

Recommended by Deborah Amos

**Jasmin Darznik, *The Good Daughter: A Memoir of My Mother's Hidden Life*
(Grand Central Publishing, 2011)**

Born in Iran to an Iranian mother and a German father, Jasmin Darznik learned little about her background while growing up in the United States. While helping her mother move, Darznik came across a wedding photograph of her mother with an Iranian groom. At first, her mother refused to talk about the photograph, but eventually she sent Darznik ten audiotapes on which she had told her life story: her abusive first marriage, the daughter she was forced to abandon to her first husband's family, and her escape to Germany, where she met the man who would become her second husband. Darznik has made of all this a beautiful story of the bonds between women and their daughters amid the experience of growing up between cultures.

**Roy Mottahedeh, *Mantle of the Prophet: Religion and Politics in Iran*
(Oneworld Publications, 2008)**

An ambitious work of history and biography, *Mantle of the Prophet* chronicles religion and politics in Iran from ancient times to the modern era. Mottahedeh artfully weaves in the life and education of a prominent modern-day cleric, thus offering a multilayered story that, unlike a conventional historical narrative, gives context to the Iranian Revolution.

Hisham Matar, *Anatomy of a Disappearance* (Dial Press Trade, 2012)

In this haunting novel, a sensitive, acutely observant teenager comes to terms with the disappearance of his political dissident father. Set in Libya, this story novelizes the seminal event in Matar's life with unforgettable precision and attention to emotional detail.

Kamila Shamsie, *Kartography* (Mariner Books, 2004)

Shamsie's sprawling novel about life in Pakistan maps the friendship of Raheen and Karim as they navigate family, love, and politics. A fascinating portrayal of the young elite in the tumultuous city of Karachi, *Kartography* exposes the promise of youth, the pain of prejudice, and the power of love.

Khushwant Singh, *Train to Pakistan* (Grove Books, 1994)

Set in the late 1940s, this classic historical novel depicts a small town on the border between newly independent India and Pakistan that is torn by the Partition and by violence between Muslims and Sikhs. Miraculously, a young love survives amid the chaos.

Alaa Al Aswany, *The Yacoubian Building* (Harper Perennial, 2006)

This contemporary novel looks at the cosmopolitan environment in Cairo before the Arab Spring. A single structure, the Yacoubian Building, serves as the backdrop for the frank, tragic, and hilarious stories of the men and women whose lives interconnect there. Al Aswany's novel sharply illuminates themes of love and loss in the Arab world.

Tayeb Salih, *The Wedding of Zein* (Three Continents, 1994)

In a village on the upper Nile, Zein the village idiot is about to be married. How did this come to be? Salih explores the local tensions over all of the usual subjects—religion, money, and traditional values. In the end, Zein's good luck brings about a reconciliation that unites his community. Often included in the same volume is Salih's *The Doum Tree of Wad Hamid*, a story that points a middle course in the competition between tradition and modernity.

Fatima Mernissi, *Scheherazade Goes West: Different Cultures, Different Harems* (Washington Square Press, 2001)

The author, a noted Muslim feminist, has written extensively on the lives of Middle Eastern women. In this work, she explores her own experience as an independent Moroccan woman encountering the encroachments of Western culture. The narrative alternates between straightforward autobiography and metafiction, conveying surprising discoveries about the conditions of women around the world.

Marc Lynch, *The Arab Uprising: The Unfinished Revolutions of the Middle East* (PublicAffairs, 2012)

This analysis of the Arab Spring is indispensable for the implications it raises for U.S. foreign policy. The overthrowing of dictators was only the first step in a regional revolution that transformed not only the roster of government officials but also the role of fear in Middle Eastern governance. However, the outcome of the Arab Spring remains undecided—will the Middle East be reborn in democracy? Or in renewed authoritarianism, as happened during the revolutions of the 1950s and 1960s?

Peter Mandaville, *Global Political Islam* (Routledge, 2007)

Drawing on politics, sociology, and Islamic studies, Mandaville explains the complex interactions between political Islam, nationalism, and globalization. An American professor of government and politics, Mandaville offers a broad historical background to contemporary Muslim politics while providing in-depth studies of Egypt, Turkey, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, Iran, Afghanistan, and Palestine.

**Deborah Amos, *Eclipse of the Sunnis: Power, Exile, and Upheaval in the Middle East*
(Public Affairs, 2011)**

From Amman to Beirut and Damascus, Amos follows Sunnis living in exile--the largest exile population in postwar history. Husbands are separated from wives, children from parents, and many are cast into a violent and uncaring subculture in which they have few rights and no roots. Even college-educated women are forced to turn to prostitution. The decisions they make illuminate the human side of the post-conflict displacement in the Middle East and give voice to the trauma of the exiles who must choose daily between dignity and survival.