



THE MAN BOOKER PRIZE

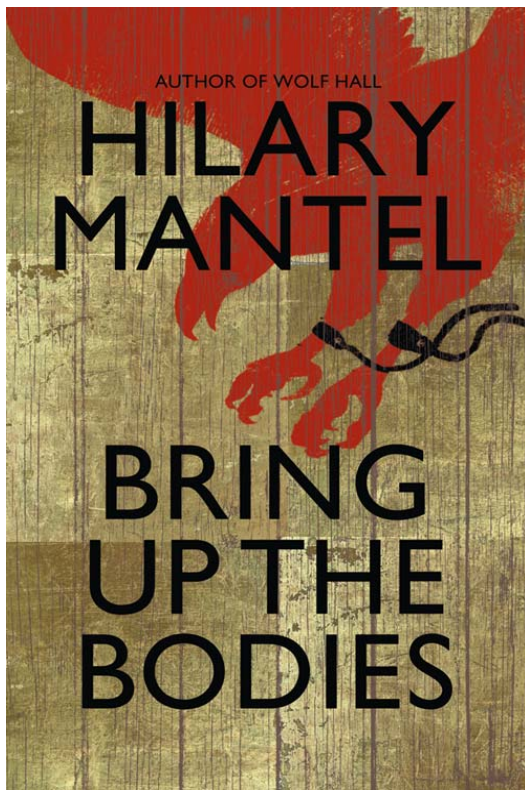
RUNNERS AND RIDERS

By HEPHZIBAH ANDERSON

PUBLISHED: 12:33 EST, 11 October 2012



The Man Booker prize 2012 will be awarded at an awards ceremony in London's Guildhall next Tuesday evening. Chair of the judges, Times Literary Supplement editor Peter Stothard has called 2012 an 'exhilarating year for fiction' and along with fellow judges including historian and author Amanda Foreman and Downton Abbey actor Dan Stevens will select the victor from the shortlist of six. To help you make your own decision, we've assessed the candidates - from established authors like Hilary Mantel and Will Self to complete newcomers like Indian poet Jeet Thayil and Alison Moore. Will your verdict be the same as theirs?



**BRING UP THE BODIES BY
HILARY MANTEL (Fourth Estate
£20)**

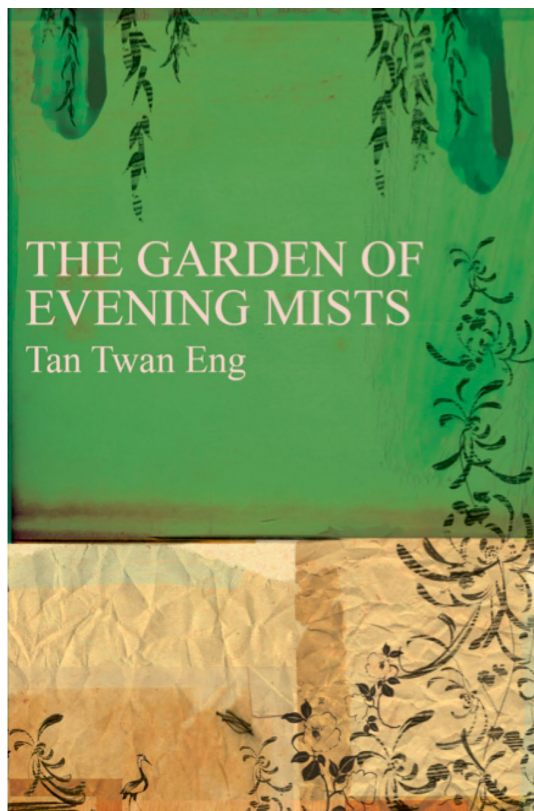
Author: Hilary Mantel snagged the 2009 prize with *Wolf Hall*, now the bestselling winner of all time. Derbyshire born, she's lived in Botswana and Saudi Arabia, and spent time as a social worker. For much of her life, she's struggled with illness.

Plot: *Wolf Hall's* sequel, it picks up the story of Thomas Cromwell, Henry VIII's fixer, in 1535. The king is now married to Anne Boleyn with whom Cromwell's fortunes have risen, and yet there is still no male heir to the throne. As the royal eye begins to rove again and it becomes apparent that Anne must go, Cromwell's own position seems ever more precarious.

Opening sentence: 'His children are falling from the sky.'

Verdict: 'Mantel's genius [...] is her knack of reaching inside people's heads into the nooks and crannies of their thoughts, seeing what many others don't. Magnificent prose' - Kathy Stevenson, *Daily Mail*

Odds: 5/2



**THE GARDEN OF EVENING MISTS
BY TAN TWAN ENG (Myrmidon
Books £12.99)**

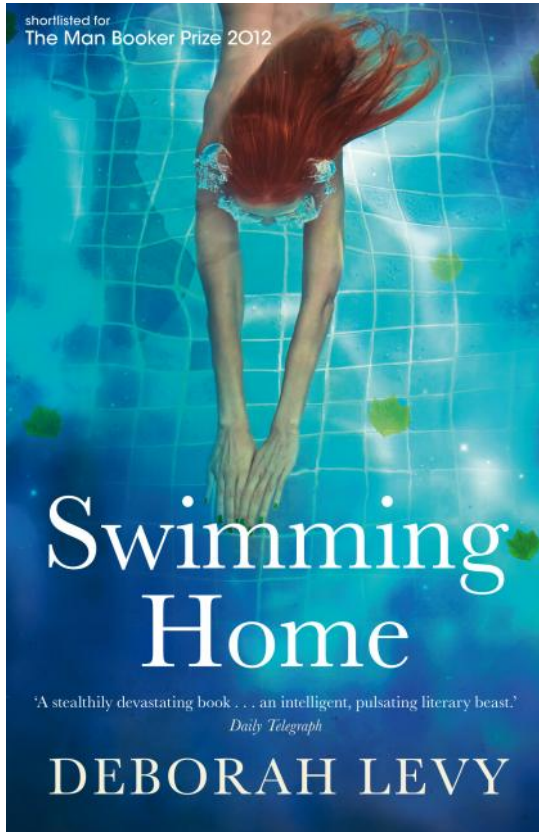
Author: At 38, Cape Town-based Malaysian author Tan Twan Eng is the youngest of this year's finalists. A former lawyer and Kazuo Ishiguro fan, he is also skilled in the Japanese martial art Aikido. When his first novel made the longlist in 2007, he was too excited to sleep. This is his second.

Plot: After surviving a harsh WWII camp, lawyer Teoh Yun Ling has spent several years prosecuting Japanese war criminals. Now, determined to create a garden in memory of the sister who didn't make it, she has journeyed into the Malay highlands to seek help from a gardener who challenges her hatred of Japan.

Opening sentence: 'On a mountain above the clouds once lived a man who had been the gardener of the emperor of Japan.'

Verdict: 'Mystery and menace, beauty and brutality are fused in this seductive novel which has history at its heart' - Hephzibah Anderson, *Daily Mail*

Odds: 5/1



SWIMMING HOME AND OTHER STORIES BY DEBORAH LEVY (Faber £7.99)

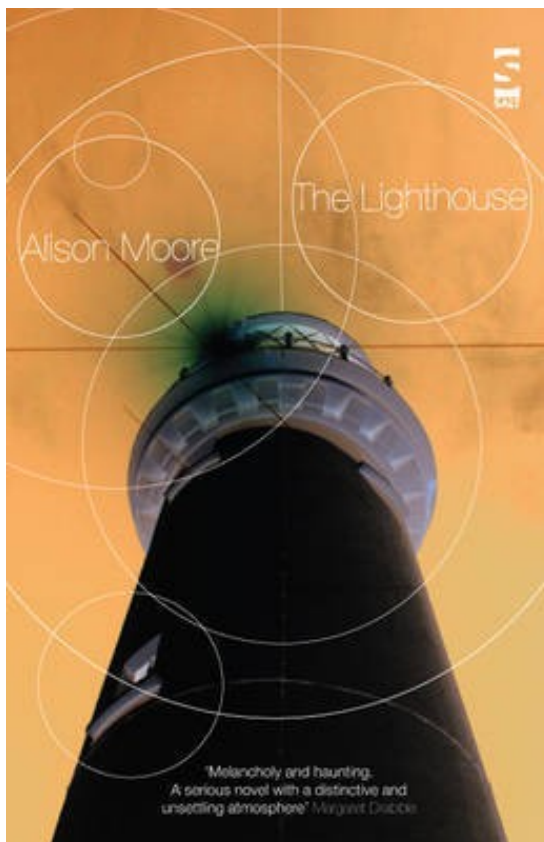
Author: Deborah Levy grew up in South Africa and published her first novel over 25 years ago, having begun her literary career as a playwright. This latest arrives after a 15-year hiatus. It was written in her garden shed and rejected by mainstream publishers, initially appearing under the new subscription-based imprint, And Other Stories.

Plot: The shortest book on the shortlist, it is set over a single week in the French Riviera where a famous poet is holidaying with family and friends. When he finds a troubled, naked female fan swimming in the pool of his villa, her presence causes the carefully maintained fictions they've woven around their lives to begin unravelling.

Opening sentence: 'When Kitty Finch took her hand off the steering wheel and told him she loved him, he no longer knew if she was threatening him or having a conversation.'

Verdict: 'A lean, filmic novel humming with secrets. Its prose is luminous and despite the darkness of themes that include depression and loss, there is immense tenderness here' - Hephzibah Anderson, Daily Mail

Odds: 10/1



THE LIGHTHOUSE BY ALISON MOORE (Salt £8.99)

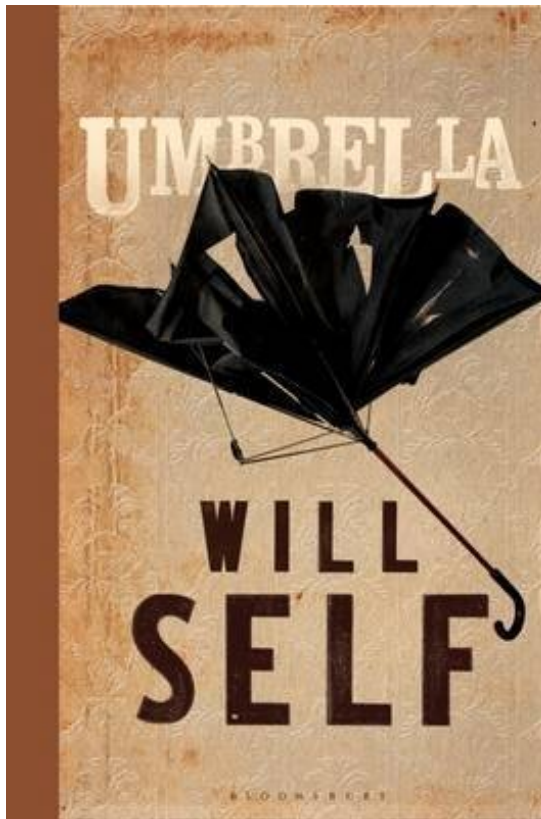
Author: Manchester-born Alison Moore has previously written short stories and novellas. She was shocked that her novel, published by a small independent press, was even entered for this year's prize, let alone shortlisted. She admires Lionel Shriver and is admired in turn by Margaret Drabble.

Plot: Almost as slender as *Swimming Home*, this tense tale centres on middle-aged Futh. After his wife leaves him, he sets off on a week-long walking holiday in Germany, where fate has him stay the night in a pub whose landlady is trapped in a jealous and abusive marriage. This most peripheral of encounters will have devastating effects.

Opening sentence: 'Futh stands on the ferry deck, holding on to the cold railings with his soft hands.'

Verdict: 'Don't mistake *The Lighthouse* for an underdog. For starters, it's far too assured. Though sparsely told, the novel's simple-seeming narrative has the density of a far longer work' - Hephzibah Anderson, Daily Mail

Odds: 6/1



UMBRELLA BY WILL SELF (Bloomsbury £18.99)

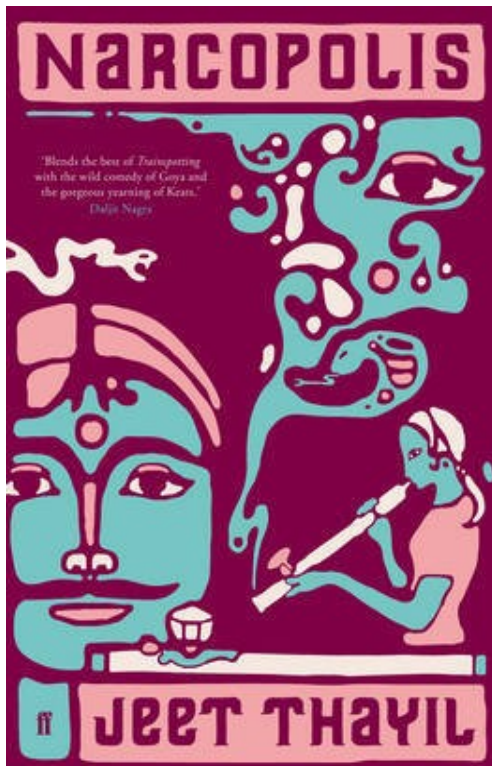
Author: Former wild-child Will Self has long been a fixture of the London literary scene, but this is his first appearance on the shortlist. His CV includes stints as a street sweeper, cartoonist and stand-up comedian. Now 51, he smokes a pipe and repairs vintage typewriters in his spare time.

Plot: Though not a novel that aspires to accessibility, its plot is compelling. Spanning the 20th century, it twins the stories of Audrey Death, a feminist who succumbs to the encephalitis lethargica epidemic that followed the 1918 flu pandemic, and Dr Zachary Busner, who is using a new drug to rouse patients who've been catatonic for decades.

Opening sentence: 'I'm an ape man, I'm an ape-man.'

Verdict: 'By the end you are filled with elation at the author's exuberant ambition and the swaggering way he carries it all off, and then a huge sense of deflation at the realisation that whatever book you read next, it won't be anything like this' - John Harding, Daily Mail

Odds: 2/1



NARCOPOLIS BY JEET THAYIL (Faber £12.99)

Author: Indian performance poet and musician Jeet Thayil wrote this, his first novel, after wrestling with addiction. Its heroine, a eunuch named Dimple, is based on a woman he met in an opium den in 1981. He's also written the libretto to an opera, Babur in London, about four Islamic terrorists.

Plot: Its pages-long prologue is composed of a single, winding sentence that transports the reader to the squalor of Old Bombay in the late 1970s. A fearful new rumour is electrifying the underworld with whispers of a murderer they call the stone killer, who is picking off the nameless poor. In part a portrait of the city itself, its pages are peopled by pimps, poets and gangsters.

Opening sentence: 'Before Dimple came to be called Zeenat, she worked part-time for Rashid and disappeared every evening to the hijra's brothel.'

Verdict: 'Feverishly inventive, it journeys across three decades, provoking comparisons with the likes of William Burroughs as it swerves from the merely dream-like to the outright nightmarish' - Hephzibah Anderson, Daily Mail

Odds: 8/1