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Drawing on her own long association with Markham, as well as diaries, letters, and interviews, Errol Trzebinski unravels the complexities of one of the century's great personalities.

Markham's memoir, *West with the Night*, was rediscovered in 1983 and became an instant bestseller, though shadowed by rumors that Markham was not the actual author. Trzebinski here puts the question of authorship to rest, as she answers many other questions about Markham in this riveting true story of courage, rivalry, sexual intrigue, and revenge.

The Lives of Beryl Markham Details

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From Reader Review The Lives of Beryl Markham for online ebook

Connie Kronlokken says

Beryl Markham is a fascinating person. Never well off, she grew up with Kenyan children, learning as they did to be fearless and ignore pain. Her father also trained her to work with his horses, and she developed an amazing rapport and understanding of horses. Moving among the British aristocrats who came out to Kenya in the early part of the 20th century, Beryl and her father trained winners. Beryl was beautiful and promiscuous, leaving a trail of lovers behind her. For ten years, she flew early airplanes and she successfully flew from England to Newfoundland, the hard way across the Atlantic in 1936.

Beryl spent 1936 to 1949 in the U.S., particularly in California, where she worked with her husband on a memoir which finally became a best-seller: "West with the Night." Returning to Kenya, she again trained winning horses. She continued to take lovers, but as Trzebinski notes, she often left people she was with better off than she found them, and people remained intensely loyal to her. As she grew older and more insecure, she was imperious, but still very brave. Trzebinski feels that the fact that she could not admit she had not written "West with the Night" marred her later years. Such a mix of cultures she was, resulting in excellence, beauty and excitement. This is her real story, told by a woman who lived most of her life in Africa. She doesn't sugar-coat Beryl's faults, but finds the gold in her as well.

Marsha Douglas says

Like other reviewers, I wanted to learn more about Beryl Markham after reading "Circling the Sun" by Paula McLain, and continued my reading with "The Lives of Beryl Markham". Although this book has been labeled by some as painting an unflattering picture of the subject, I believe Errol Trzebinski did a tremendous amount of research (as evidenced by her acknowledgements and references) to write a fair and balanced biography of a woman who led a most unconventional life and achieved success through the expense and help of others.

This is a long read, particularly if you are not familiar with Africa. Although two maps of the country are included for reference, many of the cities/towns and topographical areas mentioned in the book can't be found on the maps. After reading it, I have to wonder what Markham's life would have been like if she had returned with her mother and brother to England while still very young. Although she had very few close friendships with women, the ones that did endure (particularly with Enid, Lady Furness/Lady Kenmare) were marked by similarities: incapability of handling finances, lack of domesticity, and being involved in scandalous affairs.

Jan C says

I really did enjoy this book but I felt like it was too long. I'm not sure what I would have asked her to keep out but it just seemed to drag on.

Now, of course, Beryl Markham did a lot of stuff. Most of her friends were not women. Frequently they were royalty.

And I was so disappointed when Trzebinski presented pretty arguments against her having written the good

parts of *West with the Night*. I had previously come to the conclusion that only a pilot could have written some parts of it and that her husband had written the other parts. But the author convinced me that, probably, the reverse was true. I was so down about that.

But this was a life full of adventure. She was a horse whisperer, trainer, early pilot - made records; lived the high life in Kenya, London, New York and Hollywood.

Ebookwormy1 says

This book was well written, but by the end of it, i was so sick of Beryl Markham. What a bitter, despairing, end to a life invested so poorly. It was good for understanding the history of Markham, the Kenya colony and the times in general, but not an enjoyable to be re-read book.

It does complement the more famous "*West with the Night*," a rather mysterious biography by Markham. Trzebinski's biography clarifies Beryl's puzzling male orientation and sheds light on the controversy surrounding "*West with the Night*" authorship by Beryl Markham's third husband, the ghost writer Raoul Schumacher. If you want it all, read both. If you want just the stories of Africa, read *West with the Night* with a grain of salt.

West with the Night, Markham, 1942

<https://www.goodreads.com/review/show...>

For more on complicated African women, see

Out of Africa, Dinesen, 1937

<https://www.goodreads.com/review/show...>

Gillian says

Beryl Markham was a complex, tormented woman who led a fascinating life, leaving her mark in racehorse training, aviation history and, in a manner of speaking, literature. Errol Trzebinski's book is a very interesting, compelling read, but marred by a number of sentences and even paragraphs the logic of which is difficult, if not impossible to follow, or even recognize.

Linda Doyle says

Beryl Markham was an accomplished aviator and race horse trainer. It's too bad too much of this book concentrates instead on Markham's innumerable love affairs and rampant promiscuity. She's portrayed as a selfish, difficult person, and the author gives the impression she doesn't like her subject. Trzebinski even puts forth the idea (with some good evidence) that Markham's third husband, a writer, is the real author of her best selling memoir, *West with the Night*.

I struggled to read some sections of this book but others were quite fascinating, especially the description of her history-making flight over the Atlantic. For that accomplishment alone, Beryl Markham deserves her place in history.

Kay says

Those who have a romanticized image of Beryl Markham after reading *West with the Night* and want to *keep* that image would do well to keep away from this book. It's a tell-all -- and there is much to tell -- as Markham was apparently rather promiscuous and at times rather callous and self-serving.

Still, I have to say I'm glad I read the book, for it casts light on a very complex person. Once again, here's an object lesson in how the very driven can also be, in many ways, rather unlikeable. However, I do think that Trzebinski may have deliberately been out to do a bit of a hatchett job on Markham -- or it any rate it sure seems that way. I may eventually read another, less scandal-prone, biography of Markham to help round out the subject a bit more.

I have to wonder, though, if Markham had been a man if she'd had been the subject of such an unflattering biography. She undoubtedly slept around a lot, was ornery as hell, and was a very poor parent. How many famous men does that describe?

Ann says

I gave this book 4 stars not because it was particularly well written, but because it was so fascinating. This woman was amazing. She lived like a man in the first half of the 20th century, and made many enemies because she had to audacity to do so. Love her or hate her she did incredible things. Although it doesn't make the book any less wonderful, it was a disappointment to find out she did not write "West With The Night," but that her 3rd husband ghost wrote it for her. Still, the experiences were hers, and she was amazing. The author put me off because she kept talking about how Ms. Markham was thinking, presuming all sorts of ideas. I bet she was thinking this . . . I hate that! No one knows what anyone else is thinking! Aggggh. I can't believe the editor let her get by with that again and again. Still, all in all a great read.

Stacye says

The author didn't seem to have very much admiration or respect for his subject. I just kept thinking that if she had been a man he would have been slapping her on the bag and giving her a wink and a nudge over the indiscretions that he portrays as overshadowing her incredible accomplishments. I'm certainly not saying that she was all good. No human is, but I wouldn't recommend this book because it is in my opinion it is a rather misogynist view of a complex and remarkable woman.

Judy says

West With the Night is one of my favorite books ever. So now I know Beryl Markham didn't really write it. Does that matter? Yes and no. It's still a beautifully written story, with a strong sense of place, about an amazing woman. And yes, now some of the bloom is off the rose for me. I got tired of reading about her sexual exploits and competitive nature. Truth be told, I didn't finish the book. I just got bored and gave up.

Linda says

The good, the bad and the ugly about one of the world's most fascinating women. Raised in the Kenyan bush largely by natives, Beryl went on to create successful careers training racehorses and in aviation. Equally at home in the bush, the stables or as a jet setter, Beryl was the first woman to cross the Atlantic from England, at night--without the benefit of modern day technology or even instrument panels.

Andrew says

I purchased and read this book after reading *West with the Night*, a story written by Beryl Markham (or so I thought) that chronicles her time as a bush pilot in British East Africa. I was so taken by the book that I wanted to learn more about this amazing woman. However...for those who have read *West with the Night* I say be warned. *The Lives of Beryl Markham* paints a much less flattering picture of the woman and even makes a strong case that Markham didn't write *West with the Night*. Prepare to have your romantic perceptions of this woman's life shattered after reading *The Lives of Beryl Markham*. The story reads a bit like a textbook and it took me quite a while to wade through it in spite of my interest in the subject.

Dianne says

After I read Paula McLain's "Circling the Sun," a work of historical fiction based on the early life of Beryl Markham, I immediately wanted to know more about Beryl. Since McLain's version was fictionalized, I wanted something closer to a true biography. "The Lives of Beryl Markham" was the first book in from the library, so I jumped right into it, eager to see how McLain's version dovetailed with a more factual version.

It was very interesting to see the choices McLain made in sticking to the facts and where she chose to embellish or alter the facts. I also see clearly now why McLain stopped her story with the conclusion of Beryl's remarkable flight from England to Nova Scotia in 1932 - Beryl's life afterwards was increasingly marked with poor decisions and ended in alienation, alcoholism and senility. A very sad end to a remarkable life but the paths she took and choices she made were all her own. She was uncompromising to a fault, very much her own woman. The sad part is her unusual upbringing made her an outcast of sorts. She was a "hybrid;" part African tribal mentality and part colonial British. She never really fit anywhere.

I appreciated the detailed accounting of Beryl's life, but Trzebinski's book reads much like a PhD thesis - there are 60 pages of references, footnotes and indices alone. It was somewhat of a workout to plow through, but I am glad I did.

Recommend mostly to those who want to know more about Beryl Markham's life, especially fans of "Circling the Sun."

Linda Lipko says

Beryl Markham led quite a life, one of hedonism, selfishness, ruthlessness without a thought of how her

actions impacted on those in her circle. Today she would be categorized as a sociopath. This is a tale of her life, including her many male conquests.

Abandoned in Africa by her mother, from an early age, she was loosely raised by her father. Working with him to train superb race horses, she acquired a reputation of doing men's work.

With little social skills, and a dire lack of education, she was able to use enough people to scratch and fight her way to the top of inner circles. Dennys Finch Hatton, Bjor Blixen, Karen Blixen, aka Isak Dinesen, and Barkley Cole were but a few of those she claimed as "friends."

Basically, to put it crudely, she slept her way through East Africa, drawing men like moths to a dangerous flame, she cared very little for her reputation, or the impact her actions caused to others.

She learned to fly a plane, and to her credit, her book *West With the Night* outlines her major accomplishment of being the first female to travel cross ocean. However, there is doubt that she actually wrote that book, and instead her former husband most likely penned it for her.

I did enjoy the depiction of East Africa and the ruggedness of that continent at the time of the great white hunters. Beryl Markham was indeed an interesting woman. Tall, beautiful and sensual, she deserves credit for her accomplishments.

Julie says

I can not understand why we do not know more about this women , she was one of the first women aviators and in the same class as Amy Johnson and Amelia Earhart,was an adventurer and did indeed live an extraordinary life. She was the fly in the ointment in the love affair between Karen Blixon and Denys finch Hatton , (out of Africa) and persued him for 8 years until finally having an affair with him, this shows the determination and mind set of the woman.Unfortunately she does not come across as a very nice person she treated her friends awfully and i was surprised at the end of her life she actually had anyone with her ! The author makes much of the fact her mother left her when she was young and her father moved his mistress in and was too busy to bother with her so she grew up with African children and lived her early life like a native. This is the excuse that is used to excuse her promiscuity and her fear of showing weakness and the ruthlessness she shows, I think it shows a very damaged young women who had many problems. She married three times and had 1 son who she did not bother with, she was not faithful to any of her husbands. The 3rd husband is the one who actually "Ghost wrote " her novel *West with the night*, but she has never admitted this even on her death bed. She moved around a lot in her later life from the USA, Rhodesia, South Africa and lived a very frugal life but made a living training race horses, she lived virtually on the charity of the few freinds who bothered with her, there must have been some redeeming features to make people want to help her but i couldnt find any !Like a lot of the Happy Valley set she died in poverty, even though her book was rediscovered in the 80's and became a best seller. She returned to Keyna in the latter part of her life and although found it much changed lived there for the rest of her life until dieing in her 80's, there was a flurry of interest in her when the out of Africa film was released but unfortunately by then she was too infirm to contribute and did not like being interviewed. She was a very private person and i think the author did a great job in actually writing this book , when hardly any of her friends survive or any paperwork was left by her, I would have liked to see more photos, she was described as a great beauty but you do not get a sense of this by the photos in the book.
