

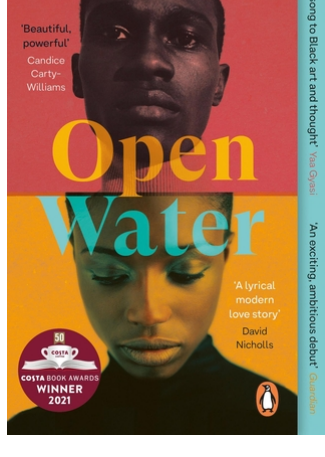
# NCW's City of Literature book recommendations

From thought-provoking non-fiction books to intricate, compassionate novels...



Posted on 18th May 2023

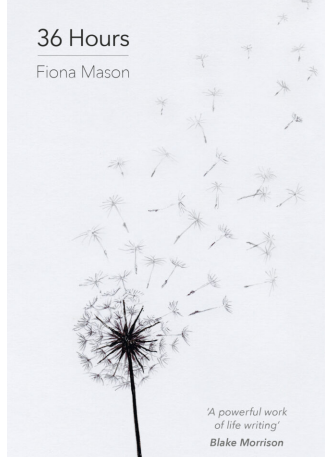
One week to go! Get ready for [City of Literature Weekend](#) with our reading list of ten personal and thought-provoking books, compiled by our Head of Programmes & Creative Engagement, Holly Ainley.



## Open Water by Caleb Azumah Nelson

*Two young people meet at a pub in South East London. Both are Black British, both won scholarships to private schools where they struggled to belong, both are now artists – he a photographer, she a dancer – trying to make their mark in a city that by turns celebrates and rejects them. Tentatively, tenderly, they fall in love. But two people who seem destined to be together can still be torn apart by fear and violence.*

'The debut from Caleb Azumah Nelson, longlisted for the [Desmond Elliott Prize 2021](#). Caleb will kick off the City of Literature weekend with a [panel event](#) celebrating his new novel, *Small Worlds*, alongside #Merky Books author Jyoti Patel.'



## 36 Hours by Fi Mason

*Less than a year after being diagnosed with inoperable cancer, Fiona Mason's husband died at home. She was his carer. Unflinching in its detail, this book is a delicate chronicle of his last day and an account of thirty-six hours that changed her life. It's also an invitation to find better ways to talk about death and dying.*

'We're delighted to host Fi for a [creative writing workshop](#) and [panel event](#), in which she will be discussing how writing can address difficult conversations around life, death and grief.'



## Wintering by Katherine May

*In Wintering, Katherine May recounts her own year-long journey through winter, sparked by a sudden illness in her family that plunged her into a time of uncertainty and seclusion. When life felt at its most frozen, she managed to find strength and inspiration from the incredible wintering experiences of others as well as from the remarkable transformations that nature makes to survive the cold.*

'The bestselling, life-changing, beautiful book that came before *Enchantment*. It will give you a flavour of Katherine's sensitive, grounding, compassionate writing style. We can't wait to hear [Katherine's discussions](#) of finding peace in the natural landscape in an 'anxious age'.'

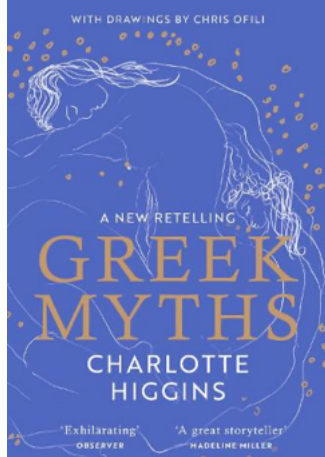


## Arrangements in Blue by Amy Key

*When poet Amy Key was growing up, she looked forward to a life shaped by romance, fuelled by desire, longing and the conventional markers of success that come when you share a life with another person. But that didn't happen for her. Now in her forties, she sets out to explore the realities of a life lived in the absence of romantic love.*

'A beautiful and poignant exploration of love, romantic and otherwise, using Joni Mitchell's *Blue* album as its anchor. Since Amy will be interviewed by internationally bestselling author Sarah Perry, it feels appropriate to share Sarah's thoughts on the book: 'Amy Key writes with rare integrity, courage and style about the pursuit of love – it's somehow both consoling and provoking, and a beautiful and necessary book.'

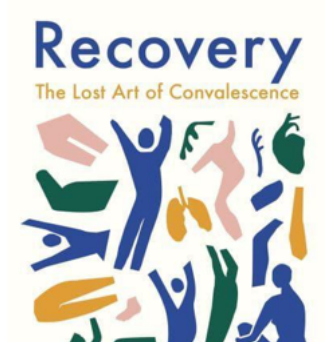
'A beautiful and poignant exploration of love, romantic and otherwise.'



## Greek Myths by Charlotte Higgins

*Unlike in many previous collected myths, female characters take centre stage – Athena, Helen, Circe, Penelope and others weave these stories into elaborate imagined tapestries. In Charlotte Higgins's thrilling new interpretation, their tales combine to form a dazzling, sweeping epic of storytelling, and a magnificent work of scholarship and imagination.*

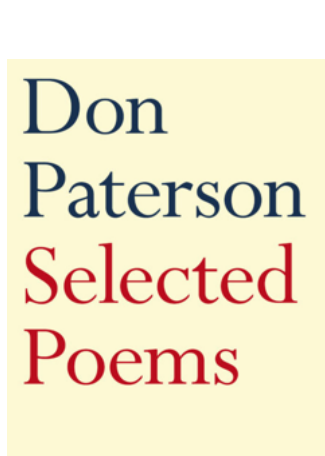
'Shortlisted for the Waterstones Book of the Year 2021, *Greek Myths* places female characters at the heart of ancient storytelling. We can't wait to hear Charlotte deliver this year's [Harriet Martineau Lecture](#) on the power of culture as a lens through which to understand current conflicts.'



## Recovery by Gavin Francis

*When it comes to illness, sometimes the end is just the beginning. Recovery and convalescence are words that exist at the periphery of our lives – until we are forced to contend with what they really mean. Here, GP and writer Gavin Francis explores how – and why – we get better, revealing the many shapes recovery takes, its shifting history and the frequent failure of our modern lives to make adequate space for it.*

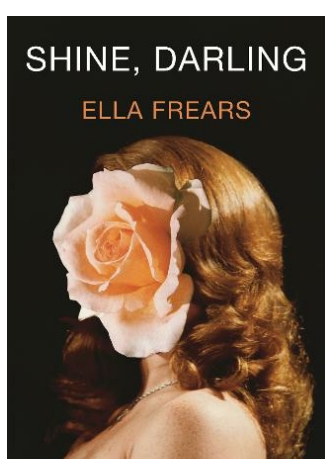
'Gavin Francis [joins us at the festival](#) to present his new biography of Norwich's most famous physician and polymath, Sir Thomas Browne. An award-winning author and a GP himself, Gavin has written many books. This is my recent favourite, a pocket-sized balm for these anxious times, flying the flag for the lost art of convalescence in our busy world.'



## Selected Poems by Don Paterson

*This selection, drawn from twenty years of work, is made by the author himself and includes not only those poems from his four single volumes, but his thrilling and original adaptations of the poems of Antonio Machado and Rainer Maria Rilke. For any readers unfamiliar with Don Paterson's work, this Selected Poems offers the perfect introduction to this most captivating of writers; and for fans, an essential gathering from a master craftsman.*

'Don will be [joining us to discuss his new biography, Toy Fights](#), exploring his childhood which shaped the award-winning poet he would become. Don is the author of eight single volumes of poetry and this selection, made by the poet himself, draws on the first four – a perfect introduction to this most captivating of writers; and for fans, an essential gathering from a master craftsman.'



## Shine, Darling by Ella Frears

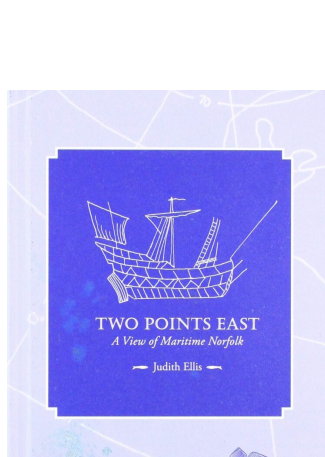
*The engine of Shine, Darling is one of strength, of fortitude in confronting and surviving the world, of a lifted-chin audacity – 'There was pain,' the speaker allows, 'but it was not new pain.' Frears's work is world-weathered rather than world-weary, delighted by service stations, fucking on bins in Cornwall, in constant communion with the moon.*

'Cornish poet Ella Frears will be [interviewing Don Paterson](#) about his new biography as well as featuring as part of [A Republic of Poetry](#), our evening celebrating *The Rialto* poetry magazine. Get to know Ella's wry and intimate debut collection of powerful poems of art, life, femininity and the power of the moon.'



## The Rialto magazine, issue 99

'Ahead of the [launch of The Rialto's celebratory anthology](#) and their 100<sup>th</sup> edition at the festival this year, get a flavour for the depth and range of poetry showcased in each dazzling, diverting issue with no 99.'



## Two Points East: A View of Maritime Norfolk by Judith Ellis

*Spanning the period from the Anglo-Saxons to the coming of the railway, it is about the boats, the fishing and some of the lives lived on the North Sea coast of Norfolk, from the once world-famous herring fishery in Great Yarmouth to the extraordinary rescues of Cromer's famous lifeboat man Henry Blogg.*

'Running our [bookbinding workshop](#) on Sunday 28 May, Judith Ellis is not only an award-winning bookbinder but also the author of a series of beautifully published volumes about maritime East Anglia, the first of which focuses on Norfolk.'



**Chris Gribble leaves NCW after 17 years of 'unprecedented growth and success'**

NCW's CEO will leave his post in September 2023



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