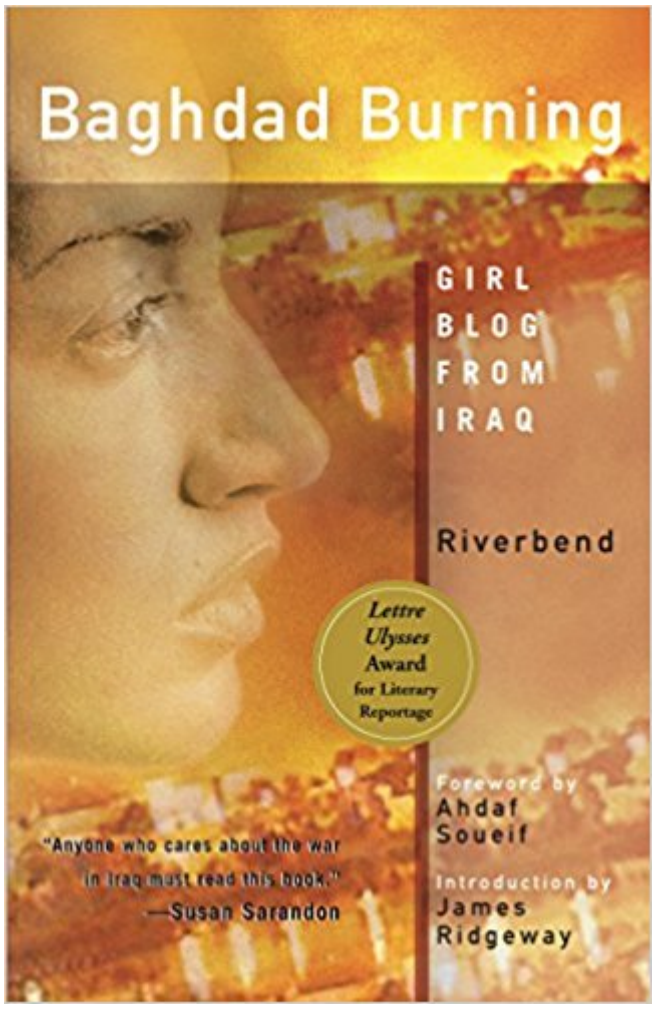
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# Baghdad Burning: Girl Blog From Iraq




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## Synopsis

In August 2003, the world gained access to a remarkable new voice: a blog written by a 25-year-old Iraqi woman living in Baghdad, whose identity remained concealed for her own protection. Calling herself Riverbend, she offered searing eyewitness accounts of the everyday realities on the ground, punctuated by astute analysis on the politics behind these events.In a voice in turn eloquent, angry, reflective and darkly comic, Riverbend recounts stories of life in an occupied cityÃ¢â ¬â •of neighbors whose homes are raided by US troops, whose relatives disappear into prisons and whose children are kidnapped by money-hungry militias. At times, the tragic blends into the absurd, as she tells of her family jumping out of bed to wash clothes and send e-mails in the middle of the night when the electricity is briefly restored, or of their quest to bury an elderly aunt when the mosques are all overbooked for wakes and the cemeteries are all full. The only Iraqi blogger writing from a womanÃ¢â ¬â„¢s perspective, she also describes a once-secular city where women are now afraid to leave their homes without head covering and a male escort.Interspersed with these vivid snapshots from daily life are RiverbendÃ¢â ¬â„¢s analyses of everything from the elusive workings of the Iraqi Governing Council to the torture in Abu Ghraib, from the coverage provided by American media and by Al-Jazeera to BushÃ¢â ¬â„¢s State of the Union speech. Here again, she focuses especially on the fate of women, whose rights and freedoms have fallen victim to rising fundamentalisms in a chaotic postwar society.With thousands of loyal readers worldwide, the Riverbend blog is widely recognized around the world as a crucial source of information not available through the mainstream media. The book version of this blog will have Ã¢â ¬Å“value-addedÃ¢â ¬Â• features: an introduction and timeline of events by veteran journalist James Ridgeway, excerpts from RiverbendÃ¢â ¬â„¢s links and an epilogue by Riverbend herself.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Iraqi women’s voices have been virtually silent since the fall of Baghdad. Yet four months after Saddam’s statue toppled in April 2003, the pseudonymous Riverbend, a Baghdad native then 24 years old, began blogging about life in the city in dryly idiomatic English and garnered an instant following that rivals Salam Pax’s Where Is Raed? This year’s worth of Riverbend’s commentary--passionate, frustrated, sarcastic and sometimes hopeful--runs to September 2004. Before the war, Riverbend was a computer programmer ("yes, yes... a geek"), living with her parents and brother in relative affluence; as she chronicles the privations her family experiences under occupation, there is a good deal of "complaining and ranting" about erratic electricity, intermittent water supplies, near daily explosions, gas shortages and travel restrictions. She rails against the interim governing council ("the puppet government") and Bush and his administration--and is sardonic on Islamic fundamentalism: as Al Sadr and his followers begin to emerge, Riverbend quotes the Carpenters’s "We’ve Only Just Begun." But Riverbend is most compelling when she gives cultural object lessons on everything from the changing status of Iraqi women to Ramadan, the Iraqi educational system, the significance of date palms and the details of mourning rituals. Just as fascinating are the mundane facts of daily life, like her unsuccessful attempt to go back to work--no one would guarantee the safety of a woman in the workplace. The blog continues at riverbendblog.blogspot.com; like this book, it offers quick takes on events as they occur, from a perspective too often overlooked, ignored or suppressed. Copyright Ã Â© Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

Riverbend is the pseudonym of a young Iraqi blogger; this book archives the first year of her blog, Baghdad Burning. Once a computer programmer who enjoyed considerable personal freedom, after Baghdad’s fall, Riverbend finds herself unemployed and largely restricted to the safety of her family’s home. In English that would put many Americans to shame, she chronicles daily life under the occupation, writing about water and electricity shortages with humor and exasperation, writing about violence with deep feeling. She also explains more complicated topics, painting a surprising picture of prewar harmony between religious groups (she herself lives in a mixed Sunni and Shiite household). Riverbend’s take on politics is so perceptive that readers may wonder if she is actually

a Beltway antiwar activist--although such readers should also question their assumption that an Iraqi couldn’t write this well or be so well informed. But the greatest accomplishment of this intriguing book lies in its essential ordinariness. Riverbend is bright and opinionated, true, but like all voices of dissent worth remembering, she provides an urgent reminder that, whichever governments we struggle under, we are all the same. Keir GraffCopyright Ã Â© American Library Association. All rights reserved

A difficult read on the war in Iraq, from an Iraqian’s point-of-view. She is candid, honest, tough, and blunt in her day-by-day blogs that eventually came together into this excellent book (and a more recent second volume, not reviewed here). Readers will find the book replete with atrocities performed by both American and native troops, sometimes innocently, more often precisely and with intent to show that America occupies Iraq at the time (2003). I have read several books written by American military personnel, always after they leave military service, but this is the first work that I have read from the "other side." I look forward to reading the second volume.

Earlier this year, the United States passed a dubious anniversary: a full decade had transpired since the initial invasion of Iraq that began the Second Gulf War. To mark the occasion, some focused on the soldiers lost, some celebrated President Obama’s draw-down of those that remain stationed there and others still attempted to calculate the pecuniary cost of the misbegotten military effort. Few, however, sought out the qualitative element of the war, particularly from the Iraqi perspective. It was in this light that I gave "Baghdad Burning" the in-depth reading I simply did not dedicate to it several years back when it was first recommended to me. Summarily, I may say that the Riverbend provided me with enough insight to not only satiate the curiosity that brought me to the title, but led me to ask even more questions. That is, in my opinion, the true mark of a worthy piece of non-fiction.

I really liked that this was a real blog, I can’t wait to read the next one. Riverbend does talk alot about politics in the book and I am not real good w/ politics so I was having a hard time following it all and those parts were kinda boring me to death, so I skipped around alot. What I was hoping to read more of was her daily life, what she does around the house or outside or where ever. Just what HER day to day life is like during the war. But even though I had to skip around alot, I absolutely love the book. Her blog is so long I have alot of catching up to do. I hope they put her whole blog into books, its so much easier to take it everywhere or even in bed than be stuck at a computer

reading it.

It was an excellent book which really made me think about the war on terror and what it really means. Parts of it were extremely boring where the author continuously whined and whined about the same things. But all in all a good read.

Very interesting view of the Iraq Invasion. Read this for a class, and would certainly recommend it.

powerful

Needed for a class was actually a good read with very good content and well written.

Recommended

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