

The Female American; Or, the Adventures of Unca Eliza Winkfield

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The Female American: or, the Adventures of Unca Eliza Winkfield When it first appeared in 1767, The Female American was called a "sort of second Robinson Crusoe; full of wonders." Indeed, The Female American is an adventure novel about an English protagonist shipwrecked on a deserted isle, where survival requires both individual ingenuity and careful negotiations with visiting local Indians. But what most distinguishes Winkfield's novel is her protagonist, a w... Full description

The Female American; Or, the Adventures of Unca Eliza Winkfield Details


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Author : Unca Eliza Winkfield , Michelle Burnham (Editor)

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From Reader Review The Female American; Or, the Adventures of Unca Eliza Winkfield for online ebook

Jill says

A beautiful and sardonic autoethnographic text filled with lots of allusions and plot twists. Definitely worth the read.

Kristen says

My rating is actually a 3.5/4.

Sneha Kannan says

Read for school. It's a really odd book about a half Native American and half English woman who ends up stranded on an island and somehow manages to convert the native population of the island to Christianity. Wouldn't read if I wasn't forced to read it for school

Hannah says

I read this book as a requirement of my Gender and Literature class in college. From a gender and historical standpoint, it was quite interesting.

Anna Webster says

I read this for an English course of mine, and this book is very interesting in juxtaposition with the novel of Robinson Crusoe...except this one is much shorter and more interesting.

Heather says

Read this one for my American Novel class. I was thinking it was going to be quite different but it wasn't all that bad. Female main character, which is rare in the 1800's, made the entire book definitely more entertaining. Clever women in an age that could barely respect women as humans.

Lily Morgan says

Robinsonette Win

Actually, this was really kinda good. Better than Robinson Crusoe in many ways--not least of which, it is shorter. I liked it.

Lauren says

Yes this was for school. Bite me. [Message to my future self]

Not bad considering how touch-and-go the novel tradition was back then. It came across as so real that we were surprised to find out that it wasn't actually a travel narrative. Tons of interesting ideas of self-building, racial hybridity, what is American-ness etc etc etc etc. It's all in my Transatlantic notes.

Mandie says

This book was profound for its time in the 18th century as it had a female protagonist with agency traveling and being able to preach. But reading it from a 21st century viewpoint I can't get over how problematic I'm viewing the contents. I've tried a few times to go back and reread it but the actions that the protagonist takes just irk me and I end up getting frustrated with her. It's probably a good sign that I have such strong emotions towards it instead of being indifferent but it's a book that I'm still deciding if I should keep or throw into the fire!

says

a femalization of Robinson Crouse. writer acts as if it is the real history in many cases.

Scott says

While flawed in many ways as a novel, this work is a surprising example of the ways that Britons were able to invest the indigenous peoples of North America with their own assumptions and fantasies.

James Holloway says

this shit was boring as fuuuuuuuuuck

Farwa Khtana says

This book is boring, like most of the books I have to read for my English class. Sorry to be so blunt, but that's the truth. The only person I can imagine who would actually be excited about this type of book would

be my English professor (who is awesome by the way) and her likes.

A work of early American literature published in the 18th century, "The Female American" was written by an author with the pen-name of "Unca Eliza Winkfield (who is also the narrator). Unca is a biracial (half native and half English) American female of considerable social status. The book starts off with her parents falling in love and getting married, much like the way John Smith and Pocahontas did. They then have Unca, a daughter, and raise her up together in her Father's settlement. Later, her mother gets assassinated, and her father, out of grief, returns to England.

In England, Unca gets educated, becomes a devout Christian, and grows to become a proper lady. She then re-visits America, and upon her return to England, gets into a quarrel with the ship's captain, ultimately resulting in her getting abandoned on an Island. The book goes on for a bit about how she manages to survive on this Island (with the help of "The Hermit's manuscript") against all odds. Later, after encountering a group of local Native Americans, she commits herself to converting them to Christianity. In the end, after several years, her Cousin from England arrives on the Island with his men, and after finding her and discovering that she is alive, marries her. Together, they work to help continue the job she has started of converting the Native population to Christianity.

The thing I hate the most about this book is the intense Eurocentrism of it. Even though the author, who is unknown, was probably a progressive thinker for his time (Unca is female and biracial), the character of Unca can't help but disgust. She uses deception and manipulation to get the Natives on her side and accept Christianity, and shows complete narrow-mindedness for their "erroneous" religion. The Natives, as is the case with most historical narratives of this time period (which are written by Europeans), are made to look like an inferior group of unintelligent, immensely simple and manipulatable people. In Unca's narrative, when she first presents Christianity to them, they immediately oblige to her call, prostrate to her, and are not in the least skeptical of her claims. Really? Are Native Americans that stupid and that desperate for your "superior" beliefs and way of life???

It also doesn't help that Unca is very narcissistic, even though it may not come off as being obvious. Her narrative gives off a forceful vibe where the reader doesn't really have a choice but to listen to her version, her interpretation, her recount of how things went down. It's always "dear reader, look at ME. I'M helping these poor Natives come to the right path of Christianity, this is MY struggle, look at MY plight." I mean, I understand that this was kind of the way books were written back then, but come on. Respect the agency of the reader a bit.

Having said that, the book is, as mentioned before, quite progressive for its time. It shows a strong and independent woman surviving on an Island by herself, and helping spread the message of Christianity (a lofty goal at the time). She's also biracial, and clearly intelligent (manages to manipulate a whole Aboriginal population), which was an unconventional archetype at the time.

But, I still hated it and am DEFINITELY not going to touch it again (unless it's on the exam, in which case, I'll force myself to look at it once more, maybe...).

Lisa Phillips says

Interesting twist on the standard great-white-male-explorer as ship-wreck victim plot of narrative fiction. While the book (circa 1790 publication) is not a work of literary prowess in a 'canonical' sense, it offers a

respite to works like Robinson Crusoe where the protagonist is male.

I think kids would find it interesting.

Rebecca says

A sort of female Robinson Crusoe. Quite interesting and entertaining.
