



CONSTANCE
Le PRINCE MAURICE
MAURITIUS

LE PRINCE MAURICE PRIZE 2008

Winner Announced

James Meek was named the winner of the 2008 Le Prince Maurice Prize for literary love stories on Saturday, June 7th, with his fourth novel, *We Are Now Beginning Our Descent*, published by Canongate.

Until now dominated by women novelists, James Meek is the first man to win the British prize. Now in its sixth year, this unique award spotlights novels which take love as their theme. It aims to reward not just the highest literary merit, but the emotional intelligence and impact of a book - writing which comes from the heart as well as the head.

The other two books shortlisted for the 2008 Le Prince Maurice Prize were *Swung* by Ewan Morrison, published by Jonathan Cape and *The Other Side of You* by Salley Vickers, published by Harper Perennial.

We Are Now Beginning Our Descent tells the story of war reporter Adam Kellas's journey from the mountains of Afghanistan to the elegant dinner tables of North London, and to the American East Coast. It spans continents and cultures, and sets one man's pursuit of love against the incendiary politics of our time.

President of the Prize, author and journalist **Tim Lott**, made the announcement at the awards dinner at Le Prince Maurice in Mauritius. Patron of the prize, critically acclaimed actor **Richard E. Grant**, presented Meek with the Prince Maurice Prize Trophy and a two-week Writer's Retreat at Le Prince Maurice. He succeeds Tilda Swinton, who was the 2006 Prize Patron. Richard E. Grant commented:

'James Meek charts a post 9. 11 route through the front lines of liberal London's chattering warriors via the War in the Middle East in search of that elusive thing called 'love'. Compellingly authentic.'

Also present at the awards ceremony at Le Prince Maurice were the judging panel, which this year boasts an exceptional line-up of some of the UK's most acclaimed authors. They are:

Simon Armitage, poet, novelist, playwright and BAFTA winner

Joanne Harris, bestselling author

Marina Lewycka, bestselling novelist, journalist and lecturer

David Nobbs, novelist and scriptwriter

Sarah Waters, Man Booker-shortlisted novelist

Irvine Welsh, novelist and scriptwriter

They were joined on the panel by the two regular Mauritian judges, authors **Carl de Souza** and **Kumari Issur**.



Tim Lott, president of the prize, explained why *We Are Now Beginning Our Descent* was selected as the winning entry:

'This terse, tense narrative, in some ways the most bleak of the books on the shortlist, is set in a context of war, both in the Middle East and over the dinner tables of North London. Its primary theme is distance - not just emotional distance but physical distance, and the fantasies we can project onto lives that are remote from our own. The two main protagonists, Adam Kellas and Astrid Walsh, are war correspondents, themselves sorely wounded by their personal histories and looking for some authentic way of finding a bridge between one another. There is a wisdom, maturity and intense intelligence to this work that marks the book out as being of the highest literary stamp. *We Are Now Beginning Our Descent* confirms James Meek's arrival as one of the most important writers of his generation.

The judges also greatly admired Salley Vickers' *The Other Side of You* for the extraordinary depth of its emotional insight and Ewan Morrison's *Swung* for its courage, originality and fearless exploration of human sexuality.'

Le Prince Maurice is one of the world's most elegant five-star resorts. With this prize, the hotel celebrates the duality of cultures within Mauritius - both English and French, as the prize is awarded to an English-speaking writer every second year, alternating with a French-speaking winner.

Notes to Editors

- The judges and winner are available for interview. Please contact Colman Getty for more information, including images and biography
- *Becoming Strangers* by Louise Dean (Scribner) won Le Prince Maurice Prize in 2006 and *Buddha Da* by Anne Donovan (Canongate) won the 2004 prize. Previous shortlisted authors include Dan Rhodes, Benjamin Markovits, Joanna Briscoe and Charlotte Mendelson
- The 2008 longlist was:

Crace, Jim	<i>The Pesthouse</i>	Picador
Crowther, Yasmin	<i>The Saffron Kitchen</i>	Little Brown
Darwin, Emma	<i>The Mathematics of Love</i>	Headline
Meek, James	<i>We Are Now Beginning Our Descent</i>	Canongate
Morrison, Ewan	<i>Swung</i>	Jonathan Cape
Mount, Ferdinand	<i>The Condor's Head</i>	Chatto & Windus
Smith, Ali	<i>Girl Meets Boy</i>	Canongate
Thomas, Scarlett	<i>The End of Mr Y</i>	Canongate
Vickers, Salley	<i>The Other Side of You</i>	Harper Perennial
- Le Prince Maurice is located on the north-east of Mauritius and is a member of Relais & Châteaux. It opened in 1998.
- For more information go to www.princemaurice.com

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