

The Man Booker Prize and its Influence on the
Reception of its Nominees

A Case Study of Julian Barnes' *The Sense of an Ending* and
A.D. Miller's *Snowdrops*

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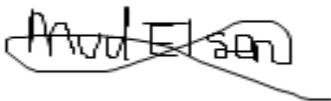
The Man Booker Prize and its Influence on the Reception of its Nominees: A Case Study of Julian Barnes' *The Sense of an Ending* and A.D. Miller's *Snowdrops*

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A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Merel van den Elsen', written in a cursive style with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Merel van den Elsen

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Abstract

This bachelor thesis examines the way in which the Man Booker prize plays a role in the general reception of the prize's selected nominees. It will present an analysis of two specific novels that were nominated for the Man Booker Prize in 2011, and will do this in the form of case studies. These case studies will be situated within the framework of discourse analysis, based on the theory by Michel Foucault, as will be modelled after Anna Auguscik's method in *Prizing Debate* (2017). This theory and method will be used in case studies on 2011 Booker Prize winner Julian Barnes and his novel *The Sense of an Ending* as well as nominee A.D. Miller with *Snowdrops*. The structure of the case studies will be according to the five phases Auguscik identifies in *Prizing Debate* as being most influential for a novel's reception. These five phases include pre-publication positioning, post publication coverage, attention on behalf of other prizes and events, interest surrounding paperback publication and finally, remaining attention on behalf of the novel's connectivity to other events etc. Each case study will result in an "attention profile". Not only will I attempt to apply Auguscik's method to my own case studies, I will also put it to the test to see if it succeeds in what it sets out to do, namely, to measure the Booker's effect on the reception of its nominees.

Key words: Man Booker Prize, reception studies, discourse analysis, literary prizes, literary awards, Anna Auguscik, Michel Foucault, Case Studies, attention profiles

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Introduction

‘Prizes don't make writers and writers don't write to win prizes, but in the near-glut of literary awards now on offer, the Booker remains special. It's the one which, if we're completely honest, we most covet.’ (Graham Swift)

‘The Man Booker Prize is the leading literary award in the English speaking world’, declares the Man Booker Prize on their official website, adding that ‘it has brought recognition, reward and readership to outstanding fiction for five decades’. (Man Booker Prize website) It goes on to state that ‘each prize has the power to transform the winner’s career’ and that winning the Booker Prize is ‘the ultimate accolade for many writers’.¹ The Booker guarantees its winners “international recognition” and a “huge increase in sales” first in hardback and later on in paperback.² The prize’s central purpose is to ‘encourage and reward authors’, ‘establish good quality fiction targeted at the intelligent general audience’, ‘assimilate high quality fiction into the mainstream’ and ‘to raise publicity and to sell a lot of books.’ (Cheele 2) While the Booker Prize promises recognition, reward and readership to its winners, the award is arguably equally famous for its history of controversy and has been object of debate ever since its creation in 1969. The Prize’s longlists and shortlists have been criticized for being too readable, too commercial and not “bookish” enough. Others have deemed the nominee list too elitist, snobbish, high-brow and catering only to scholars and inhabitants of the ivory tower. In 1981, nominee John Banville, Irish novelist and screenwriter, famously published a letter in *The Guardian* in which he came down on the judges for their elitist tendencies, requesting the committee to give him the Booker prize so that he could purchase every copy of the longlisted books and give them to libraries, ‘thus ensuring that the books not only are bought but also read—surely a unique occurrence’.³ The year 2011 stood out in the prize’s history as one that was particularly controversial and provoked strong criticism. The disapproval was largely aimed at the judges and their focus on “readability”, thus sacrificing literary quality. In an attempt to justify the longlist, judge Christ Mullin said that for him the books ‘had to zip along’ and

¹ “About.” The Man Booker Prize, themanbookerprize.com/fiction/about

² “About.” The Man Booker Prize, themanbookerprize.com/fiction/about.

³ “Man Booker Prize: a history of controversy, criticism and literary greats”. *The Guardian*. 18 October 2011.

chairman Rimington declared that they wanted people ‘to buy and read these books, not buy and admire them’.⁴ In her article “Booker Prize Divides Quality from Readability, Says Andrew Motion.”, Alison Flood also reported that former poet laureate Andrew Motion spoke out and blasted the 2011 Booker judges for creating what he called a “false divide” between highbrow literature and accessible books. Motion commented that the prize should not become a theatre that creates a split between quality on the one hand, and readability on the other.⁵ Fellow poet Jackie Kay added that ‘it is a sad day when even the Booker is afraid to be bookish’.⁶ In response to the commotion surrounding the 2011 Man Booker Prize shortlist, Gaby Wood, one of the year’s five judges, wrote an article for *The Telegraph*: “Man Booker Prize: Julian Barnes and our sense of a happy ending” in which she looked back on the selection process and defended choosing Barnes as the winner. Wood expressed being ‘surprised and rather excited’ by the ‘fuss’ the Man Booker Prize had created that year and stated:

Every year, when the Man Booker longlist is announced, the press (of which, of course, I am a member) looks for a story in it – are there fewer women than usual? Are the books more depressing than usual, or more thrilling? But a really good longlist is not tilted that way – it tells no story other than that this is an excellent year for fiction.⁷

Wood went on to declare that she was ‘exceptionally proud’ of the winner and of their shortlisted authors and that it was important for everyone to remember that while the Man Booker prize has the power to change a writer’s life, ‘a prize is only a prize’, and that it’s not an investigation, work of criticism or the ‘result of common-or-garden-enjoyment’ either.⁸

The Booker Prize may have a history of controversy, its impact on nominated authors is undeniable. Claire Squires presents support for this in *Book Marketing and the Booker Prize* (2007) using the example of Yann Martel’s *Life of Pi*, the 2002 Booker Prize winner, to demonstrate the effect of winning this award. Squires states that in the first week after it was

⁴ Flood, Alison. “Booker Prize Divides Quality from Readability, Says Andrew Motion.” *The Guardian*, Guardian News and Media, 16 Oct. 2011, www.theguardian.com/books/2011/oct/16/booker-prize-criticism-andrew-motion.

⁵ Flood, “Booker Prize Divides Quality from Readability, Says Andrew Motion.”

⁶ Flood, “Booker Prize Divides Quality from Readability, Says Andrew Motion.”

⁷ Wood, Gaby. “Man Booker Prize: Julian Barnes and Our Sense of a Happy Ending.” *The Telegraph*, Telegraph Media Group, 18 Oct. 2011, www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/books/booker-prize/8833974/Man-Booker-Prize-Julian-Barnes-and-our-sense-of-a-happy-ending.html.

⁸ Wood, “Man Booker Prize: Julian Barnes and Our Sense of a Happy Ending.” *The Telegraph*

announced as the winner, *Life of Pi* sold approximately 7,150 copies in the UK, which made it the bestselling hardback fiction title in that week.⁹ ‘The following week, it sold 9,336 copies. Previously, it had sold only 6,287 copies in total since its May publication, about half of which had been after its shortlisting.’ (Squires 86) Squires goes on to say that while not all Booker titles enjoy such spectacular sales, they do all evince a clear increase. In 2003, *Vernon God Little* (2003) by D.B.C Pierre, saw an increase from selling only 373 copies in the week prior to winning, to selling 7,977 copies in the week after the announcement.¹⁰ In another example of the commercial success the Booker instigates, Squires presents the case of Margaret Atwood’s *The Blind Assassin* (2000), which famously ‘skyrocketed from a mere 200 copies per week to selling over 3,000 a week’.¹¹ Considering these statistics, it appears safe to say that winning the Man Booker Prize has a considerable impact on the winner’s commercial success.

Richard Todd discusses the commercial successes of the Man Booker Prize winners in his book *Booker Prize, Consuming Fictions: The Booker Prize and Fiction in Britain Today* (1996), and argues that the award also has a distinct impact on commodifying and canonizing these novels. Todd contends that there has been a growing commercialization of literature since 1969, when the Booker Prize launched.¹² He comments that novelists have ‘worked in an increasingly intensified atmosphere, one in which both the promotion and the reception of serious literary fiction have become steadily more consumer oriented’. (Todd 128) While he does not attribute the commercialization of literature solely to the Booker Prize and touches upon other influencing factors, he does present a strong argument on the impact of the Booker Prize on sales of Booker Prize winners and other shortlisted authors.¹³ In *Book Marketing and the Booker Prize* (2007), Squires also explores the uses and the influence of the strapline ‘Booker Prize Winner’ or variations thereof in the marketing of winning Booker titles. She argues that the strapline is used to market winning authors and his or her book, shortlisted authors and their books, and future and reissues of other works in winning author’s oeuvres.¹⁴ She continues to set forth her argument with the example of Mantel’s *Life of Pi*, a novel that now features two

⁹ Squires, Claire. “Book Marketing and the Booker Prize.” *Judging a Book by Its Cover: Fans, Publishers, Designers, and the Marketing of Books*. Eds. Nicole Matthews and Nickianne Moody. London: Ashgate, 2007.71-82

¹⁰ Squires, *Book Marketing and the Booker Prize* (2007)

¹¹ Squires, *Book Marketing and the Booker Prize* (2007)

¹² Todd, Richard. *Consuming Fictions: the Booker Prize and Fiction in Britain Today*. Bloomsbury, 1996.

¹³ Todd, *Consuming Fictions: the Booker Prize and Fiction in Britain Today*. 128

¹⁴ Squires, *Book Marketing and the Booker Prize* (2007) 88-89

straplines on its paperback reprints.¹⁵ One of the straplines is featured at the bottom of the book, indicating that the book is “Winner of the Man Booker Prize 2002”. The second one is situated at the top of the cover with the words ‘The Number One Bestseller’.¹⁶ Squires argues that these joint straplines are closely interrelated, as *Life of Pi*’s Booker win undoubtedly contributed to making it into an international bestseller.¹⁷ By so clearly conjoining elements of critical and commercial success, Squires argues, the cover of *Life of Pi* encapsulates James F. English’s development of sociologist Pierre Bourdieu’s concept of the field of cultural production.¹⁸

Bourdieu’s work, with his concepts of different forms of capital (economic, social, cultural and symbolic) in particular, has been greatly influential in the field of prize research. Anna Auguscik even goes as far as stating that this field of study would be unthinkable without his concepts of capital and that ‘their conversation, as well as the idea of exerting power through symbolic violence’ have become a staple in this field of research. (Auguscik 16) In his journal article “Winning the Culture Game: Prizes, Awards, and the Rules of Art” (2002), James F. English discusses Bourdieu’s concepts of cultural, economic and symbolic capital and examines how these relate to cultural prizes such as the Turner Prizes and the Man Booker Prize. English continues the discussion on literary prizes in *The Economy of Prestige: Prizes, Awards, and the Circulation of Cultural Value* (2005), placing them as being part of a larger and global cultural phenomenon. In doing so, he modernized Bourdieu’s concepts and placed the Man Booker Prize in this context, looking at it from a more global perspective and through the lens of the “economy of prestige”.¹⁹ Squires argues that the cover straplines of *Life of Pi* reflect a coming together of cultural and economic capital with the award of the Booker Prize. She concludes that straplines mentioning literary awards signify the conferral of popular and literary success on books, and the particular combination of economic and cultural capital that prizes such as the Booker are capable of bestowing on their winning and shortlisted titles.²⁰

The main objective of this thesis is to address the following question: In what ways does a literary award such as the Man Booker Prize influence the reception of its nominated novels?

¹⁵ Squires, *Book Marketing and the Booker Prize* (2007). 88-89

¹⁶ Squires, *Book Marketing and the Booker Prize* (2007). 89

¹⁷ Squires, *Book Marketing and the Booker Prize* (2007). 89

¹⁸ Squires, *Book Marketing and the Booker Prize* (2007). 90

¹⁹ English, James F. *The Economy of Prestige Prizes, Awards, and the Circulation of Cultural Value*. Harvard University Press, 2008. 24

²⁰ Squires, *Book Marketing and the Booker Prize* (2007). 89

In terms of methodology I will look at two specific novels and analyze them in case studies that are modelled after the method used by Anna Auguscik in her recent book *Prizing Debate*. Not only will I attempt to apply Auguscik's method, I will also put it to the test. What happens when this method is applied to a later Booker year? Is the method she uses to measure a literary award's influence on a novel, a valid one? Does it "work"? Does it allow one to examine and obtain a clear view on a novel's reception and the way that a literary award like the Man Booker Prize influences that reception?

The focus in these case studies will be on the media coverage on these particular novels, at set moments in time; before, during and after the nomination for the award. Auguscik studied the media coverage in national newspapers, literary, trade and other specialist magazines, as well as academic journals to examine the way that these novels become a part of public debate and how their public and critical profile is changed by the attention which is bestowed upon them with the nomination and selection for the Booker. (Auguscik 18). Auguscik made a rather unconventional choice when it came to the theoretical framework she used as the basis for her research. The most commonly used theory for research on literary and other cultural prizes is Pierre Bourdieu's sociological approach and his theory of the literary field. However, Auguscik decided to use Michel Foucault's discourse analytic approach instead. Auguscik explains that one of her reasons for choosing a discourse analytic approach was motivated by the fact that it allowed her to analyze the Booker prize's double entity; as both the object and subject of debate. The Booker prize is both object and subject of debate, as it is one among participants in 'literary interaction' but also consists of individual representatives of these participants at the same time.²¹ Due to the limitations of scope of a thesis, the research I will be conducting will of course not be as extensive as that of Auguscik. Even though the methodology and the theoretical framework will be modelled after Auguscik's in *Prizing Debate*, I will be doing case studies on a more recent Booker year (Auguscik stopped at 2008). In doing so, this thesis will also be assessing whether or not Auguscik's methods still "work" when they are applied to a more recent year. In addition I will be diverting from *Prizing Debate* as I will not only be considering the year's winner (Julian Barnes) but will also take into account A.D. Miller's *Snowdrops* (2011), the shortlisted novel that was deemed least likely to win that year, (declared on July 26th, 2011

²¹ Squires, *Book Marketing and the Booker Prize* (2007). 10

by *The Bookseller* to have odds of 16/1 of winning the Booker Prize).²² This is different in the sense that Auguscik only chose to compare the winner to its biggest rival in her case studies. My motivation for considering a less popular nominee is that I want to look at the way that the Booker affects a novel, even when it may have not been granted as much attention compared to the year's most likely winners. In my research I suspect to find that Auguscik's method is an effective way to get a sense of the Booker's effect on the reception of novels to a certain degree, but that it will not be able to provide a reconstruction of reality nor a complete overview of the discourse surrounding the award and a specific novel.

In terms of theory, Auguscik states that she draws on the concepts of 'reversal', 'discontinuity', 'specificity' and 'exteriority' presented by Foucault in his 1972 inaugural lecture 'L'ordre du Discours', in her case studies.²³ The first chapter of this thesis will be devoted to providing more information on the methodological and theoretical framework used by Auguscik in her research and will explain in greater detail exactly how the case studies in this thesis will be conducted. The second and third chapter will consider the impact of the Booker Prize on the reception of Julian Barnes' *The Sense of an Ending* and A.D. Miller's *Snowdrops*. Lastly, the concluding chapter will present and analyze the main findings of the case studies and will attempt to answer the research question by drawing on the conclusions from the case studies and make recommendations for further research.

²² Graeme, Neill. "Hollinghurst Favourite to Win Man Booker." *The Bookseller*, The Bookseller, 26 July 2011, www.thebookseller.com/news/hollinghurst-favourite-win-man-booker.

²³ Michel Foucault, "The Discourse on Language", *Critical Theory since 1985*, eds. Hazard Adams and Leeroy Searle. Tallahassee: Florida State UP, 1986. 158

Chapter One: Theoretical Framework and Method

In this thesis I will be doing case studies of two novels and aim to examine the influence of the Booker on the selected novels, and how these novels are received and spoken about in various contexts. I will be modelling the method underlying these case studies after the method Anna Auguscik used in *Prizing Debate* (2017). This chapter will be dedicated to presenting the theoretical and methodological framework of Auguscik's work and will explain how these will come back in my research.

The most commonly used theory for research on literary or other cultural prizes is Pierre Bourdieu's sociological approach with his theories on the literary field. Bourdieu's works include *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste* (1984), *Language and Symbolic Power* (1991) and *The Field of Cultural Production* (1993). As a French sociologist and cultural theorist, Bourdieu is largely known for his concepts of *capital*, a term that can be subcategorized in social capital, cultural capital and symbolic capital and which argues that each individual occupies more than one social position.²⁴ According to Foucault's work, these types of capital help the ruling and intellectual classes in maintaining their power in postindustrial societies.²⁵ In his book *Distinction*, Bourdieu argues that each person internalizes aesthetic dispositions from an early age, and that social class is thus demonstrated and maintained by how people present their social spaces to the world. He was of the opinion that language functioned as a 'mechanism of power'.²⁶ 'Rather than emphasizing economic factors in social domination, Bourdieu was more interested in how social actors engaged with symbolic capital.' (Baker and Ellece 161) However, Auguscik's work differentiates from other studies on literary awards and the Booker Prize, as she grounds her research in a different theory than that of Bourdieu. Instead of using a sociological approach, she draws on the principles of discourse analysis, with a focus on Foucauldian concepts of discourse analysis.

²⁴ Baker, Paul, and Sibonile Ellece. *Key Terms in Discourse Analysis*. Bloomsbury Academic, 2013.

²⁵ Baker and Ellece. *Key Terms in Discourse Analysis*. 161

²⁶ Bourdieu, Pierre, et al. *Distinction: a Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*. Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2015.

1.1 What is (Foucauldian) Discourse Analysis?

Michel Foucault has played a central role in the development of discourse analysis through both theoretical work and empirical research', and is probably the most quoted figure when it comes to discourse analytical approaches.²⁷ Foucault's definition of discourse is that [it] "is made up of a limited number of statements for which a group of conditions of existence can be defined. Discourse in this sense is not an ideal, timeless form [...] it is, from beginning to end, historical – a fragment of history [...] posing its own limits, its divisions, its transformations, the specific modes of its temporality. (Foucault 117) Foucault's aim in his research is to examine the structure of different regimes of knowledge, in other words, the rules for what can and cannot be said and the rules for what is considered to be true and false.²⁸ In *Discourse Analysis as Theory and Method*, Jørgensen and Phillips state that 'the majority of contemporary discourse analytical approaches follow Foucault's conception of discourses as relatively rule-bound sets of statements which impose limits on what gives meaning.' (Jørgensen & Phillips 15) This fact in itself shows the extent to which Foucault has left his mark on the field of discourse analytical work. Foucault is also known for his theories on power and knowledge, in his genealogical work.²⁹ He argues that instead of power belonging to particular agents, such as individuals, the state or a group with particular interests, power is spread across different social practices.³⁰ 'It is also Foucault who provided the starting point for discourse analysis' understanding of the subject.' (15) To recapitulate, Foucault argues that subjects are created in discourses and states that 'discourse is not the majestically unfolding manifestation of a thinking, knowing, speaking subject'. (Foucault 55)

1.2 Auguscik's Methodological Choices

Auguscik motivates her choice for discourse analysis by first stating that while Bourdieu's work has been greatly influential for prize research, and many researchers in the field use Bourdieu's concepts, not all of them do, and 'in order to incorporate those that do and those that do not, in order to describe the 'constellation' of different but co-existing perspectives, including non-academic perspectives by publishers, booksellers, reviewers, politicians etc.'

²⁷ Jørgensen, Marianne, and Louise Phillips. *Discourse Analysis as Theory and Method*. Sage, 2011.

²⁸ Jørgensen and Louise Phillips. *Discourse Analysis as Theory and Method*. 15.

²⁹ Jørgensen and Louise Phillips. *Discourse Analysis as Theory and Method*. 15.

³⁰ Jørgensen and Louise Phillips. *Discourse Analysis as Theory and Method*. 15.

(Auguscik 16-17), this methodological tool seemed most effective. Applying a discourse analytical approach allowed her to ‘describe this constellation of speakers, their subject positions, the settings in which they speak, which terms they use’ and what it is they present about the novels and ‘the Booker’s involvement in the books’ life cycles’. (17) Auguscik further motivates her choice of methodology by explaining that it allowed her to analyze the Booker’s double role as both object and subject of debate; it is one among participants in ‘literary interaction’ but also consists of individual representatives of these participants at the same time. (10) She states that the interdependence of the participating parties and their ‘diverse but co-existing perspectives on the Booker’ attracts attention ‘when one specifically asks who invests (money, prestige, attention) in Booker-eligible novels and how and in what ways these investments function’. (13) Auguscik explains that it is these kind of negotiations, who participates in them and the context in which they take place that *Prizing Debate* (2017) aims to examine.³¹ ‘In other words, this inquiry asks how the Prize and its influence on a particular novel or on literature in general are discussed with regard to both the speaker’s position as an author, a publisher, a reviewer, an academic or a prize judge and the particular settings in which these people make their observations [...]’ (13)

Auguscik explains that her understanding of Michel Foucault’s theory of discourse analysis provides a theoretical and terminological framework because ‘it lends itself for the evaluation of statements made in debates on the Booker Prize’. (13) Foucault argues it is important to realize that before we can understand any form of statement, “we must first discover the law operation behind it” as well as “the place from which it comes”. (Foucault 55) In other words, we have to ask ourselves not only what is said, but also who is speaking and in which setting the subjects are speaking. In his 1972 inaugural lecture *L’ordre du discours*, Foucault presents four principles; ‘reversal’, ‘discontinuity’, ‘specificity’ and ‘exteriority’, and it is these principles that Auguscik draws upon most in her research.³² Auguscik applied these four concepts to the discourse surrounding the Man Booker Prize. She explains *exteriority* in relation to the Booker prize, in the sense that ‘novels are spoken about it different settings and need to be understood in the context in which they are given attention’. (13) She continues that there is *specificity* because each of the

³¹ Auguscik, Anna. *Prizing Debate: the Fourth Decade of the Booker Prize and the Contemporary Novel in the UK*. (2017) 13.

³² Auguscik, *Prizing Debate* (2017). 13.

novels and their profiles are highly specific, ‘and neither the public’s reaction to Booker-winning books nor the Prize’s influence on a novel’s further trajectory is the same’. (13) There is *discontinuity* in the sense that a novel presents itself differently to an informed reader before and after said novel has been honored with the prize.³³ ‘In fact’, Auguscik adds, ‘a book which was awarded the Booker is not the same book it was before it was thus distinguished: instead, it becomes a Booker book’. (13) Finally, Auguscik applies Foucault’s principle of *reversal* to the Booker prize, stating that ‘the Booker Prize is not awarded to the “best novel” - it creates a “best novel” by facilitating a space for debate’. (13) Auguscik does not, however, discuss how these four Foucauldian principles will play a role in her case studies.

1.3 Methodology of Case Studies:

Auguscik introduces what she calls a novel’s ‘public and critical profile’ which constitutes the distribution of attention in various media forms, ‘i.e. the sum of statements made in a novel’s profile - a list of who says what and in which context about a particular novel’. (14) By putting together attention profiles of selected novels, Auguscik aims to construct a view one does not usually have: ‘an archive of different perspectives and an excerpt from the debate in which the novels were used’. (113) The attention profiles are compiled by perspectives of academics, publishers, booksellers, readers and ‘advanced’ readers.³⁴ Auguscik states that, ‘in order to gauge the Booker’s effect on the discussion of the novel’, she focuses on how these participants, ‘mainly through comments in public media - evaluate the appearance of the Booker in the course of an ongoing conversation about the novel’. (113) Such an attention profile facilitates an analysis of the presence of a novel in the debate according to the four Foucauldian principles (exteriority, specificity, discontinuity, reversal) and helps understand the changes and adjustments to the discussion during a book’s ‘life cycle’. Auguscik has organized ‘the ensuing pattern of attention for each novel’ in roughly five phases which are geared ‘to the main events in its ‘itinerary’: hardcover and paperback publications, as well as events between these two such as the nomination for literary prizes.’ (115) Auguscik presents the five phases as follows:

³³ Auguscik, *Prizing Debate*, 13.

³⁴ Auguscik, *Prizing Debate*, 13.

1. Pre-publication positioning
2. Post publication coverage
3. Attention on behalf of prizes and other events
4. Interest surrounding paperback publication
5. Remaining attention in the media granted on behalf of the novels' 'connectivity' with other events (including prizes), seasonal coverage, and in comparison with other novels [...]

The hardcover publication is identified as the most important event in a novel's life cycle, as it generally inspires the biggest peak of media attention. Auguscik explains that the second, the paperback publication, is already a less secure element of a book's 'itinerary' or 'timetable', for the following reason: 'the timing of this may depend on how the hardcover edition fared in terms of sales figures' and in addition can vary because of 'a difference in publication timing between the UK and the US, [...]'. (114) Auguscik continues by stating that the novel's first publication brings with it pre- and post-publication coverage and that this pattern can also be traced with the paperback publication (9-12 months later).³⁵ This sort of media coverage, which Auguscik refers to as 'core critical responses to the novels, i.e. reviews', mostly surrounds the date of publication, but it can also be triggered by other events as well.³⁶ 'In between the two publications, a high-profile novel can be expected to catch the attention of prize juries, festival organizers and cultural commentators.' (114) Auguscik identifies two additional types of attention a book can gain and these are a mix of marketing, critical responses such as reviews and general public attention, however, due to limited space, this thesis will not be including these types of attention in the present case studies.³⁷

Auguscik also makes a distinction in the attention profiles for her case studies between 'short-term' and 'long-term' profiles. The short-term version of the profile ranges from 'its first pre-publication mention in one of the selected public media to the moment of diminishing public

³⁵ Auguscik, *Prizing Debate*, 114

³⁶ Auguscik, *Prizing Debate*, 114

³⁷ Auguscik, *Prizing Debate*, 115, further explanation: 'Articles which present a mix of critical and public attention include interviews with the author or what are known as author profiles, references to the novel in reviews of the author's other works or comparisons in reviews of other writers' books. Examples which present a mix of marketing and public attention include a novel's presence on bestseller lists, previews, as well as (mostly pre-publication) blurb-like alers with no critical input.'

attention after its paperback publication, one which usually signified the end of its prize cycle as well.³⁸ In the case studies in chapters two and three of this thesis, I will discuss pivotal moments in the itinerary of the selected novels and will (only) be paying attention to a construction of a ‘short-time’ profile. I will be making use of the online LexisNexis Academic database, made available to me by Radboud University, to collect the sources that discuss the selected novels in relation to the Booker Prize, which I will need to create the attention profiles in the case studies.

³⁸ Auguscik, *Prizing Debate*, 116

Chapter Two: *The Sense of An Ending*

2.1 Fourth Time's a Charm

Julian Barnes was born in Leicester, England on January 19th 1946 and had his first novel, *Metroland*, published in 1980.³⁹ In this semi-autobiographical story, Barnes explores what it meant to grow up in the suburbs of London and living in Paris as a post-graduate student.⁴⁰ Barnes' debut novel reportedly did not go over well with Barnes' mother, 'who complained of a "bombardment" of filth after reading the novel - but fared rather better with the critics, and the novel was awarded the Somerset Maugham Award in 1981'.⁴¹ In 1997 the novel was adapted to film and featured actors such as Christian Bale and Emma Watson.⁴² Barnes received his first Man Booker Prize nomination for *Flaubert's Parrot* (1984), which marked his third novel, but ended up losing the award to Anita Brookner's novel *Hotel du Lac* (1984).⁴³ *Metroland* did, however, win the Geoffrey Faber Memorial Prize a year later.⁴⁴ In 1998, Barnes was shortlisted for the Booker again with his highly acclaimed *England, England*, fourteen years after his first nomination for the prize, and once more in 2005 with *Arthur and George*.⁴⁵ On both occasions, Barnes went home empty-handed. 'After three previous Booker Prize for Fiction nominations (Flaubert's Parrot; England, England; Arthur and George), Barnes finally won the prestigious prize in 2011 with *The Sense of an Ending*, though he had mixed feelings about the award (which he has famously called 'posh bingo'), having been pipped at the post so many times.' (*British Council, Literature, "Julian Barnes"*)

This chapter will present the first case study, and will shine a light on Julian Barnes' Booker winning novel *The Sense of An Ending*. I will be looking at the way winning the Booker Prize, and the wave of public attention it instigated as a result, affected the book's reception and will discuss various stages in the novel's life cycle. I will present the novel's attention profile by looking at the discourse surrounding the novel in the light of the attention phases mentioned in

³⁹ "Julian Barnes - Profile." *The Telegraph*, Telegraph Media Group, 18 Oct. 2011.

⁴⁰ "Julian Barnes - Profile." *The Telegraph*.

⁴¹ "Julian Barnes - Profile." *The Telegraph*.

⁴² "Julian Barnes - Profile." *The Telegraph*.

⁴³ "Julian Barnes - Profile." *The Telegraph*.

⁴⁴ "Julian Barnes - Profile." *The Telegraph*.

⁴⁵ "Julian Barnes - Profile." *The Telegraph*.

the previous chapter. In short, the attention profile for Barnes eleventh novel can be described as the following: (1) pre- and post-publication coverage in the media starting in August 2011; (2) coverage in reference to its Booker Prize nomination, with a peak in September; (3) attention on behalf of other awards (4) remaining attention and the 2017 film adaptation.

2.2 “A Double on the Rocks”: Pre- and Post-Publication Media Coverage

The first time the novel began to spark interest was in July and August 2011. *The Sense of an Ending* was officially published by Jonathan Cape in hardback on August 4th, and at that time had already been announced to be on the Booker Longlist on July 25th of 2011. The novel went straight onto the bestseller list after its official publication.⁴⁶ After the Booker announced their 2011 longlist to the public, naturally reviews of the novel started flooding in. The vast majority of the reviews proved to be very positive. In a pre-publication review for *The Evening Standard*, Nicholas Lezard states that Barnes has managed to compress ‘a story with long temporal sweep into a scant 150 pages’ and that he has succeeded in having ‘effectively doubled the length of the book by giving us a final revelation that obliges us to reread it’.⁴⁷ Justine Jordan, writing for *The Guardian*, writes in another early review that *The Sense of An Ending*, ‘with its patterns and repetitions, scrutinizing its own workings from every possible angle’, becomes ‘a highly wrought meditation on aging memory and regret’.⁴⁸ She adds that it gives ‘as much resonance to what is unknown and unspoken – lost to memory – as it does to the engine of its own plot’.⁴⁹ In a pre-publication review for the *Daily Telegraph*, Anita Brookner comments on the effect of Barnes’ novel and describes it as “disturbing”, and even more so ‘for being written with Barnes’ habitual lucidity’⁵⁰. Brookner even goes as far as stating that Barnes’ reputation ‘will surely be enhanced by this book’. (Brookner, *Daily Telegraph*). In early August, when *The Sense of an Ending* had just been announced as being on the Booker’s longlist, Michael Prodger of the *Financial Times*

⁴⁶ “The Sense of an Ending Wins the Man Booker Prize 2011.” The Man Booker Prizes, themanbookerprize.com/resources/media/pressreleases/2011/10/18/sense-ending-wins-man-booker-prize-2011.

⁴⁷ Lezard, Nicholas. “A Rich Revelation Of False Memory.” *The Evening Standard* (London). Nexis. Web. Date Accessed: 2018/06/11.

⁴⁸ Jordan, Justine. “The Sense of an Ending by Julian Barnes – Review.” *The Guardian*, Guardian News and Media, 26 July 2011, www.theguardian.com/books/2011/jul/26/sense-ending-julian-barnes-review.

⁴⁹ Jordan, “The Sense of an Ending by Julian Barnes – Review.” *The Guardian*

⁵⁰ “A discomfort he can’t explain; The new novel by Julian Barnes about the fortunes of a group of school-friends is brief but masterful, says Anita Brookner.” *The Daily Telegraph*. London. July 23, 2011. Nexis. Web. Date Accessed: 2018/06/11.

writes that Barnes' inclusion on the list is "absolutely merited".⁵¹ He praised Barnes for his writing and said that it is 'founded on precision as well as on the nuances of language'.⁵² As the novel was only approximately 150 pages long, the novel sparked a conversation about whether or not it fit the criteria of "a novel", and whether it was not just a long short story. This was especially a topic of debate after its nomination for the Booker prize, an award for the best *novel* of the year at the end of the day. Like Michael Prodger, many of the reviewers mentioned the brevity of the novel and how concise it was in terms of language, in one way or another. However, that did not seem to have a negative effect on their general reception of the book. Prodger argued that even though the book is short, its brevity, '[...] in no way compromises its intensity - every words has its part to play; with great but invisible skill Barnes squeezes into it not just a sense of the infinite complexity of the human heart but the damage the wrong permutations can cause when combined'. (Prodger, *Financial Times*) 'A slow burn, measured but suspenseful, this compact novel makes every slyly crafted sentence count', said Boyd Tonkin of *The Independent*.⁵³ Toby Clements raved about the novel in a pre-publication review for the *Telegraph* and praised Barnes's writing stating that his sentences 'each one so simple and precise, are as iridescent as tropical fish, [...], and yet they work together to produce a perfectly wonderful harmonious shoal, a work of rare and dazzling genius.' He said that "Barnes is on absolutely top form here". (Clements, *Telegraph*) 'IS this the novel that will win Julian Barnes the Man Booker Prize for the first time?' asks Ion Trewin in his *Express* review on August 14th 2011. Trewin stated that *The Sense Of An Ending* is fiction that "not only enthralls but also makes you think." He added that Barnes' eleventh work of fiction "is unlike any fiction he has written before" and that while the novel "is spare in its telling with not a word wasted on its 150 pages", much is packed into this space. "By the time one reaches the end, it is not just the novel but the title itself that inspires the reader; not just the end of a life but how a story is told." Trewin concluded his review by rating the novel with a score of 5/5.⁵⁴ Offering a slightly different sound in one of the few critical reviews of *The Sense of an Ending*, Christian House of *The Independent* interestingly compared Julian Barnes to his contemporaries,

⁵¹ Prodger, Michael. "The Sense of an Ending". *The Financial Times*.

⁵² Prodger, Michael. "The Sense of an Ending". *The Financial Times*.

⁵³ Tonkin, Boyd. "The Sense of an Ending, By Julian Barnes." *The Independent*

⁵⁴ Trewin, Ion. "Review - The Sense Of An Ending by Julian Barnes." *The Express*

McEwan, Amis and Rushdie⁵⁵. He then stated that just as they are, Barnes “is a gin-and-tonic novelist: his books are crisp, cool and provide a kick to the head”. However, “they seldom, as is the case here, touch the heart” says House. “If that's the kind of tippie you enjoy, then *The Sense of an Ending* is a double on the rocks. Whether you consider that's enough to be a Man Booker contender remains, of course, open to debate.” (House, *The Independent*)

2.3 Attention on behalf of Booker Prize

In September 2011 the Man Booker Prize announced its shortlist, which included *The Sense of an Ending*. In addition to Barnes, other shortlisted novels were *Pigeon English* by Stephen Kelman, *Half Blood Blues* by Esi Edugyan, *Snowdrops* by AD Miller, *Jamrach's Menagerie* by Carol Birch and finally, Patrick deWitt with his *Sisters Brothers*. BBC news revealed that the 2011 shortlist for the Booker Prize had enjoyed the best sales boost ever since it announced its contenders.⁵⁶ ‘Some 37,500 copies of the books have been sold since the shortlist was revealed on 6 September, more than double the previous record set in 2009’. (BBC news) Just a few days prior to the 2011 Booker ceremony, Robert McCrum writing for *The Observer* commented on his expectations for the end results in an article called “Julian Barnes for the Booker? It could just happen.” McCrum scorned the shortlist for being “commercial” and “unambitious”, and even went as far as calling it “the bruised fruit of recession.”⁵⁷ He said that unlike previous years, there were no “obvious duds” but that there was “nothing outstanding either”.⁵⁸ He stated that his guess as to who would win the award went to *The Sense of An Ending*. He motivated his statement by saying that “it satisfies the committee’s unconscious preferences” and that it would “flatter their anxiety to make a good choice”.⁵⁹ As the announcement for the 2011 Booker Prize winner got closer, the rumors of Barnes being a favorite to win became stronger and stronger. Barnes was the bookies’ favorite to win,⁶⁰ and William Hill’s numbers on the suspected outcome of the award ceremony also reveal *The Sense of an Ending* leading in the charts:

⁵⁵ House, Christian. “The Sense of an Ending, By Julian Barnes.” *The Independent*

⁵⁶ “Booker Prize Current Shortlist Is 'Best-Selling'.” BBC News, BBC, 23 Sept. 2011, www.bbc.com/news/entertainment-arts-15034635.

⁵⁷ McCrum, Robert. “Julian Barnes for the Booker? It Could Just Happen.” *The Guardian*.

⁵⁸ McCrum, “Julian Barnes for the Booker? It Could Just Happen.” *The Guardian*.

⁵⁹ McCrum, “Julian Barnes for the Booker? It Could Just Happen.” *The Guardian*.

⁶⁰ Graeme, “Barnes Bookies' and Kindle Favourite for Man Booker.” *The Bookseller*

Bookmakers William Hill said more than 50% of all bets struck on the Man Booker prize were placed on the Jonathan Cape title to win, which is a 6/4 favorite. The second favorite is Esi Edugyan's *Half Blood Blues* (Serpents Tail), which has attracted 15% of the bets. However, it sits at third favorite at 7/2, with Carol Birch's *Jamrach's Menagerie* (Canongate) second favorite with odds of 11/4. One punter has staked £200 on Patrick De Witt's *The Sisters Brothers* (Granta), an outsider with odds of 9/1.⁶¹

Amy Worth, senior manager for Kindle at Amazon.co.uk, said: "Winning the Man Booker prize can have a profound effect on the sales of a book. Last year's winner, Howard Jacobson's *The Finkler Question*, shot up the Kindle bestsellers chart, with a 1,645% sales uplift in the two weeks following his win so it's undoubtedly going to be a career changing moment for whoever wins this year's accolade." (Graeme, *The Bookseller*)

It was the night of October 18th when the Man Booker Prize committee announced its winner and Julian Barnes was awarded the Prize for Best Novel of the Year 2011. In an article for *The Irish Times* on October 19th, 2011, Eileen Battersby comments on Barnes' win and states that Barnes taking home the award was almost inevitable.⁶² She adds that 'Once Alan Hollinghurst's hotly tipped *The Stanger's Child* had failed to make the shortlist, it was as if this year's outcome had been choreographed for Barnes and the British literary establishment'.⁶³ Battersby said that the most unfortunate fact of Barnes's win was that it defeated a 'far better work', namely Patrick deWitt's *The Sisters Brothers* which she describes as the worthy winner 'given the quality of the writing and the seriousness of several of its themes [...]'. (Eileen Battersby, *The Irish Times*) After *The Sense of an Ending* won the Man Booker Prize, *The Guardian* commented that it clearly demonstrated the Booker effect.⁶⁴ It reported that the data from Nielsen Bookscan showed a major increase in sales after winning the prize.⁶⁵ "In the week following the prize ceremony, Barnes' novel sold 14,534 copies, almost twice as many as A.D. Miller's *Snowdrops* (7,684), which has been this year's Booker success story so far. In the week before the win (to 15 October), *The Sense of an Ending* sold only 2,535 copies." (Stoddard, *The Guardian*) The article went on to state that all shortlisted books had benefited from their Booker

⁶¹ Graeme, "Barnes Bookies' and Kindle Favourite for Man Booker." *The Bookseller*

⁶² Battersby, Eileen. "Fourth time lucky for Julian Barnes as 'Sense of an Ending' takes the Booker." *The Irish Times*.

⁶³ Battersby, Eileen. "Fourth time lucky for Julian Barnes as 'Sense of an Ending' takes the Booker."

⁶⁴ Stoddard, Katy. "Man Booker Prize 2011: Sales for All the Booker Prize Winners, Including Julian Barnes." *The Guardian*

⁶⁵ Stoddard, "Man Booker Prize 2011." *The Guardian*

approval as each of the five runners up had seen a considerable sales increase in the days after Barnes' win was announced.⁶⁶ In spite of the controversy surrounding the award, the 2011 shortlist became the best-selling year in Booker history up to that point, with sales of the shortlisted novels up 127% compared to the year before.⁶⁷ According to Nielsen BookScan, 98,876 copies were sold in the six weeks after the shortlist was announced.⁶⁸ Julie Bosman of the *New York Times* also reported at the beginning of September 2011 that Knopf, Barnes' U.S. publisher, decided to move up the U.S. publication date of *The Sense of An Ending* with three months in an attempt to capitalize on the Booker buzz.⁶⁹ Data from a *Guardian* article on Oct. 13th 2012 showed numbers of total sales before and after a Booker win, which presented Julian Barnes' and his prize winning novel as having sold 27,573 copies pre-award and 243,314 post-award.⁷⁰ While *The Sense of An Ending* received predominantly positive reviews before and after winning the Booker prize, not all were as taken with Barnes' work. In a mid-December review called "Julian Barnes and the Diminishing of the English Novel", Geoff Dyer of *The New York Times* writes that even though it was not one of those years where the Man Booker Prize winner was laughably bad, but that actually 'any extreme expression of opinion about *The Sense of an Ending* feels inappropriate'.⁷¹ He adds that the problem lies in that it was so average: "it is averagely compelling... involves an average amount of concentration and, if such a thing makes sense, is averagely well written: excellent in its averageness!" (Dyer, *The New York Times*) In a review for the *Sewanee Review*, Merritt Moseley reflects on the 2011 Man Booker Prize and its contenders. Moseley says the following: Barnes's victory may help still the criticism of the Man Booker Prize" and said that in his opinion "in the end the Booker judges got it right. Did they recognize the best novel published in English in 2011? Nobody knows. Did they generate enormous columns of publicity for authors and the publishing business? Certainly. And they gave the prize to one of Britain's great novelists, recognizing him while he is still alive and at the peak of his powers." (Moseley, *The Sewanee Review*)

⁶⁶ Stoddard, "Man Booker Prize 2011." *The Guardian*.

⁶⁷ Stoddard, "Man Booker Prize 2011." *The Guardian*

⁶⁸ Stoddard, "Man Booker Prize 2011." *The Guardian*

⁶⁹ Bosman, Julie. "Julian Barnes Wins the Man Booker Prize." *The New York Times*

⁷⁰ Stoddard, Katy. "Booker Prize 2012: Sales for All the Winners and the 2012 Shortlist, Including Hilary Mantel." *The Guardian*

⁷¹ Dyer, Geoff. "Julian Barnes and the Diminishing of the English Novel." *The New York Times*

2.4 An International Bestseller

Across the Atlantic, the *Los Angeles Times* presented their Hardcover and Paperback Fiction Bestseller List, based on a survey of independent bookstores nationwide. Data from The Hardcover Bestseller List showed that *The Sense of an Ending* was featured on the list for a period of thirty-two weeks; from Nov. 6th 2011 to June 17 2012. After its paperback publication the novel was on the Paperback Bestseller List for 46 weeks; from June 24th to October 27th 2013. (*Los Angeles Times*, “Bestsellers”)

2.5 Remaining Attention: Other Awards and Film Adaptation

In November 2011, just after the Booker buzz, *The Sense of an Ending* was announced to be nominated for Best Novel at the Costa Book Awards. Barnes, however, ended up losing the award to Andrew Miller with his novel *Pure*. *The Sense of an Ending* was also nominated by librarians worldwide for the Impac Dublin literary award in 2013.⁷² Even though it was the most nominated book, having received fifteen nominations from librarians in Australia, Belgium, Canada, Croatia, Czech Republic, Germany, Greece, Ireland, The Netherlands, The UK and the USA, it lost to Kevin Barry and his novel *City of Bohane*.⁷³ In January 2017, *The Sense of an Ending* was made into a film adaptation that carried the same name. It saw its world premiere on the Palm Springs International Film Festival and was released in the US later that year, on March 10th 2017. The film, directed by Ritesh Bara and written by Nick Payne, included various acclaimed British actors, such as Jim Broadbent, Michelle Dockery, Charlotte Rampling and Harriet Walter. The adaptation received mixed reviews and was mostly criticized for its ending. In a review for *The Dominion Post*, Graeme Tuckett writes that even though the film ‘might look and smell like a good film’, that this is not the case.⁷⁴ He says ‘if you fell asleep for the last half hour, you might even think you had missed something a bit special’, but that the truth was that the Sense of an Ending, ‘beneath all them big words, top-shelf performances and star power, is a load of old rubbish’.⁷⁵ Overall, however, the film was received fairly well. Ann Hornaday of *the Denver Post*, writes that the adaptation is not as good as the book, but that it ‘receives a tasteful if necessarily limited adaptation In Ritesh Batra’s film’. Hornaday adds that it was ‘tasteful,

⁷² “Eight Irish Authors Nominated for 2013 International IMPAC Dublin Literary Award.” *Dublin City Council*

⁷³ “Eight Irish Authors Nominated for 2013 International IMPAC Dublin Literary Award.” *Dublin City Council*

⁷⁴ Tuckett, Graeme. "Ending has big names, little sense." *The Dominion Post*

⁷⁵ Graeme, "Ending has big names, little sense." *The Dominion Post*

because few could argue with Batra's genteel, reserved tone and approach; limited because no movie can do justice to the interiority and ambiguity that have been polished to a high sheen by Barnes over the course of his decades long career'.⁷⁶

2.6 The Sense of an Ending: Debate and Profile Summary

In looking at the media attention surrounding *The Sense of an Ending* from the moment the hardback publication took place up to the point of its film adaptation, a few things stand out in the novel's life cycle. When *The Sense of an Ending* had its official hardback publication in August 2011, Barnes had at that point been nominated for the Booker prize three times already and had made a name for himself as a writer. This meant that people were watching what he was doing closely. When it came out, the novel was generally well-received and the majority of the pre- and post-publications proved to be highly positive. *The Sense of an Ending's* publication came at the perfect time, as the Booker's longlist announcement was just around the corner. It is likely that the buzz surrounding Barnes' newest novel played a role in its nomination for the Booker's longlist. When news got out of the novel's longlisting (and especially later after it being shortlisted), *The Sense of an Ending* proved to be among the favorites to win. Even though the novel sparked a debate about whether it was long enough to be considered a novel, this did not take away from its popularity. Thus, when Barnes was awarded the Booker prize on the night of October 18th 2011, it only solidified the prior expectations of who was going to be taking home the award. After the attention for its Booker win wore off, the novel saw another small peak when it was published in the US and Canada and was well-received there as well. Taking into account the sales statistics of *The Sense of an Ending* going from selling approx. 27,000 to selling about ten times as much, there is no doubt that *The Sense of an Ending* is a prime example of the so-called "Booker effect".⁷⁷ However, with its hardback publication so close to its nomination for the Booker Prize longlist, it is difficult to say how the novel would have been received had it not been for the attention on behalf of the Man Booker Prize. If there had been a bigger gap between its publication and its nomination for the prize, it would have

⁷⁶ Hornaday, Ann. "Sense of an Ending": Not as good as the book, but an excellent adaptation." *The Denver Post*.

⁷⁷ Stoddard, Katy. "Booker Prize 2012: Sales for All the Winners and the 2012 Shortlist, Including Hilary Mantel." *The Guardian*

allowed for a clearer vision into the Man Booker Prize's influence on the reception of Julian Barnes' *The Sense of an Ending*.

Chapter Three: *Snowdrops*

A. D. Miller, born in London in 1974, studied Literature at Cambridge and Princeton.⁷⁸ He worked as a television producer in London before he became a correspondent for *The Economist* in 2004.⁷⁹ A.D. Miller has been the magazine's Moscow correspondent, political columnist, writer-at-large and correspondent in the American South; and became the magazine's culture editor in 2018.⁸⁰ In 2006, Miller published a family memoir called *The Earl of Petticoat Lane*, and five years later he published his first novel, *Snowdrops*.⁸¹ His debut novel was published by Atlantic in Britain in early January 2011 and was later published by Doubleday in the United States and Harper Canada and has been published in twenty-five other countries and languages since then.⁸² The A.D. Miller Books official website describes *Snowdrops* as follows:

[It] is a fast-paced drama that unfolds during a beautiful but lethally cold Russian winter. Ostensibly a story of naive foreigners and cynical natives, the novel becomes something richer and darker: a tale of erotic obsession, self-deception and moral freefall. It is set in a land of hedonism and desperation, corruption and kindness, magical hideaways and debauched nightclubs; a place where secrets, and corpses, come to light when the snows thaw.⁸³

After its hardback publication in early January 2011, *Snowdrops* was nominated for numerous awards, including the Man Booker Prize, the James Tait Black Prize, the Los Angeles Times Book Awards, the CWA Gold Dagger and the Galaxy National Book Awards, and was longlisted for the IMPAC award.⁸⁴ Other awards Miller has been shortlisted for, include the David Watt Prize, for another FPA Award and for Political Commentator of the Year and Magazine Commentator of the Year at the Comment Awards.⁸⁵

This next chapter will continue the discussion on the Man Booker Prize and the effect it has on its nominees. I will discuss the attention profile for A.D. Miller's *Snowdrops* which can

⁷⁸ "A. D. Miller." . Literature, *The British Council*

⁷⁹ "A. D. Miller." . Literature, *The British Council*

⁸⁰ "A. D. Miller." . Literature, *The British Council*

⁸¹ "A. D. Miller." . Literature, *The British Council*

⁸² "A. D. Miller." . Literature, *The British Council*

⁸³ "Snowdrops: About the Book." A. D. Miller, www.admillerbooks.com

⁸⁴ "Reviews of Snowdrops." A. D. Miller, www.admillerbooks.com

⁸⁵ "Reviews of Snowdrops." A. D. Miller, www.admillerbooks.com

roughly be divided in the following phases; (1) Pre- and Post-Publication General Media Coverage with a peak in January; (2) Booker Prize Coverage; (3) Remaining attention on behalf of other awards with a peak in December. Finally the *Snowdrops* case study will conclude with a debate and profile summary.

3.2 Pre- and Post-Publication General Media Coverage

When A.D. Miller's *Snowdrops* was published by independent publisher Atlantic in January 2011, it got mixed reviews. Even though the majority of the reviews were positive, Miller also received his fair share of criticism. In a pre-publication review for *The Guardian* on Jan. 1st, John O'Connell describes *Snowdrops* as "both a very good novel and a slightly disappointing one".⁸⁶ 'Good, because the writing has tremendous pace and energy', O'Connell explains, 'Disappointing because it adds little to what we already know about life in Putin's Russia [...]'.⁸⁷ Reviewing *Snowdrops* in January, Doug Johnstone of *The Independent* describes the novel as "a fine debut" and claims that rather than it being a conventional crime novel, "it is a deeply atmospheric, slow-burning examination of the effects of modern Russia on the soul of foreign visitors, and of one man's subtle but inexorable slide into moral decay."⁸⁸ 'Miller is absolutely wonderful at evoking the seediness and cynicism of Moscow, and he is even better at physical description. On a critical note, Johnstone comments that the chosen narrative frame "adds nothing to proceedings and ends up just being annoying" and adds that Miller seemed a tad "overly keen on foreshadowing and building up the sense of foreboding".⁸⁹ He ends his review that putting these few faults aside 'Snowdrops remains an impressive debut and Miller is a skilled depicter of place, character and mood.'⁹⁰ In Philip Womack's review of the novel, written for the *Telegraph* just after its official publication, he calls Miller a "competent enough writer, who achieves a clean, propulsive, vivid readability" but also find some things lacking in Miller's debut novel.⁹¹ 'The real difficulty with this novel is the complete spinelessness of its narrator: his attempts to excuse himself fall flat, as it seems he would rather watch somebody's life be totally ruined just on the off chance that he might get some sex out of it.' (Womack, *The Telegraph*) He

⁸⁶ O'Connell, John. "Snowdrops by AD Miller – Review." *The Guardian*.

⁸⁷ O'Connell, John. "Snowdrops Review." *The Guardian*.

⁸⁸ Johnstone, Doug. "Snowdrops, By AD Miller." *The Independent*

⁸⁹ Johnstone, "Snowdrops, By AD Miller." *The Independent*

⁹⁰ Johnstone, "Snowdrops, By AD Miller." *The Independent*

⁹¹ Womack, Philip. "Snowdrops by AD Miller: Review." *The Telegraph*

adds that he found main character Platt's amorality "not only tasteless, but unbelievable" and called the plot "entirely predictable".⁹² In another post-publication review from *The Independent*, Leyla Sanai, talks about *Snowdrops* as "an electrifying tour of the dark side of Moscow, and of human nature".⁹³ Sanai praises Miller for the way that he masterfully captures small details and called his portrait of Moscow "fluid".⁹⁴ In a late-January review for the UK's *Metro*, it is said the 'implausible sequence of events that he (Nick), as a lawyer absurdly never questions, [...]', leaves the reader 'gnashing their teeth in irritation' and that the novel is redeemed only 'by the intermittent quality of AD Miller's prose, which summons the arresting image of a pitiless city turned on by its own amoral appetites'.⁹⁵ Philippa Logan, writing for *The Oxford Times*, described the novel as a story where nothing is what it seems and calls it 'a chilling story of hedonism, debauchery, corruption and a smidgen of kindness'.⁹⁶ A few months later, in a May review for *The National Post*, bookseller and author Robert J. Wiersema writes that *Snowdrops* encapsulates one hallmark of a good book, namely, 'the ability to swallow the reader whole and immerse them utterly in a foreign world'.⁹⁷ He said that Miller 'draws the reader in slowly, compellingly, and weaves a gentle, romantic, cosmopolitan spell, all the while rendering the reader complicit in the events that ultimately transpire, that are going on throughout, just out of view'.⁹⁸ On July 22nd it was longlisted for the CWA Gold Dagger award, for best crime novel of the year.⁹⁹

3.3 Booker Prize Coverage

The Guardian's Alison Flood reported that the 2011 Booker shortlist broke sales records and that they sold 'more than double the number of copies of the shortlist last year'.¹⁰⁰ Figures from the industry magazine *The Bookseller* revealed that ever since the shortlist was announced on September 6th, 'the six books have sold 37,500 copies, up 127% on last year and 105% on the previous record in 2009, when Hilary Mantel's historical novel *Wolf Hall* went on to win'.¹⁰¹

⁹² Womack, Philip. "Snowdrops by AD Miller: Review." *The Telegraph*

⁹³ Sanai, Leyla. "Snowdrops, By AD Miller." *The Independent*

⁹⁴ Sanai, "Snowdrops, By AD Miller." *The Independent*

⁹⁵ "Snowdrops By AD Miller." *Metro* (UK). January 20, 2011 : Nexis.

⁹⁶ Snowdrops by A. D. Miller." *The Oxford Times*. January 13, 2011: Nexis.

⁹⁷ Wiersema, Robert. "Book Review: Snowdrops, by A.D. Miller." *National Post*

⁹⁸ Wiersema. "Book Review: Snowdrops, by A.D. Miller." *National Post*

⁹⁹ "Reviews of Snowdrops." A. D. Miller, www.admillerbooks.com

¹⁰⁰ Flood, Alison. "Booker Prize Shortlist Breaks Sales Records." *The Guardian*

¹⁰¹ Flood, "Booker Prize Shortlist Breaks Sales Records." *The Guardian*

One of the most striking statistics from this report, which came out just before Barnes was announced as the year's winner, was that *Snowdrops* was the most popular novel on the sales list at that point. With 11,800 sold it sat on top of the list, followed by *Jamrach's Menagerie* by Carol Birch who had 9,000 and Julian Barnes' *The Sense of an Ending* with 6,400 copies sold.¹⁰² Since it was *The Sense of an Ending* that ended up winning the Booker prize, one would have expected it the sales to reflect its popularity. Instead, it was *Snowdrops*, reportedly one of the least favorite shortlisted novels to win, that was on top of the list. In a 2012 article where they reviewed the statistics of the Booker prize nominees and winners, *The Guardian* compiled a guide to what they called "How to win the Booker prize". One of the graphics in the article was titled "even being shortlisted makes a difference" and featured *Snowdrops* as an example to showcase what being nominated for the award had meant for its sales.¹⁰³ It showed the novel only sold 8 copies in the week commencing July 16th 2011, and that after it was announced to be on the Booker's longlist at the end of July 2011, sales shot up and *Snowdrops* had sold approximately 6000 copies leading up to its nomination for the Booker shortlist.¹⁰⁴ It was also in these months that *Snowdrops* was nominated for the CWA Gold Dagger Award and got shortlisted for "New Writer of the Year and Audiobook of the Year" by Galaxy National Book Awards, which likely also contributed to an increase in sales.¹⁰⁵ The graphic also showed that the novel sold 9593 copies in the week commencing the 24th of December.¹⁰⁶ The official website of AD Miller Books, showed in an overview of the novel's most important events, that December 2011 was a particularly good month for *Snowdrops*. It was featured as a "book of the year" in the Financial Times, the Observer, the Spectator, the New Statesman, the Evening Standard, the Mail on Sunday, the Sunday Telegraph, the Sunday Express and City AM. Also in the New Zealand Listener, the New Zealand Herald, the Toronto Star, The Times of South Africa and The Millions.¹⁰⁷ Just after *Snowdrops* was announced as being on the shortlist, Lucy Scholes, writing for the *Daily Beast* commented that she did not have high expectations for *Snowdrops* and its chances of winning the Booker by extension, for the following reason: "Miller's *Snowdrops* could be considered all too familiarly conformist—a Putin's Russia-set

¹⁰² Flood, "Booker Prize Shortlist Breaks Sales Records." *The Guardian*

¹⁰³ Frost, Adam, and Jim Kynvin. "How to Win the Booker Prize – in Charts." *The Guardian*

¹⁰⁴ Frost, Adam, and Jim Kynvin. "How to Win the Booker Prize – in Charts." *The Guardian*

¹⁰⁵ "Reviews of *Snowdrops*." A. D. Miller, www.admillerbooks.com

¹⁰⁶ Frost, Adam, and Jim Kynvin. "How to Win the Booker Prize – in Charts." *The Guardian*

¹⁰⁷ "Reviews of *Snowdrops*." A. D. Miller, www.admillerbooks.com

thriller with resonances of classic Graham Greene albeit with a grittier, dirtier edge. It's an engrossing and exciting read, but predictably suffers from the classic limitations of its genre; something that will surely render it ultimately unable to hold its own in the face of its competition." (Scholes, *The Daily Beast*) In an article published on October 15th for the *Weekend Australian*, James Bradley assesses the Booker's shortlist and presents his expectations for the year's winner. Bradley says about *Snowdrops* that it has 'the immediacy of the best journalism, capturing the decadence and violence of the Russian boom and the moral ambiguity of the expatriate whose pay cheque depends on the pillaging of the country's resources'.¹⁰⁸ 'Yet', adds Bradley, 'at the same time it often seems to be all surface, a skillfully structured, well-written exercise with none of the heft of real fiction'.¹⁰⁹ Reviewing for *Macleans* in Canada, Sarah Murdoch wrote in her review of *Snowdrops*: "Among the many attractions of this enormously assured first novel, which is shortlisted for the Man Booker Prize, is that it shows the capacity of such a terrible environment to enchant. Miller was The Economist's Moscow correspondent from 2004 to 2007, [...] and he writes with the authority of someone who lived through those years".¹¹⁰ Miller also received quite positive feedback from fellow authors. William Boyd, author of *A Good Man in Africa and Ordinary Thunderstorms* described *Snowdrops* as 'a tremendously assured, cool, complex, slow-burn of a novel and a bleak and superbly atmospheric portrait of modern Russia'.¹¹¹

3.4 Remaining attention

Snowdrops was released in paperback edition in September 2011. However, in my research, I was not able to detect a noticeable peak in general media attention and it is for that reason that this phase is not discussed further. Even though it lost out on the Man Booker Prize to *The Sense of an Ending* in October, that did not mark the end for the interest surrounding *Snowdrops*. Miller's debut went on to be shortlisted for the James Tait Black Prize, the Los Angeles Times Book Awards, the Galaxy National Book Awards and the CWA Gold Dagger and was also longlisted for the IMPAC.¹¹² In November, *Snowdrops* was also presented by *The*

¹⁰⁸ Bradley, James. "Cloak And Dagger." *Weekend Australian*. October 15, 2011: Nexis. Web. Date Accessed: 2018/06/11.

¹⁰⁹ Bradley, James. "Cloak And Dagger." *Weekend Australian*.

¹¹⁰ Murdoch, Sarah. "Review: Snowdrops" *Macleans*

¹¹¹ "Reviews of Snowdrops." A. D. Miller, www.admillerbooks.com

¹¹² "Reviews of Snowdrops." A. D. Miller, www.admillerbooks.com

Spectator's reviewers as one of their picks for "Books of the year" 2011.¹¹³ Matthew Paris stated that A.D. Miller's debut novel deserved to make the Booker shortlist and that it was one of 'the punchiest, paciest and most chilling evocation of modern Moscow' he ever read.¹¹⁴

A mid-December review by *The Derby Evening Telegraph* described Miller's novel as 'a beautifully written story that grips from the very first page'.¹¹⁵ In response to *Snowdrops*' nomination for the 2011 Man Booker Prize, he said that although Miller lost to Julian Barnes, 'the nomination alone suggests that Miller is a new talent with plenty to offer'. A few months later, *Snowdrops* was shortlisted for the London Book Award in April 2012, longlisted for the James Tait Black Prize for Fiction a month later, and finally also nominated for the IMPAC Dublin literary award in November.¹¹⁶ In a review for the South African newspaper *The Sunday Independent* on October 20th 2013, the reviewer said that *Snowdrops* is 'an enjoyable read that is clever, though in a simpler way', and comments that 'it hardly seems a work deserving of a Man Booker nomination', because its themes 'are fairly opaque and the conclusions Miller draws aren't unexpected either'.¹¹⁷

3.5 *Snowdrops*: Debate and Profile Summary

Snowdrops marked A.D. Miller's debut novel and when it was published in early January 2011, the novel initially received mixed reviews and did not inspire much attention from the media. However, after news got out of its nomination for the Man Booker Prize, *Snowdrops* saw a huge peak in terms of sales. Prior to its nomination for the Booker longlist, the novel sold only a handful of copies per week, compared to shifting over 35,000 copies after its shortlisting for the award.¹¹⁸ It even sold the most copies of all the shortlisted novels, which was revealed in a report just before the Booker's award ceremony. *Snowdrops* went down in history as another example of the so-called "Booker effect".

¹¹³ Paris, Matthew, "Books of the Year." *The Spectator*. (November 12, 2011): 4113 words. Nexis. Web..

¹¹⁴ Paris, Matthew, "Books of the Year." *The Spectator*.

¹¹⁵ "Mother Russia: a great temptress." *The Sunday Independent* (South Africa). (October 20, 2013): 1204 words. Nexis. Web. Date Accessed: 2018/06/11.

¹¹⁶ "Reviews of *Snowdrops*." A. D. Miller, www.admillerbooks.com

¹¹⁷ "Mother Russia: a great temptress." *The Sunday Independent*

¹¹⁸ BBC News, Tim Masters, October 19th

Conclusion

In this research the aim was to take a look at the way that the Booker prize influences the reception of its nominated novels. I specifically examined one researcher's approach to measuring the Booker's impact; Auguscik's discourse analytic approach used in her recent book *Prizing Debate*. One of the most central concepts to Auguscik's method is what she called "the attention profile". In *Prizing Debate* she identifies how a novel's attention profile can roughly be divided in five phases. These phases reflect the life cycle of a novel and takes into account events that were of importance to its general reception. In short, these five phases were: pre-publication positioning, post publication coverage, attention on behalf of other prizes and events, interest surrounding paperback publication and finally, remaining attention on behalf of the novel's connectivity to other events etc. I adopted and applied Auguscik's method to my own case studies. The results of my case study of the reception of Barnes' *The Sense of an Ending*, showed that the novel became an instant success from the moment it was first published. The hardback publication coincidentally coincided with the Booker's announcement of its longlist and the novel quickly became a bestseller. *The Sense of an Ending* was without a doubt one of the year's favorites and so when it was awarded the Man Booker Prize on the night of October 18th 2011, it did not come as a surprise. The *Snowdrops* attention profile also proved to be a clear example of the "Booker effect". When the debut novel by Miller had just come out in early January 2011, it did not inspire much media attention and also did not sell many copies. There was, however, a visible peak in sales when it was announced to be longlisted for the Booker prize and even more so when it was selected for the shortlist. Even though *Snowdrops* was not viewed as having the potential to win the award and received mixed reviews, surprisingly, it proved to become the most popular book in terms of copies sold.

In the process of doing my case studies, there were a few aspects about the method that stood out to me. One of my observations was that I had trouble during both case studies with the forth attention phase, namely, the interest surrounding the novel's paperback publication. Not only did I have trouble finding sources related to this publication, I was actually unable to find an exact date of their official paperback publication to begin with. This was surprising because Auguscik does identify the paperback publication as one of the most important events in a novel's itinerary. Even though she does mention that the paperback publication is not as secure of an element in the book's itinerary as the hardback publication, she still presents this being of

great significance to a novel's reception. Something that also caught my attention in the process of doing the case studies, was that it was noticeably more difficult to create the attention profile for *Snowdrops* than it was for *The Sense of an Ending*. For *Snowdrops* there were markedly fewer reviews and other sources related to its discourse available. The simplest explanation for this seems to be that *Snowdrops* was a debut novel, and was therefore simply not given as much attention as a novel that was as high-profile as *The Sense of an Ending*, which was written by an already established writer. This leads me to believe that Auguscik's method, including the proposed five phases, works best when applied to a high-profile novel. The last phase, which includes remaining attention bestowed on a novel, also proved to be challenging. It suggests that this phase covers a wide range of discourse, coming from multiple sources, which made it difficult to narrow down and decide what information was important to include and what was not. It suggests that it is even possible to get a grip on the "remaining attention" a novel receives. Not only is it an enormously general term, it also brings me to another point of criticism. A problematic area in this method lies in the question: at what point as a researcher, have you reviewed "enough" information to be able to form a truthful attention profile that encapsulates an overview of the general media attention that a novel received? Is it possible to gather an archive of documents that is so extensive that it will be able to reconstruct an overview of such size? Probably not. It does not seem to be possible and/or realistic to review every single thing that is spoken about a novel.

Even though Auguscik writes extensively about why she decided to use a discourse analytical approach for her research in *Prizing Debate*, the Foucauldian principles she discusses in the first part of the book do not seem to be clearly present in her case studies. I would have expected that there would have been more of a discussion about the Booker's 'double role' (as being both the object and subject of debate), which she outlines in the beginning of *Prizing Debate*. In the actual case studies, there is no mention of any Foucault's theory, let alone the four Foucauldian principles Auguscik mentions so clearly in the section on her theoretical and methodological choices. While Auguscik's concept of 'attention profiles' do succeed in creating an interesting view on a novel's reception and the way that a literary award like the Man Booker Prize plays a part in that reception, it does not seem to be capable to create a complete overview of a novel's reception. For future research it would be interesting to look at other researchers' approaches to measuring the Man Booker Prize's influence on the reception of its nominees,

such as Sarah Norris' approach in her article "The Booker Prize: A Bourdieusian Perspective" for the *Journal for Cultural Research*.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁹ Norris, Sharon. *The Booker Prize: A Bourdieusian Perspective*, *Journal for Cultural Research* (2006), 139-158

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