



Boston Authors Club

October 2017 News & Events

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BAC on November 16: Three Debut Novelists Talk Turkey

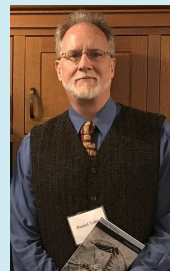
Please join us for an exciting night and bring your questions!

The Boston Authors Club is pleased to present **Three Debut Novelists Talk Turkey**, led by novelist and BAC member, Erica Ferencik (*The River at Night*, Gallery/Scout Press) with Annie Harnett (*Rabbit Cake*, Tin House Books) and Kelly Ford (*Cottonmouths*, Skyhorse Publishing) at [Newtonville Books](#), Newton MA on Thursday, November 16th starting at 7:00 p.m.

Behind every book on the shelf is its journey to publication; an odyssey often fraught with roller coaster drama, countless hours of work, and sometimes even joy. This program combines advice, experience, and humor from three local debut novelists. Please join us to hear Erica, Annie, and Kelly talk about their respective paths from dreaming of publication to holding the actual book in their hands.

BAC Featured Author Interview: Daniel Tobin on Turning Physics into Poetry in *From Nothing*

From Nothing, Tobin's book of poems inspired by the life, science, and faith of physicist and Jesuit Georges Lemaitre, recently won BAC's Julia Ward Howe Prize. In this interview, Tobin talks about his motivation for focusing on Lemaitre and the five-year process of turning his inspiration and research into poetry.



Q: What moved you to write on this topic?

Tobin: Firstly, I must give credit to Public Television since I knew nothing about Georges Lemaitre until I watched a PBS program on the evolution of 20th century physics that mentioned him and the oddity that it was a Jesuit priest who first conceptualized the idea of the universe beginning in an explosive singularity—a primeval atom, as Lemaitre called it, or The Big Bang in popular terminology.

So, what moved me was this first compelling aspect of Lemaitre's story—genius modestly recognized to the point of becoming a footnote to other more famous scientists. The second compelling fact was his faith, which was very strong—to the point of his devotion to the 14th century Flemish contemplative theologian and mystic Jan van Ruysbroeck. "There are two paths to truth," Lemaitre once said, "and I have chosen both."

Lastly, while Lemaitre lived through and participated fully in the scientific revolution that changed our understanding of the physical universe, he also lived through and witnessed the most extreme catastrophes of human brutality and horror—he fought in World War I, including the Battle of the Somme, and remained in Belgium during World War II, working with colleagues to resist the Nazi occupation. "Transcendence isn't passage; it's adding one life to another," as he said.

So Lemaitre's story—what physicists would call his "world-line" compelled me on its own terms. But perhaps the deeper

roots of my attraction to Lemaitre rest in my own passion for questions of ultimacy. From that standpoint, Lemaitre becomes something of a lens for my own intellectual and faithful obsessions. Like Lemaitre, I am a Catholic with an interest in theology as well as science.

Q: How did you go about researching the project, how long did it take, and how did your research shape the themes and imagery of the poem?

I began by getting hold of an excellent biography of Georges Lemaitre called *The Day Without Yesterday* by John Farrell. I went on to secure Lemaitre's own publications, as well as to read fairly massively about the era and about the history of modern and contemporary physics, as well as books about Pope Pius XII and his controversial leadership of the Catholic Church before and during World War II. I did quite a lot of research on the operations of gas attacks during World War I. So the whole enterprise amounted to me as a poet trying to exert sufficient negative capability as Keats called it to permit the imagination to do its work—the conversion of mere information into the vital language and dramatic form of the poem.

Eventually it required me to go to the Lemaitre Archives at the University of Lovain la Neuve in Belgium where I poured over his diaries and files, admittedly struggling with the French. The head of the archive, Lilliane Haulotte, was incredibly helpful along with her husband Michel. She introduced me to Lemaitre's nephew, Gilbert, which allowed me to gain greater personal insight into the man. Between first having the idea to pursue the book-length poem in 2008, to gaining the help of a Guggenheim Fellowship to pursue the research, to actually writing and revising what became the thirty-three sections of the poem (each 24 lines in tercets, or three-line stanzas) took me about five years. The poems' imagery and themes came entirely out of that research, and then the physical trip to Belgium—walking to an extent where Lemaitre had walked, visiting the building where he once lived, looking at his desk, and the early computer he began to develop and program—he was on the cutting edge of the digital revolution as well.

*Q: How does **From Nothing** fit into your prior work? Or does it fit?*

From Nothing definitely fits into my work, and one might say my work had been working up to it for years. All of the main themes are there—a concern with religion, a concern with science, a fascination with the connection between the individual life and history—“Who are we, where do we come from, where are we going?”—to cite the “Trinitarian” title of Gauguin's famous painting. The final sequence in my second book, *Double Life*, recounts the life of Bartolomeo de las Casas, the one-time slave trader who became a priest and wrote the first bill of rights in the New World. I cited that poem as the blueprint for *From Nothing* in my Guggenheim application and it's certainly true it was just that: a historical poem about an important lesser-known figure of great personal complexity and religious faith told from multiple perspectives in multiple voices. **From Nothing**, in turn, will be I think the launch pad for another book length poem, though nothing like a direct sequel, except in form.



BAC ANNUAL AWARDS EVENT CELEBRATES OUTSTANDING BOOKS AND AUTHORS

September's BAC Awards event honored an amazing group of Boston area authors and provided a chance to meet award winners and club members over refreshments and book signings. Read about all the honored authors and see more event pix on the [BAC web site](#).

More Julia Ward Howe Award Categories for 2017 Books

BAC has been awarding the Julia Ward Howe prizes (named after the Club's first President), to outstanding adult and young reader books for twenty years. For 2017 books, the Club is expanding its awards program to recognize outstanding books by Boston area authors in four separate categories: **Fiction**, **Nonfiction**, and **Poetry**, as well as the **Young Reader** category.

Publishers with 2017 titles meeting the BAC Awards Criteria are encouraged to submit their books to be considered for Julia Ward Howe prizes. To enter the competition, publishers must submit two copies of each eligible title, along with a fee of \$35 dollars per title. Checks should be made out to the Boston Authors Club. Eligible authors may also submit their books directly, with the same fee.

The submission deadline for eligible books published in 2017 is January 31, 2018. Please send your books and your checks to: Boston Authors Club, Attn: Mary Cronin, 2400 Beacon Street, Unit 208, Chestnut Hill, MA. 02467

Criteria for Julia Ward Howe award eligibility include:

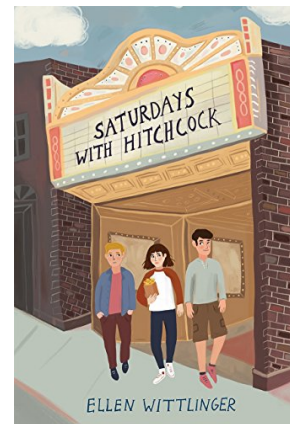
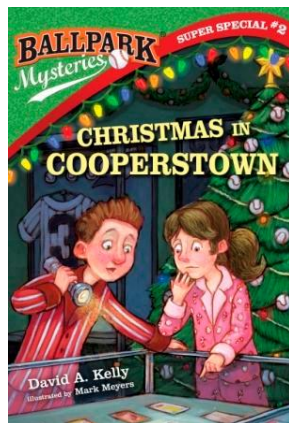
- The books must be published the year prior to the award being given.
- Authors must live or work within 100 miles of Boston the year their books are published.
- Books published in print are eligible unless otherwise noted in the criteria. Edited books, textbooks and reference books are not eligible. Self-published and digital-only books are not eligible.

Outstanding books that are not selected as category winners may be recognized as Finalists at the Awards program in Fall 2018, with no monetary prizes attached.

BAC Member News

The BAC newsletter is published the first week of every month. Please send news about your activities, speaking, and new books (along with related pictures) to bostonauthorsclub@gmail.com by October 27 for publication in the November newsletter.

Christmas In Cooperstown (Random House), the latest book in **David Kelly's** Ballpark Mysteries series of children's baseball mysteries was published on September 26th. It's a baseball mystery set in the National Baseball Hall of Fame in Cooperstown, New York.



Ellen Wittlinger's latest middle-grade novel, **Saturdays with Hitchcock** (Charlesbridge) will be published on October 10.

Helen Marie Casey's third poetry chapbook, **Zero Degrees**, will be released by Finishing Line Press in February 2018. Helen will be joining the Old Frog Pond Poets for a reading on September 17th at 2:00 p.m. when the newest Old Frog Pond chapbook, **Memoir**, will be available.

Join the Club! Or Renew Your Membership Now for 2018

The BAC is planning more programs and more book awards for 2018. We hope you will join us! Full membership dues are \$50 annually and Associate memberships are \$25 annually for the calendar year. You can join and renew online by [clicking here](#). If you would rather pay by check, please make your check out to **Boston Authors Club** and mail it to the following address:

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