

Anna Banks Biographical Sketch

Early Life

When researching Anna Burns I found it refreshing to find scant details of her biography outside of her life as a writer. She is not reclusive, yet in interviews while she shares information about herself, she manages to keep the discussion focused on her ideas and writing.

Here are the basics: She was born in Belfast 1962 and raised in working class Catholic district of Adroyne went to St Gemma's high school Lived with aunt in quiet house across the street from her crowded home. The library was a significant part of her life. She tells a charming tale of everybody she knew in town borrowing library cards from each other, yet nobody seemed to have one of their own.

Moved to London in 1987 for university. I found no evidence that she completed a degree. Her bio only mentions her high school.

She began writing in her mid-30s. Of her writing, she says it "began all of a sudden, in a rush . . . I did have a feeling something was coming before it came, and that it was going to be a lovely something for me to do, or be, or have."

Burns suffers from "lower back and nerve pain," she said, the result of a botched operation. "Nerves pain," she suddenly added, correcting herself. "There's plenty of nerves involved." Thanks to the Booker, which includes a \$64,000 prize, she may get treatment in Germany without having to worry about the cost.

"If it's successful, I'll be able to write again," she said. "I haven't written in four and a half years." The last writing she did was finishing "Milkman," a process that dragged out for months because of the pain.

Other Work and Awards

- 2001 [Winifred Holtby Memorial Prize](#), Winner (*No Bones*)^[12]
- 2002 [Orange Prize](#), Shortlisted (*No Bones*)^[13]

- 2018 [National Book Critics Circle Award](#) for Fiction,^[14] Winner (*Milkman*)
- 2018 [Man Booker Prize](#),^[15] Winner (*Milkman*)
- 2019 [Women's Prize for Fiction](#), shortlisted
- 2019 [Orwell Prize](#), Winner (*Milkman*)
- 2020 [Christopher Ewart-Biggs Memorial Prize](#) 2018/2019, for *Milkman*
- 2020 [International Dublin Literary Award](#), for *Milkman*^[16]

The Troubles



Photo of children watching a car bomb

Ireland late 1960's lasting for 30 years. 3,500 people killed. Many car bombings, street fights

Other Works

2002-No Bones

No Bones is a book about feelings, family, sex, and Ireland—but don't tell Amelia that. She's the one growing up in the mad family, in the mad society, who doesn't want to know what's going on. But things are going on: eight-year-olds collecting very peculiar treasure; babies who might be, or might not be, bombs; schoolgirls bringing guns into schoolyards; and, of course, lots of food and bad, bad sex.

If Amelia is to live she needs to change. Can she, though, in a place where people don't know how to look after themselves, and so wouldn't know how to look after one another?



Shortlisted for the Women's Prize for Fiction.

In the small town of Tiptoe Floorboard, the Doe clan, a close-knit family of criminals and victims, has the run of the place. Yet there are signs that patriarch John Doe's reign may be coming to an end. When Jetty Doe breaks into a gun store and makes off with a Kalashnikov, the stage is set for a violent confrontation. But while Jetty is making her way across town in a taxi, an elusive, chatty narrator takes us on a wild journey, zooming in and out on various members of the Doe clan with long, digressive riffs that chase down the causes and repercussions of Jetty's act.

Before Milkman took the world by storm after winning the Man Booker Prize, Anna Burns had already honed her distinctive voice. In her second novel, *Little Constructions*, she exhibits the same linguistic brio, coruscating wit, and scintillating insight into men, women, and the roots of violence. A wickedly funny novel that swoops and spirals as it examines the long shadow of abuse and violent crime, *Little Constructions* explores what transpires when unspeakable realities, long hidden from view, can no longer be denied.

Author's words about Milkman

Anna Burns discusses her third novel, 'Milkman', which won the 2018 Man Booker Prize – a tale of gossip and hearsay, a story of inaction with enormous consequences.

Readers bring their own experience all I can do is write it and hope to have it published

Teenage girl popped into her mind- narrators come to her,

Excerpt from words in video: About an entire society living under intense pressure from unrelenting surveillance from long term violence and from unfounded rumor and gossip. The narration is through the voice of an eighteen year old girl with the habit of reading and walking. She wanted to convey something about how people living in turmoil and adopt to these conditions as if they're normal, whereas the outside world sees them how they are

On the question of why she doesn't give her characters names, she says

“The book didn't work with names. It lost power and atmosphere and turned into a lesser – or perhaps just a different – book. In the early days I tried out names a few times, but the book wouldn't stand for it. The narrative would become heavy and lifeless and refuse to move on until I took them out again. Sometimes the book threw them out itself.”

“Although it is recognisable as this skewed form of Belfast, it's not really Belfast in the 70s. I would like to think it could be seen as any sort of totalitarian, closed society existing in similarly oppressive conditions,” Burns explains. “I see it as a fiction about an entire society living under extreme pressure, with longterm violence seen as the norm.”

Video of Burns:

<https://youtu.be/z8-0Kn6fgeM>