

**Press release**  
**For immediate release**

## **Take a risk on a new northern author this Spring** *12 titles announced for the annual Read Regional campaign*

12 titles by authors based in the North of England have been selected to take part in Read Regional 2017, the annual campaign that connects authors with readers in library settings across the region.

Read Regional is a celebration of brilliant new books from the North, run by New Writing North in partnership with 23 library authorities. Founded in 2008, it has previously promoted authors including Melvin Burgess, Ann Cleeves, Kim Moore and Mari Hannah.

The 2017 campaign encourages readers to 'take a risk' with their reading, by picking up a book by a new writer or by reading in a different genre. Ten of this year's selected titles are debuts, and the wide variety of literary fiction, crime fiction, memoir, creative non-fiction, poetry and writing for children offers readers the chance to try something different.

The campaign runs from March to June 2017, during which time the twelve writers will tour libraries, literary festivals and schools across the North of England. More than 80 inspiring author events will take place from Blackburn to Berwick, including workshops, book group discussions and readings.

Libraries across the North will create special displays of the books, while readers can also download a reading guide for each title and follow the authors as they write about their experiences on the New Writing North blog.

Following the spring campaign, the Read Regional titles will remain in stock in libraries from coast-to-coast, adding to the wealth of new northern literature readers can borrow from their local libraries.

The 2017 list contains a selection of exciting new books by some of the best contemporary writers in the North. Today, the Read Regional titles are named as:

***Walking the Lights* by Deborah Andrews (Freight)**

***The Lost Art of Sinking* by Naomi Booth (Penned in the Margins)**

***The Confession of Stella Moon* by Shelley Day (Contraband)**

***Streets of Darkness* by A. A. Dhand (Transworld)**

***The Death's Head Chess Club* by John Donoghue (Atlantic)**

***You Could Do Something Amazing With Your Life [You Are Raoul Moat]*  
by Andrew Hankinson (Scribe)**

***Greetings from Grandpa* by Jack Mapanje (Bloodaxe)**

***Hard Wired* by Kathleen McKay (Moth)**

***Katy Parker and the House That Cried* by Margaret Mulligan  
(Bloomsbury)**

***The Lightless Sky* by Gulwali Passarlay (Atlantic)**

***The Curious Charms of Arthur Pepper* by Phaedra Patrick  
(HarperCollins)**

***Every Little Sound* by Ruby Robinson (Pavilion)**

The Read Regional titles are selected by New Writing North from an open submission process, and in 2017 include several award-winning titles. Andrew Hankinson's book about Raoul Moat won the Crime Writers' Association Gold Dagger for Non-Fiction 2016 and Naomi Booth's *The Lost Art of Sinking* won the Saboteur Award for Best Novella 2016. Ruby Robinson's poetry collection *Every Little Sound* was shortlisted for the 2016 Felix Dennis Prize for Best First Collection and for the T S Eliot Prize 2016.

**Claire Malcolm, Chief Executive, New Writing North, said:**

"We are excited to announce this year's Read Regional list, which must be one of our strongest yet. Read Regional is all about celebrating new books by authors in the North, and encouraging readers in the region to pick up a new title and perhaps come and meet the author in their local library. Libraries are the perfect places to challenge your reading, and we are fortunate to work with librarians who are passionate about promoting new authors and helping readers to find books they will love. We hope all readers will add a Read Regional title to their reading list this Spring."

Follow the writers' journeys on the New Writing North website, where you will also find details of events and reading guides [www.newwritingnorth.com](http://www.newwritingnorth.com)

Ends

**For all media enquiries, including interviews and high res photos, please contact Laura Fraine, Senior Marketing & Communications Manager at New Writing North [laurafraine@newwritingnorth.com](mailto:laurafraine@newwritingnorth.com) or call 0191 204 8850 or 07411 164 837.**

### **NOTES TO EDITORS**

The following local authorities are taking part in Read Regional 2017: Blackburn, Bradford, Calderdale, Cumbria, Darlington, Doncaster, Durham, East Riding, Gateshead, Hartlepool, Hull, Kirklees, Leeds, Middlesbrough, Newcastle upon Tyne, North Tyneside, North Yorkshire, Northumberland, South Tyneside, Stockport, Stockton on Tees, Sunderland, Wakefield.

## **Biographies of 2017 Authors**

### ***Walking the Lights* by Deborah Andrews (Freight)**

Deborah Andrews is an award-winning theatre practitioner turned novelist. Born in Windsor, she moved to Glasgow in 1990 to study for a BA in Drama at the Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama. She went on to work as a performer, workshop leader, director and writer. In 1999, her theatrical adaptation of *Dream State: The New Scottish Poets*, won a Scotsman Fringe First Award and in 2002 she co-founded Solar Bear theatre company. She established the first year-round Deaf Youth Theatre in the UK and scripted six main-stage and several community productions, winning several awards. Her debut novel, *Walking the Lights* ('a feminist *Withnail and I*'), is shortlisted for this year's Not the Booker Prize. Since 2014, Deborah's lived in **Lancaster**, where she teaches creative writing.

### ***The Lost Art of Sinking* by Naomi Booth (Penned in the Margins)**

Naomi Booth was born and raised in West Yorkshire and is now based in **York**, where she lectures in Creative Writing and Literature at York St John University. Her debut work of fiction, *The Lost Art of Sinking*, was published by Penned in the Margins in 2016 and tells the story of a girl living in the Pennines who compulsively passes out. The work won the Saboteur Award for Best Novella 2016 and has been described as an 'absorbing read about losing yourself that packs a punch' (*Grazia*) and a 'lyrical and witty novella that could be the next big thing' (*Prospect*). Naomi has previously published short stories and is currently working on a literary history of swooning and on a novel about environmental change and body mutation.

### ***The Confession of Stella Moon* by Shelley Day (Contraband)**

Shelley Day was brought up in Newcastle and lives on the **Northumberland coast**. She is a lapsed lawyer, academic psychologist and research professor who now writes. Her award-winning short stories have appeared in magazines, newspapers and anthologies. In 2013 she was named as an Edinburgh UNESCO City of Literature 'emerging writer' and read at the EIBF. Shelley puts her dual legal and psychological background to good use in her fiction. A grim case of matricide is at the core of her debut novel, the 'psychological noir' *The Confession of Stella Moon*. The novel won the Andrea Badenoch Prize, was longlisted for the Bath Novel Award and shortlisted for the Dundee Book Prize. A collection of short stories, *A Policy of Constant Improvement*, won a Northern Writers' Award and is due out in 2017.

### ***Streets of Darkness* by A. A. Dhand (Transworld)**

A. A. Dhand was raised in Bradford and spent his youth observing the city from behind the counter of a small convenience store. After qualifying as a pharmacist, he worked in London and travelled extensively before returning to **Bradford** to start his own business and begin writing. The history, diversity and darkness of the city have inspired his Harry Virdee novels.

***The Death's Head Chess Club* by John Donoghue (Atlantic)**

John Donoghue has worked in mental health for over twenty years and written numerous articles about the treatment of mental illness in a variety of medical journals. He is married and lives in **Liverpool**. *The Death's Head Chess Club*, his deeply poignant and moving debut novel, explores the extraordinary relationship between an SS officer and a Jewish watchmaker.

***You Could Do Something Amazing With Your Life [You Are Raoul Moat]* by Andrew Hankinson (Scribe)**

Andrew Hankinson was born and brought up in **Newcastle upon Tyne**, where he now lives again after spending time in London. He started his career as a staff writer at *Arena*, and since then has contributed to *The Guardian*, *Wired*, *GQ*, *The Independent*, *Esquire*, *Spectator* and *New Statesman*. He has travelled widely, including trips to the Middle East, and he has reported from courts, disaster zones, freshly dug tunnels, ships, helicopters, fighter-jets, submarines and film sets. He has appeared on television and radio, including BBC Radio 3, Radio 4, Radio 5, *Newsnight* and *Daily Politics*. In 2012 he won a Northern Writers' Award and his book has been described by Jon Ronson as 'brilliantly written' and by the *Spectator* as 'extraordinary'.

***Greetings from Grandpa* by Jack Mapanje (Bloodaxe)**

Jack Mapanje was head of the Department of English at the University of Malawi when the Malawi authorities arrested him in 1987 after his first book of poems had been banned, and he was released in 1991 after spending three years, seven months and sixteen days in prison, following an international outcry against his incarceration. His books include *The Last of the Sweet Bananas: New & Selected Poems* (2004), *Beasts of Nalunga* (2007) and *Greetings from Grandpa* (2016) from Bloodaxe, and the prison memoir, *And Crocodiles Are Hungry at Night* (Ayeibia Clarke Publishing, 2011). He lives in exile in **York** with his family, and is a visiting professor in the faculty of art at York St John University.

***Hard Wired* by Kathleen McKay (Moth)**

Kathleen McKay's novel, *Hard Wired*, won the Northern Crime competition. Her previous publications include the poetry collections *Collision Forces* (2015), *Telling the Bees* (2014), *Anyone Left Standing* (1998) and the novel *Waiting for the Morning* (1991). Her short stories have been anthologised and broadcast. She was born in Liverpool and studied at Queen's University, Belfast. She lives in **Leeds**, teaches creative writing for Hull University and is involved in Hull 2017 Year of Culture. *Anyone Left Standing* won The Poetry Business competition, and her short stories and poetry have won national awards and prizes. She has received Arts Council awards for short stories and collaborative projects and mentored writers in Africa for the *Crossing Borders* scheme.

***Katy Parker and the House That Cried* by Margaret Mulligan (Bloomsbury)**

Margaret Mulligan loves to write adventure stories for children, magically weaving the past and present. She studied English and History at Christchurch College, then after many varied jobs, from waitressing to working at the Stock Exchange, she trained as a history teacher. She now teaches A level history at a sixth-form college in **Leeds**. When she's not writing or teaching, Margaret likes to visit historic houses and pursue her love of all things vintage.

***The Lightless Sky* by Gulwali Passarlay (Atlantic)**

Gulwali Passarlay arrived in the UK at the age 13 as a political refugee. Like many refugees, he has overcome the hardships of settling into a new life in Britain. Whilst at **Manchester** University studying Politics, he was involved with the equality and diversity committee, the student forum and was one of the student governors representing over 1600 students. Gulwali is also involved with numerous other organisations involved in youth representation and participation and in 2012 he was selected to carry the Olympic Torch. He has campaigned for many social-justice issues and continues to make a positive difference in the community and has been a change-maker in society. He has appeared on national media, including the BBC, ITV and Channel 4 News, and has given a TEDx talk.

***The Curious Charms of Arthur Pepper* by Phaedra Patrick**

**(HarperCollins)** Phaedra Patrick's debut novel will be translated into 20 languages worldwide. Phaedra wanted to write from an early age but convinced herself that most novelists were either spies or aristocracy. She qualified firstly as a stained-glass artist before gaining her professional Marketing qualifications. She has worked as a waitress, stained-glass designer, film-festival organiser, and communications manager for The Co-operative Group. After scribbling away in secret for several years, she enjoyed her first real writing success when she entered and won several short-story competitions. She now writes both short and full-length fiction on a full time basis. Phaedra lives in **Saddleworth** with her husband and son, where she enjoys walking, eating chocolate, and arts and crafts. Despite her unusual name, she was born and bred in Oldham.

***Every Little Sound* by Ruby Robinson (Pavilion)**

Ruby Robinson lives and works in **Sheffield**. She was born in Manchester in 1985 before spending most of her childhood living in South Yorkshire. She studied English Literature at the University of East Anglia in Norwich, before returning to Sheffield. She graduated with an MA from Sheffield Hallam University, where she also won the Ictus Prize for poetry. Ruby's poems have appeared in *The Poetry Review*, *Poetry* (Chicago) and elsewhere. Her debut collection *Every Little Sound* was published in April 2016 by Pavilion Poetry, an imprint of Liverpool University Press and has been shortlisted for the 2016 Felix Dennis Prize for Best First Collection.

## **About New Writing North**

New Writing North is the development agency for creative writing and reading in the North of England, and an Arts Council England National Portfolio Organisation. The organisation 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**, the **Gordon Burn Prize**, **Read Regional**, **Cuckoo Young Writers** and **Durham Book Festival**.

New Writing North specialises in developing and investing in writers of all ages and act as a dynamic broker between writers, producers, publishers and broadcasters across the creative industries. Current partners include **BBC Radio 3**, **Channel 4 Drama**, **Faber and Faber**, **Northumbria University** and **Durham University**. An entrepreneurial approach to talent development has also seen New Writing North launch new writers via its **Moth Publishing** crime imprint in partnership with Business Educational Publishers and work with Northumbria University to stage the innovative **Crime Story** festival event.

As a producer of new work, New Writing North commissions a wide range of writing from topical essays and publications to award-winning dance theatre productions, short films, live literature and broadcast projects.  
[www.newwritingnorth.com](http://www.newwritingnorth.com)