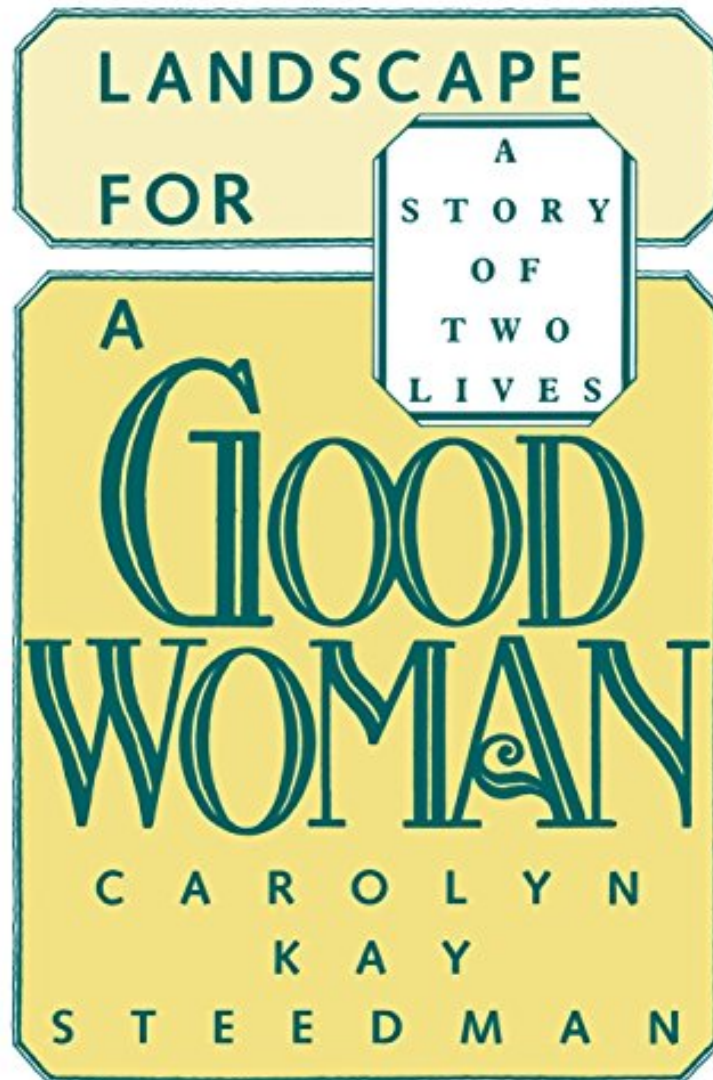


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## Landscape for a Good Woman: A Story of Two Lives

Carolyn Kay Steedman

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**Carolyn Kay Steedman : Landscape for a Good Woman: A Story of Two Lives** before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Landscape for a Good Woman: A Story of Two Lives:

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Looking for the New Look Woman By Maeri An absorbing memoir of the author's childhood in post WWII London. Steedman's mother was a chronically dissatisfied working-class woman angry about her life of material deprivation. She was, in Steedman's words, part of a "subterranean culture of longing for what one can never have." Her anger extended to her two daughters--she told them, "If it wasn't for you

two, I'd be off somewhere else." Steedman uses fairy tales, psychoanalytic theory and working class biographies to try to make sense of her mother's malaise. Her mother's unmet needs were personified in her desire for enough fabric to sew herself dresses in the fabric-intensive "New Look" style introduced by Dior in 1947--a style that compensated for the deprivations of wartime clothing rations. Naturally, she blamed her daughters for the fact that she didn't have the money. This led to Steedman having a recurring (and fascinating) childhood dream about a woman in a flowing New Look coat trapped in a revolving door. It's a Hitchcockian dream image, one of visual complexity and psychological truth. Steedman's mother stubbornly resists her daughter's painful attempts to come to terms with her maternal indifference and the odd sense of class rebellion that led her to join the Conservative Party. In the end, Steedman is left going in circles, not unlike the chic woman of her persistent dream. But she creates an unforgettable portrait of her mother, an unknowable woman who yearned for a life of luxury and respectability that defied both political and psychological stereotypes about how poor women "should" behave. 0 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Fascinating stories By Nell It's an extraordinary book. It bridges biography/autobiography/academic writing. For a woman of my age - roughly that of the author - it provides insight to some world changing events. I think that it does speak to women. I much appreciated it. 0 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Five Stars By Denise good

Carolyn Steedman's 1950s South London childhood was shaped by her mother's longing: "What she actually wanted were real things, real entities, things she materially lacked, things that a culture and a social system withheld from her... When the world didn't deliver the goods, she held the world to blame." When Carolyn Steedman grows up and begins to look for reflections of her and her mother's lives in history, theory, and literature, she finds that "the tradition of cultural criticism that has employed working-class lives, and their rare expression in literature, has made solid and concrete the absence of psychological individuality - of subjectivity." Through an in-depth comparison of personal experience and prevailing political and social science theory on the psychology and attitudes of working-class people, *Landscape for a Good Woman* challenges an intellectual tradition that denies "its subjects a particular story, a personal history, except when that story illustrates a general thesis." In this poignantly written and thoroughly researched work, the common theoretical conclusion that the survival struggles of working-class people precludes the time necessary for more genteel "elaboration of relationships" is shot full of delightfully life-affirming holes. -- For great reviews of books for girls, check out *Let's Hear It for the Girls: 375 Great Books for Readers 2-14*. -- From *500 Great Books by Women*; review by Jesse Larsen About the Author Carolyn Steedman is professor of history at the University of Warwick (United Kingdom).