White Queen: May French-Sheldon and the Imperial Origins of American Feminist Identity

Tracey Jean Boisseau

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- "... Boisseau recontextualizes U.S. feminism in the cinematic 20th century. White Queen challenges the narratives we have told about ourselves and illuminates the imperialism and celebrity worship that lurks within American feminism yet today."
- -Lee Quinby, Harter Chair, Hobart and William Smith Colleges

May French-Sheldon's improbable public career began with an expedition throughout East Africa in 1891. She led a large entourage dressed in a long, flowing white dress and blonde wig, with a sword and pistol strapped to her side. As the "first woman explorer of Africa," she claimed to have inspired both awe and trust in the Africans she encountered, and as her celebrity grew, she reinvented herself as a messenger of civilization and "racial uplift." Tracey Jean Boisseau's insightful reading of the "White Queen" exposes the intertwined connections between popular notions of American feminism, American national identity, and the reorientation of Euro-American imperialism at the turn of the century.



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