

Poppies of Iraq

Brigitte Findakly

Lewis Trondheim, Illustrator

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Brigitte Findakly, along with her husband, cartoonist Lewis Trondheim, provides perspective on the history of Iraq through her graphic memoir, *Poppies of Iraq*.

Findakly grew up in Iraq. Her book begins with a memory of visiting the historical site of Nimrud as a girl, and a quick mention of the fact that the site's famous winged lions have since been destroyed by the group Daesh, or ISIL.

This brief study in contrasts creates the framework for the book. Findakly continues to recount small, sometimes fond memories, and to note changes to those landscape over time; or, with the wisdom and clarity of hindsight, she reflects on the larger forces at work during those periods.

Here, then, is a firsthand account of the everyday impact of political change—coups and counter-coups, the rise of Saddam Hussein, and the Iran-Iraq War—as seen through one woman's eyes.

Trondheim's illustrations give a clear sense of life in Iraq, and the combination of art and text is more powerful than either could be on its own. Both focus on the domestic and personal aspects of living in Iraq, which brings emotional weight to Findakly's experience and results in a greater impact than any mere history lesson could make.

Poppies of Iraq was first serialized in the French newspaper *Le Monde*; this translation from Helge Dascher gives the English-speaking world access, via a unique window, to the people and practices of what can sometimes seem a very foreign land.

PETER DABBENE (September/October 2017)

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