

The Possibility of Fidelity in Adaptations: The Case of Director Michael Haneke

Film Uyarlamalarında Esere Sadakatin Olabilirliği ve Bir Yönetmen Michael Haneke

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Abstract

This study seeks an answer to the question of whether the content of the novel or the interpretation of the novel content by a director is followed in film adaptations, how clear the boundaries of film narrative and literary narrative are, the reflections of the narrative techniques specific to these media in the two media, how effective the narrative features are at the level of the audience and the reader, and to what extent the audience is provided with the interpretation space allocated at the end of the films. The methodology used is determined by creating a common research area in both fields with the help of the concepts of cinema and literature, as emphasized in the theories of intermediality. This article, consisting of ideas specific to the fields of the two media, explains how searching for the literary text in adaptation films is an appropriate approach with the example of Michael Haneke's adaptation of Franz Kafka's The Castle.

Keywords: Intermediality, Film Adaptations, Media Change

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Bu makale İntihal.net sistemi tarafından taranmıştır.

Gönderim Tarihi: 27 Nisan 2023

Kabul Tarihi: 3 Haziran 2023

Erişim Tarihi: 27 Haziran 2023

Sosyal ve Kültürel Araştırmalar Dergisi (SKAD)



Öz

Bu çalışmada edebiyattan sinemaya film uyarlamalarında eserin içeriğinin mi, yoksa bunun bir yönetmen tarafından yorumlanması mı izlenmektedir sorusuna bir cevap aranmakta, film anlatımı ile edebi anlatımın sınırları, bu medyalara özgü anlatım tekniklerinin iki medyadaki yansımaları, izleyici ve okur düzleminde anlatısal özelliklerin ne denli etkili olduğu ve izleyiciye film sonunda ayrılan yorumlama alanının ne derece sağlandığı araştırılmaktadır. Çalışmada kullanılan nitel yöntem, medyalararasılık kuramlarında vurgulandığı gibi sinema ve edebiyat biliminin kavramlarının yardımıyla iki alanda da ortak bir araştırma alanı oluşturularak belirlenmektedir. İki medyanın alanlarına özgü kavramlarıyla yapılmış olan bu makalede uyarlama filmlerde edebiyat metnini aramanın ne denli uygun bir yaklaşım olduğunu Michael Haneke'nin Franz Kafka'nın uyarlaması olan Şato örneğiyle açıklanmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Medyalararasılık, Film Uyarlamaları, Medya Değişimi

1. Introduction

From literature to cinema, from painting to music, various branches of art are tools, i.e., media, and the interaction and exchange between them goes back to ancient times. The study of intermediality, which can be traced back to the studies of comparatists in ancient times, experienced a renaissance in literary and cultural sciences in the 90s (cf. Fraas, Barczok, 2006:134 and Kayaoğlu, 2009:56).

Intermediality is defined by Rajewsky (2002:12) as "a literary text, a film or a painting that refers to or imitates a specific product of a foreign media or the semiotic system, specific subsystems or forms of a discourse of that foreign media.

Kayaoğlu summarizes the concept of intermediality as follows;

"Intermediality can be defined as an aesthetic method used by writers and artists to take advantage of the interaction between media. When techniques, subjects, forms of expression, discourses, etc., specific to a certain media are imitated or made the subject of another media, the techniques, forms, discourses, and contents of this foreign media are, in a sense, included in the subject or emulating media. Thus, situations that expand the boundaries of this emulating or emulating media and its meaning and characteristics can arise. Thus in the most general sense, intermediality refers to the phenomenon of at least two different expression or communication media which are conventionally accepted to be different, taking place in an artistic product recognizably and provably" (2009:9).

From the perspective of literary science, Paech notes that for many years it has been ignored that texts are not only read but also made into films and shown on television or that it is technically re-readable on video or CDs. Reflections on intertextuality and transmissions between text types and other media have kept literary science within the boundaries of intertextuality (1998:14).

However, there is now a "new paradigm" (cf. Poppe, 2007:126 and Kayaoğlu, 2009:90).

This new "paradigm," which takes its research element from intermedia relations, offers a wide range to researchers.

The historical development of the concept of intermediality has been described as the development of communicative media in the postmodern world and the constant interaction between different media. The idea of hybridity also explains this interaction. As a necessity of the modern world, intermediality makes the exchange of media observable through hypertext

novels or poetic texts used in a motion picture. From this point of view, Rajewsky (2002:199) makes it easier to make these distinctions by classifying three different forms: media combination, media transformation, and intermediality relations.

In the case of our study, media transformation is the transfer of content and subject matter from one media to another, with film adaptations being a case in point. This field, which Rajewsky defines as media transformation or media change, is defined as the transformation of the output text, which is obviously specific to one media, into another media, that is, into the semiotic system of that media where only that secondary media product is concretely present (2002:19).

In adapting a novel into a film, the film shows semantic parallels with the pre-text, the story, but the film does not have to shape itself based on the novel. As a result, what is visible is not a literary text but a film.

While the subject of Kafka's film adaptation which is the research object of the study, falls within the matter of intermediality as a media change, on the other hand, Kafka's inclusion of cinematographic elements in his works is an example of intermedia relations with a single reference example.

After the definition of intermediality, it is necessary to say that Franz Kafka made extensive use of cinematographic elements in his novels and stories, and many of the factors he used in his narrative were inspired by silent films, which were quite common and popular in the time (Alt, 2009:158).

In this way, it is a fact that the field of literature is not limited to books. Considering the text-centered transmission processes of media as meaning carriers, narrators, and transmitters, it can be understood that literary science and media science are two intertwined fields. Literature is a part of communication as a medium, and it is possible to talk about academic science in every area where the phenomenon of narration is present. For this reason, media science explains the communicative features of media tools with the concepts of literary science.

As a media, adaptations that have a position between literature and film have yet to be entirely handled within the framework of either cinema or literary science and have often not even been presented as a complete work of art. With the recent rise of intermediality, adaptations have begun to be evaluated more comprehensively under topics such as intermedia relations and media change. Our article attempts to create a research field by being aware of the connection of adaptations with literature from past to present, media change, and intermedia relations not only from literature to the cinema but also from cinema to literature.

The narrative potential of cinema is so strong that it has established its strongest connection not with painting or even theater but with the novel. Both films and books tell very detailed long stories, often from the perspective of a narrator who inserts a level of irony between the story and the audience. All that can be told in print in a novel can be more or less told or displayed in a movie (Monaco, 2013:47).

Another example is the use of an extradiegetic narrator in films which brings to mind the extradiegetic narrator style of narration, especially in literature, and adds a narrator through sound to cinema, which has the usual, customary mimetic narrator style (Genette, 1982:161). Many film theorists emphasize that the camera is the most fabulous narrator in films and that much can be told through the forms of imaging.

2. Method and Adaptation Formats

Film adaptations have been categorized in various ways by many people. However, the discussions on adaptations generally focus on fidelity and originality. This is because the adaptations' strict adherence to the novel or the creation of a new narrative inspired by the story have different effects on the audience. Some readers (as well as viewers) look for the description they have created while reading the novel and the narrative they visualize according to their own views in adaptations directly on the big screen. The position of transformations is often questioned at this point. Subsequently, fidelity to the work is discussed. Even though the relationship between literature and film is tried to be described, the comparison between the work and the adaptation continues. The fact that the story that the reader visualizes in their mind is not equivalent to another reader can be explained more clearly within the framework of subjectivity evaluations.

Sandra Poppe calls the processes of transmission as transformation and categorizes these processes under five different categories. These are 1. subject-oriented, 2. action-oriented, 3. analogical, 4. interpreting, and finally, 5.) Free transfers (2007:92).

This classification will be sufficient for us regarding which aspect of this film is evaluated in this study.

3. Analysis of Adaptation

Franz Kafka is one of the authors that literary researchers within the borders of German literature and worldwide have frequently brought to the agenda and intensively studied. In his works, he has been one of the most remarkable writers of the 20th century who has been in

direct and indirect relationships with other great writers of world literature and who has made a sound in conveying the pains of the individual who constitutes modern societies and the crises brought by modernity as defined by Giddens (1990:1).

The Castle (1926), one of Franz Kafka's most essential and unfinished novels, was adapted into the film *Das Schloß* (1997) directed by Michael Haneke. However, the novel, like many other Kafka novels, bears significant traces of his life, which sometimes causes it to be characterized as an autobiographical novel. For example, Binder (1990:269) emphasizes that the story depicts Kafka's relationship with Milena and the problems in this relationship.

The novel sees the struggle of the protagonist K. as an existential process in itself. K. is a symbol in this process, never giving up his struggle for professional and social recognition (Walser, 1961:107).

As Deleuze and Guatarri comment (2008:75), the dilemma of power being both near and inaccessible simultaneously leads to the puzzle that K. can never enter the Castle. This attitude can be characterized as a typical Kafka dilemma since neither Josef K. nor the reader will know what K.'s crime is, even though there is a trial in *The Trial*.

The novel begins with a cadastral surveyor named K. arriving in a village on the slope of a castle on a cold winter evening. Seeking accommodation here, K. is questioned by the inhabitants of the town and the castle officials about who he is and whether he can stay in the village. As can be seen, the novel depicts the image of the foreigner and the situation of an excluded protagonist at the very beginning. A bureaucratic approach and a dominant castle image are directly felt in the very first chapter. Even sleeping, a very human need, is subject to the permission of the Castle. Anything done without permission is objectionable, especially for foreigners; a complicated process has begun. In *The Village and the Castle*, the feelings of a stranger are directly conveyed to the reader through the protagonist himself.

The fact that Kafka's novels are constructed like a nightmare with the logic of a dream makes these novels one of the essential elements that make them cinematographic. According to Gülşen, Kafkaesque is the name of an environment where cinematography can be shown most robustly. The fact that Kafka's novels and stories are in such a relationship with cinematography has paved the way for Kafka adaptations in cinema and Kafkaesque films, even if they are not Kafka adaptations (Gülşen, 2011:240). For example, the narrative technique of the visibility-centered film media can turn into a visual form in Kafka's narrative, like a camera.

Michael Haneke was born in Munich in 1947. Recognized as one of the greatest contemporary directors of European cinema, his mother was actress Beatrix von Degenschild, and his father was the director and actor Fritz Haneke from Düsseldorf. Haneke studied theater, psychology, and philosophy in Vienna and worked as a writer, film, and literary critic, as well as an editor and dramaturg of television plays in Baden-Baden between 1967 and 1971.

The director has a unique understanding of cinema, referred to as 'Haneke Cinema' by film circles. He is a director who prefers to constantly disturb the audience with short narratives instead of making them emotional in his films and directs the audience to think actively. "The impossibility of characters expressing their emotions, the emphasis on objects in everyday life, the fascination of still or moving images, the virtues of what is out of frame, of the invisible, a voice with unparalleled rigor, a style that does not exclude emotion but includes it in a subtle and indirect way" (Cieutat and Rouyer, 2014:9) are among the characteristics that make Haneke different from other directors.

The disturbing elements of violence in his films and the restriction on the use of music aim to make the audience focus entirely on the story and its tension. In these ways, Haneke, who also distances himself from mainstream cinema, aims to make the audience experience the pressure directly by directly disturbing them instead of manipulating them.

Haneke, who makes a sharp distinction between motion pictures and television films, comments that the adaptations he makes for television are intended as a salute to the author of the work he adapts, and he approaches them in a way that does not damage the texture of the work. In an interview for a book on his cinema, Haneke evaluates his adaptations as follows;

In all my television adaptations of literary works, I have tried to preserve the original text as much as possible. There is a big difference between adapting a book for television and adapting it for cinema. For me, cinema is an art form, and the work of literature must submit to it. In television, on the contrary, it is the book that is a work of art; the aim is to make the television audience want to read that book. Therefore, it is necessary to do justice to the beauties of language (Cieutat and Rouyer, 2014:70).

Haneke's approach to television adaptations is quite clear; in his transformations, the original text should be conveyed visually, avoiding subjective interpretations and keeping the texture intact as much as possible. This adaptation of the novel *The Castle* was also shot in the form of a television movie. In this case, if the director is trying to preserve the novel's qualities as the

original work of art in the adaptation film, the extent to which this is realized is an element that needs to be examined in this study.

Das Schloß was filmed in 1997 in Styria / Austria. The film is in German, and its length is 123 minutes. Haneke wrote the screenplay; the film was shot in color on a 35 mm camera format and is a television film.

Adapting Kafka is the pinnacle of adaptations for Haneke. Haneke said that the fragmentary and unfinished nature of the novel was one of the elements that drew him into this work and that Kafka would not have finished this novel even if he had lived because such stories do not allow the author to finish them (Cieutat and Rouyer, 2014:159).

The novel begins on a winter evening, with the protagonist K. walking towards the castle's village, looking for a place to sleep. For this purpose, the people at the bridge where he goes examine him with questioning looks and finally inquire about his permission to sleep there. Faced with an act of marginalization at the very beginning, K. searches for ways to be accepted by the Castle and its staff and tries to reach the Castle and its administrators. Surveyor K. is called to the village to work. However, the people of the village have yet to learn about this. Everything in the town where the story takes place (like in *The Trial*, where everyone belongs to the court and exists with the court) is connected to the Castle. Therefore, K. accepts this reality and seeks ways to make a living for himself, "even though the cadastral surveyor was not needed" (Kafka 1982:95). Haneke depicts this scene just like the beginning of Kafka's novel.

In Canetti's interpretation, the visible authority of the Castle is present in the film as a location, but it is doubtful that it is seen afterward; the relationship of the desperate people at the foot of the castle hill with the officials is constituted by the waiting for the supreme authority. The question of the reason for the existence of this leading authority is never asked. But what emanates from the high office and spreads among ordinary people is humiliation by the administration. The only example of defiance of authority is Amalia's refusal to submit to the will of one of the officials, resulting in the exclusion of the whole family from the village community (Canetti, 2000:100).

In an interview with Haneke, he emphasizes that he attaches importance to the sense of temporality of the novel and the narrative time and that for this reason, he thought a lot about whether to use automobiles in the film and avoided such scenes unless he had to (Cieutat and Rouyer, 2014:166). Haneke's image of the village as a painting without using real images is any

village. The narrative begins with this picture and the sentences in the novel "es war spät Abend als K. ankam..." (Kafka, 1982: 7) spoken aloud by the narrator, the external voice.

Haneke narrates the opening sentences in the book by directly using the external voice, and this narration is accompanied by visualization. The image immediately following the quoted shot of the painting is focused directly on K., and the scene progresses as if tracking K.'s movements. In this case, there is a narrative centered on K., a camera focused on K. moves just as Kafka narrates in the novel.

This situation which is also mentioned in the narrative features of the novel, is also appropriate for Haneke, who signals the transition to a new chapter by using dark plans at the end of the events and between sequences. In an interview, Haneke stated that he prefers this both as a means of narrative construction and because it gives the viewer a sense of respite (Cieutat and Rouyer, 2014:160). Haneke's attitude is also intended to conform to Kafka's narrative style. The fact that these fragments, which Kafka constructed while writing the novel, can be used in the same way in the film media can be exemplified in terms of the transitivity of intermedia narrative techniques and the director's appropriate behavior in this situation. This preference can also be read as another indication that Haneke's adaptation has a stronger connection with the novel.

The use of motifs and how they are displayed in the narrative features are also important.

Kafka frequently uses the motif of a slow-moving bureaucracy in his works and characterizes it as a significant gap between the individuals and the powers of modern society. The novel *The Castle* is one of the works that deal with this motif quite intensely. This motif is clearly identified in the movie adaptation.

Haneke is also known to have a unique approach to the character of K., with a blurring of the depth of field and a sense of suffocation, the camera constantly hovering over and focusing on K. When there are other figures moving at the edge of the frame, it is not easy to distinguish them. "The spectator is always left alone with K. because he represents the spectator, but this logic is not carried through to the end of the film but rather takes place as a dominant point of view" (Cieutat and Rouyer, 2014:165). While K. occupies the central position, other figures are involved in his story. In this case, K.'s design determines the directors' general attitudes regarding personal design.

Haneke's depictions of the village are limited to a full-length frame in other parts of the film, just as in the quote. Haneke, who does not try to give general information about the village by

using a holistic long shot, avoids precise information by describing a man walking on any street of any town for the audience, reminiscent of Kafka's attitude.

Although the adaptation is based on the text, the director's individual preference and interpretation are evident in depicting the locations. It is possible to analyze the distance between the director and the novel through the areas; Haneke tries to reflect the areas of this novel as they are in the novel.

"You cannot adapt Kafka by adding music! Orson Welles put Albinoni's Adagio over his adaptation of *The Trial*! It's a great movie that I love, but it has nothing to do with Kafka" (Cieutat and Rouyer, 2014:129). Haneke tries to influence the audience with the stories he prepares around violence and the isolated individuals of modernity without using the element of music. Haneke, who strongly opposes the manipulation of the audience with music, increases the dose of reality with this method.

In *The Castle*, the narrator describes the situation and gives the word to the protagonist, so he sets the rhythm and directs the dialogue. It is challenging to do this in a movie. We didn't record the external sound before the shooting, but I read the text and recorded it myself so that I could time when the actors should start speaking. It was unpleasant for them, but there was no better way to be as faithful to Kafka as possible (Cieutat and Rouyer, 2014:160).

With these words, Haneke actually states the purpose of the adaptation. The question here is to what extent Haneke could remain faithful to Kafka. Apart from this, the director's use of dark plans between sequences is a direct formal adaptation of the novel.

In the film, just like in the novel, the story is divided into fragments, and dark shots are used between each fragment to provide the audience with empty spaces and to preserve the narrative form of the novel (cf. Cieutat and Rouyer, 2014:160). Haneke also frequently uses plan sequences in his film and conveys many details through the use of wide frames. These techniques allow the audience to participate in the world of the film much more than before. This attitude is seen as "a dialectical step forward in the history of the language of cinema ."As a result, it "presupposes both a much more active mental attitude on the part of the viewer and a much more positive contribution to the ongoing action"(Monaco, 2013:386), i.e., in a way the viewer begins to be mobilized in the same way as the reader is mobilized in literature. The meaning of the image emerges from the viewer's desire and attention.

4. Result

As a result of Haneke's efforts, the resulting adaptation causes the film to be evaluated in Poppe's (2007:92) category of analogous transformation. In such adaptations, as Haneke did, an effort is made to transfer both the story and plot and the special narrative elements of the written text to the cinema.

What attracted me to Kafka was his way of depicting that unreal reality. I wanted to find its cinematic counterpart, and I could never make such an attempt in cinema (as a motion picture) because, as I said before, the work is the film (Cieutat and Rouyer, 2014:165).

The director's approach to this adaptation is also seen in his answer to why he made the adaptation he quoted in this interview with Haneke. His film, as is well known, is a television movie, so the last emphasis in his words shows that if the novel were to be adapted as a feature film, he would approach it more liberally.

It is impossible to make a definitive judgment about Haneke's film, as each reader and viewer will have different criteria for evaluating the novel and the film. Still, in this study, it is practically observed that the director appropriates the characteristics of the medium of origin. It is possible to see in Haneke's cinema that the director can consciously remain faithful to the work, no matter how challenging the degree of intimacy.

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Makale Bilgi Formu

Yazar(lar)ın Katkıları: Makale tek yazarlıdır.

Çıkar Çatışması Bildirimi: Yazar tarafından potansiyel çıkar çatışması bildirilmemiştir.

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