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Two Tales, One Love: Metin Erksan's Harmonization of Eastern and Western Love

İki Öykü, Tek Aşk: Metin Erksan'ın Doğulu ve Batılı Aşk Anlatılarını Harmanlaması

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Abstract This study explores the intertextual connections between Metin Erksan's films *Sevmek Zamanı* (*Time to Love*, 1965) and *Ölmeyen Aşk* (*Eternal Love*, 1966) and the literary works *Leyli and Majnun* by Fuzûlî and *Wuthering Heights* by Emily Brontë. By examining the thematic parallels and divergences in the portrayal of love, the study highlights how Erksan synthesizes Eastern and Western love narratives to develop his unique cinematic language. While *Leyli and Majnun* embodies the mystical and transcendental nature of love, *Wuthering Heights* presents love as a force of obsession and destruction. Erksan's films reflect both perspectives: *Sevmek Zamanı* explores the notion of love as an idealized image, deeply rooted in Eastern traditions, whereas *Ölmeyen Aşk* portrays love's destructive power, akin to the Western literary tradition. However, despite the apparent dominance of one cultural perspective in each film, traces of the other tradition remain present. Neither film embodies a single, pure tradition. Thus, through an intertextual and comparative analysis, this study reveals how Erksan's interpretation of love transcends cultural binaries and offers a rich, hybrid synthesis of both Eastern and Western narratives.

Öz Bu çalışmada, Metin Erksan'ın *Sevmek Zamanı* (1965) ve *Ölmeyen Aşk* (1966) filmleri ile Fuzûlî'nin *Leyla ile Mecnun*'u ve Emily Brontë'nin *Uğultulu Tepeler* adlı edebî eseri arasındaki metinlerarası bağlantıları incelenmiştir. Çalışmada, aşkın tasvirine dair tematik benzerlikler ve ayrılıklar ele alınmış; Erksan'ın Doğulu ve Batılı aşk anlatılarını nasıl sentezleyerek kendine özgü bir sinemasal dil geliştirdiği ortaya konmuştur. *Leyla ile Mecnun*, aşkın mistik yönünü ve ona atfedilen aşkınlığı yansıtırken, *Uğultulu Tepeler* aşkı bir saplantı ve yıkım gücü olarak sunar. Erksan'ın filmleri her iki bakış açısını da yansıtır: *Sevmek Zamanı*, Doğu geleneklerine derinlemesine kök salmış idealize edilmiş bir aşk imgesini sorgularken; *Ölmeyen Aşk*, Batı edebiyat geleneğine yakın biçimde aşkın yıkıcı gücünü tasvir eder. Ancak her filmde bir kültürel bakış açısı baskın gibi görünse de diğer geleneğin izleri de varlığını sürdürür. Filmlerin hiçbiri tek ve saf bir geleneği bütünüyle yansıtmaz. Böylece, metinlerarası ve karşılaştırmalı bir çözümleme yoluyla bu çalışma, Erksan'ın aşk yorumunun kültürel ikilikleri aştığını ve Doğulu ve Batılı anlatılarını harmanlayan zengin, melez bir sentez sunduğunu ortaya koymaktadır.

Keywords love · Metin Erksan · *Leyli and Majnun* · *Wuthering Heights* · intertextuality

Anahtar Kelimeler aşk · Metin Erksan · *Leyla ve Mecnun* · *Uğultulu Tepeler* · metinlerarasılık

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Two Tales, One Love: Metin Erksan's Harmonization of Eastern and Western Love

"Aşk için ölmeli, aşk o zaman aşk."[1]

Metin Erksan was a pioneering figure in Turkish cinema and a quintessential example of an *auteur*, as he consistently infused his unique style into both the themes and the formal aspects of his films. Erksan distinguished himself from other directors of his time, as he was singularly devoted to cinema and deliberately chose the most relevant academic path to become a filmmaker. Since no formal cinema degrees were available at the time, he pursued a degree in art history at Istanbul University, which he considered the most suitable alternative. During his studies, he was taught by highly esteemed professors, many of European origin. His educational background enabled him to create multi-layered films rich in meaning.

Erksan pursued filmmaking without seeking awards or critical acclaim, either domestically or internationally, and criticized those who claimed to make films for the sake of society or art. Emphasizing his autonomy, he asserted, "I make films for myself." However, this statement has often been misunderstood and misused in contexts that are not entirely relevant. What Erksan truly meant was that he chose to make films about subjects that mattered to him, rather than catering to a specific audience or aiming for recognition at international festivals. He said he did not imply that he was indifferent to public reception or that he created films solely for his own satisfaction, regardless of whether anyone watched them. Naturally, insisting on such autonomy brought various challenges. He struggled not only with securing funding for his films but also with distributing and screening them. The trusts and cartels dominating the Turkish cinema industry left little room for independent filmmakers. It was under such circumstances that he made one of his cult films, *Sevmek Zamanı* (*Time to Love*, 1965). Distributors and cinema halls refused to screen the film; however, Georges Sadoul, a French film critic, praised it for its depiction of class conflict after viewing it at the Carthage Film Festival (Sine-Göz, 2014).

Class conflict is a recurring theme in Erksan's both social realist films and those centered on love. While it is the central issue in some of his social realist works, it serves as a backdrop in his love-themed films. In *Sevmek Zamanı* (*Time to Love*, 1965), and *Ölmeyen Aşk* (*Eternal Love*, 1966) the

[1] "One must die for love; only then is it truly love."

protagonists are two lovers from different social classes, and this class disparity is the underlying reason for their separation.

As in his other adaptations, in *Ölmeyen Aşk* (1966)—an adaptation of the novel *Wuthering Heights*—Erksan extracted the core elements and reinterpreted them through his distinctive style rather than directly replicating or imitating them. He says his starting point in making a film is the main idea of it, which is later accompanied by an image that emerges in his mind. He shares his experience in making the TRT-sponsored TV film *Sazlık* (1975), which is also an adaptation, as an example. The main idea of the film is a protagonist who is an obsessive, mad lover again, and the image in Erksan's mind is that he climbs a wooden pole and searches day and night for his beloved, whom he thinks got lost in the lake (Lokomotif, 2024). Although *Kuyu* (*The Well*, 1968) was not adapted from a literary work, Erksan drew inspiration from a real-life incident that took place in a village in Anatolia. Upon reading about the event, he traveled to the village where it occurred. Following a thorough investigation, he crafted his own version of the story, remaining faithful to its core essence (Sim, 2020, p. 58). In *Susuz Yaz* (*Dry Summer*, 1963) and *Yılanların Öcü* (*Revenge of the Snakes*, 1961), Erksan again took the central idea(s) and developed his own versions of the stories. He was criticized by the authors of the novels for departing from their texts and making significant alterations. Upon closer examination, it becomes evident that Erksan employed the same approach in *Ölmeyen Aşk*: He distilled the central themes of *Wuthering Heights* and integrated them with the visual imagery in his mind. His statements about the film, which also reflect his perspective on love, are provided below:

"I also made a movie of this novel (*Wuthering Heights*)—though it remained somewhat incomplete—and I tried to take it to the level of madness. There is a film Buñuel made in Mexico called *Cumbres Barroscosas* (*Abismos de Pasión*). He made *Eternal Love*. It's about two lovers who cannot be united. Their love is symbolized by a rocky hill. The man takes the woman to that hill right in front of her husband's eyes. She dies on the way. Then, on that hill, the man cries, screams, and makes love to her corpse. He experiences a horrifying breakdown. That is love! Otherwise, it's just, "I admire you," or some cliché like, "Do you know? I love you more than any man could ever love a woman." Everyone says that to everyone; it means nothing. Only such a love as this can be called true love, in my opinion. For instance, at the end of my movie, I had the man beat the woman's corpse. While crying and screaming, "How could you leave me and die!" he also hit her. Later, quite understandably, the producer cut those scenes of violence. The Turkish audience would not have been able to handle it. But that is how real love should be" (Kirişçi, 2015).

In this passage, Metin Erksan appears to misremember the ending of Buñuel's film. In the film, Alejandro merely kisses his deceased lover, rather than engaging in more extreme actions (mfa, 2014). While the endings of Erksan's and Buñuel's films differ, the overall emotions they evoke are similar, as both intertwine love and rage. Similar to Buñuel's *Abismos de Pasión* (1954), Erksan's *Ölmeyen Aşk* (1966) excludes romantic scenes because both directors were aware that hatred, rather than love, lay at the core of the novel. In *Ölmeyen Aşk,* Ali and Yıldız do not explicitly express their love for each other. Instead, love and anger are deeply intertwined, as demonstrated even in the final scene where Yıldız dies, and Ali shouts, "I hate you."

In another interview, when asked, "Do you think love is pathological?", Erksan responds unequivocally: "Yes, love is madness! Can a sane person truly fall in love? It is something terrifying —you stop eating, stop drinking, sometimes losing thirty kilos at once. Terrible things happen. To me, that is love." In the continuation of the interview, Erksan elaborates on the idea that men and women were once a single entity but later became separated, forever yearning to reunite. He states: "In the beginning, man and woman were one body. Humans could self-reproduce. Hermaphrodites, androgynous beings... I have always wondered how they became separated. ... Men and women want to reunite again, they are constantly drawn to each other, an immense attraction. But of course, alongside love, there is also hostility." He further references Baudelaire, recalling the notion that love and hate coexist, citing: "I hate you as much as I love you." According to Erksan, this paradox is inherent to love; love cannot exist without its counterpart, conflict and tension (Erksan, 2017, pp. 27-28).

Erksan expressed his admiration for *Wuthering Heights*, particularly for its depiction of the relationship between Catherine and Heathcliff, which reconciles love and hatred, rage and compassion. He believed these conflicting emotions were the essence of the novel and aimed to center his own adaption on them (Erksan, 2017, pp. 28-29). He was also impressed by how the themes of love and class conflict were woven together. However, this novel was not his sole source of inspiration. He stated that in order to fully grasp *Sevmek Zamanı* (1965), one must be familiar with Eastern and Western folk tales on love, particularly Eastern tales, with Leyli and Majnun being the most influential (Erksan, 2017, p. 56). Through both its mise-en-scène and narrative structure, *Sevmek Zamanı* reflects the Eastern perspective on love, specifically the concept of falling in love with a semblance or an image, a motif frequently found in Eastern tales. Gemuhluoğlu (2013) asserts that with his film *Sevmek Zamanı*, Erksan wanted to compose a modern visual masnavi, and to ensure his vision was understood, he explicitly had his characters articulate it in the dialogues: "Do such loves still exist today?" "Just like in old tales, right?"

Erksan's cinematic vision was shaped by a deep appreciation for local culture while also drawing from Western artistic and intellectual traditions—an approach influenced by both his personal values and his academic background. His education in art history exposed him to European aesthetics and narrative structures, yet his films remain deeply rooted in Turkish and broader Eastern traditions. This dual influence is evident not only in his portrayal of love but in the overall themes, visual storytelling, and symbolic depth of his works. In films like *Sevmek Zamanı* (1965), the concept of 'falling in love with an image' echoes motifs found in Ottoman and Persian literature, while his engagement with class conflict and existential struggles reflects Western literary sensibilities.

It can be asserted that Emily Brontë was exposed to influences both from Eastern and Western resources, just like Erksan, due to the literary movements of the late 18th and early 19th centuries. Towards the end of the eighteenth century, English literary world directed itself towards the East in search for some freshness in terms of imagery, subject matter and models, as they had exhausted the Greco-Roman culture. Through the works of diplomats and travelers, Orientalism spread in not only literature but also architecture, gardening, and art in general. One of the most prominent figures influential in creating the Oriental atmosphere in England was Sir William Jones, who influenced Emily Brontë, among other numerous authors of the period. He knew Persian and made translations into English (De Sola Pinto, 1946; Mamarasulova, 2020). In fact, just a few years after the first translation of Leyli and Majnun story by William Kirkpatrick under the title of *Mujnoon; or, the Distracted Lover. A Tale. From the Persian* (1785), Sir William Jones published Persian version of *Leyli and Majnun* by Abdullah Hatifi, but he only translated five couplets, and left the rest to other translators with a recommendation: the story should be translated into a prose form without adding a single image or thought. Isaac D'israeli was presumably the first to follow Jones' recommendation, and he wrote the novel version, *The Loves of Mejnoun and Leila* in 1797. Nevertheless, although it displayed some features of Sufism, D'israeli's work seemed to miss the essence, contrary to Jones, who wrote from an entirely Sufi perspective. As a result of Jones', D'israeli's and subsequent authors' translations and works inspired by the story, contemporary Western readers became familiar with the conceptions of Sufism (Nilchian, 2016). In such an atmosphere, as it is evident, it became prevalent among the authors of the period to ornament their works with oriental features (Mamarasulova, 2020).

Given this cultural and literary context, it is highly likely that Emily Brontë was exposed to different versions of the *Leyli and Majnun* story, as well as similar Eastern love narratives. The striking thematic parallels between *Wuthering Heights* and *Leyli and Majnun*—such as the portrayal of an all-consuming, almost mystical love, the presence of an insurmountable societal barrier, and the

intertwining of love and suffering—suggest that Brontë may have drawn inspiration, consciously or unconsciously, from these Eastern sources. When reading *Wuthering Heights*, Erksan likely perceived its thematic commonalities with *Leyli and Majnun* and other Eastern love narratives, particularly their shared emphasis on love as an all-consuming force intertwined with suffering, obsession, and transcendence. By blending Western literary traditions with the mystical and symbolic nature of Eastern love stories, he developed his own unique understanding of love—one that transcended mere artistic contrivance, grounded in genuine human emotions and enriched with depth and meaning.

Methodology

To analyze the web of literary and cinematic interrelations in Metin Erksan's films, this study adopts a comparative and intertextual methodology. While the term 'intertextuality' was first coined by Julia Kristeva, a more foundational understanding of the concept can be developed by first engaging with the work of Mikhail Bakhtin, whose ideas Kristeva herself frequently references. A central idea in Bakhtin's theory is that the author's intended meaning is not always expressed through direct authorial discourse, but often becomes clear through the careful use and arrangement of other voices in the text. This use of different voices can sometimes appear in the form of a narrator whose discourse seems singular, but still reflects the author's intention. As he states, "ultimate semantic authority—the author's intention—is realized not in his direct discourse but with the help of other people's words, created and distributed specifically as the words of others" (Bakhtin, 1984, p. 188).

Kristeva (1980) building her conceptualization of intertextuality upon Bakhtin's ideas, says that he was one of the first to suggest that a literary structure is created in relation to another. According to her, the "literary word" goes beyond the author's intention and gains meaning through a dialogic interaction among the author, the addressee (the character in the novel), and the broader cultural context—whether contemporary or historical. Kristeva positions the three dimensions of dialogue along two axes: the horizontal axis, which includes the author and the addressee, and the vertical axis, which represents the cultural context. Building on this idea, she argues that any text is formed through the incorporation and transformation of another, which she famously terms as 'intertextuality.'

There are always echoes of other words within any single word, and traces of other texts within any given text. Intertextuality suggests that we should not see texts as isolated or complete in themselves, but rather as shaped by difference and history. They carry remnants of otherness

because they are formed through the repetition and transformation of earlier textual forms. Instead of accepting the New Criticism view that texts are self-contained and autonomous, intertextual theory asserts that no text stands alone or operates as a sealed-off system (Alfaro, 1996).

Kristeva (1980) argues that textual 'ambivalence' arises from the mutual insertion of history into the text and the text into history. Writing is not a closed system but a dialogic process where each text absorbs, reworks, and responds to prior discourses. She emphasizes that poetic language is inherently 'double,' not simply in terms of the signifier and the signified, but as a relational structure between the self and the other. This dialogism, based on Bakhtin's notions, reveals that meaning is generated through the intersection of multiple voices, temporalities, and social codes. Thus, the minimal unit of meaning is not singular but always dialogically constituted.

Similar to Bakhtin and Kristeva, Roland Barthes (1977) emphasizes that "...a text is not a line of words releasing a single 'theological' meaning (the 'message' of the Author-God) but a multi-dimensional space in which a variety of writings, none of them original, blend and clash. The text is a tissue of quotations drawn from the innumerable centers of culture." According to Barthes, contrary to the misconceptions of most critics, attributing an Author to a text is not an act of clarification but one of limitation; it imposes a singular, fixed meaning, the "final signified," that ultimately closes the openness of writing and restricts the plurality of interpretation. In Barthes's view, it is the reader, not the author, who ultimately becomes the site where meaning is constructed; only the reader is able to perceive the multiplicity of a text and grasp the ambiguity that escapes the characters themselves.

Building on this foundation, this study aims to investigate how Metin Erksan engages with the theme of love by drawing from both Eastern and Western literary traditions. Specifically, it explores how Erksan identifies, synthesizes, and reinterprets the similarities and differences between these traditions to construct his unique cinematic portrayal of love.

The research question guiding this study is: How does Metin Erksan incorporate and transform the shared and contrasting elements of love in Eastern and Western literary narratives, specifically *Leyli and Majnun* and *Wuthering Heights* by Emily Brontë, into his films? Although various interpretations of the story of Leyli and Majnun exist, this study focuses on Fuzulî's version, as it is considered the most significant and influential one written in Turkish. To address this question, the study will analyze the thematic echoes of these two works in Erksan's films *Sevmek Zamanı* (1965) and *Ölmeyen Aşk* (1966). Through this comparative approach, the study aims to illuminate the ways in which Erksan blends different cultural perspectives on love, ultimately shaping his own cinematic interpretation.

The intertextual relationships are examined through three primary criteria: (1) narrative structure, including the development of the love plot and character trajectories; (2) symbolic representation, such as visual motifs, dialogue patterns, and spatial design that resonate with literary sources; and (3) character dynamics, focusing on emotional expression, agency, and the nature of love-related conflict. Additionally, attention is given to mise-en-scène elements that serve as visual and thematic connectors between the films and their literary intertexts.

Throughout the analysis, several recurring themes emerged in the films and their literary counterparts. These include "falling in love with a semblance or image"; "social constraints on love: class, culture, and authority"; "the tension between divine and profane love"; "love as madness or obsession; love as transcendence / annihilation of the self through suffering." The analysis will be grouped under these thematic categories. Some character functions or narrative devices did not fall neatly into the thematic categories outlined above. However, they also play an important role in facilitating the love story and illuminating the emotional journeys of the protagonists. Therefore, examples that do not directly align with any of these thematic categories are discussed under a separate 'Other' heading.

While Metin Erksan's filmography includes several works centered on love, this study focuses specifically on *Sevmek Zamanı* (1965) and *Ölmeyen Aşk* (1966) due to their explicit intertextual connections with *Leyli and Majnun* and *Wuthering Heights*. These films not only showcase Erksan's synthesis of Eastern and Western representations of love but also offer the clearest examples of his unique interpretative approach. Focusing on these two films allows for a more in-depth comparative analysis, ensuring that the discussion remains both thematically coherent and methodologically precise. While other films by Erksan explore similar themes, *Sevmek Zamanı* and *Ölmeyen Aşk* are the most relevant in terms of their direct engagement with literary sources and their reflection of the intertextual dialogue between different cultural traditions.

The Concept of Love in Eastern and Western Cultures

When truly understood, love has the potential to be the most powerful and transformative force both in the heavens and on earth. It serves as the driving motivation behind the most remarkable and elevated human accomplishments. In one way or another, true love always seeks to bring blessings to its beloved, regardless of the magnitude of sacrifice. The most profound works of literature, music, and religious thought have drawn their inspiration from love. In the realm of religion, Buddhism acknowledges that life is characterized by suffering, which stems from ego-driven desires and attachments. However, Buddhism also emphasizes that compassionate

love is vital for well-being and survival. The Dalai Lama highlights this by stating that love and compassion are fundamental necessities, not luxuries, as humanity cannot thrive without them. Similarly, Christianity teaches that God embodies love and that humans, created in God's image, inherently possess this quality. Love, therefore, is an intrinsic part of both human nature and spiritual fulfillment, as reflected in Galatians 5:22-23, which suggests that true joy is unattainable without love (Wong & Mayer, 2023).

Buğdaycı (2021) highlights the parallels between the Sufi concept of love, 'ashk,' and the Platonic notion of 'eros,' noting that in both frameworks, love is conceived as a "journey of the soul that starts from the lower stage of beauty and rises up to higher stages". In both Sufi ashk and eros, love is initially directed toward an earthly, material object, but especially in Sufi ashk, it transcends the profane through suffering and reaches a more spiritual and divine level. Buğdaycı claims that there are strong links between Greek philosophical thought and Sufism in Islamic tradition.

Similarly, Holbrook (2017) argues that Plato's *Symposium* and Şeyh Galib's *Hüsn ü Aşk (Beauty and Love)* depict a spiritual journey where love (aşk/eros) leads from the physical toward the metaphysical and eternal beauty. Through a method she calls "textual archaeology," Holbrook uncovers deep structural and thematic parallels between the two texts, highlighting how love serves as a transformative path toward wisdom and unity in both Eastern and Western traditions. In *Hüsn ü Aşk*, Aşk (Love), the male character, endures numerous trials on his journey to reunite with Hüsn (Beauty)—a process that leads to his maturation and spiritual elevation. Similarly, in *Symposium*, Plato—through the dialogue between Diotima and Socrates—depicts a comparable ascent, beginning with the love of a physical body and culminating in the contemplation of divine beauty.

Wong and Mayer (2023) put forward the concept of Golden Triad, which includes three key elements: aligning with our true self and life purpose, forming deep and meaningful connections with others through intimacy or communion, and attaining a sense of unity with nature and its Creator. The last element of this triad resonates with the concept of Wahdat al-Wujud in Sufi philosophy. Karandashev (2021) also discusses the universality of this notion of unity. The concept of love as a union of two individuals—whether temporary or lifelong—has been a persistent cultural model across societies for centuries. This conception entails an experience where two bodies, souls, or minds become one, leading to a sense of self-loss through an expansive merger with the beloved. Such unity may emerge through an equal fusion of partners or through an imbalance, where one partner is absorbed into the other via dominance or submission.

When love is unattainable or unfulfilled, or when lovers are forced apart, it often transforms into suffering. Many culture-specific notions of love emphasize pain and longing, highlighting the deep emotional intensity that defines the experience of love. Numerous scholars and writers have explored the intrinsic connection between love and suffering, asserting that no form of love exists without some degree of pain. Love, while associated with joy, fulfillment, and heightened consciousness, also renders individuals vulnerable to grief, sorrow, and disappointment. As Rollo May argues, to love is to open oneself to both the positive and negative dimensions of human experience. Similarly, Fyodor Dostoevsky asserts that suffering is inseparable from love, suggesting that the inability to love constitutes its own form of torment. Woody Allen echoes this sentiment in a more paradoxical manner, emphasizing that whether one chooses love or avoids it, suffering remains inevitable. These perspectives collectively reinforce the notion that love and suffering are deeply intertwined, making pain an inescapable aspect of profound emotional connections (Wong & Mayer, 2023).

Love can take different forms, one of which is obsessive love, referred to as *limerence* by Tennov (1979). Intense love can turn into obsession, filling the lover's mind with constant thoughts and a strong need to possess the beloved. This type of love feels urgent and overwhelming, making it hard for the lover to handle rejection or unfulfilled desires (Karandashev, 2021; Wong & Mayer, 2023).

Cross-cultural variations in emotional arousal levels have been consistently observed, particularly between Western and Eastern cultures. Western societies tend to emphasize high-arousal emotions, as these emotions align with the individualistic nature of their culture, where people seek to influence others. In contrast, Eastern cultures, which are more collectivist, prioritize low-arousal emotions, as they facilitate social harmony and adaptation to group expectations (Lim, 2016). These differences also influence passionate love, reflecting the general emotional patterns of each culture.

Eastern Representations of Love

In *Ansiklopedik Divan Şiiri Sözlüğü* (*Encyclopedic Dictionary of Divan Poetry*), love (aşk) is defined as intense form of affection. The concept of love can be analyzed from two different perspectives: its spiritual dimension in Sufism and its literary expression in Divan poetry. In Sufism, love is considered the foundation of creation, as expressed in the hadith, "I was a hidden treasure; I desired to be known, so I created the world." The Wahdat al-Wujud philosophy sees love as the means to know and unite with God. To attain visāl-i haqq (union with truth), one must detach

from worldly attachments, master the self, and eliminate the ego. Only then can a Sufi reach fanā' fillāh (annihilation in God) and attain divine love. Love, as an attribute of God, holds His secret and manifestation. At its highest level, Sufi love leads to the loss of selfhood, where the individual dissolves into divine existence. This concept, known as "Becoming one with the Truth"[2], signifies transcending the self and attaining ultimate spiritual unity. In Divan literature, love is depicted in various dimensions, ranging from a simple desire to deep devotion. Although it may initially seem linked to physical attraction, it is primarily viewed as a platonic pleasure and spiritual attachment. Love is a central theme in this literary tradition, often carrying a spiritual orientation. Some poets experienced love as a deeply personal emotion, leading them to melancholy and even turning them into legendary figures in folk narratives. Gazels and masnavis explore love both as a representation of divine love and as a passion rooted in physical and sensory experiences. In literary works, love is portrayed as a profound feeling that dominates the lover's world, while the beloved often remains unaware of it. For the lover, love is eternal, growing in intensity, sometimes to the extent of embracing death. Divan poets emphasize both the joy and suffering that love brings, highlighting the idea that pain is an inseparable part of love. The wounds caused by love never heal; longing and sorrow coexist with passion. The deeper the love, the greater the suffering, making love both an exalted and painful experience (Pala, 2014, pp. 47-49).

The Concept of Falling in Love with a Semblance or Image

In classical literature, the theme of falling in love with a portrait or an image of the beloved is quite common. In *Hüsrev and Şirin*, Şirin falls in love with Hüsrev after seeing the portraits of him left in various places she had visited, and she starts to search for him. In narratives that turn into *Ferhat and Şirin subsequently*, Ferhat, who is a 'nakkaş' (miniature painter), gives his own portrait to Şirin, as Fuzuli states, without knowing that he actually carved a rival to himself. In *Vâmık and Azrâ*, Vâmık falls in love with Azrâ upon seeing her portrait, and Azra falls in love with him upon hearing about him. Similarly, in *Hümâ and Hümâyûn*, Hümâ sees Hümâyûn's portrait in a pavilion while hunting and falls in love. In *Hüsn ü Dil*, Hüsn becomes passionately attached to the owner of a portrait hidden in a treasury without knowing who it belongs to. In *Sıhhat and Maraz*, Ruh falls in love with the beauty he sees in a mirror, unaware that it is his own reflection. Lastly, in *Yusuf and Züleyha* narratives, Züleyha fills her room with depictions (tasvirs) of herself to captivate him. In these stories, love is often not directed at the real presence of the beloved but rather at a depiction or image, making this theme an essential part of classical love narratives. The notion

[2] "Hakk ile Hak olmak" in Turkish.

of the beloved themselves being a 'sûret' (semblance) is present in Divan poetry and Sufi poetry, most prominently in Fuzûlî's *Leylâ and Mecnûn* (Gemuhluoğlu, 2013).

Fuzuli's *Leyli and Majnun*

Leyli and Majnun, originally an Arabic tale, was adopted into masnavi form by various poets first in Persian literature and then in Turkish literature, and was composed by various poets both before and after Fuzuli. There are differing claims and perspectives concerning the story's origins. One of those contend that the narrative is grounded in an actual historical event, whereas others maintain that it was conceived by a young man who loved his cousin but was only able to express his feelings through his poems, which he attributed to Kays b. Muvellah Amiri (Majnun). However, it would be more plausible to consider the story as a combination of various incidents occurred at different periods into a unified narrative (Çapan, 2009; Levend, 1959, pp. 1-7). Despite some differences, the core events that form the essence of the story were preserved across various versions. For instance, Qays and Leyli meet during their childhood; Leyli's father refuses to allow Leyli's marriage to Qays and becomes the greatest obstacle to their love; Leyli is married to another man; Qays wanders into the desert and loses his sanity, becoming known as Majnun; and ultimately, both Leyli and Majnun die as a result of their desperate and unfulfilled love. Contributions from certain poets transform the story from merely a tale of impossible love into one imbued with Sufi meanings.

In Abdorrahman Jami (1414-1492)'s and Nezami Ganjavi (1141-1209)'s versions, Majnun refrains from seeing Leyli, or a physical union, as it will impact his path towards 'fana,' which means annihilation of the self and absolute union with the True Love. Majnun's love is diverted towards the 'source of everything,' to the Truth as a result of his long sufferings, and he is no longer interested in earthly world (Nilchian, 2015). In Fuzuli's version, when Leyli encounters Majnun in the desert by chance, he cannot recognize her, and even after she reminds him of herself, he refuses union because maturity in true love resides in the heart and does not require any sort of physical contact (Fuzuli, 2000).

The question of whether Fuzuli was influenced by earlier poets who wrote Leyli and Majnun narratives, and to what extent, remains a subject of debate. In some Western sources, Fuzuli is inaccurately described as a translator of Nezami's work. While Fuzuli pays homage to Nezami and Jami by mentioning their names at the beginning of his masnavi, the significant difference in length between their works disproves this claim. Nezami's masnavi comprises 4,600 couplets, whereas Fuzuli's version contains only 3,200. Evidently, the differences are not confined to the length alone;

there are also notable variations in the events of the story (Akalın, 2017). Moreover, Fuzuli made his own contributions to the Leyli and Majnun narrative by introducing elements such as the love between Zayd (Majnun's friend) and Zeyneb, the fairy tale Leyli told Ibn Salam to keep him away from herself, the death of Ibn Salam resulting from Majnun's curse, and the dream that Zayd had at the end of the story about Leyli and Majnun together in heaven (Çapan, 2009). In Fuzuli's version, Leyli's mother plays a significant role, whereas in earlier versions by other poets, her father is portrayed as the primary, and perhaps the sole, obstacle. While incorporating his unique style in both narrative features and story events, Fuzuli remained loyal to the Sufi essence.

Fuzuli's work also distinguishes itself from those of his predecessors, as his portrayal of characters and depiction of love interweave both realistic and mystical elements. In Nizami's masnavi, for instance, Majnun displays a greater degree of abnormal behavior and is accompanied by a few companions who share his plight. Nizami presents Majnun as a pitiable figure—a powerless man who, overwhelmed by his despair, avoids human interaction out of fear. By contrast, Fuzuli reduces Majnun's erratic actions to a minimum, portraying him instead as the epitome of the ideal lover (Özcan, 2010).

A comparatively more recent author who wrote a modernized version Leyli and Majnun story was Reşat Nuri Güntekin. In his version, there are two parts: one narrative framing the main story. The frame story consists of a group of friends discussing the matter of hopeless love and whether it can be cured or not, and if it can, what the ways are. While one suggests that the cure is union, another claims "The remedy for love is separation." As a hopeless love can never be cured, love can be increased by separation. However, Mazhar suggests a radically different cure: being around the beloved so that their flaws can be seen, which will eventually weaken the love. A lover attributes superior qualities to the beloved one, and by observing their weaknesses and flaws, love fades away, which means it is cured (Çeçen, 2015).

Western Representations of Love and *Wuthering Heights*

In Renaissance thought, love was often depicted as a destructive force, inflicting emotional and physical torment—it "pricks, wounds, scars, wrings, and ruins." The Renaissance lover of the sonnets experiences love as "suffering," marked by "sighs, pain, tears, and despair." While modern English culture has moved away from openly expressing such anguish over unrequited love, Turkish cultural expressions remain deeply connected to the medieval notion of voluntary suffering for love, a theme heavily influenced by Sufi ascetic ideologies (Aksan & Kantar, 2008).

Compassionate love is a form of love rooted in care, tenderness, and commitment, extending beyond romantic relationships. It plays a significant role in early childhood education, though its interpretation varies across cultures. In Hungary, love is openly discussed as part of educational philosophy, whereas in England, terms like care, support, and empathy are preferred instead. These differences illustrate how cultural norms shape the understanding and expression of compassionate love (Mayer, 2021).

Similarities and Differences Between the Two Stories

In both stories, the lovers are depicted as two bodies sharing a single soul, making their love an inseparable bond. "Their separate states became one; as if a single soul resided in two bodies. Whoever asked Qays about a secret, it was Leyli's voice that answered him." (Fuzuli, 2000, p. 129, couplets 598-599). When his father finds Majnun in the desert, he notices that his son's sleeve is filled with blood. Majnun says that Leyli is undergoing bloodletting, and Majnun experiences the same wound, symbolizing their deep, almost mystical connection. He reassures his astonished father that there is no duality between them, as their souls are intertwined. Majnun expresses that their emotions are inseparable—when Leyli rejoices, he rejoices; when she grieves, he grieves (Fuzuli, 2000, p. 389, couplets 2128-2136). In *Wuthering Heights*, it is Catherine who expresses a similar idea about love and unity of souls:

"... he shall never know how I love him: and that, not because he's handsome, Nelly, but because he's more myself than I am. Whatever our souls are made of, his and mine are the same; and Linton's is as different as a moonbeam from lightning, or frost from fire. ...My great miseries in this world have been Heathcliff's miseries, and I watched and felt each from the beginning: my great thought in living is himself. If all else perished, and HE remained, I should still continue to be; and if all else remained, and he were annihilated, the universe would turn to a mighty stranger: I should not seem a part of it. ... My love for Heathcliff resembles the eternal rocks beneath: a source of little visible delight, but necessary. Nelly, I AM Heathcliff! He's always, always in my mind: not as a pleasure, any more than I am always a pleasure to myself, but as my own being" (Brontë, 1847, pp. 102-104).

Another similarity in both stories is that both Catherine and Leyli are forced into marriage in the absence of their true love, yet they find no real happiness in these unions. Following their separation, Qays transforms into Majnun, a mystical and almost saint-like figure, while Heathcliff becomes wild and aggressive, exhibiting abnormal behavior. Heathcliff becomes obsessed with taking revenge from those who wronged him. Majnun, on the other hand, does not even wish for

Nawfal to win his battle against Leyli's tribe, as he cannot bear the thought of her or anyone from her tribe suffering.

In traditional societies, young people's autonomy in matters of love is often discouraged by families, driven by concerns about decision-making and preserving authority, wealth, and patriarchal values. While limited tolerance is shown when a young man expresses interest in a reputable family's daughter, it is considered shameful for a girl to reciprocate. Fuzuli's *Leyli and Majnun* reflects this sentiment, as Leyli's mother reprimands her for the rumors about Qays, emphasizing that love is inappropriate for girls (Özcan, 2010). "It is not strange for a boy to fall in love, / But does love suit a girl?" (Fuzuli, pp. 140-141). Leyli's actions to pursue her love are constrained by societal norms, where disobedience results in humiliation and a loss of honor for women. Thus, Leyli refrains from actions that would defy her family or her tribe, as she lacks the agency to determine even whom she will marry, embodying the modesty and passivity typical of Eastern traditions. In contrast, Catherine is bold, rebellious, and unafraid to express her emotions, and she exercises autonomy in such matters. However, she ultimately betrays her true feelings by marrying Edgar for social status, despite knowing she truly loves Heathcliff. Her choice shapes the novel's central conflict, as it introduces a romantic rival and, upon Heathcliff's return, she disregards criticism from those around her regarding her relationship with him. Furthermore, she experiences neither guilt nor shame for her interactions with Heathcliff, despite being married to another man, which would have severe consequences in Leyli's situation.

In *Leyli and Majnun*, Leyli's parents deem Majnun an unsuitable match due to his reputation as a mad lover, fearing the negative impact on their family's honor. Similarly, in *Wuthering Heights*, Catherine perceives Heathcliff as an unfit husband because of his low social status, blaming her brother for reducing him to such conditions by depriving him of education and financial sources. Her true intention in marrying Edgar Linton is to "aid Heathcliff to rise, and place him out of her brother's power." However, she acknowledges that if she were to marry Heathcliff, they would be left destitute, reduced to a life of poverty without financial security. She does not believe that Linton or her marriage can separate her from Heathcliff; in fact, she insists that nothing on earth ever could (Brontë, 1847, pp. 100-104). Therefore, we can say that in *Wuthering Heights*, class difference is the primary reason for separation. However, in *Leyli and Majnun*, no such class disparity exists, as Majnun's father is also a wealthy and influential figure. The cause of their separation in *Leyli and Majnun* lies in Majnun's state of mind and Leyli's family's belief that having him as a son-in-law would be unsuitable for both their daughter and their family's honor.

In *Leyli and Majnun,* the rival of Majnun is Ibn-Salam. Leyli's marriage remains unconsummated, due to the story she tells about a jinn that haunts whoever touches her. Her marriage is far from typical, and she weeps in secret due to her desperate love for Majnun. In contrast, Catherine leads a conventional married life, and even becomes pregnant during Heathcliff's absence, demonstrating a stark difference in their navigation of love and societal constraints.

In both narratives, the rival male characters (Edgar Linton and Ibn Salam) are portrayed as weaker figures, symbolizing earthly love, especially in *Leyli and Majnun*.

When all hope of reunion is lost, both Leyli and Catherine fall ill due to their love, gradually weakening and ultimately passing away. Their process of dying is strikingly similar; both are wasted away, physically deteriorating due to the suffering caused by their unfulfilled love.

One of the most defining aspects of their love is that neither Majnun nor Heathcliff can imagine life without their loved ones, deeming existence meaningless. Majnun expresses this sentiment by stating: "O life! Now you, too, must come to an end! For the world has become a prison to my eyes ... My beloved was present, and the world was beautiful. Since she is gone, then let everything that exists cease to be!" (Fuzûlî, 2000, pp. 529, 2969-2970)—revealing his inability to continue living without Leyli. Similarly, Heathcliff exclaims: "I know that *ghosts have* wandered on earth. Be with me always—take any form—drive me mad! Only *do not* leave me in this abyss, where I cannot find you! Oh, God! it is unutterable! I *cannot* live without my life! I *cannot* live without my soul!" (Brontë, 1847, p. 213)—expressing his inability to conceive of life without Catherine.

Metin Erksan's Interpretation of Love

Metin Erksan's cinematic approach to love is shaped by a synthesis of Eastern mysticism and Western literary intensity. In his films, love often transcends physical desire and instead becomes a space of existential longing, symbolic imagery, and psychological transformation. Rather than portraying love as a reciprocal connection between individuals, Erksan frequently emphasizes obsession, suffering, and the pursuit of an unattainable ideal. This section offers a comparative intertextual analysis of two of Erksan's films, *Sevmek Zamanı* (1965) and *Ölmeyen Aşk* (1966), in relation to their literary counterparts. Each subsection explores how narrative structure, character dynamics, and symbolic motifs reflect and reinterpret the tension between Eastern and Western conceptions of love.

Falling in Love with a Semblance of Image

Gemuhluoğlu (2013) claims that in *Sevmek Zamanı*, the concept of love is fundamentally different from the love depicted in classical masnavis (such as *Leyli and Majnun*). In traditional stories, love is seen as a journey—it begins with an attraction to outer beauty (sûret) but gradually transforms into an appreciation of inner meaning (mânâ). The lover matures through this process. However, in *Sevmek Zamanı*, love is not a journey but an idea. The protagonist, Halil, falls in love with a woman's photograph and never even considers searching for the real person. For him, love is already complete in his mind—unchanging and ideal. He does not need to experience a transformation or a relationship; his love exists as a fixed concept rather than a developing emotion. This idea of love creates dramatic tension throughout the film, leading to the tragic ending where the lovers are killed by a rival. In contrast, in classical masnavis, lovers typically do not perish due to an external force but rather because of internal suffering, such as heartbreak or the death of the beloved. Keskin (2019) disagrees with Gemuhluoğlu on her claim that Halil's not seeking the owner of the image (sûret) is incompatible with Sufism. This is a mistaken approach. In fact, Halil renounces the worldly, just as Sufism demands, and surrenders to the image (sûret), which signifies the divine. He is drawn into the state of spiritual unity and the ecstasy of becoming one with the beloved.

Halil is in love not with Meral herself at the beginning, but with her photograph and the idealized image he has created in his mind. Fearing that reality might disrupt this constructed love, he refuses to share it with Meral. When Meral insists on hearing his feelings directly from him, Halil responds, "Mustafa has already told you what you want to know." Meral, however, persists: "I want to hear it from you. Surely, I have the right to know something that concerns me." Halil rejects this notion, asserting that this matter is strictly between himself and the image, and that Meral is not involved. Halil's attitude is similar to that of Majnuns in Nezami's and Jami's masnavis, where he refuses to see Leyli.

In *Ölmeyen Aşk*, Ethem becomes vulnerable to Ali's calculated revenge after falling into debt due to gambling. In a high-stakes confrontation, Ali demands Yıldız as repayment. When Yıldız confronts him, he cruelly responds: "How foolish you are! I did not ask for a woman who is the leftover of a decayed system and a foolish husband. I asked for the Yıldız of the past—untouched, pure, and radiant. Can you be that young girl again?" Metin Erksan frequently explores the theme of an idealized lover preserved in memory, which is evident across his films. This motif closely resembles *Sevmek Zamanı*, where Halil falls in love with an image rather than the real person. Similarly, in *Leyli and Majnun*, Majnun clings to the memory of Leyli's past self, so much so that

when he finally encounters her in the desert, he fails to recognize her. Erksan revisits this idea of falling in love with an image from the past in *Acı Hayat* (*Bitter Life*, 1962) and *Sevenler Ölmez* (1970), reinforcing his recurring exploration of idealized, unattainable love.

Social Constraints on Love: Class, Culture, and Authority

For Halil, the essence of love lies in loving itself, while for Meral, it is about hearing and confirming that she is loved. His emotions and perspective align with the Eastern philosophy of love, whereas Meral's expectations reflect a more Western understanding. Throughout the film, the cultural contrast between Halil and Meral, the duality between Eastern and Western cultures, is conveyed through various elements of mise-en-scène, such as music, costume, and location. Meral belongs to the modernized Western world, whereas Halil is more traditional and represents Eastern culture (Akser, 2001). Cultural difference along with the class disparity is the main reason for the separation of Halil and Meral.

Through Halil, she discovers the essence of love and its true meaning, ultimately recognizing the reasons for her dissatisfaction in her previous relationship with Başar. However, although Halil ultimately agrees to a union, his conversation with Meral's father—a wealthy businessman—leads him to realize their stark difference in social class. Meral's father emphasizes that, over time, this disparity could disrupt their love, as Meral might grow dissatisfied and unhappy due to the absence of the comfort and luxury she has always known. Although the film predominantly aligns with Eastern conceptions of love, it also incorporates elements that evoke Wuthering Heights. Character parallels are particularly evident; for instance, Meral's father resembles Catherine's kind and modest father more than Leyli's uncompromising and authoritarian father. Unlike *Leyli and Majnun*, where separation is not rooted in class conflict, Wuthering Heights presents class disparity as the central obstacle to love. Catherine's concerns about a life of poverty find a clear parallel in the warnings of Meral's father, reinforcing the theme of social status as a barrier to romantic union.

Although *Ölmeyen Aşk* is an adaptation of *Wuthering Heights*, traces of *Leyli and Majnun* can also be observed in the personalities of Ali and Yıldız, who embody a synthesis of Heathcliff and Majnun, and Catherine and Leyli. However, unlike Catherine, Yıldız directly fights for her love rather than hesitating due to societal expectations. She openly defends Ali and even confronts her brother, who mistreats him. Unlike Catherine, she does not see Ali as beneath her or consider him unworthy due to class differences. Nevertheless, class disparity is again the cause of the two lovers' separation. It does not stem from Yıldız viewing Ali as an unsuitable partner, but rather from Ali's overwhelming pride and obstinacy. Yıldız, in reality, seeks to overcome her brother's

opposition and bring Ali back home, yet Ali misinterprets her intentions. He takes offense at her question, "Why should I come to this hut?", perceiving it as a slight to his dignity and assuming that Yıldız looks down on him. From that moment on, pride and stubbornness dominate their relationship, ultimately preventing reconciliation.

In *Wuthering Heights*, Hindley's descent into alcoholism and gambling is portrayed as the result of emotional loss, suggesting that he is still capable of grief. In contrast, Ethem is devoid of empathy, showing no concern for his wife or family. His cruelty appears innate, positioning him not just as a flawed individual but as a structural obstacle to love. Like Leyli's father, Ethem enforces the separation of the lovers, embodying the oppressive forces—familial, cultural, and moral—that stand in opposition to personal desire. In this way, Erksan highlights how love is not only challenged by internal conflict but also shaped and constrained by external authority.

The Tension Between Divine and Profane Love

The rival male figure present in both *Leyli and Majnun* and *Wuthering Heights* is reflected in the character of Başar in *Sevmek Zamanı*. A wealthy and spoiled young man, Başar embodies profane love, as his feelings appear more superficial and physically driven, whereas Halil's love carries a transcendent, almost divine quality. The stark contrast between Başar's and Halil's ways of loving Meral illustrates two distinct forms of love: 'Hakiki' (true, spiritual) love and 'mecazi' (metaphorical, earthly) love.

Yıldız's decision to marry Lütfü reflects not genuine affection but a desperate attempt to provoke Ali and test his love. While Catherine in *Wuthering Heights* marries Edgar for social security, Yıldız acts out of wounded pride, yet remains emotionally distant from her husband. She clings to the hope of reunion with Ali until the very end, never fully surrendering to her new role. This emotional detachment mirrors Leyli's rejection of Ibn Salam, suggesting that for both women, physical union without true love is meaningless. The contrast between their outward choices and inner loyalties reveals a deep tension between societal expectations and spiritual fidelity—a hallmark of the divide between profane and divine love.

Love as Madness or Obsession

In *Ölmeyen Aşk*, both Ali and Yıldız are deeply proud and stubborn, which prevents open emotional communication and leads to tragic misinterpretation. When Ali compares Yıldız to her oppressive brother, she avoids clarification and instead replies, "You love your pride and anger, not me. Refusing to come here does not mean I do not love you." For Ali, however, words are

meaningless without action; he believes love must be proven through endurance and presence, stating, "The real issue is coming here." Their relationship devolves into a struggle of pride and defiance. While diverging from the events of *Wuthering Heights*, the film preserves the emotional essence of doomed, passionate love. As highlighted in the introduction, Erksan sees love as something that demands passion, courage, and concrete action—mere words are never enough.

Upon learning about Yıldız's love for Ali, Ethem attacks Ali, accusing him of pursuing Yıldız for her family's wealth. After a violent confrontation, Ethem retrieves a rifle, but Yıldız stands against her brother to protect Ali. Later, Ali and Yıldız continue their relentless standoff, each refusing to admit their true feelings. This is visually reinforced in a scene where they walk on opposite sides of an irrigation canal, nearly meeting on a small bridge before turning away once again. Eventually, Yıldız, hoping to provoke Ali into action, accepts Lütfü's proposal, believing he will stop the wedding. However, both expect the other to make a move, and neither does, leading to Yıldız's marriage to Lütfü.

After leaving the farm in anger, Ali returns as a radically transformed man—wealthy, well-dressed, and emotionally hardened. Despite learning that Yıldız had searched for him and suffered heartbreak, he remains indifferent, consumed by resentment and pride. His emotional detachment marks a descent into a colder, almost delusional state, suggesting a loss of his former self. As Ali seeks ways to seize Ethem's property, Yusuf warns him about the dangers of wealth, emphasizing a recurring theme in Erksan's films: Greed and materialism ultimately destroy love.

The most striking element that reflects Erksan's unique interpretation is the way he portrays Ali as a man gradually losing his sanity. Toward the end of the film, Ali's behavior becomes increasingly erratic, and his gaze takes on a wild, unhinged quality. Erksan reinforces this transformation through camera angles and music, heightening the sense of psychological turmoil. Ali fully embodies Heathcliff's thirst for vengeance, yet, like Majnun, he also succumbs to madness through love. His descent into obsession closely aligns with the concept of 'limerence,' as he experiences intense emotional fixation, intrusive thoughts, and an inability to detach from his love for Yıldız.

Love as Transcendence / Annihilation of the Self Through Suffering

Sevmek Zamanı presents love not merely as a theme but as a reflection on form and imagery. In the film, Halil's love for Meral's photograph is conveyed through images, reflections, and frames, positioning the audience as external observers of this love. This narrative approach aligns with the concept of "falling in love with the image (sûret)" found in Divan poetry. On the other hand, Meral's love for Halil begins with seeing herself in his gaze. This dynamic evokes a reference to Ovid's

Narcissus myth, as Meral becomes enamored with her own reflection in Halil's eyes. If there is a concept of "a journey of love" in the film, it belongs to Meral rather than Halil. Initially captivated by Halil's gaze, Meral gradually undergoes a transformation alongside him. Before meeting Halil, Meral's life is marked by illusions, but through him, she discovers true love and a deeper sense of reality. Erksan captures this transformation with a powerful visual reference to Plato's Allegory of the Cave in the wedding scene. Meral stands alone and visibly unhappy, while shadows appear on the wall behind her. Now awakened to truth, she no longer finds meaning in these shadows, just as she no longer finds meaning in Başar, who belongs to that world of illusion. In the final scene, the photograph of Meral and the mannequin falling from the boat and dissolving into the water serve as a significant visual metaphor, reinforcing the film's exploration of love and imagery (Gemuhluoğlu, 2013). Meral reads Ovid's *Art of Love* (*Ars Amatoria*) and walks barefoot on a snowy and muddy road, symbolizing her journey of suffering and sacrifice for love.

Meral represents a synthesis of Catherine and Leyli, just as Halil embodies both Heathcliff and Majnun. Like Catherine, Meral is assertive and independent, resisting societal expectations; yet, like Leyli, she undergoes a transformation through suffering, ultimately reaching a deeper understanding of love. Halil, similar to Majnun in Fuzuli's narrative, is inherently capable of true love and accepts suffering as part of it. However, he must also transcend his earthly attachments to reach a spiritual state where the beloved's physical presence is no longer necessary. This parallels Majnun's journey toward 'fanā' fillāh.' In the final moments of the film, Meral discards her photograph and the mannequin, symbols of 'suret' (semblance), signaling the couple's renunciation of earthly representations. Their self-annihilation through love culminates in death, echoing the mystical union at the heart of Sufi tradition.

The film's locations, combined with Halil's solitude, evoke Majnun's isolation in the desert. Much like Majnun, Halil roams different parts of the island alone, always appearing deep in thought and melancholic.

The Other

Mustafa in *Sevmek Zamanı* and Zayd in *Leyli and Majnun* serve as mediators between the lovers, facilitating communication and offering insight into the protagonists' emotional struggles. In *Leyli and Majnun*, Zayd acts as a messenger, delivering letters between Majnun and Leyli, keeping their connection alive despite societal constraints. Similarly, Mustafa in *Sevmek Zamanı* introduces Meral to Halil's unconventional love, helping her understand the nature of his attachment. Both characters function as guiding figures, interpreting the protagonists' love; however, while Mustafa

remains detached from romantic passion himself, in Fuzuli's *Leyli and Majnun*, Zayd has a relationship with Zaynab. Moreover, both characters play a crucial role in witnessing the fate of the lovers—Zayd brings news of Leyli's death, leading Majnun to his final moment of despair at her grave, similarly, Mustafa brings news of Meral's wedding with Başar. While Zayd passively observes Majnun's suffering, Mustafa takes a more active role in interpreting Halil's emotions.

While the theme of "being one soul in two bodies" is never explicitly stated in either *Sevmek Zamanı* or *Ölmeyen Aşk*, it resonates implicitly through moments of emotional mirroring and visual symmetry. In *Sevmek Zamanı*, Halil and Meral rarely interact physically, yet their isolation is framed in parallel visual compositions—framed doorways, reflections, and long silences—that suggest a shared emotional space. In *Ölmeyen Aşk*, Ali and Yıldız repeatedly mirror each other's pride, suffering, and hesitation, culminating in the canal scene where they approach from opposite sides but never fully connect. These moments do not claim metaphysical unity, but they hint at an emotional synchronicity that transcends individual will, echoing the idea of love as a force that binds rather than merges.

Conclusion

Metin Erksan's exploration of love in *Sevmek Zamanı* and *Ölmeyen Aşk* demonstrates his ability to bridge Eastern and Western literary traditions, creating a distinct cinematic vision. By intertwining the mystical devotion of *Leyli and Majnun* with the passionate destructiveness of Wuthering Heights, Erksan not only reinterprets love but also challenges conventional representations of romance in cinema. His films move beyond simple adaptations, offering a complex, layered portrayal of love that reflects both the spiritual and the psychological dimensions of human emotion.

Through *Sevmek Zamanı*, Erksan introduces the Eastern concept of love as devotion to an image, a notion deeply embedded in Sufi and classical Ottoman poetry. Conversely, *Ölmeyen Aşk* aligns with the Western Gothic tradition, where love is entangled with suffering and vengeance. The comparative analysis of these films and their literary predecessors reveals Erksan's mastery in navigating cultural intersections and transforming established love narratives into something uniquely his own.

One limitation of this study is its focus on only two films by Metin Erksan, which, while deeply illustrative of his intertextual style and thematic concerns, do not encompass the full spectrum of his cinematic treatment of love. Additionally, the analysis centers primarily on two literary intertexts—*Leyli and Majnun* and *Wuthering Heights*—selected for their thematic resonance and

narrative parallels. However, other cultural and literary influences on Erksan's work, particularly within Turkish cinema and oral storytelling traditions, remain unexplored. Future research may expand the scope by incorporating a broader range of films, intertexts, and comparative frameworks.

As can be seen, Metin Erksan's films do not simply adapt literary works but actively engage in a dialogic process with them. The emotional and narrative structures of *Sevmek Zamanı* and *Ölmeyen Aşk* resonate with multiple textual layers, where meaning emerges not from a single authorial voice but through a web of cultural and textual references. In line with Kristeva's assertion that every text is a mosaic of quotations and Barthes's notion of the reader as the site of meaning-making, Erksan's films invite viewers to navigate between Eastern mysticism and Western romanticism, crafting new meanings through cinematic language. Through this intertextual layering, love is not presented as a fixed idea but as a dynamic construct shaped by historical, cultural, and artistic dialogue.

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Appendix | Ek

Summary of *Leyli and Majnun* by Fuzuli

A wealthy Arab emir, after fervently praying to God, is granted a son named Qays. At the age of ten, Qays begins attending school, where he meets Leyli, and a profound love blossoms between them. As their love becomes known, Leyli's mother initially warns her daughter and later withdraws her from school. Devastated upon learning that Leyli will no longer be attending, Qays abandons school as well and begins wandering aimlessly in the desert. Concerned for his son's well-being, Qays's father realizes that advice will be of no use and, along with the elders of his tribe, formally asks for Leyli's hand in marriage. However, Leyli's father refuses, arguing that Qays—now known as Majnun (meaning "madman")—has lost his sanity, making marriage impossible unless he regains his mental stability. Despite the efforts of physicians, Majnun cannot be cured. As a last resort, his father takes him to the Kaaba, urging him to pray for healing, but instead, Majnun prays for his suffering to intensify. Accepting that his son will never recover from the affliction of love, his father returns with him.

Majnun continues to roam the desert, befriending animals, while Leyli, in her sorrow, falls into despair. Hoping that marriage will help his daughter forget this love, Leyli's father arranges her marriage to Ibn Salam, a suitor eager to wed her. Meanwhile, Ibn Nawfal, a renowned Arab emir known for his bravery and warrior spirit, hears Majnun's poetry and becomes deeply moved by his tragic love. Determined to help him, Nawfal writes to Leyli's father, demanding that he allow the marriage or face war. When his request is denied, a battle erupts between Leyli's tribe and Nawfal's forces. However, during the conflict, Majnun prays for Leyli's tribe to be victorious. Upon realizing this, Nawfal loses his motivation to fight. Although he emerges victorious, he withdraws without forcing the marriage.

Leyli's father proceeds with her arranged marriage to Ibn Salam. On their wedding night, Leyli deceives Ibn Salam by claiming that a supernatural being (jinn) has been in love with her since childhood and threatens to kill them both if he touches her. Afraid, Ibn Salam refrains from approaching her. Following a curse (beddua) from Majnun, Ibn Salam dies. Contrary to expectations, his death does not bring Majnun joy but rather sorrow. After Ibn Salam's passing, Leyli returns to her father's home, using her widowhood as a pretext to grieve for Majnun. Hoping that a change of scenery might help his daughter, Leyli's father decides to relocate. On their journey, Leyli unknowingly encounters Majnun, who reveals his identity through his story. However, for Majnun, Leyli has transcended physical existence and has become an ethereal, divine figure. Realizing his spiritual transformation, Leyli withdraws. Understanding that there is no longer any possibility of union in this world, she prays to God for death, which is soon granted.

When Zayd, who had helped facilitate communication between Leyli and Majnun, brings news of Leyli's passing, Majnun rushes to her grave, where he soon dies. He is buried beside her. One day, Zayd visits their graves and falls asleep, dreaming of Leyli and Majnun together in paradise (Fuzuli, 2000).

Summary of *Wuthering Heights*

In 1801, Lockwood, a man seeking solitude, rents Thrushcross Grange, a remote estate in the English moors. He soon meets his landlord, Heathcliff, a wealthy yet brooding man who resides at Wuthering Heights, a nearby manor. Intrigued by the eerie atmosphere and Heathcliff's somber demeanor, Lockwood persuades his housekeeper, Nelly Dean, to share the history of Wuthering Heights. Her recollections, which he records in his diary, form the central narrative of Wuthering Heights.

Nelly recalls her childhood as a servant at Wuthering Heights, where she worked for Mr. Earnshaw and his family. One day, Mr. Earnshaw brings home an orphaned boy, Heathcliff, whom he decides to raise alongside his own children, Hindley and Catherine. While Hindley despises Heathcliff, Catherine quickly forms a deep bond with him. Over time, Mr. Earnshaw favors Heathcliff over Hindley, causing resentment between the two boys. When Hindley's mistreatment of Heathcliff worsens, Mr. Earnshaw sends Hindley away to school, keeping Heathcliff close.

After Mr. Earnshaw's death, Hindley returns home with his new wife, Frances, and inherits Wuthering Heights. Seeking revenge, he reduces Heathcliff to a servant and forces him to work in the fields. Despite this, Heathcliff and Catherine remain close. One evening, they sneak to Thrushcross Grange to mock the Linton children, Edgar and Isabella, but Catherine is injured by a dog. She stays at the Grange for five weeks, during which Mrs. Linton transforms her into a refined young lady. By the time she returns, Catherine has developed feelings for Edgar, straining her relationship with Heathcliff.

Meanwhile, Frances dies giving birth to Hindley's son, Hareton, causing Hindley to spiral into alcoholism and cruelty. Seeking status, Catherine chooses to marry Edgar Linton, despite her deep love for Heathcliff. Heartbroken, Heathcliff disappears for three years, only to return wealthy and determined to take revenge.

With his newfound fortune, Heathcliff manipulates Hindley into deep debt, eventually seizing Wuthering Heights after Hindley's death. He further strengthens his control over Thrushcross Grange by marrying Isabella Linton, whom he treats with brutality. Meanwhile, Catherine becomes gravely ill, gives birth to a daughter, and dies. Devastated, Heathcliff begs Catherine's spirit to haunt him, unable to bear the loss. Soon after, Isabella flees to London, where she gives birth to Heathcliff's son, Linton Heathcliff, raising him away from his father.

After thirteen years, young Cathy meets Linton Heathcliff and is manipulated into marrying him by Heathcliff, who seeks revenge and control over Thrushcross Grange. Following a series of deaths, Heathcliff becomes consumed by Catherine's memory and eventually dies, leaving Cathy and Hareton to inherit both estates and plan their marriage, bringing an end to the cycle of revenge (Brontë, 1847).