

GORDON BURN PRIZE

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Shortlist announced for Gordon Burn Prize 2020

The shortlist has been announced for the Gordon Burn Prize, the literary prize that recognises the year's boldest, most ambitious and uncompromising work.

The Gordon Burn Prize was founded in 2012 and is run in partnership by the Gordon Burn Trust, New Writing North, Faber & Faber and Durham Book Festival. The prize seeks to celebrate those who follow in the footsteps of the groundbreaking author Gordon Burn, who died in 2009 and whose work includes *Happy Like Murderers*, *Alma Cogan* and *Born Yesterday*.

Eight years on from the prize's inception, it has become one of the most highly anticipated prizes on the literary landscape. Previous winners include *For the Good Times*, David Keenan (2019); *Census*, Jesse Ball (2018); and *The Long Drop*, Denise Mina (2017).

Through both fiction and non-fiction, the 2020 shortlist takes the reader on an unflinching journey through race, sexuality and class. It probes into some of our most complex relationships, most troubling politics and profoundest sources of identity as it ranges from global power play to the broken care system.

The writers Anthony Anaxagorou and Richard T. Kelly, artist Rachel Howard and journalist and broadcaster Sali Hughes are the judges of the Gordon Burn Prize 2020. They will announce the winner at a digital event on 15 October 2020 at Durham Book Festival, which is an annual event commissioned by Durham County Council.

Councillor Joy Allen, Durham County Council's cabinet member for transformation, culture and tourism, said: 'Durham Book Festival is about celebrating the written word in all its guises and encouraging people to try new works by authors who are not afraid to explore challenging topics. This is at the heart of the Gordon Burn Prize and we are delighted to once again host the prize as part of our virtual event this October.'

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The shortlist for the Gordon Burn Prize 2020 is:

Jenn Ashworth, *Notes Made While Falling* (Goldsmiths Press)
Paul Mendez, *Rainbow Milk* (Dialogue Books)
Deborah Orr, *Motherwell* (Weidenfeld & Nicolson)
Peter Pomerantsev, *This Is Not Propaganda* (Faber & Faber)
Lemn Sissay, *My Name Is Why* (Canongate)
Lisa Taddeo, *Three Women* (Bloomsbury)

Anthony Anaxagorou said: 'Reading for the Gordon Burn Prize has been a joy. The books on the shortlist represent writing that is working to establish new parameters around the possibilities of language, theory and storytelling, through which we're able to expand and enhance our understanding of each other and the world we occupy.'

Rachel Howard said: 'Reading the twelve books on the longlist during lockdown was a perfect distraction to what was going on in the world, an escape into the lives of others. The six books on the shortlist are diverse but are all powerful in their own way. I'm looking forward to rereading them again and reconvening with the other judges to choose a winner; it won't be easy, though, as the works are outstanding.'

Richard T. Kelly said: 'Gordon's writing was so much about looking for the true story that lies behind the easy account we get tempted to settle for. And in a time when, more than ever, the lie goes round the world before the truth has its boots on, it's a special pleasure to be recognising fine writing that lives up to Gordon's tough standard. I look forward to our honouring a worthy winner from this multifaceted shortlist.'

-- ENDS --

For all media enquiries, including high-res images and interview requests, please contact Laura Fraine, Senior Marketing and Communications Manager, New Writing North, laurafraine@newwritingnorth.com, 0191 204 8850.

NOTES TO EDITORS

The Gordon Burn Prize celebrates both fiction and non-fiction from the United Kingdom, Ireland and the United States of America. The winner of the Gordon

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Burn Prize will receive £5,000 and the chance to spend a month's retreat at Gordon Burn's cottage in the Scottish Borders.

The longlist for the Gordon Burn Prize 2020, announced on 17 June 2020, is:

Jenn Ashworth, *Notes Made While Falling* (Goldsmiths Press)
Luke Brown, *Theft* (And Other Stories)
Garth Greenwell, *Cleanness* (Picador)
Kirstin Innes, *Scabby Queen* (4th Estate)
Mark Lanegan, *Sing Backwards and Weep* (White Rabbit)
Casey Legler, *Godspeed* (Scribe)
Paul Mendez, *Rainbow Milk* (Dialogue)
Jenny Offill, *Weather* (Granta)
Deborah Orr, *Motherwell* (Weidenfeld & Nicolson)
Peter Pomerantsev, *This Is Not Propaganda* (Faber & Faber)
Lemn Sissay, *My Name Is Why* (Canongate)
Lisa Taddeo, *Three Women* (Bloomsbury)

Previous winners of the Gordon Burn Prize

2019: *For the Good Times*, David Keenan
2018: *Census*, Jesse Ball
2017: *The Long Drop*, Denise Mina
2016: *All That Man Is*, David Szalay
2015: *In Plain Sight: The Life and Lies of Jimmy Savile*, Dan Davies
2014: *The Wake*, Paul Kingsnorth
2013: *Pig Iron*, Benjamin Myers

Shortlisted author biographies

Jenn Ashworth

Jenn Ashworth was born in Preston and studied at Cambridge and Manchester. She is the author of the novels *A Kind of Intimacy*, *Cold Light*, *The Friday Gospels* and *Fell*. She was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society of Literature in 2018. Her latest book, *Notes Made While Falling*, is a memoir told in a series of essays, published by Goldsmiths Press. She lectures in creative writing at Lancaster University.

Paul Mendez

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Paul Mendez was born and raised in the Black Country. He now lives in London and is studying for an MA in Black British Writing at Goldsmiths, University of London. He has been a performing member of two theatre companies and worked as a voice actor. As a writer, he has contributed to the *Times Literary Supplement* and the *Brixton Review of Books*. *Rainbow Milk* is his debut novel.

Deborah Orr

Deborah Orr was an award-winning journalist whose work regularly appeared in the *Guardian*, the *Independent*, the *Sunday Times* and in many magazines. She was the first female editor of the *Guardian's Weekend* magazine, at the age of thirty. Deborah was a co-creator of *Enquirer*, a play commissioned by the National Theatre of Scotland and shortlisted for New Play of the Year at the Critics' Awards for Theatre in Scotland.

Peter Pomerantsev

Peter Pomerantsev is a Senior Fellow at the Institute of Global Affairs at London School of Economics, studying twenty-first-century information manipulation and how to fix it. An author and TV producer, he is a widely cited expert on disinformation and media, and writes for publications including *Granta*, *The Atlantic*, *Financial Times* and many others. His first book, *Nothing Is True and Everything Is Possible*, won the 2016 Royal Society of Literature Ondaatje Prize.

Lemn Sissay

Lemn Sissay is a BAFTA-nominated, award-winning international writer and broadcaster. He has authored collections of poetry and plays. He has been made an honorary doctor by the universities of Manchester, Kent, Huddersfield and Brunel. Sissay was awarded an MBE for services to literature and, in 2019, he was awarded the PEN Pinter Prize. He is Chancellor of the University of Manchester.

Lisa Taddeo

Lisa Taddeo spent eight years and thousands of hours tracking the women whose stories comprise *Three Women*, moving to the towns they lived in to better understand their lives. She has contributed to *New York* magazine, *Esquire*, *Elle*, *Glamour* and many other publications. Her short stories have won two Pushcart Prizes. She lives with her husband and daughter in New England.