

GORDON BURN PRIZE

Strictly embargoed until 10pm BST, Thursday 13 October 2022

Preti Taneja wins the Gordon Burn Prize 2022

The tenth annual Gordon Burn Prize was awarded this evening at Durham Book Festival (Thursday 13 October) to a writer whose unflinching work of narrative non-fiction blurs genres and form to understand terror, trauma and grief. The winning title is *Aftermath* by Preti Taneja (*And Other Stories*, 2022).

The Gordon Burn Prize celebrates the year's most dazzlingly bold and forward-thinking fiction and non-fiction written in English. *Aftermath* was selected by a panel of judges, made up of sportswriter and columnist Jonathan Liew, author Denise Mina (chair), broadcaster Stuart Maconie, artist and poet Heather Phillipson and writer Chitra Ramaswamy.

The Gordon Burn Prize is run in partnership by the Gordon Burn Trust, New Writing North, Faber & Faber and Durham Book Festival, a Durham County Council event.

Aftermath strives to make sense of the London Bridge terror attack in 2019. Usman Khan was a convicted terrorist who spent eight years in prison and went on to kill two people, Saskia Jones and Jack Merritt, at an event marking the anniversary of a prison programme he had participated in. Preti Taneja had taught Kahn in prison and Jack Merritt was her colleague. *Aftermath* is a profound attempt to regain trust after violence and rebuild faith in human compassion: a powerful recommitment to activism and radical hope.

Preti Taneja is a professor of World Literature and Creative Writing at Newcastle University. Her first novel, *We That Are Young*, a translation of *King Lear* set in contemporary India, won the Desmond Elliott Prize 2018.

Denise Mina, chair of the judges, said: '*Aftermath* is an extraordinary story of fractured narratives and lives that takes us into a world barely glimpsed in headlines and outrage.'

Jonathan Liew said: 'Congratulations to Preti Taneja on a staggering piece of work. This was a cruelly tough award to judge, not simply because of the high overall standard but the astonishing breadth of submissions. But *Aftermath* stood out right from the start of the process: a book that knocks the breath out of you, and not always in a good way. It's harrowing in parts;

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heartbreaking in others; humane throughout. But what impressed me above all was its artistic courage: the blurring of form and genre, the refusal to hold the reader's hand or offer simple moral nostrums, the admission that while writing can expand our world, there are limits to what it can achieve. I wish this book every success and also want to pay tribute to the other richly talented authors on the shortlist.'

Chitra Ramaswamy said: '*Aftermath* is a beautifully crafted and carefully judged examination of an atrocity and the structures and systems that surround it. I'm blown away by Preti Taneja's writing: both the moral integrity of her approach and her fractured, minimalist prose. She has written a radical, profound, profoundly fractured and completely unique work of narrative non-fiction that has stayed with me. I haven't read anything quite like it, and I can't think of a more deserving winner of the Gordon Burn Prize.'

Heather Phillipson said: '*Aftermath* is a brutal and bewildering attempt to think through the unthinkable. Preti Taneja sets out the highest possible stakes for herself as a writer and, by implication, for you as a reader. Incandescent and unnerving.'

Stuart Maconie said: 'A raw, highly personal perspective on a brutal and shocking event.'

The Gordon Burn Prize was awarded for its tenth year at Durham Book Festival.

Cllr Elizabeth Scott, Cabinet member for economy and partnerships at Durham County Council, said: "I'd like to say a big congratulations to Preti as the winner of this year's Gordon Burn Prize, with her poignant and thought-provoking storytelling of a heart-breaking event standing out with judges. Durham Book Festival aims to shine a light on writing talent from the North East and globally, so we're proud to be able to host this internationally important prize here in County Durham and demonstrate our commitment to supporting literature and creativity as The Culture County."

The Gordon Burn Prize, founded in 2012 and first awarded in 2013, remembers the late author of novels including *Fullalove* and *Born Yesterday: The News as a Novel*, and non-fiction including *Happy Like Murderers: The Story of Fred and Rosemary West* and *Best and Edwards: Football, Fame and Oblivion*.

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The prize seeks to celebrate those who follow in Gordon Burn's footsteps by recognising literature that is fearless in both ambition and execution. The works recognised often make the reader think again, playing with style or genre, pushing boundaries or diverging from the mainstream literary culture.

Previous winners of the Gordon Burn Prize include Hanif Abdurraqib, who won in 2021 for his collection of essays, *A Little Devil in America: Notes in Praise of Black Performance*; Peter Pomerantsev in 2020 for *This Is Not Propaganda*, his study on the war against reality; David Keenan in 2019, for his novel *For the Good Times*, set during the height of the Troubles in 1970s Belfast; Jesse Ball in 2018 for *Census*, his fable inspired by his late brother; and Denise Mina in 2017 for her true crime novel *The Long Drop*.

Preti Taneja receives £5,000 and the opportunity to take up a writing retreat at Gordon Burn's cottage in the Scottish Borders.

NOTE: Photos and a quote from the winner be available at this link after the announcement: [Gordon Burn Prize winner for press](#)

For all media enquiries, contact Laura Fraine
laurafraine@newwritingnorth.com 07840254153

NOTES TO EDITORS

GORDON BURN PRIZE SHORTLIST 2022 (announced on 3 August 2022):

About a Son (Phoenix), David Whitehouse
Aftermath (And Other Stories), Preti Taneja
Case Study (Saraband), Graeme Macrae Burnet
Constructing a Nervous System (Granta), Margo Jefferson
Free: Coming of Age at the End of History (Allen Lane), Lea Ypi

GORDON BURN PRIZE LONGLIST 2022 (announced 29 June 2022)

About a Son (Phoenix), David Whitehouse
Aftermath (And Other Stories), Preti Taneja
Case Study (Saraband), Graeme Macrae Burnet
Companion Piece (Hamish Hamilton), Ali Smith
Constructing a Nervous System (Granta), Margo Jefferson

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Free: Coming of Age at the End of History (Allen Lane), Lea Ypi
Keeping the House (And Other Stories), Tice Cin
Oxblood (Bloomsbury), Tom Benn
The Perfect Golden Circle (Bloomsbury Circus), Benjamin Myers
Scary Monsters (Atlantic), Michelle de Kretser
Wayward (White Rabbit), Vashti Bunyan
Your Show (Faber), Ashley Hickson-Lovence

PREVIOUS WINNERS OF THE GORDON BURN PRIZE

2021 *A Little Devil in America: Notes in Praise of Black Performance*, Hanif Abdurraqib
2020 *This Is Not Propaganda*, Peter Pomerantsev
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

The prize is open to works in English published between 1 July 2021 and 1 July 2022 by writers of any nationality.

ABOUT THE JUDGES

Jonathan Liew is a sportswriter for the *Guardian* and a columnist for the *New Statesman*, who was awarded the 2021 Sports Journalists' Association prize for Sportswriter of the Year.

Stuart Maconie is a TV and radio presenter, journalist, columnist and author. He is on BBC Radio 6 Music (with Mark Radcliffe) every weekend morning between 8 and 10 a.m. and hosts *The Freak Zone* on Sunday nights. His bestselling books include the smash hit *Pies and Prejudice: In Search of The North*, *The Long Road from Jarrow*, *The People's Songs* and the recent *The Nanny State Made Me*, which came out in the first week of lockdown in 2020.

Denise Mina (chair of the judges) is the author of the Garnethill Trilogy (1998) Paddy Meehan novels and the Alex Morrow series. Standalones include *Sanctum* (*Deception* in the US), *Conviction*, *The Less Dead* and *The*

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Long Drop. Plays include *Ida Tamson*, *A Drunk Woman Looks at the Thistle* (an hour-long performance poem), *Meet Me* and an adaptation of Brecht's *Mr Puntila and His Man Matti* for a co-production between the Traverse, Citizens and Dot Theatre company of Istanbul. An improvised comedy series *Group* pilot premiered on BBC Scotland in 2020. Comics include a year-long run on *Hellblazer*, an original graphic novel *A Sickness in the Family* and an adaptation of Stieg Larsson's Millennium Trilogy.

Literary prizes include the CWA Dagger for best first novel, CWA Dagger for short story of the year, which she won twice, the Theakston's Old Peculiar Award in two consecutive years and the 2017 Gordon Burn and McIlvanney Prizes for *The Long Drop* and *The Less Dead*. *Conviction* was a joint winner of the McIlvanney Prize 2019, a *New York Times* bestseller and a Reese Witherspoon Book Club pick. She has been shortlisted for the Edgar, the CWA Historical Dagger and short story dagger. In 2020 *The Less Dead* was shortlisted for the Costa Novel of the Year.

She has served as a judge for the CWA, the Womens' Prize for Fiction and the David Cohen Prize. She has written for the *New York Times*, *La Liberation*, the *Guardian* and the *Herald*, and is a regular contributor on radio and television.

Heather Phillipson's audacious and wide-ranging practice spans video, sculpture, installation, music, poetry and online projects. She describes her works as 'quantum thought experiments'. Recent solo exhibitions include Tate Britain, London (2021–22), the Fourth Plinth commission, Trafalgar Square (2020–22), *Almost Gone*, an audio collage for BBC Radio 3 (2020), a major exhibition at BALTIC Centre for Contemporary Art, Gateshead (2018), and a vast commission for Art on the Underground's flagship site at Gloucester Road underground station (2018). Phillipson received the Film London Jarman Award in 2016 and the European Short Film Festival selection from the International Film Festival Rotterdam in 2018. She is also an award-winning poet, was named a Next Generation Poet in 2014 and has published three volumes of poetry.

Chitra Ramaswamy is a journalist and author. Her first book, *Expecting: The Inner Life of Pregnancy*, published by Saraband in April 2016, won the Saltire First Book of the Year Award and was shortlisted for the Polari Prize. Her second book, *Homelands: The History of a Friendship*, was published by Canongate in April 2022. She has contributed essays to *Antlers of Water*, *Nasty Women*, *The Freedom Papers*, *The Bi-ble* and *Message from the Skies*. She writes for the *Guardian*, is the restaurant critic for *The Times*

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(Scottish edition) and broadcasts for BBC radio. She lives in Edinburgh with her partner, two young children and rescue dog.



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