

This is a peer-reviewed, author's accepted manuscript of the following book chapter: Barakat, T. (Accepted/In press). Collaborative translation and the remediation of intergenerational memory in Leila Abdelrazaq's *Baddawi*. In C. Jünke, & D. Schyns (Eds.), *Translating Memories of Violent Pasts : Memory Studies and Translation Studies in Dialogue* (1st ed.). (Creative, Social and Transnational Perspectives on Translation). Routledge.

Collaborative Translation and the Remediation of Intergenerational Memory in Leila Abdelrazaq's *Baddawi*

Tamara Barakat

Multimodal Translation and Memories of the Nakba in *Baddawi*

The year 1948 marks a key date in Palestinian collective memory. It constitutes the beginning of what Palestinians refer to as the Nakba or the Catastrophe. While Israeli settler colonialism in Palestine did not commence in 1948, the large majority of ethnic cleansing and massacres of Palestinians that paved the way for the establishment of Israel were committed around that period. Around 531 villages and 11 urban quarters were depopulated and destroyed, leading to the forced expulsion of around 800,000 Palestinians, who ended up in refugee camps in neighbouring Arab countries or displaced within different parts of Palestine. The Nakba led to the fragmentation of Palestinians into different isolated regions, the erasure and appropriation of Palestinian cultural heritage, the looting of archives, and the destruction of political, social, and economic institutions (Pappé; Masalha). Today, the Nakba is not perceived as a distant event in the past but as a process that continues to unfold in the ongoing occupation of Palestine and the denial of the right of return for refugees. It still informs the daily lives of Palestinians within and outside of Palestine (Manna').

Considering the absence of a sovereign Palestinian state with institutions and archives to promote their narrative, Palestinians have resorted to different forms of cultural production for the articulation, preservation, and transmission of their collective memory, including art, literature, theatre, and films (Sa'di), many of which engage with oral testimonies given by the Nakba generation and their offspring. According to Masalha, Palestinian oral history "is a significant methodology not only for the construction of an alternative, counter-hegemonic history of the Nakba and memories of the lost historic Palestine but also for an ongoing indigenous life, living Palestinian practices and a sustained human ecology and liberation" (212). Thus, it is not surprising that artists who center the question of Palestinian collective memory in their work choose to draw on oral history.

One such example is *Baddawi* (2015), a biographical graphic novel created by Palestinian-American artist Leila Abdelrazaq. In this multimodal visual-verbal text, Abdelrazaq tells her father Ahmad's story as a Palestinian refugee living in Baddawi refugee camp in the north of Lebanon. Ahmad's family originates from Safsaf, a Palestinian village which was depopulated in 1948. The graphic novel starts with an account of the massacre which forced Ahmad's family to flee to Lebanon. Following that, the narrative is divided into three sections, each spanning a different period of Ahmad's childhood: 1959–1969, 1970–1975, and 1976–1980. We follow Ahmad as he goes to school, makes friends, learns about his cultural heritage, struggles with his sense of belonging, witnesses several traumatic events, including the killing of his relative, falls in love, and finally decides to immigrate to the US to pursue his education. These experiences take place against the backdrop of displacement, violence, and destruction caused by the Lebanese Civil War and repeated Israeli attacks on the camps.

Several graphic novels that document and bear witness to traumatic events have been published in the past few decades, such as Art Spiegelman's *Maus* and Marjane Satrapi's *Persepolis*. In Arab countries, Nachabe Taan notes that "comics art is currently experiencing a revival" (210). This can be observed in the growing number of comic artists who employ this medium to explore cultural, social, and political issues through (auto)biographical narratives, such as Zeina Abirached, Lena Mehrej, and Mazen Kerbaj, and in the publication of magazines that promote comics by Arab artists, such as *Samandal*. Abdelrazaq's artwork lies at the heart of this thriving comics scene, to which she contributes not only through her publications, but also by having co-founded *Maamoul Press* which specialises in publishing comics by SWANA artists.

In this chapter, I argue that the transformation of oral testimonies into a graphic novel entails several processes of translation, not all of which are necessarily interlingual. One of the challenges Translation Studies researchers face today is the lack of "consensus about which sorts of meaning (re)communications can legitimately be classified as instances of translation", particularly in multimodal forms of communication (Boria and Tomalin 3).

Roman Jakobson's categorization of translation as interlingual, intralingual and intersemiotic remains one of the most influential conceptualizations applied in translation research. Being a linguist, Jakobson naturally focuses on the meaning of the "linguistic sign" which he defines

as “its translation into some further, alternative sign” (114). This definition is based on C.S. Peirce’s own conception of meaning “which is, in its primary acceptation, the translation of a sign into another system of signs” (Peirce cited in Marais 2019: 102). While Jakobson chooses to conceptualise translation as transposition of linguistic signs and to consider interlingual translation as ‘translation proper’, for Peirce, translation is not necessarily verbal.

Based on Peircean semiotics, Kobus Marais (2019) reconceptualises translation as “negentropic semiotic work (performed by an agent) in which any one or more of the components of a sign system or any one or more of the relationships between them are changed, or in which the relationship between the sign and its environment (time and/or space) is changed” (142).¹ A sign system is composed of three components which are in an irreducible triadic relationship: The representamen is “the form the sign takes”; the object is “something to which the sign refers”; and the interpretant is “the effect produced by the sign” (Chandler 29). In the case of interlingual, intralingual, and intersemiotic translation, it is the representamen of the sign system that undergoes change (Marais 2019: 146). Marais explains that according to Peirce, “a representamen can be either material or mental. Thus, any material thing could, in reality, be a representamen, as can any mental phenomenon. This means that any change to the materiality of the representamen entails a translation” (Ibid.).

The main implication for this definition is that interlingual translation no longer enjoys primacy over other types of translation. It allows us to identify translation processes wherever they may occur, be they verbal or not. As a result, our theorization of who can be considered a translator expands beyond those who work with verbal signs and encompasses those who communicate with non-verbal signs or a mixture of verbal and non-verbal signs.

The graphic novel *Baddawi* is based on several ‘source texts’ including the oral testimonies of Abdelrazaq’s father, grandparents and great grandparents. I argue that the first and second generation of Palestinians who have faced expulsion from their homeland can be considered translators who translate their firsthand embodied and psychological experiences into an oral narrative. These experiences are not solely structured by words, but by a plethora of senses, including the visual, olfactory, auditory, gustatory, and tactile. Following that, Abdelrazaq translates these testimonies into verbal-visual signs as she transforms them into the graphic novel. Born in the US, Abdelrazaq is spatiotemporally distant from her forebearers’ experiences. She transcribes their testimonies and intersemiotically translates them into the

graphic novel, which functions as a site of postmemory (Hirsch). These processes and the translators who perform them will be discussed in the first section of this chapter.

In the second section I will argue that the translation processes through which memory is remediated are collaborative. Cordingley and Frigau Manning show that translation is a collaborative activity that brings together several agents of translation, such as translators, editors, and publishers. In *Baddawi*, collaborative translation takes place among the three generations whose testimonies become entangled as they engage in intergenerational transmission of memory. Furthermore, the translator/artist Abdelrazaq collaborates with the publisher, designer, and editors, without whose contributions the graphic novel would not have been published.

The Translators of Intergenerational Memory

While artist and graphic novelist Leila Abdelrazaq is credited as the main creator of *Baddawi*, information gleaned from the text itself and her interviews reveals that – as indicated above – other translators who may not usually be classified as such, have contributed to the text, including her father Ahmad, his parents and grandparents, and Palestinian political cartoonist Naji al-Ali.

Ahmad's Parents and Grandparents: the Nakba Generation

Ahmad's parents and grandparents belong to the Nakba generation who personally experienced the events of 1948. They are primary witnesses to life in Palestine pre-1948, the expulsion, and the subsequent life in the camps. Ahmad's grandparents appear in a chapter titled "The Eid" (Abdelrazaq 2015: 36–39). The grandfather is pictured telling the family about life in Palestine before the Nakba (figure 1). **[Insert figure 4 here]** In an act of intergenerational transmission of memory, the grandparents translate their first-hand experiences into an oral narrative. Similarly, whenever Ahmad imagines what Palestine looks like he thinks of "his mother's stories" (figure 2) hinting at an act of translation whereby the mother reconstructs her direct experiences of the homeland into an oral narrative. **[Insert figure 5 here]**

The Nakba generation would have experienced the homeland somatically and psychologically. What they translate are their three-dimensional embodied experiences, which

as I have mentioned earlier include verbal, visual, olfactory, auditory, gustatory and tactile signs. In the narratives of this generation, “the description of land and of events is always given by reference not merely to particular places but to *particular relationships of place: lived geographies*” (Jayyusi 124). For example, when the grandfather takes his three sheep to graze during the Eid celebration, he closes his eyes and recalls a better time when he used to shepherd a whole flock in Safsaf. The spatiotemporal shift is indicated through traditional Palestinian embroidery patterns that frame the panel. The readers are invited to immerse themselves with all their senses, imagining the smell of the grass, the light breeze, the ambient noise, and the bleating of the sheep along with the grandfather. This idyllic memory is suddenly cut off as the reader moves to the next panel, and the grandfather opens his eyes to his current reality (figure 3). [Insert figure 6 here]

These translators do not just produce a linguistic account of their experience. What Ahmad would have encountered is a multimodal translation expressed through both verbal and non-verbal signs. Paralinguistic features, such as the quality of their voice, their dialects, facial expressions, gestures, and silences are part of this multimodal ‘text’ that Ahmad later retranslates in his own oral testimony. While Ahmad’s parents and grandparents are not officially acknowledged as translators, their testimonies significantly shape the graphic novel, informing the image that Ahmad constructs of the homeland to which he is denied his right of return.

Ahmad Abdelrazaq: the Witness Child

Ahmad was born and raised in Baddawi between the 1960s–1980s, witnessing some of the formative events of contemporary Palestinian and Lebanese history. Ahmad serves as a translator in two distinct ways. First, he retranslates his parents’ oral narratives of life in Palestine pre-1948 and their expulsion from Safsaf and transmits them to his daughter. As a refugee, Ahmad has never been allowed to return to Palestine. For him, Palestine is an ‘imagined homeland’ (Hammer) constructed by his parents’ and grandparents’ stories. His own translational act remediates this construction to his daughter. Second, Ahmad translates his own lived experience of growing up in Baddawi into an oral testimony that he also passes on to his daughter. Some of these translations would take place organically, in acts of vertical transmission within the family unit. Others were initiated by Leila once she started working on the graphic novel (Azzam).

Ahmad translates into an oral testimony, which unlike written texts, may be redundant, selective, and non-linear (Thompson and Bornat). Abdelrazaq explains that sometimes, he would change his mind about how a certain event had taken place or would be unable to provide details on what he was doing when a major political event was unfolding. There were memories which he recalled after the text's publication that she wishes she could have included in the text (Azzam). Rather than perceiving the selectivity of memory as a detraction from the authenticity of the work, Abdelrazaq chooses to embrace and acknowledge these aspects. Oral testimonies inform us about "how people make sense of their past, how they connect individual experience and its social context, how the past becomes part of the present, and how people use it to interpret their lives and the world around them" (Frisch 188). When Ahmad translates his memories into an oral narrative, he does not aim to create a historical account of political events but to pass on his own narrative, and by extension Palestinian collective memory to his daughter.

Naji al-Ali: the Political Cartoonist

An intersemiotic translator whose work forms a significant inspiration in the *Baddawi* project is Palestinian political cartoonist Naji al-Ali (c.1936–1987). Similar to Ahmad's family, al-Ali became a refugee in Lebanon upon the depopulation of his village in 1948. While Leila's relatives translate their memory and experiences into oral narratives, which are transmitted across generations within the family, al-Ali chose to translate his experiences into a form of visual art that speaks to the masses: the political cartoon.

Due to her generational and experiential distance from the events she depicts, Abdelrazaq found in al-Ali's cartoons a lens through which to gain perspective on the lives of refugees during the 1960s–1980s (Azzam). Her choice of restricting her colour palette to black and white can be seen as a nod towards al-Ali's. Ayyad observes that "to follow al-Ali's daily cartoons was to be invited to see the world through the eyes of a rebellious young Palestinian refugee. [...] They were meant to never be anything less than a direct, truthful chronicle of the suffering of Palestinian refugees" (2). Al-Ali's satirical cartoons didn't simply document political events, but transformed the image of Palestinian refugees from helpless victims into revolutionaries who resisted their oppression (Najjar).

The cover of the graphic novel features a boy in a striped T-shirt, standing with his back to the reader, whom we later learn is the protagonist, Ahmad (figure 4). [\[Insert figure 7 here\]](#) To the Palestinian reader, this image is easily recognised as that of al-Ali's character Handala, the witness-child with the spiky hair, tattered clothes, and bare feet. Handala faces away from the reader, crossing his arms behind his back as he silently witnesses and documents the oppression and resistance of his people, refusing to turn around until Palestinians are allowed to return to their homeland. In the preface to the graphic novel, Abdelrazaq (2015) explains the symbolism of Handala and states that the story she depicts isn't only her father's: "This story is about Handala. [...] It is about five million people, born into a life of exile and persecution, indefinitely suspended in statelessness" (11–12). By literally translating the posture of Handala on the cover, Abdelrazaq invites the reader to stand behind Ahmad's back and bear witness to his childhood memories and emphasises the collective nature of his story. Abdelrazaq's translation of intergenerationally transmitted memory is distinct from her father's in that rather than limiting its scope to the family unit, she translates for a wider Palestinian and non-Palestinian audience.

Ahmad-as-Handala reappears at the end of the graphic novel when Ahmad faces the choice of either staying in Lebanon or traveling to the United States to study. In a full-page panel, Ahmad stands at a crossroads, contemplating which path to take (figure 5). [\[Insert figure 8 here\]](#) The map of Palestine appears at the end of both paths as the sun rising across the horizon. By portraying Ahmad as Handala, Abdelrazaq indicates that regardless of which path he takes, his goal is to return to his homeland. His choice to immigrate to the US is motivated by the lack of job prospects and safety for Palestinian refugees in Lebanon. Through this visual choice, Abdelrazaq underscores the significance of the refugees' right of return, which despite its centrality, has been sidelined since the signing of the Oslo Accords. Handala will not turn around to face the reader until this return is ensured. Meanwhile, he does not wait stagnantly, but documents, demands accountability, and resists, which is what al-Ali and Abdelrazaq aspire to do through their translations.

Leila Abdelrazaq: the Activist Translator

Leila Abdelrazaq is a self-taught graphic novelist and artist. She defines herself as an artist and organiser and views her art as an extension of her political activism. Although trained in theater, Abdelrazaq's oeuvre mainly consists of comics, illustrations, and zines, which

explore issues of memory and identity. Her choice to translate her intergenerationally inherited memories into a graphic novel, rather than any other form of artistic expression is motivated by the accessibility of this medium and its capacity to break down seemingly complex political and social issues (Sawyer). According to Hillary Chute, what makes comics and graphic novels particularly adept at mediating traumatic experiences is their hand-drawn form and spatial syntax. She argues that the “spatial features of comics, such as its activation of the space between word and image and its erection of literal drawn frames alongside its breaking and violation of them, presents a grammar that can inscribe trauma not just thematically [...] but also powerfully at the level of textualization in words and images” (Chute 35). Nabizadeh further argues that comics and graphic novels are ideal for representing the experiences of marginalised individuals because “they rely on exploratory, experimental, and unorthodox modes of representation to raise their readers’ awareness of social, political, and historical issues” (1). By doing so, they promote “alternate ways of seeing” and thus “alternate ways of understanding” (Ibid.).

It can be argued that Abdelrazaq’s translation of her father’s memories does not begin with the creation of the graphic novel, but with the transcription of his testimonies. While *Baddawi* is written in English, the author includes a few Arabic expressions in English transliteration, such as words used in the dialogue between the characters. These expressions imply that her father most likely narrated his oral testimonies in Arabic. Abdelrazaq explains that she jotted down some of the testimonies on pieces of paper, while others were transcribed word for word in an electronic document (Azzam). This further complicates the translation process involved in the remediation of intergenerationally transmitted memory, implying that intersemiotic translation did not only involve the translation from orality into a visual-verbal text but also the transcription of the testimonies, followed by their interlingual translation into English.

Describing her methodology, Abdelrazaq states: “It was hand-drawn. I sketched everything and then inked it with paintbrushes and ink, then hand-lettered everything in pen. I didn’t have any training or formal guide on how to make graphic novels” (Azzam). This illustrates that in her capacity as a multimodal translator, Abdelrazaq played multiple roles simultaneously. She created the script of the graphic novel, illustrated the visuals, coloured them, and added the lettering by hand. There is no doubt that having formal training in the creation of graphic novels would have made the process easier for Abdelrazaq, who was a

full-time undergraduate student throughout the duration of the project, but it was not the most relevant skill needed for the creation of this multimodal translation. Rather, what appears more significant is the intimate relationship the translator has with the memory and testimony the visual-verbal text remediates. Abdelrazaq did not translate a readily available source text but curated her own. She did not acquire her material from an oral history archive or ethnographic interviews with refugees. Instead, she chose to make the translation a personal project by relying on her father's testimonies, which she transcribed, visualised, organised into a narrative, contextualised, and shared with a wide audience.

Abdelrazaq is temporally, spatially, and experientially distant from the testimonies she translates. The novel was published 67 years after the Nakba and 35 years after her father had left Lebanon. Born in the US, Abdelrazaq did not experience the trauma of war and displacement, unlike those whose oral and visual testimonies she retranslates. Abdelrazaq grew up listening to stories about her father's life in Lebanon and his parents' life in Palestine. This "generational structure of transmission embedded in multiple forms of mediation" is what Marianne Hirsch (35) refers to as 'postmemory'. This term highlights both the experiential distance and yet proximity to one's parents' traumatic past. In the case of Palestinian postmemory, this process is further complicated by the fact that the Nakba has not ended and is still systematically denied (Abu-Lughod 79).

In an essay where she reflects on what it means to be a Palestinian in the diaspora, Abdelrazaq alludes to the influence of postmemory on her identity construction and her attempts to work through her inherited past:

"Eventually, you realize most people's parents did not grow up in a civil war. Eventually, your mom tells you that your grandparents survived a massacre – a hidden piece of history you had unknowingly carried around comes to light, and you're not sure what to do with it. [...] This is probably when the totality of the situation descends upon you: you are Palestinian. Your father is from Lebanon. And suddenly you find yourself entrenched in something that you didn't know was around you. So you realize that even though you're older, stuff doesn't make sense. In fact, everything is kind of falling apart. And this is when we in the *Shatat* find ourselves at a crossroads; we have the option to embrace our identity or disown it" (Abdelrazaq 2016: 20).

As the embodied and psychological experiences of life in Palestine, the Nakba, and life in the camps are transmitted across generations, they are reconstructed and transformed. Diana Allan explains that “although inherited bodily memories and habits lose their experiential referents over time, they continue to carry overtones of their original meaning, while producing new ones that, in turn, may be materially inscribed and passed down” (77). It is through processes of translation that lived memory is transformed into postmemory that takes material form, as in the case of the print graphic novel.

In *Translating Across Sensory and Linguistic Borders*, Campbell and Vidal (2019 (b)) argue that intersemiotic translation is not about the ‘transfer’ of texts across medial boundaries, but about the ‘journey’ the translator experiences and then helps the audience recreate for themselves. They perceive intersemiotic translation as “a subjective, synaesthetic and relational experience to be rendered, and less as a message or content-and-form package to be carried across modal or medial boundaries” (Ibid. 31). Unlike the interlingual translator who is expected to be ‘invisible’, the intersemiotic translator is explicitly visible in this process through his/her “intense engagement [...] with the source text which also entails an appropriation of sorts, not just with the eyes but with all other senses” (Campbell and Vidal 2019 (a): xxix). The intersemiotic translator thus becomes “entangled in the translated artefact or event” (Campbell and Vidal 2019 (b): 17). This entanglement is highly visible in *Baddawi*. Although Abdelrazaq does not explicitly draw herself as a character in the graphic novel, she is present in the selection, structuration, and framing processes involved in the production of the graphic novel. Stitching her father’s isolated memories into a larger chronological narrative requires a high degree of selection and reconstruction, starting from the decision to rely on the memories of one individual, the limitation of the narrative within a particular timespan, and ending with the choice of which memories to share.

Abdelrazaq’s role as a translator is not limited to her remediation of postmemory. In 2014, she stayed with her relatives in the camp for seven months, during which time she was working on the final draft of *Baddawi*. Her own experience of walking down the streets in the camp prompted her to redo some of the illustrations, such as a scene during which children play with marbles in the street (Azzam). This process can be observed from a photograph she posted on her social media, which she describes as “last leg of the journey: drawing *baddawi* in *baddawi*” (Abdelrazaq 2014 (a)). The backgrounds of panels in graphic novels are not merely there to fill the space; they represent the universes that the characters inhabit

(McCloud 178). It was important for the translator to base her translation of the place on lived experience rather than on static reference pictures.

To conclude, in this section, I have argued that witnesses, political cartoonists, and visual artists can be seen as translators. By using the definition of translation introduced by Marais (2019), I have shown that carrying out these roles includes processes of translation that are just as important to the circulation of memory as interlingual translation. Moreover, while it is possible to identify different translators whose experiences have informed the process and product of translation, it is not possible to demarcate a clear line between their individual contributions. As Zwischenberger argues, collaboration leads to “the creation of a hybrid space, where individual contributions are strongly entangled with one another and cannot be singled out” (18). Intergenerational memory that has been reconstructed within the family unit is deeply entangled with Leila’s own experiences as a Palestinian who lives in the diaspora, her experience of visiting the camp, and her reinterpretation of al-Ali’s own translation of his reality. The input of the publishers, graphic designer, and editors with whom Leila collaborated further adds to this hybrid space, which will be discussed in the following section.

Other agents of translation: publishers, editors, graphic designers, and interlingual translators

Baddawi was published by Just World Books (JWB), a US-based publishing house founded by Helena Cobban in order to publish books that “expand and enrich the discourse in the United States and worldwide on issues of great international concern” (Just World Books). Cobban has written several books on the Middle East, conflict resolution, and transnational justice and has worked as a correspondent in Lebanon during the same period the graphic novel depicts. The project was overseen by Associate Publisher Kimberly MacVaugh who has a degree in politics and another in Arabic Studies and has worked in Palestine before joining JWB.

Baddawi was the first graphic novel published by JWB. Despite their lack of experience in the production, editing and dissemination of graphic novels, by 2015, the publisher had been operating for around five years, and had accumulated technical resources and experience from publishing around 13 books. What appears to be more relevant than previous experience in

publishing a particular medium is their political expertise and first-hand knowledge of the conditions Palestinians live under, whether in Palestine or the diaspora. This knowledge is presumably what allows them to find voices that expand the reader's understanding and appreciation of the cultural and sociopolitical dimensions of life for Palestinians.

One of the main reasons that could explain JWB's decision to approach a previously unpublished artist with a book offer is her work's alignment with their goals. In one of her interviews, Abdelrazaq explains that the publisher contacted her after having come across her work through a connection she had made through her political activism at Free Justice for Palestine (Sawyer). Part of JWB's work involves organizing talks and workshops to create a space for conversations that contribute to achieving peace in the Middle East. JWB also aims to work with "community-based organizations" that would use their publications as "educational and cultural resources" (Just World Books). Reviews by educators recognise the pedagogical value of *Baddawi*, describing it as "an exceptional book for the classroom" (Kallenborn 2017) that can foster empathy among children from a non-Palestinian background and "will play a role in the education of young minds for years to come" (Ihmoud). In general, *Baddawi* received positive acclaim, including being nominated for the Palestine Book Award. It was described as "a unique and necessary voice, especially in the world of comics" (Debaie). This 'uniqueness' may have made it potentially financially profitable for the publisher. Indeed, it has already been translated into Arabic, Korean, and French.

The design of the cover and interior of *Baddawi* is credited to Diana Ghazzawi, a Palestinian-American graphic designer. In a press release published upon her joining JWB, Ghazzawi is described as having a "wealth of experience" in the industry and "passion and commitment to the mission and vision of [the] company", further enabling them to "greatly increase [their] capacity to publish critical voices and expand the discourse on vital international issues" (Just World Books newsbar). This indicates that no external graphic designer was consulted because the publisher had already hired the necessary expertise, both in terms of technical skills and knowledge of the cultural and political context of the text under study. As explained earlier, Abdelrazaq created the visual-verbal text by hand on separate pieces of A4 paper, including the illustration and title that appear on the front cover. Arranging these pages into one document, designing the interior, front and back covers, creating chapter separators,

typesetting, and preparing the document for printing and binding, on the other hand, were the responsibility of the graphic designer.

In her acknowledgements, Abdelrazaq mentions collaborating with three editors, Muhammad Sankari, Francesco DeSalvatore, and Leena Saleh, whom she describes as “one knew a lot about the civil war, one was really good with visuals, and one didn’t really know very much about the whole situation” (Azzam). In addition to their expertise, friendship was one of the reasons these individuals were enrolled into the project. This is reflected in the informal setting through which the editing process took place, as Abdelrazaq explains: “I remember we were just sitting in my living room and had every major event that happened in the book charted out on post-it notes and we rearranged things, identifying areas where transitions were needed” (Ibid.)

From these brief descriptions, it can be argued that as Abdelrazaq’s intersemiotic translation of the memories of the preceding generations developed into a full-length graphic novel, this necessitated her collaboration with several agents who had different backgrounds and specialties (journalism, politics, publishing, visual design, activism, etc.). What unites them is their shared motivations and interests, which facilitates their collaboration. Abdelrazaq did not embark on this project out of cultural curiosity, for the sake of financial gain, or with the aim of increasing her cultural capital by getting published. The project involved the translation of sensitive, traumatic and personal memories of a group of people whose lives are still informed by the events they narrate. This explains why the publisher, designer, and editors had to share Abdelrazaq’s vision and motivation for documenting Palestinian oral history through multimodal translation. This could also explain why Abdelrazaq occupied several roles that could have been performed by other individuals in the comics industry.

Having discussed the translation processes and translation agents that contributed to the creation of the English graphic novel provides us with a solid ground on which examinations of interlingual translations of the publication can build. I would like to conclude this section with a brief reflection on the Arabic translation of *Baddawi* (2018), translated by Linda Labboun and published by Kalimat Group. Abdelrazaq states that this translation would “allow fellow Palestinians [and] Arabs to read between the lines a little more and understand something about how Palestinians in the diaspora understand and process our culture and history” (Eldemerdash).

While an in-depth analysis of the translation agents and their contributions to this interlingual translation goes beyond the scope of this chapter, it is worth noting two translational choices which significantly influence its potential to facilitate the functions mentioned above. Since English texts read from left-to-right and Arabic from right-to-left, the pages of the graphic novel were mirror inverted, distorting some of the visuals. For example, even though the panel in which Ahmad stands at a crossroads does not contain any verbal text (figure 5), the image was flipped in the Arabic translation. As a result, the maps of Palestine, Lebanon and the US become unrecognizable. It is unclear why the Arabic publisher did not request that these visuals be digitally edited, particularly when other panels which include verbal materials as part of their backgrounds were either edited or not flipped.

Some of the textual choices made in the interlingual translation are also problematic. In the introductory panel to the graphic novel, the expression “lived off the land” is mistranslated into “live outside their land” as follows:

“Safsaf’s 1000 residents lived off the land. Most of the family worked as farmers and shepherds” (Abdelrazaq 2015: 16).

يعيش أهالي القرية، الذين يصل عددهم إلى ١٠٠٠ نسمة، خارج أرضهم، ويعمل معظمهم كفلاحين ورعاة غنم.
[The village’s 1000 residents live outside their land, and most of them work as farmers and shepherds] (Abdelrazaq 2018: 14)

The translation erroneously implies that the villagers of Safsaf did not inhabit their land or use it as their source of livelihood. On the next page, Abdelrazaq visualises the ethnic cleansing of the village, accompanying it with the following caption:

“My Jiddo [grandfather] happened to be working in Akka at the time of the massacre. When he returned to Safsaf, he found the village nearly deserted and my Teta [grandmother] waiting for him. Most villagers had already fled in fear of another attack” (Abdelrazaq 2015: 17).

أثناء ارتكاب المجزرة، كان جدو في عمله في عكا. حين عاد إلى الصفصاف وجد القرية قاحلة كالصحراء وتبتنا تنتظره.
معظم أهالي القرية كانوا قد هربوا منها خوفاً من اعتداء آخر عليها.
[At the time of the massacre, my Jiddo was working in Akka. When he returned to Safsaf, he found it as barren as a desert and my Teta waiting for him. Most villagers had already fled from the village in fear of another attack] (Abdelrazaq 2018: 15).

The danger of mistranslating “nearly deserted” into “as barren as a desert” cannot be understated. Not only does it misrepresent the artist’s family’s lived experience and facts that are documented in both Palestinian oral history and written historiography, but it reiterates Zionist slogans of “making the desert bloom” and false claims that Palestine was arid, empty land before its occupation (Pappé 245; Masalha 64). In the absence of a translator’s note in which Labboun reflects on her translation strategy, it is difficult to determine whether these textual changes were made by the translator or publisher. Nevertheless, their impact hinders the transcultural transmission of Abdelrazaq’s intergenerationally inherited memories and undermines the graphic novel’s “preservation of the past [as] an act of resistance” (Abdelrazaq 2015: 12).

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have argued that the transcultural and intergenerational transmission of Palestinian collective memory is facilitated by processes of verbal and non-verbal translation. At first glance, one may argue that Abdelrazaq’s graphic novel is an intersemiotic translation of her father’s oral testimony. Throughout the analysis it becomes clear that this argument oversimplifies and erases the complex layers of translation that are involved in creation of the graphic novel. By adopting an understanding of translation that extends beyond interlingual transfer (Marais 2019), I was able to expand the notion of the translator and identify instances of multimodal translation that while being integral to the remediation of memory, would have remained unnoticed. As Bella Brodzki argues “translation is the mode through which that which is dead, disappeared, forgotten, buried, or suppressed overcomes its determined fate by being borne (and thus borne anew) to other contexts across time and space” (6). It is these verbal and non-verbal processes of translation that ensure the survival of Palestinian collective memory and counter its erasure.

Approaching translation as a collaborative practice enriches our understanding of “stylistic, rhetorical and technical dimensions to translating that are imperceptible or excluded from a single-translator focus” (Cordingley and Frigau Manning 24). This does not detract from the creativity of translators – be they interlingual, intralingual, or intersemiotic – or their ethical responsibilities towards the memories they reconstruct. Rather, it recognises that the translation the target audience encounters is not only the result of choices made by the

translator, and to assume otherwise erases the contributions of other agents that are coming to the surface through the application of Genetic Translation Studies and Actor Network Theory. This approach also enriches our understanding of the political, social, economic, and psychological factors that motivate individuals to participate in transmedial and transcultural memory transmission processes.

References

- Abdelrazaq, Leila. "last leg of the journey: drawing baddawi in baddawi". Instagram. 13 August 2014 (a). Web. 3 May 2020.
- Abdelrazaq, Leila. "the editing process aka i somehow found a way to have even less free wall space at our apartment". Instagram. 9 June 2014 (b). Web. 3 May 2020.
- Abdelrazaq, Leila. *Baddawi*. Charlottesville: Just World Books, 2015.
- Abdelrazaq, Leila. "Beyond Recitation and Ritual." *Being Palestinian: Personal Reflections on Palestinian Identity in the Diaspora*. Ed. Yasir Suleiman. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2016. 19–21.
- Abdelrazaq, Leila. *Baddawi*. Transl. Linda Labboun. Sharjah: Kalimat Group, 2018.
- Abu-Lughod, Lila. "Return to Half-Ruins: Memory, Postmemory, and Living History in Palestine." *Nakba: Palestine, 1948, and the Claims of Memory*. Ed. Ahmad H. Sa'di and Lila Abu-Lughod. New York: Columbia University Press, 2007. 77–104.
- Allan, Diana. "What bodies remember: sensory experience as historical counterpoint in the Nakba Archive." *An Oral History of the Palestinian Nakba*. Ed. Nahla Abdo and Nur Masalha. London: Zed Books, 2018. 66–87.
- Ayyad, Abdul Hadi, ed. *A Child in Palestine: The Cartoons of Naji al-Ali*. London: Verso, 2009.
- Azzam, Julie. *Status: Drawn to Palestinian Memory: Baddawi, a Graphic Novel with Leila Abdelrazaq* (Podcast). 25 November 2015. Web. 15 September 2022.
- Boria, Monica, and Marcus Tomalin. "Introduction." *Translation and Multimodality: Beyond Words*. Ed. Monica Boria et al. Abingdon and New York: Routledge, 2020. 1–23.
- Brodzki, Bella. *Can These Bones Live? Translation, Survival, and Cultural Memory*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007.

- Campbell, Madeleine, and Ricarda Vidal. "Entangled Journeys—An Introduction." *Translating across Sensory and Linguistic Borders: Intersemiotic Journeys between Media*. Ed. Madeleine Campbell and Ricarda Vidal. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019 (a). xxv–xliv.
- Campbell, Madeleine, and Ricarda Vidal. "The Translator's Gaze: Intersemiotic Translation as Transactional Process." *Translating across Sensory and Linguistic Borders: Intersemiotic Journeys between Media*. Ed. Madeleine Campbell and Ricarda Vidal. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019 (b). 1–36.
- Chandler, Daniel. *Semiotics. The Basics*. 3rd edition. London: Routledge, 2017.
- Chute, Hillary L. *Disaster Drawn: Visual Witness, Comics, and Documentary Form*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2016.
- Cordingley, Anthony, and Céline Frigau Manning. "What Is Collaborative Translation?" *Collaborative Translation: From the Renaissance to the Digital Age*. Ed. Anthony Cordingley and Céline Frigau Manning. London and New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2017. 1–30.
- Debaie, Marguerite. "Palestinian refugee boy comes of age in graphic novel *Baddawi*." 2015. Web. 15 September 2022.
- Eldemerdash, Nadia. "Leila Abdelrazaq Draws Social Justice Movements." 2017. Web. 15 September 2022.
- Frisch, Michael. *A Shared Authority: Essays on the Craft and Meaning of Oral and Public History*. New York: State University of New York Press, 1990.
- Hammer, Juliane. *Palestinians Born in Exile: Diaspora and the Search for a Homeland*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2005.
- Hirsch, Marianne. *The Generation of Postmemory: Writing and Visual Culture After the Holocaust*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2012.
- Ihmoud, Nader. "Palestinian-American's Anticipated Graphic Novel Reclaims Her Father's Narrative." 2015. Web. 15 September 2022.
- Jakobson, Roman. "On Linguistic Aspects of Translation." *The Translation Studies Reader*. Ed. Lawrence Venuti. London and New York: Routledge, 2000. 113–118.
- Jayyusi, Lena. "Iterability, Cumulativity, and Presence: The Relational Figures of Palestinian Memory." *Nakba: Palestine, 1948, and the Claims of Memory*. Ed. Ahmad H. Sa'di and Lila Abu-Lughod. New York: Columbia University Press, 2007. 107–133.
- Just World Books. "About Us." 2020. Web. 15 September 2022.
- Just World Books newsbar. "JWB Welcomes Great New Team Member." 2014. Web. 15 September 2022.

- Kallenborn, Eric. “*Baddawi*: A Graphic Novel Review 13/365.” 2017. Web. 15 September 2022.
- Manna’, Adel. “The Palestinian Nakba and its Continuous Repercussions.” *Israel Studies* 18.2 (2013): 86–99.
- Marais, Kobus. *A (Bio)Semiotic Theory of Translation: The Emergence of Social-Cultural Reality*. Abingdon and New York: Routledge, 2019.
- Marais, Kobus. “Okyeame poma: Exploring the multimodality of translation in precolonial African contexts.” *The Routledge Handbook of Translation and Activism*. Ed. Rebecca Ruth Gould and Kayvan Tahmasebian. Abingdon and New York: Routledge, 2020. 95–111.
- Masalha, Nur. *The Palestine Nakba: Decolonizing History, Narrating the Subaltern, Reclaiming Memory*. London and New York: Zed Books, 2012.
- McCloud, Scott. *Making Comics: Storytelling Secrets of Comics, Manga, and Graphic Novels*. New York: HarperCollins, 2006.
- Nabizadeh, Golnar. *Representation and Memory in Graphic Novels*. London and New York: Routledge, 2019.
- Nachabe Taan, Yasmine. “Blogging in Times of War: The July 2006 War in Lebanon and Mazen Kerbaj Imaging the Unimaginable.” *Cultures of War in Graphic Novels: Violence, Trauma, and Memory*. Ed. Tatiana Prorokova and Nimrod Tal. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2018. 204–224.
- Najjar, Orayb Aref. “Cartoons as a Site for the Construction of Palestinian Refugee Identity: An Exploratory Study of Cartoonist Naji al-Ali.” *Journal of Communication Inquiry* 31.3 (2007): 255–285.
- Pappé, Ilan. *The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine*. Oxford: Oneworld, 2006.
- Sa’di, Ahmad H. “Catastrophe, Memory and Identity: Al-Nakbah as a Component of Palestinian Identity.” *Israel Studies* 7.2 (2002): 175–198.
- Sawyer, Quest. “Leila Abdelrazaq Interview.” *Asian American Art Oral History Project* 110 (2018): 1–10. Web. 15 September 2022.
- Thompson, Paul, and Joanna Bornat. *The Voice of the Past: Oral History*. 4th ed. New York: Oxford University Press, 2017.
- Zwischenberger, Cornelia. “Translaboration: Exploring collaboration in translation and translation in collaboration.” *Target. International Journal of Translation Studies* 32.2 (2020): 173–190.

Word count: 6.883

¹ 'Negentropy' is negative entropy, or the opposite of entropy. Following Marais (2020), translation is negentropic work because it imposes constraints on semiotic material.