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H-France Review Vol. 21 (October 2021), No. 190

Kate Griffiths, *Zola and the Art of Television: Adaptation, Recreation, Translation*. Cambridge: Legenda, 2020. Notes, bibliography, and index. x + 182 pp. £75.00 U.K./ \$99.00 U.S./€85.00 (hb). ISBN 9-78-1781887097.

Review by Hannah Thompson, Royal Holloway, University of London.

It is the final word in this work's title, "translation," that encapsulates the originality and interest of this book. In each of the work's five substantive chapters, Griffiths reads a selection of French and British televisual adaptation of works by Emile Zola (including *Au Bonheur des Dames*, *L'Œuvre*, *Madame Soudis*, *Une page d'amour*, *L'Argent*, and *Germinal*) through the lens of a different theory of translation. Griffiths breaks new ground here in two ways which she explains in detail in her introduction. First, her focus on television adaptations ends what she calls the "critical silence" (p. 7) in this area by challenging viewers' and scholars' tendency to under-appreciate both the artistry and the critical significance of televisual adaptation. Secondly, Griffiths convincingly argues that a deep understanding of creative processes and practices can be gained from treating televisual rewritings of literary texts as translations rather than (or as well as) adaptations; for her, reading these televisual texts through the lens of various translation theories opens up extremely fruitful modes of interpretation and ultimately calls for a reconsideration of what televisual art is or could be. By challenging adaptation studies' traditional resistance to translation theory, Griffiths's book importantly goes some way to bridging the intellectual and disciplinary divide between literary studies and media studies.

According to Griffiths, media studies scholars' tendency to focus almost exclusively on adaptation theory risks neglecting important insights from translation theorists including those discussed in the monograph: Antoine Berman, Lawrence Venuti, André Lefevere, Ernst-August Gutt, Christiane Nord. Griffiths reminds us that translation is not only a negotiation between languages; it is also about how different media, and different cultures, understand and interpret each other. The theorists Griffiths discusses all focus, with varying degrees of emphasis, on how humanity's economic, cultural, and social differences influence the creation and reception of target texts. They all believe that translation is what Griffiths calls an "interpersonal creative translation" (p. 1) involving audiences, as well as translators and authors. Griffiths's careful discussions of her chosen theorists turns her book into a series of case studies which highlight the impact of the interactions between the many people involved in the creation of novels, translations, and adaptations in different ways. Each chapter is an exercise in what happens to

our understanding of Zola's works, their adaptations, and the latter's cultural, societal, and political contexts when we apply a particular translation theory to the relationship between source text and target text, as well as between author, translator, and audience. In this way, the book tells us as much about the priorities and uses of each translation theory as it does about the novels and their afterlives. As Griffiths carefully shows throughout, most adaptations of Zola are not (only) of the original novel, but also of previous translations, adaptations, and reworkings, all further altered by the adapting team's own creative choices. Any adaptation of Zola is thus a complicated network of intertexts, a kind of palimpsest in which echoes of previous adaptations abound.

Griffiths's chapters meticulously unpick these multiple source texts to reveal the intricate web of influences that inform each adaptation. In chapter one, "Selling Zola to Twenty-First-Century Television Audiences: Zola, Gutt and *The Paradise*," Griffiths explores how Formalist Ernst-August Gutt's controversial idea that a successful translation is one that first and foremost meets the needs of its target audience informs an interpretation of the BBC's 2012 adaptation of *Au Bonheur des Dames*. Whilst purists might argue that *The Paradise* sacrifices key elements of its source novel to ensure its own commercial success, Griffiths shows that this drive to please a new audience is in fact a very faithful translation of the novel's protagonist Octave Mouret's dreams for his department store. Chapter two, "Bodies in Translation: Zola, Venuti, *L'Œuvre* and *Madame Sourdis*" uses the productive notion of the translator's subjectivity to explore how two works about the multiple influences involved in the production of the visual arts are transformed into televisual adaptations that foreground the interpersonal processes of both translation and artistic creation. In chapter three, "Interpersonal Transactions: Zola, Nord and *L'Argent*," Griffiths again focuses on the interpersonal dimension of adaptation. But here, she uses Christiane Nord's focus on the translator as mediator of a multiplicity of creative interpretations to reveal the problematic relationships and creative tensions that exist between the novel's adaptation of real people and political events, its subsequent translation into English by Vizetelly, and Antenne 2's 1988 adaptation. In chapter four, "The Art of Deformation: Zola, Berman and *Une page d'amour*," Griffiths shows how Antoine Berman's theory of "deformation" informs her reading of Zola's novel and Elie Chouraqui's 1980 reworking of it. Berman argues that translators have a tendency to create target texts that unwittingly "deform" their source texts in an attempt to fit in with the expectations of their audiences. Griffiths uses Berman's theory to show that adaptations of *Une page d'amour* knowingly acknowledge and then resist these deforming tendencies by forcing their audiences to engage with the source text in their adaptations. Chapter five, "*Germinal* and the Politics of Patronage: Zola, Lefevre and the BBC," convincingly shows that a power dynamic exists within translation and adaptation whereby the status, mission, and cultural currency of the adaptation's funder disproportionately influence its creative choices. By opening and closing the monograph with discussions of flagship BBC adaptations, Griffiths is able to show how the corporation's priorities have evolved in the last fifty years and what these insights in turn reveal about the shifting expectations and demands of the television viewer and the industry itself, particularly in the face of increased technological pressure from other media.

In each chapter, Griffiths shows what happens to our understandings of the novel, the televisual text, and the translation theory when we read them all together. It is not only a case of the

translation theory informing the interpretation of the adaptation, as we might expect; insights from both source text and adaptation also illuminate the translation theory and reveal its strengths and flaws. And it is this mixture of insights, together with the virtuosity with which Griffiths moves from theory to theory, that adds a wonderful depth to the volume. By applying a different theory in each chapter, Griffiths provides five nuanced, distinctive, and thoughtful essays that usefully illustrate what happens when we apply translation theory to literary adaptation.

The five case studies are linked by the reappearance throughout of several key issues in translation theory, notably the various meanings of “fidelity” in different eras and in different countries. Griffiths reminds us that the concept of fidelity—a concept often used in the assessment of the success of a particular translation or adaptation—is not a static and stable term, but “a shifting construction shaped by the cultural, critical, temporal, political imperatives of the person or system invoking it” (p. 1). Thus, French adaptations of Zola’s works tend to interpret fidelity as being “faithful to Zola’s belief that art should depict contemporary life,” whereas the British BBC adaptations are “faithful to the nineteenth-century novelist’s intention to show a slice of life in his historic era” (p. 13). By arguing that each translation theorist understands fidelity differently, Griffiths calls for the reinvigoration of the fidelity debate in translation and adaptation studies. As well as extensive discussions of the theorists’ various interpretations of fidelity, Griffiths also analyses the various forces that wittingly and unwittingly influence the production of a translation, adaptation or indeed source text; the extent to which the translator or writer should foreground the artistry of her craft; and whether a translator should produce a domesticated translation that prioritizes the target reader or a foreignized translation that respects the source author and/or text.

There is a final layer of sophistication in Griffiths’s work which emphasizes its originality and importance. As well as discussing televisual adaptations of Zola’s novels, Griffiths reminds us that Zola himself was deeply involved with translation and adaptation. Not only did he adapt his own works for the stage, he was also actively engaged in the ekphrastic translation of the Impressionists’ painterly techniques into prose. More broadly, as a realist novelist he saw his role as the translation of reality into fiction and wrote about the challenges of doing so in his novels, journalism and letters. Whilst discussing the text-to-television transformations in each chapter, Griffiths cleverly shows how the source texts used in each adaptation are themselves translations of various materials—including Zola’s own notes, newspaper cuttings and, in the case of the BBC adaptations, the English translations of the French novels. By revealing the influence of a seemingly endless chain of translations, Griffiths argues for the centrality of translation theory as a critical tool in the interpretation of Zola’s work. This is especially fitting given that Zola himself claimed to be providing a scientific version of reality but was in fact a highly subjective translator of reality. All of the works discussed in this monograph foreground the role of the individual artist, writer, creator, or translator in the creative process and thus foreshadow the concerns of the five theorists showcased by Griffiths. Indeed, Griffiths’s fascination with the artistry of Zola’s novels, as well as her expert knowledge of them, allows her to draw a series of convincing and clever parallels between the work of the novelist and the work of the translators and theorists she discusses. As well of being of huge interest to scholars of Zola, and of intramodal adaptation more generally, this monograph will be of particular benefit for students and teachers

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of translation studies who are looking for examples of how various theories of translation might be fruitfully applied to canonical literary texts.

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ISSN 1553-9172