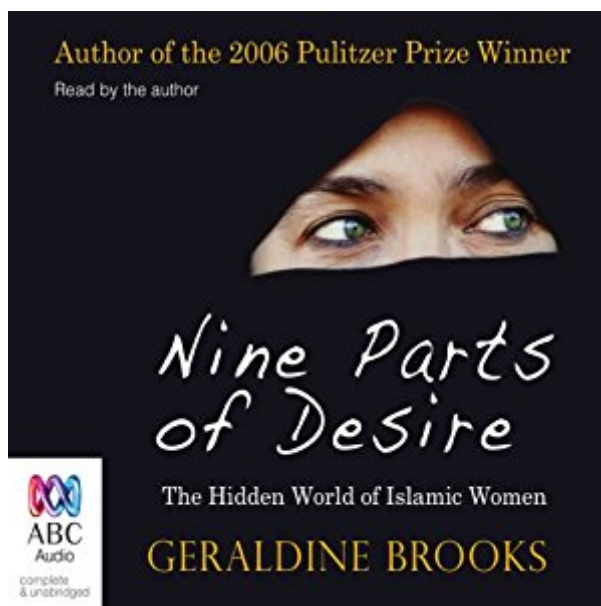


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Nine Parts Of Desire: The Hidden World Of Islamic Women



Synopsis

Nine Parts of Desire: The Hidden World of Islamic Women is the story of Brooks' intrepid journey toward an understanding of the women behind the veils, and of the often contradictory political, religious, and cultural forces that shape their lives. In fundamentalist Iran, Brooks finagles an invitation to tea with the ayatollah's widow-and discovers that Mrs. Khomeini dyes her hair. In Saudi Arabia, she eludes the severe segregation of the sexes and attends a bacchanal, laying bare the hypocrisy of this austere, male-dominated society. In war-torn Ethiopia, she watches as a female gynecologist repairs women who have undergone genital mutilation justified by a distorted interpretation of Islam. In villages and capitals throughout the Middle East, she finds that a feminism of sorts has flowered under the forbidding shroud of the chador as she makes other startling discoveries that defy our stereotypes about the Muslim world. Nine Parts of Desire is much more than a captivating work of firsthand reportage; it is also an acute analysis of the world's fastest-growing religion, deftly illustrating how Islam's holiest texts have been misused to justify the repression of women. It was, after all, the Shiite leader Ali who proclaimed that "God created sexual desire in ten parts, then gave nine parts to women."

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

This book was published over 10 years ago so I assume that it is a bit outdated. I am afraid that the conditions for Islamic women have mostly gotten worse than described. I am also going to assume the ratings for this book varied widely. Some were probably so vile that they had to be blocked and other ratings may have been overly idealistic and condemning of the religion vs. traditions of the

Islamic countries, some of which are still very much backwards (to those of us in the west). I found the book packed with vital, interesting, balanced information regarding religious practices in various Islamic countries. The author manages to cover the differences of attitudes and the attempts to make progress. She does a good job of explaining why some women, in the spirit of religious fever and anti-Western sentiment chose to start wearing a veil and even covering themselves from head to foot. It is hard for us in the west to accept this. There is a good understandable discussion of the Koran and it is interpreted to require more seclusion and abuse than the prophet Mohammed required. Though I must state, the book is written by a woman who converted to Judaism. I assume that makes her statements unacceptable to many people who might read this. This is a scholarly book with readable history of the Islamic countries and the various rulers of those countries. It also gave a good political analysis of how Western actions have helped increase fundamental fever rather than stop it (our misguided attempts have backfired). I also back came a conclusion that I had before I read the book. The only way Islamic women are going to gain some freedom from abuse is for them to find ways to lead their own people. Islamic men need to help and slowly they might make strides. I also had to resist injecting my own values into the reading of this - it was next to impossible but I did try. The book does a fairly good job of describing the main branches of Islamic traditions and why they came about. I knew that there were two but did not know about the many sub branches and related traditions. Finally there is a wonderful section about women athletics and the competition of Islamic women from Russian dominated countries (fairly liberal) to those from traditionally conservative Islamic areas (little training available.) I have a few minor negative comments. 1) the dictionary of terms is not go far enough. For instance there is a reference to a woman who is a Druse but nowhere was there an explanation of what a Druse is. 2) I would have liked a better understand what the term jihad really means to Islam. Many people believe all Muslims want to kill us. I think this is hardly true. But I would have like a deeper discussion of that point and similar attitudes to the west. 3) I would have liked to see a timeline on the progress of Islam and the major conflicts with Christianity as well as persecution from Judaism and other religions.

Our women's book club had a very interesting discussion about this book, which taught us many new things about the Moslem world. I think we all came away with a better understanding of the lives of women and their families in the Near East. The only problem is that the book was written in the mid 1990's and so much has happened in the world since then that we all wished there was an updated version!

The journalist spent years with dozens of Muslim women in multiple countries. The descriptions of rich, poor and middle class women's lives show a variability far beyond what I would have guessed. Historical paragraphs show how Prophet Muhammad's revelations and activities have affected the lives of women 14 centuries later. The author explains how the differing religious opinions provide a myriad of rules that vary from place to place. I know more now than I did when I started, but understand less.

I thought it was an excellent book setting out to understand cultures so different to mine. What was very interesting was the differences that exist in each of the nine countries. I again I appreciated living in a country where 'democracy' rules and I have the freedom to walk where I want, drive where I want, do what I want, vote, access medical care and make my own decisions

This book gives an interesting and different perspective on Islamic women and how they are treated in different parts of the Muslim world. It also gives insight to what they expect and what they accept over time.

I have greatly enjoyed this author's fiction and was pleased to find this nonfiction book by her. I have been an active volunteer in refugee resettlement, and with so many families coming in from the Middle East, it is helpful to have this extra background. I liked reading the early history of Islam and then the variations that evolved over the years. There is so much confusion and misunderstanding about Islam. This will be a useful and informative book for our volunteers.

I read most everything Geraldine Brooks writes. I enjoyed reading this to aid in understanding women in countries I will never visit. The criticism of not enough historical background may be correct. This is very readable and gives a thoughtful overview.

Books like this should be read by women the world over. It touches on many aspects of Islam, from the progressives to the fundamentalists within. It is a misogynistic ideology that has no place in the Western world.

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