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Globalization and Discourse on Terror: Hari Kunzru's *Transmission* as post 9/11 Fiction

ABSTRACT

The study analyzes Hari Kunzru's (b. 1969) novel Transmission (2004) as a post 9/11 text. Although there are no direct references to the events of 9/11, the novel is analogous to the counter-discourses against post 9/11 popular discourses on terror. The theoretical framework of the study is based on Baudrillard's critique of 9/11 as presented in his 2001 essay "The Spirit of Terrorism" which contends that 9/11 attacks were symbolic of a reaction against globalization and its negative impact on the third world. The terrorists retaliated against global neo-imperialism and ironically used the same means of globalization in the form of modern technology to wage a war against the self-proclaimed superpower, the USA. Since both Arjun Mehta and Leela Zahir, the protagonists of the novel, are labelled as terrorists, the post 9/11 discourse on terror as presented by the West and its counter-discourse as presented by the Western 'other' will be examined at length through a close reading of the text. Arjun Mehta, a budding computer programmer, struggles to eradicate his poverty for a secure future but is marked as a terrorist that makes him end up as a fugitive. Similarly, Leela Zahir, a promising actress with the prospects of touching the pinnacles of fame, is devastated because of being associated with computer generated virus. The novel is counter-discursive to the creation of the tag 'terrorist' through exposing the role of unequal distribution of wealth, opportunities and security in a globalized world in the making of terrorists (real or simulated), hence corresponding to 9/11 discourses. The paper concludes that the novel is a critique of globalization as a source of terror in the new millennium through the use of media and technology.

Keywords: Terror, globalization, Kunzru, Baudrillard, Transmission, 9/11

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Introduction

The narrative impulse of recreating what happened on the fateful day of 9/11 and its after effects on individuals, cultures and nations, inspired the creative sketching of terrorist attacks through literary as well as other artistic forms. The American novelists found it imperative to write about an event that affected their lives intensely. The media representations made the enormity of the impact of 9/11 attacks so gigantic that even the Europeans novelists tended to make it a part of their story lines. Those who did not make it the mainstream storyline, used it as a backdrop for their fiction (Michael, 2014). Michael, for example, describes Claire Messud's *The Emperor's Children* (2006), Jay McInerney's *The Good Life* (2006), Wendy Wasserstein's *Elements of Style* (2006), and Joseph O'Neill's *Netherland* (2008) as presenting 9/11 day events circuitously. On the other hand, he considers the American novels - Jonathan Safran Foer's *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* (2005), Jess Walter's *The Zero* (2006), and Don DeLillo's *Falling Man* (2007), French novel - Frédéric Beigbeder's *Windows on the World* (2003 in French/2004 in English) and British novel - Ian McEwan's *Saturday* (2005) overtly representing the 9/11 events as taking place in the New York city (Michael, 2014).

While the US and European fiction represents fear from the terrorists, South Asian fiction also exhibits an 'uncanny terror' resulting from 9/11 representations of the fear of brown skin. Pei Chen Liao (2012) in her book *Post 9/11 South Asian Diasporic Fiction: Uncanny Terror* represents the making of South Asian diasporic writers' unhomely identity in a globalized world after 9/11. She takes up Freud's concept of uncanny to analyze the nature of anxiety in a shell-shocked world. She highlights the uncanniness of cultures because of the otherness they have to face. As uncanny refers to the concept of 'double', it highlights the ambiguity of identity which is symbolic to twin tower fall incident. According to her, the South Asian diaspora is caught between South Asia and the West, hence negotiating identity between the postcolonial subject and the globalized product. She reads the 'post' in post 9/11 not in the meaning of beyond but as against, thus introducing anti-discourse to the US narratives about the event. By alluding to the displacement and unhomely existence of the South Asian migrant diaspora, she reads 9/11 as a temporal historical event from a non-Euro-centric, non-Western point of view. South Asian post 9/11 fiction is also affected by the events succeeding from 9/11 (Liao, 2012). The fiction of Mohsin Hamid, H. M. Naqvi, Kamila Shamsie, Salman Rushdie, Kiran Desai and Hari Kunzru represent 9/11 events in their unique aesthetic style (Chambers, 2010; Liao, 2012).

Duvall (2011) divides US 9/11 fiction into two categories, one that directly represents terrorist attacks and the other that represents them

through historical, allegorical or metafictional displacement. The first type represents individual trauma by employing imagination to sketch the attack on the world trade centre, twin towers' destruction, and the lives of victims and survivors. Duvall points out the limited vision of domesticized individual trauma by taking into account the critique presented by critics like Mishra, Rothberg and Gray (Duvall, 2011). For example, Mishra (2011) criticizes the above mentioned category of American novels for othering Muslims and reducing trauma to personal losses at domestic level. My study interprets *Transmission* as a third type of 9/11 fiction which neither represents the event directly nor indirectly, from the Western or Muslim perspective, but rather from an indirect perspective about the third world enmeshed in the shackles of terror created by globalization. This study discusses the work as a 9/11 novel because of Arjun's being labelled as a terrorist and his succeeding fate coupled with Leela's future, who gets caught in a completely unexpected trap of notoriety. The study contends that terrorists do not come into being because of political agendas, Islamic terrorism or clash of civilizations, rather it is the invisible shackles of globalization that devour the dreams of third world residents struggling for success. These forces, mostly in the form of mass media,   declare them as terrorists after thwarting their desperate desires to succeed.

Before moving on to the study of *Transmission* as 9/11 fiction, it is pertinent to discuss the spread of globalization. Omar Lizardo and Michael Strand in the article "Postmodernism and Globalization" (2009) contend that postmodernity has lost much of its interest in the last decade and the new buzz word is globalization. Globalization has its roots in both modern and postmodern. William I. Robinson in "Theories of Globalization" (2007) traces the popularity of the concept back to the 1970s. He describes five changing phenomena responsible for the spread of globalization; one, globalized economic integration, second, transnational cultural patterns and flows, third, international political processes, fourth, human movement leading to new migrant identities, and fifth, new structures of power, inequality and domination. He contends that globalization's capacity to expand the limits of the possible and address problems like global terrorism, polarization, ecological deterioration and political domination require more research (Robinson, 2007).

9/11 has promoted reflection and debates on globalization by bringing it to the centre of critical theory which views it sceptically because of the dialectics of conflicts and ambiguities emerging out of it. Due to the technological development and restructuring of the capital, globalization has created conflicts between haves and have-nots and capitalism and democracy. 9/11 reemphasized the limitations of globalization and the need of a theory that addresses those limitations (Kellner, 2007).

Literature Review

Transmission is the story of a hacker who perturbs the global cyber system by spreading viruses amongst multifarious organizations. As a result, technology creates new spaces and new identities in its transnational circuit (Liao, 2013). It manifest a globalization of signs, texts and signals and their effect on people in an ambivalent globalized world wherein interconnectedness is fused with a sense of isolation and alienation. The personal and collective identity coalesce as there is personal and global, local and translocal contact that further widens the gap leading to alienation and identity crisis (Kramer, 2013). In such a state of affairs the language of terror is that of signs and not of words, of viruses and not of weapons. Thus the novel is a critique of the neoliberal discourses of globalized world with its options of global mobility, settlement and job opportunities. The virus is metaphorical of all those elements that spread terror in the name of global interconnectedness. Kunzru alludes to the danger of viral cosmopolitanism in its constantly evolving heterogeneity as the camouflaged homogeneity, through multiple forms of global contact (Johansen, 2013).

     Transmission has been studied both as a global and cosmopolitan text while simultaneously dealing with the migrant dilemma in a terror ridden world. Although there is no direct reference to 9/11 in the text, terror is one of the main themes represented through e-terror. Liam Connell (2010) argues that the proliferating use of the concept of terrorism is used to camouflage the power structure based on economic exploitation of the poor classes. The characters in the novel use terrorist acts to resist such structures. Similarly, Philip Leonard (2013) discusses the representation of the image of a hacker in *Transmission*. The hacker has been represented as a troubling figure in the global polity especially because of his migrant identity. Technology has been represented as a reassertion of space and identity through transnational movement and hacking is seen as an intervention in global inclusion.

     Iwona Filipczak (2014) interprets the novel in the context of Zygmunt Bauman's theories of liquid modernity. She explores the fears of the modern man on both individual and collective levels e.g., uncertainty and exclusion. Arjun's transmitting a computer virus is interpreted as an act of protest against unequal treatment and economic exploitation, which results in global chaos, because the virus becomes uncontrolled, and he is declared a global terrorist, thus reflecting fears of the third world immigrant as well as that of the western world which may in turn create massive level catastrophe. In this type of globalized world, one cannot predict the consequences of even one's own actions.

Because of the contemporary immigrant experiences the Indian novel's scope has broadened. Bill Ashcroft in his essay "Beyond the nation: The mobility of Indian Literature" (2014) contends that *Transmission* shows a movement beyond Indian affairs - an outward movement of the society and diaspora writers. The novel reflects the direction of the contemporary Indian novel through generic border crossings, how much Indians are computer savvy and how Indian culture through Bollywood movies has infiltrated the world. Emily Johansen (2013) considers the novel a critique of the neoliberal global culture with the opportunities of global mobility and global job opportunities. Johansen considers this sort of cosmopolitanism viral cosmopolitanism as it is heterogeneous in its nature because of constant evolution.

Critics like Pei-Chen Liao read the text as a critique of globalization. *Transmission* depicts the globalized flow of people, capital and information. This free flow, however, is not free of terror as the virus turns out to be a fear beyond control. Moreover the virus which may be a source of mass disruption is presented as a weapon of mass destruction by the American government and media. Thus without a direct reference to 9/11 the novel depicts post 9/11 paranoia. The time period is that of the decline after the boom in Silicon Valley right after which 9/11 took place. According to Liao, the novel represents the increasing anxiety because of the dark politics after 9/11 by depicting the hunt of a poor computer programmer by FBI as one of the most wanted 'terrorist'. By attaching terrorism to an immigrant, Kunzru highlights the anti-immigration discursive practices using terrorism as a tool against them (Liao, 2013). Similarly, Richard Brock in the article "An "onerous citizenship": Globalization, cultural flows and the HIV/AIDS pandemic in Hari Kunzru's *Transmission*" (2008) draws a parallel between AIDS and virus that invokes satirical responses. Using Arjun Appadurai's concept of global "scapes" based on cultural, economic and ideological flows, he discusses how the pandemic in the novel shapes scapes based on finance, technology and ethnicity in a transcultural world which can be called post national.

There are very few studies that discuss Indian fiction as post 9/11 fiction. Angshuman Kar in his article "Post-9/11 Indian English Diaspora Fiction: Contexts and Concerns" (2017) highlights the fact that the mainstream Indian diaspora novelists like Jhumpa Lahiri and Kiran Desai are more concerned with general diaspora predicament and less with racial, ethnic or religious issues. Some of the Indian diaspora novelists, however, have taken up these issues especially in the wake of 9/11 and succeeding developments. He analyzes Marina Budhos's *Ask Me No Questions* (2007), Kazim Ali's *The Disappearance of Seth* (2009) and Hari Kunzru's *Transmission* (2004) as highlighting post-9/11 hate crimes against the South Asians/Southeast Asians in general and the Muslims in particular in the US

based on ethnic or racial discrimination. My study further interprets *Transmission* as a post 9/11 novel by tracing the roots of terror in globalization.

Based on the above discussion, the study seeks to look for the answers of the following research questions:

RQ1. Does *Transmission* convey the major aspects of globalization, especially as contended by Baudrillard in his essay "The Spirit of Terrorism"?

RQ2. How does *Transmission* relate to 9/11 fiction by employing the main features of 9/11 fiction?

Research Methodology and Theoretical Framework

Baudrillard's essay "The Spirit of Terrorism" has been employed as the theoretical framework for this qualitative study. The paper was written shortly after 9/11 attacks and first published on 2nd November 2001. In this essay, he criticizes the process of globalization for providing room to terrorist activities. He criticizes the spectacular presentation of terrorist activities by the West and media and considers it as not a byproduct of history but that of globalization. It moves beyond 'symbolic' and becomes a part of obscene media representations. 9/11 was orchestrated in the media to make the audience feel horrified and captive in a global order, he stipulates. This proliferation of sign exchange led to devastating psychological, social and economic consequences (Baudrillard, 2003). He labelled it a marked event, 'mother event' (Baudrillard, 2003, p.4) as it united all world events that took place before it. The event not only disrupted power and history but also analytic powers. The event is symbolic because everyone has a terroristic imagination and dreams about the destruction of a superpower because of its hegemonic growth (Baudrillard, 2003, p. 5). This desire was not only of those who happened to be on the wrong side of the world order but also of those who shared interests with the US. Too much power also leads to intense desires of its destruction. Baudrillard calls it "terroristic situational transfer" (Baudrillard, 2003, p.9). No political interests, clash of civilizations or Islamic fundamentalism led to the event. Terrorism is the shadow of absolute power and the attacks were not on the US but on globalization, the epicenter of which is the US (Baudrillard, 2001, p.11). According to Baudrillard, 9/11 attacks were symbolic of a fourth world war. The First World War put an end to European supremacy, the second to Nazism, the third cold war to Communism.

The fourth war was against globalization and not a definite enemy, an endorsement to Zizek's notion about 9/11's spectral reality. While tracing

9/11's historical continuity, Zizek differentiates it from the 20th century world conflicts like the cold war by contending that whereas in the cold war the enemy (communism) was defined; in war on terror the opponent was spectral. He considers 9/11 as the end of utopia and a return to real history as a new era with redefined and amplified walls everywhere, for example, between Israel and Palestine. In these times torture has been legalized and attains the dimensions of living apartheid. He criticizes President Bush's claim that the US is in a state of war by contending that the everyday life normally goes on in the US but war is the state agencies' agenda. Therefore in today's times the difference between war and peace is ambiguous or blurred as state of peace can simultaneously be a state of emergency (Zizek, 2006). The terrorist also used globalization tools like modern technology to wage a war against globalization. They used death not as a pessimistic suicide but as defiance. *Transmission* encompasses the same disappointment by revisiting the definition of a terrorist as propagated by the popular 9/11 US-centric discourses.

Discussion

Although *Transmission* does not directly refer to 9/11 incidents, there are connotations of 9/11's impact on the migrants, third world citizens through racial and economic discrimination. Through drawing parallels to terror discourses and causes of terrorism and direct references to the role of media and technology as tools of exploitation in a globalized world, Kunzru does not appear ignorant of 9/11's impact on the third world. Pie Chen Liao contends that the novel clearly encompasses post 9/11 paranoia (Liao, 2013). He quotes Kunzru's interview with the senior editor of Rediff, Arthur J. Pais, wherein he contends that the novel is set in the boom period of Silicon Valley before the slump started which was followed by 9/11 and that it was difficult to imagine its action taking place in pre 9/11 scenario (as quoted in Liao, 2013). Thus, the novel creates a fictional world that encompasses the anxieties based on the political scenario after 9/11. The terrorist image of an Indian computer geek being searched by the FBI as most wanted and his helplessness in fleeing from his workplace, his migrant aspirations and disillusionment, havoc played by computer virus, all draw a parallel to post 9/11 popular discourse.

As Baudrillard considers 9/11 a production of globalization, *Transmission* highlights issues arising out of globalization and resultant transnationalism. During the protagonist's attempt to fulfil his American dream, the global cyber connections and disconnections, cyber culture and finance emerge as major themes. Arjun Mehta's choice of moving to the US and his final disappointment makes the novel a narrative of resistance

against the sparkling onslaught of globalization. When Arjun leaves India, he has no regrets or nationalist ideals as he is obsessed with the wish to earn more money and a comfortable life style. The snares of globalization are so attractive that Arjun does not even feel homesickness while at the airport. This is how the financial promises of globalization have a direct impact on national values and cultural commitments of a nation. Cultural affiliation can become unstable when individuals dispose them off for a better economic future. The practice does not only affect individuals but also the unit of family. Arjun's family is hopeful that he would earn better money and become rich by going to the US. However, the American Dream of Arjun fades out within one year as he has to hop from one job to another either because of layoffs or other reasons. He feels decelerated by the surrounding situation. From this point onwards, with the terror of globalization, his identity begins to experience crisis which unfortunately intensifies with the passage of time.

Transmission depicts a failure of communication in a technologically advanced world. Adamant in the pursuit of his American dream, finally, Arjun gets a job at Virugenix, Washington State, which is marked by advanced cyber technology and culture. His colleagues did not do not communicate with each other in person, keep wearing headphones, and conveye messages via emails even to the person sitting next to them. This develops a sense of alienation in Arjun as he desperately wants to talk to a human in this cyber world. Moreover, he realizes the limitations attached to globalization because he is paid far less than any American engineer as if he is a labourer in a capitalist firm. This is how he gradually works out the exploitative reality behind the baits of promising jobs. This treatment reflects discrimination between first world and third world citizens, reminiscent of post 9/11 clash of civilizations.

Threatened by a lay off in his California based organization, Arjun releases the virus to become indispensable for the company as only he knows the code to disable the malicious virus. Arjun names the virus Leela as he is enchanted by Leela Zahir who is his favourite Bollywood actress, and uses one of her movie clips to lure his viewers to infect their machines and replicate itself while they remain busy watching the clip. The virus he creates has the capability of mutating itself into new strains by making antivirus softwares helpless to fight against these viruses. Thus the butterfly effect takes place as a multitude of viruses spread through digital networks. Butterfly effect refers to the sensitivity of any system like Web to get caught at an initial level of disruption while long term behavior changes take place due to larger sets of deviations. Thus the virus creates global level turbulence. It corrupts huge databases, interrupts data travel and breaks down all network systems. Arjun had the hope that by solving this problem,

the company would realize his importance and retain him as an employee. However, he himself never had an idea of the disaster his action would result in. Arjun unwantedly and due to his unconscious act becomes a wanted international terrorist. Arjun's being labelled as a terrorist draws a parallel to post 9/11 texts. However, terror in this context is not physical in nature and the virtual and technological terrorism has been represented as a product of our globalized world. Kunzru implies that the post 9/11 terrorism is not only contagious, it is infectious too, since all sorts of transmissions presented in *Transmission* are infectious. The virus acts like a pandemic to disrupt economic, cultural and communication flows. Like Baudrillarian sign system all terror is metaphorical, viruses are the copies of the copies of the copies and the real virus is difficult to trace. Media is the major defining factor in this globalized capitalist world and it has the discretion to label even the poor, needy and innocent dreamers all as terrorists.

Thus the novel highlights the complications (terror) arising out of globalization. Whereas it might seem a promising concept to many, others may suffer from the growing insecurity as they get trapped into the ambiguous ordeal of powerlessness. That makes the viability and sustainability of neoliberal (open flow of commodities without any barriers) globalization discourses questionable. The novel explicitly communicates that we live in a world of information not that of knowledge, i.e., a world fraught with simulacra of knowledge. Unfortunately, Arjun is declared a terrorist in a world wherein media provided information is believed to be truer than any truths. He has to flee from one place to another to save himself from the police and hide his identity. The allegation he has on him is that of breaching "national security" of the US - the super power. This is reminiscent of US state response against those who were suspected to be involved in 9/11 attacks. Arjun considers it the revenge of the uncontrollable world on him - a globalized world. The FBI killing a Southeast Asian mistaking him as Arjun is also a critique of 9/11 repercussion on South Asians. This is how brown skin gets caught in a terror ridden global world. Arjun's family has to flee from its place as well as if they were Usama bin Ladin's family. Arjun has to go underground for survival and is only seen, presumably, in an anti-globalization demonstration in Paris. The global world devours him as well as his talent.

Transmission exposes new forms of imperialism (in a post 9/11 world) that shape themselves through networked corporations, organizations and media that join together as transnational identities to strengthen economic globalization supported by new technologies. Thus the communication is presented as signal or noise, as a success or a failure. When the signs connect successful communication takes place, when they dislocate, the miscommunication plays havoc with all the existing forms of

communication. Post 9/11 terror is the result of such disconnectivity. The contemporary media prevalence in all forms of communication also highlights the paradoxes which are a result of such connectivity. Therefore, the digital world interplays between connectivity and disconnectivity, stability and volatility. Kunzru alludes to contemporary forms of domination through technology in our globalized world. Global capitalism joins hands with technology to both define and shape individuals' identity in a transnational world. Technological signs are the signs of globalization, as interpreted by Baudrillard, with unlimited (yet with interruption) possibilities of contact, circulation, exchange of cultures, identities and even ideologies. Therefore, the space can be defined as a global space wherein the signs are proliferated.

The title *Transmission* alludes to a world marked by techno-imperialism which is constituted by ontological relationships through circuit transfers and contingency. The title has myriad valences. It alludes to the flux media images and codes remain in and to the networks of the virtual space which may seem ethereal but support globalization's material motives quite substantially. The imbrication of the corporal and corporeal for communication creates new types of territorialization. This can be called cyber-territorialization which has the capacity to build and break identities, relationships and subjectivities as Arjun Appadurai argues that the confluence between the impact of mass migration and the rapid circulation of images, scripts and sensations is creating "a new order of instability in the production of modern subjectivities" (Appadurai, 1996, p. 4). This modern subjectivity is labelled as globalized subjectivity in this paper which is evident from the identity crisis faced by Arjun Mehta. Arjun's identity is achieved in an intertwining of local and global – glocal setting of his life in an economy dominated globalized and media dominated cultural world. The glocal shapes Arjun's psychic geography by creating a fissure of identity brought about by his broken dreams.

Apart from the protagonist Arjun, the lives of three other main and significant characters are interlinked in this globalized world: Guy Swift, Gabriella Caro and Leela Zahir. If Arjun Mehta has graduated in computer science and is lured by the American Dream of success, which takes him to the Silicon Valley, Guy swift is an already successful businessman who has achieved this success through his hard work by becoming a marketing executive of his London Based company. Gabriella Caro is the girlfriend of Guy Swift, successful in her place to finally get disillusioned from Guy's possessive attitude. Leela Zahir is the central virus as well as a film actress whose career is simultaneously threatened by and gets a boost by the spread of virus. All four get connected by the virus unleashed by Arjun Mehta in his desperation leading to the desperation of all of them. The

computer virus causes massive disruption in the global market matrix, flow of wealth, information and commodities. It also creates emotional disconnectivity amongst and inside many characters of the novel and the people of the world. Guy Swift as a business man is caught in consumer capitalism of brand images. Arjun is immersed in the algebric codes of computers. Leela is part of or rather an object utilized for film economy. Thus all three also become a part of the global mediascape which they constitute and are constituted by.

Transmission alludes to the bio-techno-political triad the globalized post 9/11 world is entangled in. This world is composed of human and non-human systems by connecting biological bodies with technological ones and economy with politics. Apparently, this world appears to be more absorbing and its products more adaptable but in reality, this amalgamation is vulnerable to multifarious catastrophic dysfunctions. The social relations become even more interdependent and cyber space becomes more reflexive through its hazards for the common man. Thus global terrorism is both contagious and viral now-a-days. The ethereal is in constant contact with the material in *Transmission*. The fluidity of the cyber world engenders social relations of the material world as Perner contends: "The novel's actual catastrophe is not the virus but the cultural and emotional vacuity of the people inhabiting the 'real world'" (Perner, 2011, p.222).

Antony Giddens in his book *The Consequences of Modernity* (1990) contends that the desire of control through modern institutions produces new risks. Arjun wants to control the cyber world through his control on information processing but creates an unforeseen risk for himself. Thus he constitutes and is constituted by technology and cyberspace. For him the numbers and digits and signs of this cyberspace are more rational than the physical world. However, both the real world and the digital signs turn erratic and irrational and he is caught in the quagmire of simulated reality be it of cyber world or the real world. James Benedict Green in his thesis *Flows, Routes and Networks: The Global Dynamics of Lawrence Norfolk, Hari Kunzru and David Mitchell* contends that being used to cyberspace, Arjun perceives the real world as a degraded echo of his simulated ideal (Green, 2007). Green considers the text a 'cybernetic interlacing of human and machine' and Arjun a blend of human and mechanical aspects because he finds him stripped off of any normal human interactions and reactions in spite of his love or infatuation for Leela Zahir and Chris. Although his emotions are intense, his expressions are a simulacrum of emotions, for example, when his mother cries he makes gestures to comfort her. Similarly, the communication at Databodies, which is a sterile transmission of information pieces, is devoid of any human warmth (Green, 2007). The post 9/11 globalized world is a post-

human world wherein the control mechanisms speak louder than human communication.

If Arjun helps Kunzru sketch the cyber world, the character of Guy Swift conveys a true picture of globalization. He is a successful globetrotting businessman and his globtrotting makes the inertia of global geography dynamic for him. It becomes dynamic because the global economic markets are in a constant flow and interaction and Guy's existence also revolves around that circulation of money and transactions as his branding agency is directly fed by all these processes. Guy finds his body not a temporal mass but spatial futurity flowing into present. He is a holographic refraction of global economic cycles, altogether diffused in the media transience of his branding agency. This is directly reflective of his sterile relation with Gabriella. Their relation is the Baudrillardian simulacra of love and therefore gets lost somewhere in the world of money, media and machines.

Leela Zahir, on the other hand, is a simulacrum of love representative of Bollywood industry through its movies, all revolving around the "glittery madness" (Kunzru, 2004, p.105) of man-woman love-affairs. The worship from her adoring fans is also a simulacrum as love like Arjun's ruins her career. The spectacle of her towering cinematic persona, with a virtuous grace, is in contrast to her meek real self. Her mawkish celebrity status subsumes her individuality. The multiplicity of the cinematic signs getting together to make her an iconic image rid her of the real signs of self-identity. The Hindi cinema is also exposed based on its intersection of complex power and gender relations and high personifications of ideologies and discourses surrounding around love, femininity and culture. The chain-smoking Leela reveals herself to be bitterly cynical about the movie business in which she is forced to work by her overbearing mother - herself a faded star - who seeks to fulfil her ambitions vicariously through her daughter (Kunzru, 2004, p.162).

The digital dancer Leela signs and the cinema heroine Leela signs merge to create another simulacra of terrorism furthering her fame, isolation, and decreasing her autonomy. She is enmeshed in an economic web produced by the Indian film industry and her clever mother reduces her career to a kind of prostitution. This victimization is furthered by the global travel of the virus which deprives her of any agency against global disruptive forces. It is pertinent to note that both Leela and her mother have Muslim names and Kunzru while implying 9/11 discourses uses a female character as a Muslim victim in post 9/11 scenario whereas she could never imagine to do any terrorist activity ever. Like many trainees of terrorist agencies, she is also a victim at the hands of her mother. Thus her filmstar existence is a direct parallel to terror stars who are pawns in the hands of economy driven masters.

Zygmunt Bauman (2000) has coined the term liquid modernity for the contemporary times to differentiate it from the solid modernity of heavy industry, Fordist production, imperial expansion and monopoly capitalism. The contemporary world experiences the fluidity of transmission signs and images of territorial and ideological boundaries. The contemporary power struggle is to control or generate this movement. This struggle is the foundation of global capitalism as it is directly related to the mobility of capital, commodities, information and even people. This struggle of power creates new hierarchies stratifying geopolitical powers and ideologies. The universal inclusion has become a myth and global capitalism impedes equality by controlling zones and people. Therefore, our contemporary world is not moving towards homogenization rather towards extreme polarization (Bauman, 2006). Bauman considers globalization a cause of liquidity and fears because of unequal distribution of information, capital and trade. The interconnectedness is also a threat to border security and the defence of people in a society. As global free market is uncontrollable, the states feel insecure and have to take their own security measures. The rise of global terrorism is the result of all these insecurities and fears (Bauman, 2006). This is true for Arjun Mehta who is eventually disappointed by the advanced world and the polarization between the first world and the third world which is further widened by the end of the novel. It is out of fear of losing his job that he is forced to unleash the virus. The fear turns him into a terrorist. Behind all this is the negative agency of globalization. Similarly, Guy who apparently is a beneficiary of globalization becomes a victim of its precarity.

Using Bauman's concept of liquid modernity, Iwona Filipczak traces individual and collective fears in *Transmission* as a result of globalization. She considers Arjun's act as a protest against economic exploitation and unequal treatment. Filipczak considers *Transmission* as ironic about "the globalizing processes and liquid times (Filipczak, 2014, p.75)". The novel highlights economic and cultural in-equalities as well as "polarization in the globalizing world and views globalization as a phenomenon fraught with pitfalls and dangers rather than promises" (Filipczak, 2014, p.75). The sense of uncertainty and unpredictability is a hallmark of liquid modernity generating myriad fears, making stability and security desirable yet illusory commodities (Filipczak, 2014, p.75).

Thus the post 9/11 world presents two world orders, one for third world countries and the other for the advanced countries. It is the charm of that first world power order that attracts Arjun to leave no stone unturned to reach California with the hope of getting a job that would make him prosperous overnight. However, that dream and promise both are far from reality. He learnt that he was paid far less than any American graduate. Also

there was no long term job security so he ended up changing jobs on small wages. Kunzru highlights that even in today's advanced world which advocates equal human rights, labour is exploited. Arjun explores a neatly designed class system in the transnational world not much different than the one he experiences in his own country. After crossing his Indian border and reaching California, Arjun is trapped in his immediate locality, and discovers the bleak truths of economic divide underneath the lustrous promises of Silicon Valley.

Apparently Arjun is in sharp contrast to Guy who has agency, can fly all over the world and therefore, wants to transcend temporal and spatial limits. For Guy the border is not just a line on the earth any more, no longer merely demarcating discrete territorial spaces, but traced through the ether, erecting new immaterial barriers along the fractal flows of bodies, capital and information (Kunzru, 2004, p. 238). Arjun, on the other hand, even struggles with driving or affording a vehicle for travelling. So, the global urban landscape is no more a promise of freedom but that of restrictions and limitations for him. This effect is further heightened when he has to trudge along the California highway to escape. He becomes a social outcast in a society wherein all others have freedom to do whatever they want to with an equality of rights. Arjun's reduction to a 'blur of dark skin' echoes post 9/11 racism as presented in dominant US discourses with overtones of a global caste system re-emerged and intensified.

The post 9/11 world has stronger border control and surveillance mechanism. This is highlighted in *Transmission* through European Union's immigration policy by Kunzru's fictional creation of the Pan European Border Authority (PEBA), who approach Guy's agency for rebranding the European citizenship image to present Europe as the world's VIP room, 'the question of the border is a question of information' (Kunzru, 2004, p. 237). PEBA wants to install surveillance mechanisms and data collection to strengthen its borders against trespassers. The same equalizing technology is used to create new borders, checks and balances and above all regimes of differences. This world simultaneously creates spaces that are open and close, inclusive and exclusive, hospitable and prohibitive.

The decision to segregate the best immigrants from the unproductive or low status ones is simply a new shape of the colonial classifications and hierarchies. So the post 9/11 world has its new constitutions. The information systems segregate the legitimate from the illegal migrants to quickly deport them. Therefore, the information technology's promises of a more egalitarian global order is a sham as the surveillance possibilities are like Foucauldian panopticon (Foucault, 1979). The technological reach eventually turn out to be a superpanopticon and human subjects constitute it by willingly providing data about themselves and are constituted by it by being

at risk. Thus through Arjun's predicament and Guy's being a part of neo-imperial design, Kunzru highlights the potential risks associated with the cybernetic idealism. Whereas increased connectivity opens up new opportunities it also opens paths for political control. Kunzru brings forth the transnational world complexities through making us travel through the digital world while simultaneously presenting real time border crossing.

Brubaker in his book *Citizenship and Nationhood in France and Germany* (1992) contends that modern concept of citizenship is a code for controlling immigration. It has resulted into new signs like passports, visas and biometric records which are meant for identification apparently but for control actually. Immigration is no more a simple uncontrolled flux of poor migrants who cross borders for either refuge or work. It is a complex process of checks and balances, displacements and alienation. Kunzru criticizes the rosy promises of the West for legal immigration causing brain drain and alienation in the third world counties and individuals respectively.

Kunzru blurs human and cyber boundaries through the character of Leela by presenting her both as the virus(es) and a human. This blurring is presented as a form of noise in a globalized world. The communication is a sending-receiving process wherein if the successful communication does not take place it is due to some sort of noise or barrier. Thus Kunzru asks the question about individual identity in our contemporary trans-border world as well as the cyber world that preserves transmigration data. The humans are more like objects in this world order like Guy's lustful look for the flight attendant considered rightful by him because he has paid money to please himself as the "(company) was paying this machine to administer a calculated series of pleasures and sensations (Kunzru, 2004, p.12)". The only identity is power, money and agency. Therefore, the flight attendant is reduced to the level of a commodity to provide services to the privileged. Similarly, workers of the hotel in Dubai, where Guy stays on a business trip, are also ready to serve in their uniforms with Westernized names on their badges to minimize ethnic or cultural noise required for today's neo-imperial world order. Instead of accepting differences, the post 9/11 brave new world erases them and objectifies humans while highlighting statuses.

The capacity of self-replicating in Leela virus is analogous to signs replicating system as contended by Baudrillard who calls it "terroristic situational transfer" (Baudrillard, 2001, p.9). No political interests, clash of civilizations or Islamic fundamentalism led to the event. Terrorism is the shadow of absolute power and the 9/11 attacks were not on the US but on globalization - the epicenter of which is the US (Baudrillard, 2001, p.11). Therefore, it is not only the virus that can replicate itself; it is the globalization's proliferation of images too. It is an age where machines and humans turn out to be the replication of each other burying the real selves

not to be recognized by the masses as reality. The replication is a strategy to colonize, the nature of which was physical in colonial times but in post 9/11 times it is technical. Therefore, the resistance to such powerful domination is also through the same means which may be labelled as deliberate terrorism. Leela virus challenges the hegemony of the system of capital flow. The virus provides a challenge to the smoothly running systems of the world thus to the vision of a smooth exchange of commodities to retain power.

The text is built on a cause-effect relationship like 9/11 terrorist attacks and reactions on them. The cause is capitalist exploitation of labour which results in Arjun's reaction to the destruction of capitalist systems further triggering the destruction of the main characters' lives. The noise created by Arjun was more of hubris that resulted in a loss, thus obstructing ways to perfect communication. Yet noise suggests that ours is an information age with many copies of information signs and no reach to reality or truth. So the world we live in is devoid of any substantiality in spite of its claims of transparency and uniformity. Kunzru like Foucault creates power/knowledge boundary.

Conclusion

Baudrillard (2003) contends that the proliferation of sign exchange has led to devastating psychological, social and economic consequences , consequently, the major characters of the novel are altogether destroyed. Arjun flees to the southern border adjacent to Maxico, exposing the fickleness of his American dream, Guy takes refuge in drugs, drinking and the arms of prostitutes, Gabriella decides to leave Guy for good and Leela is found missing from her hotel room where she had been feigning illness. Guy is picked up by immigration officers to showcase his coordination for Pan European Border Agency (the same organization Guy's company was serving) as Leela virus has destroyed their records of immigrants which led to cases of mistaken identities. Guy is deported to some troubled territory as a result. His identification with an Albanian is a parallel to Arjun's identification as a terrorist. In the post 9/11 globalized world, all are a machine recorded inanimate entries that can be victimized any time based on a system error. This is how they constitute and are constituted by the system. Guy, who had an ethereal vision, is brought back to earth forced to live an anti-modern life in a cottage of Stone Age. This is how the urge to destroy the US got generated not only in those who happened to be on the wrong side of the world order but also amongst those who shared advantages with the US (Baudrillard, 2003). Leela is seen begging on streets of Jakarta, making calls from cabs, surgically changed to a European appearance, a simulacrum of Leela. Arjun is seen in anti-global

demonstrations in Paris or in a hockey match in Gujrat, India, and has gained a lot of weight; he is liquefied to penetrate every corner of the globalized world. All of them face an identity crisis that is a direct result of globalization and terror. Thus, the novel indirectly but beautifully, communicates the making of terrorist due to inequality, media agency in declaring anyone a terrorist and economic globalization's exploitations and victimization. To conclude, the novel can be called a 9/11 novel as its discourse encompasses the major features of 9/11 fiction like terror, globalization, migrant predicaments, racial and cultural discrimination, identity crisis and post 9/11 paranoia. Kunzru creates this collage by moving away from mainstream narrative techniques through employing counter discourse in an inverted way.

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