

TV-SERIES AND THEIR NOVELIZATION: NEVERWHERE BY NEIL GAIMAN

SERIES DE TELEVISION Y SU NOVELIZACIÓN: NEVERWHERE POR NEIL GAIMAN



Zulfiya R. Zinnatullina¹



Ekaterina V. Zueva²



Ivan A. Popp³

RESUMEN

En esta investigación se compara la serie de televisión *Neverwhere* con la novela que lleva su mismo nombre de Neil Gaiman. Para ello, se utilizó el método de análisis de contenido con un enfoque centrado en la fidelidad de los personajes de la serie. Se utilizaron criterios literales para transformar una obra visual en una escrita, y finalmente intentar crear nuevos conceptos. Los resultados indican que Gaiman ha sido leal a la preservación de la naturaleza de los personajes, con solo una manipulación para agregar amor al contenido de la historia. Por otro lado, se observó que Gaiman ha mantenido el mismo mundo personal y completo de cada personaje y ha cumplido con las mismas técnicas cinematográficas como el corte de audio, el cambio de imagen y el cambio de espacio en su libro.

Palabras clave: novelización, *Neverwhere*, personajes, técnicas cinematográficas.

ABSTRACT

This research compares the TV series of *Neverwhere* with its novelization by Neil Gaiman. The Content analysis method was used with a central focus on the fidelity of the characters. Research findings indicated that Gaiman has been loyal to preserving the nature of the characters; however, he added love to the axis of story. On the other hand, Gaiman has kept the same personal and complete world of each character and fulfilled the same cinematic techniques such as audio cut, image change, and space change in his book as well.

Keywords: novelization, *Neverwhere*, novel characters, cinematographic techniques.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.7896827>

¹Associate professor, candidate of science, Kazan Federal University, Division of Russian Philology, email: zin-zulya@mail.ru.

²Academic Researcher, Kazan Federal University, Institute of Philology and cross-cultural communication, Faculty member, ORCID: <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-8273-8855>,

³Ural State Pedagogical University

INTRODUCTION

Nowadays no sphere of art develops separately. Such interpenetration leads to the fact that the boundaries between different types of art are blurred. We may deal with the operas transferred to the comics format, and paintings that turn to life. In this context, the relations between literature and cinema seem even more traditional. The most common way of their interaction is considered “screen version”, though some scholars state that this is not the only option (Mariyevskaya, 2015; Miles & Smith, 2013).

Development of the market economy leads to the fact that to increase the sales some shots from the screen versions are placed on the covers of books. So we may see that not only cinematography uses literature, but vice versa (Mahlknecht, 2009).

The traditional type of relationship between these fields of art -which most often follows the scheme “work of literature – script - movie”- ceases to be the only one although it still remains the most successful in terms of commercialization. At present, the schemes may have the following order: work of literature - script – screen version – work of literature. In this order, the details from the movie adaptation influence the final work of literature; another scheme may be: script – movie – work of literature, where the final work of literature follows the original script after the release of the movie.

Technological advances has shown that it is possible to transform art pieces. Nowadays these kinds of transformation can be widely seen; for instances, adapting a novel into a movie, creating a novel from a painting, or drawing a painting from the theme of a story or novel. One of the fascinating events of the present era is transforming a movie or a television series into a book, which seemed unusual when it first appeared.

In 1996, Neil Gaiman wrote a novel on the basis of his own television series. His work arose three questions: (a) is the process to transform movies or television series into a novel different from the opposite process, that is, transform a novel into a series? (b) In a movie version, story characters are expanded from novels, then, how does it happen in the process of creating a novel from a movie or series; (c) are visual effects and ‘no dialogue’ sequences in a movie and TV-series a barrier to loyalty to the main theme of the story in novels? This paper intends to answer these questions as a case study of Gaiman’s novelization of TV-series of *Neverwhere*.

LITERATURE RIVIEW

The object of this research was one of Neil Gaiman early works: mini-series and a novel *Neverwhere*. The book itself was first published in 2009 although the series was written back in 1996 in parallel with the movie. The series was first shown on the BBC, and did not gain popularity. In our opinion, one of the reasons for the failure was the lack of good special effects. The creation of a movie in the genre of

urban fantasy, to which *Neverwhere* refers, requires of the use of advanced visual effects that were not available in the late 20th century. The second reason is timing. The series has a mini format of six episodes lasting approximately 30 minutes each. It did not allow Gaiman to reveal many features of the construction of the world of London Below, the nature of the characters, among others.

METHODS

Our research was mainly based on the works that underline the connections between different forms of art (Amineva, 2015; Lisenko & Shevchenko, 2017), especially between literature and cinema (Shchepacheva & Karasik, 2016; Narrativity, 2007; Toohey, 2012). Nowadays, the tight relations between visual and verbal expression of different images is one of the main trends in modern literary studies development (Gaiman, 2012).

In this paper, using a judicial analysis method, TV-series of *Neverwhere* was comprehensively analyzed on the basis of four components (1) characters of the story, (2) axis of the story, (3) visual effects of story, and (4) filmmaking techniques. The novel, *Neverwhere*, was analyzed by textual analysis and characters of story and the axis of story were studied and analyzed in the two versions. In the end, a judicial analysis was completed to detect how visual effects and filmmaking techniques are reflected in novel.

RESULTS

In the book, *Neverwhere*, the author does not adhere to the part division given in the TV-version. The novel consists of 20 chapters which are a logically complete narrative while the series follows the principle of cliff-hanger (when the series ends on an exciting note).

Also, the novelty is the inclusion of two prologues to the book version. The first describes the events that occurred with two negative characters, Croup and Vandemar about 400 years ago in Tuscany. Most likely it is a reference to the fire that occurred in Pisa in 1595, after which the famous Pisa Cathedral was reconstructed. Supplementing the novel with this episode, the writer claims to include the universe of London Below in a wide historical and literary context. Croup and Vandemar, played by Clive Russell and Hywel Bennett, almost completely resembled the appearance of these characters: "First, Mr. Vandemar is two and a half heads taller than Mr. Croup; second, Mr. Croup has eyes of a faded china blue, while Mr. Vandemar's eyes are brown." (Gaiman, 2012, p.6).

The second prologue is already dedicated to the protagonist, Richard Mayhew, and the history of his move to London. The old woman's prophecy turns to be significant in this prologue: "Not just London . . ." The old woman paused. "Not any

London I know." It started to rain then, softly. "I'm sorry," she said. "It starts with doors." (Gaiman, 2012, p.8).

Another important detail of this prologue is an "umbrella with the map of the London Underground". It prepares the reader for the subsequent play with the toponyms connected with this type of transport. Nearly the whole novel is based on a kind of game associated with the names of streets, districts and other toponyms in London. For example, Old Bailey of Gaiman is an old man who breeds birds, and Hammersmith is not the name of a subway station, but a blacksmith. The whole London Below is structured on the basis of the metro scheme, where most of the action of the novel takes place.

Generally speaking, London plays a big role in this book. It is not so noticeable in a screen version, since many aspects related to the toponymy of London are not included or there are no explanations. So, to a person who is not related to the city, it is difficult to understand why the angel is called Islington or why there are seven sisters.

The description of the bookish London Below differs from the cinematic, which can be explained by the fact that the movie failed to accurately recreate the space that would correspond to Neil Gaiman's idea. On the screen, London Below is more modern, and it has more details dating back to the 20th century; for example, Kalashnikov assault rifles at Black Friars, LED ribbon, and corrugated aluminum pipes as decor elements at the Market. In the book version, London Below is more like a space lost in time, where the past and the present are interwoven.

It is necessary to mention that the movie includes a very small number of scenes of heroes moving in London Below, especially vertical movements, whereas quite a lot of attention is given to that in the book. Due to the inclusion of such episodes in the novel, the boundaries of London Below are expanding. Gaiman demonstrates that this is not some sort of closed space among the metro lines and communications (namely, this impression is created after watching the series), but it is the world covering the whole London.

The narrative in the book is often refracted through the prism of the consciousness of the protagonist, Richard, who initially acts as an ignorant character. Before his acquaintance with Lady Door London, even the London Above, was for him only a space where certain points were connected with each other by means of lines:

"It was a city in which the very old and the awkwardly new jostled each other, not uncomfortably, but without respect; a city of shops and offices and restaurants and homes, of parks and churches, of ignored monuments and remarkably unpalatial palaces; a city of hundreds of districts with strange names—Crouch End, Chalk Farm, Earl's Court, Marble Arch—and oddly distinct identities" (Gaiman, 2012, p.11).

The city seemed to Richard an alien, logically deprived space, since London Above was never his home, he did not understand many of the rules dictated by the city although he diligently tried to fit into this world. Only after going all the way in London Below, Richard began to see the soul of the city. For Mayhew, all events that occurred in London Below were a kind of initiation as a result of the city and Richard mutual acceptance. This idea is absent in the cinematic version. The series as a whole is concentrated around the action; it practically does not reveal the inner world of the heroes: they appear from nowhere and disappear in the same place. In the book, the psychology of the characters, in particular Richard, is more thoroughly worked out. In the movie, he is presented as a dependent, infantile, and slightly stupid young man. His inner world is almost uncovered: Richard accepts London Below very easily, starting to play by its rules. In the novel, it is shown that this acceptance is gradual although he is tormented by doubts all the time:

"It all seemed so normal, so quiet, so sane. For a moment, he felt that all he needed to get his life back would be to hail a taxi and tell it to take him home. And then he would sleep the night through in his own bed. But a taxi would not see him or stop for him, and he had nowhere to go, even if one did." (Gaiman,2012, p.12).

In the novel, Geiman describes sufficiently the story of his moving to London, the death of his parents, which are not mentioned in the series. This all makes Richard a more complex but ambiguous character. The novel deeply reveals the relationship between the characters, in particular, Richard and Door. There is even some hint of a love line, whereas on the screen these characters are indifferent to each other. In the book, their relationship goes through several stages:

1. Mercy (first on the part of Richard, then on Door's);
2. Friendship;
3. Tenderness.

The latter is clearly revealed in the farewell scene:

"Thanks for everything you did," she said, seriously. Then she threw her arms around him, and she squeezed him tightly enough that the bruises on his ribs hurt, and he hugged her back, just as tightly, making all of his bruises complain violently, and he simply didn't care." (Gaiman,2012, p.13).

Although the theme of dreams is not included in the film, it plays a great role in revealing the inner world of the characters in the literary version. The book describes the dreams of Door and Islington, who dream of episodes from their past. These events give the reader the opportunity to determine which values are important to these characters. Richard's dreams are more of a prophetic kind:

“He is somewhere deep beneath the ground: in a tunnel, perhaps, or a sewer. Light comes in flickers, defining the darkness, not dispelling it. He is not alone. There are other people walking beside him, although he cannot see their faces. They are running, now, through the inside of the sewer, splashing through the mud and filth. Droplets of water fall slowly through the air, crystal clear in the darkness.

He turns a corner, and the beast is waiting for him.” (Gaiman,2012, p.12).

In general Geiman's use of the image of the beast is a logical enough move since the genre of *Neverwhere* is an urban fantasy. Creating the image of the London beast, Gaiman relies on the rich cultural tradition of urban legends about monsters living in the lower tier (sewers, subways, etc.). Many of these legends were also filmed. Perhaps the most famous of them is the movie Alligator (1980), which tells the story of an alligator living in a Chicago sewer. Gaiman also has a reference to this film although another city is mentioned. So Hunter says:

“I fought in the sewers beneath New York with the great blind white alligator-king. He was thirty feet long, fat from sewage and fierce in battle.” (Gaiman,2012, p.13).

The London beast of Gaiman is no less terrible: “They say his hide bristles with swords and spears and knives stuck in him by those who have tried and failed. His tusks are razors, and his hooves are thunderbolts.”It rather has the appearance of a bison in the movie, although it appears fully on the screen only for one second. It is described as following in the novel: “It is huge. It fills the space of the sewer: massive head down, bristled body and breath steaming in the chill of the air. Some kind of boar, he thinks at first, and then realizes that no boar could be so huge. It is the size of a bull, of a tiger, of an ox.” (Gaiman,2012, p.13).

Also the choice of this particular animal can be explained by referring to the Statue of the Attacking Bull on Wall Street in London, which is a symbol of money, material values. Thus, to some extent, the victory over the London Beast becomes for Richard a release from the values that are dictated by London Above.

Gaiman also transfers some cinematographic techniques from the movie to the novel. It is mainly the technique of cross-cutting - the alternate display of two or more events (images) occurring simultaneously, but in different places. So, the whole book and movie are built on several plot lines: Richard and Door, Croupe and Vandemar, and Islington. They develop in parallel and. then, intersect. Although in the book the author does not always adhere to the order and length of the change of scenes, the fragmentary narrative remains. In addition the appearance of many of the characters in the book corresponds to the appearance of the actors. For example, Mr. Stockton, who was performed by Stratford Jones, is described in the following way:

“He was over sixty; his hair was gray and silver, and it was cut too long in the back, because it made people uncomfortable that his hair was too long, and Mr. Stockton liked making people uncomfortable”. (Gaiman,2012, p.15).

Many episodes in the book, especially scenes of violence, are very visual, which is also the influence of the cinema. They simultaneously affect several senses, creating the effect of synesthesia, as examples, the murder of the Marquis de Carabas or the death of Hunter.

Gaiman often uses a change of plans in the novel, imitating in his text the movement of the camera from the general shot to the close-up or vice versa. Before presenting any location to readers, the writer tells the story of this place and concentrates on details. Describing the Varney's place, Gaiman gives a historical reference on the tunnels under the London Underground, then, concentrates on Varney's home, and, after that, on the hero himself. In chapter 13, on the contrary, the camera seems to be focused, at first, on the floating body of the Marquise and, then, there is a story about underground streams. This focus helps to create the effect of constant focus movement.

Furthermore, some of the musical compositions used in the film are also present in the book. However, some details are subject to changes and additions, so Islington's wings appear in the book, instead of the guitarist who sat at the Earl's Court metro station, we meet the saxophonist in the book, the conversation between Door and Richard is transferred from the dungeon to the hill on the banks of the Thames.

Compared with the film, the last two chapters of the novel are greatly supplemented. Gaiman describes Richard's return to ordinary life in a very detailed way. It seems to us that the author is making these additions to strengthen the contrast between London Below and London Above, and also to show how alien to Richard this world has become.

CONCLUSIONS

Thus, the series and its novelization become a vivid example of the functioning of the same narrative in various forms of art. Gaiman reprocessed the cinematic version of *Neverwhere*, while preserving the main plot and the main characters were preserved.. Also, the images and the inner world of the characters are more deeply developed and fully revealed in the book. The author pays attention to their past, their duality, emotional experiences; therefore, the characters are represented as whole individuals, each of which has its own history. This also includes presence of a soft, but still love line, which in the cinematic version does not exist. At the same time, Geiman remains faithful to some cinematic techniques, such as cross-cutting, soundtracks, change of shots, using them in his book.

In the end, it should be emphasized that this research has well indicated that just like making movies and TV-series from novel version, novelization in the basis of movies and TV-series is not only possible but can open up new horizons in the field of novel writing. As textual descriptions in novels can simplify the work of movie maker, visual effects in movies can also affect the enrichment of novel writer's imagination by placing the reader a step beyond the main axis and the purpose of the movie story.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This paper was completed according to the Russian Government Program of Competitive Growth of Kazan Federal University.

The work is performed according to the President of Russian Federation Grant ProgramMK-731.2018.6.

REFERENCES

- Amineva, V.R. (2015). *Phenomenon of border in interliterary dialogues*, Journal of language and literature (JLL), 6(2), pp. 246 – 249.
- Ayupova, K., Kozyreva, M., Akimova, T. (2017). *The Artist and His Oeuvre in G. K. Chesterton's Biography*: G. F. Watts, *TARİH KÜLTÜR VE SANAT ARASTIRMALARI DERGİSİ-JOURNAL OF HISTORYCULTURE AND ART RESEARCH*, 6(5), pp. 310-314.
- Gaiman N. (2012). "Neverwhere", Harpers Collins, pp.6-20
- Lisenko, A., Shevchenko, E. (2017). *The performative nature of modern theater (as exemplified by the performances of the 'Riminiprotokoll' Group and the projects of Christoph Schlingensiefel)*, *AD ALTA-JOURNAL OF INTERDISCIPLINARY RESEARCH*, 7(2), pp.210-212.
- Mahlknecht, J. (2012). The Hollywood Novelization: Film as Literature or Literature as Film Promotion?. *Poetics Today*, 33(2), 137-168.
- Mariyevskaya, N.E. (2015). Time in the Cinema, Progress, p. 330.
- Miles, P., & Smith, M. (2013). Cinema, Literature & Society: Elite and Mass Culture in Interwar Britain. Routledge.
- Narrativity. (2007). How Visual Arts, Cinema and Literature are Telling the World Today", Distributed Art Pub Incorporated, p.127.
- Shchepacheva, I., Karasik, O. (2016). *to whom the oscar goes: the image of African American in Percival Everett's novel and Sidney Poitier's films*, *Journal of Organizational Culture, Communications and Conflict*. 20, Special Issue , pp. 215-219.
- Toohy, D. (2012). *Borderlands Media: Cinema and Literature as Opposition to the Oppression of Immigrants*, Lexington Books.