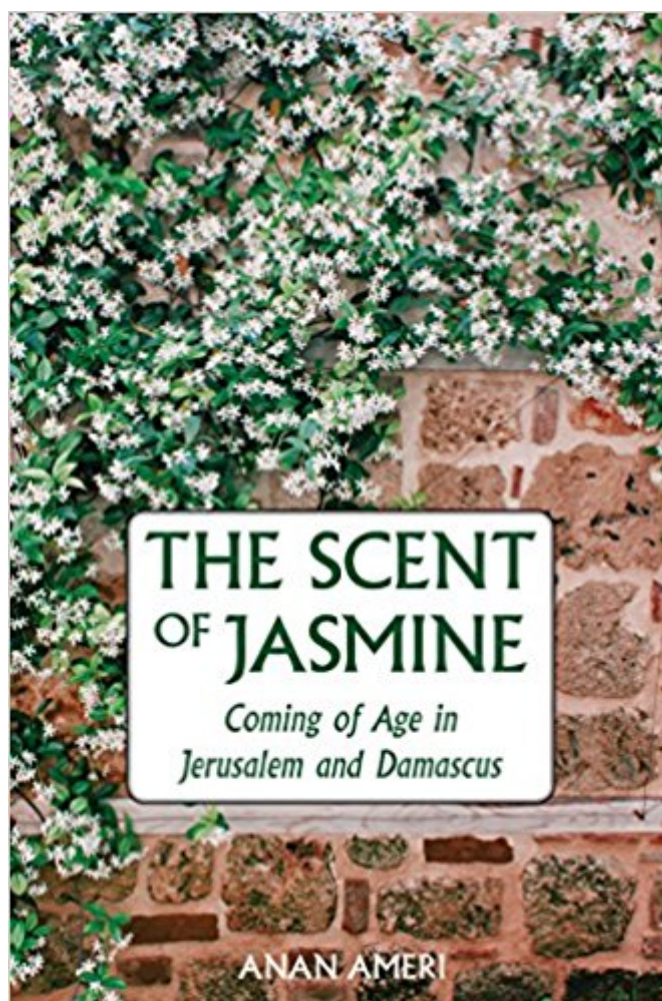


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The Scent Of Jasmine: Coming Of Age In Jerusalem And Damascus



Synopsis

Journey to a world little known to western readers. Born to a Syrian mother and a Palestinian father in 1944, Anan Ameri's refreshing memoir, *The Scent of Jasmine*, offers a funny, spirited, unique self-portrait of her childhood, adolescence and passage to adulthood as a young woman in the Arab world. A collection of twenty-three vignettes, Anan's search for the familiar fragrance of jasmine blossoms leads her to reimagine the puzzle pieces of her early life. While these stories--creative nonfictions--reverberate with the impact of enormous political upheavals and conflicts, *The Scent of Jasmine* demonstrates how the intricate bonds of family, community and place can nourish in us the creative capacity together to reimagine and repair our world.

Book Information

Paperback: 208 pages

Publisher: Interlink Pub Group (May 3, 2017)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 1566560012

ISBN-13: 978-1566560016

Product Dimensions: 6 x 0.5 x 8.9 inches

Shipping Weight: 11.2 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 5.0 out of 5 stars 8 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #868,059 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #108 in [Books > History > Middle East > Syria](#) #646 in [Books > Biographies & Memoirs > Historical > Middle East](#) #989 in [Books > History > Middle East > Israel & Palestine](#)

Customer Reviews

This book is a celebration of the Palestinian quotidian, and Anan Ameri's dialogic storytelling conjures up a theater of voices from her past, vividly bringing to life the lived experience of the making of a Palestinian woman. Moving back and forth, ever so beguilingly, between different times and places, she spins a cohesive yarn of family life in the fragmented Middle East, a life that starts with little Anan watching the birth of a baby goat and, years later, watching and mourning the crushed Arab Spring. A keen-eyed storyteller, and a reflective reader of Palestinian realities, Anan Ameri has written a nuanced, thoughtful, and animated Palestinian chronicle. Anton Shammass, University of Michigan I love this brilliant book. Dr Ameri, a master storyteller, humanizes the Syrian and Palestinian people, revealing her deep attachment to land and family. Given today's political climate, it is refreshing to read such beautifully written personal stories that illuminate hearts and

minds. Jack G Shaheen, author of *Reel Bad Arabs: How Hollywood Vilifies a People Powerfully* understated and elegantly written, Ameri's unusual memoir invites us to experience episodes from her life, which inform us of the tumult of modern Arab history and enduring cultural traditions. Ameri enchants us with witty, subtle humor about Arab customs in her coming of age years. By contrast, she also pens with documentary honesty an indictment of the evolution of Arab state duplicity. Her sadness and sense of betrayal are depicted by events surrounding what was to be her distinguished father's public memorial service. Her life spanned post-colonial history from the loss of Palestine, to refugee upheaval, to the dissolution of liberalism in Arab countries, to the death of the Arab hope, Egypt's Nasser, to the perfidy of Arab rulers, and most importantly, to the unfulfilled dream for justice for Palestine and Palestinians. Her memoir is unique in that the worsening political crises through which she lived are exposed through ordinary stages in her life. The crises are not in the forefront of her vignettes, but they are powerfully present as part of her lived life. The volume is slim, but what it conveys is immense. Read it; you will learn more from it than from political tomes. Elaine C. Hagopian, Professor Emerita of Sociology, Simmons College

Anan Ameri weaves together a colorful fabric of memories that capture how a young girl becomes a woman. Obtaining an education as well as being independent within her culture is at the center of *The Scent of Jasmine*. Ameri reminds us that privilege is no protection against war. Who we become is shaped by love and loss. A home is never destroyed as long as the heart survives. The bright gift of memory is what Anan Ameri shares with her readers. Let's us cherish the tales of her time in Syria, Jordan and Lebanon. There is much to learn from this woman's life. E. Ethelbert Miller, literary activist and host of *ON THE MARGIN* (WPFW-FM) in Washington DC

Ameri pens a delightful coming-of-age story in a tumultuous Middle East during the heady days of Arab nationalism. She captures the innocence and vulnerability of a Cairo and Beirut. We witness the growth of a defiant, independent young adult as Ameri immerses herself in activism, leaves home for college, experiences her first love and her first job. You'll want to spend summers, holidays, and Tuesday nights at Beit Jido's. Get ready to rethink what you thought it was like to grow up in the Arab world in the 1950s and 1960s. Evelyn Alsultany, Director of Arab and Muslim American Studies, University of Michigan and author of *Arabs and Muslims in the Media: Race and Representation after 9/11* --.

With flair and humor, *The Scent of Jasmine* invites readers into intimate worlds where struggles with displacement and war are interlaced with the pains and joys of family, friendship, and community. This beautiful memoir is a must read that provokes readers to laugh and cry and to urgently rethink reductive portrayals of Arab women. Nadine Naber, Associate Professor, University of Illinois, Chicago and author of *Arab America*

Anan Ameri's stories are exquisite gems of humanity her gentle, direct touch even when

describing scenes of complication, confusion, or conflict are filled with bright insight, detail, and care. I wish my father were still alive so he could read this book. Everyone should read it! Naomi Shihab Nye, poet, song writer, and novelist In the course of 23 vignettes spanning three decades The Scent of Jasmine: Coming of Age in Jerusalem and Damascus describes life as it had been from the early fifties to the mid 1970s in three major cities: Amman, Damascus and Jerusalem. Anan Ameri's extraordinary rich life is described in lively and engaging prose. Her free rebellious spirit permeates these pages providing the reader with a Kaleidoscopic expose of life in these cities. Whether it is through running away from school to take part in political demonstrations or through the travails of her political father, Ameri succeeds in describing the political landscape of wars, political and social turmoil at crucial junctures in the history of the Middle East region. The book is a real pleasure to read. Raja Shehadeh, author, lawyer, activist, and founder of the Palestinian human rights organization Al Haq An endearing and intimate autobiography of coming of age during the era of Arab nationalism in the 50s and 60s and the radicalism of the 1970s. Ameri has succeeded in capturing a precious moment in her engaged life in Amman, Damascus, Cairo, and Beirut before the ensuing collapse. Salim Tamari, research associate at the Institute for Palestine Studies, Ramallah and author of The Remaking of Palestine and the Great War --.

Journey to a world little known to western readers. Palestinian sociologist and activist Anan Ameri weaves her sometimes poignant, sometimes funny personal experiences with the historical, political, and social changes that dominated the region in which she lived during the first thirty years of her life. This memoir comprises twenty-three stories that take place in various Arab cities. It starts with a few vignettes about the displacement of Anan's family during the 1948 Nakba ('Disaster') and her constant movement from West Jerusalem, to Damascus, to East Jerusalem, to finally settling in Amman, Jordan. The book contrasts the instability of moving from place to place with the security, fun, and luxury offered by her mother's large, wealthy Damascene family. It also takes the reader into the life of an elegant Damascene home, with all its elitist traditions, powerful women, as well as the intrigue of its many secrets and rumors. The later stories focus on the author's gradual coming of age during 1950s and 1960s--an era of Arab nationalism and international solidarity. Readers will venture with Anan to Amman, the capital of Jordan; to Cairo, the political and cultural capital of the Arab world; and finally to Beirut, the new home to the Palestinian Liberation movement. Anan Ameri's experiences reflect the evolving of post-colonial Arab societies of her time, and the contradictory world around her. The result is a compelling and unforgettable memoir.

The Scent of Jasmine: Coming of Age in Jerusalem and Damascus by Anan Ameri

These vignettes offer a deeply personal glimpse into a young life, complicated by politics and governments, steadied by the love and support of family, and strengthened by the honesty and integrity of her parents. It permits us insight into the unfolding of a young woman's sense of fairness, beliefs, pride of culture, compassion, drive, persistence, and acceptance of others. We can also appreciate the author's organic feminism; fostered by parents who esteemed the contributions of women, a strong mother, aunts, and opportunities to interact with creative female artists, musicians, and intellectuals. Ameri's coming of age has aspects shared by many Palestinians forced from their homeland, but on the other hand her experience is unique. Her growing up in Amman, Jordan and Damascus, Syria, in a household where education was very important, and later attending the University of Jordan and Cairo University, during the time of the broadly popular Gamal Abdel Nasser, allowed for experiences not unlike those of the Civil Rights movement of the 1960s in the U.S. Ameri leaves us wanting to hear more of her story; her coming to the U.S., her marriage, obtaining her Ph.D., and becoming an activist in her new home. Aspirational, and inspirational.

Reviewed by Angelita E., M.S.L.S., J.D.

I love this book and I admire so much what Ameri accomplished in it. These vignettes capture personalities as well as the political mood of their times. The author's voice is caring yet unflinchingly honest; a skilled storyteller and a keen reflector on her past, she draws readers into a living, breathing world of multidimensional people who are trying to carve their paths in a world during times of profound political changes. The dialog is authentic, which went a long way in drawing me into the author's world. (I feel compelled to mention the dialog I guess because I've read so much bad dialog and know how hard it is to pull off well.) I think that by the end of this book, readers will have a more generous understanding of what it was like to grow up in a time of turmoil and the choices that make up a life. This gem of a book is a gift to readers by an intelligent, thoughtful, and politically engaged guide.

Revealing and endearing! THE SCENT OF JASMINE warmly envelops a reader in an artfully hand-sewn quilt of snapshot memories, tender with detail, honesty, humor and a discerning young woman's perspective of a world in alarming and eye-opening flux. From Anan Ameri's precious American-made Phillips transistor radio that connects her to the words of new Egyptian President Nasser to the terrorizing shock of escaping a mob in political protest while playing hooky from high school, we discover the forces that shaped her adult activist

consciousness. American readers can benefit greatly from Ameri's illumination of any and all immigrants' vibrant stories of origin that live within their hearts and enrich their adopted communities worldwide.

The Scent of Jasmine is a witty, funny and sad at the same time. Ameri, a master story teller, has succeeded in capturing a precious moment in her engaged life before coming to the USA in 1974. A brilliantly written memoir about growing up in the Arab world in the 50s and 60s. Ameri takes us with her life journey from Jerusalem to Damascus, Amman, Cairo and Beirut. She skillfully intertwines her personal narratives with the political and social changes that were sweeping the region during that era. It takes the reader to a world that is not known to most people.

Anan Ameri writes stories about her childhood, adolescence and young adulthood in such captivating ways that the book is really hard to put down. Her writing is so poignant. I could not wait to learn what happened next. Reading the book was not only an interesting cultural experience, it was an interesting human experience. I highly recommend it for anyone, whether they think they are interested in learning more about Middle Eastern culture or not. In fact, I just bought two copies to send to friends as gifts. If Anan Ameri writes another book, I'll be first in line to buy it!

This collection of short stories narrates a humorous, heartfelt, and authentic voice during a formative social and political time in the modern Arab world while illustrating the journey of girlhood and adolescence; it is relatable and touching, and a must-read for anyone interested in the Arab world, in women's issues, or in the social history and upbringing that shaped a powerful woman who journeyed to the US to become an influential leader in America's cultural landscape.

This slim volume is filled with the fascinating early years of an extraordinary life. For those who love biography, there are tales about family history, coming of age and a young woman's life in the Arab World that are filled with beauty and love. For those who know little about the Arab World, this book is a time-travel trip into a place and time that were real and yet do not resemble the image many people have of this part of the world. I cannot wait for the follow-up to this book!

This lovely work of short stories takes you gently through memories of a life lived in many places. In it, memories like the scent of jasmine carry the feeling of being home. I highly recommend it for young women.

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