

Foreword

The Laurier Poetry Series began in 2004 with the appearance of *Before the First Word*, a volume of Lorna Crozier's poetry most ably edited by Winnipeg poet Catherine Hunter. Our hope was to bring contemporary Canadian poetry to its readers in a different way—by selecting thirty-five poems from across a poet's career, and by asking the editor and the poet to write an engaging and accessible introduction and afterword, respectively. Crozier and Hunter set the bar very high.

I admit that one ambition I had in mind then—I still do—was to match the reach of the New Canadian Library. I imagined, hoped that what that series has done, mostly for Canadian fiction, the Laurier series would do for Canadian poetry. I hoped that in the high school and university classroom, poets would be better served by a volume that represented their work more widely than the usual anthology, with one or at best a few poems from each poet. And I hoped that more readers, old and new, beyond the classroom, maybe outside of Canada, would find these volumes appealing.

Ten years later, with the twentieth volume just gone to press—and with the very recent and happy experience of using ten of the Laurier volumes, including Crozier's, in a fourth-year university class on contemporary Canadian poetry—a warm and vivid image arises in memory of poet Brian Henderson, then as now the Director of Wilfrid Laurier University Press, asking me over a beer on a hot June afternoon in 2002 in Toronto, at the Learned's, whether I might be interested in editing a series like this one. Then as now, I thought the idea was excellent. I didn't know if it would fly, though Brian's was, then as now, an inspired idea. A few more beers and an hour or so later, we agreed to give it a shot.

Over this last (fast!) decade the dedicated group that Brian leads at WLUP—especially managing editor Rob Kohlmeier and his luminous team—have worked with an unimaginably wide range of poets and poetics. To what little I knew in 2004 about publishing, they have added their consummate and patient professionalism.

What continues to inspire me about the Laurier Poetry Series, or LPS, has been its reception across the country. The love and art and passion and intimacy

that twenty editors and twenty poets have brought to their volumes; the innumerable hours and conversations and meetings, the thousands of emails between and among poets and editors and Wilfrid Laurier; the generous reviews in the country's journals; the reception in classrooms and beyond: all of this eloquently speaks to the joyful proliferation of poetry in Canada today—and tomorrow. What a tremendous wealth of poets and readers we have here! What vital riches!

With each new volume, the Laurier Poetry Series hopes to continue to recognize the growing provenance of this wealth, the wide range of these riches. Our poets—and their readers—deserve nothing less.

—Neil Besner
General Editor