

The Private Life Of Islam: An Algerian Diary - Ian Young

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Ian Young spent a summer as a medical student in a provincial maternity unit in Algeria. This book is taken from the diary he began on arrival, when he found himself the privileged witness of the insides not just of Kabyl women, but also some much-trumpeted ideology. The immediate villains are a couple of expatriate Bulgarian gynaecologists. Dr Vasilev, at the closing stages of a career of fathomless incompetence, forms a bond of affection with the author and they spend many hours in the office over an old route map of Bulgaria, discussing mileages and motorcycles as Maternity drifts beneath them like an abandoned ship. Dr Kostov packs a powerful bedside punch and saves his humanitarian feelings for the health of the Deutschmark. The two form a macabre comic team as they take the reader through a series of medical nightmares. But their lot is scarcely more enviable than that of their female victims: the foreign doctors are the unhappy executors, working in blood, excrement and death, of the most respected attitudes in Algeria. The Private Life of Islam is a ruthlessly clear-sighted view of a particular place at a particular time. It is also a classic in the art of story-telling.'A real achievement, personal as well as literary.' David Pryce-Jones, The Times'A parable of the reality behind a vast amount of modern social and political fantasy, even in the most developed of countries.' David Holden, Sunday Times

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