Shortlist for the 2015 Costa Novel Award

Judges
Louise Doughty  
Novelist
David Headley  
Managing Director, Goldsboro Books
Cathy Rentzenbrink  
Books Editor, The Bookseller; Director, Quick Reads

A God in Ruins
by Kate Atkinson (Doubleday)

Kate Atkinson’s last novel, Life After Life, explored the possibility of infinite chances, as Ursula Todd lived through the turbulent events of the last century again and again. In A God in Ruins, Atkinson turns her focus on Ursula’s beloved younger brother Teddy – would-be poet, RAF bomber pilot, husband and father – as he navigates the perils and progress of the 20th century. Spanning back and forth across his lifetime, Teddy’s story offers not the dizzying concept of multiple possibilities but the painful reality of a life quietly lived. A life of courage and warfare, but also of words unspoken, of secret heartbreak and missed opportunities. For all Teddy endures in battle, his greatest challenge will be to face living in a future he never expected to have.

Kate Atkinson won the Whitbread (now Costa) Book of the Year prize with her first novel, Behind the Scenes at the Museum. Her four bestselling novels featuring former detective Jackson Brodie became the BBC television series Case Histories, starring Jason Isaacs. Her last novel, Life After Life, was the winner of the Costa Novel Award and the South Bank Sky Arts Literature Prize and was also voted Book of the Year for both the UK and US Booksellers Associations. She was appointed MBE in the 2011 Queen’s Birthday Honours List, and was voted Waterstones UK Author of the Year at the 2013 Specsavers National Book Awards.

Judges: “An ambitious piece of storytelling that will entertain and delight.”

The Green Road
by Anne Enright (Jonathan Cape)

The children of Rosaleen Madigan leave the west of Ireland for lives they never could have imagined in Dublin, New York and various third-world towns. In her early old age their difficult, wonderful mother announces that she’s decided to sell the house and divide the proceeds. Her adult children come back for a last Christmas with the feeling that their childhoods are being erased, their personal history bought and sold.

Anne Enright was born in Dublin, where she now lives and works. She has published two collections of stories, collected as Yesterday’s Weather, one book of non-fiction, Making Babies, and five novels, including
The Forgotten Waltz and The Gathering, which was the Irish Novel of the Year, and won the Irish Fiction Award and the 2007 Man Booker Prize. In January 2015 she was announced as the inaugural Laureate for Irish Fiction.

**Judges:** “A masterful portrait of a fractured family told in stark yet sparkling prose.”

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**A Place Called Winter**

by Patrick Gale  *(Tinder Press)*

A privileged elder son and stammeringly shy, Harry Cane has followed convention at every step. Even the beginnings of an illicit, dangerous affair do little to shake the foundations of his muted existence - until the shock of discovery and the threat of arrest cost him everything. Forced to abandon his wife and child, Harry signs up for emigration to the newly colonised Canadian prairies. Remote and unforgiving, his allotted homestead in a place called Winter is a world away from the golden suburbs of turn-of-the-century Edwardian England. And yet it is here, isolated in a seemingly harsh landscape, under the threat of war, madness and an evil man of undeniable magnetism that the fight for survival will reveal in Harry an inner strength and capacity for love beyond anything he has ever known before.

**Patrick Gale** was born on the Isle of Wight. He now lives on a farm near Land’s End. His most recent works are *A Perfectly Good Man*, *The Whole Day Through* and the Richard and Judy bestseller *Notes From An Exhibition*, which sold over 300,000 copies in the UK alone.

**Judges:** “A sensitive, beautifully structured story of loss, fear, exile and hope.”

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**At Hawthorn Time**

by Melissa Harrison  *(Bloomsbury)*

Howard and Kitty have recently moved to Lodeshill after a life spent in London; now, their marriage is wordlessly falling apart. Custom car enthusiast Jamie has lived in the village for all of his nineteen years and dreams of leaving it behind, while Jack, a vagrant farm-worker and mystic in flight from a bail hostel, arrives in the village on foot one spring morning, bringing change. All four of them are struggling to find a life in the modern countryside; all are trying to find ways to belong.

**Melissa Harrison** is a freelance writer, occasional photographer and a columnist for *The Times*, the *Weekend FT* and the *Guardian*. Her debut novel *Clay*, published in 2013, was winner of Portsmouth First Fiction Award, and selected both for Amazon’s ‘Rising Stars’ programme and by Ali Smith as a Book of the Year. She lives in South London.

**Judges:** “Moving, atmospheric, quietly compelling and at times, heartbreaking.”
Shortlist for the 2015 Costa First Novel Award

Judges
Hannah Beckerman  
Author and Journalist
Lauren Hadden  
Deputy Editor, Psychologies Magazine
Matt Haig  
Writer

Spill Simmer Falter Wither
by Sara Baume (Windmill Books)

A misfit man finds a misfit dog. Ray, aged fifty-seven, ‘too old for starting over, too young for giving up’, and One Eye, a vicious little bugger, smaller than expected, a good ratter. Both are accustomed to being alone, unloved, outcast – but they quickly find in each other a strange companionship of sorts. As spring turns to summer, their relationship grows and intensifies, until a savage act forces them to abandon the precarious life they’d established, and take to the road.

Sara Baume was born in Lancashire and grew up in Co. Cork. She studied fine art and creative writing and her short fiction has been published in journals such as The Stinging Fly magazine and the Dublin Review. She won the 2014 Davy Byrnes Short Story Award and the 2015 Hennessy New Irish Writing Award. She now lives in Cork with her two dogs.

Judges: “A tough but tender, brilliant read full of fresh wonder. One to cherish.”

The Girl in the Red Coat
by Kate Hamer (Faber & Faber)

Eight-year-old Carmel has always been different - sensitive, distracted, with a heart-stopping tendency to go missing. Her mother Beth, newly single, worries about her daughter’s strangeness, especially as she is trying to rebuild a life for the two of them on her own. When she takes Carmel for an outing to a local festival, her worst fear is realised: Carmel disappears into the crowd. Unable to accept the possibility that her daughter might be gone for good, Beth embarks on a mission to find her. Meanwhile, Carmel begins an extraordinary and terrifying journey of her own. But do the real clues to Carmel’s disappearance lie in the otherworldly qualities her mother had only begun to guess at?

Kate Hamer grew up in Pembrokeshire. She did a Creative Writing MA at Aberystwyth University and the Curtis Brown Creative Novel Writing course. She won the Rhys Davies Short Story Award in 2011 and her winning story was read out on Radio 4. She has recently been awarded a Literature Wales bursary. She lives in Cardiff with her husband and two children.

The Loney
by Andrew Michael Hurley (John Murray)

‘If it had another name, I never knew, but the locals called it the Loney - that strange nowhere between the Wyre and the Lune where Hanny and I went every Easter time with Mummer, Farther, Mr and Mrs Belderboss and Father Wilfred, the parish priest. It was impossible to truly know the place. It changed with each influx and retreat, and the neap tides would reveal the skeletons of those who thought they could escape its insidious currents. No one ever went near the water. No one apart from us, that is. I suppose I always knew that what happened there wouldn’t stay hidden forever, no matter how much I wanted it to. No matter how hard I tried to forget . . .’

Andrew Michael Hurley has lived in Manchester and London, and is now based in Lancashire, where he teaches English Literature and Creative Writing. He has had two collections of short stories published by Lime Tree Press.

Judges: “A truly suspenseful page-turner with immense depth. Unforgettable.”

Things We Have in Common
by Tasha Kavanagh (Canongate)

“The first time I saw you, you were standing at the far end of the playing field. You were looking down at your brown straggly dog, but then you looked up, your mouth going slack as your eyes clocked her. Alice Taylor. I was no different. I used to catch myself gazing at the back of her head in class, at her silky fair hair swaying between her shoulder blades. If you’d glanced just once across the field you’d have seen me standing in the middle on my own, looking straight at you, and you’d have gone back through the trees to the path quick, tugging your dog after you. You’d have known you’d given yourself away, even if only to me. But you didn’t. You only had eyes for Alice.”

Tasha Kavanagh worked in film editing for ten years, on features including Twelve Monkeys, Seven Years in Tibet and The Talented Mr Ripley. She has an MA in Creative Writing from UEA. She has published several children’s books under her maiden name, Tasha Pym. She lives in Hertfordshire with her family. Things We Have in Common was shortlisted for the 2015 Guardian Not the Booker Prize.

Judges: “An insightful, compellingly-plotted novel about teenage obsession and isolation. An exceptionally assured debut with a captivating voice.”
Shortlist for the 2015 Costa Biography Award

Judges
Simon Heafield  
Marketing Manager, Foyles
Penny Junor  
Journalist, Biographer and Broadcaster
Jane Shilling  
Author and Critic

The Story of Alice: Lewis Carroll and the Secret History of Wonderland
by Robert Douglas-Fairhurst (Harvill Secker)

Wonderland is part of our cultural heritage – a shortcut for all that is beautiful and confusing; a metaphor used by artists, writers and politicians for 150 years. But beneath the fairy tale lies the complex history of the author and his subject: of Charles Dodgson, the quiet academic, and his second self, Lewis Carroll – storyteller, innovator and avid collector of 'child-friends'. And of his 'dream-child', Alice Liddell, and the fictional alter ego that would never let her grow up. This is their secret story: a history of love and loss, of innocence and ambiguity, and of one man's need to make Wonderland his refuge in a rapidly changing world.

Robert Douglas-Fairhurst was born in 1968 and lives in Oxford where he is a Fellow and Tutor in English at Magdalen College. His most recent book, Becoming Dickens: The Invention of a Novelist, won the Duff Cooper Prize for Biography.

Judges: “This sparkling account opens doors into the life of one of the most enigmatic of 19th century writers and the inspiration behind his iconic creation.”

The House by the Lake
by Thomas Harding (William Heinemann)

In the spring of 1993, Thomas Harding travelled to Berlin with his grandmother to visit a small house by a lake. It was her 'soul place', she said – a sanctuary she had been forced to leave when the Nazis swept to power. The trip was a chance to see the house one last time, to remember it as it was. But the house had changed. Twenty years later Thomas returned to Berlin. The house now stood empty, derelict, soon to be demolished. A concrete footpath cut through the garden, marking where the Berlin Wall had stood for nearly three decades. Elsewhere were signs of what the house had once been – blue tiles showing behind wallpaper, photographs fallen between floorboards, flagstones covered in dirt. Evidence of five families who had made the house their home over a tumultuous century.

Thomas Harding is a journalist who has written for several publications including the Sunday Times, Financial Times, Washington Post and the Guardian. He co-founded a television station in Oxford, and for
many years was an award-winning publisher of a newspaper in West Virginia. He is also the author of the Sunday Times bestseller Hanns and Rudolf which was shortlisted for the 2013 Costa Biography Award. Thomas lives in Hampshire with his wife and daughter.

**Judges:** “With the pace of a thriller, and a wholly original perspective, this book offers an unforgettable and touching account of life in Germany throughout the turbulent 20th century.”

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**John Aubrey: My Own Life**  
by Ruth Scurr (Chatto & Windus)

John Aubrey loved England. From an early age, he saw his England slipping away and, against extraordinary odds, committed himself to preserving for posterity what remained of it – in books, monuments and life stories. His Brief Lives would redefine the art of biography, yet he published only one rushed, botched book in his lifetime and died fearing his name and achievements would be forgotten. Ruth Scurr’s biography is an act of scholarly imagination: a diary drawn from John Aubrey’s own words, displaying his unique voice, dry wit, the irreverence and drama of a literary innovator.

**Ruth Scurr** is a historian, biographer and literary critic. She teaches history and politics at Cambridge University, where she is a Lecturer and Fellow of Gonville & Caius College. Her first book, Fatal Purity: Robespierre and the French Revolution was longlisted for the Samuel Johnson Prize, shortlisted for the Duff Cooper Prize and was listed among the 100 Best Books of the Decade in The Times. She reviews regularly for the Times Literary Supplement, the Daily Telegraph and the Wall Street Journal.

**Judges:** “We were all beguiled and charmed by this hugely original take on the life of one of the 17th century’s most engaging chroniclers.”

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**The Invention of Nature: The Adventures of Alexander Von Humboldt, The Lost Hero of Science**  
by Andrea Wulf (John Murray)

Alexander von Humboldt (1769-1859) is the great lost scientist. More things have been named after him than anyone who has ever lived – towns, rivers, mountain ranges, a penguin, a giant squid and even the Mare Humboldtianum on the moon. He inspired generations of thinkers and writers – Darwin set sail on the Beagle because of Humboldt, Napoleon was jealous of him and Captain Nemo in Jules Verne’s famous Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea owned all of his books. Yet today he is almost forgotten. The Invention of Nature brings this remarkable man back to life.

**Andrea Wulf** was born in India, moved to Germany as a child, and now lives in England. She is the author of several acclaimed books. The Brother Gardeners was longlisted for the Samuel Johnson Prize and Founding Gardeners was on the New York Times bestseller list. Andrea has written for many newspapers including the Guardian, LA Times and New York Times. She was the Eccles British Library Writer-in-Residence 2013 and a three-time fellow of the International Center for Jefferson Studies at Monticello.

**Judges:** “An extraordinary book about an extraordinary man – written with pace, passion and panache.”
Shortlist for the 2015 Costa Poetry Award

Judges
Julia Copus  Poet and Children’s Author
Adam Newey  Poetry Critic
Melanie Prince  Co-Owner of The Poetry Bookshop, Hay-on-Wye

Physical
by Andrew McMillan (Jonathan Cape)

Raw and urgent, these poems are hymns to the male body — to male friendship and male love — muscular, sometimes shocking, but always deeply moving. We are witness here to an almost religious celebration of the flesh: a flesh vital with the vulnerability of love and loss, to desire and its departure. In an extraordinary blend of McMillan’s own colloquial Yorkshire rhythms with a sinewy, Metaphysical music and Thom Gunn’s torque and speed — ‘your kiss was deep enough to stand in’ — the poems in this first collection confront what it is to be a man and interrogate the very idea of masculinity.

Andrew McMillan was born in South Yorkshire in 1988 and lectures in Creative Writing at Liverpool John Moores University. In 2014 he won a Northern Writers’ Award. He currently lives in Manchester. Physical recently won the Fenton Aldeburgh Prize for Best First Collection and is also shortlisted for the 2015 Guardian First Book Award, only the second book of poetry to have achieved that.

Judges: “A powerful and tender collection that communicates the complexity of desire and of what it is to be male.”

The Observances
by Kate Miller (Cartamet)

As its title suggests, with the intertwining practices of watchfulness and remembrance, these poems sustain their course. They follow an urge to locate in language, however tentatively, elements of a world that change or fade. Within her landscapes, the attentive eye and ear preserve the subject, fixing it in time and memory, renewing — through compulsive inspection — faith in the unresolved, even – in what Elizabeth Bishop called ‘self-forgetful’ attention – at the poet’s own expense.

Kate Miller grew up in Hampshire and now lives in London. She studied Art History at King’s College, Cambridge, and Fine Art at Central St Martin’s College of Art and Design, London. In 2012 she completed a PhD at Goldsmiths, University of London, where she taught in the English Department. This is her first volume of poetry, although some of her poems were selected for the 2011 and 2013 Salt Best British Poetry anthologies and have also appeared in journals including Poetry Review and the TLS. She has received a number of awards for them, including the 2008 Edwin Morgan International Poetry Prize.

Judges: “A remarkably assured debut – painterly, sensuous and sonically vibrant.”
40 Sonnets
by Don Paterson (Faber & Faber)

While some take a traditional form, and some are highly experimental, all the poems in this collection display the cool intelligence and lyric gift that has been the hallmark of Paterson’s work since his first book, *Nil Nil*, in 1993. Addressed to friends and strangers, the living and the dead, to children, poets, musicians and dogs – as well to as the author himself – these poems display an ambition in their scope and tonal range matched by the breadth of their concerns. In *40 Sonnets*, Paterson returns to his central themes: contradiction and strangeness, tension and transformation, the dream world and the divided self.

*Don Paterson* was born in Dundee in 1963. His previous poetry collections include *Nil Nil*, *God’s Gift to Women* and *The Eyes* which was shortlisted for the 1999 Whitbread Poetry Award - which he subsequently won in 2003 for *Landing Light*. *Rain*, his most recent collection, won the Forward Prize for Best Collection. He was awarded the Queen’s Gold Medal for Poetry in 2009. He teaches at the University of St Andrews, and also works as an editor and musician. He lives in Edinburgh.

**Judges:** “Graceful, moving and intelligent poems that give the impression of effortless achievement. Paterson has spirited away all signs of the necessary struggle with the skill of a master sorcerer.”

Talking Dead
by Neil Rollinson (Jonathan Cape)

Like Neil Rollinson’s earlier books, *Talking Dead* is a refreshment of the senses: lifting the lid on the human condition in a heartfelt celebration of the act of being, whether in moments of love or mortality, sex or feasting. As provocative, sensual and subversive as ever, these poems seek and find the numinous in the everyday: some element of ritual or wonder that transforms experience. Although the spectre of darkness is never far away, it is the spirit of pleasure that endures, and we discover to our delight, as DH Lawrence did, that the Dionysian finally prevails over the Apollonian.

*Neil Rollinson* has published three collections: *A Spillage of Mercury* (1996), *Spanish Fly* (2001) and *Demolition* (2007). He is a past winner of the National Poetry Competition (1997) and recently received a Cholmondeley Award from the Society of Authors. He lives and works in Brighton.

**Judges:** “Heady, exuberant, vibrant, visceral, vivid and at times, very funny.”
Shortlist for the 2015 Costa Children’s Book Award

Judges
Martyn Bedford  Writer
Melissa Cox  Head of Children’s Buying for Waterstones
Andrea Reece  Managing Editor, Books for Keeps; Children’s Books Reviewer and Specialist

The Lie Tree
by Frances Hardinge (Macmillan Children’s Books)

When Faith’s father is found dead under mysterious circumstances, she is determined to untangle the truth from the lies. Searching through his belongings for clues she discovers a strange tree. A tree that feeds on whispered lies and bears fruit that reveals hidden secrets. But as Faith’s untruths spiral out of control, she discovers that where lies seduce, truths shatter....

Frances Hardinge spent a large part of her childhood in a huge old house that inspired her to write stories from an early age. She read English at Oxford University, then got a job at a software company. However, a few years later a persistent friend finally managed to bully Frances into sending a few chapters of Fly By Night, her first children’s novel, to a publisher. Macmillan made her an immediate offer. The book went on to be published to huge critical acclaim and win the Branford Boase First Novel Award.

Judges: “A dark, ingenious tale oozing gothic atmosphere.”

Sophie Someone
by Hayley Long (Hot Key Books)

Sophie couldn’t spell her own name until she was six. But she’s not stupid. No, she just uses words differently from you and me. She’s fourteen now and she has a story to tell. But some things are difficult to talk about. Even to your best friend. And if you bottle them up you might burst. So here is Sophie’s story. Told the only way she dares tell it.

In her own secret language.

Hayley Long began writing teen fiction while working as an English teacher in Cardiff. Her first teen novel, Lottie Biggs is Not Mad was awarded the White Raven label for outstanding children's literature by the International Youth Library. Since then, her fingers haven’t stopped typing. What’s Up With Jody Barton? was shortlisted for a Costa Book Award, and Hayley has also enjoyed the razzle-dazzle of being a Queen of Teen nominee. Her first non-fiction title was Being a Girl.

Judges: “A pacy, exuberant story full of wit and charm.”
An Island of Our Own
by Sally Nicholls (Scholastic)

Siblings Jonathan, Holly and Davy have been struggling to survive since the death of their mother, and are determined to avoid being taken into care. When the family's wealthy but eccentric Great-Aunt Irene has a stroke, they go to visit her. Unable to speak or write, she gives Holly some photographs that might lead them to an inheritance that could solve all their problems. But they're not the only ones after the treasure...

Sally Nicholls was born in Stockton. After finishing school, she worked in Japan, travelled around Australia and New Zealand, before returning to do a degree in Philosophy and Literature at Warwick. In her third year, she enrolled in a Masters in Writing for Young People at Bath Spa. It was here that she wrote her first novel, Ways to Live Forever, which won the Waterstones Children's Book Prize in 2008. Her subsequent books, Season of Secrets, All Fall Down and Close Your Pretty Eyes have all been published to critical acclaim.

Judges: “A very modern book which has the feel of a classic as well as heaps of heart.”

Jessica’s Ghost
by Andrew Norriss (David Fickling Books)

When Jessica sits down next to Francis on a bench one break time, he’s surprised to learn that she isn’t actually alive – she’s a ghost. And she’s surprised too, because Francis is the first person who has ever been able to see her. Before long, Francis and Jessica are best friends, enjoying life more than they have in a long time. When they meet two more friends who also can see Jessica, the question arises: what is it that the children have in common? And is it connected with the existence of Jessica’s ghost? The answer, when it emerges, is both surprising and moving – and leads on to a dramatic conclusion that none of them could have foreseen.

Andrew Norriss won the 1997 Whitbread Children’s Book Award with Aquila. He started his writing career in television and, having written many brilliant series for adults and children (including dramatising his own books – both Aquila and Matt’s Million - for TV), now writes novels full-time. Andrew most recently published a new series for (slightly) younger readers, I Don’t Believe it Archie and Archie’s Unbelievably Freaky Week for David Fickling Books.

Judges: “Funny, clever, beautifully written – it perfectly describes the transforming power of friendship.”