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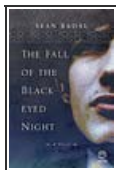
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Ponderings and Podcast with Sean Badal

August 22nd, 2008 by Emily



As part of its entertaining "Writers on Reading" series, the *Sunday Times* puts Sean Badal, whose new book, *The Fall of the Black-Eyed Night*, has just been published, on the spot. (Albeit a pleasant spot, and one that includes a podcast: play the audio file below.)

Badal mentions in particular his love for travel writing, beginning his piece with a note about his recent acquisition of a copy of Wilfred Thesiger's *The Marsh Arabs* at a winter book sale. He also gives credit for inspiration to authors such

as William Dalrymple, Jonathan Raban, Colin Thubron, Pico and Paul Theroux, whose "great dichotomy", he says, is that "despite the grand, sweeping narratives of foreign landscapes and foreign peoples, there is always the sense of the familiar."

A witty account of Badal's fascination with William Dalrymple then follows:

I've always loved travel writing. The only writer I have ever written fan mail to was William Dalrymple. I'd begged his home address off a girlfriend who was working at the Spectator — Dalrymple was a regular contributor — and fired a missive telling him how much I loved *From the Holy Mountain: A Journey in the Shadow of Byzantium*. He wrote back, enclosing a set of photographs of ancient Christian monasteries that he'd taken on his trip. That summer, I woke up early one morning and took the train to Oxford to catch Dalrymple speak at the university.

By the time he took the stage in one of the hallowed halls, the literary festivities were in full swing. The febrile atmosphere was the product of the forced gaiety that only an English summer can induce — here, if it's summer and the sun is shining, you have to get pissed and lark about. The shrill voices echoing across the courtyard gave me an instant headache. Dalrymple took the stage in flip-flops, Bermuda shorts and a floppy T-shirt that barely constrained his paunchy belly. On the podium was a plastic tumbler of (presumably warm) beer.

- [Complete article in *The Times*](#)

Podcast: "In Their Own Words" - Tymon Smith chats to Sean Badal

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Book details

- *The Fall of the Black-Eyed Night* by Sean Badal
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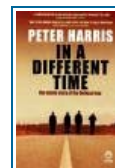
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