

SOAIS COMMITTEE NOMINATIONS 2026



TOM BAILEY



*Tom Bailey is a writer and editor based in Edinburgh. His debut pamphlet, *Please Do Not Touch or Feed the Horses*, was published by Poetry London Editions and won an Eric Gregory Award in 2025. He edits the online poetry magazine *And Other Poems* and works in social care.*

I was born in London and moved up to Scotland in 2024 while completing my PhD at Royal Holloway. I now live in Edinburgh with my partner, and work as an outreach support worker supporting young people with learning disabilities across Midlothian. I'm passionate about making literature accessible to everyone and helping young people to find their own path into publishing. Over the last few years, I've had the privilege of teaching undergraduate English and Creative Writing courses at several universities, including Strathclyde, Royal Holloway, and Boston University. It's amazing to be able to support passionate young people with their writing and encourage them to believe that a career in literature is possible for them. The poetry world in particular can feel quite opaque and cliquey, but as a poet and editor myself, I've tried to demythologise that world a little bit for my students. Beyond the university, I've also worked as a workshop facilitator for the charity Arts Without Boundaries and for The Writing School.

As a care worker supporting young people in and around Edinburgh, I think I'd bring a unique perspective to the committee. I know what it's like to work shifts on a low wage while trying to find time to read and write wherever possible. I also know how valuable financial support from the Society of Authors can be. Winning the Eric Gregory last year was an absolute game-changer for me, as it meant I was able to take some extra time off work to write. I also received a travel grant from the SoA for a writing retreat, which helped to make the retreat affordable. If anything, I think the Society of Authors could be more vocal about the financial

support it is able to provide: most writers I know don't really realise there's funding available for them. I also balance my work and writing with my editorial role at *And Other Poems*, a small online poetry magazine which has we've grown into one of the leading spaces for new poetry in the UK. I've been especially pleased to publish and feature some of my favourite Scottish poets over the last few years. I would love to be a voice on the committee for small magazines, presses and publications, particularly ones that don't have huge Creative Scotland or Arts Council grants.

Since moving to Edinburgh, I've read at and hosted various poetry events in the city, including a fundraiser at Lighthouse bookshop for Medical Aid for Palestinians. This event was part of my fundraising work with Readers and Writers Against the Genocide, a small group of writers, editors, and booksellers who want to use our platforms to speak out against the genocide in Gaza. As a SoAiS committee member, I wouldn't be afraid to speak out on controversial issues and hold institutions to account.

Whether it be about financial precarity, censorship, or Artificial Intelligence, I want to help to represent the needs and concerns of Scottish authors, translators, and illustrators.

KEN COCKBURN



*After working in theatre and gallery administration in Cardiff and Edinburgh, I became Fieldworker and Assistant Director at the Scottish Poetry Library. Since leaving I've freelanced as a poet in schools, colleges, care and community settings, and translated contemporary German poets. Much of my work is collaborative, with other poets and with visual artists, on book, exhibition and public art projects. I also run Edinburgh Poetry Tours, guided walks with readings of poems in the city's Old Town, and have led poetry walks at other locations including St Andrews and Traquair House. I've published four collections of poems, most recently *Floating the Woods* (Luath, 2018), as well as many pamphlets. My work has been exhibited at venues including Edinburgh Printmakers Workshop, Wigtown Book Festival and The Wordsworth Trust. I currently work as part-time project manager for Lapidus Scotland and Autumn Voices, and co-edit *Presence Haiku Journal*.*

I have been a member of SoA since 2008, and have benefited in many ways from advice on the nitty-gritty of contract clauses, to attending (and occasionally running) online and in-person events. Through SoA emails and The Author I'm kept informed of recent developments in writing and publishing.

I have a broad overview of what might be called the writing industry, having worked as a writer, events programmer and publisher.

I have worked as a freelance poet for over twenty years, and have a good idea of the range of work opportunities available to writers, including workshops in education and community settings, and writing commissions. Most recently much of this work has been with older people in care settings, as part of the Edinburgh International Book Festival's community programme.

I have published collections with mainstream poetry publishers (Luath, Shearsman, Carcanet), with small art presses such as The Caserom Press, and self-published a number of pamphlets.

My first career was in theatre and since then I have always valued collaborative work, in my case usually with visual artists (including Mary Bourne, Charles March and Lisa Hooper), working on public art projects, exhibitions and publications.

I have also seen things from the other side, as it were, working for organisations which provide opportunities for writers. I have programmed events with writers for organisations including the Scottish Poetry Library, Lapidus Scotland and Autumn Voices.

Sometimes this work has extended to publishing work by the writers involved, and / or their workshop participants. I have edited and print-managed a number of publications, for the three organisations mentioned above, as well as managing the pocketbooks series (1999-2002, with Alec Finlay), a range of paperback books on contemporary Scottish culture, and the follow-up series under the name of platform projects.

Recently I began for the first time to edit a poetry magazine – co-editing, anyway (there are three of us) – Presence Haiku Journal, taking over from the previous editor who had decided to step down. My role involves selecting work for inclusion, sequencing the selected material, and liaising with the designer.

I'd like to use my broad experience in the literary world to contribute to the work of SoAiS, especially in terms of encouraging local groups, looking at opportunities for authors beyond traditional publishing, and how best to maximise these in the current circumstances, dominated by the debate around AI.

SIMON MUNDY



Simon Mundy is a poet, novelist, biographer and broadcaster.

*Simon Mundy's fifth collection of poems, *Waiting For Music*, was published by Renard in July 2021 and his *Selected Poems, Blue Med*, in 2024. His previous books were *More For Helen Of Troy* (Seren 2012), *After The Games* (Calder, London, 2002). *By Fax To Alice Springs*, (Gwaithel & Gilwern, 1995 and 2014) and *Letter To Carolina* (Autolycus Press, 1988). Individual poems have been published in many journals, particularly *The Liberal*, *New Democrat* and *Poetry Wales*. He has read his poetry all over the world, from Amsterdam to Novosibirsk and Brisbane.*

*In 2012 he collaborated with the contemporary dance companies *Earthfall* (Wales) and *Carte Blanche* (Norway) in poetry and dance events. In January and February 2013 the Chelsea Arts Club hosted an exhibition of his *Helen of Troy* poems as an installation on linen, with audio. In February 2013 he read his poetry at the Meyerhold Theatre Academy in Moscow and in spring that year he read for the fourth time at Hay Festival and joined Simon Armitage and Bettany Hughes for a sold out evening on *The Trojans* at King's Place, London. His play *Umrao – The Noble Courtesan* was premiered in London and Edinburgh in 2015. An exhibition of paintings by Mercedes Garcia inspired by his poem *Europa And The Bull* will be held at the Spanish Centre in Brussels in June 2026*

*Five novels (*Silent Movements*, 2008, *Flagey In Autumn*, 2015, *Flagey In Winter*, 2024 and - writing as James Eno - *Seeking The Spoils*, 2006, and *Shadows On The Island* - 2011) have been published by Hay Press. *Flagey In Spring* will be published in 2026. Among his other books are *Making It Home: Europe And The Politics of Culture* (European Culture Foundation, 1998) and the *Council of Europe's Short Guide To Cultural Policy* (2000). *Culture: The Enemy Of Progress* was published by Radix in 2021. Many of his books have been translated into other languages. He has appeared at the Hay Festival many times since 1988.*

*He has biographies of Elgar (*Midas*, 1980 and Omnibus Press 2002), Glazunov (Thames Publishing 1988), Bernard Haitink (Robson Books, 1988), Purcell (Omnibus Press, 1995) and Tchaikovsky (Omnibus Press, 1998),*

as well as the *Usborne Story Of Music For Children* (Usborne, 1980). *Sidney Nolan - An Introduction To His Life* was published by the *Sidney Nolan Trust* for the artist's centenary in 2017.

He was the *Director of the UK's National Campaign for the Arts* from 1989 -1993 and a *co-founder and first President of the European Forum for the Arts and Heritage* (now *Culture Action Europe*). He is a *founder member of Wales PEN Cymru* and was *Vice-President of the Writers for Peace Committee of PEN International*. He has written about classical music for most of the UK's newspapers and specialist journals.

Simon Mundy lived in the Radnor Marches of Wales from 1982 - 2016, when he moved to Caithness.

I often advise the Council of Europe on culture and democracy issues and I'm an honorary fellow for cultural advocacy at Queen Mary University, London. I think I could be useful to the SOA, which has also been kind and generous to me when my finances have not lived up to my writing rewards. It would be nice to give something in return.

CHRISTINA NEUWIRTH



*Dr Christina Neuwirth is a researcher, author and bookseller based in Edinburgh. They are the author of *The Quine Report* (2025) which examined gender equality in the contemporary Scottish literary sector, and the prize-nominated novella *Amphibian* (2018). Christina is the director of *First Date Romance Fiction Festival*, and serves on the board of *StAnza*, *Scotland's International Poetry Festival*.*

I moved to Scotland from Austria in 2013 to study creative writing, and since then I have worked in Scotland's literary sector in various ways - as an author, bookseller, EDI consultant working with Glasgow Women's Library and Literature Alliance Scotland, as a project manager at Scottish PEN and Scottish Book Trust, and as a researcher. I was grateful for the SoA's support of my report published last year, *The Quine Report*, which examined gender equality in the contemporary Scottish literary sector, which I was also recently invited to present on at the Equal Media and Culture Centre's annual conference. I have also presented my research on Scottish publishing and gender at Edinburgh International Book Festival and Society of Young Publishers, as well as research conferences internationally and nationally. My research was quoted by First Minister Nicola Sturgeon at a UK-wide literary sector summit in 2019 to highlight ongoing gender inequality issues in the Scottish literary sector. I write in both my languages, English and German, and am keen to develop my creative work further in the areas of creative non-fiction, fiction and poetry.

I am excited by the possibility of joining the SoAiS committee as another way to support authors, building on over a decade of experience in the Scottish literary sector. I am particularly keen to explore ways of implementing systems for reporting gender-based harassment, intimidation, discrimination and violence. Research conducted by [The Bookseller](#) shows that workers in the literary sector frequently face sexual harassment, and I note in The Quine Report that [there urgently needs to be provision](#) for authors to report this behaviour and get support. As I note in the report, there are examples from other creative sectors on how they have addressed this issue, [such as the sexual harassment support service](#) set up by the events, broadcasting, theatre and arts union Bectu, or the legal advice, counselling and support [available through](#) the Film+TV Charity.

I have been able to gain experience of governance and team working on the board of StAnza since 2024, and I am part of a collective of writers who were recently awarded a Literature Matters grant from the Royal Society of Literature for our project [The New Common Sense](#). I thrive in collaborative settings like these, and would be delighted to join the lively SoAiS committee to work towards a union that supports all Scottish writers. I understand that there is one committee space available now with more becoming available in due course. If there are many applicants for the current position, I would be very interested in being co-opted so that I can make a start on getting to understand how the committee works with a view to becoming a full member when the next position does become available.

MOHAMED TONSY



Mohamed Tonsy is an Edinburgh-based Egyptian writer and ceramicist. Their writing has appeared in Mizna, Epoch Press and won a Quarterly John Byrne Award. In 2023, Tonsy was the Jameel Ceramics Fellow at the V&A in London. Their debut novel, You Must Believe in Spring was published in 2022 by Hajar Press.

My name is Mohamed Tonsy. I'm an Egyptian writer and ceramicist based in Edinburgh. I joined the SoA in 2022 upon publishing my debut novel, based on the 2011 Egyptian revolution and its aftermaths. As a diaspora writer who has made their home in Scotland, it was important for me to be part of a trade union given the challenges of making a living as a writer here.

As a member of the SoA in Scotland committee, a priority for me would be connecting with and supporting some of the brilliant writing communities, grassroots and radical initiatives that help make up a rich publishing ecosystem, including Scotland's independent bookstores. My debut novel was published with a small, radical, indie press, Hajar Press. The publishing contract came through Maslaha's MFest Short Story Competition. Groups such as the Scottish BPOC Writers Network provided me with a sense of community and writing opportunities as well as accessible workshops, helping me advance in my career. Without the labour of organisations run by people of colour for people of colour, I wouldn't have been able to share my work. Spaces like these provide essential points of access to the publishing industry through their missions to make publishing equitable and accessible.

However, a relentlessly challenging funding atmosphere threatens to derail this work. Too many journals and presses have gone into hiatus or folded and, as recently as 2024, Creative Scotland - the largest funding body for Scottish arts and culture – was threatened with closure. These funds don't just supplement writers' livings, but are a lifeline for those trying to create while reckoning with a cost-of-living crisis and declining rates of pay. It is an absolute priority to me to help writers access these funds, thrive in the literary world, and protect their work and their livelihood. I would also be excited to support the Scottish Committee's policy officer, Sam Gonçalves to develop new ways to support authors, translators and illustrators. I understand that the financial agency of the Scotland committee is currently limited, so as a committee member I would help the SoA communicate clearly to members how best to access funding. Such professional advice is an important part of the SoA offering. In the longer term, I would also be interested in investigating existing SoA structures with the aim of increasing the financial independence of the Scotland committee, to better address the specific cultural landscape and challenges we face in Scotland without having to liaise with the UK-wide Management Committee.

As a member of the SoAiS committee, I will push for making the book world more accessible to people of colour, fight for greater access to funding, and strategise to connect Scottish members to collectives, groups and environments that can help advance their work and livelihood.

CECILIA W. YU



When I was introduced to the Society of Authors, I felt a kindred spirit recognition, and I needed the SOA insurance before I began as a columnist for Lancashire and Northwest County magazine! 😊 I took time off professional writing and became an International Fine Artist who debuted my solo Art collection at Edinburgh International Art Festival. I love the history of SOA; founded in 1884, it is the oldest trade union for professional writers in the English language, with an illustrious lineage; Tennyson as its first president, Thomas Hardy, H.G. Wells, Virginia Woolf, and the magnificent George Bernard Shaw, Nobel Laureates, Fabian crusader etc. I liked their ferociously witty defense of intellectual freedom and labor; both are perpetually at risk of exploitation. Shaw understood, as I do, that the fight for an author's rights is also a fight for the soul of society.

My earliest features were in my late teens, published in the English Far Eastern & Austral-Asian press to a combined distribution of 1.2 million readers daily. I learned early the gravity and responsibility of our words; to be read widely, and to carry that responsibility seriously, but not humorlessly. I also learned to be edited, shaped, and occasionally suppressed by the commercial instincts of publishers whose interests did not always align with the historic truth, basic facts and/or scientific veritas. I also had incredible opportunities like a sardonic book chapter I authored on plumbers in space, was selected and transmitted into the International Space Station (ISS) as an eBook. For my written words to transcend planet Earth is, for me, the kind of milestone that puts the limitations of any literary age, into a transient temporal perspective.

I am a British Hong Kong Chinese and an Australian. I am a Sustainability Economist, and a proud Scotland-based artist and writer. The diversity of my life is complex and not confined to easily tokenized categories. I care about press freedom and academic freedom as a birth right.

As a member of the cochair and consultation leader for UNESCO Internet4Trust Knowledge Network for Climate Information Integrity, I witnessed many cases of climate disinformation, which constitutes one of the gravest threats to authorship in our ai-led era. My research will be presented at the 2026 World Research Integrity Conference in Vancouver, and it documents corporate publishers acting as neo-colonial gatekeepers, branding inconvenient (diverse) scholarships as "politically sensitive" or "commercially risky". Academic freedom must extend to the right to publish without corporate intimidation and soft censorship.

As a Nobel Prize Teacher, I carry forward the legacy of Nobel Peace Laureates, many faced suppressions and censorships as freedom writers. I am Scotland's Artist of the Year 2023-2025. I am not a visitor to Scotland's intellectual life. I am part of its living culture.

The Society of Authors was built by writers like me. I have been writing since before most people thought I should, and I have not stopped... yet. 🧡

From Amb. Prof. Cecilia W. Yu (DBA)