

*Vancouver Book Prize. She recently completed a new novel, After the Language Changed, and is at work on various other writing projects.*

## SHADOWS LIGHT

Ann Elizabeth Carson  
Toronto: Longboat Alliance Graphics  
Group Inc., 2005

### REVIEWED BY RUTH GOLDSMITH

If you love poetry, add this gem to your collection. And if you always hated poetry in school, give it another try with these refreshing new poems by Ann Carson. This is your chance to revisit that unexplored area of your life; you may be pleasantly surprised at how accessible it is.

In her solitude, Ann's senses are sharpened by the sounds of everyday living: "This is a good silence, the rustle of people's living. The silence so deafening a poem has a hard time finding a way through it."

Ann has incisive comments on noise pollution. In the serenity of the country, motorboats offend her: "Please, get to the other side of the lake, that raspy noise is spoiling the early morning stillness."

Take this book with you on to a crowded subway train and allow Ann to transport you to another dimension: "I will read a book in the sun, on the subway. I will read a book to stay away from my life—it really works." Take this book with you—it really works!

Indeed, Ann is an ideal travel companion. When you read this book you will be embarking on a journey, along a road you may never have traveled before. Feel the crisp, clear morning air. Or dip into this treasure of images when you are encased in an economy class airplane seat, and read "Day slips down over the roof-tops" or "The window is open this morn-

ing upper and lower sashes, framing a perfect landscape."

From the exhilaration of early morning in the country to the utter futility of a son's tragic suicide: "That spring I was healing from a winter-long illness. My younger son is found dead in the back of his van. Only thirty-five. Shot through the head. By his own hand. There is a hurt in me so deep. blackness inks my soul. in dark bowels of pain." And in a later poem, her answer: "Felled, I sank out of sight, frozen solid in shock. All winter. I was so very still and silent. What kept me alive? Music.... The sun still touches me, sounds of rain bring some pleasure... It's hard, the way you walk beside me now."

In comparison, her daughter is "successful, easy going, comfortable in her skin kind of person who has it all, even a group of women with whom she can explore the distance."

There is feminist rage here too: "I could rage to the end of my next life. It extends through generations of women still howling 'cross the days and nights... I have howled for years. It does no good."

Ann's comments on family life will surely strike a responsive chord: "My grandfather made my grandmother cut off her long chestnut hair and throw it in the garbage. Because it was unseemly, in a married woman." Ann's reaction is: "I know the violence of not being received, or believed, of being someone who disappoints." And "Theirs is not a family drawn closer in crisis. Rather, they fragment, splitting apart. Life goes on as usual, each alone."

Ann is not only a poet, but a sculptor as well. Interspersed among her poems are photographs of her sculptures. Reading this book is like walking through an art gallery: each poem paints a landscape, an experience, an emotion. Ann recreates the key moments in her life and hands them to us in print, so that we may read and savour them to recapture and experience their sorrow, their splendour, and their joy.

Finally, Ann prepares us for our last journey. "There is no place to come home to. There is no language for the very old ... afraid, not of death but of living too long."

And "To die at once, or piece by piece. We have no choice of memories."

"How do I live a different life when I am so old?"

"I must remember not to forget to remember."

You certainly will never forget this book. It really works!

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## PERFORMING FEMININITY: REWRITING GENDER IDENTITY

Lesla Lockford  
Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press,  
2004.

### REVIEWED BY SALINA ABJI

Most feminists would agree that women still face significant ideological pressures to conform to traditional, patriarchal notions of femininity. Do women feel similarly pressured, however, to perform in prescribed ways in order to be taken seriously as feminists? *Performing Femininity* challenges feminist readers to question the complex web of ideological constructs through which subjectivity is negotiated. For