



## Introducing ten inspiring UK women writers

Let Elif Shafak offer you a guide to modern British writing

*Ideas for your next festival, reading programme,  
or inspiration for your students*

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# Your guide to modern British writing...

Looking to book inspiring writers for your next festival?

Want to introduce your students to exciting new writing from the UK?

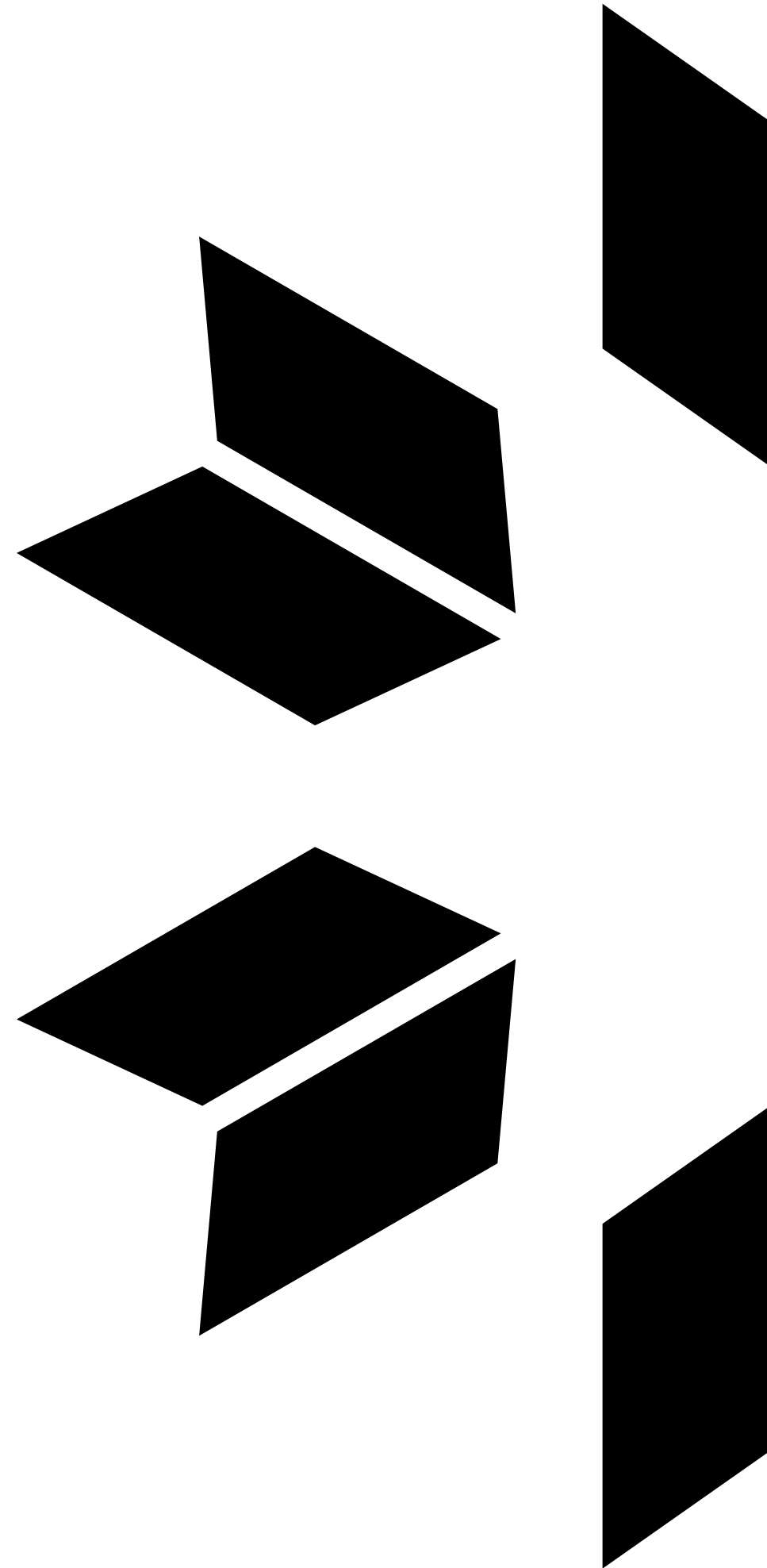
The International Literature Showcase is a partnership between the National Centre for Writing and British Council. It aims to showcase amazing writers based in the UK to programmers, publishers and teachers of literature in English around the world. To do so, we have invited six leading writers to each curate a showcase of themed writing, starting with Elif Shafak's choice of ten of the most exciting women writers working in the UK today.

Following the high-profile launch of Elif's showcase at London Book Fair earlier this month, we will in August reveal Val McDermid's choice of ten lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and intersex (LGBTQI) writers. In October, Jackie Kay will choose the Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) writers working in the UK who most excite her.

Use this guide to find out more about these writers, read their work, understand how they relate to contemporary UK literature and consider working with them in the months ahead.

All contact details are included in this guide and if you have any questions please drop us a message at [info@nationalcentreforwriting.org.uk](mailto:info@nationalcentreforwriting.org.uk)

*The International Literature Showcase is a partnership between the National Centre for Writing and British Council, with support from Arts Council England.*





(c) Fethi Karaduman

# Extraordinary times call for extraordinary women

Elif Shafak introduces her selection of ten exciting  
women writers based in the UK today

These are extraordinary times.

Across the world, we are undergoing a significant political, social and cultural transformation. Debates about identity, memory, belonging, co-existence and integration are being dramatically reframed. Every day we are bombarded with thousands of images and pieces of information: it becomes increasingly difficult to detect the boundary between fact and falsehood.

Against this turbulent background, it's more important than ever before to understand the power and the positive potential of words.

I feel truly privileged and honoured to join British Council and National Centre for Writing in their effort to showcase ten of our most prominent female writers and poets at work today. Their distinctive voices speak both to our minds and to our hearts, calling us from diverse parts of Northern Ireland, Scotland, Wales and England.

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. Their words heal wounds, old and new. Their stories help us to understand not only other people's pain and anger and resilience, but also our own. Most importantly, they rehumanize those who have been dehumanized. Swimming against the tide of tribalism, they connect us across regions, religions, ethnicities and dialects.

When things are happening too fast, literature demands us to slow down, take a look within and restore our individuality. When the world is divided into "us" and "them", literature bravely reminds that there is no "us" and there is no "them". It reminds us that "the other" is, in truth, my brother, my sister.

I see these ten women writers and poets as the voice of our conscience. Together and on their own, they work, they write, they resist and they renew our faith in humanity.

This is not a static list. Rather I see my list as fluid— it's expanding, flowing, changing, searching. There are many fabulous women writers and poets at work today. And where better to hear their voices than in the universal art of storytelling?

***Elif Shafak** is an award-winning novelist and political scientist, and the most widely read female writer in Turkey. She is also a women's rights activist and an inspirational public intellectual and speaker.*



# Patience Agbabi

‘Patience tirelessly innovates a new relationship between the classics and the contemporary. In doing so she shows us the power of words whether they are written on the page or spoken in performance.’

— Elif Shafak



(c) Lyndon Douglas

Patience Agbabi is a poet, performer and Fellow in Creative Writing at Oxford Brookes University. She read English Language and Literature at Pembroke College, Oxford and has an MA in Creative Writing from Sussex. She has lectured in Creative Writing at Greenwich, Cardiff and Kent Universities. Her four poetry collections include *Telling Tales*, a 21st century, multicultural retelling of *The Canterbury Tales*. This was shortlisted for the 2014 Ted Hughes Award for New Work in Poetry and Wales Book of the Year 2015. Her poem ‘The Refugee’s Tale’ appeared in *The Refugee Tales* (Comma Press, 2016) and she was Writer-in-Residence at Bronte Parsonage in 2018.

Read more about Patience [online](#).



## Contact

### Personal

[Telling Tales Blog](#)

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### Agent

Renaissance One: Melanie Abrahams & Rochelle Saunders

### Publisher

Canongate Books: Anna Frame

# Lucy Caldwell

‘Lucy’s words across discipline and form open compelling and unforgettable worlds with such sensitivity and humanity, they challenge us to rethink what we thought we knew.’

— Elif Shafak



(c) Tom Routh

Lucy Caldwell was born in Belfast in 1981. She has written three novels, several stage plays and radio dramas, a collection of short stories, and is the editor of *Being Various: New Irish Short Stories* (Faber, 2019). Awards include the Rooney Prize for Irish Literature, George Devine Award, Dylan Thomas Prize, Imison Award, Susan Smith Blackburn Award, Commonwealth Writers’ Award (Canada & Europe), Edge Hill Readers’ Choice Award, a Fiction Uncovered Award, and a Major Individual Artist Award from the Arts Council of Northern Ireland. She was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society of Literature in 2018.

Read more about Lucy [online](#).



## Contact

### Personal

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# Gillian Clarke

‘A towering figure in Welsh literature, Gillian Clarke’s poetry is simultaneously haunting and immediate, shifting between languages in its exploration of the local and the global, doing so with a fierce music.’  
— Elif Shafak



Cardiff-born Gillian Clarke lives in Ceredigion. Awarded the Queen’s Gold medal for Poetry in 2010, the Wilfred Owen Award in 2012, her poetry has been on the British and international exam syllabus for forty years. Other works: a writer’s journal, *At the Source*; translations of Welsh poetry and prose; radio and theatre drama. *The Gathering*, commissioned by the National Theatre of Wales, was performed in 2014. Recent work: *Selected Poems*, Picador, 2016; her tenth collection, *Zoology*, Carcanet, 2017. Her version of the book-long 7th century Welsh poem, *Y Gododdin*, appears from Faber in 2020.

Read more about Gillian [online](#).



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# Bernardine Evaristo

‘Bernardine is one of those writers who should be read by everyone, everywhere. Her tales marry down-to-earth characters with engrossing story lines about identity, and the UK of today.’  
— Elif Shafak



Bernardine Evaristo is the Anglo-Nigerian award-winning author of eight books of fiction and verse fiction that explore aspects of the African diaspora: past, present, real, imagined. Her latest novel is *GIRL, WOMAN, OTHER* (Hamish Hamilton/Penguin Random House, May 2019). It features 12 mainly black British women protagonists of different ages, cultures and sexualities whose stories overlap. Her writing also spans short fiction, reviews, essays, drama and writing for BBC radio. A literary activist, she has initiated several arts inclusion projects. She is Professor of Creative Writing at Brunel University London, Vice Chair of the Royal Society of Literature and an MBE.

Read more about Bernardine [online](#).



(c) Jennie Scott

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Hamish Hamilton, Penguin Random House: Sapphire Rees



# Jessie Greengrass

‘Jessie makes words dance. And she makes me want to stand up and dance with them. Whether turning her head to short stories or novels, she is a brilliant, emerging talent.’

— Elif Shafak



Jessie Greengrass was born in 1982. Her short story collection, *An Account of the Decline of the Great Auk, According to One Who Saw It*, won the Edge Hill prize in 2016. Her first novel, *Sight*, was published in 2017 and has been shortlisted for the Women's Prize and longlisted for the Wellcome Prize. She lives in Northumberland with her partner and their two children.

Read more about Jessie [online](#).



## Contact

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# Charlotte Higgins

‘Charlotte is an author with magic in her pen. From ancient subjects she conjures living text: vast conversations about who we are today and why the stories we tell really matter.’

— Elif Shafak



(c) David Levene

Charlotte Higgins was born in the Potteries, North Staffordshire, and now lives in London, where she works as chief culture writer of the *Guardian*. A classicist, she investigates aspects of the ancient world in her books. *Under Another Sky*, about the encounter with Roman Britain, was shortlisted for the Baillie Gifford prize for non-fiction and the PEN Hessel-Tiltman history award. Her latest book, *Red Thread*, an exploration of the idea of the labyrinth, was a BBC Radio 4 Book of the Week. She won the Classical Association prize of 2010, awarded to the writer deemed to have done most to bring the classics to a wide audience.

Read more about Charlotte [online](#).



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### Publisher

Jonathan Cape: Aidan O'Neill

# Kapka Kassabova

‘Unflinching, eloquent, Kapka Kassabova looks inside the human soul, excavates the deepest truth and tells us about it in all its tragic, mysterious beauty.’  
— Elif Shafak



(c) Marti Friedlander

Kapka Kassabova is a poet, novelist, and author of three narrative non-fiction books: *Street Without a Name* (2008), *Twelve Minutes of Love* (2011) and *Border* (2017), which won the British Academy Al-Rodhan Prize, Saltire Book of the Year, Stanford-Dolman Book of the Year, and the Highland Book Prize. She has written for the *Guardian*, *Economist*, and others. Kapka grew up in Sofia and as a young adult emigrated to New Zealand where she studied French and Russian Literature and published her first books. Since 2005 she has lived in Scotland. Her native Balkans are the location for *Border* and the forthcoming *To The Lake* (2020).

Read more about Kapka [online](#).



## Contact

### Personal

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### Agent

Wylie Agency: Sarah Chalfant

### Publisher

Granta Books: Lamorna Elmer

# Sara Maitland

‘Writer, thinker, seeker, seer, Sara Maitland is one of our most articulate and probing intellects, with an enervating ability to look closely at things and make us look with her.’  
— Elif Shafak



(c) Adam Lee

Sara's first novel *Daughter of Jerusalem* won the Somerset Maugham Award in 1979. She has written five more novels, several collections of short stories, and a somewhat eclectic range of non-fiction.

In 2004 she moved back to Galloway where she lives alone on a high moor, exploring the richness of silence and solitude. She has two adult children and a terrier called Zoe.

She teaches on the MA in Creative writing (by distance learning) for Lancaster University and writes monthly columns for the *Tablet* and for *Countryfile Magazine*.

Sara is a Roman Catholic.

Read more about Sara [online](#).



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Comma Press (short stories:) Ra Page



# Denise Mina

‘Compassionate, outspoken, witty, taking crime to places it hasn’t been before, Denise Mina is a tour de force.’

— Elif Shafak



Denise Mina is a novelist, playwright and comic book writer. She has won the CWA John Creasey Award, the Short Story Dagger (twice), the Golden Crowbar (Sweden), the Finnish Crime Novel of The Year, the Theakston Award (twice), the McIlvanny and the Gordon Burn Prize. Her work is largely feminist crime fiction but she has also written SciFi, a performance poem about nationalism which had a four week run in Edinburgh, and true crime. She lives and works in Glasgow.

Read more about Denise [online](#).



## Contact

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### Agent

RCW Literary Agency: Peter Robinson

### Publisher

Harvill Secker: Bethan Jones

# Evie Wyld

‘A bold, often spectacular wordsmith, Evie Wyld’s restless characters are matched only by the rugged landscapes and untameable wildlife around them.’

— Elif Shafak



Evie Wyld is the author of three novels, *The Bass Rock*, coming in late 2019, *All the Birds, Singing*, winner of the Miles Franklin Award; and *After the Fire, a Still Small Voice*, winner of the John Llewellyn Rhys Prize; and one graphic memoir, *Everything is Teeth*. In 2013 she was included on *Granta* magazine’s once a decade Best of Young British Novelists list. She lectures in Creative Writing at Kent University, and lives in Peckham where she part owns a small independent bookshop called Review.

Read more about Evie [online](#).



(c) Roeloff Baker

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# ‘A powerful concentration of literary and cultural concerns’

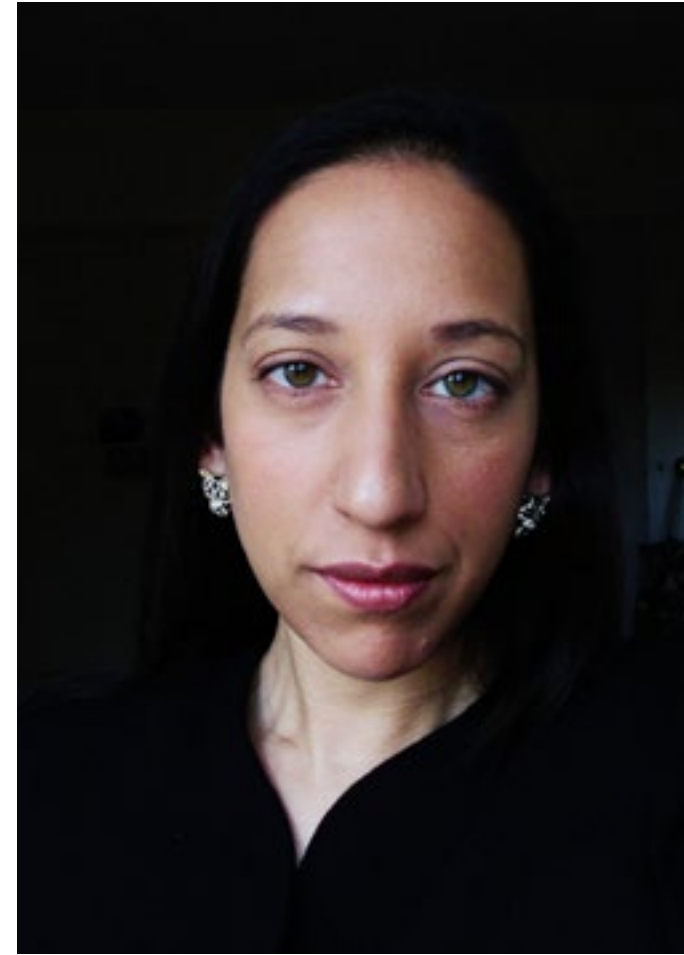
## Bidisha contextualises Elif Shafak’s selection of extraordinary UK women writers

Elif Shafak’s selection of writers for the International Literature Showcase gives us a powerful concentration of literary and cultural concerns.

Their work undercuts, overleaps, complicates and satirises canonical conventions of ‘Great British writing’, with its traditional celebration of 19th century realist prose by (mainly) Englishmen.

With her early background in acting and theatre, **Bernardine Evaristo** brings an electric vividness and compelling voice to original works which challenge and reinterpret identity. In her 2001 novel *The Emperor’s Babe*, she re-writes history by placing a modern black girl into Roman London. In *Blonde Roots* she flips Western beauty ideals on their head. And in *Mr Loverman* she undercuts macho bluster with a story of a black Londoner who is secretly gay.

The time is ripe for such a widening of perspective. We are at a point of cultural reckoning not only within Britain but also globally, as states grapple with issues of identity, homeland, belonging and refuge. We look to literature to help us understand the trauma of war and the fact that forced migration is a constant across human history. **Kapka Kassabova** is based in Scotland, but come poetry, fiction, and non-fiction, her art is as broad as her heritage. Her work faces the legacy of communism and dictatorship, as in her novel *Street Without A Name*, while her most powerful book so far, *Border*, traces what used to be the eastern edge of the Iron Curtain, bordering Bulgaria, Turkey and Greece.



Within Britain, the cultural reckoning with identity embraces the pains and triumphs of the millions who have arrived and made their lives here across decades in the postwar period. Poet **Patience Agbabi** combines the formal rigour and daring of the English Modernist poets with a refreshing breadth of interest, from race and identity to sexuality. A British author of Nigerian heritage, she effortlessly blends influences and serves as an advocate for Black British writing, as her inclusion in the landmark anthologies *Bittersweet: Contemporary Black Women’s Poetry* and *IC3: The Penguin Book of New Black Writing in Britain* shows. Authors like Agbabi have not come out of nowhere: indeed, Black British writing encompasses a vast array of postwar authors including Zadie Smith, Diana Evans, Andrea Levy and Jackie Kay.

We are also at a crucial moment – perhaps even a tipping point – of witnessing the return of violent and exclusionary populism which seeks to ‘restore’ states to some imagined ideal of racial or cultural purity. The selected writers demonstrate that no such state ever existed. Journalist, cultural commentator, classicist and historian **Charlotte Higgins**’s book *Under Another Sky: Journeys in Roman Britain* delves into Britain’s Roman past archaeologically, geographically and culturally and examines the stories subsequent centuries of British writers have told themselves about the Romans’ presence in the land.

Higgins also taps into a longstanding British literary preoccupation with landscape and the natural world – a Romantic longing for communion with the earth. This interest has been compounded with a newfound urgency as, threatened by climate change, British writers look again at what we stand to lose. Consider **Sara Maitland**, whose book *Gossip From The Forest* combines narrative non-fiction, nature writing and fairytale. Her work is concerned with contemplation of the natural world and is alive to a tradition of myth, folklore and fairytale which evokes the late, great Angela Carter. Consider too **Gillian Clarke**, who was the National Poet of Wales from 2008 to 2016. Her collection *Ice* was inspired by the cold winters of 2009 and 2010, while *Making the Beds for the Dead* contemplates war and disease, geology and archaeology, and the poems in *A Recipe for Water* pay tribute to the many forms and symbols of water.

None of the ten selected authors is like any of the others, yet all reflect and normalise women’s interiority and agency as characters and give respectful weight to women’s experiences and emotional reality, as well as those of male characters. **Jessie Greengrass** is one of Britain’s most psychologically astute authors. Her debut novel *Sight* is a probing, seriously accomplished consideration of what it means to choose to make a child and to become a mother, as well as a reckoning with the children we have been and the mothers (and foremothers) we have had.

This is linked to a wider drive – of which the #MeToo testimonial movement is a part – to acknowledge women’s voices and the endemic reality of male sexual violence on women’s lives. **Evie Wyld**’s powerful second novel, *All The Birds, Singing*, is a breathtaking excavation of a young woman’s violent and traumatic history as well as a muscular evocation of the rural landscape.

There is a great British crime tradition of small-town malaise, and the insidious effects of class privilege reflected so brilliantly by writers like Ruth Rendell, PD James and Val McDermid. Like them, **Denise Mina**’s crime novels are concerned with social injustice, inequality and the desire for abuses and violations to be righted. In police detective Alex Morrow, reporter Paddy Meehan and abuse survivor Maureen O’Donnell she has created three distinctive heroines. Her work dignifies women both as victims and investigators of violence, and reflect on wider events.





L - R: Sara Maitland, Elif Shafak, Charlotte Higgins, Bernadine Evaristo and Lucy Caldwell at London Book Fair 2019

*The End of the Wasp Season* is set during a global recession and looks at a brutal murder of a woman in an upmarket neighbourhood.

As humanity shows itself to be unable or unwilling to learn the lessons of the past, British literature's poignant distinction when it comes to war writing continues.

The Irish writer **Lucy Caldwell** is the recipient of numerous awards for her novels, plays, radio dramas and short stories. Whether she is reflecting on the Troubles, as in her novels *All The Beggars Riding* and *Where They Were Missed*, or focusing on a young man in Palestine's West Bank, as in her play *The Luthier*, a prevailing theme is that of the long after-effects of occupation, conflict, war and secrecy on ordinary people.

The work of British writers living and working today is outward-looking, formally diverse, able to cross literary traditions and academic disciplines. It is vitally relevant to conversations that are happening well beyond the literary realm – in journalism, activism, ecology, politics and psychology. These ten authors are searchers, looking within the human soul, within the local and national environment and beyond, to the further corners of the rest of the world.

**Bidisha** is a writer, broadcaster and film-maker who specialises in international human rights, social justice, gender and the arts. She writes for the *Guardian* and *Observer* and presents and commentates for BBC TV and radio, Channel 4 News and Sky News.

# Elif Shafak and Bidisha in conversation at London Book Fair 2019

*Elif and Bidisha spoke in person at the launch of the International Literature Showcase at London Book Fair 2019. In this abridged version of their interview, they discuss Elif's selection of women writers and the themes of their work. You can listen to the full conversation by clicking below.*



Listen online

**Bidisha: This is a time of great political and cultural change. What would you like to hear being celebrated across the industry and in the conversations around you?**

**Elif:** It's a time of great political turbulence. I dare say emotional turbulence as well. There's a lot of anxiety, almost an existential angst, everywhere in the world. In the past many people use to think that some parts of the world were solid, safe, steady, and that the Western world in general was in no need of talking about human rights, democracy and freedom of speech, because we were 'beyond' that threshold. That was the general approach. Other parts of the world were regarded as 'liquid' lands, such as the country where I'm from, Turkey.

After 2016 that dualistic perception of the world has been shattered and now we know that we're all living in liquid times, as the philosopher-thinker Sigmund Bauman had warned us years ago.

It's very important to understand what is the role of storytelling at a time like this. How can storytellers heal, mend, and help us to overcome these polarisations?

**Bidisha: Let's now look at your selection for the International Literature Showcase. Taken together, what do the names you've selected say about contemporary British literature?**

**Elif:** I think these women are very brave. They talk about issues that are universal. Their voices should be heard in very different parts of the world, and it's very important for me to be able to say that they must be translated into many, many more languages.

**Bidisha: How important is it also to challenge the traditions of the English literature canon?**

**Elif:** It always bothers me how the curriculum stays the same year after year. There is no doubt that the writers and poets that we are used to reading about are great names, but at the same time we should bring on board people from very diverse backgrounds, dealing with different subjects, experimenting with forms.

**Bidisha: Looking through your list there were some names that I discovered afresh and then some who I've admired for a very long time, and I was waiting for them to have their moment. One of those authors is Bernardine Evaristo. I love the way that she corrects accepted histories. So she looks at Roman London and she finds black history within that, or she flips traditional beauty ideals. What was it about her work that spoke to you?**

**Elif:** What spoke to me primarily was her unflinching ability to ring the periphery into the centre; to give more voice to the silenced, and to say that the story you think you know, can we talk about that story? I'm going to tell you that story from a very different angle, because that story changes depending on who is telling it.

Bernardine Evaristo turns it upside-down and helps me to see what I wasn't able to see before.

**Bidisha: Another author that has an incredible seriousness of mind is Kapka Kassabova, who manages somehow to tackle the legacy of communism and dictatorship in her work, and also to look at the question of borders. In her book *Border*, she crosses Bulgaria, Turkey and Greece but again she has that wonderful ability to skew perspective.**

**Elif:** I think her work is very important. I see her as a





A packed room for Elif Shafak's event at London Book Fair 2019

nomad, as an intellectual nomad, maybe a spiritual nomad. I'm intrigued by the fact that Bulgarian is her mother-tongue and she writes in English. She crosses borders - all kinds of borders, national borders, ethnic borders, political borders, that I find very, very important.

The language that politics uses and the language found in storytelling is completely different. In politics there has to be an 'us', there has to be a 'them', and the basic assumption that somehow 'us' is better than 'them'. But for a writer there is no 'us', there is no 'them', and there is no 'other'. The 'other' is me, the other is my brother, my sister.

**Bidisha: There's another name here which immediately caught my attention, because I know Patience Agbabi as a performance poet. She really stands up for other black, British writers. I wondered if that was part of it for you, that she's really an advocate for an entire history of British writing?**

**Elif:** I think she's an advocate for equality, dignity and sisterhood. To me that was really important. And at the same time I see Patience Agbabi as someone who bridges oral culture and written culture. The way she embodies the power of words, whether it's written word or spoken word, she carries that magic with her, and she tours constantly. She's a nomad in that regard.

**Bidisha: Now we have a journey into history. Charlotte Higgins is a multi-hyphenate. She's a cultural critic and a journalist, but also a historian and her book *Under Another Sky* looks into Roman-**

**British history and uncovers all kinds of unexpected stories.**

**Elif:** She's so prolific in so many areas, from journalism to history, the depth of her knowledge, the way she weaves all these subjects, spoke to me. She brings mythology, history, philosophy, ancient philosophy to her work, but while she's doing this she's also very open to new technologies, such as blogging. I think we need more women intellectuals in public space.

When I say this I'm cautious, because I know the word 'intellectual' in the UK is not a favourable word, unlike in France, or in Turkey, or in Russia.

**Bidisha: I was delighted that you selected one of my favourite authors, Sara Maitland, who reminds me of a new generation Angela Carter. Her great book *Gossip from the Forest* manages to combine nature writing, fairy tale, myth and memoir.**

**Elif:** And that's what drew me immediately into her work. And I honestly think, again, in more narrow literary circles there are subjects we don't think about enough and we don't necessarily include in our discussions. I don't like those gaps. I don't share those divisions.

**Bidisha: We turn now to a poet whose real focus is actually about getting into the complexity and the nuance, and staying away from the certainty. Gillian Clarke is a very long-standing writer, she was the National Poet of Wales from 2008 to 2016 and she's looked into everything from symbolism of ice and**

**water to the history of disease.**

**Elif:** She's a towering figure. What drew me to her work primarily was, of course, the depth, the breadth of her work, but also the way she connects the local with the global. You have a voice that cares about the minute details in nature, but at the same time talks about what's happening in Yugoslavia, or what's happening in another part of the world where there's civil conflict, or civil war, and cares about other people's pain.

**Bidisha: We were talking a little bit earlier about the traditional trivialisation of women's stories and women's experiences. Jessie Greengrass' novel *Sight* is about when you make a child, what does it mean to create a life but also recreate yourself, as this figure called 'The Mother'?**

**Elif:** Absolutely. She's so good at pointing out journeys. We all go through journeys. So the Self is not a given, static thing, particularly for women. So many stages of our lives, throughout pregnancy, motherhood, menopause - many, many stages, and she talks so bravely, beautifully, with such sensitivity about these subjects, about life, death. What does it mean, even, to have a body?

**Bidisha: Evie Wyld's second novel, *All the Birds Singing*, I remember reviewing and it's an excavation of a woman's traumatic history which is taught to us through memories, but it's also really muscular writing about the landscape and rural jobs and farming.**

**Elif:** I think in her work landscapes are not passive scenery. Just the opposite: they are very much alive, they are very much part of the story, part of the history, and part of untold stories. Coming from Istanbul that spoke to me, because I think Istanbul is also a city with an amazing character that shapes us.

**Bidisha: Now we come to urban life. This is a woman I saw at the Edinburgh Book Festival being hilarious and very charismatic: the Scottish author Denise Mina, who writes blazing, gritty, very, very fast-moving crime novels.**

**Elif:** Crime fiction is a very particular genre in which you would expect to find more women, but in fact there aren't. When I look across the world at the books that are translated, or not yet translated, she has a very unique voice and the fact that she can engage, she can enter into conversations with people of all kinds of backgrounds, without any judgement, without any elitism, I love that about her work.

**Bidisha: This brings me on to the next person you've chosen, the Irish writer Lucy Caldwell. There's one common thread running through all her work, and that's talking about the long after-effects of occupation and war and fragile states.**

**Elif:** I think she also talks about memory. What do you remember? How do we remember? How do you talk about painful memories? Like many other authors on this list, she's someone who is prolific in various areas, from short stories to plays and she has a voice in that sense, in the public space. I find that very important.

We must never forget where nationalism, tribalism, violence can take us. These are dark tunnels that humanity has gone through and we can never take it for granted that it will never happen again. It can happen again. And memory is an important part of our conversation as writers and she does that brilliantly.

**Bidisha: Of course, we want people to read these authors and love them and cherish them, but is there another level of critical engagement, of getting the authors into the canon, onto the syllabi of universities and schools?**

**Elif:** I think it's very important to bring them into different syllabi, universities definitely, schools definitely, but at the same time libraries. It makes me very sad to see how libraries are being closed down at a time when it should be the exact opposite. We need more reading, we need more talks, especially in libraries because sometimes people think that these conference halls belong to another group in the society.

**Bidisha: The themes that we've covered are vast, and I notice that they really echo conversations which are already happening well beyond the literary realm.**

**Elif:** I think together they show us that women ask incredibly important, vital and universal questions. They breathe oxygen into our public space. What's equally important is that there isn't one single way of telling a story. There are very different ways. Sometimes you perform it on stage, sometimes you write it in a historical novel. Sometimes it is a play, a theatre play. Sometimes it's a radio drama. There are very different forms open to us, and we can travel across these genres. None of them are superior to the other. There are very different ways of telling a story, but our need for stories is here to stay and in our troubled times we need to hear these voices more than ever before.



# In the press

The launch of Elif's selected writers at London Book Fair 2019 generated a great deal of discussion online and in the national and international press.



Left page clockwise from top: The Bookseller, 12 March 2019; Publishing Perspectives, 26 February 2019; The Bookseller at London Book Fair 2019, 12 March 2019

Right page clockwise from top: Stylist, 12 March 2019; he Olympian, 12 March 2019; The Jakarta Globe, 13 March 2019; New Statesman, 6 March 2019



# Coming soon

Later this year we will continue our focus on representation with international bestselling crime writer Val McDermid showcasing her selection of LGBTQI writers, followed by the third modern Makar (the Scottish poet laureate) Jackie Kay's selection of BAME writers.

In 2020 we will shift into exploring the boundaries of often misunderstood genres, from speculative fiction and crime fiction to poetry.

**Looking for writers for your next festival event? Choosing texts for your literature course?**

Stay-up-to-date with future showcases by subscribing to the [International Literature Showcase newsletter](#).

Read more about the writers at [nationalcentreforwriting.org.uk/ils](https://nationalcentreforwriting.org.uk/ils)

