



Boston Authors Club

January 2021 Newsletter

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Featured Interview: Mona Baloch, the First Prize BAC DISCOVERY Award Winner



BAC launched its first Discovery Contest last spring by inviting submission of unpublished picture book manuscripts.

*In this interview, First Prize Winner Mona Baloch talks about how a course with Susan Meyer (Wellesley College writing professor and Julia Ward Howe Awards honoree) inspired her to enter the contest, the background of her story, *Inaya and the Moon*, and how she is working toward its publication.*

Q: How did you hear about the Discovery competition? What motivated you to enter?

I took a course called Writing for Children last spring at Wellesley. It was my first time writing creatively in a structured setting, and (though workshopping my writing was scary at first) I absolutely loved it! My professor, Susan Meyer, let me know about the Discovery competition as the course was wrapping up, and I submitted one of the pieces I was particularly proud of. I am so grateful for Professor Meyer's encouragement to enter!

Q: Could you talk about the background of *Inaya and the Moon* and your inspiration for writing it?

Inaya and the Moon is about a girl who finds out that her class's field trip to the planetarium falls on the same day as Eid al-Fitr—a holiday celebrated by Muslims worldwide but not often recognized in US schools. Though initially disappointed to miss the trip and not sure that celebrating Eid will be anything special, Inaya is excited to discover the importance of the lunar calendar in her family's traditions. Inaya's story represents the process of reconciling and celebrating differences, born out of my own experiences growing up Muslim American. I also hope that this story captures the power of a child's love for learning and exploration, providing inspiration for readers of all ages. *Inaya and the Moon* is influenced by the Muslim-authored picture books I loved as a child, like *Hena*

Khan's *Night of the Moon* and Asma Mobin-Uddin's *The Best Eid Ever*. I am lucky to have had access to these stories and I hope to someday contribute to the growing body of literature representing Muslim experiences.

Q: What next steps do you have in mind for publishing *Inaya and the Moon*?

Over the next few months, I plan to network with published authors and professionals in the publishing world as I continue to make edits to my manuscript. I don't know much about the publishing process yet, so I'd like to be as prepared as I can be before taking the next steps towards publication.

Q: How does writing for children, and other audiences, fit into your longer-term career plans?

I have always loved writing: I was editor-in-chief of my high school newspaper and I was a book publishing intern at Elsevier last summer. As an elementary schooler, I even used to "publish" a newspaper for my family called *The Baloch News!* I have also always loved working with kids in different settings, so writing for children is the perfect blend of these two passions. While I'm not quite sure what my immediate post-graduate steps are, I hope that my career path will involve inspiring a love of reading and writing in young people.

Q: Do you own any autographed books?

A: Yes! I have autographed copies of *Through my Eyes* by Ruby Bridges, *The Giver* by Lois Lowry, and *Mission: Save the Planet* by Sally Ride.

Interview by Mary Cronin

A New Member Benefit Coming in 2021 - The BAC Author Gallery

This year we've been reminded that one of the most valuable human experiences is connection. We look forward to a time when we can gather again in person as authors and book lovers to connect at BAC events.

*In the meantime, the Board has an exciting project in the works to help our members connect directly with their readers—a **BAC Author Gallery** feature for the Club's website. This Gallery will promote our members and their books to organizations who wish to engage local authors for book talks, lectures, and meet and greets. Keep an eye on upcoming newsletters for more details about this developing feature of our website, and how you can take advantage of this new benefit of your BAC membership.*

By Liz Reed

WHO WE ARE

The BAC has been around since 1899. Founded by a group of literary-minded people who wanted to gather to read and speak about books, the BAC became the first major organization of its kind open to both men and women. Social activist and author of "The Battle Hymn of the Republic," Julia Ward Howe served as the organization's first president. Members of the club have included both well-known and relatively unknown authors, librarians, literary agents, bookstore owners, and people who just love books, ever since the late 19th century.



As an author or as someone affiliated with the world of books, you are cordially invited to become a member of the Boston Author's Club (BAC).

Contact Us

General inquiries:
Bostonauthorsclub2@gmail.com

Membership inquiries:
nancytupperling@gmail.com

Boston Authors Club

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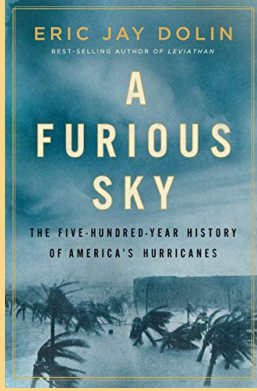
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authors!
AUTHORS!

For inclusion in the February Newsletter, send your events, news, and publications by 1/30/21 to

bostonauthorsclub@gmail.com
THANKS!

BAC member Eric Jay Dolin, author of *A Furious Sky: The Five-Hundred-Year History of America's Hurricanes*, shares the good news that his book has received a number of 2020 accolades,



including:

- *Washington Post* -- 50 Notable Works of Nonfiction for 2020
- *Library Journal* -- One of the Best Science & Tech Books of 2020
- Kirkus Reviews -- One of the top 100 nonfiction books of 2020
- *Booklist* -- Top Ten Science-Tech Books for 2020
- Amazon.com -- One of the Best Science Books of 2020

Eric will be giving a virtual book talk **Wednesday, January 13, 2021 at 6:00 P.M.** hosted by

[American Ancestors & New England Historic Genealogical Society](#)
In conjunction with [The State Library of Massachusetts](#)

President's Note

January 2021 thoughts

I'm writing this column in the waning days of 2020. It's that strange time between holidays when not much seems to happen. So what better to do than what I end up doing each year: read one book after another!

I love this time when I'm not teaching, not grading papers, when I give myself some time off of any of my own writing projects, for the rejuvenating period when I work on reducing the stack of books that have piled up on my nightstand. In the past week I've read works of fiction and non-fiction, novels and short stories, essays and biographies. What a gift it is to sit in my living room, sun streaming in, cats on the cushions beside me, a mug of hot tea steaming, and allow myself to get lost in a good book. Hours pass. I'm transported away from my professional and familial responsibilities, away from this time of political and viral unrest.

And where have I been? I've traveled to the deep South of the early part of the 20th century and the world of the unconventional Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings, as much at home hunting birds in the Everglades as she was drinking with F. Scott Fitzgerald, Ernest Hemingway and her legendary editor, Maxwell Perkins. I've been to the imaginary small town of West Annett, Maine, where Elizabeth Strout situated her compelling characters in *Abide with Me*. I've been teleported back and forth across the Atlantic and back and forth across the 19th through 21st centuries by Maria Popova's assessments of the fascinating lives and works of figures ranging from Elizabeth Barrett Browning to Emily Dickinson to Maria Mitchell to Rachel Carson in *Figuring*. And I've been to many real and many science fiction places in the collected and previously unpublished stories of Madeleine L'Engle. And there are more places to which I'll travel before the new year begins and I resume my regular routines.

To you, my BAC colleagues, I send all best wishes for a happy, healthy and productive 2021. Please remember to renew your BAC membership, and of course, to read lots and lots of good books!

Julie Dobrow
BAC President



Yesteryear at the BAC by Scott Guthery *Nonsense and More from JWH's Children*

Julia Ward Howe had six children. Five (pictured at right) survived into adulthood. Little Sam didn't live past his fourth year. In her family reminiscence the youngest, Maud, tells us how they came by their names: Julia Romana, the eldest ("in memory of her birthplace, Rome"), Florence Mario ("after Florence Nightingale"), Henry Marion ("after great-uncle, General Francis Marion"), Laura Elizabeth ("after Laura Bridgeman"), little Sam ("for his father"). Of herself, Maud says "My name was given me for no better reason than that my mother fancied it." Julia's husband, Samuel Gridley Howe, was a physician and the founding director of the

Perkins Institute for the Blind, where the family lived for many years. All the children were born at the Perkins School for the Blind save Julia Romana.

Julia's surviving children were all authors of one sort or another. Henry, Laura, and Maud have their own Wikipedia pages. Maud, Laura, and Florence shared a Pulitzer prize for their biography of their mother, "The Life of Julia Ward Howe." Julia Romana wrote a book of poems, "Stray Chords", as well as "Questor Philosophiae", a sketch of the Summer School of Philosophy at Concord. Florence penned "Social Customs" and "The Correct Thing." Henry was a professor in the School of Mines at Columbia. His book, "The Metallurgy of Iron and Steel" was the go-to book on the topic at the time. And finally, Maud wrote "A Newport Aquarelle," "Atlanta in the South," "San Rosario Ranch," "Phillida," and "Mammon."



Laura was the most prolific of the siblings with over one hundred titles, including a number of books of nonsense poetry for children, published during her 92 years. In fact, in some rarified literary circles she is recognized as "the American Laureate of Nonsense for Children." Critics who disparaged her poetry used the word 'nonsense' in the street sense but that's not sense that it is used by her admirers. Their usage groups Laura with Edward Lear, Lewis Carrol, and other writers in the nonsense genre. Far from taking umbrage at the confusion between the two senses, nonsense authors seem to relish it. I have a literary conjecture as to why: the ambiguity is leveraged by the authors and it is what makes the genre so attractive, at least to some readers.

Nonsense poetry in the literary sense only appears to be nonsense in the street sense. Finding and decoding the message in a nonsense poem, for example, is a puzzle to be solved by the astute reader. This underlying message is the author's literary lever and the reader's literary delight. Is there a message here? If so, which passages are its encoding? Who is Tommy Toothache really?

At the age of 21, Laura married Henry Richards a wealthy business owner from Maine. She and her family moved in the upper reaches of society. They met with royalty on their European tours and entertained a broad spectrum of the intelligentsia of the day. From this position, it wouldn't do to dismiss the beautiful life or disparage acquaintances in print. And yet, at least in Laura, there were strong reactions to the society around her that called for expression. Here's a stanza from her poem "Antonio" about a courtship:

***Oh, nonio, Antonio!
You're far too bleak and bonio!
And all that I wish,
You singular fish,
Is that you will quickly begonia.***

Like reading a good mystery there is something engaging about such poems, including speculation about who in Laura's social circle may lurk behind the nonsensically bony and fishy figure of Antonio.

Become a member for 2021!

Membership dues are \$50 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:

**Nancy Tupper Ling
Boston Authors Club
1600 Providence Highway #247
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