Iraq in Wartime

When U.S.-led forces invaded Iraq in 2003, they occupied a country that had been at war for twenty-three years. Yet in their attempts to understand Iraqi society and history, few policy makers, analysts, and journalists took into account the profound impact Iraq’s long engagement with war had on the Iraqis’ everyday engagement with politics, with the business of managing their daily lives, and on their cultural imagination. Starting with the Iran-Iraq war, through the First Gulf War and sanctions, Dina Rizk Khoury traces the political, social, and cultural processes of the normalization of war in Iraq during the last twenty-three years of Ba’thist rule. Drawing on government documents and interviews, Khoury argues that war was a form of everyday bureaucratic governance and examines the Iraqi government’s policies of creating consent, managing resistance and religious diversity, and shaping public culture. Khoury focuses on the men and families of those who fought and died during the Iran-Iraq and First Gulf wars. Coming on the tenth anniversary of the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq, this book tells a multilayered story of a society in which war has become the norm.

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In Memory
of
Adel Rizk, whose remembrance of Nabatiyye nourished him
through years in the desert, war, and debilitating illness
And for Iraqis
May memories of a place sustain them wherever they may be
The neutron bomb is highly intelligent.
It distinguishes between
An “I” and an “Identity.”

And now
I remember trees:
The date palm of our mosque in Basra, at the end of Basra
a bird’s beak,
a child’s secret,
a summer feast.
I remember the date palm.
I touch it. I become it when it falls black
without fronds,
when a dam fell, hewn by lightning.
And I remember the mighty mulberry
when it rumbled, butchered with an ax …
to fill the stream with leaves
and birds
and angels
and green blood.
I remember when pomegranate blossoms covered the sidewalks.
The students were leading the workers parade …

The trees die
pummeled.
Dizzied,
not standing, the trees die.

from “America, America” by Saadi Youssef
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Acknowledgments

This book was born, more than six years ago, out of a lunch conversation in Foggy Bottom with my Cambridge University Press editor, Marigold Acland. I did not know at that time that I would, as I was writing the histories of Iraqis at war, embark on a journey that evoked my personal history. I am thankful for Marigold's patience as I am to Sarika Narula for seeing the book to production.

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A significant part of my research entailed stays in Amman and Damascus, where a large number of displaced Iraqis have settled. I was able to conduct research, make contacts, and altogether organize my life with the help of a number of individuals. Hala Fattah, a historian, friend, and facilitator for all researchers of things Iraqi who flocked to Amman after the U.S. invasion, provided me with entry into the community of Iraqi exiles and intellectuals. Geraldine Chatelard, then head of the French Institute of the Near East in Amman, answered my many questions about the displaced Iraqi community. Lucine Taminian, senior researcher at The American Academic Research Institute in Iraq’s Jordan office, helped with contacts and with information based on her rich
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This book is meant as much for a general reader as it is for a specialist. I have avoided the use of Arabic terms as much as possible and included a translation in the text whenever an Arabic term is mentioned.

I have generally followed the transliteration guidelines of the *International Journal of Middle East Studies* but have not used diacritical and long vowels marks. I have also avoided adding the symbols of “alif” and “ayn” when these appear at the beginning of personal and place names unless it is necessary. This will mean that readers of the English text who know Arabic might find it difficult to translate the English back to Arabic. I apologize for the inconvenience, but my choice will make it easier for non-Arabic speakers to follow the text.
MAP 1. Iraq: Provinces and principal cities. Designed by Ryan Sloan.
MAP 2. Distribution of Army Corps during Iran-Iraq war. Adapted by Ryan Sloan from Middle East Contemporary Survey.
MAP 3. Iraq: Principal southern towns and marshes. Designed by Ryan Sloan.