

World Literature Weekend

World Literature Weekend 18–20 June welcomes a range of prominent writers and translators from all over the world in a three-day celebration held at the British Museum, Birkbeck College and the London Review Bookshop.

How to book

Tickets cost £8 (£5 concessions) per event and should be purchased in advance. To book tickets please see www.lrbshop.co.uk/worldliteratureweekend, call 020 7269 9030 or drop in at the London Review Bookshop.

Finding Us

British Museum: Great Russell Street, London WC1B 3DG
Birkbeck College: Malet Street, London WC1E 7HX
London Review Bookshop: 14 Bury Place, London WC1A 2JL
Please see individual events listings for details.



London Review
BOOKSHOP

World Literature Weekend

Programme 18-20 June



THE
BRITISH
MUSEUM

ARTS COUNCIL
ENGLAND

www.lrbshop.co.uk/worldliteratureweekend

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Welcome everybody!

Last year the London Review Bookshop hosted its inaugural World Literature Weekend and I am delighted to welcome you all to this year's festival. We hope we can provide an opportunity for people to come together to exchange ideas and listen to an array of international writers. The broad theme of the weekend will be language and exile: writers who have changed their country or their language, or both, whether through choice or compulsion. We want to ask how they have made their experience heard across frontiers and how they have used the language and literature of one country to understand and contribute to that of another.

Stories can find homes in new languages through translation too, and there will be a 'live' translation event which we hope will promote a close and detailed understanding of this rarely observed art.

In his introduction to *Lee Valley Poems*, Yang Lian writes 'There is no international, only different locals', and that might serve as a perfect guiding thought for our celebration of writing, reading and understanding across borders.

We are once again grateful to Arts Council England and the British Museum for their support in this continuing venture.

Welcome everybody!



Andrew Stilwell,
Director of Bookselling,
London Review Bookshop



Friday 18 June at 2 p.m.

Birkbeck College, Main Building, Room B35, £8

Alain Mabanckou with Helen Stevenson

The wit and energy of Congolese novelist Alain Mabanckou have been enlivening the French literary scene for many years and he's won several major prizes including the Prix Renaudot for *Mémoires de porc-épic*. In *Broken Glass* (Serpent's Tail) – shortlisted for this year's Independent Foreign Fiction Prize – the eponymous narrator, a disgraced school teacher and regular at the bar *Credit Gone West*, is asked by its landlord to fill a notebook with his customers' stories; the consequent outpouring, funny and irreverent as it is, becomes a wild reflection on storytelling as self-mythology and the interplay between African and French literary culture. An important champion of francophone literature, Mabanckou is both a writer engagé and a very engaging man. Currently teaching in the French literature department at UCLA, he makes a rare visit to London for this festival. Mabanckou will talk about his work with Helen Stevenson, translator of *Broken Glass* and author of several books, including *Instructions for Visitors: Life and Love in a French Town* (Black Swan).

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Friday 18 June at 4 p.m.
Birkbeck College, Main Building, Room B35, £8

Hamid Ismailov with Robert Chandler

Hamid Ismailov, currently writer in residence at BBC World Service, and author of the celebrated novel *The Railway* (Vintage), written before he left Uzbekistan but the first of his books to be translated into English, will talk to Robert Chandler (whose translation won the American Association of Teachers of Slavonic and East European Languages Prize for 2007). They will talk about his life and literary influences: how much did he know about his grandfather, the mullah Obid-Kori, who was shot in 1937? What are his memories of reading the poetry of Hafez in Persian to his grandmother? They'll also cover his many years as a translator of Russian and Uzbek, why he ended up writing *The Railway* in Russian, which Western writers are important to him and the influence of his radio journalism on his writing.



Friday 18 June at 7 p.m.
London Review Bookshop, £8

Elias Khoury with Jeremy Harding

Edward Said described Elias Khoury as an artist who gives 'voice to rooted exiles and trapped refugees, to dissolving boundaries and changing identities, to radical demands and new languages'. He is best known to English readers for his epic *Gate of the Sun* (Harvill Secker); his novel *Yalo* (Quercus), translated by Peter Theroux, was long-listed for this year's IFFP and is supported by English PEN's Writers in Translation series. His latest book to appear in English is *White Masks* (Archipelago).

Yalo is a soldier who becomes a deserter, thief, night-watchman in Paris, arms smuggler, then rapist. The novel, a modern take on *The Arabian Nights*, revisits Lebanon's sectarian civil war through a series of confessions extracted under torture. Khoury will be in discussion with the writer and journalist Jeremy Harding, a contributing editor at the *London Review of Books*, who has written extensively on Khoury's life and work.

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Jeremy Harding photo by Sarah Lee.



Saturday 19 June at 12 noon
British Museum, Stevenson Room, £8

Traduction en Direct – Live Translation:
**Sarah Ardizzone, Frank Wynne,
Alain Mabanckou, Daniel Hahn**

How can the same thing be said in a different language, when the language carries the assumptions of a whole culture with it? How do you balance spirit and accuracy? What do you do with slang and puns and untranslatable words? However many questions we ask about translation in the abstract, we rarely see how it actually works. This event's about giving time and attention to that process.

Sarah Ardizzone, translator of Faïza Guène and Daniel Pennac, and Frank Wynne, translator of Ahmadou Kourouma and Michel Houellebecq, will each present a translation of the same short French text, and then debate and resolve the differences in the English versions with the author. The challenge will be provided by the L.A.-based francophone novelist Alain Mabanckou, whose novels push out the boundaries of the French language. The event will be chaired by writer and translator Daniel Hahn.

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Saturday 19 June at 2 p.m.
British Museum, Stevenson Room, £8

Hisham Matar and Ahdaf Soueif

Hisham Matar was forced to leave Tripoli as a child when his father, a Libyan diplomat, was branded an enemy of the Gaddafi regime. In 1990, Jaballah Matar was kidnapped in Egypt and returned to Libya to be tortured and incarcerated. This experience underpins Matar's novel *In The Country of Men* (Viking), which was shortlisted for the Booker Prize in 2006. Ahdaf Soueif was born in Cairo and educated in Egypt and England. When she was recently awarded the Mahmoud Darwish Prize in Palestine, the committee praised her work for articulating 'the values of freedom, justice and national independence' and for looking beyond an Arab cultural inheritance. Her novel *The Map of Love* (Bloomsbury) was also Booker nominated in 1999.

The two writers, who are familiar with each other's work, will discuss, as Arabs writing in English, the way living in one language and writing in another can create a space for languages and cultures to meet.

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Hisham Matar photo by Diana Matar



Recommended by **pen**
Five Years Promoting Writing in Translation

Saturday 19 June at 4 p.m.
British Museum, Stevenson Room, £8

On Exile and Language:
Tahar Ben Jelloun, Atiq Rahimi and Eli Amir
Chair: Adam Shatz

Tahar Ben Jelloun has won wide acclaim for his novels, including *Sacred Night* (Johns Hopkins) and *Leaving Tangier* (Arcadia). His latest book of poetry, *The Rising of the Ashes* (City Lights), responds to the war in Iraq. Atiq Rahimi won the Prix Goncourt for *The Patience Stone* (Chatto), in which a woman speaks uncensored to her comatose husband; through her story, Rahimi confronts female oppression in his native Afghanistan. Eli Amir's book *The Dove Flyer* (Halban) springs from his childhood experiences in Jewish Baghdad. The discussion will be chaired by Adam Shatz, senior editor at the *London Review of Books*. This event takes place in association with English PEN, whose members 'pledge themselves to do their utmost to dispel race, class and national hatreds, and to champion the ideal of one humanity living in peace in one world'. Their Writers in Translation programme has over five years championed 30 titles by writers from all over the globe.

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Tahar Ben Jelloun photo by H elie Gallimard. Atiq Rahimi photo by Toby Rhind-Tutt.



Saturday 19 June at 7 p.m.
London Review Bookshop, £8

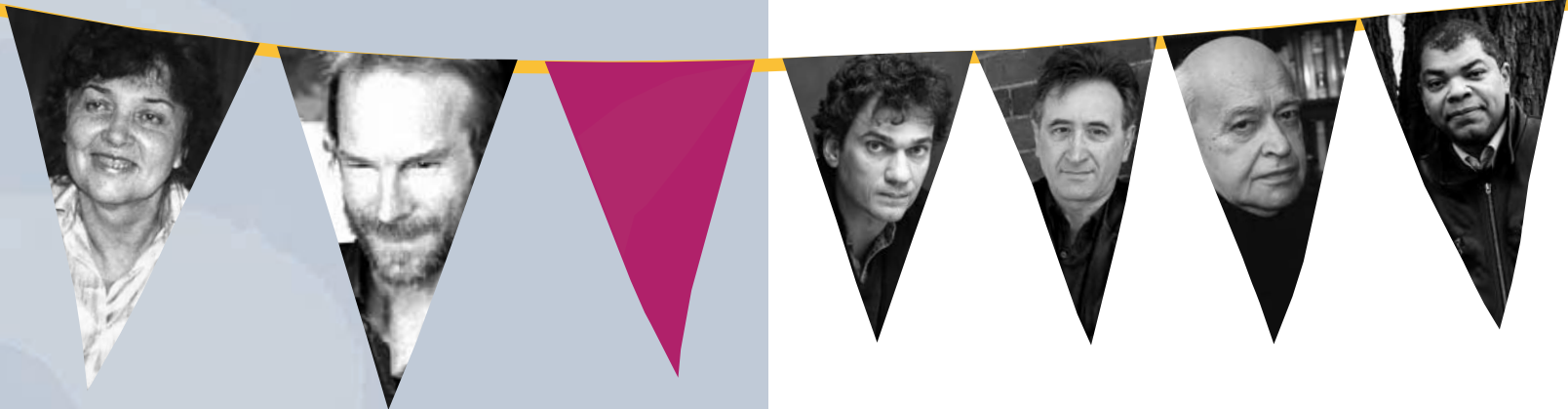
Yang Lian, Brian Holton and Iain Sinclair

Yang Lian begins his latest collection, *Lee Valley Poems* (Bloodaxe), with the statement, 'There is no international, only different locals'. He began writing traditional poetry while it was proscribed during the Cultural Revolution, and later became a founder of the Misty school of poetry, the underground group centred around the literary magazine *Jintian*. He was exiled from China after the Tiananmen Square massacre; he is now at home in Stoke Newington and the Lea Valley. His poems collapse distances by combining a deep attention to the particular with the allusiveness of classical Chinese poetry, in which a word or image can contain all of tradition: 'With the cry of a wild goose, I am drawn into the Tang Dynasty at the instant of hearing, making Lee valley's waters flow twelve hundred years upstream.'

Yang Lian will be in conversation with his translator, Brian Holton, and Iain Sinclair, poet, documentary-novelist and East Londoner.

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Iain Sinclair photo by Belinda Lawley.



Sunday 20 June at 2 p.m.
British Museum, Stevenson Room, £8

On Vasily Grossman: Yekaterina Korotkova-Grossman and Robert Chandler

Vasily Grossman's *Life and Fate* (Vintage), described by *Le Monde* as the greatest Russian novel of the 20th century, was regarded as so dangerous to the Soviet state that Mikhail Suslov declared that it could not be published for at least 200 years. Yekaterina Korotkova-Grossman, Vasily's daughter by his first wife, came to know her father only gradually. At first she saw little of him except during Orthodox Christmas holidays. In the mid-1950s she moved from the Ukraine to Moscow, and they became close in the last ten years of his life. Robert Chandler, whose translation of *Everything Flows* – a work even more critical of Soviet society than *Life and Fate* – has just been published by Harvill Secker, will talk to Yekaterina about her memories of her father and of her first reading of his work. She will also talk about her memoir *Ukraine: On the Edge of an Empire* which describes the years in Lvov immediately after the Second World War, when the entire city (previously a part of Poland) was, in a sense, deported to the Soviet Union.

Sunday 20 June at 4 p.m.
British Museum, Stevenson Room, £8

Central European Classics: Michael Hofmann, George Szirtes, Stephen Vizinczey, Tomáš Zmeškal

Throughout the 20th century, the countries that once made up the Austro-Hungarian Empire produced many of Europe's greatest and most influential writers. Twenty years after the Berlin Wall came down, is the idea of a central European region a useful one and what does it mean to today's writers? Do these countries still have a common culture and indeed did they ever?

Penguin have just republished ten important works from Poland, Hungary, Romania, Austria and the Czech Republic, encompassing memoir, essays, novels, philosophy and short stories. Four of these will form the basis of this discussion by writers of a later generation: Michael Hofmann on Thomas Bernhard's *Old Masters*, George Szirtes on Gyula Krúdy's *Life Is a Dream*, Stephen Vizinczey on György Faludy's *My Happy Days in Hell* and Tomáš Zmeškal on Josef Škvorecký's *The Cowards*.

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George Szirtes photo by Clarissa Upchurch. Michael Hofmann photo by Nina Subin.