

NEW YORKER

Issue of 2006-11-13

IRAQ IN FRAGMENTS

The first documentary about the war in Iraq to be made by a real filmmaker. James Longley gives us three powerful portraits—an orphaned boy in Baghdad whose domineering employer, an ignorant garage owner, has become his guardian; a group of Moqtada al-Sadr's followers preparing for regional elections with passionate anti-American speeches and an iron fist; a family of Kurds enjoying greater freedom after the American operation. Longley has a gift for intimacy and an eye for vagrant touches of beauty everywhere—in the faces of children, the façades of mosques illuminated at night as blissful flagellants pass before them. Even a black curl of bomb smoke becomes an entrancing pattern. The color is ravishing, the implications tragic: this is a broken society, and America cannot understand it, much less mend it. In Kurdish, Arabic, and English.—*David Denby* (Film Forum.)