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**WIRED FOR EMPIRE: INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY AS AN  
INSTRUMENT OF HYPER CAPITALIST CONTROL IN MOHSIN  
HAMID'S *EXIT WEST* AND KAMILA SHAMSIE'S *HOME FIRE***



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**Abstract**

*This paper considers Mohsin Hamid's *Exit West* (2017) and Kamila Shamsie's *Home Fire* (2017) as narrations of the ways in which information technologies infuse hyper capitalist power into everyday life. Following Hardt and Negri (2000) I locate both novels in reference to *Empire*, and Graham (2006) presents an understanding of a techno-entertainment complex in which the most intimate activity can be technologized and sold—which is to say a hyper capitalism of which I wish to argue that digital systems are a governing instrument, not a neutral channel. *Exit West* is the place where the web that delivers whatever that's couriered and whatever that's pirated is one thing that could be shut off with a press of a button by the state in a single instant. *Home Fire* is a story and a place where a browser history, Skype window, and trending hashtag are all places of reading, sorting, and managing for the Muslim citizen. Qualitative: Textual analysis of selected passages. It discovers that the point of control for both writers is at the level of access and visibility, and the technologies that guarantee connection are those that enable the legibility of people to capital and the state .*

**Keywords:** *hyper capitalism, Empire, information technology, surveillance, Exit West, Home Fire, Pakistani Anglophone fiction*

**INTRODUCTION**

As Graham (2006) calls it, a "hyper capitalism," emerges in which the most individual and private aspects of human life can be technologized, divorced from the individual and marketed as commodities (p. 5). As Rifkin (2000) puts it: What was once owned is now accessed via payment and what is now accessed is now the experience itself. Both are "IT" dependent. The networks are what allow the transfer of capital into belief, memory, and attention, and what also allows the states to surveillance those who use them. This dependence is shown in two Pakistani Anglophone novels published in 2017. Hamid's *Exit West* imagines Nadia and Saeed's path out of a crumbling city, through an array of gates that lead to better lands. *Home Fire* is the story of the Pasha siblings – Isma, Aneeka and Parvaiz – in the British security state, as told by Shamsie. Both of these books are not about technology and this is what is useful. Phones, routers, search engines and hashtags are all part of both narratives, and whenever they're used, they perform some tasks to produce power. This paper gathers those moments and reads them in the light of Hardt and Negri's (2000) theory of *Empire*.

**RESEARCH QUESTION**

How do *Exit West* and *Home Fire* show information technology as an avenue through which the hyper capitalist forces exert their dominion over mobility, over identity, over daily life?

**LITERATURE REVIEW**

The vast majority of the criticism of *Exit West* has been around space and mobility, critique of refugee politics, utopian and Marxist readings, and critique of technology. Reading the door as a spatial device, Sadaf (2020), Moutafidou (2019) and Lagji (2019) engage with migration as a historical and existential situation instead of a crisis. Bağlama (2019) proposes that the novel is an appropriation of the refugee subject for the mission of the western capitalist narrative and Perfect (2019) sees the doors as a symbol for the circulation of capital and media across the globe. Both Maucione (2021) and Schetrumpf and Wansbrough (2022) discourse it as an anti-capitalist quasi-future. The most obvious descriptions of technology are in the work of Chambers (2019), who analyzes the novel in terms of a posthumanism, in which refugees harness the device to redirect power, and Naydan (2019), who demonstrates the characters' connection via screen but not in any other way. Although the novel does not explicitly address Zuboff's (2019) argument on surveillance capitalism, Hamid's "hashtags" and "news cycles" do align with her concept of "behavioral surplus. The *Home Fire* study is split, with similar characteristics. Weiss (2022) interprets the novel as a repurposed work of *Antigone*, featuring the

television and social media as devices of tragedy. The work of both Pishotti (2022) and Chemmachery (2024) is dedicated to the notion of grievable lives in the context of grief and repatriation. In terms of media, Degenkolb (2024) forwards the claim that platforms within the novel navigate towards an accentuation of division instead of democratic speech and Chambers (2018) treats novel sonic and digital textures politically, with regard to listening. None of these studies cites hyper capitalism, neither do they inquire about the novel's technologies, and their purpose in a cross-border economic order. It's what this paper fills.

#### **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

According to Hardt and Negri (2000), Empire is a kind of sovereignty without any nation. It operates through supranational bodies, corporations, communication networks, financial markets and it rules from within daily-life instead of from a capital city (pp. 8–12). The order is a centerpiece of information technology given that it enables continuous monitoring, data extraction and control of the communication (pp. 298–302). I suppose that the scope of Empire is to be understood in terms of hyper capitalism — the economy of Empire — and information technology, the technology of Empire's connections and watching. This is a qualitative and interpretive study. Taking my cue from Belsey (2013), I provide a close textual analysis of selected passages from the two novels as cultural artefacts. As McKee (2003) reminds us, the word "text" is charged with poststructuralist assumptions of meaning and the readings presented here are one set of interpretations only. I selected instances where a 'device' or a 'network' or a 'platform' featured prominently or the story had a 'platform' as the site for repeated actions, and in each of these selections, I followed my own procedure: who is benefiting from the working of the device/ network or platform?

#### **ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION**

Exit West begins Saeed's career at advertisements agency, which offers limit offers with "bus lines, sports stadiums, and proprietors of tall buildings" (Hamid, 2017, p. 11). His online work and personalized presentations are irrelevant labor, the type Hardt and Negri name, and his employer's ideology that a story ought to be served with a viewer makes his occupation, story, really a sales tool. It's about colonizing public space by Data, not Force. The other side is evident in Nadia's social media presence. She is a short poster, and hides behind opaque usernames "the online equivalents of her black robes" (Hamid 2017 p.32). Her prudence is genuine, but she can't possibly propel a system that would gain from it anyway. It is from the same platform she subscribes for mushrooms for "cash-on-demand" delivery, so even intimacy comes through the "courier service". Hamid then leaves the courier's morning delivery next to a militant attack on the stock exchange that the same state crushes, and that the media portrays as a "morale-sapping spectacle" (p. 33). Less than a hundred workers die and its radioactive. A massacre is forgettable when a delivery isn't painful.

The best description of control is when the city's mobile signals and the Internet "disappear as if by flicking a switch" (Hamid, 2017, p. 42). Although no date is set for the end of the blackout, it is referred to as a temporary, antiterrorism measure. The network, the much touted "connectivity", is a right the users are able to revoke at their discretion. Later, when they are deprived of electricity in their bedroom, Nadia and Saeed listen to illegal downloads from unknown sites instead of eating up their data bundles, Nadia doesn't trust "the continued availability of anything online" (p. 91). Access is a paid service and can get lost.

Home Fire takes the same case into the national security realm. The first thing on the agenda for Isma's interrogation at Heathrow is her clothing. As an officer takes charge of each piece, "judging the quality of the material," she recalls her designer jacket, "This isn't yours" (Shamsie, 2017, pp. 9–11). A Muslim woman who ran a dry cleaner is not supposed to have something expensive; her mobility is therefore a sign of fraud. Her laptop and phone are stolen and her internet history is read out, including one Internet search on how to make small talk with American people. Her flight waits until America wakes up. A possession has turned into a basic component of a calculus of suspicion, and a foreign time zone determines when she can travel. Family life is also organised by technology. The sister of Isma is green Skype in the café scene, and 'touch was the one thing modern technology didn't allow' (Shamsie, 2017, p.13). The piece highlights Isma's "Muslim background" and his "strength on security" (p.21), when he reads of Karamat Lone's appointment in a bookmarked news site. The further away from the community the more successful one is. His speech generates #YouAreWeAreBritish and #Wolfpack (p. 37), while Aneeka's private message, focuses on the state to stop spying on her and to arrest some Bankers (p. 23).

The dominant ideology and dissent both find their way on the same wires; one of them trends. Within hours of Parvaiz's death, the hashtags #PERVYPASHA and #DONT SULLY YOUR SOIL are in circulation (p.145). A

family's loss makes content a family's gain and the content is for those that will profit from a frightened public. The most destroying scene is the silent one. Taking out a rental phone, Parvaiz looks for examples of "Bagram abuse" (Shamsie, 2017, p. 95). What he discovers is the searchable history of what states have done to its people and it makes him sick.

According to Zuboff (2019), this is trauma that is turned into food for consumption. Farooq uses it for enlistment of him. The search engine appears unbiased. It's what it creates, a feeling, and it's that feeling that the recruiter works with.

### **ROLE OF GLOBALIZATION**

Globalization in *Exit West* isn't just portrayed as the positive phenomenon of enabling a free flow across national borders. It's depicted as a contradictory process, that of a swift movement of goods, information, capital, bodies of images, privileged people, and the restriction of vulnerable bodies. This paradox is an integral part of hyper capitalism's functioning. Through numerous scenes in the novel, characters are placed in settings where the features of global interconnections are ubiquitous, yet access to benefits of global connections is also unequal. International airports, digital communications, luxury consumption, tourism and transnational business don't make for equality. Series of rules are instead put in place to establish a hierarchy; some movement is good because it promotes economic interests, the others are problematic and must be contained. The sending of Saeed's email from his server while a woman sleeping in Sydney provides a very good illustration of this unequal globalization. Digital information has no problem traversing the distance between the unidentified city and Australia. No passport, visa, security interview or physical inspection is necessary for the email. The digital message is sent via an infrastructure that makes room possible, on an economic basis. The migrant body is not so easy to move, however. Hamid thus draws a distinct line between the mobility of information and the mobility of people.

In the Empire of Information, you can be without borders and the human beings can remain heavily bordered. The contrast is helpful to see what makes information technology so significant to the notion of hyper capitalism. Networks facilitate the idea of instantaneous and global exchange of economy. Information can be shared, an item can be purchased and an ad can be sent at a distance without too much hassle. It is the same connected world that can thus create the impression that translates to the Earth being as accessible.

*Exit West* aims to shatter this illusion by making clear that technological distance is not debilitatingly widened by decreasing technological distance. Rich and poor people can participate in the same global network, but be structurally opposite, respectively. This argument is taken further when the Tamil family comes to Dubai. They are picked up by the security cameras at once, and the code of lip-reading software tracks their language. Prior to the aspect of being social subjects, they are already known by the technological system. In their initial episode with the global city, they are thus mediated through surveillance. Global capitalism creates an inevitable center of wealth like Dubai, characterized by luxury apartments, expensive cars, visitors and amazing architecture. Migrants arrive in this place as people who are out of place, out of work, out of power. It's through technology that their presence can be made visible, but without a guarantee of belonging.

Surveillance vs consumption is particularly relevant. The users of mobile phones during a tour are a leisure group filming and photographing their world; the people who are subject of the filming and photographing are the migrants who are recorded as security objects. So, the technological culture can engender two types of visibility: a consumer visibility that is the one of pleasure and participation, and the security visibility, the one of suspicion and control. Demand by consumers and attention by consumers are necessary for hyper capitalism while classification of populations and their management are necessary for Empire. The novel places these two forms of visibility next to one another.

The Chinese restaurant scene is further involved with the critique of globalization also, as the restaurant is a symbol of mobility, cultural exchange and commercial change. Its family owners have been working there for generations before they move to Canada, and the business is left behind as a "commercial space. Hence migration and commerce go hand in hand. The places they vacated can be sold, designed, reused, and bought, and people are migrated due to countries' economies. The continued operation of the restaurant in another manner and masquerade, is a sign of the continuity of the commodity and the discontinuity of human belonging. Second, the ambiance of the restaurant is created in a simulated cultural manner, showing that

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globalism can make culture as a consumable style. Signs can easily be passed on from culture to culture, yet the sign's historical significance can be dissolved.

Hyper capitalism, in this way, does not have to disavow cultural difference; it can maintain difference in a consumable way, or in ways that are profitable. The familiar is converted into a saleable image. The overall effect is an international climate where users can access imagery of locales and cultures, while encountering none of the historical inequities that underpin them. It is to be noted that Hamid's characters see these instabilities when they are drawn into a place that is both here and not here.

Home Fire is globalization in another, albeit similar sense. The Pasha family is spread geographically, and the characters cross-transnational boundaries between Britain, America, Pakistan, etc. Their life is organized around international education, professional itinerary, migratory experiences and international political occurrences. However, at the same time as these seemingly open opportunities, there is increased surveillance. His trip to America is cut short due to being on the list as a security threat because of who she is. So, the global citizen is not as mobile. Mobility is according to the degree of race and religion, class and suspicion of politics.

The contrasting position of Eamonn makes his role useful to Isma's. He is able to travel through cosmopolitan spaces to a certain extent, principally because he is in proximity to a privileged center of British society through his class identity, accent, name and social relations. His movements are normal. Isma, by contrast, is a girl that needs explanation, justification, of mobility. This difference illustrates the differential subjects of globalization. What can be an opportunity for one person is the suspicion for another due to the same international environment. Hyper capitalism thus doesn't abolish hierarchy; it does reorganize hierarchy by transnational networks. Globalization, too, is intertwined with colonial history as the family histories in Home Fire demonstrate. The so-called migration to Britain and service within the British Indian Army, as well as the subsequent permeation of the younger generation through educational and professional institutions are not isolated instances. They are linked to extensive histories of imperial mobility. The novel implies that uneven relations result from other forms of empire and that these relations are inherited by mobility today.

History is one in which certain populations are given the freedom to move around because of imperial purposes, others are locked away, and others are displaced – and what is presented as a “borderless” present is shaped by this. The speed with which this global situation can be intensified by information technology by making political narratives flow back and forth between country to country. An international archive of information about detention and abuse is linked to an individual through a search, a family tragedy is international news, and a speech by a British politician becomes a social-media event. This makes it harder to keep local and global distinctions.

In Home Fire, “political events don't happen over there somewhere.”

Digital media introduces those events to their home, conversation, relationships, and self-understandings. Both novels thus argue for globalization as not just one way of functioning—with one territorial center—but for functioning in networks. Globalization produces circulation, conditions of circulation unequal. Knowledge, capital, goods, and special identities can more easily traverse borders than can vulnerably bodies. The novels reveal this disconnect and highlight the unacceptability of equating technologic togetherness with social equality. Global network could link everyone and still have a ranking for everyone.

An over-arching empire dominated Hardt and Negri's understanding of Empire is even more fruitful if the various technological, economic and political stages are regarded in tandem. In the novels, Empire manifests in a variety of ways and not always as one person making decisions from a central point. Rather it resides in the advertising agencies, security institutions, media, digital platforms, consumer markets, migration regimes, and cultural expectations. The characters practically never meet a total system. They come across bits of it. Although each fragment is itself a piece of the power structure, they are also cumulatively effective in forming a recognizable structure of power. An important symbol of this transformation is the replacement of the old cinema, in Exit West, by a shopping arcade for electronic equipment and computer.

The cultural place becomes a commercial place that serves the consumption of the technology. Its old name still exists but its new purpose is different. The name remains, thereby giving the impression of continuity, and the economic creation of the building has been changed. This is Empire subtracts history in a subtle way, because, not only can it eliminate ALL history, it can also use historical sign to make for new commerce. The relationship between technology and desire is portrayed in the shopping arcade. The computer and electronic

peripheral are not simply instruments, but are commodities that promise entrance into the modern world. Technological usage is depicted as progress on the market. However, loss is registered in the scene too as the cinema was a form of communal cultural life beyond consumption. The transformation of the cinema is thus one more on an individualized technological consumption than on a collective cultural experience.

Hyper capitalism alters purchases made and the type of spaces within which people meet. Tamil family's journey in Dubai is another instance of Empire: syncretization of surveillance and luxury. The network comprises security cameras, lip-reading software, drones and security vehicles. Meanwhile, the surrounding city showcases global capitalism's opulent Ness. Both of these dimensions are not coincidental antitheses. Surveilling seeps into areas of concentration of wealth and seek to discern bodies seemingly "out of place. In this respect, the technological system is a part of economic geography maintenance, namely for identifying who can enter, who has to go out, and who can stay under watch. The guarded doors of the novel clued our thinking about selective permeability. The magical doors seem to have opened to a more global perspective—due to the possibility of geographical movement, but the structure of the social again erects barriers. Doors from poorer areas are less well secured than doors to richer areas.

This is the political economy of mobility as exposed. However, it's not just the very presence of the borders that is the issue, but how borders function based on the value of tolerated and un-tolerated movement. The problem is that "Empire" isn't just about the complete elimination of boundaries and instead deals with permeability. Citizenship is applied in *Home Fire*, as the legal status of choice allows people to be dangerous to each other, and everyone manipulates it so as to appear justifiable. Citizenship is a legal condition but, in the novel, the practical nature of it becomes questionable. The treatment of Isma, Parvaiz and Aneeka reveals that some of the citizens have more security of belonging as compared to others. Security talk can occur that renders belonging as performative in terms of ideology. Someone could have the citizenship but not actually be in the country.

Information technology makes this all the more powerful, as digital traces, media illustrations, and political declarations can be constantly replicated to reinforce the division between the acceptable citizen and the suspect citizen. The political success of Karamat Lone shows the pressure to become legitimate as it is understood in some model of an acceptable identity. One component of his public persona is being perceived as a Muslim upholding security and national belonging. When his speech enters into the world of social networking, the publicity given to his identity is amplified. As he frames key political concepts into hashtags, their compressed character implies a certain rigidity, and many of his users have proven themselves to be dogmatic. Simplified identities are easier to safely transport in networks than complicated ones - hence its usefulness to Empire. Digital circulation answers the inquiries of Velocity, Awareness and Psychological Reaction – at the cost of any nuance.

Peng Joon undergoes the process in reverse, experiencing the birth of the Pasha's family. Their situations are continually simplified and condensed into one of a few types: Muslim, British, Pakistani, terrorist, victim, sister, brother, citizen and suspect. Once these categories of these characters are given voice in media and political institutions, which becomes the case, they start shaping how the characters are being treated. Empire's strength in part is its capacity to make complex lives into "administratively convenient" identities. The individual is more complex than the category; institutions can treat the category as if complete. This is closely related to surveillance. Be aware of this, surveillance is not simply watching a person. It also represents generating knowledge related to an individual to be utilized in decision making. Isma's browser history is so significant because it tracks the things done into a historical document. The officials can then interpret the record. The same is true of digital media—they can take a quote or meme and tear it out from its source and place it in a different political conversation. It is when the information is classifiable, shareable and actionable that it becomes powerful.

Economically it can be seen as a part of the space of consumption, of the space of advertising, of the technological space of commodities, of the space of markets. It has a political aspect; surveillance, security, citizenship, migration control. It is information technology that plugs together these dimensions. It offers the vehicles for commodities to be advertised, for people to be monitored, for narrative to be circulated and for identities to be classified. The novels thus help to build the understanding of technology as infrastructure, not as stand-alone object. Cinema as a site of resistance to hyper capitalism: the immaterial labor of confined bodies. It is the inattention to immaterial labor that is particularly relevant in analyzing the characters, as

victims of hyper capitalism as well as producers of meanings, relations, and different forms of social value, in the original study.

Immaterial labor for Hardt and Negri is the labor that generates knowledge, information, communication, cultural meanings and affect. Labor of this sort can be readily integrated into the capitalist system, and because human creativity and cooperation are not fully exchangeable, there is room for resistance as well. In both novels, the characters constantly engage intersecting cognitive and affective abilities in their efforts to sustain ways of life that are not manageable from an economic perspective.

Exit West starts with young people carrying on life as usual in a city that's about to be destroyed. The experience of study, work, friendship, love and cultural interest can be seen as denial of the crisis being an overall mode of existence. Even though political institutions are failing, characters remain human beings. What makes their focus on ordinary life important is the fact that hyper capitalist, authoritarian regimes are apt at categorizing people as, say, workers, consumers, refugees, or security risks. This reduction is resisted by keeping relationships and personal aspirations alive. The affective nature of immaterial labor can be seen in the relationship between Saeed's and Nadia's. People create a global experience in the outpourings of their communication, which are not measurable by the economic categories which surround them. Their discourse, care for one another and an effort to stay together produce value that is not a commercial value. When communication technologies don't work, the need to stay connected persists. The way they relate to each other therefore becomes an example of human activity which continues after the network's efficient functioning. Nadia is also being resourceful, which is also an example of cognitive labor. She has to make constant calculations regarding her finances, accessing digital platforms, food, movement and her personal safety. She assesses risk and adjusts to changes. This type of labor is not recognized as formal labor, but still is a requirement for survival. This novel, therefore, redefines work. Planning, remembering, caring and improvising are forms of labor in times of displacement. These activities create a capacity to survive which is not readily measurable in the terms of conventional economy.

More explicit is the creative immaterial labor constructed by Parvaiz in Home Fire through the medium of his sound work. His fascination with the recording and editing of sounds in games is an effort towards making sensory experiences into cultural products. Though his working life is uncertain, and economically tenuous, but it gives him an identity distinct from that imposed on him by his family history and the security state. His sound reel is a dream-like trajectory to another future. In the context of technology, it's not only a mechanism of control, but it's a medium in which, an excluded subject is trying to produce himself. What is important about Parvaiz's creative work is that it deals with subjectivity.

In the context of hyper capitalism making people measurable economic units, this can also be a way of self-definition through creative activity. Parvaiz wants to be known not as a part of the political history of his family but for what he can create. Though he does not receive economic recognition immediately this shows some of the boundaries about this kind of resistance, but the activity of creating is still important. In this way, the novel makes immaterial work seem problematic, in that it can be used for capitalism but also may assist an individual in imagining a subjectivity that defies the capitalistic and state sanctioned subject policies. These are affective-cognitive labors carried out also by Aneeka and Isma. They conduct conversations, manage emotional responses, hold each other safe and negotiate institutional expectations. Isma's performance at the airport is very telling because she knows the official is not only interested in getting some information, but he or she is also interested in some response. Her careful response which means strategic labor. She needs to figure out which things to say, what to not say, and how to keep herself out of trouble. This emotion work is a reactive practice in a society that requires subjects to constantly regulate themselves.

Eamonn's relationship with Aneeka is also a form of resistance as it is building up a social space for learning, affection, cooking, chatting and sharing. They value each other than for career advancement. The fact that he chooses to spend some time with Aneeka instead of getting back completely into the structure that his friends would like to see him fall into indicates some resistance to the notion that a successful life must be defined by professional competition and social pecking order. The link thus evolves into a mini-economy of attention, in which individuals treasure each other for non-transcendable assets. Immaterial labor should, however, not be glorified. Hyper capitalism can incorporate the same activities. Creativity can turn into the content and the feeling can become a marketing asset and communication can produce data. Well, that immaterial labor is automatically outside capitalism would, of course, be the point. The importance is that there is a conflict over

who has control of its products and meanings. The novels depict characters trying to save some aspects of human creativity, affection and community from being incorporated completely into an apparatus of values. In this context the resistance in both novels is at times little, local, incomplete. This can be in the form of helping someone, holding a memory, producing art, passing on knowledge, maintaining a relationship, or nuance. They are not Empire overthrowing, but an action that hinders the completion of Empire category. They make it possible that someone can be more than just a consumer, worker, refugee, suspect, and data point. That's why the immaterial labor is significant for the study of hyper capitalism – because of the potential for resistance to be produced through the production of alternative meanings and social relationships.

The following sections focus on a new phenomenon, which is the making of multitude as a form of resistance to hyper capitalism. The notion of multitude is useful in Hardt and Negri to better illuminate collective aspects of resistance and is present in both novels. The many are no one. It is made up of different people and groups of people whose difference is still apparent although they work together. This seems to be especially relevant to *Exit West*, considering how migration enables individuals from varied, national, linguistic, religious and cultural backgrounds to come together. Displacement does not wipe out their differences; on the contrary, it sets the stage for difference to become the basis for cooperation.

A good example is the Mykonos camp. The "all of us are foreign" means that, from the standpoint of national exclusion, "no one is foreign. While they lack citizenship, the migrants have the opportunity to develop other modes of belongingness through proximity, information, exchange and mutual protection. They function as a community when formal institutions don't. The camp is therefore an alternative form of society, one which grows from below, not something imposed from above. There are contradictory elements in the informal economies of the camp. They're exploitation as well as cooperation, and can't be idealized as the perfect alternative to capitalism. However, the need for barter, exchange of information, mutual protection, and collective survival suggests that social value could be generated outside of formal institutions.

Practical networks are formed by the migrants due to the non-availability of support services from the official systems. Thus, the many are a product of need. Its political relevance is its ability of ordinary people to build structures of collective life when it collapses around them. This concept is further explored at the dark London communities. Migrants forming associations, farming negotiations and making councils. Political setup of their societies is not monocultural. They are polyphonic and extempore. Nadia is open to the multicultural experience, while Saeed wants to be surrounded by a familiarity of some kind.

This distinction is significant as it indicates that the plurality doesn't demand perfect unity, can include disagreement without losing cooperation. Resistance thus turns into a way of coexistence rather than a call to homogeneity. With the support of the information technology, it can strengthen the collective entities since information can be shared quickly. Knowledge of how to migrate and where to go is shared by others who are divorced from one another by national borders in *Exit West*. Words can thus become elements to be stolen by migrants to serve ends other than those of the institutions that manage technological apparatus. It's not a small amount of money. It teaches me that whatever serves the purpose of Empire can also serve the multitude. Technologies are part and parcel of politics indeed; half of this sentence is "technologies are political depending on the politician and the end of the technology.

Home Fire speaks to the many, offering a public grieving and collective attention through the media. The controversy over whether Aneeka can bring her brother home along with his body is now public and political. Her grief is now out of the confines of her family. Digital circulation works on this by the ability of messages, images, and hashtags to pass beyond the physical place where the grieving takes place. The outcome is a community-based response, which questions the State's account of what Parvaiz's life and death meant. It is a double-edged sword though, in the case of *Home Fire*, the hashtag "culture. Then the same narrative can be used to disseminate counter-narratives. The multitude theory is founded on this ambiguity. Networked communication does not necessarily free the people involved, but can make connections between people who are otherwise isolated. The public appeal of Aneeka, the video delivered by Eamonn and the reactions it elicits empower the conversion of personal testimony into collective political speech. Through circulation the individual voice takes on strength.

Eamonn's resolution to take advantage of the fame of a video and publicly address the issue of the narrative is an example of an individual endeavoring to assert his or her own narrative authority. The mainstream media

given heretically defines Aneeka and her family as living in a sensational political classification, while Eamonn tries to tell a different story. It is significant because he acknowledges that the power of representation is a form of political power. He gives a personal account, thereby breaking down the institutional distance. His video tries to put back into perspective those who have been reduced to a political symbol.

The family's grievance is also undermining the State's attempt to institute a practice of defining which lives are deserving or not of such public recognition. The act of mourning is to affirm that a human being has relationships, memories, and worth beyond annulment by a political designation. In this regard, grief is resistance. It builds an alternative memory which challenges state-uttered stories. This was a multitude that was achieved through shared recognition: people from diverse backgrounds, who may not have shared the same recognition, can share in the recognition of injustice, and respond as many.

The shortcomings of this resistance are still relevant. None of the works indicates that Empire can be overcome simply with collective action. The state has more institutional leverage, digital focus can be re-directed, misrepresented or forgotten. Hashtags can "trend jump" for a brief period of time before fading out. Pop support is fleeting, yet. Communities can fracture. However, the fact of such resistance is important for it shows that power does not finally extinguish agency. Thus, the multiplicity itself can be a force, as their relationships and meanings are beyond the control of the predominant system.

In reading immaterial labor alongside multitude, one can then attribute a more comprehensive sense of resistance to them. Immaterial labor is the concept behind what people produce, such as knowledge, emotion, creativity, communication, memory, and social relations. The many forms explain that these forms of production are collective. As a pair, they make manifest the critique that Exit West and Home Fire can sometimes be not a typical revolution in revolt, but also not just a rejection of technology. It is building of other forms of communication, caring, remembering and belonging in the same global space in which they are trying to be shaped and commodified.

#### **SUGGESTIONS**

It may be worthwhile to do more in-depth analyses of Zuboff's (2019) behavioral surplus for both novels, as neither have been read through the lens of surveillance capitalism. The framework is open to be expanded in relation to other Pakistani or migrant texts as well as to non-literary media like Pakistan's news media or the hashtag campaigns that Shamsie fictionalizes. Comparative studies on these two novels and the actual blocking of the Internet and seizure of the airports' data would gauge the fit between fiction and practice.

#### **CONCLUSION**

Both novels address this research question in a similar fashion; information technology is the location of Empire. In Exit West, the citizen's network provides citizens with goods and services but then shuts down upon demand and the citizens develop distrust of the network. In Home Fire, the leitmotif of the jacket, the internet browser history and the hashtag make a Muslim citizen legible to power. Both authors refrain from voicing neutrality in their description of these systems. They show them as the apparatus of hypercapitalism penetrating borders and colonizing the body, the phone, the family, just as Hardt and Negri theorize about Empire.

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