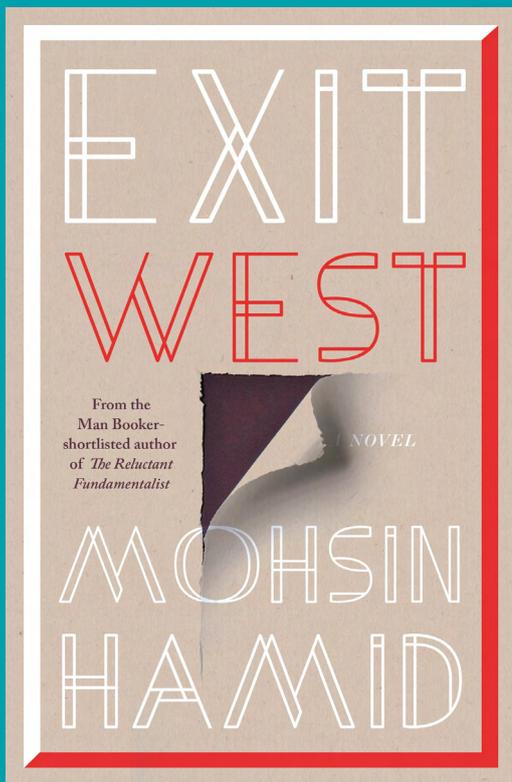


Reader's Guide



Other novels by Mohsin Hamid
Moth Smoke (2000)
The Reluctant Fundamentalist (2007)
How to Get Filthy Rich in Rising Asia (2013)

Exit West Mohsin Hamid

Hamish Hamilton

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About the author

Mohsin Hamid writes regularly for *The New York Times*, *the Guardian* and the *New York Review of Books*, and is the author of *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* (shortlisted for the 2007 Man Booker Prize), *Moth Smoke*, *How to Get Filthy Rich in Rising Asia* and *Discontent and its Civilisations*. Born in 1971, he was mostly raised in Lahore, and has since lived between Lahore, London and New York.

About the book

In a city swollen by refugees but still mostly at peace, or at least not yet openly at war, Saeed and Nadia lock eyes across their classroom. After a while, they talk, he makes her smile and they start to fall in love. They try not to notice the sound of bombs getting closer every night, the radio announcing new laws, the curfews and the public executions.

Eventually the problem is too big to ignore: it's not safe for Nadia to live alone and she must move in with Saeed, even though they are not married, and that too is a problem. Meanwhile, rumours are spreading of strange black doors in secret places across the city, doors that lead to London or San Francisco, Greece or Dubai. One day soon the time will come for Nadia and Saeed to seek out one such door, joining the great outpouring of those fleeing a collapsing city, hoping against hope, looking for their place in the world.

What the judges thought

A 'daring, delicate, unsentimental' novel, in the opinion of the judges, which 'distils the emotional wrenches of a very contemporary displacement'. This was thought to be 'a short book that maintains its tensile strength' and 'has the tenor of a future classic'.

Discussion points

In what ways do Saeed and Nadia preserve a semblance of a daily routine throughout the novel? Why do you think this becomes so important to them?

How do we see the city changing around Saeed and his family? What effect does the subtle acceleration of violence have on the reader? On the novel itself?

The city where Nadia and Saeed live and from which they flee is unnamed. Why do you think that is? What effect does this omission have on the reader?

How does violence bring Saeed and Nadia together? How do you think their relationship might have evolved if their city had never been under siege?

Do you think *Exit West* is a hopeful book? Why do you feel this way?

Useful links

www.nytimes.com/2017/03/10/books/review/exit-west-mohsin-hamid

www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/books/reviews/exit-west-mohsin-hamid-a7605451

www.npr.org/2017/03/08/519217991/from-refugees-to-politics-mohsin-hamid-writes-the-change-he-wants-to-see