

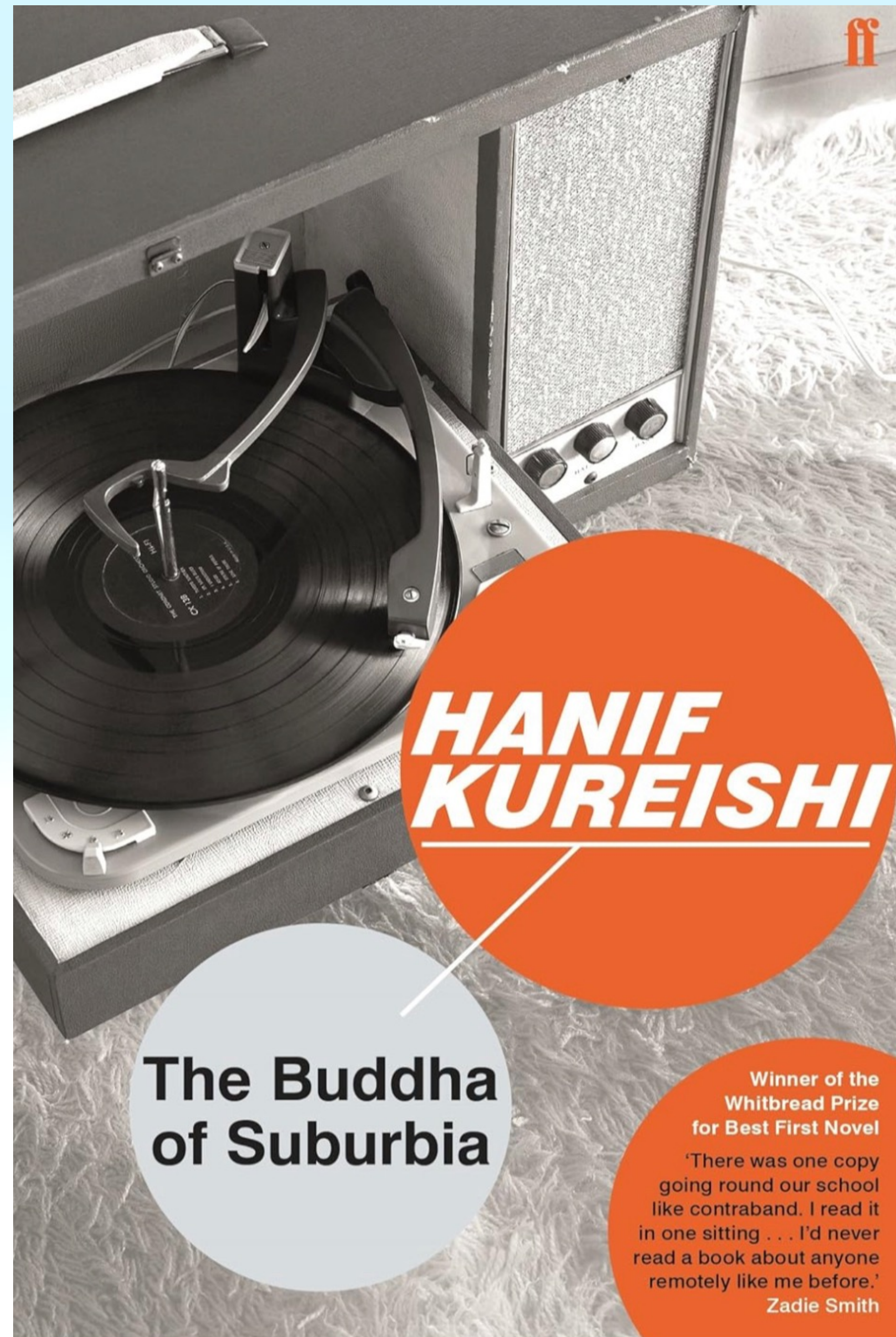
The Buddha of Suburbia

Hanif Kureishi

Lennard Seiferth, 03.12.2023

Structure

- 1. Introduction
- 2. Summary
- 3. Text-Analysis
- 4. Discussion questions



- Illustration 1: Buddha of Suburbia, book-cover

1. Introduction

1.1 Information on the author

- Hanif Kureishi, 05.12.1954, Bromley (London)
- **Famous novels:**
 - - *My Beautiful Laundrette* 1986
 - - *My Ear at His Heart* 1955
 - - *Intimacy* 1998
- British Council Literature, Hanif Kureishi

1. Introduction

1.1 Information on the author

- Family background: Pakistani roots (2. generation immigrant)

- **Experiences in his early life:**

- - Facing racism
- - Trying to fit into society
- - Exploration of identity

- British Council Literature, Hanif Kureishi

- Illustration 2: Potray Hanif Kureishi



1. Introduction

1.1 Information on the author

- Topics in his works:
 - - Race / Racism
 - - Class
 - - Sexuality

- Illustration 2: Potray Hanif Kureishi



- British Council Literature, Hanif Kureishi

„issues [...] which were concerned with **race, class, sexuality** and so on, questions provoked by my childhood and family situation, and which I couldn't help continuing to try to formulate and think about.“

Collected Essays Hanif Kureishi, *The Writer's Time*, 2011

1. Introduction

1.2 Information on the text

- **General information:**
- - Published 1990
- - Semi-autobiographical style
- - Setting: London 1970
- - Orientalism
- - Genre: Coming of Age story, cultural criticism, Satirical / humorous elements

1. Introduction

1.2 Information on the text

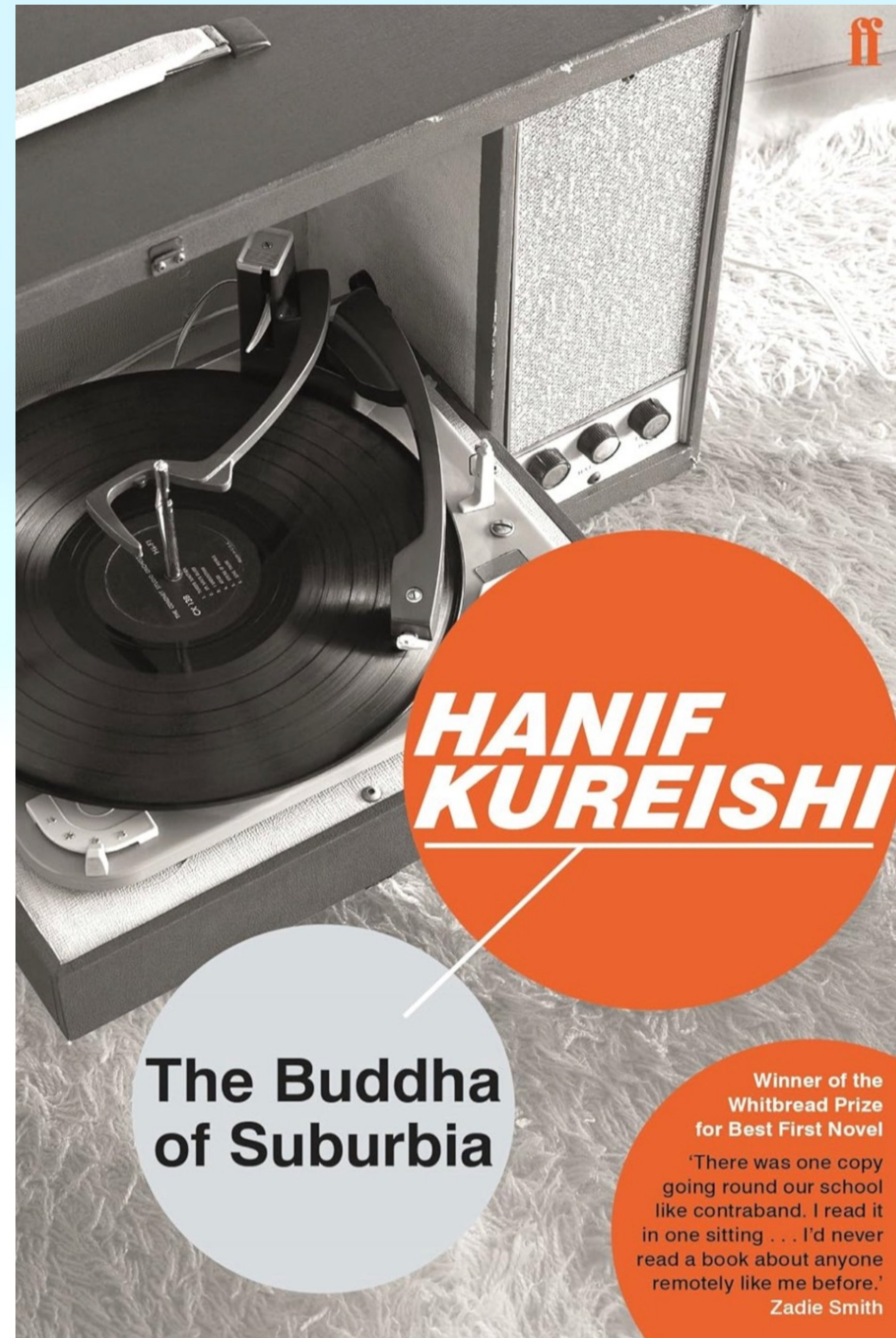
- **Context of origin**
- - Multicultural London in the 1970s:
- - Wave of immigration (especially from former colonies)
- - Punk movement: rebellious nature
- - Cultural upheavals: questioning of norms / traditions
- - New forms of self-expression
- - Political unrest: social injustice, racism

1. Introduction

1.2 Information on the text

- **Influence of the story :**
- - Awards: Withbread Prize for the Best First Novel, Wasafri Magazine: 25 most Influential books published in the previous quarter century
- Innovative book: presenting topics of certain social groups
- Multicultural perspective: second generation of immigrants
- Elements of vulgarity and description of sexuality
- Cultural relevance!
- The Guardian 2011, The Buddha of Suburbia

2. Summary



- Illustration 1: Buddha of Suburbia, book-cover,

2. Summary

- Karim (main character): Growing up in a suburb of London
- Parents: Indian immigrants
- Aimlessness: search for purpose of life / identity
- New sexual experiences: both Karim and his parents

2. Summary

- **Career history:**
- - College (no success)
- - Acting: theatre-group in London: new relationships / experiences
- - Success in England —> New York (moving in with Charlie)
- - London: Soap opera

3. Text-Analysis

3.1 Karim's character



- Illustration 3: Karim Amir, Television series,

3. Text-Analysis

3.1 Karim's character

- **Parallels to the author:**
 - - Immigrant of second generation
 - - Setting: place of growing up
 - - Important topics in the book as sexuality, class or identity

- —> Semi-autobiographical style of writing

3. Text-Analysis

3.1 Karim's character

- **Discovery phase of Karim:**
 - - Identity: Search for place in society, conflicts based on Karim's heritage
 - - Both English and Indian sides
 - - Sexuality: experiences with different people of different genders
 - - Reference: (page 17) sexual and drug experiences with Charlie: symbolic for curiosity / search for identity
 - - Following accusations from father: Restrictions in finding own character

**My name is Karim Amir, and I am an Englishman born and bred,
almost.**

**I did feel, looking at these strange creatures now - the Indians -
that ... these were my people.**

3. Text-Analysis

3.1 Karim's character

- **The picaresque character traits of Karim:**
- - Journey and adventures: self discovery, exploration of identity and sexuality, encounters with different types of characters
- - Social Mobility: different social classes / environments
- - Karim's unconventional sides: complex individual, inner conflicts, not always acting morally upright
- - Critic on social norms, experiences of cultural diversity
- - Humour and Satire

3. Text-Analysis

3.2 Racism in the Buddha of Suburbia

- ‘I was sick [...] of being affectionately called **Shitface** and **Curryface**, and of coming home covered in spit and snot and chalk and woodshavings. We did a lot of woodwork at our school, and the other kids liked to lock me and my friends in the storeroom and have us chant, “Manchester United, Manchester United, we are the boot boys” as they held chisels to our throats and cut off our shoelaces.’

3. Text-Analysis

3.2 Racism in the Buddha of Suburbia

- Characters face racism on different occasions
- Institutional racism:
 - - Karim's troubles in the theatre branch
 - - Challenges / limitations

„The whites will never promote us“, Dad said, „Note an Indian while there is a white man left on the earth. You don't have to deal with them - they still think they have an Empire when they don't have two pennies to rub together.

3. Text-Analysis

3.2 Racism in the Buddha of Suburbia

- Serious handling of racism // humorous comments!?

4. Questions for discussion

Does the novel Buddha of Suburbia downplay racism by including various humorous elements or is this serious topic portrayed effectively?

4. Questions for discussion

What role do stereotypes and prejudices play in the book and do these factors influence Karim's relationships to other characters?

4. Questions for discussion

How does the Buddha of Suburbia reflect the challenges and tensions arising from cultural identity conflicts, especially concerning Karim's experiences of cultural differences between his Indian roots and his life in London?

Bibliography

Illustrations

- **Illustration 1: Buddha of Suburbia, book-cover,**
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- **Illustration 2: Potray Hanif Kureishi,**
<https://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/books/features/hanif-kureishi-paralysed-hospital-b2261068.html>
- **Illustration 3: Karim Amir, Television series,**
<https://bowiesongs.wordpress.com/2012/11/27/the-buddha-of-suburbia/>

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Sources

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