

Where, when and what?

Oldham Book Festival,
22 September-1 October,
www.oldham.gov.uk

Beverly Literature Festival,
1-10 October, www.bevlit.org

Ilkley Literature Festival,
1-17 October, www.ilkleyletterfestival.org.uk

Knutsford Literature Festival,
7-24 October, www.knutsfordlitfest.org

Off The Shelf festival,
Sheffield, 9-30 October,
www.offtheshelf.org.uk

Morley Literature Festival,
11-17 October, www.morleyliteraturefestival.co.uk

Chapter And Verse festival,
Liverpool, 13-17 October,
www.thebluecoat.org.uk

Manchester Literature Festival,
14-25 October, www.manchesterliteraturefestival.co.uk

Chester Literature Festival,
18-31 October,
www.chesterfestivals.co.uk/site/literature-festival

Beverly, Manchester, Chester, Ilkley, Morley and Sheffield's festivals include children's programmes. For more information about festivals around the country, visit www.literaryfestivals.co.uk.



translation of the Chinese writer Ding Liying. The festival also aims to celebrate Manchester-based writers, from historical luminaries Elizabeth Gaskell and Anthony Burgess to Poet Laureate Carol Ann Duffy and the city's many bloggers.

Manchester isn't alone in wanting to show off the North West's literary leanings, with festivals springing up in nearby Oldham and traditional rival Liverpool. The latter's Chapter and Verse festival launched in 2008 as part of the Capital of Culture programme and builds on a Liverpoolian literary seam that includes the evangelical Reader Organisation, infamous discussion group Philosophy in Pubs and several live poetry collectives.

Curated and hosted by the Bluecoat arts centre, this year's programme is themed A New England and includes sessions with Jackie Kay, James Naughtie, Polly Toynbee and Brian Patten. Columnists and stand-ups Shazia Mirza and Guy Browning will muse on their routes through 21st century life in the headline slot, and almost half of the 36 events are free.

Chester Literature Festival rounds up the season in the last fortnight of October and features film critic Mark Kermode, novelist Sarah Dunant and Armitage, alongside the by now possibly trail-worn Campbell, Sayle, et al.

Although publishers' promotional budgets play their part, most literature festivals are funded by local councils and, in larger cases, the Arts Council, supplemented by sponsorship by businesses and those providing the books and marketing. "Our festival is funded by Leeds City Council, a local sponsor and a couple of small charitable foundations," says Harris. "Like all arts organisations, we face an uncertain future with regard to funding."

In Manchester and Ilkley the Arts Council has already imposed a 10 per cent reduction in funding for next year's events, pending a 25 per cent cut in its spending during this government's term. With corporate sponsors difficult to come by and institutional partners also facing lean times MLF recently launched a fifth birthday appeal.

"The government's saying that public subsidy should be replaced by philanthropy and corporate sponsorship but I doubt very much that that's going to happen," says Bolton. "Most patrons are saying they're not willing to replace public subsidy – they need to see that endorsement from public funds before they come on board."

The small town of Ilkley is bucking trends, however, by attracting increased sponsorship for 2010. "We get tremendous support from local businesses, partly because we look for events that match their interests and encourage them to bring their colleagues and friends," Feldberg says.

In another picture postcard town, known to many as Gaskell's Cranford, Knutsford's bijou festival is completely self-sufficient. For 11 years it has been run by a voluntary committee and sponsored by the local sports supplier and bookshop (now Waterstone's). "We don't receive any other financial support but the festival is well supported by our many friends and demand for tickets is often higher than the seats available," says director Audrey Young.

"Our audience and guests enjoy the town's atmosphere and intimate venues, being able to park free and have supper in one of our many restaurants," Young says. "Long may it continue!" ■

A writer reads

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SIMON MORRISON

A good book will transport you to another world. A great book will dump you back in your own with a fundamentally shifted view of the place. I read Jack Kerouac's Beat bible *On The Road* when I was living in a VW Kombi Van travelling up the east coast of Australia as a late teen. And it changed everything. The book was written at the beginning of the 1950s on one long roll of paper, so that Kerouac didn't have to stop to change the paper in his typewriter. Originally published conventionally, with wacky notions such as paragraph breaks, in 2007 Penguin brought out *The Original Scroll*, with the breaks taken out and the salacious things put back in. To open it up is to step back on to the open road and thumb a ride.

Discombobulated – Dispatches From The Wrong Side by Simon Morrison is published by Headpress.



CAROL RUMENS

I've recently enjoyed dipping into *Identity Parade: New British and Irish Poets*, a plus-size anthology of work by 85 poets, all of whom have either published a first collection since the mid-nineties or are about to make their debut. Some are established, like Alice Oswald, Paul Farley and Sophie Hannah but you'll find many less familiar and equally fascinating writers, with voices and views that bring a sharp, fresh, personal savour to everyday contemporary experience. For anyone curious to know what the younger generation of poets has to say, *Identity Parade*, with biographies and photos of each contributor, makes an excellent introduction.

Carol Rumens has recently published her 15th poetry collection, *De Chirico's Threads (Seren, 2010)* and edited, with Ian Gregson, an anthology of Hull poets, *Old City, New Rumours (Five Leaves, 2010)*.

ADAM O'RIORDAN

First published in the late 1950s, set in Egypt on the eve of the Second World War and made up of four individual novels – *Justine, Balthazar, Mountolive* and *Clea – The Alexandria Quartet* by Lawrence Durrell follows a series of interconnected lives and love affairs in the bustling and often brutal city of Alexandria. Sex, death, politics, murder and morality are all stitched together in Durrell's lush poetic vision of a city populated by poets, painters, British diplomats and merchant Copts.

It's a book I've returned to repeatedly in the decade since it was given to me. Now simply reading a few lines of the exquisite prose is enough to transport me back to the Alexandria of Durrell's imagination. It's genuinely deserving of the term "masterpiece".

In The Flesh by Adam O'Riordan is published by Chatto and Windus.

