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### **Appropriated Identity in Hanif Kureishi's *The Black Album***

In this paper, I look at the chaotic life of Shahid, the young Pakistani protagonist of Hanif Kureishi's novel *The Black Album*, as he struggles to construct an identity for himself while torn between his own Asian heritage – represented primarily by his fundamentalist Muslim neighbor, Riaz – and the more liberal culture of his adopted British homeland – embodied in his free-spirited professor, Deedee Osgood. Using pertinent elements of psychiatrist Roy Jay Lifton's concept of "The Protean Self" as a foundation, I argue that in exploring Shahid's sometimes ambivalent experimentation with various identities throughout the novel – cultural, sexual, gender, political, national, religious and personal – the novel shows that as we move further into the global culture of the twenty-first century, every individual can and must build an ever-changing self by appropriating bits and pieces from many different cultures. In the novel, we see that no culture – and no individual – belongs to any particular group or exists in any pure form in the modern world. According to Bart Moore-Gilbert, Kureishi chooses to use the romantic genre *Bildungsroman* – with some updating – because it "presents identity as a developmental, unstable and shifting process." After analyzing Shahid's kaleidoscopic adventures and his tendency to see the world in binaries, I conclude that Kureishi, much in the manner of his friend and colleague Salman Rushdie, advocates a kind of "mongrelization" (Moore-Gilbert's word) or mutability that keeps one open to the greatest range of human experience without having to choose sides.