

ENDORSEMENTS of *MY GRANDMOTHER'S HAIR*.

Marion Woodman, Jungian Analyst, Author. London, Ontario.

An autobiography told with alarming authenticity. Alarming because it divulges the delights and devastations of being the third generation daughter of a family rooted in small town Ontario. Ann Elizabeth Carson details the resultant psychic spit created in herself. She superbly outlines her healing process through the creative and connecting power of myth, and of her own art work. Readers will look more deeply into themselves.

Regine Kurek, Artist. Director, Arscura School for Art. Richmond Hill

In this book Ann Elizabeth Carson looks truth squarely in the eye. Art can be terrible. Art is not always fun. But it is honest. Art is not just decorative, or superfluous. Art is necessary, essential for our survival! In fact it could just be that helps us to stay alive, well and sane. There cannot be enough written about this truth and there will never be enough courageous souls who dare to make art for life as the path to wholeness. Fortunately Ann Elizabeth Carson is one of them. A fabulous and creative read!

Maryleah Otto, Journalist, Author. Huntsville.

Your candor, honesty and no-holds barred account stirred powerful feelings and awakened memories. Art work, poetry, narrative- a three dimensional, complex texture disclosing the suppression and marginalization of women-will resonate in our hearts long after the reading, and will have particular appeal for serious minded feminists as well as students of social psychology. More casual readers will also find many riches within these pages.

Margaret Johnston, Anglican Priest. Bracebridge.

When I started reading I was not sure where the journey would take me or where it would end. However, I could not/not take the risk and was compelled to keep reading as my own memories and remembering came flowing into my body and consciousness.

Toronto Women's Bookstore *My Grandmother's Hair*, Ann Elizabeth Carson. A moving, multigenre autobiography combining images, poetry, and personal essay, this performative book calls readers to read out loud. Interweaving the author's life with her grandmother's life and her memory of it, this book offers a view to women's life cycles in epic survey and in the detail of a moment.

Erin Harris, Chair, Older Women's Network Ontario

Storytelling is a powerful teacher. Through stories in narrative, poetry, images and mythology Ann Elizabeth Carson creates a legitimate and valued place for elders in our society, where their voices are so often unheard. At a recent reading of her new book, *My Grandmother's Hair*, at the Older Women's Network feminist reading room, Ann used a multidimensional and multimedia approach linking spoken word with revisioned myth, poetry and a colour slideshow of her drawings, paintings and sculptures. We are all hungry for transformation and in the process of doing our human homework. Ann has a dynamic and compelling presence, skillfully demonstrating how stories can be medicine, both healing and inspirational, as they teach and prepare us for the experience of change and remind us of our need to reclaim our own voices. We were immensely pleased with her presentation, skill and penetrating spirit. The intimacy of her writings is palpable and very moving. This book is bound to grow, through word of mouth, the way true art should.

Reviews of *MY GRANDMOTHER'S HAIR*Reading and Clay Presentation for Arscura, School For Living Art.Regine Kurek, Director, and Dorothy Le Baron, Senior Faculty.

Ann Carson presents her story.

The way she turned a family event into a powerful motivation towards her own passionate pursuit of education and creativity, can inspire us all to begin to live our own life to the fullest. We each know of events that could be turned around, could become seeds for new growth. During her evening presentation and reading from her new book, *My Grandmother's Hair*, Ann also takes us through a hands-on clay modelling exercise, the artistic medium that turned her life around. With this lump of clay in hand change and metamorphosis begin to take place in front of our own eyes. And don't think for a moment that this is "only" an art exercise! Her invitation and passionate guidance can be the beginning of your own story revealing seeds for change. Empowering!

Because both head and heart are engaged. Sometimes hearing her story evokes an emotional response in the listeners to do with their own biography. With the clay exercise, will follows head and heart. Working with clay allows participants an experience in the present moment, and then to connect with themselves in a deeper way. Rather than just listening, they became active as well. This changed the way the discussion went. It brought the evening from the personal realm into making connections in the immediate social realm, and beyond - to our histories past and future.

Anne Craig, Consultant to the Arts. Toronto

I reached for *My Grandmother's Hair* because of Ann Elizabeth Carson's sculpture, painting and poetry. Then, as I read, I so connected to it. I have wanted to explain my life and times to my children and grandchildren. And also to let younger women know where we came from and what we have accomplished. It is here in this special book. chapters.indigo.ca 30/11/06

Jackie Grandy, Student, Writer, Artist. Toronto.

A genre-defying, challenging, enjoyable read that cannot be pinned down to any one area of content or style. A post-modern, feminist social memoir written from a perspective of psychology, small town Ontario life in the 30's, art therapy, classical mythology and individual myth-making, personal reflection and memoir. A must read. Chapters.indigo.ca. amazon.ca and .com 11/11/06

Meg Salter, Organizational Effectiveness Consultant. Toronto This poignant autobiography will resonate with many people who are consciously aware of their own healing journeys. Ann Elizabeth Carson provides an intimate picture and graphic depiction of how our character is molded by our family and social contexts, and the psychic split resulting in mind, body and emotions. Carson's portrayal of her own multi-faceted healing journey, using myth, poetry, art and narrative is an inspiration for readers who seek to look more deeply into themselves. chapters.indigo.ca. 22/12/06 amazon.com and .ca. 01/12/06. Barnes and Noble, 22/12/06

Helen Barron, E.S.L Teacher. Toronto

This is an inspiring memoir by a talented artist and writer. It describes her struggles with tragedy and adversity and how the arts helped contribute to her insight and victory. I hope it becomes widely available. Chapters.indigo.ca. 04/12/06

Jane Champagne, Artist. Author, Ontario Landscape: A Practical Guide to Painting Landscape on Location. Southampton

I heard the writer read from her book, accompanied by a slide show of her sculpture and paintings - a rare artist who can create in all three mediums. A profoundly touching and far-reaching memoir in a language open to all readers, it reads like a love story to woman's unquenchable spirit, rather than a treatise on her survival. amazon.ca 22/12/06

Reviews, continued

Liis Windeschman, Model, Business Woman, Toronto.

I had the privilege of hearing the author read from this eloquently written book. The words reached out to me from the pages when I read it but hearing it live was truly special. If you love all aspects of art, you will melt into this book- it melds art, poetry and sculpture while exploring the author's journey. It truly is a unique read. Chapters.indigo.ca, 08/02/07

E. Graham, Business Woman, Toronto.

**A very good read!**

At its heart, My Grandmother's Hair is an exploration of memory: of the author's personal recollections of her own life, and of the very nature of memory itself. The book also offers the reader unique insight into the creative process of an artist. I found it deeply moving and a very good read! Barnes and Noble, 2/2/2007

Mary Shirley-Thompson, psychologist, Bracebridge

**Remarkable narrative--affecting, thought provoking and encouraging**

A well written labour of love and dedication, Carson uses multi-media, myth and hard science to tell a story that is both truly personal and that reflects, analyses, how a personal experience illuminates cultural, societal and physical constraints. It is a story of what is lost and what is gained by really paying attention. If you have the opportunity, see Carson do a multi-media reading of this work--you will be deeply touched and greatly encouraged. Barnes and Noble, 02/18/20

Allan Sorensen, Information Technology Professional, Toronto

**This is the kind of book I would not normally ever read.**

But then I met Ann Carson, and saw her give a reading at a local library and I bought her book My Grandmother's Hair. What I found upon reading its pages was something almost a little too powerful. Yes, there was the obvious feminist view subtly coming through, the deep sadness of recounting the past, and of course, her art on display throughout. And it was a bit difficult at times because Ann chose not to write her thoughts and story in the usual linear fashion. Here, ideas move around, and many times I had to stop and reflect on what had been said before going on. This wasn't fluff, and nor was it really a thesis to prove a point, or a simple autobiography. In fact, it's hard to generalize about the theme of this book. But the power of it is unmistakable, and, unavoidable. I believe that anyone who is exposed to this book will be changed.

While reading its pages, I was reminded over and over again that each and every person, each human being, possesses amazing and beautiful art, and integrity and intelligence, and truth and hope. And value. Precious, priceless value, in a world and life that diminishes everyone's worth to a state of being ordinary and unimportant. Yet in each person is carried all the wonder and potential and hope of all of us. This book stopped me in my tracks. It forced me to remember and learn again that everyone in my past and in my life today is just as significant and complex as anyone we read about in the headlines, or is otherwise more important. It helped me to see that some of the most fascinating people we could ever meet are sometimes the ones right in front of us. Yet the biggest lesson of all was to realize that even in the seemingly insignificant and trivial moments of our lives, there is something profound and moving. I suspect that we all privately view ourselves and our lives as being not such a big deal, unaware of the very real and very lasting impact that even the smallest things we do have on the lives of those we encounter. Ann Elizabeth Carson proves it. Chapters Indigo, Barnes and Noble, 2007.

Majero Bouman, ABD PhD., Dept of English, York University

**Brushing: Women's Generation**

Ann Elizabeth Carson's 2006 book *My Grandmother's Hair* combs through the knotting of women's generation. En/Circling the stories that live us, but that can never be given voice, this life-narrative reflects on how trauma, and strength, inhabit the physical body to speak through torsion and heal through expression. Carson traces her generation back to the symbolic erasure of her grandmother—the cutting of her hair after marriage—to tease out lines/forms of resistance

and appearance instantiated through gesture and community. A work of creative nonfiction that quite literally follows its own journey by exploring the body as archive, and art as its researcher, the book opens relationships between memory, remembering, experience, intellect, embodiment, symptom, and expression. Its strength lies in its refusal to cohere—its refusal of a journey toward integration. It is, instead, a journey about communion that seeks and allows separate elemental voices to engage in dialogic polyphony, each with its own part.

Different voices weave through each page: journal excerpts, paintings, sculpture, poetry and academic research, as well as characterizations of what might be superego and id that question and interrupt the dominant narrating "I." The text refuses to settle in any one of these, invested as it is in re-remembering a life lived by many selves fragmented into, and sometimes lost to, the experiences that make up a life. Through all of these voices, Carson succeeds in holding her story, a story of and dedicated to generation, of which we are all a part. The limits of the text are the limits it places on its own potential to speak. The perhaps inevitable author/ity, "I," writes doors into opened textual thresholds to mediate passage between the discursive fields of different forms, discourses, and voices. A memoir, *My Grandmother's Hair* negotiates the paradox of also being an academic investigation into aging and memory, and psychological research into embodied symptoms of repressed trauma and recuperation through art therapy. The many generic gestures of the text would better cohere with more rigorous editing of the explanatory passages between and amongst them.

Nonetheless, Carson deals with each of the text's generic strains with confidence and passion that open the text's appeal to a various audience—I found the research on memory and aging very intriguing, while the narrative unfolding of the process of sculpting, particularly the final sculpture of the text, had me on the edge of my seat. The narrative seaming together of these disparate discourses insinuates a reticence to wholly trust them to open (to) one another unmediated. The lacunae otherwise between the discourses ask the very questions the textual arc responds to: how do personal and generational trauma enter into everyday and academic communities; by what avenues can the body re-member itself against and/or in spite of ideologies that inscribe its repression and representation; is it possible to break silent cycles of familial and culturally inherited (self-)abuse; how do the aporia between lived age and ideologies of aging manifest in the conception of memory loss; what is the communion of mind, body, and repressions; and how might we address the power relations that produce and transect each of these investigations?

*My Grandmother's Hair* answers the patriarchal management of women's bodies and restriction of community with wrinkles of synaesthesia through which story is body, colour is freeing violence, and everyday is a piece of clay. I've always loved *listening* to my grandmother's stories. I wonder now at her gestures and poems and silences, the last of which are covered up by three languages and lifetimes of talk. In her body of work, the generations that grow up on shared gestures, lies, and myths, is both the symptom and expression of our potency.

Forthcoming in Canadian Woman' Studies/les cahier de la femme, 2008.

ENDORSEMENTS OF *SHADOWS LIGHT*

Jan Bailey, Author, *Paper Clothes, Midnight in the Guestroom, Heart of the Other.*

"In *Shadows Light* the poet confronts the silences; through poignant images grounded in daily life we fall wholly into uncensored emotion."

Senator Landon Pearson, Author, *Children of Glasnost, Letters From Moscow*

"Spare, intense and deeply resonant".

Kathy Ross, Sculptor

"I stood in the living room reading a poem and my heart turned over as my dinner guests waited for their coffee. Powerful sculptures."

Toronto Women's Bookstore. *Shadows Light*, by Ann Elizabeth Carson. This collection of poetry from Canadian author Ann Elizabeth Carson intersperses her poetry with images of her sculptures, each accentuating the other. Reflecting on loss, family, connections, and the act of writing itself, this book is a companion for writers and readers. Autumn, 2006

Marjorie Muir, *Poet's Cove*, New Monhegan Press, Maine

What a pleasure to read your poems. Thank you. "Then and Now" is especially wonderful for what it says about youth and age and how they co-exist in us. "Maine Puffin Watch" is a vivid, closely observed descriptive poem. I hope the island will continue to inspire your beautiful nature poems, as well as the poignant reflections on love and loss. Selections will be published in *Poet's Cove* as well as in the New Monhegan Press. Autumn, 2005

REVIEWS OF *SHADOWS LIGHT*

Ruth Goldsmith, *Contact Magazine*, Older Women's Network, Spring 2006, and forthcoming in *Canadian Women's Studies/Les Cahier de la Femme*

If you love poetry add this gem to your collection. Take this book with you on a crowded subway train and allow Ann to transport you to another dimension. Indeed, Ann is an ideal travel companion. When you read *Shadows Light* you will be embarking on a journey and along a road you may never have traveled before ... dip into a treasury of images ... into feminist rage ... and comments on family life that will surely strike a responsive chord. Not only a poet. Ann is also a sculptor. Interspersed among the poems are photographs of her sculptures - like walking through an art gallery. Each poem paints a landscape, an experience, an emotion as Ann recreates the key moments in her life, giving them to us so that we may savour them to capture and experience their sorrow, their splendour and their joy. You certainly will never forget this book!

Margo Little, *The Sudbury Star*, 18/07/05

... Carson's poetry distils her life experiences and gives shape to universal questions as she explores the dualities in human existence. The landscapes and seascapes of Islands - Manitoulin in Ontario and Monhegan in Maine - have served as both inspiration and solace. Ann's poetry is accompanied by photographs of her sculptures that illustrate her central themes of the necessity for a connection to nature, to community and to deeply suppressed feelings of isolation and loss. As the title of the collection implies, the poet is striving for balance. Although she acknowledges the moments when "blackness inks my soul" she always walks towards the light. Readers are left with images of "everyday pleasures" and "the comfortable sounds of the Earth's living."

Bill McLean, *The Beach Metro News*, 6/9/05

Beautiful colour photographs of her own sculptures accompany Ann Carson's latest book of poetry. Her poems range from the simple and direct as in Moment: "It's snowing on me, lightly

touched I memorize the flakes, upward into their own world. Chilled galaxy of silence..." to longer prose-poem works such as *Summer Day* or *Turn Over*, or more intimate portraits of human existence such as the musings about home reflected in *Baby Boomers*, or the feeling of loss and comfort in *What Child Comes Back*. Ann Carson also works in charcoal and watercolour and examples of her work in these media will be published in her next book.

Jim Moodie, The Manitoulin Expositor, 27/07/05

*Shadows Light*, a new collection of earthy yet elegant poems explores themes both dark and uplifting. The nature poems are celebratory, but crisply observed, and sometimes sharp in tone as well. Carson's granddaughter calls them "nature with an edge." Often the language is wonderfully precise and vivid: "A beetle clicks over grass", "the whisper of pens", "the scrape of paper tissues". Elsewhere it is more abstract and mysterious, but equally compelling: "the benison of the night air", "wind whispering across lacey places, carved by loss." The engaging, intelligently crafted poems are complemented by photographs of the author's clay sculptures, which are not only compelling in their own right, but echo and emphasize the themes of the poems: "welcoming the possibility of loss, and of dying and of forgetting/and of being fierce with reality, gives protection ... I yearn to give up expectations ... Yet ... I must remember not to forget to remember."