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30 writers share £40,000 prize fund

A record 30 writers have been recognised at this year's Northern Writers' Awards – including the inaugural winner of the Northumbria University Student and Alumni Award.

Now in its 16th year, the Northern Writers' Awards is the country's leading talent development programme for writers and 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 The awards recognise unpublished work-in-progress by new and established writers in the North of England and have now been awarded to 227 writers since they were founded in 2000.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, who hosted the award ceremony at

its city campus in the heart of Newcastle.

This year's awards were worth more than £40,000 and were judged by 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.

Ten writers received the flagship Northern Writers' Awards, with a further three new writers receiving the Channel 4/ Northumbria University Writing for Television Awards, which will 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 inaugural Northumbria University Student and Alumni Award was received by Northumbria 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.

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.”

Claire Malcolm, chief executive of New Writing North, added: “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’s Creative Writing courses are rated Top 20 in the UK in the Complete University Guide 2017. The University offers a range of courses in Creative Writing and the Humanities. For more information go to: www.northumbria.ac.uk/humanities

Northumbria is a research-rich, business-focused, professional university with a global reputation for academic excellence. To find out more about our courses go to www.northumbria.ac.uk

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