

## ***Paul Mariani Wins the John Ciardi Award for Lifetime Achievement in Poetry***

It is with great pleasure that the editors of *Italian Americana* announce that Paul Mariani has won the twelfth annual John Ciardi Award for lifetime achievement in poetry. The Ciardi prize was jointly created in 1998 by our 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. The award's \$1,000 cash prize has once again been made possible by the generosity and cultural commitment of the Sons of Italy. The previous winners of the Ciardi Award are Felix Stefanile (1998), Lewis Turco (1999), Jonathan Galassi (2000), Sandra Gilbert (2001), Jay Parini (2002), Kim Addonizio (2003), Paul Violi (2004), Dana Gioia (2005), W. S. Di Piero (2006), Daniela Gioseffi (2007), and Lawrence Ferlinghetti (2008).

Paul Mariani was born in New York City in 1940, the oldest of seven children, and grew up in a working-class environment on Long Island. He earned a bachelor's degree from Manhattan College, a master's degree from Colgate University, and a Ph.D. from the City University of New York. From 1968 to 2000 he taught at the University of Massachusetts–Amherst, where he was a Distinguished University Professor. At present he holds a Chair in Poetry at Boston College. He has been awarded fellowships by the National Endowment for the Humanities, the National Endowment for the Arts, and the Guggenheim Foundation.

Mariani has written and edited several volumes of literary criticism, but as a prose writer he is 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. Several of his recent books have combined his passion for poetry with his intense religious commitment: *God and the Imagination: On Poets, Poetry, and the Ineffable* (2002) and *Gerard Manley Hopkins: A Life* (2008), a companion to his 1970 volume *A Commentary on the Complete Poems of Gerard Manley Hopkins*.

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.