

BACHELOR THESIS ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND CULTURE

THE 2014 MAN BOOKER PRIZE CONTROVERSY

A BRITISH CULTURAL ICON UNDER A THREAT

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Abstract

This thesis will study and discuss the controversy concerning the extension of the requirements for the Man Booker Prize, a literary prize established in the United Kingdom that is awarded every year to a novel of fiction written in the English language. The focus will be on the Man Booker Prize in 2014, which is deemed to be a controversial year as it was decided then that the entry requirements would be adjusted. The new rules state that any novel, as long as it is written in English and published in the United Kingdom in the same year of the prize, can be in the running for the Man Booker Prize. Previous years entering the competition was only possible for novels from the English Commonwealth, Ireland, and Zimbabwe. This matter will be researched from the perspective of cultural identity using the theories of Bourdieu. What lies at the heart of the discussion concerning the enlargement of the requirements for the Man Booker Prize, and why did it generate so much controversy that it is still a topic which elicits much debate today? Expected is that the discussion generated this much attention because the Man Booker Prize is a cultural institution that is part of the British cultural capital, but that is now at stake and accessible to other countries such as America.

Man Booker Prize, Bourdieu, extension of requirements, controversy, cultural identity, 2014, literary field, cultural capital, debate, discussion.

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Introduction

The Man Booker Prize is often compared to the Nobel Prize for Literature and the Pulitzer Prize, but differentiates from both of these literary prizes. It distinguishes itself from the first by its yearly focus on a particular novel written in English rather than on a particular author. It distinguishes itself from the second by its smaller scope, and by its association with England and the Commonwealth rather than with the United States of America. A third prize which is often associated with the Booker Prize is the Commonwealth Writers' "Best Book Award". The latter, however, has regional awards before the overall one is announced, and judges are appointed regionally, while the Man Booker Prize is judged by a centralized committee based in London and awarded by a board that consists of critics, writers, and academics from various fields.

The Man Booker Prize is a one of a kind acclaimed prize that is aligned with the greatest prizes in literature but has its own distinct character. The Prize amongst others owes its reputation to the fact that the winning book experiences an increase in sales, the winning author often ends up on best-seller lists and because he or she gains international success. The prize makes a major contribution to the prestigious English literary world has and therefore is an important part of the British literary and cultural identity.

More than once, the United Kingdom has been described as a "cultural superpower" (Bratberg and Haugevik 2), and London, home of the Man Booker Prize, has been described as a world cultural capital (Calder n. pag). Depending on who is asked, British culture can be described in many possible ways. For many, however, there will be an immediate association with the great British literary heroes of English literature. These range from the worldly celebrated works written by poets, playwrights and authors such as Geoffrey Chaucer, William Shakespeare and John Milton to Charles Dickens, William Wordsworth, Jane Austen and Agatha Christie. Moreover, the countless great children and fantasy tales that originated in Britain must not be forgotten. Characters such as Winnie the Pooh (A.A. Milne), Alice from *Alice in Wonderland* (Lewis Carol), and Harry Potter (J.K. Rowling) all are from Britain. Next to this, the fantastic setting of the *Chronicles of Narnia* (C.S. Lewis), Middle-Earth (J.R.R. Tolkien), and the wicked tales of Roald Dahl also belong to Britain's cultural heritage and its cultural identity (Bratberg and Haugevik 2).

Obviously, British literature is something that partially defines the British culture and British heritage. This means that the Man Booker Prize, which is, as mentioned before, one of the worlds' most prestigious literary prizes, also contributes to the cultural identity of the British: the prize was established in 1969, and has since then brought literary

acknowledgement, an increase in sales and worldwide popularity to many books written by authors from the United Kingdom, the Commonwealth and Zimbabwe. Man Booker Prize winners enjoy increased book sales in the United Kingdom, but also in the United States of America. Even authors that are shortlisted for the prize but who do not win enjoy an “uptick” in publicity, because publishers must agree to spend a certain amount of money on book publicity when an author enters the competition (Peterson n. pag.). Next to this the winning novel is also promoted by book sellers and many novels that win the Booker Prize have gone onto bestseller lists and/or have been made into films, such as Michael Ondaatje’s *The English Patient*, Yann Martel’s *Life of Pi* and Thomas Keneally’s *Schindler’s Ark*. The Man Booker Prize is a prize that, in the eyes of many people, defines the English literature (Peterson n. pag.). By doing so, it also influences the literary choices of America with its “Britishness”.

In 2014, the Man Booker Prize radically changed the requirements for entering the competition. The prize was only accessible to novels written by authors from the British Commonwealth or the Republic of Ireland in the past. From 2014 and onwards, however, all novels originally written in the English language (so not a translation) and issued in Britain are considered for winning the Man Booker Prize, regardless of their country of origin (Man Booker Prize n. pag.). This means that the Man Booker Prize, which was particularly British, from that moment on has been open to authors from all over the world, including the United States of America.

Ever since this monumental change it is at the very least just as likely for an American author to win, and to place an American stamp on the British literary market. This development has raised questions for many authors, literary critics and academics regarding the identity of the prize, and British authors have expressed their concern that beating global competition will be an “even greater accolade” (Furness n. pag.).

The decision to allow authors from anywhere in the world to submit their work to the Man Booker Prize has split the literary establishment. Some have joyfully welcomed this expansion to the requirements. Others fear that American authors will from now on dominate the Man Booker Prize and the British literary establishment. Jonathan Taylor, the chairman of trustees of the Man Booker Prize, responded to the complaints about this new rule by stating that authors worrying about struggling under these new rules had a “glass half-empty” approach (Furness n. pag.). He added to this that the decision was “in keeping with what is an increasingly global, international publishing and reading world”, that the adjustment would stimulate traditional and new publishers and bring more excellent literary fiction to the attention of readers around the world. (Furness n. pag.).

The reason for the confusion and concerns regarding the change in the requirements is that at the time, there already was the Man Booker International Prize. This prize was specifically created to accept international entries. Because of the changes that were made in 2014, these two prizes have become very similar. Many fail to see the reasoning behind this decision. Another concern shared by many is that the prize, which is traditionally British, will now find its shortlists overwhelmed with American authors. The American book industry has many large publishing houses, and these publishing houses produce quite a number of bestsellers. This means that the opportunity for British writers could be decreased. Two of the five Man Booker International Prize winners have been Americans, which possibly is a sign that the same thing can happen to the Man Booker Prize. The decision that led to the new entry requirements also caused a few problems in the internal structure of the Man Booker Prize.

Any changes to the rules and on the selection of the judges are advised on by the Booker Prize Foundation Advisory Committee (The Man Booker Prize n.pag.). The consequences of their decision to adjust the entry requirements for the Man Booker Prize were noticed quite soon after the word got out. The e-council, which helps selecting the jury panel each year, was supposed to have Lady Antonia Fraser as a member. She rejected the offer, however, as she was not warned of the new rules to enter the Man Booker Prize competition. The adjustment to the requirements of the Man Booker Prize caused a general sense of concern about the loss of a great British literary institution.

A counter argument, of course, is that the domain of the English novel is the English language. "Organizing a literary prize around the long-gone historical accident of a set of political and trading relationships does not make a whole lot of sense," wrote critic and author Sam Leith, who wholeheartedly agrees with this adjustment to the rules of the Man Booker Prize, in the *London Evening Standard* (Leith n.pag.).

This thesis will research the controversy over the Man Booker Prize and the discussion that followed upon this change. The discussion has gained an incredible amount of attention. This thesis will research the reasons behind that, and investigate why the decision to change the requirements for the Man Booker Prize stirred such controversy and discussion.

To investigate this, the topic will be viewed from a Bourdieusian perspective. Pierre Bourdieu was a French sociologist. He was seen as an important, left-oriented intellectual and due to his work *La Distinction* from 1979, he is considered to be one of the greatest sociologists of the 20th century, which is why it is his theories and ideas that I will use. I will expand on this furthermore in chapter three.

Bourdieu suggested that his thoughts on cultural theory and his reflections upon corporate sponsorship could be applied to areas that differ from those he has covered in his own work. A Bourdieusian analysis will shed light on the underlying structure of this award and also on the social and political areas that the 2014 changes have affected. I will look at the discussion using Bourdieu's theories on cultural capital. Two of Bourdieu's works are relevant to the discussion of this thesis; *The Rules of Art* and *Free Exchange*. *The Rules of Art* elaborates on artistic and literary production, *Free Exchange* is based on a series of conversations with the artist Hans Haacke. The focus of this thesis will not be on the shortlisted and winning novels in particular, but rather on the structure of the Man Booker Prize as an institution and the discussion that followed after the change of requirements.

Chapter one of this thesis will explain in detail how the Man Booker Prize was established, its history, and elaborate on the people that are involved with the prize. Chapter two will discuss the controversy over the Man Booker Prize in 2014. What exactly happened to the prize that created this controversy? And how did people respond to it? The second chapter will also elaborate on the discussion that developed after the board of the Man Booker Prize decided to change the entry requirements. It will illustrate the several perspectives from authors, literary critics and publishers that took part in the discussion. Chapter three will take a closer look at the discussion that developed itself as a consequence of the change of the requirements. I will look at the discussion from a Bourdieusian perspective, to indicate what lies at the heart of the discussion. Why and how did the change of requirements have such an impact on the cultural identity of the British? The conclusion following these three chapters will aim to answer the research question "What lies at the heart of the discussion concerning the enlargement of the requirements for the Man Booker Prize, and why did it generate so much controversy that it is still a topic which elicits much debate today?", and it will elaborate on further research that could be done.

Chapter 1: The Man Booker Prize

The Man Booker Prize for Fiction is a literary prize that is awarded every year to the best original novel that is written in the English language and published in the United Kingdom (The Man Booker Prize n.pag.). It is a general assumption that, after winning the Man Booker Prize, the author of the winning book is guaranteed international notability and success. This means that the prize is of great significance for the literary world and the book trade (Sutherland n. pag.). Originally only citizens from the British Commonwealth, Ireland and Zimbabwe were qualified to enter the competition. In 2014 the prize opened up to authors of any nationality, as long as the original writing is in English and the novel is published in the United Kingdom by an established publisher: “the expanded prize will recognise, celebrate and embrace authors of literary fiction writing in English, whether from Chicago, Sheffield or Shanghai” (The Man Booker Prize n.pag.). The novel cannot be a translation, and self-published novels are not eligible.

The Man Booker Prize was established in 1969, when the company Booker, McConnell Ltd started to sponsor the literary prize. McConnell Ltd is a British food company that dates back to 1835. The aim of the prize is to promote the finest fiction by rewarding the best novel of the year, which is selected by a judging panel of five. According to the website of the Man Booker Prize, there was only one criterion from the very beginning of what was originally called the Booker Prize: the prize would be for “the best novel in the opinion of the judges”, and 48 years later that is still a key sentence in the rules of the prize (The Man Booker Prize n.pag.). In 2002, administration of the prize was reassigned to the Booker Prize Foundation and the title sponsor became the investment company Man Group (which is a British investment company that dates back to 1783), that chose to retain “Booker” as part of the official title of the prize, which is how the Man Booker Prize obtained its current name. The Booker Prize foundation is an independent registered charity that is supported by the financial gain of the Booker Prize Trading Ltd, of which it is the only shareholder (The Man Booker Prize n.pag.).

The prize money that is rewarded to the winner of the Man Booker Prize was originally 21.000 pounds, but this later was raised to 50.000 pounds in 2002, when the Man Group began sponsoring the prize. This increase of the prize money made it one of the world’s largest literary prizes. The six authors that are shortlisted each receive 2.500 pounds. The prize may not be divided or withheld (Man Booker Prize n.pag.).

The prize money that is awarded to the winner of the Booker Prize each year is sponsored by the Man Group. This means that in total, the Man Group sponsors the Man Booker Prize with 65.000 pounds worth of prize money alone. We call this “corporate

sponsorship". Corporate sponsorship means that a certain company finances all or some of the money associated with in this case a cultural institution, to trade this for acknowledgement (Norris 141). This acknowledgement comes in many forms, and for the Man Booker Prize the most obvious one is the change in the title of the prize when the Man Group started sponsoring it.

The idea of corporate sponsorship can be linked to one of Bourdieu's theories. Bourdieu has spoken out emphatically against corporate sponsorship. He believes that corporate sponsorship compromises artistic and intellectual autonomy (Bourdieu and Haacke 1995, 20), and he argues in his work *The Rules of Art* that the literary field is structured around two opposing poles: one geared to the market and one that is restricted, primarily to artistic concerns (Norris 140). According to Bourdieu the tension between these two poles is what structures the literary field and what helps us in defining what exactly literature is and what counts as such (Bourdieu 1996 p. 340). He mentions that the arts are "severely threatened" by the "increasingly greater interpenetration between the world of art and the world of money" (Bourdieu 1996, 344). Bourdieu argues that the literary field is relatively autonomous, but that his autonomy is vulnerable and that it is currently under an enormous threat because of the "interpenetration" of art and commerce (Bourdieu 1996 p. 344). What he means by this, is that new forms of sponsorship become a part of art, which is what we see happening to the Man Booker Prize: it is an alliance between an economic enterprise, the Man Group, and a cultural institution: the Booker Prize (Bourdieu 1996 p. 344).

The Man Booker Prize has seen many successes over the years and many significant events have been built around it. Since its establishment in 1969, thirty-one men and sixteen women have won the prize. The first woman to win the Man Booker Prize was Bernice Rubens, with her novel *The Elected Member* (Kidd n. pag.). She won the Man Booker Prize in 1970.

Another significant moment for the prize was in 1980, when Alice Munro's collection of short stories was shortlisted for the Man Booker Prize. This gave her a unique position in the history of the prize: *The Beggar Maid* is the only collection of short stories to ever have been shortlisted. Next to this there was the controversy of 1993, when two members of that year's judging panel threatened to walk out on the rest and the entire prize when *Trainspotting*, a novel written by Irvine Welsh, made an appearance on the long list. To satisfy the two judges, Welsh's novel was taken from the shortlist. The novel received critical acclaim later in time and is considered a modern classic nowadays (Bissett n. pag.).

The controversy of 1993 also is an example of the hesitancy that Bourdieu experiences towards the Man Booker Prize. In her article, Sharon Norris explains that symbolic violence

like this is highly pertinent to the Booker Prize because “those that are involved with the award, including the judges, shortlisted authors and members of the management committee, tend to be from a particular class”, which means there are certain expectations for the prize and the shortlisted novels (Norris 141). Bourdieu views the class structure of a social formation (such as the Man Booker Prize) as “an objective network of positions that are systematically related to each other in terms of the distribution of cultural and economic capital across occupational locations” (Weininger 137). According to Bourdieu, “the status of the positions in a social formation is a function of its proximity to or distance from the ‘legitimate culture’, this being those elements of culture that are universally recognized as ‘worthy’, ‘canonical’, or in some other way ‘distinguished’” (Weininger 137). This means that the structure of a social formation is always in play, because authors usually enter the Man Booker Prize competition because the publisher of a certain novel enters it into the competition. The publisher that enters the novel must accept to spend at least 5,000 pounds on publicity if the novel that is entered into the competition gains a spot the shortlist, and the publisher also has to donate that same amount of money if the novel wins The Man Booker Prize (Peterson n. pag.).

The selection process for the winner of the prize begins with the establishment of an advisory committee, which always at the least includes an author, a publisher, a literary agent, a bookseller, a librarian, and a chairperson that is appointed by the Booker Prize Foundation (The Man Booker Prize n.p). The Booker Prize Foundation Advisory Committee, as it is officially referred to, advises on any changes to the rules and on the selection of the judges (The Man Booker Prize n.p). The committee is always represented by all aspects of the literary world. This means that it is joined by literary critics, authors, and publishers. This advisory committee then decides who will be in the judging panel, and who will be the Chair of Judges. The Man Booker Prize website states that “every effort is made to achieve a balance between the judges of gender, articulacy and role” (The Man Booker Prize n.p).

The judging panel, selected by the Booker Prize Foundation Advisory Committee, differs each year and membership of the panel therefore only lasts for one year. On exceptional occasions, a judge can be chosen for the judging panel a second time, but this almost never happens: only Rebecca West and Lady Antonia Fraser have had the honour of being a member of the jury twice. This happened in 1969 and in 1970 to Rebecca West, and in 1970 and 1971 to Lady Antonia Fraser. The judges on the panel are chosen from amongst others literary critics, writers, academics and important public figures. Ion Trewin, literary director of the Booker Prize Foundation from 2006 until his death in 2015, said the following about this.

“The judges are not confined to any in-group of literary critics, authors and academics, but over the years have included poets, politicians, journalists, broadcasters and actors. This “common man” approach to the selection of Man Booker juries is, I believe, one of the key reasons why “the intelligent general audience” trusts the prize.” (The Man Booker Prize n.pag.)

The jury announces the long list each year in July. This list contains all the novels that might be worthy of winning the prize. The jury announces the short list in September. The winner is usually announced at a ceremony in London’s Guildhall, at the beginning of October.

The winning author of the Man Booker Prize can always expect an increase in the sales of their book. The Man Booker Prize website states that “both the winner of the Man Booker Prize and the shortlisted authors are guaranteed a worldwide readership plus an increase in book sales”. The prize-winning novels are supposed to appeal to “an intelligent general audience” (The Man Booker Prize n.p), and maybe it is because of this that Man Booker Prize winners enjoy a significant rise in the sales of their book in the United Kingdom as well as in the United States. Shortlisted authors also experience this increase in publicity, because the publishers of the shortlisted authors must agree to spend 5000 pounds on the publicity of the book. Booksellers also promote the winning novel, as the Man Booker Prize is such an established and well-known literary prize (Peterson n. pag.).

The announcement of the winner is covered by television, radio and other press worldwide and immediately receives a lot of attention (The Man Booker Prize n.p). *The Narrow Road to the Deep North*, written by Richard Flanagan, sold over 300,000 copies in the United Kingdom. After he won the prize in 2014 this number rose to 800,000 in only weeks. This was more than the sales of his previous novels all together. In the week before Marlon James’ win with his novel *A Brief History of Seven Killings*, 12,466 copies of his novel were sold, which was a 933% increase on the week before that (The Man Booker Prize n.p). Many winning novels of The Man Booker Prize, such as Thomas Keneally’s *Schindler’s Ark* (which was directed by Steven Spielberg under the name *Schindler’s List*), Kazuo Ishiguro’s *The Remains of the Day*, Michael Ondaatje’s *The English Patient*, Yann Martel’s *Life of Pi* and A.S. Byatt’s *Possession*, have reached the top of the best seller lists and/or have been adapted into films (The Man Booker Prize n.p). Both novels written by Hilary Mantel, *Bring up the Bodies* (2009) and *Wolf Hall* (2012) have been adapted into popular and award winning films, as well as on screen as on stage. Authors winning the Man Booker Prize have chances to sales of film, TV and translation rights. The prize commands far greater media coverage than any other award (Man Booker Prize). This includes the live television coverage of the annual

ceremony, and it remains, other than the Nobel Prize for Literature, possibly the only literary award that the general public in Britain is likely to have heard of (Norris 140). This is why we can establish with certainty that the Man Booker Prize is an impressive, prestigious and influential award.

The prestige of the Man Booker Prize can also be linked back to its history. When the Booker Prize was established in 1968, there were approximately 50 other literary awards. Only a few of them, however, offered a significant amount of prize money. In her article, Sharon Norris writes that “awards such as the Hawthornden and James Tait Black prize did offer a measure of prestige for the winner: even though their numbers were few, large business-sponsored literary prizes were not altogether unknown in Britain at that time. The WH Smith Award was worth a thousand pounds, for example (Norris 142). This prize was also not restricted to novels. The fact that the Booker Prize had an exclusive focus on literary fiction could, according to Norris, “have maximised the potential for prestige and the symbolic returns on the sponsor’s economic investment” (Norris 143). The Man Booker Prize offers novelists some sort of salary, at least for a limited time, which not only made the prize attractive to writers but it also helped to increase its reputation as a desired prize.

Historically, the author to win the Man Booker Prize was required to be a citizen of the Commonwealth, the Republic of Ireland or Zimbabwe. On 18 September 2013, the board of the Man Booker Prize announced in a press release that the future Man Booker Prize awards would consider authors from anywhere in the world, as long as their work was written in the English language and published in the United Kingdom. This change proved to be controversial in literary circles. This chapter elaborated on the Man Booker Prize as a whole, indicating several aspects of the prize and their relevance, such as the selection process for the judges and the sponsoring of the prize. The following chapter will elaborate on the decision of the Man Booker Prize board to adjust the entry requirements for the Man Booker Prize of 2014 onwards, and the discussion that followed after the announcement was made.

Chapter 2: The Controversy and the Debate

The changes to the entry requirements of the Man Booker Prize for Fiction have been much debated in the publishing world since they were announced in 2014. The debate is still an ongoing topic. When the first American winner was announced in 2016, the debate was pulled to the forefront of public attention once again. As mentioned before, the award solely accepted novels written by authors from Britain, the British Commonwealth, Ireland and Zimbabwe for a very long time. The judging panel of that particular year was chaired by A.C. Grayling, who was accompanied by Jonathan Bate, Sarah Churchwell, Daniel Glaser, Alastair Niven and Erica Wagner. The winner of the 2014 Man Booker Prize was Richard Flanagan's novel *The Narrow Road to the Deep North*. Grayling described his novel as a "remarkable love story as well as a story about human suffering and comradeship" (Masters n. pag.). This chapter will explore the discussion that emerged after the 2015 winner was announced, and will set out to illustrate the different perspectives from various authors, literary critics, board members and other parties such as publishers and people invested in the book-selling world. This will explain the controversy as a whole and the extent of the discussion, which will help to analyse the discussion further in chapter 3.

There were many sides to the debate, and many of these were voiced in various media such as *The Guardian*, *The Daily Mail* and *The Independent*. Various authors, literary critics and board members of the Man Booker Prize were interviewed and asked for their perspective on the matter. It did not end there, however. The discussion developed itself quickly as soon as other platforms got wind of it and the topic was discussed on several radio shows, in scholarly journals, and on websites. The topic was even discussed on online forums such as the World Literature Forum and The Literature Network, and personal blogs concerning various literary prizes and literature. The debate itself also transposed to the American continent where the matter was extensively discussed on other online platforms such as *The Atlantic*, *the New York Times*, and *The Economist*, where numerous authors and literary agents shared their thoughts on the subject.

The board of the Man Booker Prize stated that the internationalization of the prize makes winning it even more valuable and exciting. It would reinforce the position of the prize as most prestigious literary prize in the world, and it would furthermore celebrate, recognize and embrace authors from all over the world (Man Booker Prize n.pag.). Members of the board of the Man Booker Prize admitted that it was a large change, but also stated that it should not be daunting for authors that aspire to enter the contest. They confirmed that for years they had been thinking about this idea, but wanted to confer about it with over 50 writers, publishers and

agents first, which is exactly what happened in the 18 months before the important announcement (Man Booker Prize n. pag.).

Jonathan Taylor, who is chairman of trustees on the Man Booker Prize Board, stated in an interview with *The Guardian* that by including writers from around the world to compete alongside the British, Commonwealth and Irish writers, the Man Booker Prize would reinforce its standing as the most important literary award in the English-speaking world (Brown n.pag.). Taylor also mentioned in this interview that the board was excited by the opportunities that this extension should bring for readers and authors around the world. The board has expressed that because of these adjustments, “the prize would be to recognize, celebrate and embrace authors writing in English, whether from Chicago, Sheffield or Shanghai” (Bosman n. pag). It intended to embrace “the freedom of English in all its vigour, its vitality, its versatility and its glory wherever it may be: we are abandoning the constraints of geography and national boundaries” thus said Jonathan Taylor (Furness n. pag).

He went on to explain that the number of book publishers that were allowed to submit a novel for the competition has also been a concern of the years before 2014. The new model for the Man Booker Prize is supposed to encourage the traditional literary publishing houses, while at the same time “ensuring novels from new green-shoot publishers continue to be included” (Furness n. pag.). Altogether, the Man Booker Prize Board was convinced that, by changing the entry rules of the prize, the Man Booker Prize would become an even more prestigious literary award. Winning the prize would be an even greater honour, and the Man Booker Prize would become a celebration of *all* authors in the world, rather than only those native of the United Kingdom, Ireland or the British Commonwealth.

The discussion caught the attention of many long listed, short listed and winning authors, but also that of literary critics, people that have been on the judging panel the years before 2014, publishers and the discussion even reached the booksellers. Baroness Kennedy, a trustee of the Booker Prize Foundation, stated in an interview with *The Telegraph* that in her view, this adjustment to the rules would make the winning of the prize even more exciting and more valuable than it already was before (Furness n. pag.). Kazuo Ishiguro, prize-winning author, mentioned that “the world has changed and it no longer makes sense to split up the writing world in this way” (Clark 8). Ishiguro won the Man Booker Prize in 1989, and made it to the shortlist with two other of his novels. He is one of the most celebrated contemporary authors of fiction in the English-speaking world and a fond supporter of the Man Booker Prize change in requirements. He mentioned in an interview with *The Independent* that in the beginning, he was rather ambivalent. He continued saying that “it’s sad in a way because of the

traditions of the Booker, and I can understand some people feeling a bit miffed, but there is a time for change and I feel the time is now” (Clark n. pag). Later in the interview Ishiguro mentions that he heard about the move “a few months ago from someone very senior at the prize and the argument was that the standard hadn’t been high enough” (Clark n. pag.). This indicates the idea of other international (American) authors being better than authors from the United Kingdom, as these authors were, according to the anonymous spokesperson, not enough to raise the standards. Another (British) author, Will Self, whose novel *Umbrella* was shortlisted for the Man Booker Prize in 2012, expressed cynicism towards the decision, but no criticism. “Pets win prizes”, he said. “It hardly matters if they’re Boston terriers or British bulldogs, the important thing is that prizes have come to dominate the literary world because they’re effective marketing tools in a cultural era in which genuine literary criticism and judgment has given way to febrile consumerism” (Kean n. pag). Self specifically cares about the fact that there even are literary prizes and that the main reason for them to exist is consumerism, rather than caring about who is able to enter the Man Booker competition.

The decision was also greeted warmly by publishers and booksellers, who have profited from good sales of the first American winner in 2016, *The Sellout*. This is supported by Simon Heafield who is head of marketing and brand at Foyles, one of the world’s largest bookstores. Foyles named *The Sellout* as its book of the year and Heafield gave his opinion on this and the Man Booker Prize in an interview with *The Guardian*. “The decision to admit US authors to the Man Booker Prize has surely been vindicated in the awarding of this years’ prize to Paul Beatty, whose novel is exactly the kind of important, timely and original book that deserves the wider readership such a prestigious award can bring” (Kean n. pag.). He added to this that the book had received a “phenomenal reception” from customers. The sales figures of *The Sellout* are a confirmation of his claim. The novel, an exploration of race, individuality and governmental correctness in America was printed a 180,000 times on the night that the novel won the Man Booker Prize, and 80,000 more copies were printed afterwards as a result of demand from booksellers from the United Kingdom (Kean n. pag.).

The main concern of those that do not agree with the Man Booker Prize Board’s decision is that the shortlists of the Man Booker Prize will be completely controlled by American authors. They also express a concern that even though the prize is now open for authors of any nationality, the inclusion of well-supported American authors will reduce the opportunities for young and aspiring writers for other countries. Another concern is that the changes brought about in 2014 will diminish opportunities for smaller English publishers to get noticed. The reason that the shortlists of the Man Booker Prize could be completely dominated

by American authors is because these authors are often better funded and can rely on more steady and structured support than in the United Kingdom. Meant by this is that they are part of larger publishing houses, can rely on publishers that create an entire scenario as to how, when and where the book is published and what talk shows, interviews and papers are worth attention, and a complete schedule of the road to publishing a novel.

Many young writers in America have the chance to become established as writers at a young age because of the versatile creative writing programs that are given on an academic level at multiple universities including the University of Iowa and Princeton (Senzamici n. pag.). British novelist Amanda Craig said that “Americans are not only different culturally but they have loads more support via creative writing programs – they can actually make a living as literary novelists. We can’t” (Kean n. pag.). It seems that English writers are not able to enjoy the same level of support. Creative writing programmes do exist in the United Kingdom, but they are of lesser quality and are not as prominent as the programmes in the United States: out of the top 10 best creative writing programs in the entire world, the first one is at the University of San Francisco, closely followed by the University of Iowa and Princeton (Senzamici n. pag.).

Opponents of the decision of the Man Booker Prize Board also expressed a concern that the changes brought about in 2014 will decrease chances for small-scale English publishing houses to get noticed. It was mentioned in chapter one that when a publisher wants to have one of its writers enter the Man Booker Prize competition, this means that there are a few requirements the publisher must comply with. Publishers must contribute 5000 pounds towards general publicity when a novel is shortlisted and another 5000 when the novel wins. This means money has to be invested in the author and the book that is submitted for the Man Booker Prize, which is not easy for smaller publishing houses, especially when larger publishing houses enter authors that are also in the running towards winning the Man Booker Prize.

Even though the prize is now open for authors of any nationality, it is a concern that well-supported American authors will reduce the opportunities for young and aspiring writers from other countries. This can be connected to the previous argument. The United States is a leading country when it comes to the publishing field. A recent study to the world’s largest publishing groups showed that, out of the 10 largest publishing groups, four are American while only one is British. The other five leading publishing groups are from China, France, the Netherlands and Germany (Wisichenbart 4).

In a nutshell, the reasons for concern about the changes brought about in 2014 can almost all be traced back to the stir position of other in the literary world, especially America. Until 2014, the United Kingdom, Ireland, the Commonwealth and Zimbabwe still had the Man Booker Prize, one of the most prominent literary awards in the world, entirely to itself. The prize was dedicated solely to authors from these countries. By opening the Man Booker Prize to all other authors who write in English, the door opened the for America. This created an opportunity for Britain's most powerful rival in the literary category to influence Britain's literary culture.

The change also prompted concerns that the heavyweights of American literature would dominate the British award. This was not immediately the case but what did happen was that in 2014, two American authors joined British authors, including Ali Smith and Howard Jacobson, on the shortlist: Joshua Ferris and Karen Joy Fowler (Flood n. pag.), both up and coming American authors. In the announcement, the judging panel said about the shortlist of 2014 that "as the Man Booker Prize expands its borders, these six exceptional books take the reader on journeys around the world, between the United Kingdom, New York, Thailand, Italy, Calcutta and times past, present and future" (The Man Booker Prize n.pag.).

Many authors have stated their unrest regarding the new rules. One of them is Howard Jacobsen, who won the Man Booker Prize in 2010. He argues that Man Booker has made the wrong decision by letting international authors enter. Lord Bragg, an English author and parliamentarian, said he is "disappointed, but not surprised". Howard Jacobson, who won the prize in 2010 with his novel *The Finkler Question*, said that it was the "wrong decision" in an interview with the Telegraph (Furness n. pag.). Jim Crace, an awarded British author, said in an interview with *The Independent* that "there's something in there that you would lose if you open it up to American authors" (Flood n. pag.). Crace was part of that year's shortlist with his novel *Harvest*, and he also stated that "In principle, I should believe in prizes being open to everyone. But I think prizes need to have their own characters, and sometimes those characters are defined by their limitations" (Clark n. pag.). Susan Hill, an author that was shortlisted to win the prize in 1972, and who was on the judging panel of 1975 and 2011, said: "Not sure I can see a reason for this. Why can't we have a prize of our own? But either way, pity the poor judges. They buckle under the strain as it is" (Clark n. pag.).

The board of the Man Booker Prize was also confronted with the Rathbones Folio Prize, formerly known as just the Folio Prize. This prize was set up earlier in 2014 and encompasses all novels written in English. The board of the Man Booker Prize denied the claim that they opened up to all English novels because of the establishment of the Folio Prize. Andrew Kidd,

founder of the Folio Prize, said in an interview with *The Telegraph* that he was “in some ways surprised” by the announcement of the board of the Man Booker Prize, and he mentioned that it was “interesting to note” the changes (Furness n. pag.). He explained in the interview that he created the Folio Prize to accompany existing prizes, based on the idea that each has its own, unique area of activity. Kidd added to this that by “launching a prize that is open to English language writers from anywhere in the world, and building it around the Folio Prize Academy, the intention of the Folio Prize board was to fill a gap, rather than to imply that others should adopt their model” (Furness n. pag.). Many authors, critics and academics do feel, however, that this is exactly what happened to the Man Booker Prize in 2014 (Clark n. pag.). The Folio Prize was also born because the board “took umbrage at the direction they saw the Booker Prize taking – they saw it leaning toward popular fiction rather than literary fiction.” (Kellogg n. pag.). This is a reference to the controversy that surrounded the judges on the panel of the 2011 Man Booker Prize, which demanded readability as one of the primary qualities of the winning novel. The Man Booker Prize shortlist of that year overlooked novels by established authors, to eventually become a shortlist with a collection of certain novels that “zipped along”, which is how a member of the 2011 jury put it (Fiennes n. pag.).

Because of these two arguments the Folio Prize was labelled by several media as a rival of the Man Booker Prize; the Folio prize was a “Booker without the bowties” (Clark n. pag.). Andrew Clark sees the prize as a 21st century prize: “If there were too many prizes, that might dilute their impact. But I don’t think anyone feels that there are too many” (Clark n. pag.). He admitted he was one of the critics on the 2011 Man Booker Prize and added to this that the Folio Prize should be seen as complementary to other awards rather than rivalling them. “A number of authors were universally supportive. More than one said: ‘No black tie’”. Author Philip Pullman, who wrote the *His Dark Materials* trilogy, said it would be a “great addition to the current range of literary prizes” (Abrams n. pag.). Eventually the Folio Prize was set up with over a 100 supporters including the authors Margaret Atwood, Pat Barker, Bret Easton Ellis and Sebastian Faulks together with culture editors and critics from several newspapers and magazines (Clark n. pag.). Margaret Atwood stated that that the Folio Prize is “much needed in a world in which money is increasingly becoming the measure of all things” (Lawless n. pag.).

The discussion on the new entry rules for the Man Booker Prize in 2014 did not end that year. A month after Paul Beatty became the first American author to win the Man Booker Prize for his novel *The Sellout*, Julian Barnes called for the Man Booker Prize to exclude authors from the United States once again. He was backed by A.S. Byatt, Philip Hensher, Susan Hill and others. In an interview with the *Radio Times*, Barnes describes the decision as “daft”

because the prize was no longer a platform for unknown writers outside the United States to reach a global readership.

“The Americans have got enough prizes of their own. The idea of (the Booker) being Britain, Ireland, the old Commonwealth countries and new voices in English from around the world gave it a particular character and meant it could bring on writers. If you also include Americans – and get a couple of heavy hitters – then the unknown Canadian novelist hasn’t got a chance” (Kean n. pag.).

Susan Hill, an awarded British author, recently commented on the decision again to *The Guardian*, describing it as a “bad day” for authors from the United Kingdom. “I am totally in agreement with Julian”, she said. “This year saw the first author from the United States win, but the dice are now loaded against authors from the United Kingdom in sheer weight of numbers in the US” (Kean n. pag.). Only one major prize has remained open to authors only from the United Kingdom: the Costa novel of the year (Kean n.pag). In contrary, there are so many prizes in the United States dedicated to only American authors, such as the PEN award, the Bobbit National Prize for Poetry and the Janet Heidinger Kafka Prize. Philip Hensher, who agrees with Julian Barnes, wrote that it was the end of wins for British authors at the time of change. In 2013, Hensher wrote an opinion piece in *The Guardian* in which he said:

“When eligibility shifts from the UK, Commonwealth, Ireland and Zimbabwe to English-language novels published in the UK, it is hard to see how the American novel will fail to dominate. Not through excellence, necessarily, but simply through an economic superpower exerting its own literary tastes, just as the British empire imposed the idea that Shakespeare was the greatest writer who ever lived throughout its 19th-century colonies (...) Readers across the globe have understood that the Booker is a recommendation about the British or Commonwealth novel. If you want a recommendation about the all-dominating American novel, there is no shortage of prizes” (Hensher n.pag.).

His statement is in line with the general argument against the adjustments of the rule, namely that the Man Booker Prize will in the future be completely controlled by American authors. What can be concluded from Julian Barnes’ calling for a reversal of the rules of the Man Booker Prize, is that the sentiment of Philip Hensher became only stronger as the years have

passed by and more American authors have been long listed, shortlisted or even have won the prize.

This chapter set out to analyse the discussion that developed as a result of the decision of the board of the Man Booker Prize to change its requirements. Different perspectives from various authors, literary critics, board members and other parties such as publishers and people invested in the book-selling world were illustrated. This shed light on the controversy as a whole, and the scope of the discussion, which will help to analyse the discussion furthermore in chapter 3.

While researching the discussion I found that the subject reached more people than I initially expected. The discussion was not only joined by authors affiliated with the Man Booker Prize in some way, whether they were long listed, short listed, won the prize or have been a member of the jury. The decision of the Man Booker Prize board has had an effect on many branches within the literary and publishing world. There have been interviews with booksellers, publishers, and American authors; even the founder of the Rathbone Folio Prize joined the discussion. This illustrates that the discussion was very significant and relevant to many people in the literary branch. Every single one of the people that took part in the debate was either influenced by, or had an opinion about the Man Booker Prize change in requirements.

The opinions that they provided during the discussion can roughly be divided into two groups: an opposite group and a supportive group. There is not really a middle ground: opinions could all be divided amongst either one of these groups. The only “middle ground” that I could discover was an indifferent response, which was illustrated by the quote of William Self earlier in this chapter. Both of the groups contained authors, but a prominent detail is that in the opposite group we will find mostly British authors, while those authors that are in favour of the decision are mostly international or internationally oriented authors, that will of course benefit from the decision of the Man Booker Prize board. Another interesting party that took part in the debate was the booksellers, who are mainly in favour of the decision. Especially for American booksellers the requirement change means a rise in the sales of their books, should an American author win. Not all publishers are on the same page, however. It is safe to say that international publishers are generally pleased with the decision because it means that they now have the opportunity to enter novels as well. The (smaller) British and Commonwealth publishers, however, will have a hard time competing against the more significant companies that can rely on better funding. Entering the Man Booker Prize competition is expensive, and those with more money will have a better chance. In chapter 3, the discussion will be analysed

furthermore to determine the motivation behind the several parties that joined the discussion and to discover what truly lies at the heart of the debate.

Chapter 3: A Bourdieusian Analysis of the Debate

Because the Man Booker Prize is an international and prestigious *literary* prize, the discussion was quickly placed in the literary “category”. Newspapers such as *The Guardian* and *The Telegraph* dedicated an entire section on their website to the Man Booker Prize and the discussion popped up in the literary appendix of *The New York Times* and *The Independent*. The Man Booker Prize was, after all, a prize that concerned the novels of authors deemed to be classified amongst the best. The second chapter of this thesis researched this debate. It can be concluded from this chapter that the discussion that emerged after the decision to change the entry requirements for the Man Booker Prize, was a discussion primarily concerned with the involvement of America in something that was such a fundamental asset to British culture. The discussion was joined by numerous authors, both from the United Kingdom and international authors, by members of the Man Booker Prize board, publishing houses from the United Kingdom and the United States, booksellers such as Foyles, spokespersons of other literary prizes and members of several of the Man Booker Prize judging panels. It can be concluded that the discussion on the controversy covered much more ground than what was initially expected: there was something at stake for either advocates of the decision or those against the decision, and both of these groups were fundamentally convinced to be right.

This chapter will research this and eventually determine how the discussion became this important and what truly lies at heart of the discussion. The chapter will start with an overview of Britain and the British culture: what is British culture and who decides this and how does it influence the debate on the Man Booker Prize controversy of 2014? Then, the nature of the discussion will be investigated while using the work of Pierre Bourdieu as theoretical framework for this research, upon which will be elaborated later in this chapter. The conclusion of this chapter aims to answer the research question “what lies at the heart of the discussion concerning the enlargement of the requirements for the Man Booker Prize, and why did it generate so much controversy that it is still a topic which elicits much debate today?”

The British are quite protective of their country and its heritage or “Britishness”. Cultural identity has always been a difficult point in the United Kingdom: it consists of not only England, but of Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland as well. This means that there are four countries each with their own cultural characteristics, history and traditions, that work, live and share an island together. In his book *The English: A Portrait of a People*, Jeremy Paxman writes that during the time when the United Kingdom was still a world empire, no one really had to think that long about being “English” or “British”. These terms were practically the same (Veen n.pag.). Nowadays, however, this is a lot more complex. For centuries the Scots,

Welsh and Northern-Ireland Protestants felt safe and connected through the British Empire. But that connection came to an end when Scotland changed its political system due to which the country became self-governmental. At the time that this happened, in 1998, Tony Blair's political party expected the decentralisation of power to strengthen the Union, but the opposite was true. Westminster had to give away more and more power to Brussels, the monarchy lost a lot of her splendour due to all kinds of marital problems, and the Anglican church had less and less members (Veen n. pag.). All these things summed up are reasons for British identity to be a bit uncertain. The connection that once was so strong in the United Kingdom is not there anymore, which is why everything that the countries still have in common seems to be so important, and according to some has to be protected. The Man Booker Prize is one of these crucial institutions that the United Kingdom can share under the umbrella of "British culture": before 2014, the prize was accessible only to only those that were from the United Kingdom, Ireland, the Commonwealth and Zimbabwe. It was something the inhabitants of the United Kingdom could share with each other. By adjusting this and making the prize available to any author in the world, an important piece that partially keeps the United Kingdom together is at stake.

In one of his books Paul Willis, a British social scientist, says that the 'culture' that is the subject of British cultural studies is not "artifice and manners, the preserve of Sunday best, rainy afternoons and concert halls. It is the very material of our daily lives, the bricks and mortar of our most commonplace understandings" (Willis 185-6). In other words: culture is amongst others about trivial things such as what kind of clothes we decide to buy, what kind of music we listen to, what shows and news broadcasters we watch and the food that we love, but it is also the way we view ourselves in relation to others.

This idea of specifying a British culture can be related to the widely known term Britishness, which refers to the condition or value of being British, or representing British characteristics. It comprises of the qualities that connect and distinguish the British people and that form the basis of their unity and identity (Wright and Gamble 32). Since the late 20th century, the definition of Britishness became directly associated with a desire to characterize, maintain or reinstate a British identity or loyalty to Britain. Britishness can be viewed from many perspectives, but the loudest opinions are either supportive or not supportive of Britishness. The former perspective is backed by the UK Independence party, for example. Supporters of the latter perspective would be in agreement with historian David Starkey, who argued that it is impossible to teach Britishness because "a British nation does not exist as we are made up of four nations which constitutes a marketplace of identities" (BBC News n. pag.).

A recent example that illustrates perfectly this dichotomy is the Brexit. The term Brexit, a combination of the words “Britain” and “exit”, refers to the United Kingdom leaving the European Union. On June 23 2016, the British government decided to hold a referendum on the EU-membership of the United Kingdom. A small majority of 51.9 % of the votes went in favour of the referendum, thus deciding that Britain should indeed leave the European Union. The European Union membership of the United Kingdom has often been subject of debate, as the country has been creating exceptions to rules for itself ever since it became a member, such as not using the Euro as a national currency and continuing to use the British Pound. The Brexit illustrates that there are people in Britain, supporters of Britishness and the cultural values that Britain stands for, who are willing to go as far as leaving the European Union just to keep the British culture and heritage primarily British. The British higher education minister Bill Rammell, even wants to go as far as to teach “Britishness” to secondary school students.

"I very strongly believe that we are a multicultural, diverse society and I think that gives us incredible strength and richness," he told the Guardian. "But I think it is crucial that we recognise that there are some core British values that are central and common to us all" (Taylor n. pag.).

Thus, opinions on Britishness and the importance of a British cultural identity vary, and many people are either fundamentally supportive of Britishness, or not.

The Brexit seems to primarily be about politics and economics, but on a deeper level the phenomenon can be traced back to cultural identity of the British; they prefer to stay put on their own island, without any interference of other countries and cultures. The problem here is that, at the time the Man Booker Prize's rules were adjusted, this became even more difficult. The prize used to be a primarily British cultural institution, but by opening the prize up to authors that are not from the United Kingdom, Ireland, the Commonwealth or Zimbabwe, there is room for international authors to integrate on the British literary market through the Man Booker Prize. The British who voted in favour of Brexit seemingly want to lose the Europeans that are encroaching on their territories, just as much as they do not want the Americans to become involved in their economic, political and cultural situations. Just as they are trying more and more to turn this into a reality, however, the Man Booker Prize's entry rules were changed. This means that all of a sudden, the outside world can play a part in one of Britain's greatest cultural and literary institutions. The Man Booker Prize, widely acclaimed, a prize that has helped making the United Kingdom's position in the literary world even more prestigious,

is now open for entries from all over the world including America, Britain's most significant competitor.

The moment the debate on the controversy over the Man Booker Prize of 2014 developed itself, both authors, the board of the Man Booker and literary critics were able to express their ideas on the Man Booker Prize decision and inevitably did so. Initially the discussion was of a literary nature and a concern was that with the expansion of those that were eligible to join the competition, there would be less attention for little known and serious literature that originated from the Commonwealth. In his article on the importance of the Man Booker Prize, Liam Hoare says that "the Man Booker Prize casts a wide net over novelists from all across the British Commonwealth, which has given colour and light to the literary landscape of not only the United Kingdom, but other countries as well" (Hoare n.pag.). The prize serves an important function concerning the selection and promotion of smaller literature from the British Commonwealth, because publishers must agree to spend a certain amount of money on promoting the novel that enrolls in the competition.

The prize has helped to start the careers of the prize winners that won the Man Booker Prize with their debut novels, such as Aravind Adiga for *The White Tiger*, and D.B.C. Pierre for *Vernon God Little*. Another example is Salman Rushdie's novel, who joined the competition in 1993: *Midnight's Children*. The Man Booker Prize helped these Commonwealth authors receive positive reviews in the upmarket press, and enhanced their reputation further (Hoare n. pag.). Due to for example Rushdie's success of winning the Man Booker Prize and the Best of the Booker in 2008, a new generation of English language novelists from the Indian subcontinent gained popularity and success. Among them are Kiran Desai and Mohsin Hamid, the former a Man Booker Prize winner of 2006 and the latter nominated for the Man Booker Prize in 2007. One of the concerns of those not supportive of the adjustment to the rules, is that authors like Desai and Hamid will be given fewer chances to make it to the longlist or shortlist, which will eventually prevent them from winning the prize and thus the attention and publication they need to be considered as an established author.

Another prominent detail that rose from the discussion has to do with the diversity of the longlist and shortlist. So far, I have seen that the diversity of the Man Booker Prize longlist and shortlist greatly depends on the availability of the option that the judges have. Choosing between several options often results in the triumph of the most dominant group, simply because this group is bigger and thus has more chances to make it to the shortlist. Of course, the jury is at mercy of what is submitted for the Man Booker Prize. This specifically means that they are at the mercy of what the London publishers think will sell in London, as the novel

must be published in the United Kingdom to enter the competition. Several large publishing houses that are situated in the United Kingdom have ties with American publishers, which means they can greatly influence the options that are at hand for the judging panels, especially now that the prize is open to international entries. It is nearly impossible for the Man Booker Prize committee to work against that, as the only option they have is to reverse the change in the requirements to enter the competition.

The discussion continues with arguments concerning a domination of American authors on the shortlist. Several established literary prizes such as the Pulitzer and the National Book Award, only accept work written by American Authors. The Man Booker Prize has always been an exception, but some welcomed the change in requirements warmly: Michael Orthofer, literary analyst, applauds the decision of the 2014 board and categorizes the prize above a Pulitzer or National Book Award:

“For what it’s worth, I think the Man Booker, like the Folio Prize, is on the right track: if you’re looking for the best book, inclusiveness is better than exclusiveness – so the awards that I think will be most hurt by this are actually the two strictly American ones, the Pulitzer and the National Book Award, both limited (in the fiction category) to American citizens. Since the Man Booker will now automatically consider many of the books eligible for these (as long as they are also published in the UK – admittedly not a given, even for some recent NBA and Pulitzer finalists) and offer them much stiffer competition it comes out looking as the much more impressive prize” (Simpson n. pag.).

Notable is that Michael Orthofer is an American literary analyst, who is internationally oriented and will benefit from the change to the Man Booker Prize. Interesting is that he mentions the Folio Prize, the “Booker without the bowties”, as Andrew Clark put it. Orthofer places the Man Booker Prize and the Folio Prize side by side by mentioning that they are both “on the right track”. The question is whether the right track is indeed going international, or whether it would be better for the Man Booker Prize to stick to the United Kingdom, Ireland and the Commonwealth. The latter is something wished for by many, which was indicated again in 2016 by Julian Barnes, Susan Hill, Philip Hensher, A.S. Byatt and Jim Crace, when they called for a reversal of the entry requirements.

The aim of this chapter is to analyse the debate on the adjustment of the rules for the Man Booker Prize, and to research what truly lies at the heart of this discussion. In order to do so, I explained in my introduction that I will use Bourdieu’s theories on cultural identity. I can

connect his theories to the Man Booker Prize as the Man Booker Prize is a cultural institution. Bourdieu has not written about the Man Booker Prize in particular but he has mentioned that his theories are applicable to various areas, including the world of the literary prizes. Bourdieu, who did not consider himself as Marxist, was however influenced by the ideas of Karl Marx. Bourdieu studied philosophy in Paris under Marxist thinker Louis Althusser, who greatly influenced Bourdieu (Weininger 120). Especially his theories and ideas concerning cultural capital show influences of Karl Marx. Bourdieu's work has been translated to many different languages and his work is used in multiple disciplines in the humanities department. He still is considered to be one of the most prestigious sociologists, which is why his theories are used in this thesis. I will start with explaining the fundamental basis of his theory, after which I will apply this to the discussion.

The place where Bourdieu starts with his theory is called the *field*. Bourdieu saw the social world as being separated into several "fields" of practice, such as art, education, religion, politics, etcetera. Each of these separate fields has its own ideas, rules and standards and in Bourdieu's view are places where people struggle for better, higher positions (Social Theory Rewired n.pag.) What Bourdieu argues is that cultural capital forms people's foundation of social life and even predicts people's position within the social hierarchy of a community. He predicted that the more capital one has, the more powerful the position is that that person occupies in social life (Social Theory Rewired n.pag.), which we can trace back to Karl Marx' theories.

Bourdieu takes this idea of capital up to the level of a symbolic dimension of culture. His concept of cultural capital refers to all kinds of symbolic elements that, according to him, define one's culture: skills, tastes, clothing, manners, material belongings, status symbols, and so on (Social Theory Rewired n.pag.). The Man Booker Prize can be applied to several of these aspects: it indirectly defines the taste of many people, because the winning novel has an increase in sales and receives a position in several bestsellers. Additionally, the Man Booker Prize is an important status symbol for the British, especially to those involved in the literary world. The discussion which emerged after the prize was opened up to all international authors illustrates this point well. The moment word got out in 2014, every author, publisher and literary critic that felt connected to the Booker Prize in some way had an opinion on its new form.

Bourdieu continues his theory on cultural capital saying "sharing similar forms of cultural capital with others, which can range from the same taste in films to a degree from Oxford, creates a sense of collective identity and group position," which enhances the "people

like us” feeling (Social Theory Rewired n.pag.). Cultural capital comes in three different forms: embodied, objectified and institutionalized. The Man Booker Prize can be categorized under the last form: “in its institutionalized form, cultural capital refers to credentials and qualifications such as degrees or titles that symbolize cultural competence and authority” (Social Theory Rewired n.pag.). This is exactly what the Man Booker Prize and winning it means: the author that wins the Man Booker Prize is the author of the best-written novel, carefully selected by an expert jury, bound to reach the best-seller list of not only the United Kingdom but of other countries (such as America) as well. The winning novels of literary prizes are very relevant to the production and reception of literature and literary value. The fusion of the Man Booker Prize with cultural and economical capital means that it is part of the larger environment where books are published and consumed (Squires 37).

If we connect Bourdieu’s theory to the Man Booker Prize and the discussion on the change of requirements, it becomes easier to understand why the discussion gained as much attention as it did, and the reason why so many authors, literary critics, publishers and others affiliated with the Man Booker Prize were so eager to respond to the discussion and share their views. Because the Man Booker Prize is such a prestigious prize that defines a part of the British culture, it is part of the British cultural capital. Bourdieu mentioned in his work that “the more capital one has, the more powerful a position one occupies in social life” (Social Theory Rewired n.pag.). If this is applied to the Man Booker Prize, it means that the Booker Prize is one of the reasons for Britain’s success and prestige in the literary world. It is part of the cultural capital of Britain and by opening it up to international authors, a piece of this cultural capital is lost by Britain but gained by someone else, in this case America. This is also the underlying reason why Americans are so eager to join and are so enthusiastic about the decision of the Man Booker Prize Board, which I illustrated in chapter 2: for Britain, there is something at stake. For America, there is something to win: a substantial piece of cultural capital could be theirs, the only obstacle is actually winning the Man Booker Prize. If we believe authors such as Julian Barnes, who called for a reinstatement of the rules from before 2014, this is not very difficult to achieve, which is also the reason why he so greatly expresses his concerns on the new rules of the Man Booker Prize.

In an interview with *The Guardian*, Jim Crace stated: “There’s something in there that you would lose if you open it up to American authors”. It is interesting that he specifically mentions the American authors, rather than merely saying it are international authors that would cause the Man Booker Prize competition to “lose something”, as he puts it. The gist that this gives us is that the Americans, not only an economic but also a cultural superpower, will

eventually cause the Man Booker Prize to become less British and more American. American authors will probably write about America, because that is what they know the most about: Joshua Ferris' *To Rise Again at a Decent Hour*, one of the first American novels to be shortlisted, is set in America, is about an American dentist who does American things, such as being a huge fan of the Red Sox Baseball team. The other author to be shortlisted for the Man Booker Prize when it first opened up to international authors was Karen Joy Fowler. Her shortlisted novel, *We Are All Completely Besides Ourselves*, is also set in the United States of America and narrates the struggles, secrets and temptations of an American family. It will be changes like this that eventually change the Man Booker Prize as a whole, which is why it is such a struggle for so many authors to come to terms with.

This chapter researched the discussion from a Bourdieusian perspective and eventually determined how the discussion became this important and what truly lies at heart of the discussion. Using Pierre Bourdieu's theories, I explained why the discussion and the Man Booker Prize are so fundamentally important to the British: it is part of their cultural capital and thus of their cultural identity. By opening the prize up to authors from all over the world, this part of their identity is up for anyone willing to take it. The prize is internationally prestigious and one of the greatest prizes in literature, something that the British are proud of. The United Kingdom itself already is divided, and having a cultural, prestigious institution up for the taking does not contribute to the country as a cultural unity. This is what truly lies at the heart of the discussion of the Man Booker Prize: it is not primarily about the literary side, but about an assault on the cultural identity of the British. This also is the reason for the debate to become so important an on-going: cultural identity is something that affects everyone, and is thus a topic that everyone can join and discuss, which is exactly what happened.

Conclusion

The discussion concerning the Man Booker Prize change in requirements has many supporters of the decision, but also many that are fundamentally against it. The discussion is still much debated in the world of literary prizes today. This thesis researched this discussion to eventually answer the research question “What lies at the heart of the discussion concerning the enlargement of the requirements for the Man Booker Prize, and why did it generate so much controversy that it is still a topic which elicits much debate today?”

Chapter one of this thesis aimed to elaborate on how the Man Booker Prize was established, its history, the several people involved with the Man Booker Prize and what the relevance of the prize entails nowadays. It was not difficult to create an overview of the prize and everything involved with it, because the Man Booker Prize is a prestigious institution that has been researched before extensively. I was able to connect several characteristics of the prize to Bourdieu’s theory’s on cultural capital and corporate sponsorship, which helped to eventually answer the research question in chapter three.

In chapter two, I explained the discussion that emerged from the decision of the Man Booker Prize Board and what this discussion entails in great detail. The aim of this chapter was to shed light on the controversy as a whole and the scope of the discussion, which helped to analyse the discussion further in chapter 3. The discussion took place on several different media platforms, which made it difficult to create a clear and structured overview of it while this was the goal of the second chapter.

After analysing the discussion on the several media platforms where it took place, I found that arguments in favour of the decision focus primarily on internationalization of the prize. The Man Booker Prize board declared that the prize needed to raise its standards and that this would make winning the prize even more valuable and exciting. By including writers from around the world, the Man Booker Prize would reinforce its standing as the most important literary award in the English-speaking world. The change was also welcomed by publishers and booksellers, who enjoyed an increase in sales of their books due to the change. Especially American publishers were enthusiastic about the decision as they were able to put their writers on the international map even more this way.

The main concern critics had with the decision was that the shortlist would be dominated by American authors. Another concern was that the changes would diminish opportunities for smaller English publishers to get noticed. American publishing houses are larger than those in the United Kingdom, which means they have more resources and funds at their disposal. Another argument against the 2014 decision was that it was only done to

reduce competition with the Rathbone Folio Prize, which is a literary prize that encompasses all novels written in English. The prize could have become a source of competition for the Man Booker Prize if it had not changed its requirements for admittance.

In chapter three I answered my research question by linking my findings on the debate to the theories on cultural identity of Pierre Bourdieu. I came to the conclusion that the debate that was the result of the Man Booker Prize Board decision was primarily a debate about the cultural identity of the British rather than a debate about the literary characteristics of the prize. By using Bourdieu's theories I concluded that the Man Booker Prize is an institution that is part of the British cultural capital, which means that the prize opening up to international authors could result in that piece of cultural capital being taken away. This is also why the topic generated as much debate as it did: because cultural identity affects everyone, everyone is able to comment on it.

To conclude, the discussion on the controversy covered much more ground than what I initially expected. There is a lot more to research on this matter. The Man Booker Prize is an incredibly complex cultural institution and has been through many controversial situations and moments, which are all interesting to research. If the scope of this thesis had been bigger it would have been interesting to investigate those moments. I also would have paid more attention to the "middle field". Those in favour and those against the decision were all quite firm in their opinions, which is why there was an absence of a middle-field in the discussion. I lightly touched upon this in my second chapter but in further research, this is something that could be elaborated on more. It is perhaps interesting to research *why* all the people that joined the debate are so firm when it comes to their opinion, and why there seems to be so little room for compromising or understanding.

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