

Orange Award for New Writers Announces Second Year Shortlist

London, 3 May 2006: The Orange Award for New Writers, launched in 2005 as part of the Orange Prize for Fiction, announces this year's shortlist today.

All first works of fiction, including novels, short story collections and novellas, written in English by a woman of any age or nationality and published as a book in the UK, are eligible. The emphasis of the award is on emerging talent and the evidence of future potential. The winner will receive £10,000 bursary funded by Arts Council England which is intended to help the winning writer pursue their work with greater freedom.

The 2006 shortlist is:

Naomi Alderman **Disobedience** Viking (British / Novel)

Olga Grushin **The Dream Life of Sukhanov** (Viking Russian Novel)

Yiyun Li **A Thousand Years of Good Prayers** (Fourth Estate Chinese Short story collection)

The judges for the 2006 Orange Award for New Writers are:

Louise Doughty, Author (Chair)

Catherine Lockerbie, Director of the Edinburgh International Book Festival

Stephanie Merritt, Journalist

"It was incredibly hard to get the shortlist for this year's award down to just three books," said Louise Doughty, author and Chair of judges. "It is a fantastically strong year and the three we have chosen are all award winning books on any level, never mind the fact that they happen to be by first timers. Two exceptional novels and one wonderful collection of short stories - we wholeheartedly recommend them all."

Arts Council England has confirmed a Grant for the Arts award of £30,000 over three years from 2005 (£10,000 per year) for bursaries for the winners of the Orange Award for New Writers. By offering a bursary to a fiction writer for her first publication, Arts Council England will be able to support the professional development of a writer at a crucial stage in her career. Authors who have written their first book can be entered for both the Orange Prize for Fiction and the Orange Award for New Writers in any given year.

Sarah Weir, Executive Director of Arts Council England, London said: "Arts Council London is delighted to be in partnership with Orange to reward and encourage the best new writing by women in English. When the public and private sectors join together like this, the result is always more than the sum of its parts."

Lesley Henry, Head of TV, Film and Literature Partnerships at Orange, comments: "Supporting and rewarding a new generation of fresh and emerging talent is at the heart of what Orange believes in. The Orange Award for New Writers was established to encourage diversity and promise evident in first works of fiction and this year's shortlist reflects exactly this with two novels and a collection of short stories."

The winner will be announced at the Orange Prize for Fiction award ceremony which will take place on 6 June 2006 at The Royal Courts of Justice, central London. Diana Evans took the first ever Orange Award for New Writers in 2005 for her debut novel, *26A*. She has subsequently gone on to win the Decibel Award 2006 at the British Book Awards, a Betty Trask prize and was shortlisted for the Whitbread First Novel Award 2005.

Notes to Editors

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Arts Council England is the national development agency for the arts. Between 2003 and 2006 we are investing £2 billion of public funds in the arts, including funding from the National Lottery. This is the bedrock of support for the arts in England.

Our vision is to promote the arts at the heart of national life, reflecting England's rich and diverse cultural identity. We believe that the arts have the power to transform lives and communities, and to create opportunities for people throughout the country.

Arts Council England, Phone: 0845 300 6200, Fax: 020 7973 6590, Textphone: 020 7973 6564, Email: enquiries@artscouncil.org.uk, www.artscouncil.org.uk

Synopses and Biographies

Disobedience, Naomi Alderman (Viking)

In suburban north-west London, where leafy avenues wind into the countryside beyond, the Orthodox Jewish community of Hendon quietly conducts its daily life. Hidden from the gaze of outsiders, the faithful live, work, love and pray.

But then a beloved rabbi dies, and his passing brings his wayward daughter back. For the past ten years, Ronit has been living the life of a modern New York woman; returning home, she's looking forward to catching up with old friends, perhaps settling old scores. It soon becomes clear that Hendon and Ronit don't fit. Her home has become a more unsettling place than she had anticipated. And when she is reunited with her childhood girlfriend Esti, who has taken a very different path in life, it's not long before the two women are forced to confront their pasts – and to examine the difficult choices they have made.

Naomi Alderman is a graduate of Oxford University and the University of East Anglia's Creative Writing MA. She has worked as an editor and game designer and spent a number of years living in New York. She grew up in the Orthodox Jewish community in Hendon, where she now lives.

The Dream Life of Sukhanov, Olga Grushin (Viking)

Anatoly Sukhanov has everything a man could want: a glittering career, a beautiful wife, two talented children, a grand apartment, and more. But, as political alignments shift in the Kremlin and his world changes, Sukhanov finds himself troubled by his past. Years ago, he chose the comforts of a high-ranking Soviet apparatchik over a precarious existence as an underground artist. Now he's plunged into uncertainty, as he starts to realise that living a better, safer life, has meant hardly living at all...

Olga Grushin was born in Moscow in 1971. Her family left for Prague in 1976 and returned to Moscow in 1981. She studied at the Pushkin Museum of Fine Arts, Moscow State University and Emory University. She now lives in Washington, DC, with her husband and young son and is currently working on her second novel.

A Thousand Years of Good Prayers, Yiyun Li (Fourth Estate)

Set in China and among Chinese Americans in the United States, this collection of ten short stories brings the reader face-to-face with a modern China coming to terms with a complex history of repression and guilt. From the bustling heart of Beijing, through a fast-food restaurant in Chicago, to the barren expanse of Inner Mongolia, A Thousand Years of Good Prayers reveals worlds foreign and familiar and illuminates how mythology, politics, history, and culture intersect with personality to create fate.

Yiyun Li grew up in Beijing and is 33 years old. She has been living in the US since 1996. Her work has been published in Prospect, the New Yorker and the Paris Review.