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Men and Masculinity in Hari Kunzru's *Transmission*

INTRODUCTION: THE IDEOLOGY OF MASCULINITY

In *The German Ideology*, Marx and Engels state that the "ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas" (67). While the quotation does not directly discuss men and masculinities, the logic espoused here can be applied to the discussion of masculinity, since masculinity can be understood as an ideology, in the sense of "[t]he way men live out their roles in class society, the values, ideas and images which tie them to their social functions and so prevent them from a true knowledge of society as a whole" (Eagleton 8). In other words, masculinity is an ideology that prescribes the appropriate and inappropriate modes of behaviour, aesthetics, ways of thinking, occupations, familial roles, and sexual roles in a given period and class society. It serves to "acculturate" (Beynon 2) men into the dominant socioeconomic system and thus place them in the appropriate position demanded by the dominant material relations. It appears at the intersection of biological maleness and the social position of a group of men, which leads to the proliferation of different modes of masculinity, based on class, race, ethnicity, and even subculture. However, all these masculinities develop within and in relation to the dominant class system and the ideology of the ruling class. They are thus always dependent on them, never appear autonomously, and usually carry some or all of the core values of the masculinity of the dominant class, which in today's Western culture is the capitalist class. This implies the existence of "hegemonic masculinity" (Beynon 3) and "subordinate variations" (Beynon 16) of masculinity. However, the boundary between the

two is often porous, precisely because subordinate masculinities do not exist without the hegemonic one and often echo it, even if the men who subscribe to those masculinities do not belong to the class from which hegemonic masculinity originates. For example, physical size and strength, resilience, self-reliance, fortitude, and emotional reservedness, are prized among both hegemonic and subordinate groups.

However, even though "[m]ass culture generally assumes there is a fixed, true masculinity beneath the ebb and flow of daily life" (Connell 45), masculinity always proves to be an ideological construct upon closer inspection, a "fantasy about what men should be like, a chimerical construction to help people order and make sense of their lives" (Beynon 2). Furthermore, MacInnes similarly writes that "[g]ender, together with the terms of masculinity and femininity, is an ideology people use in modern societies to imagine the existence of differences between men and women on the basis of their sex where, in fact, there is none" (MacInnes 1). Consequently, the relationship between sex and gender can be seen as comparable to the relationship between base and superstructure in Marxist theory. In this comparison, sex is the base, as a set of characteristics based on material reality, while gender is the superstructure, as an ideological expression of sex. This base and superstructure create a "sex/gender system" (Rubin 159), which privileges not just men over women, but certain men over other men. Of course, the privileged group of men are capitalist men as opposed to the underprivileged working-class men, but it should not be forgotten that race and ethnicity

play a crucial role when the distribution of privilege is concerned. While capitalism has, at least to a certain extent, opened oppressive positions to both men and women from minority groups, the vast majority of capitalists and CEOs are white men; therefore, the masculinity of white male capitalists becomes the hegemonic form of masculinity.

It can be argued that hegemonic masculinity has always been tied to entrepreneurialism and the fierce competitiveness that comes with it. However, from the middle of the 20th century onwards, and especially after the rules of Thatcher and Reagan, the business aspect of masculinity has become increasingly emphasised. The economic background of hegemonic masculinity was laid bare and the acquisition of capital openly became the driving force behind it. Additionally, neoliberal economics and ideology firmly emphasised self-reliance, entrepreneurialism, and competition, which influenced masculinity. The process of constructing an aggressively competitive business masculinity was intensified in the twenty-first century, particularly after 2010, when social media became the main means of communication and allowed for the advent of the role of social media influencer. Some of these influencers took up masculinity as their main topic and became its defining ideologues, propagating a "traditional" masculinity that emphasises dominance over others, aggression, competitiveness, dominance over women in the domestic sphere, and of course, entrepreneurialism and paramount accumulation of capital. This attracted wide male audiences from different classes and different races and ethnicities, who identified with this masculine script in lieu of a more progressive one.

Similar scripts have been offered by film and TV for decades now, which means that for a relatively long time now, the number of "masculinities on offer" (Beynon 16), has declined and the fantasy of what a man should be like has become narrower.

In addition to the proliferation of images of bourgeois masculinity, traditional working-class masculinity, based on the pride of one's physical labour, has largely disappeared, which often forces (young) working-class men to align with the masculinity of their class oppressors. The reason for this lies not only in the spread of the ideology of bourgeois masculinity, but also in the restructuring of the production process in the West. Western countries have largely shifted towards a service-based economy and moved most of their heavy industry to the Third World, which has destroyed traditional patterns of identification for working-class men. Many were left unemployed and unable to provide for their families, stripped of the pride of physical strength and heavy skilled labour, and for many, the only available jobs are "low-skilled" jobs or white-collar jobs, neither of which relies on bodily strength, which was long a central tenet of working-class masculinity. This has created a deep crisis in which many men feel left behind and are disillusioned, which further drives them to identify with masculinities that are ultimately harmful to them. Thus, the ideal man in the 21st century has become a wealthy businessman, whose status is marked by expensive cars, yachts, designer clothes, luxurious homes, the ability to attract and seduce multiple attractive women, and by great

mobility, as his movement is not restricted by his low socioeconomic status or by belonging to a subordinate social group.

This masculine fantasy is not restricted only to the West. Late capitalism and information technologies have connected the world under a more or less unified market, which allows not just a free passage of goods, but also of ideologies, which naturally includes gender norms. It can be said that the role of the West and colonialism is often exaggerated when it comes to the development of gender norms in colonised countries, as Non-Western societies are also male-dominated and based on the subjugation of women, albeit, perhaps, in slightly different forms. However, globalisation and the sped-up spread of information and ideas have played a crucial role in homogenising gender norms across the globe. There are, of course, local flavours to both gender norms everywhere, but gender scripts across the world have become rather similar, particularly when it comes to the hegemonic forms. Connell describes "transnational business masculinity", which "has replaced older local models of bourgeois masculinity, which were more embedded in local organizations and conservative cultures" (Connel 263). This variant may be seen as the truly dominant variant of masculinity in the late capitalist world, as it is marked by "increasing egocentrism, very conditional loyalties (even to the corporation) and a declining sense of responsibility for others (except for the purposes of image-making)" (Beynon 22), which allows one to truly thrive in a world focused on the acquisition of capital.

Hari Kunzru's *Transmission* (2004) is set in the context of late capitalism with its insistence on transnational business masculinity and at least theoretically possible free movement across borders. The novel's protagonist, Arjun Mehta, is a young programmer from India, who, seduced by the American Dream, goes to America to get rich, but finds out that America in real life is much different from what he expected. He has to navigate a world that is set against him based on his country of origin and the poverty in which he finds himself after moving to America. He also needs to find a place in the male hierarchy, as he tries to live up to the standards of masculinity which he adopts from Bollywood films. Most criticism on *Transmission* deals with Arjun's marginalised position as an Indian immigrant, but very little has been said about masculinity and its influence on Arjun and other characters in the novel, even though it strongly thematises men and masculinity. Therefore, the goal of this paper is to shed some light on the presentation of masculinity in this novel. This analysis will focus on the relationships between the characters, which represent relationships between different types of masculinities, and point towards a hierarchy between men, while satirising this same hierarchy. On the one hand, the novel presents Arjun, who is described as belonging to a subordinate masculinity, and can even be seen as emasculated, but eventually manages to escape the rigid hierarchy, while on the other hand, the novel also presents privileged men like Guy Swift, Rajiv Rana, and Yves Ballard, who all typify transnational business masculinity in some ways, but are also

presented as ultimately insecure and at the mercy of the capitalist system they owe their power to.

THE IDEOLOGY OF MASCULINITY AND *TRANSMISSION*

The opening scene of the novel immediately describes Arjun as unimposing and emasculated, and he is consistently compared to the more powerful men around him, who wield a kind of masculine authority, which is based on economic authority and class-based power. The novel creates an acute awareness of Arjun's subordinated position as the 'excluded other' (Tüzün 1031) on multiple levels; not only is he from a developing country which serves as a source of cheap labour for foreign companies, he is also unemployed and completely lacks confidence, which puts him low in the class hierarchy, as well as in the masculinity hierarchy. He is described as "a skinny flagpole of a boy, hunching himself up to lose a few conspicuous inches before making his entrance", and "feeling himself as small as he would ever get, he clutched his folder of diplomas to his chest" (Kunzru 6), lacking any signifiers of traditionally masculine confidence and authority, particularly those of modern business masculinity. He is compared to the paragon of such masculinity, Sunny Srinivasan, whose confident and dominant presence as well as the abundance of signifiers of wealth and status make Arjun marvel at him and motivate him to move to America, aspiring to attain the same status. He is described as follows:

> On the far side, legs ostentatiously crossed, lounged a man who appeared to be less a human being than a communications medium, a channel for the transmission of consumer lifestyle messages. From his gelled hair to his lightly burnished penny loafers, every particular of his appearance carried a set of aspirational associations, some explicit (the

> branding on his tennis shirt, his belt buckle, the side arms of the UV sun goggles perched on his head), some implicit (the heft of his Swiss watch, the *Swissness* of that watch) and some no more than hints, wafts of mediated yearning written in the scent of his scruffing lotion, the warp and weft of his khaki slacks. (Kunzru 8)

Sunny is not just a channel for the transmission of lifestyle messages, he is the poster boy for a specific lifestyle, namely, the one of a successful male professional, who can afford to adorn himself with such signifiers of wealth and project soft power onto those beneath him, such as Arjun. His entire appearance is carefully crafted to impress and entice other men to follow his example and attain the power and status that come with his brand of transnational business masculinity. The masculinity he projects can indeed be seen as transnational, as his success is tied to working for an international company, and his authority signifiers are not local, but rather Western and thus universal, recognisable globally, due to the predominance of Western cultural norms in global business. On the other hand, Sunny's flashy appearance also underlines the notion that "contemporary society is based on illusions, values created by messages and their responses, which are unstable, fleeting, and often change" (King 141), since Arjun ultimately finds himself cheated and destitute in America.

However, Sunny is far from the only medium for masculine images that Arjun encounters before moving to America. His family, and in particular his father, are a major source of masculine anxiety for him. He is constantly reproached by his father for daydreaming, lacking focus, and a seeming inability to scale the social ladder and attain a position of success, wealth, and authority, as befits a man. His father belongs to the

managerial class, and his financial success, embodied by the luxury apartment they live in, is a key component of his masculine identity. Mr Mehta's vision of success is not tied strictly to India, rather, his ambitions are global, as he is proud of his flat not just because it is a product of his business success, but also because it "stood for The World" (Kunzru 15), which indicates a desire for transnational success. This is further compounded by his envy of his pretentious brother-in-law, who is a successful businessman with a son employed at a Boston company, and who never stops emphasising his superiority over the Mehtas, while "his own fool of a boy never seemed to be able to keep his head out of film magazines" (17). The pressure from his father can be seen as an additional reason for Arjun's choosing a career in America, as he, at least implicitly, wishes to live up to the demands of his father's overbearing, authoritarian, business masculinity.

The masculinity of such business endeavours is further emphasised by the family's initial indifference to their daughter Priti's getting a good job at a prominent call centre; "they were only going bananas over him because he was a boy" (Kunzru 17). Ironically, their mother seems to be the main preserver of male domination both in business and in the household, as she insists on Priti marrying as soon as possible and becoming a housewife. Mr Mehta agrees initially, but his business acumen takes over once he understands how well Priti is going to be paid, and he "start[s] to incorporate the notion of a call centre into his image of himself as a modern man" (Kunzru 24). However, even though Mr Mehta agrees to break out of the mould of a traditional, patriarchal family,

business success is still seen as a predominantly masculine, male privilege, as Arjun is seen as someone who might potentially become a successful capitalist, while Priti is staying in India to become a call centre operator for an Australian company. Arjun is going to conquer a foreign market, while Priti is being conquered by a foreign market.

However, perhaps the biggest influence on Arjun's thinking is what Beynon calls 'mediated masculinity', which is "the way in which popular media representations (in film, television and pop music in particular) provide highly crafted, alluring and accessible role models for boys and young men" (64). Arjun is described as a great devotee of Bollywood, "one of the hordes who queued for tickets during *N2L2*'s first weekend of release, grossing it ten crore rupees and making it one of the biggest openers in Indian cinema history". Moreover, in the film's protagonist, he "found a role model even more potent than the great Amitabh Bachchan, whose gangly form had dominated his teenage years" (Kunzru 34). In a nutshell, the film with which Arjun identifies so strongly focuses on a male protagonist, Dilip, who falls in love with Aparna, a woman who is simultaneously a religious traditionalist and an internationally successful businesswoman. Dilip, on the other hand, is, similarly to Arjun, lost in his daydreams and has to leave that behind and become a successful businessman to earn Aparna's love. The film projects a very straightforward view of transnational business masculinity and equates economic status with romantic love, and interpersonal relationships with monetary relationships, which may make love seem unattainable for working-class men, particularly those from minority ethnicities and

with immigrant status, like Arjun. Arjun seemingly deeply identifies with the film, especially with its protagonist's masculine arc, and strives to emulate it in real life, naïvely unaware of the ideological purpose of the film and the disjunction between it and what really awaits him in America.

Arjun's characterisation calls for comparison with his more successful compatriot, Rajiv Rana, the actor who portrays the successfully masculine protagonist of *N2L2* with whom Arjun identifies so much. Arjun's experience is typical for a non-white man in America, even more so because of his immigrant and economic status. Lazur and Majors describe this experience thus:

> Measuring himself against the standard that dictates the male gender role for the dominant culture yet denies equal access to the opportunities that sustain that standard evokes in the man of color frustrations, unexpressed emotions, and a drive for survival. Whether African-American, Latino, American-Indian, or Asian-American, he feels oppressed and at a disadvantage because his skin color, physical characteristics, and family heritage are not of the dominant culture. (Lazur and Majors, 340)

This state is poignantly embodied by Arjun when he is first described after moving to America, as "[a] figure, a walking man, trudging along the margin of a wide California highway", while "[a]nyone on foot in suburban California is one of four things: poor, foreign, mentally ill or jogging" (Kunzru 38). His body language and lack of a mode of transportation clearly signal his destitute position and a complete lack of the masculine power and success he aimed for. Rajiv Rana's presentation is completely different. Rajiv's public persona is deliberately hypermasculine; his first appearance teems with deliberately hyperbolic masculine confidence, as he dons a leather jacket, tight white T-

shirt, aviator glasses, and drives a "Ferrari Testarossa [which] throbbed like an engorged metal penis, its bright red paintwork glinting unironically in the sunlight" (Kunzru 170). The car is an almost comedic phallic symbol which showcases the unity of masculine authority, sexual prowess, and economic success, which are in stark opposition to Arjun's abject position in society. It can be said that Rajiv successfully employs what Majors and Billson term 'cool pose', which is "a ritualized form of masculinity that entails behaviors, scripts, physical posturing, impression management, and carefully crafted performances that deliver a single, critical message: pride, strength, and control" (Majors and Billson 4). Majors and Billson discuss cool pose as an inherent part of specifically African-American masculinity, which entails a special emphasis on appearing "cool", but it can be argued that similar posing is part of masculinity in general, as it always relies on men adopting certain behaviours and styles that project confidence and authority. The concept of cool pose is perhaps even more applicable to non-white men such as Rajiv, who, despite being extremely successful, are still the racial other from a Western viewpoint, and need to work harder than white, Western men to attain and maintain a strong, masculine persona and societal position. Rajiv's cool pose seems to work, as he does not look or feel out of place in Scotland, where he is working on a film. He attracts the attention of the women around him and seemingly effortlessly engages in a sexual relationship with Gabriella, Guy Swift's girlfriend, who is immediately fascinated by him.

However, the novel subverts Rajiv's successful display of hegemonic masculinity. His cool pose in public is directly linked to his portrayals of hypermasculine action heroes in films:

> If you are famous for your calm under pressure (when being attacked by a gang of lathi-wielding thugs, for example, or hanging from your fingernails beneath a collapsing suspension bridge), it may be important for your public persona to mirror your on-screen one. The emotional vocabulary of the action hero is limited. No tantrums. No weeping. (Kunzru 203)

Rajiv's action hero roles and his personal life merge as he performs the same 'male gender script' (Beynon 80) both in films and his real life, while not allowing a genuine version of himself to come to the surface. By depicting Rajiv's display of hegemonic masculinity as a mere role he fills, and not a genuine expression of his innate self, Kunzru subverts not just Rajiv's display of masculinity, but hegemonic masculinity in general, showing it to be just as make-believe as any other cinematic performance. The narrative further subverts Rajiv's strong, masculine image by revealing that he is effectively owned by notorious criminal Baby Aziz and his criminal organisation, who "were renting him out to the highest bidder like any other asset, a car, or a woman" (Kunzru 208). Baby Aziz wields real power, unlike Rajiv, and also unlike him, he does not have to create an elaborate display of masculine authority; he is not even physically present in India, he projects his power from afar, which further emphasises that he is higher up the ladder than Rajiv.

Another male character that should be compared to Arjun is Guy Swift, a seemingly very successful owner of a marketing agency, who, on the surface, embodies transnational business masculinity, as he works with a multitude of international clients, owns a luxury flat, runs a successful business, commands respect, and is seemingly successful with women. As Brock states, "[t]he contrasts between Guy and Arjun are expressed most strikingly just a few pages into the novel, as Arjun, following a successful interview for a job in the United States, rides a crowded, hot bus" (387). That is when Guy is first introduced, travelling on an aeroplane, "rather more comfortably than Arjun, who was squashed against the damp shoulder of a man in a polyester shirt" (Kunzru 12). This bodily-spatial metaphor perfectly sums up their positions on the social ladder. Guy's wealth allows him to quickly and easily transcend borders and avoid mixing with the less successful, who are seen as unpleasant and dirty. On the other hand, the non-white, working-class Arjun enjoys no comfort and is confined in a tight, enclosed space with myriad others, while travelling in a much more inconvenient and slow way, which not only limits his physical mobility, but also reflects his poor social mobility. Successful masculinity entails great mobility, and despite his daydreams and naïve misconceptions about America, Arjun is left out of this special group of men.

However, much like with Rajiv, Guy's masculinity is also subverted by the narrative. He actually has financial problems, despite the veneer of business success, and he is afraid to share the fact with his girlfriend because "Gabriella could sense neediness and did not

tolerate it very well" (Kunzru 71). Their relationship is merely an appearance; while they are together, he is able to project the sexual prowess necessary for a successful display of hegemonic masculinity, but in reality, their relationship is rapidly deteriorating, as she mostly feels disdain for him, and he masturbates to the thought of "a fantasy partner who was like Gaby but kinder, less abrasive" (Kunzru 134). Gabriella ultimately cheats on him, which signifies a breakdown in his supposed masculine authority and confidence and emphasises the hollowness of their relationship. A perhaps bigger blow to his masculine persona comes from Yves, who comes to assert authority over Guy. As a representative of the investment company which financed Guy's business venture, he is also a representative of transnational business masculinity, and, unlike Guy, seems to be genuinely successful. He behaves with the authority expected of successful men, and affirms his position by inviting Guy to sit in his own company, and to further emphasise the point, makes him sit on a beanbag, in a show of force. This, naturally, makes Guy feel uneasy, as his lack of respect and authority is revealed, and in an attempt to save face and retain some control over his bodily position and body language, "he dragged the bulky leatherette sack to a place where he could at least lean his back against the pinball machine. In this position his eyeline was almost level with Yves's own" (Kunzru 123). This way, he is literally below Yves, who has clearly positioned himself as the superior man. Guy's display of successful business masculinity is subverted as a mere performance which hides an insecure man at the mercy of a stronger masculine authority based on financial

power. This further alludes to the fact this kind of masculinity is contingent on economic upturns and the unstable global market. Eventually, even Yves's dominant persona is shown to be precarious and unstable, as it depends on the success of the company he works for, which is revealed to also be in trouble, and needs Guy to succeed to stay afloat.

The same economic downturn that endangers both Guy and Yves also endangers Arjun's already perilous position at his company. Still holding on to his naïve conception of the American Dream, he creates a novel computer virus after getting sacked in hopes that his ability to destroy the virus will convince his boss to let him keep his job. Unfortunately for him, his boss takes the credit for his ideas and proceeds to ignore him, which allows the virus to spiral out of control for some time, dealing a massive blow to the economy. This kind of behaviour is typical for Arjun's workplace. Even though the men at the company are not stereotypically masculine – in fact, they are stereotypical computer nerds – the office is a rigidly hierarchised space, and also rather strictly 'homosocial' (Sedgwick 1), particularly for white, non-immigrant men. Arjun is thus almost completely excluded from the social structure of the office – he is allowed to do his job and keep to himself (much like everybody else in the office), but he is largely ignored by everybody, especially his boss Darryl, and his opinions are casually disregarded, even when he is arguably the most competent man to solve the problem, as in the case of the *Leela* virus. Thus, the casual racism exhibited by the managerial layer of the company helps the virus

spread and wreak havoc on the economic system, which might point towards capitalism's self-destructive tendencies and the possibility of its collapsing unto itself.

In addition, the virus itself can be said to mirror the nature of capitalism; it strives to constantly spread, continually consuming everything in its vicinity to power its spread, and constantly morphing to adapt to new circumstances, while never changing its fundamental essence. The virus also evokes and stands for different anxieties produced by capitalism in the twenty-first century, particularly "reactionary Western fears of mass transnational migration, multiculturalism, and in the wake of 9/11, international terrorism" (Brock 381). The fear of foreign terrorism, fuelled by paranoid xenophobia in the wake of 9/11, is particularly prevalent in the discourse about the *Leela* virus, as it is explained as "some kind of Muslim fundamentalist attack" (Kunzru 139). Thus, Arjun, an exploited and naïve working-class man, unwittingly becomes a terrorist, even though his supposed terrorism comes from a yearning to become perceived as a successful and productive member of American society and to fit into it. This further emphasises the idea that Western capitalist society will produce its own downfall, but it also suggests that, despite the cosmopolitan discourse of openness, acceptance, and diversity, the West still remains largely closed to those who come to it seeking a better life. This point is further emphasised by Guy's pitch to the Pan-European Border Authority (PEBA), which describes Europe as "[a] continent that wants people, but only the best. An exclusive continent. An *upscale* continent" (Kunzru 257), and focuses on rebranding European border police and

strict border policy in general. In other words, the cosmopolitan mobility that Guy and Yves enjoy is a privilege of powerful, wealthy men, and it is something that they seek to preserve for themselves, instead of extending that privilege to other social strata.

Arjun's choice of naming the virus after the fictional Bollywood actress Leela Zahir and using a clip of her dancing is also quite poignant. As a devoted fan, he is complicit in her (sexual) objectification, and his virus is complicit in the proliferation of images of Leela which only capture the Bollywood version of her, as a "*femme fatale* who, by resorting to an allusive smile, causes pain and loss among her lovers" (Monaco 359), just like the virus causes pain and loss to its victims. This creates a certain connection between the virus and a fear of female sexuality, particularly non-white female sexuality. Even though Leela is seen as sexually desirable, her appeal seems to simultaneously make her a threat, as her image is equated to wholesale economic destruction. Arjun's use of her image also emphasises the notion that "Leela is subject to the play of global forces and desires over which she has little agency" (Childs and Green 87). More importantly, it highlights the distinction between the on-screen Leela, with her protean nature, which adapts to different roles, just like the virus adapts to different circumstances, and the real person behind the *femme fatale* roles. As Childs and Green state: "The virtual invisibility of the 'real' Leela, whose subjectivity is all but subsumed beneath the endlessly mutable sign of celebrity, is suggestive of both the instability and the multiplicity of identity in a contemporary culture dominated by the biopolitical technologies of the mass media" (87).

In this regard, she is similar to Rajiv Rana, since for both of them, acting out gender scripts on-screen seeps into their real lives, making performance almost indistinguishable from real life, and obfuscating their real desires and goals.

Unlike Rajiv, the real Leela resents her celebrity life and seeks to escape it, to the dissatisfaction of her mother, who has been pushing her towards a Bollywood career. She sabotages the shooting of the film in Scotland by claiming that she is ill and eventually disappears. Arjun himself also miraculously disappears from America, after being hounded as a terrorist for some time and living in desperation. The two are allegedly united, as neither has been caught, but "[t]here are sightings of Arjun Mehta and Leela Zahir around the world, sometimes alone, sometimes in company (…) They are sometimes seen kissing or holding hands" (Kunzru 397). The interpretation that they have formed a relationship in the end thematically agrees with the rest of the novel. It can be argued that Arjun is rewarded for breaking away from the masculine gender script. Even though he initially strives to live up to the standards of transnational business masculinity and the masculinity mediated in cinema, he eventually abandons that pursuit, turns away from it, and meets Leela, who has successfully broken away from the clutches of Bollywood and her mother, and both are thus able to live as their genuine selves. Influenced by Bollywood films, Arjun thinks that "the point of being a hero is to get the girl" (Kunzru 109-110), but, in the end, he gets the girl precisely by not being a hero, which is in stark contrast to typical expectations from successfully masculine men. Of course, a more pessimistic reading is

also possible; since their relationship is a rumour, it can be argued that both simply disappear and blend in, without ever meeting each other, and without ever achieving genuine, fulfilling lives, but such a reading would imply that the novel suggests the impossibility of breaking away from gender scripts and the misery of precarious, poorly-paid labour on Arjun's part, and the misery of living a cinematic simulacrum on Leela's part. Additionally, it can be said that even the optimistic reading has problematic elements in it. Arjun and Leela can be said to recreate a very typical, monogamous, sexual relationship, which indicates that there has not been a complete and total break with all the values of traditional gender norms. However, even if that is taken as true, it still stands that they are both rewarded for breaking the mould and have forged new lives outside the constraints imposed on them by social norms.

CONCLUSION

Beynon writes that crisis is "constitutive of masculinity itself" (76), in the sense that masculinity, much like femininity, is in a constant flux, ever-changing, and contingent on changes in the mode of production, namely capitalism and its ideological needs. *Transmission* encapsulates different responses to the gender politics of twenty-first century capitalism, particularly those gender politics that are tied to international business, while at the same time satirising the hegemonic masculinity of today, namely the transnational business masculinity of the modern capitalist class. The example of Arjun Mehta provides an insight into the workings of this ideology on a man from a Third World

country, who is seduced by the ideology, but is faced with the fact that a masculine life of luxury and professional authority is fiction for most, and particularly for men from underprivileged backgrounds, such as himself, who are limited by a lack of resources, mobility, and marginalised based on their race. On the other hand, the characters of Guy Swift, Yves Ballard, and Rajiv Rana, provide a viewpoint from the privileged class. They are all, on the surface, perfect examples of masculine confidence, success, and authority, and portray the masculine gender role perfectly. However, their hypermasculine personas are quickly subverted and shown to be mirages which hide insecurity, dependence on others, anxiety, and sexual dissatisfaction, which are in stark contrast to their outward presentation. Thus, the novel stresses the precarious and impermanent nature of hegemonic masculinity. *Transmission* shows that hegemonic masculinity depends on the taciturnity of the capitalist market, and is contingent on economic upturns, which means that one can easily lose his position of masculine authority and fail to perform the masculine gender script, thus emphasising the porousness and permanent crisis of this ideology.

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