

Lee Woodman's *Homescapes*

Lee Woodman's volume of poetry is a balm for contemporary-news-weary readers like me. *Homescapes* is largely poems of the past—Lee's past, Lee's family's past: snippets of tender memories, images of remembered beauty, reflections on the powerful influence of what's long gone—all things that form an individual's consciousness. And of course, as Whitman tells us, because we are all interconnected in a multitude of ways, what belongs to Lee, "as good belongs to you." Reader, you will recognize Lee's inner world: "I'll pretend I just got here when they come to the gate." And "We admired our handicraft—colorful rows of completed sock-balls..." Or "I conjured your face close to my pillow...."

Lee's past is unusual, and the first section of the book features it. Her childhood years were spent more in India than in the United States. She's a child of mid-20th-century idealists, the beautiful Americans, who wanted to bring goodness and mercy and food to the developing world. She's a third-culture kid, a term sociologists and psychologists use for someone brought up in a culture not their parents', nor one they can claim, but in a third homescape. Home for her is at least partially places/ roads/ smells/ voices/ flora of the foreign. She conveys these deftly, and any reader who has spent time abroad will be transported to those lands: "...single dangling lightbulb/ jute string charpoys." Or the dhobi on a bike, "teetering, piled laundry stacked on back." Some images brought me tears, for I too was raised in India.

But like a military brat, a diplomat's child, or a missionary's kid, Lee had to come "home" to a country that wasn't home. This experience is confusing— "We are curious strangers both home and away." Yet she adapts, as when the radio plays songs she "heard on Radio Ceylon: "Great Balls of Fire" The second section of the book captures her integration into and eventual joy in the essence of a hometown in New Hampshire. Here, Lee's sensitivity to nature is akin to Mary Oliver's: "...Cold! pond, ringed by deep green pines/a birch or two, a crimson swamp maple." Or the hemlock that "absorbs all life's events."

And finally, *Homescapes* presents a few poems about close kin...a father's intellectual-life habits, the power of sisterhood, a mother's dementia, the hold of inherited objects. And finally, to bring things full circle, Lee chooses a poem set at a burning ghat in India where, 47 years after she'd left that country, she returns to watch a clay lamp for her father and three marigolds for her mother float down the Ganges. Where's home? Home is everywhere, anywhere. And nowhere.

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