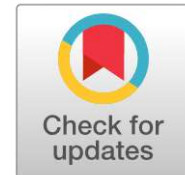


POETICS OF MIGRATION TRAUMA IN MOHSIN HAMID'S *EXIT WEST*

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Abstract

Migration has emerged as one of the most pertinent issues in the contemporary milieu. Currently, more than ever, people from many countries are being forced to migrate because of religious, social, cultural, national, racial and economic issues. This increasing trend of shifting from one place to another is causing an epistemological shift in the current milieu of human history. *Exit West* (2017) by Hamid is one of those novels that develops a discursive discourse of the ongoing migrant crisis, and highlights the ugly realities related to the phenomenon of relocation. It chronicles the story of two lovers, Nadia and Saeed, who migrate from their conflict-ridden country to save their lives. This paper configures the poetics of migration trauma in the contemporary literature by analyzing the symbols, metaphors and narrative technique used in Hamid's text with the aim of tracing a discursive aesthetic trajectory of the migration trauma discourse.

Key words: Trauma, Migration, Door, Poetics, Drone

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Human civilization has been through multiple personal and public traumas since the beginning of times. These traumas related to wars, plagues, massacres, genocides, natural calamities, terrorist attacks and personal individual tragedies affected both physical and psychological makeup of the human race. So, trauma, in both public and personal lives has been a constant in human history. The field of trauma studies evolved over time and had been through various phases. This field studies multi-dimensional traumas under the aegis of Natural Sciences, Social Sciences and Humanities. Migration is one of the issues that are being discussed under the praxis of trauma. More and more people are migrating from one place to another in multitudes on the pretexts of regional, national, religious, ethnic and political issues. Therefore, it is incumbent to study this phenomenon for a better comprehension and resolution of this issue. This research paper is a semiotic analysis of migration trauma in one of the most prolific fictional responses to the growing refugee crisis, *Exit West* (2017), penned down by Mohsin Hamid. By conducting a hermeneutics analysis of the symbols, metaphors, allusions and linguistic dimensions, this paper will analyze physical, emotional and technological kinds of traumas which migrants have to go through during their relocation.

Literature Review

Before delving into an in-depth analysis of the text, it is imperative to highlight the contours of studies already conducted in the field of migration trauma. In addition to this, it is also important to highlight the evolving meaning of the concept 'trauma', an all-time increase in refugee population all around the world, poetics of relationship between trauma and literature, trauma and migration and migration literature. Furthermore, it is necessary to observe the research contribution that has already been made by the interconnections between trauma, literature, and migration while anticipating the potential of more research that lies inherent in this interdisciplinary field. Therefore, this paper will first of all enumerate the pertinent issues and previous researches related to the interconnections between trauma, literature, and migration.

Most often, the problem of migration trauma has been studied from social sciences perspective, where migration is considered as a "security threat", "governance problem" (Munck, 2008, p. 1227), and a "key aspect of social change" (Castles, 2012, p. 155). Migrants are also considered a challenge for development (Munck, 2008, p. 1244; Hass,

2010, p. 258) which might have repercussions for the economy of the host country (Taylor et al., 1996, p. 397). However, the ongoing contours of migration and its features are “multifaceted and complex” (Jayet & Rapoport, 2010, p. 5; Taylor & al., 1996, p. 410) and there are not many comprehensive and integrated theoretical frameworks to study migration (Arango, 2000; Mangalam & Schwarzweller 3-18). Hence, in order to capture complex realities related to migration, a “semi-scientific manner of research” is required (Munck, 2008, p. 1230). Therefore, in the area of migration studies, it is imperative to collaborate for cross-disciplinary studies which might prove to be “a fertile way of extending the methodological range of research, of highlighting previously neglected aspects, and of identifying new questions for consideration” (Munck, 2008, p. 1230). This collaborative research will also extend the methods of analysis and enhance the understanding of the phenomena of migration (King, Connell & White, 1995). Hence, this paper is an attempt to study migration from a semi-scientific perspective provided usually by the field of humanities.

To begin with, trauma studies have zoomed into a sharper focus in contemporary era after the terrible instance of 9/11. The meaning of this term has evolved over time as it meant a physical injury before 18th century and now entails hybrid meanings and connotations. In dictionary terms, ‘trauma’ means “a deeply distressing or disturbing experience” (*ODE*, 2005, p. 1877) and an “emotional shock following a stressful event or physical injury, which may lead to long-term neurosis” (*ODE*, 2005, p. 1877). This word has been derived from the Greek word ‘wound’ (*ODE*, 2005, p. 1877). In these terms, trauma can be both physical and mental which can have ramifications for an individual’s subjectivity formation. Recently, trauma has become subject of ontological and epistemological inquiries which lead to innovative studies related to both praxis and poetics of trauma studies (Broderick and Traverso, 2011; Casper and Wertheimer, 2016).

This rise in the studies in trauma has also led to interdisciplinary studies of the impact of trauma in literature, film, media, sociology, psychology and politics (Tageldin, 2003; Buelens, Durrant, & Eaglestone, 2014; Nadal & Calvo, 2014; Broderick & Traverso, 2010; Heidarizadeh, 2014; Alexander, 2012). A few notable literary studies related to the praxis of trauma have been conducted by Caruth Cathy (1995), Ann Kaplan (2005), Kali Tal (2006), Michelle Balaev (2014), and Roger Kurtz (2018), Tom Toremans (2018) and Madeline Hron (2018) which highlight the multiple dimensions of trauma theories that

can be applied to literature from different eras. These literary endeavours either analyse literary works according to a psychoanalytic perspective or conduct a semiotic analysis of the text under consideration. This paper, in adherence to the semiotic analytical studies of trauma, will highlight the linguistic and literary element of the texts.

In addition to many other contemporary issues, migration is also one of the emerging field of study that is being studied under the praxis of trauma (Broderick & Traverso, 2010; Mazetti, 2008; Hron, 2018). Recently, there has been a dramatic rise in the number of migrants in the 21st century (Castles, 2012, p. 155). There is an all-time increased desire to migrate from down-trodden, war-ridden, extremist and plagued countries to developed and prosperous countries (Hass, 2010, p. 286; Gálvez, 2014, p. 169) because of globalization and advanced means of transportation available in contemporary times (Munck, 2008, p. 1229; Held & al., 2000, p. 2; Naerssen, Spaan, & Zoomers, 2008, p. 1; Paik, 2009, p. 1; Frank, 2008, p. 1). Resultantly, mass migration at this crucial juncture in the history of humanity inspired global intelligentsia to produce visual, pictorial and written accounts of migrations happening all around the globe (Frank, 2008). Mohsin Hamid has also written a detailed account of the contemporary migration crisis in his latest novel, *Exit West* (2017). The novel was an immediate success because it was so timely and pertinent.

The theme of dislocation is not only prevalent in Hamid's novels, but it is also the focus of many other authors. In fact, contemporary world is haunted by the "specter of migration" (Hardt and Negri, 2000, p. 133-134) and this "Age of Migration" (Castles & Miller, 2012, p. 1) has given rise to the creative productions on migration (Frank, 2008, p. 2; Fraser, 2018, p. 8; Koser 9; Naeressan et al., 2008, p. 1). Consequently, migration literature has emerged as a genre which deals with discursive stylistics, discourses, languages, enunciations, cultural hybridity and themes (Frank, 2008, p. 1-30; Fraser, 2008, p. 1-18; Moslund, 2010, p. 1-28; White, 1995, p. 1-19). The main features of these novels might be "linguistic deviance, impoverished vocabulary, and improper use of grammar" with "an unadorned minimalistic style which turns into a sign machine... that avoids closure that keeps pushing language to its limits, breaking down significance and multiplying meaning potentials" (Moslund, 2010, p. 7-8). Thus, migration literature is an established literary genre with its own specifications and stylistic devices.

Similarly, the studies conducted on the relationship between trauma and literature develop unique aesthetic trajectory for literary analysis. Stringer (2010, p. 7) explains how “repetition in tropes, narrative, sounds, even typography” is can be analyzed in order to evaluate trauma in a literary work. He further argues that “...contemporary trauma theory identifies what cannot be fully remembered, the illegible, the unspeakable, with a something repeated, be it an image, a phrase, a metaphor, even a syllable or sound” (Stringer, 2010, p. 5). An amalgamation of aesthetics of migration literature and trauma analysis in literature lend a chance to a very unique kind of literary analysis that can yield valuable information for the field of literary studies in trauma of migration by evaluating the literary linguistic devices employed in the text.

Methodology

This paper is an attempt to analyze the poetics of migration trauma in the text *Exit West*. ‘Poetics’ refer to “the principles and nature of any art” (Smith, 2004, p. 974). It is also the “study of the formal construction of literary works” of any genre (Buchanan, 2010, p. 369) that analyzes “poetic (literary) use of language” (Buchanan, 2010, p. 369). This study intends to analyze the use of poetic language in the text especially metaphors, symbols, similes, connotative and denotative meanings of the words. In short, it is a deconstructive study and a semiotic analysis of the poetic language used by Hamid in order to inscribe the trauma of migration in contemporary times.

Discussion

Hamid belongs to the successful younger generation of Pakistani Anglophone novelists writing in contemporary times. All his novels narrate the harsh realities of not only contemporary Pakistani society but also international burning issues. Migration has also been the harshest reality faced by Pakistanis at the time of partition. Another aspect of migration is the religious discourse of migration for Pakistani – the Prophet Muhammad’s (PBUH) migration to Medina. Therefore, migration is one of the prevailing discourses in Pakistani literature and is an established historical reality of Pakistani psyche, philosophy, religion and literature. Migration is a constant theme in all the novels written by Hamid. In *Moth Smoke* (2000), Ozi migrates from Pakistan to America and then back to Pakistan. Similarly, Changez, the central character of *The Reluctant*

Fundamentalist (2009), also goes to America and then comes back to Pakistan. Likewise, the protagonist of *How to Get Filthy Rich in Rising Asia* (2013) migrates from rural to urban area. However, in his latest novel, *Exit West* (2017), Hamid transcends the boundaries of nationality, religion and geography by narrating multiple strands of national, religious, historical and contemporary realities related to migration.

The plot of *Exit West* is a clear indication of the universal approach of this text because the main characters of the novel, Saeed and Nadia, live in an unnamed city which can be any city of the conflict ridden locality ranging from Karachi, Mosul, Basra, Aleppo, Cairo and Lahore (El Akkad, 2017; Gilbert, 2017; El Rashidi, 2017). They migrate from that unnamed city to well-known places like Greek Island of Mykonos, London, or Marin in California, USA. Their ongoing journey is a quest for peace which is the most prevalent archetypal human journey narrated in almost all the literatures form all eras, localities and generations. Moreover, multiple brief narrative stories, form alternate migrant situations, have been integrated into the main story of Saeed and Nadia to enrich migrant discourse in the narrative. Furthermore, along with spatial migration, temporal nature of migration has also been mentioned, “everyone migrates even if we stay in the same houses our whole lives, because we can’t help it. We are all “migrants through time” (Hamid, 2017, p. 209). Thus, the novel sounds like an allegorical epic tale for all ages, eras and generations because Saeed and Nadia’s journey depict the voyage of humanity- from innocence to knowledge. Migration has been used both as a contemporary reality as well as a metaphor for human evolution.

Migration trauma can be discussed in many different aspects related to emotional and physical security. Nadia and Saeed are always under a constant threat of physical assault. Similarly, the minor characters in the novel are also under physical threats. Secondly, the characters are changing emotionally. Their emotions, feelings and dispositions are changing after the trauma of migration. Furthermore, migrants are under constant surveillance of technology that makes them feel insecure and exposed. All these dimensions of migration trauma will be discussed later in the paper one by one.

Metaphor of ‘Door’ and its Association with Trauma

To begin with, the presence of mysterious doors in the narrative of the text is the first significant key to the narrative of trauma migration in this novel. Perhaps, the most interesting aspect of this novel is that every migrant travels by mysterious magical doors. These magical doors further confirm the universal vision of this narrative. Hence, the presence of surreal doors (Goldsworthy, 2017; Kapoor, 2017; Sandhu, 2017) provides a magical quality to this text and it transcends from being the narrative of an ordinary couple's migration to an allegorical representation of contemporary migrant condition. In the narrative, it has been mentioned that migrants are migrating with the help of mysterious doors and a normal door can turn into a "special door" (Hamid, 2017, p. 70). There is acknowledgement of these mysterious doors on the global level as the text narrates, "the most reputable international broadcasters had acknowledged the door existed, and indeed were being discussed by world leaders as a major global crisis" (Hamid, 2017, p. 83). These doors are being considered as a major crisis by world leaders. A crisis is something which needs to be prevented. The mysterious doors, perceived as crisis, imply that migrants are considered as a crisis and they are not given a welcoming gesture. This is the first hint towards the various causes of the traumas that migrants face during and after their migration. The migrants are not welcome anywhere – they are a crisis which needs to be rectified. This perception of migrants being a crisis leads to the victimization of the migrants.

The same doors, which are considered as a crisis by world leaders, are something dark, mysterious and scary for the migrants. The text concludes that "when we migrate, we murder from our lives those we leave behind" (Hamid, 2017, p. 94). There are recurrent references to doors as dark and mysterious places. For instance, a door has been described as "dark, darker than night, a rectangle of complete darkness – the heart of darkness" (Hamid, 2017, p. 6). Similarly, Nadia's feeling while crossing through that special door while migrating is another hint towards the symbolic significance of the doors as she is "struck by its darkness, its opacity, the way it did not reveal what was on the other side" (p. 98). This repetition of the word 'dark' provides a very significant key to analyze the traumatic experience of migration. According to *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary (OALD)* 'dark' is something that is "with little light" (Hamid, 2017, p. 376) and this word also connotes the elements of mystery, evil and hopelessness (Hamid, 2017, p. 376). Therefore, the discourse of migration in this novel evolves as something which

might initiate people into facing the mysterious evil and hopelessness. The allusion to *Heart of Darkness* by Joseph Conrad further the feeling of impending doom related to the journey of a migrant. The third significant word is 'opaque' that signify something "not clear enough to see through or let the light pass through" and "difficult to understand" (OALD, 1045). Both words 'dark' and 'opaque' hint at the journey and the experience of migration as something difficult to understand and evil and mysterious, thus, reconfirming Stringer's vision of the expression of trauma as something which is difficult to express, understand and narrate.

Along with the discourse of doors as something dark and dangerous, there is an underlying discourse of being born again, as migrants are described emerging out of those doors "pulling himself up against gravity, or a rush of monstrous tide" (Hamid, 2017, pp. 6-7) "like a newborn foal" (Hamid, 2017, p. 7) and the entry into these doors "equally felt like a beginning and an end" (Hamid, 2017, p. 98). The discourse of dying and being born again has been extended further, "it was said in those days that the passage was both like dying and being born, and indeed Nadia experienced a kind of extinguishing as she entered the blackness and a gasping struggle as she fought to exit it" (Hamid, 2017, p. 98). All these references assert that migration is a trauma because while migrating you have to murder yourself from one life and get uprooted and get born again into a new system.

Physical Trauma

In addition to the use of symbol of door in order to convey the danger and sadness associated with the trauma of migration, there are many poignant descriptive details that not only highlight the lack of basic necessities which refugees face but also the physical violence which they have to face. This lack of basic human rights and exposure to physical harm make migrants more vulnerable to long-term emotional traumas. The text quotes many examples of the underprivileged and unfortunate condition of migrants.

For example, the migrants are shown from the very beginning of the novel in both physical and emotional turmoil because of their migration. In the very first few pages the narrative depicts deplorable physical and emotional situation of the refugees as follows:

Refugees had occupied many of the open places in the city, itching tents in the green belts between roads, erecting lean-tos next to the boundary walls of houses, sleeping rough on pavements and in the margins of streets. Some seemed to be trying to recreate the rhythm of a normal life, as though it was completely normal to be residing, a family of four under a sheet of plastic propped up with branches and a few chipped bricks. Others stared out at the city with what looked like anger, or surprise, or supplication or envy. Others didn't move at all: stunned, maybe, or resting. Possibly dying. (Hamid, 2017, p. 23)

The excerpt above provides a very pitiable picture of the living conditions migrants have been forced to live in. Refugees are living in "itching tents", "lean-tos", and "under a plastic sheet propped up with branches and a few chipped bricks" placed either in the "green belts between roads" or "boundary walls of houses". They are "sleeping rough on pavements and margins of the roads" (Hamid, 2017, p. 23). In short, they are living in a very painful and traumatic condition and some people are trying to cope up with this trauma by pretending that this kind of living is perfectly "normal" but others are staring out at the city in "anger, or surprise, or supplication or envy". There is another set of migrants that does not "move at all: stunned, maybe, or resting. Possibly dying". The emotions of anger, envy, or being stunned are various responses to the traumatic condition which migrants face during and after their migration. The migrants depicted here are in pain because of their pitiable living conditions and the trauma of leaving their homes behind.

Another instance which gives a very significant insight into the trauma of being a migrant is the moment when Nadia and Saeed reach in an abandoned hotel in London city (which is now a safe haven for migrants like Nadia and Saeed) where after a long while they can have some privacy and a room to themselves. For Nadia and Saeed, to "have a room to themselves" with "four walls, a window, a door with a lock-seemed incredible good fortune" that most of the people take for granted. Nadia wants to unpack in that room and feel more at home but could not because they might be in need to leave soon. Saeed tries to make the room look more like home by placing a photo of his parents, which he brought with himself, on a bookshelf and transforms that hotel room "at least partially, temporarily into home". Nadia and Saeed are deprived of basic human facilities of cleanliness and taking bath. Nadia wants to "to take shower more than anything, more

even than she wanted food". Bathroom becomes "a kind of heaven". When she observes her body that has grown "leaner" and is "streaked with grime" and with hair, she thinks that her body looks like "body of an animal a savage". Migrants are forced to live in such barbarous and unhygienic conditions where they are deprived of very basic human necessities. For Nadia, taking bath is "not about frivolity", but it is about being "essential, about being human, living as a human being, reminding oneself of what one was, and so it mattered" (Hamid, 2017, pp. 120-122). The basic necessities of life like bathing, house, food and privacy have become inaccessible for migrants.

Adding insult to injury, migrants, who are already deprived of basic human necessities, are also facing the violence all over the globe. For instance, this text displays that migrants are always under the fear of some physical attack. Moreover, human body is so fragile that it can be eliminated by any wrong "blow", "gunshot", "flick of a blade", "turn of a car", or by "presence of a microorganism in a handshake, a cough" (Hamid, 2017, p. 7). Here, the writer enlists the kinds of physical security threats a migrant is exposed to. It is a gist of all kinds of physical assaults which are faced by migrants all around the world and that lurk in the unconscious mind of every migrant while he is migrating and becoming part of a new community. The word 'fragile' connotes something that can be "easily broken or damaged" (*OALD* 603). Therefore, Hamid is implying that human bodies and psyches are so vulnerable to the dangers present around them but in case of migration they become more susceptible to such hazards.

Repeatedly, the examples of physical traumas which migrants face have been mentioned (Hamid, 2017, pp. 25-28). For instance, in the "Tokyo district of Shinjuku", there is a man with "violence potential" who plans to physically harm two Filipina girls because they are migrants in his country and he does not like Filipinos. He believed that they "had their place, but they had to know their place. There had been a half Filipino in his junior high school class whom he had beaten often, once so badly that he would have been expelled, had someone been willing to say who had done it". Furthermore, this instance hints at the kind of mistreatment, migrants can be exposed to on the bases of their race, colour, gender, and ethnicity. He has all plans to harm these two Filipino girls as he followed them while "fingering the metal in his pocket". This is just one example of migrants being physically harmed at the hands of racists, supremacists, and nationalists.

Another nativist mob, in London city where Nadia and Saeed take refuge for a while (Hamid, 2017, p. 131-132), acts “like a strange and violent tribe”, “some armed with iron bars or knives” intent on the destruction of migrants. The text implies that these native mobs are no less than ancient groups of people who could come with unusual power and wish to cause physical harm to another tribe. This is a frightening version of the uncivilized aspects of civilized nations. This also elaborates upon the kind of brutality migrants have to face at the hands of native people. Because of this physical assault by the mob Nadia’s eye gets “bruised and would soon swell shut” while Saeed’s lip gets “split” and keeps on “bleeding down his chin and on his jacket”. This is one of the clearest and the most brutal example of physical assaults on migrants rampant in contemporary world.

In addition to these two individual examples there are multiple citations of violation of migrants’ human rights (Hamid, 2017, pp. 104, 134, 159-161). For example, the text narrates that in Vienna militants are shooting unarmed people in the hope “to provoke a reaction against the migrants” and succeed in that. Moreover, there is a “nativist mob” that intends “to attack migrants”. There is also a mentioning of ‘nativist backlash’ happening “... in other desirable cities in other desirable countries”. Furthermore, the text cites an “operation to kill migrant ghetto”, rumours about the incineration of over two hundred migrants, and a “bloodbath in Hyde Park”. The acts of incineration and bloodbath imply the atrocious acts of Holocaust because these words are usually associated with the mass murders that happened in Germany at the hands of Hitler. In the contemporary times, migrants are being killed and incinerated and they are the new sect of victimized people who are being harmed by the extreme nativists. All these incidents assert a discourse of violence, bloodshed and violation of basic human rights at the hands of nativists.

Psychological Trauma

Saeed’s character in the novel can lend to a full-length psychoanalytic study of the impacts of migration trauma but this paper will only be conducting semiotic analysis of the words and metaphors used for Saeed’s transformation from an optimistic to a pessimistic character (Hamid, 2017, pp. 102-103, 122, 128-129, 140, 185, 187). Nadia starts noticing a strange bitterness in Saeed and she thinks that she has “never seen

bitterness in him before". Nadia believes that "a bitter Saeed would not be Saeed at all". The word 'bitter' is associated with a human feeling of anger and unhappiness because one feels that one has been "treated unfairly". The unfair treatment that migrants face makes them unhappy, sad and angry that is true in Saeed's case as well. The Saeed before migration and after migration are two different persons. He always keeps on trying to connect with his country fellows "via chat applications and social media". He becomes unresponsive to Nadia's romantic gestures, "She smiled and moved to kiss him, and while her lips did touch his, his did not much respond". They are "wandering far and wide but not together, even though they appeared to be together". Saeed is a kind of person who feels happy, comfortable and secure with his native people, and does not like the feeling of "complete strangers living in close proximity". For Saeed, the house where a multitude of people is living is "jarring" that implies an "unpleasant or annoying effect" (OALD, 814). He finds it "stressful to be packed in so tightly with people who spoke in tongues he did not understand...". There is an overall discourse of decay and destruction of Saeed's subjectivity and his emotional make up. He feels something "rancid in himself, like he was rotting from within." The words 'rancid' and 'rot' both imply a significant sense of deterioration as 'rancid' stands for something "unpleasant" (ODE, 2005, p. 1456) and "stinking" (ODE, 2005, p. 1456) while the word 'rot' imply "decay" (ODE, 2005, p. 1533) and "deterioration" (ODE, 2005, p. 1533). Therefore, the text draws a discursive trajectory of human emotional, physical and psychological decay while going through the experience of migration. The multiple words, metaphors and analogies used for Saeed's transformation after migration hint at both mental and physical deterioration of Saeed's overall subjectivity.

Technological Trauma

In addition to human assaults, migrants are also haunted by technological gadgets. These machines include surveillance cameras, drones, helicopters and other military technology. The text narrates about a migrant family caught on a security camera while migrating into Jumeirah beach. There are "three exterior surveillance feed" in addition to "drone surveillance (Hamid, 2017, pp. 86-87). There are four layers of surveillance on the migrant's entry narrated here. The word 'surveillance', interestingly means "the act of carefully watching a person suspected of a crime or a place where crime may be committed" (OALD, 1525). The entry points of migrants are under strict surveillance

because migration is termed on legal terms that might imply a crime. Migrants are perceived as criminals who might be detained or captured anywhere. The feelings of these refugees under the cameras give an added insight into what kind of mental trauma they go through while being under the scrutiny of cameras. They seem “bewildered” and “overawed”. The word ‘bewilder’ connote something which evokes the feelings of confusion (ODE, 2005, p. 159) and word ‘overawed’ implies the emotion of being overwhelmed to the point of silence and inhibition (ODE, 2005, p. 1253). These technological surveillance devices are causing mental traumas of confusion, silencing and inhibition among the refugees represented in the book.

Moreover, Around Nadia and Saeed, there are “soldiers and armoured vehicles”, and above them there are “drones and helicopters” mentioned again “drones and helicopters and surveillance balloons prowled intermittently overhead” (Hamid, 2017, 135, 142, 150). This implies that migrants are being frightened with the help of ground vehicles as well as air surveillance. In short, they are being traumatized from both air and ground with the help of the technological superiority of their host countries. There is a constant presence of technology for the purpose of surveillance and victimization of the migrants in the narrative of the novel. Hamid writes, “Every day a flight of fighter aircraft would streak through the sky, screaming a reminder to the people of dark London of the technological superiority of their opponents”. The word ‘scream’ here requires special attention because it implies “a long, loud, piercing cry” (ODE, 2005, p. 1586) that also connotes a “frenzied” noise (ODE, 2005, p. 1586). This constant noise is creating and auditory trauma for the migrants with which they have to deal throughout their stays in the foreign countries.

Drones terrify the migrants more than any other technological gadget. Drones are described as more “frightening” than anything else because of their “unstoppable efficiency” and “inhuman power” (Hamid, 2017, p.151). ‘Drone’ is “an aircraft without a pilot, controlled from the ground” (OALD, 459) that is being frequently used for both military and civilian purposes. Drones are reported to have a traumatic impression on the minds of the people who are exposed to this kind of unmanned aircraft (Cavallaro & al., 2012). This text constructs the image of a drone as something dreadful that cannot be escaped from. The word ‘inhuman’ further highlights the frightening element related to drones because it signifies something that lacks “human qualities of compassion and

mercy” (ODE, 2005, p. 891) that is “cruel and barbaric” (ODE, 2005, p. 891). Moreover, the text narrates that drones evoke a “kind of dread that a small mammal feels before a predator of an altogether different order, like a rodent before a snake” (Hamid, 2017, p. 151). The use of word ‘predator’ for drone implies another dimension of drone use against migrants. The word ‘predator’ means “an animal that naturally preys on others” (Soanes & Stevenson, 2005, p. 1386) or a person who ruthlessly exploits others” (Soanes & Stevenson, 2005, p. 1386). Therefore, a drone emerges as a technological device that naturally victimizes people and exploit them especially underprivileged people like migrants. Drones emerge as lacking any positive feelings and standing as the cruelest technological device that give rise to the traumatic feelings of fear, dread, anxiety and insecurity among the migrants.

Conclusion

In conclusion, a semiotic analysis of the metaphors, symbols, analogies, allusions and denotative and connotative meanings of the language used in this novel constructs a discursive discourse of persecution, victimization and ostracizing of migrants in contemporary era. The text incorporates the discourses of injustice and inhumane treatment of migrants at the hands of developed world. The metaphor of dark and mysterious doors successfully conveys the feeling of pain, suffering and misery associated with a migrant’s dislocation. Moreover, the recurrent references to multiple physical traumas, ranging from the deprivation of basic necessities of life to the physical harm inflicted on migrants in various part of the world at the hands of government and nativist mobs imply a physically insecure milieu for migrants. Additionally, bearing all these traumas does not only affect migrants physically but this suffering also leaves permanent marks on the psyche of migrants which cause unintelligible emotional traumas. Perhaps the latest kind of distress which migrants are exposed to is the deployment of military and paramilitary technology to frighten them. Surveillance drone cameras, helicopters, armoured tanks and robots are intensifying the traumas related to migration. They are being treated as criminals who need to be persecuted at all times. In short, a deconstructive study of *Exit West* delineates a bleak poetics of the dilemma of migration that needs legal humanitarian intervention on international level for the protection and provision of basic human rights to the global migrant community.

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