A feminist voice re/written in translation: A case study of the Arabic version of Joumana Haddad's *I Killed Scheherazade*

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ABSTRACT

The objective of this paper is to study to what extent we can read as 'feminist' the translation strategies used by translator Nour El-Assaad to produce the Arabic version of Joumana Haddad's book *I Killed Scheherazade: Confessions of an Angry Arab Woman*, originally written in English. The feminist translation approaches practiced in Quebec during the 1980s and 1990s worked to shed light on the ways in which translation can transfer and foreground the feminist voice and ideology within the specific geographical scope of that time. This paper thus revisits earlier paradigms and strategies, such as supplementing and hijacking, developed by Canadian feminist translators and writers, namely Luise von Flotow (1991/1997), Susanne de Lotbinière-Harwood (1990) and Sherry Simon (1996), in order to study their resonance with the translation of feminist texts produced in the Arabic-speaking context. Since these approaches have never been applied in the context of the Arab world and specifically in Lebanon, this paper opens more discussion on the politics of feminist texts crossing different borders and cultures via translation. It shows how El-Assaad's interventions and strategies reshape the Arabic version of the book so that the force of Haddad's feminist message is amplified in some places and mitigated in others. However, further research is needed to investigate more questions such as the effect of the understanding of Arab feminism(s) and the translator's ideology on the translation of feminist texts produced in the Arab world.

KEYWORDS: activism; English-Arabic translation; feminism; feminist translation; Joumana Haddad; I Killed Scheherazade; Nour El-Assaad

Introduction

The long history of feminisms in the Arab world, and Lebanon in particular, is diverse, complex and multi-faceted. Power and powerful positions have often been associated with men, while women have been assigned a subordinate status in the Arab world and within the traditional Arab family (Barakat 1987). Lebanese writer Joumana Haddad is known for writing her revolt against all traditional ideas and notions of Arab patriarchy, including patriarchy in Lebanon and the Middle East, where men hold great authority, influence and responsibility. As a contribution to the many discussions in the politics of feminist texts crossing different borders in translation (Flotow and Kamal 2020; Castro and Ergun 2017), this paper explores the translation strategies used by the translator Nour El-Assaad to translate Joumana Haddad's book *I Killed Scheherazade* from English into Arabic, using paradigms, approaches and analyses developed by Canadian translators and scholars (von Flotow 1991/1997; Lotbinière-Harwood 1990; Simon 1996) within a specific geographical scope. As these analytical approaches have never been applied to English-Arabic translation context, we explore and question how we can read the strategies adopted by El-Assaad in her translation of Haddad's book as 'feminist'. How did El-Assaad intervene in specific places of the original text? How can the modifications that El-Assaad introduced convey the author's original message? How can we read translation strategies as 'feminist' in light of the feminist translation practices in earlier times?

We first give a brief history of women's movements in the Lebanese context and the context of Joumana Haddad, activist writer, and Nour El-Assaad, activist translator. We also set out the relevance or rationale of reading the Arabic version of *I Killed Scheherazade* using feminist translator approaches, with specific reference to 'supplementing', 'hijacking' and 'modification' to examine specific examples of English-Arabic translation of this work. In this paper, we argue that by revisiting the activist messages of Haddad mediated by El-Assaad via the English-Arabic translation of *I Killed Scheherazade* using these analytical frameworks, we can appreciate more deeply the work of woman feminist translator El-Assaad as she actively and creatively worked to challenge conventional views on translation and women. We also argue that through reading specific examples of her translation, we add to growing conversations about the important role of feminist translators in making women's voices heard in different contexts.

Reading Haddad's *I Killed Scheherazade*: women's movements in Lebanon

Feminism in Lebanon cannot be studied in isolation from the country's complex social and political histories, all of which have shaped the structural tensions, limited resources, centralized organizing and intersectionality and solidarity among feminist groups (Moughalian and Ammar 2019). Lebanese feminists have communicated their messages in various ways. The Arab Institute for Women (AiW) at the Lebanese American University (LAU), for example, has been working "at the intersection of academia and activism" in Lebanon and the Arab region since its establishment in 1973. Alongside its education and development programs, the Institute publishes the bi-annual, interdisciplinary journal *Al-Raida*, encouraging "local, regional, and international discussions by, and for women in the Arab region" (The Arab Institute for Women, n.d.). Other actors in the field of gender equality include non-governmental organisations such as ABAAD – Resource Center for Gender Equality, whose Undress 522 Campaign succeeded in repealing Penal Code Article 522 known as the rape-marriage law. The work of KAFA (which literally means "enough") Violence & Exploitation focuses on eliminating all forms of gender-based violence and exploitation. When it comes to political presence and protest in the public sphere, as Wilson et al. (2019) remind us, "women have been at the core of Lebanon's popular protests since they began on October 17, 2019" through peace marches, protests, public teach-ins and media and press activism. They have demanded equal nationality rights, inclusion of the marginalized, increased political representation and a unified personal status law (Wilson et al. 2019). As awareness and perceptions of feminism continue to grow in Lebanon and the entire region, it is important to examine how translation of texts identified as feminist into Arabic provides insight into the concept of feminist translation particularly in the Lebanese context. We analyse the iconic text *I Killed Scheherazade* by Joumana Haddad in Arabic as one way of highlighting how feminist translation analysis in one specific context (1980s Quebec) can help us appreciate the importance of translated feminist texts in the Arabic-speaking context.

Joumana Haddad & Nour El-Assaad re-writing and re-birthing women's rights

The author of the book, Joumana Haddad, is a Lebanese writer, translator, journalist, poet, instructor and women's rights activist. She is widely recognized[1] for her liberal thought, fight for equality and freedom of speech, and cultural and social activism for women's rights in the Arab world. She is the author of poetry collections and books, including *I Killed Scheherazade* (2010), which has been translated into thirteen languages. She is also the founder and editor-in-chief of an Arabic-language cultural magazine called *Jasad* (meaning 'body'), which focuses on the literature, art and science of the body. Moreover, she has recently founded the Joumana Haddad Freedoms Center (JHFC), a Lebanese youth-centred, secular and independent human rights organisation. Her works are known for rebelling against the patriarchal system, specifically in Lebanon and the Middle East, where men still hold great authority. Her best-selling book *I Killed Scheherazade: Confessions of an Angry Arab Woman* was published in 2010 by Saqi Books. Its translation into Arabic by Nour El-Assaad was published in 2011 also by Saqi Books under the title, "هكذا قتلتُ شهرزاد: اعترافات امرأة عربية غاضبة" (literally, *This Is How I Killed Scheherazade: Confessions of an Angry Arab Woman*).

Nour El-Assaad is a Lebanese translator and the founder of L'Atelier Translations[2] . She has worked with Haddad on many translation projects, including the translation of *Jasad*. Haddad explains that she and El-Assaad closely collaborate to ensure the translated version of each work reflects the original text and sounds natural to the target readership (personal communication, December 16, 2019). Haddad's 'testimonial of El-Assaad ability and literary skills suggests that El-Assaad helps her not only rewrite but 're-birth' her writing in Arabic.

> As a writer and translator myself, I never thought I could find the "perfect womb" that could deliver my writings in another language as if I had done it. But then I did. Her name is Nour El-Assaad, and she has one of the rarest talents in the literary world: giving birth to the words all over again, not just translating them. I am deeply grateful for her amazing work on my books and articles over the years. Thanks to her dedication and sensibility, I reached new horizons (Haddad, undated).[3]

[1] https://pioneersandleaders.org/women-leaders/joumana-haddad (accessed 7 October 2020).
[2] http://www.lateliertranslations.com/ (accessed 7 October 2020).
[3] http://www.lateliertranslations.com/ (accessed 7 October 2020).

Haddad's *I Killed Scheherazade* is one of many iconic works by women writers in the Arab world. It tackles subjects viewed as "taboo" in many regions, such as the body and sexuality. Haddad begins by refuting common Western stereotypes about Arab women, then goes on to critique notions of virginity relating to honour as well as discriminatory practices of forced marriage and honour killings, still prevalent in parts of the Arab world. She states,

> The most horrific of these practices in my opinion is what they dare to call 'honour killings'; for a woman irrevocably tarnishes her family's honour by engaging in pre-marital sex, or by getting herself raped, or if she seeks divorce, or when she elopes and marries against her family's wishes (Haddad 2010:108).

The book is also one of a few books by an Arab, namely a Lebanese woman, identifying as feminist, written and published in English and translated into Arabic, not vice versa. For this reason, its translation into Arabic serves as an important reference on Arab feminism among many other works of the early 20th century in Arabic by Arab women, such as those by leading feminists of Egypt, Nawal El Saadawi (born in 1931), often described as the Simone de Beauvoir of the Arab world, and Huda Shaarawi (1879-1947), founder of the Egyptian Feminist Union.

Joumana Haddad has several publications in Arabic, among which we cite: "دعوة إلى عشاء سرّيّ" (literally, *Invitation to a Secret Feast*), poetry (2008), "عودة ليليت" (*The Return of Lilith*), poetry (2004), "قفص" (literally, *Cage*), theatre (2014). She worked for ten years at Lebanon's leading Arabic language daily "An-Nahar" (1997-2017). She writes and publishes novels, essays and poems in English, Italian, Spanish and French. She wrote *I Killed Scheherazade: Confessions of An Angry Arab Woman*, a book about gender inequality in the Arab world, in English for a reason: she wanted to transmit Arab women's voices to as many readers and places as possible, where some still believe it is somehow impossible for Arab women to be liberated. In an interview with British daily newspaper 'The Guardian', she revealed why she wrote this book:

> *I Killed Scheherazade: Confessions of An Angry Arab Woman*, began as a furious response to a passing comment by a Swedish journalist interviewing her about ***Jasad*** ("Most of us in the west," said that hapless lady, "are not familiar with the possibility of liberated Arab women like you existing") and expanded into a vivid assertion of individuality, free speech, free choice and dignity against religious bigotry, prejudice

> and the herd instinct both within and outside the Arab world […] (Haddad, The Guardian, 2010).[4]

As an English language publication, *I Killed Scheherazade* inspired many reviews[5]. In her foreword to the book, Etel Adnan praises Haddad for expressing such anger and "intense violence" and calling upon Arab women to claim their own identity and freedom. Italian writer Roberto Saviano wrote: "Joumana Haddad cannot be intimidated. This book is a lesson of courage for all those who fight to go beyond their own limits and chains". The notion of 'limits and chains' raises the question of how El-Assaad translate Haddad's work into Arabic, and the strategies she chose to do so: How important is it to adopt a feminist approach in the translation of such a text? How could translation strategies be read as 'feminist' across different languages? What would a feminist approach to translation mean for this text? We first clarify what we mean by feminist translation and why we choose to read El-Assaad's work using specific approaches.

Feminist translation: re/writing invisibility, fidelity and equivalence

Feminist translation has occupied an important space within translation studies for decades. Françoise Massardier-Kenney (1997/2009) explains how 'writer-focused' and 'translator-focused' feminist translation practices have helped shed light on works that have been ignored, thus making women's literary contributions more noticed and appreciated. "As a kind of 'archeology of knowledge': translation can reconstitute traditions that have been ignored because of their radicalness or their difference, or it can show how isolated voices could be seen as constituting traditions" (Massardier-Kenney 2009:6). She also argues that the feminist translator can make explicit the bridges and solidarities between cultures and activist practices to foster clearer and more nuanced understandings of social and political realia (ibid.). According to Ruth Abou Rached, "Conceptualising all writing as re-writing, feminist translators configure translation as a creative, dynamic and engaged praxis of re/writing that exposes and challenges the ideologies and power relations privileging some groups at the expense of others" (2017:197). Feminist translation as a theory and practice can thus be seen as an act of dynamism and creativity with the translator working not to replicate but transform the text in the source language. Our paper then does not

[4] https://www.theguardian.com/theguardian/2010/aug/21/joumana-haddad-interview (accessed 7 October 2020).
[5] https://saqibooks.com/books/saqi/i-killed-scheherazade/ (accessed 7 October 2020).

look to see how 'accurately' El-Assaad translated *I Killed Scheherazade* from English into Arabic, but the extent to which the strategies she used can be read as challenging ideologies of patriarchy. We read the Arabic version bearing in mind the importance of close collaboration between author and translator. As explained by Haddad, El-Assaad played a particularly active role in rendering her activist message in the Arabic version (Haddad, Affeich & Hilal, 2019).

Feminist translators use various strategies as well as co-collaboration to convey the source text, often linking the translation project "to a deep feminist consciousness of the gender power relations governing women's lives […], as expressed in life and through language" (Kamal 2008:260). As the translation process is viewed in feminist translation as production rather than reproduction, translators identifying as feminist often flaunt their subjectivity of role in the process and look to re-write and re-create the source text instead of transferring it as a would-be replica into another language. Massardier-Kenney affirms that "channelling translation through a feminist approach can bring out aspects of a text that had been overlooked or even suppressed" (1997:65). This is why, in many instances, such notions of translation as creative co-production appear to be "at odds with the long-dominant theory of translation as equivalence and transparency […]" (Homel & Simon c.f. Arrojo 1994:150). Issues of fidelity, in/visibility and equivalence are sources of great debate in feminist translation (Godard 1984; De Lotbinière-Harwood 1990; Simon 1996). Barbara Godard (1994) argued that feminist translation is:

> difference despite similarity. As feminist theory tries to show, difference is a key factor in thought processes and in critical activity. The feminist translator affirming her critical difference, her delight in interminable re-reading and re-writing, flaunts the signs of her manipulation of the text. *Womanhandling* the text in translation means replacing the modest, self-effacing translator. The translator becomes an active participant in the creation of meaning (Godard 1984:15).

Similarly, traditional notions of fidelity are often challenged or ignored by feminist translators, who consider that fidelity "is to be directed toward neither the author nor the reader, but toward the writing project – a project in which both writer and translator participate" (Simon 1996:2). Such debates also call to mind the issue of 'equivalence', where a translator seeks to render the target text as similar or identical to the 'source' text. As texts and contexts are varied, the study of equivalence has involved the study of "the kind and degree of sameness which gave birth to

different kinds of equivalence" (Panou 2013:2) with many different paradigms in translation studies (Vinay and Darbelnet 1958; Nida and Taber 1969; Newmark 1981; Baker 1992; Pym 2010, etc)[6]. Feminist translators, however, challenge fixed notions of equivalence and speak of "equivalence in difference" as way of calling into question which ideologies and power relations configure and shape what is 'equivalent' from the outset (De Lotbinière-Harwood 1990).

As pointed out by Olga Castro and Emek Ergun (2018), debates on feminist translation have long moved on from their earlier Quebec contexts, and have taken a far less linguistic and more 'intersectional' turn. In the Arabic translation of *I Killed Scheherazade: Confessions of an Angry Arab Woman*, we found that many of the strategies adopted by Nour El-Assaad have some resonance with the paradigms, approaches and strategies developed by Canadian feminist translators and writers, mainly Luise von Flotow (1991/1997), Susanne de Lotbinière-Harwood (1990) and Sherry Simon (1996). Haddad's book is first and foremost a strong expression of her anger towards the prevailing notions of Arab womanhood, shattering stereotypical images of Arab women being powerless and dependent on their male counterparts. In many ways, El-Assad's translation of Haddad's work can be read as defying or circumventing traditional notions of 'equivalence'. She added many 'supplementations' important but subtle in nature. One example can be seen in how she renders Haddad's encounter with patriarchy in the family:

> My uncle unconsciously wanted me that day to conform to a female stereotype dictated by patriarchal society: the female stereotype of a woman […] who is waiting for the man to come home from work, from war, from politics, from thinking, and from the other estates of the outside life (Haddad 2010:105).

In the Arabic version, El-Assaad rewrites the scene as:

> يومذاك، أراد لي عمّي، في شكل لاواعٍ، أن أتماهى مع نموذج المرأة كما يمليه علينا المجتمع الأبوي البطريركي: النموذج النسائي الذي [...] ينتظر عودة الرجل، ربّ البيت، عودته من التفكير، من العمل، من الحرب، من السياسة، ومن رهانات الحياة الأخرى.
> (Haddad 2011:61)

> (Literally[7], that day, my uncle unconsciously wanted me to identify with the model of the woman as dictated by the patriarchal society: the female model who [...] awaits the

[6] A useful summary of 'equivalence' in translation studies can be found in Panou 2013:1-6.
[7] All back translations beginning with 'literally', are our own versions or glosses of the Arabic phrases in English.

> return of the man, the head of the household, his return from thinking, from work, from war, from politics, and other stakes of life).

Here, we see that it is El-Assaad re/describing the word 'man' in English as the 'head of the household' in Arabic – a clear intervention by the translator to reflect the deeply patriarchal context of 'lived' power relations of many Arab women. Another example is how El-Assaad renders Haddad's general critique of differing 'factions' of patriarchy in the Arab world context:

"There's the faction that defends conservatism and is fervent […] about the concepts of chastity and purity" (Haddad 2010:88).

El-Assaad again as a translator supplements Haddad's work in Arabic in the following way:

"هناك حزب الذين يدّعون المحافظة - «الغيورين» على مفاهيم العفة والحشمة والطهارة"
(Haddad 2011:52)

> (Literally, there's the faction that claims to preserve conservatism – those who are vigilant in preserving the concepts of chastity, decency and purity).

The addition of the word 'decency' firstly widens the realm of 'chastity' and 'purity' to 'decency', which is highly valued by the Arab patriarchal society as applicable to Arab men as well as women. She uses the word حزب (which literally means 'political party' in Arabic) to describe 'faction'. While a detailed analysis of these two examples are beyond the scope of this paper, we make brief refer to them to highlight the importance of reading seemingly innocuous changes in ways that go beyond traditional notions of 'fidelity' and 'equivalence' in translation.

But why explore and use paradigms of earlier feminist translation practice for an analysis of Haddad's book? One reason lies in the challenges faced by El-Assaad in rendering Haddad's book – which Haddad specifically writes in English – into Arabic. Conveying meaning between languages is a challenge for any translator, as Flotow (1997) explains:

> Translators have had to develop creative methods similar to those of the source-text writers; they have had to go beyond translation to supplement their work, making up for the differences between various patriarchal languages by employing wordplay,

> grammatical dislocations and syntactic subversion in other places in their texts (Flotow 1997:24).

Haddad's style of writing in English for example comprises of much sarcasm and irony. In one instance, she uses the colloquial American phrase: "Give me a break!" (Haddad 2010:116) to criticize her exasperation at the situation of Arab women and the unfair stereotypes formed about them. As a literal translation would be meaningless in Arabic, El-Assaad chooses the colloquial Arabic phrase "مهلكم على عقولنا" (literally, "respect our mind") which carries the same meaning or, at least, effect, but also interestingly widens Haddad's 'my' to 'our'.

In terms of cultural issues, El-Assaad did not have an easier job to do. Bates Hoffer (2003) argues that

> communication and translation are easier where culture is shared, where objects are similar, when value systems are similar. Obviously, it is harder where these are not shared. The difficulties are magnified where the two sides of the communication do not share cultures, social systems, and so on, but do superficially seem to share them (Hoffer 2003:93).

Hoffer's words apply to Haddad's book not only in terms of communication, but also in terms of the 'political' culture into which El-Assaad was translating Haddad's words. Besides censorships imposed by governments or institutions, self-censorship on the part of the translator may emerge as an 'un/conscious' strategy of supplementation or omission in an attempt to produce an 'acceptable' translation in a specific cultural or political environment[8]. Self-censorship in translation is not surprising in any society: many cultural, religious, social, ideological and political constraints pose an ethical dilemma on how to translate specific topics and terms. As Jose Santaemilia says: "While censorship […] constitutes an external constraint on what we can publish or (re)write, self-censorship is an individual ethical struggle between self and context" (2008:221). Self-censorship is particularly relevant concerning religious references, specifically in the Lebanese and Arab world context. For instance, Haddad, raised by "Arab conservative, Christian parents" (Haddad 2010:114), openly criticizes religions for promoting intolerance and oppression.

[8] The examples below are the result of the practice of self-censorship by the translator herself and not censorship exercised by the author of the book or the publisher (personal communication with the translator, October 16, 2020).

She also works to challenge religious stereotypes which suggest that Christian women are more emancipated and Muslim women more oppressed. When questioning what she thinks will 'happen' if she challenges such tropes in any religious context, Haddad (2010) writes:

> So, am I provoking dear old Allah? Is he angry with me, and will he chastise me? Will I be condemned to eternal damnation and denied the ultimate pleasures of Heaven? So be it. I am ready to take that risk. For I don't want an Allah, should he exist, that I cannot challenge and provoke, the way his concept challenges and provokes me (Haddad 2010:123-124).

In the Arabic version, we note the direct address to 'Allah' is 'toned down' in the following way:

"هل أنا أستفزّ ربّنا إذاً؟"
(Haddad 2011:71)

(Literally, "am I provoking our Lord?").

Haddad, an atheist, would not balk at using the Arabic word for God. So, the question is: why did El-Assaad alter Haddad's word in Arabic? Is it censorship or self-censorship by El-Assaad?

Another example is how El-Assaad translates Haddad's angry criticism of religion in society: "I can't recall […] how many times I've said: 'Damn this country. […] damn these nasty religions that turn man against man because of a God who is uncertain of his own existence" (Haddad 2010:50). El-Assaad re/writes Haddad's (blasphemous) critique in the following way:

"اللعنة على هذه الطوائف المقيتة والانتماءات العمياء".
(Haddad 2011:35)

(Literally, "damn these abhorrent sects and blind affiliations").

Here, we see that El-Assaad refers to 'sects' rather than 'religions' and added the expression 'blind affiliations'. On one hand, we could read this change as El-Assaad exercised self-censorship to keep herself safe from attack (personal and political) on religious institutions. The word طوائف 'sects', however, is no less charged in many Arab world political contexts, specifically that of war.

Could we also then read this intervention of El-Assaad re/framing Haddad's critique to resonate in particular ways with specifically Arab world readers?

Before we explore the specific strategies in El-Assaad's translation, we must also make mention of sex-related language and references to the 'female body'. Haddad writes for example: "In fact, and despite my firm belief that each person is free to do whatever he/she deems suitable with his/her body, I find the 'piece of meat' female prototype as humiliating and as degrading as the veiled one" (Haddad 2010:99).

El-Assaad translates Haddad's words as:

> "في الواقع، وعلى رغم إيماني الراسخ بأنّ كل شخص حرّ في التصرّف بجسده وفق ما يحلو له، أعتقد أن نموذج الأنثى التي تعامل جسدها كلحم رخيص لا يقلّ إذلالاً وإهانة عن نموذج المرأة المحجّبة".
> (Haddad 2011:58)

> (Literally, in fact, and despite my firm belief that each person is free to do whatever he wants with his body, I think the model of the woman who treats her body as a piece of meat is no less humiliating and degrading than the model of the veiled woman).

In Arabic, the masculine is used to refer to mixed groups of men and women. On one hand, we could read that El-Assaad used the masculine form in Arabic to render the term جسده (his body) in order to avoid mentioning the female body in mixed formats. On the other, El-Assaad does not balk at using the term 'her body' where Haddad designates it in the English text. Could we then read El-Assaad as widening the realm of body politics to men in terms of sexuality? While we cannot answer such question in this paper, these subtle supplementations raise issues which inspired us to read El-Assaad's strategies using earlier frames of feminist translation approaches.

El-Assaad's strategies: supplementing, hijacking and modification

Supplementing

In the earlier feminist translation contexts, supplementing means that a translator works to compensate for the differences between languages by performing "voluntarist action" on the text. Flotow (1991:69) explains the "over-translation" in the much-cited example of "Ce soir, j'entre

dans l'histoire sans relever ma jupe" (literally, this evening I'm entering history without lifting up my skirt) which the feminist translator rendered as "this evening I'm entering history without opening my legs". The translator clearly and intentionally intervened by explicating the meaning of the source text in a more vivid way. According to Simon (1996), feminist translators make no efforts to hide their interventions. "Far from being blind to the political and interpretative dimensions of their own project, feminist translators quite willingly acknowledge their interventionism" (Simon 1996: 28). Such interventionism requires a translator, in Simon's words to be "upfront" (Simon 1996: 36).

In El-Assaad's translation of Haddad's book, several examples demonstrate the technique of supplementation, but without any explanation from El-Assaad or Haddad in the book. For instance, at the beginning of the book, Haddad writes: "although I'm a so-called Arab woman, I, and many other women like me… have a very active professional life" (Haddad 2010:18).

El-Assaad supplements this phrase as:

"على رغم أني 'امرأة عربية'، فأنا ونساء كثيرات غيري... رسمنا لأنفسنا حياةً مهنية ناشطة".
(Haddad 2011:20)

(Literally, although I am an Arab woman, I, and many other women like me… have built ourselves an active professional life).

Another example is when Haddad writes about how women can raise their self-esteem: "She needs to accept and love herself" (Haddad 2010:131).

El-Assaad supplements this phrase in the following way:

"لا بل يجب أن تتعلّم كيف تقبل نفسها وتحبّها وتفخر بها على رغم كلّ شيء".
(Haddad 2011:75)

(Literally, after all, she must know how to accept, love and be proud of herself despite everything).

We see here that El-Assaad intervenes to affirm the author's position much more strongly. A third example is when Haddad calls on each woman to: "find a place for herself in society" (Haddad 2010:98). El-Assaad supplements Haddad's call as follows:

"تثبيت مكانتها في المجتمعات".
(Haddad 2011:57)

(Literally, strengthen her place in societies).

meaning that women already have their place in society; they just need to consolidate it. Another striking example is the sentence where Haddad explains how each woman is an authority for her own experience: "for a woman is her own sole expert, and her own guide to herself" (2010:99).

El-Assaad translates this phrase as:

"أن تكون المرأة هي خبرة ذاتها، ومرجعية هذه الذات. لأن لا خبرة لتُختبَر خارجاً، ولا مرجعية سواها، لتعود إليها".
(Haddad 2011:58)

(Literally, a woman is her own sole expert, and her own guide to herself, because there is no external experience or other authority to be referred to except her own).

Here, we see El-Assaad adding a sentence to emphasize the importance of the woman depending only on herself and not on any external entity.

El-Assaad's practice of supplementing can be read as a political intervention that renders her visible in the text. Along with Haddad, she participated in the construction and revitalization of feminist thought in an Arabic-speaking context. However, this practice was not explained to the readers of the Arabic text neither in the form of footnotes nor in the form of a preface.

Hijacking

Hijacking, in the early context of feminist translation, is the practice of a translator intervening or altering a text for her/his ideological purposes (Flotow 1991). It was first used by David Homel, "a Montreal journalist who attacks Susanne de Lotbinière-Harwood for her interference in the translation of *Lettres d'une autre* by Lise Gauvin" (Flotow 1991:78). One reason for this practice

is that the source text may simply be misogynistic, racist or homophobic. Simon explains this practice as "the appropriation of a text whose intentions are not necessarily feminist by the feminist translator" (1996:14). Susanne De Lotbinière-Harwood (1990) explains further:

> My translation practice is a political activity aimed at making language speak for women. So my signature on a translation means: this translation has used every possible translation strategy to make the feminine visible in language. Because making the feminine visible in language means making women seen and heard in the real world. Which is what feminism is all about (De Lotbinière-Harwood 1990:9).

This practice has not had a shortage of critics. Arrojo (1994) criticizes hijacking and wonders

> on what grounds can one justify that "womanhandling" texts is objectively positive while "manhandling" them is to be despised? In what terms is the trope of translation as "hijacking" non-violent? Why isn't the feminist translator's appropriation of the "original" also a symptom of "the need to retain the ownership" of meaning? (Arrojo 1994:157).

According to Arrojo, 'hijacking' means that a translator takes a text which has one specific, usually patriarchal purpose, and overwrites it in another way. But what if a feminist translator 'hijacks' the ideological intent of the writer and adapts it not to overwrite its politics but re-write its politics in a more vivid or amplified way? In our view, this is exactly what El-Assaad worked to do in her translation of Haddad's work. On several occasions, she alters the frames of reference, yet also draws attention to the feminine presence by making use of grammatical structures of Arabic not available or less visible in the English version. In one early section of her book, Haddad writes: "I know perfectly well that the Occidental, who is aware of the mosaic, complex and heterogeneous nature of our Arab societies and cultures, does exist" 2010:29).

El-Assaad translates the phrase as follows:

"الرّجل الغربيّ (أو المرأة الغربية طبعاً)".
(Haddad 2011:25)

(Literally, the Western man (or the Western woman of course)).

Not only did El-Assaad add a reference to "the Western woman" instead of using the male generic term, she also stressed on it using the adverb "طبعاً" ('of course'). If Haddad and she were co-

collaborating in this translation, could it be that Haddad was simply re/writing her own text into Arabic, with the assistance of El-Assaad? Other examples include El-Assaad's use of gender-inclusive grammatical structures in Arabic in ways which supplement or re/situate the ideology of the English version as more specifically gender-conscious. She renders Haddad's English phrase "an interview with an Arab writer" (Haddad 2010:90) in Arabic as "حوار مع كاتب/ة عربي/ة" (Haddad 2011:53).

The Arabic letter "ة" indicates the feminine gender but the slash denotes its presence as separate yet part of the Arabic root word – this is a rather uncommon and bold practice. There are other instances where El-Assaad 'adds' an additional feminine presence to Haddad's English text. El-Assaad translates "next-door neighbor" (Haddad 2010:19) as "جارك أو جارتك" (Haddad 2011:20) meaning "your male neighbour or female neighbour". In this way, she seems to be incorporating women into the equation by adopting gender-conscious translation practices.

We now consider two further examples:

- "She is the asker, and the other is the grantor. Let us instead consider this equality as basic, and behave as if it is a given fact (and it really is so)" (Haddad 2010:111):

> "لنعتبر هذه المساواة إذاً من البديهيّات، ولنتصرّف كأنها من المسلّمات (هي حقا كذلك)، بدلاً من الدوران في حلقة مفرغة المرجع فيها هو الرجل "المانح" والقرار الأخير فيها للمعيارية الذكورية".
> (Haddad 2011:63)
>
> (Literally, let us consider this equality as something evident, and behave as if it is a given fact (it is really so), rather than going around in circles where the man is the "grantor" and where the final decision belongs to the male paradigm).

- "What is required, in the Arab world particularly, is for the woman to go far in crystallising her life […] without being a mirror reflecting what others think her image should be" (Haddad 2010:111).

> "المطلوب، خصوصاً في العالم العربي، أن تذهب المرأة بعيداً، وإلى لا رجوع، في التنقيب عن ذاتها وبلورة حياتها […] دون أن تكون مرآةً تنعكس فيها الصورة التي يعتقد الرجل أنها الأصل".
> (Haddad 2011:63)

> (Literally, what is required, in the Arab world particularly, is for the woman to go far, to the point of no return, in searching for herself and crystallising her life […] without being a mirror reflecting what the man believes as the authentic one).

While the earlier practice of hijacking may be accused of distorting a text, it can be seen in this case as a positive intervention aiming at bringing the feminine to the forefront. Having worked in collaboration with Haddad, El-Assaad might have used this strategy to reinforce Haddad's position rather than impose her own ideology on the text.

Modification

According to the earlier feminist translators, language plays a major role in the oppression of women through its male-oriented lexicon and grammar and can act as a legitimating tool of patriarchal authority (Simon 1996). For this reason, Simon (1996) argues that feminist translators often seek to extend and develop the purpose of the original text, not distort it. One of the most important manifestations of patriarchy in language is grammatical gender, defined as placing nouns according to their form and not according to their meaning. We have previously seen attempts by El-Assaad to use an all-inclusive language in her translation. Yet, her practice in this respect is not always consistent. For instance, in the following sentence, Haddad writes: "Is there a more whorish act than depriving an author of his/her words?" (Haddad 2010:69).

El-Assaad rewrites Haddad's words as:

"هل ثمة عهر أكثر فظاعة من حرمان الكاتب كلماته؟"

(Haddad 2011:44)

> (Literally, is there a more whorish act than depriving an author of his words?).

The pronouns "his/her" are rendered in the masculine only as "his". While Haddad deliberately used the gender-inclusive pronouns "his/her", El-Assaad overlooked this grammatical practice and opted for what Arabic language prefers to use, that is to say the masculine form, possibly for linguistic purposes.

Similarly, Haddad (2010) notes: “But there is a huge difference between needing the other, and depending on the other, becoming a mere appendage and an accessory of his/hers” (Haddad 2010:100).

In Arabic, El-Assaad re/writes:

"لكنّ الفرق هائل بين الحاجة إلى الآخر والاتكال عليه، درجة أن تصبحي مجرّد تابع له أو ملحق به".

(Haddad 2011:58)

(Literally, but the difference is huge between needing the other and depending on him, so that you become a mere subordinate or accessory to him).

El-Assaad’s translation of “his/hers” gives the assumption that the woman is always the subordinate or accessory of the man, excluding the possibility of the opposite being the case.
Some sentences referring specifically to women seem also to ‘talk differently’ in Arabic. For instance, El-Assaad translates Haddad’s words of “The one making a demand puts herself in a position of weakness” (Haddad 2010:111) as:

" فصاحب الطلب يضع نفسه سلفاً في موقع ضعف".

(Haddad 2011:63)

(Literally, the requester already puts himself in a position of weakness).

This translation focuses on the masculine, while Haddad used the feminine grammatical gender “herself” as she was speaking about women specifically. Using the masculine in Arabic, which is the norm, generalizes the noun and fails to shift the focus towards women and their struggles. Finally, we invite consideration on the following sentence, which Haddad uses to encourage Arab women to recover their stolen identities: “Regaining this kidnapped, unknown identity, this compromised being that has been distorted under various forms of fear, conditioning, and frustration, is the hardest battle a woman must fight, and win” (Haddad 2010:111).

"ولا ريب في أنّ استعادة هذه الذات المجهولة، المرتهنة، المرمية تحت الطلاسم والتعاويذ والتابوهات والرقابات، وتحت أشكال الرعب والتخويف، هي الحرب الأصعب التي يجب أن يخوضها الإنسان ويربحها، امرأة ورجلاً على السواء".
(Haddad 2011:63)

(Literally, there is no doubt that the restoration of this unknown, captured self, which has been subject to talisman, spells, taboos, censorship and forms of terror and intimidation, is the hardest battle both women and men must fight and win).

On one hand, El-Assaad's intervention could be read as "neutralizing" (Andone 2002:141) the woman-focused bent of Haddad's text. On the other hand, it seems that El-Assaad could be supplementing or hijacking this ideological position not to overwrite it but to direct it differently.

Other types of modifications made by El-Assaad include simplifications. For instance, Haddad celebrates womanhood in many instances in her work. One example is her phrase: "the wonder of being a woman. A real woman. And being proud of" (Haddad 2010:131).

In Arabic, we only get to read this phrase as: "أعجوبة أن أعيش" (Haddad 2011:75) (Literally, the wonder of being alive).

Haddad also asks: "is there anything more magnificent than a woman insisting on winning her battles whilst remaining a woman?" (Haddad 2010:98).

In Arabic, we find that El-Assaad frames Haddad's question differently:

"فهل ثمة ما هو أجمل من أن تكون المرأة امرأة، وتظل كذلك؟"
(Haddad 2011:57)

(Literally, is there anything more beautiful than a woman being a woman and remaining like that?).

This implies omission of messages of empowerment that Haddad wished to convey to women. It is not clear whether this modification of the original meaning was carried out in collaboration with Haddad for the sake of simplicity. Otherwise, it would represent a hijacking act on the part of El-Assaad as it eliminates powerful ideas that Haddad intended to communicate.

Analysis of El-Assaad's interventions

Since El-Assaad did not write any preface in the Arabic version of the book, in which she explained the reasons behind all the modifications she introduced, it becomes therefore difficult to ascertain the motivations of the interventions using the Quebec model, as El-Assaad did not explicitly state her practice. However, through the different examples mentioned in this paper, we decided to engage in an analysis of the contexts and reasons of such interventions.

Many texts, feminist or otherwise, are modified in translation when specific references, ideas, or concepts do not exist in the target culture. Other terms run great risk of being misrepresented when read along existing values and beliefs in another language. For instance, when Haddad writes about "erotic art by Arab artists" (Haddad 2010:90), El-Assaad renders this phrase as:

"الأعمال الفوتوغرافية الفنية، لفنانين عرب وغربيين على السواء".
(Haddad 2011:53)

(Literally, photographic artwork by both Arab and Western artists).

The reason for this intervention is intimated by Haddad herself later in the English version of the book. In the section where Haddad explains more about her magazine *Jasad* (Arabic for "body"), she writes, "At this point, allow me to note that *Jasad* is not a pornographic magazine, as many Arabs have classified it. I am not the Hugh Hefner of the Arab world" (Haddad 2010:85), that is the founder and editor-in-chief of the infamous Playboy magazine. In the Arabic version, El-Assaad omitted this reference to Hefner altogether. It could be argued that El-Assaad removed it as she did not think Hefner was a relevant cultural reference to Arabic-speaking audiences. Omitting this American cultural reference reflects neither Haddad's intention of defending herself nor her ideology of writing since Haddad never shies away from taboo subjects.

But what about El-Assaad's consistency of approach concerning grammatical gender? In some instances, El-Assaad uses and supplements the gendered components in Arabic as we have seen earlier, while in others, she seems to obviate them. El-Assaad does not explain her translation practice in the Arabic version of Haddad's work. She did explain more when asked by us, as authors of this paper. She affirmed that she identifies as feminist but that as a translator her "main

concern is to remain faithful to the author" (El-Assaad to Affeich & Hilal, 2019). She also stated that she sought to translate Haddad's work in ways that reflect the original meaning intended by Haddad but were also 'acceptable' in the Arabic language. We then consulted with Haddad as the writer of the English version. In her communication, she stated that while she endorses the use of gender-neutral language, she leaves a certain margin of freedom for the translator to decide herself (Haddad, Affeich & Hilal, 2019).

But to what extent can we read El-Assaad as using feminist translation strategies previously mentioned to foreground the female identity and reinforce the visibility of women in the text? There is no definitive answer to bring here, as the 'feminist' practice of El-Assaad was not exactly the same as that of Québécois translators, who made their presence in the text and the rationale for their intervention very clear and obvious. Flotow (1991) clearly highlighted this active presence of feminist translators, which can take, according to her, different forms:

> It is becoming almost routine for feminist translators to reflect on their work in a preface, and to stress their active presence in the text in footnotes. The modest, self-effacing translator, who produces a smooth, readable target language version of the original has become a thing of the past (Flotow 1991:76).

So, while some translation strategies used by El-Assaad could be seen as resonating with earlier feminist strategies used in Quebec, this resonance is albeit partial. This partial-ness provides an opportunity for analysis and consideration on differing contexts of 'feminist' translations.

Concluding remarks

In this paper, we have explored and questioned the strategies used by the translator Nour El-Assaad to render Joumana Haddad's feminist message. El-Assaad resorted to supplementing and introducing modifications in her translation. As El-Assaad and Haddad both stated that they 'worked' the translation in co-collaboration with each other, it is difficult to draw any conclusions on whether El-Assaad enacted a process of 'hijacking' – intervening for ideological purposes or not. The strategies indeed reshaped the Arabic version of the book so that the force of Haddad's message was amplified in some places and mitigated in others.

For El-Assaad, translating into Arabic involves negotiating many linguistic and politico-cultural challenges. This paper has sought to show how translator interventions, albeit subtle, can be read in ways which shed light on how women's issues are re/presented in new contexts, even when the ideological reasons for the interventions are not 'explained' by the writer or translator. As the strategies used by El-Assaad are not explained in the Arabic version of Haddad's work, we have refrained from making any in-depth analysis on precisely 'why' and 'how' these instances occurred. It could be that some of El-Assaad's modifications were bound by the grammatical, social, cultural and religious restrictions of the Arab world or by El-Assaad's own practices of self-censorship. However, we cannot know this without the writer, translator or editing publisher openly stating this is the case. In general, the dynamic of El-Assaad collaborating with Haddad to render her words in Arabic suggests that the translation was a highly communicative and cooperative process or in other words, as Serenella Zanotti metaphorically puts it, "a cooperative process in which author and translator act as communicating vessels" (2009:87).

By keeping with the spirit of the text, it seems that El-Assaad worked to be visible and invisible by attentively listening to the voice of the text while creating a new text for new audiences: what Hala Kamal calls "a discourse in its own right" as a translation (Kamal 2008:266). This paper has sought to show the ways in which we can read the role of 'the feminist translator' as an active producer of meaning within her own, that is her Arab world, gendered political context. It is however no easy task to define or categorize what a feminist approach to translation means in the Lebanese and Arab contexts due to lack of research in this field. In general, as far as Lebanese and Arab feminism(s) is concerned, an emphasis is placed on women's rights on multiple levels. In 2020, for example, the Lebanese Revolution of October 17 called for

> an egalitarian family code, an end to violence against women, call out against sexual harassment, the abolishment of the Kafala system – which holds migrant workers in a servile relationship with their employers – inclusion of all women and girls, rights for LGBTQI, rights for individuals with disabilities and special needs, dignity, as well as freedom from oppression and violence for all (Abou Habib 2020).

In many ways, this quote is highly indicative of how many women in the Lebanese present context ardently aspire for "individual freedoms and bodily integrity" (Abou Habib 2020). Their activist demands are boldly expressed through an outright rejection of patriarchy and how it is reproduced

within the political, economic, legal and socio-cultural spheres. In this compelling quote, Abou Habib works to give a picture of 2020: Lebanese and Arab women seeking to engage more and more in recent revolts. According to Abou Habib (2020), such engagements can be described as "a total break from former experiences of revolts where the leading and loud voices were invariably male" (2020). Concerning revolutions in the MENA regions other than Lebanon, that sparked a wave of 'liberal feminism', Abou Habib (2020) also comments:

> Sudan, Algeria, and more recently Iraq, have witnessed a significant mobilization of young feminists, often calling for women demonstrating against oppression and violence and always framing their demands within a call for change and transformation towards the rule of law, justice, equality, and dignity for all (Abou Habib 2020).

Literary works on the status of women by Lebanese-Arab feminist activists like Joumana Haddad have played a significant role in encouraging women's engagement in the struggles and battles against patriarchal Arab societies. In *I Killed Scheherazade*, Haddad challenges prevalent stereotypes of womanhood in the Middle East and openly criticizes religious, social and cultural notions of virginity, objectification of women, religious authority, female inferiority, forced marriage and honour killings, among others. Her feminist voice was echoed by El-Assaad, despite some modifications she introduced in the Arabic version of the book.

Unlike the Canadian earlier feminist approach to translation (1980s/1990), which focused on the visibility of women in literature whose works have been ignored, Haddad and El-Assaad's main objective aimed first and foremost to bring to the upfront the image of Lebanese and Arab women as seen through their 'feminist lenses': oppressed, silenced and dominated by traditional male-oriented societies. Questions raised in this paper on how and by which critical frameworks we read their 'messages' could serve as foundation for future research on the analysis of translation of feminist texts in Arab world contexts. Since no research on English-Arabic feminist translation has been conducted before, we believe that this paper paves the way for further questions to be explored, including but not limited to the effect of censorship and self-censorship, ideological assumptions of the translator or publisher, as well as understanding of Arab feminism(s) on the translation of feminist texts produced in the Arab world.

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