

A man with a grey beard, wearing a black hat, glasses, a purple suit jacket, a light blue shirt, and a red tie, is seated in a brown leather chair. He is holding a yellow book in his left hand and gesturing with his right hand. The background is a library with bookshelves and a railing. The text 'ENGLISH PEN' is written in white, stylized, brush-stroke font on the left side of the image.

**ENGLISH
PEN**

**FREEDOM
TO WRITE
FREEDOM
TO READ**

Our activities and impact

1 April 2020 – 31 March 2021

Image: Linton Kwesi Johnson,
2020 PEN Pinter Prize
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 Hessell-Tiltman Prize.

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Honorary President

Philippe Sands

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Aki Schilz (incoming Vice Chair)

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Claire Armitstead (Vice Chair, resigned December 2021)

Arifa Akbar

Milena Büyüm

Francis Coles (resigned January 2021)

Cathy Galvin

Georgina Godwin

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Ted Hodgkinson

Guy Gunaratne

Sanjay Jawa (resigned July 2020)

Philip Gwyn Jones (resigned December 2021)

Dan Miller

Lulu Norman (resigned September 2020)

Shazea Quraishi

Samantha Schnee

Joanna Stocks

Can Yeğinsu

'The year 2020/21 was one of incredible significance for English PEN, as in 2021 we marked our centenary. To do so we launched an ambitious project, Common Currency, which began in 2020 and continued throughout 2021. It goes without saying that the year 2020/21 was like no other we have collectively faced. As the Coronavirus pandemic spread around the world, freedom of expression was under immense pressure, through the complexities of balancing public health with other human rights including freedom of expression, due to the increased pressure faced by writers, journalists and human rights defenders in authoritarian states, and due to the impact on the English PEN team and all those we work with. This pandemic affected each and every one of us in very different ways, and our thoughts are with all of those who have lost loved ones.'

Maureen Freely, Chair of English PEN from 2014 to 2021



Image: Nedim Türfent
Credit: Selman Keles

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 to provide concrete support to at-risk colleagues – from sending appeal letters to the relevant authorities to writing messages of solidarity and staging fundraisers, vigils, and events.

In 2020/2021, English PEN and our members have:

- Issued public statements on a range of cases of concern, including PEN Belarus, Julian Assange in the UK, Shady Habash in Egypt, Hopewell Chin'ono in Zimbabwe, Dr Abduljalil Al-Singace in Bahrain, and many more.
- Featured pieces on our online magazine, PEN Transmissions, by Belarusian Nobel laureate Svetlana Alexievich (tr. Sasha Dugdale), Turkish poet and academic Can Bahadır Yüce, Kurdish writer and former English PEN resident Nurcan Baysal, and Zimbabwean author Tsitsi Dangarembga.
- Secured media coverage to highlight writers of concern, including extensive coverage of Amanuel Asrat being awarded the 2020 PEN Pinter Prize for an International Writer of Courage.
- Supported social media campaigns for writers at risk, including Maria Ressa from the Philippines (as part of the Hold the Line coalition).
- Held vigils (both online and socially distanced) with partners including ALQST and RSF.

'I want you to know that your letters, which have rendered iron curtains meaningless and ineffective, have filled my two-step-long cell with resistance, resolve and hope.'

Nedim Türfent,
Kurdish poet, journalist,
and Honorary Member
of English PEN



Image: Amanuel Asrat
Credit: PEN Eritrea

English PEN Centenary

Common Currency

The English PEN Centenary project Common Currency commenced on 11 October 2020 with a virtual event with author Fatima Bhutto held in partnership with Durham Book Festival. We also co-hosted multiple events with Bristol Ideas, a creative writing project with Off the Shelf, and a digital residency with Zambian-Ghanaian writer, literary critic, and editor Efemia Chela with Literature Works. Common Currency continued throughout 2021.

PENWrites

In October 2020, we launched PENWrites, our letter-writing campaign in support of writers in prison and at risk. Between October 2020 and March 2021, we focused on four featured cases – Amanuel Asrat in Eritrea, Nedim Türfent in Turkey, PEN Belarus, and Pham Doan Trang in Vietnam – encouraging members and supporters to send messages of solidarity.

The feedback from the writers and their families, as well as from participants in the campaign, has been very positive. The impact of these messages is best expressed by the recipients themselves. Eritrean writer Amanuel Asrat's family sent the following response on receiving the first batch of letters:

'It is so amazing to receive the most comforting and uplifting letters. Words cannot express how grateful we are to be aware that there are many people standing in solidarity with us and our brother. I have gone through and been touched by each word on every letter. Many thanks to English PEN for all you are doing for our brother.'

Engagement in the campaign has been both UK-wide and worldwide: messages have been sent from Argentina, Australia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Canada, Czechia, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Mexico, Myanmar, Norway, New Zealand, South Africa, and the United States. Thirteen organisations, primarily sister PEN centres, had joined as partners on this project by March 2021.

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 2020/2021, English PEN and our members have submitted responses to the following consultations:

- **Hate Crime Laws: A Consultation Paper**
– Law Commission.
- **Harmful Online Communications: The Criminal Offences**
– Law Commission.
- **Freedom of Expression Online**
– House of Lords Digital and Communications Committee.

English PEN staff took part in a number of events and conferences around freedom of expression, including:

- **The Global Conference for Media Freedom**
(hosted by Canada);
- **PEN International's Writers in Prison Committee Conference;**
- **The Thomson Reuters Trust Conference;**
- **Launch of the Safe Refuge for Journalists report authored by Professor Can Yeğinsu**
(English PEN is among the organisations to have endorsed the report);
- **English PEN was a founding partner of a rapid response emergency fund to support writers and literary professionals affected financially by COVID-19.**
Launched in April 2020, the project was led by the Society of Authors, and in partnership with Royal Literary Fund, the TS Eliot Foundation, Amazon UK, and The Authors' Licensing and Collecting Society to establish an initial emergency fund of £330,000. Between 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021 the Authors' Contingency fund went on to help around 1,000 people and paid out around £1,450,000 in grants.

Ijín gò'ò Tsítsídiín
tsí nònè xtédè
LAS SOMBRERERAS DE TSÍTSÍDIÍN
Hubert Matiúwàà

RENTREE LITTERAIRE - PLON
FAÏZA
GUÈNE



白
却仍
爱的
受意，并坚守着暖
些矛盾而又挣扎的人，在我看来，
秘密。他们组成一个神圣家族。

بشرى ال
ماذا تركت
أصوات من بلاد
دوجرخدی



WORLD POET SERIES
POETRY TRANSLATION CENTRE
WINNER
ENGLISH PEN
AWARD
DIANA
BELLESSI
To Love
a Woman
Amar a
una majer
TRANSLATED BY
LEO BOIX

Anno
An
Epi
Heroin
a novel in verse
'A bold and moving
exploration of the
ethics of heroism'
Ann
Weber
Translated by Tess Le

روزنامه‌ی

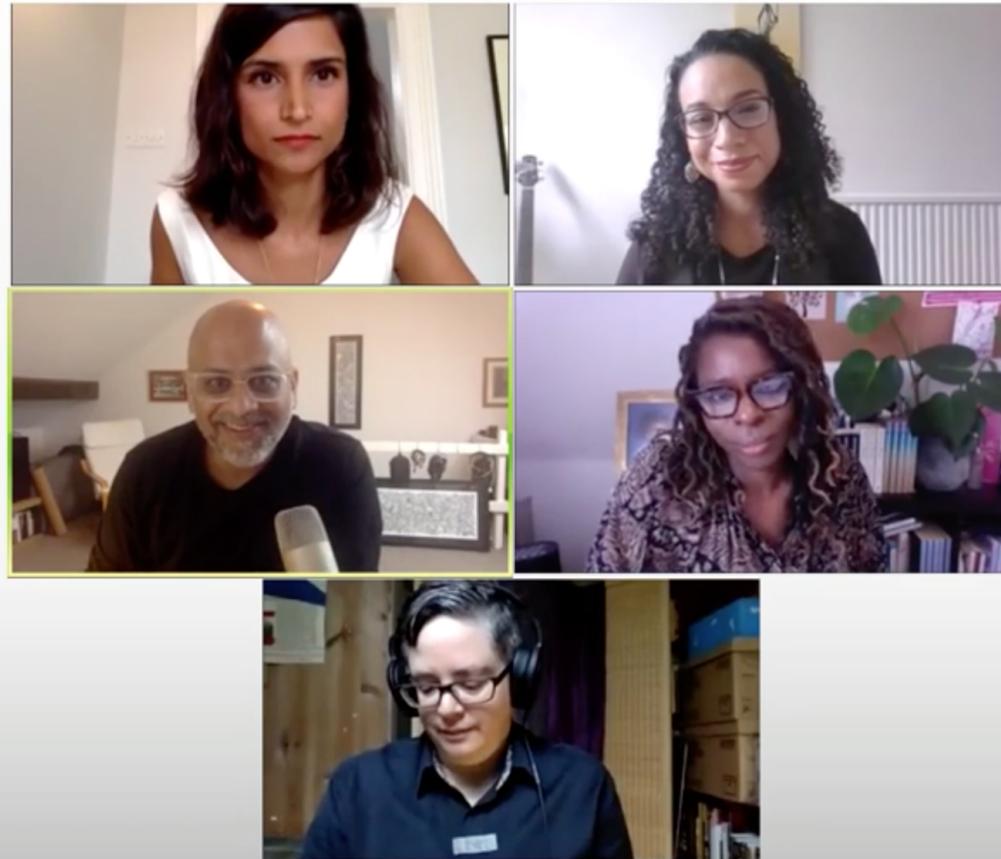
Supporting literary translation

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 must remain common currency among people in spite of political or international upheavals.'

We do this through our PEN Translates grant, online publishing, events programming and advocacy.

In 2020/2021, English PEN and our members have:

- Awarded 36 PEN Translates grants to books from 29 publishers, 27 countries and 20 languages.
- Given awards for the first time to titles from Algeria, Benin, Guinea and Guadeloupe, and books translated from Gun, Kurmanji and Latin.
- Supported the first novel from South Sudan ever to be translated into English, and the first collection of Kurdish speculative fiction ever to be published in the UK.
- Brought together 32 speakers from 11 countries for the first International Translation Day (ITD) programme to be hosted entirely online, in line with our broader events strategy during the COVID-19 pandemic. The 11th ITD featured eight sessions and was attended by 250 audience members. Panels explored diversifying translation, translation across UK regions, translation practices internationally, the effects of COVID-19 on the lives of translators, and translating the Booker Prizes into and out of English. There were also non-language-specific workshops, opportunities to pitch to leading UK publishers, the announcement of the Oxford-Weidenfeld Prize, and a headline conversation with Fernanda Melchor and Sophie Hughes.



Gitanjali Patel, Roxane Edouard
Nasser Hussain, Valerie Brandes
So Mayer

International Translation Day 2020



PEN Transmissions

PEN Transmissions is English PEN's online magazine for international and translated voices. 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.

PEN Transmissions has become a key platform during the COVID-19 pandemic. It was quickly recognised that demand for online publishing would rise, and that PEN Transmissions could be harnessed as a space to platform conversations planned as part of English PEN's events programme. As such, in an editorial on 30 March 2020, we announced that we would be doubling PEN Transmissions' output, moving to weekly publication.

In 2020/21 PEN Transmissions has:

- Commissioned 43 essays and interviews by writers in 31 countries, including Olivia Laing, Ingrid Persaud, Taqralik Partridge, Kavita Puri, Scholastique Mukasonga, Maryse Condé, Tsitsi Dangarembga, Priyamvada Gopal, Mia Couto, Steven Hall, Robert Jones, Jr., and Svetlana Alexievich. 61% of writers commissioned identified as women or non-binary and 60% of commissioned voices were writers or translators of colour.
- Welcomed over 39,900 readers in 167 countries.
- Collaborated with the British Museum and Edmund de Waal, publishing a series of pieces exploring the theme of exile.
- Published a week of in-conversation pieces with the speakers programmed to speak at the cancelled 2020 London Book Fair.

‘No literature is a mirror, to the present or the past – it is always ideological, always carries a perspective. And translation is the same. Facing away from whiteness means that our engagement with mother-tongue literature doesn’t have to be performative, nostalgic, romantic. We don’t have to pretend, in the face of the shame that white supremacy had filled us with, that there is no patriarchy, no misogyny, no homophobia, no casteism, no colourism in our cultures, languages and literatures, our pasts and our presents. It is true that our mother-tongue literature doesn’t centre the white reader: it takes for granted realities and histories in which whiteness can be irrelevant or marginal, reminding us of the myth of western universalism and neutrality, reminding us that there are other, different ways of being and thinking.’

Kavita Bhanot, ‘Translating Every Day: The Importance and Impossibility of Decolonising Translation’

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 2020/2021, English PEN and our members have:

- Collaborated with established artistic partners including the British Museum, British Council, International Booker Prize, Hay Festivals, National Centre for Writing, Free Word, the Society of Authors, Refugee Tales, Poetry Translation Centre.
- Launched the English PEN Centenary project Common Currency on 11 October 2020 with a virtual event with author Fatima Bhutto held in partnership with Durham Book Festival. We also co-hosted multiple events with Bristol Festival of Ideas, a creative writing project with Off the Shelf, and a digital residency with Zambian-Ghanaian writer, literary critic, and editor Efemia Chela with Literature Works. Common Currency continued throughout 2021.
- Held a series of four online events in collaboration with the British Museum as part of Edmund de Waal's 'library of exile' installation. These events featured writers including Edmund de Waal, Elif Shafak, Kavita Puri, Hamid Ismailov, Taqralik Partridge, Shaul Bassi, James Thornton, Ma Jian, Flora Drew, Dima Wannous, Selma Dabbagh and Alia Trabucco Zerán. The events reached online audiences of over 8000 in over 50 countries.



www.youtube.com



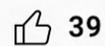
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library of exile: writing experiences of migration and exile

1,315 views • 7 Sept 2020



39



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englishpen1921
2.28K subscribers

SUBSCRIBE

Elif Shafak, Kavita Puri
Hamid Ismailov, Edmund de Waal
library of exile

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 2020/2021, English PEN and our members have celebrated:

- British writer Linton Kwesi Johnson winning the 2020 PEN Pinter Prize in a digital event in October 2020 in collaboration with the British Library. He named Eritrean poet and journalist Amanuel Asrat as the International Writer of Courage. Over 900 people attended the online event. This year for the first time we also commissioned a writer to create a piece especially for the occasion; award-winning poet Jay Bernard wrote a new poem in tribute to Linton Kwesi Johnson.
- Alison Light winning the 2020 PEN Ackerley Prize for her memoir *A Radical Romance* (Penguin)
- Anita Anand winning the 2020 PEN Hessell-Tiltman Prize for *The Patient Assassin* (Simon & Schuster).

**‘Awards are the
nourishment of
every artist’s ego. It
is always nice to be
acknowledged. It is
especially gratifying
to receive an award
that honours the
memory of esteemed
dramatist, Harold
Pinter, free thinker,
anti-imperialist
and human rights
champion.’**

Linton Kwesi Johnson,
2020 PEN Pinter Prize

Our members

Membership of English PEN as of 31 March 2021 was 1008, with 190 new members joining us throughout the year. This year we also welcomed three new Honorary Members – Nedim Türfent, Zehra Doğan and Awet Fissehaye.

Efforts were made to enhance the membership experience for supporters of English PEN, particularly during the pandemic. This included the implementation of a regular members' Zoom call, to provide community, mutual support and closer engagement with PEN's work at this very difficult time. This initiative included conversations with Philippe Sands, Nurcan Baysal, Kerri ní Dochartaigh, Margie Orford, Pilar Quintana, Lisa Dillman, Hanna Komar, Abraham Zere and many others.

English PEN also launched a new concessionary membership category in the summer of 2020. This aims to help to remove barriers to participation for those on low or unreliable incomes, and is in accord with English PEN's stated aims of supporting readers and writers who are underrepresented in the literary world.

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



www.youtube.com/watch?v=cq776rsJ4-s



YouTube^{GB}

Search



Margie Orford

📍 LONDON

The Right to Roam: Women and Free Expression with Margie Orford and Kerri ní Dochartaigh

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, handwritten signature of "T. S. Eliot" in black ink.

T. S. ELIOT FOUNDATION

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

Common Currency is supported by a National Lottery Project Grant from Arts Council England, British Council, Cockayne Grants for the Arts – a donor advised fund of London Community Foundation, and PEN International.

Our Silver PEN Partners 2020/21

David Higham Associates

Penguin Random House

HarperCollins

London Book Fair

Amazon UK

Pushkin Press

Hachette UK

Our Project Partners 2020/21

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

Bates Wells

Blavatnik Family Foundation

Bloomberg

Booker Foundation

Bristol Ideas

British Council

British Library

British Museum

Brixton Review of Books

Canongate

Fondation Jan Michalski

Free Word

Granta

Hay Festival

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

RSF

Society of Authors

Southbank Centre



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