

Gordon  
Burn  
Trust



new \*  
writing  
north

**Press Release**  
**Tuesday 11 August**

## **Shortlist announced for Gordon Burn Prize 2015**

**The shortlist is announced today for the Gordon Burn Prize 2015, which champions a fresh, undaunted approach to writing.**

The Gordon Burn Prize was founded in 2012 to celebrate the legacy of the late author. A fearless and forensic writer, Newcastle-born Burn was a literary polymath, who wrote in depth on subjects ranging from celebrity to serial killers, politics to contemporary art, sport to the media. The Gordon Burn Prize seeks to illuminate the work of those writers whose work follows in his bold footsteps.

The judges of the 2015 prize are actress Maxine Peake, authors Doug Johnstone and Roddy Doyle, journalist Suzanne Moore and artist Gavin Turk, each of whom are looking for writing which is evocative of Burn's own original and fearless literary methods.

The shortlist is:

- *In Plain Sight: The Life and Lies of Jimmy Savile* by Dan Davies (Quercus)
- *Midland* by Honor Gavin (Penned in the Margins)
- *Noon Tide Toll* by Romesh Gunsekera (Granta Books)
- *Original Rockers* by Richard King (Faber & Faber)
- *Nothing is True and Everything is Possible* by Peter Pomerantsev (Faber & Faber)

The Gordon Burn Prize is run in partnership by the Gordon Burn Trust, New Writing North and Faber & Faber, Gordon's publisher. The winner will be announced on 9 October at Durham Book Festival, a Durham County Council festival produced by New Writing North.

**Claire Malcolm, chief executive of New Writing North, said:**

We were delighted with the quality of this year's Gordon Burn Prize submissions and our judges had their work cut out for them deciding on the five titles to make the shortlist. The nature of this prize means that the selected books are all very different – each bold and fresh in their own approach – but they all give a sense that their writers are entrenched in the world they are writing about, and reflecting it back to the reader in a clear-sighted, even ferocious, way. It makes me very optimistic about the state of British publishing that such fantastic writing is being published. I hope the

prize helps to raise awareness of these titles, as they deserve to be widely read.”

**Carol Gerner, founder of the Gordon Burn Trust said:** “All of the books on the shortlist have a special quality which would have appealed to Gordon. They either approach their subject forensically and with rigour, which only a very committed writer can do, or they experiment and take an unexpected and revealing slant. They all deserve to be read and noticed by as many readers as possible.”

### **Judges’ comments**

Each judge has commented on one book from the shortlist:

*In Plain Sight: The Life and Lies of Jimmy Savile* by Dan Davies

**Roddy Doyle** said: “*In Plain Sight* is a shocking book, and it is also shockingly good. Cleverly structured, so well researched and so well written, it tells its story quite brilliantly.”

*Midland* by Honor Gavin

**Gavin Turk** said: “To me, reading this book was dream-like as I sequenced between nostalgia and explicitly remembered detail. The narrative scenarios drew me into a believable world that was also a kind of science fiction. I loved the way that Honor played with language peppering the pages with a wonderful mix of colloquiums and made up words that brought me closer to the heart of the world I was suspended in.”

*Noon Tide Toll* by Romesh Gunesekera

**Doug Johnstone** said: “*Noon Tide Toll* is a subtle and graceful collection of road stories set in a modern Sri Lanka still coping with the aftermath of war and the tsunami. Dealing with big themes of redemption and morality, it does so with a wonderfully intimate feel and a huge human heart.”

*Nothing is True and Everything is Possible* by Peter Pomerantsev

**Maxine Peake** said: “*Nothing is True and Everything is Possible* takes you on a dystopian journey into Putin’s Russia. Funny, intense and alluring. A real ride of a book. I was plunged into a world of unknowns, which quickly became frighteningly familiar. Fascinating, exciting, grotesque.”

*Original Rockers* by Richard King

**Suzanne Moore** said: “I was mesmerised by Richard King's memoir *Original Rockers*. It glistens. Tight, spacey, mood-altering just like much of the music he describes.”

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### **Notes to Editors:**

- The Gordon Burn Prize is run in partnership by the Gordon Burn Trust, New Writing North and Faber & Faber, Gordon Burn's publisher.
- Past winners of the Gordon Burn Prize are Benjamin Myers, *Pig Iron* (2013) and Paul Kingsnorth, *The Wake* (2014)
- The winner will be announced at Durham Book Festival on 9 October. Durham Book Festival is a Durham County Council festival produced by New Writing North. See [www.durhambookfestival.com](http://www.durhambookfestival.com)
- The winning writer will receive a cheque for £5,000 and be offered the opportunity to undertake a writing retreat of up to three months at Gordon Burn's cottage in the Scottish borders.
- The prize is open to work written in World English by writers of any nationality or descent who at the time of entering are permanently in residence in the United Kingdom or United States of America.
- Please visit the Gordon Burn website ([www.gordonburntrust.com](http://www.gordonburntrust.com)) for details on the Gordon Burn Prize as well as information on Gordon Burn's work.

### **Shortlisted titles**

#### ***In Plain Sight: The Life and Lies of Jimmy Savile* by Dan Davies**

Knight of the Realm; devoted son; pathological liar; marathon runner; pioneering DJ; devious myth-maker; hospital reformer; sadist; competitive wrestler; bullying psychopath and relentless sexual predator. Jimmy Savile was a complex, sinister and ultimately unknowable man. *In Plain Sight* is a devastating curtain-lift on a British society whose burgeoning 'youth' scene, from the 1950s onwards, fostered a culture ripe for abusive manipulation.

*"An extraordinary book, by turns deeply sinister and darkly comic".* Craig Brown, *Mail on Sunday*

#### ***Midland* by Honor Gavin**

*Midland* tells the stories of three young women as they fight to find their feet amidst the accumulated rubble of the twentieth century. From the bombsites of the 1940s to the construction sites of the 1960s and the school halls and decaying tower blocks of the 1980s, the novel provides an ingenious narrative of one Midlands family that is also a startling, anarchic history of a city.

*"Honor Gavin is one of the cleverest people I know".* Tom McCarthy

#### ***Noon Tide Toll* by Romesh Guneskera**

Vasantha is a van driver for hire, ferrying aid workers, returning exiles, and tentative entrepreneurs across the battle-scarred landscapes of Sri Lanka. The civil war is finally over, but the traumas of the past are still haunting. Vasantha keeps his own counsel, lingering on the periphery of his passengers' stories, but as time goes on he reveals a little of his own story

too. Perceptive, sombre and finely-tuned, *Noontide Toll* paints an extraordinary portrait of a post-war Sri Lanka grappling with the ghosts of its civil war.

*“It’s one of the trickiest acts to pull off, the turning of political comment or observation into a believable, character-driven novel, but Gunesequera manages it beautifully.” Sunday Herald*

### **Original Rockers by Richard King**

*Original Rockers* blends memoir and elegiac music writing on the likes of Captain Beefheart, CAN and Julian Cope, to create a book that recalls the debauched glory days of the independent record shop. Chaotic, amateurish and extravagantly dysfunctional, this is a book full of rare personalities and rum stories. It is a book about landscape, place and the personal; the first piece of writing to treat the environment of the record shop as a natural resource with its own peculiar rhythms and anecdotal histories.

*“A remarkable memory fugue, a work of rapture and reverie, a bittersweet and often moving tribute to a hallowed place”. The Observer*

### **Nothing is True and Everything is Possible by Peter Pomerantsev**

When he arrives in Russia in the mid-00’s, Londoner Peter Pomerantsev sees an opportunity in the booming TV industry, and gains access to every nook and corrupt cranny of the giant country: from propaganda gurus through to Siberian gangsters and the elite super-rich in London and the US. As Russia spins from decadence to madness he finds himself sucked further into Putin’s post-modern dictatorship as it rises to challenge the West.

*“A fizzingly impressionistic account of the new Russian elites... IRRESISTIBLE”. The Mail on Sunday*