In *There Ain’t No Black in the Union Jack* Paul Gilroy points out that despite the large percentage of non-white immigrants in post-World-War-Two England and the overtly racist legislation that has been passed to their disadvantage, the marginalization of race continues to be a feature of the work of researchers even within the field of cultural studies where scholars align themselves with feminist and socialist aspirations. Gilroy makes it his project to rescue black British culture from a sociologism that portrays ethnic minorities as historyless, victimized, sub-cultural pawns. This project necessarily involves opening up traditional class analysis so that it can be supplemented by additional categories reflecting different histories of subordination, thus creating a space for alliances between different members of minority communities who often occupy conflicting class positions. As Gilroy points out “it would be foolish to deny the black petit bourgeois the capacity to ‘change sides’” particularly as “journalists, teachers, sociologists and other members of the professional and managerial classes take up the needs of the working-classes by joining its political institutions, perhaps even becoming its organic intellectuals” (24). What connects these members of disparate classes is a “common history, culture, and language . . . and racism” (24).

Writers like Salman Rushdie, Hanif Kureishi, and Farukh Dhondy have, over the last decade, played influential roles in re-presenting the Asian community in England. In her controversial essay “Can the Subaltern Speak?” Gayatri Spivak states that the subaltern has no voice and that any attempt at giving her/him a voice involves speaking for or “re-presenting” the marginalized subject. Hanif Kureishi’s comments on the making of *Sammy and Rosie get Laid* suggest a similar awareness of the problematics of representation. Kureishi writes,

... is the quality of work irrelevant to the social issue, which is that of middle-class people (albeit dissenting middle-class people) who own and control and have access to the media and to money, using minority and working-class material to entertain other middle-class people? In one part of me I do believe there is some anger in the film; and it does deal with
things not often touched upon in British films. In another part of me when I look at the film industry run by the usual white middle-class public-school types, with a few parvenu thugs thrown in, I can see that the film is just a commercial product. . . . (165)

However, even if it is impossible to re-produce an authentic subaltern voice, nostalgia for this invisible alterity should not blind viewers to the radical politics of Kureishi’s films. In his essay “The Politics of Irony: The Frears-Kureishi Films” Leonard Quart describes the “ruthless unleashing of market forces” that characterized Thatcher’s England. He writes that Thatcher’s policies

which included cuts in public spending, tax reductions weighted toward the affluent, and, where possible, the privatization of social services, have led to the growth of a visible, embittered underclass—20 percent of the people living under the poverty line, the number of homeless up to 1,000,000 (150,000 under the age of twenty-five) and the highest per capita prison population within the European community. (242)

Quart adds that “during Thatcher’s years in power, the English left was both divided and self-destructive . . . and much of the traditional opposition to Thatcher—the Labor party leadership, the unions, and Liberals and Social Democrats had been neutralized” (242). Quart’s description of Thatcherite England provides an effective backdrop to Kureishi’s films. Like other immigrant writers, Hanif Kureishi attacked England’s Conservative government for its discrimination against minorities and the working-class. These political writers play a crucial role in disrupting more traditional images of the English as “the Island Race” and “the Bulldog Breed” (Gilroy 45) and the hostility with which they have been attacked by the Tories and by conservative press reporters emphasizes their revolutionary spirit. In his autobiographical essay “The Rainbow Sign” Hanif Kureishi writes,

This row between us and them [the Tories and the conservative press] was also an argument about language and representation. These people wanted to control the freedom of the imagination. They were afraid of any one who saw Britain as a racially mixed, run-down, painfully divided, class-ridden place. For their fantasy was of a powerful, industrially strong country with a central, homogeneous, culture. (X)

Rushdie, Kureishi, and other minority artists present an alternative view of England that challenges the complacency of this representation. While much critical attention has been paid to Salman Rushdie, particularly in the aftermath of *The Satanic Verses* controversy, lesser known but no less significant artists like Hanif Kureishi, Farukh Dhondy, Gurinder