



## MASSBOOKS OF THE YEAR/POETRY

*Recommended Reading from the 9<sup>th</sup> Annual Massachusetts Book Awards*

*(Books Published in 2008)*

### **Must-Reads from the 9<sup>th</sup> MassBooks** (*alphabetical, by title*)

***Francis d'Assisi 2008*** by Gary Metras. (Finishing Line Press) A beautifully executed long-form poem that brings the spiritual legacy of St. Francis to life for the modern reader.

***The Ghost Soldiers*** by James Tate. (Ecco/HarperCollins) Masterly crafted narrative poems that keep an eye on us all, scary but true, exploring among other things, hometown and the national consciousness in a time of war.

***Her Place in These Designs*** by Rhina P. Espailat. (Truman State UP) Full of humane wisdom, sharp observations and wry humor. A mature and confident voice with a formalist sensibility. Ripe with sonnets.

***In Memory of the Fast Break*** by Michael Sweeney. (Plain View Press) Edgy, hard-hitting observations on American society as viewed through the lenses of sports and popular culture.

***Narrative of the Life of the Brown Boy and the White Man*** by Ronaldo V. Wilson. (U Pittsburgh P) Prose poems narrated by a black, gay male who explores the self through situations of race, class, gender, sexuality, and love.

***Quaker Guns*** by Caroline Knox. (Wave Books) A new collection from a poet who has a penchant for quirky poetics that startle and amuse and endure.

***Same Life*** by Maureen McLane. (Farrar, Straus & Giroux) Debut collection of free-verse poems from a noted critic and reviewer invokes Sappho, explores citizenship and sexuality, landscape and history, and moves us from Etruscan ruins to video porn, as we travel through cities, gardens, lakefronts, and airplanes.

***Sea Change*** by Jorie Graham. (Ecco/HarperCollins) An ethical text of the highest magnitude, demanding that we arrive at that hardest of all creeds: a belief in the unarrestable destiny of the Other, whether that "other" be our dead and the "garden of continuing to think about them" or our fellow creatures suffering from a sea change induced by global warming, pollution, warfare.

***Spring*** by Oni Buchanan. (U of Illinois Press) A work that grips down and awakens the very roots of the poetic process, that is still and still moving, a "journeywork" as Whitman might have called it; a multidimensional text that will transform the way Buchanan's generation and future generations of poets approach poem-making.

***Two Minutes of Light*** by Nancy K. Pearson. (Perugia Press) A journey of self told in distilled language, pure and true, hip and bitter sweet.

***Watching the Spring Festival*** by Frank Bidart. (Farrar, Straus & Giroux) A collection that combines exquisite control of poetic form with a powerful and insistent underlying emotional pulse.

**Additional Note:** Do check out a wonderful edition of the work of Massachusetts poet Elizabeth Bishop in the Library of America series. This 2008 volume is edited by another Massachusetts poet, and friend of Bishop, Lloyd Schwartz.

Judges for the 9<sup>th</sup> MassBooks in Poetry: Charles Coe, Massachusetts Cultural Council; Christina Davis, Woodberry Poetry Room, Widener Library, Harvard; Teresa Pfeifer, Zanetti Montessori Library, Springfield.

The Massachusetts Book Awards are a program of the Massachusetts Center for the Book, on the web at [www.massbook.org](http://www.massbook.org).