



# MASSBOOKS OF THE YEAR/POETRY

*Recommended Reading from the 8<sup>th</sup> Annual Massachusetts Book Awards*

## The Award Books

*Blackbird and Wolf* by Henri Cole (Farrar, Straus & Giroux). In these poems the writer strives to fuse the mind and the world, meditation and observation, until what is seen becomes what is felt.

*If No Moon* by Moira Linehan (Southern Illinois UP). This cohesive and brave collection of lyric poetry invites the reader to explore the author's devotion to embracing life, grieving death, and pursuing creativity.

*Gulf Music* by Robert Pinsky (Farrar, Straus & Giroux). Former Poet Laureate Robert Pinsky explores the intersections between individual, cultural, and political memory through the idiosyncratic notion of forgetfulness.

## Highly Recommended

*Lawrence City* by Cesar Sanchez Beras (Wellington House Publishing). Set in Lawrence, Massachusetts, the collection explores town landmarks such as the Ayer Mill clock, City Hall, and Bellevue cemetery.

*Inconsiderate Madness* by Helen Marie Casey (Black Lawrence Press). Casey's poems focus on Mary Dyer, a Quaker hanged as a heretic in 17<sup>th</sup> century Massachusetts, and explore themes of belief, devotion, and the relationship between religion and the state.

*The Alchemy of Grief* by Emily Ferrara (Bordighera Press). Ferrara incorporates love, loss, friendship, and transformation in poems about the pain and healing of a grieving mother.

*Descartes' Loneliness* by Allen Grossman (New Directions). A combination of comedy and tragedy, Grossman's collection of poetry about death dares to find humor and peace in loss.

*Under Sleep* by Daniel Hall (U of Chicago Press). Written over a ten year period as an elegy to Hall's partner, *Under Sleep* utilizes a variety of poetic forms and styles to relate the effects of a loved one's death on the living.

*From Mist to Shadow* by Robert K. Johnson (Ibbetson Street Press). In a poetic exploration of his own life, Johnson shares thoughts on love, literature, family, careers, and the characters who have colored his experiences.

*Beloved Idea* by Ann Killough (Alice James Books) Killough struggles to understand through metaphor-heavy verse her feelings toward her nation, evoking images from American religion, literature, and politics.

*Easy to Keep, Hard to Keep In* by David R. Surette (Koenisha Publications). Surette's musical verses relate autobiographical stories from his life in and around Boston.

*The Situation* by John Skoyles (Carnegie Mellon UP). Skoyles addresses the relationship between life and death while incorporating love, loss, and religion.

*Saving the Lamb* by B.G. Thurston (Finishing Line Press). These poems use images from nature to illustrate aspects of human life and of the life of the poet in particular.

*Judges for the 8<sup>th</sup> MassBooks in Poetry were Claire Buck (Department of English, Wheaton College), Lawrence Raab (Department of English, Williams College) & Vanessa Vargas (Forbes Library, Northampton)*

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