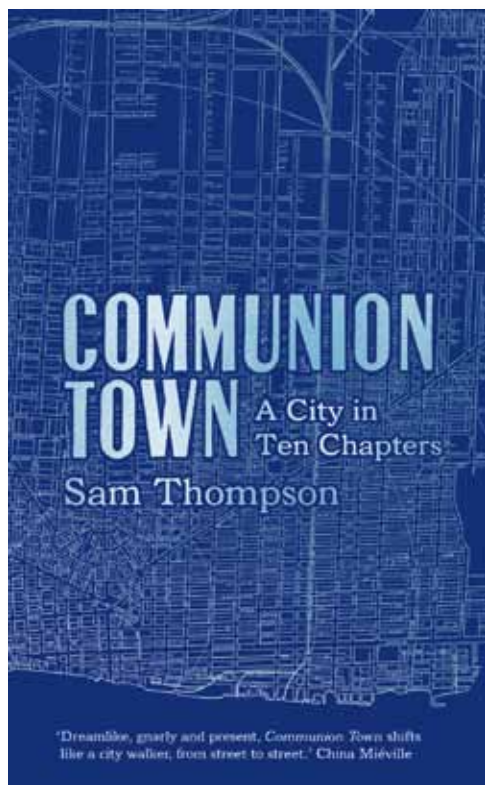




Reader's Guide



Communion Town
is Sam Thompson's first novel

Communion Town Sam Thompson

Fourth Estate
Hardback £14.99
Ebook £11.99
Paperback published January 2013

www.themanbookerprize.com



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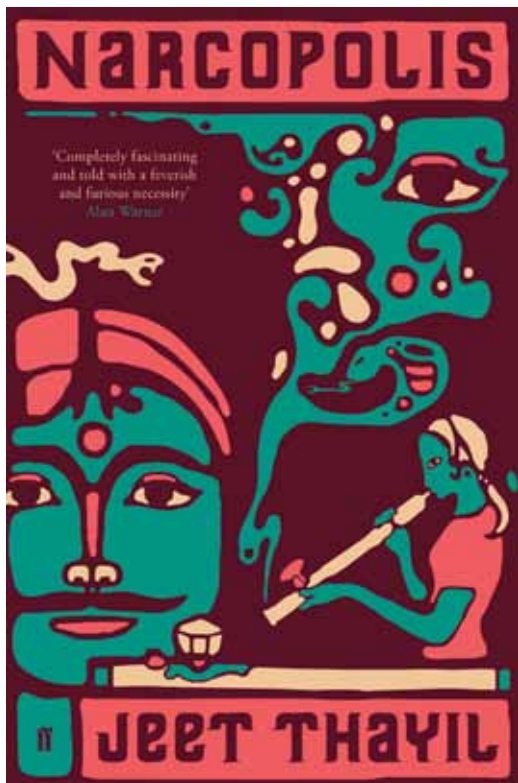


About the author	Sam Thompson was born in 1978. He teaches English at St Anne's College, Oxford, and writes for <i>Times Literary Supplement</i> , the <i>London Review of Books</i> and <i>The Guardian</i> . He lives in Oxford.
Communion Town	<p>Every city is made of stories: stories that meet and diverge, stories of the commonplace and the strange, of love and crime, of ghosts and monsters.</p> <p>This is the story of a place that never looks the same way twice: a place imagined anew by each citizen who walks through the changing streets, among voices half-heard, signs half-glimpsed and desires half-acknowledged. This is the story of a city.</p>
Discussion points	<p>Sam Thompson's imagined city in <i>Communion Town</i> is mapped out in 10 stories, each told from the perspective of a different character. Which stories do you think most effectively capture the experience of city life?</p> <p>Do you agree with the reviewer who said:</p> <p>'Perhaps it isn't surprising that one of his best stories involves a boy who constructs a model town on the floor of his sitting room, allowing his imagination to stretch out and discover what it can do. He could be a figure of the young novelist at work. Turning the pages of <i>Communion Town</i> you become aware that here is a new writer working out what he can do, and realising that he can do anything.' Robert Douglas-Fairhurst, <i>Daily Telegraph</i></p> <p><i>Communion Town</i> is classed as a novel but does its subtitle, <i>A City in Ten Chapters</i>, more accurately describe what Sam Thompson is trying to achieve?</p> <p>It has been suggested that Sam Thompson's writing is 'incredibly intelligent' and that he assumes his readers are too. Does this chime with your reading of the book?</p> <p>Do you agree that this book isn't for the reader who likes a comfortable beginning, middle and end?</p>
Themed reading	<p>David Mitchell <i>Ghostwritten</i> Italo Calvino <i>Invisible Cities</i> China Miéville <i>Kraken</i></p>
Useful links	<p>Publisher's website http://www.4thestate.co.uk/</p> <p>Facebook link http://www.facebook.com/CommunionTown/timeline</p>

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Reader's Guide



Narcopolis
is Jeet Thayil's first novel

Narcopolis

Jeet Thayil

Faber and Faber
Paperback £12.99
Ebook £9.99

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About the author

Jeet Thayil was born in Kerala, India, in 1959 and educated in Hong Kong, New York and Bombay. He is a performance poet, songwriter and guitarist, and has published four collections of poetry. He is the editor of *The Bloodaxe Book of Contemporary Indian Poets* (2008). He currently lives in New Delhi.

Narcopolis

Shuklaji Street, in Old Bombay. In Rashid's opium room the air is thick and potent. A beautiful young woman leans to hold a long-stemmed pipe over a flame, her hair falling across her dark eyes. Around her, men sprawl and mutter in the gloom, each one drifting with his own tide. Here, people say that you introduce only your worst enemy to opium.

Outside, stray dogs lope in packs. Street vendors hustle. Hookers call for custom through the bars of their cages as their pimps slouch in doorways in the half-light. There is an underworld whisper of a new terror: the Pathar Maar, the stone killer, whose victims are the nameless, invisible poor. There are too many of them to count in this broken city.

Discussion points

Dom is the first person narrator but there are multiple storytelling voices that belong to other characters, what impact does this have on the narrative?

The prologue is one single six-page long sentence. Why do you think the author wrote it this way? What effect does it have on the reader?

Jeet Thayil, in a recent interview with Siddhartha Bose in *Wasafiri*, said 'The point about the novel is that there is room for more than one kind of voice. You can switch from tragedy to comedy on one page, and it doesn't have to seem contrived.' Does he successfully achieve this shift in *Narcopolis*?

How do the changing fortunes of the characters in the novel reflect the changes to the city over the decades?

Do you agree with the reviewer who wrote 'I wished that this book, like some long and delicious opium-induced daydream, would go on and on.' Kevin Rushby, *The Guardian*

Themed reading

Amitav Ghosh *The Ibis Trilogy*
Denis Johnson *Jesus's Son*
William Burroughs *The Naked Lunch*
Dostoyevsky *The Brothers Karamazov*

Useful links

[Publisher's website](http://www.faber.co.uk)
www.faber.co.uk

[Interview with Wasafiri](http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/02690055.2012.636895)
http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/02690055.2012.636895



Reader's Guide



Other novels by Deborah Levy

Billy and Girl (1996)

The Unloved (1994)

Swallowing Geography (1992)

Beautiful Mutants (1987)

Swimming Home Deborah Levy

And Other Stories

Paperback £10

Ebook £8

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About the author

Deborah Levy writes fiction, plays and poetry. Her work has been staged by the Royal Shakespeare Company, and she is the author of highly praised novels including *Beautiful Mutants*, *Swallowing Geography* and *Billy and Girl*. Her latest novel, *Swimming Home*, was serialised on Radio 4 as a *Book at Bedtime*.

Swimming Home

As he arrives with his family at the villa in the hills above Nice, Joe sees a body in the swimming pool. But the girl is very much alive. She is Kitty Finch: a self-proclaimed botanist with green-painted fingernails, walking naked out of the water and into the heart of their holiday. Why is she there? What does she want from them all? And why does Joe's wife allow her to remain?

Swimming Home is a subversive page-turner, a merciless gaze at the insidious harm that depression can have on apparently stable, well-turned-out people. Set in a summer villa, the story is tautly structured, taking place over a single week in which a group of beautiful, flawed tourists in the French Riviera come loose at the seams.

Deborah Levy's writing combines linguistic virtuosity, technical brilliance and a strong sense of what it means to be alive. *Swimming Home* represents a new direction for a major writer. In this book, the wildness and the danger are all the more powerful for resting just beneath the surface.

With its biting humour and immediate appeal, it wears its darkness lightly.

'*Swimming Home* is a statement on the power of the unsaid. Magisterial... themes, phrases and images recur in rhythmic cycles through this fugal novel. Levy's cinematic clarity and momentum convey confusion with remarkable lucidity.' Abigail Deutsch, *Times Literary Supplement*

Discussion points

Swimming Home is told from multiple viewpoints, did you find one character more sympathetic than another?

Why does Isabel ask Kitty to stay at the villa? Is Isabel a victim or is she colluding in her husband's infidelity in order to facilitate her own escape?

How are the themes of loss and longing explored in *Swimming Home*?

Nina, in the absence of Isabel, has been Joe's companion and together they have lived with his depression. What are the strengths and weaknesses in their relationship?

The end of *Swimming Home* has been described as 'hugely surprising' and 'shocking'. What is your reaction to the end of the novel?

Themed reading

Virginia Woolf *Mrs Dalloway*
Françoise Sagan *Bonjour Tristesse*
Tom McCarthy *C*
Marguerite Duras *The Lover*

Useful links

[Author's website](http://www.deborahlevy.co.uk)
<http://www.deborahlevy.co.uk>

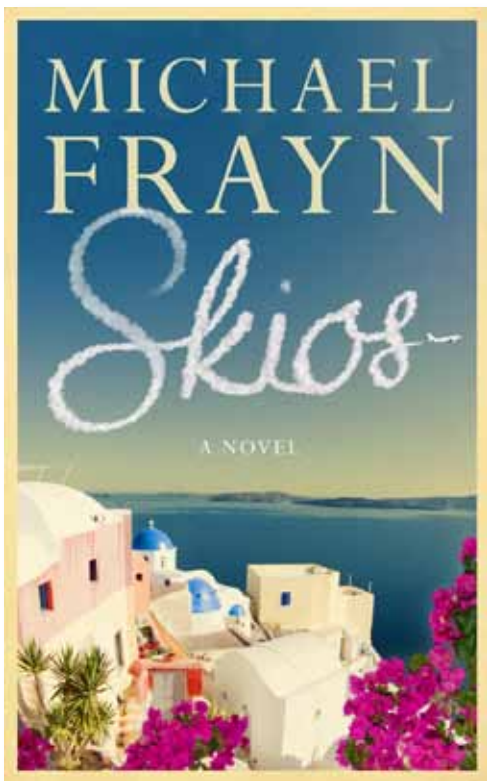
[Publisher's website](http://www.andotherstories.org)
<http://www.andotherstories.org>

[Introduction to *Swimming Home* by Tom McCarthy](http://surplusmatter.com/writings/blue-sugar-mice-and-the-death-drive/)
<http://surplusmatter.com/writings/blue-sugar-mice-and-the-death-drive/>

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Other novels by Michael Frayn

Spies (2002)

Headlong (1999)

Now You Know (1993)

A Landing on the Sun (1991)

The Trick of It (1989)

Sweet Dreams (1973)

A Very Private Life (1968)

Towards the End of the Morning (1967)

The Russian Interpreter (1966)

The Tin Men (1965)

Skios

Michael Frayn

Faber and Faber

Hardback £15.99

Ebook £12.99

Paperback published April 2013

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About the author

Michael Frayn was born in London in 1933 and began his career as a journalist on *The Guardian* and *The Observer*. His novels include *Towards the End of the Morning*, *The Trick of It*, *A Landing on the Sun* and *Headlong* which was shortlisted for the 1999 Booker Prize. His plays range from *Noises Off* to *Copenhagen*. He has translated a number of works, mostly from the Russian. Michael Frayn lives in Surrey.

Skios

On the Greek island of Skios, the Fred Toppler Foundation's annual lecture is to be given by Dr Norman Wilfred, the world-famous authority on the scientific organisation of science. He turns out to be surprisingly young and charming and the Foundation's guests are soon eating out of his hand. Meanwhile, in a remote village at the other end of the island, is a balding old gent called Dr Norman Wilfred, who has lost his whereabouts, his luggage, his temper and increasingly all normal sense of reality...

Discussion points

Michael Frayn describes *Skios* as 'an experiment to see you if you can write a farce as a novel without the communal response that helps farce to work in the theatre'. Do you think he is successful?

In what ways are comedy and philosophy intertwined in *Skios*?

Farce usually relies on skilfully exploited situation and less on character, but *Skios* has been praised for comedic force that the characters bring to the novel. Most of the characters are described by their physical attributes: does this give the reader a sufficiently three-dimensional view of the key protagonists?

How successfully does Michael Frayn use technology, such as mobile phones, to maintain the farce?

'Prior to the culminating chaos, the Toppler Foundation's guests have been downing flutes of champagne. *Skios* leaves you floating with so much euphoria, you feel you have, too.' Peter Kemp, *The Times*. Did *Skios* leave you feeling the same?

Themed reading

Kingsley Amis *Lucky Jim*
David Lodge *Small World*
PG Wodehouse *The Blandings Stories*

Useful links

[Publisher's website](http://www.faber.co.uk)

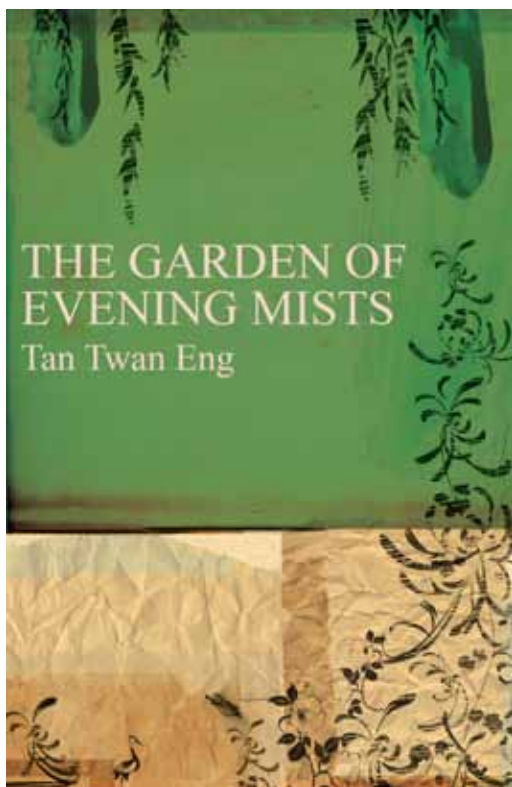
<http://www.faber.co.uk>

[The Guardian interview](http://www.guardian.co.uk/stage/2012/apr/29/michael-frayn-skios-interview)

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/stage/2012/apr/29/michael-frayn-skios-interview>



Reader's Guide



Other novels by Tan Twan Eng
The Gift of Rain (2007)

The Garden of Evening Mists Tan Twan Eng

Myrmidon Books
Hardback £18.99
Paperback £8.99
Ebook £4.99

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About the author

Tan Twan Eng was born in 1972 in Penang, but lived in various places in Malaysia as a child. He studied law at the University of London and later worked as lawyer in one of Kuala Lumpur's most reputable law firms. He also has a first-dan ranking in aikido and is a strong proponent for the conservation of heritage buildings.

His first novel, *The Gift of Rain*, was longlisted for the Man Booker Prize in 2007.

He has spent the last year traveling around South Africa and currently lives in Cape Town. His second novel *The Garden of Evening Mists* was released in January 2012.

The Garden of Evening Mists

Set during the Japanese occupation, *The Garden of Evening Mists* follows young law graduate, Yun Ling Teoh, as she seeks solace among the plantations of the Cameron Highlands. Here she discovers Yugiri, the only Japanese garden in Malaya, and its owner and creator, the secretive Aritomo. Aritomo agrees to accept Yun Ling as his apprentice 'until the monsoon' so that she can design a garden in memorial to her sister. But over time the jungle starts to reveal secrets of its own...

Discussion points

Memory is one of the main themes of *The Garden of Evening Mists*, how does Tan Twan Eng use the garden as a metaphor for memory?

Tan Twan Eng said *The Garden of Evening Mists* was a difficult novel to write 'because Yun Ling very much wanted to keep her secrets to herself. Because of what she had gone through, and what she had become, no one was allowed into her head. And yet at the same time she wanted to – she had to – reveal those secrets. It was a constant battle for me to crack her open.' Do you get the sense that Yun Ling is a reluctant narrator?

Does Yun Ling's disposition towards Aritomo and towards the Japanese in general undergo a significant shift in the course of the novel, or does she rather maintain a constant though compartmentalised attitude throughout?

How and to what extent has Yun Ling's capacity for intimate love and affection in later life been affected by her experiences in the internment camp and or her shared time with Aritomo?

Although containing many violent scenes readers have commented that they found the story comforting, leaving a feeling of calm and tranquillity. What feelings are you left with having completed the novel?

Themed reading

Kazuo Ishiguro *The Remains of the Day*
Tash Aw *The Harmony Silk Factory*
Meira Chand *A Different Sky*

Useful links

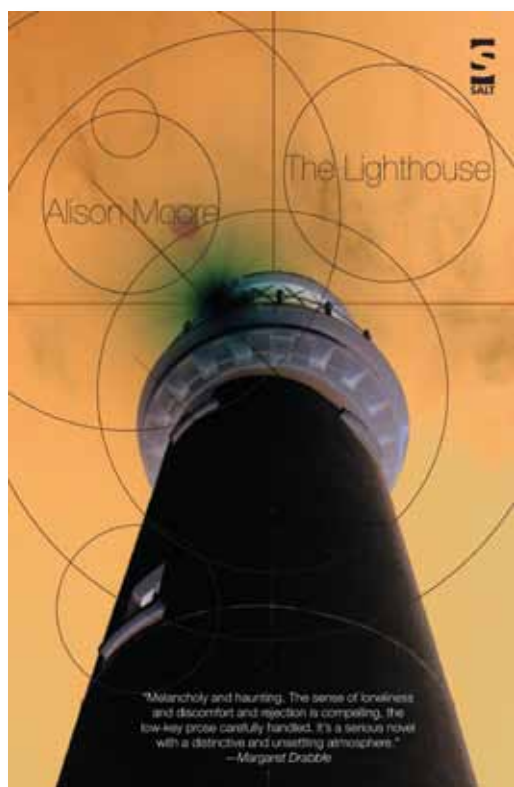
[Author's website](http://www.tantwaneng.com/)
<http://www.tantwaneng.com/>

[Publisher's website](http://www.myrmidonbooks.com)
www.myrmidonbooks.com

[The Independent Boyd Tonkin review](http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/books/reviews/the-garden-of-evening-mists-by-tan-twan-eng-7685361.html)
<http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/books/reviews/the-garden-of-evening-mists-by-tan-twan-eng-7685361.html>



Reader's Guide



The Lighthouse
is Alison Moore's first novel

The Lighthouse Alison Moore

Salt
Paperback £8.99
Ebook £8.99

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About the author

Alison Moore was born in Manchester in 1971. Her stories have been published in various magazines and anthologies including *Best British Short Stories 2011*. She has been shortlisted for the Bridport Prize and the Manchester Fiction Prize, and for the Scott Prize for her first collection. She won first prize in the novella category of The New Writer Prose and Poetry Prizes. She lives near Nottingham with her husband Dan and son Arthur.

The Lighthouse

Futh, a middle-aged, recently separated man, stands on the outer deck of a North Sea ferry. He is heading to Germany for a restorative walking holiday, yet he cannot forget his mother's abandonment of him as a boy and his first trip to Germany with his newly single father. It was on this first trip that he neglected to do something, and this omission threatens to have devastating repercussions the second time around.

Discussion points

The author set the novel in Germany having been there on a walking holiday. What do you think the setting brings to the story?

Would you describe Futh and Ester as 'sympathetic characters'? Is it important that a novel have sympathetic characters, or do they just need to be believable?

To what extent do you think Futh's obsession with his absent mother affects the choices he makes in his life?

Do you see Futh as being responsible for what happens to him? Is there a sense of fatalism in the novel?

Themed reading

Günter Grass *Cat and Mouse*
Thomas Mann *Death in Venice*
Ian McEwan *The Comfort of Strangers*
Muriel Spark *The Driver's Seat*

Useful links

Author's website

<http://www.alison-moore.com>

Publisher's website

<http://www.saltpublishing.com>



Reader's Guide



Other novels by Ned Beaman
Boxer, Beetle (2010)

The Teleportation Accident Ned Beaman

Sceptre
Hardback £16.99
Ebook £16.99
Paperback published 2013

www.themanbookerprize.com



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About the author

Ned Beaman's debut novel, *Boxer, Beetle* was published in 2010. It was shortlisted for the Guardian First Book Award and the Desmond Elliot Prize, and winner of the Writers' Guild Award for Best Fiction Book. He went on to be named by BBC2's *Culture Show* as one of their 12 Best New British Writers in 2011.

Ned Beaman was born in 1985 and lives in London. He has written for *Dazed & Confused*, *AnOther* and *The Guardian*.

The Teleportation Accident

Three events occur.

In 1679, the ceiling of the Theatre des Encornets in Paris collapses, killing 25 members of the audience and the set designer Adriano Lavicini. Are the rumours true that Lavicini made a fatal pact with cosmic evil?

In 1938, at the California Institute of Technology in Pasadena, the physicist Professor Franklin Bailey comes close to perfecting a radical new technology that could win the next war before it starts. But what are the shadowy forces at work on campus?

In 1962, in a small flat in West Berlin, Egon Loeser looks back over his strange and eventful life. From the experimental theatres of Berlin to the absinthe bars of Paris, his biggest question still remains: how can it be that a handsome, clever, charming, modest guy like him couldn't get laid more often?

Discussion points

The Teleportation Accident covers a vast time span, taking us from 17th-century Venice to a Los Angeles 17,000 years later. Although each chapter is set in a specific year, in a specific place, do you think that there is a sense that time and space are slipping?

The Teleportation Accident has a frenetic tone and moves at a fast pace: for the reader is this tiring or exhilarating?

Egon Loeser has been described as shallow, self-centred, and self-absorbed. However do you agree with Phil Baker's review in *The Times* 'Loeser starts out selfishly detached from world affairs and by the end of the book he supposedly begins to 'care', but Beaman's excessive cleverness still has something callous about it'.

The Teleportation Accident has many narrative threads and a vast array of characters. Does Ned Beaman successfully bring these together to create a coherent novel?

Do you agree that the ending of *The Teleportation Accident* has a 'brilliant finale'?

Themed reading

Mike Davis *City of Quartz*
Jake Arnott *The House of Rumour*
Jennifer Egan *A Visit from the Goon Squad*

Useful links

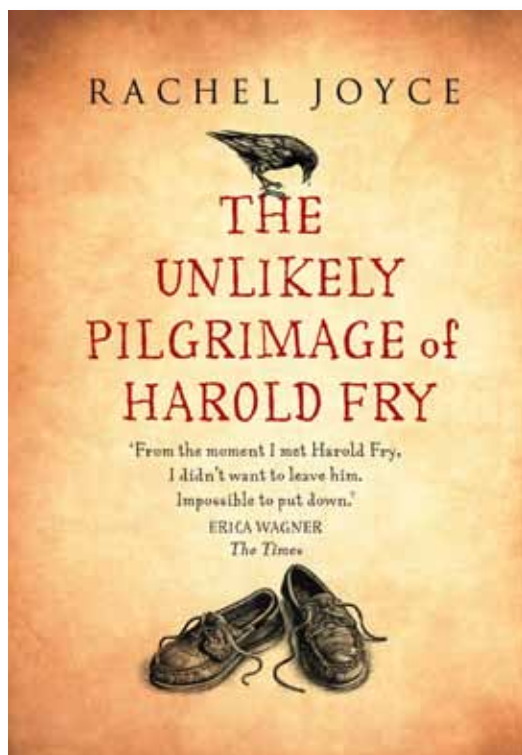
[Publisher's website](http://www.hodder.co.uk)
<http://www.hodder.co.uk>

[Ned Beaman's website](http://www.nedbeaman.co.uk/)
<http://www.nedbeaman.co.uk/>

[The Guardian interview with Ned Beaman](http://www.guardian.co.uk/books/2012/jul/22/ned-beaman-teleportation-accident-interview)
<http://www.guardian.co.uk/books/2012/jul/22/ned-beaman-teleportation-accident-interview>



Reader's Guide



The Unlikely Pilgrimage of Harold Fry
is Rachel Joyce's first novel

The Unlikely Pilgrimage of Harold Fry Rachel Joyce

Doubleday
Hardback £12.99
Ebook £13.56
Paperback published 2013

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About the author

Rachel Joyce lives in Gloucestershire with her husband and four children. She has written over 20 original afternoon plays for BBC Radio 4, and major adaptations for the *Classic Series* and *Woman's Hour*, as well as a TV period drama for BBC2. In 2007 she won the Tinniswood Award for Best Radio Play.

The Unlikely Pilgrimage of Harold Fry is her first novel. She is at work on her second.

The Unlikely Pilgrimage of Harold Fry

This is the story of recently-retired Harold Fry, who sets out one morning to post a letter to a dying friend. Quite unexpectedly, in a moment of impulse, Fry finds himself at the start of a journey which will lead him to walk hundreds of miles from home, en route making chance encounters and reflecting on tragic events from his past which transform his life and in turn alter the lives of the people he meets.

Discussion points

At the start of the book both Harold and Maureen have allowed friends to fall by the wayside. What makes someone a true friend and how does Rachel Joyce represent friendship?

Harold is a man with many flaws. Despite, or perhaps because of this, do you see him as an archetypal Englishman? Or is he an everyman?

When we first meet Harold and Maureen, while they share breakfast, they seem in different worlds. To what extent did you see Maureen as the cause of Harold's departure?

Regret is an emotion that plays a key part in the novel. Do you think the author sees it as a positive or negative force?

Was the ending of the novel a shock or the inevitable conclusion?

Themed reading

John Bunyan *The Pilgrim's Progress*
Helen Simonson *Major Pettigrew's Last Stand*

Useful links

Author's website

www.rachel-joyce.co.uk

Publisher's website

<http://www.randomhouse.co.uk>

The Guardian review

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/books/2012/apr/06/unlikely-pilgrimage-harold-fry-review>

Facebook

www.facebook.com/theunlikelypilgrimageofharoldfry

Twitter

#haroldfry or follow @harold_fry

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Other novels by Nicola Barker

Burley Cross Postbox Theft (2010)

Darkmans (2007)

Clear: A Transparent Novel (2004)

Behindlings (2002)

Five Miles from Outer Hope (2002)

Wide Open (1998)

Small Holdings (1995)

Reversed Forecast (1994)

The Yips Nicola Barker

Fourth Estate

Hardback £18.99

Ebook £16.31

Paperback published March 2013

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About the author

Nicola Barker was born in 1966 in Cambridgeshire.

She was the winner of the David Higham Prize for Fiction and joint winner of the Macmillan Silver Pen Award for *Love Your Enemies*, her first collection of stories.

Her other works include *Five Miles from Outer Hope*, *Behindlings*, *Clear: A Transparent Novel*, and *Heading Inland*, which received the John Llewellyn Rhys/Mail on Sunday Prize. Her novel *Wide Open* won the IMPAC Prize in 2000, while *Clear: A Transparent Novel* was longlisted for the Man Booker Prize in 2004 and *Darkmans* shortlisted for the Man Booker Prize in 2007.

In 1993 she was voted one of Granta's 'Best Young British Novelists' of the decade.

Nicola Barker lives and works in East London.

The Yips

'The Yips' is a noun describing a condition in which nervousness or tension causes an athlete to fail to perform effectively, especially in missing short putts in golf.

The Yips is the story of professional golfer Stuart Ransom, described as an equal to Martin Amis' John Self in the pantheon of male literary grotesques. Set in Luton, this comic novel also includes a woman priest with an unruly fringe, the troubled family of a notorious local fascist and a free-thinking Muslim sex therapist, as it delves into the murky recesses of the masculine psyche.

Discussion points

Nicola Barker has been described as a fascinating and frustrating novelist. Having read *The Yips*, do you identify with this description?

The Yips features many eccentric and unconventional characters, which is most interesting and whose story would you like to explore further?

Almost the entire novel is set in dialogue and the third person narrator plays a minor role. What impact does this have on the narrative and the reader?

Do you agree with the reviewer who wrote 'what lingers after Nicola Barker's customarily exhausting blurt of eccentricity is her treatment of how husbands and wives, mothers and daughters, get on (or don't)'.
Stephen Abell, *The Daily Telegraph*

Themed reading

Philip Hensher *The King of Badgers*
Martin Amis *Money*
Hilary Mantel *Beyond Black*

Useful links

[Metro and The Guardian interviews with Nicola Barker](#)

<http://www.metro.co.uk/lifestyle/903927-nicola-barker-tiger-woods-inspired-the-burned-out-celeb-golfer-in-the-yips>

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/books/3623313/A-writers-life-Nicola-Barker.html>

[Bibliography and critical perspective](#)

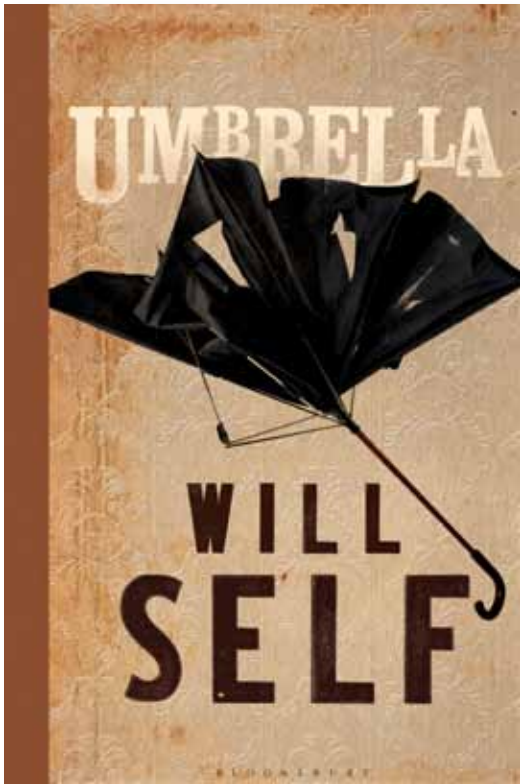
<http://literature.britishcouncil.org/nicola-barker>

<http://www.faber.co.uk/author/nicola-barker/>

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Other novels by Will Self

Walking to Hollywood (2010)

The Butt (2008)

Dr Mukti and Other Tales of Woe (2004)

How the Dead Live (2000)

Tough, Tough Toys for Tough, Tough Boys (1998)

Great Apes (1997)

The Sweet Smell of Psychosis, illustrated by
Martin Rowson (1996)

Junk Mail (1995)

Grey Area (1994)

My Idea of Fun (1993)

Cock and Bull (1992)

The Quantity Theory of Insanity (1991)

Umbrella Will Self

Bloomsbury

Hardback £18.99

Ebook £16.31

Paperback published September 2013

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About the author

Will Self is the author of many novels and books of non-fiction, including *How the Dead Live*, which was shortlisted for the Whitbread Novel of the Year 2002 and *The Butt*, winner of the Bollinger Everyman Wodehouse Prize for Comic Fiction 2008. He lives in South London.

Umbrella

Umbrella sets out to understand the nature of the modern world by going back to the source – the industrial madness of World War One. Set across an entire century, *Umbrella* follows the complex story of Audrey Death, a feminist who falls victim to the encephalitis lethargica epidemic that rages across Europe, and Dr Zack Busner, who spends a summer waking the post-encephalitic patients under his care using a new and powerful drug.

Discussion points

Will Self is a middle-aged male novelist. How convincing is the character of Audrey Death as a young girl and an old woman?

Will Self tells his story through two narrators (Audrey Death and Dr Frank Busner) and three time sequences (1918, 1971, 2010) leading to a rich but complex narrative structure. What are the advantages of this complexity? Are there significant differences between the narrative style of three time sequences?

Is the ending satisfying? Does it leave you with a sense of greater understanding of the world we live in?

We first see Audrey as a little girl, playing with her brothers and building a little grotto? What is the significance of the grotto she builds each year under her bed in the mental hospital?

Do you agree with *The Guardian's* assessment that *Umbrella* is 'a linguistically adept, emotionally subtle and ethically complex novel'?

Themed reading

James Joyce *Ulysses*
T. S. Eliot *The Waste Land*
Virginia Woolf *Mrs Dalloway*
Oliver Sacks *Awakenings*

Useful links

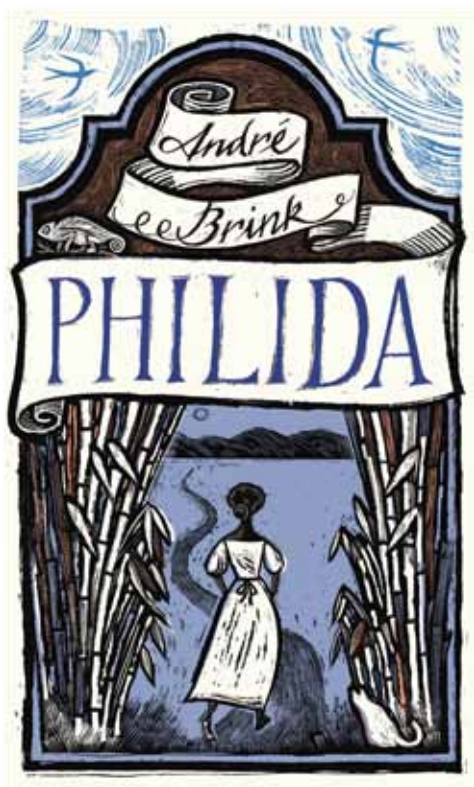
[Author's website](http://will-self.com/)
<http://will-self.com/>

[Publisher's website](http://www.bloomsbury.com/)
<http://www.bloomsbury.com/>

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Other novels by André Brink

Other Lives (2008)
The Blue Door (2007)
Praying Mantis (2005)
Before I Forget (2004)
The Other Side of Silence (2002)
The Rights of Desire (1998)
Devil's Valley (1998)
States of Emergency (1998)
Imaginations of Sand (1996)
On the Contrary (1993)
The First Life of Adamastor (1993)
An Act of Terror (1991)
The Wall of the Plague (1988)
A Chain of Voices (1981)
A Dry White Season (1979)
Rumours of Rain (1978)
An Instant in the Wind (1976)
Looking on Darkness (1974)
The Ambassador (1964)

Philida

André Brink

Harvill Secker

Hardback £14.99

Ebook £14.99

Paperback published September 2013

www.themanbookerprize.com

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About the author

André Brink was born in May 1935 in Vrede, South Africa. He has been made a Commander of the Order of Arts and Letters and awarded the Legion of Honour by the French government. In 1992 he was awarded the Monismann Human Rights Award from the University of Uppsala, for making known the injustice of apartheid to the wider world. He has won South Africa's most important literary prize, the CNA Award, three times and has had two novels shortlisted for the Booker Prize: *An Instant in the Wind* (1976) and *Rumours of Rain* (1978).

Philida

The year is 1832 and the Cape is rife with rumours about the liberation of the slaves. Philida made a pact for freedom with François Brink, the son of her master, but he has reneged on his promise to set her free. Deciding to take matters into her own hands, Philida risks her life by setting off on foot for distant Stellenbosch, in a journey that begins with the small act of saying no.

Discussion points

In the afterword, André Brink explains how he wove together fact and fiction in the writing of the novel. How does this change your perception of the novel?

Philida is, as we find out at the end of the novel, a real woman – a slave owned by one of André Brink's ancestors. What responsibilities do you think authors have when writing about real people and real history? Does this change if, like André Brink, the author is themselves connected to the story?

At the end of the novel Brink writes, 'In using historical sources it is of course necessary always to remain conscious of not only what is narrated, but also what is unsaid.' What do you think he means by this?

Do you think *Philida* could be described as a love story?

We hear from multiple voices in *Philida* as there are several narrators – including François and Philida herself. What effect does this have on the narrative, and why do you think André Brink chose to allow several different voices to give their version of the story?

Themed reading

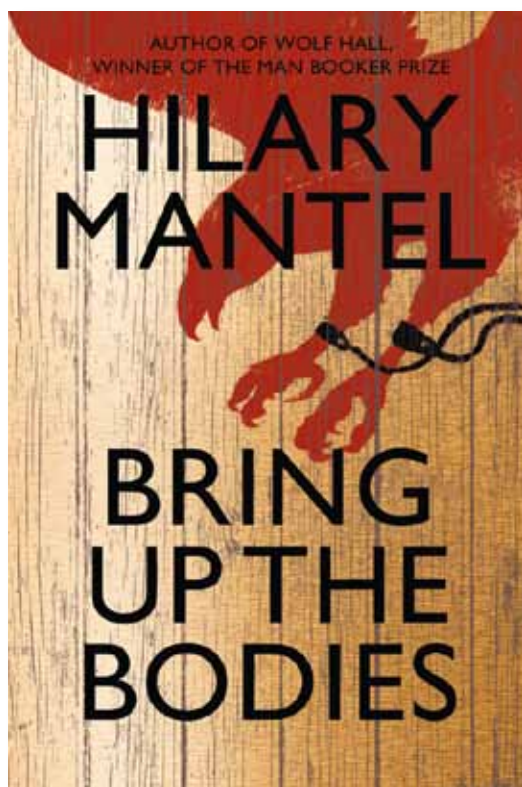
André Brink's memoir *A Fork in the Road*
JM Coetzee *Disgrace*
Toni Morrison *Beloved*
Alex Haley *Roots*

Useful links

[The Guardian interview with André Brink](http://www.guardian.co.uk/books/2010/jun/05/writing-life-andre-brink)
<http://www.guardian.co.uk/books/2010/jun/05/writing-life-andre-brink>



Reader's Guide



Other novels by Hilary Mantel

Wolf Hall (2009)

Beyond Black (2005)

The Giant, O'Brien (1998)

An Experiment in Love (1995)

A Change of Climate (1994)

A Place of Greater Safety (1992)

Fludd (1989)

Eight Months on Ghazzah Street (1988)

Vacant Possession (1986)

Every Day is Mother's Day (1985)

Bring up the Bodies

Hilary Mantel

Fourth Estate

Hardback £20.00

Ebook £19.10

Paperback published February 2013

www.themanbookerprize.com



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About the author

Hilary Mantel was born in the north of England in 1952. Educated at a convent school, she studied law, was briefly a social worker and later a teacher. After nine years abroad, she returned to Britain in the mid-eighties and became a critic and novelist, producing both contemporary and historical fiction. She lives with her husband in Devon.

Her books include: *Eight Months on Ghazzah Street* (1988); *Fludd* (1989), winner of the Winifred Holtby Memorial Prize, the Cheltenham Prize and the Southern Arts Literature Prize; *A Place of Greater Safety* (1992), winner of the Sunday Express Book of the Year award; *A Change of Climate* (1994); *An Experiment in Love* (1995), winner of the 1996 Hawthornden Prize; *Beyond Black* (2005), shortlisted for a 2006 Commonwealth Writers Prize and for the 2006 Orange Prize for Fiction and longlisted for the Man Booker Prize and *Wolf Hall* (2009), winner of the Man Booker Prize.

In 2006 she was also awarded a CBE.

Bring up the Bodies

The year is 1535 and Thomas Cromwell, chief Minister to Henry VIII, must work both to please the king and keep the nation safe. Anne Boleyn, for whose sake Henry has broken with Rome and created his own church, has failed to do what she promised: bear a son to secure the Tudor line. As Henry develops a dangerous attraction to Wolf Hall's Jane Seymour, Thomas must negotiate a 'truth' that will satisfy Henry and secure his own career. But neither minister nor king will emerge undamaged from the bloody theatre of Anne's final days.

Discussion points

The action of *Bring Up The Bodies* is seen mostly through the eyes of Thomas Cromwell. Does this change how you see history? Does Cromwell himself change in the course of the book?

The list of characters has a section called 'The Dead.' How do the dead make themselves heard and felt in this novel? How does the past infiltrate the present?

Henry claims his actions are driven by his conscience. Can you feel any sympathy for him, or is he selfish and self-deluding?

How much do you think Anne Boleyn contributes to her own destruction?

Themed reading

Eric Ives *The Life and Death of Anne Boleyn*

David Loades *The Boleyns*

John Schofield *Thomas Cromwell*

Suzannah Lipscomb *1536: the Year That Changed Henry VIII*

Useful links

[The Guardian Margaret Atwood review](#)

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/books/2012/may/04/bring-up-the-bodies-hilary-mantel-review>

[Publisher's website](#)

<http://www.harpercollins.co.uk/Authors/3691/hilary-mantel>

[The British Council](#) (bibliography and critical perspective)

<http://literature.britishcouncil.org/hilary-mantel>