Anne Frank’s Diary – The Graphic Adaptation: From Translation to Adaptation

Rachel Weissbrod
Bar-Ilan University
Ayelet Kohn
David Yellin Academic College of Eduation

This paper discusses Anne Frank’s Diary - The Graphic Adaptation (Frank, Folman and Polonsky 2017) through the prism of relevance theory and basic Bakhtinian concepts. Based on relevance theory, Gutt (2000) introduced the concept of indirect translation, which “interpretively resembles” the source text in respects that are relevant to the target audience in its new context. Taking as our departure point the idea that this concept can be applied to adaptations as well, we use it to address the graphic adaptation of Anne Frank’s diary. We show that the graphic diary interpretively resembles the original, first published in 1947, in respects that are relevant to young (and other) readers today. As in the case of indirect translation, it has been adapted to our times, first of all by turning the original written text (actually comprising more than one version) into a multimodal work. By abridging the original and adding visual elements, it meets the expectations of a new generation of readers familiar with new media. The transformation involves modification of the dimensions of time and space, which we address by means of the Bakhtinian concept of the chronotope (Bakhtin 1981). The original polyphony (Bakhtin 1984), too, has been modified since new voices, including those of the editor and illustrator, are present. The voice of Anne Frank herself, which had been partly silenced due to censorship (Lefevere 1992), was given full rein. Our focus is twofold: firstly, the adaptation itself which, in keeping with the expectation of indirect translation, is true to the original meaning despite its indirectness (Smith 2002: 112); and secondly, its relevance to the contemporary audience (“contextual effects” in the terminology of Gutt 2000: 29). The contribution of this paper lies in applying a theory which has been developed in the framework of Translation Studies to an adaptation. Thus, we tighten the links between Translation Studies and Adaptation Studies. Taking advantage of Bakhtinian concepts, we also offer tools for the analysis of multimodal texts. As one can deduce e.g. from Kaindl (2013), such texts are growingly acknowledged as relevant to Translation Studies and Adaptation Studies alike.

References
Frank, Anne, 2017. Anne Frank – ha-Yoman ha-Graphi [Anne Frank – the Graphic Diary]. Ari Folman (ed.), David Polonsky (illus.). Or Yehuda: Kineret, Zmora-Bitan, Dvir. [In Hebrew. An English version was published by Pantheon Graphic Novels in 2018.]

The diary has spawned countless adaptations, including a Broadway play, several films, a ballet and a musical. Now comes a graphic version by Ari Folman and David Polonsky, a duo responsible for *Waltz with Bashir*, a mesmerising animated film about Israel’s war in Lebanon in 1982. Where the diary ends, Anne’s book deserves the attention. A German translation in 1950 cut some of the hostile references to Germans, turning Anne’s experience into a more generalised struggle against oppression. The new graphic version was commissioned by the Anne Frank Foundation in Basel, which says it is a way to bring the diary into the 21st century, particularly for young people. At a time when Holocaust denial and flippancy flourish on the alt-right and elsewhere, that is a sound aim. “I wanted to dislike Anne Frank’s *Diary: The Graphic Adaptation* because books about Anne usually feel opportunistic or simplistic. But this comic-book version, authorized by the Anne Frank Foundation, is a monumental achievement. In large part that’s because it wears its importance lightly. . . .” In an afterword, Folman says he only used 5 percent of the entire original diary; it feels like much more.” - Tablet. “Folman and Polonsky have reclaimed Anne Frank in all of her humanity, and they allow us to witness for ourselves her beauty, courage, vision and imagination, all of the qualities that make her life and early death so heartbreaking. And, in doing so, they have elevated the tools of the comic book to create an astonishing work of art.” This adaptation of Anne Frank’s *Diary of a Young Girl* into a graphic version for a young readership, maintains the integrity and power of the original work. With stunning, expressive illustrations and ample direct quotation from the diary, this edition will expand the readership for this important and lasting work of history and literature. ...more.