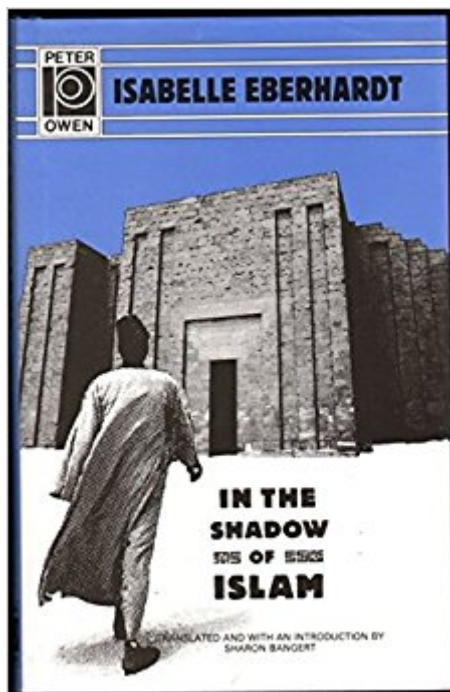


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In The Shadow Of Islam



Synopsis

Isabelle Eberhardt has emerged from the shadows to become a cult figure and an icon of the women's movement. Here is the first paperback edition of her travel journal cited by Paul Bowles as "a valuable work".

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

A European woman who assumed the persona of a young male Tunisian student describes her remarkable journey into the Sahara in colorful and textured, albeit romanticized, vignettes. In 1897, Isabelle Eberhardt (*The Oblivion Seekers*, not reviewed), born and raised in Geneva, traveled with her mother to Tunis, where both converted to Islam. Eberhardt spent much of the rest of her life in Algeria; this work comes from notes she made during 1904 as they were later edited and published in France by Victor Barrucand. Despite this cleanup of the notes, some intriguing internal tensions remain: Eberhardt says her male persona (which Arabs respected, even when they saw through it) allows her to travel without attracting notice, but in a low moment she notes that she attracts disapproval. Near the Algeria-Morocco border, she muses with some pleasure that nobody knows precisely where the boundary is, yet soon (in one of the few hints at the region's volatility) she trades her Moroccan attire for Algerian to avoid annoying residents. When individuals and settings attract her eye she describes them vividly and concisely, whether she is passing a madman reciting verses from the Koran or taking tea with male students at a mosque. (Her garb ironically restricts her access to--and ability to learn about--women; interestingly, she seems not to mind.) Her observations on the play of light and color over the desert are made with an artist's eye, and her

musings on travel and isolation reveal a pensive side. Yet far as she journeys, literally and metaphorically, she is still dogged by her prejudices: Jewish women cast "provocative leers," and Jewish men possess "insinuating and commercial abilities"; blacks can be "repulsive" and, when dancing, both "childlike" and "barbarous." Though lacking a needed glossary for the many Arabic terms used, this slim volume makes a welcome addition to the information available on an extraordinary woman. -- Copyright ©1994, Kirkus Associates, LP. All rights reserved.

"A compelling narrative and an ideal starting point from which to discover more about Isabelle Eberhardt's picaresque life." *Times Literary Supplement* "Her writings, and her sheer modernity, stand up to modern scrutiny." *Daily Telegraph* --This text refers to the Paperback edition.

Just what I needed

A very interesting book, which provides an insight into the world of the colonial era under European influence.

This volume of Isabelle Eberhardt's original *Dans L'ombre Chaude de Islam* "In the Warm Shadow of Islam" was penned in 1904. As a big Eberhardt fan I still enjoyed reading this slim 1993 edition although it's lamely billed "In the Shadow of Islam". Translated by Sharon Bangert, the omission of this single word from the title, "Warm", quite neatly reverses its meaning. Thus the translator or publishers (Peter Owen Publishers) chose to slyly sabotage Eberhardt's empathic sympathetic message about her chosen faith Sufism/Islam with a beckoning yet ominous tang. I suppose her original title, 'In the Warm Shadow of Islam', (emphasis mine) was too long and Islam-friendly for today's market? Thus, the publisher's choice perpetrates the ever popular anti-Islamic bent. That said, it's the brilliance of Eberhardt's work that manages to shine through even a biased translation. Without ado, let me provide some of my favorite quotes from *In the Shadow of Islam*: "To the extent that I feel myself saturated by ancient, unshaken Islam, which here seems to be the very breathing of the earth...And I understand that one could end one's days in the peace and silence of some southern zawiya, end in ecstasy, free of yearnings, confronting only radiant horizons. " pg 114 "I have jotted these reflections in the margin of a letter...Having written them, I relapse into my feeling of exile, wishing to bury myself even deeper in this hostile south, without any desire for the Paris I have known, where the newspaper's lip-service to feminism was even more repugnant to me

than the Parisian coquettes. I have said nothing in my response worth reading. Why bother? One day paths separate, destinies crystallize. And this is so much more than having made a few friends. When they are good enough to invite us to share their foreign happiness, let's show them what's possible to a true fraternity of minds. Let's regret nothing, since our happiness and theirs will consist in letting ourselves go one day, into mysterious currents which will carry our souls adrift towards impossible shores. Then we'll enjoy the intoxication of decadence and shipwreck; and wandering over the immense beaches of the night, we'll feel within us the seeds of suffering begin to germinate." pg 70 "...forgetting the principals of tolerance propounded by Islam at its purest..." pg 49 It strikes me that prayer, and dreams, too, should never end." pg 60-61 Please enjoy this timeless piece of writing...still relevant and convincing.

At times both poignant and prescient, "In the Shadow of Islam" is the revelation of a brilliant mind. The book is, as one would expect from a trade paperback, well printed and bound.

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