeed clings to his cultural roots to balance between his origins and the

colonial legacies, while Nadia embraces Western ideologies and lifestyle, despite maintaining her cultural way of dressing.

IV. Discussion

Chapter one: Identity and Political Exile in Ngugi Wa Thiong'O's Wizard of the Crow (2006) and in Mohsin Hamid's Exit West (2017)

In this chapter, our aim is to highlight the profound social and cultural critiques presented in Ngugi's *Wizard of the Crow* (2006) and Hamid's *Exit West* (2017). Throughout this analysis, we will explore the representation of identity and political exile present in the two novels. we will investigate the depiction of political oppression, the characters' interior exile as a form of resistance and defiance of social expectations in Ngugi's narrative. In Hamid's *Exit West*, we will focus on the challenges refugee face, how characters navigate and reconstruct their identities.

a-The Ruling Powers: A Representation of the Neocolonial Oppression in Ngugi's Wizard of the Crow

1-The Ruler as a Neocolonial Figure

The character known as The Ruler embodies the features of a tyrannical governor. He represents a dictator who abuses his oppressive power over both his subjects and his own family. His rule is characterized by violence and cruelty towards his political enemies and anyone who opposes or disobeys him, reflecting the British colonizer during Kenya's colonial period. He utilizes a strategic manipulation of the media through propaganda to maintain his authority and control over the nation's politics and its citizens. These features of the Ruler are to be found from the beginning of the Ngugi's *Wizard of the Crow* (2006). For example, he writes:

[...] knowing that in his country he was always on TV; his every moment eating, shitting, sneezing, or blowing his nose captured on camera. Even his yawns were news because, whether triggered by boredom, fatigue, hunger, or thirst, they were often followed by some national drama: his enemies were lashed in the public square with a

sjambok, whole villages were pierced to death by a bows-and arrows squad, their carcasses left in the open as food for hyenas and vultures. (Ngugi, 2006, p.1)

The Ruler's maintain of visibility through media mirrors colonial strategies of surveillance and control, reflecting the character's identity crisis. As he mimics these methods, he tries to hide his insecurity and fear of losing his authoritative power, this insecurity led to The Ruler's alienation from his own people while he also embodies a hybrid identity. As in Homi K. Bhabha's concept, this mimicry is not a perfect imitation; rather, it is incomplete and results to a hybrid identity where the individual feels like not belonging neither to his origins nor to the culture they are mimicking. By adopting colonial style of control, The Ruler is neither fully aligned with his native identity nor a complete colonial figure, resulting in an unstable identity.

The Ruler's governance makes use of various means of political oppression. One of them is his manipulation of the legal system to retain authority

[...] he had sat on the throne so long that even he could not remember when his reign began. His rule had no beginning and no end; and judging from the facts one may well believe the claim. Children had been born and had given birth to others and those others to others and so on, and his rule had survived all the generations. So that when some people heard that before him there had been a first Ruler, preceded by a succession of governors and sultans all the way from the eras of the Arabs, the Turks, the Italians, to that of the British, they would simply shake their heads in disbelief saying, no, no, those are just the tales of a daydreamer: Aburiria had never had and could never have another ruler [...] (Ngugi,2006, p.5)

As the quote above affirms, the longevity of his rule implies the absolutist control he exercises to guarantee a reign with "*his rule had no beginning and no end*" (Ngugi,2006, p.5). Indeed, one can easily understand that his control over Aburiria is an invasive one. By claiming an internal and timeless regime along invincibility, he does not only make the citizens powerless against him, but he also erases the existence of previous rulers.

Through the story, Ngugi reveals that politics is a central power in Aburiria. By controlling every aspect of life, the Ruler controls the citizens' survival resources, the nations' economy and the society's use of laws as a means of oppression to maintain his authority. Thus,

the legal system and politics is a power in the hand of the Ruler to ensure the powerlessness of the population. Michel Foucault addresses this idea through his notion of Biopolitics in his work entitled *The Birth of Biopolitics* (1978-79). It explains the positive power known as Biopower, it is exercised by the state through Biopolitics, they use the political structure over human body to control their lives (p.2). This concept refers to domination and power over the population, allowing the Ruler to take beneficial decisions for himself. A key aspect of Biopolitics is the manipulation of the citizens at the level of the body and life itself to make them obedient subjects or docile body. This is best epitomized by the female character Nyawira when she declares,

the water I drink, the food I eat, the clothes I wear, the bed I sleep on, are all determined by politics, good or bad. Politics is about power and how it is used. Politics involves choosing sides in the struggle for power. (Ngugi,2006, p.92)

It is evident that politics determine everything in an individual's life even in terms of the basic human necessities. How this power is used, for good or bad things, depends on the person who is utilizing it. This proves that politics in Aburiria is not used for the benefit of its population since it decides everything in their existence. They are not free even in their homes exposing to which extent the Ruler is politically oppressing his people. Through this mimicry of colonial practices, the Ruler attempts to create a hybrid identity that combines traditional African power structures with colonial authoritarianism. His attempt to erase the memory of previous rulers and asserting himself as the only legitimate leader, in fact, he is denying his own cultural lineage and descendants. This marks him as a hybrid figure, a leader whose sense of self is fractured by inner exile.

The Ruler continued his oppression by banishing the Movement for the Voice of the People, this is clearly illustrated when Nyawira recalls the police breaking into her home and remembers that the dictator of Aburiria had declared the movement illegal “*Then she recalled that the dictator of Aburiria had decreed that the movement for the voice of the people was*

illegal.” (Ngugi,2006, p.118). The Ruler declared this organization being illegal to suppress people’s freedom of express themselves and their believes so as to reinforce his authoritarian control.

The Ruler’s corruption was shown in different domains: political, economic, and educational. He exploits the country’s economy for his extravagant birthday celebration by wasting the resources of the state and requesting loans from the Global Bank. The Ruler’s lavish lifestyle demonstrates his disregard for the impoverished conditions of his people. The governor extends his authoritarian control to the educational system, understanding that manipulating knowledge means maintaining power. He insists on incorporating his ideologies into the nation curriculum, reflecting the colonial strategies employed by the British to impose their ideologies and language. This manipulation of the educational system serves to validate his authoritarian rule, in the novel Ngugi describes him: *“Everybody in Aburlria knew that the Ruler was the supreme educator. Teacher number one. So, all institutions of learning, from primary schools to university colleges, would be required to teach only those ideas that came from the supreme educator.”* (Ngugi, 2006, p.661)

This highlights how the Ruler controls education, by dictating the curriculum. He makes sure that only his ideas are spread, preventing any opposing thoughts. This hegemonic strategy embodies a form of ‘colonial mimicry’ a concept explored by Homi K. Bhabha, where the Ruler imitates colonial powers by imposing his beliefs. Bhabha’s theory of mimicry explains how the colonized imitate certain behaviours of the colonizers to assert control, but this imitation becomes a distorted reflection, exposing contradictions and identity crisis on the individuals. In other words, the Ruler’s orders are not just about teaching rather it is about using education as a tool for oppression. Just as colonial rulers imposed their own culture and suppressed local traditions, the Ruler enforces his ideology through the educational system, to guarantee that Aburirians remain obedient.

2-The Ministers as Postcolonial Agents

Throughout the novel, Ngugi Wa Thiong'O exposes the dynamics of the British colonization of Kenya in a fictional narration putting, where the political landscape of Aburiria is dominated by a single-party system, led by the Ruler and his loyal ministers. The Ruler of Aburiria embodies a neocolonial elite left by the British Empire, through his autocratic leadership, thereby mirroring the centralized control of British colonial governance. His relentless greed and pursuit of wealth further reflect the economic exploitation that characterized British colonialism. Moreover, the Ruler's imposition of his will on Aburirians symbolizes the cultural domination Britain enforced on its colonies. Additionally, the ministers faithfully assist The Ruler in exploiting Aburiria's resources and suppressing its people, thus acting as the neocolonial Kenyan elite who continue the legacy of colonial oppression. Encouraged by the Ruler, they engage in corruption and maintain their power to ensure the political elite's control.

Ngugi portrays the ministers; Machokali, Tajirika and Sikiokuu, as a representation of the neocolonial elite left behind by the colonizers. These ministers continue the exploitative practices and oppressive structures established during colonial rule. Their actions and strategies highlight the colonial influence in postcolonial Kenya, and show how the new regime mimics the methods of their former colonizers to achieve their aims of maintaining power and control.

Each member of the elite group value their self-interest, engaging in corruption and manipulation to secure their positions such as exploiting the economy of Aburiria to carry out the project 'Marching to Heaven' which serves as a symbol of their greed and detachment from serving the needs of the people. By diverting resources to expensive and impractical projects, the ministers ensure that only the ruling elite enjoy wealth and power, just like the colonial

period. This continuation of colonial exploitation emphasizes their role in maintaining economic disparities and social injustices.

The Minister of Foreign Affairs Machokali is one of the central figures who drives the Marching to Heaven project, embodying the corruption and neocolonial mimicry of Aburiria's elite. His commitment to the project is an example of how the ruling elite use the national resources for extravagant, impractical projects. He honours and satisfies the Ruler's greed while disregarding the economic needs of the people, when he claims, '*Our project will be the first and only su-perwonder in the history of the world.*' (Ngugi,2006, p31) Machokali proves his loyalty to the Ruler, as he distances himself from his duties as a minister to fulfil the needs of the populace, and mimics colonial activities that prioritizes massive projects.

Titus Tajirika, the minister of trade and the chairman of the project's Building Committee, epitomizes this exploitation. Tajirika reveals how the ministers view public projects as opportunities for personal gain. By shifting public resources to this costly project, Machokali, Tajirika, and other ministers replicate colonial exploitation tactics, ensuring only the elite benefit while the Aburirians remain impoverished. Their mimicry of colonial practices emphasises their hybrid identity as neocolonial agents, exploiting their own nation under the guise of progress

During colonial period, the colonizer established surveillance systems in their colonies to manipulate the colonized people to become docile bodies who would never rebel. Most of these systems are direct continuation of colonial legacy. One most evident example of these mechanism is the enlarged eyes of Machokali, the Minister of Foreign Affairs. His surgery symbolizes surveillance and control over Aburirians, his large eyes take after Foucault's concept of 'Panopticon' which is a design for a prison where a single guard can watch all the prisoners without them knowing if they are being watched.

Machokali's large eyes represent the government's ongoing monitoring, creating a feeling among the population of being constantly watched. The minister's aim was to "*have his eyes enlarged, to make them ferociously sharp, [...], so that they would be able to spot the enemies of the Ruler no matter how far their hiding places.*" (Ngugi, 2006, p.28) According to this statement, it is evident that Machokali intend to use his enhanced eyes as a tool of surveillance to serve the Ruler. It creates a sense of fear within the citizens which discourages them to rebel or resist. Thus, his eyes are powerful symbol of the oppressive control mechanisms that continue from the colonial period, showing how the new ruling elite uses similar tactics to maintain their power. It also represents the ongoing influence of colonialism, the minister clearly alienated himself from his cultural origins, resulting to his hybrid identity where the individual's sense of self combines elements from different cultures or influences, caused by colonial or cross-cultural experiences.

Sikiokuu the minister of defence, enhanced his ears in Paris, mimicking the colonial tactics in spying and eavesdropping on the populace. His actions symbolize not only physical transformation but a deeper alienation as he disconnects himself from his origins to embody a hybrid identity caught between native and colonial ideologies. This mimicry of colonial power, embodied in surveillance bodily transformations, highlights how the ministers adopt oppressive strategies to maintain their status, continuing a legacy of control that isolates them from Aburiria's people.

b-Characters' Interior Exile as a Form of Resistance in Ngugi's Wizard of the Crow (2006)

1-Nyawira's Identity Exile through the Role of Wizard of the Crow

Nyawira is one of the main characters who is introduced as an ordinary secretary of Tajirika, a corrupt minister who exploits his political position for his personal interest through bribery. She is a political activist who formed and led the movement for The Voice of the People. She is depicted to be quiet, confident, a character who possesses political awareness allowing to challenge the oppressive and corrupt power of the Ruler, striving to bring about positive change in society.

Nyawira starts her resistance by disguising herself as a beggar in order to join others in protesting against the Marching to Heaven project, shouting in front of the media "*Marching to Heaven is marching to Hell. Your strings of loans are chains of slavery your loans are the cause of begging. We beggars beg the end of begging*" (Ngugi, 2006, p.95), trying to ruin their reputation with their act. Her disguise whether as a beggar or as the wizard of the crow, symbolizes the beginning of her internal exile. The latter refers to a state of isolation where a person feels separated from their true self or community, due to adopting another identity or role that disconnects them emotionally or socially. Nyawira hides her true identity through the disguise, first of a beggar then a wizard to infiltrate the protest and challenge the corrupt regime while remaining unrecognized by the oppressive authorities.

As the Wizard of the Crow, Nyawira adopts an identity that allows her to act as a protector, and a representative of hope for Aburirians despite the challenges they face. Through her commitment to justice, resistance against the oppressive regime and the efforts to get the

citizens' right, she led a group of women to perform and show their rejection of the Marching to Heaven Project and resist the governor oppressive regime. She tells Kamiti

Then, just as planned, [...] all of us in the arena suddenly faced the people, our backs turned to the platform where the Ruler and other dignitaries were sitting. All together we lifted our skirts and exposed our butts to those on the platform, and squatted as if about to shit en masses in the arena. Those of us in the crowd started swearing: MARCHING TO HEAVEN IS A PILE OF SHIT! MARCHING TO HEAVEN IS A MOUNTAIN OF SHIT! And the crowd took this up. There were two or three women who forgot that this was only a stimulation of what our female ancestors used to do as a last resort when they had reached a point where they could no longer take shit from a despot; they urinated and farted loudly. Maybe need or fear overcome them, or both. (Ngugi, 2006, p.291)

Thus, the performance resorts to women exposing themselves in front of the Ruler and the other delegates as to rebel against their authority and disregarding their dignity. Apart from this show, the women started shouting "*MARCHING TO HEAVEN IS A PILE OF SHIT! MARCHING TO HEAVEN IS A MOUNTAIN OF SHIT!*" (Ngugi, 2006, p.291) to provoke the ruler and express their dissatisfaction with his governance and broken promises. This performance vividly portrays how citizens express their discontent through bold actions, even if it led them to be open to criticism.

This persona enables her to distance herself from her true self, creating an alienated interior space where she can carry out her plans undetected. Through this symbolic, mystical identity, Nyawira's sense of belonging is both concealed and strengthened; she is alienated from her everyday identity but gains status and influence through her role as a mystical wizard and a hidden leader of resistance. Nyawira, who is already a political activist, uses the Wizard of the Crow persona to elaborate her resistance efforts. Her dramatic confrontations, like performing rituals before the authorities, elevate her status but also isolate her, as she embodies a mystic force that the people fear rather than a comrade. This dual identity also places her at a dilemma with her personal life, as she hides her true self from even her closest allies, creating an internal division.

To protect Kamiti and resist the authority, Nyawira performs rituals as the Wizard of the Crow in front of the authorities, waving a fly whisk over the guards while chanting, *“If he comes back with even one strand of his hair missing, I will hold you two accountable”* (Ngugi,2006, p.430). This public display made the guards’ legs “chained to the ground” (p.430) because of the fierce performance of the wizard of the crow, Nyawira. It reinforces her status as a powerful, untouchable figure, however, by taking on this commanding presence, she distances herself from her identity as Nyawira, alienating herself from society in her role as a mystical character.

2-Kamiti's Shifts between his hidden Identity and his Role as a Powerful Wizard

Kamiti is the central protagonist who often plays the role of the wizard of the crow. He has a great political consciousness, a vast knowledge and the passion for nature and spirituality that are acquired from his previous studies in India. Kamiti uses his intelligence as the wizard of the crow through the imitation of African mysticism to help the oppressed citizens and fight for their rights within the movement of the voice of the people. Kamiti initially discovers this role when he and Nyawira attempt to escape from the guards, he

[...] wrote on the cardboard in big letters: WARNING! THIS PROPERTY BELONGS TO A WIZARD WHOSE POWER BRINGS DOWN HAWKS AND CROWS FROM THE SKY. TOUCH THIS HOUSE AT YOUR PERIL. SGD. WIZARD OF THE CROW. With great care not to make any noise, he slowly opened the door and saw something even better, a dead lizard and a frog. He added them to the bundle of bone and rags and hung the omen just above the door [...] (Ngugi,2006, p98)

The guards do not dare to approach the door after witnessing the writing of the wizard of the crow and the dead animals. Through his role as the wizard of the crow, Kamiti finds both interior exile and confidence. The disguise allows him to escape his marginalized, unrecognized identity, transforming into a respected figure that evokes fear. This dual existence as both

Kamiti and the wizard of the crow embodies his interior exile, as he must conceal his true self to remain the well-respected and fearful character.

The wizard of the crow's identity serves as both a shield for social alienation and a tool for Kamiti, particularly when Nyawira becomes a target for arrest after the women's performance. To protect her, Kamiti chooses to employ a tactic of deception. He performs mystical acts to mislead Sikiokuu, The Ruler's minister, by requesting mirrors to create a trick that would keep Nyawira's location hidden. This act of manipulation from African traditions origin, represents Kamiti's internal exile; he suppresses his true self to embody a mystical magician. In his role, Kamiti attempt to manipulate Sikiokuu's thoughts to divert the minister's attention from Nyawira, enabling him to challenge the oppressive regime.

The wizard of the crow, Kamiti asks the minister to bring mirrors and use them to perform his deceptive act of magic, attempting to confuse him in his greed of taking the position of the Ruler as the only important thing for him is to protect his partner, and it is evident in the story "*Even with the mirror in his hand, the wizard of the crow was no clearer about the details of his performance except that he had to protect Nyawira.*" (Ngugi, 2006, 472) Kamiti associates his mystical tactic to protect Nyawira with African traditions, where he plays on the minister's expectations in the power of African mysticism. By using mirrors, Kamiti creates an illusion that distracts the minister from his intentions, which allows him to manipulate Sikiokuu's weakness and demonstrate his understanding of their indigenous culture.

Kamiti further mimics the African mysticism while playing the role of the wizard of the crow to help all the oppressed Aburirians. He solves their problems and heals the sick, showing his deep connection to African traditions and culture. Even the ruthless ruling elite, like Tajirika, who suffered from the mysterious 'white ache' illness, Kamiti succeed in curing him whereas the Western medicines failed. Ngugi utilizes Kamiti's actions to emphasize on how the African

culture and traditional healing methods are more powerful, effective and wiser than the Western medicine and the colonial assumptions that subvert indigenous knowledge.

c-Political Exile and the Challenges Faced by Refugees in Mohsin Hamid's Exit West

Mohsin Hamid emphasizes the dominant theme of migration in his novel *Exit West*. He portrays refugees as complex individuals rather than merely victims, providing a deep analysis of their experiences. From the beginning of the story, Hamid gives detailed descriptions of Nadia and Saeed's personalities, the reason for their physical exile through the black door, and the challenges they face in unfamiliar territories. Their story commences with clash right from the instant they met. The city is introduced in the narrative's opening line, which states "*IN A CITY SWOLLEN BY REFUGEES but still mostly at peace, or at least not yet openly at war [...]*" (Hamid,2017, p.10) As seen in the preceding quote, Mohsin started by establishing the backdrop of a metropolis teetering on the edge of a conflict. where the city remains relatively peaceful, though there is an underlying sense of unease. In addition, he has set the surge of refugees experienced in the city.

Mohsin Hamid intentionally leaves the city unnamed, to add a layer of universality to the story, suggesting that the experiences of Saeed and Nadia could occur in any city affected by conflicts. As discussed by Saazmantri in his article ***THE NAMED AND UNNAMED: AMBIGUITY IN EXIT WEST*** (2021), by not specifying the city, Hamid emphasizes the shared humanity and common struggles of refugees worldwide, furthermore, it allows readers to imagine it as their own city or the city of someone they know. Saeed and Nadia's city was originally peaceful, but it became devastated in a civil war after militants took control. The militant's religious character, their prohibition on holding hands, listening to music, and their restrictive clothing regulations resemble the current situation in ISIS-controlled territories.

The civil war forced thousands of refugees to flee their home countries on terrifying journeys to Western countries, hoping to escape the brutal regime. The Western media reported the arrive of millions of refugees. As in the article *PENYELESAIAN KONFLIK INTERNAL SURIAH MENURUT HUKUM INTERNASIONAL*, Hamid's novel exemplifies the experiences of refugees from Middle Eastern countries experiencing conflicts, such as Syria, which has been in turmoil since the Arab Spring in 2011 (Kinsal, 2014). This conflict led to numerous human rights violations, with many civilians killed, losing their families and homes, and ultimately feeling compelled to leave their countries in search of safety. These refugees dispersed across various countries, from Arab nations to Europe.

In the same regard, Arif Priyanto in his thesis entitled *MOHSIN HAMID'S WORLDVIEW ON REFUGEES IN EXIT WEST* (2021), posits that the city depicted in the passage appears to be under the control of militant forces with a strict religious agenda, which causes the escalating of refugee crisis, forcing thousands to flee to Western countries in search of safety and better opportunities for life. It is stated that:

Because of the militants' religious character and their prohibition on holding hands, listening to music, and restricting clothing resemble the current situation in ISIS-controlled territory to this day. As a result, these counties went into a civil war. As a result of that civil war, thousands of refugees fled their home countries on a terrifying journey to western counties [...] (p.34)

Saeed and Nadia, the main characters in *Exit West* by Mohsin Hamid, experience physical exile where individuals are being forced to live away from one's home country, often due to political or social reasons. In short, they undergone the profound and brutal transformations from citizens of their home country to refugees in a world increasingly defined by violence and displacement. As the situation deteriorates, the pervasive violence forces them to abandon the familiar and embark on a dangerous journey through a series of mysterious doors that transport them to different parts of the world. This transition from citizens to migrants is fraught with challenges in which the protagonists face an identity crisis amidst different

cultures. Saeed and Nadia must contend with the loss of their homes, the severing of community ties, and the constant threat of danger. Their migration is not just a physical journey but also an emotional and psychological one, as they grapple with their identities in new, often unwelcoming environments.

In their travels, they confront the harsh realities of refugee camps, the precariousness of illegal crossings, and the hostility of societies that view them as outsiders. The novel poignantly illustrates the universal plight of migrants, who are compelled to leave behind everything they know in search of safety and stability. The following analysis will shed light on these two characters, as they explore the challenges they face amidst profound socio-political changes. Both characters struggle with personal and collective adversities, revealing the ways in which external conflicts shape their inner worlds and decisions. Through their journeys, we gain insight into the broader implications of displacement, identity, and resistance in the face of systemic oppression.

1-Saeed Struggling between Cultural Origins and Cross-cultural Adaptation

He was an independent- minded, grown man, unmarried, with a decent post and good education and as was the case in those days in his city with most independent- minded, grown man, unmarried, with decent posts and good educations, he lived with his parents. (Hamid,2017, p12)

Saeed, one of the main characters in Mohsin Hamid's *Exit West*, is depicted as a self-reliant person with a successful profession and a strong academic foundation. Despite his maturity and independence, Saeed chooses to reside with his parents, reflecting his deep-rooted relationships and principles rather than constraints. This decision highlights the complexities of his personal and social circumstances, where traditional family structures and economic factors heavily influence personal choices. The norm in his city, where many men like him remain in their parents' homes, generates a tension between his self-reliance and societal expectations. Saeed's situation illustrates that, despite his personal and professional achievements, he must

navigate the constraints of his culture, balancing his independence with familial affection and the comfort of a familiar home. This duality provokes challenges related to self-sufficiency, societal norms, and economic pressures, even for those who are successful and independent.

Saeed's departure from his country signifies not only a physical journey but also an emotional upheaval, since he was forced to face the painful act of leaving behind cherished memories and relationships. This departure represents a poignant closing of doors, particularly his connection with his father. The story reflects the intensity of the profound emotional struggle Saeed endures:

Saeed and Nadia said this impossible, and explained, in case of misunderstanding, that there was no problem, that they had paid the agent for three passages and would all be leaving together, and Saeed's father heard them out but would not be budged: they, he repeated, had to go, and he had to stay. Saeed threatened to carry his father over his shoulder if he needed to, and he had never spoken to his father in this way, and his father took him aside, for he could see the pain he was causing his son, and when want to stay. (Hamid, 2017, p59)

This shows how Saeed is experiencing a deep emotional struggle. He wants his father to leave the country with him and Nadia, as they have already arranged and paid for three tickets. However, his father refuses to leave the country where he shared memories with his diseased wife, which is too difficult for him to bear, so, he insists that Saeed and Nadia must go without him. Saeed even threatens to carry his father if needed, showing how desperate he is and how deeply this situation affects him. This is a new and painful experience for Saeed, who has never leaved his home and his father in such a forceful way, which highlights Saeed's inner conflict and emotional pain as he is forced to choose between his duty to protect his family and his deep love and respect for his father's wishes and memories.

Saeed's deep connection to his roots, culture, religion and community, signifies more than just a memory of his homeland; it embodies his identity and sense of belonging. This attachment highlights the richness of his cultural heritage and the relationships formed within his community, which have shaped his values and worldview. The protagonist's identification

with his environment is not just about physical familiarity but also about emotional and psychological ties that define who he is.

Saeed desperately wanted to leave his city, in a sense he always had, thought he would leave it only temporarily, intermittently, never once and for all, and this looming potential departure was altogether different, for he doubted he would come back, and the scattering of his extended family and his circle of friends and acquaintances, forever, struck him as deeply sad, as amounting to the loss of a home, no, less, of his home.(Hamid, 2017, p.58).

Saeed's expression of sadness and regret about the things he lost by moving away demonstrates his thoughtful and introspective character. He deeply contemplates his circumstances and the consequences of his choices. Despite the chaos in his country, he seeks to preserve a sense of normalcy, he shows resilience in the face of adversity. It also emphasizes on the emotional and psychological challenges the refugees face, revealing how Saeed feels deeply sad and anxious about leaving his city without return. He's not just worried about displacing to another country but also about losing his home and the people who are important to him, which is crucial to one's sense of belonging and identity. Saeed's struggle reflects this broader issue, showing how refugees must deal with the sadness of losing their old lives while facing an uncertain future.

Living in his city, Saeed constantly reinforces his sense of identity through the people, places, and traditions that surround him. His interactions with family, friends, and the broader community strengthen his feelings of belonging and purpose. The sights, sounds, and smells of his city are more than just background details; they are essential parts of his personal story and memories. When he considers leaving his city, Saeed's struggle is not just about moving; it's about potentially losing these connections that are vital to his identity. The thought of his extended family and friends being scattered feels like his world is breaking apart, making the idea of "home" less real and more like a fading memory. This deep emotional pain highlights the refugee experience, where the need for safety and a better future often means leaving behind what truly feels like home.

In this regard we can mention Bhabha's concept of 'Unhomeliness' which is particularly relevant in the context of migration and diaspora, where individuals and communities are often uprooted from their familiar environments and thrust into new and often hostile territories. The process of adapting to a new cultural setting can exacerbate feelings of unhomeliness, as the migrant navigates the complexities of cultural assimilation and preservation. The sense of being neither here nor there, of belonging to multiple places yet fully to none, underscores the intricate dynamics of cultural hybridity.

Akçesme in his article *Exploring Un/homely lives in Mohsin Hamid's novel The Reluctant Fundamentalist (2021)*, states that according to Bhabha, being 'Unhomed' or feeling 'Unhomely' should not be confused with homelessness. Instead, 'Unhomeliness' describes a state where a person feels out of place even within their own familiar environment. Despite living in a new house, in a Western country and being surrounded by family, they might feel disconnected and alienated due to cultural differences, language barriers, and unfamiliar social norms. The physical space may be their home but the surrounding environment feels strange and unwelcoming which makes them torn between their own culture and the Western culture.

Saeed in *Exit West* embodies Bhabha's concept of 'Unhomeliness'. As stated in the narrative,

For his part Saeed removed the photo of his parents that he kept hidden in his clothing and placed it on a bookshelf, where it stood, creased, gazing upon them and transforming this narrow bedroom, at least partially, temporarily, into a home. (p.75)

This action highlights Saeed's attempt to create a sense of homeness in a foreign and unfamiliar environment. The photo symbolizes his connection to his past and his parents, bringing a touch of familiarity to the new space. However, despite this effort, the surrounding environment remains strange and alienation. This duality captures the essence of unhomeliness, where elements of familiarity and strangeness coexist, creating a complex experience of identity and place.

2-Nadia embracing change and cultural identity

Nadia, a spirited and defiant woman, is portrayed as one of the central characters in the novel *Exit west*. She views migration as an opportunity to embark on a transformative journey towards a fresh start. This perspective is exemplified in a scene where “*Nadia felt as she was doing it that she was playing house, as she had with her sister as a child, and Saeed felt as he was doing it that he was a bad son, [...]*” (Hamid,2017, p65). Unlike Saeed, who is sad to be stuck in his past, Nadia is depicted to be an adventures spirit. The ways they consider the refugee camp are indicative of their divergent views about life. Indeed, for Saeed, the refugee camp is a place of sorrow and finality, these feelings are captured when this character states “*For when we migrate, we murder our lives those who leave behind*” (Hamid, 2017, p60) As for Nadia, it is rather a potential beginning full of possibilities, for her nothing is more important than the present moment.

In London, Nadia encounters an environment reminiscent of the dynamic, vibrant atmosphere of a university dormitory on the first day of classes. This setting, marked by profound energy, anticipation, and a touch of chaos, mirrors her earlier university experience where she engaged with a diverse group of international students. The lively and somewhat disordered atmosphere of the dormitory facilitated intercultural interactions and the formation of new relationships.

Similarly, in the refugee camp, Nadia finds herself in a comparable environment, characterized by its own form of energetic diversity and temporary social dynamics. Just as the university dormitory brought together people from various backgrounds, adopting a rich mix of interactions, the refugee camp presents a similar variety of cultural encounters and communal exchanges. This parallel highlights how both environments, though vastly different in context, share a common feature: they are from significant cultural diversity and interaction. Thus,

Nadia's experiences in these settings illustrate how her engagement with a multicultural environment continues to shape her social interactions and perceptions, revealing the persistent chemistry between chaos and connectivity in her life. As Nadia reflects on her experience in the house, she observes

Nadia experienced the environment of the house as a bit like that of a university dormitory at the start of classes with complete strangers living in close proximity, many of them on their best behaviour, trying to add warmth to conversations and strike poses of friendship, hoping these gestures would become more natural over time. Outside the house much was random and chaotic, but inside, perhaps, a degree of order could be built. Maybe even a community. There were rough people everywhere, and in life roughness had to be managed. Nadia thought it madness to expect anything else. (Hamid, 2017, p.80)

Nadia's being in a refugee camp was a risk since she faced bad living conditions. In the house they grapple with relentless challenge of securing food. With supplies running out quickly, they were forced to secure depots and stalls for rations or rely on the goodwill of various groups offering free meals. However, these resources are exhausted within hours leaving individuals with few options.

All the food in the house was very quickly consumed. Some residents had money to buy more, but most had to spend their time foraging, which involved going to the depots and stalls where various groups were giving out rations or serving free soup and bread. (pp.80-81)

While Nadia and Saeed were searching for wild food resources, they faced another struggle related to security. As they return home with meager provisions, their evening abruptly turns into a nightmare as they encounter an armed nativist mob wreaking havoc on their street "*their street was under attack by a nativist mob*". In the face of imminent danger, the nativist mob that attacked Saeed and Nadia, were composed of people who held nativist beliefs, an ideology that prioritizes the interests of native-born or long-established residents over immigrants. The protagonists flee but find themselves caught in the violence, sustaining injuries that physically mark them. As a result, "*Nadia's eye was bruised and would soon swell shut and Saeed's lip was split and kept bleeding down his chin and onto his jacket*" (Hamid, 2017, 81).

Indeed, the absence of essential resources such as hospitals and legal protection in refugee camps poses significant risks for them.

d-Navigating new identities in Mohsin Hamid's Exit West

The refugee experiences often entail a profound sense of displacement and the struggle to reconcile one's past with their present reality. In *Exit West*, Saeed grapples with this tension as he navigates the loss of his homeland. He felt suspended between two worlds, where he feels connected to both his cultural heritage and his new surroundings, yet fully belonging to neither.

Saeed throughout his life has been a religious and a Muslim individual belonging to a devout family, “*Saeed prayed for peace and Saeed's father prayed for Saeed*” (Hamid, 2017, p.35) He was forced to migrate from his city in search for peace and better opportunities. He moved to Mykonos then to London where he occupied a luxurious house and finally to Marin; their last destination facing a gradual transformation while encountering different cultures and people.

Saeed finds comfort and a sense of belonging through his religious practice, which becomes a lifeline for him during times of loss and displacement. Through prayer he is able to tap into cherished memories and maintain a connection with his cultural heritage. This ritual provides him with a tangible link to his childhood and offers a sense of stability. He tries to engage with his past identity by engaging with his parents' worldview through religious observance. He states:

Now, though, in Marin, Saeed prayed even more, several times a day, and he prayed fundamentally as a gesture of love for what had gone and would go and could be loved in no other way. When he prayed he touched his parents, who could not otherwise be touched, and he touched a feeling that we are all children who lose our parents, all of us, every man and woman and boy and girl, and we too will all be lost by those who come after us and love us, and this loss unites humanity, unites every human being [...] that he did not know how to express this to Nadia, this mystery that prayer linked him to [...] (Hamid, 2017, 119)

One can say that Saeed is able to navigate his new identity rooted in tradition and familial connection which allows him to carry a piece of his past with him wherever he goes. This helps Saeed to preserve his sense of self, when “*he prayed he touched his parents, who could not otherwise be touched, and he touched a feeling that we are all children who lose our parents, all of us, [...]*” (p.119) This proves how Saeed finds comfort and a sense of connection through his prayers. When Saeed prays, he feels as if he is touching his parents, who are otherwise no longer with him. This act of praying helps him connect with his parents in a spiritual way, even though they are not physically present. The prayer also brings him a shared understanding that everyone eventually loses their parents, creating a tie with others who have faced similar losses. This experience helps Saeed maintain a link to his past and a sense of identity, showing how tradition and spiritual practices can offer comfort and continuity in the middle of displacement and change.

The cultural differences encountered by Saeed in the other countries has created a general sense of unease, especially when he was close to strangers, he feels discomfort with the language barrier which led to a feeling of being alienated in the sense that he was isolated. Since he cannot fully communicate or understand those around him. He writes:

For Saeed existence in the house was more jarring. On Mykonos he had preferred the outskirts of the migrant camps, and he had grown accustomed to a degree of independence from their fellow refugees, he was suspicious especially of the other men around, of whom there were many, and he found stressful to be packed in so tightly with people who spoke in tongues he did not understand. (Hamid, 2017, p80)

In navigating a new identity Saeed sought connection with others, but his actions often reflected his anxieties about living among people of different cultures and nationalities, hinting at the prejudices he faces despite his efforts to integrate and form a meaningful relationship, he encountered racism and discrimination that challenged his sense of belonging. Hamid writes:

He was the only man from his country, and those sizing him up were from another country, and there were for more of them, and he was alone. This touched upon something basic, something tribal, and evoked tension and a sort of suppressed fear. (Hamid, 2017, p89)

In contrast to Saeed, Nadia's journey toward a new identity is marked by resilience and adaptation from the beginning when she left her parents. She embraces migration as a means of self-discovery, her tough exterior, symbolized by the black Robe, which serves as a shield against the violence and censure she encounters “*she learned how to dress for self-protection*” (Hamid, 2017, p20)

Nadia's approach to new places is marked by an open mind and a hopeful heart, driven by her lack of a sense of belonging in her homeland. This mindset is particularly evident in Mykonos, where she encounters a kind girl who actively pursues a friendship with her. Despite initially being strangers, their bond grows stronger, illustrating Nadia's capacity for connection and adaptation. Typically self-reliant, Nadia learns to accept assistance with gratitude in this new environment, recognizing that vulnerability can be a source of strength. Their shared moments of enjoying coffee and finding rest highlight the development of Nadia's character. She begins to explore a new side of herself, one that is open to friendship and values the support of the community. This evolution reflects Nadia's journey toward embracing her identity and finding a sense of belonging through interpersonal connections. Mohsin Hamid illustrates this when he writes,

A partly shaved-haired local girl who was not a doctor or a nurse but just a volunteer, a teenager with a kind disposition, not more than eighteen or nineteen years of age, cleaned and dressed the wound, gently, holding Nadia's arm as though it was something precious, holding it almost shyly. The two women got to talking, and there was a connection between them [...] (Hamid, 2017, p71)

In Mohsin Hamid's narrative, Nadia's intense longing for a shower and clean clothes underscores her deep-rooted desire for basic human dignity and a sense of normalcy amidst her displacement. This yearning reflects not only a physical need for cleanliness but also a profound search for personal renewal and self-assertion in the face of disorienting circumstances. The act of seeking cleanliness becomes a means for Nadia to reclaim her sense of self and assert her

humanity against the backdrop of dehumanizing conditions. As Hamid illustrates, “*Nadia wanted to take a shower more than anything, [...] more even than she wanted food [...] she thought her body looked like the body of an animal, a savage*” (Hamid, 2017, p. 76). This quote reveals how Nadia’s preoccupation with cleanliness signifies a primal need to reestablish her identity and dignity, which are threatened by her current situation. Her pursuit of cleanliness thus represents a form of resistance, highlighting her struggle to maintain her self-worth and humanity despite the overwhelming challenges of displacement.

Nadia’s evolving experiences lead to a significant transformation in her understanding of her own identity, particularly in terms of her sexuality. As she adapts to her circumstances, she comes to terms with her bisexuality, recognizing a shift in her attractions and desires. Her growing indifference towards her partner's attractiveness signifies a notable change in her emotional orientation. Hamid captures this transformation through Nadia's reflections, saying that:

It was not that her sensuality, her sense of the erotic, had died. She found herself aroused readily, by a beautiful man she passed as she walked down to work, by memories of the musician who had been her first lover, by thoughts of the girl from Mykonos. [...], and when she pleased herself, she thought increasingly of that girl, the girl from Mykonos,” (Hamid, 2017, p. 118).

The quote above illustrates how Nadia’s erotic interest remains alive but has shifted towards women, revealing her growing acceptance of her bisexuality. Her increasing focus on the girl from Mykonos and her comfort with this attraction, indicate a move towards embracing her sexual identity with greater self-awareness. Nadia’s experience thus highlights her personal evolution, marked by a redefinition of her desires and a more authentic alignment with her sense of self.

Chapter two: Compare and Contrast Identity and Political Exile in Ngugi Wa Thiong'O's Wizard of The Crow (2006) and Mohsin Hamid's Exit West (2017)

Ngugi Wa Thiong'O's *Wizard of the crow* and Mohsin Hamid's *Exit West* are two different narratives which emerged from their respective socio-political backgrounds, addressing the themes of identity and political exile. Ngugi's satirical novel is based on post-colonial African politics and deals with systematic corruption and authoritarian oppression in fictional African nations. On the other hand, Hamid's focus is on the psychological and human impacts of migration and conflict in rapidly evolving worlds, providing a more global outlook on displacement.

Despite the fact that those authors use magical realism to explore the transformation of identity through political exile, they do so in ways that are specific to their own historical contexts. one closely tied to African post-colonial struggles and the other to the global crisis. This chapter, thus, aims at highlighting the differences the novels have in respectively dealing with exile, magical realism, and the reshaping of identity in a time of political unrest.

a-Oppression in Wizard of the Crow and Exit West

James Ngugi 's *Wizard of the Crow* is a faithful depiction of the neocolonial phenomenon in Kenya of the independence period. Though characters like The Ruler and his ministers, Kenya represented as Aburiria renews the practices of the former colonizer. After gaining independence from British colonial rule, Kenya faced a host of challenges rooted in its colonial past period despite seeking autonomy, the country grappled with enduring political, economy, and cultural difficulties inherited from its colonial history. As Kenya sought to rebuild

itself in the aftermath of devastation, it encountered ongoing obstacles in its pursuit of true sovereignty and progress, including the issue of neocolonialism.

Neocolonialism deals with how the colonized countries are manipulated by neo-colonialists through economic, political and monetary means. It refers to a situation where a nation seems independent but in reality, it is under the economic and political influence of external power. Kenya was one of the African nations which appears to have self-governance, but decisions about its affairs are made by foreign countries.

Neocolonialism manifests in various ways in the oppressed countries, the developed nations seek to control these countries to exploit them for the sake of their interests, one of these countries is China. They impose a belief that African countries lack the technology to produce locally. This is how Kenya and other African countries are forced to export their natural resources to western nations then import their finished products at higher price.

Kenya's struggle with neocolonialism is further worsened by its reliance on exporting raw materials, and importing finished products which restrain local industrial growth and keeps many people unemployed. Along with these economic problems, China played as a broader issue of neocolonialism in African nations like Kenya.

Ngugi Wa Thiong'O believes that literature is always related to the social, economic and political conditions of its origins, especially in Africa, Kenya where literature manifests against the white's imperialism. He expresses his disillusionment with independence, since it is only a shift from an oppressive colonial system to a new ruling in postcolonial period. Ngugi renowned for his critical exploration of postcolonial Africa, showcases his adeptness in dissecting the complexities of colonialism and its aftermath in *Wizard of the Crow* (2006). Rooted in his own experiences growing up in postcolonial Kenya and witnessing the struggles of his people, Ngugi's work reflects a deep understanding of the postcolonial condition.

In *Wizard of the Crow*, Ngugi delves into themes such as identity, exploitation, corruption, oppression, and education, all quintessential to the postcolonial narrative. Through the characters and their interactions, he vividly portrays the multifaceted layers of postcolonial reality, from the loss of cultural identity to the pervasive exploitation by both local elites and foreign powers.

Both Ngugi Wa Thiong'O's *Wizard of the Crow* and Mohsin Hamid's *Exit West* explore the theme of oppression in the postcolonial period, through different contexts, mirroring the distinct historical and cultural contexts of their settings. In *Wizard of the Crow*, Ngugi demonstrates how the new leaders continue to oppress the citizens like the old colonial rulers, despite Aburiria's independence.

These leaders maintain the same system of exploitation and control as the Western power, assuming the role of the former colonizers, and continuing to exploit the nation's natural resources and manipulate the populace for their own gain. The characters of The Ruler and his ministers serve as the symbolic manifestation of neocolonialism where they adopt the Western lifestyles, values and even their oppressive structures.

Through Bhabha's concept of 'Mimicry', Ngugi's portrayal of the Ruler and the ministers and their mimicry of Western norms, reveals the continuity of power dynamics from the colonial to the postcolonial era, illustrating how the populace were left marginalized and voiceless under the control of the new leaders while they maintain the same exploitative practices under the guise of independence.

Mohsin Hamid's *Exit West* portrays the neocolonial impact on Pakistan during the postindependence period. Through the government's failure to govern effectively, Pakistan represented by the unnamed city embodies the challenges and hardships faced by exiled people. Neocolonialism was first introduced by the United States by establishing organizations.

In previous decades, America attempted to implement neo-colonialism in Pakistan by providing international monetary funds. It is also one of the nations that influenced Pakistan, as well as colonized regions, through financial assistance and political pressure. Therefore, it is evident that the power of the Western countries significantly impacts Pakistan's economic and political situations, including decisions made by the Pakistani government.

Due to its strategic geopolitical position, Pakistan become a significant interest for major powers, further complicating its internal dynamics and making more nations interested in fostering neocolonialism to exploit and benefit from its riches, leaving Pakistan's natives struggling economically, financially and politically. That is why Pakistan is neocolonised and controlled, despite gaining its independence.

Soon after independence the rulers of Pakistan began to yield to all types of inducements to enter into neocolonial economic and military alliances in order to preserve the internal systems of privilege and power, and the external control of the cheap labor and raw material of the country. Pakistan was ruled by a group of elites who shared the same interests, each individual of this group seeks to gain greater control over administrative and financial matters so to raise their influence and authority.

Mohsin Hamid uses his literary works as a connection between the Eastern and the Western cultures, providing reflections on the impact of colonialism and its legacies. Through Hamid's novels such as *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* (2007) and *Exit West* (2017), he portrays Pakistan's culture and issues from which this country is suffering, by exploring themes like global conflict, neocolonial oppression, identity crisis, global refugee crisis and migration. He reflects through his characters and their experiences the complexities of the postcolonial world, revealing how colonialism influenced societies in both the East and the West. He

portrays his characters struggling in cultural hybridity, facing difficult challenges to preserve their origins and identify their self-determination.

Since Mohsin Hamid's works serve as a connection between the East and the West, in his novel *Exit West*, he shows the existence of the two different cultures at the same time and same characters. The main character Nadia, though she left her home to live alone and be an independent woman, still wears the Burka, a long black dress that covers the whole women's body. Here it is evident the existence of the Western ideology of an independent woman who lives alone, yet the existence of the Eastern culture is undeniable which is the wearing of the Burka that represents a cultural and religious identity.

Contrary to Ngugi Wa Thiong'O's *Wizard of the Crow*, Mohsin Hamid's *Exit West* tries to show postcolonial oppression through the failure resulted by the broken system rather than the deliberate exploitation of the oppressive regime. Hamid portrays a breakdown of societal structures and governance due to the characteristics of the representation of Pakistan, the unnamed city; war, political unrest, and economic decline, which marked the governance's inability to bestow security, stability, or opportunities for its citizens unlike the authoritarian regime in Ngugi's *Wizard of the Crow*.

This systemic collapse forced the protagonists, Saeed and Nadia to flee and seek refuge elsewhere far from the fearful and uncertain city, since it became a risky existence for its citizens. Thus, Hamid highlights how the collapse of governance and societal structures can lead to the spread of suffering and displacement, reflecting a different dimension of postcolonial oppression compared to Ngugi's depiction.

b-Displacement and Exile as Forms of Resistance in Ngugi's Wizard of the Crow and Hamid's Exit West

When comparing the theme of exile in Ngugi Wa Thiong'O's *Wizard of the Crow* and Mohsin Hamid's *Exit West*, it becomes evident that both novels tackle this theme differently. Each novel displays a different type of exile, in *Wizard of the Crow*, the main characters Kamiti and Nyawira experience internal exile where they feel alienated from society, government, and their surroundings. In *Exit West*, the protagonists Saeed and Nadia escaped their homeland seeking refuge in the foreign countries.

Ngugi's *Wizard of the Crow* roots its exploration of interior exile in the specific political and historical context of postcolonial Africa, where this type of exile is depicted as both a consequence and a response to neocolonial oppression. Ngugi's narrative suggests that alienating oneself from the society can serve as a powerful form of resistance that allows individuals and communities to challenge and undermine the oppressive forces that seek to control them.

Exit West reflects a contemporary, globalized context where migration is universal and inescapable, affecting individuals' sense of self and belonging in profound ways. Hamid's portrayal of fluid movement across borders through magical black doors, combined with the emotional dislocation of his characters as they go through the door,

but approached the door, and drawing close she was struck 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, and she turned to Saeed and found him staring at her, and his face was full of worry, and sorrow, and she took his hands in hers and held them tight, and then, releasing them, and without a word, she stepped through. (Hamid,2017, p63)

analyses the identity crisis in a world where the nation's traditions and belonging are increasingly unstable. The magical doors in the story let Saeed and Nadia travel easily between countries, showing how national borders are becoming less important. However, this easy

movement does not solve their emotional and psychological problems, while struggling with losing their cultural roots and finding their identities in new places.

In relation to the forms of exile and displacement, each novel show how the main characters resist their oppressors. Kamiti and Nyawira resist oppression as members of the movement called the Voice of The People. As political activists, they actively challenge the authoritarian regime in Aburiria. Their involvement in the movement signifies their commitment to fighting for justice and freedom.

Eventually, the escalating danger forces them to alienate themselves from their surroundings, intending to hide their true identities to resist the Ruler's tyranny and authority. At first Kamiti refused to act as the wizard of the crow, but after experiencing the feeling of being respected, he accepts the wizard's role, creating a deep internal conflict. After several events, he reflects on his journey

Yesterday morning I was a job hunter. Midday I was a corpse, a piece of garbage about to be buried among other garbage. In the afternoon I was an object of Tajirika's self-amusement. In the evening I was a beggar among beggars outside the gates of Paradise. Last night I was on the run, pursued by His Mighty's police force. This morning I was the Wizard of the Crow, divining for one of His Mighty's police officers. And tonight I am a watchman in the house of a mysterious woman whom I met only yesterday. (Ngugi,2006, p149)

Kamiti's experience distances him from his original identity, underscoring his alienation from both society and himself. Saeed and Nadia's exile from their country to different ones is also a way to resist the political power, their choice to leave their homeland is an act to reject the oppressive conditions and authoritarian regime that have vanished peace from their country. Their departure serves as a powerful statement against the power structures that seek to control and limit their freedom.

Ngugi Wa Thiong'O's *Wizard of the Crow* presents exile as a conscious act of resistance, where maintaining cultural identity amid alienation serves as a form of political defiance. For the characters Kamiti and Nyawira, internal exile is rooted in a refusal to conform

to the corrupt and oppressive regime, making their alienation a means of preserving integrity and preventing the loss of cultural values. This form of exile emphasizes the political and ideological values of identity within the postcolonial African context, where defying neocolonial powers becomes essential for self-determination.

In contrast, Mohsin Hamid's *Exit West* portrays exile as an unavoidable reality of the modern, globalized world, where physical exile reshapes identity and the sense of belonging. For Saeed and Nadia, crossing national borders through magical doors symbolizes the fluidity of modern migration, yet also underscores the emotional fragmentation that comes with leaving behind one's cultural origins. Hamid's exploration centers on the personal values of migration, showing how the search for identity becomes more complex in an interconnected yet unstable world.

In *Exit West*, the portrayal of an unnamed war-torn city reflects not just a singular location but a universal experience of displacement, resonating deeply even with his own country's history of internal displacement. Specifically, in 2009, Pakistan experienced one of its most severe displacement crises, primarily due to military operations against Taliban insurgents in regions like the Malakand District of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. As violence intensified in the spring of 2009, approximately 2.3 million people were forced to flee their homes within just a couple of weeks, resulting in one of the world's largest internal displacement crises at the time.

Hamid's decision to leave his fictional setting unnamed captures the universality of such crises, allowing readers to connect the novel's events to similar experiences in Pakistan and other regions affected by conflict and migration. The difficulties of Saeed and Nadia, who must explore the unfamiliar world as refugees, equals the journeys of displaced Pakistanis who faced hostility, suspicion, and barriers to integration in new communities. Hamid's characters embody

the resilience, adaptability, and longing for stability that countless refugees and displaced Pakistanis experienced in response to conflicts that reshaped their lives.

c-Reshaping of Identity in Ngugi's Wizard of the Crow and Mohsin Hamid's

Exit West

Both Ngugi Wa Thiong'O's *Wizard of the Crow* and Mohsin Hamid's *Exit West* deal with the theme of identity through distinct ways because of the different settings and narratives of the novels. In *Wizard of the Crow*, the focus is more on identity in relation to power, politics and resistance, within the context of a postcolonial African society which is still struggling with the legacies of colonialism.

The novel explores how the protagonists adapt and shift from one identity to another as a means of survival and resistance against the oppressive regime. Particularly the main character, Kamiti who assumes the identity of the *Wizard of the Crow*, due to a lack of employment opportunities in Aburiria. Just when he starts his journey as a beggar, the authoritative guards try to arrest him and Nyawira. There he wrote a warning to not trespass the wizard of the crow's territory, "*WARNING! THIS PROPERTY BELONGS TO A WIZARD WHOSE POWER BRINGS DOWN HAWKS AND CROWS FROM THE SKY. TOUCH THIS HOUSE AT YOUR PERIL. SGD. WIZARD OF THE CROW*", and with the help of a dead lizard and a frog, he successfully scared the guards away by assimilating the role of a wizard of the crow.

Kamiti was forced to continue to act as the wizard of the crow, becoming a respectful and fearful mystical healer which pushed him to embrace this new identity to navigate in a corrupt and unjust society. As he takes on this role, Kamiti finds that the identity of the Wizard grants him influence and authority he could not have achieved as being himself.

This duality of self, drives him to grapple with how this new identity influences his understanding of who he is. Kamiti was originally a humble ordinary man, then after performing as the mystical healer, he gets more confident and empowered, as the new identity allows him to challenge and resist the oppressive forces of the government.

In *Exit West*, the theme of identity is deeply shaped by the characters' experience of exile and displacement to several places due to political conflicts and migration. As the main characters travel through mysterious black doors that take them to different locations, their identity is exposed to ongoing changes, each new environment, with its various cultures, traditions, and challenges, forces them to adapt in distinct ways.

Nadia's identity, rooted in her belief in independence and rejection of traditions, allows her to easily adapt to these changing environments. She accepts the new cultures, and experiences they encounter, seeing it as an opportunity to change and adapt to new environments. This acceptance is shown through Nadia's experience with the Nigerian community, noting that

[...] Nigerians spoke different tongues among themselves, and belonged to different religions. Together in this group they conversed in a language that was built in large part from English, but not solely from English, and some of them were in any case more familiar with English than were others. Also they spoke different variations of English, different Englishes, and so when Nadia gave voice to an idea or opinion among them, she did not need to fear that her views could not be comprehended, for her English was like theirs, one among many. (Hamid,2017, p88)

In contrast, Saeed's identity is deeply connected to his relation with his home, family and religion. For Saeed, these connections are crucial to his sense of self and belonging, and as he moves farther from his homeland, he struggles to maintain a stable identity. Each new place creates an internal conflict, causing Saeed to cling more tightly to his religious practices and memories of home.

Saeed's dilemma further worsens as the native population treat them, the refugees; as outsiders who do not belong among the citizens. The hostility comes from the widespread

resentment against migrants, as native-born residents perceive them as intruders. The native inhabitants react with a mix of disbelief and anger as their homeland transforms in response to migration. Rumors circulate about tightening cordons

being put in place, a cordon moving through those of London's boroughs with fewer doors, and hence fewer new arrivals, sending those unable to prove their legal residence to great holding camps that had been built in the city's greenbelt, and concentrating those who remained in pockets of shrinking size. Whether or not this was true there was no denying that an ever more dense zone of migrants was to be found in Kensington and Chelsea and in the adjacent parks, and around this zone were soldiers and armored vehicles, and above it were drones and helicopters, and inside it were Nadia and Saeed, who had run from war already, and did not know where next to run, and so were waiting, waiting, like so many others (Hamid,2017, p.83)

The natives believe that the need to confine the migrants to specific zones, guarded by soldiers and surrounded by drones and armoured vehicles, intensifying the refugees' sense of imprisonment and displacement. Saeed grows anxious and feels the weight of his outsider status.

Saeed seeks comfort in his cultural and religious identity. He becomes closer to those who share his language and traditions, feeling a connection to a community that provides an impression of belonging in an unfamiliar land. For instance, he is comforted by attending prayer gatherings where people from his homeland come together. He feels a connection that gives him a sense of continuity and a way to manage with the overwhelming displacement, even though it often sharpens the contrast between his past and present life. It is shown how he seeks refuge to his past culture to resist the harsh realities, especially when he visits

AROUND A BEND, on Vicarage Gate, was a house known to be a house of people from his country. Saeed began to spend more time there, drawn by the familiar languages and accents and the familiar smell of the cooking. One afternoon he was there at prayer time, and he joined his fellow countrymen in prayer in the back garden, under a blue sky that seemed shockingly blue, like the sky of another world, absent the airborne dust of the city where he had spent his entire life, [...], and as he prayed he felt praying was different here, somehow, in the garden of this house, with these men. It made him feel part of something, not just something spiritual, but something human, part of this group, [...] (Hamid,2017, p.90).

The conflict between Saeed's needs for stability and the continuously changing causes him an identity crisis, making him unsure of who he is without the familiar comfort of his home

and religion. In Marin, Saeed's hybrid identity further develops as he encounters an African American preacher who embodies both familiarity and novelty. The preacher shares a connection to Saeed's culture through his late wife and speaks some of Saeed's language, creating a sense of shared experience.

Yet, the preacher also introduces Saeed to a new approach to faith, one that combines spiritual guidance with practical support, such as feeding, sheltering, and teaching English to his congregation. This fusion of the familiar and the new gives Saeed a sense of belonging even in a foreign land and it highlights his ability to connect his cultural and religious roots with new influences. As the novel describes,

The preacher was a widower, and his wife had come from the same country, and so the preacher knew some of Saeed's language, and his approach to religion was partly familiar to Saeed, while at the same time partly novel, too. The preacher did not solely preach. Mainly he worked to feed and shelter his congregants, and teach them English. (Hamid, 2017, p.117)

This familiarity provides Saeed with a comforting link to his origins, allowing him to feel the presence of aspects of his culture even within this foreign place. Saeed discovers a way to harmonize his beliefs with his new surroundings, connecting his religious and cultural roots to a broader interpretation of faith.

This experience reinforces Saeed's sense of belonging in his new home, highlighting his ability to develop a hybrid identity that remains rooted in his culture yet open to change. In doing so, Saeed exemplifies the potential for refugees to adapt between two important things, merging the familiar with the foreign in ways that allow for growth, resilience, and connection. In short, as Bhabha's concept of 'Hybridity' highlights that the mixture of two different cultures results to a new identity. Through Saeed, the novel shows how cultural blending can offer displaced individuals a renewed sense of self, as they adapt without forgetting their values.

d-The Concept of the “Other” in Ngugi’s Wizard of the Crow and Hamid’s

Exit West

The concept of the “Other” in Ngugi’s *Wizard of the Crow* and Hamid’s *Exit West*, plays an important role in shaping the story, yet each of the novels reflect this concept in different contexts. In Ngugi’s novel, the concept of the “Other” appears in relation to power, oppression and identity. The oppressive regime of Aburiria defines the population as the “Other”, seeking to dominate, exploit and dehumanize them.

This Othering prevents the people of their rights and dignity, making them powerless under the regime’s control, it is mainly the aftermath influence of the Western powers reflected by the governor and the Global bank institution. They view the “Other” as an object of manipulation to exploit them for their political and economic interests without considering the society’s values and rights.

In *Wizard of the Crow*, Kamiti and Nyawira embody the concept of “the Other” as individuals marginalized by the regime. Kamiti, before taking on the role of the mystical wizard of the crow, he is just a simple man wondering the streets in search for job, since he does not have any power or money, he is marginalized and unvoiced just like Aburiria’s citizens. It is after playing his wizardry role that he becomes an ambiguous figure feared, he gets respect and acknowledgement from both the Aburirians and the ruling class.

Kamiti is not only isolated by the regime but also by the population, marking him as an outsider who challenges the state's authority. Nyawira, as a rebel against the autocratic rule, actively resists being alienated from both the people and Aburiria’s elite. Thus, both Kamiti and Nyawira are “Othered” because they defy the norms imposed by the ruling class. The characters are “Othered” by The Ruler treating their lives as if it is not an important matter, as it is stated

'The squad was to arrest the woman in secrecy, throw her into a van with a fake license plate, and take the prisoner directly to Sikiokuu.' (Ngugi,2006, p.256)

In Hamid's narrative, the concept of the "Other" is specifically illustrated through the experiences of the refugees like Saeed and Nadia as they migrate across borders in search of safety. As the main characters travel from one country to another, they are constantly treated as the "Other" by the local populations who saw them as outsiders, inferior in multiple ways due to their lack of resources, foreign accents and unfamiliar cultural practices, and they are viewed even as a threat for their safety.

The native population's rejection of the refugees goes further as to attack and injure them, since they feel a sense of anger, believing that their country becomes swollen by refugees and migrants who threaten their identity and status. Saeed and Nadia as one of the refugees face an attack by a nativist mob who left Nadia with an

eye was bruised and would soon swell shut and Saeed's lip was split and kept bleeding down his chin and onto his jacket, and in their terror they each gripped with all their might a hand of the other to avoid being separated, but they were merely knocked down, like many others, and on that evening of riots across their part of London only three lives were lost, not many by the recent standards of where they had come from. (Hamid,2017, p.81)

This attack intensifies Saeed and Nadia's feelings of isolation and alienation, as they realize that they are not safe or welcomed wherever they go. This event further complicates Saeed's identity crisis, as he confronts the reality that, regardless of his hopes for acceptance, he remains the "Other" in the eyes of the native society. It is an experience that not only wounds him physically but also leaves a lasting impact on his sense of belonging and self-worth in exile.

The refugees, including Saeed and Nadia, face rejection and marginalization because they are seen as strangers who do not belong to the society, this view of inferiority manifests in the way they are denied access to opportunities and treated with disdain and subjugated to discriminatory laws or social practices that limit their rights and freedoms. This experience of

being the “Other” highlights how migration not only disrupts people physically but also disconnects them socially and emotionally from the communities they seek to join.

e-Postcolonial Identities in Ngugi Wa Thiong’O’s Wizard of the Crow (2006) and Mohsin Hamid’s Exit West (2017)

In Ngugi’s *Wizard of the Crow*, the impact of colonization in the postindependence period is shown in the persistence of exploitation, and continuation of colonial oppression through neocolonial ruling elite. He emphasizes how the government mimics colonial strategies to maintain control over Aburiria’s economy and politics, the authority further mimics the colonial customs, lifestyle, and clothes.

Ngugi presents the postindependence identities of Kamiti and Nyawira, shaped by a legacy of colonial influence. Both characters explore a society that mirrors colonial oppression through a neocolonial ruling elite. The lingering effects of colonialism manifest in their hybrid identities and their need for concealment, as they shift between roles or migrate to resist the oppressive regime and survive.

In *Wizard of the Crow*, the protagonist Kamiti, who was educated in India, brings a blend of traditional African and foreign knowledge, adopting the role of the wizard of the crow as a form of disguise. This mystical identity serves as both a defence and a weapon against the oppressive regime, allowing him to interact with those in power without revealing his true identity.

Kamiti’s role as the wizard of the crow enables him to challenge the rulers and help the oppressed, yet this disguise distances him from his own identity, creating a dual existence that echoes postcolonial alienation. Kamiti’s transformation reflects his fractured identity in the

postcolonial society, as he is forced to face the tension between his cultural roots and the challenging tactics imposed by a neocolonial system.

Similarly, Nyawira adopts a hybrid identity in her resistance. She takes on disguises, initially as a beggar, and later participates as the wizard of the crow to protest against the regime's exploitation. Her actions reflect a strategic self-alienation, as she hides her true self to protect her life and that of others. This forced detachment from her authentic identity shows how colonial legacies have left individuals unable to fully inhabit their own identities under oppressive regimes.

Ngugi uses these transformations to illustrate how the lingering effects of colonialism force individuals to experience fractured identities. Kamiti and Nyawira's hybrid identities are a means of survival, embodying Homi Bhabha's concept of 'Hybridity', where individuals blend elements of their own culture with the imposed structures of the colonizers. This hybrid identity, however, alienates them from their true selves, highlighting the ongoing impact of colonialism in postindependence Kenya.

In *Exit West*, Saeed and Nadia's identities reflect the impact of colonial influence, both characters experience a conflict between their traditional values and the imposed modern, Westernized lifestyles, a tension that shapes their personalities in distinctive ways. For Saeed, his connection to religion and family emphasizes a strong cultural identity rooted in the familiar values of his community. Despite changes in his city, Saeed maintains his cultural practices, such as praying regularly, symbolizing his desire to stay connected to his roots even as the world around him changes. This illustrates Homi Bhabha's concept of "hybridity," where Saeed negotiates between preserving his identity while witnessing the Western influences impacting his city.

In contrast, Nadia's identity embodies a more rebellious, Westernized or hybridized character. She wears a black robe, a traditional garment that serves as a shield, offering her a hybrid identity, trying to maintain her cultural. However, unlike Saeed, Nadia embraces Western elements like living independently away from her family, and engaging in practices considered unconventional by her society. This hybridity in her identity illustrates how colonialism has influenced her life by reshaping societal expectations and values. Nadia's actions reflect her attempt to build a unique identity that merges both traditional and Western ideals, allowing her to handle through her surroundings with independence and adaptability.

V. Conclusion

This piece of research, we examined the issues of identity and political exile in Ngugi Wa Thiong'O's *Wizard of the Crow* (2006) and Mohsin Hamid's *Exit West* (2017), using postcolonial theory, particularly Homi K. Bhabha's concepts of 'Hybridity' and 'Mimicry'.

In the first chapter, we analysed the characters of *Wizard of the Crow* and *Exit West*. We emphasised on the representation of oppression through the neocolonial governments, who either imitate the Western power's lifestyles and oppressive method, or fail to maintain peace and security in the country. The latter cause the population suffering from their tyrannical tactics, and the consequences of their failure which led to the protagonists' political exile, influencing their identity formation.

In the second chapter, we compared the themes of identity and political exile in *Wizard of the Crow* by Ngugi Wa Thiong'O and *Exit West* by Mohsin Hamid, highlighting both the affinities and divergences in each author's portrayal. Ngugi uses the postcolonial African context to explore identity through resistance to neocolonial oppression, with the main characters, Kamiti and Nyawira adopting hybrid identities to challenge authority. In contrast, Hamid situates identity within the global refugee crisis, showing how Saeed and Nadia's identities transform as they navigate multiple cultures through migration. This chapter also addresses the different representations of "the Other". Ngugi presents it as an oppressed population dehumanized by a corrupt regime, and the protagonists' marginalization by the society. While Hamid focuses on the refugee experience, where characters face alienation as foreigners in new lands.

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