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## Ireland's Sally Rooney wins THE SUNDAY TIMES / PETERS FRASER + DUNLOP YOUNG WRITER OF THE YEAR AWARD 2017 with debut novel *CONVERSATIONS WITH FRIENDS*



Sally Rooney has been awarded The 2017 Sunday Times/Peters Fraser + Dunlop Young Writer of the Year Award, in association with the University of Warwick for her fearless, sensual novel *Conversations With Friends* (Faber & Faber), at a special ceremony in The London Library on the evening of Thursday, 7th December.

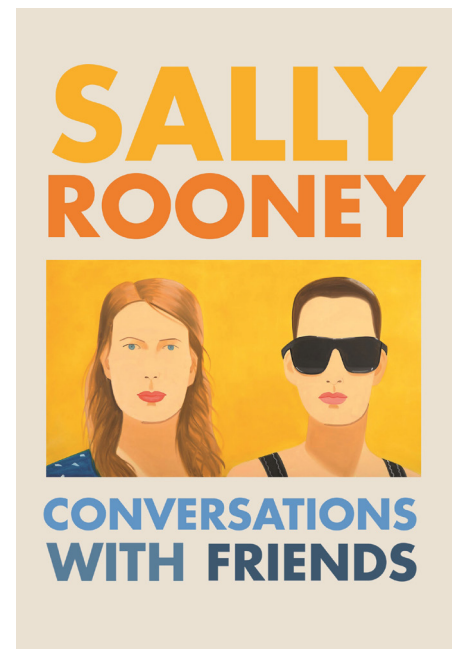
Acclaimed as a remarkably fresh, clever and self-assured novel, *Conversations With Friends* has been one of the biggest debuts of 2017, and Rooney's writing has been compared with that of JD Salinger and Bret Easton Ellis. 26-year-old Rooney, born in the west of Ireland and now living in Dublin, is the first Irish winner of this prestigious award, founded in 1991, and joint youngest winner with Zadie Smith (*White Teeth*, 2001).

The intimate story of high-risk relationships, youth and love was shortlisted for the award alongside four other writers, rather than the usual three, as a testament to the strength of submissions this year. Featuring two other novels, a collection of linked short stories and a biography, the shortlist showcased the extraordinary breadth of young British and Irish writing: **Minoo Dinshaw's** debut *Outlandish Knight* is the biography of the great and strange British historian Steven Runciman; with *The End of the Day*, **Claire North** has written a novel of life, death and everything in between; *The Lucky Ones*, **Julianne Pachico's** debut collection of stories, mostly set in Columbia, brings together the fates of guerrilla soldiers, rich kids, rabbits and drug dealers; and *The Lauras* by **Sara Taylor**, whose first novel was shortlisted for the award in 2015, explores identity and relationships, set against a rolling backdrop of the North American landscape.

This year's prize was judged by the award-winning novelist and political commentator **Elif Shafak** and the acclaimed cultural historian and biographer **Lucy Hughes-Hallett** alongside *The Sunday Times* literary editor **Andrew Holgate**, who said: 'Choosing this year's winner from five such outstanding writers was immensely difficult, but for line by line quality, emotional complexity, sly sophistication and sheer brio and enjoyment, Sally Rooney's *Conversations with Friends* really stood out. To have produced a novel which nods all the way back to Jane Austen's *Emma*, while being so thoroughly modern in feel, is quite something, and Rooney proves herself with this debut to be a really worthy addition to the extraordinary list of past winners of the Young Writer Award.'

**Elif Shafak said:** ‘From the very beginning till the end, it has been a fascinating journey to judge this prize and spot upcoming literary stars across disciplines and genres. We are very proud of our shortlist – diverse, powerful and utterly exciting. And even though it has not been easy at all to let go of such a shortlist, Sally Rooney’s extraordinary debut, *Conversations With Friends*, quickly won our hearts and our votes. I salute Rooney’s intelligent prose, lucid style, and fierce intensity – all of which will stay with the readers even long after they have finished reading this wonderful book.’

**Lucy Hughes-Hallett said:** ‘It was never going to be easy to choose our winner from such a strong shortlist. Young they may be, but all of these writers are mature talents with distinctive voices and bold imaginations. This book stood out for its glittering intelligence, its formal elegance and its capacity to grip the reader. At first reading I was looking forward to bus journeys so that I could read some more. Second time round I was still delighted by the sophistication of its erotic quadrille.’



Generously sponsored by literary agency Peters Fraser + Dunlop, the prize is awarded annually to the best work of fiction, non-fiction or poetry by a British or Irish author aged between 18 and 35, either published or self-published, and has gained attention and acclaim across the publishing industry and press for its uncanny ability to pick future greats. £5,000 is given to the overall winner and £500 to each of the four runners-up.

This was also the first year that the award has run in association with the University of Warwick, who are offering the winner a bespoke 10-week residency, and providing a year-round programme of on-campus and digital support for award alumni and the shortlisted authors. On 29th November, they also held a free one-day festival of events and workshops entitled *freeflow*, bringing together inspirational thinkers, authors, journalists and performers.

In addition, the British Council was this year announced as the international partner of the award. The British Council – which works with over 100 countries across the world in the fields of arts and culture, English language, education and civil society – will be supporting the shortlisted writers in exploring international opportunities. Through the partnership, the organisation will pursue travel opportunities for the shortlisted writers, and provide access to the British Council network and exposure to international audiences through its online platforms.

For the second year running, the award was chronicled by an official shadow judging panel made up of some of the country’s leading book bloggers: Dane Cobain ([socialbookshelves.com](http://socialbookshelves.com)), Rebecca Foster ([bookishbeck.wordpress.com](http://bookishbeck.wordpress.com)), Eleanor Franzen ([ellethinks.wordpress.com](http://ellethinks.wordpress.com)), Annabel Gaskell ([shinynewbooks.co.uk](http://shinynewbooks.co.uk) / [gaskell.wordpress.com](http://gaskell.wordpress.com)), and Clare Rowland ([alittleblogofbooks.com](http://alittleblogofbooks.com)). On 29th November, the group gave their Shadow Award to Julianne Pachico for her shortlisted collection of short stories ***The Lucky Ones***.

Since it began in 1991, the award has had a striking impact, boasting a stellar list of alumni that have gone on to become leading lights of contemporary literature. After a seven year break, it returned in 2015, awarding debut poet **Sarah Howe** the top prize for her phenomenal first collection, *Loop of Jade*, which then went on to win the T.S. Eliot Prize. Last year, **Max Porter** won for his experimental novel *Grief is the Thing with Feathers*, which also took the Dylan Thomas Prize.

Other past winners are: **Ross Raisin**, *God's Own Country* (2009); **Adam Foulds**, *The Truth About These Strange Times* (2008); **Naomi Alderman**, *Disobedience* (2007); **Robert Macfarlane**, *Mountains of the Mind: a History of a Fascination* (2004); **William Fiennes**, *The Snow Geese* (2003); **Zadie Smith**, *White Teeth* (2001); **Sarah Waters**, *Affinity* (2000); **Paul Farley**, *The Boy from the Chemist is Here to See You* (1999); **Patrick French**, *Liberty or Death: India's Journey to Independence and Division* (1998); **Francis Spufford**, *I May Be Some Time: Ice and the English Imagination* (1997); **Katherine Pierpoint**, *Truffle Beds* (1996); **Andrew Cowan**, *Pig* (1995); **William Dalrymple**, *City of Djinn: A Year in Delhi* (1994); **Simon Armitage**, *Kid* (1993); **Caryl Phillips**, *Cambridge* (1992); and **Helen Simpson**, *Four Bare Legs in a Bed and Other Stories* (1991).

Keep up to date with the award and join the conversation, via:  
[youngwriteraward.com](http://youngwriteraward.com) | [twitter.com/youngwriteryear](https://twitter.com/youngwriteryear)

## Notes to editors

### 2017 winner

***Conversations With Friends* by Sally Rooney** (Faber & Faber)

Frances, Bobbi, Nick and Melissa ask each other endless questions. As their relationships unfold, in person and online, they discuss sex and friendship, art and literature, politics and gender, and, of course, one another. Twenty-one-year-old Frances is at the heart of it all, bringing us this tale of a complex ménage-à-quatre and her affair with Nick, an older married man. You can read *Conversations With Friends* as a romantic comedy, or you can read it as a feminist text. You can read it as a book about infidelity, about the pleasures and difficulties of intimacy, or about how our minds think about our bodies. However you choose to read it, it is an unforgettable novel about the possibility of love.

'Sally Rooney writes with a rare, thrilling confidence, in a lucid and exacting style uncluttered with the sort of steroidal imagery and strobe flashes of figurative language that so many dutifully literary novelists employ. This isn't to say that the novel lacks beauty.

Its richness blooms quietly.' *New Yorker*

Sally Rooney was born in 1991 in the West of Ireland, and lives in Dublin. She graduated from an MA at Trinity College and was ranked the number one competitive debater at the European Universities Debating Championships in 2013. Her work has appeared in *Granta*, *The White Review*, *The Dublin Review*, *The Stinging Fly*, Kevin Barry's *Stonecutter* and *The Winter Pages* anthology.

### 2017 shortlist

***Outlandish Knight – The Byzantine Life of Steven Runciman*** by Mino Dinshaw (Allen Lane); ***The End of the Day*** by Claire North (Orbit); ***The Lucky Ones*** by Julianne Pachico (Faber & Faber); ***The Lauras*** by Sara Taylor (Windmill).

## The Sunday Times / Peters Fraser + Dunlop Young Writer of the Year Award:



Founded in 1991, the award recognises the best literary work of fiction, non-fiction or poetry by a British or Irish writer of 35 and under. £5,000 is given to the winner, and £500 to each of the three runners-up. The award was suspended in 2008, but with the generous sponsorship of Peters Fraser + Dunlop it was revitalised in 2015, building on the remarkable legacy of the prize by introducing two significant and exciting innovations: extending its reach by including writers from Ireland and including self-published works as well as those from publishers – putting the

prize in tune with the changing landscape of British publishing. In 2017 the prize secured two further partnerships with the University of Warwick and the British Council.

### **The Sunday Times:**



*The Sunday Times* is the UK's largest circulation quality Sunday newspaper with a circulation of 766,000 (Source: ABC, Feb 2016). Over 182,000 people subscribe to the print edition of *The Sunday Times* (Source: ABC, Feb 2016). Renowned for its technological innovation, *The Sunday Times* is available for download on all platforms and devices including Android, Amazon Kindle and iOS. *The Sunday Times* has a reputation for award-winning, courageous and campaigning investigative journalism, breaking many major world exclusives. The newspaper offers great value to readers and it is recognised not only for breaking news but for its unrivalled coverage of sports, business, the arts and entertainment.

[www.thesundaytimes.co.uk](http://www.thesundaytimes.co.uk)

### **Peters Fraser + Dunlop:**



Peters Fraser + Dunlop is one of the oldest and most established literary and talent agencies in London. We are proud to represent authors, journalists, broadcasters, speakers and estates with specialist expertise in the fields of literature, film, television and radio, public speaking, digital platforms and journalism. We offer our clients the best people to work with and the expertise to develop long-term value in their work across all media while protecting their rights in today's changing market. Our business is about creativity, enhancement, innovation and service.

### **The University of Warwick:**



The University of Warwick offers a bespoke 10-week winner residency, a festival of events, and a year-round programme of on-campus and digital support for alumni and the shortlist. The University of Warwick is consistently ranked in the top 10 universities in the UK and top 100 in the world, with the Warwick Writing Programme ranked No1 in the UK by The Sunday Times Good University Guide 2018. It is one of the UK's leading universities, with an acknowledged reputation for excellence in research, teaching and innovation alongside pioneering links with business and industry. It is home to the acclaimed Warwick Writing Programme, the largest and most comprehensive of its kind in Europe, which is currently home to renowned authors such as: Will Eaves, Maureen Freely, Michael Hulse, A.L. Kennedy, Tim Leach, David Morley, Sarah Moss, Ian Sansom, Jonathan Skinner, and David Vann.

### **The British Council:**



The British Council is the UK's international organisation for cultural relations and educational opportunities. We work with over 100 countries in the fields of arts and culture, English language, education and civil society. Last year we reached over 65 million people directly and 731 million people overall including online, broadcasts and publications. We make a positive contribution to the countries we work with – changing lives by creating opportunities, building connections and engendering trust. Founded in 1934 we are a UK charity governed by Royal Charter and a UK public body. We receive 15 per cent core funding grant from the UK government. [britishcouncil.org](http://britishcouncil.org)

### **The Society of Authors:**



The Society of Authors is the UK trade union for all types of writers, illustrators and literary translators, at all stages of their careers. They have more than 10,000 members and have been advising individuals and speaking out for the profession for more than a century. In 2017, they will award more than £400,000 in prizes and grants (for fiction, non-fiction, poetry and translation), and also administer the Sunday Times / Peters, Fraser & Dunlop Young Writer of the Year Award, along with the Women's Prize for Fiction and The Sunday Times EFG Short Story Award.