Dreams of Trespass: Tales of a Harem Girlhood

Fatima Mernissi

Description

Dreams of Trespass: Tales of a Harem Girlhood takes place in Fez, Morocco, in the 1940s and early 1950s. The harem of this memoir’s title is a large house with its own courtyard, shared by several generations of an extended family. Fatima Mernissi recounts her experiences and observations as a precocious young girl living in the harem, acutely aware of the many sacred frontiers she is forbidden to cross—the barriers between men and women and between Muslims and Christians, the threshold separating one room from another or the interior of the house from the street outside. She learns that all the women around her chafe at the limitations of harem life in one way or another, but she also comes to realize that she can transcend these limitations covertly—through imagination, creativity, learning, and even mischief.

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We enter each chapter of Dreams of Trespass through an exquisite photograph and are held there by the magic of Fatima Mernissi’s words, proving that she has indeed become an expert storyteller. Mernissi’s memoir about her childhood in an urban domestic harem in Fez in the late 1940s recounts the life experiences of her female relatives and her own reactions to the world around her. The book demystifies the harem and puts a face on Arab Muslim women in a personal and highly entertaining manner, exploring the nature of women’s power...
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