

GORDON BURN PRIZE

Shortlist announced for Gordon Burn Prize 2025

The shortlist for the Gordon Burn Prize 2025 was announced today (23 January 2025).

This year the shortlist is dominated by female authors with all bar one of the six shortlisted books being written by women. The following six books are on the shortlist:

- *Headshot* by Rita Bullwinkel (Daunt Originals)
- *Ootlin* by Jenni Fagan (Hutchinson Heinemann)
- *Mrs Jekyll* by Emma Glass (CHEERIO)
- *Poor Artists* by Gabrielle de la Puente and Zarina Muhammad (The White Pube) (Particular Books)
- *Only Here, Only Now* by Tom Newlands (Phoenix)
- *The Lasting Harm: Witnessing the Trail of Ghislaine Maxwell* by Lucia Osborne-Crowley (4th Estate)

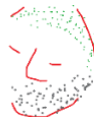
The Gordon Burn Prize recognises exceptional writing which has an unconventional perspective, style or subject matter and often defies easy categorisation. It celebrates literary outliers and daring and experimental work that often speaks to broader societal issues.

The shortlist covers fiction, non-fiction, and memoir. It comprises: a visceral novel centred around a fictional boxing tournament for teenage girls (*Headshot*): a deeply harrowing account of growing up in the care system (*Ootlin*): a gothic story on modern womanhood and grief (*Mrs Jekyll*): an eye-opening insight into the contemporary art world (*Poor Artists*): a coming-of-age novel set in a forgotten corner of Scotland (*Only Here, Only Now*): and an account of Ghislaine Maxwell's trial for her role in Jeffrey Epstein's abuse and trafficking of girls (*The Lasting Harm*).

Cont.

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The shortlist was selected by the Gordon Burn Prize 2025 judges:

- Terri White (chair), journalist, screenwriter, and author of the memoir *Coming Undone*.
- Carl Anka, journalist, author, and broadcaster who specialises in pop culture, video games, films, and football.
- Angela Hui, journalist, editor, and author of *Takeaway: A Childhood from Behind the Counter*.
- Sarah Phelps, writer for stage, radio, and TV. Her credits include *EastEnders*, *Being Human* and the BAFTA-award-winning *The Sixth Commandment*.
- David Whitehouse, novelist, non-fiction writer and writer for film and television, whose books include *About A Son*, shortlisted for the Gordon Burn Prize in 2022.

Terri White (chair) said:

"As we wrangled the 2025 shortlist through particularly passionate debate and discussion (and only a light ding-dong), I was reminded that just as no-one did it quite like Gordon Burn, no prize does it quite like the Gordon Burn Prize. Each shortlist summoned from the same spirit, but never speaking in the same voice, in the same way. This year - perhaps appropriately for our often *Mad Max 3*-esque reality - we were moved by the wild, the surreal, the vivid and the remorseless. These six books bump up against the limits not just of fiction and non-fiction - insisting that they shift - but the very limits of our world. They're the stories that followed us home, demanding to be heard."

Judge Carl Anka said:

"It's been an honour to be a judge for the Gordon Burn Book Award this year and a delightful rollercoaster reading some of the best, most thought-provoking and captivating books to have been released over the last 12 months.

The best books have you thinking, "I have to get an extra copy of this to give to a friend" before you finish reading them. I believe these six books achieve that, and then some. These are tales that need to be experienced and shared on a grand scale."

Judge Angela Hui said:

"What a stellar year of incredible writing – it made my job as a judge incredibly difficult. This line-up of books pushes the boundaries of storytelling, fucks with form in new and inventive ways and stands as a testament to what strong, exciting writing can truly be."

Judge Sarah Phelps said:

“Fearless, urgent, provocative stories, unique singular perspectives and extraordinary, compelling voices, every one of the books on this shortlist burns with it’s own particular fire.”

Claire Malcolm, CEO, New Writing North said:

"This year’s powerful shortlist centres women’s stories and women storytellers and their real, imagined and re-imagined stories. The titles on the shortlist explore the paradoxes of modern womanhood, tell us about growing up in care, how artmaking works within the capitalist system, how ill equipped the courts are to serve the needs of the young vulnerable women and girls who were Jeffrey Epstein’s victims and how it feels to be a young neuro-diverse teen with big life plans in 1990’s East Coast Scotland. The list abounds with interesting perspectives on trauma, power and art. A tremendous and diverse range of books and writers and all worth reading".

Professor Jo Robinson, PVC for the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Newcastle University, said:

“As ever, each of the shortlisted titles offer challenging and innovative approaches to important, vital stories. Newcastle University, and NCLA, are delighted to be working with New Writing North to support the Gordon Burn Prize in 2024-25 and beyond.”

The prize was founded in 2012 by New Writing North, Faber & Faber, and the Gordon Burn Trust. It is open to all writers of any nationality for work written in English and published in the UK the previous year. It is supported by Newcastle University and the Newcastle Centre for the Literary Arts (NCLA).

The Gordon Burn Prize winner will be announced on 6 March 2025 at an event at Northern Stage in Newcastle upon Tyne. The winning author will receive £10,000 and the chance to undertake a writing retreat at Gordon Burn’s cottage in Berwickshire.

The event will include readings from the shortlisted books plus performances. The event will be live-streamed.

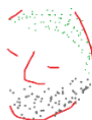
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For all media enquiries, high-res images, and interview requests, please contact Jill Read, Director of Communications and Marketing, New Writing North:

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NOTES TO EDITORS

About the Gordon Burn Prize 2025 shortlist

Headshot by **Rita Bullwinkel** (Daunt Originals)

Headshot is the story of the eight best teenage girl boxers in the U.S, told over the two days of a championship tournament. As the girls' pasts and futures collide, the specific joy and violence of the sport comes to life with electric energy. A portrait emerges of the desire, envy, perfectionism, madness, and sheer physical pleasure that motivated each of these young women to fight.

Rita Bullwinkel is an Assistant Professor of English at University of San Francisco. She is the author of the short-story collection *Belly Up*, which won a 2022 Whiting Award. Her writing has been published in the *White Review*, *BOMB*, *NOON* and *Guernica*, among others. *Headshot* is her debut novel.

Ootlin by **Jenni Fagan** (Hutchinson Heinemann)

Jenni Fagan was the property of the state before birth. She drew her first breath in care and by the age of seven, she had lived in fourteen different homes. *Ootlin* is a journey through the broken UK care system – it is one of displacement and exclusion, but also of the power of storytelling.

Dr Jenni Fagan was born in Scotland. She was selected as one of *Granta's* Best Young British Novelists after the publication of her debut novel, *The Panopticon*. Her second novel, *The Sunlight Pilgrims*, saw her win the Scottish Author of the Year at the Herald Culture Awards. *Luckenbooth* was shortlisted for the Gordon Burn Prize in 2021.

Mrs Jekyll by **Emma Glass** (CHEERIO)

By turns tender and devastating, *Mrs Jekyll* contorts Robert Louis Stevenson's gothic classic in a sumptuous and shocking account of the paradoxes and paroxysms modern womanhood. A story of power and powerlessness, light and dark, life and death.

Emma Glass was born in Wales in 1987 and is now based in London, where she writes and works as a children's nurse. Her debut novel *Peach* was published by Bloomsbury in 2018, has been translated into seven languages and was long listed for the International Dylan Thomas Prize. Her second novel *Rest and Be Thankful* was published by Bloomsbury in 2020.

Poor Artists by **Gabrielle de la Puente** and **Zarina Muhammad**, The White Pube
(Particular Books)

Poor Artists tells the story of art like never before. It follows the fictional aspiring artist Quest Talukdar as she embarks on a surreal journey into the creative industry, where she must decide whether she cares more about success or staying true to herself. Featuring dialogue from anonymous interviews with real people who have all had to ask themselves the same question.

The White Pube is the collaborative identity of UK-based critics Gabrielle de la Puente and Zarina Muhammad. The pair began publishing provocative art reviews and essays online from their arts school studios in 2015 and have since earned themselves an international cult following. *Poor Artists* is their first book.

Only Here, Only Now by **Tom Newlands** (Phoenix)

Only Here, Only Now explores what it means to come of age in a forgotten corner of Scotland and dream of a life that feels out of reach. Vibrant, lyrical, and fiercely funny, this is a story about poverty, identity and family that shines with hope and resilience.

Tom Newlands is a Scottish author living in London. He is the winner of a London Writer's Award and a Creative Future Writer's Award. In 2021 he was selected for New Writing North's 'A Writing Chance' programme which aims to showcase the most talented writers in the UK from under-represented backgrounds. *Only Here, Only Now* is his first novel.

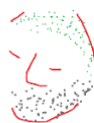
The Lasting Harm: Witnessing the Trail of Ghislaine Maxwell by **Lucia Osborne-Crowley** (4th Estate)

The Lasting Harm is an account of the 2021 trial of Ghislaine Maxwell who was convicted of five counts of sex-trafficking of minors and now faces twenty years in prison for the role she played in Jeffrey Epstein's abuse. This is a gripping true crime drama and a blistering critique of a criminal justice system ill-equipped to deliver justice for abuse survivors, no matter the outcome.

Lucia Osborne-Crowley is a trained lawyer, legal reporter and journalist and author and her second book *My Body Keeps Your Secrets* won the Somerset Maugham Award in 2021. Her forensic but accessible reporting of the Maxwell trial was described as some of the best and most trauma-informed coverage of the case.

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About New Writing North

New Writing North is the literature development agency for the North of England and is an Arts Council England National Portfolio Organisation. It works in partnership with regional and national partners to produce a range of literary activities including flagship projects such as the David Cohen Prize for Literature, the Northern Writers' Awards, Young Writers, the Gordon Burn Prize and Durham Book Festival.

www.newwritingnorth.com / @NewWritingNorth

About NCLA

Newcastle Centre for the Literary Arts, based in the School of English Literature, Language and Linguistics at Newcastle University, is a world-class centre of excellence in the field of creative writing, contributing to the cultural life of the North East via readings, projects, teaching and research.

About Newcastle University

Newcastle University, UK, is a thriving international community of more than 28,000 students from over 130 countries worldwide. As a member of the Russell Group of research-intensive universities in the UK, Newcastle has a world-class reputation for research excellence in the fields of medicine, science and engineering, social sciences and the humanities. Its academics are sharply focused on responding to the major challenges facing society today. Research and teaching are world-leading in areas as diverse as health, culture, technology and the environment. Newcastle is committed to providing students with excellent, research-led teaching delivered by dedicated and passionate teachers. Newcastle University is ranked 110th in the QS World Ranking 2024 and joint 168th in the Times Higher Education World University Ranking 2024. Newcastle University is ranked fourth in the UK and joint 24th in the world for sustainable development in the Times Higher Education Impact Rankings 2023.

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