Clarion Review

Autobiography & Memoir

A Touch on the Shoulder: A Woman's Journey of Self-Discovery
Lauren Learn
CreateSpace
978-1-4563-0106-4
Four Stars (out of Five)

A Touch on the Shoulder asks one to set aside their literary assumptions about how a book should be structured and punctuated. Lauren Learn chose to write in a stream of consciousness with minimal regard for sentence structure and other rules of grammar. She felt she needed to set aside editing conventions to give an authentic picture of what she was feeling and which of her selves was dominating each time she sat down to write. She wanted nothing to interfere with her truth at the moment pen hit paper, and for the most part she succeeded admirably. Learn's style has a raw honesty which compels the reader to suspend judgment and even support her idiosyncratic style. Doing so takes time and patience though, for the intellect wants to criticize and discard the content with the structure. The goal is worth the effort, especially for those who have experienced abuse, family problems, low self-esteem, and other unhappy issues ubiquitous to modern life. Learn conquered her demons, and her story has the potential to inspire others to confront and defeat their own.

Lauren Learn was molested at five years old by one step-father and again at twelve by another. She endured a profoundly dysfunctional relationship with her mother, was deeply hurt by the cruel rejection of three step-sisters, and struggled with excess weight. Blessedly, she had loving and stable grandparents who tempered some of the negative. The molestations led to Learn's adult realization that she had five-year-old twins and a twelve-year old living inside her who needed validation and healing. Their journey to wholeness is a recurring theme in *A Touch on the Shoulder*, and when, at the end of the book, Kristian, the twelve-year old, is given a party to celebrate her merging, it feels more wonderful than strange.

Though born and raised in the United States, Learn attended high school in Israel, lived on a kibbutz, became an Israeli citizen, converted to Judaism, and spent a year in the Israeli military. These chapters are well written and provide a fascinating and endearing glimpse into

Israeli society.

Learn's character is infectiously positive and spontaneously non-conventional. She writes with a compassionate conviction about every woman's ability to heal as she has. She has an inspiring temper with no qualms about confronting abusers and others who cause hurt. She traveled through much of the world alone with an effortlessness that defied her insecurities. Learn attended a life-changing, Native American vision quest, experimented with hypnosis, psychotherapy, and other healing modalities. She continues to live her life consciously and wear her emotions on her sleeve. One could argue that Learn has earned the right to ignore a few redundancies, commas, and tenses in her empowering quest to share *A Woman's Journey of Self-Discovery*.

Patty Sutherland