



Manchester Literature Festival: DIGITAL Events Programme

Featuring special In Conversations with leading novelists, non-fiction writers and activists alongside poetry showcases and exciting New Commissions. All events are available to view from **Monday 1 – Tuesday 30 November 2021** on the [MLF Vimeo channel](#).

View the full programme [HERE](#)

Buy Tickets to individual events [HERE](#)

Buy a DIGITAL PASS to access all the events for just £20 [HERE](#)



Elizabeth Strout in Conversation

One of America's finest writers, Elizabeth Strout returns to the world of her much-loved character Lucy Barton. In *Oh William!*, Elizabeth's superb seventh novel, Lucy is reconnected with her first husband and father of her children, William. As they undertake a road trip together, Lucy discovers long kept secrets about William's childhood which force her to reconsider their time together and her own life. A poignant story of grief, trauma, how well we can really know someone else and how we might heal. Elizabeth won the Pulitzer Prize for *Olive Kitteridge* and her novels include *The Burgess Boys*, *Amy and Isabelle*, *My Name is Lucy Barton*, *Anything is Possible* and *Olive, Again*. Hilary Mantel describes her as 'a superbly gifted storyteller and a craftswoman in a league of her own.' Hosted by broadcaster and critic Alex Clark.

Tickets £7.50

Book on 0343 208 0500 or manchesterliteraturefestival.co.uk



Rebecca Solnit in Conversation

'If war has an opposite, gardens might sometimes be it, and people have found a particular kind of peace in forests, meadows, parks, and gardens.' In *Orwell's Roses* prolific US author, activist and flâneur, Rebecca Solnit reconsiders the work of George Orwell in light of the rosebushes he planted in 1936 in the garden of his cottage in Wallingdon. Through the ultimately hopeful act of gardening, she illuminates ideas of climate crisis, poverty, totalitarianism, feminism, and slavery in the sugar trade, drawing links between Orwell's works, current societal issues and, through what she calls 'an activity deeply invested in the future', shows how nature might save us all. Rebecca is the author of more than twenty books, including *Wanderlust*, *Hope in the Dark*, *Men Explain Things to Me* and *Recollections of My Non-Existence*, which was longlisted for the 2021 Orwell Prize for Political Writing and shortlisted for the 2021 James Tait Black Award. She will be in conversation with MLF Patron **Kamila Shamsie**, author of The Women's Prize winner *Home Fire*.

Tickets £7.50

Book on 0343 208 0500 or manchesterliteraturefestival.co.uk



CWEN: Alice Albinia & Maxine Peake

'Of course, everybody knows how hard it is to countenance the idea of women-only gatherings, women-only groups. The mere sight of women assembling en masse makes certain people, women as well as men uneasy. *Queasy*.' In Alice Albinia's inventive novel *Cwen*, Eva Levi, founder of a gynotopia on an archipelago off the east coast of Britain has disappeared, feared dead. The inquest reveals a group of women from all backgrounds and the challenges they faced, while behind them lies Cwen, uniting the earth and female power. Alice Albinia is the prize-winning author of two other books, *Empires of the Indus* and *Leela's Book*. Over the past seven years, she has travelled around the edges of Britain, from Orkney to Anglesey, piecing together ancient, medieval and modern tales of islands ruled by women. Her non-fiction book, *The Britannias*, will be published in 2023. She will be in conversation with actor, writer and activist Maxine Peake.

Tickets £7.50

Book on 0343 208 0500 or manchesterliteraturefestival.co.uk



C Pam Zhang & Bryan Washington

'Too often truth ain't in what's right [...] sometimes it's in who speaks it. Or writes it.' In C Pam Zhang's Booker Prize longlisted *How Much of These Hills is Gold*, a family set out for the American West in search of their fortune. Told largely through the perspectives of 11- and 12-year-old Lucy and Sam, C Pam reinserts Chinese, Indigenous and LGBTQ+ people back into a narrative from which they've been erased. In *Memorial*, Bryan's debut novel, couple Benson and Mike are trying to work out whether or not they're still in love. When Mike discovers his estranged father is dying, he flies to Japan to see him just as his mother, Mitsuko, arrives in the USA and moves in with Benson. Two beautifully told stories about home, family and belonging. C Pam Zhang's novel was chosen by Barack Obama as one of his books of 2020 and is currently being adapted for television. Bryan's short story collection *Lot* won the 2020 International Dylan Thomas Prize. C Pam and Bryan will be in conversation with **Okechukwu Nzelu**, author of *The Private Joys of Nnenna Maloney*. Presented by Manchester Literature Festival in partnership with Durham Book Festival and Ilkley Literature Festival.

Tickets £7.50

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Novel Voices: Caleb Azumah Nelson & Brandon Taylor

Two brilliant young novelists discuss their sensational debuts. In Caleb Azumah Nelson's beautifully lyrical *Open Water* two young Black talented Londoners – he a photographer, she a dancer – fall in love to a soundtrack of the city and some exceptional music. In Brandon Taylor's precise and absorbing *Real Life Wallace*, a Black gay biochemistry student at a Midwestern university, tries to come to terms with the death of his father in Alabama. Both novels consider male vulnerability, trauma, grief, love and tenderness and question where writing by and about Black men fits in a canon of predominantly white literature.

Caleb Azumah Nelson is a British-Ghanaian writer and photographer. He was shortlisted for the BBC National Short Story Award in 2020. *Open Water* was longlisted for the Desmond Elliot Prize and the Gordon Burn Prize. Brandon Taylor is an American writer and the senior editor of Electric Literature's Recommended Reading. *Real Life* was shortlisted for the Booker Prize in 2020 and is being made into a film produced by and starring Kid Cudi. Brandon is also the author of the short story collection, *Filthy Animals*. Presented in partnership with Centre for New Writing and Creative Manchester and hosted by **Ellah P. Wakatama**.

Tickets £7.50

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Mariana Enriquez & Andrés Barba

Two Latin American purveyors of horror whose latest works are haunted by children. In the central story of Mariana Enriquez's *The Dangers of Smoking in Bed* (translated by Megan McDowell), children return from the dead not quite who they were previously. Elsewhere in this brilliant collection, children haunt Barcelona leaving a stench, a lady haunting a tower looks for a replacement, and teenage girls devour their favourite pop star. In Andrés Barba's superb *A Luminous Republic* (translated by Lisa Dillman), strange groups of children appear speaking an unknown language. Fear grips the town and a hunt begins. Andrés is the author of twelve novels including *Such Small Hands* (translated by Lisa Dillman). Mariana is also the author of *Things We Lost in the Fire* (translated by Megan McDowell). *The Dangers of Smoking in Bed* was shortlisted for the 2021 International Man Booker Prize. Hosted by **Mariana Casale** and presented in partnership with Instituto Cervantes.

Free event, no need to book



Tishani Doshi: A God at the Door

'The point of hunger/is to remind you to live.' Award-winning Indian poet Tishani Doshi joins us to share poems from her exquisite, inventive, insightful and often playful new collection *A God at the Door*. She will discuss her work and imagination; the urgency of writing about injustice, inequality and climate change, and the role Human Rights and feminism play in her life as a poet and person with fellow poet and Human Rights lawyer **Mona Arshi**. This event is presented in partnership with Ripples of Hope Festival and will include a short film of the commission Tishani wrote responding to Article 6: Everyone has the right to recognition everywhere as a person before the law.

Tishani Doshi is a poet, novelist and dancer of Welsh-Gujarati descent. Her four collections of poetry include *Countries of the Body*, *Everything Begins Elsewhere* and *Girls Are Coming Out of the Woods*, which was shortlisted for the Ted Hughes Award for New Work in Poetry. She lives on a beach between two fishing villages in Tamil Nadu with her husband and dogs.

Free event, no need to book



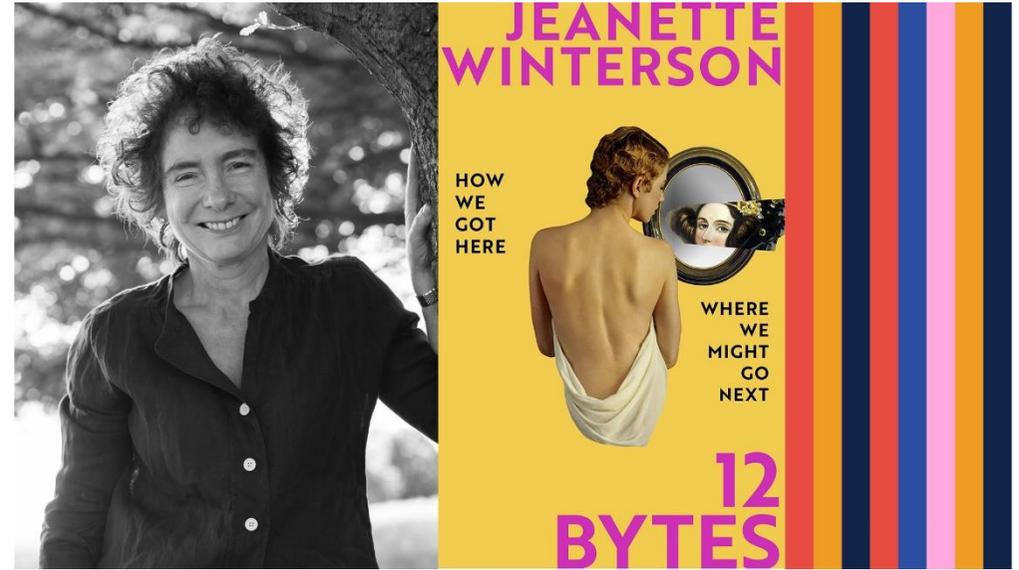
An Evening with Bernardine Evaristo

This event was recorded live at HOME on 11 October 2021

The first Black woman and the first Black British author to win the Booker Prize for her stunning novel *Girl, Woman, Other*, Manchester Literature Festival is thrilled to welcome Anglo-Nigerian writer Bernardine Evaristo for a special event to celebrate her new book *Manifesto: On Never Giving Up*. Bernardine has spent three decades as a trailblazing writer, mentor and activist and *Manifesto* is her intimate and inspirational, no-holds-barred account of how she did it. Bernardine will discuss her ground-breaking work including her many brilliant novels (*Mr Loverman*, *Blonde Roots*), her poetry and her theatre dramas with fellow writer and MLF Patron **Jackie Kay**. This event is sponsored by Weightmans.

Tickets £7.50

Book on 0343 208 0500 or manchesterliteraturefestival.co.uk



Jeanette Winterson: 12 Bytes

Due to unforeseen circumstances, Mark O'Connell was unable to take part in this event. This recording features a conversation between Jeanette Winterson and Kate Feld. This event was recorded live at Central Library on 9 October 2021

'How did we get here? Where might we go?' Is the future 'a screen onto which we project our fantasies and terrors'? What can the past tell us about the future? Are we all doomed? And what's gender got to do with it? Jeanette Winterson's latest book *12 Bytes* considers our relationship with AI, how it might develop and what we need to know. In *Notes from an Apocalypse* Mark O'Connell (*To Be a Machine*) spends time with preppers, rewilders and people who want to colonise Mars. Join us for what's sure to be a fascinating discussion about what humanity might do next. Jeanette is the author of 10 novels for adults, as well as children's books, screenplays and non-fiction, including the bestselling memoir *Why Be Happy When You Could Be Normal?* Mark's first book *To Be a Machine* won the Wellcome Book Prize in 2018. Presented in partnership with Centre for New Writing and Creative Manchester and hosted by writer **Kate Feld**.

Tickets £7.50

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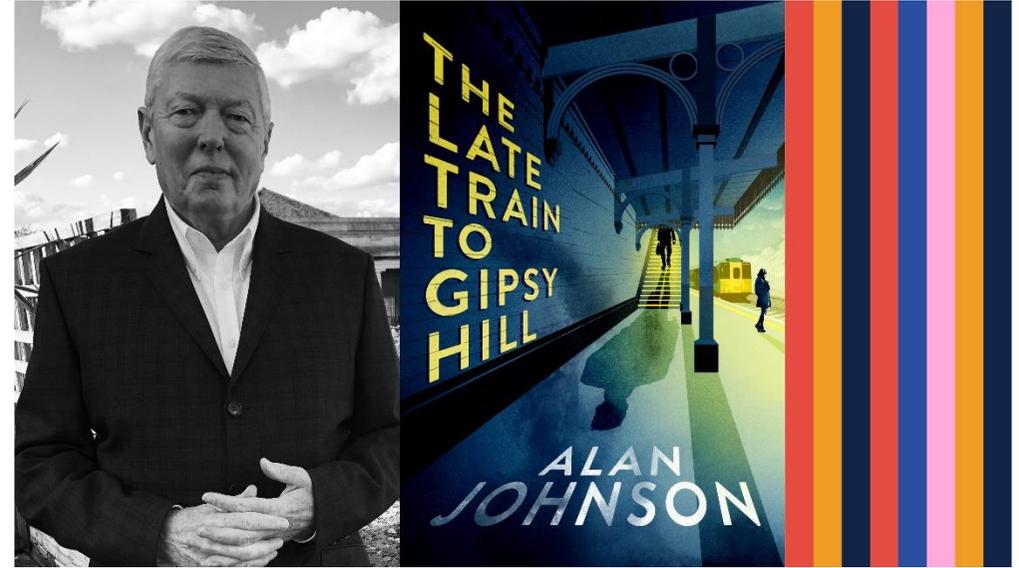
From Manchester with Love: Paul Morley in Conversation

This event was recorded live at HOME on 9 October 2021

'Superficially Wilson was a provocative liberal arts entertainer, minor music-industry player, capricious cultural theorist and abstract, self-celebrating know-it-all' but in Paul Morley's stunning biography *From Manchester with Love, The Life and Opinions of Tony Wilson*, the legendary Anthony H. Wilson is revealed in all his complex, contradictory glory. Founder of the Hacienda and co-founder of Factory Records, Wilson shaped Manchester's music and cultural scene as much as the city shaped him. Writer, broadcaster, and cultural critic Paul Morley was one of Wilson's closest friends and the man Wilson himself appointed to write his biography. Join us for an investigation into and celebration of Tony Wilson and the city he loved. Paul will be in conversation with **LoneLady**. Presented in partnership with Faber Members.

Tickets £7.50

Book on 0343 208 0500 or manchesterliteraturefestival.co.uk



An Evening with Alan Johnson

This event was recorded live at Central Library on 10 October 2021

Much-loved former Labour MP Alan Johnson makes a welcome return to MLF. Following his series of successful memoirs – *This Boy*, *In My Life*, *The Long and Winding Road* and *Please, Mr Postman*, Alan has turned to fiction, joining us to discuss his thrilling debut novel *The Late Train to Gipsy Hill*. Featuring a Ukrainian waitress mixed up in a poisoning plot and an administrator who finds himself on the run from Russian secret agents and the Met, it's an enthralling, smartly written, page turner. Alan will discuss his passion for plot-twists, politics and writing with host **Ellah P Wakatama**.

Tickets £7.50

Book on 0343 208 0500 or manchesterliteraturefestival.co.uk



Monique Roffey & Ingrid Persaud

This event was recorded live at Central Library on 10 October 2021

'Later I saw that change came as change always comes, from a chain of events with a long history, too long to see from back to front, till it come.' In *The Mermaid of Black Conch*, Monique Roffey's Costa Book of the Year winner, the life of David, one of the island's fishermen, is disrupted when he saves Aycayia, a mermaid, from her captors. While in Ingrid Persaud's *Love After Love*, Betty Ramdin invites Mr Chetan to lodge with her and her son Solo following the death of her husband/Solo's father. The creation of a new, unconventional, family changes all of their lives. Two award-winning Caribbean novelists join us to discuss determined women, magical writing, family and place. Monique Roffey is the author of seven books including *The White Woman on the Green Bicycle*, which was shortlisted for The Women's Prize. Ingrid has won both the Commonwealth Short Story Prize and the BBC National Short Story Award. Hosted by writer **Kate Feld**.

Tickets £7.50

Book on 0343 208 0500 or manchesterliteraturefestival.co.uk



Elif Shafak in Conversation

This event was recorded live at Central Library on 10 October 2021

A fig tree with a tale to tell; a grieving teenage girl who wants to know her family's story; two sets of lovers hiding from society. In her enchanting new novel, *The Island of Missing Trees*, Elif Shafak considers how the story of humans and the natural world are entwined. Set in London and the island of Cyprus, Elif explores roots, trauma and how understanding ourselves and our history can be healing. Elif is a British-Turkish novelist, feminist and activist and we're delighted to welcome her back to MLF. The author of 19 books, translated into 54 languages, Elif's previous novel *10 Minutes 38 Seconds in this Strange World* was shortlisted for the Booker Prize, and *The Forty Rules of Love* was chosen by the BBC as one of 100 Novels That Shaped Our World. Elif will be in conversation with **Ellah P Wakatama**.

Tickets £7.50

Book on 0343 208 0500 or manchesterliteraturefestival.co.uk



Clare Shaw

What happens when we engage with nature? How does local wildlife and green spaces shape us - and how do we shape them? Can we reverse environmental damage - and can poetry play a role? Watch Clare Shaw perform new poems inspired by her time as Carbon Landscape Poet in Residence for Lancashire Wildlife Trust and Manchester Literature Festival earlier this year. Clare will read her work on location, followed by a conversation with fellow poet **Helen Mort** about the main themes illuminated through her poetry, including the healing of post-industrial landscapes, and their own recent experiences of finding solace and recovery in green spaces.

Clare is the author of three poetry collections – *Straight Ahead*, *Head On* and *Flood*. Her fourth collection *Towards a General Theory of Love* was awarded a Northern Writer's Award and will be published by Bloodaxe in 2022. Earlier this year, she presented and co-wrote *Ways to Weather the Storm* on Radio Four, examining how creativity and art helped the Hebden Bridge community to live with the impact of repeated flooding. This event is presented in partnership with Lancashire Wildlife Trust.

Free event, no need to book



Postcards from Oxford Road: Hafsa Aneela Bashir, Andrew McMillan & Reshma Ruia

What does Oxford Road mean to you? For Hafsa Aneela Bashir it's attending university and growing into her own skin. For Andrew McMillan it's a geographical portal into the past and memories of love. For Reshma Ruia it's the rich tapestry of people and buildings from The Whitworth to The Refuge hotel. MLF and the Manchester Poetry Library have co-commissioned these three fantastic poets to create new micro-commissions for the first Corridor of Light Festival. Watch film footage of them performing their poems on location and discussing their work, imagination and Manchester. Hafsa was a Jerwood Compton Poetry Fellow from 2019-2020 and recently launched Poetry Health Service. Her debut collection is *The Celox and The Clot*. Andrew McMillan is the author of three poetry collections. His debut, *physical*, was the first ever poetry collection to win The Guardian First Book Award. His second, *playtime*, won the inaugural Polari Prize. Reshma's debut poetry collection *A Dinner Party in the Home Counties*, won the debut Word Masala Award in 2019. Her writing has appeared in British and International anthologies and been commissioned for BBC Radio 4.

Free event, no need to book



Melbourne to Manchester: Alicia Sometimes

Are libraries the perfect portals for time travel? And what's it like to imagine someone reading nineteenth century literature in Manchester all the way from Melbourne? The first Virtual Writer in Residence at The Portico for the inaugural #FestivalOfLibraries, Alicia will share the poems she created during her residency and her experience of delving into the library's collection of books on time, light and astronomy. Alicia Sometimes is an Australian poet, writer and broadcaster based in Melbourne City of Literature. Her poetry collections include *Soundtrack* and *Kissing the Curve*. She is currently a Science Gallery Melbourne 'Leonardo' (creative advisor) and is a 2021 City of Melbourne Boyd Garnett recipient. Hosted by **Kate Feld** and presented in partnership with Manchester City of Literature and Festival of Libraries.

Free event, no need to book



Iowa to Manchester: Anna Polonyi

What does it mean to be 'in residence' somewhere? And is it possible to ground an imagined reader in a concrete, sensory world through sounds, smells and sights? The first Virtual Writer in Residence at Central Library for the inaugural #FestivalOfLibraries, Anna will read the playful and imaginative short story she created during her residency and discuss her thoughts on libraries, language and fables. She'll also share her experience of devising *Find Me in the Fiction Section*, a secret book trail for Central Library using books by LGBTQ+ writers with links to Manchester and Iowa City. Anna Polonyi is a French-American-Hungarian writer and journalist based in Iowa City of Literature. She is the author of the poetry chapbook *Wayword*, written on the Camino de Santiago. She holds an M.F.A in fiction from the Iowa Writers' Workshop and teaches creative writing at the Iowa Young Writers' Studio. Hosted by **Kate Feld** and presented in partnership with Manchester City of Literature and Festival of Libraries.

Free event, no need to book



Not Quite Right for Us: Colin Grant, Fergal Harte, Kerry Hudson, Johny Pitts & Jethro Soutar

When is a job 'not quite right'? For Colin Grant it was when he encountered structural racism at the BBC; for Kerry Hudson when people questioned her working class credibility as she toured the UK talking about *Lowborn*; for Johny Pitts when he was rejected for TV projects in a 90s world that thought it was post-racial; for Jethro Soutar it was in an office where a bullying manager was dismissed as eccentric, and for Fergal Harte's narrator it's an editor who rejects the idea of police as villains. Listen to all five memoirs and fictions from these acclaimed writers, accompanied by photographs from these periods, to celebrate the 10th anniversary of *Speaking Volumes* and their new anthology *Not Quite Right For Us: Forty Writers Speak Volumes*. Presented in partnership with Speaking Volumes.

Free event, no need to book



Be The Change: Gina Martin, Jeremiah Emmanuel & Iman Amrani

How can you and your friends change the world? Join inspirational young authors and activists Gina Martin and Jeremiah Emmanuel in conversation with video journalist Iman Amrani, for a digital event to empower you with the tools and courage to challenge injustice and fight for change.

Writer and activist Gina Martin, rose to prominence when she successfully campaigned for a change in the law to create the Voyeurism Act and make upskirting illegal. Her first book *Be The Change* is a brilliant, practical guide for people new to activism. Gina is an ambassador for UN Women UK and advocates for regular people creating change in their communities. She will be joined by youth activist, public speaker and entrepreneur Jeremiah Emmanuel. Raised in a single-parent family in south London, Jeremiah was elected into the UK Youth Parliament becoming an MYP, and later became a young mayor within London. Aged fifteen, he founded the BBC Radio 1 and 1Xtra Youth Council. His book, *Dreaming in a Nightmare*, is a powerful account of inequality and the problems faced by a new generation. Prepare to get fired up to fight for a cause close to your heart! Suitable for ages 12+ and available for the whole of November.

Free event, no need to book



The Book of Reykjavik: Vera Júlíusdóttir with Auður Jónsdóttir, Björn Halldórsson & Fríða Ísberg

Iceland is a land of stories; from the epic sagas of its mythic past, to its claim today of being home to more writers and more avid readers, per head, than anywhere in the world. In *Reykjavik Nights* by Auður Jónsdóttir, a recent divorcee is going through her second adolescence as she tries to find her feet after the breakdown of her relationship. In *Two Foxes* by Björn Halldórsson, a sleepless suburbanite comes face-to-face with an arctic fox in his backyard, triggering a childhood memory of generational differences. *Home* by Fríða Ísberg shows a darker side of Reykjavik – this supposed paradise of gender equality. A young woman tries to make it safely home after a night out on the town, but every man she encounters feels like a potential threat. The three writers from this new Comma Press anthology will treat us to extracts of their stories and discuss their favourite literary landmarks or places, while editor Vera Júlíusdóttir will talk about editing the anthology, what defines Icelandic writing and the things that make Reykjavik a haven for writers, readers and story lovers. Presented in partnership with Comma Press and Icelandic Literature Center.

Free event, no need to book



Dara McAnulty

‘The only thing that I am really bound to is nature – as we all are.’ In his engaging first book, *Diary of a Young Naturalist*, Dara McAnulty documents his experiences with and in nature; how he navigates life and school as an autistic person; mental health; and his work as a young activist. Told over the course of a year, Dara demonstrates how we affect nature and how it affects us. Dara won Book of the Year for Narrative Non-Fiction at the British Book Awards 2021 and the Wainwright Prize for Nature Writing in 2020, becoming the youngest ever winner of a major literary prize. His second book, *Wild Child: A Journey Through Nature*, takes the reader on a multi-sensory journey; venturing out into the garden, walking in the woods, investigating heathland, wandering on the riverbank and learning about the native birds, animals and plants you will find there. Dara will be in conversation with poet, climber and fellow nature lover **Helen Mort**

Free event, no need to book



Curtis Sittenfeld & Maggie Shipstead

Friday 1 October 2021, 7pm

Join celebrated US authors Curtis Sittenfeld and Maggie Shipstead as they share what inspires them to tell the stories of determined, powerful and pioneering women through their fiction, with author and critic Erica Wagner. Curtis Sittenfeld is the bestselling author of six novels including *Prep*, *American Wife* and *Sisterland*. Her latest novel *Rodham* tells the story of a fictionalised version of Hillary Rodham, former First Lady of the United States, and how history may have been different if she had turned down Bill Clinton's marriage proposal. Maggie Shipstead's new work, *Great Circle*, is a powerful epic novel that weaves together the astonishing lives of a daredevil female aviator and the Hollywood actress who plays her on screen. Reviews are glowing, with *The Bookseller* saying: 'This is truly exceptional storytelling, combining a sweeping arc of history with writing that ... is near-flawless.' Presented by Ilkley Literature Festival in partnership with Durham Book Festival and Manchester Literature Festival. Available on demand until 31 October.

Tickets £5

Book on www.ilkleyliteraturefestival.org.uk



Leïla Slimani: *The Country of Others*

Monday 11 October, 7pm

Join award-winning author Leïla Slimani as she discusses her anticipated new novel *The Country of Others*. 1944. After the Liberation, Mathilde leaves France to join her husband in Morocco. But life here is unrecognisable to this brave and passionate young woman. Her life is now that of a farmer's wife – with all the sacrifices and vexations that brings. Suffocated by the heat, by her loneliness on the farm and by the mistrust she inspires as a foreigner, Mathilde grows increasingly restless. As Morocco's struggle for independence intensifies, Mathilde and her husband find themselves caught in the crossfire. Leïla Slimani is the first Moroccan woman to win France's most prestigious literary prize, the Prix Goncourt, for *Lullaby*, which became an international bestseller. A journalist and frequent commentator on women's and human rights, she is French president Emmanuel Macron's personal representative for the promotion of the French language and culture. This event is chaired by **Alex Clark** and has been produced by Durham Book Festival in partnership with Ilkley Literature Festival and Manchester Literature Festival.

Tickets £5

Book on durhambookfestival.com

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