

GORDON BURN PRIZE

The Gordon Burn Prize 2017: the shortlist is announced

News release for release 00:00, 21 July 2017

The shortlist is today announced for the **Gordon Burn Prize 2017**. The list continues to showcase some of the most interesting contemporary writing in its wide-ranging selection of titles. Six were selected to go forward:

- *Black Teeth and a Brilliant Smile* by Adelle Stripe (Wrecking Ball Press)
- *Border: A Journey to the Edge of Europe* by Kapka Kassabova (Granta Books)
- *First Love* by Gwendoline Riley (Granta Books)
- *The Long Drop* by Denise Mina (Harvill Secker)
- *This Is Memorial Device* by David Keenan (Faber & Faber)
- *This Is the Place to Be* by Lara Pawson (CB Editions)

In the spirit of the Gordon Burn Prize, the shortlist is far-reaching, eclectic and provocative. It includes two debuts, four works of fiction and two of non-fiction, with a third of the list published by two very small presses as the resurgence of the independent publisher in the UK continues.

Ian Sansom, one of the judges, commented:

‘Gordon Burn was unique and the Gordon Burn Prize is unique. It recognises what so many prizes fail to recognise: that literature, like all art, is in a constant process of reinvention and renewal and that the novel is a truly bastard form. The Gordon Burn Prize is a celebration of the art of possibility. This year’s shortlist includes hybrid works in many forms - autofiction, memoir, biography, travel writing and crime – and draws attention to brilliant and truly inventive work that might otherwise be overlooked. All ye that are weary and heavy burdened, gaze upon these works and wonder!’

The prize was established in 2012 to celebrate the legacy of one of literature’s great innovators. Gordon Burn’s writing was precise and rigorous, and often blurred the line between fact and fiction. He wrote across a wide range of subjects, from celebrities to serial killers, politics to contemporary art; his works include the novels *Fullalove* and *Born Yesterday: The News as a Novel*, and non-fiction including *Happy Like Murderers: The Story of Fred and Rosemary West*, *Best and Edwards: Football, Fame and Oblivion* and *Sex & Violence, Death & Silence: Encounters with Recent Art*.

The Gordon Burn Prize, run in partnership by the Gordon Burn Trust, New Writing North, Faber & Faber and Durham Book Festival, seeks to celebrate the work of those who follow in his footsteps: novels which dare to enter history and interrogate the past; non-fiction adventurous enough to inhabit characters and events in order to create new and vivid realities. The prize is open to works in English by writers of any nationality or descent who, at the time of entering, are permanently resident in the United Kingdom or the United States of America.

The prize will be awarded at the Durham Book Festival on **Thursday 12 October**.

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About the judges:

Cosey Fanni Tutti is an artist and musician, known for her art, her work in the sex industry, as co-founder of Industrial Records and Throbbing Gristle, and her pioneering electronic music as half of Chris & Cosey and Carter Tutti. Her autobiography, *Art, Sex, Music*, was published by Faber & Faber in 2017.

Petina Gappah is a Zimbabwean writer with law degrees from Cambridge, Graz University and the University of Zimbabwe. Her debut collection of short stories, *An Elegy for Easterly*, won the Guardian First Book Award in 2009. Her debut novel, *The Book of Memory*, was published in 2015. Her latest collection of short stories, *Rotten Row*, was published in 2016. She is published by Faber & Faber.

Allan Jenkins is the award-winning editor of *Observer Food Monthly*. He was previously editor of the *Observer Magazine* and once lived in an experimental eco-community on Anglesey. He is the co-author of *J. Sheekey: Fish*, and lives in North West London. His book *Plot 29: A Memoir* was published in 2017 by 4th Estate.

Ian Sansom is a novelist, broadcaster and journalist, contributing to, among others, the *Guardian*, *Times Literary Supplement* and *London Review of Books*. He is the author of fourteen works of fiction and non-fiction and is the Director of the Oscar Wilde Centre, Trinity College Dublin.

About the titles:

Border: A Journey to the Edge of Europe (Granta Books)
by Kapka Kassabova

Border is both a work of reportage and art. Kapka Kassabova returns to the border zone between Bulgaria, Greece and Turkey, an area that once swarmed with soldiers, spies and fugitives and remains deeply scarred by its past. She finds people in this little-known corner of Europe who have been shaped by a history that includes communist occupation and two world wars and can be traced to an ancient legacy of myths and legends. *Border* is a meditation on the borderlines that exist between countries, cultures and people, and that echo within each of us.

This is Memorial Device (Faber & Faber)
by David Keenan

It's the glory years of the early 80s in Airdrie and the post-punk outfit Memorial Device are taking the music scene by storm. David Keenan's debut novel recreates the youthful intensity, wild energy and rampant excitement of a small Scottish town temporarily transformed by the possibilities of alternative music. At its core is the story of Memorial Device (perhaps the greatest band you've never heard of), a group that could have gone all the way were it not for the excess and uncompromising bloody-minded belief that served to confirm them as underground legends.

The Long Drop (Harvill Secker)
by Denise Mina

Denise Mina's novel takes us back to Glasgow in the late 1950s where a series of deeply disturbing and violent murders have shaken the city. At the centre of the *The Long Drop* are William Watt, a businessman and social climber whose family have been brutally killed, and the sinister yet ...

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... charismatic Peter Manuel, a known liar and rapist. When Manuel offers Watt answers about his family's murder, the two meet in a Glasgow bar and embark on a strange and uneasy relationship that will have long-term repercussions for them both.

This is the Place to Be (CB Editions)

by Lara Pawson

Lara Pawson's fearless memoir is told in fragmentary sections that explore her experiences working as a war reporter in Angola and the Ivory Coast, her upbringing in England and intimate aspects of her personal life. The book's structure creates a collage of memory, juxtaposing questions about the nature of war reporting alongside thoughts about daily life and the nature of close relationships. *This is the Place to Be* is characterised by Pawson's unshrinking honesty as she approaches the themes of identity, race and class across different continents.

First Love (Granta Books)

by Gwendoline Riley

First Love is an unflinching portrait of the marriage between Neve, a writer in her thirties, and her older husband Edwyn. As Neve traces the development of their relationship and the events that led to their marriage, she tells of other loves and relationships, notably her tyrannical father and self-involved mother. Neve's is a story of mistakes and misalliances, of helplessness and hostility, in which both husband and wife have played a part. In beautifully crafted prose and with distinct humour, Gwendoline Riley takes us into an exploration of modern love.

Black Teeth and a Brilliant Smile (Wrecking Ball Press)

by Adelle Stripe

Black Teeth and a Brilliant Smile is inspired by the life of the Bradford playwright Andrea Dunbar, who was brought up on the infamous Buttershaw estate and died at a tragically young age. Adelle Stripe recreates the north of England during the Thatcher years, exploring the bittersweet physical and emotional landscapes that led to a teenage girl from a council estate becoming one of her nation's greatest dramatists. This debut novel weaves together both real and imagined characters and creates a clear-eyed portrait of a time of intense social change.

Longlist titles that were not selected:

- *Autumn* by Ali Smith (Hamish Hamilton)
- *Between Them* by Richard Ford (Bloomsbury)
- *Estuary: Out from London to the Sea* by Rachel Lichtenstein (Hamish Hamilton)
- *I Hate the Internet: A Novel* by Jarrett Kobek (Serpent's Tail)
- *Lincoln in the Bardo* by George Saunders (Bloomsbury)
- *The Fact of a Body: A Murder and a Memoir* by Alexandria Marzano-Lesnevich (Macmillan)
- *The Secret Life: Three True Stories* by Andrew O'Hagan (Faber & Faber)
- *You Too Can Have a Body Like Mine* by Alexandra Kleeman (4th Estate)

Previous winners:

2013 Benjamin Myers, *Pig Iron*

2014 Paul Kingsnorth, *The Wake*

2015 Dan Davies, *In Plain Sight: The Life and Lies of Jimmy Savile*

2016 David Szalay, *All That Man Is*

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The News as a Novel

Ten years ago, the late Gordon Burn took the events of 2007 and turned them into *Born Yesterday; The News as a Novel*, an ambitious and experimental novel about the way news is made, and the way the media creates and manipulates the stories we see before us.

In the spirit of this fine literary experiment with fact and fiction, Durham Book Festival and The Word Factory have commissioned four outstanding writers, **Lionel Shriver, Alexei Sayle, Petina Gappah and Benjamin Myers** to produce a piece of work in response to the extraordinary unfolding news cycle of 2017.

***The News as a Novel* will premiere at Durham Book Festival 2017 on Friday 13 October.**

Social media:

@NewWritingNorth,

@durhambookfest

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www.gordonburnprize.com

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