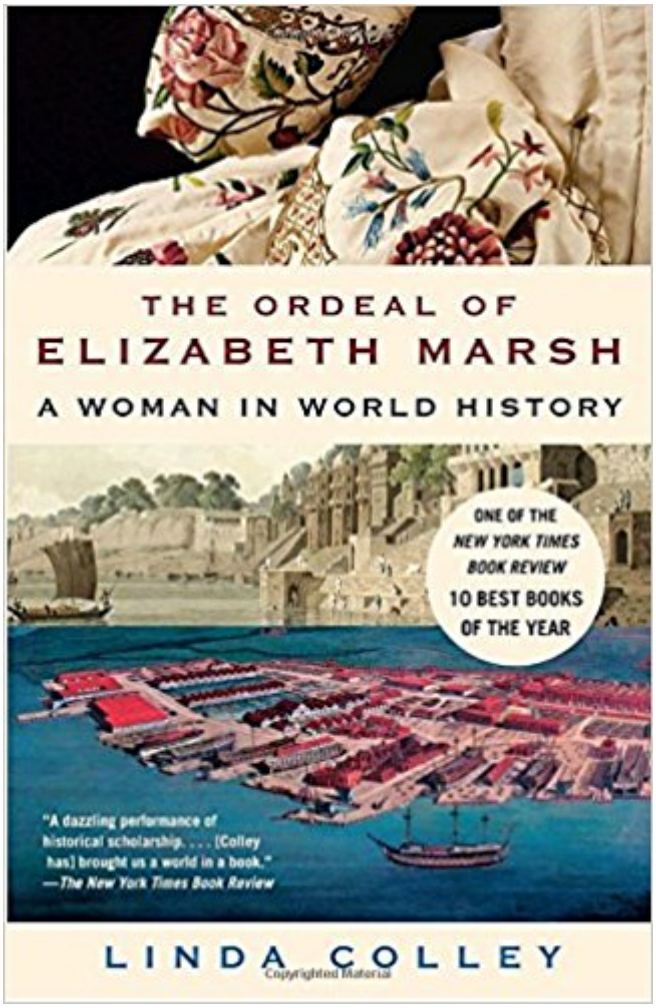
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The Ordeal Of Elizabeth Marsh: A Woman In World History



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Synopsis

In this remarkable reconstruction of an eighteenth-century woman's extraordinary and turbulent life, historian Linda Colley not only tells the story of Elizabeth Marsh, one of the most distinctive travelers of her time, but also opens a window onto a radically transforming world.Marsh was conceived in Jamaica, lived in London, Gibraltar, and Menorca, visited the Cape of Africa and Rio de Janeiro, explored eastern and southern India, and was held captive at the court of the sultan of Morocco. She was involved in land speculation in Florida and in international smuggling, and was caught up in three different slave systems. She was also a part of far larger histories. Marsh's lifetime saw new connections being forged across nations, continents, and oceans by war, empire, trade, navies, slavery, and print, and these developments shaped and distorted her own progress and the lives of those close to her. Colley brilliantly weaves together the personal and the epic in this compelling story of a woman in world history.

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Customer Reviews

There were many ordealsÃ¢â ¬â •and adventuresÃ¢â ¬â •in the tumultuous life of this emblematic 18th-century Englishwoman. At age 20 Marsh was captured by Barbary pirates and narrowly fended off the Moroccan sultan's attempts to induct her into his harem. She married a British merchant, went through both luxurious high living and humiliating bankruptcy, followed him to India, where they remade themselves as colonial grandees, then suffered another bankruptcy. (A further ordeal was snagging a husband for her under-dowried daughter.) Historian Colley (Captives: Britain, Empire and the World, 1600Ã¢â ¬â œ1850) styles Marsh a female Candide batted about by

world-historical forces. Shaped by the breakdown of barriers in this age of proto-globalization (Colley speculates excitedly, but without evidence, that Marsh was of mixed racial background), her life was opened up by the rise of the British Empire and disrupted by attendant upheavals like the Seven Years War and the American Revolution. Still, in Colley's account, she retains her own power: Marsh cannily leveraged family connections to the British naval bureaucracy to facilitate her voyaging, published a piquant memoir of Moroccan captivity and enjoyed a scandalous 18-month tour of India accompanied by a dashing, unmarried British officer. Colley makes of her story both an engaging biography and a deft, insightful social history. Photos. (Aug. 14) Copyright Ã Â© Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Linda Colley, a history professor at Princeton, first encountered Elizabeth Marsh while researching her previous book, Captives: Britain, Empire, and the World, 1600–1850. Using the scant sources available, Colley fleshes out this long-forgotten woman’s extraordinary life, which was frequently shaped by world events: war, commerce, imperialism, and global shifts of power. Unfortunately, the lack of personal papers means that readers never really get to know Marsh. However, Colley’s intention here is "recasting and re-evaluating biography" to deepen our understanding of the "global past," and she brings Marsh’s world and the forces shaping it vividly to life. Instead of portraying a life played out against world history, Colley turns the genre on its head and presents world history as it played out in a single life.Copyright Ã Â© 2004 Phillips & Nelson Media, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

The Ordeal of Elizabeth Marsh is a fascinating tale of a world we cannot remember or recognize. Elizabeth Marsh, of questionable race, origins, and status, traveled the world and saw the ways it interacted with different people. At times treated as a half-slave or as a member of the conquering aristocracy, Elizabeth Marsh illustrated the globalization of trade networks and travel during the 18th century, a world where the United States did not yet exist, pirates roamed the seas, and where her admittedly scarcely-documented life was lived. Elizabeth Marsh lived in tumultuous times, and faced them with resourcefulness and skill as she sought the shelter of places free from the storms of war and violence.For historians, this is a great resource to demonstrate the state of the world in a particular time and to use one person's life to illustrate the variable nature of society, status, and women's rights. One fantastic bit comes from Colley's preface, where she notes that many historians and biographers often choose to shorten or minimize the names within their books. By

contrast, Colley shows that a woman like Elizabeth Marsh changed names and identities; she married, but had companionship with an unmarried man; Elizabeth Marsh is the way to identify a woman without demeaning her accomplishments or acting unduly familiar (no Lizzies here).Last, Colley's work pulls on resources from a half-dozen nations, including some who came of being within Elizabeth Marsh's life. I would challenge many readers to understand the ways that this forces a historian to spread themselves thin. Thinking of all the biographers who can barely encompass a biography in one nation and one language, the sheer scale and depth of this book is impressive, even if it cannot make up materials to tell a more compelling tale of Elizabeth Marsh's life.

Linda Colley came across Ms. Marsh while researching her earlier "Captives," and found her compelling enough to devote a full work to her. The author utilizes a broad range of sources in reconstructing the life of an obscure person, albeit one who published her own pirate yarn after ransom from Morocco. How obscure? Colley did not unearth any images of her subject, and cannot finally determine Marsh's racial composition. But Marsh personifies the connections and networks within which 18C global travelers made their way, so her story tells us a great deal about her world. The narrative moves briskly for the most part, though details of family business affairs are tedious at times; "Ordeal" well conveys the sense of a rapidly changing, increasingly mobile world (globalization long predates NAFTA and the Internet). It quite effectively engenders 18C world history from the perspective of an unusual but representative woman's life. As a Royal Navy brat she had an advantage over other travelers of the age, often securing passage on ships that normally didn't take civilians; as a result she probably saw more of the world than any female contemporary. The tides of history often buffeted Marsh so that she did not control her destiny, but she emerges as a strong-willed woman in an era with little use for them.

This is an interesting work for a World History class. Not a gender history in my opinion.

Excellent. Very well written and educational.

Absolutely fascinating. The story was compelling and I actually learned a great deal about world history. Hopefully, this genre will flourish in years to come.

Fascinating, but just a little slow for me. Probably great for someone who loves detail. Not my style.

Enjoy the read.

I pick this book because of the time period in history. I found it interesting reading and very informative but a little long. As I read more about the use fo salvery both black and white it bring forth how brutel it was and that it was not confined to the American colonies.

Too much about the author's opinions and not enough about her actual travels.

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