

Great new writers

Adam Foulds, 31

His debut novel, *The Truth About These Strange Times* (Weidenfeld & Nicolson), tells of the friendship between a child memory prodigy and a lonely 28-year-old who talks to the spirit of his dead mother. Foulds studied at Oxford and then did the University of East Anglia's distinguished masters in creative writing.

Naomi Alderman, 32

Disobedience (Penguin) won the 2007 Sunday Times Young Writer of the Year award. Its heroine, Ronit, a New York career woman, provokes outrage when she returns to her orthodox Jewish north London home for her rabbi father's funeral. The debut novel also won the Orange award for new writers 2006. The Sunday Times's literary editor, Susannah Herbert, said of *Disobedience*: "Fresh, funny and moving, the book is a wonderfully mature performance from a writer who may be 'young' as defined by the award, but who has written a strikingly grown-up novel."

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, 29



The Nigerian writer, below, started her debut novel, *Purple Hibiscus*, while an undergraduate. It won the Commonwealth writers' prize for best first book (2005). Her second, *Half of a Yellow Sun* (Harper Perennial), set amid the Biafran war, won the

Orange prize for fiction 2007. In *The Sunday Times*, Hugo Barnacle wrote that it "sustains the interest with its engaging characters and its mostly artful simplicity of style".

Peter Ho Davies, 40

After an acclaimed 1998 book of short fiction, *The Ugliest House in the World*, and being named one of *Granta's* best young British novelists in 2003, he fulfilled critical expectations earlier this year with his first novel, *The Welsh Girl* (Sceptre), set in a remote village during the second world war.

Clare Allan, 38

Poppy Shakespeare (Bloomsbury), recounting the eponymous heroine's arrival at and attempted escape from a mental

hospital, is her debut. In *The Sunday Times*, Phil Baker called it "moving and bleakly funny". It was short-listed for the Orange award for new writers 2007 and long-listed for the Orange prize for fiction.

Allan, right, was inspired by the 10 years she spent



within the mental-health system, after a breakdown at 26. Her social worker encouraged her to apply for UEA's creative-writing MA. "In my first seminar, the tutor went round collecting names and a few biographical details (I lied). One student had spent the previous year working in a gallery in Prague. 'You must be suffering from culture shock,' the tutor said. 'Jesus,' I thought, 'you have no idea ...'"

Compiled by Jo Caird

Sunday Times

Culture

5/8/07