

**ENGLISH
PEN**

**FREEDOM
TO WRITE
FREEDOM
TO READ**



Our activities and impact

1 April 2019 – 31 March 2020

Image: Celebrating Nelson Mandela: His Letters, His Legacy.
Credit: George Torode.

About English PEN

Founded in 1921, English PEN is one of the world's oldest human rights organisations, championing the freedom to write and the freedom to read. We are the founding centre of PEN International, a worldwide writers' association with 145 centres in more than 100 countries.

With the support of our members – a community of writers, readers and activists – we protect freedom of expression whenever it is under attack. We campaign for writers facing persecution around the world and offer respite residencies to international writers.

We celebrate contemporary international writing through our online magazine, PEN Transmissions, and we award literary grants for translating new works into English.

We bring together outstanding writers, readers and translators for unforgettable conversations and we celebrate courageous writing with three annual literary prizes – the PEN Pinter Prize, the PEN Ackerley Prize and the PEN Hessel-Tiltman Prize.

Director

Antonia Byatt (resigned 25 June 2019)

Daniel Gorman (appointed 27 August 2019)

Honorary President

Philippe Sands

Trustees

Maureen Freely (Chair)

Claire Armitstead

Ruth Borthwick

Milena Büyüm

Francis Coles

Cathy Galvin

Georgina Godwin

Daniel Hahn

Ted Hodgkinson

Guy Lindvall Gunaratne

Philip Gwyn Jones

Dan Miller

Shazea Quraishi

Samantha Schnee

Lulu Norman (resigned 15 September 2020)

Anthony Julius (resigned 3 December 2019)

Sanjay Jawa (resigned 16 July 2020)

A man in a patterned jacket stands on a wooden stage, gesturing towards a large, seated audience in a hall. The audience is clapping. The room has blue ambient lighting and a green exit sign is visible in the background.

Image: Lemn Sissay, PEN Pinter Prize 2019 ceremony.
Credit: George Torode.

‘Free expression is under tremendous pressure from numerous fronts on a global level, and English PEN continues to shine a light on this through our campaigns for writers at risk, our support for work in translation, and our events featuring writers of courage.’

Maureen Freely, Chair of English PEN



Image: Zehra Doğan.
Credit: Refik Tekin.

Supporting writers at risk

Founded in 1960, English PEN's Writers at Risk Programme is one of the world's longest running campaigns for freedom of expression. We campaign on behalf of writers who are unjustly persecuted, harassed, imprisoned, and even murdered in violation of their right to freedom of expression. We strive to raise awareness and the funds to support them – from sending appeal letters to the relevant authorities to writing messages of solidarity and staging fundraisers, vigils and events.

In 2019/2020, English PEN and our members have:

- Supported writers in prison and at risk around the world, and welcomed the release of Ukrainian writer Oleg Sentsov, and Ugandan academic and poet Dr Stella Nyanzi.
- Secured visas for visiting writers and writers fleeing their home country.
- Fundraised emergency grants for writers at risk and in exile.
- Gathered hundreds of books for PEN Uganda's Make Space project for writers in exile.
- Hosted a series of roundtable discussions, including on freedom of expression in Turkey, setting up an ICORN residency, and the ethics of attending literary events.

**'Each letter day,
I get so many
letters from PEN
members and I am
engulfed by very
beautiful feelings...
I can feel myself
with you, always,
and perhaps that
is why I never feel
helpless.'**

Zehra Doğan,
Kurdish artist and writer

Writers in residence

We support international writers facing persecution by providing them with the time, space and funds to relax and work on their own projects.

In the 2019/2020, we hosted three respite writers' residencies in London for:

- Cameroonian journalist Mimi Mefo Takambou;
- Kurdish writer and artist Zehra Doğan;
- Kurdish writer and human rights defender Nurcan Baysal.

Image: Mimi Mefo Takambou.
Credit: Mimi Mefo Takambou.



‘Being a resident at PEN has been an enriching professional development opportunity for me. I have been able to learn and share my experience with countless individuals, personalities and organisations... These will help build my contact as a journalist and give me assurance as an advocate of press freedom in my country, Cameroon. At PEN, I also have enough time to carry out research, and write articles on happenings in Cameroon without fear of being intimidated or arrested.’

Mimi Mefo Takambou,
Writer in Residence

Freedom of expression in the UK

We campaign to defend the right to freedom of expression and the promotion of literature in the UK.

In 2019/2020, English PEN and our members have:

- Helped to acquire the annotated copy of *Lady Chatterley's Lover* by DH Lawrence used by the judge in the landmark obscenity trial of 1960. The book is now with the University of Bristol, with support from English PEN's GoFundMe campaign which raised over £20,000.
- Submitted a response to the UK government's consultation on its Online Harms White Paper, in collaboration with Scottish PEN. This response expressed concern with the proposals and urged the government to put free speech and human rights at the centre of any new system of regulation.
- Intervened in the case against journalists Barry McCaffrey and Trevor Birney in Northern Ireland, together with Index on Censorship. The charges against them were subsequently dropped.

English PEN was a founding partner of a rapid response Emergency Fund to support writers in the UK affected financially by Covid 19. Launched in March 2020, this project was led by the Society of Authors, and was in partnership with the TS Eliot Foundation, the Royal Literary Fund, Amazon UK, Arts Council England and others.

Supporting literary translation

We champion literature beyond national and linguistic borders, and beyond conventional literary expectations. Our mission reflects the PEN Charter's declaration that 'literature [...] knows no frontiers, and should remain a common currency between nations'. We do this through our PEN Translates grant, online publishing, events programming and advocacy.

In 2019/2020, English PEN and our members have:

- Awarded 37 PEN Translates grants to books from 31 countries and 19 languages. 60% of grants went to women and non-binary writers and translators.
- Supported the first novels by women writers from Libya and the Central African Republic ever to be translated into English; and awarded a Penguin Classics collection of Georgi Markov's work.
- Celebrated PEN Translates-supported titles, *Hurricane Season* by Fernanda Melchor, translated by Sophie Hughes, shortlisted for the 2020 Booker International Prize, and *Every Fire You Tend* by Sema Kaygusuz, translated by Nicholas Glestonbury, and *Zuleikha* by Guzel Yakhina, translated by Lisa C. Hayden, shortlisted for the EBRD Prize 2020..
- Brought together 90 translators for International Translation Day 2019.

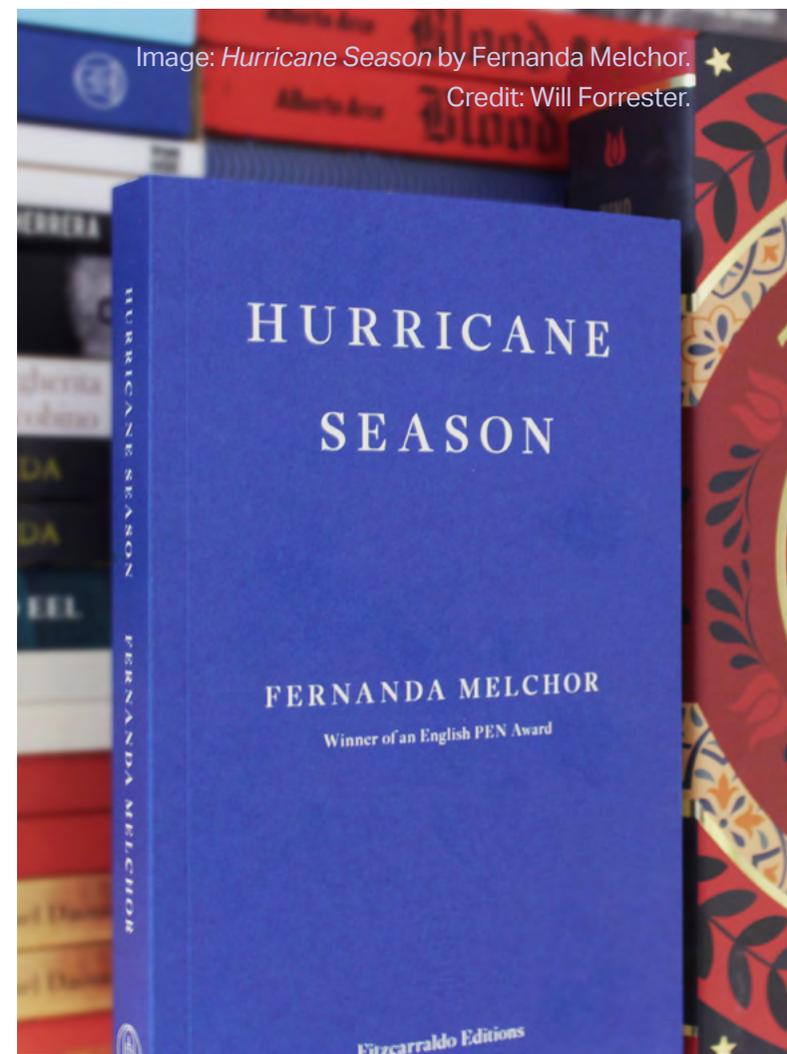


Image: *Hurricane Season* by Fernanda Melchor.

Credit: Will Forrester.

PEN Transmissions

PEN Transmissions is our online magazine for international writing. It is a digital home for some of the best writers from around the world, writing about the most urgent and important issues of our time.

In 2019/2020, PEN Transmissions has:

- Platformed work and interviews from 41 international writers in 29 countries including Joshua Wong, Ananda Devi, Peter Stamm, and Ece Temelkuran, plus a series in partnership with Granta magazine.
- Welcomed over 26,000 readers in 143 countries.

‘Free expression is the one thing that separates the free world from the rogues’ gallery of authoritarian regimes around the world. It is what separates good from evil, the right side of history from the wrong side, us from them. We don’t need to look hard for an example: the suppression of free expression – the punishment of a whistleblower in Wuhan, China – has led directly or indirectly to a pandemic that is now ravaging the entire world.’

Extract from Standing with Hong Kong: An Interview with Joshua Wong and Jason Y. Ng, PEN Transmissions, 31 March 2020

Events

We bring outstanding writers and translators together for unforgettable conversations. Our events programme focuses on platforming international voices and UK writers to speak to the key areas of our work.

In 2019/2020, English PEN and our members have:

- Collaborated with established artistic partners including the British Library, British Council, Hay Festivals, Edinburgh International Book Festival, National Centre for Writing, Free Word, Folkestone Book Festival, the Society of Authors, The Roundhouse, Poetry Translation Centre and the Festival of Italian Literature in London.
- Hosted Nobel Prize winner Svetlana Alexievich for the inaugural Anna Politkovskaya Memorial Lecture, at the British Library, in partnership with RAW in WAR (Reach All Women in War).
- Staged a conversation with Channel Four News International Editor Lindsey Hilsum at the Folkestone Book Festival about her work and her most recent book *In Extremis: The Life and Death of the War Correspondent Marie Colvin*.

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the English PEN Literary Salon at London Book Fair was unable to go ahead in March 2020. However, we platformed the conversations as a week-long series on PEN Transmissions in April 2020, featuring Dean Atta, Lavie Tidhar, Eley Williams, Irenosen Okojie and Hazel Barkworth.

Image: Celebrating Nelson Mandela: His Letters, His Legacy.
Credit: George Torode.



Prizes

Each year, we present three awards to outstanding writers – the PEN Pinter Prize, the PEN Hessell-Tiltman Prize, and the PEN Ackerley Prize. Funded by and in honour of former PEN members and significant literary figures, these prizes recognise excellence in historical nonfiction, literary autobiography, and a courageous and unflinching approach to the written word.

In 2019/2020, English PEN and our members have celebrated:

- Lemn Sissay MBE winning the 2019 PEN Pinter Prize in a sold-out event at the British Library and naming Ethiopian Zone 9 blogger Befekadu Hailu as the International Writer of Courage.
- Yrsa Daley-Ward winning the 2019 PEN Ackerley Prize for her memoir *The Terrible* (Penguin) and Edward Wilson-Lee awarded the 2019 PEN Hessell-Tiltman Prize for *The Catalogue of Shipwrecked Books: Young Columbus and the Quest for a Universal Library*.

‘I met Harold Pinter when I was thirty-six. We were on stage at The Royal Court. I was too intimidated or self-conscious to speak to him. And so I will now. Thank you. What I like about this award is that it is from a great writer and a great organisation. I accept it as a sign that I should continue. All I have is what I leave behind. All I am is what I do.’

Lemn Sissay, PEN Pinter Prize winner 2019

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PEN

Lemn Sissay

Winner of
PEN Pinter Prize
2019

Image: Lady Antonia Fraser and Lemn Sissay at the PEN Pinter Prize 2019 ceremony.

Credit: George Torode.



Our members

Members are the backbone of English PEN. It is with our membership – a community of more than 1,000 writers, readers and activists – that we protect freedom of expression whenever it is under attack.

Each year, our members join us in sending letters and messages of solidarity to writers at risk around the world; highlighting current cases of concern at events and through their writing; attending vigils and protests for writers in prison and at risk; donating books for writers in exile; reading and sharing the words of writers in the UK and around the world; and raising their voices in support of free expression.

In 2019, we welcomed a new honorary member – Kurdish journalist and human rights defender Nurcan Baysal. Nurcan was a Writer in Residence at English PEN from September 2019 to January 2020.

‘It was not an easy decision for me to leave my children. But I was feeling exhausted, empty, and unable to cope with many things. I was sick and tired of living in violence, of being full of bad news, war, death, threats, humiliation... Here, I am focusing on my English classes and meeting with many organisations which work to support freedom of speech, journalism and human rights. I have also had the chance to meet with many people who want to learn deeply about the Kurdish issue, and hope to find the time to continue working on my new book.’

Nurcan Baysal, PEN member



Image: Nurcan Baysal.
Credit: Private.

Become a member

English PEN membership is open to everyone – join our vibrant community of writers, readers and activists today.

As a member of English PEN, you'll be helping to support our varied and vital work to champion the freedom to write and the freedom to read around the world.

Sign up at
englishpen.org/membership

‘No organisation in the world knows better than PEN the vital importance of protecting the rights of individuals and of groups.

No group of individuals knows better than the members of PEN around the world about the power of the word, its ability to offer a protective embrace, for the writer, for the reader, for others.’

Philippe Sands, President
of English PEN

Image: PEN Pinter Prize 2019 ceremony.
Credit: George Torode.



Our partners and funders

Operating at the intersection between arts and human rights, collaboration is central to every piece of work that English PEN undertakes. We are hugely thankful to our members, our core funders, our project partners, and our Silver PEN partners, whose support is vital for sustaining English PEN's mission to promote the freedom to write and the freedom to read in the UK and around the world.

Our Core Funders



Supported using public funding by
**ARTS COUNCIL
ENGLAND**

The logo for the T. S. Eliot Foundation, featuring a stylized signature of "T. S. Eliot" in a cursive font.

T. S. ELIOT FOUNDATION

The logo for the Sigrid Rausing Trust, featuring the name "SIGRID RAUSING TRUST" in a serif font, with a light green rectangular background behind the text.

Our Silver PEN Partners

David Higham Associates

Penguin Random House

Hachette UK

Harper Collins

London Book Fair

Pushkin Press

Amazon UK

Our Project Partners

From venues and festivals to publishers and philanthropists, we're proud to have worked with a wide range of partners on delivering our programmes and projects. Recent partners include:

ARTICLE 19

Authors' Licensing and Collecting Society

Blavatnik Family Foundation

Booker Foundation

Bristol Cultural Development Partnership

British Council

British Library

British Museum

Fondation Jan Michalski

Free Word

Granta

Hay Festival

Index on Censorship

Metal

National Centre for Writing

New Writing North

Nottingham, UNESCO City of Literature

Off The Shelf, Festival of Words

Open Society Foundations

Poetry Translation Centre

Refugee Tales

Reporters Without Borders (RSF)

Salisbury World

Society of Authors

Southbank Centre



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