

Publishing News

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 16TH, 1997

Triumph for HarperCollins

Booker win marks new chapter

A RED-eyed but triumphant HarperCollins contingent arrived in Frankfurt yesterday morning to continue celebrating the company's first Booker win with Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things*. The author herself was flying in today, so it appears that the champagne will continue to flow. Collins, in its former guise, won the Booker back in 1972, but for the Murdoch-owned conglomerate it is a major and morale-boosting victory.

Executive Chairman and Publisher Eddie Bell, supported by what seemed to be a larger than ever cigar, flew in to Frankfurt after attending the Booker dinner with Roy's Publisher, Philip Gwyn Jones of Flamingo, Stuart Proffitt, Publisher of the Trade Division and Roy's publicist Karen Duffy.

A 20,000 reprint was put in place at Clays by Adrian Bourne, which included a 12,000 order from Australia. Thus far the title has sold 65,000 in the UK, and a further 30,000 copies in the US.

format paperback have just gone into the trade.

For HarperCollins, UK Roy's victory comes as the culmination of what looks to be a very good year for the publisher. With the at times painful restructuring of the company now behind it, the Booker triumph sets the seal on what Bell and his team regard as a new and highly successful chapter in the HarperCollins story — a saga that over the past five years has had its ups and downs.

The God of Small Things is already the stuff of legends in publishing and provided a suitably dramatic climax as the author broke down in wracking sobs as she received her prize, on Tuesday night and later declared that the book, her first novel, may be her last.

When *The God of Small Things* arrived on agent David Godwin's desk "in a brown paper envelope one Friday morning", it so impressed him that he was galvanised to fly to New Delhi "without even

having the jobs" — to seek out the author. He went on to secure over £1 million in advances from publishers worldwide.

It was acquired by, among others, Philip Gwyn Jones for Flamingo — his first buy for the imprint — who likened it to "having fallen from the sky, perfectly formed".

Arundhati Roy drew on her experiences growing up in a small village in Southern India to write the book which retells the history of South India through the eyes of 7-year-old twins. Chairman of the judges Professor Gillian Beer said its choice as the winner was a "totally unanimous" decision: "We were all engrossed by this moving novel. Her narrative crackles with riddles and yet tells its tale quite clearly".

Accepting the £20,000 prize, Roy said she felt like the children in her novel, unable to express her feelings, and the guests in the Guildhall held their collective breaths as, her voice cracking, she managed to thank her husband, agents and publishers before dissolving into tears. There were only slightly less



Quadrillion Publishing celebrated the first deal of the fair at 8.30am yesterday. They bought *The Children's Dinosaur* from Quartz Editions. Toasting the deal (l to r): Moira McCann and Des Higgins of Quadrillion, and Quartz director Sue Pinkus

emotional scenes on the HarperCollins table where sat Eddie Bell, Stuart Proffitt and Gwyn Jones.

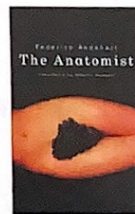
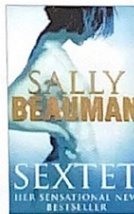
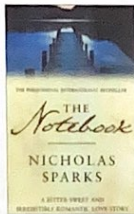
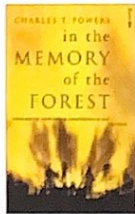
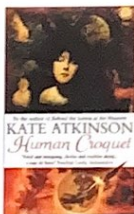
Recovering her composure, she later said that she had known since a child that she wanted to write a novel, but had taken a job

as a screenwriter to "buy the time" to write seriously. She thought, however, that she may not have another book in her, and she wondered at the 100,000 books a year published in the UK: "How does anybody find time to read them all?"

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