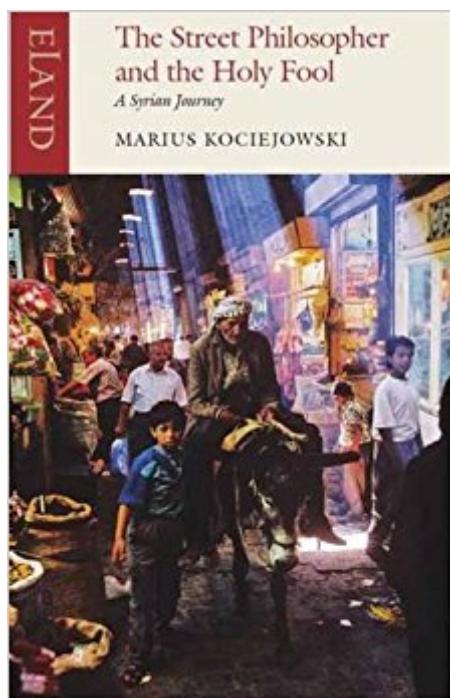


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The Street Philosopher And The Holy Fool: A Syrian Journey



Synopsis

Based on five journeys, undertaken over as many years, Kociejowski's book is entirely concerned with the slow journey towards friendship. So we learn nothing about coups or conspiracies, iconic monuments or historic travelers. Instead, we meet a chance handful of Syrians, such as Myrna, a Christian faith-healing stigmatic; Yasser, a Palestinian refugee and political activist; Abu al-Tahib, a prince of fools; a modern desert father, Paolo Dall'Oglio; and the street philosopher and the holy fool of the book's title. It was written during the era of conversation, before the use of mobiles, and long before the current civil war. Saluted as a travel classic on first publication (just 12 years ago) it is now in danger of becoming a testament to the last of the old Levant.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Marius Kociejowski is justly admired by lovers of contemporary poetry for his mastery of the craft. He has published three collections of poetry in Britain and has also published essays on various topics, mainly on people, travel and literature. Marius Kociejowski is Ontario-born but has long been resident in London, England. --This text refers to an alternate Paperback edition.

The Times Literary Supplement ranked this book as one of the greatest travel books in recent memory. They are right. The insights are profound, not chatty as in most contemporary travel books. You discover real people in extraordinary circumstances, and extraordinary people in real-life. I really cannot do this book justice here in this review (I don't have the time to write a long review), but I do give it my highest recommendation.

This is a very timely book since Syria is a hotspot that is much in the news, and its timeless because it captures a lot of the flavor and ambiance of an area with a long and storied past. It seems interesting as a travel book, a narrative of experiences; but I have to say I bought it more for whatever light it might cast on a region with which I am not familiar at first hand, and which is undergoing political turmoil that is very important to the course of affairs in the Middle East. I take off one star, at least, because the book has no maps. Yes I can get out my atlas, I can look at google earth, but really a travel book should have maps. In this case it would be good to have more than one, showing different historical epochs, for example in roman times, perhaps, at the time of the crusades, as well as the present day state boundaries.

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