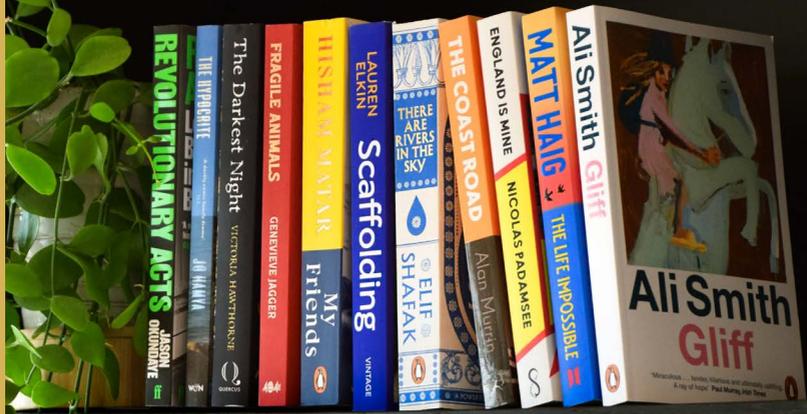


2025 SOCIETY OF AUTHORS' AWARDS
SOUTHWARK CATHEDRAL



#SoAwards

The ADCI Literary Prize

For a novel by a disabled or chronically ill author, featuring one or more disabled or chronically ill characters

The Gordon Bowker Volcano Prize

For a novel focusing on the experience of travel away from home

The Somerset Maugham Awards

For a work of fiction, non-fiction, or poetry by an author under 30

The Travelling Scholarships

Enabling writers to keep in touch with their colleagues abroad

The ALCS Tom-Gallon Trust Award

For a short story of up to 5,000 words

The McKitterick Prize

For a debut novel by an author over 40

The Queen's Knickers Award

For a quirky outstanding children's illustrated book

The Cholmondeley Awards

Recognising the achievement and distinction of individual poets

The Eric Gregory Awards

For a poetry collection by a poet under 30

The Betty Trask Prize

For a debut novel by an author under 35

The 2025 Society of Authors' Awards ceremony is the culmination of 12 months of planning, reading and judging.

Thank you to our 44 judges for your many hours of reading and discussion to discover this year's winners, runners-up, and shortlistees. We really appreciate all the skill, enthusiasm, and knowledge you bring.

Thank you to the SoA board and staff, in particular, the Communications, Events, Finance and Prizes teams, without whom the awards would not be possible.

With thanks also to our generous sponsors, the Authors' Licensing and Collecting Society (ALCS).

ALCS is a not-for-profit organisation started by writers for the benefit of all types of writers. Owned by its members, ALCS collects money due for secondary uses of writers' work. It is designed to support authors and their creativity, ensure they receive fair payment and see their rights are respected. It promotes and teaches the principles of copyright and campaigns for a fair deal. It represents over 100,000 members, and since 1977 has paid around £500 million to writers. Find out more about the work ALCS does for writers at alcs.co.uk.



SOA MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE CHAIR VANESSA FOX O'LOUGHLIN

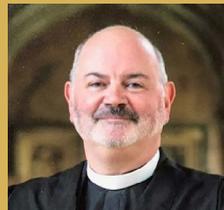
Vanessa Fox O'Loughlin is the founder of the multi-award-winning writing resources website Writing.ie, The Inkwell Group publishing consultancy and the Murder One International Crime Writing Festival. She is Ireland's leading literary scout.



© Alice-Rose Jordan

DEAN OF SOUTHWARK CATHEDRAL VERY REVEREND DR MARK OAKLEY

The Very Reverend Dr Mark Oakley was installed as Dean of Southwark on 3rd December 2023. Born in Shrewsbury in 1968, he was educated at Shrewsbury School and at the universities of London and Oxford. With a PhD in English literature, Mark has a love of poetry and has written eight books on the areas of poetry, literature and theology.



KEYNOTE SPEAKER JOSEPH COELHO

Joseph Coelho O.B.E. is a multi-award-winning children's author, poet, and playwright. He is a two-time winner of the Indie Book Awards. His Poetry Collection *Werewolf Club Rules* won the 2015 CLIPPA Poetry Award. He won the 2024 Carnegie Medal for writing with *The Boy Lost In The Maze* (illustrated by Kate Milner) and was Waterstones Children's Laureate 2022–2024.



© Hayley Madden
The Poetry Society

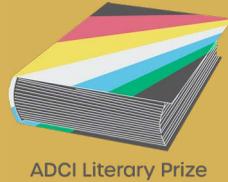
HOST HELEN EPEGA

Helen Epega is a British-Nigerian librettist, composer and performance artist. Creator of *Song Queen: A Pidgin Opera* and *Of Earth and Quill*, she integrates multilingual storytelling, African percussion and classical music. Her work explores identity and belonging and has been featured by the *BBC*, *CNN* and *The Guardian*.



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The ADCI (Authors with Disabilities and Chronic Illnesses) Literary Prize is awarded for a novel by a disabled or chronically ill author, featuring a disabled or chronically ill character. Generously supported by the Authors' Licensing and Collecting Society (ALCS), Arts Council England, the Drusilla Harvey Memorial Fund, and the Professional Writing Academy.



The 2025 winner is awarded £1,000 and the runners-up each receive £500.

Judges: Dr. Pragya Agarwal, Penny Batchelor, James Catchpole, Rachel Charlton-Dailey, Linda Corbett, Selina Mills and Dr. Okechukwu Nzelu.

'This year's books all have powerful plots that pack a punch, immersing the reader in finely-crafted worlds and situations that can shock, cause the shedding of tears, an out loud belly laugh, or silent recognition of solidarity with their multi-faceted characters. Covering historical, literary and contemporary fiction, there's something for any reader who wants to eschew outmoded disability stereotypes and engage with powerful stories showing the realities of living a disabled life.'

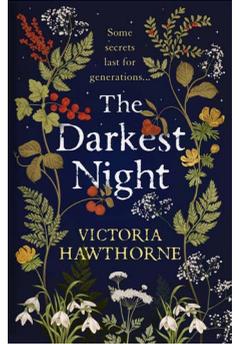
- Penny Batchelor

2025 RUNNER-UP

VICTORIA HAWTHORNE

The Darkest Night (Quercus)

Victoria Hawthorne is an author of gothic historical fiction. She also writes psychological suspense as Vikki Patis. Originally from North London, she lives in Scotland with her wife, two wild golden retrievers, and an even wilder cat.



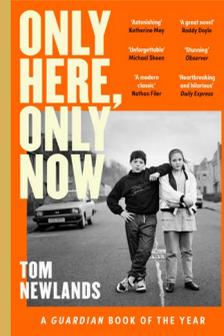
'A book that takes the reader immediately into the time and place that Victoria is writing about, whether it be London or north of Scotland. This is a heart-wrenching book about the impacts of dementia, about secrets we carry within families and the lengths we can go to protect the people we love. A staunchly feminist tale.'

- Dr. Pragya Agarwal

2025 RUNNER-UP TOM NEWLANDS

Only Here, Only Now (Phoenix, Orion)

Tom Newlands is a neurodivergent writer living in London. He is the winner of a London Writers Award and a Creative Future Writers' Award. His debut novel *Only Here, Only Now* was selected as a Guardian Fiction Book of the Year and shortlisted for the Gordon Burn Prize.



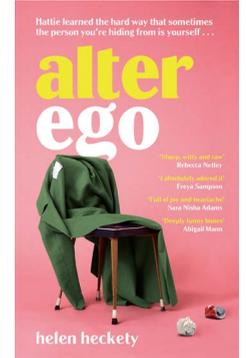
'The world Tom Newlands has conjured in Only Here, Only Now, has stayed with me, months after reading – it remains fully alive and vivid in my mind. A considerable literary achievement.'

– James Catchpole

2025 WINNER HELEN HECKETY

Alter Ego (Renegade Books, Dialogue)

Helen Heckety is a writer and performer from Kent. She is also disabled. She has written and toured two solo plays, one called *To Helen Back* and another called *Helen Highwater* which premiered at the Southbank London Literature Festival 2019. She has also written a poetry collection called *The Underlook*, which explores medical trauma, bad psychics and the case of a missing piglet. She will be forever in mourning for her hamster, Mahatma Hamster, who was her first friend to find out she'd got a literary agent, and they celebrated with strawberries. This is her debut novel.



'Alter Ego by Helen Heckety is a wonderfully engaging novel. From the opening, it captured me with its warmth, humour, humanity and honesty. Heckety is a profoundly insightful writer who has carefully plotted a complex story that will make you laugh out loud, but is unafraid to talk about difficult things. At the heart of that story is a flawed, feeling and hilarious character, with whom I know readers will fall in love.'

– Dr. Okechukwu Nzelu

For a novel focusing on the experience of travel away from home. In memory of Malcolm Lowry and endowed by Gordon Bowker and Ramdei Bowker.



The 2025 winners are awarded £1,000 each and the runner-up receives £750.

Judges: Dr Elizabeth-Jane Burnett, Derek Owusu and Jini Reddy.

2025 Shortlist

- Matt Haig for *The Life Impossible* (Canongate Books)
- Jo Hamya for *The Hypocrite* (Weidenfeld & Nicolson, Orion)
- Hisham Matar for *My Friends* (Viking, Penguin Random House)
- David Nicholls for *You Are Here* (Sceptre, Hodder & Stoughton)
- Elif Shafak for *There are Rivers in the Sky* (Viking, Penguin Random House)
- Ali Smith for *Gliff* (Hamish Hamilton, Penguin Random House)

'This shortlist exemplifies what it means to travel beyond the pages of fiction. Each book is evocative and compelling, using emotion to guide the reader on a journey through life, different cultures, and the changing meaning of what it means to feel connected to a place.'

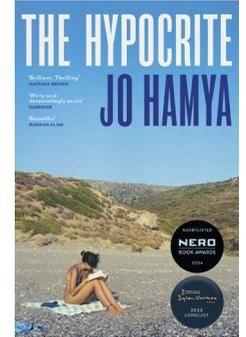
- Derek Owusu

2025 RUNNER-UP

JO HAMYA

The Hypocrite (Weidenfeld & Nicolson, Orion)

Jo Hamya was born in London in 1997. She is the author of *Three Rooms* and *The Hypocrite*, which was shortlisted for the Nero Book Awards 2024. She has written for the *New York Times*, the *Financial Times* and the *Guardian*, among others, and served as co-host of the *Booker Prize Podcast*. She is also the recipient of a Harold Moody doctoral studentship at King's College London, where her research focuses around building on 20th century western literary sociology and critique to create a viable school of literary criticism for a 21st century digitised landscape.



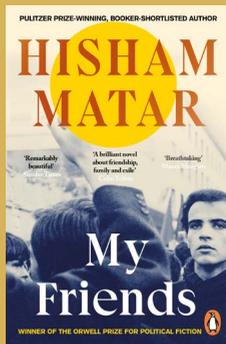
'In The Hypocrite the island of Sicily is a living part of memory, provoking wanderlust but also challenging us to think about the poignant places that have taken root in our own minds and why, how much they have given us, but also to what extent have they played a part in shaping who we are and how we relate to the world.'

- Derek Owusu

2025 WINNER HISHAM MATAR

My Friends (Viking, Penguin Random House)

Hisham Matar was born in New York to Libyan parents, spent his childhood in Tripoli and Cairo and has lived most of his life in London. His memoir *The Return* received a Pulitzer Prize in 2017. He is also the author of *In the Country of Men*, shortlisted for the Booker Prize, *Anatomy of a Disappearance* and *A Month in Siena*. His most recent novel, *My Friends*, won the Orwell Prize for Political Fiction 2024, was longlisted for the Booker Prize, and nominated for the National Book Award. His work has been translated into over thirty languages.



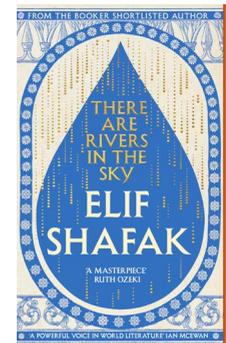
'My Friends explores the lives of three Libyan men living in political exile through a compassionate and probing lens of friendship. [...] A vibrant portrayal of literary London, encountering places where past writers lived and worked. The writing is sensitive, understated and beautifully expressed.'

– Dr Elizabeth-Jane Burnett

2025 WINNER ELIF SHAFAK

There are Rivers in the Sky (Viking, Penguin Random House)

Elif Shafak is an award-winning British Turkish novelist, whose work has been translated into fifty-eight languages. The author of twenty books, thirteen of which are novels, she is a bestselling author in many countries around the world. Shafak's novel *10 Minutes 38 Seconds in this Strange World* was shortlisted for the Booker Prize and the RSL Ondaatje Prize. *The Island of Missing Trees* was a Sunday Times bestseller, and was shortlisted for the Costa Novel Award and the Women's Prize for Fiction. *There are Rivers in the Sky*, which won an Edward Stanford Award for Fiction, is her latest novel.



'Imbued with a sumptuous and vivid sense of place, There are Rivers in the Sky travels between ancient Mesopotamia, modern day Turkey and Iraq and contemporary London via the capital's Victorian-era slums. Following the lives of three complex, captivating characters bound by life-giving water and an epic poem, the novel segues effortlessly between enchantment and brutality, the sacred and scholarship, hurt and healing. Shafak is an empathic and wise storyteller, and her tender, elegant prose invites us all to live more connected, humane and impassioned lives.'

– Jini Reddy

W. Somerset Maugham set up a fund in 1947 to enable young writers to enrich their work by gaining experience of foreign countries. The awards are given for a published work of fiction, non-fiction or poetry.

The 2025 winners are awarded £4,000 each.

Judges: Akeem Balogun, Sandeep Parmar and Ellen Wiles.

'Like the writing of the author it's named after, the Somerset Maugham Award continues to feature work that attracts interest and admiration. Reading the writing of young authors who are at the top of their game is a rewarding opportunity to see what fresh ideas are being explored by a new cohort and which thoughts and topics remain a staple in literature.'

– Akeem Balogun

'On reading the entries for this prize I was often struck by a rapacity to encounter the new, the disorienting, the modern and each book's deep engagement with the times in which we live now.'

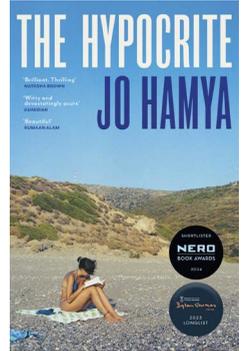
– Sandeep Parmar

2025 WINNER

JO HAMYA

The Hypocrite (Weidenfeld & Nicolson, Orion)

Jo Hamya was born in London in 1997. She is the author of *Three Rooms* and *The Hypocrite*, which was shortlisted for the Nero Book Awards 2024. She has written for the *New York Times*, the *Financial Times* and the *Guardian*, among others, and served as co-host of the *Booker Prize Podcast*. She is also the recipient of a Harold Moody doctoral studentship at King's College London, where her research focuses around building on 20th century western literary sociology and critique to create a viable school of literary criticism for a 21st century digitised landscape.



'Jo Hamya's The Hypocrite combines tense generational conflict with questions of genre in a way that is mesmerising and sensuous. It pushes at the boundaries of love and language at every turn, stepping deftly and confidently. Hamya is a writer of undeniable gifts.'

– Sandeep Parmar

2025 WINNER

ASHANI LEWIS

Winter Animals (Dialogue Books)

Ashani Lewis is a novelist and short story writer. She was a winner of the London Writers Awards 2021 in their literary fiction category. Her books *Winter Animals* and *Everest* were both listed in Marie Claire's Best Books of 2024, and *Everest* was shortlisted for the Jhalak Prize.



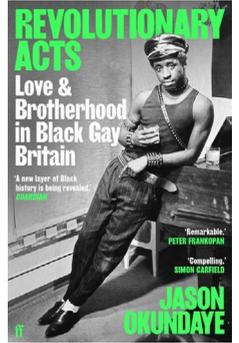
'This propulsive novel immersed us all in its wild and unusual story, told with verve, intelligence, and confidence. The characters felt alive and unpredictable, the setting vivid, and the pace never slowed. A rare achievement.'
- Ellen Wiles

2025 WINNER

JASON OKUNDAYE

Revolutionary Acts: Love & Brotherhood in Black Gay Britain
(Faber & Faber)

Jason Okundaye is an Assistant Editor and Writer at the *Guardian*. His first book, *Revolutionary Acts*, a social history of Black gay men in Britain was published by Faber in 2024, and shortlisted for the Orwell Prize.



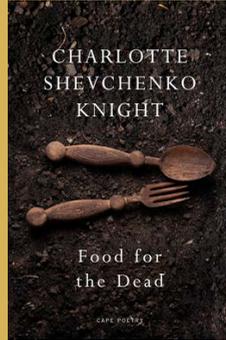
'Okundaye's book is a channel where several compelling voices shed light on the excitement, tragedies and determination housed in a colourful and thrilling area of British history.'
- Akeem Balogun

2025 WINNER

CHARLOTTE SHEVCHENKO KNIGHT

Food for the Dead (Jonathan Cape, Vintage)

Charlotte Shevchenko Knight is a writer of both British and Ukrainian heritage. Her debut poetry collection *Food for the Dead*, published by Jonathan Cape in 2024, was a winner of an Eric Gregory Award and the Laurel Prize for Best First Collection UK. Shevchenko Knight is a Manchester City Poet and is completing her PhD at the Manchester Writing School. She is currently writing a lyric memoir titled *The Inexpressible*.



'Charlotte Shevchenko Knight's poems remind us that loyalty and tragedy both have long memories. With luminous language and breathtaking detail, Knight reaches into history and her family's past to fill the mouths of the present with a familiar, yet devastating, song.'

- Sandeep Parmar

The Travelling Scholarships were established to enable British creative writers to keep in touch with their colleagues abroad.

The 2025 winners are awarded £7,000 each.

Judges: Emily Barr, Louise Jury, Alvin Pang, Johny Pitts and Philip Terry

'Travel can be transformative to the work of writers. It is wonderful to award these scholarships to support people working across a range of genres to explore, research and seek inspiration.'

- Louise Jury

2025 WINNER
SALLY BAYLEY

Sally Bayley is the author of a series of ground-breaking books which defy category and genre. All explore the relationship between biography, autobiography and fiction through myth, fable, fairytale and forms of lyrical and visual memory. Published works include *Girl with Dove*, *No Boys Play Here*, *The Green Lady* and *The Private Life of the Diary*. Sally hosts and performs the highly successful podcast *A Reading Life*, *A Writing Life*, designed to inspire creative writing, innovative reading, and artistic responses to living. Her next book will be *Pond Life*.



© Alexandra Lewis

'We were immediately won over by the sheer verve of Sally Bayley's writing. She joyously rips up every rule book in the school of memoir and tells her heartwrenching story in her own unique way, by slipping, as in a fairy tale, into the skins of the fictional characters that have shaped her world. In this topsy-turvy universe you no longer know if you are reading non-fiction, fiction, or fantasy, or some new and previously unimaginable cocktail of all three. Beautifully, stunningly original.'

– Philip Terry

2025 WINNER
JASBINDER BILAN

Jasbinder Bilan is an award-winning children's author. Her debut, *Asha and the Spirit Bird*, won the Times Chickenhouse prize in 2017 and went on to win the Costa Book Award 2020. Since then, she has published ten novels. Jasbinder's books have been nominated for the Carnegie Medal, longlisted for the Blue Peter Award, shortlisted for the Waterstone's Prize and won The Indie Book Award.



© Ian Sharp

'Jasbinder Bilan's books blend travel and compelling characters with elements of magic realism, history and page-turning storytelling. She is not afraid to put her young characters into perilous situations, and trusts them to deal with it, allowing them to have wild adventures along the way. At a time when there are so many other things competing for children's attention, Jasbinder writes page turning stories which get children reading. We hope that the travelling scholarship will allow her to find inspiration for stories where the expense of travel and research might otherwise be an impediment.'

– Emily Barr

2025 WINNER
MARCUS FIELD

Marcus Field is a journalist and former arts editor of *The Independent on Sunday*. He began his career on architecture magazines and has written widely on architecture, design, art and theatre. In 2006 he moved to Spain, where he lived in an eco-village in Andalucia for six years. During that time he lived off-grid, with river water and solar power as his only resources. He learned to grow his own food, and spent time exploring Spain and writing about his life there for newspapers including *The Independent* and *The Evening Standard*. Since 2012 he has lived in South Devon.



'Marcus Field has a strong track record of informed and engaging writing for national newspapers and magazines about culture - with a special focus on architecture - and a second strand of interest in environmental issues sparked by six years living in an off-grid eco village in Andalucia. It is to be hoped that a Travelling Scholarship will enable him to develop a possible memoir on his Spanish experience and travel further afield to complement his investigations of specialist museums across the UK.'
- Louise Jury

2025 WINNER
MONTENEGROFISHER

Montenegrofisher is the collaborative work of poets and artists **Luna Montenegro** and **Adrian Fisher**, based in London. For over 25 years, they have worked together across poetry, performance, sound, and visual art, exploring the poetic as a way to engage with ecology, locality, and social transformation. Their work moves fluidly between text, performance, image, video, sound and experimental publications. Inspired by contemporary art processes, their time with 'Writers Forum London' and the legacy of Bob Cobbing, they draw on sound and poetry traditions from both the UK and Latin America. Their expanded practice includes experimental translation, graphic scores and film poetry, with a focus on creating spaces for collaboration, reflection and sustainability.



© Jagan Pappachan

'In an era where the implications of the Anthropocene and the ravages of social inequity are significant questions for writers and other creatives, the Travelling Scholarship is a timely means to celebrate and support the energies of London-based duo Montenegro Fisher, whose inclusive, interdisciplinary and imaginative (eco)poetic oeuvre crosses genres, cultures and species.'
- Alvin Pang

2025 WINNER NATHALIE OLAH

Nathalie Olah is an author and cultural critic concerned with questions of cultural hegemony and propaganda, the aestheticization of politics and how certain media tropes normalise the phenomenon of class. She is currently based in London.



© Sophie Davidson

'Nathalie Olah is a creative and courageous writer whose work at the intersection of pop-culture, politics and aesthetics manages to illuminate the currents of our time in lucid and often counter-intuitive ways. Her specific work around class is essential in the way that it takes seriously – and eloquently decodes – notions of both high and low culture, and translates them into complex yet always compelling narratives. As a freelancer, I know the scholarship will aid her independent research and wanderings into fascinating new figurative and literal territories.'

– Johnny Pitts

Founded by Nellie Tom-Gallon in memory of her brother and now generously funded by the Authors' Licensing and Collecting Society (ALCS) and Hawthornden Foundation. For a short story of up to 5,000 words.

The 2025 winner is awarded £2,000, the runner-up £1,000 and each shortlisted author receives £500.

Judges: Andre Bagoo, Louise Brealey, Yan Ge and Peter Hobbs.

2025 Shortlist

Molly Aitken for 'This is How it Happens'

Naomi Alderman for 'God's Doorbell'

Daisy Fletcher for 'The Triangle'

Hamish Gray for 'But the fire will spit again'

Katie Hale for 'Raise, or How to Break Free of the Ground'

Somto Ihezue for 'Into Duty, Into Longing, Into Sparrows'

'The shortlisted stories showcase the exceptional power of short fiction as a genre. Such power lies not only in the dexterity of the prose, the acuity of the authors' visions, but also in their ingenuity in conjuring infinite complexity and potency out of brevity.'

– Yan Ge



Hawthornden
Foundation

2025 RUNNER-UP

HAMISH GRAY

‘But the fire will spit again’

Hamish Gray is a Scottish writer with Mauritian heritage. His work explores themes of modern masculinity and mixed identity. He has completed a master’s degree in Creative Writing at the University of Oxford. When writing prose, he enjoys taking moments from his own life and drilling into the emotions they inspire to create a deeper resonance.

‘Featuring a distinctive and engaging voice, our runner-up engages us from its first sentence before building to a haunting finale. Written in a conditional future tense, it is nonetheless a story about the now, about culture wars, intersections and the limits of limitless love.’

– Andre Bagoo

And afterwards, we’d be lying next to each other, the final flickers of the fireplace lapping at the sweat on our skin, and I’d trace my palm over his tattoos, half-expecting, half-wishing they’d flow from his skin to mine.

From ‘But the fire will spit again’
© Hamish Gray

2025 WINNER

KATIE HALE

‘Raise, or How to Break Free of the Ground, or The Lakeland Dialect for Slippery is Slape and to Form it in the Mouth Requires an Act of Falling’

Katie Hale is the author of two novels: *My Name is Monster* and *The Edge of Solitude*: a New Scientist Book of the Month, and winner of a Northern Writers’ Award for Fiction. Katie won a Northern Debut Award for her poetry collection, *White Ghosts*, and she is a former MacDowell Fellow, whose work has taken her from Antarctica to the Arctic.

“‘Raise” is a beautiful, elliptical gem of a story, its tension created and held perfectly by every sentence. It’s rooted in life and vivid landscape, but offers a meditation on how and why we tell stories. It was an easy winner: the outstanding story this year, and the unanimous choice of all the judges.’

– Peter Hobbs

Begin at yon coffin stone: flat-topped boulder at the foot of the fell, positioned for resting the burden of the dead. Your hand is small but your brother’s smaller. It twitches in yours, a caught insect.

From ‘Raise, or How to Break Free of the Ground, or The Lakeland Dialect for Slippery is Slape and to Form it in the Mouth Requires an Act of Falling’ © Katie Hale

Founded by Tom McKitterick and sponsored by Hawthornden Foundation. Open to debut novels by writers aged 40 years and over.

The 2025 winner will receive £4,000, the runner-up £2,000 and each shortlisted author is awarded £1,000.

Judges: Rebecca Foster, Gonzalo C. Garcia, Anietie Isong, Wenyan Lu, Kathy O'Shaughnessy and Nick Rennison.



2025 Shortlist

Susie Dent for *Guilty by Definition* (Zaffre, Bonnier Books)

Lauren Elkin for *Scaffolding* (Chatto & Windus, Vintage)

Ewan Gass for *Clinical Intimacy* (Doubleday, PRH)

Lara Haworth for *Monumenta* (Canongate Books)

Alan Murrin for *The Coast Road* (Bloomsbury Circus)

Tom Newlands for *Only Here, Only Now* (Phoenix, Orion)

'Discussions of the shortlist were enthusiastic, thorough and inspiring. There is a diversity in terms of themes, settings and voices. The shortlist is a demonstration of huge talents and show how debut novels can be masterpieces.'

- Wenyan Lu

2025 RUNNER-UP

LAUREN ELKIN

Scaffolding (Chatto & Windus, Vintage)

Lauren Elkin is the author of several books, including *Flâneuse: Women Walk the City*, a Radio 4 Book of the Week, a *New York Times* Notable Book of 2017, and a finalist for the PEN/Diamonstein-Spielvogel award for the art of the essay. Her essays on art, literature, and culture have appeared in the *London Review of Books*, the *New York Times*, *Granta*, *Harper's*, *Le Monde*, *Les Inrockuptibles*, and *Frieze*, among others. She is also an award-winning translator, most recently of Simone de Beauvoir's previously unpublished novel *The Inseparables*. After twenty years in Paris, she now lives in London.



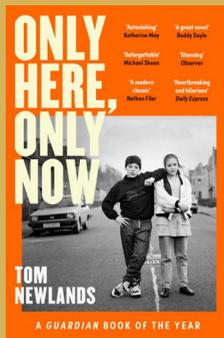
'Set in Paris across two different time periods, Scaffolding is a compulsive meditation on friendship and love and the question of limits. The tone is light but Lauren Elkin's text is thought-provoking: Lacanian ideas are discussed throughout, with terrific ease and wit.'

- Kathy O'Shaughnessy

2025 WINNER TOM NEWLANDS

Only Here, Only Now (Phoenix, Orion)

Tom Newlands is a neurodivergent writer living in London. He is the winner of a London Writers Award and a Creative Future Writers' Award. His debut novel *Only Here, Only Now* was selected as a Guardian Fiction Book of the Year and shortlisted for the Gordon Burn Prize.



'Only Here, Only Now is bursting with vitality. With her broken heart and fizzing brain, Cora Mowat vows to escape her grim Fife town. Tom Newlands's evocation of the 1990s—and of his teenage narrator—is utterly convincing. Soaring above grief, poverty, and substance abuse, Cora's voice is pure magic.'
– Rebecca Foster

Founded and sponsored by Nicholas Allan. Awarded to a quirky outstanding children's original illustrated book for ages 0-7.



The 2025 winners will share £5,000, and the runners-up receive £1,000.

Judges: Dapo Adeola, Davina Hamilton and Soofiya.

2025 Shortlist

Anne Booth and illustrator **David Litchfield** for *The Boy, the Troll and the Chalk* (Templar, Bonnier Books)

Rachel Bright and illustrator **Jim Field** for *The Pandas Who Promised* (Orchard Books, Hachette)

Catherine Cawthorne and illustrator **Sara Ogilvie** for *Big Bad Wolf Investigates Fairy Tales* (Bloomsbury Children's)

Tiny Fisscher, translator **Laura Watkinson** and illustrator **Herma Starreveld** for *Bird is Dead* (Greystone Kids)

Swapna Haddow and illustrator **Yiting Lee** for *Little Dinosaurs, Big Feelings* (Magic Cat Publishing)

Mikolaj Pa, translator **Scotia Gilroy** and illustrator **Gosia Herba** for *No. 5 Bubblegum Street* (Greystone Kids)

2025 RUNNER-UP

SWAPNA HADDOW AND YITING LEE

Little Dinosaurs, Big Feelings
(Magic Cat Publishing)

Swapna Haddow is the best-selling author and award-winning funny lady of over 40 books for younger readers. She has won the Surrey Libraries Book Award and Fantastic Book Award, and is the creator of Dave Pigeon. Originally from the UK, Swapna now lives in New Zealand with her husband, son and dog, Archie.



A nomad of the Earth, Yiting Lee is a Taiwanese author and illustrator who spent six years in the UK, where she graduated from MA Children's Book Illustration at Cambridge School of Art in 2012. Whimsical and unpredictable stories are at the heart of her picture books. Yiting is the author of *The Quiet One*, *Le Jardin de Jean* and *What's the Rush?* She likes to keep her stories simple and her illustrations full, because she knows how much children are captured by the details.

'I loved this gorgeous book that teaches children emotional resilience through understanding their feelings and learning how to navigate them.'

- Davina Hamilton

2025 WINNER

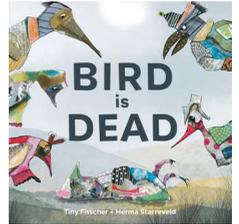
TINY FISSCHER, LAURA WATKINSON AND
HERMA STARREVELD

Bird is Dead (Greystone Kids)

Tiny Fisscher writes for all ages in all genres, and is the author of many books for children.

Laura Watkinson is an award-winning, full-time literary translator. She translates into English, from Dutch, Italian, and German. She lives in Amsterdam.

Herma Starreveld was originally a therapist and now works as a mixed media artist.



'Bird Is Dead tackles the challenging emotion of grief. Through thoughtful, yet straight-talking storytelling, Tiny Fisscher manages to approach the subject matter in the most humorous and heartwarming way. I absolutely loved the story's honesty and realism, reflecting that death can sometimes be unexpected, and can evoke a range of questions, feelings and behaviours - including bickering! Herma Starreveld's use of dark backgrounds, juxtaposed with each bird character's bright, multicoloured coats, really captures the essence of the story by delivering a visual representation of the many layers of grief.'

- Davina Hamilton

The Cholmondeley Awards were founded by the late Dowager Marchioness of Cholmondeley to recognise the achievement and distinction of individual poets.

The 2025 winners are awarded £1,680 each.

Judges: Malika Booker, Fred D'Aguiar, Hannah Lowe and Lachlan Mackinnon.

'The Cholmondeley Awards have been, since they were introduced in 1966, important honorary awards that recognise poets' sustained excellence across a body of work. Some of the recipients will already be well-known in the poetry world, while others may be deserving of wider recognition for the distinction of their writing. Many of them will have contributed to the genre in a variety of ways, through their performances and tutoring, for example. The Cholmondeley Awards prove that excellence can be perceived across a wide range of poetry from a diversity of poets. It is hoped that the recipients will feel valued, encouraged and truly celebrated.'

- Moniza Alvi, 2024 Cholmondeley Award judge

2025 WINNER JAMES BYRNE

James Byrne is a poet, editor, translator and visual artist. His recent poetry collections include *Places you Leave* and *Of Breaking Glass*. Byrne has worked with Rohingya refugees in Cox's Bazar and has given readings in places such as Libya and Syria. *The Overmind* was published in 2024 and his *Selected Poems, Nightsongs for Gaia* is forthcoming.



© Carolyn Forche

'Poet, magazine and press editor, activist, artist, and anthologist, James Byrne occupies a unique place in British Poetry as an internationalist devoted to the alignment of a British sensibility with planetary concerns: of a poetics of the oppressed; of climate change; of voices from the margins of British society that enrich its multiple traditions. His poetry carves out a space of talking with others across the art forms. He deepens what it means to practice poetry in an ethical space in communion with the local and global.'

- Fred D'Aguiar

2025 WINNER
JANE COMMANE

Jane Commane is a writer, tutor and director/editor at Nine Arches Press. Her debut poetry collection, *Assembly Lines* was longlisted for the 2019 Michael Murphy Memorial Prize. She is co-editor of *Under the Radar* magazine and co-author of *How to Be a Poet*. Her poetry has featured in *Staying Human* as well as in *The Guardian*, and on *BBC Radio 4*. She is a Writing West Midlands' Room 204 writer, and in 2017 was awarded a Jerwood Compton Poetry Fellowship. In 2025, Jane was awarded the Paul McVeigh Residency, and is currently writing a novel.



© Lee Townsend

'Jane Commane's poems carry a clear social and political vision in powerful and striking ways, which have stirred me in the time since I first read them. She has worked tirelessly as a poet in various social contexts, and devoted herself to establishing and maintaining Nine Arches Press, which is I think much the most interesting newer publisher in terms both of ambition and list. She is a significant contributor to the nation's poetic life in many ways.'

- Lachlan Mackinnon

2025 WINNER
ANNIE FREUD

Annie Freud is a poet, artist, teacher and editor. She has 4 poetry collections in print with Picador: *The Best Man that Ever Was* (2007) *The Mirabelles* (2010) (shortlisted for the TS Eliot Prize) *The Remains* (2015) and *Hiddensee* (2020). She was included in 2014 Next Generation Poets and is a fellow of the Royal Society of Literature. She is renowned for her live performances.



'Annie Freud (FRSL) a distinguished poet and visual artist, uses her distinctive autobiographical voice to confront the complex truths of her heritage with radical boldness. With a poetic that is at once charming and disarming, witty and littered with shocking carnality and humour, she tackles taboos of illness and desire with dramatic refreshing frankness. Her eclectic and multi-textual craft permits the female aesthetic to transgress prim self-censorship.'

- Malika Booker

2025 WINNER
JOHN LYONS

John Lyons was born in Trinidad and Tobago. He came to the UK to study art at age 25, gaining a National Diploma in Design from Goldsmiths College, and an Art Teachers Diploma from the University of Newcastle upon Tyne. Developing his painting practice alongside teaching full time, he has exhibited regularly in solo and group shows since 1979. He is also a prize-winning poet, with eight published volumes. In 2003 he received the Windrush Arts Achiever Award.



© Anne-Katrin Purkiss

'In his description of his latest art exhibition, Carnavalesque, as "more about the nature of carnival. It's broad, it's about folklore, customs, and how people live," John Lyons could be talking about his poetry. Born in Trinidad and Tobago in 1933 he has lived in the UK since the 1950s. He writes about art and life, from his Caribbean early life and his UK experience, with a focus on his base in the north of England. In poetry aimed at young adults and readers everywhere he's that rare person who thrives in two arts forms that match his love of two places.'
- Fred D'Aguiar

2025 WINNER
KAREN MCCARTHY WOOLF

Dr Karen McCarthy Woolf FRSL is a Fulbright Scholar and winner of the 2025 Jerwood Prize for Poetry (England). Her verse novel *Top Doll* has been shortlisted for the TS Eliot and Jhalak Prizes. Karen teaches at Goldsmiths and is the editor of seven literary anthologies, including *Nature Matters: Vital Poems of the Global Majority* (Faber, 2025). Her next collection *Unsafe* will be published by Bloomsbury in 2026.



'Karen McCarthy Woolf's poetry interrogates grief, race, and ecological crisis with lyrical precision and formal innovation. Her work opens space for vulnerability and resistance, entwining the personal with the political in startling, sensory ways.'
- Hannah Lowe

The Eric Gregory Awards, for a collection by poets under the age of 30, were founded by the late Dr Eric Gregory for the encouragement of young poets.

The 2025 winners are awarded £4,725 each and are invited to a solo week residency at Thomas Cottage generously offered by the owners. The winners will also be invited to have a poem published in the summer edition of *Poetry London*.

Judges: Caroline Bird, Jasmine Gardosi, Harry Josephine Giles, Roy McFarlane, Rosie Miles and Eric Ngalle Charles.

'Judging for the Eric Gregory Award has been a wonderful experience. The quality and depths of writing made the final decision so difficult, that the gap between longlist and winners was miniscule. The winners showed strength in writing, some deft in their approach, others sang across the page, but all with an amazing technical fortitude. I loved the places I was taken to, the experiences shared and vulnerabilities that were laid on the page. Their stories were alive, inventive and captured me like a painting or sculpture, leaving me sitting in their words long after it had finished.'
– Roy McFarlane

2025 WINNER

TOM BAILEY

Please Do Not Touch or Feed the Horses

Tom Bailey is a poet and writer based in Edinburgh. His debut pamphlet, *Please Do Not Touch or Feed the Horses*, was published by *Poetry London Editions* in March 2025. His poems have been published in *The Poetry Review*, *Poetry London*, *bath magg*, *Berlin Lit*, *Anthropocene*, *The North* and elsewhere. He also co-edits the online poetry magazine *And Other Poems*.

'It's the startling clarity of language that welcomes you into these poems, and the warm wealth of insight that keeps you with them. Rarely does a book of poems arrive as such a pleasure; more rarely are the difficulties of life and death held with such care.'

– Harry Josephine Giles

And what we took for a child's laugh was the house
catching its breath, and what we took for birdsong was
a cloud getting tangled in a tree

From *Please Do Not Touch or Feed the Horses*

© Tom Bailey

2025 WINNER

SOPHIA GEORGHIOU

Gloria Trillo

Sophia Georghiou is a British poet and writer of Italian/Greek heritage. Her writing has appeared in *The Journal of Creative Writing Research*. Her poem 'Advice for Winter' won James Massiah's Party Poetry Prize and her poem 'Pirouette' was shortlisted for the Bridport Prize in 2021.

'Gloria Trillo arrives with stains on her sheets and blood under her fingernails, spitting and sharp. These poems hold nothing back, unleashing bodily rebellion in all its beauty. Here is furious longing for something more true than a world of violence – and, in the shattered final sequence, the breath that makes such poetry possible.'

– Harry Josephine Giles

There's rage in this poem.
Rage in the satin nightgown,
in the faux fur coat, the polyester
donned too close to the bone.

From 'Dear Gloria'
© Sophia Georghiou

2025 WINNER

KAYCEE HILL

Sonic Inheritance

Kaycee Hill, a working-class poet of mixed heritage, recently completed her MA in Creative Writing at the University of Bristol. A former poetry ambassador for Hampshire and Dorset, and winner of the inaugural James Berry Poetry Prize. Her debut collection *Hot Sauce* is published by Bloodaxe Books and she received mentorship from Malika Booker.

'From the womb to the present-day music evokes and embalms the narrator. A child of Windrush who paints her inheritance with vivid colours of culture and survival. From reggae to rave this collection is rich in tone, rhythm and musicality. Lyrics full of love rooted in family and friends, living in the city and drawing from the well of musical archives.'

– Roy McFarlane

I came into the world knowing Sister Nancy's
entire discography.

From *Sonic Inheritance*
© Kaycee Hill

2025 WINNER

OLUWASEUN OLAYIWOLA

Strange Beach

Oluwaseun Olayiwola is a poet, critic, and choreographer living in London. His writing has been published in *Granta*, the *Guardian*, the *Poetry Review*, the *Telegraph* and elsewhere. His debut collection is forthcoming from Fitzcarraldo Editions (UK) and Soft Skull Press (US).

'Love, sex and Ars Poetica, an emotional tour de force, a sense of declaration for living with no apologies for the way life is lived. A worship of the male body, the ying and yang of black and white bodies. An amazing unbridled exploration of being and not belonging lyrically unfolding through this bold collection.'

– Roy McFarlane

We are not fools. We do not get
to be free. What we get
is to be here

From 'There are No Houses in the Future'

© Oluwaseun Olayiwola

2025 WINNER

KATIE O'PRAY

Apricot

Katie O'Pray is a poet, who works as a creative facilitator – propelled by the therapeutic potential writing holds within our communities, as a means of expression, activism, empowerment and connection. Their poetry has been associated with a variety of prizes, institutions and publications. Their debut collection of poetry, *Apricot*, was published by Out-Spoken Press in 2022.

'On the one hand, Apricot is a devastating poetic memoir of a life blown apart and yet the artfully constructed collage of its explosion creates a wholeness. Beauty and humour is found on the eating disorder ward, institutional language is repurposed with wit and, coursing through each line, the movement of a singular mind urges both poet and reader to live.'

– Caroline Bird

I came out of the sickness
like a sore loser
saying: okay I'm ready I'll bite

From *Apricot*

© Katie O'Pray

2025 WINNER

ERIC YIP

Exposure

Eric Yip is from Hong Kong and the author of *Exposure* (ignitionpress, 2024). He won the 2021 National Poetry Competition and was shortlisted for the 2023 Forward Prize for Best Single Poem and the 2024 Michael Marks Poetry Award. His writing has appeared in *Best New Poets*, *The Guardian*, *The Poetry Review*, and *Poets & Writers*.

'Exposure is both cinematic, still, precise and panoramic, every carefully-chosen word focused like a lens. The relationship between art and history is interrogated, how we carve our viewpoints and dissect our memories into singular scenes. Whilst reading Eric Yip, we see through his camera; each poem, a frame of life, hit by a new angle of light.'

– Caroline Bird

Like a magician's assistant, a book prepares for its own vanishing.

From *Exposure*

© Eric Yip

Betty Trask left a bequest to the Society of Authors to fund prizes for first novels written by authors under the age of 35 in a traditional or romantic style.

The winner is awarded £10,000 and each shortlisted author receives £3,240.

Judges: Andrew Cowan, Daisy Lafarge and Stephanie Sy-Quia

2025 Shortlist

Bonnie Burke-Patel for *I Died at Fallow Hall*
(Bedford Square Publishers)

Madeline Docherty for *Gender Theory* (John Murray)

Genevieve Jagger for *Fragile Animals* (404 Ink)

Ashani Lewis for *Winter Animals* (Dialogue Books)

Elizabeth O'Connor for *Whale Fall* (Picador, Pan Macmillan)

Nicolas Padamsee for *England is Mine* (Serpent's Tail, Profile Books)

'Whether politically urgent, exquisitely lyrical, or strange and surreal; whether expansive or economical, comic or introspective, set now or in the past, each of these skilful novels is brimming with wit and invention. Together they demonstrate the wonderfully open-ended possibilities for the contemporary novel.'

– Andrew Cowan

2025 WINNER ASHANI LEWIS

Winter Animals (Dialogue Books)

Ashani Lewis is a novelist and short story writer. She was a winner of the London Writers Awards 2021 in their literary fiction category. Her books *Winter Animals* and *Everest* were both listed in Marie Claire's Best Books of 2024, and *Everest* was shortlisted for the Jhalak Prize.



'In the strange, snowy atmosphere of Winter Animals anything is possible and nothing is predictable. Newly homeless, almost broke, 36-year-old Elen becomes the unlikely compadre to four privileged young Brits, a "gang of runaway utopians" improvising a life of squatting and skiing and sexual entanglement in the vast abandoned landscapes of North America. It's an idiosyncratic premise and a truly invigorating slalom of a novel.'

– Andrew Cowan

We would like to thank all our generous sponsors and supporters of our SoA Awards: ALCS, Arts Council England, Nicholas Allan, Ramdei Bowker, the Drusilla Harvey Memorial Fund, Hawthornden Foundation, the Professional Writing Academy, and the many trusts through which our prizes are funded.



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– Nadine Matheson

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The Society of Authors is the UK trade union for all types of writers, illustrators and literary translators at all stages of their careers. We have been advising individuals and speaking out for the profession for more than a century.

We administer prizes and awards to support and celebrate authors of fiction, non-fiction, poetry, literary translation, audio drama and educational writing. In addition to this evening's prizes, we manage The Sunday Times Charlotte Aitken Trust Young Writer of the Year Award, The Translation Prizes, The Ilse Schwegcke Prize, and the ALCS Educational Writers' Award. Each year we also distribute a range of grants for works in progress and for authors in need.



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