



Provided by the author(s) and University of Galway in accordance with publisher policies. Please cite the published version when available.

Title	Paperback review of 'The Line of Beauty'
Author(s)	Kenny, John
Publication Date	2006-07-01
Publication Information	Kenny, J. (2006, 1 July) Paperback review of 'The Line of Beauty', by Alan Hollinghurst. 'The Irish Times', 'Weekend': 13.
Publisher	The Irish Times
Item record	http://hdl.handle.net/10379/498

Downloaded 2023-03-28T14:12:26Z

Some rights reserved. For more information, please see the item record link above.



The Line of Beauty

Alan Hollinghurst

Picador, £7.99

Lines of cocaine; lines of curvature where men's backs meet buttocks; lines of prose that, though not so beautiful in cadence as repute suggests, roll the reader comfortably up in old swathes of novelistic textures – these Booker-winning lines from 2004 are all redelivered with the recent BBC adaptation and this tie-in. While certain of Hollinghurst's themes are modern (AIDS, conspicuous consumption), we are on traditional character ground with young naïf, Nick Guest, a gay Oxford graduate besotted with straight friend, Toby Fedden, at whose family home in Notting Hill he is lodging. Thatcher's mid-80s Britain struts and trumpets around them, especially in the form of Toby's Tory MP father, Gerald. Nick's experiential lessons, acquired amid a privileged milieu enlivened out of seemingly innate shallowness by Hollinghurst's satire, progress towards a powerful ending of ambivalent aubade-like mood. This is how to write a discursive novel about period and politics: somewhat obliquely, from the inside out, avoiding the easy moralising of distance and retrospective judgment.

John Kenny