

PRESS RELEASE

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Local Author Achieves National Success

Jennifer McVeigh wins Epic Romantic Novel Category

Romantic Novelists' Association Awards 2014

North London based author, Jennifer McVeigh, was declared the winner of the Epic category of the Romantic Novel of the Year Award this evening.

The announcement, made by Darcey Bussell CBE, was for the author's novel *The Fever Tree*. To mark her success Jennifer was presented with a star-shaped crystal trophy by Ms Bussell during a glittering ceremony held in the Reading and Writing Room of the Gladstone Library, One Whitehall Place in London SW1.

Jennifer's novel then went forward, along with those of the four other category winners - Contemporary, Historical, Romantic Comedy and Young Adult - to contest the Romantic Novelists' Association's (RNA) most coveted award, the Romantic Novel of the Year. This is the most prestigious award in the RNA's calendar and the winner was announced later in the evening.

The Epic Romantic Novel category is for novels containing serious issues or themes, including grittier fiction such as sagas, multi-generational tales or time slip novels. Jennifer won in the face of fierce competition from Jessica Blair, Mary Fitzgerald, Emma Fraser, Kate Lord Brown and Lucinda Riley.

Published by Penguin, *The Fever Tree* is set in 1880s South Africa. Frances

Irvine was left penniless after her father's sudden death and was forced to emigrate to the Cape. In that barren country she met two very different men - one driven by ambition and the other by ideals. When a smallpox outbreak sends her to the diamond mines she is drawn into a ruthless world of greed and exploitation. Torn between passion and integrity, her choice has devastating consequences.

The category winners' novels -

**A Night on the Orient Express* - Veronica Henry
Contemporary Category

**The Fever Tree* - Jennifer McVeigh
Epic category

**The Gilded Fan* - Christina Courtenay
Historical Category

**It's Raining Men* - Milly Johnson
Romantic Comedy

**Linked* - Imogen Howson
Young Adult

- were read and judged by a respected, highly experienced panel of five independent industry professionals who determined the overall winner of the Romantic Novel of the Year.

This year the five judges included Sarah Broadhurst, *The Bookseller*; Alison Flood, *Guardian.co.uk*; Jane Mays, *The Daily Mail*; Karin Stoecker, ex-Editorial Director, Harlequin Books and Chris White of Waterstones.

The judges said of Jennifer's novel, "Well developed characters, a strong plot and evocative writing."

For the past 50 years the RNA has set a benchmark in romantic fiction. Its President, Katie Fforde, commented, "The RNA was set up in 1961 to encourage the good writing of romantic fiction in all its many genres. We congratulate all of our category winners. To get this far and compete against some of the best authors in the

land is no mean feat."

Cover images for all the above novels, together with author photographs, can be found at:

http://www.romanticnovelistsassociation.org/activities/photo_galleries

High resolution pictures of the Romantic Novel of the Year Awards can be found in the media section of our website

http://www.romanticnovelistsassociation.org/news/media_centre

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The Epic Romantic Novel Finalists

Jessica Blair, *The Road Beneath Me*, Piatkus

In the early 19th century times are hard. Ambition overrides family relationships, thrusting people into conflict with far-reaching repercussions. When the lives of two people, separated by over five hundred miles of land and sea, are plunged into upheaval, they find themselves facing uncertain futures. When their roads eventually meet, joy is theirs for the taking, but will it be snatched away before it can be embraced?

Mary Fitzgerald, *The Love Of A Lifetime*, Arrow

Richard Wilde fell in love with Elizabeth Nugent the moment she arrived at his family's farm. As the Second World War rages, Richard is sent to fight, leaving Elizabeth to deal with a terrible secret that could destroy his family. Their love remains constant but once the fighting is over, will the secrets and lies that Elizabeth has been hiding keep them apart forever?

Emma Fraser, *When Dawn Breaks*, Sphere

Two women, one secret. A heartbreaking choice. Skye 1903. Jessie, daughter of a local midwife is determined to become a nurse. Isabel, the doctor's daughter, is planning to follow in her father's footsteps even though her choice will be frowned upon. Isabel can't stay away from Archie, Jessie's older brother. Then Archie disappears and their lives are irrevocably changed. Years later when the

girls' paths cross again, neither is certain what the other knows about that fateful day. Working shoulder to shoulder they have no option but to confront what's been hidden for so long.

Kate Lord Brown, *The Perfume Garden*, Atlantic (Corvus)

The Perfume Garden is a sumptuous story of lost love and family secrets set between modern day Valencia and the Spanish Civil War. A forgotten house guards its secrets, a garden grown wild. A woman searches for the truth about her family. She soon realises that it is one thing to let go of the past, but quite another when it won't let go of you.

Jennifer McVeigh, *The Fever Tree*, Penguin

Frances Irvine, left destitute after her father's sudden death, is forced to emigrate to the Cape. 1880 South Africa is a country torn apart by greed. Frances becomes entangled with two very different men — one driven by ambition, the other by his ideals. When a smallpox outbreak sends her to the diamond mines, she is drawn into a ruthless world of exploitation, of human lives crushed in the scramble for power. Here she sees her path to happiness. Torn between passion and integrity, she makes a choice that has devastating consequences.

Lucinda Riley, *The Midnight Rose*, Pan

From the glittering palaces of India to the stately homes of England, the path of Anahita Chavan is followed from 1911 to present day. From a noble but impoverished family, she forms a lifelong friendship with Princess Indira and becomes her official companion. Travelling to England just before the outbreak of the Great War she meets young Donald Astbury. Eighty years later American actress Rebecca Bradley begins filming at the crumbling Astbury Hall. Ari Malik, Anahita's great-grandson arrives unexpectedly - he and Rebecca's discoveries begin to unravel the dark secrets that haunt the Astbury dynasty.

Note to Editors

About the Romantic Novelists' Association

The RNA was formed in 1960 to promote romantic fiction and encourage good writing and now represents more than 700 writers, agents, editors and other publishing professionals. The Romantic Novel of the Year Award was launched in the same year, and recognises excellence in romantic novels thereby enhancing the standing of the genre.

The RNA has always involved readers in judging the awards. Keen readers are asked to rate nominated books on a number of criteria including romantic content, readability, characters, plot, dialogue, style and ending. These readers' favourites are then presented to the expert independent judges, who decide the overall winners.

The 2013 Romantic Novel of the Year Award winner was Jenny Colgan, for *Welcome to Rosie Hopkins' Sweetshop of Dreams*, published by Sphere. Other recent winners include Jane Lovering, Julia Gregson, Freya North, Rosie Thomas, Jojo Moyes and Philippa Gregory.

A list of past winners of RNA awards can be found at www.romanticnovelistsassociation.org