



# Harem: The World Behind the Veil

*Alev Lytle Croutier*

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# Harem: The World Behind the Veil

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## **Harem: The World Behind the Veil** Alev Lytle Croutier

This book offers an insight into the harem and harem life, focusing on the famed Seraglio of Topkapi Palace. The author uses her first-hand experience to describe the absolute rule of the sultans, the slave markets and the eunuchs. The book is illustrated with paintings by Delacroix, Ingres and Renoir, Turkish woodcuts, Persian miniatures, photographs and film stills. Croutier investigates the middle class harems, looking at the polygamous life of ordinary Middle Eastern households, including marital customs, child rearing, medical practices, superstitions and the expression of desire and jealousy. "Harem" shows how this Eastern institution invaded the Victorian imagination, in the form of decorating, costume and art and how Western ideas, in turn, eroded a system which had seemed to be absolutely powerful.

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