

30 writers share £40,000 prize fund at Northern Writers' Awards 2016

A record 30 writers have been recognised at this year's Northern Writers' Awards, which were held in Newcastle on Thursday night.

Now in its 16th year, the Northern Writers' Awards is the country's leading talent development programme for writers, which this year attracted over 1,000 entries. The awards recognise unpublished work-in-progress by new and established writers in the North of England and have now been awarded to 227 writers since they were founded in 2000.

The Northern Writers' Awards are produced by New Writing North with funding from Arts Council England and support from Northumbria University.

This year's awards are worth more than £40,000 and were judged by the literary agent Euan Thorneycroft (AM Heath), publishers Hannah Westland (Serpent's Tail) and Leah Thaxton (Faber & Faber), author Louise O'Neill, poet Patience Agbabi, and journalist Peter Wilby.

Awards include development opportunities with partners including Channel 4, Lime Pictures, Arvon, The Literary Consultancy and mentoring as well as cash prizes, which buy writers time to complete their work.

Ten writers received the flagship Northern Writers' Awards, including **Mark Pajak, from Didsbury**, who was awarded £3000 to support him to complete his first poetry collection. **Mark said:** "Every writer is a traffic jam of doubts. This award presents to me a quiet slip road of confidence where my ideas can change gear."

Jessica Smith from Consett, County Durham, has also been recognised for her middle grade children's novel. **Jessica said:** "I'm delighted and extremely grateful to receive a Northern Writers' Award. The award will enable me to devote more time to develop my writing; but more than simply providing financial assistance, to know that someone in the industry has seen promise in my work is both encouraging and rewarding."

The Clare Swift Short Story Award, sponsored by the North East Chamber of Commerce, was awarded to **Deborah Buchan, from Newcastle**, for her story 'Wednesdays at Hyde Park Gate'. **Deborah said:** "Winning this award for me is very much about recognition – the idea that something you have created is of value and significance to others. It also means support, support to continue working and to keep going, knowing that what you do matters, not just to you, but to other people too."

Three new writers have won Channel 4/ Northumbria University Writing for Television Awards, which give them 12-month attachments to Liverpool-based television production company, Lime Pictures.

Jayshree Patel and Drew Hubbard have the opportunity to work with staff on *Hollyoaks*, while – in a brand new award – Lizzie Lomas will be attached to Lime Pictures' children's television drama department. All three writers will receive mentoring from experienced producers and a bursary worth £3000. At the end of the development period, writers may have the opportunity to undertake a paid commission for an episode of a Lime Pictures production.

The Northumbria University Student and Alumni Award was received by Northumbria University PhD candidate, **John Schoneboom, originally from New York**. John's debut novel, *Fontoon*, was published in 2014 by Dedalus Books. **John said:** "It seems to me the only way to find originality in writing is to seek it in the strangest and least-vetted parts of your own unconscious associations, setting off on a necessarily lonely train of thought into the wilderness. So receiving a Northern Writers' Award is like turning around to find that I'm not alone here. Some passengers have climbed aboard, and they're dressed to party. We must be going somewhere after all."

For emerging writers, winning a Northern Writers' Award can offer a foot up the ladder, including introductions to publishers and agents at the annual Summer Salon in London, support from New Writing North and the possibility of mentoring and other professional development. For writers who have already had work published, winning an award can buy time to write or to follow a new artistic direction.

Recent notable Northern Writers' Awards winners include poet Andrew McMillan, whose first collection *physical* won the Guardian First Book Award 2015; and short story writer Carys Davies, whose collection *The Redemption of Galen Pike* won both the Jerwood Fiction Uncovered Prize and the Frank O'Connor International Short Story Award.

The full list of winners for the Northern Writers' Awards 2016 is:

Northern Writers' Awards

Amy McCauley (Manchester)
Mark Pajak (Didsbury)
Carolyn Jess-Cooke (Whitley Bay)
Melissa Lee-Houghton (Blackburn)
Jessica Smith (Consett)
Stacey Sampson (Sheffield)
AB Jackson (Sheffield)
Yvonne Reddick (Preston)
Benjamin Webster (Otley)
Clare Weze (Burton in Lonsdale)
Shash Trevett (York)

Waterhouse Award

Seán Hewitt (Warrington)

Arvon Award

Juliana Mensah (Gateshead)

Clare Swift Short Story Award
Deborah Buchan (Newcastle)

Northumbria University Student and Alumni Award
John Schoneboom (Newcastle)

New Fiction Bursaries
Andy Hickmott (Manchester)
Nicholas Graham (St Bees)
Beda Higgins (Newcastle)
Vik Banks (Leeds)
Libby Carpenter (Preston)

Andrea Badenoch Fiction Award
Lucy Nevitt (East Riding)

Channel 4/ Northumbria University Writing for Television Awards – serial
drama
Jayshree Patel (Manchester)
Drew Hubbard (Gatley)

Channel 4/ Northumbria University Writing for Television Awards –
children’s drama
Elizabeth Lomas (Manchester)

Cuckoo Young Writers Award
Kate Collins: winner
Jennifer Szandrowska: highly commended (Sunderland)
Isabella Sharp: highly commended

Conor Robinson Award
Catherine Maw (Sunderland)

Matthew Hale Award
Amy Langdown (Cramlington)
Shana Nichols (Cramlington)

Patience Agbabi judged the poetry entries and said: “The winning manuscripts all had a cohesive vision, poems that consistently made me see the world anew and took exciting risks with form and/or content.”

Euan Thorneycroft, judging fiction, said: “One of the thrills of being an agent is coming across new writing that makes you sit up that little bit straighter in your chair. Judging these awards was a fantastic experience. There was such a range of forms and approaches on offer, all of which were of an extremely high standard. By the end of it, not only was I sitting straighter, I was jumping off the chair!”

Claire Malcolm, chief executive of New Writing North said: “This is always a hugely exciting moment for us as we announce the new winners of the Northern Writers’ Awards, as well as finally meeting the writers whose work we have been reading since the winter. It’s always such a pleasure to discover talented writers we have not encountered before, and this year we found several brilliant writers who were completely new to us. We’re now looking forward to working with the winners to support their own creative ambitions.”

Northumbria University Pro Vice-Chancellor (Business and Engagement) Lucy Winskell OBE said: “I would like to personally congratulate this year’s record number of winners at the Northern Writers’ Awards, particularly the inaugural winner of the Northumbria University Student and Alumni Award. This year’s winners are a testament to the tremendous talent here in the North and the fantastic ways in which our winning partnership with New Writing North and Channel Four supports and invests in that talent.

“The Northern Writers’ Awards are at the heart of our partnership with New Writing North and further demonstrate the University’s ongoing commitment to celebrate and nurture creative talent in the region. Our partnership has gone from strength to strength in the last few years. Looking forward, we will continue to develop exciting collaborations, for our students and staff, and also the wider writing community and cultural sector, enabling us to share expertise, develop innovative research and provide unique creative opportunities.”

Ends

For all media enquiries and interview opportunities, please contact Laura Fraine laurafraine@newwritingnorth.com or 0191 204 8850/ 07411 164 837

High res images and winner biographies are available at this link:
<https://www.dropbox.com/sh/dzmwbkrvopumhsk/AAAD2IN9-FWbNjEjOJbgUfLPa?dl=0>

Notes to Editor

New Writing North is the reading and writing development agency for the north of England, and is an Arts Council England National Portfolio Organisation www.newwritingnorth.com. It works in partnership with regional and national partners to produce a range of literary and performance activities including flagship projects such as The Northern Writers’ Awards, Cuckoo Young Writers, the Gordon Burn Prize and Durham Book Festival.

About Northumbria University

Northumbria University, Newcastle is a research-rich, business-focused, professional university with a global reputation for academic excellence. Complementing its work with New Writing North and Channel 4, the University works with a range of high profile cultural partners, including BALTIC Centre for Contemporary Art, Live Theatre, Great North Run Culture and Tyne & Wear Archives and Museums providing students with industry exposure and live project opportunities. We were awarded the Times Higher Education Award for Excellence and Innovation in the Arts in 2012, as well as the Journal's Culture Award for Best Arts and Business Partnership in 2013. Northumbria University's Art and Design courses were ranked Top 10 in the UK for Research Power following the Research Excellence Framework 2014 and the University was ranked Top 50 in the UK – its highest ever league table position – in the Guardian University League Table 2017.

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