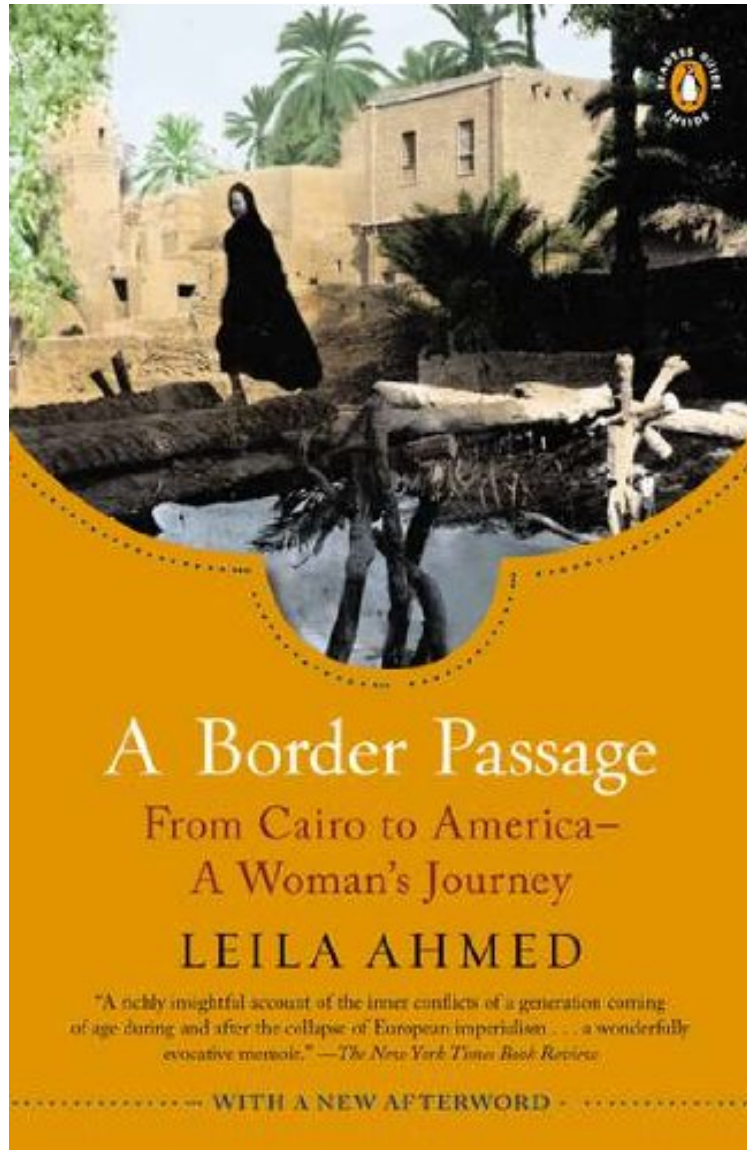


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A Border Passage: From Cairo to America--A Woman's Journey

Leila Ahmed

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Leila Ahmed : A Border Passage: From Cairo to America--A Woman's Journey before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised A Border Passage: From Cairo to America--A Woman's Journey:

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Insightful Memoir from a True Citizen of the WorldBy Chimonsoh"Border Passage" is a very significant 20C memoir. Ahmed, a professor of religion, has spent much of her academic career demonstrating the complexity of Islamic faith, the unacknowledged roles of Muslim women. A key

insight here is her assertion that "women's Islam" is different from that of men: more private and less strident, perhaps more tolerant, worth attentive consideration. Though she emphasizes liberal elements of Islam, she is no apologist. Though some parts are less than scintillating, it is always readable. Her own story is most instructive, describing extensive travels for education and teaching, offering thoughtful comments on various people and places. "Border Passage" provides essential personal context for her scholarly work, also revealing key aspects of Middle Eastern and world history. It presents penetrating insights into the varieties of Islam; the modern encounter between West and non-West (sic); varied aspects of nationalism; the impact of education migration on women.² of 2 people found the following review helpful. I especially liked the chapter about who she was. By ClifCI especially liked the chapter about who she was: an Egyptian or an Arab, since this is the sort of self-identification we all can think about. I had heard this question in another context before: what are we first, Americans or Christians.³ of 3 people found the following review helpful. Thoughtful and informative book. By bubbieI really appreciated Leila Ahmed's thoughtful and informative book, "A Border Passage: From Cairo to America--A Woman's Journey". She grew up a Muslim, in Cairo. Her maternal grandparents were quite wealthy, but when Nasser came to power, most of their wealth was snatched away. Leila tells of her idyllic childhood in Cairo, then her schooling in England. She eventually went on to teach in the UAE and the US. Towards the end of her book, she addressed what it was to be both a Muslim and a feminist. Here is where I could only read a few paragraphs at a time, as I would have to put the book down so I could ruminate over what she had written. It wasn't that it was hard to comprehend, it's just that I wanted to savor the ideas. This is what a good book does. I was enchanted by this book because the first 4/5 were memoirs, and the last 1/5 was a philosophical dissection. Very sweet book. I have recommended it in a chat room as a "must read" book.

An Egyptian woman's reflections on her changing homeland updated with an afterword on the Arab Spring. In language that vividly evokes the lush summers of Cairo and the stark beauty of the Arabian desert, Leila Ahmed movingly recounts her Egyptian childhood growing up in a rich tradition of Islamic women and describes how she eventually came to terms with her identity as a feminist living in America. As a young woman in Cairo in the forties and fifties, Ahmed witnessed some of the major transformations of this century: the end of British colonialism, the rise of Arab nationalism, and the breakdown of Egypt's once multi-religious society. As today's Egypt continues to undergo revolutionary change, Ahmed's inspirational story remains as poignant and relevant as ever.

From Publishers Weekly. As in her widely admired scholarly book *Women and Gender in Islam*, Ahmed addresses how historical and political forces shape personal identities, particularly those of Arab Muslim women. Here, however, the subject is Ahmed's own identity as a scholar, a woman, a Muslim and an upper-class Egyptian at home in both East and West. In elegant prose, she tells of her childhood in Cairo, her college years at Cambridge and of teaching in Abu Dhabi and America. In Ahmed's nuanced rendering, politics are not the backdrop to people's lives but their fabric. The internalization of colonial attitudes, the 1952 revolution and Arab nationalism, class issues, the effects of Zionism and the politics of gender roles are woven into her life and the lives of those around her. Most poignant is the transformation of Ahmed's disdain for her "traditional" Arabic-speaking mother, who spent her days with female relatives, into an understanding of how these women made sense of their lives. Indeed, throughout this fluid memoir, she provocatively reformulates the terms by which men—Western and Arab—have defined women through her own cross-cultural comparisons of women's communities, as when she describes the all-female Girton College (at Cambridge) as a harem: "the harem as I had lived it, the harem of older women presiding over the young." Copyright 1999 Reed Business Information, Inc. From *Library Journal*. Ahmed, a professor of women's studies at Amherst and the author of such scholarly works as *Women and Gender in Islam* (Yale Univ., 1993), writes a personal memoir of her childhood in 1940s and 1950s Cairo, education in England, and teaching work in America. Like the most skillful and subtle of teachers, she entices you with what seems like an afternoon chat over tea; only when it is over do you realize how much you have learned and how fascinating the journey has been. She imparts a great deal of Egyptian history, culture, and sociology, including some background on the concept of "Arabness," as well as a brilliant introduction to the difference between the Islam of men and the Islam of women. The descriptions of her grandmother's salon will no doubt strike a chord of memory with any Western female who spent time listening to mothers, aunts, and grandmothers in the kitchen at family gatherings. A delightful read; recommended for libraries that collect in intercultural, gender, or Middle Eastern studies. AJulie Still, Rutgers Univ., Camden, NJ Copyright 1999 Reed Business Information, Inc. From *Booklist*. Questions of identity engage Ahmed in this gracefully written and deeply felt reflection on her Egyptian Muslim childhood, Cambridge education, and life in U.S. academia. Born into Cairo's upper class during the 1940s, Ahmed, professor of women's studies at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst, was taught to value all things European, an orientation discredited by the revolution, Nasser's ascent to power, and the emergence of Arab nationalism. Ahmed's confusion about her place in the new Egypt was further exacerbated by her engineer father's bold opposition to Nasser's pet project, the Aswan High Dam. She was also profoundly affected by her observations of the great divide between the sexes, and she uses her carefully parsed memories of her extended family and friends to introduce striking insights into the radically different ways Islamic men and women interpret their faith.

Poetic and questing, Ahmed brings the same perspicacity to her musings on the experience of being seen as a woman of color in England and the U.S., ultimately illuminating the malignancy of so many of our assumptions regarding gender, race, culture, and who has the power to declare what is right. Donna Seaman