Susan Alice Fischer, editor. *Hanif Kureishi*. Bloomsbury, 2015. Pp. xvi, 175. £22.99.

The British Asian writer Hanif Kureishi is often regarded as a trailblazing figure. For over three decades, he has produced plays, screenplays, short fiction, novels, and essays, frequently breaking taboos and exploring underrepresented and marginalized people within British society. Several studies on Kureishi focus on his ambitious response to contemporary realities and his impact on British culture. Commentators have focused particularly on his early, groundbreaking cinematic collaborations—the Stephen Frears directed films, *My Beautiful Laundrette* (1985) and *Sammy and Rosie Get Laid* (1987)—and his critically acclaimed debut novel, *The Buddha of Suburbia* (1990).

A number of the contributors to *Hanif Kureishi*, edited by Susan Alice Fischer—for instance, Fischer, Peter Hitchcock, and Geoff Boucher—emphasize the continuingly political nature of Kureishi's putatively more "personal" and "post-ethnic" writing from the late 1990s onwards (1–2, 37, 100–101). As such, they respond to a particular critical orthodoxy surrounding the work of Kureishi's middle, even late (the author is now in his 60s), period: namely, that his work post-*Intimacy* (1998), a controversial *roman à clef* charting infidelity and the breakdown of a relationship, has lost its political edge and become introspective, self-indulgent, and navel-gazing. The need to rescue Kureishi's more recent writing from such a charge becomes a refrain across the collection. And the contributors are right to explore the continuing political engagement of Kureishi's twenty-first-century work, including his post-9/11 and 7/7 non-fiction, discussed in Fischer's essay, "Hanif Kureishi's 'better philosophy'" (Chapter 5), and his screenplay *Venus* (2006), discussed in Deanna Kamiel's essay, "'I believe my eyes'" (Chapter 2). Kamiel accurately notes that *Venus*, directed by Kureishi's long-term collaborator Roger Michell, gives a voice to young, working-class, white British women—a group often derided as "chavs" and "mingers" by British society at large and without recourse to the protections afforded by multiculturalism and political correctness (32). According to Kamiel, the screenplay's subversiveness arises from placing Jessie, a representative of such socially disregarded women, center stage as the object of desire and focusing on her elderly white admirer, Maurice, and thus on the indignities of aging in a contemporary world obsessed with youth. Connected to this idea of growing old, Jago Morrison's essay "The parallax of aging" (Chapter 6), examines the politics of Kureishi's sci-fi novella *The Body* (2002) and offers a new reading of this under-examined text in relation to seeing and voyeurism while engaging directly with the theories of Slavoj Žižek. Morrison's nuanced treatment of the politics of aging in Kureishi's recent writing makes this a valuable and timely contribution.

Following Fischer's introduction, Michael Perfect's chapter "The enigma of abandonment" argues against interpretations of Kureishi's writing as "representative" of any category within identity politics. His essay usefully ranges across the author's work from the novel *The Black Album* (1995) onwards, with some fine close readings of the 2003 screenplay *The Mother* about an older white woman's need for sexual fulfilment. Kamiel's elegantly written essay, mentioned above, follows, reading the much-discussed *My Beautiful Laundrette* against *Venus*. Her stimulating contribution accomplishes this comparative reading with style and verve. Hitchcock's "Culture and anarchy in Thatcher's London" (Chapter 3) revisits the turbulent politics of *Sammy*

and Rosie Get Laid. In Chapter 4, Ryan Trimm finds new things to say about the oft-researched *Buddha of Suburbia* by exploring it as a rewriting of "metropolitan multicultural novels," that is, the post-Windrush urban fiction of such figures as Sam Selvon and George Lamming (60). In Chapter 5, Fischer considers religion versus capitalism and Kureishi's positing of a "better philosophy" or a third way, provided through art and love. Her analysis of *The Black Album* alongside more recent post-9/11 non-fiction is helpful and necessary since Kureishi's second novel examines Muslim radicalisation, but she could take up a stronger final position on the more contentious, sometimes reductive, portrayals of Muslim figures in Kureishi's work. In Chapter 7, Boucher offers an illuminating reading of an under-explored yet central aspect of Kureishi's later writing by using the trope of psychoanalysis to interpret the novel *Something to Tell You* (2008). The collection concludes with Susie Thomas' discussion of aesthetic techniques in "*The Last Word* on Hanif Kureishi" followed by two new interviews with Kureishi and Frears, respectively. Thomas is a perceptive and authoritative commentator on Kureishi, and her essay sheds light in original and lively ways on the subtleties of the author's stylistic methods, especially the impact of what she terms his "self-subverting sentences" (116). However, her analysis then veers into a discussion of masculine versus feminine representations in Kureishi's latest work, and for this reviewer at least the reasons for that shift in focus are not clear. Further analysis of Kureishi's overlooked literary strategies would have been welcome.

This collection will be valuable to researchers and students of contemporary British literature and British Asian cultural production. The new interview with Kureishi offers a blend of funny, laconic, unpretentious, and politically serious observations from the man himself, while many of the academic essays will interest Kureishi scholars because of their concern with the writer's more recent and/or insufficiently discussed work. My main criticism of an otherwise excellent volume is the reverential, even hagiographic, tone that inflects some of the essays. Although Kureishi's œuvre is impressive, courageous, and important, some of his recent work can also feel imaginatively flat and repetitive—particularly the problematic, sometimes misogynistic *Something to Tell You*. In addition, the ideas rehearsed across Kureishi's recent fictional and non-fictional prose, often through his presumptive "we" voice, can seem repetitive: the value of art, fundamentalist Islam versus Western secularism, a masculine need for sexual gratification with multiple partners, and the pre-eminence of London over everywhere else in the UK. It appears as though some of the critics in this volume are so busy defending Kureishi from what they see as wrongheaded critical readings that their own assess-

ments of his work end up being overly respectful. A more forceful critique of his recent writing would have added another dimension to this fine new collection.

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