The Dialogics between Mythos and Logos in
Metin Erksan's *Sevmek Zamanı*

Henrieta Krupa*

Abstract

Metin Erksan's Sevmek Zamanı (Time to Love, 1965) stands out for its evocative exploration of love, obsession, identity, and the dichotomy between reality and illusion. The film's poetic black-and-white imagery, minimal dialogue, and emphasis on visual composition invite viewers into a profound emotional and cognitive engagement. This article discusses previous interpretations of the film that applied various frameworks (mythical, philosophical, and psychoanalytical) that led to contradictory meanings and conclusions. By exploring Sevmek Zamanı through the lenses of Sufi mysticism, Platonic philosophy, and Lacanian psychoanalysis—particularly enriching Lacanian interpretation by utilising the concept of objet petit a—the article demonstrates the film's dual operation within mythos and logos, arguing that Erksan's film functions as a complex, multi-layered narrative that unfolds meaning within the non-propositional and non-conclusive Socratic dialogics. This interplay between mythos and logos generates a liminal space where contradictory meanings and ways of experiencing the world coexist and complement one another, challenging viewers to confront their own perceptions and understanding of reality. By eliciting a dialogue between emotional unconsciousness and cognitive consciousness, Sevmek Zamanı disrupts schematic thinking. The article enriches scholarly discourse by integrating previously underexplored aspects of Lacanian theory and illuminates the ways Erksan's film operates within both mythos and logos dialogically, rendering contradictory meaning complementary. Thereby, the study offers a nuanced view on the film's complexity within its content and narrative form.

Keywords: *Sevmek Zamanı, Metin Erksan, mythos, logos, Socratic dialogics, objet petit a*

*Dr., Girne American University, Faculty of Human Sciences, KKTC.
E-mail: elizabethhenrietakrupa@gmail.com
ORCID : 0000-0003-3066-8813

-Araştırma Makalesi-

Metin Erksan'ın *Sevmek Zamanı*'nda Mitos ve Logos Diyalektikleri

Henrieta Krupa*

Özet

Metin Erksan'ın Sevmek Zamanı (1965), aşk, takıntı, kimlik ve gerçeklik ile illüzyon arasındaki ikilik üzerine düşündürücü bir keşif olarak öne çıkar. Filmin şiirsel siyah-beyaz görüntüleri, minimal diyalogları ve görsel kompozisyona verdiği önem, izleyicileri derin bir duygusal ve bilişsel etkileşime davet eder. Bu makale, filme dair önceki yorumları ele alarak çeşitli çerçevelerde (mitolojik, felsefi ve psikanalitik) yapılan yorumların nasıl çelişkili anlamlar ve sonuçlara yol açtığını tartışır. Sevmek Zamanı'nıSufi mistisizmi, Platonik felsefe ve Lacancı psikanaliz perspektiflerinden inceleyerek—özellikle Lacancı yorumu objetpetit a kavramını kullanarak zenginleştirerek—makale, filmin mitos ve logos içinde çift yönlü bir işleyişe sahip olduğunu gösterir. Erksan'ın filminin, anlamın önermesiz ve sonuçsuz bir Sokratic diyalektiğinde ortaya çıktığı çok katmanlı, karmaşık bir anlatı olarak işlediğini savunur. Mitos ve logos arasındaki bu etkileşim, çelişkili anlamların ve dünyayı deneyimleme biçimlerinin bir arada bulunduğu ve birbirini tamamladığı bir eşik alanı yaratır, izleyicileri kendi algı ve gerçeklik anlayışlarını sorgulamaya davet eder. Duygusal bilinçdışı ile bilişsel bilinç arasında bir diyalog başlatarak, Sevmek Zamanı şematik düşünceyi bozar. Makale, Lacancı teorinin daha önce yeterince araştırılmamış yönlerini entegre ederek akademik tartışmaya katkıda bulunur ve Erksan'ın filminin mitos ve logos içinde diyalektik olarak nasıl işlediğini aydınlatarak, çelişkili anlamları tamamlayıcı hale getirir. Böylece, çalışmanın filmin içeriği ve anlatı formu açısından karmaşıklığına dair nüanslı bir bakış sunduğu iddia edilmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: *Sevmek Zamanı, Metin Erksan, mitos, logos, Sokratic diyalektik, objet petit a*

*Dr., Girne Amerikan Üniversitesi, Beşeri Bilimler Fakültesi, KKTC
E-mail: elizabethhenrietakrupa@gmail.com
ORCID : 0000-0003-3066-8813

Introduction

Erksan's *Sevmek Zamau*, translated as *Time to Love* (1965), holds a unique place in Turkish cinema for its exploration of profound themes and innovative approach to storytelling. Director Metin Erksan is a pioneering figure in Turkish cinema, recognised for his introspective films that often challenge conventional themes and storytelling techniques. His first film, *Karanlık Dünyası* (*The Dark World*), depicting a true story of blind folk-poet Aşık Veysel, was banned in Türkiye after its release in 1952 for its poor depiction of agricultural technology. In 1960, Eksan directed *Gecelerin* Ötesi (*Beyond the Nights*), which was also banned for its criticism of the developing capitalism of the time. His cinema adaptation of Farik Baykurt's novel, *Yılanların* Öcü (*Wrath of Snakes*) was also banned after its release in 1962 for its critical portrayal of the harsh rural life. In 1963, Erksan directed *Susuz Yaz* (*Dry Summer*) and when the film was likewise banned, it was sent to the Berlin International Film Festival where it won an award. *Ölmeyen Aşk* (*Never-ending Love*) is Erksan's cinema adaptation of Emily Bronte's *Wuthering Heights*, released in 1966 and in 1968, Erksan directed *Kuyu* (*The Well*) depicting another traumatic true event—a story of a peasant young woman who kills her kidnapper. In the film Şeytan (*The Devil*), directed in 1974, Erksan remakes William Friedkin's *The Exorcist*, and in 1976, he makes a cinema adaptation of Shakespeare's *Hamlet* in İntikam *Meleği-Kadın Hamlet* (*She-Hamlet: The Angel of Revenge*). During his carrier as a director, Erksan made several documentaries and television adaptations of Turkish short stories, and in 1977, he started teaching at Mimar Sinan University in Istanbul.

Erksan's *Sevmek Zamanı* stands out as his masterpiece, with its minimalist dialogue, black-and-white cinematography, and deliberate pacing, which collectively create a contemplative and meditative atmosphere. The film unfolds in its unique poetic visual and narrative style, delving into complex themes related to the human psyche. The film's aesthetic choices such as the use of steady, prolonged shots reminiscent of photographic stills contribute to its timeless quality, inviting viewers to engage deeply on both emotional and intellectual levels. The film's visual style, characterised by its use of reflective surfaces and subdued tones, reinforces this exploration by creating an atmosphere that blurs the boundaries between reality and illusion, and Erksan's ability to evoke profound philosophical themes through cinematic language underscores his mastery as a director. By employing minimal dialogue and emphasising visual composition, *Sevmek Zamanı* invites viewers into a world where emotions and perceptions intertwine, challenging them to confront their own understandings of love, identity, and reality.

Sevmek Zamanı is a thought-provoking exploration of love and human condition, addressing issues of identity and subjectivity, and due to its thematic complexity and stylistic execution, drawing on concepts from mythical, cultural, philosophical and psychoanalytical theories that invite a variety of approaches, critics often arrive at contradictory interpretations. The narrative revolving around a young male protagonist who becomes enamoured with a photograph of a gazing young woman that serves as a mirror-gate for the protagonist's inner journey, the film's central motif—the enchantment by an image—emerges as a meta-narrative that likewise mesmerises the audience by unfolding through a series of images with each shot composed like a slow-moving photograph accompanied by musical input. The scarcity of dialogues foregrounds the non-linguistic system of signifying through which the film communicates with its audience, and the alignment of the film's central motif with its form transforms the film into a mirror-gate for the viewer, taking them of their journey that calls for audience-centred engagement to arrive at meaning. *Sevmek Zamanı* emerges as a cinematic poetry, tapping into the audience's consciousness and the unconscious alike, and by eliciting meaning through its unique signifying system, the film operates on both levels of mythos and logos, and simultaneously within neither exclusively, leading to a variety of meanings and interpretations.

Thus, Erksan's film emerges as a nuanced multi-layered narrative of Socratic dialogics,

unfolding within non-propositional and non-conclusive relation between mythos and logos. This dialogical duality taps into the collective unconscious and the mythical consciousness concerned with the *hows*, and simultaneously addresses the critical consciousness concerned with the *whys*, engaging the viewer on both emotional and cognitive levels. In other words, the film performs by conveying meaning within the Socratic dialogics, eliciting non-propositional and non-conclusive states between contradictory ways of experiencing the world. As the film unfolds within the dialogic interplay between mythos and logos, it open sa liminal subject position for the viewer that allows contradictory interpretations that indeed complement one another, challenging the audience to confront schematic thinking and embark on a journey of self-discovery.

Methodology

Offering a plot summary, the article explores the variety of the scholarly reflections on *Sevmek Zamanı*, some of which approach the film's mythical dimension, others through a philosophical or psychoanalytical framework, rendering scholars to arrive at often contradictory conclusions; some viewing the hero's journey as enlightening, others as a manifestation of a troubled psyche leading to the protagonist's downfall. The study further synthesises the mythical, philosophical, and psychoanalytical dimension on which the film unfolds by first establishing the concepts of mythos and logos, and then examining the ways it addresses mythos, drawing from Eastern Sufi philosophy and Turkish folk tradition, the transitional state from mythos to logos, exploring the film within the framework of Plato's theory of Forms in his Cave Allegory, and finally logos, delving into a psychoanalytical discussion and utilising Lacan's theories on subjectivity and identity formation, and approaching the central motif of the film(falling in love with an image) through the lens of Lacan's concept of *objet petit a*. By reflecting on the variety of perspectives that the film inherently calls for, evident from the critics' diverse explorations of the film, this article aims to reflect on the multiple layers of operations embedded in Erksan's masterpiece, impacting the viewer's perception by taking them on a journey to self-discovery, and to suggest that because the film operates within both mythos and logos, it renders the contradictory aspects complementary. In other words, the study proposes that *Sevmek Zamanı* rhizomatically unfolds by operation of the Socratic dialogics, juxtaposing all perspectives simultaneously within a non-propositional and non-conclusive relationship.

Plot Summary

Sevmek Zamanı is a hauntingly beautiful film that delves into themes of love and obsession, juxtaposing reality and illusions. The story revolves around Halil (Müşfik Kenter), an introspective house painter who becomes infatuated with a photograph he encounters while working in an empty mansion. This photograph, depicting a young woman named Meral (Sema Özcan), captivates Halil who spends hours staring at it, lost in his thoughts and feelings. However, Halil's infatuation with Meral's image signifies more than a romantic longing—it serves as a metaphor for the human desire, anxieties, and complexities of the human psyche to navigate the world around.

Halil's life takes a turn when Meral unexpectedly appears in the mansion. Coming from a wealthy background, Meral becomes intrigued by Halil's intense devotion and gradually becomes drawn to his sincerity and emotional depth. The film explores the dynamics of their relationship as Halil remains steadfast in his love for the image rather than the living woman. His initial refusal to engage with Meral creates a poignant tension between them and despite her efforts to connect with Halil and bring him into her reality, he remains attached to her image that keeps taking him on his inner journey.

As the film progresses, so does their relationship and Meral, determined to bridge the gap between her real self and Halil's perception of her, eventually succeeds to connect with

Halil. Complicating their relationship is Meral's boyfriend Başar (Süleyman Saim Tekcan), who representing the materialistic aspects of life, becomes jealous and hostile towards Halil. Despite Başar's attempts to intimidate Halil, Halil remains unwavering in his devotion. Meral's father (Adnan Uygur), a wealthy authoritative figure, also plays a role in the development of their relationship. Despite what seems as a friendly conversation between him and Halil about their future with Meral, Meral's father implies that Halil is an unsuitable match due to his lower social status. Consequently, an additional conflict arises from societal expectations, preventing further development of Meral and Halil's relationship. The film reaches its climax when Meral, abandoned by Halil and having agreed to marry Başar, decides to escape her reality to join Halil and they meet secretly, seeking refuge in Halil's natural world of pure emotion and devotion. The film ends with Barış shooting the embracing lovers to death, and the tragic fate of Meral and Halil's love, symbolising the impossibility of reconciling idealised love with the harsh realities of life, leaves the audience mesmerised.

Sevmek Zamanı is a poignant and thought-provoking film that transcends its romantic narrative and invites the audience into a philosophical meditation on the nature of love, the complexity of human psyche, and the relationship between appearances and reality. It remains a significant work in Turkish cinema, celebrated for its artistic vision and emotional resonance. The film is renowned for its minimalist dialogue and poetic visual style that creates a timeless and dreamlike atmosphere, mirroring the emotional landscape of the characters. The recurring motifs of water and reflective surfaces by steady, prolonged shots contribute to the film's contemplative and melancholic tone and the film's slow pacing and careful composition invite viewers to reflect on the nature of desire, illusion, and reality. As Erksan masterfully uses the cinematic medium to explore themes of love, identity, and human condition, the tragic ending, underscoring the impossibility of reconciling the ideal with reality, leaves a lasting impact on the audience.

Conflicting Perspectives on *SevmekZamanı*

Several scholars have examined the film's content and aesthetics that contribute to its timeless reflective quality, providing valuable insights into how Erksan's directorial choices artistically elevate the film. In "Preferencing Image to Reality: The Movie *Time to Love* as an Example of Schizoid Dilema" (2022), F. Zehra Ercan and Havvanur Toraman argue that Halil's preference for an image over reality exemplifies a schizoid dilemma, serving as a psychic defence mechanism by which individuals withdraw into a fantasy world to avoid the complexities of real human relationships. Halil's fixation on the photograph is seen as a manifestation of psychological dysfunction and the authors explore how Halil's behaviour— his detachment from reality, preference for solitary activities, and his rich inner fantasy life—reflects characteristics of schizoid personality disorder. They suggest that Halil's retreat into the world of images allows him to maintain a sense of control and safety, avoiding the unpredictability and vulnerability associated with real interpersonal connections. The article also delves into the broader implications of this psychological reading, suggesting that Halil's behaviour can be seen as a critique of modern society's increasing disconnection from reality in favour of fantasies. This analysis positions *Sevmek Zamanı* as a poignant exploration of the human psyche and its coping mechanisms in the face of existential dilemmas. Overall, Ercan and Toraman's study provides a psychological interpretation of *Sevmek Zamanı*, offering insights into human psyche, and interpret the film's central theme as an allegory for schizoid dilemma.

In "The Psychoanalitic Study of Love within the Context of Symbolic: *Sevmek Zamanı*" (2011), Ahmet İmançer and A. Ekber Sarıgül examine Erksan's film through the lens of Lacanian psychoanalytic theory, focusing on the concepts of Symbolic and the Father's Law versus the Mirror Stage of Lacanian Imaginary. The authors argue that Halil's fixation on Meral's photograph represents a profound refusal to engage with the real world, represented

as Lacanian Symbolic. In Lacan, the Symbolic is associated with language, culture, and social structures that shape human subjectivity and represents the stage into which a healthy individual gradually transition from the initial Imaginary after being socialised through language. Halil's fixation on the image hence signifies his deep-seated struggle with Lacanian Symbolic, and İmançer and Sarıgül, like Ercan and Toraman, suggest that Halil's preference for an image over reality highlights the conflict within Halil's psyche with the demands of the real world. İmançer and Sarıgül's study provides a psychoanalytic interpretation of *Sevmek Zamanı*, illuminating how the film's exploration of love operates within Lacanian Symbolic and Imaginary and Halil's behaviour and actions are seen as a reflection of broader psychoanalytic themes related to identity formation, fantasy, and subject positions within cultural systems. Within psychoanalytical theory, the present study further expands İmançer and Sarıgül's Lacanian exploration, suggesting that Halil's fixation can be further interpreted utilising the Lacanian concept of *objet petit a*—the unattainable object-cause of desire that drives human longing and fantasy.

Unlike Ercan and Toraman's psychological approach, viewing Halil's fixation on an image as a manifestation of schizoid dilemma of a troubled psyche, or İmançer and Sarıgül's Lacanian exploration, interpreting Halil's behaviour as his inability to successfully integrate within the Symbolic, Suphi Keskin explores Erksan's film through the lens of Sufi mysticism, viewing Halil as a true Sufi seeker whose love for Meral's image leads him towards a deeper understanding of existence. Keskin's article "An Analysis of *Time to Love* (1965) According to Its Narrative and Visual Approach from Sufi Perspective" (2019) examines the ways the film's narrative and visual elements reflect Sufi themes and concepts. Providing a brief overview of Sufi philosophy, Keskin aligns it with the film's portrayal of inner journey directed towards divine love, emphasising the spiritual significance of love as a means of transcending the material world. The author foregrounds that Sufism perceives worldly love as a reflection of divine love, and Halil's love for the image of Meral is interpreted as a metaphor for the Sufi concept of *aşk-ı mecazî* (worldly love) serving as a stepping stone towards *aşk-ı hakikî* (divine love). Halil's detachment from the real Meral and his fixation on her image is viewed as symbolising the Sufi journey from the tangible to the abstract—from the worldly into divine. Halil's rejection of Meral's physical presence in favour of her image is seen as reflecting the Sufi ideal of transcending the material to seek divinity and the progression of Halil towards Meral as mirroring the stages of a Sufi's spiritual journey. The initial enchantment with the image, the struggle with societal norms and personal desires, and the eventual transcendence through love and sacrifice are interpreted as aligned with Sufi teachings. Meral's role is viewed as being a catalyst for Halil's spiritual awakening and his shifting from the ideal into reality as mirroring the Sufi journey of integrating divine love with worldly existence. Keskin also analyses the film's black-and-white cinematography and slow-moving shots as reflecting the contemplative and introspective nature of Sufi practice, and the visual austerity, emphasising shadows and light, according to the author, echo the Sufi focus on inner purity and enlightenment. Likewise, the frequently depicted water in the film (rain, lake, and the sea) is analysed as a symbol of purity, cleansing, and the flow of divine grace in Sufi thought hence, the recurrent imagery of water is viewed as representing spiritual purification and transformation of the characters, while reflections in water as symbolising the quest for self-knowledge. Keskin concludes that *Sevmek Zamanı* is a profound cinematic exploration of Sufi themes where the content and form work together to depict a spiritual journey of love, self-discovery, and transcendence. Keskin's interpretation within the framework of mythos, viewing the film as a cinematic allegory for the Sufi path, offers a nuanced perspective on the film's depiction of a hero's journey as the Sufi seeker on his quest for union with the divine.

Bayram Küçük's analysis in "The Use of Cinematography as an Art of Emotion: *Time to Love* Movie" (2023) delves into the ways Erksan employs cinematographic techniques to evoke emotions that enhance the film's thematic depth. Situating *Sevmek Zamanı* within the broader

context of Turkish cinema, noting its distinctive style, Küçük emphasises Erksan's innovative use of visual storytelling evoking emotional response from the audience. The director's choice of making the film black-and-white is discussed as a deliberate decision that heightens the emotional impact, with its monochromatic palette emphasising contrasts and shadows reflecting the characters' internal emotional states. The black-and-white imagery is also viewed as a way to strip the narrative down to its emotional essence, removing the distraction of colour to focus on the interplay of light and darkness symbolising the dichotomy of love and loss. Küçük also analyses Erksan's use of close-ups for its role in creating intimacy between the characters and the audience. By focusing on subtle facial expressions and minute details, the film conveys complex emotions and inner turmoil without relying on dialogues. The framing is also discussed, visually isolating the characters and representing their emotional isolation and internal conflicts. The deliberate slow pacing and the slow-moving shots are viewed as a method to evoke a contemplative mood, allowing viewers to immerse in the characters' emotional experiences. Küçük also discusses how the melancholic music complements the visual storytelling and the ways the strategic use of silence and ambient sounds enhance the overall emotional atmosphere of the film. Küçük concludes that Erksan's *Sevmek Zamanı* is a masterpiece of cinematography, using visual details, pacing, and symbolic imagery to deeply resonate with viewers and the article underscores how Erksan's visual storytelling powerfully evokes complex emotions in the audience.

"On the Narrative Structures and Relations with Tradition in *Sensiz Yaşayamam* (*I Cannot Live without You*) and *Sevmek Zamanı* (*Time to Love*)" (2022) by Derviş Zaimağaoğlu explores the connections of two Erksan's films to tradition and experimentation with non-classical cinematic elements. Delving into the ways these films relate to classical Turkish cinema, Zaimağaoğlu discusses the significance of traditional narratives in Turkish culture, particularly in literature and oral storytelling. The author emphases how these traditions have influenced modern Turkish cinema, providing a rich source of themes, motifs, and narrative structures. It is noted that both films draw heavily on traditional themes of love and obsession, and the author points out how these themes are rooted in Turkish tradition where idealised and unattainable love often leads to tragic outcomes. The concept of fate is likewise seen as playing a crucial role in both films, and in *Sevmek Zamanı*, Halil's eventual tragic end is interpreted as inevitable, echoing traditional stories where characters are bound by destiny. The study also examines the black-and-white cinematography and slow pacing, viewed as creating a timeless quality. Zaimağaoğlu analysis enriches the discussion of Erksan's film by its focus on the portrayal of female characters in both films, noting that while the women in these narratives often embody traditional gender roles, they also exhibit agency and complexity, reflecting the evolving role of women in Turkish society. The study indicates that both films exemplify the director's ability to blend traditional narratives with modern cinematic techniques, and through themes of love, fate, and obsession, conveyed by innovative narrative structures and visual storytelling, Erksan creates films that resonate with contemporary audiences while honouring their cultural heritage. Thus, Zaimağaoğlu's analysis indirectly demonstrates how Erksan's films bridge past and present, tradition and innovation.

Murat Akser's article "Auteur and Style in National Cinema: A Reframing of Metin Ersan's *Time to Love*" (2013) is the only article written in English, in which the author delves into Erksan's film through the lens of auteur theory and *National Cinema Movement* in Türkiye. Within this frame of reference, Akser identifies Erksan's *Sevmek Zamanı*—"celebrated by Turkish filmmakers and film scholars alike as the best film ever made" (p. 163)—as an example of national cinema in film studies. Akser argues that Erksan's thematic preoccupations and distinctive style position the director as a significant auteur in Turkish cinema with full control over his work. Exploring the film within the East versus West dichotomy, Akser identifies the film as a "melodrama", based on the "formulation of lower class/rural=East/local culture vs. upper class/urban=West/foreign culture", which, as he argues, "can be observed clearly in

Turkish melodrama" (p. 174). The plot is viewed as unfolding "the love story of a poor boy Halil and a rich girl Meral", and as Akser claims, is "based on a simple boy-meets-girl story" (p. 174). Akser identifies Halil as representing Easter values, such as spirituality, honesty, chastity, and emotions, juxtaposing with Meral, the daughter of a wealthy capitalist, who "represents carnal/sexual love and desires", along with her father and her boyfriend Başar symbolising "corrupt moral values" of the West (pp. 176, 174). The theme of falling in love with an image is likewise identified as a common theme in classical Turkish literature and Anatolian folk stories, and the imagery depicting the nature, associated with Halil, and the city, associated with Meral, as serving to foreground the East versus West dichotomy. The use of music that accompanies the portrayal of the characters—Turkish classical music and melodies by the *ud* (eastern folk instrument resembling a guitar) to which Halil listens and Western classical music such as Bach to which Meral listens along with the disco music to which her friends dance at her wedding—is also discussed within the East/West dichotomy discourse. Although Akser's analysis within the framework of East versus West discourse offers a fresh perspective, his assertion that "*Time to Love* tells the stories of two lovers that represent eastern and western values", exemplifying national cinema, may oversimplify the film's multifaceted dimensions (p. 178).

Lastly, the article entitled "Women, Representation, and Communication in the Film *Sevmek Zamanı*" (2023) by Esma Kayar views the film beyond its appearance being a simple story about falling in love with a photograph, and instead, perceives it as a unique reflection of the existential philosophy prevalent in Turkey during that era. Kayar's thematic exploration is linked to the female character Meral, delving into themes such as representation, fear, freedom, and communication. The author references Plato's Cave Allegory and Heidegger's existential philosophy to analyse the themes of reality and illusion in the film. Kayar's exploration, based on Heidegger's existential philosophy and his concept of *Dasein* (being-there), views Halil's retreat into representations, his solitary life in nature, and his reluctance to connect with Meral as reflecting his existential angst, highlighting his struggle with recognition and existence. The study suggests that Halil's fear stems from the possibility that Meral might not recognise or validate the protagonist's existence and Meral's approach, challenging Halil's fear, highlights her influential role in the narrative. Kayar also explores the film's social realist aspects, particularly focusing on gender issues, and examines how women's issues are shaped within the film's realist context. She concludes that despite mutual recognition between Halil and Meral, Meral faces rejection from her social class, attributed to her gender rather than her economic class. Overall, Kayar's analysis provides a nuanced view, illustrating the film's profound engagement with existential themes, traditional philosophical questions, and social issues, particularly concerning the representation of women.

The collective scholarly analysis undoubtedly positions Erksan's *Sevmek Zamanı* as a significant work of art that, according to some, addresses mythical and mystical, according to others, philosophical or psychological discourses. The on-going scholarly exploration underscores the film's engagement with classical mysticism, psychological existential themes, traditional philosophical questions, and social issues, offering not only a deeper understanding of its narrative and visual approach but also revealing that Erksan's film provides a rich ground for academic inquiry, which, as it is seen, may arrive at diverse conclusions. However, the intersection of mythical, philosophical, and psychoanalytical dimension through which *Sevmek Zamanı* operates, not exclusively but rather in a complementary way, has not yet been addressed. This interdisciplinary approach could therefore provide a framework that reveals how the film's complexity of the *whys* and *hows* interact to create a multi-layered narrative meaning and explain the film's lasting emotional and cognitive impact on the viewer even almost sixty years later after its release. This article argues that the apparent contradictions in scholarly interpretations are complementary as Erksan's ability to blend non-verbal storytelling with profound mythical, philosophical, and psychological themes signifies a

non-propositional and non-conclusive Socratic dialogics between mythos and logos, which positions the film within the broader context of not only Turkish and world cinema but also a nuanced discourse analysis.

Mythos and Logos: Foundational Approaches to Understanding

The concepts of mythos and logos represent two foundational approaches to understanding and explaining the world. These approaches, while seemingly divergent, each provide unique and valuable insights into human experience and knowledge, shaping human understanding and expression. Mythos refers to the traditional narrative structures and themes prevalent in myths, legends, and folk tales. Rooted in cultural traditions, mythos encompasses the symbolic and allegorical tales passed down orally through generations, and aims to address the *hows* of the operations of the world. These narratives serve as vessels for collective beliefs, values, and norms, offering a shared framework for interpreting the world. According to Joseph Campbell in *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, mythos explains natural phenomena, human behaviour, and cultural practices through metaphorical stories, embodying the wisdom and moral lessons of a culture (1949/2008). Examples of mythos include the ancient myths of gods and heroes, religious creation stories, and folk tales and legends. In contrast, logos denotes rational thought, logic, and reason, aiming to address the *whys* certain events occur. This principle is associated with scientific inquiry, philosophical discourse, and logical argumentation. As Aristotle posited in *The Nicomachean Ethics* (350 BCE), logos is characterised by systematic reasoning, evidence-based conclusions, and the pursuit of objective truth (2009). It relies on empirical data, logical analysis, and structured argumentation to explain and understand phenomena. The primary function of logos is to provide clear, rational explanations, seeking to uncover the underlying principles and causes of events through observation and experimentation. Examples of logos include scientific theories, philosophical treatises, mathematical proofs, and analytical essays.

The epistemological basis for mythos and logos vary. While approaches through mythos rely on narrative, symbolism, and tradition, offering a holistic and often metaphorical understanding of the world, integrating emotions, beliefs, and cultural values, logos is based on reason, logic, and empirical evidence, seeking precise, verifiable explanations through rational analysis and systematic inquiry. While mythos aims to convey cultural wisdom, moral lessons, and collective identity, addressing existential questions and human experiences in a narrative form that is accessible and relatable, logos aims to explain natural and social phenomena through rational analysis and logical argumentation, uncovering universal truths and principles that are consistent and repeatable. The methodology also differs in a sense that mythos utilises storytelling, allegory, and metaphor to convey meanings and truths; it is flexible and open to interpretation. On the other hand, logos employs logical reasoning, structured argumentation, and empirical observation, and it demands consistency, clarity, and evidence, aiming for objective and replicable results. Mythos is predominantly found in ancient and pre-modern cultures where oral traditions and communal storytelling were primary means of knowledge transmission. It remains influential in religious, literary, and cultural contexts and addresses the human need for meaning, purpose, and connection, resonating with emotions, spirituality, and the subconscious mind (Jung, 1964; Jung, 1959/1991). Logos, on the other hand, emerged in ancient Greece with the advent of philosophy and has become dominant in the modern era, particularly with the rise of scientific methods and technological advancements, addressing the human need for understanding, prediction, and control, and appealing to the intellect, conscious reasoning, and the pursuit of factual knowledge (Hume, 1748/2007).

In contemporary discourse, both mythos and logos continue to play vital roles. While logos is indispensable for scientific progress and technological development, mythos remains crucial in arts, humanities, and social sciences, providing depth, meaning, and context to human experiences. The interplay between mythos and logos enriches human understanding,

allowing navigating the complexities of the world with both rational clarity and imaginative insight. While mythos and logos represent two complementary dimensions of human understanding and expression, recognising the value of each leads to a more nuanced and holistic understanding of the world, combining the strengths of narrative wisdom and logical rigor. This synthesis can foster a richer inquiry, bridging the gap between the symbolic and the empirical, and offering a more comprehensive framework for exploring the human condition.

The Mythical Dimension: Sufism in *Sevmek Zamanı*

The use of myth in cinema has been a subject of extensive study, particularly in literature and films that explore universal human experiences and timeless themes. Campbell's concept of the *monomyth*, or what he calls, *the hero's journey*, is a foundational work that has influenced numerous literary and cinematic narratives (1949/2008). Campbell's argument is based on the belief that myths across different cultures share common structures and motifs, resonating deeply with audiences by tapping into the audience's collective unconscious. In *SevmekZamanı*, Erksan employs similar mythical structures, drawing from Eastern Sufi philosophy and Turkish oral traditions. Studies such as those by Carl Gustav Jung provide a framework for understanding the mythical dimensions in Erksan's film and help explain how archetypal images and motifs in the film, such as the notion of falling in love with an image or the water imaginary that frequently reappears evoke a deep response in the viewer.

To begin with, *Sevmek Zamanı* signifies on the level that addresses mythos. The encompassing theme of the film—the concept of an image juxtaposing reality and the notion of *falling in love with an image* (*surete aşık olmak*)—is found in the Eastern Sufi philosophy concerned with the phenomena of the allegorical, worldly love and the divine, true love, in which the former is understood as a manifestation, precisely through physical representations of the hidden divinity, concretised from the eternal and infinite into a tangible, concrete form, enabling an inner journey that leads to divinity. The theme often reappears in Turkish folk tradition and is revisited in various Ottoman and Persian poetry and art, one of which is the well-known tale of Mecnun and Leyla. On one level, Erksan's film, revisiting the mythical theme of love (worldly and divine) through the motif of *falling in love with an image*, taps into the subconscious of this mythical dimension. Halil's love of Meral's image, which is precisely devoid of any physical or sexual desire, is depicted by his prolonged enchanted gazing at the photographic representation of Meral's face throughout the film. While gazing at the image, as if in a state of trance, Halil transcends time and space, and by losing himself in the mirroring gaze of the image, enters into the mythic dimension. The other-than-worldly love experienced by Halilas a spiritual motion towards a unity with divinity is explicitly stated several times within the plot. Halil repeatedly clarifies to Meral that he is in love with her image not Meral herself. Refusing her approaches, Halil justifies his refusal to his only friend, Mustafa Derviş (Fadıl Garan), whose name signifies the chosen one and explicitly refers to a Sufi aspirant. Mustafa Derviş functions as Halil's alter ego and eventually, it becomes him who encourages Halil to take actions. The spiritual aspect of Halil's love is also depicted and conveyed by long and slow camera shots that seem to shift the actual time into the mythical timelessness.

Besides, in Sufi philosophy, an individual purified by divine love functions as a mirror that illuminates and reflects the eternal, infinite love. This mythical dimension emerges by means of Halil's prolonged gaze directed towards the gazing image of Meral, which indeed manifests and functions as a mirroring image reflecting divine love, shifts towards the character of Meral, initiating her own personal transformation by means of forces of love. In other words, while Meral's image, signifying as a mirror, initiates Halil's journey to transcend towards divinity, Halil's gaze serves an identical mirror, initiating Meral's transformation from the physical into divine.

The mythical dimension of the contextualised themes of love and image, which operates on the level of the mythical consciousness that addresses the *hows*, rather than the *whys* of the critical thinking, is further reinforced by the director's approach of the loop input of the theme. In other words, the structure of the film aligns the narrative content with the signifying form by which the film, scarce of uttered words, emerges as a visual and auditory construct, eliciting an emotional engagement of its audience. Thus, the director's approach embeds the mythical *hows* through eliciting emotions that emerge by visual and auditory representations. In fact, the first eight and half minutes of the film lack any spoken language as the film begins (speaks to the audience just like Meral's image does to Halil) through the unfolding of images that evoke a soothing silence of a landscape by a lake, surrounded by erected trees, a tranquillity of an island and its empty beaches, pounded by the waves of the sea, and the continuously falling rain, creating an almost dream-like, melancholic atmosphere that transcends time and space. The film thus emerges as a composition of colourless, almost surrealistic profound visual representations, often shot by a steady camera, emphasising the theme of sublime nature of the depicted water, the mythical origin of everything, operating as a reflecting mirror that projects images of the physical environment. Worth noting, the name Meral, in Altai and Turkish signifies both the female deer, and within the mythical thinking, one is reminded of the sacrifice triggered by the killing of the sacred deer. In ancient Turkish folklore and mythology, however, the deer is also frequently depicted as a symbol of spiritual strength. In Eksan's film, it is Meral, symbolising spirituality, who initiates the *monomyth* of the hero's journey. On the other hand and in the current context of water, the name Meral also signifies a wide body of shining water, sparkling and mirroring brilliantly in the day light. The theme of images as liquid reflections of the sublime is further highlighted by the camera shots portraying the outside world, the characters, and even the scenes from within the *other* space, repeatedly framing images as reflections from behind the window. The film that unfolds in such a form of series of splendid, and what might at times seem as almost independent photographic images, creating an effect of stabilising and immortalising the shots of the otherwise momentous physical reality within mythos.

The narrative style of such a poetic photographic language signifies meaning to the viewer in a notably non-linguistic mode through images and sounds. This is achieved, for instance, by conveying the psychic states of the characters by images depicting various manifestations of water, may it be the pouring rain, the serene surface of the lake, or the wuthering sea. Meaning is also conveyed by images of various indoor and outdoor spaces such as enclosed, narrow, or deserted streets, which likewise correspond with the characters' moods and states of mind. The dialogues between the characters are scarce, often depicting them alone or even if together, standing and walking without speaking. The illusionary, non-linguistic narrative language is accompanied by an auditory input that likewise contributes not only to this illusive atmosphere but also conveys the characters' psychic state. The poignant melodies of Turkish traditional tunes played by an *ud* player, Mustafa Dervis, in scenes where Halil dwells in his trance, the instrumental music, mostly the playing of the piano and the flute, deprived of lyrics, or the dramatic music of Bach, all likewise address and signify within the level of the non-verbal, mythic unconsciousness. By utilising music that likewise surfaces within mythos, signifying the inner states of the characters, and eliciting emotions within the audience, the film takes the viewer on a mystic journey into the inner self that resembles the inner journey of a Sufi towards the truth.

As indicated in the philosophy of Sufism, after acquiring an understanding of the reality, the purified-by-divine-love individual embarks on a journey back through time by integrating everything experienced. By the end of the film, Halil likewise, upon realising that there is no worldly equivalent to his love, takes all dear to him in his journey back through time into the mythical, dissolving his ego by integrating Meral's photograph, a mannequin dressed as a bride, signifying Meral to be married to another man, and eventually, Meral herself who

escapes her wedding to join him. Together, they return to the mythic origin of creation—water—which like Meral's image and as her name indicates, manifests its reflecting property like a mirror reflecting the divine truth. As they finally embrace in death, they integrate within the origin of creation—water, which, as the camera zooms out, illuminates their eternal souls and love transcending into the divine. Thus, within the mythic dimension, Meraland Halil die together with their souls eternally united in love.

The Transition from Mythos to Logos: Platonic Philosophy in *Sevmek Zamanı*

Plato's philosophy, particularly his theory of Ideal Form elaborated on in *The Republic* (380 BC) by his Cave Allegory, has likewise been influencing literature and cinema interpretations. Plato's allegory posits that the physical world is an illusion—a mere shadow of the truth that exists in the realm of the Ideal Form (Plato, 2007). This idea is mirrored in Erksan's *Sevmek Zamanı*, where the protagonist's fixation on an image reflects the Platonic separation between the world of appearances and the world of ideal forms. Scholars such as Alexander Nehamas have contributed to understanding the influence of Platonic thought on modern visual culture, providing a critical framework for analysing how films depict the tension between reality and illusion. In his 1988 article "Plato and the Mass Media", Nehamas explores the parallels between Plato's criticisms of poetry and the role of mass media in contemporary society, arguing that Plato's critique of poetry, outlined in *The Republic*, can be extended to understand the impact of mass media today. Plato criticises poetry for its potential to deceive and manipulate audiences, believing that poets create imitations of reality that appeal to emotions rather than reason. This imitation (*mimesis*) can lead people away from the truth and hinder their ability to think critically. Nehamas suggests that like poetry in ancient Greece, mass media today (including television, movies, and advertising) creates powerful imitations of reality that can shape public perception and behaviour. Mass media, through its widespread reach and emotional appeal, can likewise manipulate audiences and perpetuate stereotypes, ideologies, and nowadays, consumerist values, prioritising sensationalism and entertainment over truth and critical thinking. Nehamas emphasises the importance of philosophical inquiry in countering the negative effects of mass media, suggesting that philosophy can help individuals develop critical thinking skills and cultivate a deeper understanding of reality, enabling them to resist manipulation and deception. By fostering a more reflective and questioning mind-set, philosophy can empower individuals to engage more thoughtfully with media and resist the seductive allure of simplistic, emotionally charged narratives.

Linking Nehamas's article with Erksan's film, focusing on the theme of Halil's love for a photograph and the audience's philosophical engagement with the film reveals the dual operations through which the film deconstructs its content by its form within the framework of Plato's critique of poetry's power to manipulate and deceive, extended to the impact of media. In Erksan's film, this critique is embodied in Halil's fixation on Meral's photograph, representing an attraction to an imitation that captivates and dictates his emotions and actions. The photograph is a mere image, devoid of the complexities and authenticity of Meral's true self. Halil's initial inability to engage with the actual Meral parallels the way media can cause individuals to engage with constructed images and narratives rather than reality. This results in a distorted perception of the world, much like Halil's distorted perception of love. Nehamas emphasises how mass media, like poetry, appeals to emotions rather than reason, potentially leading individuals away from the truth. Halil's emotional attachment to the photograph, which he finds enchanting, showcases this manipulation. His emotions are dictated by an image, leading him to initially reject the real Meral when she expresses her genuine feelings for him. Plato's concern about poetry's ability to corrupt the soul by promoting false ideals is thus depicted by Halil's character development. His love for the photograph, an idealised and static representation of Meral, prevents him from experiencing and understanding the complexities of real human relationships. Halil's fixation on the image rather than the person

leads to a form of self-deception and stagnation. He remains trapped in a fantasy, unable to confront or accept the real world, much like the way mass media may create false ideals and hinder personal growth and critical engagement with reality. On the other hand, Nehamas' suggestion that philosophical inquiry is crucial in countering the negative effects of media manipulation addresses not only Halil's journey, which can be seen as a philosophical quest to self-discovery, in which his eventual realisation of the limitations of his love for the photograph and his confrontation with reality signify a move towards a deeper understanding of himself but also the journey on which the film takes its audience through a philosophical engagement, underscoring critical reflection on the complexities of reality. This journey the audience takes mirrors the philosophical pursuit of truth and the importance of moving beyond surface-levels of meaning.

Thus, the film that tackles the theme of images and human condition, calling for an interpretation within the framework of Platonic philosophy, signifies within the transitional state from mythos to logos. Similarly to the philosophy in Sufism, Plato's theory of Forms views the physical realm as a play of shadows or images, which are merely reflections of the truth and the ideal, transcendent of time and space. Plato's Cave Allegory, which within the realms of mythos and logos, functions as a transitional stage due to employing non-paradigmatic myths, parables, and stories into his philosophical enterprise. Likewise, Erksan's film revolving around the theme of images and shadows, linked to human condition, emerges as a cinematic expression of Plato's allegory in its content as well as form.

Halil's deep attachment to the idealised love represented by Meral's image leads him to initially reject the actual person when she approaches him. He refuses to acknowledge her as an individual or accept her genuine affection for him, even notably avoiding eye contact. In Halil's reality, there is no place for the actual Meral who exists in the world external to Halil's. This behaviour closely mirrors the situation depicted by Plato's philosophy in his Cave Allegory, where those who have internalised the reflections on the wall, fail to recognise that true reality exists beyond the confines of the cave. Halil's love for an image likewise blinds him to the reality of the person to such an extent that when the owner of the image appears, he does not accept the reality other than the one created by him. In this context, Meral represents the truth that juxtaposes those captivated by the play of illusions believing to be the truth who refuse to see the real truth. The composition of the scenes confirms this psychic entrapment of Halil who is often depicted as facing the wall, with his back to the outside world. Worth mentioning is Halil's occupation, which likewise links him to indoor spaces, physically positioning him facing walls as a wall painter. The black-and-white images that comprise the film likewise repeatedly portray photographic images of reflections, projected either by the surface of the lake or as a play of shadows on the wall. One of such memorable instances is linked to Meral's awakening consciousness, which is portrayed during her wedding scene. Meral's escape of her wedding party to join Halil is triggered by a projection of the shadows of the dancing guests on the wall behind Meral. By this scene, Erksan's film explicitly alludes to Plato's Cave Allegory signifying Meral's awakening to reality beyond illusions.

On the other hand, as the plot unfolds and Halil gives in to Meral's urges to face reality of her love for him, the viewer experiences Halil's gradual shift into facing the outside world, manifesting in the film by scenes now portraying Halil looking out of windows. What is more, after Halil and Meral's short lived dating, depicting them walking hand-in-hand the empty streets and along the abandoned seaside, or just gazing together at the sea or at one another, signifying Halil's progression in terms of facing the truth of the reality of Meral's love, when confronted by Meral's father, the inconvenient socio-economic realityforces Halil back to retreat to his safe zone. However, having been exposed to reality, just as the one in Plato's Cave Allegory who sees the truth and no longer is capable to believe in illusions of the shadows, the viewer observes that Halil no longer gazes in a state of trance at Meral's image.

From within the Platonic interpretation, both Meral and Halil exit their existential entrapment within their metaphorical caves and set out for the search of the truth. Just like in Plato's allegory, the one who has experienced the sublime truth outside the cave becomes ridiculed by those who have not, and eventually withdraws from the realms of shadows and illusions or if not, is annihilated by those whose reality they threaten, Meral and Halil, now having been exposed to the truth, are likewise misunderstood by Meral's father and ridiculed by Meral's boyfriend, who representing those trapped within the realm of shadows and illusions, eventually annihilate them. In an embrace of truth, Meral and Halil meet their death and together transcend into the realm of Platonic Forms, ensuring the eternality of their Ideal Love.

The Logos: Psychoanalysis and Lacan in *Sevmek Zamanı*

Lacanian psychoanalysis offers a robust framework for examining themes of identity, desire, subjectivity, and identity formation in literature and cinema. Utilising Lacanian theory in film studies by scholars like Slavoj Žižek (1992) who explore how cinematic narratives and visuals reflect and construct psychic realities facilitate elucidating the deeper psychological dynamics at play in films such as Erksan's *Sevmek Zamanı*. Revolving around the theme of images, the act of gazing, and the concepts of subjectivity and identity formation, *Sevmek Zamanı* ultimately addresses logos by inviting a psychoanalytical exploration, particularly approaching the film's subject matter through the lens of Lacan's studies concerned with the formation of subjectivity as a consequence of an identification with an image during the Mirror Stage, or what Lacan calls, an *imago* (Lacan, 1961/2006). Arising from the theory of the triad—Real, Imaginary, and Symbolic—framing the human psyche, Lacan identifies the initiation into the Imaginary—the Mirror Stage—as a crucial stage, defined as a transitional stage where a yet non-linguistic infant identifies with an *imago*, manifesting as either a mirrored reflection or as a loving gaze of a caretaker, fostering a sense of unity of the self, which plays a fundamental role in identity formation of a subject. Lacan's theory of the Mirror Stage, where an infant first identifies with their reflection and internalises the *imago* of the self as the self, becomes essential for understanding how characters in *Sevmek Zamanı* relate to images within the Imaginary, the Symbolic, and the Real. Lacan's theory of identity formation suggests that the Mirror Stage within the Imaginary is foundational for the formation of an individual's ego and the sense of self before transitioning into the Symbolic, represented by culture, language, and social structure, where identity formation progresses after an individual transitions through socialisation and language. Halil's fixation on Meral's image can be interpreted as an extension of the Mirror Stage, where Meral's image serves as an idealised *imago* force, essential for his identity formation.

In this sense, Halil's fixation on the image of Meral's gazing eyes indicates that Meral's image signifies for Halil the Lacanian source of *imago* that addresses his incomplete identity formation. This suggests that Halil's psychic state predominantly operates within the Imaginary, having failed a successful psychic initiation into the Symbolic. This is explicitly supported by the dialogue between him and Meral when he asserts that what draws him to her image is the loving gaze that her image provides him with. Moreover, Halil's love of the image further indicates not only a weakly formed ego but also the inability of the ego to form a mature subjectivity precisely because of the literal lack within the driving force of his desire. In other words, what signifies as a symbolic lack that drives desire operating within a mature psyche—the Lacanian *objet petit a*—for Halil, it is the actual lack that serves as a driving force of his desire (Lacan, 1998). Since there is no desire for Meral or for the actual gaze, only Halil's projected fantasy of her gaze, it is indeed the literal lack that serves as a constituting force for the formation of Halil's subjectivity.

To clarify, in Lacanian theory, the concept of *objet petit a* is understood as the object of desire, or to be precise, the object that causes desire, the so-called object-cause of desire, which

serves as a key element within the dynamics between desire, fantasy, and subjectivity. The Lacanian *objet petit a* holds great significance in both the Symbolic and Imaginary registers of the psyche. In the Symbolic, it represents the unconscious fantasies and desires that drive the subject. Within the Imaginary, it manifests as a tangible object and an image that a person fixates on as the desired object, which is precisely Halil's case. Since Halil desires lack, this state indicates his failed transition into the Symbolic. The Lacanian *objet petit a* could be further understood as the virtual trace of one's absolute primordial drive satisfaction, which Lacan calls *jouissance,* and which he defines as emerging through the process of socialisation into the Symbolic as that which is being-lost and therefore, is perpetually desired (Lacan, 1992). In this sense, the process of Halil's socialisation into the Symbolic suggests incompleteness, and this is manifested not only by the actual lack operating as Halil's object-cause of desire but also by the state of his trance-like experience depicted by his staring at Meral's image, which notably resembles Lacanian *jouissance,* which for a subject operating within the Symbolic cannot be immediately present and as such, it fosters the subject's desire. The concept of *objet petit a*, an object-cause of desire that is elusive and unattainable, emerges from the subject's experience of the lack of *jouissance*. However, in Halil's case, it is not the lack of *jouissance* but precisely the actual lack, signified asthe absence of Meral, which emerges as a coveted object-cause of Halil's desire. This state of Halil's psyche indicates both him being trapped within the Imaginary and also the inability of Halil's ego to form a mature subjectivity precisely because of the literal lack driving his desire.

Thus, it is only the sense of unattainability, signifying as lack, which fuels Halil's desire and serves as a focal point that drives his unconscious fantasies projected onto the image of Meral. On the content level, Halil's name refers to not only a friend, companion, and beloved in Arabic but also a flute in Hebrew and a pouring rain, which echoes the setting as well as serves as an allusion to the Imaginary and the non-linguistic aspect of the human psyche. What is more, this pre-verbal aspect, represented by Halilis juxtaposed with both Başar, whose name is suggestive of his success as a signifying phallus within the Symbolic, and Meral's father, the wealthy industrialist who embodies the ultimate signifying phallus— law, culture, and language—the phallogocentric aspect of signifying practices within the Symbolic. Meral also appears as the enforcer of the Symbolic, the executor of the Father's Law who attempts to initiate Halil into the Symbolic. What is more, Halil's reluctance to take action and by implication, fully transition from the Imaginary into the Symbolic, despite the encouragement he receives from Meral and his alter ego Mustafa Derviş, can be interpreted as his refusal of the Symbolic—the Father's Law and Order, and his role as a signifying phallus within culture— but also perhaps as his fear, precisely of a metaphorical castration, which is an inevitable initiation into the Symbolic.

Halil's isolation from social life is explicitly depicted by various ways and narrative forms. His occupation as a wall painter alienates him from social life. He is mostly portrayed silent and alone, and when forced to interact, he notably avoids eye contact. Halil's existence within the Imaginary is further reinforced by the structure of the narrative form within which the film unfolds as a notably visual and auditory input; in other words, as non-linguistic representation of a human psyche. Each attempt Halil eventually takes, results in his regression back into the Imaginary. This is depicted by his initial refusal of Meral's acknowledgement of her feelings for him, followed by his search for her that results with him being abused by Başar and his friends, and eventually by his final attempt when he approaches Meral's father upon her urging him to do so. Each initiation into the Symbolic results in Halil facing the Lacanian Real only causing further traumas. The final blow that Halil faces comes upon discovering that Meral and Başar are getting married, which forces Halil to regress even further beyond the Imaginary, closer to the Real. This is depicted by the scene where Halil gathers Meral's image and a real-life mannequin dressed in bridal gown, representing Meral as Başar's bride, and boards his boat, paddling into the middle of the lake. This surrealistic scene signifies not only

Halil's troubled psyche but also the ultimate dissolving and collapsing of Halil's established coordinates within the Imaginary, leaving Halil, who fails to integrate within the Symbolic and whom the Imaginary likewise fails, with no option but to approach the Real—the origin of mythos—by retreating into primordial waters—and the origin of logos—by retreating into primordial womb. Thus, seeking shelter in the middle of the lake, the only place he feels safe, and eventually accompanied by Meral herself, who after boarding his boat, empties the vessel of Halil's representations of her, remaining as the ultimate signifier and signified of Halil's love, the two finally embrace in their death. The Lacanian interpretation suggests that the Law of Father has been successfully executed—preventing a deviation from the Symbolic by punishing those who fail to integrate or reject to internalise the Symbolic of the signifying phallus.

Conclusion

Erksan's *SevmekZamanı* intersects the mythical, philosophical, and psychoanalytical dimensions through which the film signifies and through its thematic complexity and unique artistic expression, it imparts a lasting impact on the viewer. The literature review demonstrates that scholars have approached the film within various frameworks, arriving at often contradictory conclusions; nonetheless, the present article proposes that Erksan's poetic masterpiece, operating within both realms of mythos and logos, and simultaneously within neither exclusively, emerges as a multi-layered and multi-dimensional narrative that renders contradictory meanings and interpretations complementary. Hence, Erksan's film unfolds within the Socratic dialogics of non-propositional and non-conclusive operations of mythos and logos, tapping into the collective, mythical unconscious and simultaneously addressing the critical and analytical consciousness, engaging the audience on both emotional and cognitive levels. It is precisely because the film unfolds within the operations of the dialogic interplay between mythos and logos, entering a liminal space, that it calls for a variety of interpretations that might emerge as contradictory, challenging the audience to confront their schematic thinking and embark on their own journey of self-discovery. Overall, Metin Erksan's *Sevmek Zamanı* does not impose its truth on the viewer and instead of providing answers, the film elicits the audience to feel and think. *Sevmek Zamanı* is a must to see—a timeless piece of art.

Conflict of Interest Statement

The author of the article declared that there is no conflict of interest.

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