

THISTLEDOWN
PRESS

FALL 2021

Thistledown Press was established in 1975, and in Fall 2020 began a new life with a new owner, author and businesswoman JoAnn McCaig, new managing editor Caroline Walker, and Elizabeth Philips as our new acquisitions editor. We are an independent literary publisher with high editorial standards, producing beautifully designed books — fiction, creative nonfiction, and poetry — for a diverse audience.

In our debut season we are delighted to introduce six new titles, featuring emerging and seasoned writers from across Canada. We have *The Beautiful Place*, a brilliant sequel to Sinclair Ross' *As for Me and My House*, from novelist Lee Gowan; a darkly humorous novel about an ex-military-alcoholic-in-recovery turned Anglican priest, *All Is Well*, by Katherine Walker; a remarkable memoir about a year in a Middle East war zone, *Peacekeeper's Daughter*, by Tanya Bellehumeur-Allat; a richly textured poetry collection, *Girl running*, by Diana Hope Tegenkamp; funny and sharp short fiction, *Only if We're Caught*, by Theresa Slind; and a lyrically written historical novel for middle-grade readers set in Canada and Germany, *Dear Peter, Dear Ulla*, by Barbara Nickel.

Onward to the next 45 years of great writing and reading!

Thistledown Press gratefully acknowledges the financial support of The Canada Council for the Arts, SK Arts, and the government of Canada for its publishing program.



Canada Council Conseil des arts
for the Arts du Canada



Canada 

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9781771872089

- English
- 5.5 x 8.5 x 1 in | 1 gr
- 352 pages

Subject

FICTION / Literary

Distributor

UTP Distribution

Expected ship date: Sep 15, 2021

Carton quantity: 24

The Beautiful PlaceBy (author) Lee Gowan 

Sep 30, 2021 | Paperback , Trade | \$24.95

Lee Gowan's new novel, an audacious sequel to Sinclair Ross' prairie classic, *As for Me and My House*, is about a man who is in trouble in love and work—a darkly funny cautionary tale for our times.

"A preposterous, pan-Canadian tale, straight-faced, that evolves into a quest for a dead man's frozen head. Subtly hilarious, beautifully crafted and with lots of moving parts, this novel is fresh, original, and compelling." --Ken McGoogan, award-winning author

The man we know only as Bentley is facing a triple threat—in other words, his life is a hot mess every way he looks. Like anyone who feels that he's on the brink of annihilation, Bentley thinks back to his misspent youth, which was also when he met his famous grandfather, the painter Philip Bentley, for the first time. To make matters worse, he has inherited his grandfather's tendency to self-doubt, as well as that cranky artist's old service pistol. Our hero is confused about so much. How did he end up as a cryonics salesman—a huckster for a dubious afterlife—when he wanted to be a writer? And who is the mysterious Mary Abraham, and why is she the thread unravelling his unhappy present? What will be left when all the strands come undone? Lee Gowan's *The Beautiful Place* is the best kind of journey: both psychological and real, with a lot of quick-on-the-draw conversations and stunning scenery along the way —and only one gun, which may or may not be loaded.

Contributor Bio

Lee Gowan grew up on a farm near Swift Current, Saskatchewan, and studied at the University of British Columbia, where he earned an MFA in creative writing. He is the author of three previous novels: *Confession*, *The Last Cowboy*, and *Make Believe Love*, which was shortlisted for the Trillium Award for Best Book in Ontario. He is also an award-winning screenwriter, and was nominated for a Gemini Award for his screenplay *Paris or Somewhere*. He is currently Program Director, Creative Writing and Business Communications, at the University of Toronto School of Continuing Studies.

Key Selling Points

Lee Gowan compares his novel to *Machines Like Me* by Ian MacEwen. Like MacEwen, Gowan has a speculative element in his novel—cryonics, the freezing of the dead with hopes of a medical resurrection in some vague distant future—with realistic characters and situations. And like Caroline Adderson's *Ellen in Pieces*, the novel documents a character's reinvention of self. Gowan also compares his novel to others that have used literary classics as their jumping-off point, for example *The Wide Sargasso Sea* by Jean Rhys for its relationship to *Jane Eyre*, and J.M. Coetzee's *The Master of Petersburg* because of its use of Dostoevsky's *The Devils* as an inspiration. He also cites *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead* because it is an often comic take on a source work (*Hamlet*) that was not a comedy. *Never Let Me Go* by Kazuo Ishiguro could be compared because of the way the speculative fiction has been embedded in an otherwise contemporary setting.

**Reviews**

"Gowan never wavers...the book simply flows. *The Last Cowboy* is an engaging book that is at once funny, poignant and a razor-sharp image of that most tender and terrible of entities: the family."— *The Globe & Mail*

"Gowan's sparse, unadorned prose speaks much between the lines. His characters are well-wrought, etched as with acid, and true. And *The Last Cowboy* continues — and ups the ante — in the newest vein of western CanLit."— *The Hamilton Spectator*

"*Make Believe Love* is a comedy that refuses to get cynical or mean. Its daffy story and evenness of temper evoke some of Canadian fiction's past accomplishments, such as the small-town sketches of early Robertson Davies by way of ... Margaret Atwood's *Lady Oracle* ... Lee Gowan's debut is funny and laid-back ... shot through with affection ... — *Vancouver Sun*

"A promising debut.... Gowan's command of language, his sense of place, his subject matter all make him a writer worth watching." — *The Gazette* (Montreal)



9781771872157

- English
- 5.5 x 8.5 x 1 in | 1 gr
- 192 pages

Subject

FICTION / Literary

Distributor

UTP Distribution

Expected ship date: Sep 15, 2021

Carton quantity: 24

All Is WellBy (author) Katherine Walker 

Sep 30, 2021 | Paperback , Trade | \$24.95

Christine Wright is having a bad day. She's an ex-special forces soldier and a recovering alcoholic, and now her new career as an Anglican Minister has started off with the worst kind of bang. Could it be her reflexes are a little too twitchy for this job?

From the opening page, this fast-paced tale is all about a cover up: the burying of a body, while fending off an angry widow, and a very suspicious parishioner appalled by the loss of a precious church artifact. And then there's the vengeful plot of a terminally ill military-cop-turned-stalker who plans to get Christine locked up if it's the last thing he does.

Among the many revelations and surprises we experience is the fact that we're instantly on the side of the unfailingly flawed and irreverent Christine—who cannot imitate a perfectly pious priest even though her life so clearly depends on it. Mystic Julian Norwich, she of the famous “all shall be well, and all manner of thing shall be well,” is the patron saint of this wickedly funny novel.

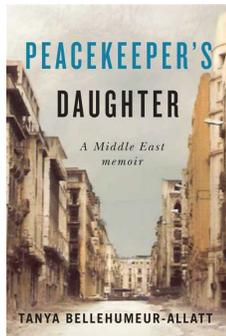
All is well for Katherine Walker's readers despite, or because of, Reverend Wright's many wrongs.

**Contributor Bio**

Katherine Walker was born and raised in Calgary where she studied fine arts. After working as a graphic designer, Katherine joined the Royal Canadian Navy, which took her to both coasts and out to sea. Her recent graduate studies in divinity, along with her artistic and military background, enhance her journey through life. You can talk with Katherine about divine guidance, dismantling underwater mines, or the connection between beauty and truth. Katherine is grateful for the tradition of story, the wilderness, and every breath in this amazing life. She currently lives in Nanaimo, British Columbia. *All Is Well* is her first book.

Key Selling Points

Katherine Walker compares her book to the blackly comic novel *My Sister the Serial Killer* by Oyinkan Braithwaite because of its similar use of humour to get up close to some intense issues. Both show feminine navigation of power structures. The television series *Fleabag* by Phebe Waller-Bridge contains similar themes of characters seeking redemption and feeling a sense of exile. Both use quirky yet authentic characters to explore social challenges.



9781771872164

- English
- 5.5 x 8.5 x 1 in | 1 gr
- 330 pages

Subject

BIOGRAPHY & AUTOBIOGRAPHY / Personal Memoirs

Distributor

UTP Distribution

Expected ship date: Sep 15, 2021

Carton quantity: 24

Peacekeeper's Daughter*A Middle East Memoir*By (author) Tanya Bellehumeur-Allatt 

Sep 30, 2021 | Paperback, Trade | \$24.95

The astonishing story of a French-Canadian military family stationed in Israel and Lebanon in 1982-1983, told from the perspective of a twelve-year-old girl

Peacekeeper's Daughter parachutes the reader into the Lebanese Civil War, the Palestinian crisis, and the wave of terrorism—including the bombing of the American Embassy—that ravaged Beirut at the height of the siege. This novelistic memoir moves from Jerusalem to Tiberius, from the disputed No-Man's Land of the Golan Heights to Damascus, and on to Beirut by way of Tripoli, crossing borders that remain closed to this day.

It's June, 1982. Twelve-year-old Tanya and her family are preparing to leave their home on the military base in Yellowknife, Northwest Territories, to move to Israel, where her father will serve a one-year posting with the United Nations. While they're packing up, Israel invades Lebanon. The President-elect of Lebanon is assassinated. Thousands of Palestinian men, women, and children are murdered at the Sabra-Shatila refugee camps in southern Beirut. The Middle East's relative peace explodes into waves of violence.

It is in the midst of this maelstrom that the family arrives in Israel and settles into an apartment. The simple act of walking down the street is fraught with peril. Violence may come at them from any direction at any time.

Peacekeeper's Daughter is a coming-of-age story, as well as an exploration of family dynamics, the shattering effects of violence and war—and the power of memory itself to reconcile us to our past selves, to the extraordinary places we have been and sights we have seen.

Contributor Bio

Born in Germany to French-Canadian parents, Tanya Bellehumeur-Allatt grew up on various army bases across Canada, from Quebec's North Shore to Yellowknife, Northwest Territories. When she was twelve years old, her family moved to Tiberius, Israel, where her father served as a United Nations peacekeeper on the Golan Heights. When war broke out with Lebanon, Tanya and her family moved to Beirut, where they lived for seven months, at the height of the Lebanese civil war. Tanya's journal from 1982-1983 became the seeds of her memoir, *Peacekeeper's Daughter*. Tanya holds an MA in English Literature from McGill University and an MFA in Creative Writing from UBC. She lives in Quebec's Eastern Townships with her husband and four children.

Key Selling Points

The memoir is written in a novelistic style, with dialogue and action that create a sense of immediacy and put the reader in the moment, experiencing everything along with Tanya.

The book has an appealing child-as-narrator, giving us a 12-year-old's perspective, but in a style and tone that will engage adult readers.

The story provides an insider view of military life, United Nations peacekeeping, and life in the Middle East.

Portions of *Peacekeeper's Daughter* have appeared in the following Canadian literary journals:

SubTerrain, Winter 2021 ("Carrying War")

The New Quarterly, Fall 2020 ("Terrorist Mythologies")

The Antigonish Review, Fall 2020 ("City of the Dead")

Malahat Review, Fall/Winter 2018 ("Terrorist Narratives")

Prairie Fire, Spring 2016 ("Witness")

Tanya compares her book to *Homes: A Refugee Story* by Abu Bakr Al Rabeeah with Winnie Yeung because it has a teenage narrator writing his first-person experience living in war-torn Syria and leaving that country to come to Canada.



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9781771872140

- English
- 5.5 x 8.5 x 1 in | 1 gr
- 120 pages

Subject

POETRY / Canadian / General

Distributor

UTP Distribution

Expected ship date: Sep 15, 2021

Carton quantity: 24

Girl runningBy (author) Diana Hope Tegenkamp 

Sep 15, 2021 | Paperback , Trade | \$24.95

This stellar debut collection by Métis poet Diana Hope Tegenkamp takes us through many worlds and wonders.

In *Girl running*, find solace and outrage, grief and tenderness, bewilderment and beauty, all "entangled in hope and dreaming." The poet's love of the natural world is both earthy and adamantine, and her passion for literature and art is just as rich a source for her questioning eye.

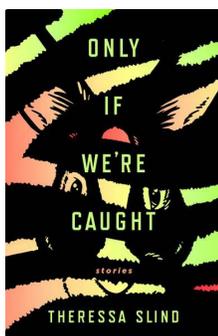
On the edge of Saskatoon, a woman opens a car door and flees. A child runs away from residential school after a beating. A Métis man's ghost gallops on a ghost horse across the prairies. Henry James' 19th-century heroine, Isabel Archer, runs across a wintery yard. Lana Tisdell drives away from Falls City, Nebraska, after the murder of her transgender boyfriend. After many losses—of a mother known and loved, of a Metis father unknown and imagined—the 'girl' of this collection is running towards and away from mortality. In these poems, disappearances, perpetual flights, river walks, shadowy descents and miraculous returns connect daily living and mortality, current social realities and ancient histories, the surface and the subterranean depths of our complicated lives.

Lovers of contemporary Canadian poetry will find that this textured collection rewards reading and rereading.

**Contributor Bio**

Diana Hope Tegenkamp is a Metis writer who lives and creates on Treaty 6 Territory, Homeland of the Metis. Her writing has appeared in numerous literary journals across Canada, including *CV2*, *Grain*, and *Matrix*, to name a few. In 2020, she was awarded second prize in the Banff Centre Bliss Carmen Poetry Contest and was longlisted for the CBC Poetry Prize.

Diana works across mediums, including film, photography, visual art, performance art, sound and music. Her video performance piece, UNMUTE, was selected for SLANT's 2021 Writing Bodies festival, and more of her multi-disciplinary work, including film poems for *Girl running*, can be found on her website, www.dianahopetegenkamp.com. She lives in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan.



9781771872119

- English
- 5.5 x 8.5 x 1 in | 1 gr
- 132 pages

Subject

FICTION / Short Stories

Distributor

UTP Distribution

Expected ship date: Sep 15, 2021

Carton quantity: 24

Only If We're CaughtBy (author) Theresa Slind 

Sep 30, 2021 | Paperback , Trade | \$24.95

This sensational debut collection of short stories takes readers on a tour of the astonishment inside the ordinary, the quotidian. Meet the happy wunderkind inside the sad elderly lover, the vulnerable teenager inside the high-powered lawyer, the loving father inside the vampire. Vampire?

In these stories, no narrator is too far-fetched, because every voice is in some way our own. We unravel a mystery with a mortician troubled by the ghosts of his clients, stumble along a gravel road with a too-young pregnant woman searching for a lost girl, watch a feminist falling in love with the office Romeo, are charmed by a robotic humanoid with a penchant for merlot and sedition... Whether the subject is betrayal, disappointment, grief, love or longing, these stories will entertain you with zippy word-craft and sly humour, and seduce you with tenderness. Theresa Slind takes us on an exhilarating ride through the many chambers of the complicated, messed up, resilient human heart.

"A stellar collection of stories--funny, poignant, wide-ranging, and wise. *Only If We're Caught* will catch your heart." —Yann Martel, author of *Life of Pi* and *The High Mountains of Portugal*

"Theresa Slind's writing is perceptive, thoughtful, smart, funny and beautiful. In this collection, she finds the extraordinary everywhere—in her language, in the relationships she so beautifully explores, and in the luminous landscape of the everyday. — Alice Kuipers, author of *Life on the Refrigerator Door* and *Me and Me*

Contributor Bio

Theresa Slind is a librarian at Saskatoon Public Library. Her writing has appeared in *Prairie Fire*, *PRISM international*, *The Malahat Review*, *The New Quarterly*, *Grain*, and elsewhere. She grew up on a grain farm in north-east Saskatchewan and lives in Saskatoon with her husband and daughter. *Only If We're Caught* is her first book.

Key Selling Points

Comparable titles:

Something for Everyone by Lisa Moore*Hellgoing* by Lynn Coady

These are unconventional, energetically told stories, with off-kilter narrators and surprisingly slanted takes on reality.

Late Breaking by K.D. Millar (think: K.D. Miller meets Corner Gas)*Stone Mattress* by Margaret Atwood (think: Stone Mattress meets Fargo)*Immigrant City* by David Bezmozgis (think: Immigrant City meets a wheat field and jellied salad)

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Dear Peter, Dear Ulla

By (author) Barbara Nickel 

Sep 30, 2021 | Paperback , Trade | \$12.95

***Dear Peter, Dear Ulla* is an imaginative and beautifully crafted historical middle-grade novel about two cousins who are fast friends even though they have never met.**

Letters fly back and forth between them, and although Ulla lives in Danzig, Germany, and Peter on a Mennonite farm in Saskatchewan, their lives become inextricably entwined through an intense, empathetic connection that plays out in the first months of World War Two. Peter is a talented pianist and Ulla a skillful storyteller with a talent for drawing—will these skills help or hinder them through the challenges brought about by war? They can't think of one another as enemies, even though that's what the world is telling them that they are. Unfolding in alternating chapters, suspense builds as suspicion mounts all around both young protagonists. Will German-speaking Mennonites on the Canadian prairies be accused of sympathizing with the Nazis? Is Peter safe from the bully who despises him for playing music instead of hockey? Will the Nazis catch Ulla in the act of helping a Jewish friend? Will Ulla's father lose his job entirely because of his views? These urgent questions, and the danger the war will sever the deep connection between Peter and Ulla, will keep young readers enthralled through this deft weaving of complex cultural and moral questions, told here with energy, humour, and empathy.

Contributor Bio

Barbara Nickel grew up in Saskatchewan and attended Goshen College in Indiana, where she studied music (violin) and English literature. She received an MFA in Creative Writing from the University of British Columbia, where she also taught. Barbara has published acclaimed books for both adults and young people. Her children's titles include *Hannah Waters and the Daughter of Johann Sebastian Bach*, which won a B.C. Book Prize and was shortlisted for the Governor General's Award, as well as a picture book, *A Boy Asked the Wind*, which was a finalist for the Ruth and Sylvia Schwartz Children's Book Award. Barbara lives in Yarrow, British Columbia, with her husband and two sons.

Key Selling Points

The novel gives a child's-eye-view of events during the Second World War: Peter in Saskatchewan hears about a war far away that could have immediate effects on his German-speaking family, and Ulla in Danzig experiences the horrors of war first-hand.

Illustrations throughout the book represent drawings that Ulla creates and sends to Peter with her letters, depicting things she sees, such as battleships and explosions, and things she wishes for, like cakes to eat.

Barbara compares her novel to *The Book Thief* by Markus Zusak, which includes illustrations done by a character in the story. She also compares it to *Don't Tell the Enemy* by Marsha Forchuk Skrypuch, a story with the same setting, depicting characters struggling against Nazis and putting themselves at risk to help others.



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Reviews

Hannah Waters and the Daughter of Johann Sebastian Bach:

"In this absorbing novel...Nickel writes with kindness and insight about the girls and their families, and gives a sense of the healing power of music to draw people together." *Quill & Quire*

The Mozart Girl:

"The novel truly shines in its descriptions of Nannerl playing and composing music...An engaging glimpse into the life and mind of a talented young woman sidelined in the annals of history." *Kirkus Review*

A Boy Asked the Wind:

"This is a book with intellectual, artistic, and literary depth...a beautiful choice for home and public libraries." *The Deakin Review of Children's Literature*

"Nickel's poetry is stunning." *Quill & Quire*

9781771872171

- English
- 10 B&W illustrations
- 5.5 x 8.5 x 1 in | 1 gr
- 256 pages

Subject

JUVENILE FICTION / Family / General

Audience range

Age (years) from 8 - 12

Distributor

UTP Distribution

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Combinable across all Ampersand's participating UTP publishers.

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