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Canada

The Work of Her Hands:
A prairie woman’s life in remembrances and recipes

By Plynny Gutman

Recipes and memories weave a beguiling tale that spans life of a remarkable prairie woman and captures the vanishing stories of the Great Depression.

Marie Anne Lacaille would have said she was an ordinary woman, but to her granddaughter and her family, she was an inspiration, the source of her family’s strength, and an incredible cook. *The Work of Her Hands* is Plynny Gutman’s effort to capture her grandmother’s stories and to recreate a way of life that has all but vanished from our memories. From her move to Saskatchewan from Quebec in the early 1900s, to raising a family through the ’30s, to her reinvention as a working woman in the ’50s, Marie Anne Lacaille lived her life with style, humour and an ability to create spectacular meals.

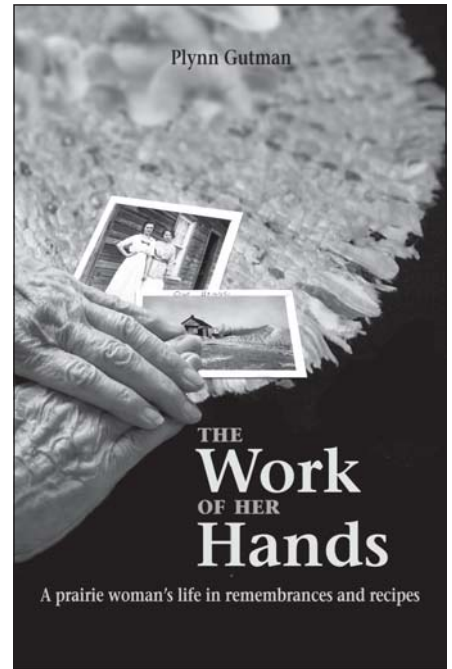
But one of my favourite meals was a simple dish my grandmother used to make – *tranche*, pronounced by rolling the tongue over the “t” and “r,” landing heavily in an “ah” and sliding out with a “shh” sound, which in French means “slice.” In this case, thin slices of potatoes, cooked directly on the smooth iron top of a coal stove; a one-item meal she, as a young wife and mother, served her family in the direst days of the Great Depression.

My grandmother was a master at making something wonderfully delicious out of almost nothing. But if you told her this she’d shrug her shoulders and pucker her lips as if they were forming the word *jour* – her French-Canadian way of expressing nonchalance – and say, “Well, we just make do with what we have.”

* * *

On a few occasions I’ve tried to recreate the recipe using a pancake griddle. It hints at the experience, but it doesn’t truly capture it. I know it’s because eating *tranche* was never just about the potatoes. Over the years it became a ritual of memory and experience. Without fail, after a few bites, my elder relatives would start to tell stories about how good a meal of potatoes tasted even when the previous night’s meal was potatoes, and the next night’s would be, too. Or they would reminisce about the time lightning struck the house, or what it was like when the rain finally came again.

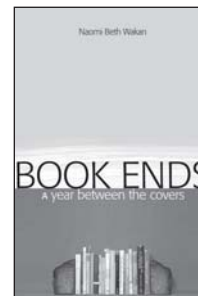
Plynny Gutman left a career in the business world to follow her lifelong passion for writing. She received an MFA in Creative Writing from Lesley University and has been the director of the Young Adult Writing Project sponsored by the English Department of Arizona State University since 2007. Gutman also teaches writing classes and workshops in Canada, the US and the United Arab Emirates.



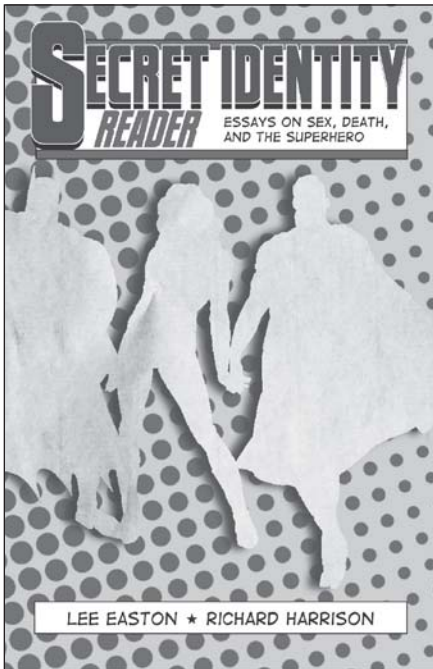
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 978-1-894987-51-6
 6 x 9 Paperback
 200 pp. \$19 September
 Memoir

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Book Ends:
A year in between the covers
 by Naomi Beth Wakan
 978-1-894987-42-4
 254 pp. \$19 2010
 Literary Criticism



“As Wakan reflects with honesty and humour on how each book touches her life, she shares her unique island perspective and illustrates that a well-read life is also well-lived.”
 – Bobbie Jo Reid,
Senior Living



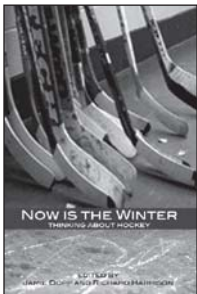
Secret Identity Reader: Essays on Sex, Death and the Superhero

By Lee Easton and Richard Harrison
 978-1-894987-50-9
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 Non-fiction

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“You don’t have to love hockey to love *Now is the Winter*. The insights gleaned are not limited to this single game. The book is multidisciplinary in the truest sense, with the contributors representing over a dozen fields...” – Angie Abdou, *Arete*

Secret Identity Reader: Essays on Sex, Death and the Superhero

By Lee Easton and Richard Harrison

Zombies, modernism, post-modernism and dangerous women mingle in this fascinating look at the history and cultural impact of the comic-book superhero.

Comic-book superheroes have risen from their newsprint beginnings to dominate films, infiltrate the literary establishment and become an integral part of popular culture. *Secret Identity Reader: Essays on Sex, Death and the Superhero* is a collaboration between two authors who investigate, and often disagree on, key facets of the superhero character and storyline. Masculinity, origin stories and the problem of the sidekick are all fair game in this wide-ranging discussion, which also considers the superhero’s place in a post-9/11 world and ponders why these characters keep dying and coming back to life.

As Easton points out, superhero stories are not like novels or films. They are masculine melodramas, violent soaps whose purpose is to change with the times and amuse their current audience. They twist and change within their limits as “kid stuff” literature rather than push outwards towards all their emotional and literary edges. Need children in a story where adults can’t have sex? Bring their offspring from the future and have them coexist with their parents as variations on a theme without the trouble of a childhood. Need to move the story through time but not have people get old? Invent a formula that slows aging, or find a machine that resets everything. Or just start over, reboot the title, cobble the familiar pieces together in a new way as if the old stories were a rough draft of the new. Need to boost sales? Kill a beloved character. Then bring them back because everyone was sad to see them die.

All this is possible because the superhero world is a continuing-story world in which the characters outlive the readership in two ways: the readership turns over with time, and the characters represent the same things they always have, but are rejuvenated to fit the current readership’s social, technological and political setting. Each generation of creators must reinvent old characters in the shape of contemporary culture. The manual typewriter that Clark Kent used in 1961 is meaningless in 2009, and so it’s gone; why hang on to the same Clark Kent? Almost all the people who read and loved him have moved on. Would those reading now want him even if we could?

Lee Easton is the head of the English department at Mount Royal University in Alberta. **Richard Harrison** is the author of both poetry and non-fiction and also teaches English at Mount Royal.

Seeing Lessons

By Catherine Owen

A vivid and sensitive poetry-portrait of a pioneering woman photographer and the British Columbia forests she captured on film.

Mattie Gunterman (1872–1945) is a fascinating character, capable of walking from Seattle to Beaton, BC running a full camp-kitchen, caring for her children and taking fascinating portraits of a British Columbia that has all but vanished, both the people and the trees. In thoughtful and elegantly written poems, Catherine Owen traces the path of this remarkable woman, contrasting both modern life and the modern environment with what Mattie would have encountered. Part biography, part environmental elegy, *Seeing Lessons* leaves readers seeing the world in a different light.

Lines on Mattie’s photos: 1910–1943

1

Slattern landscape, flattened snags and rag-tag ends of logging’s slap to lasting –
you prim on Nellie, derby winner, racing

her silk flanks to the victory of some arbitrary
line, back linen stiff, skirt proper, pose
its own trophy, starched snub to the wild’s Born to Lose.

2

Portrait from a killing century: two boys and their guns,
not Jack the Rippers, nor Caligulas, nor Huns
just children at play in a chopped and hacked field,

swinging two geese by the feet like cricket bats
with wings, divining rods of snow jagging the peaks
behind them, the bowler hats and cravats of two young rakes,

taught to shoot, not just to eat, but as a matter
of fact right, Henry and his friend George, the latter
shot down in France, five years after the hunt.

Catherine Owen was born and raised in Vancouver and currently lives in Edmonton. She’s been a teenage mother, an English major, a small business owner and a salesperson for a tattoo magazine. Currently, she writes full time in a wide range of genres, plays in two metal bands and is an amateur photographer. Her previous books with Wolsak and Wynn include *The Wrecks of Eden* and *Shall: ghazals*.



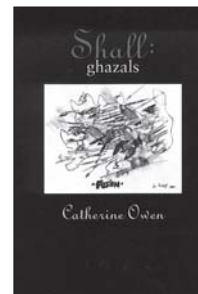
Seeing Lessons

By Catherine Owen
978-1-894987-48-6
5.75 x 8.5 Paperback
80 pp. \$17 September
Poetry

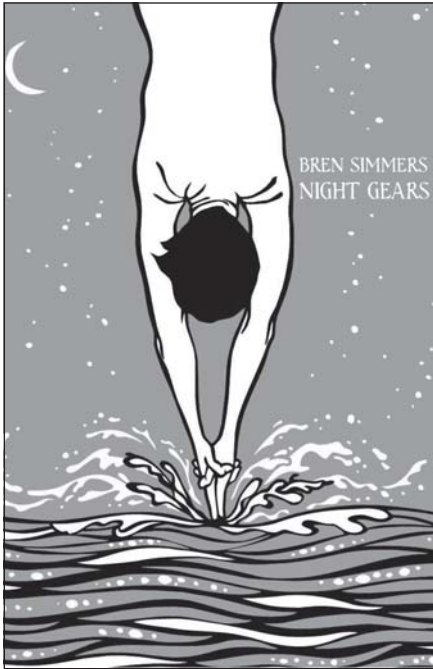
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Shall: ghazals

By Catherine Owen
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80 pp. \$17 2006
Poetry



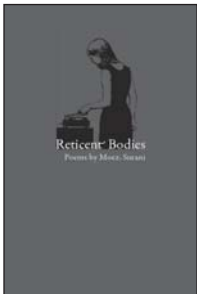
“I highly recommend Catherine Owen’s new collection of Canadian ghazals, *Shall: ghazals*, and I shall be reading them again and again.”
– M. Travis Lane,
Fiddlehead



Night Gears
 By Bren Simmers
 978-1-894987-49-3
 5.75 x 8.5 Paperback
 80 pp. \$17 September
 Poetry

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 96 pp. \$17 2009
 Poetry



“Surani has that rare ability to write beautifully without ornament.”
 – Paul Vermeersch

Night Gears

By Bren Simmers

Humour and humanity mix beautifully in an eye-opening debut collection.

From the “whittled towns” of Saskatchewan to the song of the “red-breasted delivery truck,” Bren Simmers uses her unique ability to draw connections between rural and urban, between the divine and the absurd, to create dazzling poetry. In *Night Gears*, Simmers’ first collection, her lines demand the reader’s attention, whether she is cataloguing roadkill on a trip to the arctic, revelling in the intensity of a thunderstorm at a fire lookout, or unfolding the silent pain of small-town life.

Index of Photos Taken

Bleached buildings heaved
 from permafrost, their foundations’
 claim rejected.
 Burnt quills of black spruce, former scribes
 of CO2 emissions.
 Cheesy painted backdrops with cutouts
 we stuck our faces through, trying on each town
 (See Clinton, Chicken, Dawson Creek, Toad River)
 their four-store strip malls.
 Co-op cafés, hungry for the next
 local colour gas stop
 we could write home about.
 Everything beauteous:
 See Paper birches that tattooed my fingers white.
 A lichen, you said, a kind of dust.
 See Fireweed in heavy brush strokes.
 See Route Taken.

Bren Simmers has worked in fire lookouts, on ferries, in libraries and in urban parks. She was the poetry editor for *PRISM international* and has a Masters of Fine Arts in Creative Writing from the University of British Columbia. Winner of the Arc Poem of the Year Award, her work has published in journals across Canada including *Event*, *Grain* and *The Fiddlehead*. She often writes poetry while driving, walking or riding the bus. Her poems are rooted in the body, and explore the connections between people and the landscape that surrounds us.



Dust from our Eyes:
An unblinker look at Africa,
Second Edition
 by Joan Baxter

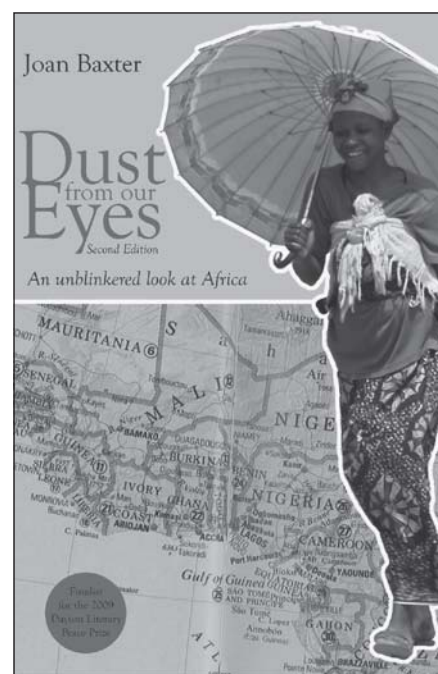
Part memoir, part adventure tale, part political thriller – a compelling read that dissolves stereotypes and exposes paradoxes about Africa.

Finalist for the 2009 Dayton Literary Peace Prize.

“*Dust from our Eyes* is one Canadian’s attempt to understand why Africa continues to experience injustice and exploitation in what some call the age of neo-colonialism ... [Joan Baxter’s] deep respect for and keen interest in all things African makes this book both a labour of love and a lament for lost hopes.”
 – Adelia Neufeld Wiens, *The Winnipeg Free Press*

“Even while tackling so many politically charged issues, *Dust from our Eyes* remains a deeply human book, with a narrative and a set of interviews running through every chapter. This is a compelling work that could change your perspective on Africa and the West’s impact there.” – Joseph Howse, *The Chronicle Herald*

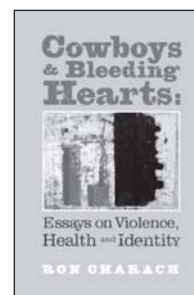
Joan Baxter is a Canadian journalist, award-winning author and anthropologist. In 2002, she was one of the first journalists to gain entry to the rebel-held north of Côte d’Ivoire to report on the civil war. She reported for many years for the BBC World Service, the Associated Press and has contributed features and documentaries to a variety of CBC programs. Her writing has appeared in *The Globe & Mail*, *The Toronto Star* and in UK newspapers including the *Sunday Times*. Her book, *A serious pair of shoes: an African journal* won the 2001 Atlantic Writing Award for best non-fiction. Baxter divides her time between her home in Nova Scotia and her work in Africa.



Dust from our Eyes:
An unblinker look at Africa,
Second Edition
 by Joan Baxter
 978-1-894987-47-9
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 Non-fiction

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Cowboys & Bleeding Hearts: Essays on Violence, Health and Identity
 By Ron Charach
 978-1-894987-35-6
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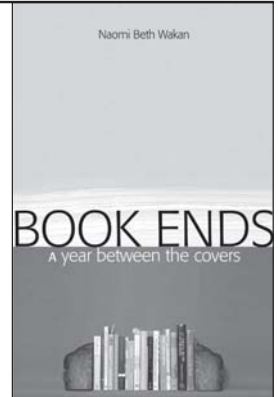


“*Cowboys & Bleeding Hearts* is a lucid and provocative take on how to engage problems of violence and addiction.”
 – Douglas J. Johnston,
Winnipeg Free Press

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A year between the covers

By Naomi Beth Wakan
 “*Book Ends* is a seamless and fascinating account that inspires one to reflect upon a broad range of issues and, hopefully, to read some of the books that Wakan has brought to life in her own unique way.”
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978-1-894987-40-0
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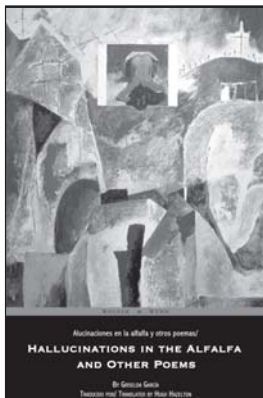
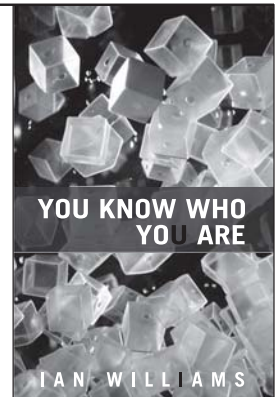
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All eyes were on her as she opened her birthday gifts – silly gifts, simple gifts. Like the giant jar of Cheez Whiz, which she loved spread thick on her morning toast, or the bucket of Saskatoons, the kind of wild berries she used to pick from stands of brush on the Saskatchewan farm and then eat, by the bowlful, splattered with a light coat of heavy cream she'd separated from that morning's milking. But it was the teddy bear that clinched her heart. She'd never had one of her own as a child growing up on a prairie homestead...

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