

The Booker: Prized in Public Libraries?

An investigation into the attitudes of public librarians towards the Man Booker Prize for Fiction.

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Karl Hemsley

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Abstract

This report examines the attitude of a selection of public librarians towards the Man Booker Prize for Fiction. Fifteen librarians, from five library authorities in the north of England, were interviewed, in order to ascertain their opinions regarding the Booker and its place in public libraries. The report also considers the views of commentators on the Booker and literature concerning fiction provision in public libraries.

In order to set the role of the Booker in context, librarians were asked to discuss the parts played by reader development and literary fiction in public libraries. Reader development is seen to be central to the role of libraries and to have contributed to the moving of books and reading to the heart of what libraries are about. It is recognised that book promotions are effective and that it is part of the task of library staff to promote all areas of stock. The interviewees' opinions on literary fiction reflect the divide seen in the literature between the 'patronising' and 'elitist' schools of thought, as there are differences over the extent to which public library services should be demand led.

The interviewees' opinions on the Booker Prize also reflect the views of commentators on the award. Several myths concerning the Booker are identified. It is argued that these myths are important, as they inform librarians' attitudes towards the value of the Booker in libraries.

Librarians are seen to have some misgivings concerning the value of the Booker as part of their reader development work, with some other prizes seen as more 'public library friendly' than the Booker. This is because they provide valuable promotional material and opportunities for library users to become involved in the awards in a way that the Booker does not. The Orange Prize, the BBC's Big Read and various children's awards are highlighted in this regard.

In conclusion, it is suggested that as librarians recognise the effectiveness of attractive book promotions, then the organisers of the Booker Prize could increase the profile of their award in public libraries, if they so wished, by providing libraries with the same kind of professionally produced publicity material that is sent to bookshops.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

“... did I think the painting of Plymouth Harbour” - here he pointed at a rather dull oil hung above the fireplace- “should be replaced by a literary figure? Would it not be more suitable for a library?”

*(Every Man for Himself, by Beryl Bainbridge,
shortlisted for the 1995 Booker Prize).*

1.1 *The Booker's stature*

The Man Booker Prize for Fiction is awarded annually to what its judges consider to be the best novel of the year by a citizen of the Commonwealth or the Republic of Ireland. The judging process and the kind of novel that tends to be nominated for the Booker (the name by which the prize is still best known, and by which it will be referred to in this report) will be discussed later. For now, it suffices to say that the Booker is seen as a prize for the ‘literary novel’, a concept that will also be returned to later.

The Booker is widely seen as a highly prestigious prize. J.M. Coetzee, twice a winner of the award, describes it as the “principal prize in the English speaking world” (in Leonard (1999)), and for Kenneth Baker, Chairman of the judging panel in 2001, “The Man Booker Prize is undoubtedly the best literary award in the world today” (Baker (2003)). It receives a huge amount of media coverage, including the televising (currently by BBC2) of the award ceremony. Also, as Todd points out, its eligibility rules mean that “the catchment area represented comprises one quarter of the world’s population” (1996:8). The USA falls outside this area, but the Booker is nevertheless highly regarded in that country (Baker (2003), Wood (2002)). One of the most important results of this high profile is that winning, and even being shortlisted for the Booker, brings a large increase in sales figures for a novel. Salley Vickers, a judge in 2002, writes,

“The impact on a writer’s reputation, and earnings, if she or he wins the Booker is enormous - so enormous that the task of choosing would be inhibiting if one lingered too long over the consequences of that choice” (2002).

One example of the Booker’s impact was J.M. Coetzee’s win in 1999. His novel, *Disgrace*, had a first print run of just 16,000, but after winning the Booker its hardback sales were over 100,000 (Fern (2002)). In 1993, 27,000 hardback copies of Roddy Doyle’s *Paddy Clarke Ha Ha Ha* were sold within half an hour of bookshops opening after that novel’s Booker win (Alberge (2002)). The impact can extend to a writer’s other works. A.S. Byatt had written a number of books that had had little commercial success, but after winning the Booker in 1990 for *Possession*, these earlier works were republished and some translated into other languages. Their “success, though deserved, cannot be attributed to any other cause than the greater success of *Possession*” (Todd (1996:29)). In fact, the Booker has had a positive impact beyond the authors that have won the prize in that it “has demonstrably raised the interest in, and sales of, serious fiction” (Lawson (1994:12)).

1.2 Fiction in public libraries

The Booker’s high profile and stature mean that it is of significance to public libraries. In the UK public libraries undertake a very wide range of functions, but the provision of reading material for leisure is especially important. According to Snape,

“The history of the public library shows that its leisure function is vital to its popularity... if it were not for fiction it seems safe to assume that far fewer people would use [public libraries] than currently do so” (1996:83).

Put another way,

“All public libraries know that their bread and butter comes from the mass lending of novels” (Labdon (1991:36)).

Of course, novels nominated for the Booker represent only a tiny part of the fiction available in public libraries. However,

“Receipt of a literary prize is a clear indication of consensus approval for a writer, either from his/her own profession or from literary or cultural institutions. Britain offers fewer prizes than most countries, but even so there remains a substantial number. The largest of these, the Booker Prize, has consistently rewarded original and under-publicized writers” (Spiller (1991:159)).

For this reason therefore, public libraries might be expected to take especial note of the Booker Prize, seeing its winners (and other shortlisted books) as a form of recommendation.

There is the danger of fiction being regarded as unimportant because it is a leisure activity and therefore not essential. For Drabble though,

“Novels are not, as all who read them know, a frivolity, a luxury, an indulgence. They are a means of comprehending and experiencing and extending our world and our vision. They can exercise the imagination, they can widen our sympathies, they can issue dire and necessary warnings, they can suggest solutions to social problems, they are the raw material of the histories of tomorrow” (in Goodhall & Kinnell (1992)).

Public libraries are well placed to promote this literature. According to Byatt (1992) public libraries are the equivalent to Britain’s greatest art galleries and theatres in that they are the places where the finest literature is found, but they have the advantage of being spread all over the country. Greenhalgh et al. (1995) point out that libraries have a positive public image, because, unlike many other public institutions, they do not exist solely for the disadvantaged in society but rather to serve the whole community.

Librarians though are divided over policies on how this important material should be provided. There is a long-standing argument between two schools that have been caricatured as ‘patronising’ and ‘elitist’ (described by Baker (2002)). Both may

agree that “Libraries exist to serve the needs of their users” (Clayton & Gorman (2001:4)), but there is disagreement over how these needs should be determined.

The ‘patronising’ school believes that libraries should provide the public with what it wants. As Mann says, “the novel should stand or fall on public demand” (in Baker (2002:19)). Rawlinson (an American librarian) exemplifies this ‘Give ’em what they want approach’, arguing that “A book of outstanding quality is not worth its price if no one will read it” (1981:2188). This argument is supported by the view that genre fiction reading should not be denigrated. Atkinson (1981:12) quotes a chief librarian, Edward Sydney, who once said to a library assistant, “A man reading a western is performing his highest function - he is reading”. O’Rourke makes the point that much genre fiction is better than it is normally given credit for. She writes,

“... there is an assumption that it is straight forward to decide between good and bad books, good and bad readings. I would suggest that the issue is more complex than it looks at first glance (1993:17).

Bob is an example of somebody arguing against this demand-led approach, believing that “... consumers’ tastes are largely shaped by what is available” (1982:1707). He is supported by Spiller, who quotes T.S. Eliot:

“Those who claim to give the public what the public want begin by underestimating public taste; they end by debauching it” (2000:7).

Bolton also agrees, denouncing

“... the political correctness that rails against making quality distinctions between books on the grounds that such discrimination is elitist” (1998:3).

Some regard originality as an important factor in public library fiction provision. Bob (1982:1708) argues that very original writing is not likely to be

immediately popular, but that its originality justifies inclusion in public libraries. Simply listening to public demand would not lead to such works being stocked. Spiller puts it this way:

“Some librarians (including the writer) favour a heavy weighting for ‘literary’ novels. This is partly because genre fiction offers readers a much higher level of acceptable substitutability between authors than ‘literary’ fiction, with its attempt - however flawed - at originality” (2000:142-143).

Broadus provides a balanced summary of both sides of this argument (in Clayton & Gorman (2001)). This argument involves librarians who have to make difficult decisions under pressure. Spiller (2000:138) shows that public library fiction borrowing in Britain fell by thirty-one percent between 1987-1988 and 1997-1998. Because the Booker Prize is seen as an award for literary fiction, then the argument outlined above is of significance, in that librarians with an ‘elitist’ viewpoint are more likely to want to give a higher priority to the Booker Prize in public libraries than are their ‘patronising’ colleagues.

1.3 *The aim and objectives of the report.*

With the above issues in mind the aim and objectives of this report are as follows.

Aim:

To examine the attitudes of a selection of public librarians towards the place of Booker Prize nominated fiction within public libraries.

This will be achieved through the following objectives.

Objectives:

To examine general perceptions of the Booker Prize from the interviewed librarians, and from commentators in order to place public librarians' views in context.

To examine the views of a selection of public librarians on the following issues:

- Literary fiction and its role in public libraries.
- Reader development and its relationship with the Booker Prize.
- The recommending and promoting of books and their relationship with the Booker Prize.
- Comparing the place of the Booker Prize in public libraries to that of other book prizes.

This report will now outline the methodology used in attempting to achieve the above ends.

Chapter 2

Methodology

Finally, I came up with a plan which, while perhaps not exactly as Mr Farraday had requested, was the best, I felt sure, that was humanly possible.

*(The Remains of the Day, by Kazuo Ishiguro,
winner of the 1989 Booker Prize).*

2.1 *The theoretical basis of the interview method*

According to Stone & Harris,

“The main aim [of outlining a research report’s methodology] is to provide sufficient information to enable the reader to understand and evaluate the findings” (1984a:5).

Whether a quantitative or qualitative approach is employed depends upon what question(s) the researcher wishes to examine. Qualitative research is a means of attempting to describe and understand a situation by looking at it through the perspective of those involved in it, and using induction to reach a fuller explanation (Gorman & Clayton (1997:23)). As this research aims to examine the opinions and attitudes of a group of people in a particular situation, i.e. public librarians, then qualitative methods are required. As Silverman says,

“The methods used by qualitative researchers exemplify a common belief that they can provide a ‘deeper’ understanding of social phenomena than would be obtained from purely quantitative data” (2000:8).

Specifically, in depth interviews are used, because the aim is “...*not* that of data collection, but *ideas* collection” (Oppenheim (1992:67)). As Patton explains, interviews are able to provide richer data than is observation alone. Observation

allows the researcher to see behaviours, but interviews give access to “feelings, thoughts and intentions.... *The purpose of interviewing, then, is to allow us to enter the other person’s perspective*” (1987:109).

There are three main approaches to qualitative in depth interviews identified in the literature (for example, Patton (1987)). These are:

- 1) Informal conversational
- 2) General interview guide
- 3) Standardised open-ended.

These three methods exist on a continuum, with the informal conversational style being the least structured and the standardised open-ended being the most. The informal conversational style has the advantage of great flexibility; the interviewer has no prepared questions and so can follow any line of enquiry that seems the most fruitful. The disadvantage (especially for someone as inexperienced as this researcher) is the danger that not all relevant points will be covered. The standardised open-ended approach has the opposite strengths and weaknesses. As all the questions, and their order, are pre-determined, then all relevant subject areas can be covered, but there is no scope for further exploration of interesting answers. The general interview guide involves the interviewer having a pre-prepared list of subject areas to be covered but also being ready to ask follow-up questions in order to delve deeper into responses where this seems appropriate. This last method is the approach used in this dissertation.

The interviews were recorded as “.... the use of a tape recorder permits the interviewer to be more attentive to the interviewee” (Patton (1987:137)). The researcher sees this as important, especially because of his lack of experience in conducting interviews. Patton points out that the process of using open-ended questions and following up replies with further relevant questions that have not been prepared beforehand is difficult. He writes,

“.... interviewing becomes an art and science requiring skill, sensitivity, concentration, interpersonal understanding, insight, mental acuity, and discipline” (1987:108).

This is why it was essential to concentrate on the interview. Some notes were also taken as a back up in case of problems with the recorder, but fortunately the equipment worked perfectly well.

2.2 The interviews

The researcher wrote to fifteen library authorities in the north of England (see appendix 3). There were a variety of responses. Some were unable to offer help, one offered to answer a written questionnaire and of the ones who offered to let me interview staff some responded more quickly than others. The first five invitations to interview staff were accepted. Appendix 4 provides the interview timetable. The interviewer asked to be able to interview each librarian separately, but in authorities A and C two of the librarians were interviewed together at their request because of time constraints. At authority E it proved possible to interview only two librarians because of staff absences, four librarians were interviewed at authority D and three at each of the others. In the text of this report the words of the interviewed librarians are italicised, with any words needed to make the meaning clear in square brackets. The librarians are identified by a letter to indicate the authority at which they work followed by a number to distinguish each librarian within a particular location.

For the reasons explained above, a general interview guide was used (see appendix 5). What follows is an explanation of why these particular questions were asked. The questions were asked in order to promote discussion, and this is what happened. Interviewees took the opportunity to talk around the subjects brought up.

2.2.1 Reader development

As this report concerns Booker Prize novels in public libraries it was felt to be important to explore librarians' views on reader development generally. One of the key ideas behind reader development is that librarians actively encourage library users to widen their reading. This is important because the researcher aims to examine to what extent librarians see it as their role to encourage users to read Booker fiction.

2.2.2 *Literary fiction*

The Booker is seen as an award for literary fiction, therefore it is important to know librarians' opinions on this type of novel and its place in libraries. Interviewees were asked to define 'a good read' in order to ascertain if any of the features of a good read correspond with those of literary fiction. The first series of interviews highlighted the difficulty of knowing exactly what is meant by the term 'literary fiction', so subsequent interviews included a request to define the concept.

Having covered the more general idea of what literary fiction is, the librarians were asked to move to the more particular question of its role in public libraries. Interviewees were asked to comment on the statement "It is the role of libraries to promote literary fiction." The technique employed of presenting a card containing a statement and asking the interviewee to comment is known as 'auto-driving' (it is described by Baker (2002: 38)). It is used in order to prevent the interviewer communicating any bias in his voice. This question is too simplistic to read anything into where the interviewees placed themselves on the Likert scale, but it proved an effective way of leading into discussion of the reasons behind their answers.

2.2.3 *Recommendations and promotion*

It is important to know to what extent library staff feel confident in recommending books beyond their own reading experience, as this shows whether the personal opinions of library staff regarding the Booker Prize influence the likelihood of them recommending these novels to library users. As promotion of material is recognised as playing an important and effective role in libraries (for example, Van Riel (1993)), it is important to know if librarians recognise any specific issues around the area of promoting literary fiction.

Librarians were asked where their priorities would lie between spending a limited budget on literary fiction or best sellers. The researcher recognises that this is a rather simplistic question, but it nevertheless proved an effective way of prompting further discussion and exploring the differences between the 'patronising' and 'elitist' schools of thought.

2.2.4 The Booker and other prizes

Having considered the more general issues the interviews moved specifically onto the Booker Prize to discover what role librarians saw this award having within public libraries. They were also asked to compare the Booker with other book prizes, in order to explore the question of whether the Booker is more or less ‘public library friendly’ than these awards.

It must be emphasised that the above is a theoretical outline. In practice several librarians moved on their own accord to questions later in the interview guide. For example, some interviewees gave their views on the Booker as soon as they were asked about reader development. In all cases however, the interview guide proved a useful way of ensuring that the researcher covered all necessary ground.

2.3 Quantitative data

This report consists mainly of qualitative analysis. However, appendix 6 shows quantitative data concerning Booker Prize fiction in the five library authorities visited. On each day that interviews were carried out, the researcher looked at that authority’s Opac to examine provision of Booker Prize fiction. Each novel shortlisted for the Booker over the last six years was searched for, and the number of copies in stock and on loan recorded. Audio books and books classified as lost were not counted.

“By combining [qualitative and quantitative data], the researcher’s claims for the validity of his or her conclusions are enhanced if they can be shown to provide mutual confirmation” (Bryman (1988:131)).

This is known as ‘triangulation’, attaining a ‘true fix’ on a situation (Silverman (2000)). This quantitative material can be examined to see if what librarians say about the provision of Booker Prize fiction is supported by the evidence of the library

catalogue. However, the data concerning the number of books on loan form merely a snapshot, as they were collected on just one day in each authority.

2.4 *Analysis and interpretation*

It is essential that the data gathered be used appropriately. That is, the replies need to be analysed and interpreted. Patten explains:

“Analysis and interpretation are conceptually separate processes. *Analysis* is the process of bringing order to the data, organizing what is there into patterns, categories and basic descriptive units. *Interpretation* involves attaching meaning and significance to the analysis, explaining descriptive patterns, and looking for relationships and linkages among descriptive dimensions” (1987:144).

Consequently, chapters three to six of this research contain a conclusions section that attempts to outline the main consequences of the analysed information. Chapter seven attempts to perform the same task in relation to the whole report.

2.5 *Literature Review*

The literature review for this report is dispersed throughout the text. This method is supported by Linley and Usherwood (in Conder (2002)). It is hoped that in this way it can be clearly seen how the literature relates to the research. The literature search was carried out in a variety of ways. These included *Star*, the University of Sheffield’s online catalogue, and then browsing the shelves around the area indicated; using a similar method in Sheffield City Library, which led to the researcher finding Todd (1996), which proved a particularly useful text; conducting searches of newspaper articles, both online and using *The Times Index*; and using *Library and Information Science Abstracts* to conduct a literature search. Also, module reading lists from the

University of Sheffield's MA in Librarianship (particularly the ones connected with collection management and public libraries) proved very useful.

2.6 Limitations of the research method

- A weakness with the above methodology concerns the sampling of librarians interviewed. As the researcher accepted invitations from those authorities which were the most accommodating, then the sample could be somewhat biased. However, the researcher was investigating the personal opinions of the individual interviewees rather than concentrating on the policies of authorities, and there were pronounced differences found in the views of librarians within the same authority.
- A researcher should be beware of making too broad generalisations from qualitative data, especially when the number of interviewees is relatively small as in this report. Bryman writes,

“There is a tendency towards an anecdotal approach to the use of data in relation to conclusions or explanations in qualitative research. Brief conversations, snippets from unstructured interviews.... are used to provide evidence of a particular contention. There are grounds for disquiet in that the representativeness or generality of these fragments is rarely addressed” (in Silverman (2000:11)).

Blackburn (1994:192) explains that this sort of inductive approach only provides evidence for “a very restricted part of the vast spatial and temporal order about which we then come to believe things”. Therefore, it is not easy to generalise from the findings, even though it is desirable to be able to do so. To combat this problem it is necessary to look for trends in answers rather than to rely too much on single replies, and to relate findings to the wider literature. It is also necessary to be able to recognise the difference between firm conclusions and suggested areas of further research.

- There is the danger that interviewees might give answers that they believe will please the interviewer. This tendency may be exacerbated by the use of a tape recorder. To counter this the confidential nature of the interview (i.e. that neither librarian nor library authority were to be named) was emphasised.

Chapter 3

The Booker Prize

“...*this history is for you and will contain no single lie...*”

(*The True History of Kelly Gang*, by Peter Carey,
winner of the 2001 Booker Prize).

3.1 *A brief history of the Booker Prize*

Todd (1996) describes how in the 1960's Britain had a number of literary prizes, but they all lacked prestige and impact outside the literary world. The prize money was insufficient to allow a winner to become a full-time writer and a win brought no significant increase in sales. This situation was often contrasted unfavourably with that which existed in France and Italy. These countries each had a long established, high profile prize for literary fiction, the Prix Goncourt and the Premio Strega respectively. These two remain very important prizes largely because “to win the Goncourt or the Strega was and is to be assured of massive sales” (Todd (1996:56)).

The situation changed when the Booker Prize for Fiction was first awarded in 1969. It was set up by Booker plc and aimed “to reward merit, raise the stature of the author in the eyes of the public and encourage an interest in contemporary quality fiction” (Booktrust (2002)). The prize, then as now, was open to writers from the Commonwealth and the Republic of Ireland. It was modelled on the Prix Goncourt, but with the difference that the Goncourt awarded only nominal prize money whereas the Booker winner received £5,000, an amount that has increased gradually since. This prize money, a substantial sum at the time, ensured publicity for the Booker. However, it was the years 1980 to 1982 that saw the Booker's profile raised to new heights. In 1980 two very highly regarded novelists, William Golding with *Rites of Passage* and Anthony Burgess with *Earthly Powers*, were seen as the main contenders for the prize, and for the first time the Booker had a significant impact on

sales. The next two years' winners, Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* and Thomas Keneally's *Schindler's Ark* achieved great critical acclaim and huge sales, thereby helping the Booker to attain its current stature. The Booker gains extra publicity by the policy of announcing a shortlist of six novels several weeks before the winner is announced, which allows for media discussion of the contenders and brings added publicity for books other than the eventual winner.

One of the most important features of the Booker Prize is the role played by publishers. Publishers can submit up to two eligible novels to be considered for the prize. This figure was reduced from three in 1996 after the number of novels submitted had exceeded 140 in the previous year. Judges must also call in at least eight but no more than twelve extra novels from a list of further nominations by publishers, and may call in any other novel they deem fit even if it has not been submitted by its publisher. Also, novels by any writer shortlisted in the previous ten years can be submitted in addition to a publisher's other nominations. To be eligible a book must be a full length novel and "be a unified and substantial work. Neither a book of short stories nor a novella is eligible" (Booker Prize (2003)).

There have been some recent changes in the running of the Booker. In 2001 it was decided to announce a longlist of twenty-four novels under consideration for the prize. This practice will continue, though the exact number on the list will vary, as a way of bringing more publicity to the prize. In 2002 the Man Group became the new sponsors of the Booker Prize and increased the winner's prize money to £50,000. Also, that year's Chairwoman of judges, Lisa Jardine, said that the Booker was at "the beginning of a new era" (in Gibbon (2002)), by which she meant that the judges would look beyond what they saw as typical Booker novels.

3.2 The implications of the rules of the Booker Prize

The history and rules of the Booker determine to a large extent how the prize is seen by those with an interest in fiction, including public librarians. A *Times* editorial describes book prizes generally as playing the same financial role as a patron might have fulfilled in the past, and sees the Booker in particular as a guide to contemporary

literary writing (Anon (2000)) The Booker's rules though can lead to controversy. For example, in 1982 there was an argument over whether *Schindler's Ark* should be eligible for the Booker, as it is a book based on real events, falling into a category that is sometimes now termed 'faction'. In 1998 argument centred on whether Ian McEwan's *Amsterdam* should be classed as a novella and thereby be excluded from Booker eligibility. These controversies arise partly because the Booker's criteria for eligibility are not detailed. For example, although the prize is generally seen as a prize for literary fiction, this is not actually specified in the rules, so in theory, genre fiction could be considered. This lack of specific guidelines makes the selection of judges very important, as it means that they have great freedom in selecting books for the long and shortlists. The panel of judges is selected by the Booker Prize Management Committee, which decides first upon a Chair and then selects a panel designed to provide a suitable balance. An illustration of how judges interpret the nature of the Booker Prize came in 1998 when William Trevor's *Death in Summer* did not make it onto the shortlist, despite being thought of as one of the more likely winners that year. Martin Goff, the administrator of the Booker Prize, explained the judges' decision by saying that, "Trevor had been discussed at length. He was felt to be a brilliant story writer but not a great novelist" (in Alberge (1998:5)). Many disagreed strongly with this interpretation (Alberge (1998)) and Trevor has subsequently been nominated for the Booker, which shows how difficult and subjective these decisions are.

The role of publishers also influences perceptions of the Booker. It is they who determine the majority of books which are put forward for the prize and who create the situation where judges have to read well over a hundred novels. Unlike other literary awards the Booker judges must read all submitted novels (Booker Prize (2003)), a process that according to Valentine Cunningham, Chair of judges in 1998, "addles the brain" (Cunningham (1998a:15)).

3.3 Librarians' views

The above factors are significant because they influence the way in which public librarians view the Booker Prize. For example, one interviewee said,

“The fact that publishers nominate books makes me dubious about how broad the prize is (Librarian B2).

For other librarians the Booker's publicity means that,

“These books get all the hype they need” (Librarian A1).

“The television debates on the Booker are boring and can put you off” (Librarian A2).

The criteria for judging the Booker is sometimes seen as vague, though it seems that certain conventions are recognised.

“How do you decide what is literary fiction, because it's such a subjective thing” (Librarian C1).

“There are rules, like the ‘Hampstead novel’. Particular locations or social groups might figure” (Librarian D3).

For some librarians the Booker rewards novels that are not the most suitable for their library and ignores others that are deserving of recognition.

“I don’t think that it’s relevant for most people in [library authority B]. The publishers and judges are aiming at different people” (Librarian B3).

I think some books, like good crime stories and thrillers, are just as well written as some of the ones that get the Booker” (Librarian A2).

There is agreement however, that the Booker is a well established prize and that public libraries need to take note of it.

“[It is] obviously a well respected prize. When anybody thinks of literary prizes it’s the one that trips most easily off the tongue” (Librarian B2).

“The Booker gets a lot of publicity, so we have to stock shortlisted books for that reason alone. People expect it” (Librarian E2).

3.4 Conclusions

It can be seen therefore, that the Booker Prize is well established and receives a great deal of publicity. Public librarians acknowledge this and recognise that their libraries must make Booker shortlisted novels available. However, some of the librarians interviewed express reservations about the prize. One of these is that the Booker’s agenda is set by publishers, who submit books for consideration. This raises the issue of how broad a range of books is considered for the award.

Also, there is the issue of the type of novel that is considered for The Booker, and whether such books are likely to be popular with anything other than a minority of public library users. There is doubt concerning Booker eligibility, in that it is difficult to define what literary fiction is, and it has been shown that the Booker Prize

rules are not specific in this respect and that judges can make decisions that others will regard as perverse. Connected to this is the view that very good novels may not be considered for the prize because they are seen as genre fiction.

The following chapters will explore these issues further, looking at the extent to which the particular features of the Booker are seen as strengths and weaknesses in public libraries. First though, it is necessary to consider more generally how public librarians view the issues of reader development, the recommendation of fiction and the role of literary fiction, in order to then discuss how the Booker Prize fits into this broader picture.

Chapter 4

Librarians and Reading

I knew all these things. I read them all. I read under the blankets with my torch, not only after I'd gone to bed; it was more exiting that way, like I was spying and might get caught.

(*Paddy Clarke Ha Ha Ha*, by Roddy Doyle,

winner of the 1993 Booker Prize).

4.1 Reader Development

Reader development has been an important feature of British public libraries in recent years. Thebridge and Train highlight the 1992 conference, *Reading the Future: A Place for Literature in Public Libraries* as “a turning point in the re-instatement of the book at the core of library service, at a time when many feared it was being sidelined by electronic media” (2002:132). At this conference A.S. Byatt argued that “The public library ought to be the place where the reading experience is shared” (1992:16). A delegate speaking from the floor urged that librarians working with adult library users should follow the example of children’s librarians in promoting literature.

“Children’s librarians do feel they are the guardians of children’s literature; they value book knowledge; they take an active approach to promotion; they work through partnerships, e.g. with publishers and schools; they make value judgments on quality” (in Van Riel (1992:42)).

Librarians interviewed for this report recognise the importance and impact of reader development in subsequent years, showing that the words of Byatt and the delegate, among others, have been acted upon.

“Reading books has definitely been seen as more important over the last 7 or so years. Reading development has accentuated the role of books”

(Librarian A3)

Another librarian described a series of meetings between colleagues from her library authority and authority A.

“We looked at what reading and books mean. There was some concern that the actual reading of books could possibly become a bit lost among all the other technological developments. People feel, particularly the staff, that books are the core of what libraries are” **(Librarian D1).**

Reader development is widely seen as a means of countering this danger of reading moving away from the heart of what libraries are about. Van Riel defines reader development as the

“... active intervention to open up reading choices, increase readers' enjoyment and offer opportunities for people to share their reading experiences” (in Train & Elkin (2001:395)).

Librarians interviewed for this report were asked for their definitions of reader development. The following are some examples of their replies.

“Promoting the idea of reading and reading based activities to as many people as possible” **(Librarian D3).**

“A way of being pro-active about selling, what I would loosely term, the reading experience” (Librarian B2).

“To get more visitors into the libraries; to get more people reading more books; to enhance the reading experience by giving them the opportunity to find authors that they may not have read before and to encourage them to try different genres. Also to organize reading events and to support reading groups and other activities where people can discuss the reading experience” (Librarian E1).

“Making the best use of the stock that you have. Finding ways in which it can be made attractive to readers” (Librarian D1).

“I don’t think it’s just about making people read the classics” (Librarian C1).

“‘The right book for the right person at the right time’ - a quote from Rachel van Riel from ‘Branching Out’. If that right book’s not there then you find something that is, or you help someone to expand on what they read. I don’t think that it’s reading up necessarily. That’s a common misunderstanding, that if you’re not reading something by Margaret Atwood, or somebody of that ilk, then it’s not reader development. I think it’s taking an interest in someone. If someone reads Catherine Cookson, if you introduce them to Maureen Williams then you’re staying in that area but you’re branching out.” (Librarian D4).

Several themes emerge from these comments. There is the desire to see more people using a library’s stock of books and for those who are already library users to ‘branch out’ and try the type of book that they have not previously read. This is seen as making the best use of stock. It is also emphasised that reader development is not concerned only with encouraging readers to move on to ‘better’ literature (‘the

classics' or someone of Margaret Atwood's ilk). Reader development is seen as a pro-active process, showing that librarians realise that it involves more than simply making books available.

Some examples were provided of how librarians can contribute to reader development.

Staff talking on the counter - I think that's a huge part of it, that's the main part that you can build on" (Librarian D2).

"I think that most librarians enjoy books and enjoy reading, and I see my job as to get my enthusiasm across to other people, and especially to people who don't tend to read" (Librarian D4).

"We've had themed trips, for example, the Bronte Museum and Bradford's photographic museum to tie-in with biographies" (Librarian C2).

"We're trying to get a reading group in every branch [of the authority]. I don't know if we'll be able to do that, but the one's we have got have been really good at encouraging people to read a wider range of books. They really seem to enjoy talking about what they've read" (Librarian E2).

Scothern (2000) shows how effective reading groups are at encouraging people to read more. Her research also demonstrates that effective leadership is necessary for a reading group to function to its full potential, and that public libraries are ideal for running for such groups, as they have trained staff, venues that are known to the public and the necessary stock.

Reader development can therefore be seen to operate in public libraries both informally, through staff chatting with library users, and through organised activities. It is certainly seen as central to the work of librarians. As it aims to encourage readers to 'branch out' and to help libraries to make better use of their book stocks, then

reader development has an important role in the relationship between libraries and literary fiction, including Booker Prize novels. However, librarians are quite clear that reader development is not only about connecting library users to this type of fiction.

4.2 A good read.

The following is an attempt to examine what the interviewed librarians see as ‘a good read’, in order to better understand the extent to which the characteristics of a good read are similar to those of literary fiction. This is done because the Booker is a prize for literary fiction and it is important to see if librarians associate the kind of book that might be shortlisted for the Booker with the concept of a good read.

Not surprisingly, there is recognition of the subjectivity of the reading experience, so that when asked to define ‘a good read’ librarians’ responses included the following.

“It’s up to you what makes a good read” (Librarian A1).

“That’s subjective isn’t it? What I call a good read, somebody else would say is a load of rubbish” (Librarian D3).

“It could make you laugh, cry, or think about something or be a total shut-off. It will be different for each person” (Librarian B2).

This subjectivity is also shown by a survey of library users in Buckinghamshire. Two of their top three favourite books, *Pride and Prejudice* and *Lord of the Rings* were also among the three most loathed (Anon (2003:11)).

Nevertheless, the librarians were able to identify some features that might make a book a good read.

“If it keeps you gripped then it’s a good read. If you can’t put it down”
(Librarian D2).

“Something that grabs you on the first page.... I think that the first part should suck you into the story.” **(Librarian D4).**

“Something that engages you. Something that either reflects your own experience or that is totally different” **(Librarian A1).**

“Often it’s either the book that you can most relate to or the one that takes you somewhere totally strange” **(Librarian A3).**

It was noted that the same person might respond to different types of book at different times in his or her life.

“The reading experience is different for everybody. People look for different things at different times in their lives. Something that’s been discussed in reading group scenarios is that depending on where you are in your life you’re going to read different books for different reasons” **(Librarian E1).**

“It depends on circumstances - wanting something different from a relaxed holiday read for instance. It needs to keep your interest at that time in your life”. **(Librarian C2).**

Alan Bennett puts it this way,

“Something in the book speaks to part of you that is just waiting to be spoken to. You and the book are ripe for each other. It is in this sense that you don’t only read a book: the best books read you” (1996:5).

Narrative is seen as being of particular importance.

“An interesting plot that you can identify with” (Librarian C3).

“I think I’m quite old fashioned in what I like to read. I like a good story. I much to prefer to have characters that I can identify with. I think that probably applies to the majority of people who use libraries”. (Librarian D1).

The quality of writing also matters.

“For me it should be well written - but it could be any kind of book. The key is that it is well written.” (Librarian B1).

“From my point of view it has to be something that is well written. If something’s not well written then I’m turned off it immediately” (Librarian D1).

Perhaps surprisingly, it was in response to being asked about a good read that two librarians mentioned the appearance of a book.

“And also I think, for me, if the book’s got a horrible cover then it puts me off. A paperback [cover] can have much more of an impact than a hardback. I like Angela Carter and I think that her paperbacks are far more enticing than the hardbacks” (Librarian D4).

“When browsing a good cover is important - I don’t like to pick up one with poor cover” (Librarian D2).

A.S. Byatt was very pleased with the cover design chosen for *Possession* and thought it an important feature of her book (Todd (1996)).

Although there is agreement that what constitutes a good read is highly subjective, and will change for any particular individual at different times, there are certain characteristics that have been highlighted as especially contributing to a good read. These are plot, that the book is well written and that it grips the reader. This report will now look at the issue of literary fiction and consider which features of a good read are seen in that type of novel.

4.3 Features of literary fiction

The Booker is a prize for literary fiction. Therefore it is important for this report to examine how people, particularly public librarians, perceive literary fiction. Defining the term is not a straightforward matter, as the following comments show.

“I’m not sure that I can define what it is” (Librarian C3).

“I know it when I see it” (Librarian B3).

There are attempts at definitions in the literature.

“Unlike popular or genre novels, literary novels cannot be prescribed by publishers. They are what they are, and are usually like nothing else. They create their own enclosed world, are inventive in terms of narrative and character, and have an inimitable voice, the personal signature of the author” (Celyn Jones (2002)).

“By ‘serious literary fiction’ I mean self-consciously literary novels intended to appeal to the ‘general reader’: that is a reasonably sophisticated, largely but not exclusively professional readership with an interest in, but not unlimited time for, the leisured consumption of full-length fiction” (Todd (1996:3)).

The librarians interviewed for this report were asked to provide their definitions of ‘literary fiction’. It is very difficult to provide a concise definition of such a concept in an interview situation, but they were able to provide some thoughts on the distinguishing features of literary fiction.

“[It is] *more challenging*” (**Librarian B3**).

“Literature always conjures up for me, highbrow, the classics the things that you might study for A level or a degree. Literature is something that is less ephemeral perhaps. Fiction is a bit more here-today-gone-tomorrow. I can’t imagine that we’ll be reading Katie Ford or Joanna Trollope in a hundred years time.... It’s a very difficult divide. I’m not sure if it only becomes literature when it’s over a hundred years old” (**Librarian C1**).

“ I think of literary fiction as the standard classics.... something that has stood the test of time” (Librarian B1).

“Maybe the plot isn’t so important as in other books. It’s more concerned with difficult language and ideas” (Librarian A2).

There are some very negative views on literary fiction. One librarian canvassed opinion among her para-professional colleagues prior to being interviewed.

“I can tell you what some of our staff think about literary fiction. A front-line library assistant of 20 years experience called literary fiction: ‘elitist stock that does not issue. We need more best-sellers and books that people actually want to read, not what we think they should read’”. (Librarian C2).

The *Observer*’s literary editor, Robert McCrum reports similar views.

“Within the [publishing] industry, ‘literary fiction’ has become identified as another label for second-rate novels that don’t sell” (2002)).

“Some have even gone so far as to observe that the label [of ‘literary fiction’] could simply be a way of describing a novel that places style before content, puts prose before plot and subordinates character and narrative to nebulous aesthetic concerns” (2001).

Others have more positive views on literary fiction though.

“People overlook how ferociously well-written *Cold Comfort Farm*, *The Diary of a Nobody* or P.G. Wodehouse are - they deserve to be treated with greater respect” (Kate Saunders in Craig (2003)).

“It should, after all, be stating the obvious to point out that being popular does not mean that a book is automatically exempt from being amongst the very best. It is almost a cliché to point out that Dickens was one of the greatest populist writers in history” (Toms (2002)).

“[Literary fiction is] *something obviously that’s very well written, well researched. The style of writing’s going to be very important. The usual things, good characterization, well-drawn characterization. It needs a good plot or be believable. It needs to be held together as one coherent whole*”
(Librarian E1).

It is clear from the above that there are both positive and negative feelings attached to the label ‘literary fiction’. One important characteristic is that literary fiction is well written, one of the features of a good read. This might be an encouragement to librarians to use literary fiction in reader development. However, there is also the perception that plot is not particularly important in literary fiction. As a good plot is seen as one of the most important features of a good read then this may lead librarians to have a less positive view of literary fiction. It might be protested here that much literary fiction is plot driven, but this report is concerned with the perceptions of the interviewed librarians and this is how some of them perceive literary fiction to be. It might also be significant that librarians see literary fiction as being old, long-established works. This could create a problem for Booker Prize fiction, which might be seen as not having stood the test of time and established itself as literary fiction. However it would seem that Booker judges attempt to choose

novels that will not be quickly forgotten. The Chair of judges in 2001 said of that year's shortlist

“There is no doubt that some of these books will be read for years to come”
(Baker in Staff and agencies (2001)).

4.4 *Literary fiction in public libraries*

The librarians interviewed for this report were asked to what extent they agreed with the statement, “It is the role of libraries to promote literary fiction”. They were also asked to comment on where their priorities would lie, between buying literary fiction and more popular books, if they were in control of a very limited budget (see appendix 5). These questions were asked in order to promote discussion on how librarians see the role of literary fiction in public libraries. Comments included the following.

“I think that it’s important for libraries to stock literary fiction and for people to be made aware that it’s there. It should be available for people to try” (Librarian D1).

This librarian qualified her remarks later;

“Libraries should provide literary fiction. Not in the same quantities as you would provide the best sellers, but people should know that they can come and get hold of others, even if not straight away.” (Librarian D1).

“The middle ground is always the best. Providing what the public wants, what they like to read, but also providing what we think they might like. If

it's not there, they can't select it. They'll always go for the old favourites, Mills and Boon, Agatha Christie, but you've got to put new authors in there so that they can have a go at them" (Librarian D3).

The need for variety is supported by Coleman.

"I believe that we should be providing a very broad range of material; all genres, the literature of many cultures not just our own culture, classics, modern literary novels and light fiction as well. The main thing a library can do is to give people range, to give people space to browse and to experiment and take risks" (1992:33).

One measure that might help librarians to provide a good balance, and to make the best use of library stock, is to provide a system of free reservations and requests from other branches.

"We've recently introduced a system of free reservations to encourage people to borrow from other branches. This allows us to make better use of the stock that we have" (Librarian D1).

"Reservations are very important as there isn't enough money to have multiple copies through the system" (Librarian D2).

Some librarians came down more strongly on one or other side of the argument regarding the relative importance of best sellers and literary fiction.

"... maybe we ought to be questioning how much we provide of the light paperback material, the very popular fiction that can be bought in

bookshops, or whether it's really our role to buy multiple copies of novels that are very heavily hyped up" (conference delegate in Van Riel (1992:33))

"Libraries should have a particular concern for books that people are less likely to buy" (Librarian D1).

"I think that we spend far too much time on best sellers" (Librarian D4).

"I suppose you'd have to go more toward the demand and try to find ways of accommodating the other side of things. Library issues are falling nationwide so you need to provide something that people want. It's a service at the end of the day; people are paying for it with their council tax. There's always a danger with reader development, or any kind of promotion, that you end up sounding too prescriptive: 'this is what we think you should be reading and this is good for you to read'. We're not meant to be teachers. We should make people aware of what there is available to read, but we're not there to say that you should do this or should do that" (Librarian D1).

"I believe in giving people what they want, you can't be judgemental" (Librarian A1).

"Definitely [I lean] towards demand. We're there for people, we're not there for us. We should buy what people want" (Librarian D2).

The above illustrates that the interviewed librarians are divided over the extent to which stock provision should be demand led. It is not easy however to divide them into two camps, as the issue is not at all simple. Librarian D1 for instance, believes that libraries should pay especial attention to books that are less likely to sell well, yet she also believes that a library's priority should be to provide what the council tax

payer wants. There is also the recognition of the danger of deterring library use by seeming to pressurise library users, and of the need to not be judgemental. This shows what a difficult task faces librarians who are trying to provide as wide a range of literature as possible, while meeting demand for the most popular books. It also is proof that the distinction between the ‘patronising’ and ‘elitist’ schools, described in the introduction, is real, even though an individual librarian, as above, may not consistently support only one side of that argument.

A further point to emerge is that librarians can feel under great pressure to meet performance targets and therefore follow a more demand led policy than they would wish to.

“If you’re on a small budget you’re better going for more popular titles. I only say that because, I’ve been talking about this with other colleagues, and you’ve got to hit library standards on issues, whereas ideally I wouldn’t buy any best sellers, or at least chop the number of copies right down, because if you can buy something when it’s published in the supermarket with your shopping, I don’t think there’s a need there to provide it. Also, I think that if you took all the popular authors away you’ve got more chance to promote the newer ones that don’t get the same sort of cut off their publishers. I think that [best value] forces you to devalue your service. There’s a concentration on IT and information, and if you want that then you should leave that to internet cafes to an extent. It’s the same with hiring CDs and things. What’s the point when you’ve got record shops and music shops? I don’t see that you can compete” (Librarian D4).

“I think that [targets] can distort what you try to do. I think that you need standards, but this government is becoming quite obsessive with them, in the NHS, schools, local authorities and everywhere and to some extent they can distort what you try to do. They can put a lot of pressure on people” (Librarian E1).

“I think that there should be more evaluative methods for libraries rather than just issues, because if you’re in a small area with a small population, then you’re not going to be able to increase your issues dramatically”

(Librarian D4).

It could be then, that some librarians feel that they are not able to be as adventurous as they would like in promoting fiction other than best sellers because of the pressure of meeting targets in the number of loans issued. Librarian D4 believes that more qualitative methods could be used to assess a library’s performance. This is a very important issue, but perhaps the most important thing to emerge from the above data is that all the interviewed librarians (including the ones not quoted above) believe that there is a place for literary fiction in public libraries. Even those interviewed librarians who are most in favour of a demand led approach recognise the need for literary fiction in public libraries.

4.5 *Recommending literature*

This report will now consider how librarians recommend books to library users. Specifically, the researcher wishes to examine the extent to which they find it more difficult to recommend the type of fiction that they themselves do not read. This may illustrate how important it is for librarians to be readers of literary novels in order to recommend that type of book.

First, there is the general point of the extent to which librarians talk with library users about books and reading.

“We’ve lost the art of talking about books with the general public”

(Librarian B1).

“We don’t want to make people think, ‘I’m not going to that library because she’ll accost me and say why haven’t you read this book’” **(Librarian C2).**

“People in somewhere like Cambridge find out information for themselves much more than in this kind of area, especially because of the internet, so it depends on your library and your clientele how much you need to recommend books” (Librarian B1).

This shows that librarians can find it difficult to recommend books, or feel uncomfortable doing so, or see it as unnecessary in some circumstances. This might suggest a need for greater training in this area.

Librarians were asked, “Do you believe that librarians find it easier to recommend the type of books that they themselves read?” One gave this answer:

“I think if you keep up to date with what’s published and if you know who writes like who else, and if you go through ‘who writes like who?’ material, then it’s just a question of keeping up to date. You can’t do that by just working in a library, you’ve got to go into bookshops and see what’s published because you don’t see much because you’re doing all your approvals and things through lists. You haven’t got the books to hand to flick through them and check. It’s a question of being interested in books. I don’t necessarily read science fiction but I wouldn’t have a problem recommending something to somebody else if they’ve got an idea of what they already like. It’s the same with crime books. If someone likes Patricia Cornwall you can look at the ‘who writes like?’ list and recommend something from that” (Librarian D4).

This would seem a very professional and pro-active approach to recommendation. Other librarians feel that having read a book does make a very real difference to recommending it.

“It’s much easier to recommend books that you are aware of because you can tell people about the author or about the content of the book. So yes,

people do tend to promote the kind of book that they read themselves and enjoy” (Librarian E1).

“It’s very difficult to recommend books that you haven’t read” (Librarian D1).

“Most people who work in libraries are not librarians and find it hard to recommend beyond what they have read” (Librarian B2).

Some people believe that it is necessary for librarians to be enthusiastic readers.

“Librarians have simply got to read. Anyone working in a bookshop is required to read. Booksellers give this sort of advice on a daily basis and don’t think about it as a special part of their job; they think of it as the whole of their job” (conference delegate in Van Riel (1992:41)).

Some of the interviewed librarians said it is a very positive thing to encourage reading among staff.

“We [the library staff of authority A] are big book people” (Librarian A1).

“Our staff reading group reflects the importance we put on reading” (Librarian A3).

“I do believe that as libraries we should be promoting reading among our staff as well as customers” (Librarian C1).

The above comments demonstrate that librarians' personal views on books will often have a great influence on whether they recommend them to library users. This is significant for this report because it means that librarians' opinions on Booker Prize novels, and whether they have read and enjoyed them, will influence how often they are recommended to users. The next two chapters will examine librarians' views on the Booker.

The above data are also significant in that they suggest the need for greater training of library staff and the benefits of encouraging staff to read more widely. Training could involve helping staff to learn how to use such resources as *Whichbook.net* and *The Bookseller.com*, which can be used to point people towards the kind of book that they might like. Para-professional staff were mentioned by one interviewee as having particular problems in recommending books beyond their own reading. This researcher does not know whether or not this is a fair point, but as so many members of library staff are para-professionals, and they are very often the people who library users have most contact with, then clearly it would be advantageous to include them in training programmes rather than restricting the training to professional librarians.

4.6 *The promotion of literature*

The librarians interviewed for this report were asked, "What do you think are the main matters to be considered when promoting literary fiction in a public library?" This led to various comments on the importance generally of promoting books in public libraries.

"Any display of anything that looks new goes well" (**Librarian A3**).

"A well put together display will always lead to more loans" (**Librarian E2**).

“They have to be made to look as though people would want to pick them up and read them” (Librarian A2).

Librarians therefore seem confident that an attractive display will encourage users to borrow books. It was also said that libraries should promote all kinds of books.

“It’s the role of librarians to promote fiction, non-fiction, whatever” (Librarian A1).

“Promoting books is an important part of a librarian’s job, and it doesn’t matter what type of book you’re talking about. We should take an interest in all our stock” (Librarian C3).

It was said that there are sometimes problems with para-professionals not wanting to promote some books.

“I think that non-professional staff can have the mindset to concentrate on the popular stuff because it shifts more easily. But I don’t think that it’s the job of libraries to provide just popular fiction. I think that it should be more wide ranging” (Librarian D4).

“People are still reeling from the latest promotion called ‘Textual Intercourse’. There were some objections to gay literature from library assistants” (Librarian C2).

As with the issue of recommending books, which is closely related to promotion, the researcher does not know whether this singling out of para-professionals is justified. It would seem fair however, to say that these members of staff should receive training

in this area, because as members of library staff who have regular contact with library users they clearly play a part in this aspect of a public library's work.

The most significant things to be said about the promotion of books in libraries generally are that librarians believe that promotion works and that it is part of their job to promote all of their library's stock. The next chapter will examine attitudes to promoting Booker Prize novels specifically.

4.7 Conclusions

Reader development is of central importance in public libraries. This is illustrated by the term being incorporated into some librarians' job titles. Librarians are aware of the danger of books and reading becoming marginalized in libraries and they do not want this to happen. They recognise that it is part of their job to promote books and that well-run promotions, including attractive displays, are very effective. This has significance for Booker Prize fiction in libraries as librarians recognise the importance of promoting all their stock. However librarians are divided over the extent to which literary fiction should be given any kind of priority. Some, the 'patronising' school, believe that their service should be primarily demand led, unlike the 'elitist' school who believe that less time should be spent on best sellers. Some library staff would prefer to take a more adventurous, less demand led approach, but feel constrained by the pressure of meeting targets. These quantitative measures may hinder the promotion of Booker Prize fiction in libraries.

It is acknowledged that most library staff find it more difficult to recommend fiction that they have not read, rather than novels with which they are familiar and enjoy. This means that it is important to consider librarians' personal opinions on Booker Prize fiction, and whether they read such novels, in order to see how likely they are to recommend these works to readers. It also suggests that libraries should encourage staff to read and to provide training that will encourage them to be more confident in recommending books beyond their own reading experience. It was said in the interviews conducted for this paper that para-professional staff have particular difficulty in recommending books that they have not themselves read. As no para-

professionals were interviewed for this report then the researcher does not feel able to comment on whether or not this is a fair point. However, it would seem reasonable that para-professionals also receive appropriate training because of the amount of time that they spend with library users.

About a decade ago Rachel Van Riel described the tendency of people within librarianship to look down on reading as an activity. A personnel manager of a library authority told her that

“If a candidate listed reading as a hobby this was not considered an advantage for the job; in fact, it was more likely to be held against them as it would suggest that they were introverted and unable to deal with the public” (1993:81).

By contrast, librarians interviewed for this report have a more positive attitude to reading, so the climate would appear to be right to encourage reading as an activity.

To some extent the qualities of a ‘good read’ are seen as similar to those of ‘literary fiction’. The most important is that each is seen as being well written. However, there is a belief that a good plot is not a characteristic of literary fiction but is an important (perhaps the most important) feature of a good read. This may well effect how librarians perceive Booker Prize fiction.

The following chapters will consider firstly the beliefs that librarians and others hold about the Booker Prize and then how librarians see the role of the Booker Prize in libraries.

Chapter 5

Booker Myths

Rivers said, 'it's difficult isn't it, to talk about. . . beliefs?

'Is it?'

'I find it so'.

*(The Ghost Road, by Pat Barker,
winner of the 1995 Booker Prize).*

One of the definitions of the word 'myth' is, "a popular belief or story that has become associated with a person, institution, or occurrence" (Dictionary.com (2003)). There are myths attached to the Booker Prize. That is to say, there are certain widely held beliefs, which may contain a greater or lesser amount of truth, that inform people's opinions about the Booker Prize. Interviews for this report and the wider literature provide evidence of some of these perceptions. What follows is an attempt to describe these beliefs and to examine the extent to which they can be said to be justified.

5.1 *A Predictable Prize*

One view of the Booker Prize is that its annual shortlist is highly predictable. Three of the interviewed librarians addressed this issue in the following way. They were not specifically asked about their views on the shortlist's predictability, but rather volunteered the following comments when asked their opinions on the prize generally.

"Too few writers get nominated. I think the shortlists are always dead predictable" (Librarian D4)

“I think you get a lot of the same authors [nominated for the Booker]”

(Librarian D1)

“It’s never really a surprise what books come up for it” **(Librarian A2)**

Similar views are least hinted at by commentators on the Booker. In 2002 some of the Booker judges (most vociferously, David Baddiel) spoke out against “too many heavyweight, self-consciously literary tomes” (Baddiel (2002)). Nevertheless, even in such a year a journalist could write,

“For all their revolutionary rhetoric, [the judges’] shortlist of six struggled to shake off the old Booker formula: a few old reliables (William Trevor and Carol Shields), a dash of exoticism (Rohinton Mistry and the lesbian eroticism of Sarah Waters), and a purgative dose of gritty realism (Tim Winton)” (Gibbon (2002)).

This belief in an ‘old Booker formula’ can also be seen in the following comment on the 1996 prize:

“.... there is.... (and this is somewhat to be regretted) a strong whiff of *deja vu* about the names on the shortlist. Four of six writers nominated for the prize.... have been there before (Anon (1996:152)).

Fern (2002) describes this criticism thus:

“Booker shortlists are lambasted every year for being too boring, too British, too politically correct....”

There is however, some evidence to suggest that Booker shortlists are not at all predictable. In 2001 the Booker Prize began the practice of publishing a longlist of candidates. Previously, any such list was kept secret (though leaks might occur). Bookmakers took the opportunity to issue odds on each of the longlisted books. In 2001 the bookmaker William Hill offered the following prices when the longlist of twenty-four was published:

- 6/1 Beryl Bainbridge
- 7/1 Melvyn Bragg or Nick Hornby
- 10/1 Peter Carey or Jane Urquhart
- 12/1 James Kelman or Ian McEwan
- 14/1 V.S. Naipaul or Marina Warner
- 16/1 Abdulrazaak Gurnah
- 20/1 Any of the others.

None of the three books with the shortest odds were shortlisted, and only two of the top ten favourites made it that far. Four of the eventual six shortlisted novels fell under the category 'any of the others'.

The situation in 2002 was similar when a longlist of twenty novels was released. William Hill offered the following odds:

- 5/1 Howard Jacobson
- 6/1 William Boyd or Zadie Smith
- 8/1 Robert Edric
- 12/1 John Banville, Jon McGregor, Rohinton Mistry, Will Self, Colin Thubron or Tim Winton
- 14/1 Anita Brookner; Yann Martel or Sarah Waters

16/1 Michael Frayn, Linda Grant, Philip Hensher, or Carol Shields

20/1 William Trevor;

25/1 Dannie Abse or Joan Barfoot.

This time, none of the first four favourites were shortlisted and again only two of the top ten favourites were.

Bookmakers must give careful thought to the odds that they offer, so the above prices, though they are only taken from two years, demonstrate that a Booker shortlist is anything but predictable. There is also earlier evidence of the shortlist's unpredictability. For example, in 1997 there was "... the omission from the 29th Booker shortlist of Ian McEwan, whose *Enduring Love* was thought to be a near-certainty" (Coldstream (1997)), and 1993's judges received much criticism for failing to shortlist Vikram Seth's *A Suitable Boy* (Reynolds (1999)).

The perception then, of a predictable Booker shortlist, seems to be held without any real justification.

5.2 *The Booker Novel.*

A similar view of the Booker is that a certain type of book is shortlisted for and wins the prize, what might be termed a 'Booker novel'. This perception is perhaps what makes people mistakenly believe that the Booker shortlist is predictable. Sometimes this view of a 'Booker novel' is expressed positively, sometimes negatively.

"[The Booker shortlist] is picked by literary figures, it's what they enjoy. It has this literary merit behind it. You know that if you sit down with a

Booker Prize novel you'll get something that's extremely well written"
(Librarian D3).

"Some [Booker Prize novels] are more works of art than stories"
(Librarian D1).

"There is often no plot resolution, which would be more unusual in a genre novel" **(Librarian C3).**

"A lot of them don't have a plot really, they just meander along in a flow of consciousness." **(Librarian E1).**

Many commentators have directly addressed the issue of what makes a 'Booker novel'.

"Is there such a thing as a 'Booker novel'? This year's judges, led by the publicity-savvy Lisa Jardine, certainly think so. And they don't much like it" (McCrum (2002b)).

"Sally Vickers [one of the 2002 judges].... railed against the 'sheer portentousness' of so many of the 130 books they [the judges] had to read. The worst offenders, of course were men. 'There are far too many big male books', she said" (Gibbon (2002)).

David Baddiel wrote scathingly of some of the books he had had to read as a 2002 Booker judge:

"At the press conference the judges were asked about their general impression of the books they had to read, and I replied that I'd read too

many heavyweight, self-consciously literary tomes; too many novels weighted down with an obvious, instant gravitas; too many books, in other words, that attempt to be exactly the sort of book that wins the Booker prize” (Baddiel (2002)).

His article goes on to provide advice, in satirical fashion, to a would-be Booker winner on the necessary ingredients for his novel. These include setting the book in the past, in a distant country, with an old and dying narrator who is a writer, artist or academic. He also advises that the book be longer than 500 pages.

More than a decade before Baddiel Robert carver also provided satirical instruction on how to win the Booker, including the advice to,

“.... move to Literary London (borders Islington-Notting Hill-Brixton). Write about *anything* but real life in modern Britain, preferably magically-realistically” (Carver (1991:52)).

Writing of the Booker shortlist in the year 2000, David Robson complained that

“Small town America in the 1980s is the closest the list takes us to contemporary Britain” (Robson (2000)).

Others said of the same list,

“None of the six novels contending for Britain’s most prestigious literary award is set in modern Britain” (Alberge (2000:9)).

“All six shortlisted novels carry the clearest hallmarks of millennial literary fashion in novel writing. Most strikingly, all are largely interior monologues” (Ezard (2000)).

Other commentators have a more positive view of the ‘Booker novel’. Erica Wagner takes a different line from her fellow 2002 judge Baddiel, praising the

“.... longer, denser read.... after all it [the Booker] is a prize for literature” (in Gibbon (2002)).

McCrum also defends the prize against Baddiel’s attack by asking the rhetorical questions,

“Was *The Remains of the Day* pretentious? Do V.S. Naipaul or Penelope Lively write to a formula? Is it so dreadful that *Disgrace* ‘grabs a big theme’? Is *Oscar and Lucinda* unreadable? Was *Paddy Clarke Ha Ha Ha* pompous?” (2002b).

Russell Celyn Jones explains that he and his fellow judges in 2002 did not dismiss genre novels on the grounds that they were not Booker type books, but judged them on their merits. He writes,

“Crime and romantic novels were not prejudged. Rather, the limitations of genre, such as plot and character conventions, became apparent in the reading process, and only then rejected” (2002).

The introduction of the published longlist in 2001 highlighted how broad the Booker Prize can be. This list included *The Amber Spyglass*, Philip Pullman’s children’s book, and *How to be Good* by Nick Hornby, a writer with more popular appeal than

would normally be expected of a Booker nominee. The Booker Prize's rules for eligibility of a book state that

“Any full-length novel, written by a citizen of the Commonwealth or the Republic of Ireland, is eligible. Such a book must be a unified and substantial work. Neither a book of short stories nor a novella is eligible” (Booker Prize 2003).

This means that children's books and genre fiction (for example crime or science fiction) are theoretically eligible for the Booker. Although the Booker is frequently referred to as a literary prize, there is no stipulation that a nominated book must be 'literary'. In practice, it would seem that this quality is exactly what the judges look for. As McCrum says, “A genre novel has never won this prize” (2002a) and it can certainly be argued that *The Amber Spyglass* and *How to be Good* are literary works, even if they are unorthodox 'Booker novels'. Although "The thing about the Booker is that there are no rules" (Martin Nield in Alberge (2002)), it is the selection of judges who are of a very broadly similar background that ensures that rules are not necessary in order for the 'Booker novel' to be perpetuated. The members of the Booker judging panel of 1997 were described as “all paid-up literary professionals” (Anon (1997:137)), and this description would fit many judges from other years.

It would therefore seem fair to say that there is a perception that there exists such a thing as a 'Booker novel' and that to a very large degree this perception is accurate. One of the interviewed librarians summed this up by saying that Booker Prize novels are examples of literary fiction and as such stand apart from genre fiction. He then thought that he could express his point better by saying of 'Booker novels':

“There are rules. It's another genre actually” (Librarian C3).

5.3 *A highly subjective prize*

Even though there seems to be such a thing as the 'Booker novel', there still exists the paradoxical notion that the judging process is highly subjective, and for some people this lessens the value of the prize.

"It's only based on the opinion of a small group of people - that's my thought on it" (Librarian D2").

"There must be a lot of luck involved in winning. I mean do the judges that year happen to like your writing?" (Librarian A3).

Perhaps the best evidence of a high degree of subjectivity being involved in the Booker Prize is when a judge from one year criticises the choice made by a different panel. This highlights the luck involved in a writer having the 'right' judges for him or her. Valentine Cunningham has twice been a Booker judge yet he is very dismissive of a highly thought of Booker winner:

*"How on earth did Arundhati Roy's amateurish *The God of Small Things* outdo both Jim Crace's lovely rewrite of the story of Christ in the Wilderness, *Quarantine* (which rightly won the Whitbread Prize for fiction) and Bernard MacLaverty's extraordinarily inventive wedding of musicology and anti-bigotry in Ulster, *Grace Notes*? And just how did Ms Roy get on to last year's shortlist in the first place?" (1998a:15).*

Kenneth Baker believes that

“[Beryl Bainbridge] should have won [in 1999] with her novel, *Master Georgie*” (2003).

In 1999 Salman Rushdie’s *The Ground Beneath Her Feet* unexpectedly failed to make that year’s Booker shortlist.

“[It] was described by some judges as containing too many ‘tedious’ passages. They also felt there ‘were too many ghastly puns’” (Reynolds (1999)).

Rushdie is of course one of the most celebrated of contemporary novelist and is often praised for his inventive use of language. Reviewing *The Ground Beneath Her Feet* Stephanie Merritt writes,

“Rushdie's writing here is as vibrant and satisfying as ever” (2000).

This illustrates that what one critic sees as ‘vibrant and satisfying’ another might see as ‘tedious’, and the chances of a novel winning the Booker may depend on which of these critics is amongst that year’s judges.

Judges can attempt to be objective. Describing her experience as a judge in 2002, Erica Wagner says,

“.... all the judges, I think, were very good at distinguishing personal opinion from critical opinion” (2002).

Similarly, another judge Jason Cowley says,

“I think that it is possible to form objective judgements about books, to demonstrate, for example, why several of the books on the shortlist are superior to *The Untouchable* by John Banville” (1997:16).

The difficulty here is that Cowley goes on to admit that he was the only judge to advocate two particular novels. Good judges may be open-minded and use discussions to genuinely inform their opinions. Nevertheless, the Booker’s history of controversies and arguments, involving judges and commentators, proves that there is truth in this particular myth, that a high degree of subjectivity must be present when deciding shortlists and winners. This might be used to support the view of those public librarians who believe that the winning of the Booker Prize proves nothing about a novel, other than that a small number of judges happened to have liked it that year, and that therefore it does not warrant special attention from public libraries.

5.4 *A lifetime achievement award*

There is a view that the Booker prize can be awarded less for the book nominated in that particular year than for the lifetime’s work of its author. This perception may have been even stronger before 1999, as it was not until that year that J.M Coetzee became the first writer to win the Booker for a second time, an achievement since matched by Peter Carey. Nevertheless, some recent judging decisions are cited to support the suspicion that the Booker can be given as a lifetime achievement award.

Two of the interviewed librarians mentioned this perception, though none of the interviewees were specifically asked about this issue. The following views were offered when they were asked for general comments on the Booker Prize.

“They’ve regretted not giving it [the Booker Prize] for something else; it’s a case of ‘it’s not as good as whatever, but he or she can have it’. I think with the ‘Blind Assassin’ by Margaret Atwood especially, it’s a good book, but I don’t think it’s as good as the ‘Handmaid’s Tale’ that was nominated. I think that they think they’ve got to give them [the author] something before they die” (Librarian D4).

“I think that sometimes it’s been given to people for what they’ve done in the past. Didn’t some people say that about Ian McEwan when he won?”
(Librarian E2).

Commentators on the Booker also discuss this issue. The following give analogies to illustrate that it is wrong to take earlier novels into account when judging the prize.

*“Remember when Henry Fonda won the Oscar for best actor for *On Golden Pond*? Not for *Once Upon a Time in the West*; not for *Twelve Angry Men*: those fine performances had been overlooked by the Academy. His reward for his performance in this mawkish film [*On Golden Pond*] was widely seen as compensation for earlier neglect. But lifetime achievement is not what the Best Actor Oscar is for. It’s not what the Booker Prize is for, either” (Wagner (1998:22a)).*

“Ideally the Booker prize would be run like a criminal trial. Past offences (or past novels) would not be taken into account, and justice would be administered only according to the available evidence (the books in question)” (MacFarlane (2000)).

Some commentators identify what they see as specific examples of the Booker Prize being awarded for earlier exceptional novels.

“Beryl Bainbridge’s remarkable novel, *Every Man for Himself* lost to Graham Swift’s *Last Orders* in 1996, but then the prize was probably going for his earlier *Waterland*, pipped at the post in 1983” (Wagner (1998:22)).

“The year I judged, *The Blind Assassin* by Margaret Atwood was the winning novel, and I’m sure that it was chosen by my colleagues based on her body of work, rather than that particular novel, which was by no means her best” (Frostrup (2003)).

At the time of the announcement of the 1998 shortlist it was remarked that

“.... there was much wailing and gnashing of teeth last year when Ian McEwan’s notable *Enduring Love* was left of the shortlist” (Wagner (1998b:5)).

McEwan went on to win the prize in 1998, perhaps adding further evidence to the accusation that Booker judges attempt to make up for previous mistakes.

There is contrary evidence however that the Booker Prize does not operate in this way. Perhaps the strongest is that Beryl Bainbridge has never won the award. Bainbridge has appeared on the shortlist six times, and on a seventh occasion (2001), her novel was made the bookmakers’ favourite but failed to make it to the shortlist. If ever there was pressure to award the Booker on the strength of a lifetime’s work then it would surely apply in this case more than ever, as Bainbridge is so highly respected and generally seen as very unlucky to have not won the Booker at least once (Baker (2003)). Furthermore, the achievement of Coetzee and Carey in winning the prize twice also suggests that Booker judges base their decision on that year’s novel alone and are free to make the award to previous winners rather than to see it as somebody else’s turn to win the prize.

It is impossible to know for certain whether, to what extent and in which ways a panel of Booker judges is influenced by a nominated writer’s previous work and success in the Booker. It is possible that judges in one year are heavily influenced by

such factors and those in another year not at all. It is true however, that the perception exists that judges are so influenced, and this itself is of significance. It is important to librarians that the Booker Prize is credible; that it is at least an attempt to honestly choose the best eligible novel of the year. One librarian comments,

“I think that people can feel that there is a hidden agenda behind who is chosen” (Librarian C1).

It would therefore increase the credibility of the Booker Prize, including in the eyes of librarians, if the belief that it is sometimes awarded because of past achievements could be shown to be untrue. The conclusion of this report will discuss an idea that might help in this respect.

5.5 Unreadable books

Some people believe that the Booker Prize rewards novels that are elitist and pretentious, unreadable almost for some people, and that these books are often bought or borrowed because of a desire to create an impression rather than because of a genuine interest in literature. The interviewees for this report recognise, and in some cases share, this perception of the Booker.

“There’s a danger that it can be seen as elitist, but it isn’t necessarily so” (Librarian D1).

“An interesting thing I’ve heard is, ‘there’s the Booker Prize winner - that’s one to give a miss’” (Librarian C2).

“A minority appeal and intense” (Librarian C1).

“Salman Rushdie, that kind of writer, is very difficult. It must be great art because I can’t understand it” (Librarian A1).

“It’s a bit of a status symbol to be seen sitting there reading the Booker” (Librarian C2).

“Some [library users] would come back and be honest and say, ‘that’s rubbish, God knows how that won a prize’. Others would come back, and I knew they probably hadn’t enjoyed it, but they’d read it because it was the done thing to read it, and they said they’d enjoyed it because that’s the way they wanted to be thought of” (Librarian D2).

This shows that belief in the pretentiousness and unreadability of Booker Prize fiction can be so strong that it is difficult for some people to accept that others read such novels for any reason other than to create a certain impression.

Similar views on the nature of Booker Prize fiction are expressed by commentators.

“Chris Smith the [then] Culture Secretary.... described the Booker Prize as too elitist and highbrow” (Alberge (1998:5)).

“The Booker Prize emerges in autumn to provide a welcome boost in sales for otherwise unreadable and unpopular fiction” (Ong (2000)).

“The prize has a history of being a haven for literature which would otherwise remain virtually unheard of, not because it is too damn clever for the rest of us mere mortals to comprehend, but because it is written with the precise intent of being too damn clever” (Toms (2002)).

“[Booker Prize winners] have, above all been books which took themselves too seriously, chosen by people who took themselves too seriously” (Wilson (2002)).

“There is not a book here [the Booker shortlist of 2000] which anyone could call a page-turner, still less a comedy. Worthiness, not flair, is the key word. Crab-like narratives, intricate rather than gripping, are another common denominator” (Robson (2000)).

“*The Blind Assassin* contains some fine writing, but also more patterns than *Dressmaker’s Weekly*; you feel coerced into admiration rather than offering it up voluntarily” (MacFarlane (2000)).

There are however, more positive views of the Booker. Some commentators want to point out that literature can be both serious and popular. Salley Vickers describes the discussions of the 2002 Booker judges.

“I never heard any judge suggest for a second that there should be any drop in standards, or that serious literary books should be relegated. The debate was - and should be - what is meant by ‘serious’. It is possible - I would say desirable - to be both popular and profound. Homer was - Shakespeare was - Jane Austen, the Brontes, Thackery and Dickens were” (2002).

Some believe that the Booker succeeds in rewarding this type of novel. Fern argues that

“...the Booker has a long-established reputation for selecting literary books which are nonetheless highly readable. This reputation has been shored up with choices like Salman Rushdie’s *Midnight’s Children*, Kazuo Ishiguro’s *The Remains of the Day* and Anita Brookner’s *Hotel Du Lac* (2002).

This view is supported by the impact that the Booker has on sales.

It can also be argued that a number of books that have won the Booker Prize have been recognised in subsequent years as significant novels.

“Nobody’s canon of recent British and Commonwealth fiction would, I take it, care to be without William Golding’s *Rites of Passage* (1980), Kazuo Ishiguro’s *The Remains of the Day* (1989), Nadine Gordimer’s *The Conservationist* (1974) or Salman Rushdie’s *Midnight’s Children* (1981) and Michael Ondaatje’s *The English Patient* (1992) to name only a few” (Cunningham (1998a:19)).

One interviewed librarian strongly defended the Booker against the charge of pretentiousness.

“It’s not pretentious. This is a view put forward by lazy readers”
(Librarian D4).

Librarians are divided on this issue, just as other interested parties are. It is not surprising that people should take different positions on fiction. However, it does seem unfair to suggest that Booker judges deliberately select pretentious novels or that those who read these books do so only to impress. The impressive sales of some Booker novels (shortlisted as well as winners) and the high regard that many are held in years after their Booker success suggest otherwise. Indeed, there could be a counter argument that it is fashionable to criticise the Booker. Nevertheless, it is widely believed that the Booker rewards pretentious unreadable novels, so this is an impression that has to be overcome by librarians when promoting these books

5.6 *A great vehicle for publicity.*

The Booker Prize has a history of controversy. It has seen arguments about the rules and how they should be interpreted, and over controversial statements by writers, judges and critics, as well of course, as fierce debate over which novels should be shortlisted for and awarded the Booker. The myth is that such arguments are good for literary fiction in general and Booker novels in particular because they raise the profile of such books. Some go as far as to suggest that many of these arguments are generated deliberately to keep the Booker in the news. What follows are some examples of Booker Prize controversies.

1971

A judge, Malcolm Muggeridge, withdrew because he was so appalled at the sex and bad language in the submitted novels (Jones (1998:)).

1975

The judges only shortlisted two of the submitted novels (Jones (1998:)).

1978

A.J. Ayer, chairman of the judging panel, announced that he only read detective stories and it was said that his wife read the nominated books for him (Valentine (1998a)).

1982

There was an argument as to whether the winner, *Schindler's Ark* was fiction or non-fiction. As *Schindler's List*, it was marketed in the USA as non-fiction (Todd (1996)).

1989

London Fields, by Martin Amis, failed to reach the shortlist because of feminist objections (Jones (1998)).

1993

The publisher of Vikram Seth's *A Suitable Boy* called the judges 'a bunch of wankers' for not shortlisting the book (Jones (1998)).

1994

One of the judges, Julia Neuberger, described the decision to award the prize to James Kelman's *How Late it was, How Late*, as a disgrace. She said, "I'm really unhappy. Kelman is deeply inaccessible for a lot of people. I am implacably opposed to the book" (in Winder (1994:18)).

1999

John Sutherland angered his fellow judges by claiming that the panel had split along lines of gender, that a veto had kept Rushdie's *The Ground Beneath Her Feet* from the shortlist and that nobody on the panel "... passionately liked [the winner] J.M. Coetzee" (Davies (1999)).

1999

Kazuo Ishiguro argued that the amount of prize money given to the Booker winner was 'pathetic'. Martin Goff, the prize's administrator, responded by saying that the Booker should follow the example of France's Prix Goncourt by offering prize money of just £5, on the grounds that the winner will go on to make a large amount of money from sales (Gibbons (1999)).

All of these controversies, and many others, were news items that brought publicity for the Booker. When defending himself against the accusation of leaking the deliberations of the judging panel to the press John Sutherland wrote,

“Publicity, even bad publicity, is good for the Booker. What kills prizes is indifference” (1999).

Mark Lawson agrees that

“It’s the rows that keep [the Booker] going” (1994:12).

In the same article he goes further (though a little tongue in cheek) by arguing that

“The Booker Prize is officially intended to promote the cause of serious fiction, but its function has, over time, become more subtle. The aim is now to provoke rows and scandals, which may in due course, promote the cause of serious fiction” (1994:12).

Todd supports this view:

“.... controversy has in many respects actually been the making of the Booker Prize: among some thoughtful and intelligent annual press comment there is always the fatuous element, even (perhaps especially) in the highbrow literary press, claiming that every Booker jury ‘gets it wrong’. It is surely evident that it is precisely by ‘getting it wrong’ that the Booker survives” (1996:64).

This view that all publicity is good publicity can lead to the suspicion that the media is manipulated into giving attention to the Booker. Commenting on the leak to the press from the 1999 jury deliberations, McCrum believed that

“.... for any seasoned Booker-watcher, this trifling episode bore the marks of Martyn Goff’s inspired literary spin-doctoring” (1999).

It is impossible to know to what extent McCrum’s suspicions are true. It probably is true to say however, that by its very nature the Booker will inevitably throw up controversies because people will disagree over the relative merits of novels, sometimes quite strongly.

“Part of the PR genius of the prize is that any year’s shortlist guarantees either a ‘usual suspects’ fuss (full of famous names) or a ‘who the hell?’ (obscure novelists) rumpus” (Lawson (1994:12)).

Librarians recognise the controversial nature of the Booker Prize and the consequences of such controversy. As with the above issues, these comments came merely from being asked for general comments on the Booker.

“If [the Booker] picks something that’s a bit controversial it’s interesting because it will provoke a debate among people about books, what people like to read. Anything that keeps books and reading in the public eye and in the news is not a bad thing at all” (Librarian D1).

“More controversial winners and rank outsiders do tend to generate more publicity. The fact that they get more media coverage does seem to promote interest” (Librarian E1).

“There seems to be some kind of controversy every year, which is a bit silly really because people are bound to argue over what books they like. Still, if it brings some attention then it’s no bad thing, but I do wonder sometimes if the arguments aren’t a little contrived” (Librarian A3).

Booker controversies are so frequent that they have certainly become an important part of the prize’s mythology. It is probably fair to say that they are inevitable, simply because every year there will be a number of novels that have strong support from a certain a quarter but only six can be nominated and only one (following a rule change to prevent any more ties) can win. The number of these controversies that are contrived is impossible for this researcher to know, but it is noted that others believe that there is considerable media manipulation. More significantly for librarians, there is widespread agreement that controversy generates publicity, which is good for the Booker and makes books and reading more newsworthy. This can be used to help the promotion of Booker Prize literature.

5.7 Conclusions

Through its history certain myths have developed about the Booker Prize. Some of these are inter-related. For example, the necessary subjectivity of the judging process and the view that it is sometimes given in recognition of a lifetime’s work have contributed to the controversies that have become associated with the award. The perception that the Booker is a predictable award would certainly seem to be unfair and the belief that it selects a large number of almost unreadable novels goes against the evidence of impressive sales and the number of novels that have maintained a high a high level of respect from critics. The belief in a ‘Booker novel’, a certain type of book that tends to be shortlisted for the Booker, has some truth to it, probably because judges with similar backgrounds are usually chosen. However, the recent policy of publishing longlists has highlighted quite a variety of contenders for the prize.

Librarians can make use of these Booker myths in promoting books. Perhaps they can test the predictability of the prize by asking library users to make their own Booker predictions for shortlists and winners. The many newspaper articles that highlight controversy around the prize could be displayed to bring attention to the contenders, and library users could be encouraged to add their own opinions. Reading groups could be asked to consider questions such as ‘is there such a thing as a ‘Booker novel’, and if so what do you think of it?’ The very fact that myths have developed about the Booker Prize shows that the award enjoys a level of interest that should encourage public librarians to promote it enthusiastically.

Chapter 6

The Booker Prize in public libraries

‘You’ve heard about the prize, ladies? Me, too.’

*(Midnight’s Children, by Salman Rushdie,
winner of the 1981 Booker Prize).*

6.1 *The negative view*

Many people have negative feelings about book prizes generally and the Booker in particular. There is the view that prizes for literature are inappropriate.

“Sport is a zero-sum game. It produces a winner and a loser. But life is not a zero-sum game, and nor for that matter is literature. The notions of prizes, awards, dominance hierarchies, pecking orders have nothing to do with art” (Barnes (1997:24)).

The validity of book prizes is undermined somewhat by the following comments from Booker Prize judges.

“All books are different and, in a way (which doesn't bear thinking about if you're a judge), it is entirely invidious to compare one novel with another anyhow” (Wagner 2002).

“.... in the final alchemy, the crucial ingredient will be one which ensures that no book could ever be a sure fire cert to win, nor any meeting of five independent-minded people have a predictable outcome. It will not be any

of the judges - hotly and avidly as I know we will all debate tonight; it will be luck - that mercurial factor which plays a part in the drama of all writing careers - that makes the final choice for the man Booker Prize” (Vickers 2002).

A.N. Wilson believes that the Booker Prize should be abolished. The following are some of his reasons.

“It goes without saying that more often than not the ‘wrong’ book wins. A prize for the best English novel which in its 33-year history was never been given to Anthony Powell, Barbara Pym, Martin Amis, Will Self or Beryl Bainbridge must be seen as something of an oddity” (2001).

“When one says that the Booker stinks, that it is corrupt, one is not saying that the judges are taking back-handers from publishers. But, when a group of five middle-brow people (most of them unused to real reading) speed-read 120 novels and then have to convene to say which one is the best they are not reading in the ordinary sense of the word. When they meet, they will (however unconsciously) be earnest, and want to impress one another with their portentousness and lack of humour” (2001).

Sometimes Booker judges are criticised for being biased. This report has already shown one librarian’s concern that judges are believed to have hidden agendas.

“.... sometime Booker prize judge AL Kennedy branded the award ‘a pile of crooked nonsense’. The winner, she said, was invariably determined by ‘who knows who, who's sleeping with who, who's selling drugs to who, who's married to who, whose turn it is’” (Moss (2003)).

“Rushdie doesn't get shortlisted now because he has attacked [the London literary] community. The real scandal is that [Martin] Amis has never won the prize. In fact, he has only been shortlisted once and that was for *Time's Arrow*, which was not one of his strongest books. That really is suspicious. He pissed people off with *Dead Babies* and that gets lodged in the culture. There is also the feeling that he has always looked towards America” (John Sutherland in Moss (2003)).

A further concern is that publishers have too much influence over the Booker Prize, resulting, in among other things, the judges having to read too many novels and therefore not being able to give due consideration to each. All the judges are supposed to read every submitted novel.

“The fact that publishers nominate books makes me dubious about how broad the prize is (Librarian B2).

“I'm not sure that the publishers should play such a big part. [Trezza Azzopardi's] ‘The Hiding Place’ wasn't put forward by the publishers so it was called in by the judges and got on the shortlist” (Librarian D4).

“The problem is that publishers play games with the rules, and the prize should be a celebration of the publishing industry, not a cause for frustration” (Lisa Jardine in Thorpe (2002)).

“.... publishers act as ‘judges’ in helping to influence the make-up of the pile from which the [then] unpublished ‘long shortlist’, and finally the official shortlist is chosen. An astute publisher might, for instance have included relatively unknown writers among the three [now two] nominees, counting on the judges’ prerogative to ‘call in’ additional titles by the better-known novelists on a given year’s list” (Todd (1996:72-73)).

“Publishers, agents, and the novelists themselves see the prize as nothing more than a lottery. The more tickets you have, the better the chance of winning. The result is that I have a splitting headache and notes on 134 works of British fiction. My colleagues, I discover, have notes on 129, which means - I suspect - that I must have read five novels twice. After about 90, I would have difficulty knowing” (Sutherland (1999)).

“Many publishers waste two or three slots on authors writing below par, who have it in their contract to be submitted” (Celyn Jones (2003)).

“I have been a Booker judge (in 1993), and I read 100 novels. That was as many as I could cope with. There is an unbridgeable gulf between the expectations of publishers and authors and the reading capacity of the judges” (Clee (2002)).

It has been shown in chapter 4 that many members of library staff find it difficult to recommend books other than ones that they have read themselves. In this respect the following comments are significant.

“I don’t tend to read many Booker nominations because you tend to think, ‘this is going to be a boring worthy read’. ‘The God of Small Things’ I very much enjoyed, but for me I’d rather read a book that’s readable rather than go for some heavy-going worthy book just because it’s won an award. I wouldn’t read them” (Librarian E1).

“I’ve looked back through the list [of Booker shortlisted novels] right back to the 60’s and I haven’t read one” (Librarian D2).

Both of these librarians believe that there are particular problems attached with promoting Booker Prize novels and librarian D2 says that book prizes are not of

particular importance to libraries. This might support the evidence of a connection between the books that library staff recommend and what they enjoy reading themselves. It should also be noted that they are both professional librarians rather than para-professionals, suggesting that it is not only the latter who tend to avoid recommendations beyond their own reading experience.

For some librarians there is less need to promote Booker Prize fiction than other stock, or particular problems associated with promoting it.

“I don’t see a huge importance [for book prizes] in reader development. If we didn’t have them it wouldn’t make a huge difference” (Librarian D2).

“It can be harder to promote Booker winners and other literary fiction when the authors are less well known” (Librarian D3).

“Some books are not as easy to read, and something like a Booker Prize winner is not always the easiest read, so you might have to be a more dedicated reader to pick up a book like that. ... A lot of people will not be interested in certain books. You can make people aware of books but you can’t make people read books that they don’t want to read” (Librarian E1).

“The whole thing about promotion is that it should be things that don’t fly out of the door of their own accord anyway. There’s no point in trying to promote things that are already popular. ... What’s the point of promoting it if it’s won the Booker” (Librarian C3).

There are contradictory reasons given as to why Booker Prize should not receive special attention in the area of promotion. There is the view that such novels will not be popular with readers, but also the opinion of one librarian that Booker novels will issue well anyway, so the library should concentrate on promoting material that might not otherwise be borrowed. However, appendix 4 shows that, on

the days sampled, many more Booker shortlisted novels from the last six years were on loan in Authority E, where a librarian believes that such fiction is not popular with a great many readers, than in Authority C, where a librarian suggests that Booker novels will be popular anyway, so need no promotion. There is also a much larger stock of Booker novels in Authority E than Authority C. This is unlikely to be for demographic reasons, as both authorities are very largely working class.

It is suggested that it is more difficult and less useful to recommend literary novels than genre fiction.

“Books and websites that tell you ‘who writes like who’ are more useful for genre fiction. It’s not easy to define what people find interesting in a particular author when it’s literary fiction. Somebody might write about a particular country, but that’s not necessarily what the appeal of a particular author is. You might like the style of an author, which is a very hard thing to define” (Librarian C3).

“People who are interested in literary fiction don’t tend to need that much help” (Librarian C3).

It can be seen therefore that some negative views of the Booker concern the nature of the prize itself, whereas other relate to its role in the public library. Interestingly, librarians give contradictory reasons why it may not be appropriate to place special emphasis on promoting Booker Prize fiction.

6.2 *The Positive View*

It has already been shown that the Booker Prize is very well known.

“When anybody thinks of literary prize it’s the one that trips most easily off the tongue” (Librarian B2).

This high profile is seen as strength as it can put books and reading in the limelight, especially, as chapter 5 of this report shows, when there are controversies around the award.

“Anything that builds up the profile of reading is good, anything at all” (Librarian D3).

The Booker is seen as a way of keeping people aware of recent literary publications.

“The Booker shortlist, however controversial, acts as a consumers’ guide” (Todd (1996:71)).

“[The Booker] can act as a sort of guide for libraries, showing what we should have in stock” (Librarian E2).

“Borrowers expect literary fiction to be there [in public libraries]. Some come in with the Booker short list and ask ‘have you got this?’ It might be the first time they’ve heard of the book, but they see it on the list and think, ‘oh, I might try that’” (Librarian D1).

One librarian believes that it is easier for libraries to promote literary fiction, including Booker novels, now than in the past.

“Things are improving. There’s more literary fiction in popular culture now. For example, Zadie Smith’s ‘White Teeth’ has been televised”

(Librarian D4).

He also points out that promotion of Booker Prize fiction can be successful in all kinds of public libraries, not only those in more wealthy areas.

“Last year we had a promotion of Booker Prize fiction in [a branch library in a working class area] that went really well. It isn’t only for [two named branches in more prosperous areas], the middle class preserves” **(Librarian D4).**

The above demonstrates that there is the potential for Booker Prize fiction to be promoted very successfully in public libraries, especially because of its high profile. This chapter will conclude with some ideas on how this potential could be realised. First though the position of Booker Prize in libraries will be compared to that of other book awards.

6.3 *The Booker and other awards*

Librarians were asked whether they thought that book prizes had a part to play in reader development.

“Very much so, because book prizes get media attention and we can ride on the back of that” **(Librarian A1).**

“They’re important because we can be seen to be engaging with national or even international fiction” (Librarian B2).

Although the value of book prizes generally is recognised, there are specific problems with the Booker Prize. All interviewed librarians said that they had not been sent any promotional material from Booker in recent years.

“I know that in the past Booker has provided posters, but we haven’t had any in the last few years” (Librarian E1).

“We ordered extra copies of the 2002 Booker winner for a reading group but they’ve not arrived” (Librarian A1).

When the Booker shortlist is announced the books are only available in hardback.

“The trend is more towards paperbacks. Hardbacks can put people off. It’s a little point, but it makes a difference” (Librarian B1).

This demonstrates that, though librarians see the value of book prizes for reader development, it is not always possible to make full use of the Booker in this regard, mainly because of a lack of promotional material.

To explore this issue further librarians were asked, “do you believe that any other book prizes (not necessarily for fiction) are more “public library-friendly” than the Booker?” The BBC’s Big Read is not an award for new books, but librarians refer to it, as it can be used for reader development in a similar way to the annual book prizes. The following replies show that other awards are often seen as more helpful to libraries than is the Booker.

“We’re more interested in the Orange Prize. Part of the reason is that Orange go all out to assist libraries in promoting their books” (Librarian A1).

“I went to a meeting last week that suggested that the Orange Prize has captured the imagination more than the Booker. This year we’ve got quite a lot of posters, bookmarks, stickers and other promotional material from Orange. It makes it a lot easier to promote when you’ve got something to promote with ...Orange is better in promotional terms and possibly more accessible – more tend to get on the best seller list [than the Booker]” (Librarian E1).

“The Orange is great for libraries. Staff here have a sweepstake on the Orange Prize: each reads a book, pays a pound, and the reader of the winner gets the money” (Librarian B1).

The Orange provides packs that contain so much that,

“The Orange promotional material is way over the top for small libraries [one pack for each library] but I’ve never seen anything for the Booker” (Librarian C1).

Other prizes are also seen positively.

“The most friendly, I’d say, would be the WH Smith award. I’ve had loads of publicity material for it. They linked in libraries with the People’s Network as well, because you could vote for it. It was saying ‘go to your local library and use the People’s Network to vote online’, which I think was a brilliant idea. Whereas the Booker Prize is inaccessible really. With the

Booker you just see it in bookshops really. I haven't seen any publicity material sent out to public libraries" (Librarian D4).

"I think something like the Big Read is different because it is books that people have read themselves and have recommended themselves rather than a book being chosen for its worth by a panel of experts, in inverted commas. People might want to read it to see why it has won and whether they agree" (Librarian C2).

"I think that the public library-friendly ones are the children ones, like the Smarties prize. The Blue Peter one is quite good. They actually do encourage children to read something that is different" (Librarian C3).

"I think that smaller prizes are better recommendations than the large prizes because they're normally picked by fellow authors who write in that field. I think that they've got more authority to say that it's a good read. With the Booker Prize, because it's so wide, it's not a proper recommendation" (Librarian D4).

Librarians can be seen to perceive a number of advantages that other prizes have over the Booker in terms of being 'public library friendly'. These include provision of more publicity material, involving the public in the prize (for example the WH Smith award encouraging people to vote online) and putting forward books that librarians are more confident of recommending. This last point is interpreted in different ways. Some librarians see the Big Read as providing good recommendations because its list of a hundred books is the result of a vote by the general public rather than 'experts'. However, one librarian has more confidence in 'smaller' book awards (he gave the Golden Dagger award for crime writing as an example) precisely because they are adjudicated by experts. By 'smaller' he seems to mean more specialised, by contrast with the more general Booker. He trusts the judges for such awards to know what the readers of that particular genre like.

6.4 Management Issues

Opinions about the Booker Prize and other literary awards influence the policies of public libraries. The following remarks show how two librarians view the Booker in comparison to the BBC's Big Read and the Smarties Prize for children.

“One of the reasons why we haven't done so much promotion with the Booker is that we don't have enough copies. ... We wouldn't take the risk of buying multiple copies of Booker Prize books with the budget constraints that we've got. If we were to get multiple copies of anything then it would probably be for books in the Big Read where we haven't got enough.”

(Librarian E1).

“I would buy a dump bin of the Smarties Prize, but I'm not sure that I'd buy a dump bin of the Booker Prize. You can afford to buy multiple copies of the Smarties Prize, but not of the Booker” **(Librarian C3).**

Both of the above librarians explained that the reason for these views is that Booker Prize books would not be as popular with library users as would the other prizes mentioned. This is because of the Smarties Prize's promotional material and because the Big Read is based on the views of the general public.

There are suggestions however that could help public libraries to make better use of Booker Prize fiction. Library Authority C has a stock policy document that states,

“Circulating collections have been introduced to make a wide range of fiction books available to readers in the most cost effective way. These are intended to provide wider access to literary fiction and minority interest books which would not be purchased for a large number of libraries individually”.

Such a policy would be helpful where, as suggested by librarians in this report, it is felt inappropriate to buy many copies of a Booker Prize novel, as it ensures that users of all an authority's branches get the opportunity to see the novel on display.

Van Riel makes an interesting suggestion.

“I can't be the only person to be reading titles shortlisted not for this year's Booker but for last year's or the year before that. My library could make me feel a whole lot better about this by offering a selection of Bookers, perhaps with a commentary suggesting why some look to become books of all time while others were books of the day” (1993:84).

This would provide an interesting display and would also help to solve the problem of libraries not being able to hold a large number of copies of Booker novels from any single year. It provides an alternative for librarians (as in library authority A who were kept waiting for extra copies of *The Life of Pi*, above 6.3) who have problems receiving multiple copies of Booker books. Clearly it is difficult for public libraries to compete with bookshops in immediately providing multiple copies of Booker shortlisted fiction. However, this policy of providing a longer-term perspective on the prize could play to the strengths of libraries, as it involves promoting a wide range of books collected over a number of years rather than many copies of a narrower range of novels.

When promoting books one librarian expressed the view that

“I wouldn't use that particular term [literary fiction]. 'Prize nominated books', something like that maybe. It could sound a little disparaging to the rest of the books [to use 'literary fiction'] - 'here's the literary fiction and this is the rest of it'” (Librarian D1).

Her colleague agrees that ‘literary fiction’ is not the best name to use, but believes that this type of writing could receive a higher profile in the following way.

“When you go into a library you can find a Mills & Boon section, the crime section; the horror section, I think there should be more of a switch towards literary fiction. I think I’d call it ‘contemporary fiction’, like the bookshops tend to” (Librarian D4).

Such a policy might avoid the problem of the term ‘literary fiction’ having negative connotations for some people.

6.5 Conclusions

This and previous chapters have shown that the librarians interviewed for this report are divided over the nature of the Booker Prize. Some see it as elitist and inaccessible while others see its award as an indication of excellence. This division is also seen in commentators on the prize. Similarly, there is a divide concerning how appropriate the ‘Booker novel’ is for public libraries that reflects the differences between the ‘elitist’ and ‘patronising’ schools of thought. There is though, more agreement on how ‘public library friendly’ the Booker is. Other prizes (the Orange, the WH Smith Literary Award, the Big Read and various children’s awards are mentioned) are seen in a more positive light in this regard. There is an appreciation of the publicity material provided and the opportunities for library users to become involved in the award.

“Promotions work, but they’re not that easy to do well. If it’s done for you; with professional posters and so on; then we’re going to be very happy to use that” (Librarian E2).

There can also be problems connected with having only a small number of Booker novels and with the fact that they are only available in hardback when the shortlist is announced.

This report will recommend that the question of the Booker's organisers' opinions of the prize's role in public libraries could usefully be examined. Such research might question why libraries are not being sent publicity material by Booker. The other concerns can be dealt with by librarians. Van Riel is right to point out that libraries can promote Booker fiction from previous years rather than just the latest award. This could help public libraries to make better use of stock that has been built up over years and avoid unequal competition with bookshops.

Involving readers in the prize is relatively easy, if librarians see this aspect of book awards as important. For example, library users could be invited to vote for their favourite ever Booker novel as well as giving their opinions on the current year's contenders.

Librarian D4 makes the suggestion that literary fiction generally, including Booker Prize fiction, could be given a higher profile by introducing a 'contemporary fiction' section in libraries. This could prove a very useful way of highlighting Booker novels that might otherwise become somewhat lost in a general A to Z fiction run.

There is also the policy of Authority C of having a circulating collection, consisting largely of literary fiction, that enables libraries to make better use of limited stock by displaying it to all branches in the system, and doing so in a way that highlights the books in that collection as something distinct from the rest of the library's fiction.

Chapter 7

Conclusion

He wanted her to see that it had been a disinterested quest for truth

*(Sacred Hunger, by Barry Unsworth,
joint winner of the 1992 Booker Prize).*

This chapter will return to the objectives of the report set out in the introduction in order to consider what conclusions can be drawn from the research undertaken.

7.1 Objective One: general perceptions of the Booker Prize

This report has as an objective to examine general perceptions of the Booker Prize from the interviewed librarians, and from commentators, in order to place public librarians' views in context. It can be seen that there are certain myths concerning the Booker Prize, widely held beliefs that influence how people perceive the award. These implications of these will be considered in turn.

7.1.1 A predictable prize

There is a widely held belief that Booker shortlists are highly predictable. However, the evidence, principally from a major bookmaker's odds provided on the publication of the Booker's longlists over the last two years, suggests otherwise. Nevertheless, this perception is widely held and seen as negative. Librarians and the organisers of the Booker might benefit from countering this belief in promotional material. Perhaps libraries could invite library users to make their own predictions as part of their promotion of Booker novels.

7.1.2 *The 'Booker novel'*

The Booker Prize is often seen as rewarding a certain type of book, what might be called a 'Booker novel'. Although the rules of the prize allow for nomination any full-length novel from a citizen of the Commonwealth or the Republic of Ireland (so that genre fiction such as crime or science fiction is not excluded), there would seem to be a lot of truth in this myth. The 'Booker novel' is probably perpetuated partly by the appointing each year of judges from similar backgrounds. This policy is sometimes criticised (e.g. Anon (1997)), but as one former Booker judge says of another,

“No one would appoint Julia Neuberger, distinguished person though she is, to judge a high-diving competition” (Sutherland in Todd (1996:71)).

To appoint less specialised judges may lead to a loss of credibility for the Booker.

Another factor that may be connected with the existence of the 'Booker novel' is the role played by publishers, who are responsible for the vast majority of nominations for the award. Some of the interviewed librarians are suspicious of the role played by publishers and believe that this leads to a less broad prize. Some commentators, including former Booker judges, complain that publishers exploit the award's rules in an attempt to get as many of their books as possible nominated. One of the results of this is that the judges have to read too many novels and are therefore unable to give due consideration to each. The Chair of the 2002 judging panel believes that

“It is mad that every publisher gets two books” (Jardine in Thorpe (2002)).

Perhaps by limiting the publishers to one book each and allowing the judges more scope to call in further books, then the publishers would have less opportunity to manipulate the rules and judges would have more control over the awarding of the prize. This could help to provide broader longlists and shortlists and increase the Booker's credibility in the eyes of public librarians.

7.1.3 A highly subjective prize

There is certainly truth in the myth that a high degree of subjectivity is involved in the awarding of the Booker Prize. This is shown most clearly when judges from one year disagree strongly with decisions made by other panels. This lessens the value of the Booker (and other book prizes) in the eyes of some. However, a large degree of subjectivity is inevitable and insofar as it leads to discussion, controversy and therefore publicity, others see this aspect of the prize positively. In this regard the very loose eligibility rules of the Booker can be seen as strongly advantageous, in that they allow the judges to reward authors who are prepared to experiment and thereby encourage the novel to develop. A recent television programme included the following comments, first from the narrator and then from the novelist Jeannette Winterson.

“The novel can be anything its writers want it to be. It can deviate, experiment, console. It can be as audacious or as conservative as its authors dare” (*The Story of the Novel* (2003)).

“There’s no worries about fiction. It’s not over, it’s not dead. It’s always finding new beginnings. But it will only find new beginnings as long as writers are not afraid to use their own voice and to experiment. Without experiment it’s finished” (*The Story of the Novel* (2003)).

One way of looking at the variety in literary fiction is illustrated by the following.

“[There] is an ongoing debate within the literary community about the purposes of the novel today. Should it elevate or entertain? As Jonathan Franzen pointed out in the *New Yorker*, there are ‘two wildly different models of how fiction relates to its audience’. In what he calls the ‘status’ novel, the author (following Flaubert) places himself above the herd, declares his writing a work of art and disdains the appreciation of his

readers. Or there is the ‘contract’ novel, that makes a compact between writer and reader, in which the novelist’s responsibility is ‘to create a pleasurable experience’, i.e. to entertain (McCrum (2002b)).

Allowing freedom for the judges to be highly subjective means that the Booker can remain a broad prize, something that librarians interviewed for this report see as a positive thing. The judges should remain free to reward both ‘status’ and ‘contract’ novels. This perception of a broad prize might be increased by restricting publishers to one nomination as suggested above.

7.1.4 A lifetime achievement award

The belief that judges sometimes award the Booker to a writer more for his or her career’s work than the novel being considered for that particular year is widespread, and held by librarians and commentators, including former Booker judges. As stated above, it is impossible for this researcher to know whether and to what extent any judging panels have been so influenced. However, the perception certainly exists and lessens the credibility of the Booker in the eyes of some librarians. The researcher wrote by email to some former judges to ascertain if they agreed with the idea of creating a lifetime achievement Booker award, to be presented every three to five years to a deserving novelist, as a way of taking pressure off judges who are aware of this perception. This idea suggested itself to the researcher from the data gained while undertaking this research. Therefore, there was a lack of time to contact as many judges as the researcher would have wished. Email was chosen for the purposes of speed, but there were some recent judges for whom no email address was found. Also, some of the people written to were on holiday. Four recent judges did reply.

Mariella Frostrup believes that *The Blind Assassin* won the Booker in 2000 because of Margaret Atwood’s previous work (see above, 5.4). She also writes,

“I certainly agree that a lifetime achievement award would be a good thing”
(2003)

Kenneth Baker also believes that,

“A lifetime achievement award seems to be an attractive idea because it allows the judging panel to make an award to recognise a writer’s long contribution to the world of literature” (2003).

However, Baker warns that

“.... such an award might diminish the significance of the actual Booker Prize itself” (2003).

Russell Celyn Jones, a judge in 2002, takes a different view.

“I don’t think that a Booker lifetime achievement award every three to five years would be sufficient to take the pressure off the judges. What I think would be a better way forward is for the judges to decide, in camera, what books should be entered” (2003).

Nor does Simon Jenkins, Chair of the 2000 judging panel, support this idea.

I am opposed to ‘lifetime achievement’ awards. The Booker has always been for the best novel of the year, and I feel it should stay that way. There are many other literary prizes for other purposes” (2003).

Perhaps it could be ensured that the annual Booker Prize would not be overshadowed by such a lifetime award by having separate judging panels, and making the announcement of the latter award in the first quarter of the year, at a time when the Booker is less likely to be in the news. It should be noted that Rushdie’s *Midnight’s Children* was awarded the ‘Booker of Bookers’ in 1993, and that that

year's Booker winner, *Paddy Clarke Ha Ha Ha*, far from being overshadowed, had exceptionally good sales.

The main advantage of a lifetime achievement award would be to counter the suggestion that the annual Booker Prize is awarded for anything other than the merits of the novels under consideration for that year. This is significant for libraries as the current perception undermines the credibility of the Booker.

7.1.5 Unreadable books

Some commentators and librarians believe that the Booker awards pretentious and inaccessible books. The evidence suggests that much criticism is unfair (see above) but it is perhaps more important that the perception exists rather than whether it is true. Interestingly, the charge does not seem to be levelled at the Orange Prize, even though sometimes novels (for example, *Hotel World*, *Fingersmith* and *The Blind Assassin*) are shortlisted for both the Orange and the Booker. This suggests that the contrasting perceptions of these prizes are the result of how they are promoted rather than of the books that they reward.

7.1.6 A great vehicle for publicity

One of the Booker myths is that the large number of controversies generated by the prize over the years is very good for books and reading as a way of keeping literature in the news. One form that this myth takes is the belief that these controversies are generated deliberately. As stated above, it is impossible for this researcher to know how much truth there is in this latter belief. It would seem though that the nature of the Booker is bound to create controversy because of the strong opinions that many hold on literary fiction and because of the subjective nature of the award. Librarians recognise that the Booker gains a great deal of publicity and they tend to see this as a positive feature of the prize. It is certainly one that can be used for promotional purposes, as every year the Booker receives much media attention.

7.2 Objective Two: literary fiction and its role in public libraries

The librarians interviewed for this report agree that there should be a place for literary fiction in public libraries. They do however, reflect the divide found in the literature between the ‘elitist’ and ‘patronising’ schools of thought, in that some believe strongly that library stock provision should be primarily demand led, whereas others think that especial attention should be paid to providing and promoting material that might otherwise be less popular. A couple of librarians point out the pressure that they feel under from targets that hold them to account for the amount of stock issued. They indicate that this pressure prevents them from following a more adventurous policy of promoting less popular books.

This issue raises the question of what public libraries are for. If the role of public libraries is simply to provide the material that is in most demand from the public, then Appendix 6 suggests that there is not a huge demand for Booker novels, and the libraries covered by this report are supplying enough copies of Booker shortlisted fiction. This is because, on the days when the researcher visited these libraries, there were very few examples of a novel shortlisted for the Booker over the last six years being unavailable within the authority. However, if libraries exist to provide a broad range of literature and to actively help readers to broaden their reading experience, then perhaps librarians should be asking why it is that novels that have been shortlisted for a highly prestigious prize, and in many cases sell very well, are relatively unpopular among borrowers. This leads on to the question of reader development.

7.3 Objective three: reader development and the Booker Prize

The interviewed librarians recognise the centrality of reader development in their jobs, indeed some of them have the words ‘reader development’ in their job titles. There is agreement that reader development covers all areas of stock, but not literary or prizewinning fiction in particular. Some librarians point out that reader development is not about helping people to ‘read up’, for example, to progress from Mills and Boon to *Jane Eyre*, but rather to broaden the reading experience. In fact,

librarians from authority C describe encouraging a reading group, including some who enjoyed literary fiction, to try a Mills and Boon romance.

There is a division though between those who see book prizes as useful tools in reader development and those who see little particular use for them. The former point to the publicity that prizes provide and the fact that to some extent being shortlisted for a prize is a kind of recommendation.

7.4 Objective four: the Booker Prize's place in promotion and recommendation

Several issues have emerged concerning the recommending and promoting of books in libraries. There is agreement that many members of library staff find it difficult to recommend fiction beyond their own reading experience. This suggests a need for training in the skill of recommending fiction, both for para-professionals and professional staff. Some librarians suggest that more should be done to encourage library staff to read more, and it would seem that this would provide staff with more confidence to recommend fiction. It is interesting to note that librarian D2, who says that she has never read a Booker shortlisted novel, is very firmly of the belief that stock provision should be demand led, and that book prizes are not particularly useful for libraries. Of course, not too much should be read into the words of a single librarian, but it could be that reader development for library staff, that included the reading of literary fiction could lead to staff being more prepared to recommend Booker Prize fiction.

Librarians from authority D highlight how well their policy of free reservations has worked. Authority C has a policy of circulating a collection that largely consists of literary fiction. These would seem to be effective ways of making the most of limited material. Librarian D4's suggestion of introducing a 'contemporary literature' section could also be a way of highlighting literary fiction using language that might be more appealing to many library users.

7.5 Objective five: comparing the place of the Booker Prize in public libraries to that of other book prizes

Although there is disagreement among the interviewed librarians about the nature of the Booker Prize itself, there is agreement that some other book prizes are more ‘public library’ friendly. All those interviewed said that their libraries had not received promotional material in recent years, and as one points out,

It makes it a lot easier to promote when you’ve got something to promote with (Librarian E1).

By contrast other prizes, particularly the Orange and various children’s prizes, send much appreciated promotional material. The WH Smith award and the BBC’s Big Read are also praised for involving members of the public to a much larger extent than the Booker. It is understandable if librarians prefer to use professionally produced promotional material from Orange to making their own displays for Booker novels. If the organisers of the Booker wish to see their prize have a high profile in public libraries then they need to provide the latter with the kind of promotional material that they send to bookshops.

7.6 Possible areas for further research

The following areas connected with this research might usefully be examined.

- *The attitudes of para-professional staff towards literary fiction in general and the Booker in particular*

Some librarians interviewed for this report suggest that para-professional library staff often have a very negative view of literary fiction and believe that libraries should

concentrate more on best sellers. It is also suggested that they have particular difficulty in recommending fiction beyond their own reading experience. As para-professionals often have a great deal of contact with library users then it may prove useful to know whether the above is true, or if para-professionals differ little, if at all, from professional librarians in this regard.

- *The views of members of the public who buy modern literary fiction in general or the Booker in particular, but who do not borrow from public libraries.*

Book sales continue to rise at the same time as library book issues fall. It could prove valuable to know why some people buy modern literary fiction but do not borrow it from libraries. This could be achieved by interviewing people in bookshops and asking them whether they also use public libraries, and if not, why not.

- *The views of the organisers of the Booker Prize concerning the relationship between their prize and public libraries.*

The Booker is the best-known book prize in Britain, but it has a lower profile in public libraries than some other awards. Interviews could be carried out to discover if the Booker's organisers see this fact as important. Is their concern only with commercial success in bookshops?

- *The criteria used by Booker judges to decide which novels should be shortlisted for and win the Booker.*

Any full length novel from a citizen of the Commonwealth or the Republic of Ireland is eligible for the Booker, yet the prize is generally seen as one for 'literary fiction', a difficult concept to define. Therefore, it could prove of interest to examine what criteria previous Booker judges have used when shortlisting novels and deciding on the winner.

Appendix 1

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Appendix 2

Booker Shortlisted Novels: 1969 - 2002

The entry in **bold type** is that year's winner.

2002

The Life of Pi, Yann Martel

Family Matters, Rohinton. Mistry

Unless, Carol .Shields

The Story of Lucy Gault, William. Trevor

Fingersmith, Sarah Waters

Dirt Music, Tim. Winton

2001

The True History of the Kelly Gang, Peter Carey

Atonement, Ian. McEwan

Oxygen, Andrew Miller

Number9dream, David Mitchell

Hotel World, Ali Smith

The Dark Room, Rachel Seiffert

2000

***The Blind Assassin*, Margaret Atwood**

The Hiding Place, Trezza Azzopardi

The Keepers of Truth, Michael Collins

When We were Orphans, Kazuo Ishiguro

English Passengers, Matthew Kneale

The Deposition of Father McGreevy, Brian O'Doherty

1999

***Disgrace*, J. M. Coetzee**

Fasting, Feasting, Anita Desai

Headlong, Michael Frayn

Our Fathers, Andrew O'Hagan

The Map of Love, Ahdaf Saouef

The Blackwater Lightship, Colm Toibin

1998

***Amsterdam*, Ian McEwan**

Master Georgie, Beryl Bainbridge

England, England, Julian Barnes

The Industry of Souls, Martin Booth

Breakfast on Pluto, Patrick McCabe

The Restraint of Beasts, Magnus Mills

1997

***The God of Small Things*, Arundhati Roy**

The Essence of the Thing, Madelaine St. John

Europa, Tim Parks

Grace Notes, Bernard McLaverty

Underground Man, Mick Jackson

Quarantine, Jim Crace

1996

***Last Orders*, Graham Swift**

Every Man for Himself, Beryl Bainbridge

Alias Grace, Margaret Atwood

Reading in the Dark, Seamus Deane

A Fine Balance, Rohinton Mistry

The Orchard on Fire, Shena Mackay

1995

***The Ghost Road*, Pat Barker**

In Every Face I Meet, Justin Cartwright

The Moor's Last Sigh, Salman Rushdie

Morality Play, Barry Unsworth

The Riders, Tim Winton

1994

***How Late It Was, How Late* , James Kelman**

The Ocean of Time, George MacKay Brown

Reef, Romesh Gunsekera

Paradise, Abdulrazak Gurnah

The Folding Star, Alan Hollinghurst

Knowledge of Angels, Jill Paton Walsh

1993

***Paddy Clark Ha Ha Ha*, Roddy Doyle**

Scar Tissue, Michael Ignatieff

Under the Frog, Tibor Fischer

Remembering Babylon, David Malouf

Crossing the River, Caryl Phillips

The Stone Diaries, Carol Shields

1992

***The English Patient*, Michael Ondaatje (co-winner)**

***Sacred Hunger*, Barry Unsworth (co-winner)**

Serenity House, Christopher Hope

The Butcher Boy, Patrick McCabe

Black Dogs, Ian McEwen

Daughters of the House, Michele Roberts

1991

***The Famished Road*, Ben Okri**

Times Arrow, Martin Amis

The Van, Roddy Doyle

Such a Long Journey, Rohinton Mistry

The Redundancy of Courage, Timothy Mo

Reading Turgenev (from Two Lives), William Trevor

1990

***Possession*, A. S. Byatt**

An Awfully Big Adventure, Beryl Bainbridge

The Gate of Angels, Penelope Fitzgerald

Amongst Women, John McGahern

Lies of Silence, Brian Moore

Solomon Gursky was Here, Mordecai Richler

1989

***The Remains of the Day*, Kazuo Ishiguro**

Cat's Eye, Margaret Atwood

The Book of Evidence, John Barnville

Jigsaw - an Unsentimental Education, Sybille Bedford

A Dissaffection, James Kelman

Restoration, Rose Tremain

1988

***Oscar and Lucinda*, Peter Carey**

Utz, Bruce Chatwin

The Beginning of Spring, Penelope Fitzgerald

Nice Work, David Lodge

The Satanic Verses, Salman Rushdie

The Lost Father, Marina Warner

1987

***Moon Tiger*, Penelope Lively**

Anthills of the Savannah, Chinua Achebe

Chatterton, Peter Ackroyd

Circles of Deceit, Nina Bawden

The Colour of Blood, Brian Moore

The Book and the Brotherhood, Iris Murdoch

1986

***The Old Devils*, Kingsley Amis**

The Handmaid's Tale, Margaret Atwood

Gabriel's Lament, Paul Bailey

What's Bred in the Bone, Robertson Davies

An Artist of the Floating World, Kazuo Ishiguro

An Insular Possession, Timothy Mo

1985

***The Bone People*, Keri Hulme**

Illywhacker, Peter Carey

The Battle of Pollock's Crossing, J. L. Carr

The Good Terrorist, Doris Lessing

Last Letters from Hav, Jan Morris

The Good Apprentice, Iris Murdoch

1984

***Hotel du Lac*, Anita Brookner**

Empire of the Sun, J. G. Ballard

Flaubert's Parrot, Julian Barnes

In Custody, Anita Desai

According to Mark, Penelope Lively

Small World, David Lodge

1983

***Life and Times of Michael K.*, J.M. Coetzee**

Rates of Exchange, Malcolm Bradbury

Flying to Nowhere, John Fuller

The Illusionist, Anita Mason

Shame, Salman Rushdie

Waterland, Graham Swift

1982

***Schindler's Ark*, Thomas Keneally**

Silence among the Weapons, John Arden

An Ice-Cream War, William Boyd

Constance or Solitary Practices, Lawrence Durrell

The 27th Kingdom, Alice Thomas Ellis

Sour Sweet, Timothy Mo

1981

***Midnight's Children*, Salman Rushdie**

Good Behaviour, Molly Keane

The Sirian Experiments, Doris Lessing

The Comfort of Strangers, Ian McEwan

Rhine Journey, Anne Schlee

Loitering with Intent, Muriel Spark

The White Hotel, D.M. Thomas

1980

***Rites of Passage*, William Golding**

Earthly Powers, Anthony Burgess

A Month in the Country, J.L. Carr

Clear Light of Day, Anita Desai

The Beggar Maid, Alice Munro

No Country for Young Men, Julia O'Faalain

Pascali's Island, Barry Unsworth

1979

***Offshore*, Penelope Fitzgerald**

Confederates, Thomas Keneally

A Bend in the River, V.S. Naipaul

Joseph, Julian Rathbone

Praxis, Fay Weldon

1978

***The Sea, The Sea*, Iris Murdoch**

Jake's Thing, Kingsley Amis

Rumours of Rain, Andre Brink

The Bookshop, Penelope Fitzgerald

God on the Rocks, Jane Gardam

A Five-Year Sentence, Bernice Rubens

1977

***Staying On*, Paul Scott**

Peter Smart's Confessions, Paul Bailey

Great Granny Webster, Caroline Blackwood

Shadows on Our Skin, Jennifer Johnston

The Road to Lichfield, Penelope Lively

Quartet in Autumn, Barbara Pym

1976

***Saville*, David Storey**

An Instant in the Wind, Andre Brink

Rising, R.C. Hutchinson

The Doctor's Wife, Brian Moore

King Fisher Lives, Julian Rathbone

The Children of Dynmouth, William Trevor

1975

***Heat and Dust*, Ruth Praver Jhabvala**

Gossip from the Forest, Thomas Keneally

1974

***The Conservationist*, Nadine Gordimer (co-winner)**

***Holiday*, Stanley Middleton (co-winner)**

Ending Up, Kingsley Amis

The Bottle Factory Outing, Beryl Bainbridge

In Their Wisdom, C.P. Snow

1973

***The Siege of Krishnapur*, J.G. Farrell**

The Dressmaker, Beryl Bainbridge

The Green Equinox, Elizabeth Mavor

The Black Prince, Iris Murdoch

1972

G. John Berger

Bird of Night, Susan Hill

The Chant of Jimmie Blacksmith, Thomas Keneally

Pasmore David Storey

1971

***In a Free State*, V.S. Naipaul**

The Big Chapel, Thomas Kilroy

Briefing for a Descent into Hell, Doris Lessing

St. Urban's Horseman, Mordecai Richler

Goshawk Squadron, Derek Robinson

Mrs Palfrey at the Clairmont, Elizabeth Taylor

1970

***The Elected Member*, Bernice Rubens**

John Brown's Body, A.L. Barker

Eva Trout, Elizabeth Bowen

Bruno's Dream, Iris Murdoch

Mrs Eckdork in O'Neill's Hotel, William Trevor

The Conjunction, T. Wheeler

1969

***Something to Answer For*, P. H. Newby**

Figures in a Landscape, Barry England

The Impossible Object, Nicholas Mosley

The Nice and the Good, Iris Murdoch

The Public Image, Muriel Spark

From Scenes Like These, G.M. Williams

Appendix 3

Letter Requesting Interviews

The following is a copy of the letter sent to librarians to request an opportunity to interview staff for this report. Addresses used are omitted.

Dear [librarian's name],

I am currently studying full-time for the University of Sheffield's MA in Librarianship, and as part of the course I am required to write a dissertation. My dissertation concerns Booker Prize-nominated fiction in public libraries. Specifically, I am looking at libraries' policies with regard to buying these books and the opinions of librarians on the role that they play in public libraries.

If possible I would like to include [authority's name] Libraries in my study. Please would it be possible for me to interview some members of your staff? Ideally, I would like to interview the person in charge of book purchasing and three other librarians (perhaps librarians at different branches). I fully understand the need for confidentiality and will not identify any librarians by name, nor [authority's name]. If you were willing to allow me to meet members of [authority's name] staff then I would like to carry out the interviews in June or July.

I would be very grateful for any help that you could provide and enclose a stamped self-addressed envelope.

Yours sincerely,

(Mr Karl Hemsley).

Appendix 4

Interview Timetable

The following shows the dates of the interviews conducted for this research, with job titles as given by each interviewee.

Library Authority A	23 June 2003
Librarian 1	Area Manager West
Librarian 2	Senior Librarian
Librarian 3	Librarian, based at Central Library.
Library Authority B	27 June 2003
Librarian 1	Senior Librarian
Librarian 2	Reader Development Officer
Librarian 3	Stock Manager
Library Authority C	3 July 2003
Librarian 1	Community Librarian
Librarian 2	Community Librarian
Librarian 3	Bibliographic Services Manager

Library Authority D

8 July 2003

Librarian 1	Stock Manager
Librarian 2	Manager of [branch name] Library, and Community Library Services
Librarian 3	Reader Services Librarian
Librarian 4	Reader Services Librarian

Library Authority E

29 July 2003

Librarian 1	Reader Development and Marketing Coordinator
Librarian 2	Branch Librarian

Appendix 5

Interview Guide

Introductory remarks

Thank you very much for allowing me to interview you. This interview is connected to the dissertation that I am writing as part of my MA in Librarianship course at the University of Sheffield. Everybody interviewed will remain anonymous, that is neither you nor the library authority you work for will be named in the final report. First of all, I would like to ask you some questions about reader development.

Reader development

To what extent have you been involved in reader development in your present or previous jobs?

What is your own definition of reader development?

Libraries and literary fiction

What do you think makes a ‘good read’?

What do you think is the difference between literary fiction and a ‘good read’?

I am going to show you a statement. Please could you show me how far you agree or disagree with it using this scale (a Likert scale of five points: ‘strongly agree’, ‘agree’, ‘neither agree nor disagree’, ‘disagree’, ‘strongly disagree’)?

“It is the role of libraries to promote literary fiction.”

Could you explain your answer?

What do you think are the main matters to be considered when promoting literary fiction in a public library?

Do you believe that librarians find it easier to recommend the type of books that they themselves read?

There is a debate within the library profession concerning whether libraries should be concerned primarily with providing readers with what they ‘want’ or what they ‘need’. With this in mind, if, because of budget constraints, you were forced to choose between buying only best sellers or books that might be considered ‘literary’, what would be your priority?

Does your library have a written policy on literary fiction? (If it is written down could I have a copy please?)

The Booker Prize

What is your opinion of the Booker Prize?

Does your library have a policy, informal or otherwise, concerning buying books that are nominated for or win the Booker Prize? (This is only to be asked of the most appropriate librarian in each library).

What role, if any, do you see for book prizes in the area of reader development?

What role do you see for the Booker specifically, in the area of reader development?

If, because of budget constraints, you were forced to choose between buying only best sellers or books short-listed for the Booker Prize, what would be your priority?

What do you think are the major issues to be considered connected with promoting Booker Prize shortlisted fiction in a public library?

What practical matters (give example if necessary) are associated with promoting Booker Prize short listed fiction? (This would only be asked if not covered in the preceding answer).

Of what other book prizes are you aware?

Do you believe that any other of these book prizes (not necessarily for fiction) are more “public library-friendly” than the Booker?

If yes can you say why you think that?

Is there anything else you would like to say about the role of libraries and literary fiction?

What is your current job title?

Thank you...

Appendix 6

The Stock of Booker Novels in the Interviewees' Authorities

The following shows how many copies of each novel shortlisted for the Booker over the last six years (1997 - 2002 inclusive) were in stock and on loan on the date that interviews were carried out in that particular library. The first number shown indicates the number of books on loan, the second shows the number of copies owned by the library authority. For example, '1 of 3' means that the library authority has three copies of a book, one of which is on loan. Lost books are not included in these statistics, nor are materials in any other format than print (e.g. audio books). Figures relate to the whole authority and do not indicate how many books are held at a particular branch. The dates that these data were collected can be seen in appendix 4 and dates and authorship of the novels in appendix 1

Library Authority	A	B	C	D	E
Novel					
<i>The Life of Pi</i>	15 of 19	4 of 11	2 of 3	2 of 5	14 of 34
<i>Family Matters</i>	4 of 7	0 of 5	0 of 2	0 of 2	0 of 4
<i>Unless</i>	14 of 27	16 of 28	1 of 3	3 of 4	5 of 5
<i>The Story of Lucy Gault</i>	4 of 9	1 of 14	2 of 3	4 of 4	4 of 5
<i>Fingersmith</i>	27 of 41	10 of 17	1 of 2	5 of 7	3 of 12
<i>Dirt Music</i>	5 of 8	1 of 10	1 of 3	1 of 3	3 of 4
<i>The True History of the Kelly Gang</i>	22 of 27	0 of 17	0 of 1	1 of 6	2 of 18
<i>Atonement</i>	13 of 20	2 of 17	0 of 3	6 of 19	8 of 28
<i>Oxygen</i>	2 of 3	1 of 6	0 of 1	0 of 6	0 of 6
<i>Number9dream</i>	0 of 1	2 of 2	1 of 1	1 of 2	0 of 2
<i>Hotel World</i>	8 of 20	1 of 6	0 of 1	3 of 5	1 of 6
<i>The Dark Room</i>	13 of 16	1 of 9	0 of 3	1 of 3	2 of 5
<i>The Blind Assassin</i>	12 of 22	2 of 21	2 of 5	5 of 9	9 of 21
<i>The Hiding Place</i>	6 of 17	0 of 6	0 of 1	0 of 0	0 of 4
<i>The Keepers of Truth</i>	9 of 9	4 of 11	1 of 2	0 of 1	1 of 5

<i>When We were Orphans</i>	2 of 10	1 of 7	0 of 1	0 of 4	0 of 7
<i>English Passengers</i>	16 of 42	0 of 14	0 of 1	3 of 7	2 of 14
<i>The Deposition of Father McGreevy</i>	0 of 1	1 of 3	0 of 1	0 of 1	0 of 2
<i>Disgrace,</i>	5 of 18	1 of 16	0 of 2	0 of 2	0 of 7
<i>Fasting, Feasting</i>	4 of 13	1 of 2	0 of 3	0 of 1	1 of 6
<i>Headlong</i>	4 of 7	1 of 5	0 of 2	1 of 3	2 of 11
<i>Our Fathers</i>	0 of 2	0 of 2	1 of 1	0 of 3	0 of 3
<i>The Map of Love</i>	1 of 5	0 of 1	0 of 2	2 of 2	0 of 5
<i>The Blackwater Lightship</i>	0 of 0	0 of 2	0 of 1	0 of 3	2 of 5
<i>Amsterdam</i>	6 of 15	1 of 7	3 of 13	4 of 8	8 of 9
<i>Master Georgie</i>	1 of 14	0 of 17	0 of 2	1 of 8	2 of 10
<i>England, England</i>	3 of 11	1 of 20	0 of 1	2 of 9	0 of 5
<i>The Industry of Souls</i>	0 of 2	0 of 10	0 of 1	0 of 0	0 of 1
<i>Breakfast on Pluto</i>	1 of 2	0 of 0	0 of 4	0 of 3	0 of 6
<i>The Restraint of Beasts, Magnus Mills</i>	7 of 13	0 of 1	0 of 1	0 of 1	1 of 9
<i>The God of Small Things</i>	8 of 25	4 of 11	1 of 3	4 of 11	3 of 9
<i>The Essence of the Thing</i>	5 of 10	0 of 2	0 of 2	0 of 1	0 of 8
<i>Europa</i>	1 of 1	0 of 1	0 of 1	2 of 5	0 of 2
<i>Grace Notes</i>	0 of 5	0 of 3	1 of 1	0 of 5	0 of 5
<i>Underground Man</i>	0 of 3	0 of 2	0 of 1	1 of 4	0 of 1
<i>Quarantine</i>	5 of 10	0 of 7	0 of 2	1 of 4	1 of 9