Novelization: Another Way of Writing

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ABSTRACT

This article aims to illuminate a form of literary expression that has long existed alongside cinema but has not received comprehensive scholarly attention. We delve into the realm of novelization, a discourse genre that traverses from screenplays to novels, intricately intertwined with mediums such as film, television series, and video games.

Our objective is to delineate the essence of novelization, exploring its unique characteristics that render it a hybrid entity bridging two linguistic realms. Furthermore, we undertake a detailed examination of the symbiotic relationship between novelization and cinema. Lastly, we delve into an analysis of novelization's impact on diverse non-verbal languages, delving into its multifaceted influence across various artistic platforms.

Keywords: Novelization; Cinema; Novel; Adaptation; Creation; Interfilmicity.

INTRODUCTION

Novelization, a literary genre intricately intertwined with cinema and other non-verbal mediums, is predominantly supported by the screen. This practice involves the conversion of cinematic works, video games, or cartoons into novels, representing an adaptation in reverse, with the aim of extending cinematic enjoyment to the realm of reading. Despite its historical roots predating cinema, novelization remains relatively understudied in scientific discourse, offering a unique avenue to reimagine the intersections of literature and cinema beyond conventional adaptation paradigms.

While numerous studies have explored the dynamic interplay between literature and cinema, novelization has often been overlooked. However, cinema-novels have existed since the inception of cinema, offering a textual reinterpretation of cinematic narratives and expanding literary fiction. This analysis seeks to examine the distinctive contributions of novelization as a narrative form. Does the incorporation of novelization techniques and its diverse reading mediums evoke a sense of familiarity or introduce novel narrative dimensions? From a literary standpoint, can novelizations be deemed intriguing in terms of narrative depth and literary merit?

The term "novelization," derived from the verb "novelize," suggests that authors of novelizations are tasked with expanding screenplays typically comprising 20,000 to 25,000 words into works spanning at least 60,000 words (CASTAGNET-CAIGNEC, Sonia, Novelization: An Encounter with the Already There Revealing the Authorial Positions of Young Writers,2017, pp. 173-174). While novelization has garnered limited scholarly attention, certain critics (BAETENS, Jan, Contemporary Novelization in French,2006) have contributed significantly to its recognition and exploration, shedding light on this distinct form of narrative discourse.

To implement this type of writing, "Writers generally succeed by adding description or introspection. Ambitious writers are compelled to work on transitions and characters just to achieve 'a more prose-worthy format.' Sometimes, the 'novelist' invents new scenes to give the plot an 'additional dimension,' provided they are allowed to do so."

Regarding the genre's definition, it is evident that novelization is closely associated with adaptation, albeit in an inverse manner compared to traditional adaptations. While adaptation typically involves the transition from written to visual formats, novelization uniquely transitions from visual to written forms (Jan, Novelization, a Contaminated Genre? In Poetic, no. 2 (138), 2004, pp 235- 25). This distinctive characteristic underscores novelization's nuanced role in reshaping narratives across different media landscapes.

Most novelizations are grounded in the screenplay, facilitating a transition from one verbal language to another and bypassing the complexities of language transposition. This unique process shifts from visual imagery to narrative structures, offering a distinct pathway that mitigates challenges commonly associated with cinematic adaptations.

To understand the genesis of novelization and its initial establishment, it is crucial to delve into its origins. Notably, novelizations often emerged concurrently with film production, blurring the lines between their chronological precedence. In some instances, the writing of novelizations commenced even before film production, underscoring their close ties to screenplays or excerpts thereof.

This early relationship between novelizations and films led to novelizations serving as cinematic previews, sometimes preceding the actual release of the films. These early novelizations, driven primarily by commercial motives, diverged from their cinematic counterparts, creating a unique literary experience that preceded the visual rendition.

This commercial aspect of novelization not only allowed audiences to experience a film before its official release but also catered to those seeking additional insights and narrative expansions beyond the cinematic experience.

This dynamic engendered a fascination among filmmakers, as novelizations provided a platform to extend and explore narrative dimensions that might not have been fully realized on screen. Thus, novelization transcended its role as a mere adaptation, evolving into a tool for cinematic exploration and audience engagement that continues to captivate filmmakers and audiences alike.

Literary Novelization/Commercial Novelization

As we have emphasized earlier, novelization is a genre that meets two expectations: a commercial horizon of expectation and a literary one. This traces back to the 1920s through the 1970s when cine-novels proliferated (BAETENS, Jan, Contemporary Novelization in French, 2006), although the term "novelization" was not yet coined; this term emerged in the 1980s (defined as a novel adapted from a film or screenplay according to Le Petit Robert, 1995 edition), with a significant number of titles published by Pocket. It is in this manner that novelization developed and expanded, thereby establishing a variety other than commercial novelizations, giving way to literary ones published in the Bibliothèque Rose and Verte collections at Hachette.

The recognition of novelization continued to grow, particularly in the 2000s, as novelizers increasingly ventured into youth literature, thereby enhancing the genre's visibility and acceptance. Jan Baetens has been instrumental in exploring and documenting this phenomenon, shedding light on the intricate relationship between cinema and literature through numerous articles and studies.

Novelization has often been disparaged and underestimated by many critics for several reasons, one of which asserts that novelization is not a genuine adaptation and is even an anti-adaptation, moving in the opposite direction of film adaptation.

It is evident that novelization is a very different adaptation from cinematic adaptation since most novelizations are based on scripts; moreover, the absence of intermediality that cinematic adaptation enjoys is regrettable, as novelization merely transposes into text what is already strongly narrative. In this scenario, the novelist does not face the same problems associated with cinematic adaptation, and thus, it can be said that novelization is a false adaptation. It carefully avoids all the deviations allowed by adaptation: "Novelization is seen as merely a flat copy of the events narrated in the film." (Ibid.)

Novelization/Film (Interfilmicity)

Since its inception, cinema has maintained a symbiotic relationship with literature. These two forms of expression intertwine, overlap, and adhere to the same logic of narration. Both tell a story, albeit using different techniques. They are two signs, two languages, aiming towards the same goal of reception, but unlike the linguistic sign, the cinematic sign is characterized by a certain latency and extreme complexity.

This relationship is ever-present, whether in novelization or cinematic adaptation. Nowadays, we observe that these relationships are cross-disciplinary. The adaptation of novels into films has become "commonplace," and the novelization of films is also beginning to find its place.

"The transition from novel to film, or from film to novel, depends on several elements: narrative structure, themes, literary genre, cinematic genre, plot and or flashbacks, shooting, sound effects. All these issues are part of the play and stakes of changing signs, where the transfer of the latter becomes a bit more complex in the case of film adaptation.

It involves a change from one sign system to another completely different, a comparison that thus falls within a very broad sphere. Where every change is meaningful" (MERAD, Soumeya, Literature and Cinema: Another Figure of Intertextuality, Review of Human Sciences, 2017, pp. 165-176).

The novel, as a central element in both processes of adaptation and novelization, embodies a narrative form with descriptive moments that allow for reader imagination and engagement. In contrast, cinema relies on a non-verbal sign system centered around moving images as the fundamental unit of expression. The cinematic experience is shaped by visual storytelling techniques, including shot compositions, angles, and editing, which evoke emotions and contribute to collective memory formation among viewers. The technological apparatus of cinema further enhances its immersive nature, creating a distinct narrative experience.

Despite the differences in adaptation and novelization processes, the narrative remains the focal point of analysis. The underlying structure of storytelling guides these transformations, highlighting the dynamics and stakes involved in shifting between different sign systems. Understanding these dynamics helps elucidate the complexities and nuances of interfilmic relationships, enriching our appreciation of storytelling across diverse mediums.

Both cinematic adaptation and novelization render the narrative distinctively, dissecting it and varying in viewpoints, instances, and moments. The narrative derived from novelization permits the narrator to shift perspectives or augment the image portrayed by the film, thereby fostering a rich imaginative experience for the reader.

Consequently, the narrative of novelization, perhaps even more so than the original literary work, vividly illustrates this virtual aspect that aids the reader, who was once a viewer, in remembering the event through detailed description (GARCIA, Alain, The Adaptation of the Novel to Film, Paris, 1990). Irrespective of whether the source material is a screenplay or a film, the task of the novelizer equates to that of crafting a story. These adaptations also possess a critical dimension, as they ponder the authenticity and ideological function of the text or film, critically examining the use of words, images, and sounds.

For the individual undertaking novelization, the process involves more of reading than merely watching a film. Reading a film encompasses grasping every detail, from the written elements like title cards, intertitles, fragments of letters, and newspapers, to the spoken elements such as dialogue, and not overlooking the suprasegmental features like intonation, stress, and volume (BAETENS, Jan & LITS, Marc, Novelization. FromFilm to Book / NOVELIZATION. From film to novel, Leuven University Press, 2004).

This also includes non-verbal cues like facial expressions, gestures, and pantomime. The novelizer contemplates the filmic elements such as shot scales (close-up, long shot), movement (of characters), and even auditory aspects like noises and music, considering how these elements interact with each other and with the narrative's structure. All these intricacies contribute significantly to the narrative's transformation into a novel, presenting a comprehensive challenge for the novelizer.

Returning to the influence of film on novelization, there is a reciprocal dependency between the two. We can thus speak of a bridge between these two modes of narration. Cinema uses non-verbal language accompanied by audiovisual effects, but the final product, the film, goes through several stages:

Comparative Table between the Two Modes

Cinematic Adaptation	Novelization
Cinematic adaptation is a process that involves transposing an existing work (such as a novel, short story, comic book, or video game) into a film.	Novelization is a subtle art that combines fidelity to the original and personal creativity.

1. **Understanding the Original Work**
   - Before beginning, it's crucial to fully immerse oneself in the original story, whether it's a novel, comic, or short story.
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2. **Selection of Material to Adapt**
   - Understanding the mechanism of the genre to be adapted (novel, play, or other) is essential.
   - The screenwriter must analyze the strengths to determine which elements to retain and which to modify.
	2. **Choice of Perspective**
	   - Deciding on the narrative point of view, whether to tell the story in the first person or in the third person singular.

3. **Screenplay Writing**
   - The screenwriter plays a significant role, needing to absorb the key moments of the story and transform them into scenes and sequences.
	3. **Fidelity and Creativity**
	   - Staying true to the main plot is essential; however, the novelist has the liberty to add additional dialogues or describe the settings in more detail.

4. **The Adaptation**
   - The adaptation should be creative to engage the viewer, whether it is faithful, free, or a transposition.
	4. **Writing Style**
	   - The writing style varies depending on the genre of the film, whether it's a detective story, thriller, or drama.

5. **Choice of Director**
   - The director is the one who will bring the adaptation to life.
	5. **The Novelist's Role**
	   - The novelist is not just a transcriber; they have the right to add emotions.
	A good novelization strikes a balance between respect and creativity.

6. **Pre-Production**
   - Planning the shooting, including casting, budgeting.
   - Creating storyboards to visualize the scenes.	

7. **Shooting** - This stage involves capturing the images, directing actors, and working with the technical team.	
8. **Post-Production**	

- Editing is crucial here, involving music selection, sound mixing, and conducting tests. 9. **Distribution and Release** - This is the final stage of the adaptation process.	

This table confirms the points made earlier in this article: there is a coexistence between the two processes, which share the same starting point, the screenplay. Creating a cinematic adaptation of a novel involves transforming it, modifying it, and creating another copy of the work that is identical, similar, or completely different.

Starting from the narrative, namely the novel for the film and the screenplay for the novelization, this back-and-forth between the final product and the original creates a relationship of intertextuality.

In the domain of adaptation, as illustrated in the accompanying table, the screenwriter serves as the conduit of intertextuality. Their engagement with the source material is characterized by deep immersion, a form of mimesis, initiating the adaptation process by crafting a cinematographic text derived from the novel.

This process adheres to the narrative conventions specific to verbal language, particularly literature. This distinction is vital and has been thoughtfully established, based on factors related to the film's formatting process. Within this framework, the film acts as a cinematographic reinterpretation (MERAD, Soumeya, Literature And Cinema: Adaptation As Another Figure Of Intertextuality, ibid.), unfolding through a sequence of steps: (novel - change - screenplay - final adaptation - film).

The same sequence applies to novelization, viewed as a literary re-creation, drawing from or inspired by a screenplay with fewer narrative elements: screenplay - change - manuscript - novel.

This analysis enables us to differentiate between two distinct systems of signs. However, the question arises: where is the intertextuality in the film in relation to the novelization's novel, and in relation to the film itself?

Intertextuality from film to novel manifests in the structural relationships (both syntactic and semantic) between the novel (hypotext) and the film (hypertext), as well as between the screenplay (hypotext) and the novel (hypertext). It is important to acknowledge that both end products, the texts, retain their independence and emerge as new texts.

Once the processes of novelization or filmmaking begin, the film evolves into an entity of genuine meaning, recognized as a novel discourse, distinct from the original text (BAETENS, Jan, From Image to Writing: Novelization, a Minor Genre? In French Today 2009, p 17-25). This comparative examination allows us to identify the similarities and the tangible and imaginary coexistence between the two creative realms: literary and cinematic.

Discussing the unique characteristics of cinema earlier aimed to highlight the intricate process of novelization, which entails converting a complex system of signs and language into a unified narrative form. Upon completion, this narrative phase introduces another challenge regarding the author's role and the distinction between the author and the narrator (Ibid.).

In the adaptation process, we observe a collaborative effort involving the screenwriter, director, and editor, complicating the identification of a sole author. Conversely, in novelization, the transition is from collective to individual endeavor, presenting the novelization author or creator with the challenge of either adhering to the source or liberating their creative imagination. The author's role in novelization remains a contentious issue; does he assume the role of an author in the traditional sense of a writer?

In filmmaking, the director is often seen as the pivotal figure, whereas the narrator serves as an embodiment of the storyteller, playing a fictional role distinct from the actual author. The author is responsible for selecting specific narrative connections, editing, and framing, among other tasks. In novelization, the narrator reclaims their diegetic position and focuses on their primary duty of storytelling.

The image of the narrator is unrelated to the real author. It is part of the narrative instance, "the most difficult entity to define, denoting the abstract place where choices for the narrative and story conduct are made" (Genette, Gérard, Figure III, Paris, Seuil, 1972). The narrator is part of the narrative instance.

Everything we know is conveyed or shown by this instance, whether fictive (openly assumed by one or several characters in the film) or real (where all signs of presence are maximally erased by image and sound). These expressivity issues make the status of the author of the novelization even more complex, which is why most authors write under a pseudonym.

According to Jan Baetens, several problems hinder the recognition of such writing, with contempt for the genre being the primary reason. Indeed, the author is not considered a full-fledged writer, as these are the types of books found in airports or supermarket shelves […]. (BAETENS, Jan, Novelization, from Film to Novel: Readings and Analyses of a Hybrid Genre,Paris-Brussels, Les Impressions Nouvelles, 2008, p.14). It is neither a screenplay nor a novel but a novelization, a new genre of fiction born from new techniques. The second reason is related to the temporality of novelization; indeed, these works gain a certain but ephemeral audience (lasting only a few months).

Video Game Novelization

The inception of novelization dates back to the 2000s with the rise of children's literature, where many novelizers focused on the novelization of animated series, manga, and video games.

This medium has already demonstrated numerous adaptations of literary works into video games, and today we are witnessing the phenomenon of novelizing video games into novels. Several novelizations have allowed fans and gamers to extend their enjoyment of the games into written form (GRIGNON, Prisca, Video Game Novelizations: A Link between the Multiple Supports of Intermedial Fictional Universes, Video Game and Book, University Press of Liège, 2018).

In 1940, novelizations saw fruitful production in the realm of video games, with books playing a crucial role, particularly in the novelization of games related to fantastic fairy tales.

Defining this process in relation to video games involves transforming a video game into a novel or comic book; many novelizations have achieved commercial success. For example, the serial novels "HALO," written by various authors, marked the first major success, and another successful case is "THE WITCHER," with novels written by Andrzej Sapkowski. The "The Witcher" series has been commercially successful in the video game industry (Ibid.).

Video game novelization has the power to offer young players the opportunity to bring their favorite characters to life. The transition from game to book is very expressive, with video games proliferating in a specific genre classification. Marc Mati addresses this classification in his article "Video Games and Narrative Logics," allowing us to distinguish between various groups such as adventure games, complete narrative games, fighting games, real-time strategy games, and role-playing games (Ibid.).

Thus, video game novelization is beneficial for both game companies and authors, extending the lifespan of games and reconciling gamers with novel readers unfamiliar with the gaming universe. In summary, video game novelization is a growing practice in the video game industry.

CONCLUSION

This article has traversed the landscape of novelization, examining its myriad literary and artistic facets. Our discourse culminates in accentuating the practicality of novelization, which emerges as a burgeoning field laden with advantages and prospects within our contemporary milieu.

The metamorphosis it undergoes in linguistic adaptation enables it to engage new audiences and resurrect narratives that were once disregarded or underappreciated. Novelization serves as an intermediary between literature and disparate media forms, such as video games and films, thus aiding readers in deciphering the inherent narratives.

The pragmatic benefits of novelization also warrant attention; it facilitates a reduction in production expenditures, proving to be a more economical approach to generating books from pre-existing materials rather than originating content anew.

Novelization is undeniably a dynamic and evolving domain, its significance amplified by the ascent of digital media and the escalating demand for compelling narratives. As such, novelization is poised to assume a more prominent role within the realms of popular culture and narrative arts, its influence bolstered in tandem with the expansion of cinema.

Accordingly, novelization merits an expansive scientific examination and theoretical structuring, a prospect that should captivate literary scholars. There exists potential for our students to delve into this field, scrutinizing the alterations and evolutions wrought by novelization, potentially through an interdisciplinary and comparative methodological approach in scientific inquiry. In this article, we have endeavored to elucidate the various manifestations of novelization and its interrelation with cinema, advocating for its pivotal function in scientific research and its capacity to inspire forthcoming generations of scholars.

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