

## “Doors That Could Take You Elsewhere” - Migration, Magic and Rancièrian Dissensus in Mohsin Hamid’s *Exit West*

**Paula Brauer**

### **Abstract:**

Mohsin Hamid’s novel *Exit West* narrates migration in a magical realist way, breaking with the stylistic conventions of his genre. Mysterious black doors transport his characters from country to country, thus drastically altering the way in which he portrays migration. This article analyses the effects of these alterations with the help of Jacques Rancière’s work on the relation between arts and politics, especially the idea of dissensus. It argues that there is a potential for disruption inherent to magical realism because of its hybrid composition as the third space between magic and realism. This disruptive power manifests itself on multiple levels in the novel. Firstly, the category of distance is disintegrated as the magical doors blur physical doors and, in the end, make them altogether redundant. Secondly, the notion of time is fractured when the author sketches a possible future in which former populations have mixed to live harmoniously alongside one another. Thirdly, and most importantly, prior power relations in which migrants are excluded from politics are reconfigured and models of political participation are restructured. Each of these disruptions attacks the consensual order of politics and rethinks it in favour of migrants and refugees so that it can be concluded that Rancièrian dissensus is achieved in the novel.

**Keywords:** migration, magical realism, *Exit West*, Jacques Rancière, dissensus