



**LUND UNIVERSITY**  
Humanities and Theology

# **The Novelization of Douglas Adams' *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy***

Carmen Robertson Salas

ENGK01 Literary Seminar

HT 2011

English Studies

The Centre for Languages and Literature

Lund University

Supervisor: Birgitta Berglund

Carmen Robertson Salas  
ENGK01  
2011-11-08

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## Introduction

There are many literary works that have been adapted to another media. As oral stories once were written down to form literary works, literary works have been adapted first to the stage and later to other media such as radio, film, television and computer games.

When studying an adapted work it is important to take into consideration the intermedial aspect of the works in question, what happens to a story when it is translated from one media to another, which senses does the media form focus on and how does that affect the story? There is also the matter of how much the media format matters when it comes to success and status. Different types of media have different status in the academic and commercial world. Would an adaptation suffer from that status if it was adapted from a 'higher' ranked media to a 'lower'? An adaptation is often made by a different author and often after a time lapse from the original publication and therefore the cultural differences of the new adaptation and the audiences reception must be taken in consideration. There are of course exceptions.

Despite being one of the best selling novels in the science fiction genre, with over 15 million copies sold (Clements 1), many people do not know that Douglas Adams' best-selling novel *The Hitch-Hiker's Guide to the Galaxy* (1979) started out as a radio theatre drama at BBC Radio 4 in 1978. The radio play received such a large following and such positive reviews that the author got approached by two well known publishing companies shortly after the first radio series had aired (Gaiman 52)<sup>1</sup>. The radio play was adapted into a novel. Later on the story franchised into more novels, a TV-show, comic books, stage performances and a movie.

However, the novel *The Hitch-Hiker's Guide to the Galaxy* is not a written down version of the radio script. Adams added pieces to the story that were not there in the original radio series. He also voiced how he was not completely satisfied with the last two parts in the first radio series and subsequently re-wrote them completely in the novel (Gaiman 56). There are therefore distinct differences between the two works with the same names and author. He commented on this when he had adapted the story to a TV-show:

The medium dictates the style of the show, and transferring from one to another means you're going against the grain the whole time. It's the point where you go against the grain that you come up with

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<sup>1</sup> Neil Gaiman is the author of *Don't Panic – Douglas Adams & the Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* and a friend of Adams. In his book he quotes both Adams and people working with Adams and *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*, in all different media versions of the story.

the best bits. The bits that were the easiest to transfer were the least interesting bits of the TV-show (Adams quoted by Gaiman, 86)

The aim of this essay is to discuss what happened when the radio drama was novelized. How did Adams adapt his own story from an audio based media into a literary one? What changed in the story, and how did the central characters, Arthur Dent, Ford Prefect, Zaphod Beeblebrox, Marvin the Paranoid Android and Tricia ‘Trillian’ McMillan, change? I will look at the intermedial and adaptational aspects as well as the differences and similarities of radio drama and literature. Finally, I will in this essay try to discover what made this story adaptable to so many types of media, and why it became such a phenomenon.

This essay has three primary sources, the novel *The Hitch-Hiker’s Guide to the Galaxy* published 1979, the radio play *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*, aired 1978 (although the pilot aired in 1977) and the scripts of the radio play *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy: The Original Radio Scripts*, published in 1985 and re-published as a 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary edition in 2005. I will when referring to the radio play refer to the scripts of the radio play (if nothing else is mentioned). The novel will be referred to as simply “the novel”.<sup>1</sup>

## **Adaptation theory, novelization and intermediality**

Studying a novelization, i.e. a novel that is based on an already existing product in another media format, one must take into consideration intermedial studies as well as adaptation theory studies, because the two fields have much in common with each other and novelizations have qualities that concern them both. Adaptation studies focus on how a work is adapted from one media into another, investigating what it is that gets adapted and how “form (expression) can be separated from content (ideas)” (Hutcheon 9). Intermedial studies on the other hand focus on the multimedia aspects of either a single media or the interactivity between different media and what happens when the borders between different media are not easily discerned (Chapple & Kattenbelt 11, 167).

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<sup>1</sup> There have been several different spellings of the title, however Adams himself decided in 2000 that the title should be written ‘Hitchhiker’s’ the same way everywhere. When referring to the original novel, I will spell it as it was published; *The Hitch-Hiker’s Guide to the Galaxy*.

Contemporary adaptation theory has several difficulties when it comes to novelizations. Linda Hutcheon writes:

In short, adaptation can be described as the following:

- An acknowledged transposition of a recognizable other work or works
- A creative and an interpretive act of appropriation/salvaging
- An extended intertextual engagement with the adapted work. (8)

A novelization can easily fit in to all of these three criteria but Hutcheon only mentions the practice of novelization in passing, stating that novelizations often need to be based on a better literary source than a script. Even so, Hutcheon argues that there is a negative view on adaptation that is uncalled for, since for example 85 percent of the Oscar for Best Picture are given to films that are adaptations (38). Hutcheon also writes that one must see an adaptation as an adaptation and not measure it to the fidelity of the source (7). The matter of the literary source's length or quality should then not matter. Hutcheon discusses how novelizations (especially those for children) can work for educational purposes, to give an insight into characters' personality or explanations of vague or equivocal elements in the original work. Many of the novelizations produced, according to Hutcheon, are not fully qualified adaptations but made for commercial purposes only, unlike the other examples of adaptations she discusses in her book (118-119). Most novelizations are seen as tools to understand the original work or a commercial product made as merchandise to the work it is based on rather than as adaptations as much.

The fact is, as Deborah Allison explains about novelizations, that “academic study of this widespread phenomenon has been almost non-existent” (1). Jan Baetens believes that studies of novelization should be promoted, as academic studies move from a literary to a cultural focus but the underlying contempt of the genre prevents this (45-46). That novelizations have been around a long time<sup>1</sup>, are commercially successful and are based on several formats such as video games, comics, theatre, radio theatre<sup>2</sup>, as well as films, do not seem to have been reasons enough for academic studies and recognitions.

Going against the grain (as Adams suggested) and trying to adapt a work from one media format to another, there would be a value in studying all adapted versions' intermedial

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<sup>1</sup> For instance, Cervantes novelized his own *entremeses* in the early 17<sup>th</sup> century (Reed, 1) and novelizations based on films existed already in the 1920's (Allison, 1).

<sup>2</sup> Some examples: *Mass Effect: Revelation* (2007) by Drew Karpyshyn based on the Video-game *Mass Effect* (2007) by BioWare; *It's Superman!* (2005) by Tom De Harven based on the Marvel *Superman* Comics and Jane Smiley's *A Thousand Acres* (1991) based on Shakespeare's *King Lear* (1608).

properties. According to Irina O. Rajewsky there is a need to categorize intermediality into three subcategories:

- “Medial transposition” in which the focus lies on strictly comparing the source to the adapted media product.
- “Media combination” in which those media which in themselves have several (or at least two) media components that integrate into a new one (like film and opera). This entails an expansion of media forms by combining existing ones.
- “Intermedial references” when making allusions by imitating another media but with the original media's tools, for example painting as a photograph (51-52).

It is important to note, Rajewsky argues, that one work can have qualities that fit into two or even three of these categories (52). A work can be intermedial in many ways, and although this essay will not delve deeper into intermedial studies it is interesting to note when discussing the qualities of a work that has such clear intermedial qualities and fit into at least two of these subcategories.

An important fact to note is that most novelizations are not based on the performed part of the source medium but rather on its screenplay, and because of that many of the problems that one could have when adapting from novel to a multi-modal media are non-existent (Baetens 46). On the other hand, the problem Hutcheon describes, that a novelization would lack material because of the short nature of a screenplay (38) seems to contradict what a novelization is. The script of a film is there for actors, directors, costume designers etc. to base their performance on, whereas for a writer who novelizes a story it is there to draw inspiration and dialogue from. The screenplay is not in need of length as it is just a tool to realize a film, and a film focuses on several medial aspects. Contrary to a film, a novel focuses only on the textual.

The portrayal of characters, for instance, is a good example of the difference of focus in different media. Hutcheon argues that in a novelization the characters' personalities and inner thoughts can be better explored in the narrative resulting in a deeper insight for the audience (118). Thomas Leitch, however, argues that actors in a film are as capable of displaying emotions and thoughts (without soliloquies or voice-overs) as a detailed narrative in a novel in the way they use their bodies and voices in their acting (158). Leitch also believes that there are gaps in all types of media but that these gaps come in different forms and have different kinds of effect. As an example Leitch describes how in some novels the reader gets to know the

protagonist's thoughts and feelings, and therefore sees the other characters in the story from the protagonist's point of view. In film adaptations of these kinds of novels, one gets to know the other characters thoughts and feelings better through the slightly more neutral eye of the camera (158 -159). Whether through words or with emotions portrayed by actors, the story gets realized and brings to forefront different approaches to the story. The interesting part of an adaptation to another media format is not then how true it is to the source but the intermedial aspects, i.e. what focal point(s) that particular medium focuses on.

Most novelizations are based on film screenplays and therefore most studies focus on these types of novelizations. That is not to say that there do not exist novelizations based on radio plays. Radio theatre, which is the source media of the novelization discussed in this essay, is of course different from a film in many ways. E. D. M Sibiya describes the importance of radio theatre plays and the novelizations based on them in South Africa and how they have helped to popularize literature (138) as well as affected playwrights' success in writing novels (141). It has also “developed book publishing while promoting its own drama” (149). Sibiya also underlines the importance of the relationship many of the playwrights have with their audience, as the writers get continuously and direct response from the audience. The writers get to rework their texts both through the stage production, before the theatre is aired and following the audience response when the novelization is written (143-144).

On radio theatre, Tim Crook writes:

There are five main dimensions to the structure of communication in audio drama:

- The word through voices: dialogue and narrative.
- Music through instruments and choral voices.
- Sound effects: natural atmosphere and spot effects or abstract sounds synthesised or natural sounds that have been symbolised
- Post-modernist use of previously recorded actuality, archive or sound history, or previously recorded narrative and dialogue.
- The imagination of the listener: this is physically a silent dimension. In terms of consciousness it is immensely powerful. This is the existence of a significant part of the play in the imagination of the audience, i.e. the listener. It is what I have defined previously as 'the imaginative spectacle'. (160)

It appears that Crook also refers to a ‘gap’, just as Leitch mentioned. In radio theatre it is the place where the audience is responsible to use their imagination to imagine the senses that the medium does not focus on.

With adaptation theory, intermediality and these five dimensions of audio drama in mind, I am going to discuss how Adams adapted the radio play into a novel and what dimensions he brought forward and which were left to be gaps.

## **Adapting the radio series to a novel: storyline and general features**

Turning to Adams' work, the setting in the radio drama is, of course, mainly created by sound effects, music and characters describing what they see and feel. In the novel, however, Adams has to describe the setting in much more detail as he does not have the aural element to rely on. This becomes obvious when describing the Infinite Improbability Drive. To compare, the part in the script is about 500 words (with F/X<sup>1</sup> notes etc) and in the novel it is about 1200 words and in the play just over 3 minutes (1978 disc 1, "perhaps we died"). In this case, the setting in the novel and the sound effects in the radio series seem to take equally long time to listen to as it does to read. Unlike the previous example, the description of the planet Magrathea is rich in detail in the novel (1979 121-132) but in the play one only gets to know that it has two suns, is cold, has an abandoned city and tunnels underground (62-65). The audio setting was in the original broadcast comprised by Marvin humming on Pink Floyd's "Shine on You Crazy Diamond" (1975) and "Also Sprach Zarathustra" (1896) by Strauss (the theme-song in Stanley Kubrick's *2001: A space Odyssey* (1968)) (1985 62-62), this part was cut from the later editions of the radio show and what remains are sound effects of wind and background music (1978 disc 2, "The Mind Of A Bowl Of Petunias", "This Is Really Spooky").

The real difference when it comes to the lengths needed to describe a setting is how familiar the listener is with the settings described. In a radio play the setting is built around the senses; the listeners hear the wind, the music and the mood of the actors and can then envisage what the place in question would look like. In a novel the place is described, both directly and with metaphors and the reader then has to try to imagine that place, but without the help of any additional senses. A familiar feeling, like a desolate, windy and cold place (like Magrathea) takes less time and effort to evoke in a listener's mind as opposed to a made up 'new' feeling, like experiencing the Infinite Improbability Drive, something the listener never has experienced and so cannot apply directly to his/her imagination. In the novel, however, the place descriptions need to be more developed to get the reader to fully appreciate the setting.

The aspect of sound versus description is also obvious when it comes to exploring feelings and senses. Adams describes the protagonist Arthur Dent's feelings in much greater detail from the very start of the novel, how he is always feeling awkward and uneasy (1979 7),

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<sup>1</sup> F/X is short for sound effects, and always written in all caps.



how alone and panicky he feels when he realizes that the Earth has been blown up (1979 56-57) and this continues on throughout the novel. In the radio series this is expressed by Simon Jones' through the acting but not put focused upon as much as in the novel. As a result the loneliness in Arthur Dent's character is much more palpable in the novel.

Another example of evoking feelings in the radio series is in the scene when the starship Heart of Gold is almost blown up. In the script the sound effects are as such:

F/X: ALARM BELLS AND SIRENS GO OFF  
 [...]
 F/X: HOWLING SCREECH OF PROTESTING ROCKET ENGINES. THIS SECTION SHOULD BE AS VIOLENTLY NOISY AS POSSIBLE  
 [...]
 F/X: EVEN MORE NOISE FROM THE ENGINES  
 [...]
 F/X: TREMENDOUS EXPLOSION, WHICH FAIRLY QUICKLY TRANSFORMS ITSELF INTO A LITTLE DRIBBLE OF FAIRLY LIGHT FILM MUSIC AND DIES AWAY. (1985 58-59)

This is combined with the actors' panic-stricken voices. In addition one of the actors, who is playing the shipboard computer, is singing Hammerstein's and Rogers', "You'll never walk alone" (1945). In the novel, Adams had to write much more to evoke the panic that was very obvious in the play. The part is nearly five pages, including dialogue and narrative which take up almost equal parts (1979 111-115).

What was most challenging to produce is impossible to say. Adams himself said that the production of the sound effects took much more time and effort than the Radiophoninc Workshop, who created the sound effects together with Adams and the producer Geoffrey Perkins, were allowed. They sometimes borrowed time from other shows on the BBC as Adams wanted to explore further in sound effects than radio plays usually did (Gaiman, 33). On the other hand he was considerably overdue on the deadline for the novel and had to send the pages he had finished writing by motorbike to the publishing company (Gaiman 55). He also was a perfectionist as a writer, and constantly scrapped and rewrote his own texts (Gaiman 32, 54). Producing both works was challenging, but at different points in the production.

Not only did the existing narrative parts develop because of written down setting and place descriptions, but Adams was able to add more narrative parts and guide parts to the story because of the textual nature of a novel. A radio drama may of course contain a narrator (which this play does) but as Crook writes, the aspect of the audience (and not a reader) forces the writer to prioritize dramatic features (like dialogue, aural elements and action) more than

narrative features (like setting, descriptions of characters' looks, thoughts and feelings etc) (162). In many cases Adams kept much of the original narrative and guide parts from the script, sometimes he added more to them in the novel and other times he moved them from one part to another. For example, the introduction in the novel is far longer and contains parts that come later in the radio script, and is then followed by a description of Arthur's house. This introduction would be too heavy for the radio show, which has a much shorter introduction and is directly followed by dialogue. Expansions, like a longer introduction and more detailed descriptions can be given to the reader without disrupting the flow of the story, as it would in a radio series. This occurs, for example, as background stories to characters, like Ford Prefect's original name (1979 44-45), different experiences of the characters during the same time, as the first night they all spend aboard the starship Heart of Gold (1979 97-101), and as sub-plots.

The sub-plots in the novel would not be changes to the original story but rather more information given to events just mentioned in passing. Zaphod stealing the Heart of Gold is one good example. In the radio series the audience only gets to hear a radio news-show on the event, but in the novel Adams dedicates a whole chapter to describing it (1979 34-42). Another example is the parts describing Prostetnic Vogon Jeltz, the antagonist of the series, when the reader gets to follow his feelings and actions when he is not interacting with Arthur and Ford (1979 43-44, 48-49, 60, 63). Crook stresses that a crucial difference between writing a plot for a radio drama and writing one suited for a novel is that the drama is dependent on a limited time frame, as the show is broadcasted and therefore cannot be put aside and resumed later as a reader is able to do with a novel (162). Another difference is that the sub plots in a radio theatre are dependent on the time left to fit them in, and in a 30 minute time frame this can be hard while still trying to keep to the dramatic features of a play.

Because of the aural nature of Radio theatre, Hutcheon explains, the actors' voices need to be easy to separate for the listener. Consequently, the number of actors in a play needs to be limited (41). It could be because of this need of voice recognition in the radio series that the peripheral characters are less featured in the series and more so in the novel. The readers get to know the peripheral characters in the novel as they are given more room, and especially more direct thoughts and feelings. Of course, the actors in the radio series give characterizations to the parts, but as they only get a very short amount of time to act, these are not as elaborate in the radio show as in the novel or as the central characters in both the radio series and the novel. This

could also have to do with the need for dramatic features that are discussed in the previous paragraph; too much information would stifle the action and lose the listeners' interest.

Beside from the sub-plots added and peripheral characters developed, Adams also decided to make some major plot changes to the story. As mentioned in the introduction, he was less than happy with the fifth and sixth episode (the two last episodes in the first radio series), which he thought lacked the isolation and loneliness that the first four episodes had. The biggest reason there is such a difference is that, being overworked, Adams chose to co-write the two last episodes with his friend John Lloyd (Gaiman 37-38). The biggest plot changes are consequently made at the end of the novel. Firstly, the reason Zaphod wants to go to Magrathea is expanded to not just be as he says in the radio play "partly the curiosity, partly a sense of adventure, but mostly I think it's the fame and the money" (1985 55). Instead it evolves throughout the novel into a mystery involving a lobotomy made on his brains signed by his own initials (1979 128) and him being in some kind of collaboration with the former Galactic President, making him take actions that his subconscious is telling him to do without knowing the reasons behind them. Secondly the escape from Magrathea is changed, from being blown "through the space time continuum" to the restaurant at the end of the universe (1985 103) to escaping by Marvin hooking himself up to the robot-cops spaceship and making it commit suicide (1979 183). These plot changes result in both a more intricate narrative and a cliff-hanger for the following novel to expand upon.

In the novel Adams also took the opportunity to add new ideas that he would later incorporate into the second radio series. The most important of this is the part about towels. The first mention of the subject was made in the special 'Christmas' episode that was recorded on 20 November and transmitted 24 December 1978. This is where the idea about towels (being the most useful thing in the universe) first was touched upon. It is not clear whether this was first an idea written into the novel, which Adams' at that time was writing, or an idea that first was realized in that special episode. The narrator and the guide both take up the subject of towels already on page 26 in the novel. This is another example of the close intertextual and intermedial aspects in Adams' writing, an idea that was mentioned just in passing in a special episode (1985 148), after six episodes had already aired, and had become hugely popular was then worked into the novel to be one of the most memorable and recurrent themes in his following works.

The intermedial qualities of the novel could be analyzed as both medial transposition, the way that Adams adapted the story from one media to another, and intermedial references, the way the novel is imitating the format of the show in short chapters, audio description and footnotes (the guide). When studying two novelizations of the film *Capricorn One* (1978) by Peter Hyams, Allison notes that the cinematic device of cross-cutting is adapted by both authors to short segments and short chapters (4). This is a feature that Adams adapts as well; there are many chapters that are no longer than two pages. Chapter 26 is only half a page long, acting like a bridge between the two longer chapters that precede and follow it (1979 151).

The way Adams adapted the story to another media was by adding depth, adding new ideas and expanding already existing ideas, adding sub-plots and developing peripheral characters while keeping his already thoroughly worked through dialogue. The response from the audience combined with the author's own awareness of the parts he thought unsuccessful (Gaiman 99) meant that the novel was a result of both collaboration, in the radio series, and writing on his own which resulted in much re-working and editing. The novel sold over 250 000 copies in the first three months (Gaiman 58).

### **Adapting the radio series to a novel: the characters**

One of the challenges Adams was faced with when novelizing the work was how to alone adapt characters that were created through co-operation. The characters in the radio series differ from the novel because they are the result of co-operation. Firstly, the writer writes the script with an idea of how he wants the role to be like. Secondly the character needs to be casted, often by the producer or director. Crook writes that some important aspects when auditioning actors for parts are to “judge how actors will adjust their performance according to your notes and direction”, commitment to the part and to watch out for “same voice casting” i.e. see to it that every voice in the show is distinct (238-239). Thirdly the actor casted gives to the role nuances and a personality that can both change the script and inspire new ideas for the writer. For instance, the role of Marvin, casted by the producer of the show Geoffrey Perkins (Gailman 39), was only intended to appear in the second episode, but because of the actor Stephen Moore’s good performance he instead became one of the most popular characters of the show and featured in all of the remaining episodes in the first series (1985 50).

However, for the character portrayal in a radio show to be successful the dialogue needs to be good as well, as the dialogue is both the main tool for characterizations and the major part of realizing the narrative (Crook 171). The narrative in the radio series gives very little characterization, there are for example very few descriptions of looks and thoughts – these are instead embedded into the dialogue through the characters' own observations. The plot leans on the actors to give a well rounded, dramatic dialogue that includes descriptions of what is happening around them. The casting of the radio series was then of utter importance and a big reason why the series was so successful.

When adapting the characters for the novel, Adams was faced with the difficult task of transferring the actors work into text and his work method moved from co-operation to solitude. He was able to explore different ways of characterizing, but the directness of the actors' distinct voices was lost. The process of adapting was not a one way production from a radio theatre to a novel. The first novel was published in October 1979, and although broadcasted in January 1980 the recording of the second radio series (secondary phase) started in May 1979. Before this the seventh episode, a Christmas special, was transmitted on 24 December 1978. For these reasons alone all these works have distinctive intermedial qualities and the characters are not just based on a script of another work; they developed throughout an intermedial process.

When considering the characters closer it is most natural to start with the main character, Arthur Dent. As the protagonist of the story, Arthur Dent would be the greatest challenge to adapt. A radio series depends much on its main character, Crook explains, as the character is responsible for capturing the audience and keeping them listening (172). When Adams wrote the script he intended for Simon Jones to play the part of Arthur Dent. Adams said that "I wrote the part for him, and I wrote the part with his voice in mind and with an idea of what he was strong on playing" (Adams quoted by Gaiman 252), and so he had to transfer the specific nuances of Jones' acting into the character in the novel.

There is the extended use of appearance and personality in the narration in the novel. In both the novel and the radio series Arthur Dent is depicted as a very normal Englishman who is trying to cope with very abnormal experiences and find normality whilst travelling through the universe. This is realized in a very different way in the novel than in the radio series. In the first chapter of the novel the reader is introduced to Arthur Dent as a rather ordinary Englishman, a bit unsure of himself and never at ease. These features are unnecessary to explain

in the radio series, as the intended listeners were British and could identify these trade mark characteristics in the way Simon Jones acted. In the novel the reader also gets a very loose description of Arthur's appearance – 30 years old, dark haired and tall (1979 7-12). This is not at all detailed as descriptions go, but it far surpasses the description of Arthur in the radio series, which only states that he is a 6 ft tall ape descendent (1985 18).

Adams is also able to use the omniscient third person narration form to explore Arthur's emotions. The narration form makes the reader understand the world described to them in much more detail, and also get an insight into the character's or characters' feelings and thoughts as "omniscient narrators move at will between places, historical periods, and characters" (Griffith 61). Arthur's feeling of abandonment and loneliness is further developed in the novel, especially when he realizes that the Earth does not exist any more (1979 56-57, 69). Adams also uses the other characters' thoughts to further characterize Arthur, like his conversation with Ford that revealed Arthur's frequent use of sarcasm (1979 15), Zaphod doubting that he and Arthur would ever meet at a party, implying that Arthur is a lot duller than himself (1979 96) or Ford's perception of the tendency Arthur (and humans in general) has to state the very obvious or repeating what has just been said (1979 46).

When it came to Ford Prefect, Adams had a clear idea of him from the very beginning:

I thought the keynote of the character of Ford Prefect was that given the choice between getting involved and saving the world from some disaster on the one hand, and on the other hand going to a party, he'd go to the party every time. (Adams quoted by Gaiman, 253)

The character description above is accurate to both Ford Prefect in the novel and Ford Prefect in the radio series. The differences between the characters lie in the internal and external descriptions added in the novel. First, there is his appearance. There is no description of this in the radio series at all. The listeners have to work out for themselves that he is humanoid, as he can blend in with humans on the Earth with no difficulties. In the novel however, the reader gets a much more detailed description, both of his looks and of his personality. One example is the guide's description of his name, which gives the reader an understanding of his origins (1979, 44-45). Another example is the description of how his earth friends perceive him and how he feels being stuck on Earth (1979 12-14). His interactions with peripheral characters are also more noticeable in the novel, as the reader gets an insight into both his and the other characters'

internal thoughts. Adams also changes the conversation with Mr Prosser (1985 20-21) so that the idea of Arthur being able to protest without actually lying in front of the bulldozer and instead joining Ford at the bar is Ford's instead of Arthur's (1979, 17-20). This was a good move as Ford is, out of him and Arthur, the character that is more out of this world and could come up with such an absurd idea.

Ford's "semi-cousin" Zaphod Beeblebrox has a much larger part in the novel than in the radio series. His characteristics are much the same, self centred and obsessed with being cool, but in the novel the narrative follows him much more, starting with a whole chapter describing him stealing the Heart of Gold (1979 34-42), something that is only represented by a radio transmission in the radio series (1985 46). This radio transmission is included in the novel as well. The plot changes in the novel also affect the characterization of Zaphod, as he is depicted as a man with a mysterious mission instead of, as in the radio series, a man with a mission just to get wealthy and even more popular. To keep with Zaphod's personality traits this mission is one Zaphod does not know himself. This also adds to the trait Trillian perceives in the novel, that his popularity and success are due to him not really knowing what is going on (1979, 89-92, 125-127, 160-164).

The flattest character in the radio series is Trillian, and she is given some more roundness in the novel. Adams himself admitted that he had difficulties when it came to writing female characters, as he had a hard time understanding women and therefore was afraid to depict them in an unrepresentative way. The main purpose of Trillian was, according to Adams, having another person from Earth to understand references made by Arthur so that he would not be completely lost in space. The character lost her purpose because of Ford, as he had lived on Earth a considerable amount of years and therefore understood Earth-related fact. Adams felt that Trillian did not really come to her own until the end of the third novel (Gaiman, 257). Although the character is not the most interesting in the novel, she does get a more distinct voice than in the radio series.

Both Zaphod's and Trillian's looks are, like Ford's and Arthur's, described in more detail in the novel. That Zaphod has two heads, three arms and a horrible fashion sense you would already know if you had listened to the radio series. Zaphod is, in comparison to the other main characters, depicted quite clearly. Incidentally, the two heads were put in as a joke from Adams' side, but proved to be an expensive struggle in the following TV series. The novel adds

to his looks, giving him further details as wavy blond hair, blue eyes and having stubble. He looks like the ex-hippie he is (1979, 36-39). Contrary to Zaphod, Trillian is not described at all in the radio series. In the novel she is given a distinct look, “slim, darkish, humanoid, with long waves of black hair, a full mouth, an odd little knob of a nose and ridiculously brown eyes” (1979, 41), something that helps to visualize the character. The problem of her character in the series was not the lack of description, but its flatness. For example Ford, who is one of the most rounded characters, is not given any physical traits (like Trillian) but his other traits like personality and dialogue are so well written and diverse that the listener gets a firm picture of who this character is. In the radio series Trillian’s feelings about the earth’s demolition are not explored but in the novel she is described feeling agitated over her negative reaction over the news about the Vogon destroying the Earth as she never had intended to return to the planet (1979, 98). Describing the characters better, including their looks, and later continuing with feelings and thoughts, makes the characters more interesting and believable in the novel, especially with a character like Trillian which was a lot flatter in the radio series.

One crucial way in which both Zaphod and Trillian are developed in the novel is in their relationship. They are in many ways each other’s opposites; Zaphod a very selfish and vain person and Trillian a highly educated and responsible one. In the novel, when first having saved Arthur and Ford from dying of asphyxiation in deep space Zaphod is concerned not for the aliens (Ford and Arthur) they picked up, but for the fact that it would harm him as he is on the run from the government. When Trillian asks Zaphod if he would be happy to just let them die he replies that no, he would be “not happy as such, but...” with the underlying meaning that his own safety concerns him more than saving someone from dying (1979, 80-81). Later, when discussing the likelihood of them picking up Ford and Arthur in “sector ZZ 9 Plural Z Alpha”, the narrative goes on explaining the difficulties Trillian has to understand when Zaphod is being stupid on purpose and when he was actually being stupid and how to respond to his stupidity – what ever reason he had for it (1979, 89-90). Not only does this part further describe Zaphod’s characteristics but Trillian’s as well. She is observant and smart yet patient with Zaphod’s many eccentricities.

As mentioned in the beginning of this chapter the character of Marvin was a result of good acting and positive audience response. The character is, according to Adams, based on his friend Andrew Marshall, although he admits that the character is partly based on himself as



well. Adams' mother made the observation that Marvin very much reminded her of A. A. Milne's Eeyore, and Adams' admitted this but added that "literature is full of depressives. Marvin is simply the latest and most metal" (Gaiman, 254-255).

Little changed when Adams adapted Marvin to the novel, many of his lines are the same and his appearance is overlooked both in the novel and the radio series, he is simply described in the way he carries himself and by his very depressed and sarcastic personality. Adams admitted that he had no distinct idea of Marvin's looks except that he is designed to look beautiful but fails because of how he holds himself and ends up looking pathetic (Gaiman, 255).

The success of Marvin, in both the novel and series can be due to the duality of his character. As Adam Roberts writes: Marvin is given a "Genuine People Personality" hence he can have genuine people personality-problems (2006, 119). He is on the one hand extremely sturdy, in the radio series he waits on Magrathea for many millions of years whilst the other characters are blown forward in time (1985, 97), and extremely smart with "a brain the size of a planet" (1985, 45). On the other hand he is so miserable that the durability and cleverness only becomes a burden.

The novelization process affected the main characters differently. Some, like Trillian, were altered and expanded and others, like Marvin, stayed much the same. Similarly changes can be noted – the appearances are more detailed and the characters' thoughts and feelings described by the narrative in greater detail. Additionally, the characters' perceptions of each other add to the general characterizations as well. An intermedial process shaped the characters, first through co-operation in the radio series, then in solitude when Adams wrote the first novel, and later back to co-operation when creating the second radio series.

## **Adaptability and success**

The first adaptation of the Hitchhiker's story was made only a year after it was first broadcasted, but the adaptations did not stop with the first novel. Following the novelization the secondary phase of the radio series was aired in 1980 and was, with the primary phase adapted into a LP record published by Hannibal Records in 1982. The adaptations were based on the script but with cuts and cast changes (Gaiman 71-4-74). Adams wrote four more novels to the

series; *The Restaurant at the End of the Universe* (1980), *Life, the Universe and Everything* (1982), *So Long, and Thanks for All the Fish* (1984) and *Mostly Harmless* (1992). In 1981 the story was adapted to a TV series based on the first radio series. A computer game was made, based on the original story, and released in late 1984. It “became the bestselling adventure game in America on its release, selling over a quarter of a million copies” (Gaiman, 146-154). Nine comic books were released, three for each of the first three novels, by DC comics in 1993, 1994 and 1996<sup>1</sup>. Several stage performances have also been made based on the story (Gaiman, 61-66).

Adams died of a heart attack in 2001 (Gaiman, 203) but that did not stop the story from spawning. Radio series parts three to five (loosely based on the novels three to five) were adapted and aired in 2004 and 2005. Adams long fought for movie project was made into reality in 2005 when the movie *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* directed by Garth Jennings and based on Adams' script hit the cinemas. The latest addition to the Hitchhiker's universe is the final novel in the series, *And Another Thing...* (2009) written by Eoin Colfer (Gaiman 216-224, 225-228, 236-237).

*The Hitch-Hiker's Guide to the Galaxy* and following adaptations in all forms are not only adaptations, they are re-mediations. When Adams created the novelization he needed to, as Hutcheon explains, transcode the aural media of radio theatre to the written media of a novel (16-17). As the source media was not a long novel that needed to be subtracted, but a script that needed additional body there was room for Adams to explore and use the tools of writing and at the same time translate the already existing work into a textual media. The adaptability of the story is due to many reasons; one of them is that Adams was a passionate and competent writer who could bring to forefront the different media's uniqueness.

The advances of technology were a huge factor behind the many adaptations of the Hitchhiker's story. Gaiman writes that “Adams had a tendency to have ideas that didn't always fit into the framework of what he was doing at the time” (154). In that way other media formats could give him the opportunities to explore these ideas. New technology can, according to Hutcheon, give fidelity to imagination, so that the audience can experience whole different worlds only described and imagined before (29). A good example of this can be made when comparing Zaphod from the Hitchhiker's TV-series with the film equivalent; in the TV series

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<sup>1</sup> The information about the comic books is available at DC Comic's homepage. However, the information is on several pages, one for each of the nine comic books. For gathered information, go to "The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy" article on Wikipedia: The Free Encyclopedia.

from the early 1980s Zaphod's second head was a clumsy prosthesis which looked very un-lifelike. In the movie, aired in 2005, there were no issues creating a man with two heads with special effects. Both technology and media formats affected the re-mediations and adaptations made by Adams. He expressed his own view on different media formats when he was asked about Interactive Literature. He said that comparing it to literature was pointless as the important part is not comparing but instead “[w]hat matters is whether it’s interesting and exciting” (Gaiman 151).

*The Hitch-Hiker's Guide to the Galaxy* is one of the best sold science fiction novels of all time, and regarded as a cult classic. It is important to note that the radio show is also a cult classic. Although many people today are not aware of its existence it was a huge success in the UK at the time. After the first episode had aired, there were two national newspapers that gave the show good reviews, something really rare for a new radio show airing 10.30 pm on a Wednesday (Gaiman 36). The first radio series was awarded several awards: the Imperial Tobacco Award in 1978; the Sony Award in 1979 and the Society of Authors/Pye Awards 'Best Programme for Young People' in 1980 (“A History of 'The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy’”). Additionally, although the show did not win a Hugo Science Fiction Award in 1979 in its category “best dramatic presentation”, the series is the only radio show up to date that has been nominated in these awards (“1979 Hugo Awards”).

Adams believed that the radio show did much for the success of the novelization as “radio audience has a greater overlap with a solid reading audience than television does” (Adams quoted by Gaiman 58). It could be that audio theatre is a medium that is more easily adapted than others; it lacks a film’s detailed visual aura, a play’s changeable nature and a novel’s complex narratology. There had not been a science fiction radio series since Chilton’s BBC series *Journey into Space* in the 1950s (Gailman 36), strangely science fiction had been left to other media forms and most audio based science fiction took place in music (Roberts 2006 334-335).

One of several factors of the success of the novel was timing. Gaiman explains that the novel came in just the right moment. After the success of works like *Star Wars* (1977) and *Close Encounters of the Third Kind* (1977) science fiction had been accepted by the public and *The Hitch-Hiker's Guide to the Galaxy* was a further step as it included comedy, a subcategory that was unrepresented in science fiction. The success of, for example *Star Wars*, Roberts explains, also triggered a negative reaction based on the belief that the movie was responsible for

“the dumbing down of SF”. Roberts says that although it is hard to hold *Star Wars* as the sole responsible part, he stresses the fact that science fiction from the 1970s to the present has moved from a “primarily written literature of *ideas* into a primarily visual idiom of imagery and spectacle” (emphasis added) (2006, 279). The timing of a comedic and socially criticizing radio series and later novel like the Hitchhiker’s in the late 1970s was then as much inspired by as a reaction to the boom of these types of science fiction works that, according to Roberts, lack many adult aspects and due to their media (film) poorly communicate ideas (2006, 279).

The comedy aspect is something Adams kept very central in both the original script and in the novelization. The fact that there are quite few works in this genre is surprising, as the works often receive great reception<sup>1</sup>. Robert Grant, author of both science fiction novels and writer for the comedic science fiction TV show *Red Dwarf* says:

Science fiction comedy, per se, is a very underpopulated field. I'm not quite sure why: there's a natural link in that both SF and comedy deal in the same currency - both look at the world from odd angles. (Grant par 2)

Comedy science fiction works, like the Hitchhiker’s, use the ability of science fiction to shine a light on social patterns with means overblown and fantastical and the ability of comedy to laugh at these social patterns, and in that laugh at ourselves. The combination of comedy and science fiction has proved to create not only a successful works but also a large fan base. A contemporary example of this is Joss Whedon’s TV series *Firefly* (2002), which got such a large following with devoted fans that the cancelled TV series was adapted into a movie, *Serenity* (2005), distributed by Universal Pictures (Russell, 1-3). Similarly, an additional novel in the Hitchhiker’s “trilogy of five”, as Adams called his ever expanding collection of works, became a hexalogy when *And another thing...* was written in 2008 by Eoin Colfer, seven years after Adams’ death. Colfer has been, according to Gaiman, a fan of Adams’ works since school years. An extraordinary form of fan fiction was written, and published with Adams’ widow’s consent as the last novel in the series.

When it comes to the audience of an adapted work there are some problematic aspects, both with new, unknowing audience and with knowing audience. Hutcheon describes a knowing audience as one that is familiar with the source of the adapted work. A knowing audience can create problems for the adapter. First, there are the gaps left out in every work. It is

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<sup>1</sup> For example movies like *Mars Attacks!* (1996), *Men In Black* (1997), *Galaxy Quest* (1999) and TV-series like *Red Dwarf* (1988-1999 and 2009-present), *Futurama* (1999-2003 and 2008- present) and *Invader Zim* (2001-2001 and 2006)

essential to a work to leave some gaps but the adapter can make the mistake of omitting too much of the story, making the plot hard to follow if one has not read the original work. This results in a work that requires the audience to have knowledge of the original source to appreciate the work at all. Hence a successful adaptation is an adaptation that both knowing and unknowing audience can appreciate. Hutcheon writes:

[I]t is probably easier for an adapter to forge a relationship with an [unknowing] audience ... Without foreknowledge, we are more likely to greet a film version simply as a new film, not as an adaptation at all. The director, therefore, will have greater freedom – and control.

A knowing audience has expectations as well as emotional attachments to the source of an adapted work and are easily upset by changes to a story (120-125). At the same time both children and adults are partial to continuous “sagas”, Hutcheon explains. These are wide spanning stories like *Star Trek* that explore not only different plots but also different media formats; extending and diversifying into a whole universe (172-174). Adams took on the task of recreating his original radio play into a novel, with the difficulties of having a knowing (and loving) audience with expectations and wrote a novel that both fulfilled the knowing audience and captured the unknowing, and in doing so he created a successful novelization.

## Conclusion

When Douglas Adams novelized his radio drama *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy Primary Phase* he was faced with the challenges every adapter faces when adapting a story from one media to another. The dramatic essence of the radio show needed to be reworked to a readable format. He did this by focusing more on the narrative, on describing settings, incorporating more sub-plots, giving the peripheral character more space and introducing new ideas whilst changing the plot from the original series where it was not as successful as he wanted. In doing so Adams chose to slow down the pace of the dramatic radio show and refocus on the textual aspects instead of the aural ones. When the aural media was lost and the textual gained he was able to create a novel where the story is based on the ‘original’ but still stands on its own as a unique work that realizes the plot with a novel’s special qualities.

When the work was adapted, the characters needed to be adapted too. They, more than the plot, was a result of co-operation, because although the dialogue was mainly written by Adams, the actors gave the characters distinct flavours which helped to shape not only the characterizations but the whole plot. Adams chose to focus more on the description of the

characters: their looks, their internal thoughts and their feelings and kept most of the dialogue from the radio show. The characters that were successful in the radio show Adams' adapted and their personalities did not change much, whilst flatter characters, like Trillian, were developed and rounder characteristics in the novel and thereby making more sense.

The characters and the story were a result of re-adaptations and re-mediations. The novelization Adams wrote influenced the second radio show and was at the same time influenced by the first one. The works were written in such close contact, time wise, and by the same author so that ideas, like the one about towels, and characters, like Marvin, that were from the beginning meant to be a small parts, became core features in the story.

*The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*-story expanded even more after the first adaption and most of these adaptations (and re-mediations) were really successful. The adaptability was due to the originality of the story, the worked through simplicity of a radio theatre script and to Adams' eternal eagerness to explore new technologies and improve his own work. The novel became successful because of the timing, as science fiction had become accepted by the public in the 1970s when the novel was published, and also due to the comedy incorporated in all Adams' Hitchhiker's works. He also succeeded in adapting the works, starting with the novelization, to both the knowing and unknowing audiences' liking. In doing so he created a successful novelization which is a 'real' adaptation. He focused on the special elements of the media that the work was adapted to and left gaps where he needed. Finally, he worked in an intermedial process which resulted in both several successful works in different media formats and a huge fan base.

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