



Look Both Ways: A Double Journey Along My Grandmother's Far-Flung Path

Katharine Coles

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Part memoir, part biography, *Look Both Ways* traces the long path that sent Katharine Coles's grandparents across the world, searching for oil and a resolution to their untenable marriage.

Both trained geologists, Walter Link and Miriam Wollaeger hoped to work in the field, discovering oil to supply a booming market. Because of gender restrictions, though, only Walter could actually do this. He left his adventure-starved wife behind, figuring out who she was both without him and with him. Tense, abundantly researched, and heartbreaking, this narrative drills into a dead marriage and finds characters so alive that they challenge Coles's perceptions of her own marriage.

Coles travels the world—including stops in Cuba, South and Central America, and Indonesia—visiting places that marked her grandparents' early life together. Driven to understand her vibrant grandmother, Coles leaves her own husband behind, where he worries about his wife, too. The couples exist in constant comparison; Coles contrasts her communications with the misread communications that passed between her grandparents and great-grandmother.

Miriam Wollaeger is shown to have been a magnetic young woman, and she centers the story. She is fit, capable, and intelligent, but she is also childish, ruled by her charismatic mother, who chose Walter Link as a suitable spouse for her. Miriam moves from tyranny to tyranny; her husband's expectations for women almost erase her. As Walter ascends in his career, Miriam tries to create a new self.

Short fragments heighten the tension and pacing, and poetic language conveys the foreign world of the 1930s. Though her own history is not as developed as that of her grandparents, the inevitable comparisons between the past and the present, and between expectation and reality, drive this narrative and make its history intimate. In *Look Both Ways*, Coles makes sense of the unique forces that shaped women in the twentieth century.

CAMILLE-YVETTE WELSCH (November/December 2018)

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