

A Voice, Remembering And Misremembering, From Old Baghdad

[Here.](#)

A member of the Iraqi, quasi-secular, elite, who witnessed the 1958 coup against the government (and against strongman Nuri es-Said, who had the same fate as Prince Feisal, his corpse dragged through the streets and then cut up into pieces to the delight of the crowds), and the American invasion. He clings to certain beliefs – that no one cared, in the good old days, whether one was Sunni, Shi'a, Christian, or Jew – and is unable to identify Islam as the source of the violence and aggression in his own society. He prefers instead to mention the “two wars” brought to Iraq by Western powers, Great Britain (that war consisted of removing the Ottoman Turk overlords, and then suppressing a rebellion among the tribes against the formation of the modern state of Iraq) and the United States (that war removed the despot Saddam Hussein and was followed at once by a long, very expensive attempt to make Iraq prosperous and keep Iraq whole). He never mentions Islam, never mentions why Sunnis and Shi'a are at each others' throats. For all I know he may really believe that there was a time when “no one cared” whether you were Muslim or Christian or Jew or what kind of Muslim you were, but the misperception of reality, in order to avoid thinking about the effect of too much Islam, is common to Muslims, and Muslim Arabs, and Muslim Arabs in Iraq, and as long as the wary Westerner can detect it, and separate it from the other, sometimes useful observations, there are other reasons for listening to the testimony of such people as this former physician to Saddam Hussein, now luckily living in semi-sane London, and a painter à ses heures.