



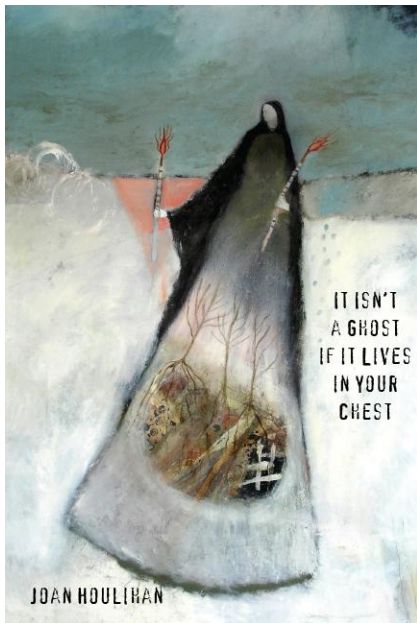
Boston Authors Club

October 2022 Newsletter

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Featured Interview: Joan Houlihan



Congratulations to Joan Houlihan, author of six books of poetry, and the winner of this year's Julia Ward Howe Poetry Award for her latest book, *It Isn't a Ghost if It Lives in Your Chest*.

Houlihan is a part-time Professor of Practice at Clark University in Worcester, Massachusetts and also serves on the faculty of Lesley University's Low-Residency MFA in Creative Writing Program. She founded and directs the Colrain Poetry Manuscript Conference.

In this interview, Joan unpacks the meanings of her winning title, reflects on the poets who have inspired her over time, and delves into the context of one of her poems.

Q: *It Isn't a Ghost if It Lives in Your Chest* is such an evocative title! Can you tell us what it means to you?

A: Why *isn't* it a ghost if it lives in your chest? For one thing, even if you can't see it, you can feel it, the same way you can feel, but not see, your breathing, or your heartbeat. Or, maybe the chest it lives in is a treasure chest—the one place where you keep everything significant and beautiful and these things are always alive to you. This book is meant to represent both of these chests, and the poems are calling back, calling up from the past, what's still significant, breathing, and beautiful. People who are gone. Events long over. Sayings and cultural references that have disappeared from our lives. It is a book of tributes and of changes surrounding aging, of the perspective that comes with that.

Q: *What poets past and present would you say have influenced and inspired your work the most over time?*

A: Influence is a tricky thing to identify, but I was certainly inspired in my youth by Dickinson, Hopkins, Roethke, and Plath, so probably influenced by them as well. The single most inspiring poem for me at age 20 was *The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock*, which I heard read aloud in my Modern Poetry class. I was completely stunned by “I should have been a pair of ragged claws/Scuttling across the floors of silent seas” and I sat there, feeling chills, wondering how this experience I was having was conjured by words arranged on a page. I also loved Coleridge’s *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, and I can see its influence on my third book, *The Us*, in its structure (long narrative told in ballad-like stanzas); its subject (an epic journey); and its use of marginal glosses. I wanted it to read, look, and feel like an ancient, newly-discovered, text—as did Coleridge with his! I look at my bookshelves now and realize there have been many, many poets and writers who have entered my creative process, lived in me, left a mark, and it seems like a long conversation, one that (hopefully) doesn’t end until I die.

Q: *Could you please pick one of the poems in **Isn't a Ghost If It Lives in Your Chest** and tell us about its context, imagery, and resonance it has for you?*

A: Eliot’s *Prufrock* certainly had a hand in my love of persona poetry, and *Isn't a Ghost if it Lives in Your Chest* contains quite a few persona poems. One of them, “I am a Fugitive from a Chain Gang,” is a title taken from a 40’s movie and in this poem I also reference “The Snake Pit,” another great old movie, both of which I watched with my mother. The persona is animated by memories of the mother mixed with scenes from these movies, and dramatizes becoming an outcast looking for kindness and discovering “I have become my own prisoner.” The image of the axe (“playing with the head of an axe”) resonates with the first poem’s title “The axe and hammer which come to be mother” and implies the danger involved in looking for kindness in the wrong place.

Q: *Any final words?*

A: I am immensely grateful to Four Way Books, and its publisher, Martha Rhodes, for believing in and supporting my work. I am also grateful for the use of the magnificent library at Truchas Peaks Place in New Mexico where many of these poems began or were completed. I’m thankful for the quiet beauty of that place. Finally, immense thanks to the Boston Author’s Club for this honor, a recognition of my work that’s so welcome and invaluable.

Interview by Mary J Cronin

Join Us on November 7 for an In-Person Event

Our **SO YOU WANT TO WRITE A CHILDREN'S BOOK?** program is back by popular demand - and it is expanded to include illustrator and agent perspectives!

On Nov. 7, 2022, at 7 p.m., join children's authors Cynthia Levinson, Lisa Rogers, and Ray Anthony Shepard AND illustrator/author Brian Lies, AND agent Elizabeth Bennett AND moderator/author Tracy Geary at **Whitelam Books, 610 Main St., Reading, MA (whitelambooks.com)** for an informative and fun evening. You will hear all about what it takes to turn an idea into a fiction or nonfiction picture book, middle grade or YA—and then how to attract an agent to sell it!

So You Want to Write (or Illustrate) a Children's Book?

Brian Lies	Ray Anthony Shepard	Elizabeth Bennett (agent)	Lisa Rogers	Cynthia Levinson

**NEW MEMBER SPOTLIGHT:
A Warm Welcome to**

Alix Klingenberg

This month, we are delighted to spotlight new BAC Member Alix Klingenberg, who describes herself as a poet, spiritual director, and creative dilettante. Alix has a BA in Visual Art from Oberlin College and a Masters in Divinity, and is obsessed with people dynamics, myth, philosophy, and imagination.



Alix lives in Melrose, MA with her family, 2 black cats, and a ridiculous dog named Cricket. She is queer and polyamorous and writes on themes of love & loss, sex & commitment, healing and family systems. With a passion for social justice, anti-racism, intersectional feminism, community, and the natural world, Alix writes from a place of transformation. She self-published her first poetry collection, "Secrets and Stars" in 2020 and has another book coming out in 2023 with Central Ave publishing.

You can find more of Alix's poetry and art on Instagram @AlixKlingenberg or on her website <https://www.alixklingenberg.com/>

TWO QUESTIONS FOR ALIX:

Q: What aspects of being part of a community of writers and appreciators of literature are most important to you?

I think for me, being a writer is a strange and lonely kind of process at times. So being part of a community of people who relate to the struggles, who have wonky work hours, and generally just enjoy reading and writing is such an important part of feeling connected and healthy as a creative. It's also fertile ground for collaboration, deepening my craft, and generally creating and sustaining each other in our work.

Q: How might the BAC better serve our community?

I'm so new here I'm not sure how to answer this one, but I'd love to have some casual gatherings to get to know each other and hear about what everyone is working on.

Interview by Lisa Rogers

Photos from the JWH Awards Event



President's Note: Call for 2022 JWH Competition Book Submissions



Our celebration of the 2021 Julia Ward Howe winners and finalists was a wonderful and affirming event! It was so great to be celebrating these excellent authors and their books, exciting to be in the beautiful and historic Metropolitan Waterworks Museum, and just fantastic to be seeing one another in person again. Hearty thanks to all the BAC Board members who helped to organize this event.

Of course now that we've completed our 2021 cycle, it's time to get started on 2022. I'd like to ask any BAC member who has published a book during this calendar year to make sure that you or your publisher submits it for consideration. I'd also like to ask for your help in identifying other books by Boston-area authors who published books this year. We do send out a broad call to publishers, but particularly in a time when there are many small publishers, we don't always reach

them all.

To refresh everyone's memory, we're looking for works of fiction, non-fiction, poetry and young readers' books that were:

- **Published during calendar year 2022**
- **Written by authors who lived or worked within a 100 -mile radius of Boston during the time this book was written**
- **Are not edited volumes, textbooks or reference books**
- **Are not self-published or published only in a digital format**

We ask to receive two copies of a book for our reading committee's review and a fee of \$35 per submission. The fee can be paid by check or on our website.

Please help us by making sure that all Boston-area authors' books are part of our consideration for the Julia Ward Howe awards, and thanks.

Julie Dobrow
BAC President

ADD YOUR INFO THE THE BAC MEMBER GALLERY

The BAC MEMBER GALLERY IS OPEN ONLINE!

Visit it here: <https://bostonauthorsclub.org/gallery>

ADD YOUR PHOTO AND INFORMATION FOR FREE

For details on how to be included in the Gallery, email us at: bostonauthorsclub@gmail.com

AUTHOR GALLERY



Janet Costa Bates



Mary J. Cronin



Scott Guthery



Cynthia Levinson



Moxing Li



Nancy Tupper Ling



Missy Montgomery



Lisa Rogers

Yesteryear: BAC Foundations

Birth of the Boston Authors Club

"This Club shall be called THE BOSTON AUTHORS CLUB. It is organized to further literary purposes and the promote social intercourse among the authors of Boston and vicinity."

So sayeth Article I of the Constitution and By-Laws of the Boston Authors Club as

The epigraph by Byron reads

*Dear Authors! Suit your topics to your strength,
And ponder well your subject and its length;
Nor lift your load, before you're quite aware
What weight your shoulders will, or will not bear.*

WorldCat shows yearbooks for 1910 and 1915-16 but not one for 1913. It does show that there are archives of *The Bulletin of the Boston Authors' Club* at Harvard, College of the Holy Cross, and the University of Oklahoma however as well as "Minutes, records, etc." and "Club room expenses" at the BPL.

The club's constitution and by-laws have changed considerably if not continuously since 1913. There is no longer a Room Committee or an Entertainment Committee, for example. The annual dues of \$5 in 1913 would be \$141 today using the CPI so the club as certainly held the line on price inflation.

Resident members, non-resident members, and deceased members as of 1913 are all listed at the back of the twenty-two page book. Among the thirty-eight non-resident members are Mabel Loomis and Professor David Todd of Observatory House in Amherst as well as an Associate Justice of the Vermont Supreme Court, Hon. Wendell Phillips Stafford.

A NOTE on page 21 informs the reader that "The new clubrooms are at Trinity Court, Dartmouth Street, Suite A, in Tyler Hall." The January 21, 1916, issue of *The Harvard Crimson*, notes that

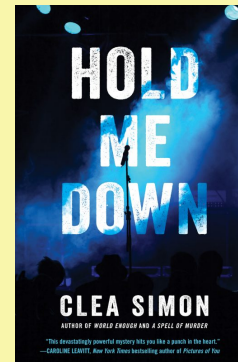
"Members of the Harvard Poetry Society will be guests of the Boston Authors' Club at a reception given in the club rooms in Trinity Court, Dartmouth street, Boston, this afternoon at 3 o'clock. O. Shepard and C. Wright Sr. will read selections from their own works."

Google never ceases to amaze.

By Scott Guthery

Clea Simon is thrilled to share that her 2021 psychological suspense novel, *Hold Me Down* (Polis), was long-listed for the Massachusetts Center for the Book fiction award.

The long list is called the award's "Must Reads" list. Stay tuned - the winner will be announced in October!



authors!
AUTHORS!

Send us your news by 10/29/22 for inclusion the
November BAC Newsletter:
bostonauthorsclub@gmail.com
THANKS!

JOIN NOW FOR EXTENDED MEMBERSHIP

Become a member, OR RENEW NOW, for Membership through 2023!
Membership dues are \$50 annually for the calendar year. Join now and your membership will extend through December 31, 2023. You can join and renew online by [clicking here](https://bostonauthorsclub.org/join-and-renew). <https://bostonauthorsclub.org/join-and-renew>

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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