

ti-Indigenous racism as they exist in the Canadian conscience. That said, the book is still an excellent example of how ideology functions. Despite intending to protest racial injustice, at times, Walker reproduces white supremacist ideology throughout the book.

Stolen Sisters recognizes the disappearance of Maisy Odjick and Shannon Alexander as an example of the Canada-wide phenomenon of missing and murdered Indigenous women. Walker deems the latter a femicide and illustrates the impact of gender inequality and lack of institutional justice on the safety of Indigenous women. Despite reinforcing anti-Indigenous racism in a number of ways, Walker makes a substantial and highly necessary contribution to the body of literature documenting this crisis. She demonstrates that as long as Indigenous women are denied the right to gender equality and institutional accountability, disproportionate levels of violence will continue to be inflicted upon them. Demanding governmental response to such violence requires a concerted international effort; a stand in solidarity with Indigenous women worldwide.

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ABOUT CANADA: WOMEN'S RIGHTS

Penni Mitchell
Halifax: Fernwood, 2015

REVIEWED BY AMANDA LE ROUGETEL

If history is the study of the past as it relates to human beings, then *About Canada: Women's Rights* brings 150 years of that past vividly to life through the names and stories of the countless women whose courage and hard work helped shape Canada into the country of essential, if not always actual, equality, justice and caring it is today. Using secondary sources, Penni Mitchell, editor of Winnipeg-based *Herizons* magazine, succeeds admirably in her objective to shine a spotlight on “just some of the women who climbed on soapboxes and defied the limitations of their gender” to bring about change.

Beginning in the mid-1800s and following through to 1999 (with a nod to First Nation and colonial era women before those dates), Mitchell tells the stories of the many firsts by women. New France (today's Québec) had no shortage of such firsts: It saw the first hospital in 1645, the first school for girls in 1676, and the first recorded public protest by women in 1757 against the governor's proposed reduction in public rations of bread and meat. The first female principal in Canada was Emily Stowe of Ontario; in 1867, she became the first woman to practice medicine in Canada, after having had to train in the U.S. because she was denied entry to the U of T's medical school on the basis of her sex. In 1921, Agnes Macphail became the first woman elected as a member of parliament.

The list of women with impact – first or otherwise – goes on: You'll read about familiar names, including

Nellie McClung, Madeleine Parent, Muriel Duckworth, and Judy Rebick, to name just four. But you'll also read about women you've likely never heard of, including Thanadelthur, a young Dene woman in 1713 who was an instrumental negotiator in the fur trade in northern Manitoba; Agathe de Saint-Père, a successful businesswoman in early 1700s Québec; Mary Ann Shadd, active in the Underground Railway in the early 1800s, a proponent of integration, an author and a newspaper publisher; Margaret Bulkley, who assumed a male identity and practiced as a surgeon in the mid-1800s; Elsie Gregory MacGill, North America's first female aeronautical engineer (1927); and many more.

The individual women's stories are fascinating, and when woven together they tell the larger story of social change effected through collective action. Women worked together in clubs, institutes, councils, action committees, funds, and leagues. For example, women gathered in the guise of 'literary' clubs to organize politically; the National Council of Women was founded in 1893 to fight for equal wages and public health services; in the early 1900s, university women's clubs advocated for equal pay and suffrage; in 1904, the Canadian Women's Press Club brought together women reformers who were earning their living as published writers. Fast forward over the decades to the late 20th century and you'll learn about the work of the National Action Committee on the Status of Women (NAC), the Canadian Abortion Rights Action League (CARAL), the Legal Education and Action Fund (LEAF), the Disabled Women's Network (DAWN), Le front de libération des femmes du Québec, and others.

Read the book linearly from start to end to experience the sense of evolving rights over the decades – and

the work that remains to be done to achieve genuine equality. Or read it backwards by skipping from the index to the pages of particular interest to you. Either way, Mitchell's writing will pull you in. The end notes organized by chapter offer full references for the sources she used; in so doing, they provide the reader wanting more than this slim volume—it is just 206 pages—can offer.

Mitchell's book is like a well-presented and inspiring survey course in women's history: It dips the reader's toe into the vast collective of women who, individually and together, faced hardship, isolation and ridicule and yet kept working to improve women's lives by increasing the scope of their rights. *About Canada: Women's Rights* is a must-read as either introduction to, or reminder of, the vital contributions women have made to Canada through the end of the 20th century.

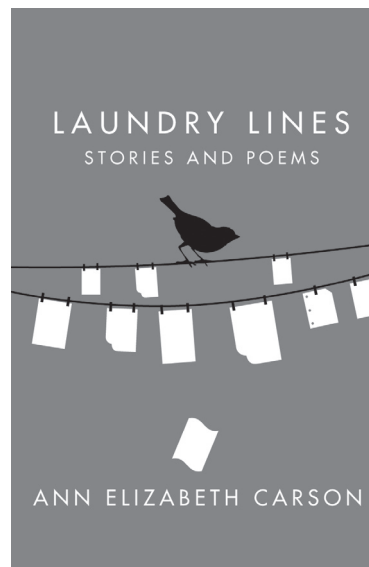
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LAUNDRY LINES

Ann Elizabeth Carson
Toronto: Inanna Publications, 2015

REVIEWED BY SONIA DI
PLACIDO

In his/her work, every memoirist leaves behind a better or worse likeness of the people he knew, alongside two self-portraits. The first of these two is painted intentionally, while the second is unplanned, accidental. It goes without saying that the first is more flattering than the second, and the second is more faithful than the first. The better the writer, the



more attention we should pay to this discrepancy.

—Wisława Szymborska, Poet

“Laundry Life,” the opening of three sections in Ann Elizabeth Carson’s memoir, *Laundry Lines*, combines both poetry and prose. Beginning with poetry, the effect of two written genres makes for a dynamic and allows for a reader to approach memoir with varied narrative perceptions. Most effective, is the (song) poem prior to prose:

to speak
before the light goes out...
Hear the faint, waiting hums
that heed
disembodied stories strung juicy
deep, ours to be born into
when we gaze in wonder at the
little we have come to know.

...pulley squeaks
as my mother hangs clothes on
two steel lines,
strung garden-length;
wooden pegs in a pouch on the
line, the next peg
in her mouth—she could even
talk around it.

Socks line up just so, toes point
in one direction

the days the heels and toes face
each other is a sure sign of trouble
brewing.

Beyond “Laundry Life,” the longest narrative poem in the book, Carson moves into prose. This sets up an emotive flow that allows for a gentler entry into one woman’s story. A succinct feminine approach? Rather, let’s engage feminism and how that exhibits itself in the book not only as Carson writes her memoir celebrating and questioning the women who have been and remain of influence to her life’s narrative. The feminism also manifests through intrinsic approaches to a combination of the two genres. A playful, yet, a birth-like approach, a duality that invites the blending into one. As the genre of two lovers melding to become one in a memoir of story and song.

It’s a supreme act of control to understand a life as a story that resonates with others. It’s not a diary. It’s taking this chaos and making a story out of it, attempting to make art out of it. When you’re a writer, what else is there to do? ...It’s like stitching together a quilt, creating order that isn’t chronological order—it’s emotional, psychological order.
—Dani Shapiro, *Still Writing*

Shapiro’s image of the quilt fits in perfectly well with Carson’s own inclusion of specific memory to the women of her childhood and how they stitched, used, and kept quilts. A vital aspect of her upbringing, which through memoir she is able to shape into sharing its personal and culturally symbolic influence on her life. A fluid uncertainty moves moodily through the memoir as to whether the ‘quilting’ is both a memoir technique between two genres and something that Carson has conscientiously researched or