



# Secure the Shadow: Poems (Southern Messenger Poets)

*Claudia Emerson*

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Daringly realistic and artfully mediated by past and present, Claudia Emerson's *Secure the Shadow* contains historical pieces as well as poems centering on the deaths of the poet's brother and father. Emerson covers all aspects of the tragedies that, as Keats believed, contribute to our human collective of Soul-making, in which each death accrues into an immortal web of ongoing love and meaning for the living. Emerson's unwavering gaze shows that loss cannot be eluded, but can be embraced in elegies as devastating as they are beautiful.

The macabre title poem refers to the old custom of making daguerreotypes, primitive photographs, of deceased loved ones. Other striking poems describe animal deaths -- mysterious calf killings, a hog slaughter, the burial of a dead jay, "identifiable / but light, dry, its eyes vacant orbits."

Death, as the speaker's heart and mind instruct her, exists in a shadow world. When the body disappears, the shadow also flees. By securing the shadow, the poet finds a representation of the dead's soul, a soul always linked to the body. Hence, Emerson's attention to the minute details of the body's repose -- reflected in the long, related sequence of refrained poems -- never allows its memory to fade.

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