Textual and Visual Correspondence Between the Novel and the Film: The Epistolary Narrative of *Love, Simon*

Özgür Çalışkan

ABSTRACT

Love, Simon (2018) is an American comedy-drama film directed by Greg Berlanti and based on Becky Albertalli's novel *Simon vs. the Homo Sapiens Agenda* (2015) about the email correspondence between Simon and another male student from his high school. Digital correspondence and Simon's voiceovers form the backbone of the storytelling. Comparing the book and the film, with a particular focus on the written form of communication and the narrator's inner voice, one can observe differences between the textual and visual forms, especially when considering the narrative line. This paper examines how the novel as a text centered on digital correspondence is transformed in the film adaptation. The paper aims to reveal how the role of the narrator changes from novel to film in the context of Plato's mimesis and diegesis. The similarities and differences between the use of text through the narrative line are analyzed within the scope of adaptation theory and poststructuralist textual analysis, and the transformation of mimetic and diegetic epistolary storytelling into diegetic and non-diegetic speeches, sounds and visuals in the film universe. As a result, it has been revealed that the film has mega-textual features in the context of adaptation and correspondence, that it has been adapted to the film without losing the characteristics of the story through intertextuality, that it stands at a point of transmission, that it successfully visualizes the anonymity in correspondence, and that it carries the plot and the identity of the characters to the visual dimension.

Keywords: Love Simon, Epistolary, Coming out, Correspondence, Film Adaptation, Film Narrative

ÖZGÜR ÇALIŞKAN
Asst. Prof.
Anadolu University
ozgurcaliskan@anadolu.edu.tr
ORCID ID: 0000-0002-7407-3371

Roman ve Film Arasındaki Metinsel ve Görsel Yazışma: *Love, Simon* Filminde Mektuplaşma Anlatısı

Özgür Çalışkan

ÖZ

Love, Simon (2018), Greg Berlanti'nin yönettiği ve Becky Albertalli'nin *Simon vs. the Homo Sapiens Agenda* (2015) adlı romanından uyarlanan, Simon ile lisesinden bir başka erkek öğrenci arasındaki e-posta yazışmalarını konu alan bir Amerikan komedi-drama filmidir. Dijital yazışmalar ve Simon'ın seslendirmeleri olay örgüsünün merkezinde yer almaktadır. Kitap ve film karşılaştırıldığında, özellikle yazılı iletişim biçimine ve anlatıcının iç sesine odaklanıldığında ve anlatı çizgisi göz önüne alındığında, metinsel ve görsel biçimler arasındaki farklılıklar gözlemlenebilmektedir. Bu çalışma, dijital yazışmaları merkeze alan bir romanın film uyarlamasına nasıl dönüştüğünü incelemektedir. Makale, Platon'un mimesis ve diegesis kavramları bağlamında anlatıcının rolünün romandan filme nasıl değiştiğini ortaya koymayı amaçlamaktadır. Uyarlama kuramı ve postyapısalcı metin analizi kapsamında metnin anlatısının kullanımı ile mimetik ve diegetik epistolar hikaye anlatımının film evreninde diegetik ve diegetik olmayan konuşmalara, seslere ve görsellere dönüşümü arasındaki benzerlikler ve farklılıklar analiz edilmektedir. Sonuç olarak, filmin, uyarlama ve mektuplaşma bağlamında mega metinsel özellikler taşıdığı, metinlerarasılık aracılığıyla hikayeyi, özelliğini kaybetmeden filme uyarlayarak aktarımsal bir noktada durduğu, yazışmadaki anonimliği başarıyla görselleştirerek olay örgüsünü ve karakterlerin kimliğini görsel boyuta taşıdığı ortaya konmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Love Simon, Mektuplaşma, Açılma, Yazışma, Uyarlama Film, Film Anlatısı

ÖZGÜR ÇALIŞKAN
Dr. Öğr. Üyesi
Anadolu Üniversitesi
ozgurcaliskan@anadolu.edu.tr
ORCID ID: 0000-0002-7407-3371

INTRODUCTION

"I'm so glad that my memory's remote 'cause I'm doing just fine hour to hour, note to note." This phrase was written on a chalkboard wall in high school student Simon's room. Although this sentence refers to the lyrics of Elliot Smith's song titled Waltz 2, it provides clues as to what kind of young adult Simon is in a cinematic language. Simon Spier is the protagonist of Becky Albertalli's novel *Simon vs. the Homo Sapiens Agenda* (2015) and Greg Berlanti's film *Love, Simon* (2018), based on the novel. Lyrics written on Simon's room wall have an auditory connotation, given that song reference is visual and textual, with writing from the wall of a movie character's room. From the beginning of the film, this visual narrative shows how the novel adaptation can offer a richness and variety of uses in the visual expression of cinema.

Further, considering the rising popularity of young-adult novels in the last decade, it is inevitable for best-selling novels to be adapted to the cinema. However, it is noteworthy that Simon's story was adapted to the cinema. Made by a significant firm, the prominent feature of this film is that the main storyline is centered on a gay romance.[1] While this feature makes the film more remarkable, it also becomes more critical to infer the relationship between the text and visuals, especially how it is presented, as the film is an adaptation. Although there may be positive consequences for Simon's remote memory as it was written on the wall, both the film and story it contains emphasize that the audience must remember a thing and not forget some of them again.

The story of *Love, Simon* revolves around the correspondence between high school student Simon, who is secretly gay, and another anonymous gay student from his high school via e-mail. The plotline develops when Simon tries to find the real identity of his correspondent and struggles with the notion of sharing his secret with his family and friends. Digital correspondence and Simon voiceovers

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[1]https://www.latimes.com/entertainment/movies/la-et-mn-love-simon-marketing-20180316-story.html
https://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/films/news/love-simon-first-gay-studio-film-lgbtq-nick-robinson-greg-berlanti-riverdale-a8261866.html
https://www.theguardian.com/film/2018/mar/31/gay-cinema-homosexuality-coming-out-hollywood-gilbey-sexuality
https://www.bbc.com/news/entertainment-arts-43737712
https://ew.com/movies/2017/10/31/love-simon-first-look/
https://variety.com/2018/scene/vpage/love-simon-premiere-gay-teen-romantic-comedy-1202722636/

form the backbone of storytelling. When the book and film are compared with a particular focus on the written form of communication and narrator, Simon's inner voice reveals disparities between textual and visual forms, especially considering the narrative line. As the reader and viewer act as the secret witnesses of Simon's correspondence and his thoughts on his life and sexual orientation, they are consubstantial with his identity and empathize with him.

The Correspondence Between Film and Adaptation

Cinema is a visual and auditory art form whose signs are generally perceived differently. Several theories developed within the cinema can be used to understand a particular film element. While making this interpretation, it should not be forgotten that the film is a text—a script—in the first place, whether it is an adaptation.

Studies conducted in the historical period of cinema generally point to the following two periods: classical and modern cinema. Christian Metz (1991) claimed that non-visual and verbal aspects are more critical in modern cinema, and this new cinema is more satisfying in terms of filmic narrative because it is more narrative-oriented. This approach can be a source for a more narrative-oriented examination of films and provide a direction for film semiotics, especially for those whose narratives are studied. Film semiotics tries to make the invisible reality visible by defining the uniqueness of the film and unraveling discourse by treating the film in a language-like fashion (Buckland, 2004, p. 88). This approach does not suggest that movies should be examined like novels because multiple film elements affect the narrative. More importantly, films are different from novels in depicting the action rather than describing the same (Gaudreault & Jost, 2004, p. 45). Therefore, it is necessary to think of a film as a language in structure. However, while doing so, it is essential to understand the story it narrates through its dynamic scenes and actions. Considering the film as a text, Metz's (1974) five tracks: image, dialog, sound, music, and written materials, should also be applied to adapted textual film analysis, especially when the plot assumes epistolary form. Unlike oral narratives, in cinema, there is a mega narrator who helps evoke a dynamic visual; it is difficult to destroy its existence with sub-narratives, which places cinema in a position that is more complex than that of literature, causing the dual narrative to manifest (Gaudreault & Jost, 2004, p. 54). *Love, Simon*, has more than two narratives. First, the main text of the film; second, the film's script; third, the film itself; the film's adaptation with its sub-narration stemming from the

epistolary structure of the novel. Interdisciplinary studies of novels and films are often contradictory. On the one hand, these two are at times considered different as the former consists of words and the latter consists of visuals; on the other hand, they are sometimes reckoned as similar in terms of narrative, history, culture, and form (Elliot, 2006, p. 1).

This situation may require a particular share of this contradiction from both sides regarding film adaptation. For this reason, adaptation theory may benefit from a more comprehensive understanding of the film in question, and it may also ensure that the structure created by the novel from which the film is adapted is not ignored, given that the adaptation contains epistolary content.

Sobchack (1979) mentioned that adapted fiction is related to its "themes, narrative action, plot and scene structures, characterization, imagery, and dialogue" to become successful. Besides, Corrigan (2012) emphasized essential features of adaptation: retaining and recreating the plot and settings, surviving the complexity of the characters through adaptation, altering themes, ideas, and cultural context, and customizing the meaning of an original text for the reader or viewer. Further, Corrigan (2012, p. 20) suggested that questions should be asked about adaptation concentrating on the occurrence of recreation, the way characters are affected, relation to themes and ideas in the original text, adaptation differences from the original on cultural and historical approaches, and if there is a change in the form of communication. According to Leitch (2012), adaptations are intermedial, counter-exphrases examples of a distinctive mode of transtextuality, quintessential examples of intertextual practice. They are an act of re-vision within themselves, creating a transpositional situation through a transformation from one genre to another and updating the original work in accordance with the new audience, making it more comprehensible for them (Sanders, 2006, pp. 18-19). This act of renewal in adaptation adds value to the original work.

Films in the 20th and 21st centuries have imitated or simulated historical events, stories, and essential moments in literature, and everything has suddenly become adaptable (Welsh, 2007, p. xx). This situation has brought along the examination of adaptations. As questions arise about how an adaptation is retold, whether the initially intended meaning has changed, how the characters are dealt with, issues such as "fidelity, accuracy, and truth" have come to the fore, particularly regarding adapted films and have revealed that the adaptation process is essentially a circular movement (Welsh, 2007, p.

xxv). Adaptation theory, formed at the junction of linguistics (semiotic, poststructural, postmodern, textual reproduction) and cultural criticism, should convey original and exciting things about the culture (Slethaug, 2014, p. 3). Therefore, in the analysis of an adapted film, inferences can be made regarding various cultural and structural areas in the context of the element investigated from an interdisciplinary standpoint, not just a linguistic one. In this regard, several categorizations related to adaptation theory consider this situation. Wagner (1975) proposed three categories of adaptation: transposition, commentary, and analogy. In transposition, the literary text is transferred to the film in the most accurate way possible; commentary entails the interpretation of the text adapted by making changes, and analogy is the treatment of the original text as a starting point (Cartmell, 1999, p. 24). These features of the adapted film are not far from the relationship between cinema and epistolary form. There is also a mutual relationship between a film form and an epistolary form, as Naficy mentioned; that is, both are mimetic and diegetic (Nacify, 2001, p. 102).

Visually Linked Correspondence in Epistolary Form

In epistolary narration, including letter-writing characters, the author prepares the reader for an end by creating certain characters and by having them write about events in a specific tone and style. However, the characters themselves cannot write as if they know the secrets of the story such that the feeling of events is determined beforehand (MacArthur, 1990, p. 9). Letters are as fictional as they are transparent because letter writers consciously or unconsciously transform events and experiences into texts that produce particular meanings from the writer's perspective. The writer then creates a character or the co-author of a narrative in which the former leads (MacArthur, 1990, pp. 118-119). Epistolary novels consist of letters; although there is unity in epistolary novels, correspondence has continuity in itself, and this continuity and development become essential to recognize the narrator (Dücker, 2017, p. 161). As the epistolary form crosses the private and public sphere boundaries, it is regarded as remediable. Moreover, the ability of individuals to express themselves more freely owing to anonymity in the Internet environment contributes to this renewal and offers the possibility of "intrapersonal, interpersonal, group and mass communication" (Chesnokova, 2015, pp. 14-17). At this point, it is essential to look at how the traditional epistolary form has transformed in different communication environments today.

The literary genre consisting of printed versions of e-mails is reminiscent of traditional epistolary novels. However, this new epistolary form created by e-mail contains a more informal sentence structure, abbreviations, and spelling outside standard rules (Rose, 2004, p. 238). E-mail epistolary allows each character's voice to be heard through a narrator, and readers must determine the character's adequacy by interpretation and reflection (Rose, 2004, p. 240). Letters contain emotions that activate a person's soul while conveying a snapshot of a private world and reflecting the author's life and thoughts, revealing human behavior, social conditions, and cultural relations (Maupin, 2016, pp. 63-64). While examining contemporary forms of letters, such as e-mails, text messages, and Facebook posts, enables us to understand the effects of these forms on identity, personality, and tendencies, inferences can be made as to why people communicate through these forms and how they make a difference as a monologue or dialog in the plot (Maupin, 2016, pp. 66-67). The situation brought about by new communication modalities is also crucial in rewriting, sharing, and creating their own stories about their own lives, whether alone or mutually.

Autobiography has become more empowered and diversified in the online environment, and attention has been given to the complexity of the relationship between self and self-representation, with studies on numerous aspects of online representation of identity (Poletti & Rak, 2014, pp. 3-5). The online environment has brought identity to a different state, allowing an individual to form an identity without appearing as oneself, and by diversifying the ways of doing this with different media, it has enabled them to form different written narratives with multiple personalities (Poletti & Rak, 2014, pp. 5-9). Online life essays can sometimes be self-reflexive, which can provide new perspectives on the process of identity formation and the role of the narrative because self-representation is related to others, and someone's print or web post is never just about themselves (Pulda, 2015, pp. 181-183). As online identities are also related to offline identities, it is essential to look at the offline structure of online selves (Kennedy, 2014, p. 26). Internet posts appear to be related to the epistolary form because of personal narratives, event and situation association, debates, and negotiations (Friesen, 2009). In this context, if online and offline identities are so closely related, it is also noteworthy how people who use these areas, people with young identities, and people at the incipient stage of their identity formation reflect this identity and consume this cultural form. When different identities, such as lesbian, gay,

bisexual, transgender, and intersex people (LGBTI), are considered, popular culture and one's own culture meet in these new environments and forms.

Popular-cultural texts often create a feeling that LGBTI identities require acceptance by heterosexuals; however, although these texts create a tolerant heterosexual audience, they remarginalize LGBTI people by forcing them into permanent isolation (Peele, 2007, p. 2). Thus, it becomes even more critical for isolated individuals to communicate with those who share similar identities through open or confidential correspondence and share characteristics of their identities. The texts that narrate such stories also constitute a support and understanding process.

The epistolary form, which has been used frequently in young-adult fiction in past years, generally serves as a communication modality between people who are apart, primarily when this form is used to tell love stories. It, therefore, allows the evaluation of mutually suppressed feelings and puts the reader in the role of a detective (Dücker, 2017, pp. 162-164). In the novels that use the epistolary form, Wasserman observed that while involving the readers, some characters aspire to take control of their lives during adolescence, these characters have a point of view of their own, they try to establish a balance between themselves and others through correspondence, and the characters use correspondence as a form of honest self-reflection (Wasserman, 2003, p. 51). Thus, in the context of reflecting on oneself and even the society at this juncture, *Love, Simon* stands at an essential point in the context of the young-adult novel adaptation, the identity of its characters, and the form of the correspondence it contains.

AIM AND METHODOLOGY

This study aims to understand the role of digital correspondence and text on storytelling from the book to the film and how these two different mediums use an epistolary-based plotline of the narrator's identity and story. Correspondence, generally a written phenomenon closely related to the correspondents' identity, has primarily become digital nowadays; however, cinema is more audio-visual. It is thus necessary to understand how the narrative can be reflected in the audio-visual language of the cinema, especially in a story where digitally written correspondence forms the main plot. Therefore, similarities and differences between the use of text through the narrative line are discussed through

visual support of the mimetic and diegetic epistolary storytelling and hence the transformation of one's story from text to visible and audible content.

In the context of literary works, Plato distinguished the representation of actions through the author's own voice as diegesis and the representation of actions through the imitation of the voices of characters or characters as mimesis (Lodge, 1984, p. 92). Especially in the novels of the 19th century, a balance between mimesis and diegesis in the context of showing and telling began to be established and the clear distinction between diegesis and mimesis was destroyed (Lodge, 1984, p. 96). In addition, when Bakhtin's typology of literary discourse is taken into account, there are the categories of diegesis, which is the category of direct speech of the author, mimesis, which is represented speech, and as a third category, double oriented speech, which refers to another speech acquisition created by another addresser (Lodge, 1984, p. 98). David Lodge (1984, pp. 102-108), in the context of Plato, Volosinov and Bakhtin's discourse typologies, argues that classical realism is characterized by a balanced use of mimesis and diegesis; in modernism narratives are more pictorial and mimesis dominates over diegesis; in postmodernism narrators are more open about the questions and processes involved in the act of narration and diegesis is revived.

Since novels are only written works, the aforementioned process of making discourse distinctions and creating typologies changes with the addition of sound and image in cinema. In film studies, diegetic narrative is usually considered as the diegetic sound that belongs to the world of the film and the non-diegetic sound outside the world of the film. However, when it comes to the adaptation of a novel narrative to film, since both the discourse in the field of literature and the elements of film cannot be separated, the typology of discourse in both fields is taken into consideration as a method in this study. Moreover, since the narrative of the story analyzed contains epistolary elements, the film also has a narrator who moves and transforms from the novel. Since epistolary elements were also tried to be preserved in the adaptation, it was deemed appropriate to make an analysis of the film, especially in the context of its narrator, taking into account its layered structure as mimesis and diegesis as in the novel. For this reason, it is worth noting that, particularly in this study, a discussion has been established due to specific comparisons by reaching the scenario of both novel and film. Therefore, this study also examines how a novel, as a written genre that carries the identity of the correspondents, creates a film

narrative without losing the identity of the characters and follows the plot of the story, primarily based on correspondence.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

From Simon with Love

Love, Simon and the book from which it is adapted have been investigated in their story, characters, and narrative form. Current studies of the movies and books generally deal with the story in the context of sexual orientation, identity, representation, school theme, power relations, queer and popular culture, and the personality of Simon as the protagonist of the story (Aguilera Martinez, 2019; Fedorov, 2018; Gading & Marsih, 2019; Gouck, 2018; Haley, 2018). Becky Albertalli (2017), the author of the book Simon vs. the Homo Sapiens Agenda, indicates—as one of the story's main points—that the main character, Simon, as a 16-year-old gay, opens up to only one person who does not know Simon's real identity. This can be considered both the cause and effect of the book story, especially in the film, which turns into an epistolary form. The whole progression of the storytelling and the mutual unaccountability of identities in the resulting mutual correspondence makes the fundamental point. In this sense, by examining the characteristics of the adaptation and correspondence expression of the story in this study, an evaluation of the emerging young-adult genre, adaptation, correspondence, and identity may be helpful. In Table 1, the findings generated by categorizing the narrative elements of the book and the film are discussed in more detail under discursive headings from a qualitative perspective.

Table 1 Comparison of Narrative elements between Book and Film According to the Theoretical Framework

NARRATIVE ELEMENTS	IN BOOK	IN FILM
Simon	▪ Narrator as Mimesis	▪ Narrator as mimesis and diegesis with diegetic & non-diegetic voice
Simon's secret	▪ Told by narrator in the beginning	▪ Mere clue and building tension
Music	▪ No sound, only song names creating characters' identity.	▪ Setting cinematic and emotional atmosphere. ▪ Used diegetic and non-diegetic. ▪ Representing characters' mood and identity. ▪ Supports characters' relationships.

Simon's room	▪ Described written and used if it is necessary for characters' scenes.	▪ Decorated with written words, posters to reflect and deepen Simon's identity.
Creeksecrets website	▪ Only written text. Formatted as a letter. ▪ Anonymous.	▪ Visualized through computer and mobile phones. ▪ Sometimes written texts are vocalized. ▪ Anonymous.
Epistolary form	▪ It is only given in writing, sometimes in e-mail format, sometimes in Simon's written dialogues. All full text are given. ▪ The answer comes with the pages. ▪ Usually the final typed version of the correspondence. ▪ It is given as mimesis by the correspondents.	▪ Sometimes it is presented visually on a computer or cell phone screen, sometimes in mimesis with Simon's voice and the voice of the person Simon thinks he is corresponding with using diegetic and non-diegetic features. ▪ The act of writing is visualized. ▪ The full text is not always available. ▪ The arrival of the answer is supported by message sounds. ▪ The act of digital correspondence is shown on both sides, showing what is written and what is deleted. ▪ It is given by correspondents as mimesis both diegetic and non-diegetic.
Plot	▪ It is given as mimesis through the narration of Simon, the narrator.	▪ It is given through the reactions of different characters and the camera's narration; it is non-diegetic with Simon's voice and also double oriented with visualized acting and editing narrative.
When epistolary stops	▪ It is given through Simon's mimesis narration.	▪ It is given diegetically through behavior, through Simon's lonely appearance in his room and checking his messages.
End of correspondence	▪ It is given as a written mimesis dialog of two characters.	▪ It takes place through diegetic dialogues between two characters.

Letters on the Wallpaper

The film's opening scene directly introduces the viewers to the main character, Simon. The birthday scene reflected on the screen, Simon's voiceover, and the camera that occasionally leaves the frame and pans over to the cell phone create a sincere and close relationship. Even in some frames, scenes appear from Simon's perspective. Similar to the book, the narrator, Simon, speaks to the audience

and establishes his first voice correspondence in the film. The attempt at creating this close relationship with the audience turns into an even more special relationship with Simon, who is keeping a secret. Besides, in the novel, the secret that the reader learns from the beginning, that Simon is gay, turns into a mere clue in the film, and the written narrative in the novel is visualized here only by Simon's gaze at the young gardener across from the window of his room. The audience can hear the content of Simon's first voice relationship is his life in his own words. He tells about his family, friends, and life and calls out to the audience, "I am just like you," emphasizing his ordinary life. At this point, a feature is gained by cinema, and the narrative begins to proliferate.

While Simon's gay identity is given at the beginning of the book, mainly through the apparent forgetfulness of private digital correspondence and through the threat of another character, the characters of the narrative world gradually learn about this secret in the film's narrative. While the disclosure of correspondence and identity is used as a threat element in the book, it is an element that is felt by the audience in the film and is gradually built into the plot. The reader witnesses conflict with the threat and the narrative of the tension that Simon is experiencing with the threat, while the viewer tries to unravel what the secret is with visual clues structured in Simon's voice from the very beginning of the film and watches the conflicts with its disclosure.

In voice correspondence with the audience, the words of Simon as the narrator begin accompanying the images, and then the music heard from inside and outside of the film is continually diegetic and non-diegetic, which is witnessed extensively throughout the film. Importantly, what should be emphasized about the music used in the film is its contribution to the adaptation. The novel's readers can often imagine the narrator's voice within their limits. However, music is a layer added to the adaptation to create a cinematic atmosphere. Furthermore, the music that the audience hears outside the film's universe instantly transforms into sounds from vinyl, phone, or computer in the film universe, thereby contributing to its reality. At critical moments in the film narrative, the music outside the film's soundtrack provides an auditory and semantic contribution as both the ambient sound and the sound outside the world of the film.

The first morning Simon goes to school in his car is also the film's opening credits. In the opening credits, the band Bleachers' Rollercoaster song is played. The songs of the Bleachers band are also heard

later in the film and at the end. The Bleachers band was founded in 2014 and is a popular American band that performs music in pop-indie style. Therefore, it can be said that the songs of the Bleachers band influence the book on the young adult genre in the film. In the continuation scene where Simon takes his friends to school by car, the 1975's song called Love Me, which started to be heard on the radio, is current and emphasizes friendship with its lyrics. When Simon starts to correspond with Blue, he listens to the song Waterloo Sunset by The Kinks in his room. The lyrics of the song describe Waterloo Boulevard from inside a room and, at the same time, talk about the lonely love of two people. While talking to his best girlfriend, Leah, State of Flow by Theander Expression plays in Simon's room. For the audience, Leah and Simon's relationship is ambiguous until it is resolved, and therefore the lyrics of the song describe the fluid state of a boy who shuts himself in a room with a friend/lover. Unlike the written narrative, this song reinforces the atmosphere of the cinema, which is added to the visual with the music, and the ambiguity between the characters of the film. Simon's dream about university life is fictionalized with a musical narrative and the song I Wanna Dance with Somebody by Whitney Huston, known as a queer anthem in music history. The encounter between Blue and Simon at the end of the movie and when everything is revealed, the song Wings by the Haerts is about learning to love and being together. The song in the last scene of the film, where Simon moves on to another life, is a song by the Bleachers band heard at the beginning of the movie. The song Wild Heart is about leaving, finding the way to a loved one's wild heart, and change. In the context of all these musical uses, it can be said that the auditory advantage of cinema is used quite prominently in adaptation.

The film's narrative, with different layers, is reflected in Simon's room, especially as mentioned in the introduction. As in any movie, the character's environment furnishes information about one's identity and biography. Simon's room communicates with the audience literally through the wall, which looks like a chalkboard and posters, books, and other objects. It appears that the room is visually communicating with the audience through texts.

Along with some lyrics, texts are written on the wall, such as "Think!," "Chelsea is made of lasagna," "April 2nd-Radiohead," "Pray for Atlanta (ATL)," and "Days until graduate 20," allow Simon to use his room to correspond to the audience and visitors. Whether the contemplated act with an exclamation mark is related to Simon himself, it is then etched immediately in memories as a permanent visual. A prayer is being sent to ATL, where Simon lives, explaining why Chelsea is made of lasagna. In

2017, a one-day shift in the history of Radiohead's April 1 concert could be thought of as Simon's misinformation or April Fool's joke. The number of days until graduation, continually decreasing during the film, makes Simon's situation fixed between the present and the future. Simon's room, including the contribution of the novel's author Albertalli, differs from all other decent parts of the house owing to its visual design and the communication it tries to establish (Osborne, 2018). The room is where almost all of Simon's confidential correspondence takes place, except for such correspondence through his cell phone during the movie. Simon lives out his gay identity and all his thoughts through his actions in this room.

Another space in the movie that should be mentioned is the Creeksecrets website. This virtual space is the invisible area where electronic messaging occurs in the film and is essential for the story and characters. When today's correspondence is considered, Creeksecrets, having a feature close to the open letter format, differs from the traditional format because it is in online mode. One of the reasons for this differentiation is that the correspondence can reach multiple individuals simultaneously. Another reason is that it can conceal the identity of the author. This situation is exemplified by the first post of the movie's other secret main character Blue to Creeksecrets. When Blue says, "But nobody knows that I am gay," he tells it to everyone through online correspondence at the end of his public post. At this point, the importance of anonymity emerges and becomes a reference point for what kind of meaning and importance the correspondence has if the author's identity is unknown. Also, if this anonymity did not exist, whether Simon could immediately get a new e-mail address and start communicating with a secret identity only by sharing his gay identity is one of the critical points. However, the event's motivation, which will form the film's correspondence narrative and push the audience to be a detective with Simon, is established.

Notes to Record, Words to Talk

Unlike the novel, the film adds to its epistolary form because the correspondence parts are expressed aloud. Especially since Simon started to correspond with Blue, correspondence is sometimes voiced by Simon and Blue, which the former predicted. Here, the situation leaves the reader's task to Simon's imagination through adaptation. In the novel, while the first correspondence is given as a full text—as the audience of the film already heard the exact text through Simon's voice at the beginning of

the film—in the first correspondence shown in the film with chapters, this time Simon transcribes what he told the audience and turns it into correspondence with Blue. Furthermore, the audience learns Simon's secret this time, although they had assumed it earlier. The acquaintance required for correspondence has become a secret of gay identity between Simon and Blue. In this epistolary form, real identities remain concealed while the secret is revealed. As the epistolary form is created by sharing the secret, other identity features are shared, except real name and image. In particular, the aim of sharing the secret and other identifying features is to overcome the feeling of loneliness caused by living in secret (or "in the closet") just because of a gay identity.

Given that cinema uses different motions as a tool, the process after the first correspondence increases in motivation; with the mobilization of online correspondence, the conflict and anticipation in the film are heightened as Simon constantly checks his e-mail on his phone. When this expectation of instant correspondence (created differently from the novel) finds a response, the first information about Blue is also pictured in Simon's eyes, owing to the epistolary form. The visualization of imagination about Blue is provided by voice and hands touching the computer keyboard as there are no characteristic features such as handwriting in traditional correspondence. As the correspondence progresses, the epistolary form almost assumes the form of a personal diary with the correspondents' posts about their daily lives. Again, the commonality with the novel emerges here. As the frames and correspondence progress, the characters' information on the pages of the novel deepens. In particular, their mention of their lives and more well-known popular-culture areas can be found in both the characters' cultural backgrounds, although they do not know each other or the audience.

The story, which has become increasingly identified with Simon, is also included in the correspondence of the audience's excitement as they witness the secret correspondence of the two young men. In the scene in which Simon extends his greetings at the end of his e-mail to Blue, Simon's indecision, that is, what he wrote and deleted on the computer screen, is instantly featured in the visual of the film. The greeting status cannot be reversed by Simon's typing "Love" and pressing the send button later, with the instant situation brought about by online correspondence. Presenting this situation emphasizes that the correspondence experienced in terms of the audience is not different from that of two people trying to get to know each other whether or not they are gay.

Last Letter in Screenshot

At the beginning of the novel, an event occurs, which is included later in the film's storyline. It is moved from the beginning of the novel to the middle of the film when Simon leaves his e-mail open while e-mailing to Blue on his school computer, and his friend Martin, who uses the computer subsequently, sees this correspondence. Despite the adaptation, the revelation of this event layers the conflicts as per the film's narrative. The weakness of online correspondence is compounded at this point by the case of hidden gay identity. The ability to copy online correspondence poses a threat in the form of evidence of private correspondence between two people.

Martin's use of Simon's correspondence as a threat to meet Simon's friend Abby forms one of the primary nodes in the film's story. This conflict pushes Simon to think and speak out again with the audience. While images support Simon's questioning why only gay people should be coming out in his thoughts, we see Simon's heterosexual friends coming out to their families. As these thoughts are perhaps supported by the correspondence, Simon comes out to his friend Abby with the thoughts mentioned earlier.

The threat posed by online correspondence is again realized through online correspondence. Nevertheless, Martin's public post on Creeksecrets also reveals Simon's real identity this time. This disclosure allows Simon to acknowledge his identity openly in epistolary form and kept from the public. Support for Simon, who finds himself in an impasse, comes again through text messages. His real-life acquaintances suddenly turn into correspondents with whom Simon does not wish to correspond during the crisis. While this emotional state is left to the reader's imagination in the novel, Simon's crisis is visualized in the film. Although Blue's correspondence is disclosed, his real identity is not revealed. Simon is left unanswered by learning that Blue has blocked his e-mail address. In traditional correspondence, whether the sent letter or text reaches the addressee is an element of curiosity; or when the recipient has no preference for not being able to block the sender because of the online form of correspondence used here, both parties can instantly control and visualize the course of the correspondence. Simon's desperation is expressed in the film by two-sided sound editing, which turns into a dialog between Simon and Blue.

As the correspondence stops, Simon's feelings highlight two critical points regarding epistolary and identity: the return of the feeling of loneliness with the cessation of sharing the gay identity, which was eliminated by correspondence; and when the correspondence comes to a halt, and Simon realizes that he was in love with Blue, it also shows that this love was formed by correspondence. In this way, the love caused by the epistolary sharing of sexual orientation and many other things that make up the identity can also be transmitted to the viewer. The fact that everyone knows the relationship of the correspondents does not reduce the relationship of the correspondence at the end of the story.

On the contrary, Simon, doing what Blue did in the first place, this time with his real identity, writes an invitation to Creeksecrets that anyone can read. Moreover, the film shows us the people as recipients reading the text of Simon's post. Simon is in correspondence with everyone and asks the other person to reveal his secret identity in front of everyone visually. The correspondence now turns into a visual coming out for both correspondents. Thus, correspondence now turns into a visual opening. Simon feels that he can only confirm the love he experiences through correspondence with the visual sharing in front of everyone. The visuality of the cinema uses narrative construction to create this scene and transform love into reality from secret correspondence. The story begins with correspondence and ends with everyone watching two young boys verbally correspond. In addition, the encounter of two people who know each other as friends in social life but share their feelings through correspondence visually strengthens the film's ending. While the reader of the novel witnesses love through texts, as two lovers correspond, the viewer of the film experiences this situation through the coming together of what was previously seen visually.

CONCLUSION

Love, Simon, adapted from a novel in the epistolary form, successfully demonstrates the journey of the sound between the audience and film, the relationship of the narrator with both the audience and correspondence in the film, creating the "mega narrator" (Gaudreault & Jost, 2004) showing the action, and even telling it. The features that Metz (1974) stated about the movie being a text were also rewarded. Besides, the film has a multi-dimensional narrative and can carry the transtextuality (Leitch, 2012) between the novel and screen in adaptation, youth, identity, correspondence, and coming out. The retelling of the story remains true to its epistolary form, ensuring accuracy and fidelity and reinforcing

its cultural critique. Especially considering the way of correspondence and the biography of the characters and their experiences, the film sometimes stops in a transpositional state and sometimes adds its interpretation to the novel with the characteristics of the cinema. The film adapts a story that progresses with writing from a written novel; it uses this literary aspect for movement in different parts of the film, performed when necessary, and uses critical reference points of contemporary forms of communication.

Anonymity, an essential point of online correspondence, has been adapted to the film, leaving it as it is outside the camera. By using the voice of the authors' characters, the film allows e-mail correspondents to be heard. Visualizing the emotions in the correspondence also makes sense of the correspondents' human behavior, social conditions, and cultural relations. As the characters reflect on themselves, the film emphasizes how the situation experienced by two young gay male characters, in particular, turns into an epistolary form of identity sharing. In addition, while Simon's environment in the novel is perceived differently by each reader, the film's visual narrative constructs Simon's environment more liberally. For this reason, while the gay identity in the book is conveyed with a threat as Simon's environment in the movie is depicted more tolerantly in the film with elements such as the neighborhood, costumes, living style, and behavior patterns of the other characters, the issue of the future outcomes after the question of who the Blue is. Further, pointing the camera at others shows that this is not just about the main characters themselves. Although in the context of the film's narrative and perhaps the young adult audience originally targeted, visuals and sound are not entirely isolated from popular culture, attention is drawn to the identity of the gay characters.

The reader and audience experience the story of two young gay men in different genres—book and film—through an extraordinary correspondence between them. The correspondence experience of Simon with Blue through their identity made the characters more permanent by visualizing them. By meeting the person with whom he corresponded, Simon moves to another phase of the correspondence and achieves victory by completing the countdown to graduation on his room wall. Simon's story has set an example for others, and now he will share his experiences with others in correspondence, which will turn into a series of events. Although Simon's memory is remote, he and anyone watching can still do just fine remembering the correspondence.

This study also suggests that the narrative discourses and distinctions from Plato to the present day do not only exist in literature as a literary text, that this situation becomes complex, especially in adaptations, and that in order to make sense of this complex situation, it is necessary to shed light on the fact that both literary and audiovisual situations in films may also be subject to these distinctions. In particular, Bakhtin's double oriented approach in the context of literature may indicate that there is a dual narrator between the book and the film in the context of adaptation, though perhaps not as a narrator, and in some cases even more or layered narratives can be discerned if different adaptations are analyzed.

GENİŞLETİLMİŞ ÖZET

Edebiyattan sinemaya uyarlanan eserlerin incelenmesi, tarihsel süreç içerisinde kendi disiplinler arası çalışma alanlarını oluşturmuşlardır. Genellikle uyarlama çalışmaları adı altında kategorileştirilen bu alan, hem uyarlanan edebiyat eserinin yazınsal özeliklerini hem de sinemanın görsel-işitsel özeliklerini dikkate almaktadır. Dolayısıyla uyarlama filmler içerikleri doğrultusunda birçok açıdan incelenebilmektedir. Bu çalışmada Becky Albertalli'nin yazmış olduğu ve Türkçe'ye Simon Homo Sapiens'e Karşı (2017) adıyla çevrilmiş genç-yetişkin romanının, 2018 yılında uyarlanan *Love, Simon* (Greg Berlanti) isimli filmi arasındaki özellikler incelenmektedir. Özellikle romanın ve filmin hikâyesinin oluşturan ve olay örgüsü içerisinde yer alan mektuplaşma (epistolar) anlatısı çalışmanın uyarlama filmin incelenmesindeki öncelikli alanı oluşturmaktadır. Yazışma ile ilerleyen bir hikâyenin roman olarak yazılı bir eser ile görsel-işitsel bir eser olan film ile ifade edilme biçimlerinin farklılığının incelenmesi ise çalışmanın amacını oluşturmaktadır. *Love, Simon* filmi ve romanıyla ilgili güncel çalışmalar genellikle hikâyeyi cinsel yönelim, kimlik, temsil, okul teması, güç ilişkileri, queer ve popüler kültür ve hikayenin kahramanı olarak Simon'un kişiliği bağlamında ele almaktadır (Aguilera Martinez, 2019; Fedorov, 2018; Gading & Marsih, 2019; Gouck, 2018; Haley, 2018). Simon vs. the Homo Sapiens Agenda kitabının yazarı Becky Albertalli (2017), hikâyenin ana noktalarından biri olarak, ana karakter Simon'ın 16 yaşındaki bir eşcinsel olarak yalnızca kendisini tanımayan tek bir kişiye açıldığını belirtmektedir. Bu durum ise hem romanda hem de filmde bir mektup formuna dönüşmektedir. Hikâye anlatıcılığının tüm ilerlemesi ve ortaya çıkan karşılıklı yazışmalarda kimliklerin karşılıklı hesaplanamazlığı, temel noktayı oluşturmaktadır. Bu anlamda bu çalışmada hikâyenin uyarlama ve örtüşme anlatım özelliklerinin incelenerek ortaya çıkan

genç-yetişkin türü, uyarlaması, yazışması ve kimliği hakkında bir değerlendirme yapılması yararlı görülmektedir. İncelenen hikâyedeki yazışmanın gelenekselden dijitale nasıl dönüştüğü ve bu dönüşümün özellikle filmin anlatısı ve karakterler için ne ifade ettiği de dikkate alınmıştır. Bu nedenle öncelikle sinema ile uyarlama ilişkisi ve mektuplaşma/yazışma biçiminin görsel özelliklerine ilişkin bir alan yazını oluşturulmuştur.

Sinema tarihsel olarak genellikle klasik ve modern sinema dönemi olarak iki sürece ayrılmaktadır. Görsel olmayan ve sözel özelliklerin arttığı modern sinemada anlatı odaklı yapının baskınlığı görülmektedir. Bu durum, sinemaya ilişkin göstergebilim unsurlarına dikkat edilerek filmlere bir dil gibi yaklaşmayı da içermektedir. Fakat bu durum filmi bir roman olarak düşünmekten daha çok filmdeki görsel-işitsel tüm unsurları bütün bir büyük anlatıcı olarak düşünmeyi gerektirmektedir. Uyarlama filmlerde ise anlatının çoğaldığı görülmektedir. Örneğin *Love, Simon* filmi özelinde, hem filmin uyarlandığı roman, hem romanın senaryoya dönüştürülmüş biçimi hem de uyarlama sonucunda oluşan filmi kendisi farklı anlatılara sahiptir. Bu çoklu anlatıyı anlamlandırmak ve özellikle uyarlama filmi incelemek için uyarlama teorisi önemli bir kaynak oluşturmaktadır.

Uyarlamaların başarılı olması tema, anlatı devinimi, sahne yapısı, kişileştirme, görselleştirme ve diyalog gibi birçok unsurla ilişkilidir. Uyarlamalara ilişkin yeniden yaratımın nasıl gerçekleştiği, hikâyedeki karakterlerin nasıl etkilendiği, uyarlanan metinle olan tema ve fikir ilişkisi, uyarlanan ile uyarlama arasındaki kültürel ve tarihsel yaklaşımlar ve eğer varsa iletişim biçimleri, uyarlamanın incelenmesinde sorulması gereken sorular olarak öne çıkmaktadır. Bu nedenle uyarlanmış bir filmin analizinde, incelenen öğe bağlamında sadece dilsel değil disiplinler arası bir bakış açısıyla çeşitli kültürel ve yapısal alanlara ilişkin çıkarımlarda bulunulabilir. Bu bağlamda, bu durumu dikkate alan adaptasyon teorisi ile ilgili çeşitli sınıflandırmalar bulunmaktadır. Wagner (1975) üç uyarlama kategorisi önermektedir: aktarma, yorum ve analoji. Aktarmada edebi metin filme mümkün olan en doğru şekilde aktarılır; yorumda ise, değişiklik yapılarak uyarlanan metnin yorumlanmasını gerektirir ve analoji, orijinal metnin bir başlangıç noktası olarak ele almaktadır (Cartmell, 1999, s. 24). Uyarlanan filmin bu özellikleri, sinema ve mektuplaşma biçimi arasındaki ilişkiden uzak değildir. Naficy'nin de belirttiği gibi, bir film formu ile bir mektup formu arasında karşılıklı bir ilişki vardır; yani her ikisi de mimetik ve diegetiktir (Nacify, 2001, s. 102).

Mektuplaşma biçiminde, karakterlerini içeren epistolar anlatımda yazar, belirli karakterler oluşturarak ve olayları belirli bir ton ve üslupla yazdırarak okuyucuyu bir sona hazırlamaktadır. Ancak karakterlerin kendileri, olayların hissiyatı önceden belirlenecek şekilde hikâyenin sırlarını biliyormuş gibi yazmamaktadırlar (MacArthur, 1990, s. 9). Mektup romanlarında bir bütünlük olsa da yazışmaların kendi içinde sürekliliği vardır ve bu devamlılık ve gelişim anlatıcıyı tanımak için elzem hale gelmektedir (Dücker, 2017, s. 161). E-postaların basılı versiyonlarından oluşan edebi tür, geleneksel mektup romanlarını andırmaktadır. Ancak e-posta ile oluşturulan bu yeni mektup formu, daha resmi olmayan bir cümle yapısı, kısaltmalar ve standart kuralların dışında yazım içermektedir (Rose, 2004, s. 238). E-posta yazışmaları, her karakterin sesinin bir anlatıcı aracılığıyla duyulmasını sağlar ve okuyucular, karakterin yeterliliğini yorumlama ve yansıtma yoluyla belirleme durumunda kalmaktadır (Rose, 2004, s. 240). Harfler, özel bir dünyanın anlık görüntüsünü aktarırken, yazarın hayatını ve düşüncelerini yansıtırken, insan davranışlarını, sosyal koşulları ve kültürel ilişkileri ortaya koyarken kişinin ruhunu harekete geçiren duyguları içermektedir (Maupin, 2016, s. 63-64). Çevrimiçi ortam, kimliği farklı bir duruma getirerek, bireyin kendisi gibi görünmeden bir kimlik oluşturmasına olanak tanımakta ve bunu farklı mecralarla yapmanın yollarını çeşitlendirerek, birden çok kişiliğe sahip farklı yazılı anlatılar oluşturmasını sağlamaktadır (Poletti & Rak, 2014, s. 5-9). Çevrimiçi yaşam denemeleri bazen öz-düşünümsel olabilir, bu da kimlik oluşturma süreci ve anlatının rolü hakkında yeni bakış açıları sağlayabilir çünkü benlik temsili başkalarıyla ilgilidir ve birinin basılı yazısı veya web gönderisi asla sadece kendileriyle ilgili değildir (Pulda, 2015, s. 181-183).

Geçmiş yıllarda genç-yetişkin kurgularında sıkça kullanılan mektup biçimi, öncelikle aşk hikâyelerini anlatmak için kullanıldığında genellikle birbirinden ayrı insanlar arasında bir iletişim biçimi işlevi görmektedir. Dolayısıyla karşılıklı olarak bastırılmış duyguların değerlendirilmesine olanak tanır ve okuyucuyu dedektif rolüne sokmaktadır (Dücker, 2017, s. 162-164). Wasserman, epistolar biçimini kullanan romanlarında, okurları dâhil ederken bazı karakterlerin ergenlik döneminde hayatlarının kontrolünü ele geçirmeye çalıştıklarını, bu karakterlerin kendilerine ait bir bakış açısına sahip olduklarını, kendileri ve diğerleri arasında bir denge kurmaya çalıştıklarını gözlemlemiştir. Yazışma yoluyla karakterler yazışmaları dürüst bir öz-yansıtma biçimi olarak kullanmaktadır (Wasserman, 2003, s. 51). Bu nedenle *Love,Simon* filmi, kendini ve hatta toplumu bu noktada yansıtma bağlamında, genç-yetişkin

roman uyarlaması bağlamında, karakterlerinin kimliği ve içerdiği yazışmaların biçimi bağlamında önemli bir noktada durmaktadır.

Love, Simon'ın hikâyesi, gizlice eşcinsel olan lise öğrencisi Simon ile lisesinden başka bir anonim eşcinsel öğrencinin e-posta yoluyla yazışmaları etrafında dönmektedir. Simon, yazıştığı kişinin gerçek kimliğini bulmaya çalışırken; sırrını, ailesi ve arkadaşlarıyla paylaşma fikriyle çatışma yaşamaktadır. Dijital yazışmalar ve Simon'ın anlatıcı sesi, hikâye anlatımının omurgasını oluşturmaktadır. Özellikle yazılı iletişim biçimine ve anlatıcı Simon'ın iç sesine odaklanan kitap ve film arasında bir karşılaştırma, özellikle anlatı çizgisi göz önüne alındığında, metinsel ve görsel biçimler arasındaki farklılıkları ortaya koymaktadır. Okur ve izleyici, Simon'ın yazışmalarının, yaşamı ve cinsel yönelimi hakkındaki düşüncelerinin gizli tanıkları olduğundan, Simon'ın kimliğiyle özdeşleşmekte ve onunla duygudaşlık kurmaktadır.

Bir romandan mektup biçiminde uyarlanan *Love, Simon*, sesin seyirci ile film arasındaki yolculuğunu, anlatıcının hem seyirciyle ilişkisini hem de filmdeki yazışmalarını başarıyla sergilemektedir. Ayrıca çok boyutlu bir anlatıma sahip olan film, uyarlama, gençlik, kimlik, yazışma ve ortaya çıkış açısından roman ve ekran arasındaki metinler arasılığı (Leitch, 2012) taşımaktadır. Hikâyenin yeniden anlatımı, mektup biçimindeki biçimine sadık kalarak doğruluk ve aslına uygunluk sağlar ve kültürel eleştirisini güçlendirmektedir. Özellikle karakterlerin yazışma biçimleri, biyografileri ve yaşadıkları göz önünde bulundurulduğunda film, kimi zaman aktarım halinde durur, kimi zaman da sinemanın özellikleriyle romana kendi yorumunu katmaktadır. Film, yazılı bir romandan yazıyla ilerleyen bir hikâyeyi uyarlarken; bu edebi yönü, gerektiğinde gerçekleştirilen filmin farklı bölümlerindeki hareket için kullanmakta ve çağdaş yazışma/mektuplaşma biçimlerinin kritik referans noktalarından faydalanmaktadır.

Çevrimiçi yazışmaların olmazsa olmazı olan anonimlik, filme uyarlanarak kameranın dışında bırakılmıştır. Film, yazışan karakterlerinin sesini kullanarak e-posta yazışmalarının duyulmasını sağlamaktadır. Özellikle iki genç eşcinsel erkek karakterin yaşadığı durumun mektup şeklinde bir kimlik paylaşımı biçimine dönüştüğü vurgulanmaktadır. Romanda Simon'ın çevresi her okuyucu için farklı algılanırken, filmin görsel anlatımı Simon'ın çevresini daha özgür bir şekilde kurgulamaktadır Ayrıca, kamerayı başkalarına doğrultmak, bunun sadece ana karakterlerin kendisiyle ilgili olmadığını göstermektedir. Filmin anlatısı ve belki de başlangıçta hedeflenen genç yetişkin izleyici bağlamında,

görseller ve ses, popüler kültürden tamamen izole edilmemiş olsa da, eşcinsel karakterlerin kimliğine dikkat çekmektedir.

Okur ve izleyici, kitap ve film gibi farklı türlerdeki iki genç eşcinsel erkeğin hikâyesini, aralarındaki olağanüstü yazışmalar aracılığıyla deneyimlemektedir. Simon'ın, Blue ile kimlikleri üzerinden yazışma deneyimi, karakterleri görselleştirerek daha kalıcı hale getirmektedir. Simon, yazıştığı kişiyle tanışarak yazışmanın başka bir aşamasına geçer ve odasının duvarında mezuniyet için geri sayımı tamamlayarak zafere ulaşmaktadır.

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