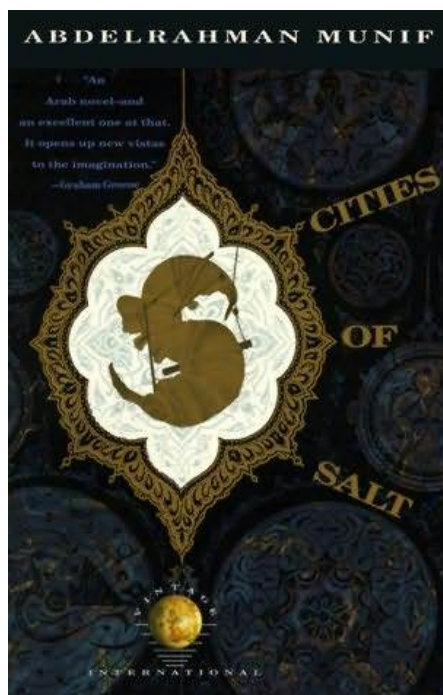




Cities of Salt

Abdul Rahman Munif , Peter Theroux (Translator) , Abdelrahman Munif

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Cities of Salt

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Cities of Salt Abdul Rahman Munif , Peter Theroux (Translator) , Abdelrahman Munif

Set in an unnamed Persian Gulf kingdom in the 1930s, this remarkable novel tells the story of the disruption and diaspora of a poor oasis community following the discovery of oil there. The meeting of Arabs and the Americans who, in essence, colonized the remote region is a cultural confrontation in which religion, history, superstition, and mutual incomprehension all play a part.

Powerful political fiction that it is, **Cities of Salt** has been banned in several Arab countries, including Saudi Arabia. The novel, the first volume in a trilogy, has been translated from the Arabic to English by Peter Theroux.

Cities of Salt Details

Date : Published July 17th 1989 by Vintage (first published 1984)

ISBN : 9780394755267

Author : Abdul Rahman Munif , Peter Theroux (Translator) , Abdelrahman Munif

Format : Paperback 627 pages

Genre : Fiction, Historical, Historical Fiction, Novels

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The details wilted, shrank and were forgotten, down to the very last one prompted in the memory by an act of will or a persistent ghost. Any attempt to recall the image of things and

places that had been encountered an oblivion that spread like warm air and made them dreamlike.

It was a special kind of tragedy, like amnesia followed by long-belated remembrance in which the chaotic confusion and curse of things were made apparent.

There is always something new to learn about dehumanization. There is always something new to learn about the combination of the stealing of land and the bleeding of labor, the sterilization of culture and the objectification of class, categorized as "clash" and more truthfully a choke hold so long as one has what the foreign country needs. This first part of a trilogy stops at a point, but the headlines and the hate crimes and the pardoning of war crimes tells me the conclusion is nowhere in sight. Going by the multitude of other age old narratives of systematic oppression going strong today, I will not live to see the end of this.

Everywhere there was potential for endless quarreling, and many of the men felt, vaguely, that the fistfights and constant cursing were not always the result of mistakes or ill intentions and had little to do with the actual words spoken; they felt this even more since depression and homesickness and other damned "things" were still within them and tore them apart before the quarrels and the curses and the rest.

They had come to work but here they worked and were killed at the same time.

A great deal of mutilation is committed in the name of oil. The treatment of the Chapel Hill shooting by US media attests to the financial interests of these brainwashers and finance, of course, is all. It is this social flensing of the self, cloaked in sheep skins of "materialism" and armor of "economy", that erases and enslaves and rewards in accordance to who holds the reins. The ultimate danger, however, does not lie in the action but how the act is continually spliced, making a violent other out of who in reality is represented far more by Les Misérables and God's Bits of Wood than anything capitalism can conjure up. This is what makes the final turn from terrorism, to savior complex, to "developing" country.

Harran had not changed completely. As soon as the caravan arrived the people swarmed around it. much sooner than they thought, at the first looks they exchanged with the people, the two felt enveloped in an atmosphere and home and friends. The people crowded around them as if they had been away only on a short trip. Time had left its marks on all their faces, but these marks were dissolved by the emotions underneath, and these emotions revealed the inner strength which eliminated time and distance, returning their features to their original loveliness.

Islam strongly runs throughout the entirety of Munif's tale, and as an atheist I will not belittle the whole for the sake of my personal theological preferences. I will, however, say that the humanity which held all these people together was beautiful, and the contrast to the distanced, corporatized, profit focused actions of the incoming Americans brought out the true horror show. People are tricked, people are starved, people are processed as a fuel of foreign potential, and the advice they are given in return is to scatter in hatred and no longer be a people.

"Do you want the truth? Ibn Rashed was a dog, a son of a bitch: greedy, selfish, and tricky; but he was a Muslim and an Arab. He knew right from wrong, and that was what ruined him, that was what killed him." Abdullah al-Zamel paused, took a deep breath and went on in a clear and even sharp voice. "The Americans are godless. They are infidels. They know nothing but 'Work, work, work. Arabs are lazy, Arabs are liars, Arabs don't understand.' Ibn Rashed never stopped for a minute. It was always 'Yes sir, yes sir, whatever you say,' and they treated him like a dog; they let him struggle and go mad and die. And not one of those sons of bitches, not even Sh'eira, Nusayis, who came to his funeral, so much as said 'God rest his soul.'"

Even those in power have something to learn, for isolation, rage, and hollow despair are equal opportunists.

K Alkaabi says

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Catherine Mustread says

A long fictional look at Saudi Arabia's development as an oil country and the toll paid by those whose lives were disrupted, never to be the same, in this first volume of the Cities of Salt Trilogy, which left me feeling sad. I read this because it was chosen by the Middle East North African Lit Group as a novel by a Saudi Arabian author.

I enjoyed reading about the effect of the Americans first arriving and the terrible smell they leave behind them. How ironic! Of course Americans always think they are doing things for the best of the locals and can't understand why they are not appreciated more for the "progress" they bring, if they think about it at all.

The translator of the English edition is Peter Theroux, younger brother of travel writer Paul Theroux. Peter is also the author of a non-fiction book about Saudi Arabia written in 1991, Sandstorms: Days and Nights in

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