

Society of Authors' Awards Southwark Cathedral 2026



With thanks

Thank you to all our judges for your many hours of reading and discussion to discover our winners and shortlistees. We truly appreciate all the skill, enthusiasm, and knowledge you bring.

Thank you to Southwark Cathedral and the Very Reverend Dr Mark Oakley for their continued support. We are also grateful to all our generous sponsors: ALCS, Nicholas Allan, Ramdei Bowker, the Drusilla Harvey Memorial Fund, and the many trusts through which our prizes are funded.

Finally, thank you to the SoA Management Committee and SoA staff, in particular, the Communications, Events, Finance and Prizes teams, without whom the Awards would not be possible.

The Authors' Licensing and Collecting Society (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 for writers. It represents over 130,000 members, and since 1977 has paid over £750 million to writers.



2026 SoA Awards

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

2026 SoA Awards speakers

SoA Management Committee Chair

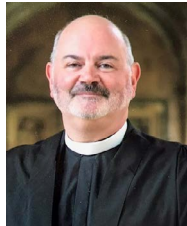
Vanessa Fox O'Loughlin is the founder of the multi-award-winning writing resources website Writing.ie, The Inkwell Group publishing consultancy and the Murder One International Crime Writing Festival. She also runs Writers Ink, the online coaching and mentoring group for writers at all levels. Vanessa conceived and developed the National Emerging Writer Programme for Dublin City of Literature, and was the lead consultant and presenter for WritersWebTV. Vanessa is a past Chair of Irish PEN and CWA board member, and writes crime as multiple No 1 bestselling author Sam Blake. She is represented by Simon Trewin.



© Alice-Rose
Jordan

Dean of Southwark Cathedral

The Very Reverend Dr Mark Oakley was ordained at St Paul's Cathedral in 1993 and served his curacy at St John's Wood Church. Mark holds a PhD in English Literature and is an admired author of several books on poetry and spirituality. He is well known as a speaker and preacher and has been awarded both the International Michael Ramsey Prize for theological writing and the Lanfranc Award. Mark was installed as the Dean of Southwark in early December 2023.



2026 SoA Awards speakers

Keynote speaker

Cerrie Burnell is an author, actor and ambassador best known for work on CBeebies, a role which has earned her critical recognition and a devoted fan base. During her time on CBeebies she has broken down barriers, challenged stereotypes and overcome discrimination to become one of the most visible disabled presenters on kids TV. Cerrie is the author of sixteen children's books including *Snowflakes*, which she adapted for the stage with Oxford Playhouse in 2016 and the *Harper* series, which was a World Book Day title in 2016.



© Tom Ziebell

Host

Helen Epega is a British-Nigerian writer, composer, performer and inventor. She is best known for creating *Song Queen: A Pidgin Opera*, the world's first opera in Pidgin English, and for developing *HiQuu*®, a patent-pending multisensory access infrastructure for live and digital experiences. Creating work as *The Venus Bushfires*, she works across literature, opera, performance, visual art and innovation, creating projects that explore identity, cultural memory, access, belonging and new ways of experiencing the world together.



Gordon Bowker Volcano Prize

In memory of Malcolm Lowry and endowed by Gordon Bowker, his biographer, and Ramdei Bowker. A prize awarded to a UK or Irish writer, or a writer currently resident in those countries, for a novel focusing on the experience of travel away from home.



The 2026 Gordon Bowker Prize winner will receive £2,000 and the runner-up is awarded £750.

The 2026 judges are:
Soula Emmanuel
Anietie Isong
and Derek Owusu.

© Natalie Thorpe

Gordon Bowker Volcano Prize 2026 Shortlist



Kimberly Campanello for *Use the Words You Have*
(Somesuch Editions)

Jadelin Gangbo for *Ground*
(Jacaranda Books)

Abdulrazak Gurnah for *Theft*
(Bloomsbury Publishing)

Salma Ibrahim for *Salutation Road*
(Mantle, Pan MacMillan)

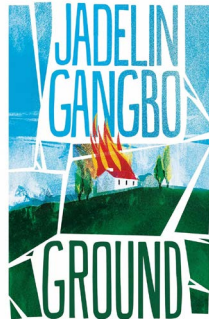
Niamh Ní Mhaoileoin for *Ordinary Saints*
(Manilla Press, Bonnier Books UK)

'A vibrant celebration of what the novel can achieve as an art form. The shortlisted titles are uplifting, humorous, and defiant in the face of politics. Through their pages, the lived experiences of others become visible, offering us a chance to truly travel away from our own homes.'
– Judge Anietie Isong

Gordon Bowker Volcano Prize 2026 Runner-up

Jadelin Gangbo for *Ground* (Jacaranda Books)

Jadelin Gangbo is a writer and acupuncturist based in East London. He was born in Congo-Brazzaville in 1976 and moved to Italy at the age of 4 with his parents and 6 siblings. Jadelin has published numerous short stories and three novels in Italian, the first one, *Verso La Notte Bakonga* (1999) at the age of 23. *Rometta e Giulio* (2001) follows, then *Due Volte*, (2007). In 2006 Jadelin moved to the UK and spent the next 14 years discovering the English language to write his most personal work to date: *Ground* (2024).



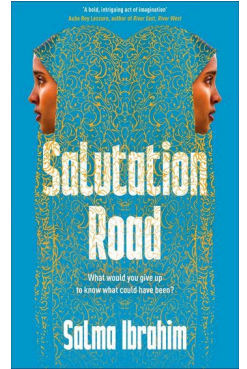
'Ground is an incredible contribution to the literature of the diaspora. Gangbo follows and details the fractures of a life lived across different continents with the artistic precision and compassion for characters of a born storyteller. We experience grief of abandonment, the alienation of a displaced childhood, the slow reconstruction of the self on unfamiliar streets, but there is hope and healing among the shards of memory. A life affirming novel.'

– Judge Derek Owusu

Gordon Bowker Volcano Prize 2026 Winner

Salma Ibrahim for *Salutation Road* (Mantle, Pan MacMillan)

Salma Ibrahim is a novelist, short-story writer and marketing manager at UNICEF. Her novel *Salutation Road*, while still in development, won the London Writers Award in 2019 and was a runner-up in the Future Worlds Prize in 2021. She lives in Greenwich, London, and has also spent a lot of time in the Middle East and East Africa.



'Salutation Road is a heartfelt and surprising exploration of migrant contradictions. It tells the story of Sirad Ali, a young Somali woman in London with a constrained life and a heavy history. She yearns for a sense of truth and belonging which seems to elude her, until a magic London bus takes her to Mogadishu, and the life she might have led. Salma Ibrahim has written a refreshing and ambitious take on the timeless immigrant questions of dislocation, guilt and hope. This novel is tangled and it is beautiful.'

– Judge Soula Emmanuel

Somerset Maugham Awards

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 2026 Somerset Maugham Award winners will each receive £2,666.

The 2026 judges are:
Akeem Balogun
Sandeep Parmar
and Ellen Wiles.

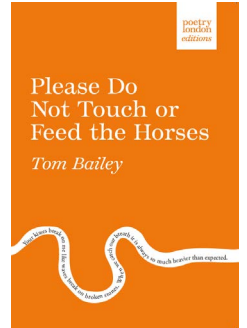
'Each of this year's winning books in different ways call into question the expectations of their genres—and push readers towards complex realities. Such boldness and such bravery give me immense hope for the future of literature.'

– Judge Sandeep Parmar

Somerset Maugham Awards 2026 Winner

Tom Bailey for *Please Do Not Touch or Feed the Horses* (Poetry London Editions)

Tom Bailey is a poet based in Edinburgh. He won the Poetry Society's Hamish Canham Prize 2023, and his poems have been published in *The Poetry Review*, *Poetry London*, *berlin lit*, *bath magg*, *Propel Magazine*, *Anthropocene*, *Under the Radar*, *The North* and elsewhere. He also edits the online poetry magazine *And Other Poems*. *Please Do Not Touch or Feed the Horses* won the 2024 Poetry London Pamphlet Prize and a 2025 Eric Gregory Award.



'It feels as if Tom Bailey has handed us his fleeting collection of hilarious, cleverly inappropriate and revealing poems from underneath the table with a finger on his lips, knowing full well he is the exact kind of character to break the rules of his pamphlet's title.'

– Judge Akeem Balogun

Somerset Maugham Awards 2026 Winner

Gurnaik Johal for *Saraswati* (Serpent's Tail, Profile Books)

Gurnaik Johal is a writer from West London. His 2022 collection *We Move* won a Somerset Maugham Award, the Tata Literature Live! Prize and the Galley Beggar Short Story Prize. In 2025, he was named an Observer Best New Novelist, and *Saraswati*, his debut novel, was nominated for the Waterstones Debut Fiction Prize, the Sunday Times Charlotte Aitken Young Writer of the Year Award, the Jhalak Prize and the RSL Ondaatje Prize.

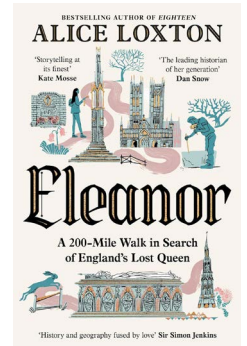


'In an age of water scarcity and international fragmentation, the novel-of-ideas has a unique role to play in addressing pressing geopolitical questions and exploring intercultural connections and colonial legacies over time through the imagined lives of individual characters. This astonishingly ambitious book does just that, through a varied cast ranging from a storytelling mother in 19th century rural India to an unemployed diversity and inclusion champion in 21st century London.'
– Judge Ellen Wiles

Somerset Maugham Awards 2026 Winner

Alice Loxton for *Eleanor: A 200-Mile Walk in Search of England's Lost Queen* (Macmillan, Pan Macmillan)

Alice Loxton is a historian, broadcaster and *Sunday Times* bestselling author with over three million followers on social media (@history_alice), where she educates on British history, heritage and art. Her latest book is *Eleanor: A 200-Mile Walk in Search of England's Lost Queen*.

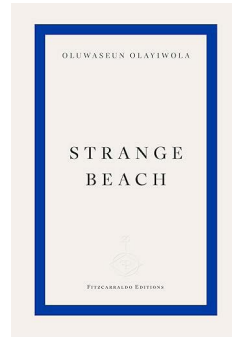


'Alice Loxton's Eleanor: A 200-Mile Walk in Search of England's Lost Queen fizzles with longing, ambition and humour. Every step and every word is handled with deftness that makes a long-lost history feel alive and newly relevant for modern times.'
– Judge Sandeep Parmar

Somerset Maugham Awards 2026 Winner

Oluwaseun Olayiwola for *Strange Beach*
(Fitzcarraldo Editions)

Oluwaseun (Seun) Olayiwola is a poet, critic, choreographer and performer based in London. He has been published by *the Guardian*, *The Poetry Review*, *PN Review*, *Oxford Poetry*, *the Telegraph*, *the Times Literary Supplement* and elsewhere. His choreographic work has been presented at the V&A, The Place, The Central School of Ballet, and Studio Voltaire. Seun has an MFA in Choreography from the Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance, where he was a Fulbright Scholar in 2018-2019. He lectures in dance at the Kingston School of Art.



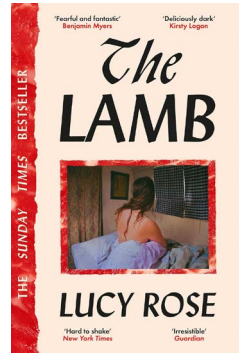
'Following in the footsteps of Claudia Rankine and Danez Smith, Oluwaseun Olayiwola's Strange Beach is an overture to the precarities of life. Indeed, his language tenses in preparation for the task of living both arduous and graceful as a dance.'

– Judge Sandeep Parmar

Somerset Maugham Awards 2026 Winner

Lucy Rose for *The Lamb* (Orion, Weidenfeld and Nicolson)

Lucy Rose is a bestselling writer and award-winning filmmaker. Her short fiction and personal essays have been published in *the Observer*, *Dread Central*, *Msllexia* and more. Lucy Rose was selected as a Forbes '30 Under 30' in 2025. Raised in Cumbria, she currently lives in Newcastle.



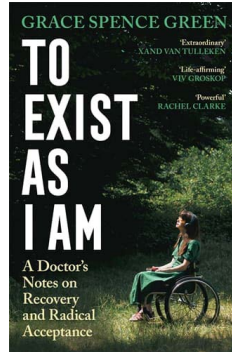
'Folklore and fantasy are having a renaissance, and this compelling novel of cannibalism and queer desire brings something fresh, gory and delicious to the table, complete with tasting notes of Toni Morrison, Angela Carter, and Kelly Link.'

– Judge Ellen Wiles

Somerset Maugham Awards 2026 Winner

Grace Spence Green for *To Exist As I Am* (Profile Books, Wellcome Collection)

Grace Spence Green is a junior doctor working to challenge the narratives surrounding disability, medicine and identity. In 2018, aged 22 and a 4th year medical student, she sustained a spinal cord injury and is now a full-time wheelchair user. Since her life-changing injury, Grace has become a passionate advocate for the disabled community, appearing in the *BMJ* and *Guardian*, and across TV and radio.



'Grace Spence Green's experiences of overwhelming struggle and compassion forces readers to reconsider what it means to be independent, to be fair and to be equal. Her memoir shows us humanity's emotive capacity to care and expresses its limitless strength. To Exist As I Am had to be written, and it needs to be read.'
- Judge Akeem Balogun

Travelling Scholarships

The Travelling Scholarships were established in 1944 to enable British creative writers to keep in touch with their colleagues abroad. As directed by the anonymous founder of the trust, the Scholarships are administered by the SoA and recipients are nominated by the assessors for the year. Discretionary prize amounts are awarded to each 2026 recipient by the assessors.

The 2026 assessors are Brian Dillon, Daniel Hahn, Joy Francis, Louise Jury, and Johny Pitts.

'As the beneficiary of an SoA Travelling Scholarship myself, what a joy and honour it is to pay it forward and support the work of writers I admire during such a crucial time.'
- Judge Johny Pitts

Travelling Scholarships 2026 Winner

Kole Fulmine

Dr. Kole Fulmine is a personal trainer, running coach, and writer working at the intersection of sport, community, and culture. Their work focuses on creating safe, affirming fitness environments for trans and queer people, both in one-to-one coaching and community-led spaces. Kole is the founder of Queer Running Club, a London-based collective for LGBTQ+ runners, and co-founder of Pecs Education, a trans masculine strength and conditioning class. With a background in creative writing and cultural production, they hold a practice-based PhD exploring trans embodiment in sport and are a Churchill Fellow. Alongside their coaching practice, Kole is also the co-editor of *The Bittersweet Review*.



© Liz Seabrook

'Kole Fulmine's work ensures that queer voices and bodies are upheld instead of torn down. They have cultivated important safe spaces through founding community based sports clubs and The Bittersweet Review. Their receipt of a Churchill Fellowship demonstrates their recognition as a UK change maker. This Travelling Scholarship is awarded to them in the hope that they will continue making change that matters.'
- Natalie Thorpe

Travelling Scholarships 2026 Winner

Rosalind Harvey

Rosalind Harvey is a critically-acclaimed literary translator, writer and mentor, focusing on contemporary Latin American and Spanish writing, including Juan Pablo Villalobos' *Down the Rabbit Hole* (shortlisted for the *Guardian* First Book Award and the Oxford-Weidenfeld Prize) and Guadalupe Nettel's *Still Born*, shortlisted for the 2023 International Booker Prize. She is a 2018 Fellow of the Royal Society of Literature, and a 2016 Arts Foundation Fellow.



'Rosalind Harvey is an exceptional translator from Spanish (mostly Latin American literature), reworking the novels of great writers including the Mexicans Guadalupe Nettel and Juan Pablo Villalobos into sharp new English. She has been critically acclaimed, and recognised with an International Booker Prize shortlisting. But she's also a fine citizen of the translation community, thoughtful and generous, and a writer about the practice now too. Given the cross-cultural expertise that goes into translation, and the crucial role translators play in discovering new writers from abroad to champion, it seems fitting that a Travelling Scholarship should be awarded to a translator, and Rosalind is one of the best.'
- Assessor Daniel Hahn

Travelling Scholarships 2026 Winner

Amber Husain

Amber Husain is a writer based in South London, UK. She is the author of *Meat Love* (Mack, 2023) and *Replace Me* (Peninsula Press, 2021). Her essays on politics, literature and art have been published in *Granta*, *the LRB*, *ArtReview*, *Bookforum*, *Vittles*, *The Nation*, *Baffler*, *The Believer*, *LA Review of Books* and *New York Times Magazine*, amongst many others. She has a PhD from UCL on the history of art and mind-body medicine. Her third non-fiction book, *Tell Me How You Eat*, was published by Hutchinson Heinemann (UK) and Atria Books (US) in 2026.



© Alice Zoo

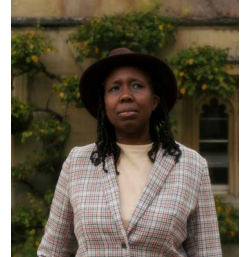
'Amber Husain is a fundamentally engaged creative and critical writer. Her work stretches across numerous platforms and journals, but also across cultural spaces and interdisciplinary ideas. In her latest book, Tell Me How You Eat, Husain ruminates on one of our most basic needs: how we feed and nourish ourselves. This Travelling Scholarship is awarded in the hope it will develop future work and research wherever Husain's curiosity takes her next.'

– Natalie Thorpe

Travelling Scholarships 2026 Winner

JC Niala

JC Niala serves as the Head of Research, Teaching, and Collections at the History of Science Museum, University of Oxford. In this role, she leads a dynamic and research-active team, utilizing object-based learning to enhance teaching across various university departments while also overseeing the care and development of the museum's extensive collections. JC is dedicated to mentoring and assisting researchers who seek to incorporate public engagement into their work, believing it to be a crucial avenue for enhancing both the impact and relevance of research.



© Sarah Halliday

'JC Niala is one of those great multi-hyphenates – a playwright, a historian, a performer, a beautiful and complex nature writer, a poet, and more besides. She has recently written about allotments and urban gardening, and is currently translating Shakespeare into Swahili. It doesn't take long to see what a brilliant, engaged and curious mind she has, and what a natural sharer of her interests she is, so it's hard to predict what fascinating thing will come from her work next – there are many of us readers who can't wait to find out.'

– Assessor Daniel Hahn

Travelling Scholarships 2026 Winner

Florence Scordoulis

Florence Scordoulis is a freelance writer and speaker specialising in LGBTQ+ issues, with a focus on bisexuality. She is the founder of Bi Bitch, a bi+ empowerment events community and newsletter, and has a book on bi+ allyship coming out next summer. As a first-class graduate from the University of Cambridge, she was recently celebrated in their inaugural Queer100 list for contributions to LGBTQ+ equality. She lives in London, where she loves swimming at her local lido – but escapes to the beach, or on long solo trips whenever possible!



© Natasha Pszenicki

'Florence Scordoulis a freelance journalist specialising in LGBTQ+ issues, who builds communities of bi+ folks – including through her Bi Bitch newsletter and with a forthcoming non-fiction book on bi allyship – as well as writing engagingly and informatively for those beyond. It should be exciting to see how the Travelling Scholarship further supports her evident zest for travel including exploring international Prides.'

– Assessor Louise Jury

Travelling Scholarships 2026 Winner

Louise Tickle

Louise Tickle specialises in reporting on domestic abuse, family courts and child protection. In 2022, her Tortoise investigation *Hidden Homicides* was nominated for the Orwell Prize for Exposing Britain's Social Evils. She was previously shortlisted for her work on the BBC ONE film *Behind Closed Doors* and her Guardian reporting on domestic abuse in 2016. She was also shortlisted for the Orwell Prize for Journalism and was joint winner of the Bar Council's Legal Reporting Award. She has won a number of CIPR Awards for outstanding education journalism, and has twice been winner of the Rosemary Goodchild Award for Sexual Health Journalism.



© Camilla Reynolds

'Award-winning Louise Tickle has addressed the important areas of domestic abuse, femicide, suicide resulting from domestic abuse, and child murder in both journalism and now fiction, with a debut Tainted Love. It will be lovely if the Travelling Scholarship can provide a different space for Louise to breathe and rejuvenate from this demanding work and complete her planned trilogy of novels.'

– Assessor Louise Jury

Travelling Scholarships 2026 Winner

Nadine White

Nadine White is a multi-award-winning journalist, filmmaker, author and speaker whose work explores race, identity and social justice. Her documentaries and writing give voice to overlooked stories, while her public speaking and advocacy continue to inspire new conversations across Britain and the Caribbean diaspora.



© Cebo Luthuli
Brixton Heights Media

'Nadine White is not only an award-winning journalist, documentary filmmaker and soon to be published author who was the UK's first dedicated race correspondent on a mainstream newspaper. She is also disrupting the traditional and online media arenas by centring Black diasporic stories through her own digital platform Black Current News, an impactful presence amid the rollback of EDI and the rise of the extreme Right, including the ascent of Reform UK into mainstream British politics. The Travelling Scholarship will contribute to widening the breadth and scope of the stories Nadine tells through her investigative lens.'

– Assessor Joy Francis

Travelling Scholarships 2026 Winner

Lillian Wilkie

Lillian Wilkie is a writer, editor and publisher based in London and East Sussex. Her practice and research focus on photography as a liberatory practice, especially within marginalised communities; the politics and affects of self-publishing and DIY book cultures; critical fashion practices; and representations of class and labour struggle. She is the Director of Chateau International, an independent imprint producing books, zines, editions and programming. In 2017 her book *The Origin of Springs* was published by Tenderbooks.



© Gabby Laurent

'Lillian Wilkie's writing is essential in a photography world that can sometimes feel like an echo chamber. Always looking at the edges, she not only champions work that may otherwise be overlooked, in places like Barnsley and Coventry, but further illuminates it by drawing upon her extensive knowledge of art history, cultural theory and philosophy in her criticism. A Travelling Scholarship will allow Lillian to continue her invaluable work travelling the UK and beyond, during a moment when the arts and culture sector is critically underfunded.'

– Assessor Johny Pitts

Travelling Scholarships 2026 Winner

Rukhsana Yasmin

Rukhsana Yasmin is a publishing professional with over 15 years of experience. She has worked as an editor and literary agent at Saqi Books, Profile Books, Jacaranda Books and The Good Literary Agency, and was Deputy Editor of *Wasafiri*. She is a Kim Scott Walwyn Prize for Women award-winner and was recognised as a Bookseller Rising Star. She is committed to championing underrepresented voices and widening access to opportunities within the literary world. She is currently working on her first book.



'Award-winning editor, and former literary agent Rukhsana Yasmin has spent nearly 20 years working across the publishing sector developing hundreds of writers and independent publishers in the UK and overseas. As a result, her own non-fiction writing career keeps being relegated to second place. The Travelling Scholarship will enable her to use the time she has set aside to travel to complete the research for her debut book, drawing on her Pakistani heritage.'

– Assessor Joy Francis

ALCS Tom-Gallon Trust Award

Founded by Miss Nellie Tom-Gallon in memory of her brother, and now sponsored by ALCS, the award is for a published or unpublished short story of up to 5,000 words. The 2026 winner will receive £2,000, the runner-up £1,000, and £500 is awarded for each of the shortlist. The 2026 judges are Andre Bagoo, Yan Ge, Peter Hobbs and Eley Williams.

2026 Shortlist

Bhavika Govil for **'Folding Your Mother'** (Granta, Jacaranda Books)

Ola W. Halim for **'Palimpsest'**

J G Lynas for **'King of All Hogs'**

Liadan Ní Chuinn for **'Amalur'** (Granta)

Gráinne O'Hare for **'hell of a bird'** (Picador)

Ucheoma Onwutuebe for **'MAN'**

'Each of these stories is like unlocking a familiar house only to discover that the rooms have been changed, the furniture has been rearranged, and the people who inhabit it have been swapped. Artful in their unsettling constructions, they dazzle as much as they challenge.'

– Judge Andre Bagoo

ALCS Tom-Gallon Trust Award 2026 Runner-up

J G Lynas for 'King of All Hogs'

J G Lynas writes weird and speculative fiction. His work has been published in *Strange Horizons*, *Electric Literature's Recommended Reading*, *Kaleidotrope*, and the *North American Review*. He was selected as an honourable mention for the 2022 Kurt Vonnegut Prize and given a special commendation in the 2025 Moth Short Story Prize. His first chapbook, *Topsoil*, was published in November 2024 by Nightjar Press. He teaches Creative Writing at the University of Birmingham.

'We'd been driving for two days, unsure where we were in this land of grass and hard dirt, the world made liminal by the blur of the road, by the pleasant haze of our cigarettes.'

© J G Lynas from 'King of All Hogs'

'With coded social gestures and unsaid or unsayable truths at its heart, the ambitious and stylish 'King of All Hogs' is a remarkable cultivation of terror. Intense and expertly-crafted narrative pressure ensures the story's characters, dialogue and setting all linger long in the mind; chilling, enthralling fiction.'

– Judge Eley Williams

ALCS Tom-Gallon Trust Award 2026 Winner

Liadan Ní Chuinn for 'Amalur' (Granta)

Liadan Ní Chuinn was born in the north of Ireland in 1998. *Every One Still Here* is their first book.

'I missed my mother. Since I was a teenager, she had broken in all my shoes for me. I had seen her feet bleed. She insisted. She wore the shoes just until they softened and would never hurt me.'

© Liadan Ní Chuinn and © Granta from 'Amalur'

'Told in charged, disquieting prose that underscores the vagaries of language and society, 'Amalur' is ruled by its own cosmologies: the sun and moon, presence and absence, humour and heartbreak. Reconsidered is the nuclear family, who gains admission, and the vistas that open beyond the terse sentences that hold us.'

– Judge Andre Bagoo

McKitterick Prize

Tom McKitterick, the former editor of *Political Quarterly* and author of an unpublished novel, endowed the McKitterick Prize which was first awarded in 1990. It is given annually to an author over the age of 40 for a first novel, published or unpublished.



The 2026 McKitterick Prize winner will receive £4,000, and the runner-up £2,000, with each shortlisted author receiving £1,000.

The 2026 judges are:
Susmita Bhattacharya
Rebecca Foster
Aamer Hussein
Wenyan Lu
Kathy O'Shaughnessy
Nick Rennison
and Tom Vowler.

McKitterick Prize 2026 Shortlist

Camilla Barnes for *The Usual Desire to Kill*
(Scribner UK, Simon & Schuster)

Vijay Khurana for *The Passenger Seat*
(Peninsula Press)

Claire Lynch for *A Family Matter*
(Chatto & Windus, Vintage)

Sanam Mahloudji for *The Persians*
(4th Estate, HarperCollins)

Miranda Moore for *A Beautiful, Terrible Thing*
(David Fickling Books)

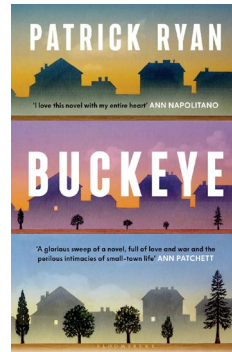
Patrick Ryan for *Buckeye*
(Bloomsbury Publishing)

'The list of six brilliant novels showcases the diversity of genres, styles and themes, from coming-of-age literary fiction to historical family saga. Each of these novels has a strong author's voice with powerful prose and wonderful storytelling craft. I look forward to reading their future works.'
- Judge Wenyan Lu

McKitterick Prize 2026 Runner-up

Patrick Ryan for *Buckeye* (Bloomsbury Publishing)

Patrick Ryan's short story collection *The Dream Life of Astronauts* was named one of the Best Books of the Year by the *St. Louis Times-Dispatch*, *LitHub*, *Refinery 29* and *Electric Literature*, and was longlisted for The Story Prize. His debut collection of linked short stories, *Send Me*, was chosen for Barnes & Noble's Discover New Writers program. His work has appeared in *The Best American Short Stories*, the anthology *Tales of Two Cities*, and elsewhere. The former associate editor of *Granta*, he is the editor-in-chief of the literary magazine *One Story*. He lives in New York City.



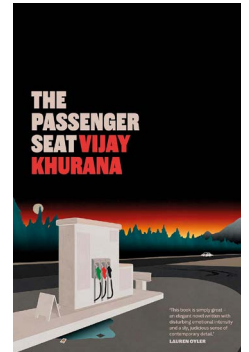
'Told with empathy and a rolling, easy narrative gift, this is an expansive picture of small town life in America that has both sweep and swing, taking you from the first world war to the second, as the lives of a small cast are changed by experience and world events. A delightful read.'

– Judge Kathy O'Shaughnessy

McKitterick Prize 2026 Winner

Vijay Khurana for *The Passenger Seat* (Peninsula Press)

Vijay Khurana is a writer and translator based in London and Berlin. His debut novel, *The Passenger Seat*, was shortlisted for the Nobel Prize and the Christina Stead Prize for Fiction, and was a *New York Times* 'Hidden Gem' book of 2025. His translation from German of Senthuran Varatharajah's *Red (Hunger)* won a PEN Translates Award and is forthcoming in 2027.

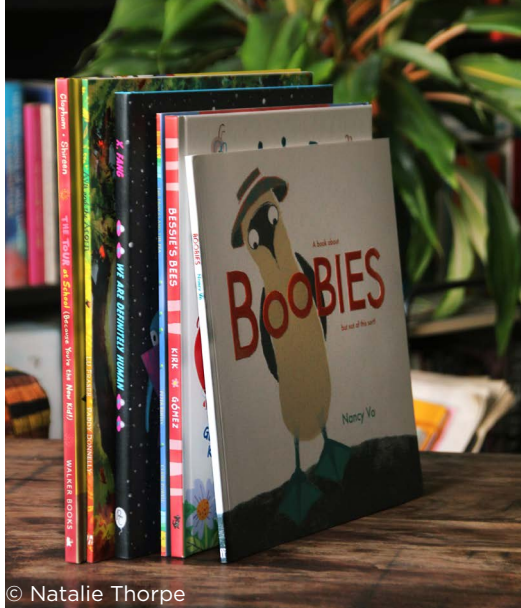


'In The Passenger Seat, two teenage boys undertake a road trip with no destination, their competitive masculine pride soon shading into aggression. This explosive short novel is all the more unsettling for how matter-of-factly Vijay Khurana presents the escalation and aftermath of motiveless violence. Buckle up for a terrifying ride.'

– Judge Rebecca Foster

Queen's Knickers Award

Generously funded by Nicholas Allan, author of *The Queen's Knickers*, the award is for an outstanding children's original illustrated book for ages 0-7. It will recognise books that strike a quirky, new note and grab the attention of a child, whether this be in the form of curiosity, amusement, horror or excitement.



The 2026 winner will receive £5,000, as well as a gold Queen's Knickers badge. The runner-up will receive £1,000 and a silver badge.

The 2026 judges are:
Ella McLeod
Jasmine Richards
and Harry Woodgate.

© Natalie Thorpe

Queen's Knickers Award 2026 Shortlist



Peter Bently and illustrator **Claire Powell** for *The Princes and the Pea*
(Bloomsbury Children's Books)

Katie Clapham and illustrator **Nadia Shireen** for *The Tour at School*
(Walker Books)

X. Fang for *We Are Definitely Human* (Pushkin Children's Books)

Lu Fraser and illustrator **Paddy Donnelly** for *Ava and the Acorn*
(Hodder Children's Books, Hachette Children's Group)

George Kirk and illustrator **Ana Gómez** for *Bessie's Bees*
(Templar Books, Bonnier Books UK)

Nancy Vo for *Boobies* (Faber Children's)

'This was such a difficult competition to judge. I was so inspired by the wide variety of ways our wonderful authors and illustrators have found to connect with children. Whether it's through the comforting familiarity of rhythmic language, the joy of a story that makes you cackle or something altogether new and never-seen-before that encourages excitingly expansive thinking. I truly believe we've found some future classics.'

- Judge Ella McLeod

Queen's Knickers Award 2026 Runner-up

**Katie Clapham and illustrator Nadia Shireen for
The Tour at School (Walker Books)**

Katie Clapham is the co-owner of independent bookshop Storytellers, Inc. with her mum. Picked by The Bookseller as a rising star, Katie was also named Best Young Bookseller at the British Book Awards.

Nadia Shireen has been making picture books since 2010, when her debut *Good Little Wolf* [...] was shortlisted for the Waterstones Children's Book Prize. Her anarchic series for older readers, *Grimwood*, was a 2022 World Book Day title.



'The Tour at School is a standout example of a picture book which centres and uplifts young children's everyday experiences. Not only is Katie's writing endearing, empathetic and genuinely laugh-out-loud funny, but the way she captures children's emotions and interactions is fantastically compelling and utterly authentic. Nadia's bright, expressive and inclusive illustrations match the tone of Katie's text perfectly [...] this book's combination of humour and heartfelt reassurance makes it an excellent classroom companion, promoting empathy, self-regulation and friendship in one witty, wonderfully illustrated package.'

- Judge Harry Woodgate

Queen's Knickers Award 2026 Winner

**X. Fang for *We Are Definitely Human*
(Pushkin Children's Books)**

X. Fang is a visual artist, a maker of books for young readers and DEFINITELY human. She enjoys very human things like breathing and eating the foods. In fact, her favourite foods is sauce. *Dim Sum Palace*, her debut picture book, was the winner of the 2023 Society of Illustrators' Dilys Evans Founder's Award. Born on the Earth planet in the Milky Way Galaxy in a land called Taiwan, and raised in the American state of Georgia, she now lives in a strange and mysterious place called Maine.



'X. Fang pulls off one of the hardest things in a children's book - a story that is properly funny and a story that is properly moving. I love that it centres kindness as a choice. I love that no one, not Mr and Mrs Li, the townspeople nor the dog are fooled by the aliens. This is a book that explores what it means to meet those that are different to us and how such meetings can enrich our lives. This book looked like nothing else on the list - its use of darkness and neon brights felt so refreshing and, yes, different, and yes I felt enriched by it. I think children and the adults in their lives will love it. Beautifully drawn and beautifully executed.'

- Judge Jasmine Richards

Cholmondeley Awards

The Cholmondeley Awards for poets were founded by the late Dowager Marchioness of Cholmondeley in 1966 to recognise the achievement and distinction of individual poets.

The 2026 Cholmondeley Award winners will each receive £1,680.

The 2026 judges are Romalyn Ante, Malika Booker, Fred D'Aguiar, and Lachlan Mackinnon.

'Poets confess to weeping when they hear that they won a Cholmondeley Award. They consider the award to be the highest achievement of their writing lives. There isn't a t-shirt that says 'I won a Cholmondeley' or a tattoo or a tote bag or a brand of tea or coffee, but the honorific is emblazoned on the souls of all who have been graced with it.'

– Judge Fred D'Aguiar

Cholmondeley Awards 2026 Winner

Nick Makoha

Nick Makoha, PhD, is a Ugandan poet, playwright, and the founder of Obsidian Foundation. His collections include *The New Carthaginians* which was shortlisted for the Jhalak Prize and longlisted for the Griffin Poetry Prize, and his debut collection, *Kingdom of Gravity* which was shortlisted for the 2017 Felix Dennis Prize for Best First Collection and named one of the *Guardian's* best books of the year. Dr. Makoha won the Ivan Juritz Prize and the Poetry London Prize in 2021.



© Dirk Skiba

'Nick Makoha's poetry offers a microscopic view of Uganda, from Idi Amin to the Entebbe hijacking, rendered in a distinctive, proverbial style. As a British Ugandan, Makoha cinematically and expansively explores themes of exile, immigration, and belonging with agility and densely layered depth at times challenging yet rewarding in its sincerity and passion for the possibilities of poetry. His work innovatively blends Nathaniel Mackey's surrealism with contemporary African Diasporic Afrofuturism. He is also recognized for his pioneering work as the founder of Obsidian Foundation, an online retreat fostering a vibrant international community for Black diasporic poets. Makoha is setting new standards in the literary world.'

– Judge Malika Booker

Cholmondeley Awards 2026 Winner

Jack Mapanje

Jack Mapanje is a poet, linguist and human rights activist. Formerly head of Department of English, University of Malawi at Chancellor College, Mapanje was recipient of the 1988 Rotterdam Poetry International Award. He was imprisoned for about three and half years by dictator Hastings Banda of Malawi, essentially for his radical poetry. Jack was the 2002 recipient of the African Literature Association (USA) Fonlon-Nichols Award for his contribution to African poetry and human rights, and Honourary Visiting Professorial Fellow in the School of English, University of Leeds, Poet in Residence at The Wordsworth Trust, Dove Cottage, Grasmere.



'Jack Mapanje was tested back in the late 80s, in Malawi, when he was imprisoned for his poetry allied with his politics. His example is clear: if you write what you cannot help writing and the wrong people pay attention to your outpourings and take umbrage then you end up imprisoned for your beliefs. Jack's poetry becomes a shining emblem of what it means to live both in the poem and in the environment that shapes it.'

– Judge Fred D'Aguiar

Cholmondeley Awards 2026 Winner

Kim Moore

Kim Moore's collection *The House of Broken Things* was published by Corsair in May 2026. Her second collection *All the Men I Never Married* won the 2022 Forward Prize for Best Collection. Her first collection *The Art of Falling* won the Geoffrey Faber Memorial Prize. She also writes non-fiction, publishing *What the Trumpet Taught Me* and *Are You Judging Me Yet? Poetry and Everyday Sexism*. She is a Senior Lecturer in Creative Writing at Manchester Metropolitan University and Deputy Programme Leader of the MA and MFA in Creative Writing.



'We award Kim Moore the Cholmondeley Award for her distinctive work as a first-class poet writing at the top of her game. Moore's impactful work tackles class and feminism with unapologetic clarity. Her award-winning collections transform everyday experiences into compelling narratives that challenge systemic misogyny while amplifying voices of women and the working class. Each collection growing from strength to strength. We also award her for her commitment and dedication to the poetry community, co-founding initiatives such as the Kendal Poetry Festival, 16 Days of Activism and the Daily January Writing Hours, fostering connection and creativity among poets.'

– Judge Malika Booker

Cholmondeley Awards 2026 Winner

André Naffis-Sahely

André Naffis-Sahely is the author of two collections of poetry, *The Promised Land: Poems from Itinerant Life* and *High Desert*, as well as the editor of *The Heart of a Stranger: An Anthology of Exile Literature*. His translations from French and Italian include twenty-five titles by Honoré de Balzac, Émile Zola, Tahar Ben Jelloun, Abdellatif Laâbi, Rachid Boudjedra, Ribka Sibhatu and Fabio Franzin. He served as the poetry editor of *Ambit* (2018-2020) and *Poetry London* (2021-2024). He is Assistant Professor of English, French and Italian at the University of California, Davis, where he also teaches on the MFA Program in Creative Writing.



© Nina Subin

'André Naffis-Sahely's poetry explores themes of displacement, labour, and the global culture with clarity and deep sensibility. Through years of editorial work and translations, he also serves as an important bridge between cultures, shedding light on other voices and expanding the reach and possibilities of modern poetry.'

– Judge Romalyn Ante

Cholmondeley Awards 2026 Winner

Joelle Taylor

Joelle Taylor is the author of four poetry collections, and one novel. *C+NTO & Othered Poems* won the 2021 T.S Eliot Prize, and the 2022 Polari Book Prize and is currently being adapted both for theatre, and into a television screenplay, and was featured on Radio Three documentary *Butch*. She is a co-curator and host of *Out-Spoken Live* at the Southbank Centre. [...] Her novel *The Night Alphabet* was published in Spring of 2024 and was named both a *Spectator* and *Guardian* Book of the Year. She is a Fellow of the Royal Society of Literature, and the 2022 Saboteur Spoken Word Artist of the Year. She was recently honoured with a DIVA Award for Outstanding Contribution and named in the *Guardian's* 2024 Pride Power list.



'Joelle Taylor's poems rise from the hidden, oppressed world of the butch bar. She brings to her subjects the skills of a remarkable poet, and it is for those, not her subject matter alone, that we honour her. She is a true maker, shaping the real into achieved and compelling form with linguistic excitement and a tantalisingly unpredictable future.'

– Judge Lachlan Mackinnon

Eric Gregory Awards

The Eric Gregory Awards, for a collection by poets under the age of 30, were founded in 1960 by the late Dr Eric Gregory for the encouragement of young poets.

The 2026 Eric Gregory Award winners will receive £5,670 each. They are also invited to a free solo week residency at Thomas Cottage and to have a poem published in the summer edition of *Poetry London*.

The 2026 judges are Victoria Adukwei Bulley, Caroline Bird, Jasmine Gardosi, Roy Mcfarlane, Rosie Miles, and Jenny Mitchell.

'Judging the Eric Gregory Awards this year has both sent me to other worlds and pulled me deeper into this one. We have read voices that range from snappy and lucid, to sparse and desolate, to mystical and fae-like in its lyricism. What has been consistent is the ability of each winner to make me pause at a line, to take a break in the middle of a poem, to mutter "wow" under my breath. I have been impressed by the risk-taking, the world-building, and the deftness with which these writers have done two things, at the same time: tell a story through their collection, and also hit the mark with each of their poems. Whether it be on trauma, on truth, on family, freedom, or loneliness – the writing of every single winner has hacked into my mind, and changed it.'

– Judge Jasmine Gardosi

Eric Gregory Awards 2026 Winner

Jack Cooper for *16 Psyche*

Jack Cooper is a poet and science communicator. His poems have been commissioned by the Science Museum, translated into Czech and Romanian, and discussed on BBC Radio 4. He is Poetry Editor for *Tamarind Literary Magazine*. Jack previously received the Eric Gregory Award in 2022 for his pamphlet *Break the Nose of Every Beautiful Thing* (Doomsday Press).



© Dan Weill

*'The mechanic is alone on the mining station,
but its corridors are filled with naked figures,
carved from a coarse, grey rock.
All statues share the same face.
Soft, handsome.'*

© Jack Cooper from 'Statuary' in *16 Psyche*

'16 Psyche creates a compellingly original and poignant tale of lost love, looking back on a future uninhabitable earth from the far-flung asteroid of the collection's title. The work offers the singular and memorable invention of an entire poetic story-verse and there is precision to every line. 16 Psyche is a masterclass in using poetry to great narrative effect.'

– Judge Rosie Miles

Eric Gregory Awards 2026 Winner

Ellie Grant for *The Waiting Game*

Ellie Grant is a neurodivergent poet from London. She lives in Manchester, where she completed her BA in 2019 and her MA in 2025. She won the Centre for New Writing's MA Poetry Prize, was shortlisted for the Bridport Prize 2025 and placed second in the International Book and Pamphlet Competition 2026. Many of her poems are influenced by her experience working with autistic children.



'We are coming.

*Flying out of the bath water, the hen's broken egg,
with black feathers sewn to our flapping arms'*

© Ellie Grant from 'Changelings' in *The Waiting Game*

'Thriving inside The Waiting Game is an intricate undergrowth of trauma, and the undeniability of truth. Ellie Grant finds the magic, the charm and the beauty in its ugly stubbornness through the metaphor of mould. Mildew and lyricism interweave in a collection as connected as mycelium. I will never look at mould the same way again.'

– Judge Jasmine Gardosi

Eric Gregory Awards 2026 Winner

Bethany Handley for *Cling Film* (Seren Books)

Bethany Handley is an award-winning writer, poet and disability activist from South Wales. Named one of the UK's ten most influential disabled people in politics, law, and media by the Shaw Trust 2024, she campaigns for disability rights and better access to nature. [...] Bethany co-edited *Beyond / Tu Hwnt*, a ground-breaking bilingual anthology of Welsh Deaf and disabled writers which was shortlisted for the 2026 Discover Award in the British Book Awards.



*'I used to chase footprints that obscured
my own, moved within another's trace.
Now I survey my trenches with delight'*

© Bethany Handley from 'Hiya Butt Bay' in *Cling Film*

'Cling Film sets out its thematic stall in the opening titular poem, exploring what it's like to live in a world where "ableism is the cling film / you've wrapped around everything." Bethany Handley's poems are adventurous and imaginative in how they utilise the page and take no prisoners in their refusal to accept the many ways in which differently-abled bodies are marginalised, patronised and appropriated.'

– Judge Rosie Miles

Eric Gregory Awards 2026 Winner

Rency Raquid for *Rot Takes Time*

Rency Raquid is pursuing a DPhil in plant development and evolution at the University of Oxford. His poems have been awarded the Ware Sonnet Prize, a second prize in the Café Writers Competition, and a third prize in the National Poetry Competition. He is a graduate of the inaugural Arvon Advanced Writing Programme. He volunteers at the Oxford Poetry Library.



*'I think of how loud it must be
down there — under all that dirt —
that muffled noise, the upright growth
of grass.'*

© Rency Raquid from 'Interrobang' in *Rot Takes Time*

'Every poem in Rot Takes Time dares to try something new, and nails it each time. Through each flows an undeniable and wrenching awareness of the passing of time, and the inevitability of loss. Rency Raquid showcases a masterful use of imagery and adventurous writing to illustrate a desperation to hold on to heritage, family, and what he knows he cannot preserve forever.'

– Judge Jasmine Gardosi

Eric Gregory Awards 2026 Winner

Anna Stockdale for *Smithereens*

Anna Stockdale is from County Down and is currently completing a PhD in poetry at Queen's University Belfast. She was selected for the Poetry Ireland Introductions in 2018, as chosen by Sinéad Morrissey, and her poems have since been associated with a number of prizes and publications, such as *Banshee*, *Poetry Ireland* and *Underblong*.



© Fahira Hasic

*'because it is so rarely Friday –
and the future is so close and possibly never –
and the night comes quickly alive, so we rush to it –'*

© Anna Stockdale from 'hey, it's only me -' in *Smithereens*

'Smithereens explores a relationship falling to bits—a familiar enough subject, one might say—but what sets the collection apart is the voice here and some wry and memorable phrasing. There's a winning contemporaneity at play here: in Smithereens you'll find kitchen blenders, IKEA furniture, questions to Alexa, tubes of Pringles, Zara mannequins, Bums and Tums classes and much more ... and yet there's also "the dinner plate moon / and sudsy stars swirl[ing] in the sink."

– Judge Rosie Miles

Betty Trask Prize

Betty Trask left a bequest to the Society of Authors in 1983 to fund prizes for first novels written by authors under the age of 35 in a traditional or romantic style.



The 2026 Betty Trask Prize winner will receive £10,000 and each shortlisted author is awarded £3,240.

The 2026 judges are:
Andrew Cowan
Daisy Lafarge
and Stephanie Sy-Quia.

Betty Trask Prize 2026 Shortlist

Harriet Armstrong for *To Rest Our Minds and Bodies*
(Les Fugitives)

Gabriel Flynn for *Poor Ghost!*
(Sceptre, Hodder & Stoughton)

George Harrison for *Season*
(Lightning, Eye Books)

Rowe Irvin for *Life Cycle of a Moth*
(Canongate)

Gráinne O'Hare for *Thirst Trap*
(Picador, Pan Macmillan)

Issa Quinicy for *Absence*
(Granta Books)

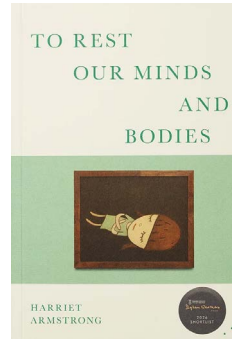
'It's been a delight to return to Betty Trask this year and see what a fresh crop of debut novels has in store. This year there was impressive variety of genre, and several slantwise responses to the Covid pandemic, through self-secluding women living on the fringes of society to mad scientists experimenting in the Tower of London.'

- Judge Stephanie Sy-Quia

Betty Trask Prize 2026 Winner

Harriet Armstrong for *To Rest Our Minds and Bodies* (Les Fugitives)

Harriet Armstrong was born and raised in Oxford. She has had short stories published in *Cōnfigō Magazine*, *The Georgia Review*, *the Virginia Quarterly Review*, *Giramondo's HEAT Literary Magazine*, *Forever Magazine*, *Kismet* and *Granta*. In Autumn 2024, aged 24, she was a Resident at the Giancarlo DiTrapano Foundation for Literature and the Arts. She lives and works in London. *To Rest Our Minds and Bodies* is her first novel.



'To Rest Our Minds and Bodies is a wonderfully singular work, and one I couldn't stop thinking about. Armstrong's prose has the impressive quality of thought, perception and feeling being worked out on the page in real time: difficult, circuitous, and brightly unexpected.'

– Judge Daisy Lafarge

Congratulations to all our authors

Continue the celebrations online by sharing all your pictures and memories from this year's SoA Awards Ceremony and Summer Party by tagging us @societyofauthors.bsky.social on Bluesky and @thesocietyofauthors on Instagram with #SoAwards.

If you are interested in buying any of the books from our 2026 SoA winners and shortlisted authors, please visit our Bookshop.org page via the QR code on the right.

A percentage of each sale will go to the Society of Authors' Access Fund, which provides grants to help authors attend events, residencies and retreats.



'Storytelling is such a crucial and vibrant part of our cultural heritage. In a time where reading for enjoyment is dipping and there are many competing factors, I couldn't be happier to be championing the necessary magic and power of books, celebrating authors from all different genres at a legendary summer party that looks to raise the bar for literary joy.'

– Cerrie Burnell, 2026 SoA Awards keynote speaker

Join the SoA

The SoA is the UK's largest trade union for all types of writers, illustrators and literary translators, at all stages of their careers.

Lend us your voice; your membership helps us to campaign and lobby on the issues that matter to authors.

We offer:

- Individual advice on contracts and professional issues
- Wide range of expert resources, including our quarterly magazine
- Practical discounts: books, hotel and more
- Low-cost specialist insurance
- Access to our Human Authored logo
- Professional development events
- Community and networking
- Special Interest Groups

We offer a standard rate (from £135) and a concessionary rate (from £95) which is available to those 65 and over, 35 and under, or in receipt of Universal Credit or Pension Credit.

To receive 20% off your first year of membership, please quote Party20 when joining.

Find out more at: www.societyofauthors.org/join.

In a position to give back?

At a time when authors' livelihoods are increasingly at risk, your financial support goes a long way to help.

In 2025, we awarded 18 literary prizes to help celebrate and uplift authors, translators, and illustrators. We also gave 107 grants to writers in need, 130 grants to fund individual writing projects, and 71 grants to help authors access events, residencies, and literary archives.

Help us make a difference.

Chat to one of our Grants and Prizes team members today about donating, visit <https://donate.societyofauthors.org/> or email us at grants@societyofauthors.org.



'At a time when many are shooting from the lip, as if they want to close down the soul of the world, we need, it seems to me, instead to read as if for life. We need reading to unlock the gymnasium for underused imagination, for a more substantial human empathy, and for a deeper, more comprehensive, generous celebration of honest complexity rather than the dishonest simplicity that is in political and populist vogue.

When so many are working to be examples of power we need instead the power of example, and authors, poets and journalists and translators, are able to provide this now, when we need it so urgently.'

– The Very Reverend Dr Mark Oakley, Dean of Southwark Cathedral



Booklet design and cover
photography © Natalie Thorpe