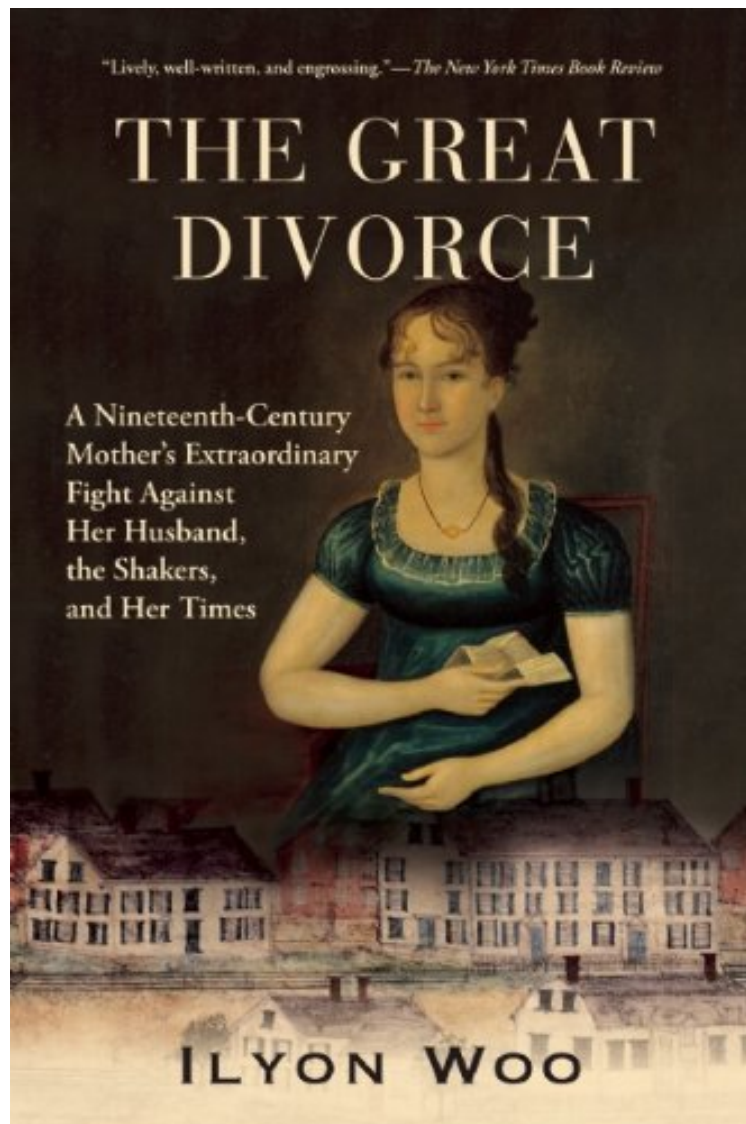


(Download free pdf) The Great Divorce: A Nineteenth-Century Mother's Extraordinary Fight against Her Husband, the Shakers, and Her Times

## The Great Divorce: A Nineteenth-Century Mother's Extraordinary Fight against Her Husband, the Shakers, and Her Times

*Ilyon Woo*

*audiobook / \*ebooks / Download PDF / ePub / DOC*



[Download](#)

[Read Online](#)

#1232550 in Books 2011-08-16 Original language: English PDF # 1 7.50 x 4.25 x 1.251, .85 #File Name: 080214537X416 pages | File size: 23.Mb

**Ilyon Woo : The Great Divorce: A Nineteenth-Century Mother's Extraordinary Fight against Her Husband, the Shakers, and Her Times** before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Great Divorce: A Nineteenth-Century Mother's Extraordinary Fight against Her Husband, the Shakers, and Her Times:

9 of 9 people found the following review helpful. Fantastic read!By CustomerI am a history junkie. I especially enjoy works that give a rich, full flavor of a time as well as presenting different views of the same event. This book delivers nicely on both counts, relating the atmosphere in New York State and the country in the early 1800's, especially in regards to religion, the condition of women, and women's rights. The centerpiece is one womans battle to regain her children, who had been spirited away by her husband. At a time when a woman had little recourse against those that harmed or mistreated her, Eunice Chapmans battle was an amazing one. What could have been a small family drama escalated into a war that caught up politicians, lawyers, the Shaker religion and such luminaries as Martin Van Buren and Thomas Jefferson.All that aside, the author makes the book highly accessible to the reader, writing in an engaging style that makes this a page-turning historical mystery. It is just plain great storytelling!0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Historical masterpieceBy Long term customerA deceptively easy read, but thought provoking. One almost immediately sympathizes with both Eunice and her husband James, if for different reasons. Opens a window on early 19th century life in America. Unlike similar works that strive to be scholarly and pretentious, this is a good old fashioned story that happens to be true.0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Reads like a novelBy SuekyReads like a novel...very well written and researched...lots of history of the times as well as the Shaker sects. EXCELLENT.

Ilyon Woos *The Great Divorce* is a dramatic, richly textured narrative history of early Americas most infamous divorce case. A young mother singlehandedly challenged her countrys notions of womens rights, family, and marriage itself in a bid to win back her kidnapped children from the celibate, religious sect known as the Shakers. Pulling together the pieces of this saga from crumbled newspapers, Shaker diaries, and long-forgotten letters, Woo delivers the first full account of Eunice Chapmans epic five-year struggle. A moving story about the power of a mothers love, *The Great Divorce* is also a memorable portrait of a rousing challenge to the values of a young nation.

From Publishers WeeklyKnown today for their elegant hand-hewn furniture, in the early 19th century the Shakers were a radical religious sect whose members renounced sexuality, property, and family to join a Christian utopian community. And if a father joined the Shakers with his children, as James Chapman did in 1814 in upstate New York, his estranged wife had neither parental rights nor legal recourse. In his smoothly narrative and revealing debut, Woo objectively deciphers this segregated society that, despite its stance in the Chapman case, believed in gender equality and was led by its own "Mother Lucy." Eunice Chapman successfully took her case against the Shakers and her husband to the New York legislature, where she obtained a divorce and regained legal custody of her three children, forcibly taking them back in 1818. Full of information about womens lives and status at the time, the book makes the case that Eunices charisma and obsessive determination helped her overcome the usual rejection of women in the public sphere. Both Eunices struggle and the Shakers story fascinate equally while dispelling romanticized myths of utopian societies in the tumultuous postrevolutionary period. Copyright Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.From BooklistBack in the 1800s, when a woman married, she ceased to exist. She had no legal rightszero. Thus the story of a woman like Eunice Hawley Chapman has real potential for drama. Indeed, this uppity woman's five-year struggle to gain custody of her children at any cost is most deservedly the stuff of an HBO miniseries. When Eunice's abusive, alcoholic husband, James Chapman, decided to clean up his life by joining a reclusive religious group called the Shakers, they asked that he face up to his marital and paternal responsibilities. His membership rested upon convincing Eunice to join him. She declined. So he sold all his worldly possessions, left Eunice with little but the clothes on her back, and abducted their three children to live with him inside the Shaker compound. While the U.S. was engaged in the War of 1812, Eunice launched a personal war on both governmental and religious authority. Alas much of the empathy we might feel for this dirt-poor mother and her quest gets lost amidst Woo's ponderous, thesis-like approach. --Donna Chavez *Modern Americans*, bombarded with stories of celebrity divorces, probably assume that the tabloid breakup is a recent phenomenon. This lively, well-written and engrossing tale proves them wrong.The New York Times Book Woo captures the drama and many ironies of Eunices story, admiring her courage without adopting her view of the Shakers as unmitigated villains.The New YorkerProvocativeWoo vividly tells the story of the Chapmans broken family, beginning with a dramatic sentence worthy of Stephen KingWoo tells [this story] in nuanced and absorbing detail.Elaine Showalter, *The Washington Post*Ilyon Woos *The Great Divorce* is much more than a fascinating account of a womans trailblazing battle for her children. By delving so deeply into the sources, Woo brings the past to life in all its wonderful strangeness, complexity, and verve. This is what history is all about.Nathaniel Philbrick, author of the National Book Award-winning *In the Heart of the Sea*Ilyon Woo has taken the stuff of obscure history and transformed it into a gripping drama that resonates with our own world. Though she lived in the 19th century, Eunice Chapman reminded me of Erin Brockovicha woman on a mission who fights like a tigress for what she believes in. Woo has an eye for the telling detail, and a prose style as elegantly spare as a Shaker chair. The result is a heart-warming, finely written story of one woman's battle against fanaticism, a story that has particular resonance today.Simon Worrall, author of *The Poet and the Murderer*American history, law, religion, and politics all come alive in this poignant account of an abandoned

womans rescue of her children in the first decades of the nineteenth century. Ilyon Woo gives us the unfolding drama of the first and only legislative divorce in the history of New York as part of a larger struggle for civil identity and womens rights. It is not enough to say that this story of Eunice Chapmans fight against injustice is well told. Ilyon Woo tells a story that every American should want to read. Robert A. Ferguson, George Edward Woodberry Professor of Law, Literature, and Criticism, Columbia University and author of *The American Enlightenment, 1750-1820* A gripping read. Ilyon Woo is a scholar who draws on an impressive array of primary sources, but her lively prose is anything but scholarly. That Woo succeeds in making the reader sympathize with Eunice Chapman is not surprising; that she also makes the reader feel empathy for the Shakers and the troubled James Chapman is a measure of her masterful and sensitive storytelling. Glendyne Wergland, author of *One Shaker Life: Isaac Newton Youngs, 1793-1865* Ilyon Woo presents the earliest child custody laws of this country with vivid relevance [Woo] creates a tactile portrait of life nearly 200 years ago both legal and feminist details are fascinating Eunice has all the splash and charisma of a modern celebrity. Holly Silva, *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* A myth-smashing tale It would have been easy to tell this story as a polemic or a melodrama, but Woo never lets us settle into mere indignation or pity. Anne Trubek, *The Barnes Noble* This biography makes a movie-worthy story of [Chapmans] struggle to reclaim her children and her destiny. Meredith Maran, *More* In addition to providing an enthralling account of Eunices early life, marriage, and legislative campaign, Woo offers a detailed look at the Shakers communal way of life. . . Woo writes with verve. Pamela H. Sacks, *Worcester Telegram Gazette* This is a true story of losses, but also a momentous emancipation, and what it took to get there. . . [Woo] is a wonderful resource to us today. . . Near the end, in the climax of the story, I felt as if I was gaining the kind of truth and wisdom that comes more often from a novel. David Ritchie, *Brattleboro Reformer* Woo gives an interesting, and at times gripping, step-by-step account of the drama, capturing the various personalities involved, the issues at the heart of the conflict, and the far-reaching political and social ramifications of the legislation. . . the challenge of the historical nonfiction genre is to give life to facts and to create an engaging story, in which nothing can be made up or embellish. Woo does an excellent job of meeting both those challenges. Carlene Phillips, *The Harvard Press* A smoothly narrative and revealing debut Full of information about womens lives and status at the time, the book makes the case that Eunices charisma and obsessive determination helped her overcome the usual rejection of women in the public sphere. Both Eunices struggle and the Shakers story fascinate equally while dispelling romanticized myths of utopian societies in the tumultuous postrevolutionary period. *Publishers Weekly* "A writer of extraordinary empathy and great resourcefulness, Ilyon Woo has transformed a neglected historical record into a vivid evocation of an era and an amazing tribute to a remarkably tenacious woman, Eunice Chapman. Meticulously researched and compellingly narrated, *The Great Divorce* will stand in the pantheon of American womens history writing." John Matteson, Pulitzer Prize-winning author of *Edens Outcasts* *The Great Divorce* is a superb book masterfully written, deeply suspenseful, and filled with fascinating facts and insights. American history would be everyones favorite subject if more historians wrote like this. Woo is a writer to watch. Debby Applegate, winner of the 2007 Pulitzer Prize for *The Most Famous Man in America: The Biography of Henry Ward Beecher* *The Great Divorce* is a riveting tale of betrayal and redemption. Ilyon Woos story of Eunice Chapmans desperate legal struggle to retrieve her children from the Shakers brings early nineteenth-century America alive. Woo blends a thorough knowledge of the era with a novelists eye for character and place to make us understand how one woman could wage such an epic battle and why we should know about her crusade. Michael Grossberg, Sally M. Reahard Professor of History Professor of Law, Indiana University, and author of *Governing the Hearth: Law and the Family in Nineteenth-Century America*