



Boston Authors Club

October 2021 Newsletter

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Featured Interview With Lisa Perron



Lisa Perron, poet and children's author, is the First Place Winner in BAC's DISCOVERY Awards contest for her unpublished manuscript *Meet the Moons*.

In this interview, Lisa talks about her inspiration for *Meet the Moons*, how it fits into her writing career, and the positive impact of the Discovery Award.

Q: Could you please describe the theme of *Meet the Moons* and your inspiration for writing it?

A: Meet the Moons is a rhyming, nonfiction picture book about several of the moons in our solar system. My husband, an earth and planetary scientist, studies one of these moons, Titan. His research was the nugget of inspiration for this story. The moons are full of wonderful weirdness—including rivers of methane, funky shapes, and constant volcanic eruptions. It's as if they all have their own distinct personalities! That realization prompted me to write the story from the moons' perspective, which was great fun.

Q: How does this work fit in the context of your other publications and development as a writer?

*A: I've always enjoyed writing poetry, but I didn't start writing for children until a few years ago—beginning with a middle-grade novel in 2018. Then I started drafting picture books and studying craft through various conferences and workshops. I write both fiction and nonfiction picture books, with the latter often relating to some aspect of earth science. Family hikes are a big source of inspiration! Over the past year, I've had several poems accepted for publication in children's magazines and anthologies, and I recently received a publication offer on one of my picture book manuscripts. Like *Meet the Moons*, it's a rhyming nonfiction story.*

Q: What motivated you to enter the BAC Discovery contest?

*I have one of my critique partners to thank for encouraging me to enter the contest! I'd been focused on querying my middle grade novel this year, but I had plenty of completed picture book manuscripts to choose from because I'm part of the 12x12 Picture Book Writing Challenge, where the goal is to write at least one picture book per month. *Meet the Moons* was my newest manuscript at the time I submitted it to the contest.*

I've met many amazing and supportive authors by participating in writing contests over the past couple of

years, and that community-building aspect is one of my favorite things about contests. Of course the prizes for the Discovery Award were a big draw, too!

Q: Has the feedback from the BAC judges, and winning the contest, helped you with next steps for *Meet the Moons*?

*Absolutely. Winning the Discovery Award and receiving encouraging feedback from the judges gave me the confidence to think about next steps for the manuscript. When I submitted to the contest in June, I did not have an agent, but since that time, I've signed with Tricia Lawrence of Erin Murphy Literary Agency, and she's very excited about *Meet the Moons*. Thank you so much to the judges, organizers of the Discovery Award, and everyone at the BAC for this honor and the chance to talk about my writing.*

Interview by Mary J Cronin

Currently Reading: Richard Lazarus

Richard J. Lazarus, JWH Nonfiction Award Winner for *The Rule of Five*, is the Howard and Katherine Aibel Professor of Law at Harvard University, where he teaches courses on environmental law and Supreme Court decision making. He has represented the government and environmental groups in forty Supreme Court cases and has presented oral argument in fourteen. Lazarus was the founding director of the Supreme Court Institute, which prepares attorneys for oral argument in over 90 percent of the cases brought before the Supreme Court.



Q: What are you reading right now?

*A: *Lady Bird Johnson: Hiding in Plain Sight* by Julia Sweig*

Q: What inspired you to pick up this title?

A: I am fascinated by U.S. history and American Politics, and naturally LBJ. I know remarkably little about Lady Bird Johnson and read favorable reviews in the New York Times of this book

Q) What is your impression of the book so far?

A: My expectations were likely too high based on the NYT review. The book is a welcome addition to the historical record of Lyndon Johnson but less eye-opening than I had anticipated. The author effectively used the audio diaries of Lady Bird Johnson but the book's content has so far (100 pages in) proven more derivative of prior scholarship than I had expected and has offered less original insight than I had hoped. Perhaps that will change as the book progresses.

Q) Please feel free to give us a star rating from 1-5 (5 being the best).

A: At this point, I would give the book a 4, but I would be delighted if it ends up a 5.

Interview by Kate Farrell

The Boston Authors Club 2021 Discovery Award Winners



First Place
Meet the Moons
by Lisa Perron

Second Place
Emilie's Fire
by Megan Scudellari

Third Place
Michelson's Shoes
by Betsy McGovern

Honorable Mentions

Llama Lips by Amy Benoit
Peregrine by Joyce Frank

authors!
AUTHORS!

For inclusion in the November
Newsletter, send your events,
news, and publications by 10/29/21
to
bostonauthorsclub@gmail.com
THANKS!

President's Note

October Musings

I'm writing this month's musings from my office at Tufts University, where I teach in the department of Child Study and Human Development. We have a lab school attached to the department, and my favorite thing about my office is that it overlooks the playground where, in good weather, children play. It's a beautiful fall day and as I write, they are out in force – running around, digging in the large sandbox, coming up to the few offices where people are working (many of us still work largely from home except when we're teaching) and pressing their little faces against the glass to peer in or to wave.



But there's one little girl who is sitting by herself under a tree, looking at a book. I'm not sure why she's not playing with her peers. But she transports me back to my own childhood, when sometimes my very favorite thing to do at recess was to look at or read the book I'd just taken out of the library.

I can recall with such joy the days of elementary school where the teacher wrote on the board "Library" as one of the activities for the day. In the first school I went to, a K-3 school, I became well-known to the librarian, a Mrs. Platt, because I read so quickly that taking out the allowed two books per week just wasn't enough. She made an exception and let me take out four.

When I was in third grade I'd become so interested (*read,obsessed*) with animals I resolved to read every single non-fiction book the little library held about animals. I systematically took out my allotted four books each week, going from one end of their Dewey-decimal categorization to the other, informing myself on otters, lions, whales, birds of prey and all kinds of other creatures. Mrs. Platt, so taken with my

systematic determination, decided to make me her "assistant." I was allowed to spend some time each week outside of my third grade classroom in the library, helping her to reshelve books and in the process, learning more about the ways in which books in libraries were arranged.

Of course my mother, who introduced my brothers and me to the joys of reading, was also an elementary school teacher, and encouraged me in these pursuits. Weekends were often filled with trips to the public libraries where there were many more books than in the little K-3 library. We would come home with armloads.

So as I look out the window today at this little girl, I have to smile, thinking of the little girl long ago who dreamed of someday being able not only to read books, but also, to write them. Maybe she's thinking about that, too.

Julie Dobrow
BAC President

Yesteryear at the BAC by Scott Guthery BAC's Most Celebrated Nobody (Self-Described)

When digital signatures were invented in 1976 I mused that digital autograph hounds would be soon be all the rage and that digital signatures of the rich and famous would become collectibles. The digital hounds never made an appearance and it wouldn't be until 2021 that digital signatures (in the form of NFTs, or non-fungible tokens) started showing up at Christie's.

But all of this was scooped by Boston Authors Club member Joe Mitchell Chapple (1867-1950) whose *Flashlights of Famous People* "was extolled throughout the nation" according to our sharp-penned BAC historian, Mildred Buchanan Flagg. I have not been able track down any details of Joe's prescient vision in *Flashlights* but it may have been a companion volume to his *Favorite Heart Throbs of Famous People* which was published by the eponymous Chapple Publishing Company of Boston. Joe was evidently way, way ahead of the indie and self-publishing waves too.



Chapple became the editor of **The Bostonian** magazine in 1897. Demonstrating his ambitions for reaching a broader, more cosmopolitan market, he soon thereafter renamed it **The National Magazine** and added broader coverage of American life and letters. He and his wife moved into the magazine's Savin Hill, Dorchester publishing plant where their apartment, known locally as The Attic, became something of a salon for visiting celebrities. In 1915 Chapple petitioned the Boston City Council to build a motion picture house next to his Savin Hill location, but the locals didn't want any new-fangled movie houses in the neighborhood so Mayor Curley refused approval. Undeterred by this Bostonian provincialism, Chapple went on to score several Hollywood film credits including as writer for "Graft"(1915) and producer for "Annabelle Lee"(1921).

An urban legend about Chapple has it that he was granted a personal interview with President Chester A. Arthur when he was only 16. Joe must have been something of a modern day John Aubry, the seventeenth British folklorist and antiquarian who is credited with inventing the brief celebrity biography genre. Aubry's most popular book, *Brief Lives*, was widely read but discounted by the intellectuals of his day as gossipy entertainment for a credulous audience.

In addition to his twentieth century reincarnation of gossipy life vignettes of famous people, Chapple published a multi-volume *Heart Throbs* series. This included a collection of the favorite poem or bit of prose of some 52,000 citizens, with the tantalizing title *Heart Throbs in Prose and Verse Dear to the American People and by Them Contributed in the \$10,000 Prize Contest Initiated by the National Magazine, 1904-1905*. Literary contests were yet another prescient activity by the endlessly enterprising Chapple. To close the circle with BAC's very own literary contest namesake, President Teddy Roosevelt's favorite poem appears on page 343 of the *Heart throbs* volume published in 1905. It's by Julia Ward Howe.

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