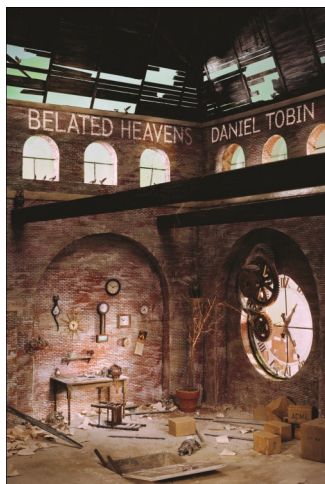




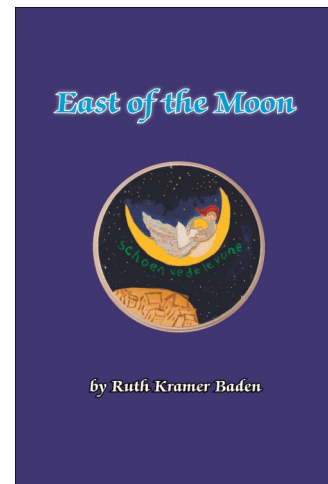
Must-Read Poetry 2011

from the Massachusetts Book Awards

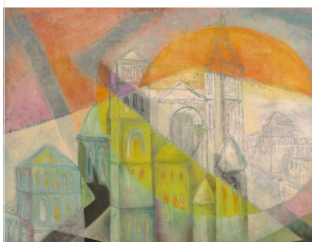
Daniel Tobin's deft and elegant poems explore and celebrate life as a journey, paying close attention to "the conveyances of getting there" and reveling in the sights and sounds along the way. The poems of *Belated Heavens* (Four Way) invite the reader to traverse both the physical and spiritual realms.



In *East of the Moon* (Ibbetson Street), Ruth Kramer-Baden has written poems that let wonder ripen into wisdom. Her empathy is rooted in the understanding that life is always a desperate improvisation. These poems resonate on a personal, historic, and mythic level.

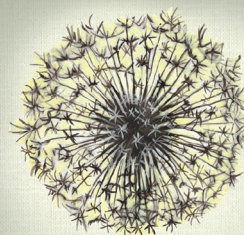


Ghosts and Whispers



Krikor Der Hohannesian

In *Ghosts and Whispers* (Finishing Line), Krikor Der Hohannesian recounts the personal stories of his Armenian relatives, some of whom survived and some of whom were killed in the Armenian massacres of the early 20th century. These are poems that make art out of tragedy.



God, Seed

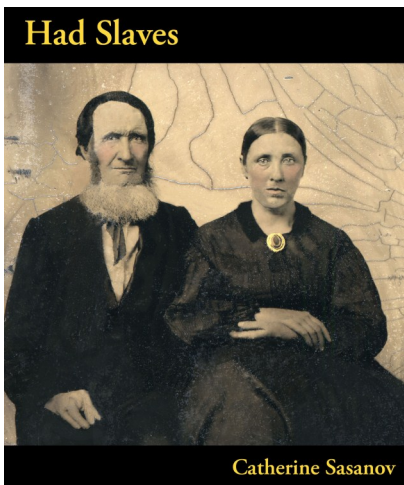
Poetry & Art About the Natural World

Rebecca Foust and Lorna Stevens

God, Seed (Tebot Bach) is lyrical, intense, and concerned with issues of Earth's survival. It has a fierce yet loving attitude toward the natural world and human nature. Most of Rebecca Foust's poems are matched with paintings by colorful artist Lorna Stevens.

Foust's *All that Gorgeous Pitiless Song* (Many Mountains Moving, 2010) is also recommended by the judges.

Had Slaves



Catherine Sasanov

"Had Slaves": Catherine Sasanov stumbles across these words in the family papers of her Missouri ancestors, and in this volume reconstructs fragments of what might have been the lives of the eleven men, women, and children held in bondage by her great-great-great-grandfather and his family. *Had Slaves* (Firewheel) is a powerful view of American slavery and its ongoing legacy.

In the long, spacious lines of *Heaven & Earth Holding Company* (Pittsburgh), John Hodgen entertains the reader with his witty storytelling. His free-wheeling exuberant cadences disarm and charm the reader, and then deliver their meaning with subtle force.

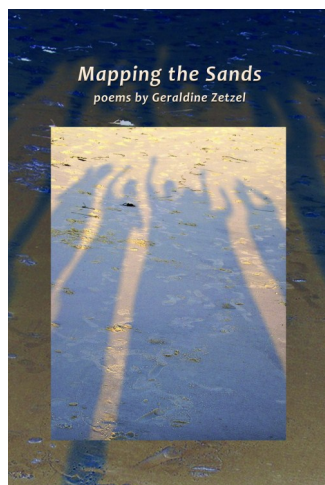


Heaven & Earth Holding Company
John Hodgen

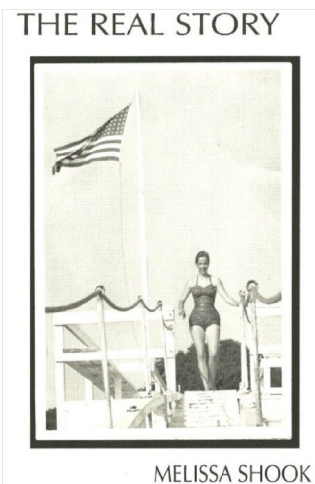
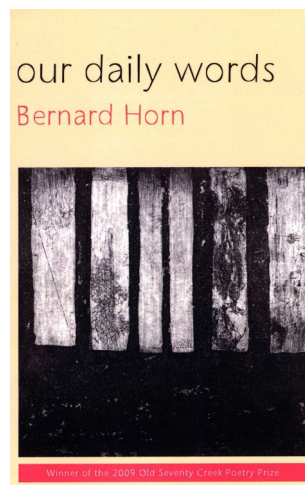


The Massachusetts Book Awards are a program of the Massachusetts Center for the Book, the Commonwealth Affiliate of the Center for the Book in the Library of Congress, on the web at www.massbook.org.

A poet who can make magic out of the hall closet is worth listening to. Geraldine Zetzel's mature work in *Mapping the Sands* (Mayapple) offers an expansion of the spirit, a patent playful imagination that reaches through strictures of propriety and convention to the bedrock of connection. The book allows life to emerge "as if lit from within."



Bernard Horn's poetry in *Our Daily Words* (Old Seventy Creek) holds the beating heart of everyday's apparently random trivialities. In beautiful language he juxtaposes surprising things that don't go together — except in real life. His poems are organically musical and lift daily experience to spiritual and intellectual intensity.



Melissa Shook's *the Real Story* (Finishing Line) shines a Kleig light into the dusty corners of real life in this accessible, un-sentimental collection that will strike chords of recognition for readers.

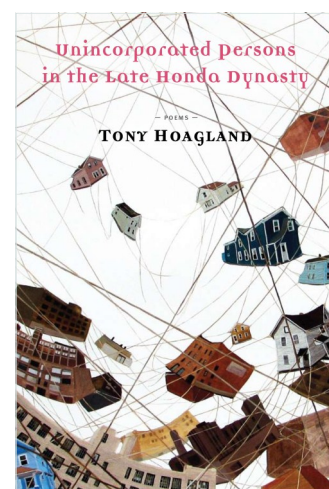


With tremendous economy and control, in *Stray Home* (UNT Press) Amy Clark delivers a bracing and honest collection about family, love, self-awareness, and vulnerability that at times "quivers with bed-rock faith."

In *Triage* (Cervena Barva), Tam Lin Neville casts her clear, compassionate eye upon the city and its often down-and-out inhabitants in need of triage from hopelessness, idleness, and fear. Precise, vivid poems reveal a willingness to be a part of rather than apart.



In *Unincorporated Persons from the Late Honda Dynasty* (Graywolf), Tony Hoagland's keen eye, sense of play, and piercing intellect animate every poem. This is a collection that defies, challenges, and invigorates. With his quirky "muchness," Hoagland wrestles with his times in tragicomic fashion.



Beginning in May you can access an online discussion of the books from the Massachusetts Center for the Book Facebook page. Here's a google-shortened version of the page URL: <http://goo.gl/nnRLS>. Be sure to "like" the page so you can stay tuned as we shall announce the award winner in poetry there at summer's end.

MassBook 2011 Poetry Judges: Anne Berard, Milford Public Library; Frank Miller, Brockton Poetry Series, Brockton Public Library; Beth Roll Smith, West Bridgewater Public Library