



An Evil Eye

Jason Goodwin

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From the Edgar® Award–winning author of *The Janissary Tree* comes the fourth and most captivating Investigator Yashim mystery yet!

It takes a writer of prodigious talents to conjure the Istanbul of the Ottoman Empire in all its majesty. In three previous novels, Jason Goodwin has taken us on stylish, suspenseful, and vibrant excursions into its exotic territory. Now, in *An Evil Eye*, the mystery of Istanbul runs deeper than ever before.

It's 1839, and the admiral of the Ottoman fleet has defected to the Egyptians. It's up to the intrepid Investigator Yashim to uncover the man's motives. Of course, Fevzi Ahmet is no stranger to Yashim—it was Fevzi who taught the investigator his craft years ago. He's the only man whom Yashim has ever truly feared: ruthless, cruel, and unswervingly loyal to the sultan. So what could have led Yashim's former mentor to betray the Ottoman Empire?

Yashim's search draws him into the sultan's seraglio, a well-appointed world with an undercurrent of fear, ambition, and deep-seated superstition. When the women of the sultan's orchestra begin inexplicably to grow ill and die, Yashim discovers that the admiral's defection may be rooted somewhere in the torturous strictures of the sultan's harem.

No one knows more about the Ottoman Empire and Istanbul than Jason Goodwin, of whom Janet Maslin wrote in *The New York Times*: "Mr. Goodwin uses rich historical detail to elevate the books in this series . . . far above the realm of everyday sleuthing."

An Evil Eye Details

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From Reader Review An Evil Eye for online ebook

Irka says

I don't know why others are complainig about the plot it was so intersting and twisting so surprisingly that I have even suspected a child to be a serial killer. / Ciekawa akcja, intryga w haremie genialnie poprowadzona - podejrzewalam nawet dziecko o bycie morderca. A i Palewski nie jest ju? tym ciamajdowatym polskim ambasadorem tylko dajacym celne wskazowki z zewnatrz- mila odmiana po "The Bellini card".

Hart Roussel says

The best of the series so far

An Evil Eye is the best of the Investigator Yashim series so far. Istanbul and Ottoman Palace intrigue seemed so much more vivid. Most importantly, Yashim's character development takes a major leap as the reader begins to understand the hidden history and motivations of Yashim.

Waverly Fitzgerald says

The Evil Eye. Well, I started this series with the fourth book but I will certainly go back and read more. Jason Goodwin is my favorite kind of writer (I discovered after cruising his website). He writes about what he's passionate about, so he's written a geographical history of tea (Gunpowder Gardens), an account of walking to Istanbul (On Foot to the Golden Horn), a history of the Ottoman Empire, a cookbook featuring Turkish cuisine and even a guide to sacred places in London (A Pilgrim's Guide to Sacred London), co-written with his father, John Michell, an expert in the sacred landscape of England. And along with that five mysteries set during the early 19th century in Istanbul, featuring Investigator Yashim. I have to admit the recipes in this book make me hungry for that cookbook. I do have a little bit of a problem understanding the terms Goodwin throws about with ease. Pasha, aga, valide, kalfa: I don't know what these roles are, and I have to guess from context. I wish there was a glossary. He's also one of those writers who likes to start in the middle of things and you have to gradually sort out where you are and what's going on. Since the chapters are short, this happens a lot. But one of the things I most appreciate about this book, is this dim sense I'm getting of what the culture is like (because I'm plunged into it) and the complexity of the world at this point in time with both Russia and Egypt gobbling up territory that had once belonged to the Ottoman Empire. I also admire the point of view shifts. I told my current Novel Immersion class to pause when reading and reflect on what is keeping them going forward. At the point I'm at, two-thirds of the way through the book, I want to know who killed the harem girl, who is that guy with the knife making his way through the snow, is Fevsi really a traitor, how will Yasdim's past relationship with Fevsi affect what happens next, what will happen to the boy who ran away from the palace school, when will Yashim find those papers he lost on the island, will the valide move to the other harem, who cursed the head eunuch, and what is the Talfa plotting.

Heather says

Decent and enjoyable light reading if you're into Ottoman intrigue.

Kerry Hennigan says

I have enjoyed the three Investigator Yashim novels that precede *An Evil Eye*, so when I finally got my hands on this one, I plunged right into it, expecting to enjoy it.

And I did - to a point. At some point the complexity of characters, locations and plot lost me sufficiently for me to put it aside in favour of another book. When I later returned to Goodwin's novel, I read through to the end, and felt somewhat satisfied at the outcome.

For me Goodwin's descriptions of Istanbul are what most compel me to read his novels. Plus what's not to like about Yashim - and his friend the Polish ambassador?

But with the scene constantly shifting from one valide to another, one palace to another, etc, it takes some concentration (at least for this reader) to keep track of everything and thus derive maximum satisfaction from the experience of reading the novel.

Perhaps next time around...?

Paola says

Profumi e sapori d'oriente.

Anche questo Goodwin non delude. L'investigatore eunuco Yashim si troverà a indagare in mezzo a intrighi di palazzo, maghe, equilibri politici che cambiano, in una Istambul meravigliosa e decadente.

Yashim è anche un ottimo cuoco e alcune delle sue ricette vien voglia di provarle:)

Stefano Bittasi says

Sempre bellissima lettura, storicamente accurata e capace di farti entrare nell'Istanbul del XIX secolo. Per chi ama questa città e conosce un po' della sua storia e di quella della fine dell'Impero Ottomano Goodwin è veramente una goduria. E' però vero che questo quarto episodio delle vicende di Yashim è un po' più arzigogolato e difficile da seguire delle precedenti (con alcune pagine veramente inutili come quelle dell'"uomo col coltello"). I nomi poi sono talvolta così simili l'uno all'altro che il rischio di perdersi è un po' troppo alto.

Comunque ... buona e godevole lettura

Malachi Antal says

An Evil Eye

Well-written novel set in Ottoman Empire already begun historic decline to become the sick man of Europe. Byzantine studies The Lords of the Horizon seminal nonfiction gave the writer name recognition for me. Describing how two pivotal women originated from French Guadeloupe and Martinique to influence kingmakers is intriguing point Jason Goodwin brings up.

Short chapters the better to keep the readership rolling along the plot.

Excellent descriptors à la, “Prince Alexander Petrovich Galytsin was called Alexander, after the tsar; Petrovich, after his father, and Galytsin, after the family estate outside Moscow. In Istanbul, where he served as military attaché to the Russian embassy, he was better known as the Fox.” p. 46

Historic instances such as, “In 1836 Mehmet Ali Pasha’s well-trained Egyptian army swept up the Mediterranean coast. Sidon, Acre, Beirut, had all fallen to the overmighty vassal of the sultan, who had appealed in desperation to the only power capable of protecting Istanbul [...]” sets scene for Russians to enter. “Palewski was Polish, from his tongue to his heart, and represented a country that no longer existed—at least, it was not recognized by any of the Christian courts of Europe. The Ottomans sustained the notion that their old proud foe existed still; they accepted the credentials of an ambassador whose country had been swallowed by its neighbors. They even sustained the ancient custom of paying the ambassador a stipend for his maintenance, for magnanimity was the mark of a great empire, and old habits died hard; but the stipend was small and did not stretch to summer residencies.” p. 16-17

“In Saint Petersburg—white river, white streets, the buildings white and interminable against a pale sky—his judgement was devoured. He blundered like a man who had lost his horizons. Yashim stood by aghast, unable to understand the change in his mentor. He remembered Fevzi sweating as he matched the Russians glass for glass in the colorless alcohol their hosts pretended to be drinking.”

“When the Russians showed him on a map what he was about to sign away, he merely shrugged, as if to say that Batoumi, with its strategic position on the Black Sea, was a bagatelle for a sultan as powerful as his own. Fevzi Ahmet gave Batoumi away because he did not want to seem niggardly in such company; because he had compromised himself. Had it not been for Yashim he might have given away more—and the sultan’s affection would not have saved him from the silken bowstring.” p. 131

Caïque caiquejee and feluccas play prominence in Istanbul ferrying people. Mention on ferenghis in book on page 45. Paid dollar for this book brand-new at Dollar Tree in Southbay within Los Angeles, California, a unit desolate whatnot the people mover across the way.

Julie says

I am very much enjoying this series. Set in Istanbul/Constantiople as the Ottoman Empire slowly collapses, it's strongly atmospheric. It is a confusing, even disorienting, world. Yashim is, as the title says, a eunuch. This is important mostly because it means he can enter the harem, access to which is denied to others. And he's a shrewd investigator. Then there's the food--his cooking enchants me. (I know there's a book about that. I'm saving it.

really worth reading, but I'd recommend going in order. Many recurring characters. Not tremendous character development one to the next, but I think you'd follow the complicated plots more easily.

Bridgit says

How bad is the mystery fiction when the lead character must explain the plot to you in the last 8 pages? There are old Murder, She Wrote plots that hold your interest more.

I'm not getting my jollies by bashing Goodwin. I enjoyed the first three books in this series. But *The Evil Eye* is a poor addition. It reads like he phoned it in. (Example: "Hey, remember where I wrote about finding a body in a well in *The Snake Stone*? Well, put a body in a well here too, but don't bother with any of the interesting details.")

I am very fond of Yashim and Palewski, the Polish ambassador, and will usually follow along with whatever they are doing. But there is no character development in this book. Yashim hardly even cooks anything. Palewski is working on a translation, but we never hear any more about that. There are some good descriptions of new landscapes, but this isn't a travelogue.

Goodwin's murders aren't even interesting. To the point where the Russian diplomat who receives the vital clue throws it in his waste basket after Yashim leaves the room. That's what Goodwin should have done with this book. Thrown it away and waited until his creativity summoned up interesting new tales about Yashim.

If this is your first introduction to the Yashim mysteries ... choose another book.
If you have already read the first three Yashim mysteries ... choose another book.

Antigone says

Fans of Agatha Christie and Arthur Conan Doyle may find much to appreciate in this short series of mysteries by Jason Goodwin. They are set in Istanbul, at the tail-end of Ottoman rule. Our detective is a eunuch named Yashim who's on-call to the sultan for those stickier investigations that require discretion and dispatch. His physical deficiency provides him unique access to the hidden world of the harem where, through the odd twist or turn, information can frequently be unearthed. He has a great friend in the Polish ambassador, Stanislaw Palewski, a diplomat abandoned by his country to this backwater post. Both men can be found, on any given evening, pairing Yashim's delectable cuisine with a forgotten wine from the embassy's cellar.

Thick with atmosphere, politics, philosophy and subtle forays into deduction, they are for me a form of literary oasis. The suspense is kept to a minimum, and drawn out to such a degree that I'm forced to slow down, contemplate, relax...and just enjoy the ride. *An Evil Eye* is the fourth of the series and revolves around the abrupt disappearance of Fevzi Ahmet, an old nemesis of Yashim's and admiral of the Ottoman fleet. The pages do not snap as they turn. In fact, I might suggest a cup of tea.

TroTro says

I love all of the Yashim books.

Therese says

I love Jason Goodwin's books on Istanbul. They evoke the smells, sights and sounds of the 19th century in one of the most fascinating cities in the world. Goodwin's unerring ability to conjure up people and scenes was undermined in this Yashim investigation by convoluted plot-lines, and too many characters who made appearances, then disappeared to reappear later. There is much intrigue in the Sultan's palace, among the functionaries who collect reports from far-flung corners of the Ottoman Empire, among the girls in the harem, with the Russians stirring the political pot, a precursor to their direct involvement today in neighbouring Syria, on the side of Bashar alAssad.

A. says

I purchased this book and recommended it to my book group based on the recommendation of a highly respected, interesting, cultured, intelligent friend. I'm not sure if I needed to have read the first three in this "set" to really appreciate the book, or if it just wasn't my style, or what, but I thought it was good! But just that: good!

This "set" is not so much a series of books that must be read in order -- I understand it is more like a set of mystery novels, that can certainly be read out of order. Inspector Yashim is a Eunuch in Istanbul with connections to the Sultan and other high ranking politicos, who is permitted to live outside of the castle, and who ends up being the man called in to solve the most bizarre or intricate of crimes. He also happens to stumble upon others, in light of his life and connections. In this book, Yashim is called in to see about a body in a monastery that has mysteriously appeared.

The unfamiliarity with the subject matter and even the most basic of things such as a persons title make the beginning of the book difficult to wade through. Efendi appears to be a sort of casual title -- perhaps akin to "sir" or "friend" and is often used in connection with the proper name for an individual, and occasionally on its own. Such as: Efendi Yashim or just Efendi. Pasha is another title... and Valide I believe is a title and not a proper name. Goodwin uses these words as if they are every day words to his readers. And perhaps they are to some; and perhaps readers of the first three found these words familiar. But as for my friends, co book group readers, and myself: a glossary would have been helpful to refer to for reminders and a brief explanation or background. I can understand not weighing down the story w/ these definitions, but as I say, a glossary of some sort would have been helpful.

The other frustrating/annoying bit about the book is the author's gratuitous food scenes. I understand that some of these mystery-type authors want their theme, but this one already has one -- exotic locations, foreign involvement, and history! No need to bring in how that onion was cut, how the parsley was sprinkled, etc.

On the plus side, however, it was an entertaining story and somewhat rewarding in the end. For me, once I passed the halfway point, it became a quick read, and I wanted to know what happened next. I began to read much more quickly, and even found myself wanting to turn the page rather than obey my bed time. I also

liked some of the side characters quite a bit (particularly Palewski), and I imagine that having read the first 3 books would have assisted more in caring about Yashim's own backstory.

There appears to be a story of revenge lurking in the background, and once the "big reveal" was made at the end of *An Evil Eye*, I imagined that I might have cared more if I knew why it was such a big reveal.

Overall, I enjoyed the scenery, I enjoyed the familiarity with the unusual (to us here in America, anyway), and I enjoyed the mystery. As I said, it was good! But not great. I would recommend to someone who is a big mystery fan, a fan of Istanbul and/or harems and/or sultans and/or historical politics. I would recommend to someone looking for a meatier book, a denser book.

(Three and a half stars)

Caitlin says

There were a couple of places where the book didn't work so well as a stand alone, but for the most part, it did okay.

The characters might have been more complex and flawed than strictly necessary, as a few of them, I disliked. I didn't quite want the end a few of them found. But the mystery was interesting, the twist nice enough.
