

**Press release – embargoed until 00.00 Tuesday 29 January 2019**

## **The 12 new books by northern writers you must read in 2019**

New Writing North, the literature development agency for the North of England, today announces its list of ‘must-read’ titles by northern authors for 2019.

The Read Regional campaign sees the 12 new titles stocked in libraries across the North, while the authors take part in 85 events around the region between March and June 2019.

Read Regional is a celebration of brilliant new books from the North of England, and was founded by New Writing North in 2008. The campaign is funded by Arts Council England and is produced in partnership with 22 library authorities, where authors will take part in book group events, school visits, readings and workshops.

The titles selected for 2019 include *Slip of a Fish* by Amy Arnold, which won the inaugural Northern Book Prize in 2018; *Devil’s Day*, the new novel by Andrew Michael Hurley, whose book *The Loney* won the Costa First Novel Award in 2015; and *Kintu* by Jennifer Nansubuga Makumbi, who received a prestigious Windham-Campbell Prize for Fiction in 2018.

### **The full list of Read Regional 2019 titles is:**

#### CHILDREN’S AND YOUNG ADULT

Laura Steven, *The Exact Opposite of Okay* (Egmont)

Mark Illis, *The Impossible: On the Run* (Quercus Children’s Books)

#### FICTION

Amy Arnold, *Slip of a Fish* (And Other Stories)

Jude Brown, *His Dark Sun* (Moth)

Andrew Michael Hurley, *Devil’s Day* (John Murray)

Catherine Isaac, *You Me Everything* (Simon & Schuster)

Jennifer Nansubuga Makumbi, *Kintu* (Oneworld)

Robert Scragg, *What Falls Between the Cracks* (Allison & Busby)

Tony Williams, *Nutcase* (Salt)

#### NATURE

Karen Lloyd, *The Blackbird Diaries* (Saraband)

#### POETRY

Clare Shaw, *Flood* (Bloodaxe)

John Challis, *The Black Cab* (Poetry Salzburg)

For the selected authors, Read Regional is not only an opportunity to meet readers and talk about their work, but also to celebrate the vitality of libraries as centres of creativity and learning for the whole community.

**Laura Steven, author of *The Exact Opposite Of Okay* said:** “I’ve followed the careers of Read Regional authors for many years now – campaigns like these are so important for showcasing the wealth of often-overlooked literary talent we have here in the North – so it’s completely surreal to be part of the line-up for 2019.”

**Catherine Isaac, author of *You Me Everything* said:** “Read Regional is a terrific campaign that celebrates new writing and introduces a diverse, fascinating selection of books to readers. I’m honoured that *You Me Everything* will be part of it and am really looking forward to appearing at an array of libraries and literary festivals this spring.”

**John Challis, author of *The Black Cab*, said:** “I’m thrilled to have been selected for Read Regional 2019. I can’t wait to get on the road in my metaphorical black cab and visit libraries all over the North. Given the divisiveness of our political moment, the need to communicate with each other is more important than ever. And libraries, our repositories for free thinking and new ideas, offer the perfect meeting place.”

**Claire Malcolm, chief executive of New Writing North said:** “Our Read Regional list for 2019 is a real celebration of brilliant books that you must not miss out on this year. The North is bursting with literary talent and this list reflects a wide range of genres and subjects, from courageous YA to an extraordinary Ugandan epic, so there really is something for everyone. At a time when libraries are increasingly under threat, we would encourage readers to make use of this precious public resource. Visit (or revisit) your local libraries; borrow our must-read titles; and come and meet the Read Regional authors in person this spring.”

Find information about all of the events and download free reading guides for each of the titles at [www.newwritingnorth.com](http://www.newwritingnorth.com)

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**For all media enquiries, including interviews, please contact Laura Fraine, Senior Marketing & Communications Manager at New Writing North [laurafraine@newwritingnorth.com](mailto:laurafraine@newwritingnorth.com) or call 0191 204 8850. High res images are available to download at**

<https://www.dropbox.com/sh/u5vqbs8sbstcebg/AADIqg-uHiOPqiMLwpGG3pqPa?dl=0>

### **Notes for editors**

Read Regional takes place in the following library authorities:

Bury, Calderdale, Cumbria, Darlington, Durham, East Riding of Yorkshire, Gateshead, Hull, Kirklees, Knowsley, Leeds, Liverpool, Middlesbrough, Newcastle, North Tyneside, North Yorkshire, Northumberland, South Tyneside, Stockport, Stockton-on-Tees, Sunderland, Wakefield.

### **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, 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)

### **Author biographies and additional author quotes:**

**Amy Arnold** was born in Oxford in 1974. She studied Neuropsychology at Birmingham University and has worked in a variety of jobs from packing swedes to teaching and lecturing. She lives in Cumbria, and in 2018 was awarded the inaugural Northern Book Prize for her debut novel, *Slip of a Fish*.

**Amy Arnold said:** "I can't wait to take part in Read Regional simply because I love libraries and I love talking about books and (let's be honest) books are better when they're shared."

**Jude Brown** has published short stories in several anthologies, one of which won an Arts Council England Community Publishing Award. Her work has been shortlisted for the Bridport and Raymond Carver Short Story Prizes and she won a Fish Publishing prize for her micro-fiction. *His Dark Sun* was long-listed for the *Msllexia* Novel Competition and she is the recipient of a Northern Writers' Award. She lives in Sheffield.

**Jude Brown said:** "I'm really looking forward to the interaction with readers. We each bring our own experiences and have our own unique relationship with a book and I can't wait to get feedback and hear what people think about *His Dark Sun*. I'm also looking forward to meeting librarians and

seeing what's going on at local libraries. As a child my family didn't have the resources to buy many books, so trips to the library were regular features. I treasured my library tickets and the continued threat to public libraries saddens me, because no-one should be denied access to literature."

**John Challis** was born in London in 1984 and has lived and worked in the North East since 2010. In 2012 New Writing North awarded him a Northern Promise Award. His poems have appeared on BBC Radio 4, as well as in journals and anthologies including *The North*, *The Rialto* and *Land of Three Rivers* (Bloodaxe). John works part time at Newcastle University. *The Black Cab* is his first pamphlet of poems.

**John Challis said:** "I'm thrilled to have been selected for Read Regional 2019. I can't wait to get on the road in my metaphorical black cab and visit libraries all over the North. Given the divisiveness of our political moment, the need to communicate with each other is more important than ever. And libraries, our repositories for free thinking and new ideas, offer the perfect meeting place."

**Andrew Michael Hurley** has lived in Manchester and London, and is now based in Lancashire. His first novel, *The Loney*, was originally published by Tartarus Press as a 300-copy limited edition, before being republished by John Murray. It went on to sell in twenty languages, win the Costa Best First Novel Award and Book of the Year at the British Book Industry Awards in 2016, and is in development as a feature film. *Devil's Day* is his second novel.

**Andrew Michael Hurley** said: "I feel privileged that my novel, *Devil's Day*, has been selected for this year's Read Regional campaign and I'm really excited about the many events coming up in the spring and summer. Never more have we needed the precious democratic spaces of libraries to read, talk, listen and discuss together."

**Mark Illis** has written extensively for TV, including *EastEnders*, *The Bill* and *Emmerdale*. He also wrote the award-winning screenplay for *Before Dawn*. He has had three adult novels published by Bloomsbury, and more recently two by Salt. *The Impossible* won a Northern Writers' Award in 2015. He lives in Hebden Bridge, West Yorkshire, with his wife and two children.

**Mark Illis** said: "Read Regional is all about meetings between writers and readers. Encountering the writer can help to make a book feel exciting, intriguing and engaging. A writer can create enthusiasm, demystify the process of writing and add something different to the school day. I'm looking forward to meeting teenagers in libraries and schools, to talking to them, working with them, reading to them and to answering their questions."

**Catherine Isaac** was born in 1974 in Liverpool. She began her career as graduate trainee at the Liverpool Echo and was later appointed Editor of the Liverpool Daily Post. She wrote her first book, *Bridesmaids*, while on maternity leave and under the pseudonym Jane Costello. She has since written nine books, all *Sunday Times* bestsellers in the UK. *You, Me, Everything* is her first novel

writing as Catherine Isaac. She lives in Liverpool with her husband Mark and three sons. Film rights to this novel have been optioned by Lionsgate, and foreign rights have sold around the world.

**Catherine Isaac** said: “Read Regional is a terrific campaign that celebrates new writing and introduces a diverse, fascinating selection of books to readers. I’m honoured that *You Me Everything* will be part of it and am really looking forward to appearing at an array of libraries and literary festivals this spring.”

**Karen Lloyd** is an award-winning writer and environmental activist based in Cumbria. Her first book, *The Gathering Tide: A Journey Around the Edgelands of Morecambe Bay*, won the Striding Edge Productions Prize for Place in The Lakeland Book of the Year Awards 2016. *The Blackbird Diaries* is an intimate account of the wildlife in Lloyd’s edge-of-town garden, the South Lakes landscape, the Solway coast and the Hebridean islands of Mull and Staffa.

**Karen Lloyd** said: “I’m looking forward to sharing my book ‘The Blackbird Diaries’ with audiences and readers across the north – and in sharing a celebration of our wonderful wild environments and important garden habitats.’

**Jennifer Nansubuga Makumbi**, a Ugandan novelist and short story writer, has a PhD from Lancaster University. Her first novel, *Kintu*, won the Kwani? Manuscript Project in 2013 and was longlisted for the Etisalat Prize in 2014. Her story ‘Let’s Tell This Story Properly’ won the 2014 Commonwealth Short Story Prize. She lives in Manchester with her husband, Damian, and her son, Jordan.

**Jennifer Nansubuga Makumbi** said: “I write in libraries within Manchester. I am excited to be selected for Read Regional and have *Kintu* not only stocked, but read where I wrote it. I can’t wait to tour the libraries out there.”

**Robert Scragg** had a random mix of jobs before taking the dive into crime writing. He’s been a bookseller, pizza deliverer, Karate instructor and football coach. His debut novel, *What Falls Beneath the Cracks*, impressed the judges at last year’s Theakstons Crime Festival in the Dragons Pen, enough to get a thumbs up all round.

**Robert Scragg** said: “The importance of libraries in our communities must never be underestimated, Having spent as much time as I did in my local one as a child, I’m thrilled to be part of a great initiative like Read Regional, promoting the fab libraries and librarians, and hope it helps encourage people to make good use of some amazing resources.”

**Clare Shaw** has three poetry collections from Bloodaxe: *Straight Ahead* (2006), which attracted a Forward Prize Highly Commended for Best Single Poem; and *Head On* (2012), which is, according to the *Times Literary Supplement*, ‘fierce ... memorable and visceral’. Her third collection, *Flood*, was published in June 2018. Often addressing political and personal conflict, her poetry is fuelled by a strong conviction in the transformative and redemptive power of language.

**Laura Steven** is an author, screenwriter and journalist from the northernmost town in England. *The Exact Opposite of Okay*, her 'hilarious and poignant' YA debut exploring slut shaming and sexuality, was published by Egmont in 2018. Laura's journalism has been featured in *The i Paper*, *Buzzfeed*, *The Guardian* and *Living North*. She has a BA in Journalism and an MA in Creative Writing from Northumbria University.

**Laura Steven said:** "I've followed the careers of Read Regional authors for many years now – campaigns like these are so important for showcasing the wealth of often-overlooked literary talent we have here in the North – so it's completely surreal to be part of the line-up for 2019."

**Tony Williams's** *All the Bananas I've Never Eaten* won the Saboteur Award for best short story collection. His poetry includes *The Corner of Arundel Lane and Charles Street* and *The Midlands*. He lived in Sheffield for more than a decade before moving to rural Northumberland. He works in Newcastle-upon-Tyne.

**Tony Williams said:** "I'm so pleased to have been chosen for Read Regional this year. All writers want is for people to read their work, and this makes that possible on a big scale. I'm looking forward to getting out across the North and meeting readers."