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Northumbria Professor invited to help select £10,000 literature prize winner

Twenty-first century literature expert [Professor Katy Shaw, of Northumbria University](#), has been invited to join the Society of Readers and Writers for [The Portico Prize for Literature](#) – the UK's only award of its kind for Northern writing.

Professor Shaw is among an appointed group of 21 writers, academics, poets, critics, librarians and editors, invited to be part of this year's Society.

Between them, they will select a long list of up to 14 books from among the

entries to this year's Prize. These will then be narrowed down to a short list of six by the Prize's judging panel, with the winner awarded £10,000.

The Portico Prize is a biennial award, open to new works of fiction, non-fiction and poetry that best evokes the spirit of the North of England. Eligible books will have a central theme or subject that engages with some aspect of the North, whether through place, character or sensibility.

As Professor of Contemporary Writings within [Northumbria University's Department of Humanities](#), and a vocal advocate for opportunities for Northern writers, Professor Shaw is looking forward to playing a key role in this year's prize.

Speaking about her appointment to this year's Society of Readers and Writers she said: "Myself and Northumbria University are delighted to be supporting The Portico Prize for Literature this year."

Last year Professor Shaw published the [Common People report](#), which called for major changes to the publishing industry to make it more accessible for writers from diverse and working-class backgrounds.

She is currently the academic lead for the [A Writing Chance project](#), co-funded by the actor Michael Sheen to create options and opportunities for aspiring writers and journalists from lower income and under-represented backgrounds.

In addition, she is also involved in an inquiry by the [Northern Culture All Party Parliamentary Group](#), exploring what Northern Culture needs to rebuild, rebalance and recover, and in the past has given evidence during the [Performers' Alliance All-Party Parliamentary Group](#) inquiry into social mobility in the creative sector.

Joining Professor Shaw as part of the Society this year are Yvonne Battle-Felton, author of *Remembered*, which was shortlisted for the Jhalak Prize (2020); Beth Barker, writer and co-host of the Up North Books podcast; Graham Caveney, who was shortlisted for the Portico Prize in 2020; Jake Hope, children's book consultant who was named as one of the top ten librarians of the future in the 'Love Libraries Campaign'; and Natasha Junejo, writer, social justice campaigner and founder of #SouthAsianWriters.

Lynne Allan, Chair of The Portico Library, said: “The Portico Prize makes a welcome return in 2021. We’re thrilled to be working with this year’s Society of Readers and Writers, whose passion and dedication to reading and writing will help us to select an initial longlist and shine a spotlight on the most important new writing about the North, in all its diversity.

“We are also fortunate to have such a distinguished panel of judges to accomplish the difficult task of selecting the shortlist and winner from a very strong field of entries.”

Publishers are invited to submit works of fiction, non-fiction and poetry published between 1 August 2019 and 31 July 2021, with the deadline for submissions being Saturday 31 July.

The longlist will be announced on Tuesday 28 September, followed by the shortlist on Tuesday 7 December. Further details of the winner will be announced in January 2022.

Each of the shortlisted authors will be gifted with honorary membership of The Portico Library in 2022.

The Portico Library will host a series of events including a longlist event with members of the Society of Readers and Writers in conversation, and a Shortlist Readings event with the shortlisted authors.

The Prize was last awarded in 2020 to Jessica Andrews for her novel *Saltwater*. Previous winning and shortlisted authors include Benjamin Myers, Anthony Burgess, Val McDermid, Sarah Hall, A.S. Byatt, Hilary Mantel and Simon Armitage.

This year the judging panel is chaired by Gary Younge, the award-winning author, broadcaster and a Professor of Sociology at the University of Manchester. He is joined by leading figures from the worlds of literature, the media and academia, who all have an association with the North of England. They are: the broadcaster Melanie Sykes, (also Editor-in-Chief of *The Frank Magazine* and co-presenter of the Sykes & Savidge Book Club); the award-winning author and former Portico Prize winner Sarah Hall; the poet and essayist and former Young People’s Laureate for London Momtaza Mehri; and Anita Singh, arts and entertainment editor at *The Daily Telegraph*.

Gary Younge comments: “It’s an honour to chair the judging panel for such an esteemed prize that both draws from and promotes the rich and varied tradition of writing and writers from the North of England.”

Northumbria is ranked 33rd in the UK for English and Creative Writing Courses in the Guardian University Guide 2021. [Find out more about studying English at Northumbria University.](#)

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