# THEORY AND METHODOLOGY OF MODERN NOVEL TRANSFORMATION: THE CASE OF ALAN MOORE'S "V-FOR VENDETTA"

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| KEYWORDS | SUMMARY |
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| *graphic novel, modernism, subjectivity, reality, illusion, writing about writing, closure, fragmentary narration* | The evolution of 21st century novel is regarded. The paper concentrates on fiction subjectivity reflection in Alan Moore's graphic novel "V – for vendetta". The graphic novel is considered to be the result of modern novel transformation. The article investigates this issue by examining the narrative techniques accompanied by graphic presentation. |
| | According to the analysis of recent researchers and publications there is no universal definition of the graphic novel as a literary phenomenon. So the paper is an extension to examine the narrative strategies of "V – for vendetta" inherited in modernism novels. |
| | The narrative inquiry and analysis were used in the study. |
| | The impact of the modernism characteristics on the Alan Moore's graphic novel "V – for vendetta" is shown. The study has confirmed the deepening of fiction subjectivity which is manifested in not distinct measure between reality and illusion as author's interpretation of the picture of the world through masking, disguising, hallucinations and unconscious thoughts. It has been found that "the plot of style" in Alan Moore's "V – for vendetta", presented by the intensity of visual perception, the speech peculiarities,and specific characteristics of narrative organization, predominates. Extensive coverage is given to nonlinear, fragmentary, multileveled narration and closure as a fact of visual inter-textuality. |
| | An attemptis made at identifying the modernism novel characteristics in Alan Moore's graphic novel "V – for vendetta". |
| | The study enabled to identify the work that mixed features of literary narration and comics as an up-to-date novel. The material in this article can be used both in theoretical course of modern literary criticism and practical graphic novel workshop. |

## INTRODUCTION

Comics genre attracted both writers and painters all over the world. Stephen King, Umberto Eco, Ray Bradbury, Kazimir Malevich and Frank Frazetta adopted comics techniques to their work. Moreover, graphic prose is considered to be all-sufficient kind of art in France, Germany and the USA. In Japan, for example, manga has its own traditional school, in England graphic novels are added to school curriculums.

To represent graphic illustrations, accompanied by the narrative, which have also attracted much media attention in recent years, modern researchers use a range of terms "graphic novel", "comics", "graphic storytelling", "pictorial storytelling", "visual narration", "sequential art", "graphic literature". Most of these terms (except "comics") can be divided into two parts. The first words 'graphic', "pictorial", "visual" are used to stress the visual quality of the "storytelling". Such combinations of words underline the synthetic nature of this phenomenon. It is not a pure literary genre and the variety of terms proves this fact. At the same time the graphic novel is, in our opinion, high in genre hierarchy than, for example, one-page and one-plot strips or comics magazine, a series of comics joined by plot line or heroes. And even web comics that range from traditional strips and are determined by variety of forms such as horror, absurd, nonsense, fantastic, biographic, documentary can be compared to self-published comics and are considered to be rather amateur than professional. The classic structure of the graphic novel is supposed to have the image or picture accompanied by hero's speech or author's comments taken into speech balloons, narrative boxes. Voice-over in some graphic novels can be ignored or limited. Such classiccomics structure has the background for interacting and involving the participant of the reading process in the common game.

So, the main issue is connected both with the identification of specific genre characteristics of the graphic novel and the narrative strategies that imitate the modernism tradition.

Analysis of recent researches and publications. The creators of sequential art Will Eisner and Scott McCloud identify comics as an "art form – the medium" and compare this phenomenon with a vessel which can hold any number of ideas and images" [McCloud S. 1993]. These researchers use the terms form and medium as interchangeable notions. McCloud's picture of a half-full comics-pitcher, which consists of "writers, artists, trends, genres, styles, subject matter, and themes", demonstrates that genre is something larger than form. So Will Eisner and Scott McCloud interpret graphic novels as forms rather than genres. While some authors, for instance, Katherine Butcher and M. Lee Manning in "Young Adult Literature: Exploration, Evaluation, and Appreciation" operate the terms genre and format: the chapter of the textbook is entitled "Exploring other formats" and refer to graphic novels as "visual genre" [Bucher K. and Manning M. Lee. 2006]. Kenneth L. Donelson and Allen Pace Nilsen in "Literature for today's young adults" state that "the term format is more accurate than genre because the stories range from science fiction and fantasy to mysteries, historical fiction, love stories, and whatever else a creative person might think of"[Nilsen A. andDonelson K. L. 1998], like epic, comedy, tragedy. James Bucky Carter in his study doesn't

consider the graphic novel to be a genre, he argues that "much of the use of genre to describe comics and graphic novels comes from either a lack of understanding or a lack of education, or, at worst, a reluctance to accept new forms and "new" voices into already established notions of the literary" [Carter J. 2013].

There are some researchers who treat the graphic novel as a genre. For example, Peter Smagorinski in "Teaching English by design" confirms that "a genre refers to works that share codes: western, heroic journeys, detective stories, comedies of manner, and so one. These genres are often produced through a variety of media: short story, drama, novel, film, graphic novel, and so on, which themselves are referred to as genre" [Smagorinski P. 2007]. Moreover, ""by genre" the researcher doesn't "mean strictly form-oriented groupings of literature— poetry, drama, the novel, and other structures". He uses genre to refer to texts that employ a predictable, consistent set of codes". The researcher concludes that such specific characteristics of graphic novels as "panels on pages with word balloons", "narration in each panel" the reader must follow, the "codes of the characters and plots and visual elements found within each piece of sequential art narration make the genre, not the shared form that supports those genres".

It may seem a very delightful prospect, but Sierra Throop, graduate of Michigan State University, in the paper "How the graphic novel has made its way into the literary canon" offered "to expand" the "Western canon" and "to include graphic novels" there, due to their growing popularity".

The term "graphic novel" is rather a new and an up-to date issue in Ukraine. Ukrainian studies primarily provide the linguistic approaches to investigation of the graphic novel [Dmitrieva D. 2014], [Dmytryev O. 2013.].So, the paper of D. Dmitrieva is of certain interest for our issue. Russian researcher, for example, states that "the graphic novel is at the crossroad of comics, literature, and cinema" and operates the term "strip cartoon novel" for examining Alan Moore's "V for "vendetta"" in Russian reader's perception.

**PURPOSE**

According to the analysis of recent researchers and publications we can make a conclusion that there is no universal definition of the graphic novel as a literary phenomenon. So the paper is an extension to consider the graphic novel as a genre that invaded the novel postmodernism strategies in its structure.

The narrative inquiry and analysis were used in the study.

**RESULTS**

The fact that the graphic novel is the representative of a new fiction era, that mixed in its structure previous literary tradition,is determined primarily by such characteristics of the modern novel as an "uncompleted" genre, that" continuous to develop"[Bakhtin, M. 1975]. According to M. Bakhtin, the genre skeleton of the novel hasn't formed yet, so we couldn't foresee all its "plastic possibilities". The famous scholarstates that "the novel" has no strict set of features. Furthermore, the fact that the novel is an uncompleted genre and by it is far from having an established genre boundary results in certain theoretical difficulties in setting up a set of theoretical rules to define the novel. The fact that most graphic novels, for example A. Moore's "V for vendetta", have dynamic plots, background, heroes is not enough to define the graphic novel as a genre.

It's not a secret that the main reason for rapid evolution of the novel at the beginning of the 20thcentury became the crisis of realistic consciousness. The ways of its overcoming differed a lot. Some writers tried to adopt the features of new electronic era to their literary creations. As a result such experimental works as novel-vocabulary, novel-crossword, novel-astrological textbook appeared. Moreover, the term hypertext, which corresponds to the peculiarities of "computer reading", was applied to fiction and determined as fragmentary spatial form of narration without fixed plot, culmination and denouement, with structural flexibility and ready for interpretations. The graphic novel successfully combines both the regiments of art, for instance, perspective, symmetry, brush stroke and the regiments of literature: grammar, plot, syntax that become superimposed upon each other. Furthermore, "in its most economical state, comics employ a series of repetitive images and recognizable symbols", as the "father of the graphic novel" Will Eisner states.

But the most efficient for our study is the statement of Ukrainian researcher that one of the ways the modern novel was trying to overcome the literary crisis of "realistic consciousness" was the "restoring the fiction subjectivity, that draws recipient's attention to person's psychics, especially the relationship between conscious and unconscious and consequently the style transformation of the text at the expense of activation of strange voice, liquidation the author as a narrator, creation the effect of narrative multiperspective [Keba O. 2012]. The graphic novel is really laconic, but at the same time looks like a sustainable unit. The verbal text itself is not descriptive and consists primarily of dialogues, monologues. They are rich in interjections to create the sound effect of the speech. To make the scenes visual and "heard" A. Moore provides the so-called sound balloons to imitate the sound of radio or TV set. So, the reader can hear the phrase from the song"every time we say goodbye" decorated by curve line and taken into balloon in the form of star more than twice from different

locations. We suppose the author applies such technique to create the constant background sound. Moreover, the dialogues are full of elision marks to imitate true-to-life situations and let the recipient to add the actions, movements, gestures that could probably follow the hero's words. In addition, the frequent usage of elision marks is determined not only unfinished phrases but also the speaker's excitement or different kinds of interruptions. It can be also supposed to be a kind of a game the reader is involved in. He is an active participant of the story. The author's remarks are limited by information on time and place, such as "November 7th, 1998" or "November 7th, 1998. The Shadow Gallery".The author's remarks are omitted even at the beginning of the novel. The novel starts with the voice of fate: "Good evening, London. It's nine o'clock and this is the voice of fate broadcasting on 275 and 285 in the medium wave. It is the fifth on the eleventh. Nineteen ninety seven", that is heard from the tower. This is the way the reader learns about the time and space the actions take place.

The images in the graphic novel are much more descriptive than words themselves. The panels in the novel are characterized by quick change of spectrum plans. There is an alternation of general, close-distance, close-up and detailed frames that make the narration visual. The analysis of the graphic novel panels showed that the author used pictures of different size: wide and narrow. The question is: what is the reason for using different format. So there are four pictures in one line. Two of them are wide and two other pictures are almost twice narrower. The first wide slide shows the explosion of the Houses of the Parliament and the second one reflects the reaction of Evey (They have…They have been..Did you do that?) and the Mask (I did that). These panels are accompanied by narrow pictures that show half of the mask face and the balloon with the words: "Remember, remember the fifth of November, the gunpowder treason and plot" and half of the girl's face with a wide open eye. First of all, we deal with contrast reactions on the explosion: horror and proud, that increases the effect of catastrophe. Second of all, the explosion and the people's reaction are shown as a simultaneous act.

We should admit that the structure of graphic novel narrative is similar to textual structure in drama. In most cases heroes really act in pairs. Sometimes the image contains several heroes, but the contrastive principle is observed, that is positive and negative characters take part in the dialogue. We suppose the narration in the graphic novel to be identical to those in drama. There is no past in the graphic novel everything is happening right now. The present time speech balloons with dots, interjections are combined with gestures, facial expressions, sound effects and all together create a complete whole of time and space.

We are going to find out the realization of subjectivity in the graphic novel as the continuation of modernism tradition. Let's analyze the peculiarities of phenomena of subjectivity in the graphic novel "V – for vendetta", written by A. Moore.

First of all, the author's interpretation of the picture of the world in terms of reality and illusion changes. The Guy Fawkes' mask, disguising (Evey in priest's house), hallucinations, unconscious thoughts provide the balancing of the novel between the reality and illusion. Once being deceived (Evey is in prison, Valery's letter) the reader doubts in almost everything. V is a kind of a mystery for the recipient: is he out of his mind, is he a hero or terrorist. Moreover, the reader doesn't know for sure whether V is real or he is the result of Evey's ill imagination? The author keeps in secret whose face was under Guy Fawkes' mask. The novel exists in modernism tradition of total simulation, not distinct measure between reality and illusion.

Second of all, "the plot of the action" in the graphic novel has lost its domination. "The plot of style" that includes the intensity of visual perception, the speech peculiarities and the specific characteristics of structural organization of the narration became the moving force. Images in the process of interaction with words do not play less important role than narration. "V – for vendetta" is the example of successful team-work both the writer and the graphical painter. The images provide the intensity of form and contest. Black and white colors that dominate, sharp lines, symmetrical design, mirror images (the last page is a mirror picture of the first one)help to portray the emotional and mental state of heroes. Other important aspect is the loss of chronological linear sequence of events. The plot of the story is nonlinear and is told from different points of view. The novel is fragmentary by its character and consists of mini-situations most of which are not completed: mini-situation 1 the detectives guess, that V means number 5, mini-situation 2   the man in the mask comes to kill doctor Delia, mini-situation 3 – Mr. Olmond kills himself, mini-situation 4 – The Nose again and detectives are examining the case, mini-situation 5 – Delia remembers her experiments in Larhill, mini-situation 6 – the detectives find out that Delia is in danger, mini-situation 7 – V kills Delia, mini-situation 8 – V kills the detective, who was going to ware Delia, mini-situation 9 – the police finds Delia's dairy.

We can't but mention that so called "writing about writing" or frame story influence the multi-leveled narration. The sample of the story within the story is the letter, written by Valerie. Such structures makes the moment of play, giving the parody and theatre context. The author makes the direct incorporation of the letter in the text of the graphic novel. We face the joint between two independent texts, one of which is Evey's conscious tells about her staying in the prison and the other letter on five sheets of toilet paper. Valerie's letter is incorporated in the

main text both graphically with omitted beginnings and endings and in a comic's way. So Evey's prison experience turned out to be false and designed to ruin the prison of her life. Vice versa, Valerie was in fact real. The recipient is involved in the game. The mixture of kaleidoscopic dreams, thoughts, associations, different points of view and visual presentation remind the recipient the Eye, the Nose, the Ear, the Mouth and the Finger that help the leader to control people. Another example of "writing about writing" in "V – for vendetta" is Delia's dairy. The story about experiments in Larkhill and patient from room number 5 is finished with the same image of a man doctor Delia remembered of when she saw a rose.

Alan Moore invades the memories and associations in the text unconsciously, when some events, images, people. For example, rose reminds the doctor of the figure of a man in the sunlight. The slides that show the changes of Evey's memories don't contain words at all. The dead body of Derek provokes the kaleidoscope of Evey's fragmentary reminiscences: she remembers men's voices near the door, herself left at the empty street, the time she was happy with Derek. Slides easily interpret the chaos in her thoughts, memories, and actions. The darkness and the smell of roses bring childhood hallucinations back in mind.

Another significant issue in terms of graphic novel is double coded narration and or, so called, Bakhtin's polyphonic discourse that corresponds to inter-textuality.Every utterance and every word in discourse is polyvalent: it has multiple meanings or associations of meanings and always alludes to other meanings. Roland Barthes states that "a text is a multidimensional space in which a variety of writings, none of them original, blend and clash"[Barthes R. 1977].In terms of our study beside the direct inter-textual allusions to Shakespeare we deal with specific type of inter-textuality – the visual one. Reading the graphic novels asks the recipients to make links between words and image on the page, but to make the meaning in the margins between the panels, using other senses – sound, touch, taste and smell to create the context for the visual. Closure as the inter-textual potentialof the novel is the property of the recipient to complete the missing of something, for instance, imagining that the other side of an object exists when only one side is visible. It is important that being the cognitive property of the closure it is performed temporally via the spaces in graphic novels, in between the panels.This is almost the same asthe "fill in the gap" property of narrative in general.

**CONCLUSION**

An attempt is made in this paper to show the transformation of Alan Moore's graphic novel "V – for vendetta" as the representative of a new era genre in the modernism tradition.

The plastic, flexible nature of the novel, on the one hand, and crisis of realistic consciousness, on the other, made such evolutional transformations possible. The interrelation between image and word in the graphic novel provided the high-level effect of spontaneous presence and direct participation in the narration. It can be concluded that the specific structure of the novel made the fiction subjectivity deeper, and indicated theruined measures between fantasy and reality. As a result, the setting of the style dominates due to visual perception, unconscious invasion of memories and associations, nonlinear, fragmentary and multileveled narration and specific type of visual inter-textuality. The evidence from this study suggests a variety of further researchers both in theoretical (landmarks in development, format and narratology, chronotopes and "time files", graphic place and space) and practical fields (the graphic novel workshops).

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