



Press Release

CONTACT: SHARON SHALOO
Massachusetts Center for the Book/Boston
bookawards@massbook.org • 617.521.2719

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A COMMONWEALTH OF BOOKS, READING & LIBRARIES

The 9th Annual Massachusetts Book Awards Announced

BOSTON, Mass. (June 22, 2009) – The Massachusetts Center for the Book is pleased to announce the award and honors titles in the 9th Annual Massachusetts Book Awards.

The awards are presented annually to books from the previous calendar year that were published by Massachusetts authors or that convey important Massachusetts themes. The twelve titles named in fiction, nonfiction, poetry, and children's/young adult literature will be promoted during the programming year 2009-2010 in libraries throughout the commonwealth.

The award winner in fiction is *People of the Book* by Geraldine Brooks, published by Viking, a powerful look at the mysterious history of a rare Hebrew manuscript. Honors in fiction go to Stephanie Grant's *Map of Ireland* (Scribner's) and Roland Merullo's *American Savior* (Algonquin). *Map of Ireland* is the story of a young Irish-American lesbian infatuated with her Parisian French teacher of African descent, set against the backdrop of Boston's school busing crisis, while *American Savior* tackles questions of church and state with the humor and incisiveness we've come to expect from Merullo.

The nonfiction award goes to *Snow Falling in Spring* (Farrar, Straus and Giroux) by Moying Li, an all ages read that traces the author's coming of age in China during the Cultural Revolution and her eventual emigration to the U.S. in her 20s. Nonfiction honors go to Brenda Wineapple's *White Heat* (Knopf), which examines Emily Dickinson in her friendship with Thomas Wentworth Higginson, and to *Through an Uncommon Lens* (U Mass Press) by Patricia Fanning, an important new biography of F. Holland Day, a significant early 20th c Massachusetts photographer.

In poetry, the award winner is James Tate, whose volume of masterfully crafted prose poems, *The Ghost Soldiers* (Ecco), explores, among other themes, hometown and the national consciousness in a time of war. The honors titles in poetry are *Spring* (U Illinois) by Oni Buchanan, a work that the judges feel grips down and awakens the very roots of the poetic process, and *Sea Change* (Ecco) by Jorie Graham, a major work of poetry and environmental ethics.

The Children's/Young Adult Literature category this year recognizes works for young, middle, and young adult readers with its award and honors titles. The award goes to Katie Smith Milway's picture book *One Hen* (Kids Can Press), a true story of Kojo, a young boy from West Africa, who turns one small micro-loan into a better life for his family and for his village. Honors go to Lois Lowry's *The*

Willoughbys (Houghton Mifflin) and to Nancy Werlin's *Impossible* (Dial). Lowry, a past MassBook Award winner in this category, is back with an old-fashioned and zany story of a nanny, her badly behaved charges, and a long lost heir, written and illustrated – it's clear – with great delight by the author. Werlin's young adult novel successfully crosses realistic fiction and fantasy in the story of Lucy Scarborough, a foster teen who must perform three impossible tasks to free herself from an ancient family curse.

This year's MassBook judges were Betsy Clarke, Boston Public Library; Charles Coe, Massachusetts Cultural Council; Christina Davis, Woodberry Poetry Room, Widener Library, Harvard; Karen Demers, Wilbraham Public Library; Deborah Doulette, Neilson Library, Smith College; Janet Eckert, Western Massachusetts Regional Library System; Karen Kosko, Haggerty School Library, Cambridge; Teresa Pfeifer, Zanetti Montessori Library, Springfield; Mary Rose Quinn, North Andover Public Library & Mass Board of Library Commissioners; Suzanne Terry, Boston Athenæum; Forest Turner, Suffolk County House of Correction Library; and John Warner, Commonwealth Archives.

The Massachusetts Center for the Book is the Commonwealth affiliate of the Center for the Book in the Library of Congress. It works within the network of state-center affiliates across the country to promote books, reading, literacy, and libraries. MCB sponsors programming and develops collaborations that forward the cause of books and lifelong reading in our commonwealth.

The Center is supported, in part, by the Boston Athenaeum, Boston Public Library, Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners, Massachusetts Cultural Council, Mass Humanities, and Simmons College Graduate School of Library and Information Sciences.

You can read more about the Book Awards and other Center for the Book programs at www.massbook.org.

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