

29th April 1970

Dear Dame Rebecca,

Thank you for your nice letter of the 24th of April. It was nice of you to write as you did. However, it is we who should be thanking you and so I want to express our deep gratitude to you for twice acting as judge for the Booker Prize. Nobody, I have been told, could have been a more acute and penetrating judge and your presence on the panel has added much lustre as well as the stamp of complete objectivity.

Sad as we are that you cannot undertake a third term I fully understand your reasons. I can only thank you again for your great contribution to the launching of the prize.

I don't mind your making the suggestion about dividing the prize. In fact I sympathise with your point of view, so I understand the feelings of the judges when two works are of more or less equal merit but a decision has to be taken that one person gets nothing and the other the lot. I have passed on your comments to John Murphy at Bookers and to the Publishers Association. I am told the reasoning behind the "one big prize" theory is to give the prize maximum importance and excitement and to give maximum publicity to novel writing - and reading - as a whole. To split the prize would, it is argued, diffuse the impact of the biggest, single prize for a single book in a single category of writing.

I must accept the reasoning but I do understand that this may cause acute disappointment to the "runner-up". I hope Mr Trevor was not too upset.

Thank you again so very much for all you have done.

Yours sincerely,

Dame Rebecca West, DBE,

47 Piccadilly, London, W. 1
Tel. G. 1. 1. 1