

NEW WRITING NORTH

Press release

For release Friday 26 June 2020

Twenty-six writers from a record 1800 entrants receive awards worth over £45,000 to support their unpublished work-in-progress in this year's NORTHERN WRITERS' AWARDS

This year is the 21st anniversary of the Northern Writers' Awards, founded by the writing agency New Writing North.

The Northern Writers' Awards recognise talent and support new work towards publication or broadcast by offering mentoring, developmental support and cash awards to writers at all stages of their careers.

The 2020 awards could hardly come at a more significant time. The week after the Creative Industries Federation report highlighted the 'cultural catastrophe' facing the culture sector as a result of Covid-19, the Northern Writers' Awards offer financial support and encouragement to writers. Yes, the planned ceremony in Newcastle has been cancelled and the industry networking event where winners meet potential agents and publishers has been put on hold, but appreciation of and support for the awards has never been so strongly demonstrated by the publishing industry and by this year's award winners. Many of the writers who have seen their incomes and opportunities plummet as a result of the Covid-19 crisis say winning an award means having the confidence and the financial resources to continue writing.

As **Northern Writers' Awards for Poetry** winner Polly Atkin says: "Winning a Northern Writers' Award would never not be a great boost to both morale and finances, but this year it feels like a life-saver. Like many freelance writers, I lost most of my paid work for the year in March. Like many disabled and chronically ill writers, I'm facing a long period of uncertainty, knowing it may not be safe to resume face-to-face work for many months to come. This award not only offers creative encouragement when I really need it, but financial support which will make continuing to create possible. It has saved my year."

Other writers agree. Hannah Hodgson, a poet and blogger with a life-limiting illness, is shielding during the pandemic and had been seriously ill in hospital when she received the news of her Northern Writers' Awards win. Hannah says: "Despite everything that was going on I couldn't stop smiling. This award is unique in that it recognises potential for a project and person, and the future of these two things. Having such an esteemed judge recognise what I am doing, and

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to give me the financial means to expand on and finish it, is a true blessing both logistically and emotionally.”

As well as financial stability, the 2020 winners spoke of the recognition that the awards bring.

Ruqaya Izzidien, who won a **Northern Writers’ Awards for Fiction and Narrative Non-Fiction**, said: “It’s an honour to receive a Northern Writers’ Award, but it also means a great deal to me personally to witness awarding bodies recognising, supporting, and amplifying own voices in literature.”

The Northern Writers’ Awards, the largest of their kind in England, have a reputation for identifying some of the country’s best unpublished writing. Previous winners include Andrew McMillan, Yvonne Battle-Felton, Okechukwu Nzelu, Benjamin Myers and Carys Davies.

Two of this year’s largest awards were made for full-length manuscripts.

The Hachette Children’s Novel Award was awarded to Hannah Durkan from Leeds. Hannah wins an advance of £5000 as part of a publishing contract with Hachette Children’s Books.

The **NorthBound Book Award** was awarded to John D. Rutter who wins £5000 plus publication with Saraband.

Claire Malcolm, Founding Chief Executive of New Writing North said: “When lockdown began and we furloughed staff we knew that whatever happened we needed to keep the awards programme running, as this year writers would need the support more than ever. It has been an extraordinary year and I’d like to thank all of our judges and supporters for working with us throughout the lockdown and surrounding uncertainties to ensure that our support reaches writers in the way that works best – by supporting them to progress their work and careers.”

Katy Shaw, Professor of Contemporary Writings at Northumbria University, said: “The Northern Writers’ Awards profile the best new talent from the North of England. At a time when we need culture and the arts more than ever, this year’s winners show that the next generation of creative talent has the potential to help us re-frame a post-pandemic world and better understand ourselves and our society.”

Kate Agar, Editorial Director at Hachette Children’s Books and a judge for the Hachette Children’s Novel Award said: ‘I absolutely loved being involved in judging the Hachette Children’s Novel Award this year; getting to see the work

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of so many talented writers was such an honour. Our winner, Hannah Durkan, was unanimously praised by all our judges for her incredible world-building. Her fantastical middle-grade contains relatable heroes, high flying adventure and the most amazing creature you haven't yet heard of: the space whale! We know readers are going to love tumbling head-first into Hannah's story.'

Kris Doyle, Editorial Director at Picador and a judge for the Northern Writers' Awards' fiction and narrative non-fiction categories said: "I was honoured to be asked to be a judge. All of the shortlists were strong and diverse; I enjoyed reading the entries and discussing them with my fellow judges. Deliberations were rigorous but convivial and I'm really proud of the winners. I hope they enjoy their prizes! More importantly, I hope they keep working on these projects and that they go on to find publishers and readers."

The list of 2020 winners in full is:

Northern Writers' Awards for Fiction and Narrative Non-Fiction

Susan Barker
Ruqaya Izzidien
Rebecca Muddiman

Northern Writers' Awards for Poetry

Jennifer Lee Tsai
Suzannah V Evans
Hannah Hodgson
Polly Atkin
Fokkina McDonnell

Hachette Children's Novel Award

Hannah Durkan

NorthBound Book Award

John D Rutter

Northern Debut Awards

Ruksana Abdul-Majid
Victoria Bennett
Gaynor Jones

TLC Free Reads Scheme

Mark Holmes
Dani Watson

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The Sid Chaplin Award

Winner: Jodie Russian-Red

Highly Commended: Sarah Tarbit

Northumbria University Student and Alumni Award

Andrew Wilkinson

Channel 4 Writing for Television Awards – Bonafide Films

Samantha Neale

Channel 4 Writing for Television Awards – Lime Pictures

Jenna Campbell

Andrea Badenoch Fiction Award

Sally Tottle

Arvon Award

Naomi Kelsey

Young Northern Writer Award

Winner: Katie Wilson

Highly Commended: Naomi Thomas, Wambui Hardcastle

Matthew Hale Award

Jessica de Beer

The Northern Writers' Awards are supported by Arts Council England and Northumbria University along with a host of publishing, media and higher education partners including Channel 4 and Hachette Children's Group.

Judges for this year's awards include the writers Naomi Booth, Vahni Capildeo, Mitch Johnson and Amy Liptrot; literary agent Chloe Seager, from the Madeleine Milburn Agency; and editors Kris Doyle, from Picador, and Kate Agar from Hachette Children's Books.

-- ENDS --

NOTES TO EDITOR

For all winners' bios and quotes see attached document.

The Northern Writers' Awards 2020 were produced by New Writing North with support from the following organisations:

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Ends

**For all media enquiries, please contact Laura Fraine
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NOTES TO EDITORS

New Writing North is the writing development agency for the north of England, and is an Arts Council England National Portfolio Organisation www.newwritingnorth.com. The Northern Writers' Awards are its central platform for discovering and developing new writers from across the region, and were founded in 2000. More information about the Northern Writers' Awards is available at www.northernwritersawards.com. New Writing North works with writers to develop career opportunities, new commissions, projects, residencies, publications and live events.

Northumbria University, Newcastle is a research-rich, business-focused, professional university with a global reputation for academic excellence.

One of the largest institutions in the UK with almost 34,000 students from more than 132 countries and over 200,000 alumni worldwide, Northumbria is empowering a new generation of innovators, visionaries and change-makers to transform lives, to make a remarkable impact on the world, and to take on tomorrow. Northumbria has invested more than £250 million in its estate since 2005 to improve the student experience. Northumbria is ranked top 50 in the UK for research power and had the 4th largest increase in quality research funding (REF 2014). According to Times Higher Education, Northumbria had the biggest rise in research power of any university in the UK. Northumbria's cultural partners include New Writing North, Live Theatre, BALTIC Centre for Contemporary Art, Tyneside Cinema, and Tyne & Wear Archives and Museums.

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