



At Home Abroad: An American Girl in Africa

Nancy Henderson-James

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At Home Abroad: An American Girl in Africa Nancy Henderson-James

At Home Abroad is a stunning autobiography of Nancy Henderson-James's youth in Africa. Heart-wrenching is her uprooting at age 15 when the war for independence began, from Angola, whose natural world, people, customs, languages she so loved. Nancy bravely and articulately recounts a true saga of personal loss and bereavement. But out of the crucible of conflicts between herself and her parents, the Africa she loved and the America from which she felt estranged, comes crystalline strength, confidence, humor, and self-knowledge. Her journey to wholeness, with its exquisite analysis and detail, enlightens us, so that we, too, see our own lives with new understanding and compassion and recognize better our place in the 21st century as citizens of the world.

Judy Hogan, Founding Editor of Carolina Wren Press, 1976-91.

In this intimate and detailed autobiography, Nancy Henderson-James throws open the door on a room in the history of religion that has been locked and double-bolted: the life of a child of Christian missionaries in the 1950's in Africa. It is not another story of the children of a crazy preacher or an abusive father. Rather it is a story of the loneliness of a daughter of liberal Protestant missionaries who do (almost) everything right professionally, but are absent in crucial ways to the lives of their children. "I was dancing between complex alliances of race, nationality, gender and religion." Readers will wince at a wastebasket made from an elephant's foot, at a child going to a male teacher to tell a secret that belongs to a parent, at images of spacious homes and multiple servants in a village of poor dwellings - ". . . my life in white colonial Angola . . . in the midst of a system fast coming apart." But At Home Abroad is also the story of a young woman finding her own way to survival, to freedom, and to her own spiritual path.

Pat Schneider, author: Writing Alone and With Others, Oxford University Press, 2003

Nancy Henderson-James has written a tremendous book. Her writing skillfully weaves the threads of a beautiful exotic setting, the discoveries and tensions of adolescence, the powerful shaping attachment to a very particular place, and the void of absence. I highly recommend her memoir to anyone exploring the mysterious terrain of childhood, the challenge of straddling vastly different worlds, or the way loss adds depth as well as pain to a thoughtful life.

Mary Edwards Wertsch, author of Military Brats: Legacies of Childhood Inside the Fortress

Henderson-James has written a wonderfully constructed memoir filled with honesty and tenderness describing an intriguing childhood life compelling her to straddle different cultures. And through its elegant prose, resonant images and informative commentaries, this gem of a book effectively presents a thoroughly engrossing and moving account of experiences that most of us would otherwise know very little about.

Norm Goldman, Publisher and Editor, bookpleasures.com

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Vance Malik:

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Leonel Burton:

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