



*Boston Authors Club*

## December 2019 Newsletter

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### In This Issue

- **Julia Ward Howe Awards Now Open for Submissions**
- **Featured Author: Tara Masih, *My Real Name is Hanna***
- **BAC Board: President's Note and New Member**
- **Member News and Events**



### ***The Annual Julia Ward Howe Awards Competition Is Open for Submissions***

The Boston Authors Club has been awarding the Julia Ward Howe Prizes, (named after the Club's first President) to outstanding adult and young reader books for over twenty years. These awards recognize exceptional books by Boston area authors in four separate categories: **Fiction, Nonfiction, Poetry**, and the **Young Reader** category.

Publishers with 2019 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 to the BAC, with the same fee.

The submission deadline for qualified books published in 2019 is **January 31, 2020**. Please send your books and checks to: Boston Authors Club, Attn. Julie Dobrow, 103 Conant Road, Lincoln, MA, 01773.

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**Featured Author: Tara Masih**

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**Tara Masih** is this year's Julia Ward Howe Young Reader Winner for **My Real Name is Hanna**, which has been praised as “A stirring story of survival, resilience, and love.”

*In this interview, Tara talks about the personal and historical inspirations for basing her novel for young readers on a true Holocaust survival story, the depth of her research into Jewish communities in Ukraine, and a family connection that she discovered in the plot of her next book.*

**Q: *My Real Name Is Hanna* is based on a true story of Holocaust persecution in the Ukraine during World War II. What moved you to turn the experiences of Esther Stermer and her family into a novel for young readers?**

I saw a documentary, *No Place on Earth*, about the Stermer family who lived in Ukraine during WW II. It's very powerful and I highly recommend it. My family was riveted by the film and deeply affected by the story about a group of Ukrainian Jews who hid underground in dark, dank caves to avoid the Nazis. I couldn't let the story go, and by morning, Hanna's voice was in my head, narrating the opening of what would become the novel. Because the story captured my teen son's attention, I felt this could be written for a younger audience. I hear that many youths don't even know what the word *Holocaust* means.

**Q: How did you go about researching the events portrayed in the book, and how long did it take?**

Getting hold of Esther Stermer's rare biography was crucial. Beyond that, the research was too extensive to list here. It was done over 7 years and involved online research, history books, memoirs, interviews with survivors, and discussions with museum curators.

I had no idea what I was getting into in terms of the complex history of that part of the world. The U.S. has a very brief, simple history by comparison. All the changes in regimes and governments, the borders and country renaming, the politics, etc., were very hard for me to follow. I think people are getting a glimpse of that with Ukraine being in the news every day lately. Luckily one survivor from the same general area that I had set the novel in was able to explain the history to me in laymen's terms. I believe there is information in this book that has not yet appeared in fiction.

**Q: What are some of the highlights from your research that made the story come to life for you, and influenced how you shaped the book?**

I'm very interested in how folklore shapes culture, so I was thrilled to learn of the symbolism in the *pysanky* tradition (Easter egg dying), the oral history of how the Sephardic Jews came to Poland (they may have begun worshipping in caves), and the tradition of carving messages into trees (Witness trees, which have been used by shepherds and Native Americans). These little drops of folkloric/historical gold made the task of wading through the horrors of the Holocaust more doable. Everything mentioned helped to stitch the plot together.

**Q: How does *My Real Name Is Hanna* fit into your prior work? (Or does it fit?)**

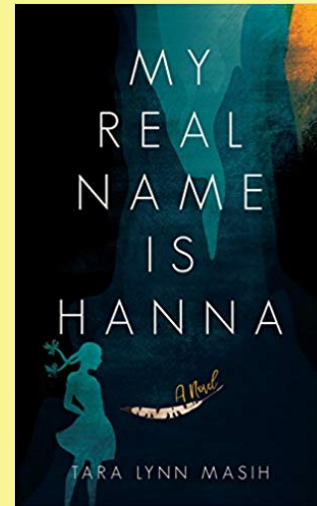
The only way in which *Hanna* fits into my prior work is that it highlights a social justice issue, with the goal of increasing empathy. It's my first novel, so I can't compare it to any prior work, but the structure does follow my early experience with flash fiction and experimenting with structure. I also love finding epigraphs, so each part begins with an excerpt from Mark Twain's *Joan of Arc*.

**Q: Do you have a new novel or writing project underway? If so, could you tell us more about it?**

I didn't think I would write about WW II again; I was ready to move on to another era, but I began doing research after someone gifted me with another remarkable true WW II story that's set this time in the United States. While researching, I discovered my grandfather had a role to play in the overall plot, so that was exciting. I plan on writing him into the novel in some way. So it's been another amazing research journey, this time a more personal one as I go through family scrapbooks and letters. That's all I can say about it right now.

And I do want to close with a huge thanks to the BAC for this honor. It's awards such as yours that inspire us writers to keep creating!

*Interview by Mary J Cronin*



## A note from the president:

Greetings to all BAC members!

*I'm writing this as I look out on the winterscape all around me. The snow piling up makes me think about curling up with a good book, a mug of steaming hot cocoa beside me. I can't wait to finish my semester so that I can begin to get to that pile of books on my nightstand!*

*We have started to receive books to consider for the 2020 Julia Ward Howe prize. If you are interested in participating on one of our reading committees, please contact me ([jdobrow111@gmail.com](mailto:jdobrow111@gmail.com)).*

*I'm pleased to welcome Martha Pott as a new member of the BAC Board. You can read her brief profile below. Looking ahead to 2020, we will elect more new Board members whose experience and interests will add greatly to our leadership. We are also always on the lookout for new BAC members. If you know anyone who might be interested in joining, please direct them to our website or to Nancy Tupper Ling ([ntupper@finelinepoets.com](mailto:ntupper@finelinepoets.com)), our membership coordinator.*

*Finally, we'll be sponsoring some great events in the spring, so be on the lookout for notices in 2020.*

*Wishing you all a wonderful, happy and healthy holiday season – Julie Dobrow*

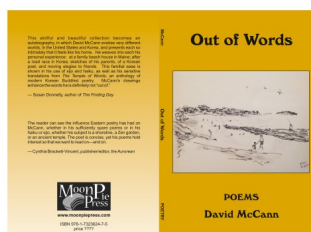


New BAC Board member **Martha Pott** loves to read books and especially loves to bind and make unique books. She is on the faculty of Tufts University.

authors!  
AUTHORS!

## News About BAC Authors and Events

### Poetry and Poets



**Out of Words**, David McCann's new book of poems (which the author reports is perhaps aptly titled) was published this summer by Moon Pie Press in Westbrook Maine.

**Helen Marie Casey** has two poems in the first issue of *The Moving Force Journal*: "There in the Crusted Snow" and "Nothing More."

**Julie Dobrow** reports that on December 10 - Emily Dickinson's birthday - the paperback edition of her book **After Emily** will be released. Julie will be giving more book talks in December, including:



**12/15/19, 2:00 p.m.**, Talk on "Secrets of the Archives: The Things You Simply Didn't Know about Mabel Loomis Todd." Co-sponsored by the Amherst Historical Society and Museum, Archives and Special Collections/Jones Library and Amherst Books, Woodbury Room @ the Jones Library, 43 Amity St, Amherst, MA 01002

**12/16/19, 6:00 p.m.**, Talk about Millicent Todd Bingham, Society of Woman Geographers/NY, The Birch Wathen Lenox School, 10 E 77th St, New York, NY 10075

***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](mailto:bostonauthorsclub@gmail.com) by December 28 for publication in the January 2020 newsletter.***

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## One More 2020 Membership Reminder

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***Full membership dues are \$50 annually 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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Walpole MA 02081**

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