



The Butterfly Mosque: A Young American Woman's Journey to Love and Islam

By G. Willow Wilson



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The extraordinary story of an all-American girl's conversion to Islam and her ensuing romance with a young Egyptian man, *The Butterfly Mosque* is a stunning articulation of a Westerner embracing the Muslim world.

When G. Willow Wilson—already an accomplished writer on modern religion and the Middle East at just twenty-seven—leaves her atheist parents in Denver to study at Boston University, she enrolls in an Islamic Studies course that leads to her shocking conversion to Islam and sends her on a fated journey across continents and into an uncertain future.

She settles in Cairo where she teaches English and submerges herself in a culture based on her adopted religion. And then she meets Omar, a passionate young man with a mild resentment of the Western influences in his homeland. They fall in love, entering into a daring relationship that calls into question the very nature of family, belief, and tradition. Torn between the secular West and Muslim East, Willow records her intensely personal struggle to forge a “third culture” that might accommodate her own values without compromising the friends and family on both sides of the divide.

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Bibliography

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

In this satisfying, lyrical memoir of a potentially disastrous clash between East and West, a Boulder native and Boston University graduate found an unlikely fit living in Cairo, Egypt, and converting to Islam. Wilson embarked on a yearlong stint working at an English-language high school in Cairo right after her college graduation in 2003. She had already decided that of the three Abrahamic religions, Islam fulfilled her need for a monotheistic truth, even though her school did not include instruction in the Qur'an because it angered students and put everybody at risk. Once in Cairo, despite being exposed to the smoldering hostility Arab men held for Americans, especially for women, she found she was moved deeply by the daily plight of the people to scratch out a living in this dusty police state tottering on the edge of moral and financial collapse; she and her roommate, barely eating because they did not know how to buy food, were saved by Omar, an educated, English-speaking physics teacher at the school. Through her deepening relationship with Omar, she also learned Arabic and embraced the ways Islam was woven into the daily fabric of existence, such as the rituals of Ramadan and Friday prayers at the mosque. Arguably, Wilson's decision to take up the headscarf and champion the segregated, protected status of Arab women can be viewed as odd; however, her work proves a tremendously heartfelt, healing cross-cultural fusion. (*June*)

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From [Booklist](#)

Starred Review After an illness forces her to face her own mortality at age 18, Wilson, the child of two atheists, finds herself in search of religion. The faith that feels right for her is Islam, but in the wake of 9/11, she has difficulties embracing it fully. It isn't until she makes the decision to move to Cairo to teach at an English-language school that she is able to immerse herself in the religion she has come to love and become a Muslim. When she falls in love with Omar, an Egyptian physics teacher, Wilson becomes increasingly open about her faith, despite the reactions she fears from her friends and family. Though adjusting to life in Egypt takes some work—from learning the ins and outs of the complex marketplace to respecting societal divisions between men and women—Wilson finds herself warmly embraced and welcomed by Omar's family. Wilson's illuminating memoir offers keen insights into Islamic culture, distinguishing carefully between the radical fundamentalists who hate the West and the majority of peaceful Muslims. An eye-opening look at a misunderstood and often polarizing faith, Wilson's memoir is bound to spark discussion. -- Kristine Huntley

Review

"The Butterfly Mosque is replete with insights into faith, family, cross-cultural courtship and the inevitable 'clash of cultures,' making it an absorbing read. . . . Wilson's memoir offers the reader valuable insights into the Islamic faith. . . . A remarkable journey, one that illuminates the humanity in us all."—*The Seattle Times*

"Captivating . . . [An] excellent memoir . . . [that] deserves attention; not just for the clarity of [Wilson's] style and her shrewd observations, but for her sincerity and courage in following her own truth."—*The Globe and Mail*

"Eloquent . . . A life-altering adventure in love, faith, and surrender . . . [Wilson] wins the reader over with her courage, her keen intelligence, her insatiable hunger for truth, and her fine writing. It is riveting to watch a liberal, fiercely independent young American transform into a Muslim and an Egyptian daughter-in-law. . .

. Much more than a coming-of-age story, Wilson's memoir explores expatriates and anti-Westernism, economics and fundamentalism, Egyptian culture and feminism . . . [and] builds a bridge between the East and the West through her writing."—*Charlotte Observer*

"Wilson's book, particularly in these treacherous times of mistrust and paranoia, is a masterpiece of elegance and determination. . . . Wilson has written one of the most beautiful and believable narratives about finding closeness with God that makes even the most secular reader wince with pleasure for her. . . . A natural-born storyteller."—*The Denver Post*

"Wilson skillfully conveys the terms of complex sociological discord. . . . Her careful examination and forthright wit make her an ideal ambassador to those who haven't . . . separated [Islam] from its attendant terrorist factions and stereotypes. . . . Wilson has the objective sensitivity to understand the attitudes and arguments facing her; she's multicultural, eloquent and humbly persuasive. And even better, she knows how to tell a great story."—*Paste Magazine*

"Wilson's illuminating memoir offers keen insights into Islamic culture. . . . An eye-opening look at a misunderstood and often polarizing faith, Wilson's memoir is bound to spark discussion."—*Booklist* (starred review)

"More than one skeptical reader was thoroughly won over by [Wilson's] lack of preachiness or self-righteousness."—*Elle* (Readers' Prize)

"A gorgeously written memoir about what it means to be human in a fractured world, told with warmth and wit to spare. *The Butterfly Mosque* is a book that will stay with you for years."—Reza Aslan, author of *No god but God and How to Win a Cosmic War*

"Satisfying and lyrical . . . [*The Butterfly Mosque*] proves a tremendously heartfelt, healing cross-cultural fusion."—*Publishers Weekly*

"[An] honest and uplifting memoir . . . [that] embraces—not demonizes—both Muslims and the West as critical foundations for [Wilson's] spiritual journey."—*The Huffington Post*

"Thoughtful . . . Wilson's gorgeously written, deeply felt memoir is more than a plea for understanding. It's also a love story and an exploration of life in a culture far removed from ours. . . . [*The Butterfly Mosque*] pulls aside the veil on a world many Americans judge based on thin, sometimes ugly, media stereotypes. Wilson's sincere love for her faith blooms on almost every page [and] that heartfelt desire to know The Other infuses the book with soul."—*Boulder Daily Camera*

"Memoirs like Wilson's continue to be an important counterpoint to the tales of Mideast belligerence that fill the nightly news."—*Winnipeg Free Press*

"What the reader takes away from [*The Butterfly Mosque*], besides an appreciation for Wilson's limning of Cairene life, is not the feeling that Islam and the West should never have been at odds. Rather, if there is a theological revelation, it's the approach Wilson models as a literary critic: she's a better one, capable of reading ironically, than fundamentalists of any stripe. . . . [Wilson] reveals not the correct or final interpretation but the value of interpretation itself."—*Powells Books*

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Kevin Gans:

Why don't make it to become your habit? Right now, try to ready your time to do the important behave, like looking for your favorite reserve and reading a guide. Beside you can solve your condition; you can add your knowledge by the e-book entitled The Butterfly Mosque: A Young American Woman's Journey to Love and Islam. Try to the actual book The Butterfly Mosque: A Young American Woman's Journey to Love and Islam as your friend. It means that it can being your friend when you sense alone and beside regarding course make you smarter than previously. Yeah, it is very fortunated for you. The book makes you more confidence because you can know almost everything by the book. So , let's make new experience in addition to knowledge with this book.

Denise Dennis:

The publication with title The Butterfly Mosque: A Young American Woman's Journey to Love and Islam possesses a lot of information that you can understand it. You can get a lot of gain after read this book. That book exist new information the information that exist in this e-book represented the condition of the world now. That is important to yo7u to find out how the improvement of the world. That book will bring you throughout new era of the internationalization. You can read the e-book on your smart phone, so you can read that anywhere you want.

Herman Hernandez:

The Butterfly Mosque: A Young American Woman's Journey to Love and Islam can be one of your basic books that are good idea. All of us recommend that straight away because this publication has good vocabulary that can increase your knowledge in terminology, easy to understand, bit entertaining but nevertheless delivering the information. The author giving his/her effort to get every word into joy arrangement in writing The Butterfly Mosque: A Young American Woman's Journey to Love and Islam nevertheless doesn't forget the main place, giving the reader the hottest along with based confirm resource facts that maybe you can be considered one of it. This great information can certainly drawn you into new stage of crucial imagining.

Debra Brunette:

Reading a book for being new life style in this season; every people loves to read a book. When you examine a book you can get a lots of benefit. When you read publications, you can improve your knowledge, simply because book has a lot of information onto it. The information that you will get depend on what types of book that you have read. If you wish to get information about your review, you can read education books, but if you want to entertain yourself you are able to a fiction books, this kind of us novel, comics, as well as soon. The The Butterfly Mosque: A Young American Woman's Journey to Love and Islam provide you with a new experience in reading a book.

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