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In Transit: The Changing Nature of Cities, Suburbs and Modes of Communication in Cold War America

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ABSTRACT

This article is concerned with the study of urban spaces, such as cities, suburbs and modes of transportation, and their changing social and political dimensions in Cold War America. To do so, the essay will try to understand how cities and suburbs, post- World War II, evolved in terms of demographic composition and how domestic and foreign policies of the two power blocks impacted this demography. American sociologist, Louis Wirth's (1996) ideas of expansion of cities and formation of suburbs have been examined against the actual development of American metropolises alongside an exploration of domestic policies, especially those of 'containment' and 'conformity', and referenced to works of Cold War historians- Robert Genter and Nadel. Having identified the forces governing these spaces, the essay then delves forward to account for the implications of the 'third space' in Cold War America. It considers 'third space' as a geographic entity, as propounded by historian of urban planning- Edward Soja, and compares the representation of the 'third space' in Cold War literary texts to derive its conclusion.

Louis Wirth (1996) considered growth of cities the best indicator for the modernization of our civilization and identified the 19th century as the "Age of Great Cities". However, no general consensus has been reached on the definition of a city. For sociological purposes, he defines a city as a "relatively large, dense and permanent settlement of socially heterogeneous individuals" (Wirth, 1996, p. 98). In the wake of rapid technological development, American cities witnessed an influx of a large number of people from different parts of the country. Variations in personal traits, cultural life and ideas gave way to segregation based on color, ethnic heritage, economic and social status and taste and preferences in modern cities. Sentimental and emotional ties of people living and working together weakened, and as Wirth (1996) points out, fostered a spirit of competition, aggrandizement and exploitation. Recruitment of workers from different backgrounds led to the accentuation of uniqueness through "competition and the premium upon eccentricity, novelty, efficient performance and inventiveness" producing a highly differentiated population (Wirth, 1996, p.102). The structure of the city tended towards acceptance of "instability and insecurity" (Wirth, 1996, p. 101).

This heterogeneous nature of the city was antithetical to the policies of the United States post-World War II, which reached its climax with the implementation of the policies of 'containment' and the excesses of McCarthyism brought on by the Cold War. U.S foreign policy between 1948 and mid-1960s were technical known as 'containment policies', where the U.S officials actively tried to stop the growth and spread of Communist ideology within America's geographical borders as well as outside it. Nadel (1995) saw containment deriving its logic from the argument "that the world was divided into two monolithic camps, one dedicated to promoting the inextricable condition of capitalism, democracy and religion, and one seeking to destroy that ideological amalgamation by any means" (Nadel, 1995, p. 3). Paranoia against communist ideology, in the wake of the World War II, had spread to such an extent that containment policy engulfed all facets of public life- "corporate production and biological reproduction, military development and industrial technology, televised hearings and filmed teleplays, the cult of domesticity and the fetishizing of domestic security, the arms race and atoms for peace all contributed to the containment of communism..." (Nadel, 1995, p. 2). The success of the 'containment' policy, thus, depended on the general ac-

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ceptance of a relatively small set of narratives by a relatively large portion of the population. Government used modern propaganda techniques to subordinate individuality of the "larger community and immerse itself in mass movements" (Wirth, 1996, p. 102). 'Conformity' to government social prescriptions became the positive and sought after value in the American population. Apart from being a foreign and domestic policy, it also became "a rhetorical strategy that functioned to foreclose dissent, preempt dialogue and preclude contradiction" (Nadel, 1995, p. 14). The U.S government, thus, starting with the Hatch Act of 1939, passed a series of laws to protect the country against domestic subversion by making loyalty to the United States the condition for federal employment. Pressured by Republicans to do even more, President Eisenhower revised the loyalty program by expanding the grounds for dismissal. He continued the practice of dismissing employees who belonged, or had belonged, to political organizations deemed subversive or who supported particular political causes. But he added another category, what he referred to as "security risks"; that is, those who were not necessarily disloyal to the United States but who did not possess the proper "character" and therefore were a threat to national security. This, according to Genter, re-established in Cold War America, the long standing link in American discourse between political radicalism and psychopathology- one that served as the foundation of the emerging national security state (Nadel, 1995, p. 2).

Political trouble in Europe furthered influx of refugees into the American cities and these migrant families with different political leanings and ideologies were thought to pose particular risk to the health and well-being of the American urban population. The 'iron curtain' descended across Europe and the city dwellers in America were grasped by, "anxiety about the apparent threat to enshrined American ideals of self-determination and economic liberty posed by Bolshevik-influenced notions of shared ownership and communal living, coupled with the demands for continuing growth of a capitalist economy" that would surely enter America along with the refugees (Gill, 2013, p. 25). Even before the iron curtain speech, rogressive reform groups called for "treatment of these problematic groups through such policies as immigration restriction, sterilization campaigns, and eugenic approaches to the management of mental diseases" (Genter, 2018, p. 6). While still other 20th century reformers sought to combat varied threats from radicals emigrating from Eastern Europe, such as-social degeneracy, criminality, and moral turpitude, with analytic tools of criminology, sociology, and other disciplines to understand the psychological and physiological differences between social, racial, and ethnic groups to stave off societal collapse. Although, the most of these ideas did get delegitimized by the 1940s, "general concerns about the moral and psychological health of the nation had not disappeared by the start of the Cold War and fed into efforts to fortify the nation from radical threats" (Genter, 2018, p. 6). As a result, the foundations of the post-World War II national security state, which America was building towards, rested on psychiatric discourse.

The expansion of reasons for disqualification, by President Eisenhower, for federal employment not only evinced the entry of psychiatric discourse into the political arena, as pointed out earlier, but also represented a fundamental rethinking of the relationship between the state, domestic security, and the individual. This shift was prompted in large measure by new theories of deviance, psychopathology, and character formation developed by American psychiatrists who, under the guise of rooting out threats to security, devised categories for classifying deviant behavior (from alcoholism to homosexuality, criminality, and delinquency) and argued that such behavior could only be recognized through an intense interrogation into the backgrounds of suspects (Genter, 2018, p. 4). Thus, in the city, an individual was always under governmental surveillance, living in constant fear of contracting subversive ideas from his neighbors or fellows workers or divulging incriminating details of his/her own life. Every personal transgression was viewed as a viewed as a form of deviant behavior whether political or not, forcing individuals to cultivate a veneer to prevent exposing something disturbing underneath and exude a 'phony' exterior.

Americans soon grew tired of surveillance in the cities, threat of subversive political ideologies, suspicious immigrants and were in need of a safer place to raise their families in. Government policy and propaganda presented the suburbs as a desirable alternative to susceptible American families. Suburbs were supposed to bestow good health and provide "elevating vistas of space, light and clean air" (Gill, 2013, p. 23). By 1970, the percentage of Americans living in the suburbs doubled; more Americans were now living in suburban areas than in cities (Fishman, 1996, p. 78). American war veterans provided with easy access to housing facilities in the suburbs, courtesy the GI bills, chose to live the quaint life away from suspicion and lure of revolutionary and radical politics of the city. Improving modes of transportation and introduction of new railway lines along with increase in the ownership of automobiles among the Americans opened up new ways of commutation. It was no longer necessary for the family to live near the major earner's place of occupation. City dwellers, tired of living in rented rooms of an apartment building shared by people from different communities, races and even countries, sought their own homes. The 'conformity' seeking American, homogenized by public propaganda, saw investment in the suburban home akin to commitment to the nation. Becky Nicolaides quotes a developer speaking in 1919, "It elevates a man to own a home…Homes make patriots" (qtd. The poetics of the American Suburbs 25). John Keats, in his book *Crack in the Picture Window* professes that life led by people in the suburbs were identical and were perfectly in keeping with the government's prescription. They lived in identical houses, had the similar jobs, took the same trains, ate the same food and had the same mundane problems. The suburbs, at least from the outside, were the model of the 'American conformity' produced by the high 'containment' culture of the Cold War.

Back in the city office, however, one had to keep up appearances and conform to the socially accepted percepts that made the perfect patriotic American so as to not raise the sus-

picion of one's employers, especially if one was employed by the federal government. Robert Genter, in his essay, gives account of the importance attached to the loyalty tests and the absurdity of the way of judging whether an aspirant possessed the required character for federal service. Any minor deviation from the norm popularized by the government was not only enough to disqualify him from his position in the office but also could have him labeled as a communist sympathizer and/or a 'security risk', as has been explained earlier in the essay. Ironically, even though American families had fled to the suburbs to flee surveillance, they had to be wary of the surveillance subjected on them by their neighbors. They constantly suspected each other of undertaking subversive activities or being a 'phony'- association with whom may taint their own career and personal lives. So, the American families carried the culture of surveillance with them from the city to the suburbs. The large glass window in the living room, as indicated by John Keats in his book, often became the medium of such scrutiny. Anyone who broke the social norms of the quite, apparently homogenous suburbs was treated with suspicion and as an outcast.

But even if American families settled in the suburbs, they still had to travel to the city, almost daily, to reach their place of work. The suburbs were inextricably linked to the city; it had to be far enough to not be a part of the chaos of the city, but not too far to be cut off from it completely. Modes of transportation- trains, buses and later automobiles were the link between these widely separated spaces. The expansion of the railway lines was crucial to the growth of suburbs as they provided the working man easy and cheap access into the city. The automotive boom ensured that by 1967 there were three automobiles for every seven person in the suburbs of cities like Los Angeles. 41 percent of people living in the suburbs had access to one vehicle, 44 percent to two or more vehicles, and only 15 percent of the households lacked a car (Warner, 1996, p. 71). Fear of a nuclear war between the Eastern and the Western block and souring of relations with the Soviet Union led to the expansion of Freeways running away from major cities, so that people could swiftly desert the city in the event of a nuclear threat. These freeways entered rural hinterlands which previously had very little contact with big cities. The National Interstate and Defense Highways Act enacted by President Eisenhower, on 29 June 1956, ordered the construction of 41,000 miles of roads that would take residents out of the cities quickly in case of a conventional or Nuclear War with the Soviet Union. These quicker and direct routes allowed for suburban growth in areas not served by trains.

This continual to and fro between the suburbs and the city greatly changed the nature of the 'commuter' and these modes of communication in the Cold War context. Given that the cities and the suburbs emerged as distinct entities, the 'commuter' in the public/private mode of transportation was at once part of the city and the suburbs while not belonging to either of the two spaces. As the commuter boarded the train from the suburbs, the societal forces of the suburbs and the surveillance perpetuated on him by his neighbors stopped only to be picked up and intensified in the city office, however, the hour –hour and a half that he spent commuting no such force acted upon him. The commuter train was a neutral space which had no fixed decorum mainly because one spent very little time aboard it to determine the conditions under which communication should further. The commuter traversing the realm of the city office and the suburban home, twice a day, six days a week "between these contrasting spaces took on a triple spatial and indeed temporal identity" (Cunningham, 2007, p. 9).

As the train travelled from the suburbs to the city, this commuter's view constantly changed- from the sordid working class neighborhoods with its kitchenette buildings, to the leisured backyards of the suburban homes and then again to the claustrophobic apartments of the city, through the glass window of the commuter train or his personal car. "Trains running high on embankments between houses brought the commuter's gaze directly on the level with upper windows, allowing immediate visual contact" (Cunningham, 2007, p. 17). This gave the commuter a unique opportunity to 'gaze' at urban life in all its forms without being influenced by any of these geographical spaces as he was always confined to the neutral space of his mode of transportation. Looked upon from this perspective, the 'commuter' seemed to share some characteristics with Baudelaire and Benjamin's 'flaneur', however, Cunningham refutes it by saying that the 'commuter' "provides a more empirically grounded alternative figure through which to apprehend the relations between individual and city, the personal and the mass", as he traveled not within the city but rather from the suburb to the city (Cunningham, 2007, p. 19). The commuter engaged through this movement in a daily negotiation of difference and connection between distinct spatial and temporal identities. This space of commute i.e., the commuter train or the personal car assumed the personality of the 'third space' brought into existence by the cultural characteristics of the first and the second spaces i.e., the city and the suburb. As shall be seen from later literary examples, this third space was dialogic in nature, committed to democratic processes of political transition and ethical transformation in the American society where such independent processes were disallowed by strict government censorship, surveillance and paranoia.

Speaking of the traditional grass mats- the Gacaca Courts, which qualify as a 'third space', Homi Bhaba states:

> "the Gacaca is not simply a neutral area of confession, nor is it principally a space of confrontation and guilt. It is a place and a time that exists in-between the violent and the violated, the accused and the accuser, allegation and admission. And that site of in-betweenness becomes the ground of discussion, dispute, confession, apology and negotiation through which Tutsis and Hutus together confront the inequities and asymmetries of societal trauma not as a 'common people,' but as a people with a common cause" (qtd. Communicating in the Third Space 11)

Modes of communication in Cold War America played a similar function. This site of in-betweenness was the sole space where the average American could abjectly consider

the political color that his/her life had imbibed. Although outside the train or the car his/her every moved acquired a political dimension, the average American coached by propaganda and scared by televised defamations, could consider his role in the Cold War society objectively within the 'third space'. Thus, discussions, disputes, confessions between people had to take place within the 'third space' to be authentic and to allow people to communicate without the restrictions posed by political ideologies. Blake and Miss Dent, the wife driving up to collect her husband from the train station and the family in *White Noise*, as shall be later analyzed in the essay, all have to confront each other and the inequities and the asymmetries of societal trauma of the Cold War within the confines of these modes of transport. Within this small confined space, they have just one identity- their personal identity and they see each other for who they are, this conjures up a sort of fellow feeling and they look upon each other not with suspicion but rather as fellow human beings with similar needs and aspirations. Political ideologies, societal segregation only start acting upon them when the alight from the train or their respective cars.

The third space of the mode of transport, according to Gail Cunningham represented, "waves of suburban commuters differentiated by class or occupation, but nevertheless rapidly became the daily signifier of mass that characterized the city space" (Cunningham, 2007, p. 11). The commuters might have been a signifier of the mass in 19th century London, but in Cold War America, the projected identities that made the commuters acceptable in cities and suburbs came off in the 'third space' and thus, destroyed the narrative framework that characterized the period. Terms such as 'phony', 'conformity' and others, engaged in the translational temporality of the 'third space', lost their mode of intention within the 'third space'. These signifiers which determined one's social status outside became arbitrary within, refusing to make sense without the Cold War linguistic rule or semiotic process in modes of transportation. "The openness of the sign to translation—that living flux that marks the "difference" between intention as object and as modality— shifts the balance of discourse from the language of enmity to the language of proximity", producing the lapse of the Cold War cultural traditions and the displacement of the members of the society within the 'third space' (qtd. Communicating in the Third Space 13). It also brought about a common identity- the fellowship addressed in the previous paragraph, completely new in its hybridity.

Armed thus, with an understanding of America's containment policy, the cult of conformity, the implications of living in the city or the suburbs during the Cold War and Soja and Bhaba's understanding of the 'third space', the paper shall move on to the analysis a John Cheever short story, a Phyllis McGinley poem and a Don Delillo novel to go beyond traditional modes of thinking about space and account for their changing significance in Cold War America by viewing the representation of modes of communication- trains, airplanes and cars as the 'third space' in contemporary literary texts. In keeping with Soja's hypothesis it shall be seen that Cold War assumptions created a dynamic force that was actively produced and reproduced maintaining the 'third space'.

The railway coach as the third space and the identity of the commuter as one detached from the Cold War implications is seen clearly in John Cheever's short story, named after the departure time of the train taking the commuters back from the city to the suburbs, *Five-forty eight*. The story follows the pattern of a regular extra marital affair, but the Cold War endows it with a few extra dimensions. The woman, with whom Blake had an affair and then dismissed from the office where they both worked, has been identified as a "phony". Constant legislations, public hearings, televised confessions warned Americans to be "suspicious of phonies, wary of associates, circumspect about their past and cautious about their speech" (Nadel, 1995, p. 74). Cold War America required a new code of conduct to confront "valorized duplicity" bent on destroying all traditions erected for the safe guard of individuals (Nadel, 1995, p. 75). Blake confronted by her on the train laments "his lack of suspicion when she first mentioned her months in the hospital" (Cheever, 1978, p. 243). Months spent in hospital because of mental illness, as is hinted at time and again by the woman, had special connotations in the environs of the Cold War. Any sort of mental ill health was linked to deviancy and proclaimed by psychiatrists as inkling to having an ill-favored character that would eventually lead to the person to becoming a 'security risk'. She was obviously aware of the implications of her disease and mentioned it only in passing in the office; however, she confesses it all in the 'third space'. The train, being removed from the city as well as the suburbs, allows her to shed the mask of composure and confess everything in its non-controlled environment. She recollects that though she had been in the hospital for a very long time, "they never tried to cure me, they only tried to take my self-respect away" (Cheever, 1978, p. 243). She was simply one among many who had had treatment (probably inadequate) for mental or neurological disorder and was later termed subversive for it, "the enemy…pretending to be a friend" (Nadel, 1995, p. 75). It is quite clear from Blake's lament that he perceived the situation similarly.

Cold War American society, which Blake was a part of, looked upon betrayal as the true test of loyalty towards the nation. Nadel (1995) states that unless someone was willing to betray friends, no oath of loyalty was credible and Blake passed his test well by betraying his partner. After spending the night with her, he had her fired from the job, probably with accusations of sexual advancement towards him, as immorality was also deemed a legitimate reason to consider someone a 'phony' or a 'security risk'. Genter, in his essay, outlines that "security investigators were told to examine the political affiliations... as well as character, habits, and morals, including but not limited to such matters as gross immorality, excessive use of intoxicants, and lack of integrity" (Genter, 2018, p. 4). Thus, with her history of mental illness and Blake's accusation of sexual impropriety, Miss Dent could easily be certified as a 'deviant'. However, in the neutral train, Miss Dent looks the victim that she is. She had received improper treatment for her ailment, been dis-

criminated against for that ailment, betrayed by her lover and ousted from work for Blake's own security. Within the train distorted codes of morality promoted by the Cold War cease to exist, thus, Blake feels guilty and devotes his attention to the evening paper to keep his mind off it.

As Miss Dent presses her pistol against Blake, he wishes that other passengers like Mrs. Crompton and Mr. Whatkins would notice and come to his aid, but within the train, none of his fellow passengers care. Mrs. Compton, though curious of his relationship with his wife in the suburbs, is blissfully asleep aboard the train and refuses to carry on her surveillance. Mr. Whatkins, a commercial artist who often broke "sumptuary laws of the suburbs" by wearing sandals or corduroy jackets and was generally avoided by his neighbors for not being the typical suburban conformist is looked at without discrimination. Even though Blake was content to look away and not acknowledge him in the suburbs, Blake wishes to secure his help and protection within the train (Cheever, 1978, p. 239).

While Blake walking the city streets, being pursued by Miss Dent sure of her "meaning to kill him", he tried his best to evade (Cheever, 1978, p. 237). Confronting her in the city would mean associating with a 'deviant' which surveyors in the city would be sure to catch. Not only would it jeopardize the veneer that he had cultivating with utmost care all this while, but would also entail him confronting the outcome of his decisions formed on the basis of the twisted moral codes of the Cold War city. Looking to escape his pursuer, he enters a bar and immediately loses her enveloped by a throng of city dwellers. This incident might seem coincidental; however, the Cold War environs renders Miss Dent's inability to find Blake in the bar a poignant explanation. The bar, being part of the city ruled by Cold War assumptions, protects the (pretend) conformist- Blake, who has proved his loyalty to the nation by betraying his secretary-Miss Dent, who, on the other hand, has been discredited by her failure of the loyalty test. By portraying Miss Dent as a sexual deviant, Blake has, for the time being, brushed away any suspicion and fixed his "mask of conformity", as Genter (2018) calls it, quite firmly on himself (p. 11). The city bar merely defends its own by denying one already been ousted by society. However, this protection wears off as soon as he enters the commuter train.

Blake's betrayal of Miss Dent and her subsequent dismissal, however, were not enough to lead her to threaten Blake with a pistol aboard a moving train, her desperation had more to do with Cold War's 'containment culture' and the position allotted to her in that society. Elaine Mary Taylor mentions America's tendency of practicing, "a cult of domesticity as a form of political and social containment for sexual energies of post-World War II teenagers and young adults, congruent to commensurate with American foreign and domestic policy of containing communism" (qtd. Containment Culture 117). Female sexuality had to support monolithic goals of Cold War America through a practice of duplicity, the woman had to attract and stimulate male sexual drives but not gratify it. In other words, "... it had to indicate its presence through absence" (Nadel, 1995, p. 117). In such a rigid, sexually codified society, females could belong to either of the two classes demarcated by Nadel- "the lady" or "the tramp". It is quite clear from the names that the woman's ability to contain the man's sexual drive was akin to her preserving her dignity. Miss Dent's sexual encounter with Blake morally tainted her in the eyes of the society she lived in. She had failed the responsibilities that came with legitimate sexual license by being unable to domesticate Blake, who was already married. The only avenue left open, to Miss Dent, to redeem herself was to try and see herself in a family situation with Blake, which she tried through a letter. She addressed Blake as "dear husband", trying to put the relationship in a socially accepted bracket (Cheever, 1978, p. 244). The irony of the situation, however, laid in her ability to only do so in the neutral compartment of the commuter train. In the city, Blake was able to stop her from coming into the office aided by the restrictions the society imposed on the likes of Miss Dent- the social 'tramp', but this seal is broken inside the train. Just as in the city, Miss Dent would have been unable to pursue Blake into the suburbs as being the 'social tramp' and having been identified as a 'security risk' with a history of mental illness, she would never have been able to command any confidence in her accusations of Blake- the accepted conformist. Only the liminality of the train allows her the opportunity of confronting her perpetrator- Blake.

It is noteworthy that while Blake had initiated and participated in the sexual encounter with Miss Dent willingly, the society was quite willing to turn a blind eye to male sexual promiscuity, provided there were no other vices accompanying it. Without a doubt, Cold War American society afforded the male members greater sexual license than women, even though aberrant sexual behavior was a criterion for declaring someone a 'security risk'. Nadel (1995) points outs that by 1959, the range of legitimate sexual license for men had steadily increased, as illustrated by the growing cultural acceptance of the "playboy" promoted by the magazine of the same name. With virtually no articles or verbal substance, the magazine appealed exclusively to readers interested in participating in fantasies that saw women as 'tramps', "foreign from and alien to readers or one's domestic setting" (Nadel, 1995, p. 129). This explains how Blake was able to continue with his immoral activities without ever getting reported for it. The lines, "most of the many women he had known had been picked up for their lack of self-esteem", signify that the encounter with Miss Dent was not a solitary event, rather of the sort he frequently indulged in (Cheever, 1978, p. 238). The Cold War society had been protecting or at least accepting him, 'the playboy', while prosecuting his playmate for 'gross immorality'. The confrontation between 'the playboy' and 'the tramp', thus, had to take place in a neutral space where both would be treated as equals and the only available place to such a society was the space of its transportation. The commuter train provided Miss Dent the opportunity to threaten Blake with a pistol and make her own stance and predicament clear. The climax of the confrontation, though, takes place outside the train. The protagonists of the story having commuted from the city embark upon the suburban station of Shady Hill and invisible forces of suburban 'conformity' started acting upon them. Miss Dent can no

longer commit the radical murder of her lover; the suburbs rob Miss Dent of her agency, she could no longer challenge the social norms that provided the victim no chance of redeeming herself. Instead she leaves with him groveling at her feet. The ending might have been different had Cheever decided to get to the climax while still on the train.

If Cheever's story showed the plight of the Cold War 'tramp' who found agency only aboard a commuter train, Phyllis McGinley's poem *5.32* shows the Cold War 'lady' and her reflections while driving the family car. Even though their social position differs widely, their quality of life hardly changes. The 'lady', though socially acceptable, hardly had any avenues open to her to express herself. Allen Nadel (1995) quite perceptively says "…within the dominant discourse of the Cold War, female sexuality was almost always not reconcilable with domestic security. Or if it was, there seemed no acceptable discourse that could make the concept consistent with domesticity" (Nadel, 1995, p. 126). Cold War America could conceive the willing house wife only in conjunction with its idea of the suburban haven. The *American Woman's Home* portrays the white housewife as the nurturer and moral guardian of the suburban home.

The suburban wife was supposed to stay at home; sometimes engaging with community work outside which was termed as 'municipal housekeeping', but other than that she was to be the doll in the well-kept doll house of the suburbs. If as a single woman she had worked in the city, it was expected of her to give up that job after marriage and forget about economic independence and concentrate on "building a comfortable home life (was) the most morally worthwhile act one could undertake", according to Stephanie Coontz (qtd. The Poetics of the American Suburbs 24). She hardly ventured into the city, unless she was accompanying her husband, but drove the car to the station every evening just as the train from the city came in to pick up the husband. Volume 28 of the July 1950 issue of the 'Better Homes and Gardens' magazine had an advertisement for a Ford car, which showed a woman driving the car with her son in the front seat while the husband inspected it. The advertisement made it clear that car belonged to the family but promptly left out the fact that it was mostly used to serve the husband's needs as the wife was seldom allowed to ventured out alone. In this sense, the suburban wife was not the typical commuter travelling from the city to the suburbs, rather she was a commuter within the suburban space, traveling from the house to the liminal train station in an equally liminal mode of transport- the private car, waiting for her commuter to arrive.

McGinley's poem records the musings of one such suburban house wife as she waits at the station for her husband's train to come in. She thinks of the monotony of her life as she sits in the car under the awning of a little station in Virginia. She is not alone; there are many others like her going through the same motion every day. She claims that this is the hour that she will remember best because in the space of the car and the station, part of neither the city nor the suburb, she is allowed to gaze objectively at her own world, controlled viciously by the domineering presence of the husband walking towards her, "… the evening paper/Under his arm and his hat pushed back on his head" (McGinley, 1954, pp.11-12) Once back at home, she will be shoved into the role that the suburban home has designated her- sitting by the table with the "dinner waiting, and the sun not yet gone down" (McGinley, 1954, pp.14) The thought of breaking out of the mold only occurs to her in the neutral space of the car or the station. If she acted on it at home, the same fate that greeted Blake's wife in Cheever's story would await her. The husband, enraged at her unwillingness to play the role that his suburban play has designated her, will grow estranged. She, on the other hand, would have no way to retaliate and like Blake's wife in Cheever's story will lead a life not worth mentioning. Even though not a typical 'commuter', the car and the train station provides her with the same opportunities as they do the regular commuter- an opportunity to gaze inwards as much as outwards to gauge her position in Cold War power dynamics of the sexes.

By the 1970s, the landscape of the urban scene had changed further; the distinction between suburbs and cities blurred and a new space emerged along the major urban cities. Robert Fishman (1996) calls them 'technoburb' and defines them as "a peripheral zone, perhaps as large as a county that has emerged as a viable socio-economic unit" (Fishman, 1996, p. 79). The 'technoburb' had shopping malls, industrial parks, campus like office complexes, hospitals, schools and a full range of housing types. The residents looked to their immediate surroundings rather than cities for jobs and other needs. The absence of a great tidal wash of workers in and out of a single urban core every working day of the week meant relatively shorter automobile journeys around the 'technoburb'. As a result, the average journey to work diminished not only in time but also in distance. This changed commuting; the 'commuter' no longer spent at least two hours on his way to and from work, however, as will be seen in Don Delillo's 1985 novel *White Noise*, none of the significance of the mode of transport as the 'third space', was lost.

The novel is remarkable for the number of episodes that unfold in the family car as it travels within the limits of the Blacksmith 'technoburb' with the family inside. Blacksmith, neither a city nor a suburb is a hybrid with characteristics of both. In the Cold War context that would mean that the sensibilities of the radicalism, suspicion of the city were in a constant tussle with the conformist tendencies of the suburbs, often confusing the residents whether to adhere to the conventions ruling the city or the suburbs. As a result, clear communication within the characters is left wanting. Thus, Jack finds it difficult to reach Heinrich, while Denise is unable to confront her mother. Babette fails to communicate her fears to her husband and so on. Free interactions, rare as they are, only take place within the neutral, sealed up space of the family car while commuting.

The banter between father and son regarding the weather while commuting within the 'technoburb', where Heinrich takes on the objective position or the idea of a media controlled collective subjectivity, claiming "I'm only telling you what the radio said", while Jack, taking on the subjective position asking him to "look at the windshield. Is that rain or not?" is one such example of free flowing

communication in the family (Delillo, 1985, p. 23). This inability to comprehend one's true self inside the house is further emphasized when Jack acknowledges that Bee's presence made them self-conscious at home. "Her presence seemed to radiate a surgical light... [we] acted without design, avoided making decisions, took turns being stupid and emotionally unstable…" (Delillo, 1985, p. 94). The regular inhabitants through a method of trial and error, compromise and adjustments have somehow learnt to cohabit in the absence of a fixed code of social order but, the arrival of Bee, from an urban city (Tokyo), exerts an added pressure. Bee having not had the time to adjust herself within the household still holds on to the conventions of the city which the other members find alienating. The description of Bee at the airport contrasts the unease she creates at home. Jack notes that Bee looked remarkably well rested after a journey that spanned time zones, continents and vast oceanic distances. Up in the air, aboard the plane, the social codes imposed by cities, suburbs or the confusing chaos of the new 'technoburb' cease to exist, it is then akin to the liminal third space of the commuter train of Cheever's story. Tweedy puts it perfectly, "… an aircraft travelling at the speed of sound may be the last refuge of gracious living and civilized manners known to man" (Delillo, 1985, p. 93).

It is not only Bee who seeks the refuge of the liminality of the car or airplane but also the prostitutes in the area, who remain hulled up inside the car throughout the whole toxic event. Prostitutes have been outcasts in the American society, as Genter (2018) points out, ever since the First Red Scare when the authorities tried to "reform society by restricting immigration, curbing prostitution, ending alcohol consumption..." (Genter, 2018, p. 5). These outsiders cannot operate freely inside the 'technoburb', where rules of the city and the suburbs mix together to create a claustrophobic environment hinted at throughout the novel. They are allowed to exist only inside the detached space of the car. Thus, the entire negotiation with Murray takes place with them inside the car and when they need to discuss the specifics it is Murray who is absorbed into their liminal world. Stepping into the 'technoburb' automatically implicates them as deviant miscreants the state is fighting against.

A very physical manifestation of the secession of the third space is seen in the petrol pump incident, where fleeing from the aftereffects of a toxic spillage Jack steps out of the safety of the family car only to be exposed directly to the toxic cloud of Nyodene D. The idea of the neutrality of the 'third space' of the mode of transport in the American society during the Cold War is directly evoked by Delillo. The moment Jack steps out of the sealed car, he endangers not only himself but also his own family. The 'third space' strictly outside the purview of social rules governing the sickening 'technoburb', literally under the onslaught of toxic fumes, a result of Cold War's preoccupation with chemical and atomic warfare, now gains an active dimension. The car not only provides a space where the Cold War assumptions fall apart, but it also protects the family from the environment destroyed by the enmity between the two superpowers. The confinement of the family in the car can be seen as a parody of the American society created in the wake of the Cold War which has resulted in the creation of a festering social order that allows no individual of either sex to operate freely in the city or the suburb. A culture which promotes continuous surveillance over its citizens by the government as well as by the citizens themselves in cities and suburbs which, in turn, requires everyone to cultivate a veneer and limits communication between inhabitants.

The third space of the mode of transportation, from the end of World War II to the fall of the Soviet Union was more than just a means of connecting the city and the suburb. It came in contact with the differently endowed political spaces in Cold War America while still remaining free from any of their implications. As has been shown throughout the paper, this was the last place where citizens of the country could shed the veneer cultivated to fit into the society. However, this was only a temporary relief, the forces of 'surveillance' and 'containment' started acting upon the inhabitants of Cold War America as soon as they left the detached space of their chosen modes of transportation.

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