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Putting it Graphically: Fidelity in Graphic Novel Adaptations of Classic German Literature

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Putting it Graphically: Fidelity in Graphic Novel Adaptations of Classic German Literature

Do graphic novel adaptations of works in the "canon" of German literature faithfully portray the original works? Does the use of unique styles, inclusion of original text, plot representation, and color enhance or deter the faithfulness to the original?

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How characters and scenes are drawn and how characters are represented are a part of the **STYLE** criterion. The way in which an image is drawn can tell readers how to feel and gives them a clue on what to expect in the future. How characters are drawn can also be mixed with how characters are represented because illustrators use style to make a point.

The source material is sometimes kept when a story is adapted to different media. In the adaptation of a book to a movie, this is seen through narration, most commonly at the beginning and the end. Comparing a book to a graphic novel, different percentages of the **ORIGINAL TEXT** are found dependent on the graphic novel.

In adaptation to different media, the plot of a story is changed to better fit the new medium (most commonly seen when a book is made into a movie). This can also happen when a work is made into a graphic novel. The criterion of **PLOT CHANGES** examines the differences in the plot between the original and the graphic novel.

Different types of media use **COLOR** in different ways, whether in excess or lack of or somewhere in between. The way color is used tells its own story and gives its own emphasis to important features in a story. The criterion of color analyzes the emphases of the author and compares the different emphases with the those of the source material.

Blank, J. (2017). '... But Is It Literature?' Graphic Adaptation in Germany in the Context of High and Popular Culture. European Comic Art,, Vol. 10 p7493.

Tabachnick, S. E. (2010). The Graphic Novel and the Age of Transition: A Survey and Analysis. English Literature in Transition, Vol. 53 pg 3-28.

DIE VERWANDLUNG
VON FRANZ KAFKA

Style:
Similar style as the novel, told in third-person point of view, with the characters interjecting occasionally. The way the characters are drawn makes them seem sinister or like they are trying to hide something, even the family

Original Text:
Used throughout the book to show Gregor's thoughts and feelings, also to give background and explain pictures
Includes the famous first line; something that any version of the story should always include

Plot:
Maintains the same original plot, not missing important plot points
Shows Gregor in an alleyway after he dies, which is not mentioned in the novel version

Color:
Images were filled with shadows to give the reader an uneasy feeling
Black and Red to portray Gregor's insect body; two dark colors
Even scenes during the daytime were dark and shadowy, showing an inescapable nightmare

Anne Frank Tagebuch

Style:
Cartoon-like, somewhat exaggerated style represents the original material well: a visual "label" for each main character that gives Anne's perceptions a visual embodiment (ex. Margot wears conspicuous glasses, Frau van Daan is often near her blue-and white chamber pot, etc.)

Use of Original Text:
Original words for the majority of the text, some fictionalized dialogue in speech bubbles, which, by the adaptors' own admission in the afterword, serve to display Anne's talent as an author and preserve the power of her words

Plot Representation:
Overall fidelity to the events and thoughts that Anne wrote in her diary, some themes that run throughout the diary are condensed into a few, focused pages, and some smaller events are left out in the adaptation.

Use of Color:
Vibrant, bright colors for Anne's daydreams and her life before the war; dark colors for Anne's nightmares and scenes of Nazi brutality; dull, drab, earthy tones for life in the "Hinterhaus" uses of sharp contrast powerfully portray both Anne's hopes and fears.

Annette von Droste-Hülshoff
Die Judenbuche

Style:
Cartoon-like style with specific character representations.

Original Text:
The descriptions all have the original text
Some speech bubbles have original text, others are paraphrased to shorten the conversation - they use less words to convey the meaning

Plot:
No plot differences
Some scenes are skipped, some are extended (especially dialogue-heavy scenes)

Color:
There are not very many colors, the illustrations are basically black and white (the "white" is actually pale tan)
It is obvious when it is night compared to the day

ANACONDA

IM WESTEN NICHTS NEUES

Style:
Impressionistic style conveyed the perception of Paul, the protagonist in the novel, and the time period.

Original Text:
Paragraphs of original text supported the illustration in the graphic novel

Color:
Shading of black, white, and grey were primarily used
Conveyed the darkness of WWi, and the loss of humanity

Plot:
No plot differences between the original and the graphic novel adaptation

"The graphic novel is an extended comic book, written by adults for adults, which treats important content in a serious artistic way and makes use of high-quality paper and production" (Tabachnick, 2010, p. 3). The German literary community has been very slow to accept the graphic novel as a literary genre (Blank, 2017). As the graphic novel has gained acceptance, graphic representations of classical German literature are being published alongside many original graphic works. The literary community sees two criteria regarding whether a graphic novel is of quality work: "... first, a good adaptation should be faithful to the original text if it is to be called an adaptation rather than a retelling; second the adaptation should be faithful to itself in that its visual side should have a style, which while in keeping with the intentions of the author of the original text, is itself unique" (Tabachnick, 2010, p. 4).

CONCLUSION: Examination of the 4 criteria reveals that the adaptors of these 4 graphic novels, part of the "German canon," sought to remain faithful to the original works. While the graphic novels may have given extra emphasis to certain characteristics of the original novels, they still convey the same stories.