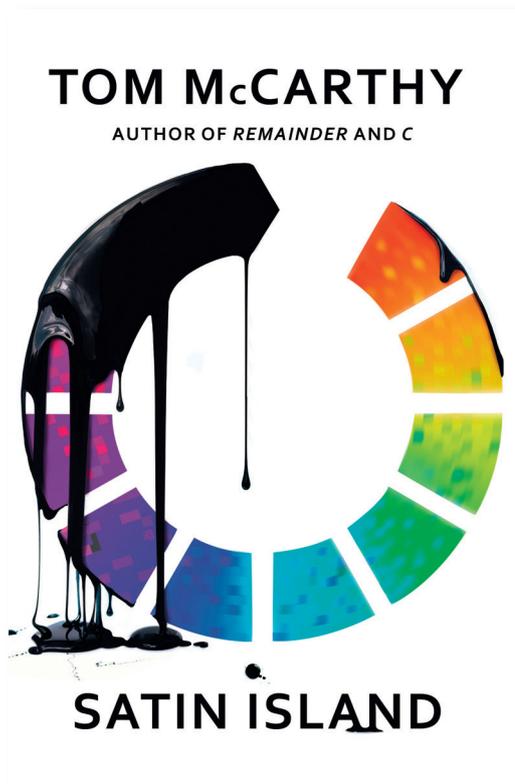


Reader's Guide



Other novels by Tom McCarthy

Remainder (2006)

Men in Space (2007)

C (2010)

Satin Island Tom McCarthy

Jonathan Cape

www.themanbookerprize.com

#FinestFiction



About the author

Tom McCarthy was born in 1969 and grew up in London. His creation, in 1999, of the International Necronautical Society (INS), a 'semi-fictitious organisation' that combines literature, art and philosophy, has led to publications, installations and exhibitions in galleries and museums around the world, from Tate Britain and the ICA in London to Moderna Museet in Stockholm and The Drawing Center in New York.

Tom regularly writes on literature and art for publications including *The New York Times*, *The London Review of Books* and *Artforum*.

Satin Island

Set in contemporary London, *Satin Island* is a work reflecting disjointed times.

A story about U., a 'corporate anthropologist' working for an elite consultancy. U.'s employers have set him two tasks. First, he must assist in the launching of a great, epoch-defining project which no one, least of all its own architects, fully understands. Second, he has been asked to compose the seemingly impossible: the Great Report – an ethnographic document to sum up our age. Instead, procrastinating, meandering, drifting through endless buffer-zones of information, U. grows obsessed with the images with which the world bombards him on a daily basis: oil spills, African traffic jams, roller-blade processions, zombie parades. Is there a secret logic holding all these things together – a codex that, once cracked, will unlock the master-meaning of our times? Might it have something to do with South Pacific Cargo Cults, or the dead parachutists in the news? Perhaps; perhaps not.

Discussion points

'If there is an individual alive in 2015 with the genius and vision of James Joyce, they're probably working for Google' (Tom McCarthy, *The Guardian*). In what ways does *Satin Island* challenge our conventional expectations of what a novel should offer?

'We require experience to stay ahead, if only by a nose, of our consciousness of experience - if for no other reason than that the latter needs to make sense of the former, to (as Peyman would say) narrate it both to others and ourselves, and for this purpose, has to be fed with a constant, unsorted supply of fresh sensations and events.' What does *Satin Island* have to say about how we create meaning in a world of data saturation?

U. becomes obsessed with and entranced by images of oil spills, news stories of parachutist deaths and footage of African traffic jams. What links these seemingly disparate things and why do you think McCarthy has chosen this imagery?

U. often speaks from impersonal spaces – airports, hotels, hospitals - what do you make of these locations in *Satin Island*?

What is the Great Report? And what comparisons can be made between U.'s project and the work of the novelist?

Themed reading

Franz Kafka *The Castle*
Thomas Pynchon *Bleeding Edge*
Dave Eggers *The Circle*
Joshua Cohen *Book of Numbers*
Claude Levi-Strauss *Tristes Tropiques*

Useful links

www.themanbookerprize.com
<http://www.randomhouse.co.uk/editions/satin-island/9781446444085>
<http://www.interviewmagazine.com/culture/tom-mccarthy>