

Thursday 2 August 2012
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

THE CONVERSATION BEGINS

EDINBURGH WORLD WRITERS' CONFERENCE WEBSITE GOES LIVE

The organisers of the Edinburgh World Writers' Conference today announced that the website for the event – www.edinburghworldwritersconference.org – is now live. The website provides details of all the events taking place every afternoon at the Edinburgh International Book Festival from 17 to 21 August, as well as the speakers, a full list of participating authors, and an opportunity for members of the public to join the worldwide conversation. All five events taking place in Edinburgh will be broadcast live on the site, and participants and audience members are actively encouraged to have their say, both in the conference itself, on the website, via Twitter (**#worldwritersconf**) and other social media platforms.

The Edinburgh World Writers' Conference is an ambitious programming partnership between the Edinburgh International Book Festival and the British Council. Inspired by the seminal 1962 Writers' Conference, the Edinburgh events of this worldwide conference will involve 50 writers from 25 different countries discussing and debating the role of fiction in society with a public audience, who will have a unique opportunity to meet this stellar line up of world renowned authors and join in the debate. Keynote speakers include Ahdaf Soueif, Ali Smith, Patrick Ness, Irvine Welsh and China Miéville.

Nick Barley, Director of the Edinburgh International Book Festival, said "We are hugely excited to offer the opening events in this year-long conversation, which will travel around the world from Edinburgh, returning to the city in 2013. We look forward to an invigorating debate and welcome the participation of audiences around the world. The new website is a wonderful opportunity for everyone who is passionate about great writing, and great writers, to have their say."

Susie Nicklin, British Council Director of Literature, said "The Edinburgh World Writers Conference represents an opportunity for all of us to rethink how writers, and their writing, can play a part in understanding and improving our world. We are delighted that this platform will allow anyone, anywhere with access to the internet to play an active role in the discussions, both those issuing from Edinburgh and the ensuing 14 different countries taking part in the Conference over the next 12 months."

Edinburgh World Writers Conference Sessions at the Edinburgh International Book Festival run from 3.00pm to 5.00pm daily from Friday 17 to Tuesday 21 August. Tickets, priced at £10 (£8 concessions) are available from www.edbookfest.co.uk or through the Box Office on 0845 373 5888. Each session will also be broadcast live online on www.edinburghworldwritersconference.org.

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Editors Notes:

The Edinburgh World Writers' Conference is a major programming partnership between the Edinburgh International Book Festival and the British Council and is supported by The Scottish Government's Edinburgh Festivals Expo Fund, Creative Scotland, the City of Edinburgh Council and EventScotland.

Edinburgh World Writers' Conference Delegates:

Scottish Delegates: Alan Bissett, Theresa Breslin, John Burnside, Sophie Cooke, Keith Gray, Kirsty Gunn, Kapka Kassabova, Jackie Kay, Aonghas MacNeacail, Denise Mina, Nicola Morgan, Ewan Morrison, Ian Rankin, James Robertson, Ali Smith, Irvine Welsh.

Other UK delegates: Melvin Burgess, Alan Gibbons, Hari Kunzru, Nick Laird, Patrick Ness, China Miéville, Ben Okri, Owen Sheers.

International Delegates: Andrei Astvatsaturov, Bernardo Atxaga, Xi Chuan, Junot Díaz, Nathan Englander, Carlos Gamerro, Xiaolu Guo, Manu Joseph, Margo Lanagan, Michel Le Bris, Yiyun Li, Garth Nix, Joyce Carol Oates, Elliot Perlman, Matthias Politycki, Jose Rodrigues dos Santos, Preeta Samarasan, Elif Shafak, Kamila Shamsie, Kyung-Sook Shin, Dag Solstad, Ahdaf Soueif, Janne Teller, Kim Thuy, Chika Unigwe, Binyavanga Wainaina, and Samar Yazbek.

International Events:

The Edinburgh World Writers' Conference will travel to Australia, Belgium, Canada, China, Egypt, France, Germany, India, Malaysia, Portugal, Russia, South Africa, Trinidad & Tobago and Turkey.

1962 Writers' Conference

The format of the 2012-2013 Edinburgh World Writers' Conference mirrors the notorious event that took place 50 years ago in 1962. That year, the radical publisher John Calder worked with the impresario Jim Haynes to bring some 70 authors to Edinburgh. The guests included US authors Norman Mailer and Henry Miller alongside Scottish writers Hugh MacDiarmid and Muriel Spark, and several lesser-known authors, including William S. Burroughs, who would become famous as a result of the Conference. John Calder argued at the time that 'the novel enriches mankind by its ability to rouse the senses, to stimulate the intellect and to excite the imagination'. The 2012 Writers' Conference takes as its starting point the same five topics that were discussed in 1962.