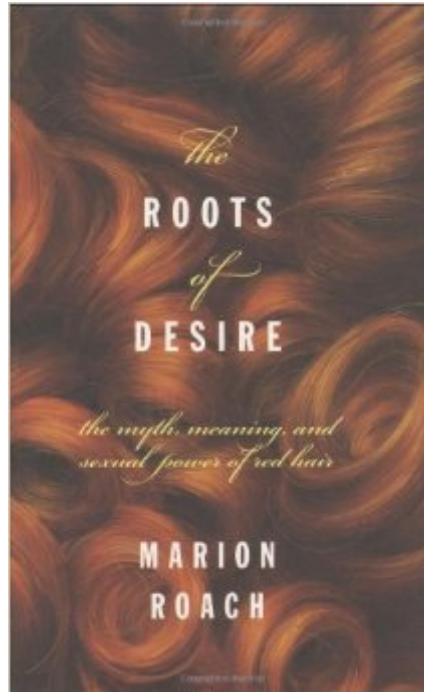


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Roots Of Desire: The Myth, Meaning And Sexual Power Of Red Hair



Synopsis

Part history, part cultural commentary, part memoir, *The Roots of Desire* is a witty and entertaining investigation into what it means to be a redhead. A redhead rarely goes unnoticed in a crowded room. From Judas Iscariot to Botticelli's *Venus* to Julianne Moore, redheads have been worshipped, idealized, fetishized, feared, and condemned, leaving their mark on us and our culture. Such is the power of what is actually a genetic mutation, and in *The Roots of Desire*, Marion Roach takes a fascinating look at the science behind hair color and the roles redheads have played over time. She discovers that in Greek mythology, redheads become vampires after they die; Hitler banned intermarriage with redheads for fear of producing "deviant offspring"; women with red hair were burned as witches during the Inquisition; in Hollywood, female redheads are considered sexy while male redheads are considered a hard sell; and in the nineteenth century, it was popular belief that redheads were the strongest scented of all women, smelling of amber and violets. Redheads have been stereotyped, marginalized, sought after, and made to function as everything from a political statement to a symbol of human carnality. A redhead herself, Roach brings candor and brilliant insight to the complicated and revealing history of redheads, making this a stand-out narrative and an essential tool in understanding the mechanics and phenomenon of red hair.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

If I had it to do again, I wouldn't waste my money or my time on this book. I wish I'd read the negative reviews because they're all correct: Roach is all over the place in this sketchy tome riddled with unnecessarily complicated run-on sentences and inflated narcissism. She goes to witch camp

to find out about redheads, but never completes the inquiry. She goes on and on about her visit to Darwin's house, which gives no insight except the one that she misses: Red hair is hardly a characteristic of the fittest because it's most often accompanied by fair skin prone to sunburn, making redheads more vulnerable in many parts of the globe. It's lost on her that, following Darwin's theory, it should have died out long ago, overtaken by "fitter" characteristics let alone eliminated because it was seen as a sign of sin during certain periods. Red-heads, as she points out, are most prevalent where the sun is weakest, in often-grey places like England, Ireland and Scotland. Her lengthy attempts at explaining the genetics of red hair are redundant and vacuous, leaving the reader with nothing. Her again-lengthy explanations about why some of history's most infamous characters like Lilith and Eve are portrayed in the arts as red-heads completely neglect what is most obvious: Their hair color is anyone's guess and they are portrayed long after their existence by artists using red for its visceral affect on the viewer. A more "extensive serious inquiry" as the Chicago Tribune review on the back cover says, might have delved into the psychology of color - why red is perceived as a power color, while blue is perceived as soothing, yellow uplifting; then to abstract that into why red-heads are met with such strong reaction, be it love, lust, fear, or hate.

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