

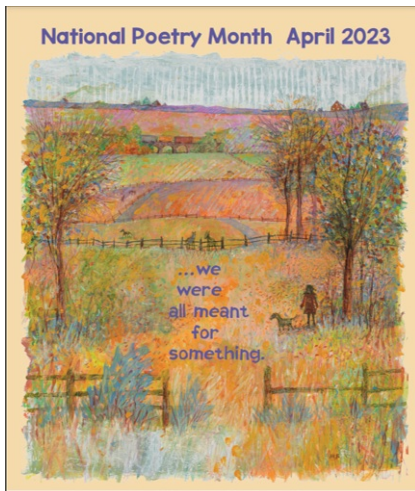


Boston Authors Club

April 2023 Newsletter

Celebrating Poetry Month

- **Meeting the Market:** Interview with Doug Holder, Poet and Publisher
- **The Poetry Bulletin:** A Poet-to-Poet Resource
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BAC'S POETRY MONTH ISSUE

This poster celebrating Poetry Month 2023 was designed by Marc Brown, creator of the popular series of Arthur books. The poster was commissioned by Scholastic as part of a new National Poetry Month initiative between Scholastic and the Academy of American Poets.

The included line of text, "...we were all meant for something" is from the poem "Carrying" by U.S. Poet Laureate Ada Limón.

MEETING

the

MARKET

This month, Meeting the Market interviews Somerville-based poet and publisher Doug Holder, founder of the Ibbetson Street Press and currently the co-president of the New England Poetry Club.

Holder has been a regular literary columnist for the Somerville Times for over 20 years, and he serves as the director of the Newton Free Library Poetry Series. He teaches creative writing at Endicott College and previously taught writing at Bunker Hill Community College. His papers, and interviews are archived at the "Doug Holder Papers Collection" at the University at Buffalo, as well as at the University of Massachusetts in Boston. Holder's latest

poetry collection is *The Essential Doug Holder* (Big Table Books).

In this interview, Doug shares his thoughts on today's poetry trends, tips for getting published, and the poetry he is currently reading.

Q: How would you describe the overall level of interest in writing and publishing poetry today compared to a decade ago?

Well, I think it is greater than ever. Ten years ago, you had fewer opportunities to publish. I think with all the new online journals, the way it has become much less cumbersome to submit (Submittable, etc...), and in general-- editors have acquired more skills to attract writers to their venues. There are much more workshops offered than ever before--- and many of them are still online because of the Pandemic. I think many people became compelled to write poetry during the Pandemic, as a way to deal with the isolation and chaos of the world. Personally, I know as co-president of the [New England Poetry Club](#) that we are attracting more members than ever, and our readings and workshops are packed. I have seen great communities that have been birthed by poetry groups—like the Pow Wow River poets, the Bagel Bards, the Jamaica Plain Poets, etc.... just to name a few. The [Mass Poetry Organization](#) has thousands of members and is continuing with their annual festival this May in Salem, MA.



Q: What are the most viable paths to publication and what other opportunities are available for poets to reach readers and listeners?

I would say—first get your name out there—create your own blog or website—so if people want to know more about you and your work, there will be one central place that they can go to. Join a poetry organization like Mass Poetry, and the New England Poetry Club, so you can be exposed to what's going on in the poetry world, active networks of poets, etc. Through meeting other poets you will learn about more publishing opportunities. The best book resource would be *Poets Market* which can be bought at many bookstores and online. Here are listed hundreds of magazines that accept poetry. The entries in the book will tell you explicitly what the magazine wants. To state it simply, if you send dog poems to a cat journal—you are out of luck! [DUOTROPE](#) is a fine online site to find new places to send your work.

Q: What developments and trends do you personally find most promising and exciting?

Well—I think people have become very skillful in publicizing their books. For instance, Gloria Mindock, the founder of the Cervena Barva Press (Somerville, MA), produces beautiful video trailers for her authors and others. The subjects that poets are writing about are more diverse than ever—so trans, LBGQ, and other folks bring their story to the stage. I have seen more and more people of color publishing and presenting much more than in the past.

Q: What poetry are you reading this month?

Purgatory Road by Charles Coe, *City Stories* by Denise Provost, *Virology* by Mary Buchinger, *Seldom Purely* by Linda Conte ...to name just a few. There so many great poets out there whom I admire, like Wendy Drexler, Hilary Sallick, Regie Gibson, Dennis Daly, Lloyd Schwartz, Harris Gardner, Danielle Legros Georges, David Miller, Nina Alonso, Zvi Sesling, Karen Klein; far too many to mention them all—and not enough time to read!

Interview by Mary J Cronin

A Poet-to-Poet Resource



The [Poetry Bulletin](#) is a poet-to-poet effort to make the publishing process friendlier and easier. Emily Stoddard created this resource in 2018, on the way to publishing her own debut book of poetry, *Divination with a Human Heart Attached*.

In describing her motivation for maintaining and expanding the original database of poetry book publishers to a monthly resource, Emily comments, “*Writing and submitting a poetry collection can be such a long journey, with too many gatekeepers and expensive contests making it more difficult. My hope is to make the process a little friendlier,*

easier, and more transparent.

The project started with a list of poetry book publishers in 2018 and has grown from

there. Over 175 reading periods are now tracked, and this year, I'm also researching fee waiver and compensation info to make the list more complete. In 2021, a submissions fee support circle also formed. Since then, over \$5,000 has been given to cover submission fees for over 75 poets."

Sammarco at the Boston Athenaeum on April 12



Anthony M. Sammarco will present a lecture on his best-selling book *Inferno: The Great Boston Fire of 1872* at The Boston Athenaeum, 10 ½ Beacon Street on **Wednesday April 12, 2023 at 6:00 PM** as a highlight of the Athenaeum's exhibition *Revisiting the Ruins* which will be open prior and after the lecture. Eventually destroying 775 buildings and causing millions of dollars in damage to the commercial section that we now know as Boston's business district, the great fire of 1872 ranks among the most destructive fires in American history.

In-Person Ticket Link: <https://community.bostonathenaeum.org/s/events?event=a2K8a000007cK8x>

The Athenaeum Exhibition

Following the 150th anniversary of the Great Boston Fire, *Revisiting the Ruins* (April 6, 2023 - July 29, 2023) will consider how this event—which ravaged Boston's central commercial district—was pictured, described, and circulated, presenting a range of media that documented the blaze and its aftermath. This exhibition will showcase powerful artifacts from a pivotal moment in Boston's history while prompting visitors to consider how it has been remembered (or forgotten) generations later.

Reading Right Now

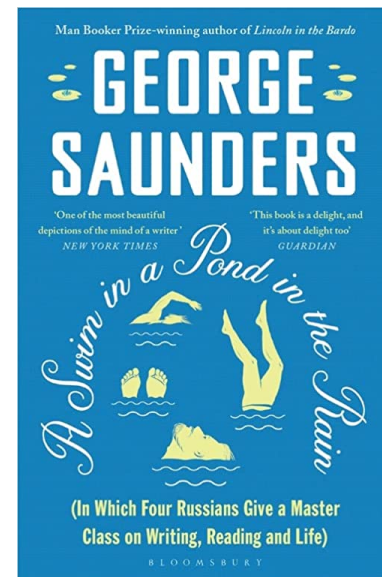
Kerry Feltner is Presidential Development Writer at MIT. Right now she is reading *A Swim in a Pond in the Rain*, and she says "it's one the best books I have read in recent years."

Q: What motivated you to pick up this title?

It was recommended by fellow writers. I also wanted to try George Saunders' nonfiction instead of his fiction to hear how his voice comes across in the different genre.

Q: Would you recommend it to friends? Why or why not?

I would highly recommend it as it is truly a masterclass in the power of a short story. Saunders guides a reader through Chekhov, Turgenev, Tolstoy, and Gogol with humor, intelligence, excitement, and care, and I found that it was a fascinating experience to hear his point of view and questions alongside these powerful stories. In reading this book, it feels like you are a student in Saunders' creative writing class at Syracuse University; it is as if you are in a conversation with him about each story, which leads to a wider understanding of the material as Saunders continues to peel back the layers of meaning in pace with you, the reader. For anyone who is looking to understand the short story genre in greater detail, this is the book for you.



Interview by Mary J Cronin



PRESIDENTS MUSINGS

SPRING READING

One of the great things about taking a few days and going away is that you can allow yourself some time to read. (And, of course, it's great to be feeling better enough about Covid to even contemplate going on an airplane!) So on a recent trip out to Arizona, I allowed myself to put away all of the papers I had to grade and instead, read a book. Flying across the country and having hours to read without interruption is a joyous experience – even wearing a mask the whole time.

This experience made me think about times when I was growing up, before the responsibilities of being a mom or a daughter of aging parents or a professor or a volunteer or any of the other things I do, when I could spend a big chunk of time in a book. Hours. A weekend. Staying up a lot of the night reading under the covers with a flashlight. How wonderful to have these kinds of immersive experiences, and how rare to have them as we get older and have so much that competes with them! There's something so magical about being able to give over your mind – and often your heart – to someone else's story.

So as spring starts to convince us that winter is behind us, as trees bud out and bulbs emerge from their hiding places and burst into bloom, let's all resolve make or take a little more time to create those encompassing moments of reading for ourselves.

Happy spring, and happy reading!

Julie Dobrow
BAC President

YESTER YEAR

John Holmes: A Prized Poet Who Stayed Home

Many Boston Authors Club members have won literary prizes for their works. I suppose many of us harbor a secret hope that someday, somehow, a prize committee will recognize one of our books. But what if accepting the prize meant you had to leave the country for a year? So it is with the Amy Lowell Poetry Traveling Scholarship, an award of about \$66,500 given each year to support a year of travel and study outside of North America.

In the mid-1950's, a distinguished prize committee consisting of Archibald MacLeish, John Ciardi, and Richard Wilbur awarded the Lowell scholarship to Boston Authors Club member John Holmes (pictured at right with Robert Frost).



Unfortunately, the travel requirement was too much for Holmes, so the award was withdrawn. Finding the bright side, Holmes commented, "I have the odd distinction of being the only living ex-Amy Lowell Traveling Poetry Scholarship holder." More details about the prize, including all past winners, can be found on the Lowell website at <https://amylowell.org/>. There you will learn that the 2023-24 winner, Christopher Nelson of Iowa, was selected from among 226 applicants, and you can tee up your application for next year's award before the October deadline. You will not, however, find any mention of Holmes or his odd distinction.

John Holmes (1904 – 1962) created his own distinguished literary legacy as professor in the Tufts University English department where he taught poetry from 1934 to his death. Holmes was known for bringing into his classes some of the best poets of the day to read and converse with his students. The Tufts student newspaper took note of his "fierce pride in the literary achievements of his students." Robert Frost was one of his visitors, and John Ciardi, Maxine Kumin, Anne Sexton, and George Starbuck were among his students.

In addition to university teaching, Holmes published seven collections of his own poems: *Address to the Living* (1937), *Fair Warning* (1939), *Map of My Country* (1943), *Along the Row* (1944), *The Double Root* (1950), *The Symbols* (1955), and *The Fortune Teller* (1961). He authored two books about poetry that book-ended his career: *The Poet's Work* was published in 1939 and the second, *Writing Poetry*, came out in 1960. Holmes was also deeply involved in everything poetry in Boston and around New England. He taught night courses for poets, hosted a poetry program on WGBH, was a Director of the Chautauqua Writers Workshop, and was in charge of the Tufts University Writers Workshop from 1952 to 1962.

Besides poetry, Holmes wrote hymns, four of which were included in the Unitarian Universalist Association's first hymnbook, *Hymns for the Celebration of Life*, and three of which are included in *Singing the Living Tradition*, which was published in 1993. The most frequently mentioned of his hymns, "The People's Peace," was adapted from a poem in his fifth poetry book, *Map of My Country*. The first line of the hymn is "Peace is the mind's old wilderness." According to the redoubtable Mildred Flagg in *Notable Boston Authors*, Holmes also authored a work titled *Professors are People*. I've been unable to find any trace of it.

To no one's surprise, Holmes was active in the New England Poetry Club (NEPC). In fact, he was the club's president at his death. In his honor, the club created an annual prize for "a young student poet enrolled at and attending a Massachusetts college." Anne Sexton, a student in one of Holmes' workshops, paid tribute to his mentorship of young poets by writing a poetic elegy for Holmes entitled "Somewhere in Africa." Bob Clawson, a current member of NEPC, characterizes the poem as "the finest elegy written by an American poet." It begins, "Must you leave, John Holmes, with the prayers and psalms you never said, said over you?"

The John Holmes Collection at the Tisch Library, Tufts University, is the major repository for Holmes' papers. There are detailed biographies of Holmes at uudb.org/articles/johnholmes.html and www.harvardsquarelibrary.org/biographies-new/holmes-john-1904-1962/

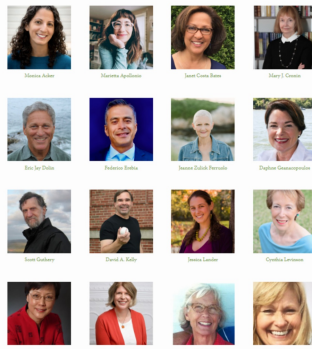
By Scott B Guthery



For inclusion in the MAY BAC Newsletter, send your events, news, and publications by 4/28/23 to

bostonauthorsclub@gmail.com

Claim your spot in the BAC Author Gallery!



A REMINDER THAT ALL BAC MEMBERS ARE WELCOME TO ADD THEIR INFORMATION TO OUR NEW AUTHOR GALLERY. Email us for details

bostonauthorsclub@gmail.com

Become a member OR RENEW NOW for 2023!

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:

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