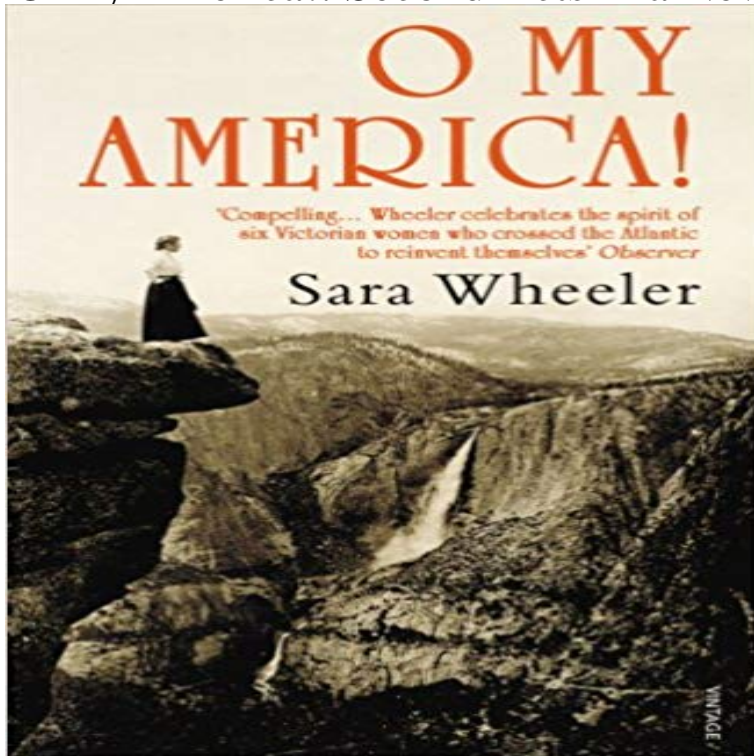


O My America!: Second Acts in a New World



Shortlisted for the Dolman Travel Book Award After reckoning with the ends of the earth in acclaimed books such as *Terra Incognita* and *The Magnetic North*, Sara Wheeler rediscovered America thirty-five years after her first Greyhound trip across the country. She returns in turbulent midlife to trace the steps of six women who fled various sorts of trouble in nineteenth-century England and went to the United States to reinvent themselves. Her travel companions include Fanny Trollope, mother of Anthony and author of the biting *Domestic Manners of the Americans*; the actress Fanny Kemble, who shocked the nation with her passionate first-hand indictment of slavery; the prolifically pamphleteering economist Harriet Martineau; the homesteader Rebecca Burlend, who had never been more than twelve miles from her Yorkshire village before she sailed to the New World; the traveller Isabella Bird, whose many ailments remained in check as long as she was scaling the Rockies; and the novelist Catherine Hubback, niece of Jane Austen, who deposited her husband in a madhouse and rode the brand-new rails to San Francisco. Tough-minded outsiders, these women's truest qualities emerged in a country as incomplete and tentative as their native land was staid and settled. And they discovered second acts for themselves at a time when the world expected them to disappear politely. From the swampy heat of Georgia's Sea Islands to the icy purity of the Cascades, Sara Wheeler finds their path, and her own.

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