

Patrick Gale

Writer - fiction

Born on the Isle of Wight in 1962, Patrick Gale spent his infancy at Wandsworth Prison, where his father was Governor, then grew up in Winchester. He now lives on a farm near Land's End. He published his first novel, THE AERODYNAMICS OF PORK, at the age of twenty-one and has now published twenty highly acclaimed novels, among them LITTLE BITS OF BABY; KANSAS IN AUGUST; THE FACTS OF LIFE; and TREE SURGERY FOR BEGINNERS.



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Publications

Fiction

Publication Details Notes

**TAKE NOTHING
WITH YOU**

2018

Tinder Press

1970s Western-Super-Mare and ten-year-old oddball Eustace, an only child, has life transformed by his mother's quixotic decision to sign him up for cello lessons. Music-making brings release for a boy who is discovering he is an emotional volcano. He laps up lessons from his young teacher, not noticing how her brand of glamour is casting a damaging spell over his frustrated and controlling mother. When he is enrolled in holiday courses in the Scottish borders, lessons in love, rejection and humility are added to daily practice.

Publication Details Notes

A PLACE CALLED WINTER 2015 Tinder Press	A privileged elder son, 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, a world away from the golden suburbs of turn-of-the-century Edwardian England. In this exquisite journey of self-discovery, loosely based on a real life family mystery, Patrick Gale has created an epic, intimate human drama, both brutal and breathtaking. It is a novel of secrets, sexuality and, ultimately, of great love.
A PERFECTLY GOOD MAN 2012 UK: HarperCollins	<p>"Do you need me to pray for you now for a specific reason?"</p> <p>"I'm going to die."</p> <p>"We're all going to die. Does dying frighten you?"</p> <p>"I mean I'm going to kill myself."</p> <p>When 20-year-old Lenny Barnes, paralysed in a rugby accident, commits suicide in the presence of Barnaby Johnson, the much-loved priest of a West Cornwall parish, the tragedy's reverberations open up the fault-lines between Barnaby and his nearest and dearest. The personal stories of his wife, children and lover illuminate Barnaby's ostensibly happy life, and the gulfs of unspoken sadness that separate them all. Across this web of relations scuttles Barnaby's repellent nemesis – a man as wicked as his prey is virtuous.</p> <p>Returning us to the rugged Cornish landscape of NOTES FROM AN EXHIBITION, Patrick Gale lays bare the lives and the thoughts of a whole community and asks us: what does it mean to be good?</p>
THE WHOLE DAY THROUGH 2009 UK: HarperCollins; French: Belfond; Portuguese: Bertrand	<p>When forty-something Laura Lewis is obliged to abandon a life of stylish independence in Paris to care for her elderly mother in Winchester, it seems all romantic opportunities have gone up in smoke. Then she runs into Ben, the great love of her student days – and, as she only now dares admit, the emotional yardstick by which she has judged every man since. She's cautious – and he's married – but they can't deny that feelings still exist between them.</p> <p>Are they brave enough to take the second chance at the lasting happiness that fate has offered them? Or will they be defeated by the need to do what seems to be the right thing?</p> <p>Taking its structure from the events of a single summer's day, THE WHOLE DAY THROUGH is a bittersweet love story, shot through with an understanding of mortality, memory and the difficulty of being good. In it, Patrick Gale writes with scrupulous candour about the tests of love: the regrets and the triumphs, and the melancholy of failing.</p> <p>THE WHOLE DAY THROUGH is vintage Gale, and displays the same combination of wit, tenderness and acute psychological observation as his Richard & Judy bestseller NOTES FROM AN EXHIBITION.</p>

Publication Details Notes

**GENTLEMAN'S
RELISH**

2009

UK: 4th Estate

Wry and perceptive, GENTLEMAN'S RELISH is a new collection of short stories written by Patrick Gale over the last ten years. The title piece observes the awkward dance of a father around his enigmatic adolescent son. From the macabre story "Cookery", where one boy's obsession with cooking and food culminates in a fatal climax, to "Hushed Casket", where a settled and unremarkable couple suddenly embark on a dramatic erotic journey, the stories are never predictable. Gale demonstrates how simple acts or conversations have the potential to drastically alter the destiny of a relationship, as in "Dreams", where a simple discussion about dreaming becomes a catalyst for the breakdown of a settled couple's relationship. "Fourth of July, 1862", written to celebrate the anniversary of the publication of ALICE'S ADVENTURES IN WONDERLAND, is a compassionate portrait of Alice's elder sister, a character neglected by Lewis Carroll but imagined here in poignant detail. In "Freedom", a rickety caravan is handed down through generations of one family, loaded down with memories and a promise of refuge. Mistaken at a book festival for her more flamboyant namesake in "Petals in a Pool", a timid writer of English satires finds herself bewildered by a few days lived in another person's skin. Other stories take on a broad scope of subjects, tracing the loneliness and violence that can seep into ordinary people's lives.

ROUGH MUSIC

2009

UK: Flamingo; US:
Ballantine; French:
Belfond; Polish:
Nasza

In 1968 a prison governor is recalled from a Cornish holiday when one of his lifers escapes and robs a train. Left behind in an atmospheric seaside house, his wife falls in love with her brother-in-law, but their illicit idyll quickly turns to tragedy. In the present, a bachelor also takes a holiday in Cornwall, with his parents. His mother is in the early stages of Alzheimers. Her blurring memories mistake one love story for another, and we gradually realise that this is the same family, the same house - and that history may be about to repeat itself. A brilliantly compelling novel.

Publication Details Notes

NOTES FROM AN EXHIBITION
2008
UK: Fourth Estate;
Chinese complex:
Sun Color; Chinese
simplified: Beijing
Honeybee; Dutch:
Ambo-Anthos;
French: Belfond;
Hebrew

When Rachel Kelly dies suddenly of a heart attack, the Kelly family come together to mourn her, to look after one another, and to remember the past – both shared and private.

As a painter, Rachel’s career was quite clearly divided into two periods. When she was younger she made bold, energetic, abstract studies of colour and form. Later, she made calmer paintings from nature, inspired by the Cornish landscape that surrounded her. Her life-long struggle with bi-polar disorder, and with the effects of the medication she used to control it, influenced all aspects of her work and family life and made it difficult, in some ways, for her family to really know her. The chapters of this book shift their focus between each of her four children and her husband so that we share all of their stories as they reconsider and discover her as an individual and a painter, as well as in her role as their parent and wife. As her husband stumbles on the secrets of her troubled past, we also learn how she found peace in later life, through her family and their Quaker beliefs.

Framed by notes on paintings and objects from Rachel’s working life, taken from a posthumous exhibition, the family’s loves, secrets and horrors are told with tenderness and perceptive humour. As this novel crosses continents and spans decades it becomes a full and moving exploration of individual identity, relationships and the influence of family.

FRIENDLY FIRE
2008
UK: HarperCollins

As a foundling who has spent all her life in institutions, Sophie is well-trained to survive life as a scholar in an ancient boarding school. No amount of homework, however, can prepare her for meeting and falling hopelessly in love with Lucas. Wealthy, Jewish and an exotic contrast to the rough-edged boys she has grown up with, he draws her into a tangle of forbidden passion which seems doomed to end in disgrace.

But Sophie's other, surer love affair is with education. She succumbs to the glamour of learning and the beauty of the place in which she finds it, but she also learns other, tougher lessons in the world beyond the school's high walls, about class, families, mother-love and of the havoc they can wreak. Patrick Gale has been acclaimed for his insight into what makes men and women tick; what makes up the 'ordinary' stuff of life; and what makes it extraordinary. In this fine new novel, he turns his cool but compassionate eye on the jumble of pains and joys inherent in the getting of adult wisdom.

Publication Details Notes

A SWEET**OBSCURITY**

2004

UK: Flamingo;

Dutch: Ambo-Anthos

A SWEET OBSCURITY is a moving tale with a tragic young girl at its heart. Dido, the nine-year-old heroine and emotional centre of Patrick Gale's latest novel, knows that the adults who surround her, the adults who should know better, depend on her for happiness. Eliza, the chaotic and depressive aunt who has brought up Dido, and whose brilliant academic career has foundered due to the demands of motherhood, tries and fails to give Dido the happy childhood she herself never had. Her ex-husband Giles needs Dido back in his life, sensing that it has lost all meaning without her.

Told from the disparate points of view of the four lost and emotionally bereft adults, this is a story about the lengths we go to in order to seek the protection we feel other people can provide. It is the story of people in search of a family, and of the neglect of one young girl who needs support more than anyone.
