

**Review of Elisabeth Stevens' Novel**  
**Ride a Bright and Shining Pony**  
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Elisabeth Stevens' latest novel, Ride a Bright and Shining Pony, is a tour de force on all levels—cultural, psychological, and philosophical. An accomplished artist and poet, Stevens enhances her book's themes with original etchings and metaphoric language.

The plot revolves around the historical march in Washington, D.C. on August 28, 1963, when women and men of all colors joined together peacefully to advocate for jobs and justice. The dream of brotherhood, however, was turned to nightmare in Stevens' novel when individual blacks and whites shot each other, and a mob marched to the local police station, where two innocent blacks had been jailed.

In that mob was Cynthia, the white protagonist and first-person narrator, who came to Washington less for the march toward racial equality than her personal march toward marriage with her lover, Lester, a liberal Southerner reporting for a Washington newspaper. His hypocrisy is exposed when he believes that his best (black) friend is flirting with Cynthia and his best (white) friend has been murdered by a black.

Cynthia's movement toward maturity is measured in small steps as she tries to understand her prior marriage, current affair, and relationships in general between the races. She comes to realize that even when—and however—love and trust are lost, there remains hope, embodied in the lullaby which Lester sang to her and which provides lines for the novel's title.

The etchings that preface the novel and divide its two parts are rich with classical allusion, fairytale-like grotesquerie, and the complex psychology of anger terrified and depressed by its own force.

Stevens' novel portrays not only an historic moment in American history, but also the ancient conflict of good and evil, as expressed by Cynthia's insight about moral challenges: "The old patterns to be discarded were more than reactionary laws and narrow-mindedness. They encompassed a cruel, murky malevolence, an obdurate stain infecting blacks and whites alike."