

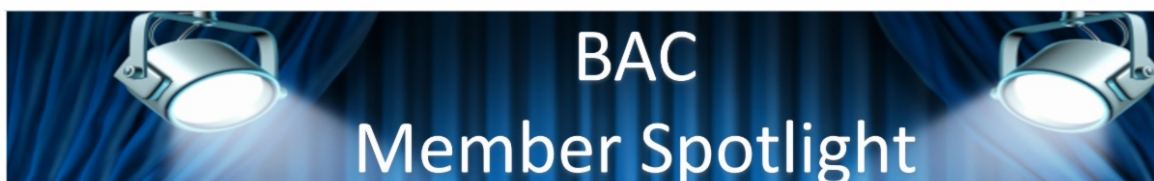


Boston Authors Club

April 2024 News

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BAC member Lorenzo Petruzziello has written three mystery novels set in Italy, as well as numerous online articles about Italian culture, food, and travel. Lorenzo holds degrees in International Economics and International Marketing. He writes in his spare time, drawing inspiration from frequent trips to Italy.

*His latest novel, *The Taste of Datura*, will launch in April with a book signing tour at Boston-area bookstores. For more about Lorenzo's online writing and 2024 book tour dates, visit www.lorenzowrites.com In this spotlight interview, Lorenzo talks about how his Italian background has inspired his novels, his three-book-promise, and what's next.*

Q: Your nonfiction writing about Italy seems like a perfect match for your novels. How has your background inspired the plots and characters in your books?

My background definitely inspires my stories. Since the age of 11, I spent my summers in Italy – from my teenage years through my mid-twenties, including a college semester in Milan. Born and raised in USA by Italian parents with a strong connection to Italy's current culture, the Italian culture – both classic and current – is embedded in me. My travels and friendships help me continue to keep a finger on the pulse of today's culture focused on food, drink, and travel. I felt I could share a view of the country that goes deeper than the museum-like view as seen by tourists. So, I use my stories and characters as tools to share my view and knowledge of today's Italy, of course with a bit of the history and myths behind it.

Q: Congratulations on the publication of your latest novel, *The Taste of Datura*, and the upcoming

launch events. Can you describe your writing routine and how you build your story and characters?

Of course, I'm motivated by the places where I have spent time. Ideas come to me at random with topics and plots inspired by people, culture, interactions, foods, etc. I let those thoughts brew until I feel what I refer to as a match. The idea must interest me and be able to allow me to share current and classic culture and traditions of Italy. My mission began with writing about modern and current Italy on my blog and continue through storytelling with my books.

Q: Are you planning to feature another city in Italy in your next novel?

Thank you for this question. When I wrote my first novel *The Love Fool*, I was living in Rome for a bit and fell in love with the Eternal City. As I explored, I thought of ideas and finally challenged myself to write a book. As I was writing *The Love Fool* and saw some traction, I sat back and promised myself that if I can write one book, then I will write three. I continued my challenge with my second book *A Mistake Incomplete*, then completed my three-book-promise with *The Taste of Datura*. With that said, although I've completed the promise that I had made to myself back in Rome, I do feel another story could be in my future. If so, I would pick another city or region, even consider going back to Rome.

Q: You studied international economics and earned an MBA in Global Marketing. In addition to your writing, you work with your sisters to manage a family business that provides specialized logistics services. Do you ever find yourself thinking about potential novels based on that aspect of your career?

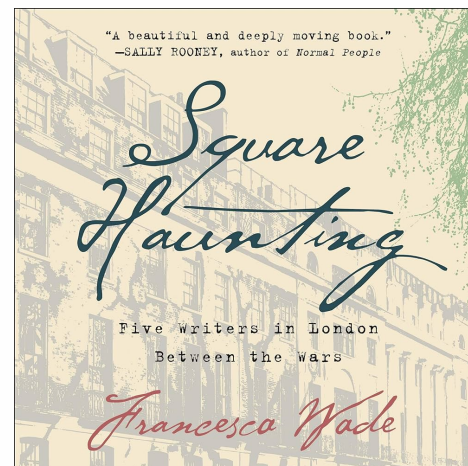
Well, *The Love Fool* was guided by my past work experiences in global marketing and publicity within the entertainment industry. So, I can't rule out the idea of being inspired by my current line of work, which is the logistics business. I'm sure shipping will pop up in a story at some point.

Interview by Mary J. Cronin

Reading Right Now

Daphne Palmer Geanacopoulos, the author of *The Pirate's Wife* (HarperCollins 2022) and *The Pirate Next Door* (Carolina Academic Press 2017), is a historian, journalist and author. She writes on a variety of subjects, including maritime history, business, science, health, fitness, education, museums, parenting, philanthropy, and lifestyles and trends, and has published over 40 articles in newspapers and magazines.

Daphne is currently reading *Square Haunting: Five Writers in London Between the Wars* by Francesca Wade (Tim Duggan Books 2020)



Q: What motivated you to pick up this title?

A: *I picked up this book because as a writer of women's history, I am always interested to learn from other writers how they do their craft. Francesca Wade wrote a group biography on five twentieth century women writers I was eager to learn more about: Hilda Doolittle, known as H.D., Dorothy L. Sayers, Jane Ellen Harrison, Eileen Power, and Virginia Woolf.*

Wade skillfully summarizes each of the author's lives in only about fifty pages. This is a real skill given that some of these women had long and complicated lives. What makes Wade's book doubly fascinating is that these women all lived at some time or another in Mecklenburgh Square in London. I was not familiar with that part of London, so I was interested to know what made it so attractive as a writer's haven.

Q: Would you recommend it to friends?

A: *I would certainly recommend *Square Haunting* to friends—it was not only educational but a pleasurable read. I would especially recommend it to my author friends who want to see a pro handle the difficult challenge of writing a group biography and a book about place. Francesca Wade did an admirable job.*

President's Note: What's in a Name?



The New York Times' A.O. Scott recently published a zingy column titled, "Like My Book Title? Thanks, I Borrowed It." He cites recent novels like *Birnam Wood* (Eleanor Catton's 2023 publication) and *Tomorrow, and Tomorrow, and Tomorrow* (Gabrielle Zevon's book from 2022) as part of a kind of appropriation trend designed to make readers who buy most of their books online pay attention because we know -or think we know - the allusion. And if not, we think we should know where a title comes from.

Scott suggests that prior to the 20th century, book titles were more likely to be descriptive than allusive, using protagonist's names (*Robinson Crusoe*, *Moll Flanders*) or places (*Wuthering Heights*, *Middlemarch*) or giving away the main "what" of the book (*The Scarlet Letter*, *War and Peace*).

20th century book titles, he writes, became what he thinks of as an "echo chamber": *For Whom the Bell Tolls*; *Look Homeward, Angel*, *Gone With the Wind*. We knew the titles, they reverberated with the times in which they were written, and then they became even more recognizable.

And now, he concludes, we need to be referential to get noticed at all. Is this because of the plethora of books being published between mainstream, independent, and online publishers, or because of the ways in which many of us now find books? Scott does not surmise, but I'd suggest it might be because of both.

I don't know about many of you, but my experiences with trade book publishers have been that book titles get decided upon not so much by the author but rather by the marketing department. (My publisher changed not only my title but also the subtitle of my book; it was a big argument to get either one of them back to something that I thought resonated with the contents of what I'd written). And my experience with titles within the academic press world has been the experience of finding titles that might be a little catchy, but then there's the requisite subtitle. After the ubiquitous colon, there's a subtitle that needs to speak to the buzzwords or jargon of the field in some way. Heaven forbid you come up with a title that doesn't have a subtitle! I've railed against that, too. Small wonder that it's so easy to mock and parody academic-y titles.

We're in such a crazy world of book titles now that you have places like Book Riot providing lists of book titles "to make you laugh, snort, and cringe" or people on social media sites like Reddit or Pinterest coming up with parody book titles or lists of "daft authors and ridiculous titles." There's even a British organization called the Alliance of Independent Authors that sponsors an "Art of the Title" contest for independent authors. "In this unique contest, your challenge is to convey an entire book in just its title, in the most creative and compelling way possible," they write. "Your title should be no more than seven words long and evoke emotion, intrigue, and a sense of the whole book — be that a non-fiction how-to, a literary memoir, a poetry book, or a dramatic story." And they conclude, "We're looking for creativity, originality, and depth — in a handful of words. So, think beyond the ordinary, push the boundaries, and captivate us with the power of your title alone. This is a unique opportunity to show off your writing skills in a whole new way! We can't wait to read what your imagination unfolds with just a few words."

A pretty good challenge, especially in this day and age! Do you want to know who won? Listen to this YouTube video and find out! <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6hRyqfy-ORM>

Happy spring, happy reading!

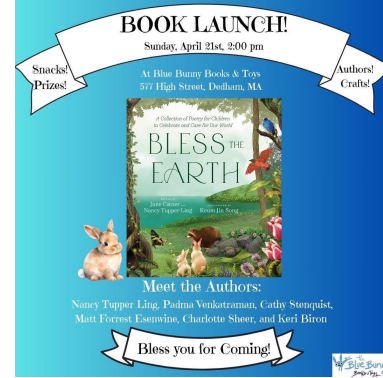
Julie Dobrow
BAC President

Spring Book Launches

Bless the Earth Book Launch on April 21

Nancy Tupper Ling's latest anthology with June Cotner will be published on April 2nd. The book launch will be celebrated at the Blue Bunny Bookstore on April 21st. BAC member Padma Venkatraman will join the event to read one of her poems from the book. Everyone is invited!

Here's the link to sign up
<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/bless-the-earth-book-launch-tickets-866976338567?aff=oddtcreator>



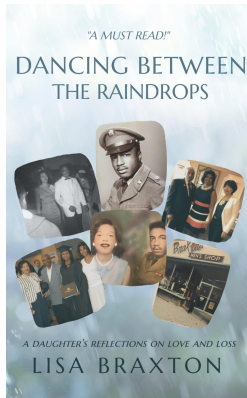
BOOK LAUNCH!
Sunday, April 21st, 2:00 pm
At Blue Bunny Books & Toys
577 High Street, Doolham, MA

Snacks/Prizes! Authors/Crafts!

Bless the Earth
A Collection of Poetry for Children
in Celebration and Gratitude for Spring

Meet the Authors:
Nancy Tupper Ling, Palma Vinkhottman, Cathy Sturmpist,
Marti Forrest Esmerine, Charlotte Sizer, and Kerl Biron

Bless you for Coming!



Memoir by Lisa Braxton

Lisa Braxton's new book, a memoir in essays, *Dancing Between the Raindrops: A Daughter's Reflections on Love and Loss* will be published this spring by Sea Crow Press.

This book is a deeply personal mosaic of a daughter's remembrances of beautiful, challenging and heartbreaking moments of life with her family. It speaks to anyone who has lost a loved one and is trying to navigate the world without them while coming to terms with complicated emotions.

Margaret Mayall: BAC Member Among the Stars

We have a habit of naming things after people with an often misguided intent to honor them. One of the most incongruous in my memory is a footbridge just outside Boston's Sumner tunnel named after atomic bomb physicist Enrico Fermi. That was until I discovered that a minor planet was named after the street in Cambridge on which BAC member Margaret Walton Mayall (1902—1995) lived.

Our venerable Club historian, Mildred Flagg, doesn't tell us when Margaret Mayall joined the Boston Authors Club, but she does provide a detail-rich sketch of Mayall's life and works in *Notable Authors: Members of the Boston Authors Club 1900—1966*, so we can assume that it was 1966 or before.



Mayall's career was quite literally focused on the stars. She earned a BA in mathematics at Swarthmore in 1924 and an MA in astronomy at Radcliffe in 1928. While at Radcliffe, she became one of the human "computers" at the Harvard Observatory, a member of the dedicated group of women memorialized in Dava Sobel's *The Glass Universe*. Mayall worked at the Harvard Observatory from 1924 to 1954. From 1949 to 1954, Mayall was the Pickering Memorial Astronomer, an indication of her growing and recognized contribution to the field. She left Harvard in 1954 to become the Recorder of the American Association of Variable Star Observers (AAVSO), a position she held until her retirement in 1973.

While Mayall authored numerous scholarly articles and tracts on photometry and variable stars, her particular enthusiasm was the star-gazing practiced by backyard astronomers using what was called common telescopes. Among other books that she wrote for amateur astronomers, Mayall edited a two-volume revision of *Celestial Objects for Common Telescopes* by British astronomer Thomas Webb (1807—1885). Her edition of Webb is still getting 5-star ratings on Amazon.

Mayall shared her interest in amateur astronomy with her husband, Robert Newton Mayall (1904—1989), who was a civil engineer and, not incidentally, an AAVSO council member. Among the many books that they co-authored are *Skyshooting: photography for amateur astronomers*, *Sundials: Their Construction and Use*, and *The Sky Observer's Guide*. First published in 1965, the *Guide* was republished by St. Martin's Press in 2002. It also gets glowing reviews on Amazon.

In addition to writing popular books for amateur astronomers, the Mayalls jointly curated Harvard's Harold C. Ernst collection of portable sundials. A typewritten manuscript that the Mayalls authored includes a lengthy

description of their classification system for portable sundials and a list of sundial collections in the US, among which is the Nathaniel Bowditch collection now at PEM.

What about that address-eponymous planet mentioned above? It's the minor planet, **3342 Fivesparks**, named after the Mayall's long-time residence at 5 Sparks Street in Cambridge. The street itself may have been named after Lizzie Wadsworth Sparks, who is said to have urged her husband, Edward Pickering, to hire more women astronomical computers when he became the Harvard Observatory director.

On a sad note for both amateur and professional astronomers, Harvard's Wolbach Library closed permanently last month. The Wolbach housed the 550,000 glass plates that were curated by the dedicated women astronomers memorialized by Sobel, including Boston Authors Club member Margaret Walton Mayall.

By Scott Guthery

Authors After Hours: Whitelam Books

BAC members and friends socialized, caught up with news, shared some books, and generally enjoyed themselves at the March "Authors After Hours" event at Whitelam Books in Reading.

A big thanks to Liz Whitelam for opening up her store to the BAC, and for her fabulous staff including Jeanne who helped organize things.

Special appreciation go out to Tracy Geary, Nancy Ling, and Sarah Stanton - the BAC Board members who keep our program calendar in gear and share their photos of the fun.



The logo for the Boston Authors Club newsletter, featuring the word "authors!" in a teal, lowercase font with an exclamation point, and "AUTHORS!" in a grey, uppercase font with an exclamation point below it.

The BAC newsletter is published the first week of every month except for the summer months. Please send news about your upcoming events, awards, and new books to bostonauthorsclub@gmail.com by April 22 for publication in the May edition.

Members are reminded that they are welcome to add an author profile to the [Boston Authors Club Gallery](#). This is an opportunity to promote your books and refer visitors to your website and your social media presence.

Your BAC Membership for 2024

BAC membership dues are \$50 for the calendar year. You can join or renew online by [clicking here](#). If you would rather pay by check, please make your check out to the Boston Authors Club and mail it to the following address:

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