CHESTNUT HILL, MA (February 2009) -- University Prof. of English Paul Mariani, a noted Catholic poet and essayist who is one of America's foremost literary biographers, has won the twelfth annual John Ciardi Award for lifetime achievement in poetry, the editors of *Italian Americana* have announced.

The Ciardi prize was jointly created in 1998 by the journal and the National Italian American Foundation to honor a writer who has made a landmark contribution to Italian American poetry.

"In keeping with the diverse talents of the man for whom it is named, the award recognizes contributions to poetry not only through original verse, but also in translation, criticism, teaching, and editing -- all fields in which the late John Ciardi worked with great distinction," according to the award announcement. Previous winners include Felix Stefanile, Lewis Turco, Jonathan Galassi, Sandra Gilbert, Jay Parini, Kim Addonizio, Paul Violi, Dana Gioia, W. S. Di Piero, Daniela Gioseffi and Lawrence Ferlinghetti.

Paul Mariani has published over 200 essays and reviews and is the author of fourteen books, including six books of poetry. His awards include a Guggenheim Fellowship and several National Endowment for the Arts and National Endowment for the Humanities Fellowships.

According to the award citation: "Mariani has written and edited several volumes of literary criticism, but as a prose writer is perhaps best known for his four extensively researched, gracefully written, and highly regarded biographies of twentieth-century American poets": *William Carlos Williams: A New World Naked* (1981), *Dream Song: The Life of John Berryman* (1990), *Lost Puritan: A Life of Robert Lowell* (1994), and *The Broken Tower: The Life of Hart Crane* (1999). He is currently at work on a biography of Wallace Stevens.


"Spiritual concerns have also been increasingly prominent in Mariani's six volumes of poetry—*Timing Devices* (1979), *Crossing Cocytus* (1982), *Prime Mover* (1985), *Salvage Operations: New & Selected Poems* (1990), *The Great Wheel* (1996), and *Deaths & Transfigurations* (2005). His poems range widely through time and space, a body of work
held together by recurring themes of love and loss, family and memory, culture and communion, written in a clear and serious style enlivened by eruptions of vulgarity and slang. No one brief excerpt can suggest the full range of his achievement, but the artistry and intensity of his work are vividly displayed in the final stanza of 'Wasn't It Us You Were Seeking?', the opening poem of his most recent collection:

Wasn't it us you were seeking?" Clamant voices, out of sorts with this submersion always into Memory and Doubt. And now radar picks up human wreckage on the screen: the dead, dredged up from the depths. And now a shout, as they flop about the deck, raw, barnacled, obscene"

Mariani came to Boston College in 2000 from the University of Massachusetts–Amherst, where he was a Distinguished University Professor. He had been making a spiritual retreat with the Jesuits in Weston in the previous year when a small voice inside said: "Go to BC. Go to BC," he told the Boston College Chronicle. He also recalled saying as he first set foot on the BC campus: "I'm home."

Mariani's papers were acquired by Burns Library in 2001, the year he completed his book, Thirty Days: On Retreat with the Exercises of St. Ignatius, an account of a midwinter spiritual retreat made at a Jesuit house in Gloucester, Mass.

He holds a bachelor's degree from Manhattan College, a master's degree from Colgate University, and a doctoral degree from the City University of New York.

He and his wife, Eileen, have three sons, the eldest of whom, Paul, is a Jesuit priest.

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