

Loubna Serraj, winner of the 3rd Orange Book Award in Africa

The Orange Book Award in Africa rewards Loubna Serraj for her novel *Pourvu qu'il soit de bonne humeur*, ('Let's hope he's in a good mood') published in Morocco by La Croisée des chemins



As part of its undertakings in Africa and its commitment to the continent, the Orange Foundation decided to launch the Orange Book Award Africa in October 2018. This Award, in partnership with the Institut Français, reflects a desire to work to promote literary talent in Africa and encourage the local publishing industry.

For this 3rd edition of the prize, 74 novels were entered by 44 publishing houses based in 16 different countries. An initial shortlist of titles was made by 5 reading committees in Cameroon, Ivory Coast, Guinea, Mali and Tunisia.

An international panel chaired by Véronique Tadjo

The 6 novels selected were submitted for the panel's appraisal to select the winner.

Chaired by **Véronique Tadjo** (author, Ivory Coast), **the panel comprised writers, literary critics, journalists and recognized personalities from the literary world**: Yvan Amar (journalist from RFI, France), Kidi Bebey (journalist, editor and author, France), Yahia Belaskri (writer and journalist, Algeria), Eugène Ebodé (writer, Cameroon), Youssouf Elalamy (author, 2020 winner, Morocco), Valérie Marin La Meslée (journalist *Le Point*, France), Nicolas Michel (journalist *Jeune Afrique*, France), Gabriel Mwènè Okoundji (psychologist and poet, Congo) and Mariama Ndoeye (author, Senegal).

The panel chose the book by Moroccan writer Loubna Serraj, *Pourvu qu'il soit de bonne humeur* published by La Croisée des chemins



Loubna Serraj has made her passion for reading and writing her profession. A radio editor and commentator, she also has a blog in which she reveals her literary, social or political 'musings' on current topics with a deliberately quirky perspective.

While describing domestic violence as a backdrop, her first novel, *Pourvu qu'il soit de bonne humeur*, explores the quest for freedom of two women separated yet connected by everything...through no will of their own.

Véronique Tadjo and the panel members were deeply affected by *Pourvu qu'il soit de bonne humeur*. They said: "With assurance and sensitivity, the author takes up a subject that alas, is still topical: domestic violence. The topic is addressed here with no hint of Manichaeism. The narration is led to its conclusion and is deployed successfully through several themes, of which we identify:

the handing down of trauma through generations, resistance in all its forms, multi-dimensional love, dignity in the face of suffering, abnegation as well as a desire for freedom. This work invites us to travel into the past through two characters, two periods and two couples, to get a better understanding of the present. Loubna Serraj calls out to her society and consequently all the countries where women still suffer physically. Readers hear the author truly speak out. This first novel is a successful tour de force.”

Loubna Serraj will receive a €10,000 prize and have a campaign organized to promote her book.

Published in Morocco by La Croisée des chemins in February 2020, *Pourvu qu’il soit de bonne humeur* was jointly published in France by Au diable vauvert in March 2021.

Pourvu qu’il soit de bonne humeur is also part of a joint publishing project in several African countries (Mali, Algeria, Tunisia, Guinea Conakry and Côte d’Ivoire) as part of the Club d’Oujda, an African and French publishers’ collective dedicated to circulating publications. The visibility given by the Orange Book Award in Africa will support this distribution wherever it takes place.

The five other finalists were:

- Ahmed Gasmia, *Les peuples du ciel*, (‘The sky peoples’) published by Frantz Fanon, Algeria
- Ibrahima Hane, *L’écume du temps*, (‘The froth of time’) published by L’Harmattan, Senegal
- Monique Ilboudo, *Carrefour des Veuves*, (The widows’ crossroads’) published by Les lettres Mouchetées, Congo
- Davina Ittoo, *Misère*, (‘Misery’) published by L’Atelier des nomades, Mauritius
- Sami Mokeddem, *Le secret des Barcides*, (‘The Barcid secret’) published by Pop Libris, Tunisia

About the Orange Foundation

The Orange Foundation is committed to social and professional insertion for young people and women in difficulty: young people without qualifications and out of work, women in vulnerable situations, people with autism. For the past 30 years, the Foundation’s initiatives have given them access to education, healthcare and culture, to help them find their place in society. We also help increase access to culture to all audiences by providing easy access to vocal music, books, museums. The Foundation now works in all these fields, ensuring that digital technology, essential in today’s world, plays a part in equality of opportunities. In this way, with the support of its committed employees, the Orange Foundation helps nearly 2 million people every year in 30 countries to make a new start.

"Orange Foundation, helping with what’s important"

Find out more: fondationorange.com

About the Institut Français

The Institut Français is the public organization in charge of cultural initiatives outside France. Under the dual auspices of the French Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs and the Ministry for Culture, it actively contributes to France’s influential diplomacy. The distribution of French books worldwide is a cultural, intellectual and economic challenge.

Find out more: institutfrancais.com

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