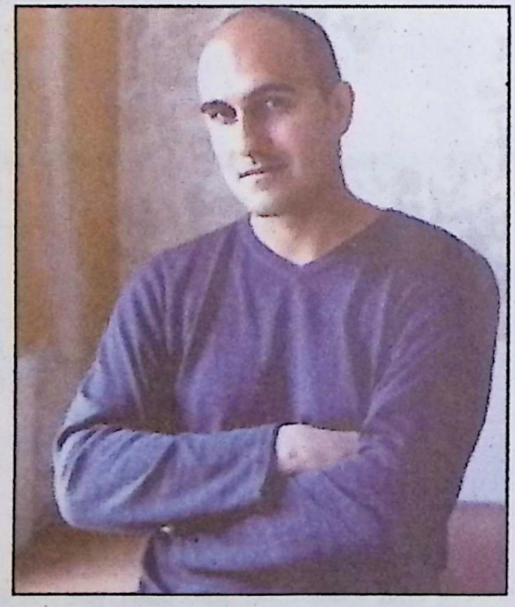
Revolution Calling

Novelist Hari Kunzru was born in 1969 and grew up in Essex. His first book The Impressionist (2002) won the Betty Task Prize and Guardian First Book Award, it also won the Whitbread First Novel Award. His second novel Transmission (2004) won the British Book Awards in 2005. His other novels are: Noise (2005), My Revolutions (2007). He lives in London.
In an exclusive interview Hari Kunzru talks about his idea of life.

AHMEDE HUSSAIN

What is your earliest childhood memory? How important is your childhood to you?

I remember running down the aisle of a plane, on my first visit to India aged two. My mother disputes this, saying she would never have allowed me to do that. I also remember her feeding me some pink medicine on the same flight, something she also denies. My early childhood was happy and uncomplicated. I'm very grateful to my parents for providing me with a comfortable, stable and loving home. I spend a lot more time working through the events of my pre-teen and teen years, which were less happy. The world outside my home proved to be a more fraught and difficult place.



Hari Kunzru

VS Naipaul has talked about separation of the man (the person who writes) and the writer. How is it like for you?

That strikes a chord. For a long time my daily life was secondary to the project of becoming a writer. As I grew older, I started to put more value on living life, on taking pleasure in everyday things. However I'm not by nature a person who finds it easy to be content. I get bored, depressed, angry. I need the challenge of writing, of trying to express those things I find inexpressible, to give some shape and meaning to life.

Do you think every novelist, in a way, writes history, both at a personal and social level?

I'm not sure I understand the question. A novel is certainly a product of personal history, if only because a project that takes a couple of years to complete will necessarily become a receptacle for all the feelings and experiences undergone by the writer during that time. As for social history, I think it's more complex. A novel is also a product of its time and place, so perhaps that's true.

How do you see the 'role' of English in the context of South Asia, a place where the language had once been imposed on its people?

For a long time, English has been an Asian language. South Asians have adapted it to their own needs and are using it in exciting, creative ways the English of South Asia is now as different from the English of Britain as American English. Its role as a colonial language meant that it didn't belong to any one ethnic or religious group. In the context of independent nations, many of which are trying to balance the cultural claims of several different communities, this lack of ownership has given the language a new role a unifying factor, rather than evidence of foreign domination.

Does a female writer's way of handling a certain theme differ from the way a male writer will tackle it?

I don't think there are any essential differences between male and female writers. If there is such a thing as 'women's fiction' it consists in the choice of themes. Writers have certain commitments, and certain areas of knowledge. Women have historically been more involved in domestic affairs, and more dependent on the