

Booker Prize 2012

Monday, 15 October 2012

Every year I try to read all six Booker Prize final novels.

This year we're back to a normal Booker final list - I usually love one or two, enjoy one or two, don't like one of two. Last year for the first time ever I loved all 6. But many, far more intellectual critics than I, felt it was "too commercial".

Hilary Mantel; streets ahead of the rest with *Bring Up The Bodies*. Even better than *Wolf Hall*.

Will Self - Umbrella; unreadable. Literally; I gave up after 100 incomprehensible and pretentious pages. Last writer who did that to me was Salman Rushdie. Drugs, obscure words, "artistic" punctuation, use of "clever" italics - really annoying. Rihanna's version far better.

Jeet Thayil: *Narcopolis*; back to the "we must have one Indian sub continent finalist" - vastly inferior to *The God of Small Things*, *White Tiger* and my personal favourite *Animal's People*. Packed with hookers, poverty, drugs... all the obligatory suspects.

Deborah Levy's *Swimming Home* - I thoroughly enjoyed but possibly as it's set in the Nice/Cannes/Grasse area I know so well.

Alison Moore's *The Lighthouse* - dull.

Tan Twan Eng - *The Garden of Evening Mists* - very good, atmospheric.

Mantel deserves to win by a mile but since the list has reverted to form, the utterly ghastly *Will Self* book could be selected. If it is, I urge you NOT to read it.