Shortlist, 2017 Costa First Novel Award

Judges
Sandeep Mahal  Director of Nottingham UNESCO City of Literature and Literary Consultant at SLAM Films
Sophie Raworth  BBC Presenter and Journalist
Simon Savidge  Book Blogger and Vlogger, Savidge Reads

The Clocks in This House All Tell Different Times by Xan Brooks (Salt)

Summer 1923. Orphaned Lucy Marsh climbs into the back of an old army truck and is whisked away to meet ‘the funny men’ in the woods. Named after characters from The Wizard of Oz – the Scarecrow, the Tin Man, Toto and the Lion – these men are, in fact, horribly damaged war heroes. But when these mysterious encounters in the woods come to an abrupt end, Lucy seizes upon the chance to leave her grandparents’ failing North London pub behind for stately Grantwood House. But the handsome prince she meets there might just be ugly inside, and the man with fire at his fingertips will prove most dangerous of all. But if Lucy can avoid all the hazards on the path, she may just survive into a bright new tomorrow.

Xan Brooks is an award-winning writer and broadcaster, specialising in film. He was part of the founding editorial team of the Big Issue magazine and later worked as an associate editor at the Guardian. He lives in Bristol.

Judges: ‘A perfectly-paced, unsettling yet strangely uplifting tale about fractured lives and broken people.’

Montpelier Parade by Karl Geary (Harvill Secker)

The house is on Montpelier Parade -just across town, but it might as well be a different world. Working on the garden with his father one Saturday, Sonny is full of curiosity. Then the back door eases open and she comes down the path towards him. Vera. Chance meetings become shy arrangements, and soon Sonny is in love for the first time. Casting off his lonely life of dreams and quiet violence for this intoxicating encounter, he longs to know Vera, even to save her. But what is it that Vera isn’t telling him?

Karl Geary was born in Dublin and moved to New York at age 16 where he co-founded music venue Sin-e and later the Scratcher in New York’s East Village. He’s worked as a scriptwriter and an actor (including in Ken Loach’s Jimmy’s Hall, and has adapted and directed Dorothy Parker’s "You Were Perfectly Fine" for the screen. He lives in Glasgow.

Judges: ‘A beautifully-written story about the pain and wonder of love found in unexpected places.’
Eleanor Oliphant is Completely Fine
by Gail Honeyman (HarperCollins)

Eleanor Oliphant leads a simple life. She wears the same clothes to work every day, eats the same meal deal for lunch every day and buys the same two bottles of vodka to drink every weekend. Eleanor Oliphant is happy. Nothing is missing from her carefully timetabled life. Except, sometimes, everything. One simple act of kindness is about to shatter the walls Eleanor has built around herself. Now she must learn to navigate the world that everyone else seems to take for granted – while searching for the courage to face the dark corners she’s avoided all her life. Change can be good. Change can be bad. But surely anything is better than...fine?

While Gail Honeyman was writing her debut novel, Eleanor Oliphant is Completely Fine, it was shortlisted for the Lucy Cavendish Fiction Prize as a work in progress. Translation rights have sold to over thirty territories worldwide, Reese Witherspoon has optioned it for film and it was chosen as one of the Observer’s Debuts of the Year for 2017. Gail was also awarded the Scottish Book Trust’s Next Chapter Award in 2014, and has been longlisted for BBC Radio 4’s Opening Lines and shortlisted for the Bridport Prize. She lives in Glasgow.

Judges: ‘Tender, touching, endearing and heartbreaking in equal measure.

The Haunting of Henry Twist
by Rebecca F. John (Serpent’s Tail)

London, 1926. The shock of the First World War has given way to excess and debauchery – a playground for the Bright Young Things. On the periphery are Henry and Ruby Twist, newly married with a baby on the way. When Ruby is killed in a tragic accident, Henry is left with his grief and his infant daughter – a single father in a world without single fathers. Terrified she’ll be taken from him, and unsure of where he now belongs, Henry stays away from prying eyes. Until one evening a stranger steps out of the shadows and calls to him. He says he has lost his memory and remembers nothing but Henry’s name and his own: Jack Turner. Henry is both terrified of and irresistibly drawn to Jack - why does this man seem so familiar, so magnetic? Why has he come to Henry under such strange circumstances? And could he be offering Henry a life to replace the one he lost when Ruby died?

Rebecca F. John was born in 1986 and grew up in Pwll, a small village on the South Wales coast. Her short stories have been broadcast on BBC Radio 4. In 2014, she was highly commended in the Manchester Fiction Prize. In 2015, her short story ‘The Glove Maker’s Numbers’ was shortlisted for the Sunday Times EFG Short Story Award. She won the PEN International New Voices Award 2015. Her first short story collection, Clown’s Shoes, was published by Parthian. She lives in Swansea.

Judges: ‘Grabs you from the very first chapter and draws you through with its wonderful characters and unexpected twists.’
Shortlist, 2017 Costa Novel Award

Judges
Lucy Atkins  Author and Critic
Freya North  Author
Wayne Winstone  Owner, Winstone’s Bookshops

Reservoir 13
by Jon McGregor  (4th Estate)
Midwinter in the early years of this century. A teenage girl on holiday has gone missing in the hills at the heart of England. The villagers are called up to join the search, fanning out across the moors as the police set up roadblocks and a crowd of news reporters descends on their usually quiet home. Meanwhile, there is work that must still be done: cows milked, fences repaired, stone cut, pints poured, beds made, sermons written, a pantomime rehearsed. The search for the missing girl goes on, but so does everyday life. As it must. As the seasons unfold, there are those who leave the village and those who are pulled back; those who come together or break apart. There are births and deaths; secrets kept and exposed; livelihoods made and lost; small kindnesses and unanticipated betrayals.

Jon McGregor is the author of four novels and a story collection. He is the winner of the IMPAC Dublin Literature Prize, Betty Trask Prize and Somerset Maugham Award, and has twice been longlisted for the Man Booker Prize. He is Professor of Creative Writing at the University of Nottingham, where he edits The Letters Page, a literary journal in letters. He was born in Bermuda in 1976, grew up in Norfolk and now lives in Nottingham.


Under a Pole Star
by Stef Penney  (Quercus)
Flora Mackie first crossed the Arctic Circle at the age of twelve. Years later, in 1892, determination and chance lead her back to northern Greenland as a scientist at the head of a British expedition, defying the expectations of those who believe a woman has no place in that harsh world. Geologist Jakob de Beyn was raised in Manhattan. Yearning for wider horizons, he joins a rival expedition. Jakob and Flora’s paths cross. It is a fateful meeting, where passion and ambition collide and an irresistible attraction is born. The violent extremes of the north obsess them both: perpetual night and endless day; frozen seas and coastal meadows, and the strange, maddening pull it exerts on the people trying to make their mark on its vast expanses - a pursuit of glory whose outcome will reverberate for years to come.

Stef Penney is a screenwriter and the author of three novels: The Tenderness of Wolves (winner of the 2006 Costa Book of the Year), The Invisible Ones (2011), and Under a Pole Star (2016, winner of the 2017 Wilbur Smith Adventure Writing Prize). She has also written extensively for radio, including adaptations of Moby Dick, The Worst Journey in the World, and, mostly recently, a third instalment of Peter O’Donnell’s Modesty Blaise series.

Judges: ‘A novel of huge scope with a tremendous sense of period and place.’
Home Fire
by Kamila Shamsie (Bloomsbury Circus)

Isma is free. After years spent raising her twin siblings in the wake of their mother’s death, she is finally studying in America. But she can’t stop worrying about Aneeka, her beautiful, headstrong sister back in London – or their brother, Parvaiz, who’s disappeared to prove himself to the dark legacy of the jihadist father he never knew. Then Eamonn enters the sisters’ lives. The son of a powerful British Muslim politician, Eamonn has his own birthright to live up to – or defy. Two families’ fates are devastatingly entwined in this searing novel that asks: what sacrifices will we make in the name of love?

Kamila Shamsie is the author of six novels including Burnt Shadows (shortlisted for the Orange Prize for Fiction) and, most recently, A God in Every Stone, which was shortlisted for the Baileys Women’s Prize for Fiction, the Walter Scott Prize for Historical Fiction and the DSC Prize for South Asian Literature. Three of her novels have received awards from Pakistan’s Academy of Letters. Kamila Shamsie is a Fellow of the Royal Society of Literature and was named a Granta Best of Young British Novelists in 2013. She grew up in Karachi and now lives in London.

Judges: ‘A brave and important book that explores themes that feel both urgent and timeless.’

Tin Man by Sarah Winman (Tinder Press)

It begins with a painting won in a raffle: fifteen sunflowers, hung on the wall by a woman who believes that men and boys are capable of beautiful things. And there are two boys, Ellis and Michael, who are inseparable. And the boys become men, and then Annie walks into their lives – and it changes nothing and everything.

Sarah Winman grew up in Essex and now lives in London. She attended the Webber Douglas Academy of Dramatic Art and was an actor for 30 years in theatre, TV and film.

Judges: ‘A tender and deeply moving exploration of love and grief written with deceptive simplicity.’
Shortlist, 2017 Costa Biography Award

Judges
Arifa Akbar  Freelance Journalist, Critic and Columnist
Simon Garfield  Author
Richard Humphreys  Non-Fiction Buyer, Waterstones

Once Upon a Time in the East: A Story of Growing Up by Xiaolu Guo (Chatto & Windus)

Xiaolu Guo meets her parents for the first time when she is six. They are strangers to her. When she is born her parents hand her over to a childless peasant couple in the mountains. Aged two, and suffering from malnutrition on a diet of yam’s leaves, they leave Xiaolu with her illiterate grandparents in a fishing village on the East China Sea. It’s a strange beginning. Like a Wild Swans for a new generation, Once Upon a Time in the East takes Xiaolu from a run-down shack to film school in a rapidly-changing Beijing, navigating Western boyfriends, underground art and censorship. In 2002 she leaves Beijing on a scholarship to study in a picturesque British village. Now, after a decade in Europe, her tale of East to West resonates with the insight that can only come from someone who is both an outsider and at home.

Xiaolu Guo was born in south China. She studied film at the Beijing Film Academy and published six books in China before she moved to London in 2002. She’s been nominated for several prizes including the Baileys Women’s Prize for Fiction, the Orange Prize for Fiction and the International IMPAC Dublin Literary Award. In 2013 she was named as one of Granta’s Best of Young British Novelists, an accolade awarded only once every decade. Xiaolu splits her time between London and Berlin.

Judges: ‘An eye-opening and compelling account of one woman’s search for art, love and freedom.’

A Bold and Dangerous Family: The Rossellis and the Fight Against Mussolini by Caroline Moorehead (Chatto & Windus)

Mussolini was not only ruthless, he was also subtle and manipulative. Black-shirted thugs did his dirty work for him: arson, murder, destruction of homes and offices, bribes, intimidation and the forcible administration of castor oil. His opponents – including editors, publishers, union representatives, lawyers and judges – were beaten into submission. But the tide turned in 1924 when his assassins went too far, horror spread across Italy and twenty years of struggle began. Antifascist resistance was born and it would end only with Mussolini’s death in 1945. Among those whose disgust hardened into bold and uncompromising resistance was a family from Florence: Amelia, Carlo and Nello Rosselli.

Caroline Moorehead has spent time with surviving members of the Rosselli family, researching letters and diaries never previously translated into English to reveal, in all its intimacy, a family driven by loyalty, duty and courage, yet susceptible to all the self-doubt and fear to which humans are prey. By telling the story
of this remarkable family and their ultimate sacrifice, she reveals the human cost of the horrors that befell Italy at a pivotal moment in its history.

Caroline Moorehead is the biographer of Bertrand Russell, Freya Stark, Iris Origo and Martha Gellhorn; her biography of Lucie de la Tour du Pin, *Dancing to the Precipice*, was shortlisted for the Costa Biography Award in 2009. She’s the author of two bestselling books on the French Resistance, *A Train in Winter* and *Village of Secrets*, which was a *Sunday Times* bestseller and was shortlisted for the Samuel Johnson Prize. She lives in London.

**Judges:** ‘A dazzling story of family heroism in a time of fascist rule.’

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**In the Days of Rain**

by Rebecca Stott (*4th Estate*)

As Rebecca Stott’s father lay dying, he begged her to help him write the memoir he’d been struggling with for years. He wanted to tell the story of their family who for generations had all been members of a fundamentalist Christian sect. Yet each time he reached a certain point, he became tangled in a thicket of painful memories and couldn’t go on. The Exclusive Brethren were a closed community who believed the world is ruled by Satan: non-Brethren books were banned, women were made to wear headscarves and those who disobeyed the rules were punished. Rebecca’s father, like her grandfather, had been an influential Brethren Minister: he preached in the ‘Iron Room’ of their meeting houses and made choices that would eventually come to haunt him. Rebecca was born into the Brethren, yet as an intelligent, enquiring child she was always asking dangerous questions. She would discover that her father had been asking them too, and that the fault line between faith and doubt had almost engulfed him.

Rebecca Stott is an author and academic. She teaches English Literature and Creative Writing in the University of East Anglia and writes fiction and non-fiction. Her novels include *Ghostwalk* and *The Coral Thief*. She lives in Norfolk.

**Judges:** ‘A vivid and truly unforgettable family story of life in a cult.’

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**Fragile Lives**

by Professor Stephen Westaby (*HarperCollins*)

The day his grandfather died, Steve Westaby vowed to become a heart surgeon. Now, as one of the world’s most eminent heart surgeons, Professor Steve Westaby shares the stories of the lives he fought to save. He took chances and pushed the boundaries of heart surgery, saving hundreds of lives over the course of a 35-year career. In this memoir he details some of his most remarkable and poignant cases, such as the baby who’d suffered multiple heart attacks by the age of six months, a woman who lived the nightmare of Locked-In Syndrome, and a man whose life was powered by a battery for eight months. *Fragile Lives* offers an insight into the exhilarating and sometimes tragic world of heart surgery, and how it feels to hold someone’s life in your hands.
Steve Westaby is a world-famous heart surgeon renowned for being the first surgeon in history to fit a patient with a new type of artificial heart, claiming a place in medical history. During his 35-year career as a surgeon, he worked at several of the UK’s top hospitals and performed over 11,000 heart operations. He won the Ray C Fish Award for Scientific Achievement in 2004 and the same year was featured in the BBC documentary Your Life in Their Hands, alongside Henry Marsh. He's a heart surgeon at the Paediatric Cardiac Unit at John Radcliffe Hospital in Oxford.

Judges: ‘A powerful, engaging and passionate memoir from a surgical pioneer.’
Kumukanda
by Kayo Chingonyi (Chatto & Windus)

Translating as ‘initiation’, kumukanda is the name given to the rites a young boy from the Luvale tribe must pass through before he is considered a man. Kayo Chingonyi’s debut explores this passage: between two worlds, ancestral and contemporary; between the living and the dead; between the gulf of who he is and how he is perceived. Underpinned by a love of music, language and literature, this debut collection is a powerful exploration of race, identity and masculinity, celebrating what it means to be British and not British, all at once.

Kayo Chingonyi was born in Zambia in 1987, and moved to the UK at the age of six. As well as being widely published in journals and anthologies, Kayo has delivered lectures and readings from his work at venues and events around the world, and most recently on Alan Yentob’s documentary on T S Eliot on BBC Radio 4. He represented Zambia at Poetry Parnassus (a festival of world poets staged by the Southbank Centre as part of the Cultural Olympiad) and was awarded a Geoffrey Dearmer Prize. He was Associate Poet at the Institute of Contemporary Arts (ICA) from Autumn 2015 to Spring 2016. Kayo is also an emcee, producer, and DJ and regularly collaborates with musicians and composers both as a poet and a lyricist. He lives in Essex.

Judges: ‘Energetic, skilled, tender and bold – this is an outstanding collection by a major new talent.’

Inside the Wave
by Helen Dunmore (Bloodaxe Books)

To be alive is to be inside the wave, always travelling until it breaks and is gone. These poems are concerned with the borderline between the living and the dead – the underworld and the human living world – and the exquisitely intense being of both. They possess a spare, eloquent lyricism as they explore the bliss and anguish of the voyage.

Helen Dunmore was a poet, novelist, short story and children’s writer. Her poetry books have been given the Poetry Book Society Choice and Recommendations and won several prizes including the Cardiff International Poetry Prize, the Alice Hunt Bartlett Award and the Signal Poetry Award. Her poem ‘The Malarkey’ won the 2010 National Poetry Competition. She published fifteen novels and three books of short stories - most recently, Birdcage Walk in 2017. She died in June 2017.

Judges: ‘We were all stunned by these breathtaking poems.’
On Balance
by Sinéad Morrissey (Carcanet)

Set against a backdrop of ecological and economic instability, Sinéad Morrissey’s sixth collection revisits some of the great feats of human engineering to reveal the states of balance and imbalance that have shaped our history. The poems also address gender inequality and our inharmonious relationship with the natural world.

Sinéad Morrissey was born in 1972 and grew up in Belfast. She read English and German at Trinity College, Dublin, from which she took her PhD in 2003, and has published five collections including Parallax (2013) which won the T S Eliot Prize. She's lived in Germany, Japan and New Zealand and lectured in Creative Writing at the Seamus Heaney Centre for Poetry at Queen's University in Belfast and now lives in Northumberland where she's Head of the Creative Writing programme at Newcastle University. She's also Belfast’s inaugural Poet Laureate.

Judges: ‘This collection appropriately strikes a balance between technical mastery and range and depth of enquiry.’

Useful Verses
by Richard Osmond (Picador)

Richard Osmond's debut collection follows in the tradition of the best nature writing, being as much about the human world as the natural, the present as the past. Osmond, a professional forager, has a deep knowledge of flora and fauna as they appear in both natural and human history, as they are depicted in both folklore and herbal - but he views them through a wholly contemporary lens. Chamomile is discussed through quantum physics, ants through social media, wood sorrel through online gambling, and mugwort through a traffic cone. In each case, Osmond offers an arresting and new perspective, and makes that hidden world that lives and breathes beside us vividly part of our own.

Richard Osmond was born in 1987. He works as a wild food forager, searching for plants, fruits and fungi among the forests and hedgerows of Hertfordshire and co-owns an award-winning wild food pub, The Verulam Arms, in St Albans. He received an Eric Gregory Award from the Society of Authors in 2017.

Judges: ‘A contemporary, agile and original take on the intersection of the natural and human worlds.’
Shortlist, 2017 Costa Children’s Book Award

Judges
Sanchita Basu De Sarkar  
Owner, Children’s Bookshop, Muswell Hill  
Fiona Noble  
Children’s and YA Previews Editor, The Bookseller  
Piers Torday  
Author

**Moonrise**  
by Sarah Crossan (Bloomsbury Children’s Books)

Joe hasn’t seen his brother for ten years, and it’s for the most brutal of reasons. Ed is on Death Row. But now Ed’s execution date has been set, and this might be the last summer they have together.

Sarah Crossan has lived in Dublin, London and New York and now lives in Hertfordshire. She graduated with a degree in Philosophy and Literature before training as an English and Drama teacher at Cambridge University.

Sarah Crossan won the 2016 Carnegie Medal, the YA Book Prize, the CBI Irish Children’s Book Award and many other prizes for her novel, *One*.  

**Judges**: 'An exceptional, compelling book for our time – its analysis is devastating but its message is hope.'

**Wed Wabbit**  
by Lissa Evans (David Fickling Books)

You’re called Fidge and you’re nearly eleven. You’ve been hurled into a strange world. You have three companions: two are unbelievably weird and the third is your awful cousin Graham. You have to solve a series of nearly impossible clues. You need to deal with a cruel dictator and three thousand Wimbley Woos (yes, you read that sentence correctly). And the whole situation – the whole, entire thing – is your fault.

Lissa Evans still remembers cracking her first joke, aged 7. It involved a hippo. (We'll say no more.) But the comedy bug was born and, following a medicine degree, Lissa changed careers to become a comedy producer for radio and TV. Eventually, after a decade of running a red pencil through other people’s work, Lissa began to write something of her own. Her first book for children, *Small Change for Stuart*, was shortlisted for the Carnegie Medal and the 2011 Costa Children’s Book Award. She’s also written books for adults. Lissa lives in London.

**Judges**: ‘A deeply original riot of a novel that will delight children and adults alike, and keep you laughing all the way through.’
The Island at the End of Everything
by Kiran Millwood Hargrave (Chicken House)

Ami lives with her sick mother on an island where the sea is as blue as the sky. It’s all she knows and loves, but the arrival of a cruel government official, Mr Zamora, changes her world for ever. Her island is to become a colony for sufferers of leprosy. Banished to an orphanage across the water, Ami meets a honey-eyed girl named for butterflies, and together they set out to find a way back home to the island at the end of everything.

Kiran Millwood Hargrave was born in London in 1990 and studied at both Cambridge and Oxford University. She's an award-winning poet, with three collections published (the first at the age of twenty), and has completed residencies in Banff, Tokyo and Whitstable. Her first children’s novel, The Girl of Ink & Stars, was one of the bestselling children’s debuts of 2016, received widespread critical acclaim and won both the Waterstones Children's Book Prize and the British Book Awards Children's Book of the Year. She currently lives in Oxford.

Judges: ‘Entirely original with not a word out of place – as vivid and beautiful as the butterflies themselves.’

The Explorer
by Katherine Rundell (Bloomsbury Children’s Books)

After crashing hundreds of miles from civilisation in the Amazon rainforest, Fred, Con, Lila and Max are utterly alone and in grave danger. They have no food, no water and no chance of being rescued. But they are alive and they have hope. As they negotiate the wild jungle they begin to find signs that something – someone – has been there before them. Could there possibly be a way out after all?

Katherine Rundell was born in 1987 and grew up in Africa and Europe. In 2008 she was elected a Fellow of All Souls College, Oxford. Rundell is the bestselling author of Rooftoppers which won the Waterstones Children’s Book Prize and the Blue Peter Award in 2014. The Wolf Wilder was Katherine’s first book for Bloomsbury. It was published in 2015 and was the most reviewed children's book of the year. She lives in London.

Judges: ‘A masterful, delicious read from start to finish.’