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### BOGGS, SKLOOT, AND GRABER RECEIVE LITERARY AWARDS

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(Richmond, Virginia) – The Library of Virginia is pleased to announce the winners of the 14th Annual Library of Virginia Literary Awards, sponsored by Dominion. The October 15 awards celebration was hosted by award-winning Virginia author Adriana Trigiani. Awards categories were fiction, nonfiction, poetry, and literary lifetime achievement. Winners of the Library of Virginia’s Annual Literary Awards receive a \$3,500 prize and a handsome engraved crystal book.

**Belle Boggs** is the recipient of the **Emyl Jenkins Sexton Literary Award for Fiction** for *Mattaponi Queen: Stories*, which the judges felt presented strongly imagined narratives set in a distinctive but changing Virginia. Writing with candor, affection, and poetic eloquence, Boggs celebrates a cast of recurring and empathetic characters who inhabit their region and community as people who permit one another to embrace themselves for who they are.

Boggs was born in Richmond and grew up in King William County and now lives in Chatham County, North Carolina. Her parents live in Walkerton, Virginia, a town of fewer than 100 people on Virginia’s Middle Peninsula. Boggs received an MFA in fiction from the University of California at Irvine. She is both a writer and a high school teacher. *Mattaponi Queen*, which also won the Bakeless Prize, is her debut collection of short stories.

The other finalists for the fiction prize were: *Compass Rose* by John Casey and *Ford County* by John Grisham. *Compass Rose* is the sequel to Casey’s National Book Award-winning *Spartina*. It concludes his complex and sensitive exploration of the society and ecosystem of a coastal Rhode Island community living in the constant presence of the sea—part sustainer and part destroyer. *Ford County* by John Grisham is a collection of seven stories that evoke the tradition of Southern tall tale-telling. The work reflects the talent and humor of a skilled storyteller.

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The winner of the **2011 Literary Award for Nonfiction** is **Rebecca Skloot** for ***The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks***. Skloot draws from more than a thousand interviews and extensive scientific and historical research to present the remarkable story of Henrietta Lacks and the "HeLa" cells that were harvested after her cancer diagnosis. Skloot tells the complex story with sensitivity while portraying a tragic, heroic, and disturbing account of science and family in clear and readable prose.

Skloot is an award-winning science writer whose work has appeared in the *New York Times Magazine*; *O, The Oprah Magazine*; *Discover*, and many other publications. She specializes in narrative science writing and has worked as a correspondent for WNYC's *Radiolab* and PBS's *Nova ScienceNOW*. *The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks*, Skloot's debut book, took more than a decade to research and write, and was a *New York Times* best-seller. It won the Heartland Prize for Nonfiction from the *Chicago Tribune* and was named the Best Book of 2010 by Amazon.com.

The other nonfiction finalists were: *To Serve the Living: Funeral Directors and the African American Way of Death* by Suzanne E. Smith and *Bible Babel: Making Sense of the Most Talked About Book of All Time* by Kristin Swenson. Original and fascinating, *To Serve the Living* opens with the dramatic story of social tension, lynching, and personal heroism in Georgia in the 1960s and closes with the funerals of Rosa Parks and Coretta Scott King. Smith reveals a surprising account of little-known dimensions of American social history: the important role of African American funeral directors from the Underground Railroad to the civil rights era. Without a trace of preachiness, *Bible Babel* makes the intricacies of the Old and New Testaments accessible to general readers of all faiths or none. Kristin Swenson deciphers Bible scholarship for modern readers with gentle good humor that respects the profundity of her subject without taking herself too seriously.

**Kathleen Graber**, assistant professor of English in the creative writing department at Virginia Commonwealth University, won the **2011 Literary Award for Poetry** for ***The Eternal City***. Graber's book suggests the miraculous in ordinary human experience, exploring the interplay among the personal, historical, and philosophical. Graber was named one of five finalists for the National Book Award in the poetry category for *The Eternal City*, her second collection of poetry. Her poems have appeared in the *New Yorker* and the *American Poetry Review*, among other publications, and her first collection, *Correspondence*, was published in 2006.

The other poetry prize finalists were Michael Chitwood, a freelance writer and lecturer at the University of North Carolina, for *Poor-Mouth Jubilee* and Leslie Wheeler, professor of English at Washington and Lee University, for *Heterotopia*. Chitwood's *Poor-Mouth Jubilee* is a book of stillness and immanence—quiet and perceptive re-visions that reflect a world full of wonder and revelation. The poems' frank, direct effects, reminiscent of those found in the poetry of James Wright, make us aware of the meaning to be found in both sound and silence. Drawing upon the musical textures and metaphorical resonance of Liverpool, as

well as the intricacies of form, Leslie Wheeler's book *Heterotopia* demonstrates how an individual's finely honed memory can illuminate the experience of others.

The judges also selected an honorable mention in poetry category: *A Walk in Victoria's Secret* by Kate Daniels.

The winners of the **People's Choice Awards** are *In the Company of Others* by **Jan Karon** in the **fiction category** and *The Horse in Virginia* by **Julie Campbell** in the **nonfiction category**. The finalists for the People's Choice Awards are selected by a panel of independent Virginia booksellers and librarians from the list of books nominated for the Library's Literary Awards. Winners are decided by readers voting online and in libraries. Winners of the People's Choice awards receive \$2,500 and an engraved crystal book.

Also honored at this year's Literary Awards was **Tom Angleberger** for *The Strange Case of Origami Yoda*, which was selected as the winner of the annual **Whitney and Scott Cardozo Award for Children's Literature**. The *New York Times Sunday Book Review* calls *The Strange Case of Origami Yoda* "a delightful first novel presented as a joint effort between the neatly typed notes of Tommy, a sixth grader, and the scribbles of friends." A juried panel selected five finalists from nominated authors whose works focused on literature for children ages four through eight, with a publication date of 2010. Nominated titles were accepted from the greater mid-Atlantic region. A public vote occurred online and in public libraries throughout central Virginia in July and August.

**Lisa Russ Spaar**, a professor of English at the University of Virginia, won this year's **Carole Weinstein Prize in Poetry**. She is the author of seven books of poetry and won the Library of Virginia's poetry prize in 2009 for *Satin Cash*. The Weinstein Prize, established in 2005, is awarded each year to a poet with strong connections to central Virginia. The annual prize recognizes significant recent contribution to the art of poetry and is awarded on the basis of a range of achievement in the field of poetry. There is no formal application process or competition. Selection and notification of the annual prize is made by a three-member board of curators.

The recipient of the 2011 Library of Virginia **Literary Lifetime Achievement Award** is Nelson County native **Earl Hamner**, writer of novels, television shows, and movies and the force behind the semiautobiographical television series *The Waltons*.

Next year's Literary Awards Celebration will be held on October 20, 2012.

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