



LIBRARY OF VIRGINIA

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HABILA, PEERY, HOGAN, AND SMITH RECEIVE LITERARY AWARDS

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(Richmond, Virginia) – The Library of Virginia is pleased to announce the winners of the 11th Annual Library of Virginia Literary Awards honoring Virginia authors or, in the case of nonfiction, works on a Virginia subject. This year's 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 and the People's Choice Awards receive a \$3,500 prize and a handsome engraved crystal book.

R.T. Smith is the recipient of the poetry prize for *Outlaw Style: Poems*, which the independent panel of judges hailed as offering a brooding understanding of both the riches and horrors of Southern culture. Smith is editor of *Shenandoah: The Washington and Lee Review*. In 2002, he received the Library's poetry award for *Messenger*. The other poetry finalists were *Blessings and Inclemencies* by Constance Merritt and *Littlefoot: A Poem* by Charles Wright.

The winner of the 2008 literary award for the best work of nonfiction is Wesley C. Hogan for *Many Minds, One Heart: SNCC's Dream for a New America*. The book explores how the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee broke open the caste system in the American South and offers new insights into the internal dynamics of SNCC as well as the larger civil rights and Black Power movement.

The judges felt that *Many Minds, One Heart* reminds us of the ongoing quest for democracy while highlighting its complexity and fragility. Hogan's voluminous research and graceful style engaged the reader from beginning to end. *Many Minds, One Heart* also won the Lillian Smith Book Award and the Peace History Society's Scott Bills Memorial Prize.

Hogan is assistant professor of history and co-director of the Institute for the Study of Race Relations at Virginia State University. She and her family live in Richmond.

The other finalists for the nonfiction prize were Barbara Kingsolver with Steven L. Hopp and Camille Kingsolver for *Animal, Vegetable, Miracle: A Year of Food Life* and Peter Wallenstein for *Cradle of America: Four Centuries of Virginia History*. The judges also selected an honorable mention in the nonfiction category: *What This Cruel War Was Over: Soldiers, Slavery, and the Civil War* by Chandra Manning.

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For the first time since the inception of the Library of Virginia Literary Awards, two authors, Helon Habila and Janet Peery, are winners of the 2008 Library of Virginia Literary Award for the best work of fiction. The judges felt that the literary styles of *Measuring Time* by Helon Habila and *What the Thunder Said* by Janet Peery, though very different, were equally impressive and equally worthy of the award. *Measuring Time* plays with our conceptions of history, showing it as something lived and told rather than documented. In *What the Thunder Said*, the language and structure of the novel appear effortless. The narrative voice is authentic and evocative of the Depression during the dust bowl years and Peery's prose is beautifully lyrical.

Helon Habila teaches creative writing at George Mason University. His writing has won many honors, including the Caine Prize and the Commonwealth Writers Prize. Janet Peery teaches creative writing at Old Dominion University. Peery is a recipient of a Guggenheim Fellowship, the Rosenthal Award from the American Academy of Arts and Letters, the Whiting Writers Award, and an NEA Fellowship. Her first novel, *The River Beyond the World*, was a National Book Award Finalist for Fiction in 1996.

This year's other fiction finalist was *The Rope Walk* by Carrie Brown. Brown won the category in 2005 for *Confinement* and in 2001 for *The Hatbox Baby*.

The winner of the People's Choice Award in the fiction category is *Puss 'n Cahoots* by Rita Mae Brown and in the nonfiction category, *Unruly Americans* by Woody Holton. The People's Choice Awards are cosponsored by the Library of Virginia and James River Writers, a nonprofit Richmond-based writers' organization. The finalists for these 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.

Also honored at this year's Literary Awards was Pamela Duncan Edwards for *The Old House*, winner of the second annual Whitney and Scott Cardozo Award for Children's Literature. In selecting this book a juried panel reviewed 29 nominated titles from authors whose works focused on literature for children ages four through eight. Nominated titles with a publication date of 2007 were accepted from the greater mid-Atlantic region.

The winner of this year's Weinstein Poetry Prize is David Wojahn, who teaches at Virginia Commonwealth University and directs its creative writing program. His first book, *Icehouse Lights*, won the prestigious Yale Series of Younger Poets prize. He is the author of six collections of poetry. He has received fellowships from the National Endowment for the Arts, the Fine Arts Work Center in Provincetown, the Illinois Arts Council, the Indiana Arts Commission, and the Breadloaf Writers' Conference. The Weinstein Prize winner is selected separately from the Library of Virginia's Literary Awards by a special board of curators.

The recipient of the 2008 Library of Virginia Lifetime Achievement Award is Rita Dove. A former Poet Laureate of the United States and Consultant in Poetry at the Library of Congress, Dove is the youngest person—and the first African-American—to receive this highest official honor in American letters. She held the position for two years. In 2004 Virginia Governor Mark Warner appointed her Poet Laureate of the Commonwealth of Virginia, a two-year position.

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Dove is Commonwealth Professor of Poetry at the University of Virginia. She holds honorary doctoral degrees from more than 20 American universities. Among her many awards are the 1996 Heinz Award in the Arts and Humanities, the 1997 Barnes & Noble Writers for Writers Award, the 2001 Duke Ellington Lifetime Achievement Award in the Literary Arts, and the 2006 Common Wealth Award of Distinguished Service.

Next year's Literary Awards Celebration will be held on October 17, 2009.

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