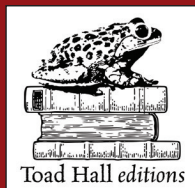
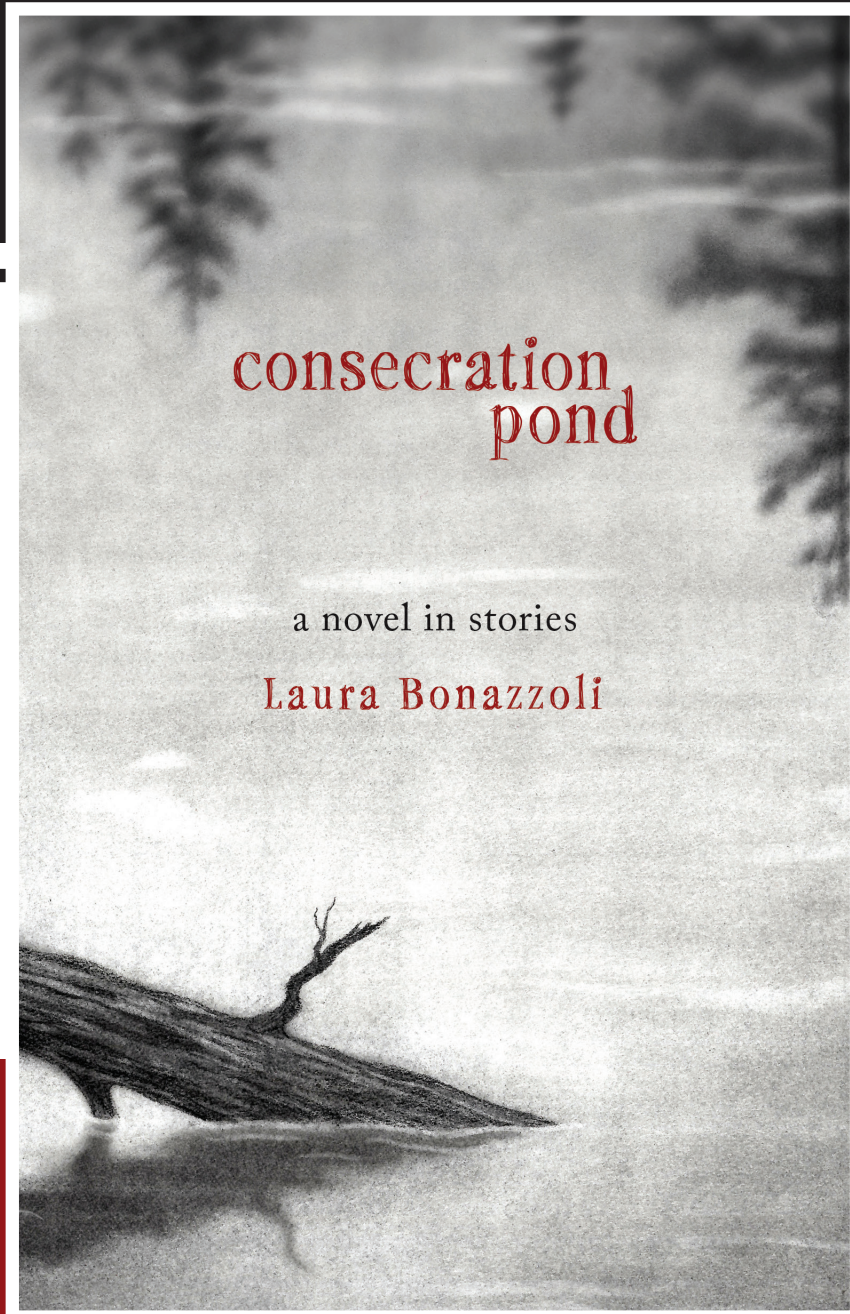


Consecration Pond

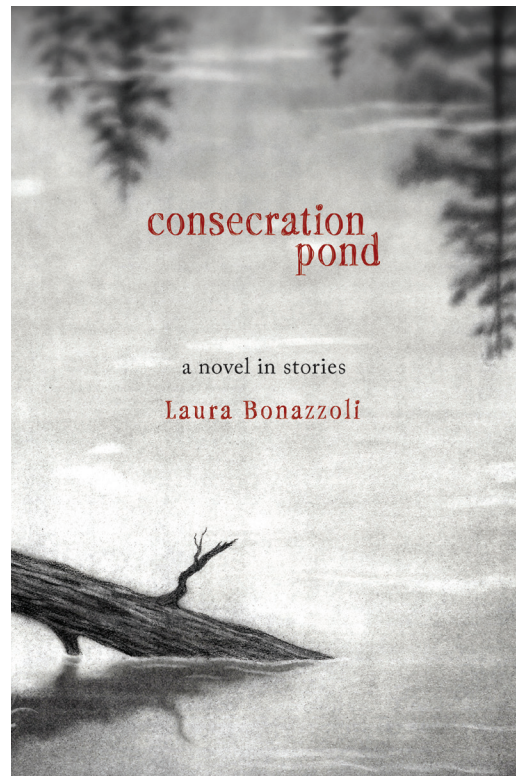
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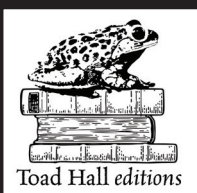
ABOUT THE BOOK

On the shores of Consecration Pond, a burn victim begs her husband's ghost for forgiveness for failing to save him, a retired teacher counsels a reporter seeking easy answers to the cause of his neighbor's death, and a boy's self-imposed rite of passage nearly costs him his life. The eleven linked short stories in Laura Bonazzoli's collection take place by the same pond in rural Maine. Together, they offer a meditation on the nature of wisdom, the risks and gifts of allowing ourselves to be seen, and the challenge of creating meaning in the wake of loss.



With candor and sensitivity, these luminous stories trace the highs and lows of the residents from Consecration Pond, people of the stars, the loons, and the changing seasons. Conversations with the dying and the dead, the non-human, and the not-present haunt these pages. All the while, the heavens drape comfort across the shoulders of the forlorn. Take this book to a lakeside cottage and savor it by lamplight well into the night.

—Jodi Paloni, author of *They Could Live With Themselves*



Q&A WITH THE AUTHOR

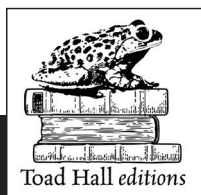
What is *Consecration Pond* about? It's about the experience of being human. It's about people who are haunted by guilt or regret or unresolved grief. People who love deeply, but can't act on their love. People who carry a darkness so deep that it breaks them. And people who, while overcome with gratitude for their life, acquiesce to their death. It's about you and me and everyone. And it's about dragonflies and frogs and stars and the pond above which they fly and leap and shine.

All eleven of the stories take place on the shores of the same pond in rural Maine. How did that setting inform the book? In many stories, some aspect of the natural world serves as metaphor for the character's situation or challenge, or the story's theme. For instance, in "Wild Geese," the narrator, Gus, encounters both the stiff body of a dead cat and a huge and raucous flock of wild geese. These creatures, one solitary and the other communal, reflect both the costs of our individualistic culture and a path forward. In a few stories, an incident in the natural world actually shifts the narrator's consciousness. This happens, for example, when Evelyn in "Paper Lanterns" sees a falling star. Most importantly, some of these stories reveal the natural world as teacher. Howard Nemerov's poem "The Pond" was an important influence on the book, especially the story "Spring Ice." The poem's speaker tells of a pond that appeared at the end of a meadow after one rainy October, and of a boy named Christopher who went skating there that winter and drowned. The following summer, the narrator sees a dragonfly, a "winged animal of light," that had

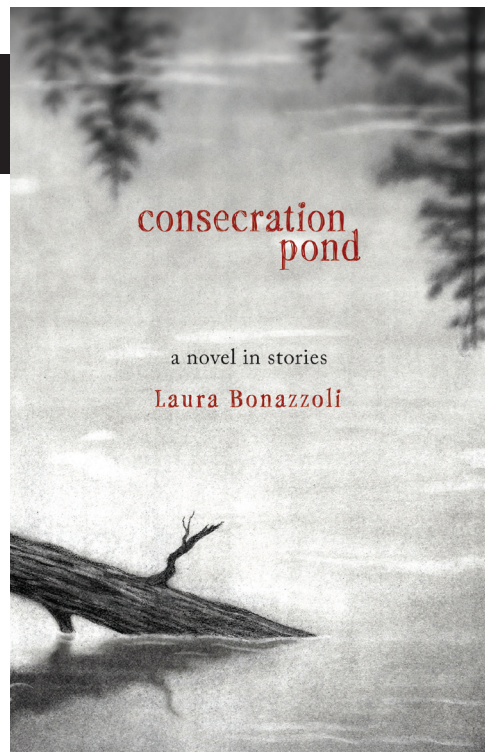
once, as a nymph, been a "killer" on the floor of the pond, and his recognition of this duality, this casting off of one identity for another, brings the speaker not consolation, he says, but acquiescence. That message of acquiescence to loss and change runs through many of the stories, probably most strongly through the title story.

Did you consciously decide to write a group of stories that all take place on a pond in Maine?

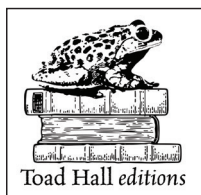
It happened organically. After I'd written "Prayer of the Bell" and "Spring Ice," it occurred to me that they both take place on a pond in Maine—and then I realized that I had a story for which I'd written multiple drafts over the past thirty years—yes, thirty years—that also takes place on a pond. That was "Frogs and Goddesses." So I suddenly asked myself, why couldn't this be the same pond? And once I became open to the idea of a linked group of stories, two other stories that I'd written and revised multiple times came to mind. Neither, in the drafts I had, took place on a pond, but both could easily be revised to do so. For instance, "Crossing the Dark" has a key scene in which the narrator takes his nephew stargazing. In the original, this scene took place in the backyard of the home, but it was easy—and so much more effective—to have them row out to the middle of the pond to look at the stars. Finally, once I got going, new characters began to talk to me. For instance, I very much wanted to tell the story of the woman to whom Lucy, in "Prayer of the Bell," is speaking. I wanted to explore what had happened to cause her to lose her voice, and how she felt about the loss of her husband. Over time, more characters asked me to tell their stories.



DETAILS



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- Pre-Orders:** May 20, 2022



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

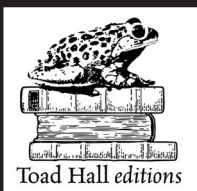


photo by Amy Wilton

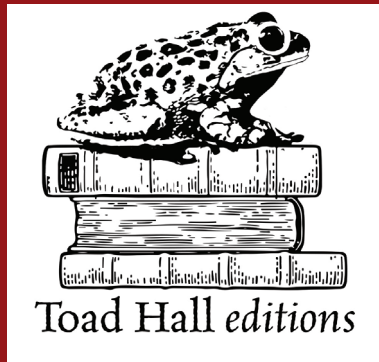
Laura Bonazzoli received a B.A. in liberal arts from Regis College in Weston, Massachusetts and an M.F.A. in theatre from the University of Minnesota, Minneapolis. While working as a freelance editor and writer for a variety of publishers, she performed in local and regional theatre productions and wrote fiction, poetry, and essays. After her stories “Prayer of the Bell” and “Spring Ice” were published in literary magazines, she began working on a collection of linked stories that all take place on a pond in Maine. That collection became the novel in stories, *Consecration Pond*.

Laura’s fiction has appeared in numerous publications, including *Evening Street Review*, *The Sandy River Review*, and many others. She has also published poetry in more than thirty literary magazines and several anthologies. Her personal essays have appeared in literary and mainstream journals, including *The American Journal of Nursing*. She lives in a renovated schoolhouse in Midcoast Maine, a short walk from a small but majestic pond.

You can find Laura at laurabonazzoli.com



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
May 18, 2022
hello@toadhalleditions.ink



Contact: Amy Tingle
201.259.9801

Toad Hall Editions to publish Laura Bonazzoli's short story collection *Consecration Pond*

(Northport, ME, May 18, 2022) Toad Hall Editions announces the forthcoming publication of Rockport, Maine author Laura Bonazzoli's first book, *Consecration Pond*, a novel in stories. On the shores of Consecration Pond, a burn victim begs her husband's ghost for forgiveness for failing to save him, a retired teacher counsels a reporter seeking easy answers to the cause of his neighbor's death, and a boy's self-imposed rite of passage nearly costs him his life. The eleven linked short stories in Laura Bonazzoli's collection take place by the same pond in rural Maine. Together, they offer a meditation on the nature of wisdom, the risks and gifts of allowing ourselves to be seen, and the challenge of creating meaning in the wake of loss.

"Separate lives, touched by tragedy, sustained by love, connected by the still waters of Consecration Pond. Eleven individual stories, skillfully interwoven, beautifully told. When I finished the final story and put the book aside, the characters lived on in my memory as vivid and fresh as when we'd first met. And so, I returned to the first, to again share the lives of the people who inhabit the shores of Consecration Pond."

—John Bragg, award winning author of *The Broom of God* and *Exit 8*

Bonazzoli writes, "Consecration Pond is about the experience of being human. It's about people who are haunted by guilt or regret or unresolved grief. People who love deeply, but can't act on their love. People who carry a darkness so deep that it breaks them. And people who, while overcome with gratitude for their life, acquiesce to their death. It's about you and me and everyone."

Located in mid-coast Maine, Toad Hall Editions is a women-owned and women-run small press whose mission is to publish potent and thought-provoking work by women and gender-diverse authors and create and deepen community by dedicating more space to voices and stories that for too long have lived in the margins. For more information visit toadhalleditions.ink

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Reviews for *Consecration Pond*

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—John Bragg, award winning author of
The Broom of God and Exit 8

“Every reader will find moments to embrace in these eleven linked stories about lives that center around a Maine pond. More than a body of water, the pond is a member of the community, a timeless presence that rescues, restores, and releases.”

—Elizabeth Macalaster, author of
*War Pigeons: Winged Couriers in the
U.S. Military, 1878-1957*

With candor and sensitivity, these luminous stories trace the highs and lows of the residents from Consecration Pond, people of the stars, the loons, and the changing seasons. Conversations with the dying and the dead, the non-human, and the not-present haunt these pages. All the while, the heavens drape comfort across the shoulders of the forlorn. Take this book to a lakeside cottage and savor it by lamplight well into the night.

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