

# The Booker book

NOVELIST **Bernice Rubens** was still trying to adjust this week to the fact that her fourth book, *The Elected Member*, has just won the £5,000 Booker Prize, the world's largest literary award.

"I knew I had won ten days before it was announced and I had a little time to live with it," she told me at her home in Frogna Gardens, Hampstead. "But I still don't believe it."

She was surprised that the novel even reached the short list of six, which included books by **Iris Mur-**

**doch**, **Elizabeth Bowen** and **William Trevor**. "I didn't think I stood an earthly," she confessed.

But on Tuesday night **Miss Jennie Lee**, the Minister of the Arts, presented **Miss Rubens**, 44, with the £5,000 cheque as proof of her success, at a reception held in Stationers' Hall.

"I've no particular plans for spending it," she said. "I'll probably be very sensible and decide to invest the money."

The *Elected Member*, which tells of a man being driven mad by the neurotic members of his family, had poor sales of only 3,000 when it was published last

year. But it was a best-seller in America, where it was given the title *Chosen People*, and sold 14,000 copies in its first month.

Ironically, now that it has been given the Booker accolade as the best novel of 1969, it is to be republished here and is also to appear in paperback.

**Miss Rubens**, who is married to writer **Rudi Nassauer** and has two teenage daughters, has lived in Hampstead for more than 20 years. She is now at work on a new novel.

"I'm halfway through, but I have no timetable for these things," she said. "It will be finished when it's finished."

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