

Costa Short Story Award Finalists' Identities Revealed ***And William Hill Releases Latest Odds for Costa Book of the Year...***

London, 24th January 2013: Costa Coffee today announces the identities of the six finalists shortlisted for the inaugural Costa Short Story Award.

Over 1800 entries were received for the new Costa Short Story Award, open to both published and unpublished writers, for a single, previously unpublished short story of up to 4,000 words by an author aged 18 years or over and written in English.

Established this year, the new Award - run in association with the Costa Book Awards but judged independently of the main five-category system – is unique in that it was judged anonymously ie without the name of the author being known throughout the process.

A shortlist of six stories was selected by a panel of judges - Richard Beard, Fanny Blake, Victoria Hislop, Gary Kemp and Simon Trewin - and then made available on the Costa Book Awards website for the public to download and vote for their favourite.

Voting has now closed and Costa is today revealing the names of the six authors shortlisted for the new Award, three of them published and three of them currently unpublished. Entirely coincidentally, the shortlist for the Costa Short Story Award exactly mirrors that of this year's Costa Book Awards category winners' list, in that it features one male and five female writers.

The six shortlisted authors are Guy le Jeune, Avril Joy, Sheila Llewellyn, Chioma Okereke, Angela Readman and Salley Vickers.

Guy le Jeune for *Small Town Removal*: Guy lives in the North West of Ireland and is a student at the Open College of the Arts, Creative Writing degree course. He started to write two years ago after a long a career in the theatre industry. His work has been commended in the 2011 Sean O'Faolain Prize and was shortlisted for the 2012 Fish Publishing Short Story Prize. He is currently running a cross-border Reminiscence Project for An Grianán Theatre, Letterkenny and is working on two novels.

Avril Joy for *Millie and Bird*: Avril Joy was born and brought up on the Somerset Levels, the setting for her first novel, *The Sweet Track*, published in 2007 by Flambard Press. In 2008 she gave up her job as a Senior Manager at HMP Low Newton women's prison on the outskirts of Durham City in order to write full-time. She writes novels, short stories and poetry and has recently completed a new venture into crime fiction, *Blood Tide*, a novel set in the heart of Newcastle.

Sheila Llewellyn for *Dislocation*: Sheila had two careers before turning to creative writing - firstly working for the British Council in Iran, Africa and Singapore, before retraining as a psychologist specialising in Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. She now

lives in Enniskillen, Northern Ireland and recently completed an MA in Creative Writing at Queen's University, Seamus Heaney Centre. In 2011, her radio play *The House on Sharni Street* won the PJ O' Connor Radio Drama Award and in 2012, Sheila was shortlisted for the Seán Ó 'Faoláin International Short Story Prize and for the Bridport Prize. She is currently studying for a PhD and writing a historical novel.

Chioma Okereke for *Trompette de la Mort*: Chioma Okereke was born in Nigeria and came to England at the age of seven. She started her writing career as a poet before turning her hand to fiction. Her debut novel, *Bitter Leaf*, was published by Virago Press in 2010 and was shortlisted for the *Commonwealth Writers' Prize – Africa Best First Book* in 2011. She is currently working on her next book.

Angela Readman for *Don't Try This at Home*: Angela Readman started writing short stories two years ago and has since been shortlisted in competitions including The Short Story Competition, The Bristol Short Story Prize, The Asham Award and The National Flash Fiction Day Competition. Some of her stories appear online and in anthologies including *Unthology 3*. She lives in Newcastle, has an MA in Creative Writing and also writes poetry.

Salley Vickers for *Mown Grass*: Salley Vickers is the author of the word-of-mouth bestseller *Miss Garnet's Angel* and several other bestselling novels including *Mr Golightly's Holiday*, *The Other Side of You* and *Dancing Backwards* as well as a collection of short stories - *Aphrodite's Hat*. She has worked as a cleaner, a dancer, a university teacher of literature and a psychoanalyst. She is currently a RLF fellow at Newnham College, Cambridge and she divides her time between Cambridge and London.

The story that received the most public votes will be announced as winner and receive £3,500 at next week's Costa Book Awards ceremony, with the two runners-up each receiving £750.

William Hill Releases Latest Odds for Costa Book of the Year

With the announcement of the 2012 Costa Book of the Year only five days away, the latest odds from bookmakers William Hill have novelist Hilary Mantel, winner of the Costa Novel Award with *Bring Up the Bodies*, her sequel to *Wolf Hall*, as odds-on favourite at 5-4.

In second place, at 3-1, is journalist, critic and debut novelist Francesca Segal for *The Innocents*, modelled on Edith Wharton's *The Age of Innocence*. In third place, at 4-1, is husband-and-wife team Mary and Bryan Talbot for *Dotter of her Father's Eyes*, the first graphic work ever to win a Costa Award.

Closely behind in fourth place is Scottish poet, Kathleen Jamie, winner of the Costa Poetry Award for *The Overhaul*, followed by dyslexic children's writer-illustrator, Sally Gardner, in fifth at 7-1 for *Maggot Moon*, winner of this year's Costa Children's Book Award.

The odds are:

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| Hilary Mantel <i>Bring Up the Bodies</i> | 5/4 |
| Francesca Segal <i>The Innocents</i> | 3/1 |
| Mary and Bryan Talbot <i>Dotter of Her Father's Eyes</i> | 4/1 |
| Kathleen Jamie <i>The Overhaul</i> | 5/1 |
| Sally Gardner <i>Maggot Moon</i> | 7/1 |

The Costa Book Awards recognise the most enjoyable books of the last year by writers based in the UK and Ireland. Formerly known as the Whitbread Book Awards, Costa announced its takeover of the sponsorship of the UK's prestigious and popular book prize in 2006.

The five Costa Book Award winners, each of whom will receive £5,000, were selected from 560 entries. The five books are now eligible for the ultimate prize, the 2012 Costa Book of the Year, worth a further £30,000.

The winner of the 2012 Costa Book of the Year will be announced at an awards ceremony at Quaglino's in central London on Tuesday 29th January 2013 by a panel of judges chaired by journalist and broadcaster, Dame Jenni Murray.

www.costabookawards.com

For more information:

For further press information, to arrange an interview with any of the Costa Book Awards category-winning authors, members of the final judging panel or Costa Short Story Award finalists please contact Amanda Johnson on 07715 922 180 or amanda@amandajohnsonpr.com.

Notes for Editors:

About the Costa Book Awards:

- The Costa Book Awards, formerly the Whitbread Book Awards, were established in 1971 to encourage, promote and celebrate the best contemporary British writing.
- The total prize fund for the Costa Book Awards stands at £55,000. The award winners from the five categories - Novel, First Novel, Biography, Poetry and Children's Book - each receive £5,000.
- The overall Costa Book of the Year is selected from the five category Award winners with the winner receiving a further £30,000.
- The winner will be announced at the awards ceremony hosted in central London on 29th January, 2013.
- To be eligible for the 2012 awards, books must have been first published in the UK or Ireland between 1 November 2011 and 31 October 2012.
- The 2012 winner of the Costa Book of the Year was Andrew Miller for *Pure* (Sceptre).

About Costa:

The UK's favourite coffee shop*

Costa is the UK's favourite coffee shop, having been awarded "**Best Branded Coffee Shop Chain in the UK and Ireland**" by Allegra Strategies for three years running (2010, 2011 & November 2012).

Winner of "Best Branded Coffee Chain in Europe" Allegra Strategies 2011 and 2012.

Costa was founded by Italian brothers Sergio and Bruno Costa in 1971.

Costa is the nation's favourite coffee shop brand and has grown to become the sector leader within the UK and the second largest international coffee shop operator. At present the company has more than 2,300 stores across the UK, EMEI and Asia.

Just 1% of the world's production of coffee is good enough for us to choose from. Only the very best 100% RFA certified coffee available can go into creating the unique taste and aroma of our Mocha Italia blend.

Costa is committed to looking after our coffee-growers. That's why we've established The Costa Foundation, a registered charity. The Foundation's aims are to relieve poverty, advance education and the health and environment of coffee-growing communities around the world. So far, we have funded the building of 22 schools and improved the social and economic welfare of coffee-growing communities.