



## The Body: A Novel

By Hanif Kureishi

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After a bit you realize there's only one invaluable commodity. Not gold or love, but time. How far are we willing to go to stay young? Hanif Kureishi - acclaimed author of *The Buddha of Suburbia* and *Intimacy* - explores the possibilities in this provocative story of an older man whose brain is surgically placed in a younger man's body by a network of underground doctors. Adam is offered the chance to trade in his sagging flesh for a much younger and more pleasing model. He tells his wife and son that he is going on an extended vacation. He immediately embarks on an odyssey of hedonism, but soon finds himself regretting what he left behind and feeling guilt over the responsibilities he has ignored. Sinister forces pursue him, wanting possession of "his" body, and he soon finds himself with nowhere to turn. "A fluent, socially observant writer whose sentences move with intelligence and wit" (The New York Times Book Review), Kureishi presents us with both a fantastically vivid tale and hard-hitting questions about our own relationships with our minds and bodies - and with time that is running out.

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## The Body: A Novel By Hanif Kureishi Bibliography

- Sales Rank: #3023446 in Books
- Published on: 2011-04-01
- Released on: 2011-04-01
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 8.44" h x .40" w x 5.50" l, .47 pounds
- Binding: Paperback
- 160 pages

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### Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

At once intriguing and preposterous, Kureishi's slender new novel starts off promisingly. Adam, the narrator, a famous writer in his 60s, is approached at a party by an attractive and mysterious young man named Ralph. Ralph claims to be an old man whose brain has been transplanted into a new, younger body. The bodies come from dead young people, whose deaths seem eerily convenient for those who want to become "Newbodies." At first Adam does not believe the story. But Ralph's entreaties are so convincing-and appealing-that Adam agrees to temporarily transplant his brain into the body of a man of 25. After all, "Who hasn't asked: Why can't I be someone else? Who, really, wouldn't want to live again, given the chance?" The science behind the idea is vague and silly, but Kureishi probably never meant it to be convincing. Instead, he sends Adam on various soul-searching journeys in his new body, which was "stocky and as classically handsome as any sculpture in the British Museum." Adam waxes on his life in a new body, has loads of hot sex and eventually settles at a spiritual retreat on a Greek island. But soon he yearns to return to his old body-warts and all-and to his wife and former life in London. But menacing forces conspire against him, and he soon realizes the grave consequences of his decision. The novel is too short and sketchy to fully explore the ramifications of its premise. Kureishi, through Adam, has many things to say about life in an alien body, but these musings never really cohere. And the creepiness of the setup, which could have made for spine-tingling reading, never amounts to much. Still, the writing, as in Kureishi's other novels (*Intimacy*; *The Buddha of Suburbia*), is crisp and precise, and the book should satisfy his fans until something more substantial comes along.

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From [Booklist](#)

Kureishi's new novel employs the shopworn device of reporting what happens when part of one person is transplanted into another. In this case, an old man's brain is displaced into a young man's "facility," an extreme measure even in a time when, thanks to aging baby boomers, youth is mourned as a fleeting resource, and the effort to maintain it is pursued with increasing fervor. Sixtyomething London playwright Adam is none too stable mentally, and half-deaf, half-blind, and half-lame, too. He carefully elects the illicit surgical transplant, so his is no sudden, unwanted, Kafka-esque awakening as an insect or transformation into a mammoth breast a la Philip Roth's *Breast* (1972). Yet many may recall those and other tales of transformation as they follow Adam's journey into newfound hedonism, during which he finds that possessing something of value means one will be pursued by have-nots. Kureishi's smoothly written, fast-moving, thought-provoking work concludes with a man on the run, imprisoned by his "self" and now certainly knowing that time waits for no one. *Whitney Scott*

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Review

'He wields a singularly pure and classical style, at times a dissecting instrument more reminiscent of the French tradition than the English. It is one of the paradoxes that makes his art successful, this contrast between the severity of his authorial mind and the luxuriance of much of what he depicts.' *Independent on Sunday*

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