Immigrant to a terrorist: on liquid fears in Hari Kunzru's Transmission

The purpose of this paper is to discuss Kunzru's novel in the context of Zygmunt Bauman's theories concerning "liquid modernity". The article focuses mainly on the exploration of fears which haunt modern man on the individual and collective level. The main character's act of transmitting a computer virus is seen as an act of protest against unequal treatment and economic exploitation, expressing fear of exclusion, becoming a social outcast and a "wasted life". In the consequence of the global chaos, which ensues when Arjun Mehta loses control over the virus, the protagonist's position changes: a Third World immigrant worker is turned into a global terrorist, thus reflecting Western society's fears of the Other, who may introduce destabilization and be a cause of a "collective catastrophe". Finally, it is argued that the novel comments on modern man's condition of uncertainty and a decreasing ability to predict the consequences of one's actions in the globalizing world.

Keywords:
liquid modernity; fear; uncertainty; globalization; protest; immigrant; terrorist;

References:

Hari Kunzru's third novel is a slowly unwinding story of assumed identity. Frame's real name is Chris Carver. In concocting Frame's history, Kunzru draws heavily on Angry Brigade mythology. It is a familiar tale - the middle-class boy radicalised by sex and drugs, led from commune to anarchist group to terrorist cell - but one told with some vigour. What begins as student pranks against the state eventually develops into something much darker, when Carver carries out the 1971 bombing of the Post Office Tower, a 'real' act for which no one has ever claimed responsibility. All of this is a departure for Kunzru, whose two previous novels - The Impressionist and Transmission - were teeming
Angry Brigade mythology. It is a familiar tale - the middle-class boy radicalised by sex and drugs, led from commune to anarchist group to terrorist cell - but one told with some vigour. What begins as student pranks against the state eventually develops into something much darker, when Carver carries out the 1971 bombing of the Post Office Tower, a ‘real’ act for which no one has ever claimed responsibility. All of this is a departure for Kunzru, whose two previous novels - The Impressionist and Transmission - were teeming