

Foreword

I am happy to serve as the general editor for the Laurier Poetry Series, the development and growth of which I have followed from its early days. My gratitude goes to Neil Besner and Brian Henderson, who conceived of the Laurier Poetry Series in 2002 as a way to offer a more robust selection of a single poet's work than could be found in an anthology. In 2004, the Laurier Poetry Series launched the first volume, Catherine Hunter's selection of the poems of Lorna Crozier, *Before the First Word*. Neil served as General Editor for all volumes until he was joined in 2016 by Brian, when he left his role as WLU Press's Director. In an act of commitment to poetry publication that is nothing short of inspiring, the Laurier Poetry Series expanded to a list of thirty-three fascinating titles under their leadership.

The retirement of the original editors has given me a surprising historical jolt. But thinking historically is a good way to revisit the original plans for the series, and to think towards the future. Under my editorial eye, the series will retain its original aim to produce volumes of poetry made widely available to new readers, including undergraduate students at universities or colleges, and to a general readership who wish for "more poetry in their poetry." WLU Press also retains its commitment to produce beautiful volumes and to alert readers to poems that remain vital to thinking about urgencies of the contemporary moment. It is a reality that poetry books are produced in smaller print runs and often on a shoestring, and as a consequence, original collections of poetry tend to go out of print too quickly and far too precipitously. The series has the added goal of bringing poems from out-of-print collections back into the public eye and the public discourse. The Press's commitment to the work of literary studies includes choosing editors for each volume who can reflect deeply on the body of work, as well as inviting original afterwords from the poets themselves.

As we embark on this next turn of the series, access is our watchword. Canadian literature has undeniably had a checkered history of exclusionary practices, so who gets the nod and who takes part in discussions—as readers and as writers—of Canadian poetry? In the classroom, it is my privilege and my task to introduce a generation of students to the practice of reading poetry as a vital thread in cultural, social, and political conversations, conversations that challenge ideas about Canada and seek to illuminate and bring to consciousness better futures. For that work, I want access to as many voices on the page, and as robust a selection of poems from those voices, as I can get my hands on. This is the language of the bibliophile, the craver of books, the person whose pedagogical pleasure comes from putting poetry books into the hands of others and saying, simply, “Read this, and we’ll talk.” Multi-author anthologies do not always usefully demonstrate to readers how a poet’s work shifts and changes over the years, nor do they always display the ways that a single poet’s poems speak to and with and sometimes usefully against one another. I want at my elbow, in every discussion, inside and outside the classroom, our best poetic practitioners. I want books that offer not just a few poems, but dozens: selected volumes not only by the splashiest prize winners but also significantly by poets who have been carrying a full cultural backpack for decades. I also want to showcase new and prolific voices who have taken off like rockets. For this, I am grateful for the chance to bring these poets to you, or bring them back to you. Turn is sometimes a return and sometimes a revolution. Neil and Brian started this series off with a bang, and now it’s time to light another fuse.

The volume you hold in your hands sizzles. Read this, and we’ll talk.

—*Tanis MacDonald*
General Editor