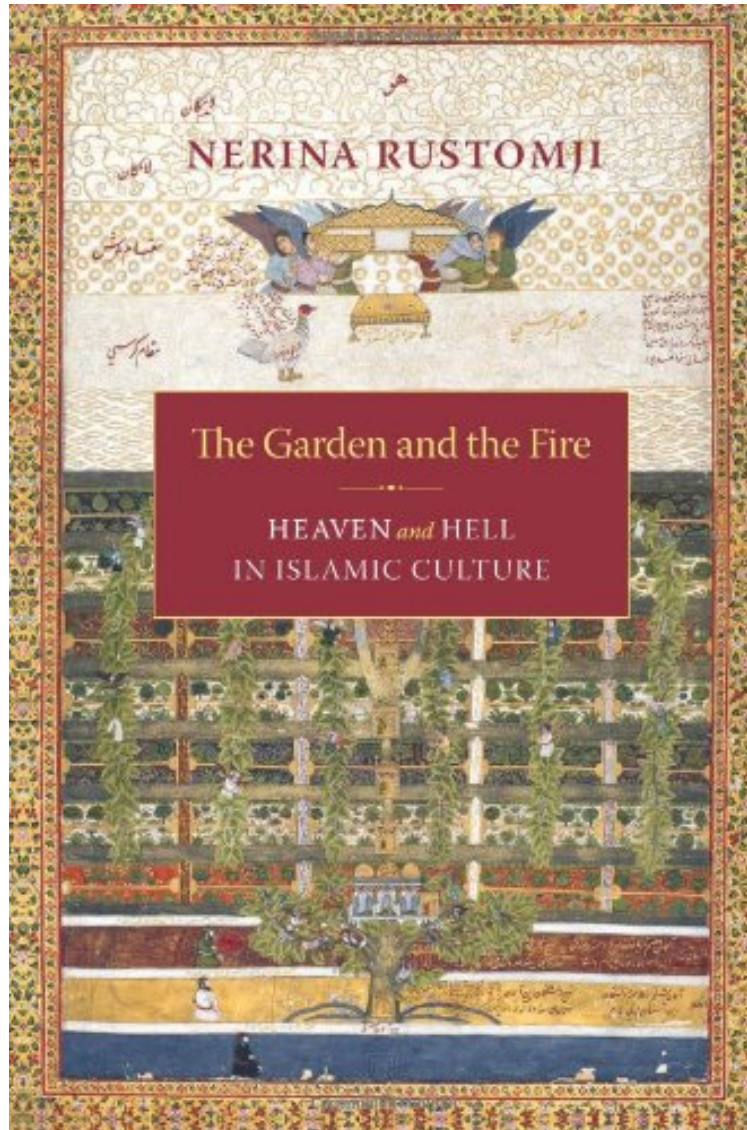


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The Garden and the Fire: Heaven and Hell in Islamic Culture

Nerina Rustomji

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Nerina Rustomji : The Garden and the Fire: Heaven and Hell in Islamic Culture before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Garden and the Fire: Heaven and Hell in Islamic Culture:

2 of 3 people found the following review helpful. A collection from the Qur'an and the hadiths By Paul Stevenson Nerina Rustomji has collected many sources of Islamic ideas about the Garden/Paradise and the Fire/Hell. She has drawn on the Qur'an, hadiths and eschatological manuals. She traces the development of these ideas from their beginnings in the Qur'an through ever greater elaborations, with more and more details filled in over the centuries. An

interesting feature of Islamic thought about the next life is that it envisions what Rustomji justly calls an "afterworld," which is somewhat different than the usual Christian idea of an "afterlife." While Christians tend to see the afterlife of the saved as primarily existence in the direct presence of God, with little elaboration of the physical conditions of heaven, Muslims have many detailed concepts about the physical characteristics of Paradise and its inhabitants, both human and non-human. The final chapter includes reproductions of numerous paintings that represent life in both Paradise and the Fire. This book is a useful source of information for those curious about Muslim concepts of life after death. There is a lot more to it than the "72 virgins" that seem to be about the only bit of (mis)information that circulates in popular lore in America these days. This book, like many other academic books from many publishers in recent years, sadly suffers from a lack of proofreading. It is riddled with small errors on many pages, and has a few larger ones too. Academic publishers, please go back to using editors and proofreaders!

Islamic conceptions of heaven and hell began in the seventh century as an early doctrinal innovation, but by the twelfth century, these notions had evolved into a highly formalized ideal of perfection. In tracking this transformation, Nerina Rustomji reveals the distinct material culture and aesthetic vocabulary Muslims developed to understand heaven and hell and identifies the communities and strategies of defense that took shape around the promise of a future world. Ideas of the afterworld profoundly influenced daily behaviors in Islamic society and gave rise to a code of ethics that encouraged abstinence from sumptuous objects, such as silver vessels and silk, so they could be appreciated later in heaven. Rustomji conducts a meticulous study of texts and images and carefully connects the landscape and social dynamics of the afterworld with earthly models and expectations. Male servants and female companions become otherworldly objects in the afterlife, and stories of rewards and punishment helped preachers promote religious reform. By employing material culture as a method of historical inquiry, Rustomji points to the reflections, discussions, and constructions that actively influenced Muslims' picture of the afterworld, culminating in a distinct religious aesthetic.

A timely publication, highly recommended for specialists and non-specialists alike. (Youssef Choueiri Times Higher Education Supplement) This gem of a book offers a thorough, evocative study... Essential. (Choice) A delightful book. (David Reisman Journal of Islamic Studies) A wide-ranging... welcome addition to a small and growing body of scholarship. (Brannon Wheeler American Historical) Rustomji has filled a real gap in the secondary literature.... [The Garden and the Fire] is one of the best introductions to the Islamic eschatological literature. (Walid Saleh Journal of the American Academy of Religion) Highly useful not only to students and educated lay people but also to comparativists and specialists. (Frederick S. Colby Journal of Religion) About the Author Nerina Rustomji is associate professor of history at St. John's University in Queens, New York.