

## Booker time

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Monday, 12th December 2011



The Press Association is reporting that Matthew Crawley (AKA Dan Stevens) will be on the Booker panel next year. Sir Peter Stothard is the chairman of the judges and he will be joined by broadcaster and historian Amanda Foreman and academics Dinah Birch and Bharat Tandon.

That's a heavyweight list. Even Stevens counts as a critic, having just launched an online literary magazine called The Junket. Stothard said, 'We have two of Britain's finest professional critics, with [expertise](#) in novels from the 18th to the 21st century, a distinguished actor who is also an accomplished literary critic and an historian who is one of the most successful biographers of our time. We are all looking forward to a feisty Man Booker year - with a background of Jane Austen, John Ruskin, Georgiana Duchess of Devonshire, the Times Literary Supplement and even a hint of the library at Downton Abbey.'

The Booker has gone to great lengths to bury the controversy of this year's award, which was accused of being 'dumbed down' despite there being some renowned literary figures on the judging panel: Susan Hill, Gaby Wood and Matthew d'Ancona. But, judging by Stothard's hefty statement, this year's panel will not be long deliberating a book's 'readability', as its immediate predecessor did. Perhaps some enterprising soul will now propose a rival Anti-Literature Prize?