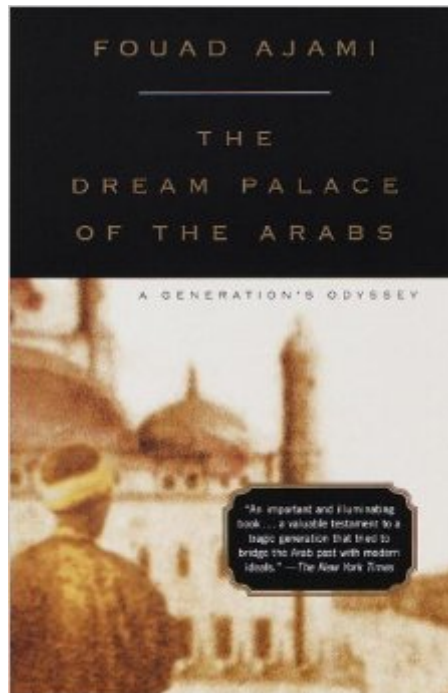


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Dream Palace Of The Arabs: A Generation's Odyssey



Synopsis

From Fouad Ajami, an acclaimed author and chronicler of Arab politics, comes a compelling account of how a generation of Arab intellectuals tried to introduce cultural renewals in their homelands through the forces of modernity and secularism. Ultimately, they came to face disappointment, exile, and, on occasion, death. Brilliantly weaving together the strands of a tumultuous century in Arab political thought, history, and poetry, Ajami takes us from the ruins of Beirut's once glittering metropolis to the land of Egypt, where struggle rages between a modernist impulse and an Islamist insurgency, from Nasser's pan-Arab nationalist ambitions to the emergence of an uneasy Pax Americana in Arab lands, from the triumphalism of the Gulf War to the continuing anguished debate over the Israeli-Palestinian peace accords. For anyone who seeks to understand the Middle East, here is an insider's unflinching analysis of the collision between intellectual life and political realities in the Arab world today.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

The extremism that seems to pervade the Middle East is neither the region's predestined endpoint nor is it a historical inevitability—rather, it is a condition that sprung out from the failure of a great generation of reformers and free-thinkers that lived in the middle of the twentieth century, and whose passing away by the 1990s marked the triumph of theocracy and backwardness in the Middle East. "The Dream Palace of the Arabs" is the sequel to the "Arab Predicament," which Fouad Ajami, a Lebanese professor at Johns Hopkins, published in 1980; back then, Mr. Ajami was

younger and "approached [his] material more eager to judge." In the "Arab Predicament," he bemoaned the Arab political experience; in "The Dream Place of the Arabs" he tries to "appreciate what had gone into the edifice that Arabs had built." This literary journey chronicles the birth of a generation of modernizing Arabs that fought and lost the case for modernity. The history of the past seventy years is narrated through the life of authors and their works-what they wrote, how the societies around them reacted, and how the political condition merged with their literary expression, only to suppress it and silence it. As a parallel history, "The Dream Palace of the Arabs" could accompany any book. But in looking at the literary interplay between modernizing authors and their surroundings, Mr. Ajami has not only dug deeper in his probe of what brought about the present Arab political condition, but has analyzed the issue on a whole other level. The reader who is familiar with Middle Eastern history will not feel burdened by the material. The refreshing tone and approach allows Mr.

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