



*Boston Authors Club*

## August 2023 Newsletter

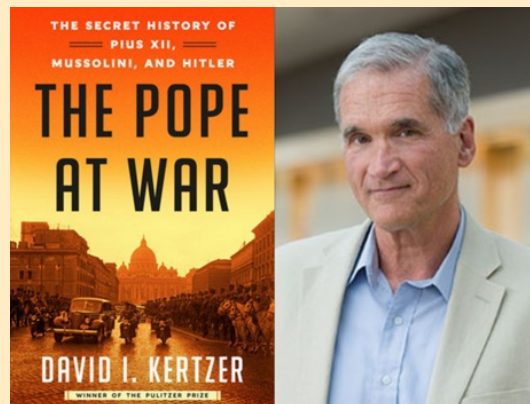
### In This Issue

- Announcing the JWH Award Winners and Finalists
- **SAVE THE DATE!** September 12 JWH Awards Event & Reception
- Reading Right Now: *The Wonder Chamber*
- President's Note: Savoring Summer Days
- Yesteryear: Awards Above Criticism - Mary E. Wilkins Freeman

## Congratulations to This Year's Julia Ward Howe Winners and Finalists

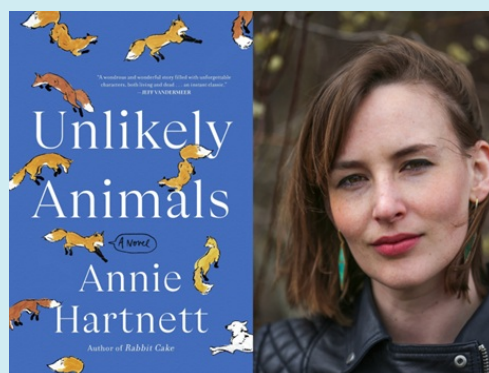
### NONFICTION WINNER

*The Pope at War* by David I. Kertzer



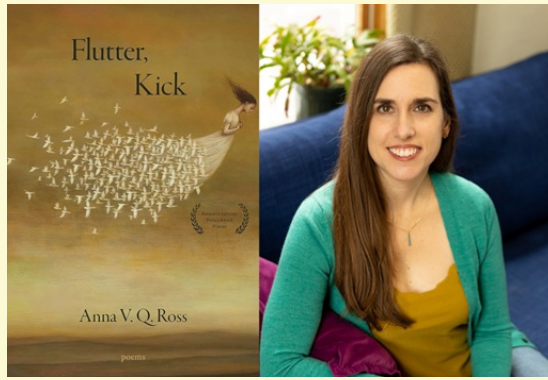
### FICTION WINNER

*Unlikely Animals* by Annie Hartnett



## POETRY WINNER

*Flutter Kick* by Anna V.Q. Ross



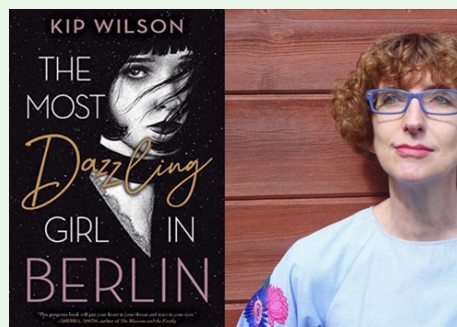
## YOUNG READER WINNERS

(2 YR CATEGORIES THIS YEAR: Younger & Older Audiences )

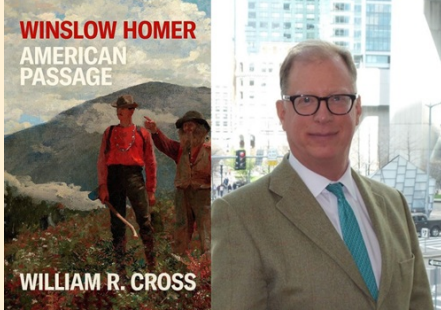
*Rica Baptista* by Janet Costa Bates



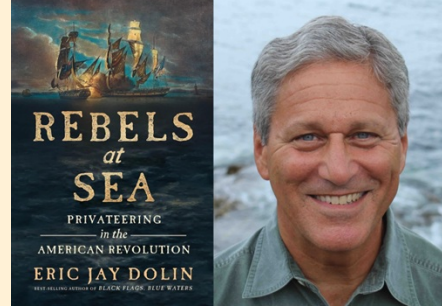
*The Most Dazzling Girl in Berlin* by Kip Wilson



## NONFICTION FINALISTS



***Winslow Homer***  
by William R. Cross



***Rebels at Sea***  
by Eric Jay Dolin

## FICTION FINALISTS

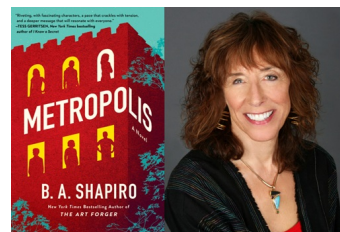
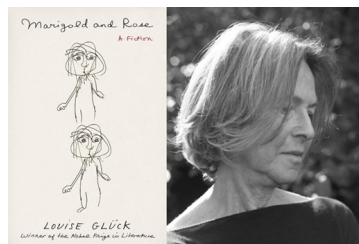
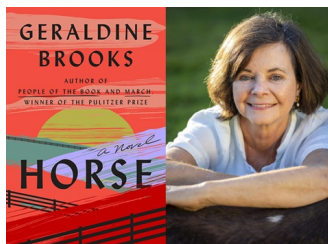
***Horse*** by Geraldine Brooks

***Marigold and Rose*** by Louise Glück

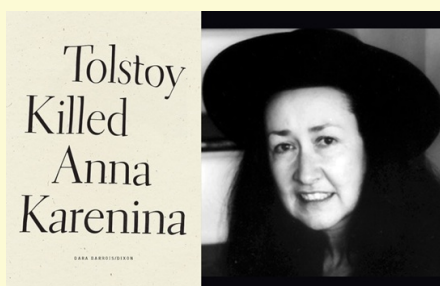
***We all Want Impossible Things*** by Catherine Newman

***Our Missing Hearts*** by Celeste Ng

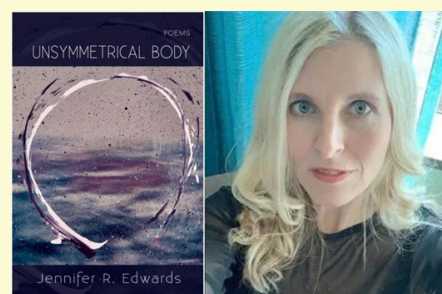
***Metropolis*** by B.A. Shapiro



## POETRY FINALISTS



***Tolstoy Killed Anna Karenina***  
by Dara Barrois/Dixon



***Unsymmetrical Body***  
by Jennifer R. Edwards





**YR FINALISTS  
(Younger Audience)**

*The Big Scream*  
by Kirsti Call



*I'll Go and Come Back*  
by Rajani LaRocca



**YR FINALIST  
(Older Audience)**

*The Sky We Shared*  
by Shirley Reva Vernick

**You Are Invited! JWH Awards Event and Reception on Tuesday, September 12**

**JOIN US IN PERSON TO CELEBRATE THIS YEAR'S WINNERS AND FINALISTS**

**SEPTEMBER 12 from 7PM - 8:30PM**

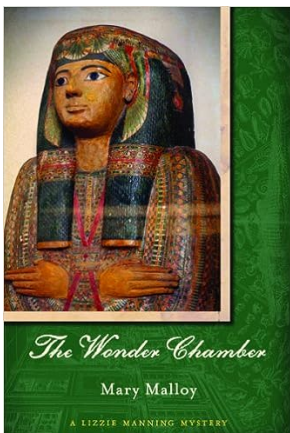
***Awards Event and Reception at the Waterworks Museum 2450 Beacon Street Chestnut Hill, MA***

*This historic Museum is near Cleveland Circle, across from the Chestnut Hill Reservoir. It is accessible from the C and D Green Lines. There is also free visitor parking next to the Museum building. For Museum directions and more information visit: <https://waterworksmuseum.org/>*



**PLEASE RSVP TO [bostonauthorsclub@gmail.com](mailto:bostonauthorsclub@gmail.com)**

**READING RIGHT NOW**



**Janet Steins is currently the Vice President and newsletter editor of Boston's Ticknor Society and an independent editor and researcher with a focus on anthropology. She previously worked as Associate Librarian for Collections at Harvard's Tozzer Library, which houses anthropology and archaeology collections from around the globe. Janet's summer reading includes *The Wonder Chamber*, book three in the *Lizzie Manning Mystery* series by Mary Malloy.**

**What are you currently reading?**

Among my choices for summer reading this year was a 3-book fiction series by Boston area historian Mary Malloy. and at the time of my writing this I am just beginning book three. Titles in Malloy's "Lizzie Manning Mystery" series are *The Wandering Heart* (2009), *Paradise Walk* (2011) and *The Wonder Chamber* (2014).

### **What motivated you to pick up this book?**

In the spirit of full disclosure, I am acquainted with Mary, and furthermore it was she who told me about the books. She was not wrong to think I would enjoy them!

Mary's protagonist is history professor Lizzie Manning. Lizzie teaches at St. Patrick's College in Charlestown, located just a short walk to the North End where she often lunches with her best friends including St. Pat librarian Jackie Harrigan. And, by the way, can Jackie be relied on to support Lizzie's research as any historian might need help from her librarian colleague? She sure can (and yes, I'm a librarian myself!)

### **Would you recommend it to friends?**

Highly recommended! Lizzie is very intelligent and determined, and in this series she finds herself involved in research projects (the first two in England and the third in Italy) involving ancient objects, lost relics, forgotten manuscripts, historic pilgrimages, scholarly squabbles, with an assortment of intriguing and sometimes dangerous characters thrown in. If you think I'm describing "cozy" mysteries, be assured I'm not. The women in Malloy's books are much too smart, and her plots so much more creative than that. Filled with surprises, I found these stories to be true page turners, and I'm so looking forward to getting further into book 3.

*Interview by Mary J Cronin*

## **President's Note: Savoring Summer Days**



The other day I was out walking, and, much to my distress, found the first acorns of the season on the ground. *But it's July!* I thought to myself. I still have so many things on my summer to-do list to do; I have several more pieces of writing I'm hoping to complete; I have so many more books stacked up on my night table to read! Somehow, despite the long languid days, despite the slower pace of life, summer always seems to race by with autumn on its heels, about to overtake it.

Yet there's much to which we can look forward in the coming season, especially for those of us in the BAC. We'll have our annual Julia Ward Howe awards ceremony. We have an events committee busily at work planning some exciting new BAC events. I've already started to receive inquiries from authors and publishers with 2023 books about submitting them for consideration of our prizes, and I know that

soon our local UPS people will be delivering cartons of books to my doorstep.

Falling acorns notwithstanding, there's another month until Labor Day. So savor those beach days, watch the two supermoons that will happen this month rise, listen to the diminishing songs of crickets and frogs. Pour yourself a glass of lemonade or ice tea, and tuck into that book you've been waiting to read. It's still summer – enjoy it!

**Julie Dobrow**  
**BAC President**

## **Yesteryear: Awards Above Criticism**

***"The most of my work is not really the kind I like myself." So sayeth Boston Authors Club member Mary E. Wilkins Freeman a popular and prolific New England author profiled by our historian emeritus, Mildred Flagg, in her history of notable Boston authors. Flagg goes on to editorialize without elaboration, "Her background made her an unusually interesting figure."***

***A bit of biographical research makes it clear that***

***Flagg was understating the case. The roadside marker illustrated here hints at one part of this background: "American writer Mary Wilkins Freeman was born in 1852 in Randolph, Massachusetts. Her family moved to Brattleboro, Vermont in 1867. ... Returning to Randolph in 1883, she became a very successful author respected by the likes of Mark***



*Twain and Rudyard Kipling. Her years in Brattleboro influenced her development as a writer of New England life." (Vermont Division for Historic Preservation – 2019)*

Both Flagg and the Vermont road sign omit the painful details of the life that drove Wilkins Freeman to become an author. Her father's move from Randolph to Brattleboro was an attempt to escape poverty that made a bad family situation worse. His business venture failed, one sister died, and her mother had to work as a servant to keep the family afloat. Wilkins Freeman sold her early short stories and poetry to supplement her mother's small income. In the process, she focused on work that would earn fees and royalties, a commercial priority that continued after her parents' death and her return to Massachusetts. During her long writing career, she published fifteen volumes of short stories, over fifty uncollected stories and essays, fourteen novels, three plays, three volumes of poetry, and eight children's books, and succeeded in earning a substantial income. Her best-remembered works depict single women and mothers struggling (and often failing) to rise above the poverty and narrow-mindedness of rural New England life.

Freeman herself was perhaps the most cutting critic of her own writing but by no means the only one. In his book *The Women Who Make Our Novels*, Grant Overton opines "Both as a short story writer and as a novelist her work is unimportant, largely ephemeral and extremely overrated." In his short, huffy review of Freeman's oeuvre, Overton is particularly upset about a short story, "The Copy-Cat," that appeared in 1914 about two young ladies wearing the same-colored ribbons. "This in the year of our Lord 1914!" Overton hyperventilates. Freeman's literary transgression? 1914 was the year that WWI started.

Overton doesn't just have it in for Freeman but for everyone who dares to publicly admire her work. "Mr. Howells and his school have so long instructed us to accept without question their estimates of her work that it becomes imperative to cut the ground from under them." Nevertheless, Overton failed to dissuade Freeman's supporters. As the above photo of a 1905 dinner party at the fabled Delmonico's in New York illustrates, by the turn of the century she was welcome in the highest literary circles. There's another Boston Authors Club member seated next to Freeman in this photo. Do you recognize him?

Like many of the women in her stories, Wilkins Freeman did not find happiness in marriage. In 1902 she married Dr. Charles Freeman not realizing that he was an alcoholic, sleeping powder addict, and long-term womanizer. She continued writing during their tumultuous relationship, finally separating from Freeman, who was committed to an insane asylum.

Her literary career did provide her with a happier ending. In fact, as we celebrate this year's Julia Ward Howe winners, it's appropriate to note that Mary E. Wilkins Freeman was the first winner of the William Dean Howells Medal for Distinction in Fiction in April 1926. She was followed by a long and undisputedly distinguished line of honorees, including Willa Cather, Pearl Buck, William Faulkner, Eudora Welty, E. L. Doctorow, John Updike, Don DeLillo, and Shirley Hazzard. Flagg cites another memorable quote from Wilkins Freeman to round out her BAC member profile: "I have heard that my work was founded on Jane Austen, but I have never read any of her books." Perhaps in this statement, she wanted to distance her writings about hard-scrabble life in New England from Austen's upper-class settings and Anglophile readers. Of course, as Overton contended, it's possible that Freeman didn't know there was a war going on. And equally possible that she wouldn't have changed a word if she did. Tough lady.

*With thanks to Jennifer Nader, who is writing a biography of Wilkins Freeman, for bringing this past member of the Boston Authors Club to our attention; and to Carol Farrington of the Brattleboro Historical Society for sharing the picture of the Wilkins Freeman road marker.*

**By Scott B. Guthery**

## SEND US YOUR FALL 2023 NEWS

***Please send news about your fall PUBLICATIONS AND EVENTS to [bostonauthorsclub@gmail.com](mailto:bostonauthorsclub@gmail.com) by August 30 for publication in the September 2023 newsletter.***

**authors!**  
**AUTHORS!**



*Boston Authors Club*

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