



## MASSBOOKS OF THE YEAR/FICTION

*Recommended Reading from the 9<sup>th</sup> Annual Massachusetts Book Awards*

*(Books Published in 2008)*

### **Must-Reads from the 9<sup>th</sup> MassBooks** *(alphabetical, by title)*

***American Savior*** by Roland Merullo. (Algonquin Books) If Jesus returned, what would his position be on abortion? Find that answer and more in this hilarious and inventive novel of church and state.

***A Better Angel*** by Chris Adrian. (Farrar, Straus & Giroux) A collection of short stories delving into the tragedies in life, often with doses of dark humor that illustrates Adrian's originality and talent.

***Blindspot*** by Jane Kamensky & Jill Lepore. (Spiegel & Grau/Random House) A playful romp through pre-Revolutionary Boston by two history professors who limn the life of a portrait painter in exile whose male apprentice is a talented young woman in disguise. Exactness of detail and a wealth of excerpted historical documents balance the tale's satire as the plot races toward a suspenseful end.

***The Condition*** by Jennifer Haigh. (HarperCollins) New England family's messy history of divorce, homophobia, and suburban angst plays out against the daughter's diagnosis of a genetic condition that traps her forever in a child's body.

***The End*** by Salvatore Scibona. (Graywolf Press) In this finely sculpted debut novel, the lives of a baker and others fatefully intersect in an Italian-American neighborhood in early-20<sup>th</sup>-century Cleveland.

***The Foreigner*** by Francie Lin. (Picador) A man attempting to fulfill his mother's dying wish becomes embroiled in criminal intrigue in this haunting, noir-influenced debut novel set in contemporary Taipei.

***The Given Day*** by Dennis Lehane. (William Morrow) Chilling drama, impressively researched, that hurtles across 1919 Boston and weaves Babe Ruth, influenza, race tensions, and a police strike together with cold grace.

***The Heretic's Daughter*** by Kathleen Kent. (Little, Brown) Convincingly detailed narrative, authored by the descendent of a woman sentenced to death during Salem's 17<sup>th</sup>-century witch trials, paints a grim picture of one community splintering from within, pitting family against family, neighbor against neighbor.

***Map of Ireland*** by Stephanie Grant. (Scribner) Set against the tumultuous backdrop of Boston during the school busing crisis, a young Irish-American lesbian infatuated with her Parisian French teacher of African descent sets out on a journey through the fringes of the Black Power movement to find love.

***People of the Book*** by Geraldine Brooks. (Viking) Explores the mysterious history of a rare Hebrew manuscript throughout the centuries as it travels across continents and falls into the hands of various protectors.

***Requiem, Mass*** by John Dufresne. (Norton) The narrative memoir of Johnny who has spent his life trying to keep his offbeat, dysfunctional family together.

***The World Before Her*** by Deborah Weisgall. (Harcourt) Recreates episodes in the life of novelist George Eliot surrounding her ill-fated honeymoon in Venice. A century later, a parallel story unfolds.

Judges for the 9<sup>th</sup> MassBooks in Fiction: Karen Demers, Wilbraham Public Library; Deborah Doulette, Neilson Library, Smith College; Forest Turner, Library, Suffolk County House of Correction.

The Massachusetts Book Awards are a program of the Massachusetts Center for the Book, on the web at [www.massbook.org](http://www.massbook.org).