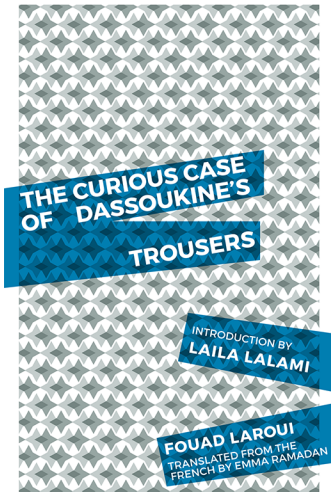


The Curious Case of Dassoukine's Trousers

About the Book



By Fouad Laroui | Translated by Emma Ramadan
120pp | \$14.95 US
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What would it be like—a world where everything was foreign? The first book in English by Morocco’s most prominent contemporary writer, a bestseller in both France and Morocco, winner of the Prix Goncourt de la nouvelle, the most prestigious literary award in France for a short story collection, this linked story collection employs laugh-out-loud humor and profound pathos across a variety of literary styles to explore what it is like to live surrounded by the unfamiliar: to try to make it as an expatriate, to converse with those who know things by different names, to encounter prejudice, and more, all related in Laroui’s powerful conversational literary style, which manages to be at the same time wholly unique and wholly familiar.

Discussion Questions

1. In the story titled “Dislocation” (p.18), the narrator, Maati, asks the question, “What would it be like—a world where everything was foreign?” He repeats the question, each time adding in a new element, building a story around his thoughts as he walks home to his wife, Anna. Why do you think Laroui chose to structure the story this way, and what is the significance of repeating the question as he begins and ends each growing iteration of thoughts?
2. What perspective does this story collection offer on the subject of cultural difference, identity, the idea of being ‘foreign’?
3. Talk about the story that stood out to you, and discuss why.
4. Many of the stories read as conversation, dialogue between friends and strangers, internal conversations, and even the conversations that happen in what is not said. Do you think his use of conversation is effective in exploring language, culture, religion, and philosophy throughout the stories? Why or why not? Why do you think Laroui chose to write with such an emphasis on dialogue?
5. In the title story, “The Curious Case of Dassoukine’s Trousers”, we meet Dassoukine, a government official who tells a strange story of peculiar circumstances involving stolen pants, twenty million (or is it two hundred million?) pounds of wheat, and a case of mistaken identity. How does Laroui explore in this story what Laila Lalami describes in the introduction as the author’s “constant concern with power and displacement”?
6. Discuss the story “Fifteen Minutes as Philosophers”. Why do you think Laroui wrote this particular story in script form, and do you feel it was an effective choice? What themes and ideas are explored in this story?