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Review of Garden City: Dreams in a Kansas Town

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Garden City: Dreams in a Kansas Town. By Holly Hope. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1988. Illustrations, maps, afterword. xv + 175 pp. \$15.95.

Unlike many other small towns in the Great Plains, Garden City, located in southwest Kansas, has experienced a rapid increase in population over the past ten years. Iowa Beef Packers opened the world's largest beef packing plant in Holcomb, seven miles west of Garden City, resulting in an influx of newcomers to the town, most notably more than two thousand Southeast Asian refugees.

Holly Hope was born in Garden City in 1956 and was able to observe these and other changes while she grew up in the town and later when she returned to her parents' home. The first part of the book is primarily autobiographical and deals with the author's childhood in Garden City. After providing a historical and geographical overview of the region, Hope focuses on the sources of her alienation from the community. For example, she recalls telling her friends that she left Kansas because she read too much. Like many intellectually curious students, she found herself frustrated by a school

system that emphasized conformity and sports. She found few friends within the community, noting that she feels the greatest kinship with those women for whom Garden City has little to offer. The first part of the book concludes with some observations of the recent changes in Garden City: the construction of new suburban areas, the arrival of franchises, and the emergence of busing as a local issue.

The second half of the book is a collection of interviews, completed in 1982, with five professional people who grew up in southwest Kansas, moved away, returned, and with one exception moved away again! The farmer obtained a degree from McGill University and found himself disliking Montreal because there were too many people. He returned to the farm but was unable to make any money and is now attending law school in Los Angeles. The journalist returned to run for the city commission and state legislature; he also left to attend law school. The Hispanic attorney returned to Garden City after law school determined to help minorities by working for Legal Aid; he now lives in Arizona for health reasons. The author's brother returned from college to start up a public radio station and is now attending Yale University. Only the drama teacher remains, committed to making the community a better place to live.

By concentrating upon the lives of professionals, the author provides a one-sided view of Garden City. She also neglects the lives and dreams of those persons who have remained in Garden City. Although the book was published in 1988, there is relatively little information concerning the town's adaptation to the influx of Southeast Asians. This is a particularly interesting aspect of the community in view of the author's portrayal of the town as closed-minded. In short, the book provides only a limited perspective on life in Garden City.

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