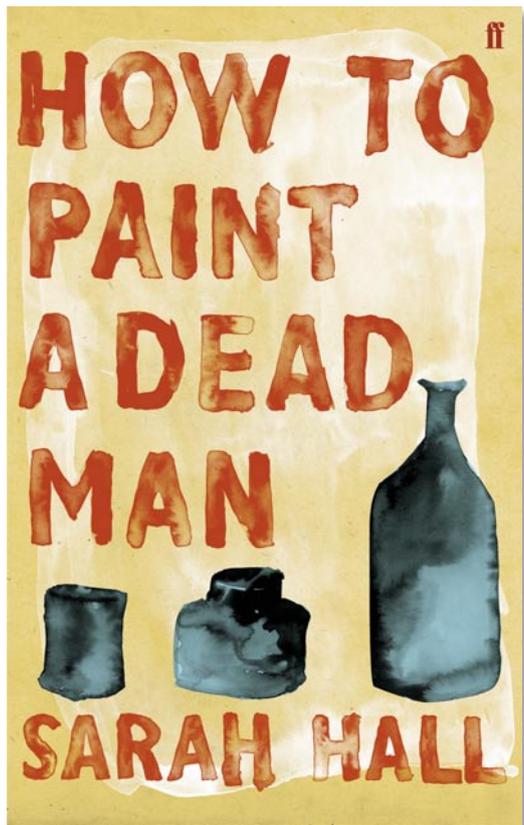


Reader's Guide



Other books by Sarah Hall

Haweswater (2002)

The Electric Michelangelo (2004)

The Carhullan Army (2007)

How to Paint a Dead Man

Sarah Hall

Published by Faber and Faber

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About the author

Sarah Hall was born in Cumbria in 1974. She received a BA from Aberystwyth University and a MLitt in Creative Writing from St Andrews, Scotland. She is the author of *Haweswater*, which won the 2003 Commonwealth Writers Prize for Best First Novel, a Society of Authors Betty Trask Award, and a Lakeland Book of the Year prize. In 2004, her second novel, *The Electric Michelangelo*, was shortlisted for the Man Booker Prize, the Commonwealth Writers Prize (Eurasia region), and the Prix Femina Etranger, and was longlisted for the Orange Prize for Fiction. Her third novel, *The Carhullan Army*, was published in 2007, and won the 2006/07 John Llewellyn Rhys Prize, the James Tiptree Jr. Award, a Lakeland Book of the Year prize, and was shortlisted for the Arthur C. Clarke Award for science fiction.

How to Paint a Dead Man

Italy in the early 1960s: a dying painter considers the sacrifices and losses that have made him an enigma, both to strangers and those closest to him. He begins his last life painting, using the same objects he has painted obsessively for his entire career - a small group of bottles.

Not long afterwards, a blind girl tends his grave, trying to understand the world she can no longer see, and wondering whether the presence she feels nearby is the 'Bestia', the monstrous creature depicted in the altar of painting of her local church.

In Cumbria 30 years later, a landscape artist - who once wrote letters to the Italian recluse - finds himself trapped in the extreme terrain that has made him famous.

And in present-day London, his daughter, struggling with the sudden loss of her twin brother while trying to curate an exhibition about the lives of the twentieth century European masters, is drawn into a world of darkness and sexual abandon.

Discussion points

How did the extract from Cennini's *The Craftsman's Handbook* effect your understanding and interpretation of the novel?

Did you find any one of the four narratives more compelling and vivid than the others?

Signor Giorgio expresses himself in riddles '*We should not forget that when we limp away afflicted through the spirit, it is not to the factory gates or to the corporate steps we pilgrimage. Instead we go to the sea for its salt.*' What does this effect the way the reader perceives Giorgio?

How do you think that the four stories work both individually as separate entities and as part of a cohesive whole?

Susie tells her story through the unusual 'second person narrative', how does this effect your perception of her?

Themed reading

Oxygen Andrew Miller
Belloq's Women Peter Everett
Master Georgie Beryl Bainbridge

Useful links

www.themanbookerprize.com
www.faber.co.uk
www.guardian.co.uk/books/2009/jun/06/how-paint-dead-man-sarah-hall