



**Thistledown
Press**

**Spring
2024**

Welcome to Spring 2024 from Thistledown!

Legacy is the thread that runs through this year's spring list.

The Rasmussen Papers, Connie Gault's cheeky homage to Henry James, delves into the complexities of poetic legacy and literary ambition; in *The Beech Forest*, Marlis Wessler explores the reverberations of the Holocaust in the life of one ordinary woman living in present-day Saskatchewan; and in the debut poetry collection by Métis poet E. MacGregor, *What Fills Your House Like Smoke*, the legacy of colonialism haunts every page. Though these three books look back and contemplate the legacy of the past, each in its own way also looks forward into a more just, peaceful, and equitable future.

JoAnn McCaig,

Publisher

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.

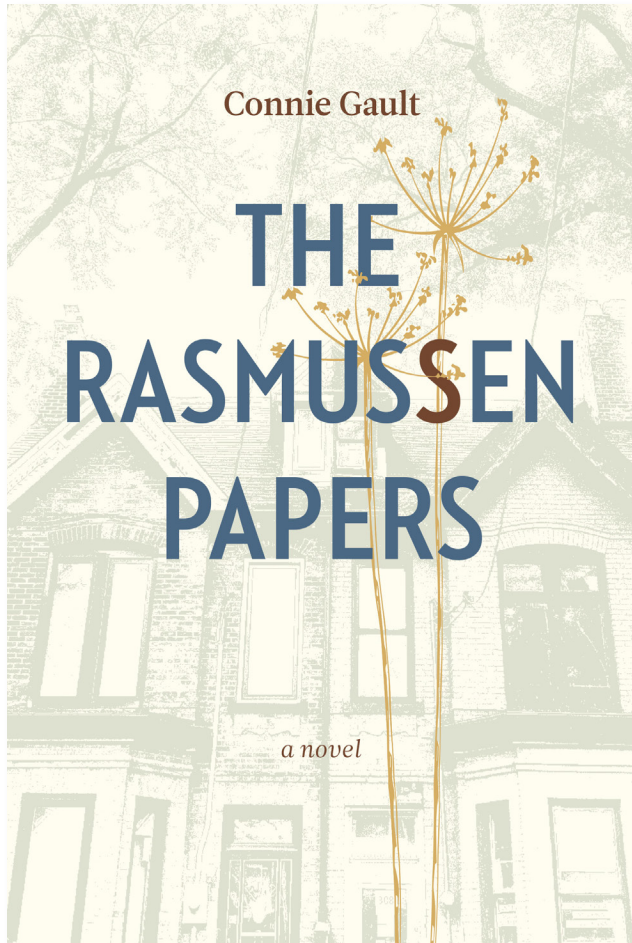


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Canada 



Publication: May 14, 2024
\$24.95 paperback | 5.5 x 8.5 | 192 pages
ISBN 9781771872539
FICTION / Literary / Psychological
Distributor: UTP Distribution

About the Author

Connie Gault has written for stage and radio and film. Her first novel, *Euphoria*, won a Saskatchewan Book Award for Fiction and was short-listed for the High Plains Fiction Award and the Commonwealth Prize for Best Novel of Canada and the Caribbean. *A Beauty* won the 2016 Saskatchewan Book of the Year as well as the award for fiction, and was long-listed for the Scotiabank Giller Prize. A former prose editor of *Grain* magazine, Connie has also edited books of fiction and has taught many creative writing classes and mentored emerging writers. After spending most of her life in Saskatchewan, she now lives in London, Ontario.

The Rasmussen Papers by Connie Gault 🍁

“*The Rasmussen Papers* is an urban fox of a novel—light-boned, beautiful and sly. I loved every inch of it, from the dark knowing of its nose to the quicksilver tip of its tail.”

—Alissa York, author of *Far Cry*

A delightfully cunning, sharply insightful novel about ambition and subterfuge from the author of the Giller-longlisted novel *A Beauty*.

This novel’s unnamed narrator is so obsessed with the desire to write the biography of her literary hero, the late poet Marianne Rasmussen, that she assumes a false name and talks her way into the house of Rasmussen’s former lover, Aubrey Ash. She gets more than a foot in the door—she moves in as a lodger, gaining precious daily contact with frail, crusty, almost-centenarian Aubrey and his handsome, younger (but hardly young) brother Harry.

The would-be biographer tries to ingratiate herself with both the Ash Brothers. She flatters Aubrey and she flirts with Harry, but the harder she tries to get her hands on the coveted prize—access to the Rasmussen papers—the more she gets tangled in a trap that might just be of her own making. Can she resist the temptation to possess, by any means, the letters, photographs and first drafts that could unlock the secret to Marianne Rasmussen’s genius?

The Rasmussen Papers is a brilliant reply to Henry James’ *The Aspern Papers*. Connie Gault flips James’ story on its head and slides it into contemporary Toronto’s Cabbagetown, among the marginalized and dispossessed, people the narrator studies as intently as she studies everyone she meets—until a confrontation on a streetcar makes her reconsider the limits of what you can know of another’s story, and how hidden we all are, especially from ourselves.

“*The Rasmussen Papers* is an intricate puzzle-box, perfectly proportioned and opening with a click of recognition—but this variation on a Jamesian theme is completely original and unexpected. Gault presses echoes and refractions on us until quite gently the puzzle opens and we see revealed the inner prize: one lonely mind and soul. The best book I’ve read in years.”

—Marina Endicott, author of *The Observer*

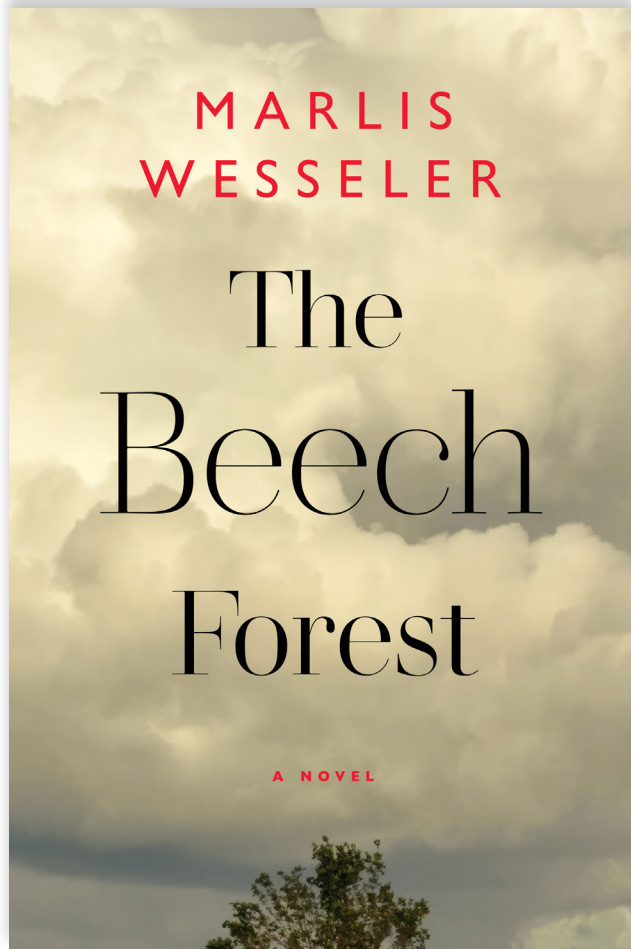
Praise for *A Beauty*:

“Gault is a genius. Her prose is tough and lyrical, her wisdom startling . . .”
—Lorna Crozier

“Evocative, laced with humour, precisely sculpted yet mysterious at its core—*A Beauty* takes us on a journey deep into the Canadian prairie of the 1930s. As the story unspools, we find ourselves transported into the minds and hearts of dozens of hugely differing and unforgettable characters, each brought so vividly to life.”

—Muslims for Peace and Justice Fiction Award Jury
Comments, Saskatchewan Book Awards, 2016





Publication: June 4, 2024
\$24.95 paperback | 5.5 x 8.5 | 222 pages
ISBN 9781771872546
FICTION / Literary / Small Town & Rural
Distributor: UTP Distribution

About the Author

Born in Kinistino, Saskatchewan, Marlis Wesseler attended university in Saskatoon and Regina, taught school in the North, travelled extensively and has lived and worked in Regina for over forty years. *The Beech Forest* is her sixth book of fiction. Award-winning and often nominated, her previous books include the short story collections, *Life Skills* and *Imitating Art*, and the novels, *Elvis Unplugged*, *South of the Border*, and *The Last Chance Ladies' Book Club*.

The Beech Forest

by Marlis Wesseler 

“This powerful novel speaks to all who grapple with shameful events in their culture’s past. Interweaving this stark subject with the quotidian events of the main character’s life as a wife and mother makes this story—full of strong characters, wit and drama, both in Germany and Saskatchewan—deeply compelling and relatable.”

—Joan Givner, author of *Half-Known Lives* and *Playing Sarah Bernhardt*

Lisa Braun struggles to understand both her own life and the tragic historic events that haunt her in this engaging new novel written in Marlis Wesseler’s characteristically understated, confiding prose.

The novel begins with Lisa heading off into a beautiful beech forest in Germany, near where her in-laws live. As she walks, she ponders the stark contrast between the peaceful forest and the notorious concentration camp, both known as Buchenwald. Her husband Gerhardt’s family has always been reticent, or maybe evasive, about the Holocaust and their family’s World War Two experiences, and Lisa has learned not to ask too many questions.

After they return to Canada, Lisa unexpectedly finds herself very alone and at loose ends, and through a series of events befriends an elderly man, Ben Meisner, who was interned in Buchenwald—and the questions she has always wanted to ask come searingly into focus. Lisa gets a closer view of unthinkable events than she bargained for, and in time Ben Meisner relies on her in a way she could never have predicted.

This wry, perceptive novel is about secrets and silences; about estrangements between family members, and gaps in understanding between well-intentioned people who struggle to bridge the distances between one another. *The Beech Forest* looks into the dark corners of the human heart, and brings us back out into the light of day with humour and compassion.

“This should be a somber book, but it is anything but: Marlis Wesseler is a master of tongue-in-cheek observations and insights. This novel is evocative, sharply engaging and often laugh-out-loud funny.”

— J. Jill Robinson, author of *More in Anger*

Praise for Past Work:

The Last Chance Ladies' Book Club: “Wesseler deftly manages a balance of darkness spiced with wit and empathy, as the book club loses its innocence and characters are thrust into a divisive dilemma . . . and readers willingly engage with this original compelling page-turner to find out the truth.”

—Book of the Year Award Juror statement, Saskatchewan Book Awards, 2018

“In her wonderfully comic, quietly humane novel, *Elvis Unplugged*, Marlis Wesseler masters a confident and compelling narrative voice.”

—Book of the Year Award Juror statement, Saskatchewan Book Awards, 1998





Publication: April 9, 2024
\$19.95 paperback | 6 x 8 | 71 pages
ISBN 9781771872522
POETRY / Subjects & Themes / Family / Indigenous Peoples of Turtle Island
Distributor: UTP Distribution

About the Author

E. McGregor is a Euro-Settler/Métis writer currently living in Winnipeg, Manitoba. Her poetry, fiction and creative nonfiction have appeared in numerous magazines including *Room*, *The Dalhousie Review*, *CV2*, *The Fiddlehead*, and others. She obtained a Master of Fine Arts in Creative Writing from the University of British Columbia in 2022. *What Fills Your House Like Smoke* is her first poetry collection.

What Fills Your House Like Smoke

by E. McGregor 

In this debut poetry collection, E. McGregor combines the lore of family history with personal memory, vividly parsing patterns of inheritance, particularly through the maternal line.

What Fills Your House Like Smoke begins and ends at the deathbed of the writer's Métis grandmother. In between, McGregor composes an incomplete and wildly imaginative biography of her grandmother, interrogated by family photographs, stories, and the scant paper trail she left behind.

McGregor sifts through the complexities of motherhood, daughterhood, anxiety, intimate relationships and addiction, weaving family history with memory to make sense of what is carried on. Especially affecting are poems about childhood and the people who disappear from a child's life, and the struggle to live as a societal outsider, finding strength in self-definition and the power of narrative.

As these poems unfold, they move us toward an understanding of maternal inheritance, shifting identities, forgiveness, and finally love.

Excerpt from *What Fills Your House Like Smoke*:

Inheritance

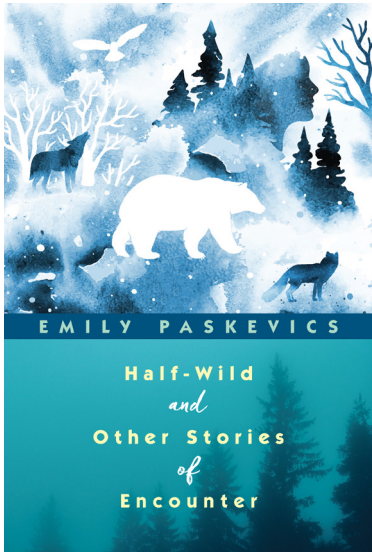
Avoidance, the art of skirting
his cane or his hand,
we speed like wolf
spiders, hunting in dark corners
games out
of sight, smothering giggles
erupting like
spring grass fires
that might catch wind
and burn him
up.

Praise for *What Fills Your House Like Smoke*:

"There is a rawness and tender vulnerability in the re-membering of a mother's mother's life in the thematic dotted lines, hardlines and blurred lines of McGregor's poetry. For bodies under duress, survival is instinctive and passed on, and a breakthrough from the trauma endured is made possible in an honest remembering to liberate oneself."
—Rita Bouvier, author of *a beautiful rebellion*

"*What Fills Your House Like Smoke* is a staggering collection . . . technically agile and thematically nuanced. McGregor's poems have the effect of flame, sucking the air out of the room; of a soothing hand on your chest, reminding you to breathe. An indelible debut."
—Hollay Ghadery, author of *Rebellion Box*





Half-Wild and Other Stories of Encounter by Emily Paskevics

Publication: September 5, 2023
\$24.95 paperback | 5.5 x 8.5 | 156 pages
ISBN 9781771872485
FICTION/Nature & the Environment/Short Stories

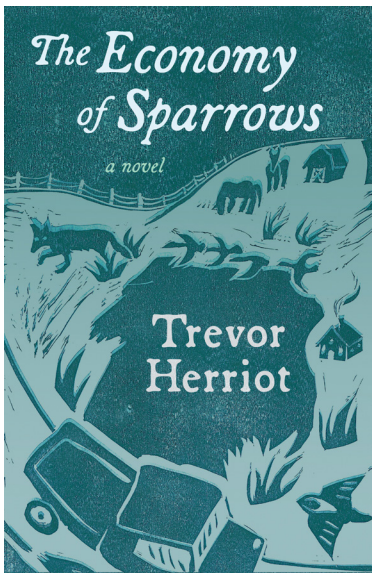
In *HalfWild and Other Stories of Encounter*, a startling debut short story collection by a new Ontario writer, intergenerational relationships unfold in a context of environmental change and degradation.

Emily Paskevics takes her characters—mothers, daughters, fathers, sisters—into the wilderness to lose themselves in their primal nature . . . or to find what they’ve always been missing as they struggle in a borderland between irrevocable environmental change and hope for ecological connection and healing.

The Heathens and the Dragon: A 13th-Century Adventure by Kate A. Boorman

Publication: September 5, 2023
\$16.95 paperback | 5.5 x 8.5 | 300 pages
ISBN 9781771872478
YOUNG ADULT FICTION / Historical / Medieval / Action & Adventure / Social Situations / Values
Ages 9-13+

From award-winning author Kate A. Boorman comes her first middle grade historical novel, set in France in the Middle Ages at a time of great religious upheaval. *The Heathens and the Dragon: A 13th-Century Adventure* stars twelve-year-old Elodie, a resourceful guardian to her little brother Bertran and his often willful pet chicken Codet. Together with Joie, a young troubadour, they perform for their very survival.



The Economy of Sparrows by Trevor Herriot

Publication: September 12, 2023
\$24.95 paperback | 5.5 x 8.5 | 264 pages
ISBN 9781771872461
FICTION / Literary / Nature & the Environment

This debut novel by Trevor Herriot, one of Canada’s foremost writer-naturalists, is the richly observed story of Nell Rowan, who has inherited her family’s prairie farmstead and returned there to live after many decades away. Nell is increasingly obsessed by a 19th-century bird collector while haunted by memories of her mother’s disappearance.



a beautiful rebellion

poems

rita bouvier



a beautiful rebellion

by Rita Bouvier

Publication: April 10, 2023

\$19.95 paperback | 6 x 9 | 72 pages

ISBN 9781771872348

POETRY / Canadian / Indigenous

This evocative new poetry collection speaks with a fierce tenderness of many aspects of the poet's life: a childhood spent on the banks of the Churchill River, the death of a beloved one, the struggle to try to find forgiveness for wrongs done and the weariness of trying to redress those wrongs. And, most poignantly, a beautiful rebellion reaches one hand back to Louis Riel and one hand forward to future Métis generations.

Gordie's Skate

by Bill Waiser; illustrated by Leanne Franson

Publication: April 15, 2023

\$14.95 paperback | 10.25 x 8.5 | 24 pages

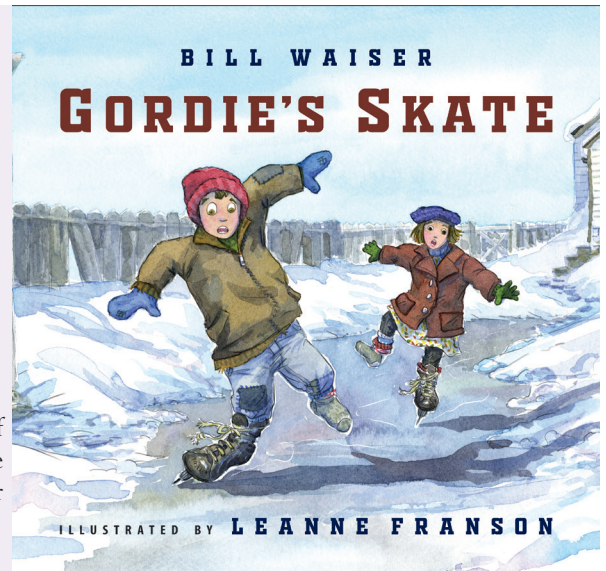
ISBN 9781771872355

\$21.95 hardcover | 10.25 x 8.5 | 24 pages

ISBN 9781771872393

JUVENILE NONFICTION / Biography & Autobiography / Sports & Recreation

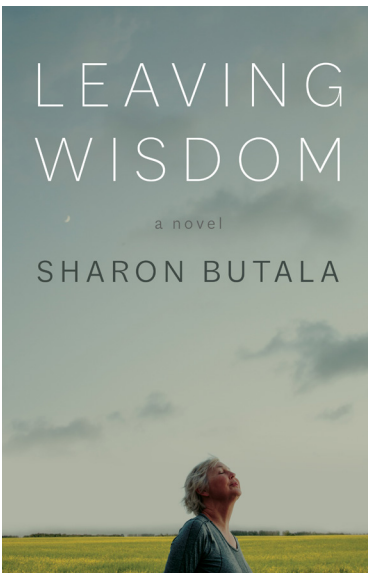
Set in Saskatchewan during the Great Depression, this is the story of hockey legend Gordie Howe and his first experience with skating. The book is charmingly illustrated in full colour by Leanne Franson. Bill Waiser is a popular historian and Governor-General's-Award-winning author.



LEAVING
WISDOM

a novel

SHARON BUTALA



Leaving Wisdom

Sharon Butala

Publication: May 30, 2023

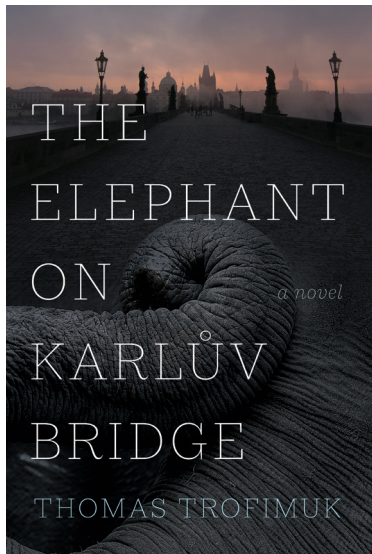
\$24.95 paperback | 6 x 9 | 282 pages

ISBN 9781771872362

FICTION / Literary

Sharon Butala's new novel begins with the wrong kind of bang when retiring social worker Judith falls on the ice on the way to her retirement party. The debilitating concussion that follows seems to shake loose a confusing whirl of memories.





The Elephant on Karlův Bridge

by Thomas Trofimuk

Publication: August 15, 2022
\$24.95 paperback | 6 x 9 | 352 pages
ISBN 9781771872256
FICTION / Literary

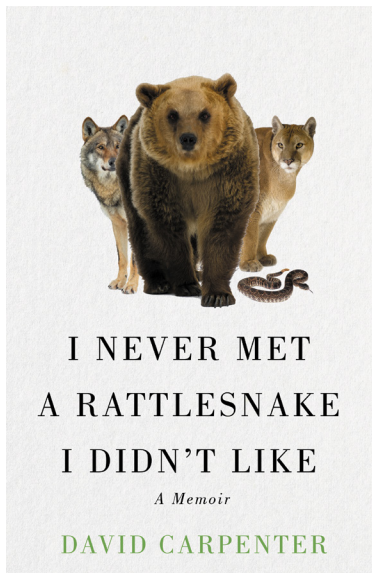
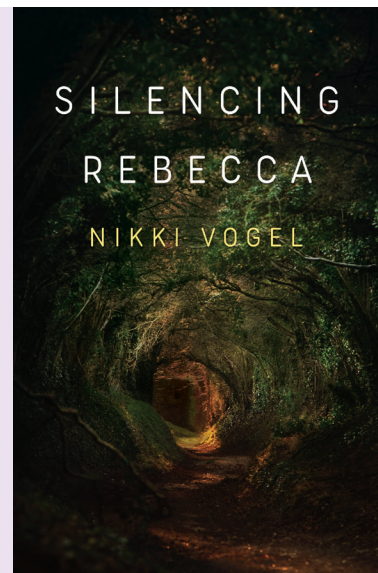
Set in Prague and narrated with great panache by the 600-year-old Charles Bridge, this novel begins with an elephant named Sál escaping the Prague Zoo. As the elephant moves through the beautiful Czech city, the lives of the men and women she meets are altered by the encounter. Each character is at a crossroads, and desperately seeking the wisdom they need to wrestle with profound questions—how to live, how to love, who to love, how to heal.

Silencing Rebecca

by Nikki Vogel

Publication: August 31, 2022
\$18.95 paperback | 5.5 x 8.5 | 240 pages
ISBN 9781771872263
YOUNG ADULT FICTION/Literary/Magical/Religious/Jewish

In this genre-bending debut YA novel combining elements of horror, magic realism, and realistic fiction, Rebecca Waldmann's sheltered life as an Orthodox Jewish teen in Toronto is shattered when her father moves them to Edmonton, where she is plunged into the worldly life of a public high school. Rebecca doesn't just defy the strictures of her ultraorthodox religion by wearing tight jeans and flirting with a non-Jewish boy. She discovers to her horror that she has undergone a change that makes puberty look easy—she's been transformed into a golem!



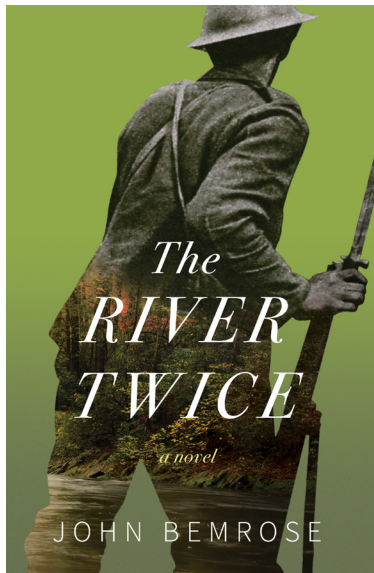
I Never Met a Rattlesnake I Didn't Like: a Memoir

David Carpenter

Publication: August 31, 2022
\$24.95 paperback | 6 x 9 | 230 pages
ISBN 9781771872270
NATURE/Essays/Personal Memoir

David Carpenter's collection of essays explores a city boy's love of the wild, a passion that has enriched his life from boyhood. At 80, this irrepressible Saskatchewan raconteur examines his intense fascination with predators large and small, and his awe in the face of the variety of creatures that may be out to get us—or who are out to get one another.





The River Twice

by John Bemrose

Publication: May 30, 2022
\$24.95 paperback | 5.5 x 8.5 | 354 pages
ISBN 9781771872201
FICTION / Historical / Literary

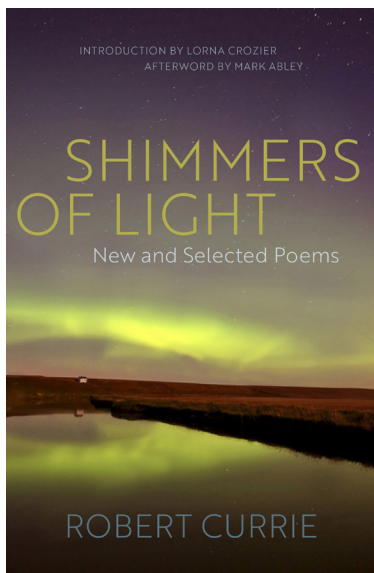
The River Twice, by the Giller-nominated author of the bestselling *The Island Walkers*, is a gripping new World War I novel set in the Southern Ontario factory town familiar to his many readers, where residents are reeling as the wounded return and the list of local young men who have been killed continues to grow.

Setting Fire to Water

by Phoebe Tsang

Publication: May 30, 2022
\$24.95 paperback | 5.5 x 8.5 | 234 pages
ISBN 9781771872195
FICTION / Short Stories

Shifting restlessly from dark to light and back again, written in lithe, precise prose, the stories in Phoebe Tsang's debut collection illuminate the lives of those who exist inside otherness. The seventeen stories in *Setting Fire to Water* unfold outside the Canadian mainstream, where longing—for home, for love, for artistic achievement, for spiritual fulfillment—is a given, and acceptance—of self, of the knowability of others, of the limits to knowing—is always in question.



Shimmers of Light: New and Selected Poems

by Robert Currie

Publication: March 18, 2022
\$24.95 paperback | 5.5 x 8.5 | 312 pages
ISBN 9781771872188
POETRY / Canadian

Robert Currie's *Shimmers of Light: New and Selected Poems* uses the vernacular of ordinary working people to tell stories and sing songs of small-town prairie life. Like Alden Nowlan, or more recently, Billy Collins, this poet constructs poems from the unvarnished wood of common language—there's no veneer, no glossing over here.



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Spring 2024 UTP Specials

Frontlist Special: 50+ frontlist titles

Discount: 45% Code: 1FRN

Conditions: One order per code. Ends March 30, 2024.
Combinable across all Ampersand's participating UTP publishers.

2023 Backlist Special: 50+ backlist titles

Discount: 47% Code: BAC6

Conditions: One order per code. Ends December 31st, 2023.
Combinable across all Ampersand's participating UTP publishers.

2024 Backlist Special: 50+ backlist titles

Discount: 47% Code: BAC7

Conditions: One order per code. Starts January 1st, 2024.
Ends December 31st, 2024. Combinable across all Ampersand's participating UTP publishers.

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