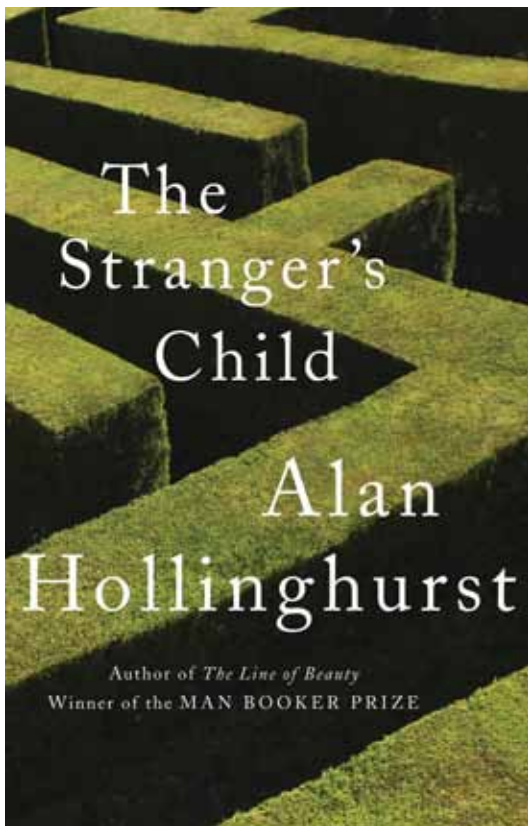




The Man
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2011

Reader's Guide



Other books by Alan Hollinghurst

The Swimming-Pool Library (1988)

The Folding Star (1994)

The Spell (1998)

The Line of Beauty (2004)

The Stranger's Child (2011)

The Stranger's Child Alan Hollinghurst

Picador / Pan Macmillan

Price £20

www.themanbookerprize.com

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About the author

Alan Hollinghurst was born in 1954 in Gloucestershire. He studied and then taught English at Oxford. For several years he was the Deputy Editor of the *Times Literary Supplement* and was one of Granta's Best Young British Novelists in 1993. Alan Hollinghurst lives in London. *The Line of Beauty*, which won The Man Booker Prize in 2004, was adapted into a three part television series by the BBC and aired on BBC2 in May 2006.

The Stranger's Child

In the late summer of 1913 the young poet Cecil Valance comes to stay at 'Two Acres', the home of his close Cambridge friend George Sawle, and of his sister, Daphne. The weekend will be one of excitements and confusions for all the Sawles, a weekend in which a poem is written which will become a touchstone for a generation, an evocation of an England about to change for ever. Linking the Sawle and Valance families irrevocably, the shared intimacies of this weekend become legendary events in a larger story, told and interpreted in different ways over the ensuing century, and subjected to the scrutiny of critics and biographers with their own agendas and anxieties. In a sequence of widely separated episodes we follow the two families through startling changes in fortune and circumstance. Throughout this often richly comic history of sexual mores and literary reputation runs the story of Daphne, from innocent girlhood to wary old age. Around her, Hollinghurst draws an absorbing picture of an England constantly in flux. Spanning almost the whole of the twentieth century and written in five sections of gloriously contrasting mood, setting and texture, the whole is a symphonic novel of incredible power, thrilling and profoundly moving. This is a truly great novel from one of the finest writers in the English language, at the height of his powers.

Discussion points

Why did Alan Hollinghurst choose the title *The Stranger's Child*?

The Stranger's Child is a subtle novel. How much does *The Stranger's Child* tell us directly, and how much does it leave us to infer?

How effectively and to what purpose does Alan Hollinghurst present other people's words in the novel – from Cecil's poems, to Paul Bryant's diary, to Dudley's memoir?

What is the significance of love in the novel?

What plot development surprised you most about *The Stranger's Child*?

Themed reading

Evelyn Waugh *Brideshead Revisited*
Tennyson's 'In Memoriam A.H.H'
Henry James *The Aspen Papers*

Useful links

<http://www.panmacmillan.com>
<http://www.picador.com>
Interview with Alan Hollinghurst
<http://www.guardian.co.uk/books/2011/jun/18/alan-hollinghurst-interview>
Round up of reviews
http://www.theomnivore.co.uk/Book/7227-The_Stranger_s_Child/default.aspx