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Hanif Kureishi

MY EAR AT HIS HEART

READING MY FATHER

Author of The Buddha of Suburbia and Something to Tell You

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From Booklist

Kureishi has long found inspiration for his art in the experiences and personalities of his family. This has occasionally gotten him in trouble; Intimacy (1998), his account of a man leaving his wife and children, was autobiographical enough to unnerve some critics, and Something to Tell You (2008) incited his sister Yasmin to pen an editorial entitled "Keep Me out of Your Novels" in London's Independent. With this memoir, Kureishi lays bare the author's knotty relationship with his late father, a Pakistani immigrant who worked his life away as a bureaucrat yet spent his evenings trying (ultimately unsuccessfully) to write novels based on his life. It is the discovery of one such unpublished novel that occasions this book. Afforded the ambiguous opportunity to peer into his father's psyche through his literary imagination, Kureishi attempts to parse fact from fiction as he exposes his father's conflicted relationship with his own parents, as well as his formative sexual escapades. But a second found novel deals with resentment of his children and stirs up deep Oedipal ambivalence. Part reconciliation, part vindication, this messy yet honest book is among Kureishi's best. --Brendan Driscoll

Review

"A riveting piece of textual detective work . . . A moving and fiercely honest book."

--The Guardian (U.K.)

"It is family memoir, autobiography and cultural history combined. . . . With what

feels like unmitigated honesty Kureishi successfully conveys the impression that in

this book he has actually given us himself." -- The Sunday Times (London)

About the Author

Hanif Kureishi won the prestigious Whitbread Prize for The Buddha of Suburbia and was twice nominated for Oscars for best original screenplay (My Beautiful Laundrette and Venus, which starred Peter O'Toole). In 2010 Kureishi received the prestigious PEN/Pinter Prize. He lives in London.

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Described in a recent "New York Times Magazine "profile as a "postcolonial Philip Roth," Hanif Kureishi first captured the attention of audiences and critics in the 1980s with the award-winning novel "The Buddha of Suburbia "and the films "My Beautiful Laundrette "and "Sammy and Rosie Get Laid." In three decades of acclaimed work, Kureishi has written fiction and films exploring a series of interconnected themes about identity and desire--from Islamic radicalism to kinky sex, and from psychoanalysis to the relationships of fathers and sons. After discovering an abandoned manuscript of his father's, hidden for years, Kureishi was compelled to turn his "unflinching perspective" ("Time Out") onto his own history. Like Roth, Martin Amis and Geoffrey Wolfe, who also have written books about their fathers, Kureishi wanted to understand and perhaps to reconcile.

"My Ear at His Heart "offers remarkable insight into the birth of a writer, chronicling how Kureishi's own literary calling emerged from the ashes of his father's aspirations. And so begins a journey that takes Kureishi through his father's privileged childhood by the sea in Bombay, through the turbulent birth of Pakistan and to his modest adult life in England--his days spent as a civil servant, his nights writing prose, hopeful of one day receiving literary recognition.

"A beguiling and complex tale of fact, fiction and family tensions" ("The Guardian"), "My Ear at His Heart "was published to great acclaim in the United Kingdom in 2004 and went on to win the prestigious Prix France Culture Etranger. Now, this profound work from one of the most compelling artists of our time is at last available in a Scribner edition.

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Features

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