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Kunzru, Hari. Gods Without Men

Kunzru?s assured novel wanders back and forth in time, following several groups of the lost as they seek something more or better for themselves. Where their stories all collide eventually is the Pinnacles, three fingers of stone projecting up out of the Mojave Desert. Among the wide cast of characters are Fray Garces, a half-insane Jesuit missionary intent on conveting the natives; Deighton, a scarred and arrogant ethnologist attempting to study the culture of the native tribes before it is lost entirely; dissolute British rock star Nicky Capaldi; the members of a hippie commune, including their ?Guide,? Judy; and several others. But the core of the novel is formed by the experiences of Jaz, an assimilated American Sikh; his white American wife Lisa; and their four-year-old son Raj, who has autism. When Raj vanishes in the desert, near the Pinnacles, Jaz and Lisa become the center of a media storm. Kunzru?s portait of their marriage is nuanced and insightful; his descriptions of Jaz and his family?s life as immigrants always slightly out of step with American culture even more so.

Complex, layered, lively, and intelligent, Kunzru has crafted an astute and piercing portrait of humanity?s continual quest for meaning?whether through religion, science, drugs, computer programming, or extraterrestrial life?amid the chaos of every day life.

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