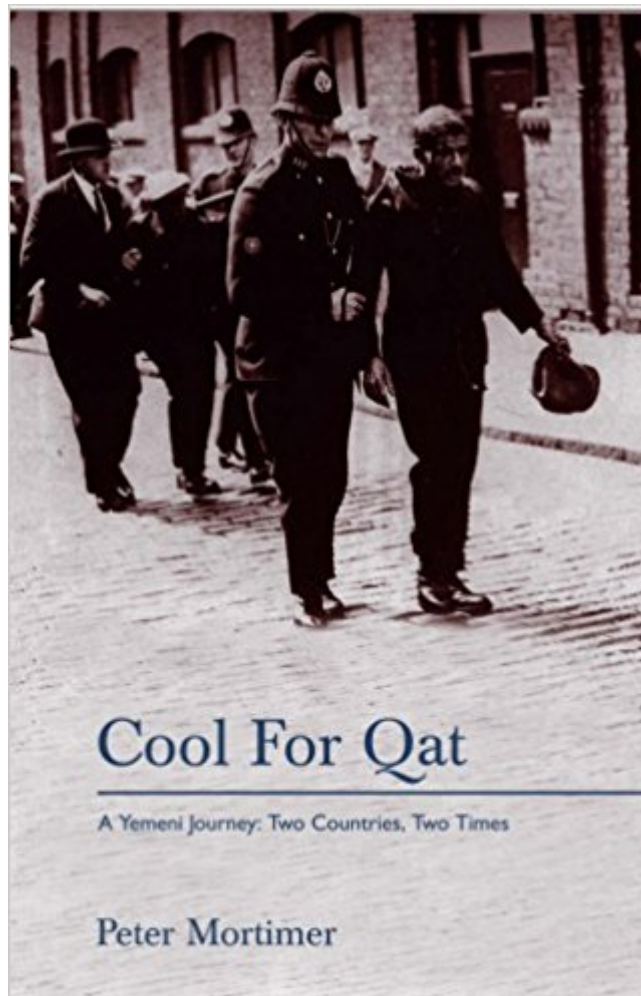




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Cool For Qat: A Yemeni Journey: Two Countries, Two Times



Synopsis

When author Peter Mortimer was commissioned to write a play about the little-known "Arab Riot" between Yemeni and British seamen at the Mill Dam, South Shields, in 1930, he decided to take the long trip to Yemen itself in search of inspiration. Undeterred by post-11 September government warnings, Mortimer set off and found an extraordinary and surprisingly Anglophile country. Cool for Qat documents this journey, during which Mortimer pieces together how the riots of 1930 arose and considers their relevance to the Western attitude towards Muslims today. Back in the UK, Mortimer's investigations into the 1930 riot reveal a society with many striking similarities to current times. Then, as now, Muslim immigrants were treated as scapegoats for all manner of ills, tabloid newspapers drummed up prejudice, and the powers that be often used fear to disguise their own economic failings. Cool for Qat is a thought-provoking, controversial, and often humorous document of one man's travels through a country about which little is known in the West.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

"Touching, thought-provoking and, at times, humorous' - North Tyneside News Guardian" "A humorous Englishman-abroad travelogue. But it has a serious side. Mortimer weaves in the story of the Arab Riot of Yemeni seamen in South Shields and discovers the racial mistrust of 1930 has strong parallels with 2005' - Newcastle Upon Tyne Journal" "An honest, sympathetic, sometimes self-deprecatingly humorous but illuminating book that is deeply relevant to the troubled times we're currently living through' - Shields Gazette"

Peter Mortimer is a poet, playwright and editor who lives in the windy Northumbrian coastal village of Cullercoats. He is the editor of IRON Press and the artistic director of Cloud Nine Theatre Productions.

Obviously, this is not an anthropological treatise on Yemeni culture; rather a variant of 'the innocent abroad' approach. Mortimer seems to know very little about Arabic culture, including some curiously persistent misspellings of even very common words. But what the author lacks (or pretends to lack?) in terms of prior knowledge is amply compensated for by the tenderness and honesty of his writing and his deepening liking of Yemen, in combination with a subdued, but sustained critique of his own place in the world. Mortimer's lack of judgment is refreshing, particularly in combination with a sweet sense of wonder at the people, places and events Mortimer stumbles across. Part travelogue, part making-of, part social history, part self-discovery, this elegant book left this reader with warm feelings for its author and even warmer feelings for the Yemenis he encounters in one way or another. An enjoyable read about liminal people and places in and from a magnificent, complex, and usually overlooked corner of the Arabian peninsula.

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