

**Elif Shafak reveals her selection of some of the most exciting women writers  
working in the UK today as part of a two-year project to  
showcase writing from the UK**

**Embargoed 16.30pm GMT 12 March 2019**

Elif Shafak has today revealed her selection of ten of the most exciting women writers working in the UK. Her list was commissioned by the National Centre for Writing (NCW) and British Council supported by Arts Council England to launch a new two-year programme to promote writing from the UK to an international audience. The International Literature Showcase will invite six guest curators to focus on different aspects of writing from the UK starting with Shafak's selection of women writers and moving on to explore LGBTQIA+ writers with guest curator Val McDermid, followed by Jackie Kay's selection of BAME writers. In 2020 the showcase will explore genre with a focus on poetry, speculative fiction and crime.

With a view to promoting the export of outstanding talent to international markets Shafak's selection is a call to world-wide literature festivals, publishers and academics to look again at writing from the UK and broaden the scope of authors considered for literary events, translation and contemporary British literature courses.

Elif Shafak's selected writers are:

- **Patience Agbabi**
- **Lucy Caldwell**
- **Gillian Clarke**
- **Bernardine Evaristo**
- **Jessie Greengrass**
- **Kapka Kassabova**
- **Charlotte Higgins**
- **Sara Maitland**
- **Denise Mina**

- **Evie Wyld**

In revealing the writers Elif Shafak said:

“Each writer is very different in terms of style and subject matter, and yet they all share a significant trait: a passionate commitment to the art and craft of storytelling. To the power and the positive potential of words. Their voices bring clarity into the commotion of our times and help connect us across regions, religions, ethnicities and dialects.”

The list includes Bernardine Evaristo who in *The Emperor's Babe* challenges conventional narrative by contextualising black history in Roman London 1,800 years ago, Lucy Caldwell who in her play *The Luthier* examines the long-term impact of occupation and conflict, and journalist Charlotte Higgins who taps into British literatures longstanding preoccupation with landscape and the natural world.

Chris Gribble, Chief Executive at the National Centre for Writing said:

“Writers and the amazing stories they create are some of our strongest and most potent cultural and economic exports. Elif’s selection of 10 extraordinary UK women writers is the first of six showcases to highlight our amazing writers to programmers, publishers and teachers of literature in English around the world.”

This year the International Literature Showcase will focus on presenting the diversity in UK writing - inviting guest curators to focus on women writers, BAME writers and LGBTQIA+ writers. In 2020 the programme explores genre with a look at poetry, crime writing and speculative fiction - with reference to how society is, was and will be.

Cortina Butler, Director, Literature at the British Council said:

‘We should never take for granted that the work of British writers will automatically find an audience outside the UK. The International Literature Showcase reaches out to the gatekeepers for literature around the world, presenting exciting UK writing that they may not be aware of that will speak powerfully to their audiences as well as our own. We are delighted that this new programme opens with such an interesting selection of women writing today by Elif Shafak and we look forward to subsequent editions.’

Sarah Crown, Literature Director for Arts Council England, who is supporting the International Literature Showcase said:

“The International literature Showcase will present a diverse range of outstanding talent to the widest possible international audience. We are delighted to support this ambitious initiative, which will develop international markets and shine a spotlight on the strength of contemporary writing right across the country.”

Later this year, the British Council will be offering the opportunity to bid for small grants to enable the writers selected for the International Literature Showcase to take part in festivals and other literature programmes around the world. Details will be shared on

<https://nationalcentreforwriting.org.uk/ils/>

Join the conversation with #LitShowcase @WritersCentre @LitBritish

Download additional photos, quotes and resources at –

<https://www.dropbox.com/sh/e19110n58rkz6n0/AAcEaPI8vcsvYOWnwFKn9u7ha?dl=0>

**/End**

#### **Notes to Editors:**

1. For comment and interviews contact Ashton Bainbridge at FMcM Associates, 0207 4057422 or [ashtonb@fmcm.co.uk](mailto:ashtonb@fmcm.co.uk) or Alice Kent, National Centre for Writing at [alice@nationalcentreforwriting.org.uk](mailto:alice@nationalcentreforwriting.org.uk) or 01603 877177
2. The **National Centre for Writing** (NCW) is a place of discovery, exchange, ideas and learning for writers, literary translators and readers. Based in the restored and extended 15th century Dragon Hall in the heart of Norwich England’s first UNESCO City of Literature, it explores how writing can inspire and change the world we live in. Its year round programme of events, festivals and courses reaches over 14,000 people a year with an additional 110,000 engaged online. Through its learning and participation programme it supports 20,000 young people a year and has a commitment to working with those in the most disadvantaged areas. NCW’s patrons include Margaret Atwood, JM Coetzee, Kei Miller and Elif Shafak. [www.nationalcentreforwriting.org.uk](http://www.nationalcentreforwriting.org.uk)
3. The **British Council** is the UK’s international organisation for cultural relations and educational opportunities. We work with over 100 countries in the fields of arts and culture, English language, education and civil society. Last year we reached over 75 million people directly and 758 million people overall including online, broadcasts and publications. We make a positive contribution to the countries we

work with – changing lives by creating opportunities, building connections and engendering trust. Founded in 1934 we are a UK charity governed by Royal Charter and a UK public body. We receive 15 per cent core funding grant from the UK government. [www.britishcouncil.org](http://www.britishcouncil.org)

4. **The International Literature Showcase** is a partnership between NCW and British Council to support the best artistic and organisational talent across the literature sector to develop international markets, international working capacity, and share best practice across the sector.

<https://nationalcentreforwriting.org.uk/ils/>