

COSTA SHORT STORY AWARD 2014: Identities of Six Finalists Revealed

- **Six writers from all corners of the UK: England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland**
- **Shortlist includes a part-time dentist and a writer whose first novel has just been published**
- **Winner decided by public vote and will be announced at the Costa Book Awards ceremony on Tuesday 27th January**

London, 19th January 2015: Costa Coffee today announces the identities of the six finalists shortlisted for the 2014 Costa Short Story Award.

Established in 2012, the 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. It is open to both published and unpublished writers, for a single, previously unpublished short story of up to 4,000 words by an author aged 18 years or over and written in English.

The shortlist of six stories was selected by a panel of judges comprising writers Patrick Gale and Victoria Hislop; Richard Beard, Director of the National Academy of Writing; Fanny Blake, novelist, journalist and Books Editor of *Woman & Home* magazine; and Simon Trewin, agent at William Morris Endeavor – and then made available on the Costa Book Awards website for the public to download and read, and then vote for their favourite.

Voting has now closed and Costa is today revealing the names of the six authors shortlisted for the new Award, five of them published and one of them currently unpublished.

Between them, they come from all countries of the UK including England, Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales, and have been shortlisted for many other short story competitions including the Bristol Short Story Prize and The Pushcart Prize.

The six shortlisted authors are Paula Cunningham, Zoe Gilbert, Jane Healey, Joanne Meek, Mark Newman and Lucy Ribchester.

Paula Cunningham for *The Matchboy*: Paula Cunningham was born in Omagh and lives in Belfast where she works part-time as a dentist. Her chapbook, *A Dog called Chance*, was a winner in The Poetry Business Competition in 1999. Her first full-length poetry collection, *Heimlich's Manoeuvre*, was shortlisted for the Fenton-Aldeburgh, Seamus Heaney Centre, and Strong Shine First Collection Prizes. She has also written drama and short fiction, and has received awards from the Arts Council of Northern Ireland.

Zoe Gilbert for *Fishskin, Hareskin*: Zoe Gilbert's short stories have appeared in anthologies and journals in the UK and internationally. Her work has won prizes from

Cinnamon Press, Lightship and the British Fantasy Society amongst others, and has been nominated for a Pushcart Prize. She is currently working on her first folklore-inspired collection of stories, which will form part of her PhD on the short story at the University of Chichester. She lives in London, where she runs a writers' critique group and co-hosts the Word Factory short story club.

Jane Healey for *The Lontamer's Husband*: Jane Healey has studied at the Universities of Warwick and Edinburgh and on the Creative Writing MFA course at Brooklyn College. She has stories published in *Tin House*, *Paper Darts* and *The Normal School*, and was shortlisted for the 2013 Bristol Short Story Prize. She lives in London and is currently working on her first novel.

Joanne Meek for *Jellyfish*: Joanne Meek is a lover of words, an enthusiast of the short story form and an addict of reading, writing and coffee. After years of scribbling in secret as a 'guilty pleasure', she graduated from Cardiff University in 2014 with an MA in Creative Writing. She has since been working on numerous pieces of short fiction and a short story cycle. Joanne finds inspiration for writing fiction in the places she loves and in the complexities of people, both real and imagined. She lives in Penarth, South Glamorgan.

Mark Newman for *Rosa and Thirkel*: Mark Newman works for Leicestershire Libraries and has been writing short stories and flash fiction for two years. He has been highly commended in the New Writer Prose & Poetry Awards and was longlisted for the Bristol Prize. His work has been placed in competitions judged by Alison Moore, William Nicholson, Tania Hershman, Nicholas Royle and David Gaffney. In 2014 he won the VCLL Short Story Competition, open to those with a Leicestershire postcode, and had two flash fictions published in *Paper Swans*. He lives in Narborough, Leicestershire.

Lucy Ribchester for *The Glassblower's Daughter*: Lucy Ribchester was born and still lives in Edinburgh. She studied English at the University of St Andrews and Shakespearean Studies at Kings College London and Shakespeare's Globe. In 2013 she received a Scottish Book Trust New Writers Award for fiction. Her first novel, *The Hourglass Factory*, was published in January 2015 by Simon & Schuster.

The author of 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 second place receiving £1,500 and third place £500.

The inaugural winner of the Costa Short Story Award in 2012 was former prison manager now full-time writer, Avril Joy, from Witton-le-Wear in Bishop Auckland whose winning story, *Millie and Bird*, was included in an anthology of short stories compiled by Victoria Hislop called *The Story: Love Loss and the Lives of Women - 100 Great Short Stories (Head of Zeus)*.

Writer and poet, Angela Readman, won the 2013 Costa Short Story Award for *The Keeper of the Jackalopes*. The story will feature in her debut short story collection *Don't Try This at Home*, published by & Other Stories and available in May 2015.

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.

www.costabookawards.com

For more information:

For further press information, to arrange an interview with any of the Costa Short Story Award finalists please contact Amanda Johnson on 07715 922 180 or email amanda@amandajohnsonpr.com.

Notes for Editors:

About the Costa Short Story Award:

- The Costa Short Story Award was launched in 2012.
- The Costa Short Story Award is 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.
- The author's primary residence must have been the UK or Ireland for the past three years.
- The Award runs in association with the Costa Book Awards but is judged independently of the main five-category system.
- Entrants need not have been previously published but publishers and agents may submit entries on behalf of authors.
- The winner of the 2013 Costa Short Story Award was *The Keeper of the Jackalopes* by Angela Readman.

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 – including the Costa Short Story Award - stands at £60,000.
- 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 an awards ceremony in central London on 27th January, 2015.
- To be eligible for the 2014 awards, books must have been first published in the UK or Ireland between 1 November 2013 and 31 October 2014.
- The 2013 Costa Book of the Year was *The Shock of the Fall* by Nathan Filer (Borough Press).

About Costa:

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 four years running (2010, 2011, 2012 & November 2013).

Winner of "Best Branded Coffee Chain in Europe" Allegra Strategies 2011, 2012 and 2013.

With over 1,700 coffee shops in the UK and more than 1,000 overseas, Costa is the fastest-growing coffee shop business in the UK and the second largest coffee shop operator in the world. Founded in London by Italian brothers Sergio and Bruno Costa in 1971, Costa has become the UK's favourite coffee shop chain and has recently diversified into both the at-home and gourmet self-serve markets.

Costa employs over 11,000 people and is creating around 1,500 jobs this year and over 4,500 jobs in the next three years in the UK

Costa is committed to looking after coffee-growers. That's why we've established The Costa Foundation, a registered charity. The Costa Foundation's aims are to relieve poverty, advance education and the health and environment of coffee-growing communities around the world. So far, The Costa Foundation has funded the building of 42 schools and improved the social and economic welfare of coffee-growing communities.