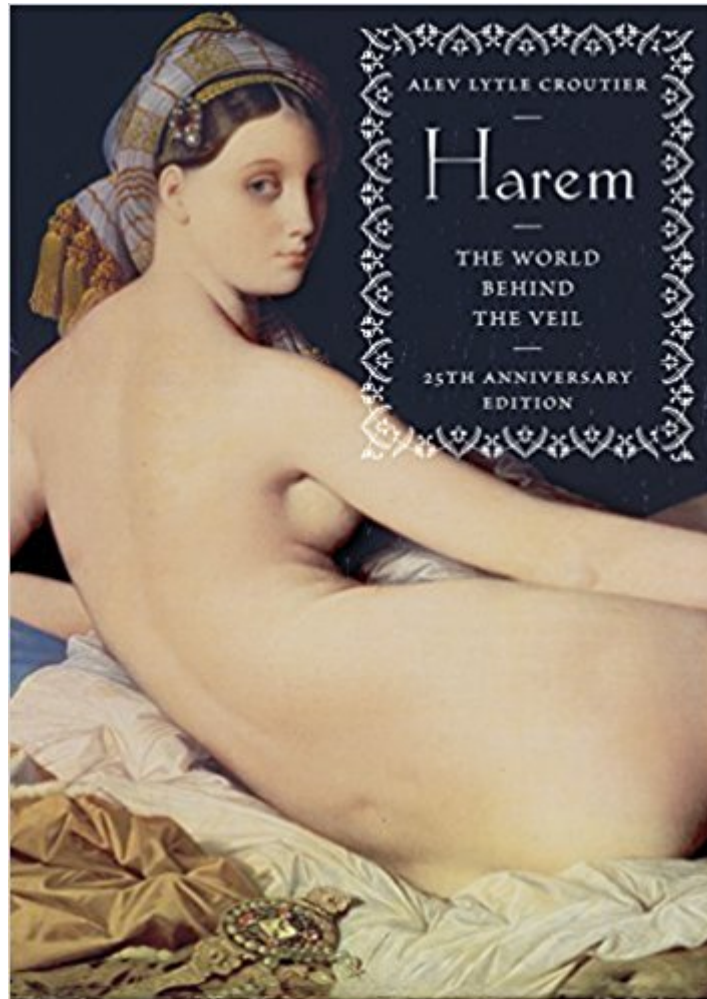




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# Harem: The World Behind The Veil



## Synopsis

A fascinating illustrated history of one of the strangest, and cruelest, cultural institutions ever devised. A worldwide best seller, translated into twenty-five languages. "I was born in a konak (old house), which once was the harem of a pasha," writes Alev Lytle Croutier. "People around me often whispered things about harems; my own grandmother and her sister had been brought up in one." Drawing on a host of firsthand accounts and memoirs, as well as her own family history, Croutier explores life in the world's harems, from the Middle Ages to the early twentieth century, focusing on the fabled Seraglio of Topkapi Palace as a paradigm for them all. We enter the slave markets and the lavish boudoirs of the sultanas; we witness the daily routines of the odalisques, and of the eunuchs who guarded the harem. Here, too, we learn of the labyrinthine political scheming among the sultan's wives, his favorites, and the valide sultana; the sultan's mother; whose power could eclipse that of the sultan himself. There were the harems of the sultans and the pashas, but there were also "middle-class" harems, the households in which ordinary men and women lived out ordinary; albeit polygamous; lives. Croutier reveals their marital customs, child-rearing practices, and superstitions. Finally, she shows how this Eastern institution invaded the European imagination; in the form of decoration, costume, and art; and how Western ideas, in turn, finally eroded a system that had seemed eternal. Juxtaposing a rich array of illustrations; Western paintings, Turkish and Persian miniatures, family photographs, and even film stills; Croutier demystifies the Western erotic fantasy of "the world behind the veil." This revised and updated 25th anniversary edition of *Harem* includes a new introduction by the author, revisiting her subject in light of recent events in Turkey, and the world.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

I enjoyed learning about the harem and what it was really like in the different time periods. Ms. Croutier does a great job of giving the reader a nice overview of the harem. What I didn't particularly care for was that the information was very general. Ms. Croutier doesn't go into any great detail about any of the particular time periods. I have no idea of the ins and outs of harem life in the 1500s compared with life in the 1700s. I wanted more in depth information and I wanted to learn more about the particular women of the time period. In the end, I just wanted more information. I don't believe this book will answer a whole lot of questions about harem life. I think most readers will find themselves searching for other books so they can have a more full, well-rounded, understanding of the harem.

This is a interesting factual report of what harem life was like throughout the years. It makes me glad to be here now. All those beautiful women in beautiful clothes kept prisner and scabbling about who is the most important. What a waste of women.

Truly excellent. Rarely does a scholarly book give such rich, elegant detail, especially considering the hidden world of harem women in Ottoman Turkey. I sank into this book with avid curiosity, and stayed riveted to its pages. Illustrated with stunning artwork, (both Eastern and Western interpretations), it is beautiful enough for your coffee table, intelligent enough for your smart friends, and sexy enough for your nightstand. An absolute jewel of a book. I recommend it to anyone who has ever been curious about those unknown, unnamed women whose lives were lived behind the harem veils.

I thought this book was going to be a bore especially after reading the authors description of what the book was, however I was pleased to find that this book is actually a page Turner! I tell all my

friends about it all the time and am even considering using this book as the next read of my book club! ã ã ã^ã

The book was a disappointment..It was more of a history documentary.I had expected actual stories of young women brought into the harem-+a first person account-instead it just described them. A lot of research went into this book.I would have enjoyed some personal stories.

Interesting. Although it was written from the author's personal prospective the novel showed deep academic research, at times it felt like as if I was reading history textbook (in a positive way). Personally, Turkey is one of those countries I can always go back and find something new and fascinating about. This book answered some of my questions and confirmed what I knew before I opened it. I was sort of unprepared for the abrupt ending, other than that I liked the novel, would definitely recommend it.

The Turkish born author presents a fascinating insight into harem life in fifteenth through nineteen century Turkey. She supplements her account with paintings and photographs of the era, including some of her own family. This balanced account debunks many Western myths relating to harems. Her thoughtful account explains why harems existed, what life was like inside them, and how they related to Islam and Turkish culture. Fascinating read!

Like others have said this is an interesting and very easy to read book. Would def recommend to others who are interested in this subject. I feel super bad for the eunuchs and women and what they went through.

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